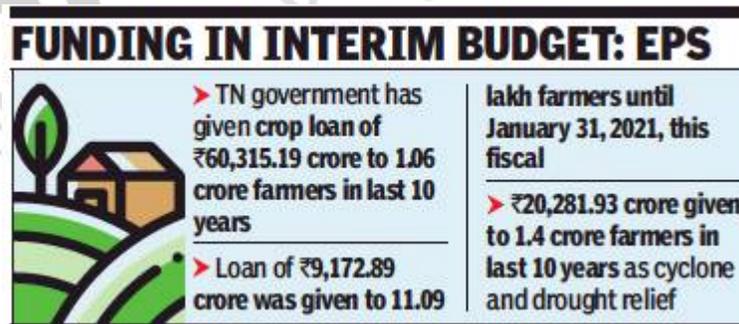




EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–FEBRUARY 6, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- On February 5, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami – announced the waiver of ₹12,110 crore crop loans availed by 16.43 lakh farmers from cooperative banks.
- ✓ The CM made a suo motu announcement about the scheme under Rule 110 on the floor of the House.
- ✓ The state government would arrange financial resources in the interim budget, the CM said.
- ✓ The average loan waiver per farmer works out to ₹73,706.
- ✓ This is the highest quantum of loan waiver ever made in the State



- ✓ The last time the crop loan was waived was in 2016, when former chief minister J Jayalalithaa assumed charge for her fourth and consecutive second term.
- ✓ The outstanding loan of ₹5,318.73 crore was waived, benefitting 12.02 lakh small and marginal farmers, owning land up to 5 acres
- ✓ For the first time, in the year 2006, the DMK government decided to write off all types of loans — short term, medium term and long term — for all categories of farmers, regardless of the size of landholdings.
- ✓ At the time, the amount was ₹7,000 crore
- ✓ It was also the first instance of a state government waiving farm loans due to cooperative banks by agriculturists.

Relief for farmers

The State government has not made any distinction among farmers but has chosen to cover only short-term crop loans, unlike in the previous occasions (in 2006 and 2016) when medium-term and long-term agricultural loans, too, were covered

*(₹ in crore)

Year	Policy measures	Cost to the exchequer*
1996	Waiver of penal interest rate on agricultural loans	20
1999	Interest waiver for prompt payment within due date for crop loans taken from July 1, 1999, to June 30, 2000	36
2001	Waiver of interest and penal interest for farmers who paid their dues before November 30, 2001, with respect to overdue outstanding as on June 30, 2000	311
2003	Waiver of interest on crop loans	61
2004	Waiver of interest on crop loans	62
2004	Rescheduling of crop loans as on March, 2004	645
2006	Waiver of all farm loans and interest thereon outstanding with the cooperatives, as on March 31, 2006	7,000
2009	Full interest waiver for prompt payment of all crop loans	140
2016	Waiver of outstanding farm loans (short-term crop loans, medium-term agriculture and long-term farm loans) issued to small and marginal farmers as on March 31, 2016	5,318.73
2021	Waiver of existing outstanding crop loans issued to all types of farmers	12,110

SOURCE: A PAPER TITLED "AGRICULTURAL LOAN WAIVER: A CASE STUDY OF TAMIL NADU'S SCHEME," BY DEEPA S. RAJ AND EDWIN PRABU A., PUBLISHED IN VOL. 39, NO. 1&2, 2018, OF THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA OCCASIONAL PAPERS, AND TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

- ✓ The state government had announced several assistance measures to benefit the farmers this season
- ✓ It had earlier extended ₹1,717 crore, under input subsidy head, for the crop loss due to cyclones Nivar and Burevi and the unseasonal rain in January, benefitting 16.43 lakh farmers.
- ✓ The amount is credited directly to the farmers' bank accounts.
- ✓ The state government had earlier allocated ₹2,247 crore towards drought relief in 2017.

