

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—FEBRUARY 7, 2021

TAMIL NADU

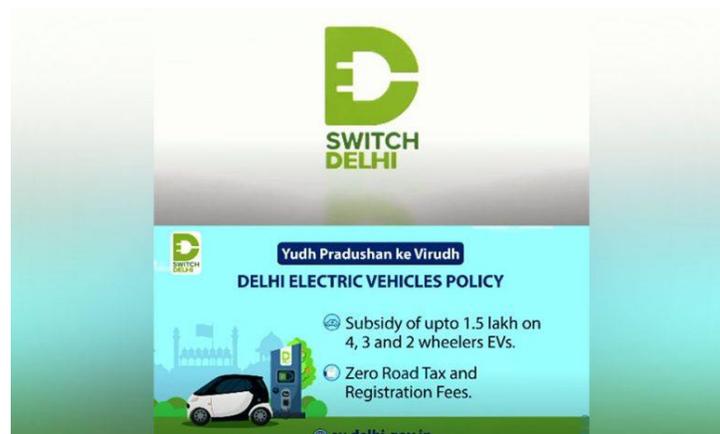
- **The State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Ltd (SIPCOT) – has proposed to establish a new industrial park in Dharmapuri district.**
 - ✓ The industrial park would come up on 1,550 acres of land on the outskirts of Dharmapuri town at around ₹600 crore.
 - ✓ It would be developed to attract automobile industries, leather industries (dry process), integrated textile industries, food processing, and general industries.
 - ✓ The new park will provide employment for local youth and improve the economy of the region.
 - ✓ The first phase of the project would cover 1,021 acres of land in Adhagapadi, Adhiyaman Kottai, Thagangam and Balajangamanahalli in Nalampalli taluk.
 - ✓ Soon, a government order would be passed in this regard.
 - ✓ Also, SIPCOT has set aside 36 acres of land for creating a solid waste management facility on the premises of the upcoming industrial park.
 - ✓ The facility would be used to compost the organic wastes generated by the units and would be used as manure for green belt development on the campus.

- **The Villupuram district administration in Tamil Nadu - has issued the first declaration under the Wildlife Protection Act to announce Kaveli wetlands as a bird sanctuary.**
 - ✓ The first declaration was issued under the Section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
 - ✓ The Kaveli Wetlands is the second-largest brackish water lake in South India, after the Pulicat lake.
 - ✓ It is located near to the Marakkanam on the East Coast Road of the Kaveli Lake.
 - ✓ The wetland is spread over an area of 670 square kilometer and is connected to the Bay of Bengal through the Uppukalli Creek and the Edayanthittu sanctuary.
 - ✓ The southern part of the wetland was declared a reserved land in the year 2001.

- ✓ The Kaliveli wetlands supports around 20,000 birds every year and acts as a feeding ground for long-distance migrant birds coming from the cold subarctic Central Asia and Siberia.
 - ✓ Some of the migratory birds include Black-tailed Godwits, White Stork, Eurasian Curlew, Ruff and Dublin.
 - ✓ The declaration will ensure that no construction take place in the surroundings so as to maintain the natural biosphere and biodiversity of the area.
 - ✓ Further, the wetlands have large area that will help in recharging the ground water table.
- **NLC India Limited (NLCIL) - commissioned the second unit of the Neyveli New Thermal Power Project (NNTPP) on February 3**
- ✓ The unit, with a capacity of 500MW, successfully completed 72 hours of continuous trial operation.
 - ✓ It will commence commercial operation after obtaining formal clearance from the Southern regional load despatch centre.
 - ✓ NNTPP includes two units with a capacity of 500MW each.
 - ✓ The first unit, which was commissioned in December 2019, commenced commercial operation.
 - ✓ The states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Puducherry are beneficiaries of this project.
 - ✓ The lignite-fired boilers of NNTPP are first of its kind in India.
 - ✓ Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) supplied the steam generator and turbine generator packages for the NNTPP.
 - ✓ With the commissioning of the second unit of NNTPP, the total installed power generation capacity of NLCIL group increased to 6,061.06MW.

