



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–FEBRUARY 14, 2021

### TAMIL NADU

- **On February 13, Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched an integrated public grievance CM helpline management system at the Secretariat in Chennai**
- ✓ He also inaugurated the CM Helpline Call Center, built at a cost of ₹12.78 crore, on Rajiv Gandhi Salai in Sholinganallur, Chennai.
- ✓ **Under the system, people can use the toll-free number '1100' to call and air grievances.**
- ✓ The CM had announced the scheme on the floor of assembly on September 15 last year.
- ✓ The plan is to implement the scheme at an outlay of ₹69.21 crore.
- ✓ In the first phase, the 100-seat helpline desk will attend the grievances of the public between 7am to 10pm in the tollfree number.
- ✓ People can also use web portal CMHelpline.tnega.org, app CMHelpline Citizen, e-mail cmhelpline@tn.gov.in, Twitter ID @CMHelplineTN, and through the Facebook account <http://www.facebook.com/CM-Helpline-TN> to register their grievances.
- ✓ Action will be taken on petitions received through all modes within a stipulated time.
- ✓ Aadhaar and PDS card numbers are requested while registering grievances.
- ✓ Skill development training will be extended to callers seeking jobs, and the petitioners will be informed of the status of their petition via SMS.
- ✓ The CM, chief secretary, secretaries and heads of all departments and respective district collectors will review action taken on petitions within a stipulated period.
- ✓ Currently, government departments have separate grievance redressal mechanisms such as centres and web portals.
- ✓ The district collectorates hold grievance redressal meetings every week and exclusive meetings are organised for farmers, fishermen and pensioners.
- ✓ The helpline scheme was originally launched by J Jayalalithaa in 2016

➤ **On February 13, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched the crop loan waiver scheme at the Secretariat in Chennai.**

- ✓ The CM had made an announcement on the floor of the assembly recently that the outstanding crop loans of ₹12,110 crore availed by farmers in cooperative banks would be waived.
- ✓ As a token gesture, the CM gave away the certificates of loan waiver to nine farmers.
- ✓ The cooperatives, food and consumer protection department issued an order on February 8, waiving loans of 16,43,347 farmers.
- ✓ As per the G.O., all outstanding loans as on January 31, 2021, qualify for the scheme.



- ✓ The representatives of Tamil Nadu Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association, the Coordination Committee of Tamil Nadu All Farmers' Associations, Cauvery Delta Farmers' Association, Coleroon, Lower Anicut Irrigation Farmers' Association and Tamil Nadu Farmers' Welfare Association thanked the CM.
  - ✓ The Government's announcement comes against the backdrop of back-to-back disasters such as cyclones Nivar and Burevi and unseasonal rains in January wreaking havoc in the state.
  - ✓ As per the government estimate, 2.96 lakh hectares suffered damage in cyclones, while the January rains damaged 6.81 lakh hectares, hitting the southern and coastal districts badly.
  - ✓ The government has been crediting assistance of ₹1,717 crore to 16.43 lakh farmers as damages, said the CM justifying the loan waiver.
- **On February 13, Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched the seventh phase of excavations at the Keeladi site in Sivaganga district.**
- ✓ Keeladi's neighbouring villages Konthagai, Manalur and Agaram are also included in this phase of excavation.
  - ✓ Director of excavation R Sivanantham, Sivaganga district collector P Madhusudhan Reddy, archaeological officials and research students were at the site when the Chief Minister launched work through video conferencing.

The first round of Archaeological Survey of India's excavation took place between March and September 2015 at Keezhadi in Sivaganga district.



