

**EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 13,
2021**

NATIONAL

- On March 12, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - launched the “Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav”, the government’s initiative to mark 75 years of the country’s Independence, from the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat



- ✓ The day marks the occasion of the 91st anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi’s Dandi March
- ✓ The Amrit mahotsav will continue till August 15, 2023
- ✓ The PM also flagged off a 21-day long padyatra (foot march) by 81 marchers from Sabarmati Ashram to commemorate Dandi March.
- ✓ The Padyatra will cover a journey of 241 miles from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi in Navsari and will end on April 5 lasting for 25 days
- ✓ Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism will lead the first 75 kilometers of the padyatra.

- ✓ Further, the government will conduct several activities every week and different ministries will participate in these events.
 - ✓ Indian embassies, outside the country, will also organise programmes as part of the celebrations
 - ✓ Governor of Gujarat Acharya Devvrat, Union MoS (I/C) Prahalad Singh Patel and Chief Minister of Gujarat Vijay Rupani were present on the occasion.
 - ✓ In his speech, PM Modi said five pillars — freedom struggle, Ideas at 75, Achievements at 75, Actions at 75, and Resolves at 75 — are the guiding force for moving forward.
 - ✓ Mahatma Gandhi led the Dandi March, or Salt March, in 1930 from the Sabarmati Ashram till Dandi in Navsari as a non-violent protest against the British salt monopoly.
 - ✓ The march was held from March 12, 1930 to April 6, 1930.
 - ✓ Last week, the Centre announced the formation of a high-level national committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to commemorate 75 years of the country's independence.
- **The Union ministry of housing and urban affairs - has launched a dedicated 24X7 national helpline '14420' to report unsafe manhole cleaning**
- ✓ The helpline can be used by the people to register complaints if they see workers cleaning septic tanks or sewage systems without wearing masks or other safety gear.
 - ✓ The ministry had earlier launched the 'Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge' programme to mechanize all sewer and septic tank cleaning operations in the country.
 - ✓ The helpline is an extension of this programme.
 - ✓ The Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board will manage the helpline in the city on a 24X7 basis.
 - ✓ House owners/contractors, who have engaged workers under unsafe conditions, are liable to be prosecuted and punished under Prohibition of Employment as a Manual Scavenger and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013
 - ✓ In 2018, Tamil Nadu's Metrowater had developed a machine to clean sewer systems.
 - ✓ Metrowater had received the third prize for their innovative machine, which avoided entry of humans into manholes.
- **The Union government - has proposed a ban on use of single-use plastic in two phases beginning January 1, 2022**
- ✓ In this regard, the Centre had issued a draft notification giving timelines of the staggered plan without affecting small businesses and traders
 - ✓ Manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of all single-use plastic commodities will be prohibited under amended rules
 - ✓ Further, the Centre has also decided to increase thickness of polythene bags from 50 microns to 120 microns from September 30 this year

- ✓ At present, polythene bags of less than 50 microns thickness are banned across the country.



- ✓ Increase in thickness of carry-bags, made of virgin or recycled plastic, will substantially improve collection and recycling of used carry-bags.
 - ✓ At present, 40% of total plastic waste remains uncollected in the country every day.
 - ✓ The uncollected plastic waste causes choking of drainage and river systems, soil and water contamination, littering of marine ecosystem, eating by stray animals, and its open air burning leads to adverse impact on human health and environment.
 - ✓ The draft notification, issued in the gazette by the environment ministry on March 11, defined 'single-use' plastic for the first time and identified such items which are to be banned in a staggered manner in two phases.
- **On March 12, the All-India Council for Technical Education - withdrew its approval process handbook (APH) for 2021-22, which had the new eligibility criteria.**
- ✓ As per the AICTE chairperson Anil Sahasrabudhe, the new guidelines were futuristic but not binding on institutions and developed in keeping with the vision of the National Education Policy-2020
 - ✓ The handbook has indicated that mathematics and physics at Class XII-level had been made optional for admission to engineering courses
 - ✓ As per the new eligibility criteria, students would have the option to study biotechnology, textile or agriculture engineering through bridge courses.

