

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 20, 2021**

### **TAMIL NADU**

- **On March 19, Lok Sabha – passed a bill that seeks to place seven castes under Devendrakula vellalars in Tamil Nadu**
- ✓ The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021 which amends the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 modifies the list of Scheduled Castes in Tamil Nadu by grouping seven castes into one nomenclature, Devendrakula Vellalar
- ✓ The castes include Devendrakulathan, Kadaiyan, Kalladi, Kudumban, Pallan, Pannadi and Vathiriyar.
- ✓ The Government of Tamil Nadu has proposed the modifications in the Scheduled Castes list and the Registrar General of India has given his concurrence to the proposed modifications.
- ✓ In February, during the visit to Chennai, the Prime Minister said that the Centre has accepted the community's demand to be listed by their collective name of 'Devendrakula Vellalar'.
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu government had earlier accepted a recommendation of a committee set up in 2019 headed by IAS officer Hansraj Verma to reclassify the seven sub sects under the generic name 'Devendrakula Vellalar' and forwarded it to the Centre.
- ✓ The seven communities combined have a presence in 28 of Tamil Nadu's 33 districts.
  
- **Tamil Nadu Transmission Corporation (TANTRANSCO) – to adopt a new hybrid technology for Fibre optic terminal equipment (FOTE) that intends to save more than ₹32 crore to the Government**
- ✓ The hybrid technology consists of combining two different processes, SDH (Synchronous Digital Hierarchy) and MPLS-TP (Multi Protocol label switching-transport profile)

- ✓ The new technology was approved for usage by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC)
- ✓ The hybrid SDH and MPLS-TP will be deployed in all the thirty eight 230-KV and above capacity sub-stations, while MPLS-TP technology will be deployed for FOTE in all 110-KV sub-stations
- ✓ FOTE systems are necessary for transfer of services like voice, data & video between the main load despatch centre (MLDC) located in Chennai to other load despatch centres across the state.
- ✓ SDH (Synchronous Digital Hierarchy) is the existing technology that has been in use for more than a decade now
- ✓ MPLS-TP (Multi Protocol label switching-transport profile), designed to speed up and shape network traffic in telecommunications transport networks, is the next most suitable operational flexible technology.
- ✓ For smooth transmission of technology, TANTRANSOCO has proposed a hybrid FOTE to handle data from both technologies.
- ✓ The cost savings arise from the fact that SDH equipment costs around ₹6.7 lakh as against MPLS-TP equipment costing just ₹1.7 lakh

## NATIONAL

- **On March 19, Lok Sabha - passed a bill to amend the Mines and Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act through voice vote**
- ✓ Union minister for Mines, Pralhad Joshi moved the bill in the lower house
- ✓ The amendment aims to create more employment opportunities by allowing the entry of private enterprises and enhanced technology in mining activities.
- ✓ The reform in the mining sector would generate 55 lakh direct and indirect jobs.
- ✓ India produces 95 minerals and has same potential like South Africa and Australia but the mining sector was under-explored and India still had to import minerals like gold and coal, according to the Minister
- ✓ The bill will allow auctioning of mines that were allotted in 1980.
- ✓ At the base value, without adding premium, the 570-odd mines will fetch around ₹27 lakh crore to the Government exchequer
- ✓ The mining sector contributes 1.75% to the country's GDP at present, but the proposed reforms will raise the contribution to 2.5% by enabling auctioning of more number of mines
- ✓ The Bill removes the distinction between captive and non-captive mines and seeks to introduce an index-based mechanism by developing a National Mineral Index (NMI) for statutory payments.
- ✓ The National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET), to see the functioning of the mining sector, will be made an autonomous body.
- **On March 19, the Union Government – written to Chief Justice S A Bobde, who retires on April 23, to recommend the name of his successor**

- ✓ This is as per the convention that has been followed since the collegium took over the process of selecting judges in the 1990s.
- ✓ Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad wrote to CJI Bobde requesting him to nominate his successor, who would be appointed as the 48th CJI