- ✓ The government had extended ₹20,281.93 crore towards relief to farmers in the past 10 years.
- **The State Government - had passed a bill to set up a new university in the name of former CM J Jayalithaa on February 5.**
 - ✓ In this regard, Thiruvalluvar University would be bifurcated and the new university would be established in Villupuram.
 - ✓ The new university will start functioning from this academic year itself, according to a Bill tabled in the Assembly by Higher Education Minister K.P. Anbalagan
 - ✓ The proposed Dr. J. Jayalalithaa University will have jurisdiction over Villupuram, Kallakurichi and Cuddalore districts, with the exception of areas specified under the provisions of the Annamalai University Act, 2013.
 - ✓ The Governor would be the Chancellor of the university.
 - ✓ The first Vice-Chancellor would be appointed by the government within three months of the gazette notification.
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has directed colleges and universities to function six days a week from February 8 to cover syllabus and conduct practical classes.**
 - ✓ Colleges are expected to utilize the six working days to split the strength and conduct classes on alternate days.
 - ✓ The state government has allowed higher educational institutions to conduct physical classes for undergraduate and postgraduate students from February 8.
 - ✓ It has allowed hostels for the students to function.
 - ✓ In this regard, the order was issued by the higher education secretary on February 3
 - ✓ The order will be applicable to all arts, science, technical and engineering colleges and universities till the end of the academic year 2020-21
 - ✓ The institutions are directed to follow standard operating procedures after the reopening
 - ✓ The college plans to continue with online classes for students who are not able to attend the physical classes.
 - ✓ Anna University has issued a staggered schedule to be followed from February 8 on its campuses and colleges.
- **On February 5, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - announced the government will set up residential police public schools in Trichy, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Salem, Cuddalore and Vellore.**
 - ✓ He was replying to the motion of thanks to the governor's address to the assembly.
 - ✓ A residential school has already been set up to provide high quality education to children of police constables in Chennai

- ✓ The CM inaugurated the residential school in Chennai on the premises of Tamil Nadu Police Academy at Oonamancherry near Vandalur in 2018.
- ✓ The CM also announced the government's plan to upgrade the city police hospital as a multispecialty hospital to provide high-quality treatment and surgeries.
- **The Tamil Nadu assembly - passed eight bills on February 5 that were tabled during the first sitting of the ongoing session**
 - ✓ It includes one for enhancing punishment for offences committed against women and children.
 - ✓ According to the Bill, the imprisonment period has been increased from seven years to ten years under IPC sections 304-B, 354 D and five years to seven years under Section 354 D.
 - ✓ Another Bill introduced by Minister for Higher Education and Agriculture K.P. Anbalagan sought to amend the Annamalai University Act, 2013, and the Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University Chennai Act, 1987
 - ✓ It seeks to hand over three medical institutions to the Health and Family Welfare Department, so as to treat them as government institutions.
 - ✓ The three institutions are Rajah Muthiah Medical College and Hospital, Rajah Muthiah Dental College and Hospital, and Rani Meyyammai College of Nursing, attached to Annamalai University in Chidambaram.
 - ✓ The Bill is in line with the announcement made by Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam in his Budget speech.
 - ✓ Minister for Commercial Taxes K.C. Veeramani tabled a Bill to amend the Tamil Nadu Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, in light of repealing the provision of the Tamil Nadu Sugar Factories Control Act, 1949, under Section 14.
- **The Centre - has approved tiger reserve status for the sanctuaries covering the entire forests of Meghamalai and Srivilliputhur in Tamil Nadu.**
 - ✓ The 1lakh-hectare area, home to 63 mammal species and 323 bird species, will be India's 51st tiger reserve.
 - ✓ On February 3, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) conveyed the approval to the Tamil Nadu government.
 - ✓ Srivilliputhur and Meghamalai sanctuaries will be notified as tiger reserves, based on a letter from the Tamil Nadu government on January 7 and a technical committee meeting on January 22
 - ✓ The last tiger reserve was notified six years ago in Arunachal Pradesh, Kamlang.
 - ✓ The Meghamalai Wildlife Sanctuary is spread across the districts of Theni and Madurai
 - ✓ The Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary lies along Kerala's Periyar Tiger Reserve.
 - ✓ The plan has been dragging for about seven years, with pug marks being spotted, proposals sent but it was DNA analysis that finally sealed the order.