STATES

- **Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal - launched the 'Switch Delhi' campaign recently to promote the use of electric vehicles in combating the pollution in Delhi.**



- ✓ The Chief Minister also highlighted that the state government will hire electric vehicles in six weeks for various purposes.
 - ✓ He further appealed the various associations and business chains to set up the charging stations in their respective premises.
 - ✓ The Chief Minister highlighted the electric vehicle policy of the Delhi government.
 - ✓ Under the policy, the Delhi government has planned to give an extensive subsidy on the purchase of the electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers.
 - ✓ It has also planned to waive off the registration charges and road tax for the electric vehicles.
 - ✓ The Delhi Government has set a target of 25% electric vehicles registration among total vehicle registrations by 2024.
- **Andhra Pradesh - has become the second State to implement the power sector reforms as announced by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**
- ✓ The state has implemented one of the three reforms that was announced in the year 2020.
 - ✓ Accordingly, the state has started the Direct Benefit transfer (DBT) of electricity subsidy to farmers with effect from September 2020.
 - ✓ After implementing the reform, Andhra Pradesh is now eligible to mobilise additional financial resources equal to 0.15 percent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
 - ✓ Andhra Pradesh has also completed One Nation One Ration Card reform, Ease of Doing Business Reforms and Urban Local Bodies Reforms besides the power sector reforms.
 - ✓ Therefore, Andhra Pradesh has been granted permission to raise a total additional amount of Rs. 9,190 crores as incentive.
 - ✓ **Before Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh undertook the reforms in the power sector.**
 - ✓ It was given additional borrowing permission of Rs. 1,423 crores which is equal to 0.15 percent of its GSDP.
 - ✓ The Power Sector reforms were aimed at creating a transparent and hassle-free provision of power subsidy to the farmers and preventing leakages.
 - ✓ The Department of Expenditure has made guidelines for the States who are undertaking reforms in power sector
 - ✓ As per the guidelines, the states can raise additional financial resources of up to 0.25 percent of the GSDP.
 - ✓ For that purpose, four citizen centric areas were identified for reforms
 - ✓ It includes Ease of doing business reform, Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card System, Urban Local body or utility reforms and Power Sector reforms

NATIONAL

- **Prime Minister, Narendra Modi - addressed an event marking the Diamond Jubilee of the High Court of Gujarat via video conferencing on February 6**



- ✓ He also released a Commemorative Postage Stamp marking the completion of sixty years of the establishment of the High Court
 - ✓ Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, Justice M.R. Shah of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court Vikram Nath, Solicitor-General of India Tushar Mehta, Chief Minister of Gujarat Vijay Rupani have attended at the online event.
 - ✓ The PM congratulated the Supreme Court for hearing the most number of cases through video conferencing in the world during the pandemic
 - ✓ The Gujarat High Court showed its adaptive capability by early start of hearing by video conferencing, SMS call-out, e-filing of cases and 'email my case status' during the pandemic
 - ✓ The Gujarat High Court became the first court to stream the court proceeding live.
 - ✓ The Court also started streaming of its display board on YouTube and uploaded its judgements and orders on the website
 - ✓ During his speech, the PM expressed satisfaction that digital infrastructure put in place by the Law Ministry's e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project has been adopted so quickly by the courts
 - ✓ Further initiatives launched included e-filing of cases, Unique Identification Code and QR code for cases, which led to setting up of National Judicial Data Grid
 - ✓ The Gujarat High Court has completed sixty years of its establishment on May 1, 2020.
- **On February 6, 34 women personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) - joined the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA)**
 - ✓ CoBRA is the elite CRPF component specialising in jungle warfare and counter-Naxal operations.
 - ✓ The women personnel for the CoBRA are chosen from the six Mahila Battalions of CRPF
 - ✓ They will undergo a strenuous CoBRA pre-induction training of three months.



- ✓ The training shall cover firing and special weapons, tactical planning, field craft, explosives, jungle survival skills etc.
 - ✓ After the completion of the training, these women warriors will be posted in Left wing extremism-hit areas deep inside the jungles
 - ✓ They will be posted in insurgency-hit places like Chhattisgarh, and shall fight the Maoists just like their male counterparts.
 - ✓ The induction of the first women CoBRA Unit was marked by a ceremony that was held in Kadarpur village.
 - ✓ The entry of CRPF women personnel into CoBRA wing coincides with the 35th Raising Day celebrations of 88th Mahila Battalion.
 - ✓ Notably, 88th Mahila Battalion has the distinction of being the first all-woman battalion in the world.
 - ✓ In another first, an all-woman brass band was also formed on February 6.
 - ✓ Its members will undergo a training course to acquire requisite skill for playing the music instruments.
 - ✓ CRPF already has an all-women pipe band.
 - ✓ The CoBRA special operation unit was established in the year 2009 to counter the naxalite menace
 - ✓ Currently, there are ten battalions of CoBRA.
- **The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) - has amended its rules to cap trans-fatty acids (TFAs) in food products**
- ✓ As per the new regulations, food products in which edible oils and fats are used as an ingredient shall not contain industrial trans-fatty acids more than 2% by mass of the total oils/fats present in the product
 - ✓ The new rule will come into effect on and from 1st January, 2022
 - ✓ In December, the FSSAI had capped TFAs in oils and fats to 3% by 2021, and 2% by 2022 from the current levels of 5%.
 - ✓ The WHO has called for the elimination of industrially produced trans-fatty acids from the global food supply by 2023.
 - ✓ Trans-fatty acids are created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid, increase shelf life of food items and for use as an adulterant as they are cheap.