- ✓ These guidelines were not compulsory and states and institutions would be free to continue with the existing policy, the AICTE noted.
- **The government's think tank, NITI Aayog – submits first list of 12 Public Sector Undertakings for privatization, kicking off the centre's privatization drive**
- ✓ The list submitted includes the PSUs in strategic sectors, which the centre wants to keep with bare minimum presence
- ✓ The strategic sectors comprise of the petroleum, power, atomic energy, coal, and other minerals, space, defence, insurance, banking, financial services, transport and telecommunications.
- ✓ This list will now be reviewed by Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) and Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD) which is headed by cabinet secretary.
- ✓ The plan to privatise the PSUs was announced by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget 2021.
- ✓ This will kickstart the achievement of the centre's target of Rs 1.75 lakh crores of disinvestment in the financial year 2021-2022.
- ✓ The FM had announced to privatise two PSBs and one general insurance company in the year 2021-22 during her budget speech
- ✓ The NITI Aayog has been entrusted with the task to suggest names of PSUs in strategic sectors that are needed to be merged, privatised or made subsidiaries of other PSUs
- ✓ However, the PSEs which are functioning as the autonomous organisations such as Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Airports Authority of India (AAI) have been kept out of the policy.
- ✓ The PSUs in the non-strategic sectors like steel and hospitality will either be privatised or closed

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On March 12, the Supreme Court – ruled that no serving bureaucrat could be given additional charge of state election commissioner (SEC)**
- ✓ The apex court noted that independence of ECs was sacrosanct under the Constitution and only truly independent people having no links with the government could hold such high offices in ECs
- ✓ A bench of Justices R F Nariman, B R Gavai and Hrishikesh Roy criticized the Goa government for giving additional charge of SEC to its law secretary
- ✓ In this regard, the SC held that the decision made a mockery of the constitutional mandate that state ECs must be truly independent bodies

INTERNATIONAL

- **Japan and Australia - have collaborated for a \$500 million pilot project that produces liquefied hydrogen from brown coal**

- ✓ The project involves the commercial production and overseas export of liquefied hydrogen through cargo ships
 - ✓ It seeks to create the first-ever international supply chain for the liquefied hydrogen.
 - ✓ The project will produce hydrogen by reacting coal with oxygen and steam under high heat and pressure with carbon dioxide & other gases emitted as the by-products.
 - ✓ The project is located in the Brown Coal Reserves in the state of Victoria, Australia and is run by Kawasaki Heavy industries.
 - ✓ It will help Japan to meet its “net zero emission” target by 2050.
 - ✓ Japan aims to boost the annual hydrogen demand by ten times amounting to 20 million tonnes by 2050.
 - ✓ Japan is the fifth largest energy consumer of the world
 - ✓ Australia dominates the global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade.
 - ✓ Brown coal, also known as Lignite, is a soft, brown, combustible, sedimentary rock which is formed from the naturally compressed peat.
 - ✓ It is the lowest rank of coal because of its relatively low heat content.
 - ✓ The coal, with a carbon content of around 25 to 35%, is exclusively used as a fuel for steam-electric power generation.
- **On March 11, the European Parliament - has declared the entire European Union as “LGBTIQ Freedom Zone”**
- ✓ The European Union resolution declares that the “LGBTIQ persons anywhere in European Union will enjoy the freedom to live and publicly show their sexual orientation & gender identity without any fear of intolerance, persecution or discrimination”
 - ✓ The resolution further adds that the authorities at all the levels of the governance across the European Union shall protect and promote the equality and fundamental rights of all including the LGBTIQ.
 - ✓ The resolution was passed by 492 votes in favour, 141 against and 46 absentations
 - ✓ It is in response to Poland’s local authority declaration of “LGBT ideology-free zones” two years ago
 - ✓ In Poland, the same-sex relationships are not legally recognised.
 - ✓ It has already banned the same-sex couples to adopt the children together.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **On March 11, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) - reviewed their cooperation in the space arena including the earth observation, lunar cooperation, satellite navigation, space situational awareness and professional exchange programme.**