- ✓ **Justice N V Ramana, the senior-most among SC judges, is in line to succeed Justice Bobde as the next CJI.**
  - ✓ As per convention, the CJI recommends the name of the senior-most SC judge as successor a month ahead of his retirement.
  - ✓ Hence, it is expected that CJI Bobde will recommend Justice Ramana's name as his successor by March 23
  - ✓ The appointment to the office of the Chief Justice of India should be of the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court considered fit to hold the office, as per the memorandum of procedure for appointment of CJI
  - ✓ The law minister, at the appropriate time, would seek the recommendation of the outgoing CJI for the appointment of the next CJI.
  - ✓ After receipt of the recommendation of the CJI, the law minister will forward the recommendation to the prime minister who will advise the President in the matter of appointment.
  - ✓ Justice Ramana, who is in line to become the next CJI, will have tenure of one year, four months and three days.
- **India - has launched the "Gram Ujala Scheme" on March 19, 2021 to provide the cheaper LED bulbs in the rural areas.**
- ✓ The scheme was launched by the Union power and new and renewable energy minister, Raj Kumar Singh.
  - ✓ The ambitious scheme, first such in the country, aims to provide around 600 million LED bulbs to the rural areas at a lesser price of Rs. 10.
  - ✓ Under the scheme, the bulbs are offered by the state-run Energy Efficiency Services Ltd's subsidiary, Convergence Energy Services Ltd (CESL).
  - ✓ The scheme does not have government's support or comes under any subsidy.

- ✓ It will be financed entirely through the carbon credits which will be claimed under the “United Nations’ Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)”.
- ✓ The revenue from the carbon credit will contribute Rs. 60 per LED.
- ✓ This scheme also proposes to take back the incandescent and compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs of the rural consumers.
- ✓ After submitting the bulbs, the consumers will get 7 watt and 12-watt LED bulbs with three years’ warranty.
- ✓ In the first phase, the scheme was launched from Arrah district in Bihar.
- ✓ During the first phase, around 15 million LED bulbs will be distributed in the villages of Arrah (Bihar), Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Nagpur (Maharashtra), and western Gujarat.
- ✓ In the year 2014, the previous ‘Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Lighting for All’ (Ujala) scheme had reduced the LED bulb prices to Rs. 70 per piece from around Rs. 310.

## PERSONALITIES

- **Union Education Minister, Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ - took a ride in the ‘Energy Swaraj Yatra’ bus recently**
- ✓ The bus has been built by Dr Chetan Singh Solanki, a professor of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay



### IIT Bombay Energy Swaraj Yatra Bus



- ✓ The “Energy Swaraj Yatra” bus, which runs completely on the solar energy, consists of a complete work-cum-residential unit.
- ✓ Dr Solanki has been travelling on the bus to raise awareness regarding the use of solar power.
- ✓ The bus allows the occupant to perform all the daily activities such as bathing, cooking, sleeping, working, meeting and training.
- ✓ The bus is fitted with 3.2 kW solar panels and 6 kWh of battery storage capacity.
- ✓ The Energy Swaraj Yatra began in 2020 and will continue till 2030.
- ✓ Dr Solanki has been recently conferred with the Brand Ambassador of Solar Energy of Madhya Pradesh by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