- ✓ Between March 2017 and August 2018, forest officials analysed 118 scat samples and confirmed the presence of at least 14 tigers.
- ✓ With a large population of ungulates (hoofed mammals), spotted deer, Indian gaurs and wild boars, Meghamalai has a large prey base for tigers.
- ✓ Srivilluputhur, meanwhile, hosts leopards, Nilgiri tahrs, lion tailed macaques, jungle cats and sambars.
- ✓ And while the eastern part of Srivilliputhur falls in the rain shadow zone of the Western Ghats (it receives poor rainfall), wild animals do gather along the Deviar, Periyar and Kovilar dams.
- ✓ There are 18 streams between the eastern slopes of Deviar and Mudangiar that join mostly with the Arjuna river.
- ✓ Such perennial streams act as wildlife riparian habitats, playing an important role in the conservation of elephants and tigers

STATES

- **High-speed 4G internet services - were restored in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir on February 5 in view of the “overall security situation” prevailing currently in the Union Territory**
- ✓ The move comes nearly one-and-a-half years after they were discontinued in view of security concerns arising out of abrogation of Article 370
- ✓ Internet across J&K was completely shut on August 5, 2019, and subsequently restored at 2G speed.
- ✓ Highspeed 4G internet resumed in two districts — Ganderbal in Kashmir and Udhampur in Jammu — in August last year on a trial basis.
- ✓ Other 18 districts continued to work with 2G internet
- ✓ The Jammu and Kashmir government on January 22 this year extended a ban on high speed mobile data services across the Union Territory.
- ✓ J&K LG Manoj Sinha, who since taking over in the UT in August last year had ensured consistent review of the ban by the special committee, gave his approval to restore 4G services.

NATIONAL

- **The third phase of vaccination against Covid-19 - is likely to begin from mid-March onwards**
- ✓ This was announced by health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan in Lok Sabha on February 5.
- ✓ The government had recently indicated that the over 50 age group would receive vaccinations soon, and there might be an initial preference for people over 60 years.
- ✓ The minister also said that so far 22 countries have asked India for the vaccine to be provided.

- ✓ Of them, the government has already provided 15 countries with the vaccine either as aid or through an agreement.
- ✓ Till February 1, 56 lakh doses of grant assistance and 105 lakh doses on contract basis have been sent to these countries.
- ✓ Vaccination of front-line workers has started from February 3.
- ✓ So far, over five million beneficiaries have been vaccinated against Covid-19.

- **The government - has prepared a draft to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**
- ✓ As per the draft, anyone injuring or killing animals may no longer escape with a penalty of ₹50.
- ✓ The government is proposing a penalty up to ₹75,000 or three times the cost of the animal with jail term up to five years or both if an act of an individual or an organisation causes an animal's death.
- ✓ The draft has proposed offences in three categories — minor injury, major injury leading to permanent disability, and death to an animal due to cruel practice
- ✓ It has prescribed different penalties ranging from ₹750 to ₹75,000 and jail term up to five years for different crimes.
- ✓ This was announced by minister of fisheries, animal husbandry and dairying Giriraj Singh, while offering a written response to a Parliament question in Rajya Sabha on February 5
- ✓ The minister, however, did not give details, including monetary penalties and quantum of punishment.
- ✓ The draft amendment also provides for making offences of cruelty against animals cognisable and making state animal welfare board a statutory body.
- ✓ The existing law stipulates a penalty between ₹10 and ₹50 for any act of cruelty such as beating, kicking, torturing, starving, overloading, overriding and mutilating an animal.
- ✓ It doesn't have different categories of offences for cruelty.
- ✓ According to government, 316 cases relating to cruelty to animals were pending in various courts across the country.
- ✓ Sixty-four such cases were pending in the Supreme Court while 38 were pending in Delhi high court.
- ✓ Among states/UTs, the highest number of cases was in Tamil Nadu (52) followed by Maharashtra (43), Kerala (15), Karnataka (14), Telangana (13) and Rajasthan (12).
- ✓ A total of 199 out of the 316 cases relating to cruelty to animals were pending for more than five years.

