

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY
24, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister O Panneerselvam - presented the state interim budget for the year 2021-22 at Chennai's Kalaivanar Arangam on February 23, 2021**



- ✓ This was the 11th budget speech for the Deputy Chief Minister under the AIADMK government.
- ✓ As per the budget estimates, the state's fiscal deficit is expected to be 4.99% and the state's economic growth is pegged at 2.02%,
- ✓ The state debt, which is currently at Rs, 4.85 lakh crore, is set to increase to Rs. 5.7 lakh crore in 2021-22
- ✓ The total revenue receipts has been projected with a 17.64% fall at Rs 1,80,700.62 crore
- ✓ Revenue deficit went up to ₹65,944 crore in the current year and will remain at ₹41,417 crore in the coming year.
- ✓ A total of Rs. 13,352 crore had been spent by the state government on COVID-19 relief operations in the state, as stated by the Finance Minister

Key features of Interim Budget 2021-22

A look at some of the major announcements made by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister D. Pannierselvam during his Interim Budget speech:

Revised estimates for 2020-21



• Total revenue expenditure in 2020-21 estimated at **₹2,46,694.69 crore**



• State's Own Tax Revenue expected to fall by about 18% to **₹1,09,968.97 crore**

• Total revenue receipts expected to fall by around 18% to **₹1,80,700.62 crore**

• Revenue deficit to widen to **₹65,994.06 crore** in 2020-21 from **₹21,617.64 crore**

• Fiscal deficit expected to widen to **₹96,889.97 crore**



Total expenditure of ₹13,352.85 crore incurred for tackling COVID-19

• Tamil Nadu's Gross State Domestic Product expected to grow by **2.02%** in 2020-21 at constant prices

• Agriculture grew by **5.23%**

• Double-digit GDP growth expected in 2021-22

• Overall outstanding debt estimated to be **₹4,85,502.54 crore** as on March 31, 2021, and **₹5,70,189.29 crore** as on March 2022



₹5,000 crore provided for the crop loan waiver scheme



Computer science to be taught as a separate subject to students of Classes 6 to 10 at all government high and higher secondary schools



Allocation of **₹19,420.54 crore** for the Health and Family Welfare Department



A detailed feasibility report for establishing Metro Rail in Coimbatore at a cost of **₹6,683 crore** has been prepared and is under examination

Highlights of the interim budget 2021-22

Puratchi Thalaivi Amma Comprehensive Accident-cum-Life Insurance scheme

- ✓ The finance minister unveiled the Puratchi Thalaivi Amma Comprehensive Accident-cum-Life Insurance scheme during the interim budget
- ✓ It will be launched in association with LIC and United India Insurance Company to benefit 55.67 lakh families living below the poverty line
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women carried out the task of identification of beneficiaries.
- ✓ Beneficiaries of life cover will be in the 18-50 age group and those under accident cover in the 18-70 group.
- ✓ The extension of the policy under life cover can be done up to the age of 55 years.
- ✓ Around 32.51 lakh beneficiaries in rural areas and 23.15 lakh in urban areas will be brought under the government's accident-cum-life insurance cover
- ✓ The State government will fully bear the burden of annual premium payment, which will be ₹330 for life cover and ₹12 for accident cover per beneficiary.
- ✓ As per the order issued by the Revenue and Disaster Management Department, approximately ₹114 crore would be required annually for the scheme

- ✓ The scheme has been formulated on the lines of the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana of the Central government

Financial aspects of the budget

- ✓ The government has also allotted ₹5,000 crore for ₹12,110.74-crore crop loan waiver scheme
- ✓ The overall coverage under the Tamil Nadu Government Employees' Health Insurance Scheme would be extended from ₹4 lakh to ₹5 lakh with enhanced benefits.
- ✓ The scheme is coming to an end in June 2021.
- ✓ Subsidies and transfers will remain elevated at ₹1,01,180 crore next fiscal as against ₹1,11,229 crore in the pandemic year.

