

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 18, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- On February 17, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - laid the foundation for the Cauvery basin refinery in Nagapattinam through videoconferencing.



- ✓ The PM also dedicated Indian Oil Corporation's 143-km-long natural gas pipeline from Ramanathapuram to Tuticorin to the nation
- ✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami participated in the event through videoconferencing.
- ✓ The ₹31,580 crore refinery project was being set up by Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) on the premises of an existing refinery in Panangudi village
- ✓ It will have an annual refining capacity of nine million tonnes and was completed at a cost of ₹700 crore
- ✓ The pipeline project will transport natural gas from ONGC gas fields in Ramanathapuram as feedstock to petrochemical and fertilizer industries in Tuticorin.
- ✓ It has a capacity of 8 million metric standard cubic metres a day

- ✓ The pipeline is part of the mega natural gas pipeline project being implemented in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Puducherry.
 - ✓ The 1,445-km-long natural gas pipeline will connect Ennore - Thiruvallur - Bengaluru - Puducherry - Nagapattinam - Madurai-Tuticorin
 - ✓ It is being established to evacuate gas from the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import terminal at Kamarajar port in Thiruvallur district that has a capacity of 5 million metric tonnes per annum.
 - ✓ The Ramanathapuram - Tuticorin pipeline will be connected to Ennore LNG terminal to meet the increased demand in the southern part of the country.
 - ✓ It will also supply environment friendly piped natural gas to households in the form of CNG.
 - ✓ The proposed refinery at Nagapattinam will produce petrol, diesel, and polypropylene.
 - ✓ The project would provide direct employment to 600 people and indirect employment to 1,000 people
- **P. Dhanasekaran and M. Sreedhar - have been appointed as State Information Commissioners in the Tamil Nadu Information Commission.**
- ✓ They will replace R. Dhakshinamurthy and G. Murugan, who have ceased to hold the posts.
 - ✓ Dhanasekaran and Sreedhar will hold office for a term of three years from the date on which they assume office or the date on which they attain 65 years of age, whichever is earlier.

NATIONAL

- **The government - approved a mega ₹12,195 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for telecom gear manufacturing over a period of five years**
- ✓ The decision is aimed towards strengthening the local manufacturing drive and make India a global hub for manufacturing telecom equipment
 - ✓ The scheme is expected to lead to an incremental production of about ₹2.4 lakh crore, with exports of about ₹2 lakh crore and bring in investments of more than ₹3,000 crore.
 - ✓ The decision was approved by the Union Cabinet on February 17
 - ✓ The scheme will be operational from April 1, 2021
 - ✓ It was also likely to generate 40,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities and generate tax revenue of ₹17,000 crore from telecom equipment manufacturing
 - ✓ The scheme will cover the manufacturing of core transmission equipment, 4G/5G Next Generation Radio Access Network and wireless equipment, access and Customer Premises Equipment (CPE), Internet of Things (IoT) access devices, other wireless equipment and enterprise equipment such as switches and routers.

- ✓ The core 'component' of this scheme is to offset the import of telecom equipment worth more than ₹50,000 crore.
- ✓ For inclusion of MSMEs in the scheme, the minimum investment threshold has been kept at ₹10 crore, while for others it is ₹100 crore.
- ✓ For MSMEs, a 1% higher incentive is also proposed in the first three years.
- ✓ The details of the scheme were informed by Telecom & IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

➤ **On February 17, the Cabinet - approved signing of a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius**

- ✓ This is India's first such trade agreement with any African country.
- ✓ The agreement aims to promote trade of goods and movement of individuals between the two countries as well as telecom and financial services.
- ✓ It is a kind of a free trade agreement between India and Mauritius, liberalizing the norms to boost the bilateral trade
- ✓ Mauritius is a key ally of India with which it shares a long relationship.
- ✓ The agreement, to be signed shortly, covers 310 export items for India
- ✓ It includes food stuff and beverages (80 tariff lines), agricultural products (25 lines), textile and textile articles (27 lines), base metals and articles thereof (32 lines), electricals and electronic item (13 lines), plastics and chemicals (20 lines), wood and articles thereof (15 lines), and others.
- ✓ Mauritius will benefit from preferential market access into India for its 615 products
- ✓ These products include frozen fish, speciality sugar, biscuits, fresh fruits, juices, mineral water, beer, alcoholic drinks, soaps, bags, medical and surgical equipment, and apparel.
- ✓ In case of services, Indian service providers will have access to around 115 sub-sectors from 11 broad service sectors
- ✓ The service sectors include professional services, computer related services, research & development, other business services, telecommunication, construction, distribution, education, environmental, financial, tourism & travel related, recreational, yoga, audio-visual services, and transport services
- ✓ Under the agreement, both the countries have agreed to cut or eliminate the duties on the products and liberalize the norms to promote the services trade.

