



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS –FEBRUARY 25, 2021

STATES

- **The Uttar Pradesh assembly - passed the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion Bill, 2021 by a voice vote on February 24, 2021**
 - ✓ The bill will now be sent to the UP legislative council for its approval before it becomes an act after a formal approval by the governor.
 - ✓ The bill was put forth in the assembly by parliamentary affairs minister Suresh Khanna for voting.
 - ✓ The state government had promulgated an ordinance to this effect in November last year making unlawful religious conversion a cognisable and a non-bailable offence.
- **The Madhya Pradesh government - tabled the Freedom of Religion Ordinance 2020 in assembly on February 24, 2021**
 - ✓ The Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet had passed the ordinance on January 8 to prevent inter-faith marriages by fraud, allurements or coercion.
 - ✓ The punishment of the violation of the Ordinance ranges from two to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of ₹50,000.
 - ✓ Madhya Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel had signed the ordinance.
 - ✓ It has to be cleared in assembly within six months.

NATIONAL

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – has set a target of monetising 100 government-owned assets across sectors worth ₹2.5 lakh crore**
 - ✓ The planned privatisation of state-run enterprises will help the government free up resources for spending on welfare, development, empower the citizens and create jobs
 - ✓ This was announced by the PM on a webinar convened to prepare the roadmap for the implementation of Budget proposals on privatisation and asset monetisation.

- ✓ The PM said the government does not have to keep running public sector enterprises just because they have been running for decades
- ✓ The PM sought to strengthen the thrust for private sector by linking the twin drives of privatisation and monetisation to the need for meeting the basic needs — from schools and roads to clean drinking water to the poor.



- ✓ Since coming to power in 2014, the NDA government has been vocal about the sale of PSUs, especially loss-making ones, such as Air India
 - ✓ Earlier, it had announced the sale of state-run entities, such as HPCL to ONGC, another PSU, as strategic sale
 - ✓ It is now trying to push it as a key reform initiative and has even added state-run banks and a general insurance company to the list
 - ✓ The Government wanted to keep PSUs in only four strategic sectors — atomic energy, space and defence, transport and telecom, power and petroleum – with minimum presence
- **On February 24, the Union Cabinet - approved the imposition of President's rule in the Union territory of Puducherry.**
- ✓ Union information and broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar made the announcement in New Delhi
 - ✓ No party staked claim to form government after chief minister V Narayanasamy and his council of ministers resigned on February 22.
 - ✓ The legislative assembly of the UT will be dissolved after the President grants his permission.
 - ✓ The model code of conduct will come into force after the Election Commission of India announces poll dates and Puducherry will go to polls with four other states.
 - ✓ President's rule was last imposed in Puducherry between March and July in 1991 when the JD-DMK coalition government fell.
 - ✓ Chief Minister V Narayanasamy resigned after the speaker of the legislative assembly had declared that the Congress government lost its majority in the House on February 22.

- ✓ The President accepted their resignation on the next day and Union home ministry issued a notification in this regard.
 - ✓ Former Delhi police commissioner Bhim Sain Bassi is being considered for the post of Lt Governor of Puducherry
 - ✓ The post fell vacant after incumbent, former top cop Kiran Bedi was suddenly removed on February 16 this year.
 - ✓ Bassi's five-year tenure at the UPSC will end on February 28.
- **The Centre - has decided to allow administration of the Covid vaccine for a price of ₹300-400 at private hospitals in the next round of vaccination**
- ✓ It will be available for persons aged 60 and above, as well as those above 45 with serious comorbidities
 - ✓ Around 27 crore people are expected to be covered in the second phase, with around 10 crore people were over 60 years
 - ✓ The next round of vaccination will start on March 1 with the participation of 20,000 private and 10,000 government hospitals.
 - ✓ The price under consideration is for the Oxford-AstraZeneca's 'Covishield' vaccine shot
 - ✓ The price for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, the other vaccine cleared for emergency use authorisation in India, is likely to be finalised soon.
 - ✓ So far, while private hospitals were involved in vaccinations, beneficiaries were health care and front-line workers whose shots are paid for by the government.
 - ✓ While persons can pay and schedule shots, vaccinations will be free of cost at government hospitals.
 - ✓ Recipients will, however, not have the option to choose the vaccine (Covishield or Covaxin) though each session site will stock only one particular brand.
 - ✓ As of now, averages of 10,000 vaccine sessions are being held daily.
 - ✓ Over 1.23 crore vaccine doses have been given through 2,63,224 sessions across the country till February 24
 - ✓ At present, the vaccination drive is limited to inoculation of first two priority groups – health and front-line workers.