A SHOT FOR ALL, BUT NOT ENOUGH

Shinod Akkararambil

- ₹5,000 crore for crop loan waiver scheme
- ₹816.8 crore for restoring Pallikaranai marshland
- ₹3,410 crore for 12,000 new buses including 2000 electric buses
- Assistance to establish Tamil Chair in Canada Toronto University
- Health insurance for govt staff to be hiked to ₹5 lakh
- Accident-cum-life cover up to 4 lakh for 56.67 lakh BPL families
- Computer science subject for Classes 6 to 10 in govt schools

THE ROAD AHEAD

PHOTO: B. A. RAJU

CAPTAIN & DEPUTY: Chief minister Edappadi Palaniswami with finance minister O Panneerselvam before the interim budget

Allocation (₹ cr)	Department/Program
22,219	Rural development
19,421	Health and family welfare department
18,751	Highways
9,568	Police
6,453	Water resources
5,142	Urban local bodies
6,754	Rural local bodies
5,478	Higher education
4,316	Social security schemes
3,548	PMAY (Gramin) scheme
3,700	PMAY (Urban) scheme
2,350	Smart Cities Mission
1,450	AMRUT
7,217	Provision to fund losses incurred by Tangedco
2,634	Integrated Child Development Services
1,954	Noon meal scheme for school children
1,932	Post matric scholarship programme for Adi Dravidar and tribal welfare
300	TIIC to strengthen and expand its role

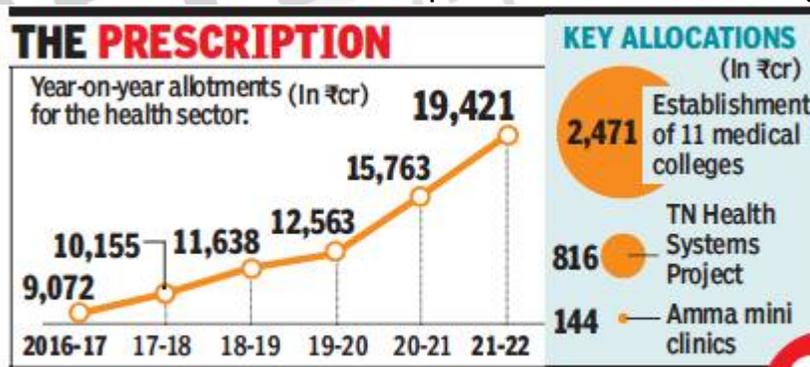
ALLOCATIONS IN INTERIM BUDGET (In ₹cr)

- ✓ The brighter side of the state was the 5.23% growth of the primary sector, followed by secondary sector at 1.25% and services by 1.64%.
- ✓ The state's own tax revenues declined sharply by 17.64% to 1.10 lakh crore, as against the anticipated ₹1.33 lakh crore in the budget estimates for 2020-21

- ✓ Tamil Nadu's share of central taxes was also reduced to ₹23,039.46 crore in the Union Budget (revised estimates for 2020-21) from ₹32,849.34 crore in the Budget estimates for 2020-21.
- ✓ The state's overall debt outstanding is estimated to be ₹5.7 lakh crore by March 31, 2022.

Health

- ✓ Allocation for the health department went up by nearly 22% to ₹19,420.5 crore in the interim budget estimates of 2021-22 compared to ₹15,863.4 crore in the estimates of 2020-21.
- ✓ This is lower than the 25% increase in the previous budget when allocation went up from ₹12,563 crore in 2019-20.
- ✓ The state has allocated Rs. 144 crore for the Amma mini clinics in rural and urban areas
 - ✓ These clinics will function between 9am and 11am and between 4pm and 7pm with one doctor, a nurse and a health worker.
 - ✓ They will offer treatment for minor ailments such as seasonal fevers, do blood tests for early diagnosis of communicable and non-communicable diseases
 - ✓ They refer patients to primary health centres, taluk/district hospital or medical college hospital in case they need specialized care.
 - ✓ These clinics are set up to prevent crowding at secondary and tertiary care facilities”
- ✓ The government has announced to set up 11 new medical colleges in 2021