A section of Archaeological Survey of India's excavation site at Keezhadi. PHOTO: G. MOORTHY

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They included pearl and glass beads, dice, semi-precious stone beads, stylus, shell bangle, terracotta figurines, copper coins and implements and burnt brick structures.</li> </ul>
Number of trenches: 43	Antiquities found: 1,800	

- ✓ The ASI conducted the first three phases of excavation --2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, respectively.
- **On February 13, Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - laid the foundation for the construction of four check dams across the river Tamiraparani in Tuticorin district, via video conferencing.**
- ✓ The check dams to be constructed at ₹71.28 crore were announced by the CM in the assembly on March 18, 2020
- ✓ They were built up to reduce the quantum of surplus water draining into the sea so that it would benefit people in the dry region throughout the year.
- ✓ At Alwarthirunagari, a 440m-long check dam connecting Alwarthoppu will be constructed at ₹25.14 crore.
- ✓ Three tail-end check dams with a total length of 717m will be built at Mukkani (172m), Punnaikayal (383m) and Sernthamangalam (162m) villages at ₹46.14 crore.
- ✓ The CM also laid the foundation stone for renovation work on the shutters at the Mayanur barrage that feeds Kattalai channel.
- ✓ The ₹185 crore projects include repairs on the shutters and strengthening of the retaining walls.
- ✓ The 250-long barrage was inaugurated in 2014 but some parts of the barrage was damaged in 2018.
- ✓ Also, the CM inaugurated modernization works on the 18-channel scheme in Theni district.
- ✓ The state had passed a government order for the project at an outlay of ₹59.1 crore in Uthamapalayam block in Theni district on January 22

➤ **A bill to modify the list of Scheduled Castes in Tamil Nadu - was introduced in Lok Sabha on February 13.**

- ✓ The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was introduced by Union minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Krishan Pal Gurjar in the lower house
- ✓ The Bill seeks to group seven Scheduled Caste communities in certain districts of Tamil Nadu under 'Devendrakula Velalars'.
- ✓ At present, these seven castes exist as separate entries in the list of the Scheduled Castes
- ✓ Any change in the lists of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes requires a constitutional amendment.
- ✓ The Bill may likely be taken up for consideration and passage in the second part of the Budget session, which will begin on March 8.
- ✓ The Registrar General of India has conveyed concurrence to the proposed modifications.
- ✓ Last December, the State CM Edappadi K Palaniswami announced that he would urge the Centre to group the seven communities as 'Devendrakula Velalars', accepting the recommendation of the Hansraj Varma Committee, which was established by the government.

## NATIONAL

➤ **The central government - approved ₹3,113.05 crore additional assistance to five states and Union territories (UTs) which were affected by natural disasters last year**

- ✓ This was announced by the ministry of home affairs (MHA) on February 13
- ✓ The grant is being provided to Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Puducherry, which were affected by floods, cyclones (Nivar and Burevi) and pest attack.
- ✓ Of the total assistance, Madhya Pradesh received the maximum of ₹1,280.18 crore for pest-attack during Kharif season, 2020
- ✓ It was followed by Bihar, which got ₹1,255.27 crore, while Andhra Pradesh has been allocated ₹280.78 crore
- ✓ Both these states have received the assistance for the floods that hit the states during the Southwest Monsoon last year.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu has been sanctioned ₹63.14 crore for cyclone Nivar and ₹223.77 crore for cyclone Burevi, taking the total amount to ₹286.91 crore.
- ✓ The Union territory of Puducherry shall receive ₹9.91 crore for Cyclone Nivar

➤ **Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari – released a report, 'Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities: The Burden on Indian Society' on February 13**