- ✓ They are present in baked, fried and processed foods as well as adulterated ghee, which becomes solid at room temperature.
 - ✓ They are the most harmful form of fats as they clog arteries and cause hypertension, heart attacks and other cardiovascular diseases.
 - ✓ The latest amendments to FSSAI rules complete the overall process of regulating trans fats in India.
- **India - will begin to administer the second dose of anti-Covid vaccines — Covishield and Covaxin — from February 13 for people who were vaccinated on January 16**
- ✓ In this regard, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan asked the States to schedule all healthcare workers for vaccination at least once before February 20 and all frontline workers at least once before March 6.
 - ✓ A total of 12 States and Union Territories have achieved 60% or more vaccination coverage of healthcare workers.
 - ✓ Both vaccines approved in India are to be given 28 days apart, according to the rules governing their dosage.
 - ✓ In the U.S., the two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine are recommended to be given 21 days apart.
 - ✓ And for the Moderna vaccine, the interval is 28 days.
 - ✓ In the U.K., the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines are allowed to be given 12 weeks apart (though 21 days is the recommended interval) to ensure more people get at least one shot.
 - ✓ As of February 6, India has inoculated 5.6 million, which includes 5.2 million healthcare workers and 3,70,693 frontline workers, for whom vaccination began this week.
- **The Centre – has recently launched a unified web portal for monitoring the progress of GOBARDHAN activities in India.**
- ✓ It was jointly launched by the Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Rattan Lal Kataria, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Animal Husbandry Minister Giriraj Singh



- ✓ The GOBARDHAN scheme was launched by the Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation
 - ✓ GOBAR-DHAN scheme stands for Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources – DHAN scheme.
 - ✓ This scheme is the part of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).
 - ✓ It focuses on keeping the villages clean, generate energy from cattle waste and increase the income of rural households.
 - ✓ The scheme is an important component of Swachh Bharat Mission Phase-2, which focuses on organic solid waste management.
 - ✓ The initiative will address the issue of solid waste management, create open defecation-free villages and effectively manage the cattle dung and other organic waste.
 - ✓ Under the scheme, 3.5 lakh villages, 374 districts and 16 States or Union Territories of the country have been declared ODF till date.
 - ✓ The ODF-plus comprise of the measures so as to enhance Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM).
 - ✓ The GOBARDHAN scheme is also an element under the ODF-plus strategy.
- **The Centre - has recently confirmed the presence of 1600 tonnes of lithium deposits in Mandya district of Karnataka.**
- ✓ The quantity of the lithium in the region can only be confirmed after exploring the entire area.
 - ✓ Further, commercial exploitation for the deposits can start only after the technical, social and economic feasibility studies are done.
 - ✓ The survey was done on the surface and limited subsurface in the pegmatites of Marlagalla – Allapatna area by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD).
 - ✓ AMD is coming under the Department of Atomic Energy.
 - ✓ Lithium is widely used in optical modulators for mobile phones, lithium-ion batteries, high energy additives to rocket propellants and lubricating grease.
 - ✓ The import of lithium from Japan, China and Taiwan has increased by three-fold in between 2017 to 2020.
 - ✓ The first Lithium plant of India has been set up at Gujarat in the year 2021.
 - ✓ It was established with the help of investment of Rs 1000 crore made by the Manikaran Power Limited.
 - ✓ This plant will make use of Lithium ore to produce the base battery material and make Gujarat a hub for Lithium-ion batteries.
 - ✓ Indian firm, Khanij Bidesh India Limited and an Argentinian firm had signed an agreement in the year 2020 to jointly explore lithium in the South American nation.
 - ✓ The South American nation has 17 million tonnes of lithium metal reserves.

- **The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and Zomato - have signed a MoU under the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNidhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme recently.**
- ✓ Under the MoU, it was decided to bring the street food vendors on the food-tech platform of Zomato, so as to increase their 'online' presence and business opportunities.