- ✓ The interim budget has allotted ₹2,470.9 crore for establishment of the new medical colleges.
- ✓ An addition of ₹291.5 crore has been made to better the quality of care at government hospitals
- ✓ This covers the management of 65 non-communicable diseases and to reduce inequities in reproductive and child health services under the Tamil Nadu Health System Reforms Project.

Education

- ✓ The government will offer computer science education to students from Class VI in all government high and higher secondary schools

NEW LESSONS

THE PLAN

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education to be integrated with science curriculum for Classes VI to X
- Science teachers likely to be trained in ICT
- Hi-tech labs established in 6,029 government schools at ₹520 crore

WHAT WILL STUDENTS LEARN?

- Basic operations of computers, MS Office, programming languages such as C and fundamentals of Python programme and problem solving skills
- At present, students are studying these as a separate subject in Classes XI and XII

ALLOCATION

₹34,181cr for school education

₹5,478cr for higher education



- ✓ Computer science is so far being taught as a separate subject only in Classes XI and XII with focus on C++, Python, HTML, JAVA and problem solving skills.
- ✓ Other boards usually introduce Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education in Class III.
- ✓ The school education department was allotted ₹34,181 crore and the higher education department ₹5,478 crore in the interim budget.
- ✓ The government has spent ₹520 crore to establish hi-tech labs at 6,029 government schools.

Transport

- ✓ Tamil Nadu's bus fleet is set to expand by 40% in the next five years with the government announcing procurement of 12,000 new vehicles.

SHIFTING GEARS

NEW BUSES | Buses which transport corporations in TN may get over five years:

Diesel buses 10,000

Electric buses 2,000

FIRST PHASE (2021) 2,200 buses | 500 electric buses for Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore

Cost Allocation
₹1,580cr ₹623cr



- ✓ The government sanctioned ₹623 crore for the first phase of the project, which will involve buying 2,200 diesel buses and 500 electric buses.
- ✓ A majority of the e- buses will be for MTC, Chennai, and the rest will be deployed in Madurai and Coimbatore cities
- ✓ The entire first phase will cost ₹1,580 crore and German Bank (KfW) has agreed to provide financial assistance of up to 203 million Euros.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu was the first Indian state to sign Global C40 Clean Bus Declaration to KfW funding and all new diesel buses will have BSVI type engines, which cause lesser air pollution.

Agriculture

- ✓ The 2021-22 interim budget of the government has given top priority to the farm and irrigation sectors.
- ✓ The government has increased the outlay for the agricultural sector to around ₹12,000 crore and the capital outlay for major, medium and minor irrigation works to ₹6,453 crore in the interim budget
- ✓ The government has taken up several irrigation infrastructure projects in the Cauvery, Tamiraparani and other river basins and has fixed tight deadlines for their completion in the next two years.
 - ✓ Athikadavu-Avinashi flood canal scheme, costing ₹1,652 crore is scheduled to be completed in December this year.
 - ✓ Diversion of flood surplus water from Mettur dam to dry tanks in the Sarabanga basin is under implementation and would be completed shortly.
 - ✓ Tamiraparani, Karumeniyar and Nambiyar linking project will be completed by March next year and it would benefit arid regions of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts.
- ✓ The capital major irrigation, outlay for medium irrigation and minor irrigation was stepped up from ₹4,882 crore in the budget estimates of 2020-21 to ₹6,389 crore in the revised estimates for 2020-21.
- ✓ From ₹812 crore last year, the government has increased the premium subsidy allocation to ₹1,738 crore for providing crop insurance in the state in the interim budget.

Chennai city partnership

- ✓ The ambitious Chennai city partnership programme got official nod in deputy chief minister's budget speech.