➤ **On February 17, the Union Cabinet - approved amendments to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**

- ✓ The latest amendments give district magistrates the power to issue adoption orders and monitor functioning of various agencies responsible for implementation of the Act.
- ✓ The divisional commissioner will have the power to decide appeals with regard to adoption cases.

- ✓ This will enable “speedy disposal of adoption cases and enhance accountability”, according to the Government
 - ✓ Currently adoption orders are issued by the district courts.
 - ✓ The proposed amendments categorise previously undefined offences as ‘serious offence’ where the sentence is more than seven years but no minimum sentence is prescribed or a minimum sentence of less than seven years is provided.
 - ✓ At present, the Act has three categories of petty, serious and heinous crimes.
 - ✓ It is also proposed to expand the definition of “Child In Need of Care and Protection” (CNCP) to include victims of trafficking, drug abuse, abandonment by guardians and those rescued from child labour under the National Child Labour Project.
 - ✓ It is also proposed to bring the district child protection units under the jurisdiction of the DM.
 - ✓ Besides, Child Care Institutions will be approved for registration only after a report with recommendations is sent to the authorities by the district magistrate.
 - ✓ Also Child Welfare Committee members will be appointed after a background and educational qualification check.
- **On February 17, the Union cabinet - approved enhanced delegation of financial powers under capital procurement to levels below the vice chiefs of Army, Navy and IAF**
- ✓ The decision is aimed at faster processing and implementation of military modernisation projects.
 - ✓ Accordingly, financial powers of up to ₹100 crore have been delegated to commanders-in-chief of the different commands in the three Services and the regional commanders of the Coast Guard.
 - ✓ The financial powers up to ₹200 crore have been delegated to the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, the Master General Sustainment (Army), the Chief of Material (Navy), the Air Officer Maintenance (IAF), the Deputy Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff and the Additional Director General, Coast Guard.
 - ✓ This delegation of powers will be for items of capital nature such as overhaul and refit of tanks, helicopters and aircraft, replacement of critical arms, ammunition and weapons, and creation of security infrastructure.
- **On February 17, India – announced a gift of 2 lakh doses of Covid vaccine doses for UN peacekeeping forces**
- ✓ This was announced by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar while speaking at the UNSC open debate on ensuring equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines in countries affected by conflict and insecurity
 - ✓ The debate was attended by the Foreign Ministers of the UNSC member countries.
 - ✓ The foreign minister laid out nine “solutions” to five “concerns” regarding the global accessibility to vaccines.

- ✓ Canada is the only G-7 country to demand its share of doses from the Covax facility.
 - ✓ China had supplied vaccines to 22 countries, as per its foreign minister.
 - ✓ India told the UN Security Council that 25 countries have already received India-made vaccines under its Vaccine Maitri programme.
 - ✓ Another 49 countries in Europe, Latin America, Caribbean, Africa Southeast Asia and Pacific islands will be supplied in the coming days.
 - ✓ Currently there are three variants of concern — the UK/Kent variant, South Africa and Brazil/Manaus variants.
 - ✓ India joined other countries to strengthen the COVAX facility, prevent disinformation campaigns and prepare for the next global pandemic.
 - ✓ COVAX is a global initiative to develop, purchase and deliver vaccines worldwide
 - ✓ Until February 9, India had supplied 62.7 lakh of a total of 167.7 lakh of its vaccines as gifts, the remainder being sent on commercial terms
- **The Mathura district jail - has started preparations to hang a woman for the first time in independent India.**



- ✓ 38-year old Shabnam Ali was convicted of killing seven members of her family when she was 25 years old
- ✓ Over the next 11 years, Shabnam went to the Allahabad high court, the Supreme Court, the President and then the Supreme Court (SC) again.
- ✓ In January last year, her review petition was dismissed by the SC.
- ✓ The Mathura district jail is the only jail in the country where women can be hanged
- ✓ Built 150 years ago, the gallows has never been used in independent India.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Pakistan - is unlikely to exit the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) 'grey' list until June**
- ✓ The global terror financing and money laundering watchdog, FATF's Plenary and Working Group meetings is scheduled to be held from February 21 to 26 in Paris
 - ✓ The meeting is all set to decide on Pakistan's grey list status.
 - ✓ Pakistan was placed on the 'grey' list in June 2018 and given a timeline to implement 27 action points.