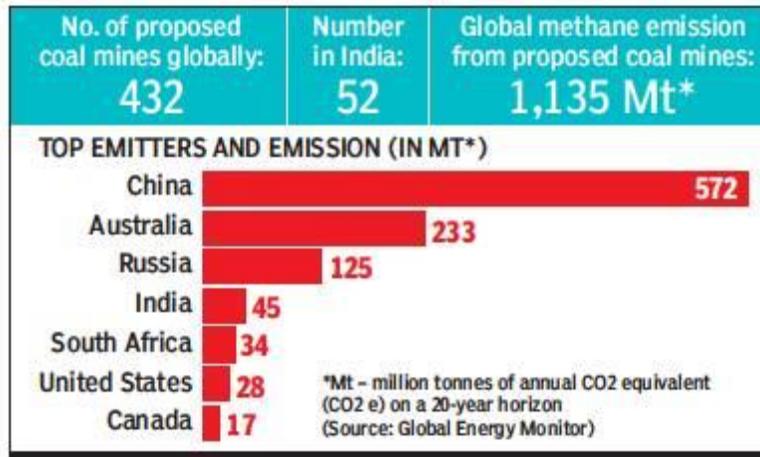
- **Chennai-based National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) – to set up three permanent observatories to monitor coral bleaching and identify long-term mitigation measures**



- ✓ The observatories will be permanent structures, unlike the buoys off Chennai coast which are used to measure coastal water quality.
  - ✓ They will measure all critical climate change and water quality parameters like sea surface temperature, dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll, blue algae, and water level variations.
  - ✓ Researchers will also dive deep into the ocean to collect underwater data periodically.
  - ✓ Further, the data from the observatories will be validated with satellite data.
  - ✓ NCCR, which monitors the country's coastal water quality, has a field office in Mandapam, from where a research team monitors 128 coral species in the 21 islands at Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay region.
  - ✓ In 2018, the lab started coral restoration work in the Hare and Manoli islands, where polyps were tied to small concrete slabs on an iron frame and placed at 3m depth.
- **On March 19, environmental group, Global Energy Monitor – released a new report on climate impact of methane emissions from proposed coal mines worldwide**
  - ✓ The countries with the highest amount of methane emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e20) from proposed coal mines are China (572 Million tonnes), Australia (233 Mt), Russia (125 Mt), India (45 Mt), South Africa (34 Mt), the US (28 Mt), and Canada (17 Mt).
  - ✓ The report noted that the proposed coal mines in China, the US, Turkey, Poland, and Uzbekistan could emit 40-50% of their greenhouse gas emissions in the form of methane, making them among the gassiest proposed coal mines in the world
  - ✓ The first-of-its-kind analysis surveyed 432 proposed coal mines globally and modelled methane emission estimates at the individual mine level

- ✓ Unless efforts are taken, methane emissions from these proposed mines would amount to 13.5 Mt of methane annually, a 30% increase over current methane emissions.

## METHANE EMISSIONS LINKED TO NEW COAL MINES



- ✓ According to the report, coal mines currently under development would emit 1,135 million tonnes (Mt) of annual CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) on a 20-year horizon and 378 Mt of annual CO<sub>2</sub>e on a 100-year horizon.
- ✓ Based on a 20-year horizon, estimated emissions would exceed the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the US coal plants (952 Mt in 2019).
- ✓ Methane is the second biggest contributor to global warming after CO<sub>2</sub>, with a shorter atmospheric lifetime, but much stronger potency and warming potential.
- ✓ During mining, fractured coal seams and surrounding strata emit methane into the atmosphere.

## DEFENCE

- **On March 19, Ministry of Defence - signed a ₹ 1,188 crore contract with defence PSU Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) for the supply of 4,960 Milan-2T anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) to the Army.**
- ✓ These second-generation Tandem warhead ATGMs have a range of 1,850 metres
- ✓ The missiles will be produced by BDL under the license from MBDA Missile Systems of France.
- ✓ These missiles can be fired from both the ground and vehicle-based launchers.
- ✓ They will be inducted in the 13-lakh Army, which is facing an acute shortage of advanced missiles to thwart enemy tanks.
- ✓ Last year, the Army had decided in favour of an emergency induction of a limited number of the third-generation Israeli Spike ATGMs
- ✓ This was to meet immediate operational requirements amidst the military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh.

- ✓ The induction of indigenous third-generation Nag ATGMs is delayed for a longer period
- ✓ In this scenario, the Army is largely equipped with the Milan-2T and Konkurs (4-km) ATGMs, which have been produced by BDL under licence from French and Russian companies for years.

