



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 21, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu government - ordered closure of schools for Classes IX, X and XI from March 22 till further notice**
- ✓ The decision follows the rise in Covid-19 cases across the state
- ✓ Physical classes for Class XII students, however, will continue as they have to appear for board exams.
- ✓ Classes and hostels for these students are allowed to function by adhering to SOPs, as per the government
- ✓ The board exams for other board Class X students, including CBSE and ICSE will be held as announced.
- ✓ The schools are permitted to hold special classes for these students and operate hostels
- ✓ As on March 20, at least 143 students of 14 schools in Thanjavur district had tested positive.
- ✓ The state recorded 1,243 fresh cases on March 20 after crossing the 1,000-mark for the first time in 81 days on March 19

STATES

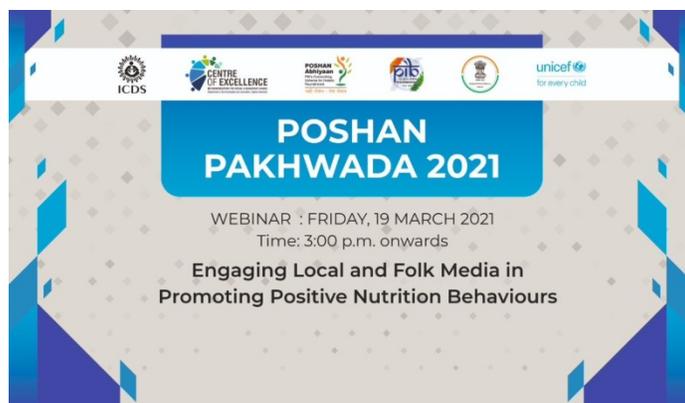
- **On March 20, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma - announced setting up of Shri Ram University in Ayodhya.**
- ✓ The project worth over ₹5,000 crore was proposed by a private entity
- ✓ The university is proposed to come up by 2022.
- ✓ The institute will teach Vedic maths (a collection of techniques/sutras to solve mathematical problem sets in a fast and easy way), Jyotish Kendra, Karma Kand (ritual services proffered by swamis or religious Brahmins in exchange for dakshina) and research on Gita, Vedic and other religious scriptures, including the Ramayana

- **On March 18, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot – announced a new Universal Health Scheme (UHS) called “Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Yojana”, which is to be launched on May 1, 2021**
- ✓ This universal health coverage scheme was announced in the State budget on February 24 at an outlay of Rs. 3,500 crore
- ✓ Under the scheme, cashless health services will be provided to all the families in Rajasthan for a health cover up to Rs. 5 lakh
- ✓ The “Rajasthan Model of Public Health” was announced during the state budget for 2021-22.
- ✓ Under this model, the state government will table “Right to Health Bill” with emphasis on the rights of patients for health care
- ✓ These measures are to be taken in accordance with the recommendations of World Health Organisation (WHO).

- **The Jharkhand government – has recently launched the “SAAMAR Campaign” to tackle malnutrition in the state**
- ✓ The term ‘SAAMAR’ stands for “Strategic Action for Alleviation of Malnutrition and Anaemia Reduction”.
- ✓ The campaign aims at identifying anaemic women and malnourished children within 1000 days target
- ✓ It involves the participation of various state departments with school management committees, tribal groups & gram sabhas to make them aware of the nutritional behavior required
- ✓ Under the campaign, all the Anganwadi centres will be engaged in identifying anaemic women and children who are undernourished

NATIONAL

- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development - is celebrating the Poshan Pakhwada from March 16 to March 31, 2021.**



- ✓ The Department of Women & Child Development and the Social Welfare Department will be the nodal departments to organise the Poshan Pakhwada across various states and Union Territories.