- ✓ The report was based on a study done by the World Bank and SaveLIFE Foundation, an NGO that works for road safety.
  - ✓ During the event, the Minister asked the States to follow the Tamil Nadu model of road safety, which managed to reduce road accidents by 38% and deaths by 54%, with the support of the World Bank
  - ✓ The data for the study was collected from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, which account for 35% of the total fatalities in India.
  - ✓ According to the study, more than 59% of low-income households and 47.6% of high-income households faced a decline in the total household income following road accidents.
  - ✓ Tamil Nadu registered 57,228 road crashes and 1,05,252 road crash deaths in 2019 alone, making it the State with the sixth highest road crash deaths that year.
  - ✓ Earlier, in 2018, Tamil Nadu was ranked at number one in terms of road accidents
  - ✓ In India, cost per seriously injured person comes at Rs 3.64 lakh while cost per minor injured person stands at Rs 77, 938 and the cost per death is estimated at Rs 91.16 lakh
  - ✓ Around 70% of deaths are in the working-age group of 18 to 45 years old while India accounts for 415 deaths per day in road accidents.
  - ✓ India accounts for the highest number of road accidents globally
  - ✓ Every year, 1.5 lakh people being killed and more than 4.5 lakh crippled in 4.5 lakh road accidents with losses amounting to 3.14% of the GDP.
  - ✓ The World Bank report comes even as the country is observing an extended first-ever “Road Safety Month” currently to build awareness of road safety.
- **The Insurance sector regulator, Insurance Regulatory Authority of India (IRDAI) - has asked all the Insurance companies to issue digital insurance policies using the government’s Digilocker app.**
- ✓ Besides ensuring the safe preservation of the policy documents, the app will reduce the disputes and fraud.
  - ✓ Using this app, claims processing and settlement of the policies will be faster
  - ✓ The necessary technical guidance and logistic support to facilitate the adoption of Digi locker will be provided by the Digilocker team in National e-Governance Division (NeGD) under MeITY.

- ✓ The Digilocker Initiative, launched under the Digital India program, is run by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY).
- **The second phase of Vigyan Jyoti programme – has commenced on February 11 on the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science.**
- ✓ The Vigyan Jyoti Programme will encourage the girls to take interest in science and build a career in STEM.
- ✓ The programme would be expanded to 50 more districts in addition to the 50 more districts currently under the programme across India.
- ✓ It was launched by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) in December 2019.
- ✓ The programme is currently running successfully in 50 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV).
- ✓ The programme targets the girls at school level of Class IX to Class XII in order to encourage and empower them to pursue STEM courses.
- **The National e-governance plan in agriculture (NeGPA) – was recently extended upto March 31, 2021**
- ✓ It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, which was launched in the year 2010-11 in 7 States
- ✓ The scheme was launched with the aim of achieving the rapid development in India by using Information & Communication Technology (ICT).
- ✓ It helps in timely access of the agriculture related information to the farmers.
- ✓ In the year 2014-15, scheme was extended to cover all the remaining States and 2 UTs.
- ✓ Under the second phase, funds were released to carry out the software/ hardware related activities and to set-up the State Project Management Unit (SPMUs) alongwith hiring manpower on contractual basis
- ✓ The NeGPA guidelines were amended in 2020-2021 in order to infuse the modern information technologies in the farm sector.
- ✓ Further, the initiative such as Unified Farmers Service Platform (UFSP) was launched to facilitate seamless interoperability of various public and private IT systems in the agriculture domain.
- ✓ The agency acts as a central hub in the agri ecosystem and enables the registration of service providers.

## **CONFERENCES, FESTIVALS & SUMMITS**

- **The Union Culture Ministry's flagship festival, the Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav (RSM) - will be held in West Bengal this year**



- ✓ The inauguration of the festival is scheduled to be held at Cooch Behar Palace on February 14
- ✓ The festival will enhance mutual understanding and bonding between people of diverse cultures, thereby securing stronger unity and integrity of India, as per the statement by the Ministry
- ✓ Renowned artistes, including local artistes, would participate in the festival of folk art forms
- ✓ The 10th edition of the festival was held in Madhya Pradesh in October 2019.