- ✓ As per the MoU, the MoHUA and Zomato will be running a pilot program initially by on-boarding 300 vendors.
 - ✓ These vendors will be selected from across six cities namely, Patna, Bhopal, Nagpur, Ludhiana, Vadodara and Raipur.
 - ✓ They will also be given training on technology & partner app usage, menu digitization, pricing and hygiene & packaging.
 - ✓ On October 5, 2020 the MoHUA also signed a MoU with the Swiggy to empower Street Food Vendors with digital technology.
 - ✓ The ministry also launched the Mobile Application called "PMSVANidhi se Samridhhi".
 - ✓ The application will compile the details of PM SVANidhi beneficiaries and their families to link them with the Central Government Schemes.
 - ✓ The PM SVANidhi scheme was launched on June 01, 2020 to provide the affordable working capital loan to street vendors.
 - ✓ It seeks to benefit over 50 lakh Street Vendors affected by the pandemic.
 - ✓ The scheme provides the vendors a collateral free loan of up to Rs. 10,000, of one year.
- **India's first thunderstorm research test bed - will be established in Balasore, Odisha**
 - ✓ It aims to minimize the human fatalities and loss of property because of the lightning strikes.
 - ✓ This announcement was made by the Director-General of India Meteorological Department, Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra.
 - ✓ He also announced that a first-of-its-kind Monsoon Testbed will also be set up near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh.
 - ✓ Both of these projects are in the planning stage.

- ✓ The Thunderstorm testbed will be established in a collaboration among the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Ministry of Earth Sciences, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and India Meteorological Department (IMD).
 - ✓ The testbed would be conducting the studies on thunderstorms.
 - ✓ It will comprise of several observational networks, radar, auto-station, a full-fledged observatory, a wind profiler and a microwave radiometer.
 - ✓ On an average, more than 350 people are killed in Odisha because of lightning strikes.
 - ✓ As per a report, in the span of nine years (till 2020), 3218 people have died due to lightning.
- **PayPal – has announced that it will stop offering the domestic payment services within India beginning from April 1, 2021.**



- ✓ The American digital payment solutions provider intends to focus on enabling more international sales for the Indian businesses in future
 - ✓ Paypal had processed USD 1.4 billion international sales in the year 2020 for over 3.6 lakh Indian merchants.
 - ✓ Going forward, the company has decided to invest in the product development field
 - ✓ It plans to support Indian businesses to reach 350 million PayPal consumers across the world and increase their sales internationally.
 - ✓ PayPal is an American company that operates an online payments system.
- **Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman – launched the third phase of Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar mela held in Guwahati on February 6**
- ✓ During the mela, the Assam government has distributed the financial assistance of Rs. 3,000 to each of 7.5 lakh people who belongs to tea garden areas.
 - ✓ The financial assistance was provided under the Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar scheme.
 - ✓ Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar scheme was started by the Assam government in the year 2017- 18.
 - ✓ The scheme aims to encourage people to open bank accounts in tea garden areas



- ✓ Under the scheme, payment of incentive of Rs 2500 is provided to the bank account of those tea garden workers' whose bank accounts were opened after demonetization (November 8, 2016).
- ✓ The workers who opened their bank accounts before demonetization are given a total amount of Rs. 5000 in 1st instalment and Rs 2500 in 2nd instalment

INTERNATIONAL

- **On February 5, Google – announced the launching of paid-for news platform in Australia**
 - ✓ For providing the news content to the platform, it had signed a deal with relevant publishers
 - ✓ Google had rolled out the News Showcase platform in Brazil and Germany
 - ✓ In Australia, the platform was originally scheduled for launch last June
 - ✓ But Google delayed plans when Australia decided to make it a legal requirement for Google and Facebook to pay Australian media firms for content, unprecedented anywhere else in the world.
 - ✓ In retaliation, Alphabet-owned Google said the legislation was “unworkable” and would force it to pull out of the country altogether if implemented.
 - ✓ The legislation is now before a parliamentary inquiry
 - ✓ In this scenario, the launch of News Showcase in Australia will ensure Google pays seven domestic outlets to use their content.
 - ✓ Financial details of the content deals weren't disclosed.
- **The Environment Ministry of China - recently announced to set up a new Public Information Platform that will allow the public to track emissions from the polluting enterprises.**
 - ✓ The platform will come into effect on March 1, 2021.

- ✓ It will help the authorities to prosecute the public who will break the rules, based on the real-time monitoring and tracking of historical data.
 - ✓ Under the plan, around 2.36 million companies, industrial facilities and institutions in the nation will require to obtain permits so as to emit pollutants including the Sulphur dioxide or wastewater.
 - ✓ The platform will be launched to get information about the polluting firms and in turn to penalize them so as to reduce the emission of pollutants.
- **Pakistan - successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile called Ghaznavi recently**



- ✓ The ballistic missile has a striking capability of up to 290 kilometres in both day and night modes
- ✓ It was launched to mark the culmination of Annual Field Training Exercise of Army Strategic Forces Command.
- ✓ Pakistan has also test-fired the nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile Shaheen-III on January 20, 2021.
- ✓ This missile has the range of up to 2,750 kilometres and was commissioned into service with the Pakistan Army in the year 2012.
- ✓ It was named after the 11th century Muslim Turkic conqueror Mahmud of Ghazni
- ✓ This missile is powered by a single stage solid fuel rocket motor and is influenced from a Chinese design called M-11.

