



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 26, 2021

### TAMIL NADU

- **On February 25, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - declared nearly 27 lakh students belonging to Classes IX, X, and XI in TN to have passed this academic year without annual or board exam.**
  - ✓ This was announced by the CM in his suo motu statement in the assembly under Rule 110.
  - ✓ The state will soon release guidelines for assessment of marks
  - ✓ The decision has been taken “considering the extraordinary situation faced by students and teachers, requests from parents, and views of academicians,” said the CM
  - ✓ Speaking on the floor of the State assembly, the CM said students this year had to learn entirely through state-run Kalvi TV.
  - ✓ Considering the difficulties faced by them in learning through online classes, the government had even reduced the curriculum this year, he said.
  - ✓ The state government had started classroom coaching for Classes X and XII only from January 19 this year
  - ✓ Following the guidelines of the Centre, the state invoked the provisions of the Disaster Management Act and imposed lockdown on March 25 last year
  
- **On February 25, the State Government - raised the retirement age of the Government Staff to 60 years from the existing 59.**
  - ✓ The move may help the government to defer payment of ₹5,000 crore towards retirement benefits in the next fiscal year.
  - ✓ This was announced by the chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami while making a suo motu announcement in the assembly
  - ✓ The state had raised the superannuation age of its staff to 59 from 58 in May last year
  - ✓ The order is applicable to all government employees in service and those who retire on May 31, 2021.

- ✓ The announcement is applicable to teaching and nonteaching staff in the government and government aided educational institutions, constitutional statutory bodies, local bodies, boards, commissions and societies.
- ✓ Accordingly, those due for superannuation on May 31, 2021, will now leave service on May 31, 2022.
- **On February 25, Higher education minister K P Anbalagan - launched the Entrepreneurship and Career Hub Innovation and Incubation Centre at Madras University to support entrepreneur ventures.**
- ✓ The centre will incubate 10 startup ideas from the postgraduate students and research scholars.
- ✓ Seed funding support of a maximum of ₹10 lakh would be made available to these students along with incubation space and mentoring support
- ✓ Electronics and material lab, wet chemical lab, biological lab and digital film making lab are being set up as part of the entrepreneurship hub initiative.

## **NATIONAL**

- **On February 25, the centre - announced new and stricter guidelines for regulating social media companies, OTT platforms and digital media**
- ✓ The 'Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code' is designed to curb misuse of social media platforms and brings them under the purview of specific regulation for the first time.
- ✓ The new guidelines will be applicable to social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media firms, as well as streaming services such as Netflix, YouTube and Amazon Prime Video
- ✓ These platforms are mandated to appoint executives to coordinate with law enforcement, disclose the first originator of the mischievous information and remove, within 24 hours, content depicting nudity or morphed pictures of women.
- ✓ Any contentious content flagged by the government or legal order has to be taken down quickly.
- ✓ As per the guidelines, social media intermediaries are to appoint a resident grievance officer, who shall register complaints in 24 hours, file monthly compliance reports and resolve the grievances within 15 days.
- ✓ The social media companies will need to reveal the "first originator" of a post in response to a court order or request by law enforcement
- ✓ Rules related to social media will be administered by the Ministry of Electronics and IT while those related to Code of Ethics and procedure and safeguards, in relation to digital media, will be administered by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- ✓ The code will also set guidelines for digital publishers of news and current affairs content, requiring them to disclose their ownership and other information.

- ✓ A Code of Ethics and three-tier grievance redressal mechanism would be applicable for news publishers, OTT platforms and digital media.
- ✓ The new guidelines were released by IT and Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad
- ✓ The new rules take effect immediately, though significant social-media providers will get three months before they need to start complying.
- ✓ The country has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 44.8 crore YouTube users, 41 crore Facebook users, 21 crore use Instagram and 1.75 crore are on Twitter.
- ✓ Social media intermediaries have been split into two categories with the large ones expected to have higher compliance standards.
- ✓ Further, social media and global internet giants will not be able to withhold the information on the source of unlawful and inflammatory messaging beyond 72 hours.
- ✓ They will need to be prompt in responding to requests of subscribers, especially women, on removal of objectionable content such as leakage of nudity or sexual acts.
- ✓ The platforms will now need to take down any “unlawful” content in a span of 36 hours.