WHAT CITY GETS	Projects likely to be funded under Chennai city partnership
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">> ₹2,000cr mega streets project> Integration of various modes of transport such as Chennai metro rail, MTC, suburban and outstation rail network through Chennai Unified Metropolitan	<p>Transport Authority (CUMTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> A road safety cell that devises policy level initiatives to bring down road fatalities in the city> A gender lab which will look at improving safety, security and women-centric infrastructure in the city> Better housing infrastructure for low income groups

- ✓ The first phase of this project will be implemented with an outlay of ₹3,140 crore, of which World Bank will provide ₹2,175 crore (US\$300 million).
- ✓ The project aims to achieve better coordination among Chennai's service agencies such as Greater Chennai Corporation, Chennai Metrowater Supply and Sewerage Board, TN Slum Clearance Board, Metropolitan Transport Corporation and the state highways department in providing better service and also push them towards greater self-sustenance.

- ✓ Among key areas of focus under the project will be women's safety in public places, solid waste management, public health and improving the city's resilience to disasters such as floods.
- ✓ In the first phase, the focus will be on strengthening governance, policies and institutions.
- ✓ The programme will be implemented in three phases over seven years.
- ✓ The objectives of the first phase will include operationalising the Chennai Unified Metropolitan Urban Transport Authority (CUMTA), strengthening the human resource capacity of the civic agencies.
- ✓ Under this programme, GCC has submitted proposals for funding of bio-mining at Perungudi and Kodungaiyur dumpyard, construction of 17 flyovers and bridges, and area-based development of Sholinganallur, Velachery, Thiruvanmiyur, Mylapore, Anna Nagar, Tiruvottiyur and Purasawalkam on the lines of smart city works carried out in T Nagar.

Police

- ✓ The interim budget had set aside ₹9,577 crore for the police department, ₹691 crore higher than the 2020-2021 budget.
- ✓ The additional funds will help modernise the new cybercrime police wing
- ✓ The state has granted permission to set up 46 new cybercrime cells across the state.
- ✓ This comes a couple of months after the city police started 12 cybercrime cells at the DCP office here.
- ✓ Likewise, the fire and rescue services department got an allocation of ₹4,436 crore, ₹436 crore more than the previous budget.

Pallikaranai marshland redevelopment

- ✓ The state has earmarked ₹816.8 crore for the redevelopment of Pallikaranai marshland, the last surviving wetland in the city.
- ✓ Projects planned include removal of encroachments, clearing debris, formation of bund, planting saplings, extending the perimeter wall and removal of trees.
- ✓ It will be undertaken in collaboration with the Public Works Department (PWD), the Highways Department and the Greater Chennai Corporation
- ✓ Further, the funding from the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change was also anticipated
- ✓ The Conservation Authority of Pallikaranai Marshland had been constituted and restoration activities were being implemented at a cost of ₹165.68 crore

Urban housing scheme

- ✓ The state government has allocated ₹3700 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) scheme for the financial year 2021-22 in the interim budget estimate.
- ✓ A total of 1.25 lakh tenements and houses are currently under construction in the state and will be completed shortly.
- ✓ The first TN housing sector strengthening programme, with a development policy financing loan of US\$200 million, is under implementation.

- ✓ The first phase of Inclusive Resilient and Sustainable Housing for the Urban Poor is at an advanced stage of approval.

Budget allocation for Coimbatore district

- ✓ The government allocated ₹6,683 crore for the 44 km-Coimbatore metro rail project in the interim budget.
- ✓ The fund allocation comes almost three years after the announcement of metro rail project for the district in the assembly.
- ✓ A detailed feasibility report for setting up the metro rail for about 44km at a cost of ₹6,683 crore in the first phase was prepared and the same under scrutiny.
- ✓ The five corridors, covering a distance of 144km, have been proposed and preparation of a detailed project report was underway.