## SPORTS

- **Discus thrower, Kamalpreet Kaur – booked her Tokyo Olympics berth with a national record of 65.06m on the final day of Federation Cup in Patiala on March 19**



- ✓ Kamalpreet, who hails from Badal village in Sri Muktsar Sahib, broke the nine-year-old national record of 64.76m held by 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Krishna Poonia.
- ✓ Veteran Seema Punia finished second with a best effort of 62.64m and Sonal Goyal of Delhi took the bronze with 52.11m.
- ✓ The Tokyo Olympics qualifying mark is 63.50m.
- ✓ Hima Das of Assam won the women's 200m race with a new meet record time of 23.21 seconds.
- ✓ Hima, who has a personal best time of 23.10 seconds, is yet to qualify for the Olympics.
- ✓ The Olympic qualifying mark is 22.80 seconds.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu's S Dhanalakshmi, who stunned Hima Das in 100m sprint, had to settle for the silver with a time of 23.39 seconds.
- ✓ Archana Suseendran of Tamil Nadu finished third with 23.60s.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu's Dharun Ayyasamy and Vithya Ramraj won men and women's 400m hurdles with a timing of 50.16 and 59.59 seconds respectively.

## RANKINGS

- **The United Nation Sustainable Development Solutions Network - has released its annual report called "World Happiness Report, 2021" on the eve of "World Happiness day" which is observed on March 20**

# HAPPIEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD

- |                |                |                    |                    |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Finland     | 7. Germany     | 13. Ireland        | 18. United Kingdom |
| 2. Iceland     | 8. Norway      | 14. United States  | 19. China          |
| 3. Denmark     | 9. New Zealand | 15. Canada         | 20. France         |
| 4. Switzerland | 10. Austria    | 16. Czech Republic |                    |
| 5. Netherlands | 11. Israel     | 17. Belgium        |                    |
| 6. Sweden      | 12. Australia  |                    |                    |



- ✓ India is ranked at 139<sup>th</sup> position out of 149 countries in the annual report, which was once again topped by Finland
- ✓ The Nordic nation is followed by Iceland, Denmark, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Norway.
- ✓ United States was ranked at 19<sup>th</sup> position.
- ✓ India's neighbours, Pakistan is on 105<sup>th</sup>, Bangladesh on 101<sup>st</sup> and China on 84<sup>th</sup>, according to the report.
- ✓ Afghanistan was titled as the 'Least Happy' country, followed by Zimbabwe (148), Rwanda (147), Botswana (146) and Lesotho (145).
- ✓ India was ranked at 144<sup>th</sup> position out of 156 countries in the "world happiness report, 2020".
- ✓ Ten countries who have been ranked behind India in the year 2021 are Burundi, Yemen, Tanzania, Haiti, Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **World Sparrow Day – March 20**



- ✓ The Day is observed every year to raise awareness about protecting the house sparrows, whose population has been dwindling of late due to noise pollution
- ✓ The main purpose of celebrating the day is to highlight the significance and importance of conservation and protection of the sparrows
- ✓ World Sparrow Day is an initiative started by the Nature Forever Society of India along with the Eco-Sys Action Foundation of France.
- ✓ The Society was started by a dedicated conservationist Mohammed Dilawar.
- ✓ Dilawar was named by the Time as one of the "Heroes of the Environment" in 2008.
- ✓ The first World Sparrow Day was celebrated in 2010 by carrying out different various kinds of activities and events like art competitions, awareness campaigns, and sparrow processions
- ✓ The Theme for World Sparrow Day is "I Love Sparrows"