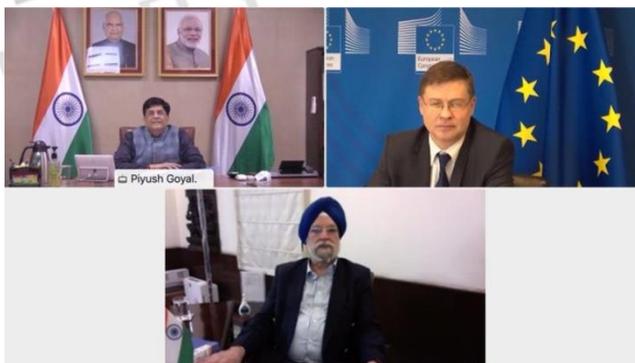
INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) - settled a \$400 million currency swap facility from the Reserve Bank (RBI) of India last week, as per the agreed terms between both the countries.**
- ✓ Earlier, Sri Lanka announced its decision to pull out of a 2019 agreement to develop a Colombo Port terminal jointly with India and Japan.
 - ✓ However, both countries clarified that the developments were not linked.
 - ✓ The CBSL obtained the swap facility on July 31, 2020, for an initial period of three months, to deal with the severe economic impact of the pandemic.

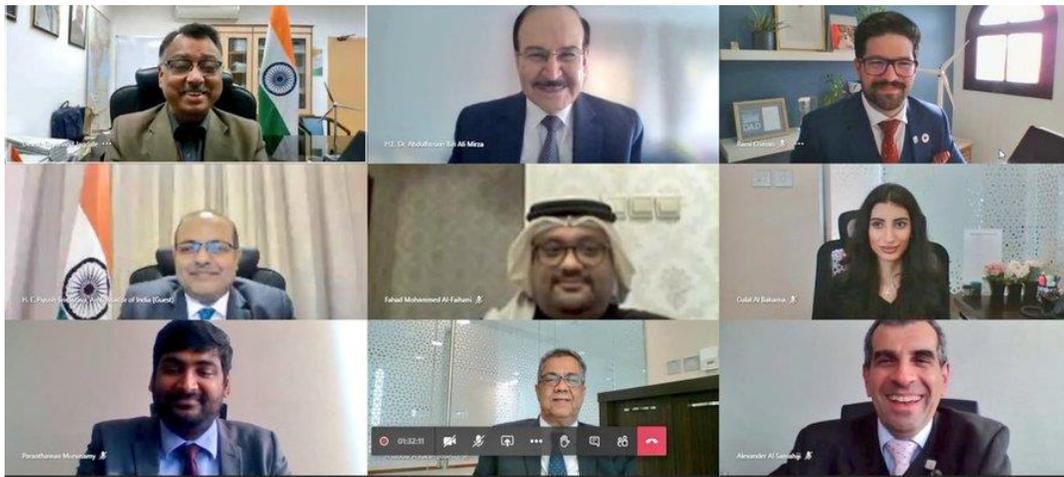
- ✓ Subsequently, the RBI provided a three-month rollover at CBSL's request, until February 1, 2021.
- ✓ Sri Lanka's has a massive foreign debt obligations — \$6.8 billion this year — and fall in gross official reserves to \$5.6 billion as of December 31, 2020
- ✓ To deal with this, Sri Lanka has sought further loans from China, among others, and additional currency swap facilities from both India and China.
- ✓ Sri Lanka expects the \$1.5 billion swap facility from China to come through soon.
- ✓ But, neither China nor India has responded to Colombo's debt freeze request.
- ✓ Sri Lanka owes over \$5 billion to China and \$960 million to India in debt repayment.
- ✓ The currency swap is only one of at least three requests Sri Lanka has made to China since the pandemic.
- ✓ Following approval of a \$500 million loan from China in March 2020, the Sri Lankan government has sought an additional \$700 million loan
- ✓ This is in addition to applying for another 'COVID-19 Emergency and Crisis Response Facility' to the tune of \$180 million from the Beijing-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The 1st High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Trade & Investment - was held between India and European Union (EU) on February 5**
- ✓ The dialogue was co-chaired by Piyush Goyal, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Valdis Dombrovskis, the European Union Executive Vice-President & Trade Commissioner.