UNRESERVED SLOTS FOR WALK-INS

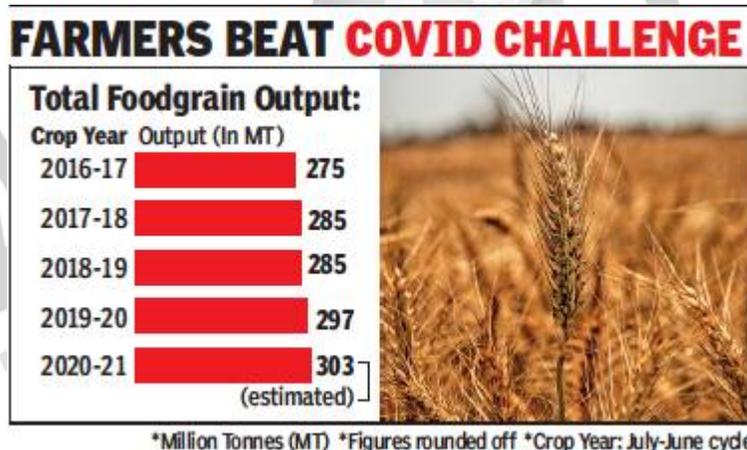
➤ Jabs will be free at govt hosps. Covishield may cost Rs 300-400/dose at pvt hosps. But you can't choose your preferred vaccine brand

➤ One has to first register on CoWIN, but those who can't use the app/smartphone will be "accommodated", a govt source says

➤ Recipients then have to fix an appointment through either web interface or Aarogya Setu, common service centres and IVRF

➤ Each vaccination session will have reserved slots (to be given preference) apart from unreserved slots for walk-in beneficiaries

- ✓ While around 65.24 lakh health and 43.60 lakh front-line workers have received the first dose of the vaccine, over 14.81 lakh healthcare workers have also got the second dose of the vaccines.
 - ✓ While the countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16, front-line workers started receiving the jabs from February 2.
 - ✓ Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu has made testing mandatory for passengers from the UK, Brazil, South Africa and Middle East and will insist on quarantine for travellers from Kerala and Maharashtra.
 - ✓ This is being done following the rise in Covid-19 cases in these areas
 - ✓ On February 24, the Centre deputed high-level teams to 10 states that have been reporting a rise in Covid infections.
 - ✓ The teams will visit Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, MP, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka, TN, West Bengal and the Union territory of J&K to ascertain the reason for the spike in cases.
- **India's foodgrain production in the 2020-21 crop year - will touch a new all-time record of around 303 million tonnes (MT)**
- ✓ This is over 2% higher than the previous year's output.



- ✓ The agriculture ministry's second advance estimates for the current crop year (July-June cycle) was released on February 24
- ✓ It showed record output of paddy (120 MT), wheat (109 MT), maize (30 MT) and gram (12 MT) among the foodgrains in the current crop year.
- ✓ The ministry's figures showed that production of foodgrain estimated during 2020-21 will be higher by 24.47 MT than the average production in the past five years' (2015-16 to 2019-20).
- ✓ Good monsoon rainfall (9% higher than the long period average) and its better distribution in most states last year helped in higher acreage and output of both Kharif and Rabi crops
- ✓ Exemptions given to the farm sector during the lockdown period had helped in uninterrupted sowing operations.

- ✓ Among oilseeds, the estimated production of groundnut and mustard will touch a new high this year at a time when the government has been focusing on these crops to reduce India's import bill.
 - ✓ Overall, oilseeds' production is estimated to be 4 MT higher this year compared to 2019-20.
 - ✓ The country currently has to import edible oil worth ₹65,000–₹70,000 crore annually due to the huge gap between domestic demand and production.
 - ✓ Among non-foodgrain crops, production of sugarcane is estimated to be higher this year by 27 MT whereas the output of cotton is estimated to be at the same level as last year.
 - ✓ During the first advance estimates in September last year, the ministry had estimated the 2020-21 output at 301 MT.
 - ✓ It has now been revised to 303 MT in the second advance estimates.
 - ✓ Every year, the ministry comes out with four estimates of a particular crop year before releasing the final output data.
- **The Centre - has signed a loan agreement for \$304 million with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for the Assam Power Transmission Project.**
- ✓ The agreement was signed by acting director-general of investment operations at AIIB, Rajat Mishra and the Joint Secretary at the Economic Affairs Department, Baldeo Purushartha.
 - ✓ This was announced by the Ministry of Finance
 - ✓ Out of the total estimated cost of \$365 million for the project, AIIB is to provide \$304 million while the remaining will be granted by the Government of Assam
 - ✓ The loan will have a maturity period of 24 years and a grace period of 5 years.
 - ✓ It will be used for strengthening electricity transmission system in the state of Assam.
 - ✓ The project comprises of the laying down of transmission line, construction of 10 transmission substations and the upgradation of 15 existing substations as part of the new network system.
 - ✓ Some of the existing transmission lines will also be converted into the optical power wire