- ✓ The key focus areas of the Pakhwada are to address the nutritional challenges using the Food Forestry and to organize the Poshan Panchayats.
 - ✓ Under the Pakhwada, the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) working under the Ministry of AYUSH, will distribute 4 samplings of the nutritional rich plants to each of the Anganwadi Centers.
 - ✓ The ministry will also be organizing the awareness campaign on the topics including the malnutrition prevalence and its consequences, food forestry, Poshan Vatika, identification of SAM children and its management.
 - ✓ The Poshan Abhiyaan was launched on March 8, 2018 by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
 - ✓ The mission seeks to improve the nutritional outcomes and brings about the behavioral change at the individual and community level so as to achieve the desired goals of the mission.
 - ✓ The Poshan Maah was observed in the month of September 2020.
 - ✓ This was organized at the Anganwadi level.
- **The Union Minister of Women & Child Development, Smriti Irani – announced that the government will soon establish women helpline centres in foreign countries to ensure the safety and security of overseas Indian women**
- ✓ This was announced by the Minister in reply to a supplementary question in Rajya Sabha
 - ✓ These women helpline centres are being set up with the help of Ministry of external affairs in foreign countries.
 - ✓ **The union minister also informed that the Ministry of Women and Child Development has associated with NIMHANS for the mental health outreach of the children and will be funding the project SAMVAD.**
 - ✓ This project aims to provide psychological help to the children in distress.
 - ✓ It aims for the mental health outreach with respect to the child survivors of trafficking, child in conflict with law or the children who are abandoned and orphaned.
 - ✓ Project SAMVAD refers to “Support, Advocacy and Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances and Diseases”.
 - ✓ Launched in June 2021, the project is being run in association with the Panchayati Raj Ministry at a total cost of ₹56 crore for the period of five years.
 - ✓ Till date, a total of 41,000 personnel have been trained across 28 States to ensure early intervention and screening of the children having mental concerns
 - ✓ The centre has also collaborated with NALSA and the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure a fair compensation for the acid attack victims.
 - ✓ NIMHANS is “National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences”, located in Bengaluru.
 - ✓ It operates autonomously under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

- **On March 18, the Rajya Sabha - has passed the “Insurance Amendment Bill 2021” that seeks to amend the Insurance Act, 1938.**
- ✓ The bill increases the maximum foreign investment allowed in an insurance company from 49% to 74%
- ✓ It also has a provision for removal of restrictions on ownership and control of the insurance companies
- ✓ However, as per the bill, majority of directors on the board and key management persons will have to be resident Indians.
- ✓ Further, the bill specifies that at least half of directors have to be the independent, which also ensures the accountability.
- ✓ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the Bill, amid criticism from the Opposition parties on the clause enabling “control and ownership” by foreign investors.
- ✓ Since 2015, in the last five years, ₹26,000 crore foreign investment has come in and 12 new insurance firms have opened up, said the Finance Minister
- ✓ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed during the Union Budget 2020-21 to raise the foreign direct investment (FDI) in Indian insurance companies to 74%.
- ✓ This move aims to provide access to fresh capital to some of the insurance companies in the country
- ✓ As a “Union List Subject”, Insurance is listed in the Seventh Schedule of the constitution of India.
- ✓ Thus, this sector can only be legislated by Central Government.
- ✓ The insurance sector was opened up to foreign investment in 2000 by allowing 26% FDI
- ✓ In 2015, the BJP government had brought another amendment hiking the FDI limit to 49%.

- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) – are jointly sponsoring the renewable energy solutions by Indian Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs).**
- ✓ They have announced a \$41 million-loan guarantee program in order to finance the investments by Indian SMEs towards the renewable energy solutions and rooftop solar installations
- ✓ The SMEs accounts for 48% of the total energy consumed in the industrial sector of the country
- ✓ The proposed investments in the solar solutions will help in improving the access to clean, steady and affordable energy
- ✓ USAID and DFC have partnered with New York-based Encourage Capital to tackle the problem.
- ✓ They have also collaborated with the two Indian non-banking financial companies called cKers Financial and woman-owned Electronica Finance Ltd (EFL).