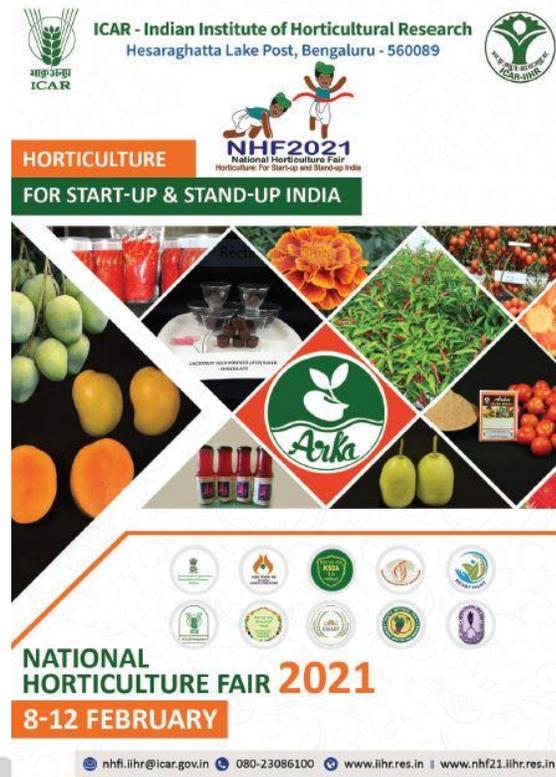


- ✓ The dialogue was held as per the commitment made during the 15th India-EU Leader's Summit held in July 2020.
- ✓ It seeks to provide ministerial level guidance to enhance the bilateral trade and the investment relations.
- ✓ Both the countries agreed to reach a consensus on the bilateral trade & investment cooperation issues, including the India-EU multilateral dialogue
- **The first meeting of the Joint Working Group between India and Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of Renewable Energy - was held virtually on February 4**



- ✓ The Bahraini delegation was held by H.E. Dr. Abdul Hussain bin Ali Mirza who is the President of Sustainable Energy Authority.
 - ✓ E. Mr. Dinesh Dayanand Jagdale the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy led the Indian delegation.
 - ✓ The meeting was also attended by Piyush Srivastava who is the Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain.
 - ✓ During the meeting, both sides highlighted the importance of renewable energy in order to meet climate change goals.
 - ✓ Both the sides agreed on sharing the experience, expertise and best practices with each other.
 - ✓ In July 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India and Bahrain to promote the bilateral cooperation in Renewable Energy.
 - ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bahrain in August 2019
 - ✓ This was the first ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Bahrain
 - ✓ Both the countries signed MOUs in the fields of Space, International Solar Alliance and the RuPay Card during his visit.
- **The National Horticulture Fair - will start on February 8 at the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) campus**
- ✓ People from all over the country shall participate the five-day event virtually.
 - ✓ The theme of the National Horticulture Fair 2021 will be 'Horticulture for Start-Up and Stand-Up India'.
 - ✓ The fair will be organised by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR).
 - ✓ Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the physical entry of participants is restricted to 30,000.
 - ✓ Farmers will also participate in the event with the help of 721 Krishi Vijnana Kendras and 11 Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes.
 - ✓ During the event, around 211 live demonstrations will be showcased.
 - ✓ The Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) is an autonomous organization focusing on applied research on various aspects of horticulture

- ✓ It is headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka.



- ✓ The institute is a subsidiary of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and works under the nodal head of the Ministry of Agriculture.

PERSONALITIES

- **Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala – is all set to become the first African and first woman to lead the World Trade Organization (WTO)**

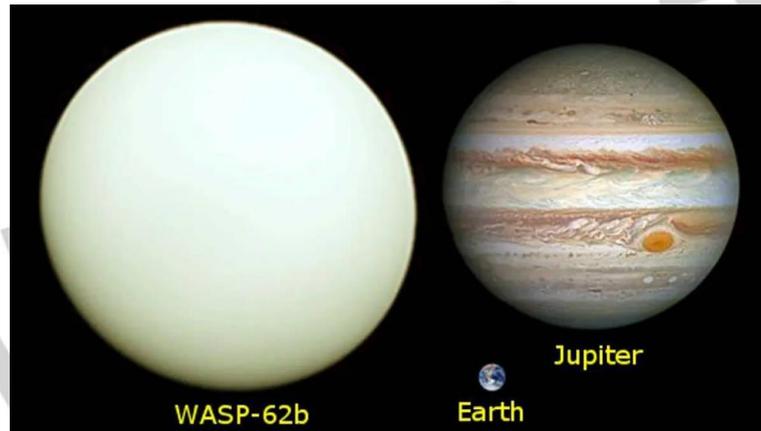


- ✓ South Korea's trade minister Yoo Myung-hee, a finalist selected from among eight candidates, withdrew her name after months of diplomatic pressure on February 5
- ✓ The Biden government expressed its support for Okonjo-Iweala on the day
- ✓ It had praised her experience at the World Bank and leading Nigeria's finance ministry, and pledged to work with her on reforms.