<b>'MUST REMOVE OBJECTIONABLE CONTENT'</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (called intermediaries) legally bound to remove objectionable content within stipulated timelines</li> <li>➤ Objectionable content includes info which <b>threatens security or sovereignty of country, disturbs public order, is defamatory, obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, invasive of another's privacy, harmful to minors, infringes any patent, trademark, copyright or other proprietary rights</b></li> <li>➤ Intermediaries bound to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>remove content within 36 hours when asked through a court order or on being notified by government or its agency</li> <li>➤ Platforms mandated to identify source of objectionable/unlawful content within 72 hours of being asked by investigating/cybersecurity agencies</li> <li>➤ Intermediaries asked to establish <b>grievance officer who should acknowledge a complaint within 24 hours, resolve it within 15 days</b>. Also appoint chief compliance officer and nodal contact person</li> </ul>

- ✓ Digital news platforms and publishers of online curated content operating in India will have to inform the I&B ministry about where and how they publish, the nature of content they release, and the size of their subscriber base, within 30 days of the notification of the new Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, for existing platforms
- ✓ The news and current affairs digital platforms will need to follow the norms of journalistic conduct prescribed by the Press Council of India Act and the Programme Code of the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act, as is done by print media and TV channels.
- ✓ The rules mandate that publishers of news and current affairs content and of online curated content set up a three-tier grievance redress mechanism and

publish monthly compliance report containing details of grievances they have received and action they took.

- ✓ The three-tier self-regulation mechanism for digital media, including news websites, includes a self-regulation body headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court or high court, or an “eminent” person in the field.
- ✓ The digital media rules also provide for a government-appointed oversight mechanism and an Inter Departmental Committee (IDC) empowered to seek hearings on violations of code of ethics
  - ✓ The IDC comprises representatives of various ministries including defence, external affairs, home, I&B, law, IT and women & child development, among others.
- ✓ Further, a joint secretary level, or senior officer, will be “authorised” to direct the blocking of content.
- ✓ Digital platforms will also not “publish or transmit” any content prohibited under any law.

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR DIGITAL MEDIA**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Publishers of news and current affairs content and publishers of online curated content to inform I&amp;B ministry about their details within 30 days of publication of rules, or in 30 days from start of their India operations</li> <li>➤ Publisher of news and current affairs content and online curated content to publish monthly compliance report containing details of grievances received and action taken</li> <li>➤ Publishers to set up grievance redressal mechanism to receive complaints against content, issue acknowledgement of grievance to complainant within 24 hours, and decide on complaints in 15 days</li> <li>➤ Publishers operating on Indian territory to set up three-tier structure of self-regulation by publishers, self-regulation by self-regulating bodies of</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">publishers, and oversight mechanism by Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ministry to develop, publish, coordinate and facilitate adherence to Code of Ethics by publishers and self-regulating bodies</li> <li>➤ Ministry to establish joint secretary-level officer-led Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) comprising representatives of various ministries and domain experts to examine complaints or grievances</li> <li>➤ IDC can recommend that ministry issue warning or censure to intermediary/publisher, demand apology, put up warning card or disclaimer</li> <li>➤ In case of online curated content, IDC can ask ministry</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">to direct publisher to reclassify ratings of content, edit synopsis, modify content descriptor, age classification, parental or access control, delete or modify content, or direct blocking for public access information in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In case of emergency, I&amp;B secretary empowered to block, as an interim measure, public access to information without giving publisher or intermediary an opportunity of hearing</li> <li>➤ In such cases, the authorised officer must, within 48 hours, bring the request before the IDC for its consideration and recommendation</li> <li>➤ Final decision to be taken by I&amp;B secretary on the basis of recommendations by IDC</li> </ul>
---	---	--



- ✓ OTT platforms would have to self-classify the content into five age-based categories - U (Universal), U/A 7+ (years), U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A (Adult).