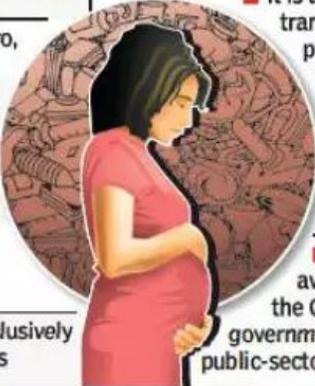
- **The Indian drug regulator's subject expert committee (SEC) - has denied emergency use authorisation (EUA) to Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine**
- ✓ It has refused on the ground that the causes of reported adverse events was being probed

- ✓ On February 5, the US-based Pfizer announced that it was withdrawing its application for emergency use approval.
 - ✓ The expert panel also held absence of data from local clinical trials as a reason for not proceeding with Pfizer's application.
 - ✓ The SEC observed that serious adverse events, including palsy and anaphylaxis, were reported during post-marketing of the vaccine globally.
 - ✓ Since the causality of the events was being investigated, the committee did not recommend the messenger or mRNA vaccine for emergency use in India.
 - ✓ Moreover, the company had not proposed any plan to generate safety and immunogenicity data in the Indian population, the committee said.
 - ✓ The drug regulator maintained that any foreign company with a vaccine candidate developed outside India would have to conduct at least bridging studies in India to ensure immunogenicity.
 - ✓ Pfizer was the first company to apply in India for emergency use authorisation in December for the vaccine
 - ✓ It had sought the drug regulator's nod to import it, besides a waiver of clinical trials on the Indian population.
 - ✓ Over 4,000 adverse events were reported after people received the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine in the US
 - ✓ It includes 21 cases of anaphylaxis, a severe, lifethreatening allergic reaction that occurs rarely after vaccination
 - ✓ This was indicated in a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in January.
- **The government's Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project - begun on February 4**
- ✓ Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri performed a "bhoomi puja" at India Gate.



- ✓ The redevelopment of the avenue becomes the second part of the government's larger Central Vista revamp project
- ✓ The first part involves the construction of the new Parliament building, which began last month

- ✓ The three km long avenue stretches from North and South Block till India Gate, and includes Rajpath and its lawns and Vijay Chowk.
 - ✓ This was originally designed to be a grand processional pathway to the Viceroy's House during the British Raj.
 - ✓ The redevelopment project is scheduled to be completed in time for the Republic Day Parade in 2022
 - ✓ It would include refurbishment of the landscaping, increasing green cover from 3.5 lakh square metres to 3.9 lakh square metres, and a new irrigation system
 - ✓ Public toilets, drinking water facilities and a vending area would be constructed at 10 spots along the avenue
 - ✓ Walkways and bridges over the canals would be constructed to provide better connectivity with the parking and amenities at 12 locations
 - ✓ The project will cost ₹608 crore and it has been cleared by the Delhi Urban Art Commission, the Heritage Conservation Committee, the Central Vista Committee and the local body.
 - ✓ The project was awarded to Shapoorji Pallonji & Company Private Limited on January 8.
- **The government's maternity benefit scheme, or Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana - has crossed 1.75 crore eligible women till financial year 2020**

MATTER OF HEALTH	THE INITIATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect women in India ➤ Every third woman is under-nourished, while every second woman is anaemic ➤ Under-nourished women often give birth to babies with a low birth weight ➤ When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle ➤ Owing to economic and social distress, many women continue to work to earn a living for their family up to the last days of their pregnancy ➤ They resume work soon after childbirth, which prevents their bodies from fully recovering ➤ It also impedes their ability to exclusively breastfeed during the first six months 	<div style="background-color: #00a651; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <p>The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana provides maternity benefits of ₹5,000 for pregnant women and lactating mothers after their first delivery</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The benefit is provided in three instalments ■ It is a conditional cash transfer scheme and provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare ■ The scheme ensures safe delivery and good nutrition for women ■ The benefits are not available for employees of the Central or State governments and any public-sector undertaking 

- ✓ This was informed by the Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani in the Rajya Sabha on February 4.
- ✓ A total sum of ₹5,931.95 crore was paid to 1.75 crore eligible beneficiaries between financial year 2018 and 2020.
- ✓ Apart from that, ₹2,063.70 crore was disbursed in the current fiscal to 65.12 lakh women