➤ **Anbil Dharmalingam Agriculture College and Research Institute (ADACRI) in Trichy - has developed a new paddy variety TRY 4 to help farmers who are unable to achieve good yield due to salinity in their agriculture lands.**

- ✓ Saline and alkaline soil account for approximately about 11.25 lakh acres in the State
- ✓ The paddy variety suited to normal soils may not suit such salinity or sodicity areas.
- ✓ So far three rice varieties namely TRY1, TRY2 and TRY 3 have been released by the college during 1995, 2002 and 2010 respectively.
- ✓ These rice varieties are either long slender or medium bold suitable to 'idly' making only.
- ✓ Off late, the rice variety TRY 3 has picked up among farmers throughout the state due to its high yield
- ✓ In 'Thaladi' season, such rice variety is cultivated where TRY 4 will be a boon to the farmers.
- ✓ The variety can be raised in the coastal areas of Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Cuddalore.
- ✓ The TRY 4 has an average grain yield of 5,730 kg per hectare with 22% increased yield over TKM 13, 16.5% over ADT and 7% over TRY 3

➤ **The Tamil Nadu government - has reconstituted the State Commission for Women with Gowri Ashokan as its Chairperson.**

- ✓ The Chairperson and the Members of the Commission will hold office for three years.
- ✓ R. Jamuna, T. Deepa, T. Shylaja, B. Dakshayani and Manisha Chordia are appointed as the other members of the panel.
- ✓ In this regard, a separate Government Order was issued by the state government, which was notified in a government gazette
- ✓ "The tenure of other two existing members of the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women who were nominated by the government among the members of the Legislative Assembly will cease to be the members of the Commission from the

day on which they cease to be the members of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly," the G.O. stated.

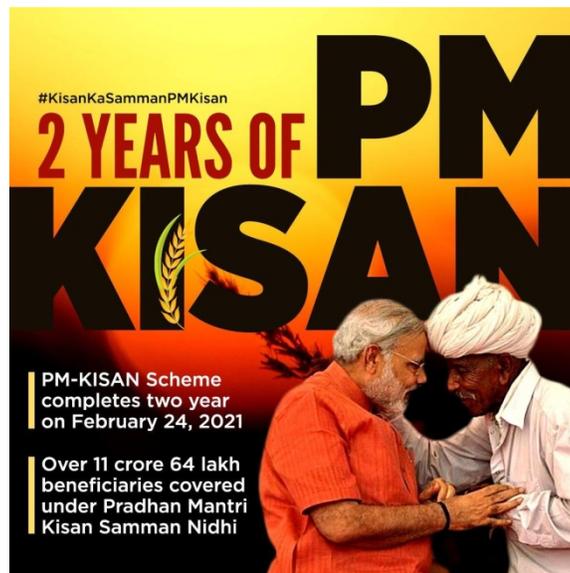
NATIONAL

- **The States and Union Territories (UTs) - have rolled out the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 scheme to cover children and pregnant women who missed routine immunisation during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0 Launched by Health Minister



- ✓ This was announced by the Health Ministry in a release issued on February 23
 - ✓ More than 29,000 children and 5,000 pregnant women were covered on the first day, as per the release
 - ✓ The first phase has been rolled out from February 22 for 15 days.
 - ✓ The campaign is scheduled to have two rounds of immunisation lasting 15 days
 - ✓ It is being conducted in 250 pre-identified districts/urban areas across 29 States/UTs.
 - ✓ As per the guidelines released for IMI 3.0, the districts have been classified to reflect 313 low risk, 152 medium risk and 250 high risk districts.
 - ✓ The States have been asked to follow a “staggered approach” to avoid crowding at the session sites and even plan break-up sessions if a staggered approach is not effective.
 - ✓ The sessions have also been planned in such a way that not more than 10 beneficiaries are present at the session site at one given point in time.
- **The flagship scheme of the central government, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) - has completed its two years on February 24, 2021.**
 - ✓ The PM-KISAN Scheme was formally launched by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on February 24, 2019 at Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.
 - ✓ Under this scheme, an amount of 6000 rupees per year is transferred to the bank accounts of farmers directly.