- ✓ The content classification will also identify content on the basis of themes and message, violence, nudity, sex, language, drug and substance abuse, and horror, and will have to be displayed prominently along with an advisory for viewers' discretion.
  - ✓ The publishers of online curated content who show content classified as U/A 13+ or higher must also ensure that access control mechanisms, including parental locks, are made available for such content
  - ✓ Implementation of appropriate access control measures includes the improvement in the accessibility of online curated content by persons with disabilities.
- **The Centre - has withdrawn its order that required scientific institutions to seek prior approval before organising any international online seminar or conference.**
- ✓ On February 24, the ministry of external affairs (MEA) issued the new guidelines after withdrawing the earlier order issued on November 25
  - ✓ The earlier order regarding political clearance for international conferences/ seminars / training etc. due to the Covid-19 pandemic was “no longer applicable” in view of the easing of restrictions on travel and assembly of people.
  - ✓ All such events will, however, continue to be governed by the same rules and regulations that were applicable to political clearances prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - ✓ Two leading academies of the country — Indian Academy of Sciences and Indian National Academy of Sciences — had sought withdrawal of the order, saying such restrictions could halt all scientific discussions

## **INTERNATIONAL**

- **On February 24, US President Joe Biden - formally reversed executive orders taken by predecessor Donald Trump to freeze green card applications and certain types of visas**
- ✓ According to Biden, the earlier decision of Trump harms the US, including by preventing certain family members of US citizens and lawful permanent residents from joining their families here
  - ✓ Trump had banned green cards for new immigrants and halted temporary work visas for skilled workers, managers and au pairs in the H-1B, H-4, H-2B, L-1 and J categories
  - ✓ According to Trump, the move was vital to safeguarding the US labour market during the coronavirus outbreak.
  - ✓ The pandemic was seen as an excuse or cover for measures first enacted by Trump in 2017 with his “Buy American, Hire American” executive order.
  - ✓ It was opposed by tech firms, and business groups, including the US Chamber of Commerce and National Associations of Manufacturers

- ✓ Since assuming office, the Biden administration has overturned several of Trump's anti-immigration policies, including the so-called Muslim ban and a policy that forced asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their asylum applications are processed.
- ✓ Separately, the White House has also proposed legislation that would provide an eight-year path to citizenship for most of the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the US.
- **On February 25, Australian Parliament - passed the final amendments to the 'News Media Bargaining Code'**
- ✓ The amendments were agreed between treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on February 23
- ✓ With this, Australia's law forcing Google and Facebook to pay for news is ready to take effect
- ✓ In return for the new changes, Facebook agreed to lift a ban on Australians accessing and sharing news.
- ✓ The rest of the law had passed in parliament earlier, so it can now be implemented.
- ✓ Google has already struck deals with major Australian news businesses in recent weeks including News Corp and Seven West Media.

## ECONOMY

- **On February 25, Cognizant - launched a new five-year, \$250 million corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative**
- ✓ The new initiative will focus on the causes of equitable educational opportunities, economic mobility, diversity and inclusion, and health and well-being globally.
- ✓ The fund will equip students, learners, and workers with digital skills in advancing economic mobility for all communities, improve the health and well-being of people, and drive efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, the company said.
- ✓ From 2021, Cognizant and its foundations will expand its CSR efforts beyond US and India to new global markets including Australia, Canada, Germany, and the UK.
- ✓ Cognizant is also introducing new philanthropic programs in partnership with Cognizant's Affinity Groups to support African American, Latinx, LGBTQ, Pan-Asian, women, and veteran communities.
- ✓ New programs will also be launched for Covid-19 relief efforts in addition to programs introduced in 2020 such as Pandemic Response Challenge with XPRIZE.
- ✓ In April 2020, Cognizant committed \$10 million to COVID-19 global relief efforts.

## SPORTS

- On February 25, Ravichandran Ashwin – claimed 400 test wickets and became the second faster bowler to reach the milestone, after Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralitharan



- ✓ Ashwin reached the landmark with Jofra Archer's wicket in the 24th over on Day 2 of the fourth Test match in Narendra Modi Stadium at Motera, Ahmedabad .
- ✓ In doing so, he became the 16th highest wicket-taker in the game, after making his debut against the West Indies in 2011
- ✓ Ashwin is the fastest to reach 250, 300 and 350 wickets in Test cricket
- ✓ Ashwin now holds the record for the most Man-of-the-Series awards for an Indian cricketer (7 times) and the second most 10-fors from India after Anil Kumble.
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu State Election Commission roped him in to catch the attention of citizens to create electoral awareness, where Ashwin advised voters to check whether their names are in the electoral roll
- ✓ Ashwin is an alumni of the much-respected Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan school in Chennai, and later did his B-Tech in Information and Technology