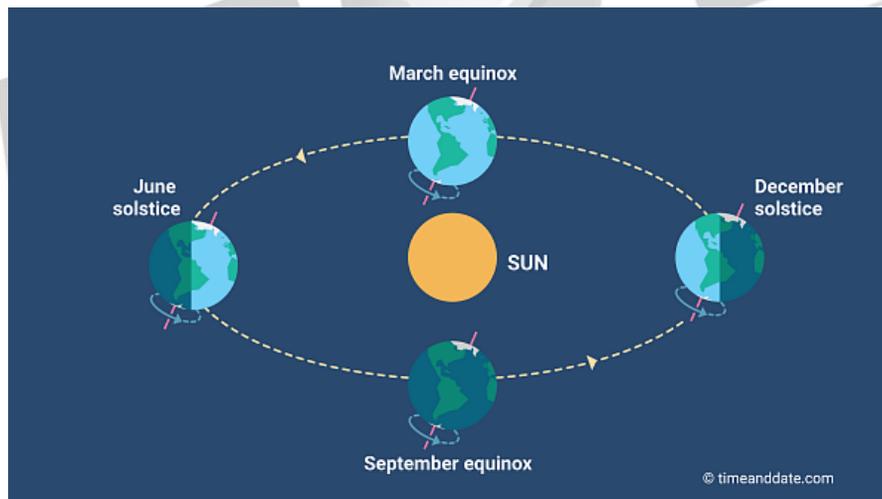
➤ **International Day of Happiness – March 20**



- ✓ The Day highlights the importance of 'happiness' in the overall well-being of human beings and the important role it plays in deciding the objectives of public policies

- ✓ Happiness is intrinsically related to the equitable economic growth, which in turn lead to the sustainable development of the society
- ✓ Theme 2021 - "Happiness for All, Forever"
- ✓ The International day of Happiness was first observed by the United Nations in the year 2013.
- ✓ The Day was observed following years of campaigning by the United Nations adviser, Jayme Illien who grew up in a Mother Teresa's orphanages in Kolkata.
- ✓ The resolution to observe the day was passed on July 12, 2012 after the initiation by Bhutan.
- ✓ Bhutan had emphasised the importance of "National Happiness" over "National Income" since 1970s.
- ✓ The country had also adopted the concept of "Gross National Happiness" over the "Gross National Product" for guiding the country
- ✓ Gross Domestic or National Happiness is an index that is used to measure the collective happiness and well-being of the population.
- ✓ The Gross National Happiness Index is instituted as the goal in the constitution of Bhutan which enacted in July 2008.

➤ **Spring Equinox or Vernal Equinox – March 20, 2021**



- ✓ The duration of the spring equinox will be of 12 hours, 7 minutes this year, with the sunrise taking place at 6:25 am and sunset at 6:32 pm
- ✓ Usually, the spring equinox occurs on March 20, which is considered as the first day of the spring as per the astronomical calculation of the seasons
- ✓ However, it may occur on any date from March 19 to 21 due to astronomical variations
- ✓ Equinoxes occur twice every year, one on March 20th or 21st and the second on September 22nd or 23rd.
- ✓ The dates are based on the two equinoxes and solstices.
- ✓ The astronomical spring will end on June 21, 2021 which is called as the summer solstice.

- ✓ The Equinoxes have got their name from the Latin word which represents 'equal night'.
- ✓ The equinoxes mark the two points in a year when equator remains as the closest part of Earth to sun.
- ✓ On this day, the sun passes exactly directly above the equator.
- ✓ An equinox occurs when the tilt of the Earth's axis is neither inclined away from nor towards the Sun.
- ✓ This leads to an almost equal duration of day and night on an Equinox day.
- ✓ During the spring equinox, the northern and southern hemispheres will share the sunlight equally.
- ✓ It means that Earth gets 12 hours of daylight and darkness during those days.
- ✓ The Vernal Equinox is also known as the Northward equinox.
- ✓ Also termed as March Equinox, it is an astronomical event that marks the beginning of spring season in the Northern Hemisphere and the Autumn season in the Southern Hemisphere (Fall Equinox).
- ✓ Spring Equinox will take place across Asia, the US, Canada, Europe and Northern Hemisphere, while, Australia, South Africa, South America and New Zealand will witness Fall Equinox.