- **On February 17, Britain - became the first country in the world to approve 'human challenge trials' in which volunteers will be deliberately exposed to Covid-19 to advance research.**
- ✓ The trial will see up to 90 healthy volunteers aged between 18 and 30 exposed to the smallest amount of the virus needed to cause infection.
- ✓ Volunteers will be screened for possible health risks, and kept in quarantine for close monitoring for at least 14 days in a specialist unit at London's Royal Free Hospital.
- ✓ Imperial College London is co-leading the project with the UK government's vaccines task force and the clinical firm hVIVO.
- ✓ Volunteers will get compensation of around £88 per day for the duration of the study
- ✓ The study, due to start within a month, will also involve follow-up monitoring for a year
- ✓ To make the trial safe, the version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus circulating in England since March 2020 will be used, rather than a new variants
- ✓ Scientists have used human challenge trials for decades to learn more about diseases such as malaria, flu, typhoid and cholera, and to develop treatments.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **Sri Lanka - will re-acquire 99 World War II-era oil storage tanks leased to Indian Oil Corporation in the eastern port district of Trincomalee**
- ✓ In 2003, Sri Lanka leased out the oil tank farm to India, for the upgradation and commissioning of 99 tanks in it for a 35-year period.
- ✓ However, the project did not proceed further inspite of renewed discussions during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Sri Lanka in 2015 and a "roadmap" finalised in 2017
- ✓ It is the second deal with India to be scrapped by Sri Lanka this year.
- ✓ Last month, the Sri Lankan government scrapped the trilateral deal with India and Japan to develop the Colombo Port's Eastern Container Terminal (ECT).
- ✓ The harbour in Trincomalee is considered one of the finest deep-sea, natural harbours, in a strategically coveted spot, on Sri Lanka's north-eastern coast.
- ✓ It was developed by the British during World War II.
- ✓ The storage tanks will have the capacity to offer bunkering facilities to the ships sailing in close proximity to Trincomalee

PERSONALITIES

- **Rashmi Samant – has announced that she has quit as the president of the Oxford University Students' Union on February 16**



- ✓ Rashmi became the first Indian woman to be elected president of the Oxford University Students' Union
- ✓ She has stepped down following accusations of making “racist” and “insensitive” remarks online and on other forums in the past, including a reference to the Holocaust.
- ✓ She is also accused of offending transwomen in another post.
- ✓ Rashmi has since deactivated all her social media accounts.
- ✓ Rashmi, who studied in Manipal and Udupi and graduated from Manipal Institute of Technology, is a student of MSc in energy systems at Linacre College, Oxford University.

AWARDS

- **S. Chinny Krishna, the co-founder of Blue Cross of India - has been conferred with the ‘Prani Mitra’ award for 2021 by the Animal Welfare Board of India for his lifetime service to animals.**



- ✓ Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Giriraj Singh presented the award to Krishna in New Delhi on February 16.
- ✓ ‘Prani Mitra’ is the country’s highest award for animal welfare.
- ✓ Interestingly, Krishna’s father V. Sundaram received the award for the year 1997

OBITUARY

- **Captain Satish Sharma, veteran Congress leader – passed away in Goa following an illness**



- ✓ Sharma, 74, was a former union minister and a former member of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha both.
- ✓ Known as Rajiv Gandhi's friend and a Gandhi family loyalist, Sharma was once a strong power centre in the grand old party by virtue of his proximity to the first family.
- ✓ After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, Sharma contested the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh and became the minister for petroleum (1993-1996) in the P.V. Narasimha Rao government
- ✓ His tenure later came under scrutiny for allotment of petrol pumps as part of political patronage.
- ✓ Later, he had shifted to Rae Bareilly before Congress President Sonia Gandhi started contesting from the seat since 2004.
- ✓ Capt. Sharma, a former airline pilot, was also given a Rajya Sabha berth by the Congress before he left the active politics

RANKINGS

- **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh - remained the top three states with the highest employable talent, according to the India Skills Report 2021.**
- ✓ Karnataka takes the fourth spot followed by Andhra Pradesh at the fifth position
- ✓ Bangalore is among the most preferred cities to work for aspiring professionals.
- ✓ Delhi, Telangana, Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal completes the Top 10 states with employable talent
- ✓ Haryana could not make it to this list again, despite the massive push from numerous skill development measures.
- ✓ The report was prepared by Wheebox in partnership with Taggd, CII, AICTE, AIU and UNDP
- ✓ As per the report, 45.9% of the youth were considered highly employable resources.
- ✓ This is far less than the previous years, indicating a skill gap in education
- ✓ The average age of India is 26.8 years old.
- ✓ Among the employable talent, more women were found employable than men.
- ✓ 41.25% of women were found employable while only 38.91% of male employable resources were identified.

- ✓ In fact, the number of women enrolled in colleges and degree programs have increased over the past, as per the report.
- ✓ Among all aspiring professionals, B.Tech holders and MBA graduates were considered the most employable resources domain wise.
- ✓ The report is based on the assessment of 65,000 candidates from across the country who appeared for the employability test and 150 companies across 15 industries who participated in the India hiring intent survey.
- ✓ Kerala, acclaimed for its high literacy rate, did not make it to the list of top 10 states in terms of employability, despite having a huge population of employable resources.
- ✓ The state shows up only among the states with highest access to numericals and English language education, along with Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal.
- ✓ However, Kerala has the highest employability for ages 26-29 who are lacking in job opportunities for aspiring professionals.
- ✓ Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pune and Delhi continue to serve as the preferred destinations for employment, considering the opportunities available in these cities
- ✓ Hyderabad and Bengaluru topped the list with most employable talent.