## PERSONALITIES

- **An Indian-origin employee at the UN, Arora Akanksha - has announced her candidacy to be its next Secretary-General**

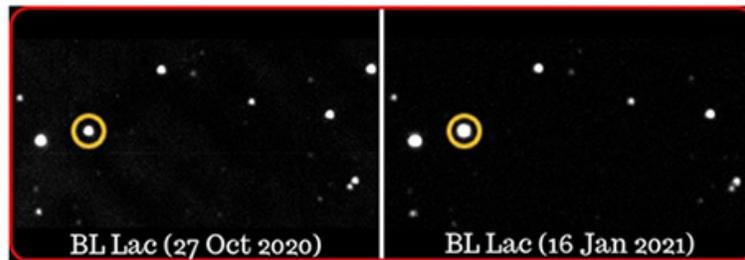


- ✓ With the announcement, Akanksha becomes the first person to compete against incumbent Antonio Guterres
- ✓ Guterres is seeking a second five-year term beginning January 2022 as chief of the United Nations.
- ✓ 34-year old Akanksha is working as an audit coordinator for the UN Development Programme
- ✓ She had launched her campaign this month.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Indian Astronomers - have identified a strongest optical flare in one of the oldest astronomical objects namely BL Lacertae, which is a supermassive black hole or blazar**

- ✓ The analysis of the source and nature of the optical flare will help in tracing the mass of the black hole and the evolution of Universe



*The luminosity of BL Lac observed on 27 October 2020 (left panel of figure) was around  $2.95 \times 10^{12} L_{\odot}$  and after 80 days, i.e., 16 January 2021 (right panel of figure) was  $\sim 7.25 \times 10^{12} L_{\odot}$ , i.e.,  $\sim 250\%$  increase in the luminosity which is equivalent to more than 4 trillion  $L_{\odot}$  (here  $L_{\odot}$  = luminosity of the Sun).*

- ✓ Blazars are the feeding supermassive black holes situated in the heart of distant galaxies.
- ✓ They emit jets of charged particles, which travel equally at the speed of light.
- ✓ The BL Lacertae blazer is situated 10 million light-years away from the Earth.
- ✓ It is one among the 50 most prominent blazars that can be seen with small telescope.
- ✓ This blazar was predicted to be experiencing flares with the help of the Whole Earth Blazar Telescope (WEBT).

## AWARDS

- **Four women scientists from the National Science Academies - have been chosen for the SERB Women Excellence Award in recognition of achievement in the field of science and engineering.**
- ✓ The award was announced on the eve of International Day of Women and Girls in Science, 2021.
- ✓ The selected fellows will get a grant of Rs. 15 lakh for pursuing research in the field of science and engineering
- ✓ The four women scientists who were selected for the awards include -
  - ✓ Shobhna Kapoor, Assistant Professor at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.
  - ✓ Antara Banerjee, Scientist in B National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health, Mumbai.
  - ✓ Sonu Gandhi, Scientist D from the National Institute of Animal Biotechnology, Hyderabad.
  - ✓ Ritu Gupta, Assistant Professor in the Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur, Rajasthan.
- ✓ The SERB Women Excellence Award is given by the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) from the year 2013
- ✓ It is given to support the basic research in the frontier areas of science and engineering.

- ✓ It is a one-time award and is given to women scientists who are below 40 years of age.
- ✓ The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) is a statutory body working under the Department of Science and Technology.
- ✓ It was established to promote the basic research in science and engineering in 2009 by the SERB ACT, 2008.
- ✓ The agency also provides financial assistance to scientists, academic institutions, R&D laboratories etc for doing the research.
- ✓ It is chaired by the Secretary of the Government of India in the Department of Science and Technology.

## SPORTS

- **On February 13, Priyanka Goswami of Uttar Pradesh – created a new national record in the 20-km walk at the 8th open national and 4th international race walking championship in Ranchi**



- ✓ The 25-year old Priyanka broke Bhawna Jat's record set at the same event last year.
- ✓ With the win, Priyanka bagged a place for the 2022 Tokyo Olympics and World Athletics Championship in Oregon.
- ✓ After joining the Railways in March 2018 through sports quota, Priyanka won two silver medals at national level in 2017-2018.
- ✓ She also bagged gold in the all-India railway competition (2018) and has participated in World Walk Championship in Italy (Rome) and in Asian Walk Championship Japan.
- ✓ Priyanka is currently being trained by two-time Olympian Gurmeet Singh.
- ✓ She is posted as clerk in the personnel department of Izzatnagar railway division of NER in Bareilly.