- ✓ The US administration of former President Donald Trump had blocked Okonjo-Iweala's candidacy after a WTO selection panel recommended her as chief in October
- ✓ The development cleared the way for WTO members to conclude a consensus-based process and confirm Okonjo-Iweala as the next WTO director-general.
- ✓ The Geneva-based watchdog has gone without a director-general since Brazil's Roberto Azevedo quit a year early in August
- ✓ The 164-nation member WTO has not clinched a major multilateral trade deal in years and failed to hit a 2020 deadline on ending subsidies for overfishing.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **For the first time, astronomers at the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre of Astrophysics - have discovered a huge planet with about half the mass of Jupiter without clouds and haze**



- ✓ Named WASP-62b, this planet was first found in 2012 through the Wide Angle Search for Planets (WASP) South survey, but was not studied in detail until now.
 - ✓ It is 575 light years away and orbits its star in just four-and-a-half days, unlike Jupiter, which takes nearly 12 years to orbit the sun
 - ✓ This proximity to the star makes it extremely hot, hence the name "hot Jupiter."
 - ✓ Using the Hubble Space Telescope, data and observations of the planet were recorded using spectroscopy
 - ✓ The study was published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters.
 - ✓ Cloud-free planets are exceedingly rare as only less than 7% of exoplanets have clear atmosphere
 - ✓ For example, the first and only other known exoplanet with a clear atmosphere was discovered in 2018.
 - ✓ Named WASP-96b, it is classified as a hot Saturn.
- **The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) Council – has approved the setting up of the world's largest radio telescope during its latest meeting**



- ✓ The UK-based Square Kilometre Array Observatory is an intergovernmental organization, dedicated to the radio astronomy.
 - ✓ Currently, the Square Kilometre Array Observatory comprises of the organisations from the ten countries namely, Canada, China, Australia, India, New Zealand, Italy, Sweden, South Africa, United Kingdom and the Netherlands.
 - ✓ The Square Kilometre Array is the largest radio telescope across the world.
 - ✓ The telescope will be set up in Africa and Australia in the next decade
 - ✓ This telescope is different than the conventional optical telescopes
 - ✓ The Radio Telescopes can be used to detect the invisible gas and it has the potential to reveal areas of space that might have covered by the cosmic dust.
 - ✓ The operation, maintenance and construction of the radio telescope will be overseen by SKAO
- **The launch vehicle Stardust 1.0 - was launched from a former military base in US called Loring Commerce Centre recently**



Stardust 1.0 Rocket Launch

- ✓ This is the 1st commercial space launch that is powered by biofuel.
- ✓ It is also the first commercial rocket launch for the state of Maine
- ✓ The launch vehicle Stardust 1.0 is suitable for student and budget payloads.
- ✓ It is 20 feet in height, weighing around 250 kg and can carry a maximum payload mass of 8 kg.

- ✓ In its first launch, the rocket carried three payloads including two small satellites called 'CubeSats' into space
- ✓ The Stardust rocket launch vehicle has been manufactured by BluShift, an aerospace company based in Maine, US.
- ✓ This company is involved in developing the rockets powered by bio-derived fuels.
- ✓ It is also developing other rockets such as Stardust Gen. 2, Starless Rouge, and Red Dwarf.

DEFENCE

- **Ka-226T utility helicopters – are to be manufactured with an indigenous content ranging between 27%-33%**



- ✓ This was announced by the Chairman and MD of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) R. Madhavan
- ✓ The Ka-226T utility helicopters are to be jointly manufactured locally by India and Russia with Transfer of Technology (ToT)
- ✓ The final deal is held up as the Russian proposal of 62% indigenous content in assembled helicopters falls short of the tender requirement of 70%,
- ✓ In Ka-226T, 70% was proposed to be the Russian content, which is not the same as the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) 52%.
- ✓ Russians were unable to offer 70% of this and they offered up to 62%, that too only in Phase-4 of production
- ✓ The Ka-226T is meant to replace the obsolete Cheetah and Chetak fleet of the Army and Air Force
- ✓ The total technical life of this ageing fleet will start finishing from 2023 onwards.
- ✓ As per the Russian proposal, the localisation plan would be spread over four phases
- ✓ It begins with 3.3% indigenisation for 35 helicopters, going up to 15% for next 25 helicopters, 35% for 30 helicopters in Phase 3 and eventually to 62.4% indigenisation in Phase 4 for the last 50 helicopters.
- ✓ The helicopters would be manufactured by India Russia Helicopters Limited (IRHL) — a joint venture between HAL and Russian Helicopters.