- ✓ The agencies also agreed to collaborate for activities on rice crop area and air quality monitoring using the data from satellites.
- ✓ LUPEX mission is the joint Lunar Polar Exploration Mission on which India and Japan are already working.
- ✓ The mission aims to send lander and rover to the south pole of the Moon by around 2024.
- ✓ Recently, India had collaborated with Italy in order to explore the opportunities in space science, earth observation, robotic & human exploration.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The first Meeting of the BRICS Contact Group on Economic and Trade Issues (CGETI) - was held from March 9th till 11th, under India's Chairship**
- ✓ The theme for India's Chairship for 2021 would be 'BRICS @ 15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation, and Consensus'.
- ✓ During the meeting, India presented the calendar of events for BRICS CGETI 2021
- ✓ The calendar included the priority areas for deliverables, schedule and scope of the MSME roundtable conference workshop on Services Statistics, and the BRICS Trade Fair.
- ✓ It was followed by several presentations made by the concerned department on proposed deliverables under BRICS CGETI track.
- ✓ Earlier, on February 19, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar launched a website for five-nation BRICS grouping
- ✓ The website was designed to provide a comprehensive snapshot of BRICS engagement and the exhaustive calendar of events during BRICS at 15 under the Chairmanship of India.
- ✓ The leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) met for the first time in St. Petersburg, Russia, on the margins of the G8 Outreach Summit in July 2006
- ✓ Later, the group was formalized as BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the UN Assembly in New York City
- ✓ The member countries of BRICS, which have a combined GDP of USD 16.6 trillion, comprise 41% of the world population, 24% of the world GDP, and 16% of the world trade.
- ✓ The 13th BRICS Summit will be held under India's Chairship in 2021, and it will be the third time India will host the BRICS Summit after 2012 and 2016.
- ✓ The summit will hold discussions around three pillars including Political & Security front, Economic & Financial front and Cultural & People to People exchanges

PERSONALITIES

- **On March 13, Justice Indu Malhotra – retires from Supreme Court after nearly three-year short tenure**



- ✓ She was the first woman advocate to be directly appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court from the Bar
 - ✓ She was the eighth woman SC Judge appointed on April 27, 2018.
 - ✓ Justice Indu Malhotra was the second woman to be designated 'Senior Advocate' by the Supreme Court in 2007.
 - ✓ She was a practising advocate in the Supreme Court prior to her being appointed as a judge.
 - ✓ Justice Malhotra was part of the SC's five-judge bench delivering the Navtej Singh Johar case verdict to decriminalise Section 377 and permit consensual sexual relationship in private among members of the LGBTQ community.
 - ✓ The judge was also part of the constitution bench that unanimously declared section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) – adultery – unconstitutional.
 - ✓ Justice Malhotra's was the lone dissent in a Constitution bench judgment that permitted entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, which traditionally barred entry of women in the age group of 10-50 years.
 - ✓ Further, She was also a part of the three-member in-house committee which had inquired into the sexual harassment allegations against the then CJI Ranjan Gogoi
 - ✓ Justice Indira Banerjee is the only woman judge now in the apex court.
 - ✓ With Justice Malhotra's retirement, the number of judges in the court will reduce to 29 as against the sanctioned strength of 34
 - ✓ Justice M. Fathima Beevi was the first woman Supreme Court judge, appointed 39 years after the court was established in 1950
 - ✓ She was followed by Justice Sujata V. Manohar and Justices Ruma Pal, Gyan Sudha Misra, Ranjana Prakash Desai and R. Banumathi
- **Gurdeep Singh - from the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party took the oath as a senator on March 12**
- ✓ Thus, Gurdeep becomes the first turban-clad Sikh representative in the upper house of Pakistan's parliament.
 - ✓ Singh, from the party of PM Imran Khan became the first turban-clad Sikh representative from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan's Senate on March 3.