- **The government has set up 11 committees – to expedite the country’s transition from a linear to a circular economy across 11 focus areas.**
 - ✓ The initiative will be led by the concerned line ministries apart from officials from Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and NITI Aayog
 - ✓ The 11 focus areas are - Municipal solid waste & liquid waste, electronic waste, scrap metal (ferrous & non-ferrous), solar panels, gypsum, lithium-ion batteries, agriculture waste, toxic hazardous industrial waste, used oil waste, tyre and rubber recycling and end-of-life vehicles (elvs).
 - ✓ Circular economy is an economic system which aims at eliminating the waste, minimize the resource inputs and ensure continual use of resources.
 - ✓ This method seeks the reuse, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing, recycling and sharing in order to create a closed-loop system.
 - ✓ It also minimises the creation of pollution, waste and carbon emissions.

- **India - has developed its first indigenously developed App Store called “Mobile Seva Appstore”**
 - ✓ The app store hosts around 965 apps of several domains and categories of public services
 - ✓ This was informed by the Minister for Electronics and IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad, in a written reply to Rajya Sabha
 - ✓ This Indian App Store will be available for free of cost in the initial phases.
 - ✓ The minister also informed that, India is the largest user of mobile apps.
 - ✓ As per India App Market Statistics report 2021, around 5% of the apps on Android belongs to the Indian Apps developers.
 - ✓ The Mobile Seva is an initiative which has been launched by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
 - ✓ It is implemented by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC).
 - ✓ The Mobile Seva Appstore hosts various government applications, public services and also the private developers Apps
 - ✓ It will be based upon service-oriented architecture and cloud-based technologies.
 - ✓ It seeks to provide a mobile application hosting platform for the Indian mobile application developers

- **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – to collaborate with USO India and Toonz Media Group on a water conservation awareness programme for students.**
 - ✓ Under the programme, students will create animation videos which will be unveiled as part of “H2Ooooh! – Waterwise Program”
 - ✓ The videos will be unveiled on the occasion of World Water Day on March 22, 2021.
 - ✓ This programme is organised in partnership with the National Mission for Clean Ganga, Water Digest magazine, United Schools Organization India (USO India) and Toonz Media Group.

- ✓ The H2Ooooh! – Waterwise Program programme was launched by the UNESCO, New Delhi in September 2020.
- ✓ The programme encourages school children in the age group of 6-14 years to submit story ideas, videos and cartoons with respect to the rising water crisis in India.
- ✓ Since the launch of the programme, around 17,000 students of 43 schools across India have participated in it.
- **India – to conduct pilot studies to estimate thickness of Himalayan glaciers using airborne radar surveys**
 - ✓ The studies will be conducted in the Lahaul – Spiti basin of the Himachal Pradesh initially and later in the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra sub-basins
 - ✓ This pilot proposal was initiated by the Goa-based “National Centre for Polar & Ocean Research (NCPOR)” under the Ministry of Earth Sciences”.
 - ✓ The centre is responsible of administering the Indian Antarctic Programme.
 - ✓ It also maintains the Antarctic research stations namely the Bharati & Maitri of India
 - ✓ The project assumes significance considering the recent glacier bursts in Uttarakhand during February 2021

INTERNATIONAL

- **The European Union – adopts ‘Sinatra Doctrine’ to counter China’s growing influence in Europe through its divide and rule policy**
 - ✓ The Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) member countries of EU have accepted the “Sinatra Doctrine” as a counter to the increasing China’s aggressiveness in the region
 - ✓ The Sinatra Doctrine will be based on two broader concepts –
 - ✓ Continuing mutual cooperation with China to address the global challenges like Covid-19, climate change & regional conflicts and
 - ✓ Strengthening the strategic sovereignty of European Union by protecting the technological sectors of its economy
 - ✓ The name ‘Sinatra doctrine’ given by Soviet government of Mikhail Gorbachev, was used to describe their policy to allow the neighbouring Warsaw Pact states to determine their internal affairs.
 - ✓ The name was taken from the song “My Way” which was popularized by Frank Sinatra.
 - ✓ The 17+1 initiative of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also known as the “Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries”.
 - ✓ The initiative promotes the business and investment relations between China and 17 countries of CEE.
 - ✓ The Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) member countries include- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary,

Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Serbia and Slovenia.