- ✓ This amount is transferred to them in three instalments of 2000 rupees.
 - ✓ This scheme was initially launched to provide income support to all Small and Marginal Farmers' families who are holding the cultivable land up to 2 hectares.
 - ✓ Later, the scheme was expanded to cover all farmers' families irrespective of the size of their land holdings.
 - ✓ The scheme was announced by Piyush Goyal during the Interim Union Budget of 2019 and was formally announced on February 24, 2019.
 - ✓ The scheme, at an outlay of Rs. 75,000 per annum, came into effect from December 2019.
 - ✓ This scheme was first conceived and implemented by the Telangana government as "Rythu Bandhu scheme".
 - ✓ Under this scheme, the Telangana government is providing 58.33 lakh farmers a support of ₹5000 per acre per season twice in a year.
 - ✓ Also called as Farmer's Investment Support Scheme (FISS), it provides direct support to farmers for two crops in a year.
 - ✓ The scheme also received support from various organisations including the World Bank for its implementation.
- **Union Housing & Urban Affairs Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri and Minister of Electronics & IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad – launched the National Urban Digital Mission (NUDM) on February 23 at a virtual event**
- ✓ The mission aims to create a digital infrastructure for various cities in the country
 - ✓ During the event, several other digital initiatives of the Ministry including India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX), SmartCode, Smart Cities 2.0 website and Geospatial Management Information System (GMIS) were also launched
 - ✓ The IUDX has been developed in partnership between the Smart Cities Mission and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
 - ✓ It is an open-source software platform which facilitates secure, authenticated, and managed exchange of data amongst various data platforms



- ✓ Smartcode is a platform that enables all ecosystem stakeholders to contribute to a repository of open-source code for various solutions and applications for urban governance.
- ✓ In general, the NUDM will create a shared digital infrastructure that can consolidate and link the various digital initiatives of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
- ✓ This mission will institutionalise the citizen-centric and ecosystem-driven approach for the urban governance and service delivery in cities by 2022 and in all cities and towns by 2024.
- ✓ Smart Cities Mission is being implemented by Union Ministry of Urban Development in association with the respective state governments.
- ✓ It initially included 100 cities that will be completed in between 2019 and 2023.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Japan - has appointed the first ever Minister for Loneliness amidst the increasing suicide rates due to the current pandemic situation**