- ✓ According to the government's initial estimate, it aimed to reach 51.7 lakh women per year through the scheme.
 - ✓ Under the scheme, pregnant women and lactating mothers receive ₹5,000 on the birth of their first child in three instalments, after fulfilling certain conditionalities.
 - ✓ The direct benefit cash transfer is to help expectant mothers meet enhanced nutritional requirements as well as to partially compensate them for wage loss during their pregnancy.
 - ✓ The scheme was announced on December 31, 2016, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a televised address to the nation.
- **The Union Home Ministry - is planning to introduce legislation in the Budget session of Parliament to amend a 1991 Act pertaining to the powers and functions of the Delhi government and the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G).**
- ✓ The proposed legislation received the Union Cabinet's approval on February 3.
 - ✓ The Bill is likely to clearly define the powers of the L-G and the Delhi government on the lines of the Supreme Court judgment of February 2019.
 - ✓ It is likely to give more powers to the LG's office.
 - ✓ A Supreme Court Bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan had given a unanimous verdict on the role of these two authorities.
 - ✓ The services plea of the two authorities has been referred to a larger Bench of the court and the hearing is yet to conclude.
 - ✓ In the February 14, 2019 verdict, the court upheld as "legal" the Ministry's earlier notifications authorising the L-G to exercise powers in relation to services.
 - ✓ The court confirmed the Delhi High Court's finding that the Anti-Corruption Branch's (ACB) jurisdiction is confined to Delhi officials and statutory bodies and does not extend to Central government officials.
 - ✓ Last year, the Ministry notified the rules for the newly created Union Territory of J&K
 - ✓ In that, the government said, in case of difference of opinion between the L-G and a Minister when no agreement could be reached even after a month, the "decision of the Lieutenant-Governor shall be deemed to have been accepted by the Council of Ministers."
- **On February 4, Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy - introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2021, in the Rajya Sabha.**
- ✓ It seeks to replace an ordinance to merge the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) cadre of All India Services Officers such as the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service with the Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram Union Territory (AGMUT) cadre.
 - ✓ The reason for introducing the Bill was because of the "huge deficiency" of All India Service officers in J&K, as per the proposal.

- **On February 4, Aircraft manufacturer Boeing - announced strategic collaboration agreements with Air Works of India**
- ✓ The agreement will be for the maintenance, repair and overhaul of the Navy's P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft and the VIP transport fleet of the IAF.
- ✓ The Navy operates nine P-8I and will receive another aircraft by year end.
- ✓ Air Works undertakes base maintenance for ATR 42/72, A320 and B737 fleet of aircraft from its facilities in Mumbai, Delhi, Hosur and Kochi.

ECONOMY

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has announced a centralised industry-wide 24X7 helpline for information on grievance redressals by September 2021**
- ✓ The helpline will address customer queries in respect of various digital payment products
- ✓ It will also give information on available grievance redress mechanisms
- ✓ The move is aimed at improving the public confidence in digital payment transactions
- ✓ Going forward, the facility of registering and resolving the customer complaints through the helpline shall be considered," the RBI said in its monetary policy statement.

SPORTS

- **England cricket team captain Joe Root - became the third English player to score a century in his 100th Test and joined an exclusive list of players on February 5**
- ✓ He achieved the rare feat on the first day of the first Test between India and England played at Chepauk, Chennai
- ✓ The 30-year-old Yorkshireman battled cramps and remained unbeaten with 128 runs on the day

INCREDIBLY RARE: 100 IN 100TH TEST

Joe Root is now the third Englishman and only the ninth overall to post a century in his 100th Test. Ricky Ponting is the only batsman to register a century in each innings of his 100th Test. Here is the list..

Player	Runs	For	Opposition	Venue	Season
Colin Cowdrey	104	England	Australia	Birmingham	1968
Javed Miandad	145	Pakistan	India	Lahore	1989-90
Gordon Greenidge	149	W.Indies	England	St.John's	1989-90
Alec Stewart	105	England	W.Indies	Manchester	2000
Inzamam-ul-Haq	184	Pakistan	India	Bangalore	2004-05
Ricky Ponting	120 & 143*	Australia	S.Africa	Sydney	2005-06
Graeme Smith	131	S.Africa	England	The Oval	2012
Hashim Amla	134	S.Africa	Sri Lanka	Johannesburg	2016-17
Joe Root	128*	England	India	Chennai	2020-21

- ✓ In the process, the England captain, scored his third Test century on the trot.
- ✓ Root has scores of 128*, 186 and 228 in his last three Tests
- ✓ Further, Root has scored at least one half in 7 consecutive tests in India
- ✓ He is now second on the all-time list behind Javed Miandad (8 successive Tests in India).
- ✓ Alvin Kallicharan and VVS Laxman have 7 fifties in 7 consecutive Tests in India.