- ✓ The Chinese investments in 12 EU member states which were participating in “17+1 initiative” were approximately 8.6 billion euros in the year 2010 to 2019.
- ✓ On the other hand, the Chinese investment in Finland for the same period was 12 billion euros and in Netherlands it was 10.2 billion euros.

- **The World Bank - has approved \$200 million to Bangladesh under the Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE) project.**
- ✓ The financial assistance will be used to provide support and services to low-income urban youths and the migrants who have been impacted by Covid-19 pandemic
- ✓ The RAISE project aims to benefit around 1.75 lakh poor urban youth by providing apprenticeship programme, training, micro & self-employment support, and counselling.
- ✓ It also seeks to help around 2 lakh migrants who returned to Bangladesh for re-migration.
- ✓ To provide the support and services, 32 district welfare centres will be set up across Bangladesh.
- ✓ The concessional lending will be provided by the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA) over a 30-year term with the grace period of 5 years.

- **On March 13, Russian scientists – have launched one of the world's biggest underwater space telescope to view deep into the universe from Lake Baikal.**



- ✓ Named ‘Baikal-GVD’, the telescope was submerged to a depth of 750-1,300 meters (2,500-4,300 feet), around four kilometres from the lake's shore.
- ✓ The deep underwater telescope, which has been under construction since 2015, is designed to observe neutrinos, the smallest particles currently known

- ✓ Neutrinos are very hard to detect and water is an effective medium for doing so.
 - ✓ The telescope is the largest neutrino detector in the Northern Hemisphere
 - ✓ It is the result of collaboration between scientists from the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Russia and Slovakia.
 - ✓ The floating observatory comprises of strings along with the spherical glass and the attached stainless-steel modules.
 - ✓ The Baikal telescope will be an alternative to 'Ice Cube' which is a giant neutrino observatory under the Antarctic ice at the US research station located at the South Pole.
 - ✓ Lake Baikal is the largest freshwater lake by volume in the world, comprising of 22 to 23% of the fresh surface water.
 - ✓ The oldest lake in the world is also the World's deepest lake with the maximum depth of 1,642 m.
 - ✓ Lake Baikal has been designated as the World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the year 1996
- **The Parliament of Spain - has voted in favour of a new law that legalises the euthanasia on March 18, 2021.**
- ✓ The law was passed with 202 votes in favour, 141 votes against and two abstentions in the chamber of 350-seat.
 - ✓ Following this, Spain has become the fourth European nation that allow the terminally-ill or gravely-injured patients to end their life
 - ✓ The other four EU Nation include Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg.
 - ✓ The Spanish legislation will allow passive euthanasia in which the medical staff will intentionally end a life to relieve the pain and suffering.
 - ✓ This will be done, only for a Spanish national or its legal residents, by stopping the life-saving medical treatments.
 - ✓ The patients must also be "fully aware and conscious" while making the request.
 - ✓ The request must also be approved by the second medic and by the evaluation body.
- **The European Union (EU) comprising of 27 member economies - has joined the "Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) initiative" of India.**
- ✓ The EU joined this initiative following its endorsement of the charter of the CDRI.
 - ✓ CDRI is an international coalition of countries, United Nations (UN) agencies, private sectors, multilateral development banks and academic institutions.
 - ✓ The initiative was launched with the objective of promoting research, sustainable development and knowledge sharing in the areas of infrastructure risk management, financing, and recovery mechanisms.
 - ✓ The CDRI Initiative was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the year 2019 at the UN Climate Change Summit.
 - ✓ The initiative also focuses on developing disaster-resilience in the ecological, social, and economic infrastructural areas.

- ✓ This initiative also aligns with EU's objectives of "European Green Deal" and "EU Strategy on Adaptation".