### QUICKEST TO 400 TEST WICKETS

Bowler	For	Tests	Time Taken
Muralitharan	SL	72	9 yrs 137 days
<b>R Ashwin</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>9 yrs 110 days</b>
R Hadlee	NZ	80	17 yrs 0 days
D Steyn	SA	80	10 yrs 225 days
R Herath	SL	84	18 yrs 6 days
A Kumble	Ind	85	14 yrs 58 days

- ✓ Ashwin remains the only Indian allrounder to post a hundred and bag five wickets in an innings in the same Test for a record three times
- ✓ He has taken 54 tests to reach 300 wickets earlier, which was the quickest by any bowler in Test history

- **On February 25, Prithvi Shaw – scored the highest individual score in List A cricket in the Vijay Hazare Trophy**
- ✓ Prithvi scored a majestic unbeaten 227 off 152 balls for Mumbai against Pondicherry at the SMS Stadium in Jaipur, Rajasthan



- ✓ Prithvi's maiden double hundred surpassed Sanju Samson's previous best of unbeaten 212 off 129 balls for Kerala against Goa at Alur on October 12, 2019
- ✓ This was the fourth double hundred in the history of the Vijay Hazare Trophy.
- ✓ The other double centuries in the tournament are 203 by Yashashvi Jaiswal for Mumbai against Jharkhand on October 16, 2019 and 202 by Karanveer Kaushal for Uttarakhand vs Sikkim on October 6, 2019
- ✓ Also, this was Prithvi's second century of the tournament after his unbeaten 105 in the opener against Delhi.
- ✓ Prithvi's brilliant knock was also the highest score by a captain in List A cricket in the world
- ✓ The Mumbai player surpassed the unbeaten 222 by Graeme Pollock versus Border in East London.

## **TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT'S SCHEMES – A REPORT**

- **The Tamil Nadu Government - had launched several key schemes ahead of the elections due to the State**
- ✓ The most popular one among all the announcements is waiver of ₹12,110 crore in loans taken by 16.43 lakh farmers from primary cooperative societies.
- ✓ The average loan waiver, announced on the eve of polls, works out to about ₹74,000 per farmer family
- ✓ Salem, Trichy and Erode top the list of districts with maximum loan write-off with ₹1,356 crore, ₹1,329 crore and ₹1,042 crore respectively
- ✓ The farming community was also given compensation to the tune of ₹1,715 crore for damages caused by cyclones Nivar and Burevi and the unseasonal rain in January.

# THE WELFARE ADVANTAGE

**MOST GOVERNMENT SCHEMES HAVE KEPT THE NEEDS OF THE FARMERS AT THE FOREFRONT. HERE ARE A LIST OF A FEW KEY MEASURES**

## WAIVER OF CROP LOANS

**Aim** | Outstanding short-term crop loans and gold loans – as on January 31, 2021 – taken from cooperative banks, have been waived. It includes, principal, interest and penal interest



**Amount waived** | ₹12,110.7 crore outstanding loans in cooperative banks

**No. of beneficiaries** | 16.4 lakh families

## FREE HOUSE-SITE PATTAS

**Aim** | Regularisation of residential encroachments in unobjectionable poramboke lands, excluding Chennai and periphery and grant free house-site pattas



> CM launched distribution of pattas to 55,000 residential encroachments last week; plan to provide pattas to another 45,000 encroachments by month-end

> Patta for three cents is given to a family in rural areas, and two cents in urban areas like town panchayats and municipalities

## CYCLONE AND RAIN RELIEF TO FARMERS

**Aim** | To offer aid to farmers who lost their crops in cyclones Nivar and Burevi and unseasonal January rain

**No. of beneficiaries** | 16.36 lakh

**Compensation** | ₹1,715 crore for damages to crops in more than 9.76 lakh hectares

> Compensation given by doing away with the SDRF guideline to keep a cap of two hectares per farmer

> Compensation increased in various categories, highest was for perennial crops – From ₹18,000 per hectare to ₹25,000 per hectare