INTERNATIONAL

- **On February 24, the US state department - announced that it intends to seek election to a seat on the UN Human Rights Council for the 2022-24 term, starting in January 2022**
- ✓ This signals an effort to roll back the Trump dispensation's withdrawal from the body in June 2018.
 - ✓ The US expected the UNHRC to support investigations into abuses in Syria and North Korea to promoting the human rights for women and LGBTQI persons and other minorities, and combating racism and religious persecution.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **India – supplies Covishield vaccine to the African country, Ghana**
- ✓ The first batch of 600,000 doses of the AstraZeneca/ Oxford vaccine was delivered to Ghana on February 24
- ✓ This marks the beginning of the global rollout of the vaccine, manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII), under the Covax initiative
- ✓ The vaccines, shipped to Accra on February 23, were part of the first batch to be sent to Africa by Covax
- ✓ The initiative aims to deliver at least 2 billion doses of the vaccine by the end of 2021.
- ✓ Covax is an international pooled purchasing mechanism for Covid vaccines
- ✓ It is co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, working in partnership with Unicef as well as World Bank.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **India - begins its BRICS Chairship with the inaugural three-day-long Sherpas' meeting on February 24, 2021**



- ✓ Secretary (Consular Passport and Visa & Overseas Indian Affairs) chaired the meeting and introduced the themes, priorities, and calendar for BRICS 2021
- ✓ Earlier, the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had launched India's BRICS 2021 website at Secretariat of BRICS at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan on February 19
- ✓ Extending the support to India in hosting this year's summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping may visit India later this year.
- ✓ BRICS is the acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- ✓ The 12th BRICS Summit was held by the Russia on November 17, 2020 virtually amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ The BRICS countries accounts for around 26 % of the world land surface, 41% of world population and account for around 23% of the Gross World Product
- ✓ All the members of BRICS are also the members of G20 grouping.

- ✓ The first meeting of the BRICS grouping was held in Yekaterinburg in June, 2009.

AWARDS

- **Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh - were awarded for being the best performing states in implementing the central income support scheme, PM-Kisan**
- ✓ The three states were awarded in three different categories on the occasion of the second anniversary of the flagship scheme on February 24.
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh was awarded for fastest implementation of the scheme, while Karnataka topped the list in covering the highest percentage of beneficiaries
- ✓ Maharashtra was adjudged the best in the country in physical verification and grievance redress among the beneficiaries of the scheme.

SPORTS

- **On February 24, President Ram Nath Kovind - laid the foundation stone of the sports complex, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave and digitally inaugurated the world's largest cricket stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad**



- ✓ Built up over an area of 215 acres along the Sabarmati riverfront to accommodate 1,32,000 spectators, the new stadium will be renamed as the 'Narendra Modi Stadium'
- ✓ Union Minister Amit Shah, his son and BCCI Secretary Jay Shah were present among others in the event
- ✓ The proposed Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave will comprise a natatorium, athletics track, football, hockey and tennis stadia, velodrome/skating area among other facilities.
- ✓ The stadium, popularly referred as 'Motera stadium', was named as Sardar Patel Stadium when it hosted the 'Namaste Trump' event on February 24, 2020

- ✓ The event was jointly attended by Indian PM Narendra Modi and the then US President Donald Trump.
- ✓ The initiative at Motera was the dream project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had conceived it as President of GCA and Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2014.
- ✓ The construction had begun in 2016 and has been completed at the estimated cost of ₹800 crore.
- ✓ The ground has been equipped with LED floodlights, a first for any Indian sports site.