- ✓ Singh secured 103 votes in the House of 145 whereas Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (Fazlur) candidate Ranjeet Singh secured just 25 votes and Asif Bhatti of the Awami National Party got 12.
- ✓ Singh hails from Swat district and is the first turban-clad Sikh representative from the province in the Senate.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Fugaku, the world's most powerful supercomputer – is fully ready and available for the research and shared use**



- ✓ The Japanese scientific research institute called RIKEN and Fujitsu started developing the “Fugaku” six years ago
- ✓ The Research Organization for the Information Science and Technology (RIST) of Japan has selected 74 projects which will use this supercomputer in the financial year 2021.
- ✓ This supercomputer has been developed with the aim of making the device core of the computing infrastructure of Japan.
- ✓ It was later used for the projects intended to combat COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020
- ✓ The supercomputer has topped the top-500 list, which is a “Supercomputer benchmark index”, for the second year in line.
- ✓ Fugaku has been named after an alternative name for Mount Fuji.
- ✓ The development of Fugaku, with a Fujitsu A64FX microprocessor, was commenced in the year 2014 as a successor to the K supercomputer.

- ✓ The computer is capable of performing 100 times the application capacity of K supercomputer.
- ✓ It has been developed to implement the high-resolution, large-scale and long-duration simulation.

SPORTS

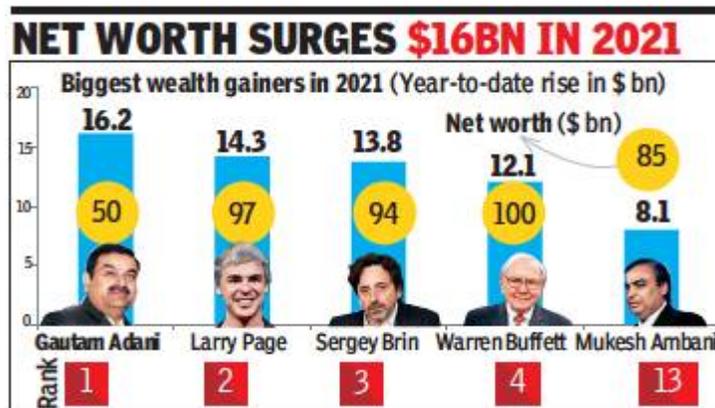
- **On March 12, India's Mithali Raj - has become the second woman cricketer after England's Charlotte Edwards to score 10,000 runs in international cricket.**
- ✓ In an international career spanning 22 years, the 38-year-old skipper of India's 50-over team reached the coveted mark in her 212th one day international.



- ✓ Thus, Mithali became the first Indian woman cricketer to achieve the mark
- ✓ Mithali has reached 10,001 runs at an average of 46.73 in 291 innings (311 matches), while Edwards has scored 10,273 runs (avg. 37.49) in 316 innings (309 matches).
- ✓ Mithali made her international debut in June 1999 against Ireland
- ✓ Among her other achievements, Mithali is the only female cricketer who has scored more than 6,000 runs in ODIs.
- ✓ Mithali is the first player to score 7 consecutive 50s in ODI Cricket.
- ✓ She has been the captain of the Indian women's cricket team since 2005 and is the only female cricketer who have captained in more than one ICC ODI World Cup finals during the years 2005 and 2017.
- ✓ She is also the first woman cricketer to complete 20 years in International cricket in the year 2019.
- ✓ Mithali was conferred the Arjuna Award in the year 2003 and Padma Shri in the year 2015

RANKINGS

- **Gautam Adani - has gained more wealth than any other person in the world this year, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index**
- ✓ The net worth of Adani has jumped \$16.2 billion to reach \$50 billion in the year 2021
- ✓ This has made him the year's biggest wealth gainer, beating even Elon Musk, who has overtaken Jeff Bezos in 2021 for the title of world's richest.
- ✓ Shares of all Adani group stocks, except one, have rallied at least 50% this year.



- ✓ The surge in wealth is massive in comparison with the \$8.1 billion added by Adani's compatriot and the richest person in Asia, Mukesh Ambani.
- ✓ Adani has been rapidly expanding his conglomerate, by acquiring ports, airports, data centers and coal mines in India, while proceeding with his controversial Carmichael coal project in Australia.
- ✓ Adani Total Gas, top performer in the group, has jumped almost 97% this year, while the flagship Adani Enterprises has advanced 87%.
- ✓ Adani Transmission went up by 77%, while Adani Power and Adani Ports have gained more than 50% this year.
- ✓ Adani Green Energy, after rising over 500% last year, has climbed 10% so far this year.