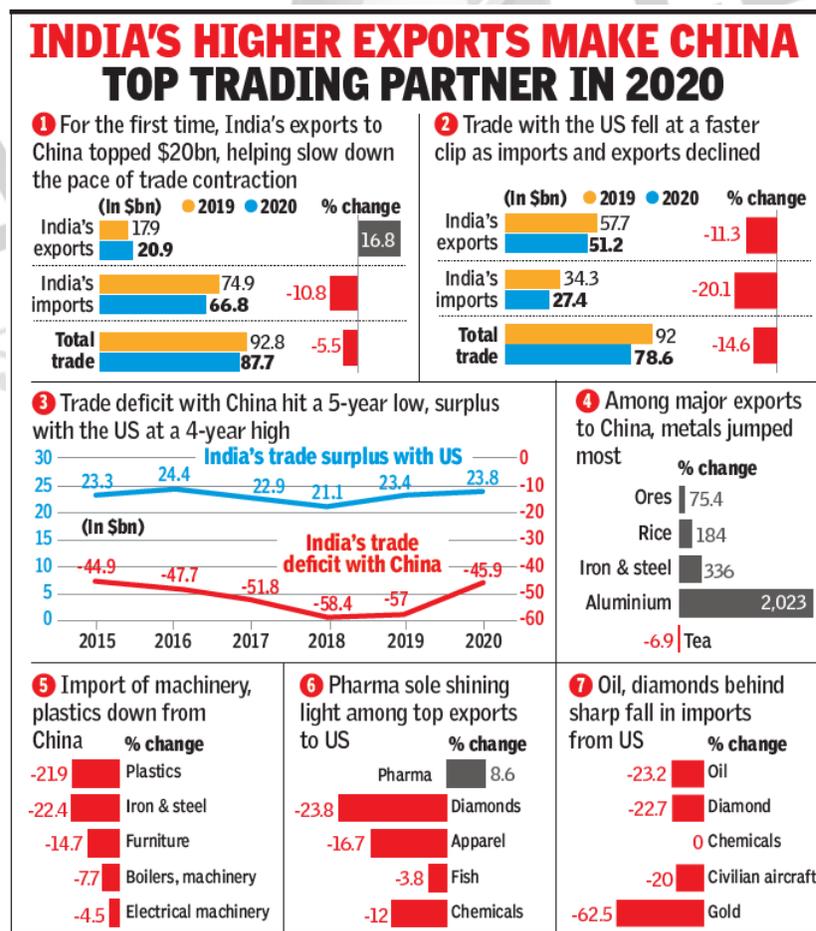


- ✓ Earlier, United Kingdom became the first country in world to create a similar position in the country in 2018.
- ✓ Tetsushi Sakamoto, who is in charge of combating Japan's declining birth rate and revitalising regional economies, was appointed as the Loneliness minister.
- ✓ Japanese government has also created an "isolation or loneliness countermeasures office" on February 19, 2021 within its cabinet.

- ✓ This office will look after the issues like suicide and child poverty which have increased amid the ongoing pandemic.
- ✓ Suicide is considered a major social issue in Japan.
- ✓ In the year 2017, the country had witnessed seventh highest suicide rate in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- ✓ The suicide rates had increased by 34.7% during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.
- ✓ The rates were at peak in 2003 and reached its lowest in the year 2019.
- ✓ However, the monthly suicide rates in Japan increased by 16% in between July and October 2020 because of COVID-19.
- ✓ Among the total cases, seventy percent of suicides are male.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **China – has become India’s top trading partner in the year 2020**
- ✓ The total imports from China at \$58.7 billion were more than India’s combined purchases from US and UAE, the country’s second- and third-largest trade partners, respectively.
- ✓ According to the data from the Commerce Ministry, the two-way trade between India and China stood at \$77.7 billion last year



- ✓ Compared with this, the bilateral trade between India and US stood at \$75.9 billion amidst the pandemic curbs
- ✓ India continues to rely heavily on Chinese-made heavy machinery, telecom equipment and home appliances
- ✓ The bilateral trade gap with China was at almost \$40 billion in 2020, making it India's largest.
- ✓ Further, India also managed to increase its exports to China by about 11% from a year ago to \$19 billion last year

DEFENCE

- **On February 23, the defence ministry - cleared acquisition proposals collectively worth over ₹17,000 crore**
- ✓ This included the procurement of 118 Arjun Mark-1A main-battle tanks for ₹8,379 crore.
- ✓ The improved tank was formally handed over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Army last week.
- ✓ The contract for the "improved" Arjun tanks will be the second such mega deal for home-grown weapon systems in recent times
- ✓ It will be signed later this year after the cabinet committee on security's final nod
- ✓ These 58-tonne tanks have been fully designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with the Indian Army.
- ✓ Recently, the ₹47,000 crore contract for 83 new Tejas fighters was signed on February 3, in the biggest-ever indigenous military deal
- ✓ The 118 Arjun tanks, which will add to the first 124 such tanks inducted by the Army well over a decade ago, have 71 "upgrades" for better firepower, mobility, protection and endurance.
- ✓ Arjun tanks have already been inducted into Indian Army and are deployed along the Pakistan Border in the western desert.
- ✓ The Army has also ordered emergency procurement of 27 M4 wheeled armoured vehicles under a Rs 178 crore contract signed with the Pune-based Bharat Forge company of the Kalyani group.
- ✓ The Kalyani M4 is a multi-role platform, designed for quick mobility in rough terrain and in areas affected by mine and Improved Explosive Devices (IED) threats
- ✓ Interestingly, the M4 vehicles and a few others were earlier tested in Ladakh, during the military confrontation with China, for their ability to swiftly transport troops in high-altitude conditions.
- ✓ The defence acquisitions council (DAC), chaired by minister Rajnath Singh, also issued directions that all capital procurement contracts, other than design and development cases, should be concluded in two years.