## MICRO IRRIGATION

**Project** | Setting up of drip irrigation system including sprinklers

**Till now** | Since 2011-12, 19.3 lakh acres have been covered at a cost of ₹4,060 crore

**Current fiscal** | 5 lakh acres is being covered with a subsidy of ₹1,200 crore, which is the highest in the country

> The Centre shares a financial component, but Tamil Nadu is the only state that extends 100% subsidy to small and marginal farmers and 75% subsidy to others farmers for up to 12.5 acres

> Subsidy also to create ground level storage structures (₹40,000), digging of borewells (₹25,000), among others

## MODERNISATION OF IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

> Cauvery sub-basin to benefit 4.67 lakh acres



**Cost** | ₹3,384 crore; in anticipation of NABARD assistance, the state has allotted ₹5 crore this fiscal

> Rehabilitation of the Grand Anicut canal system to benefit 2.27 lakh acres in Thanjavur

**Cost** | PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation for the project estimated to cost ₹2,639 crore

> Renovation and modernisation of Lower Bhavani sub-basin to benefit 2.47 lakh acres

**Cost** | ₹933 crore

## RETIREMENT AGE EXTENSION

**Aim** | Age of retirement extended from 59 years to 60 years to ensure financial support

**Govt employees to benefit** | 12 lakh | **Teachers to benefit** | 3.5 lakh | **How many due to retire this year** | 25,000



Text: Julie Mariappan

## CAUVERY-GUNDAR RIVER INTERLINK

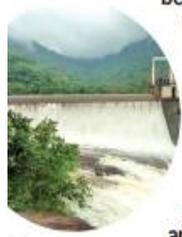
**Aim** | To irrigate arid regions in Karur, Trichy, Pudukottai, Sivagangai, Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar districts with surplus water from the rivers

**Cost** | ₹6,941 crore

**First phase** | Cauvery water will be diverted to South Vellar river through a 118.5km channel that will irrigate 42,170 acres

**Second phase** | 109km channel between South-Vellar and Vaigai to benefit 23,245 acres

**Third phase** | A 34km long canal will link Vaigai and Gundar rivers to benefit 44,547 acres in Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar districts



## KUDIMARAMATH



**Aim** | Restoration of traditional water bodies, maintenance of supply channels, canals, tanks, strengthening and reconstruction of surplus weirs and sluices

**Till now** | More than 4,800 projects have been taken up at a cost of ₹869 crore since 2016-17

**Projects in current fiscal** | 1,364

**Estimated benefit** | 64.52 lakh hectares in 34 districts

## ATHIKADAVU-AVINASHI SCHEME

**Aim** | Irrigation of drought-prone areas and ground-water-depleted taluks of Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode districts. It would lift 15TMC of water from Bhavani river annually from Kalingarayan anicut to feed water bodies covering 24,458 acres

**Cost** | ₹1,652 crore

> Additional 33MW captive solar park will be set up at a cost of ₹144 crore at the site



## AT A GLANCE

### EDUCATION

**Aim** | Introduction of 7.5% NEET quota for government school students

**Beneficiary** | 435 students this academic year



**2GB free data scheme** | 9,69,047 govt college students will get 2GB free data per day to attend online classes from February to May

> 11 new medical colleges to come up

### HEALTH

> Setting up 2,000 Amma mini-clinics

> All districts to have tertiary care facility, interim budget allots ₹2,470.9 crore for this



### CORONA RELIEF

> Cash support of ₹1,000 to all cardholders, ₹2,000 to 35.65 lakh members of 14 welfare boards and match industry, ₹1,000 to 13.3 lakh disabled



> Pongal gift hamper and cash of ₹2,500 to all rice cardholders in 2021

- ✓ About 16.36 lakh farmer families have benefited from the scheme, through which the assistance was directly credited to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries
- ✓ The farming community has been among the major beneficiaries of the government's schemes
- ✓ The government has launched several irrigation and water management schemes
  - ✓ It includes Cauvery-Gundar river interlinking project, Mettur-Sarabanga lift irrigation scheme, Athikadavu-Avinashi lift irrigation scheme, kudimaramath and other micro-irrigation schemes
- ✓ The government's decision to hand over one lakh house site pattas to homeless people occupying government 'poromboke' land is another populist scheme.
- ✓ The government has announced an ambitious target of covering about 45,000 beneficiaries in the second half of February.
- ✓ Further, the CM ordered the extension of the retirement age of state government staff from 59 years to 60 years, which would benefit more than 12 lakh government employees and teachers and their families.