- ✓ In 2015, India and Russia had concluded an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for at least 200 Ka-226T twin engine utility helicopters estimated to cost over \$1 billion
- ✓ Out of these, 60 helicopters are to be directly imported and remaining 140 manufactured locally.
- ✓ The first helicopter would be delivered within 36 months from the signing of the contract.

ECONOMY

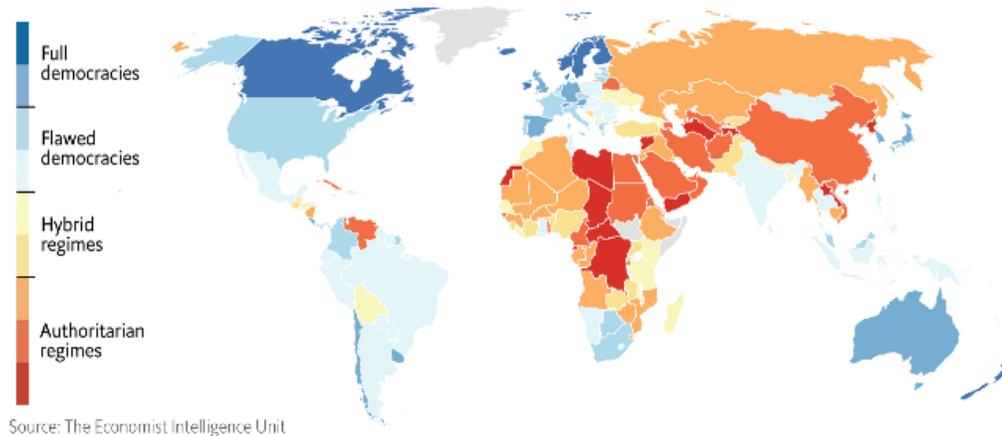
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has announced that it will adopt the 'One Nation One Ombudsman' scheme**
- ✓ The approach aims to make the alternate dispute redress mechanism simple and more responsive to the users.
- ✓ It is planning to integrate the consumer grievances redressal under a single ombudsman as opposed to the three grievance redressal schemes working at present.
- ✓ The three ombudsman schemes are currently available in the banking, non-bank finance companies and digital transactions.
- ✓ The RBI has also operationalized the complaint management system (CMS) portal as a one stop solution.
- ✓ This portal will be used for the alternate dispute resolution of the customer complaints which are not resolved by regulated entities.
- ✓ The mechanism will cater to all the customers from banks, NBFCs and the non-bank issuers of prepaid payment instruments.
- ✓ The e-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme will be rolled out in June 2021.
- ✓ The banking Ombudsman is a quasi-judicial authority that was created in the year 2006 under the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006.
- ✓ It was created to enable the resolution of complaints of bank customers.

RANKINGS

- **The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) – released the Democracy Index 2020 alongwith its report titled “Democracy in sickness and in health?”**
- ✓ The index classified the economies under categories such as flawed democracies, full democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes.
- ✓ As per the report, 23 countries are categorized as full democracies, 52 as flawed democracies, 35 countries as hybrid regimes while 57 countries are authoritarian regimes, out of total 167 countries.
- ✓ In the Democracy Index, Norway has topped, followed by Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada respectively.
- ✓ India's rank at 53rd place has shown a decline of two places from the previous year ranking.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2020 Democracy Index

167 countries scored on a scale of 0 to 10 based on 60 indicators



- ✓ In the index, India has been classified as a 'flawed democracy'.
- ✓ The other significant flawed democracies include U.S., France, Brazil and Belgium.
- ✓ Sri Lanka was placed at 68th position and classified as a flawed democracy.
- ✓ Pakistan was ranked at 105th position and classified as a 'hybrid regime'.
- ✓ Other Hybrid regime countries include Bangladesh which has been ranked at 76th position and Bhutan which has been ranked at 84th
- ✓ Afghanistan has been ranked at 139th position and it has been classified as an 'authoritarian regime'.
- ✓ The EIU has been headquartered in London, United Kingdom.
- ✓ It provides the forecasting and advisory services through the economic and business research across the world.