- ✓ The DAC also approved a Rs 5,300 crore project to develop onboard “protection and countermeasures” for 820 armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) against guided missiles, rockets and other projectiles.
- ✓ This “Make-II” category project will see companies develop prototypes at their own cost for the final selection.
- ✓ Apart from that, the Defence Ministry also approved for the acquisition of indigenously-developed Nag anti-tank guided missile, Arudhra medium power radar and Armour-Piercing Fin-Stabilized Discarding Sabot (APFSDS) 125mm practice ammunition

AWARDS

- **On February 23, the US administration - named Indian social activist and anti-graft crusader Anjali Bhardwaj for a newly instituted International Anticorruption Champions Award**



- ✓ 48-year old Bhardwaj is a co-convenor of the National Campaign for People’s Right to Information (NCPRI) and a founding member of Satark Nagrik Sangathan.
- ✓ Her activism helped the implementation of the Right to Information Act 2005, the Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2011, The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, and the Grievance Redress Bill among other legislations.
- ✓ Honorees for the award are from Albania, Ecuador, Guatemala, Iraq, Libya, and Ukraine among other countries.
- ✓ The award was announced by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken
- ✓ The 12 individuals recognized for the award, including Bhardwaj, have worked tirelessly to defend transparency, combat corruption, and ensure accountability in their own countries.

SPORTS

- **G Sathiyan – won the Men’s single title at the 82nd Senior National Table Tennis Tournament for the first time in Panchkula on February 23**



- ✓ In the final game, World No. 37 Sathiyan defeated nine-time national champion and world number 32 Sharath Kamal in a five set thriller
 - ✓ 28-year old Sathiyan represented the Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) in the tournament
 - ✓ Sathiyan was part of three finals and three semifinals in the last six editions of the championship, but the title win remained elusive for the Chennai-based table tennis player
 - ✓ Sathiyan received ₹2.50 lakh and a trophy while Sharath collected ₹1.65 lakh and the runner-up trophy.
 - ✓ Defending champion Manav Thakkar and unseeded S.F.R. Snehit were the losing semi finalists in the tournament
- **President Ram Nath Kovind and Union home minister Amit Shah - will inaugurate the world's biggest cricket facility, the Motera Stadium, in Ahmedabad on February 24.**



- ✓ The Motera stadium was to be renamed as the Narendra Modi Stadium after the inauguration
- ✓ The Test, which will be the first-ever international match at the venue, will be played in front of around 50,000 spectators at the newly-built stadium
- ✓ Spread over 63 acres land, the stadium has seating capacity for 1,32,000 spectators surpassing Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) which till now had the largest capacity of 90,000 spectators.

- ✓ The total stadium area is 2,38,714 square metres, which is equivalent to 32 Olympic size soccer fields put together.
- ✓ It was built at an estimated cost of Rs. 800 crores by Larsen & Toubro
- ✓ The stadium has 11 pitches made of red and black soil and is the only stadium in the world to have the same soil surfaces for the main and practice pitches.
- ✓ The ground's drainage system enables water to be drained off within 30 minutes from the time it stops raining.
- ✓ The old Motera Stadium was demolished in the year 2016 which had the total sitting capacity of 54,000 spectators
- ✓ The foundation stone for the new stadium was laid in 2018