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **Indian Ambassador to China, Vikram Misri - participated in the "Nowruz" festival ceremony, which was held at the Secretariat of "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)" in Beijing on March 20**



- ✓ Nowruz is the Iranian and Persian New Year Festival.
- ✓ The celebration was attended by various diplomats of other SCO member countries which include China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and India.
- ✓ During the celebrations, the Indian embassy showcased the performances of Yoga, Kathak and Indian cuisine.
- ✓ On the occasion, the Indian Ambassador also planted a Pine tree sapling as a symbol of nurturing of the friendship between India and SCO.
- ✓ The New Year starts on the spring equinox or the March equinox which is marked as the first day of Farvardin, the first month of Iranian solar calendar.
- ✓ The Nowruz has been celebrated since 11th century CE when the Iranian calendar was reformed
- ✓ The United Nations officially recognized "International Day of Nowruz" in the year 2010 with the adoption of UN resolution 64/253.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On March 18, Russia - hosted a peace conference between the Afghan government under Ashraf Ghani and the Taliban in Moscow**
- ✓ It was also attended by the international observers to help Afghanistan to resume its stalled peace process.
- ✓ It was the first meeting among the three planned international peace meetings.
- ✓ Three meetings have been planned ahead of the deadline of May 1, 2021 for the final withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan.
- ✓ This date for the withdrawal of the troops from Afghanistan was agreed upon as per a deal between U.S. and Taliban that was signed in 2019.



- ✓ Russia is mediating the Afghanistan Peace Process because the talks in Doha between Afghan government and Taliban got stalled.
- ✓ Two peace treaties have been signed as a part of various peace processes till now.
 - ✓ The first treaty was signed in September 2016 between Afghan government and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin militant group
 - ✓ The second peace treaty was signed on February 29, 2020 between the U.S. and Taliban.
- ✓ The 2020 treaty had called for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan within 14 months if Taliban follows the terms of agreement.
- ✓ But after this agreement, there was a surge in insurgent attacks against the security forces of Afghanistan.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Researchers from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research – have developed an integrated system for producing artificial Photosynthesis, which is a natural process of reducing the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.**
 - ✓ This artificial photosynthesis (AP) harnesses solar energy and converts the captured carbon dioxide to carbon monoxide (CO), which can be used as a fuel for internal combustion engines.
 - ✓ In artificial photosynthesis (AP), scientists are essentially conducting the same fundamental process in natural photosynthesis but with simpler nanostructures
 - ✓ The team of Scientists has designed and fabricated the integrated catalytic system which is based on the metal-organic framework (MOF-808) comprising of a photosensitizer and a catalytic centre
 - ✓ The photosensitizer can harness the solar power while the catalytic centre in turn reduces the CO₂.
 - ✓ The photosensitizer is a molecule which absorbs light and transfer electron from incident light to a nearby molecule.
 - ✓ It is chemically called “ruthenium bipyridyl complex ([Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂])”.
 - ✓ The framework also comprises of a catalytic part called rhenium carbonyl complex ([Re(CO)₅Cl]).

- ✓ The catalyst has the capability to oxidize the water in order to produce oxygen.

OBITUARY

- **G V Ramakrishna (91 years), former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)**



- ✓ The second chairman of Sebi, who created a modern regulatory framework for stockmarket passed away on March 20 in Chennai after a brief illness.
- ✓ Born in 1930 in Bengaluru, Ramakrishna started his career as a biochemist before opting to join the civil services in 1952.
- ✓ Early in his career he went to Harvard University for his Master in Public Administration
- ✓ In his 50 years of government service, GVR, as he was popularly called, was tasked with several assignments that included the minister of economic affairs at the country's embassy in Washington in 1972.
- ✓ He retired from the IAS in 1988 but his expertise continued to be sought that he was appointed India's Ambassador to the European Economic Community (European Union) in 1989.
- ✓ Known for his stellar administrative performance, Ramakrishna was appointed chairman of market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in 1990 when it lacked legal status.
- ✓ He was known for strongly advocating a ban of the badla stock trading system (BSE's carry forward system) in 1994.
- ✓ He headed Sebi till 1994 and became the first chairman of Disinvestment Commission in 1996 for a three year term
- ✓ He was also an adviser in the Planning Commission in 1981 and a member in 1994.
- ✓ The Disinvestment Commission, chaired by Ramakrishna, was set up to advise, supervise, monitor and publicise gradual disinvestment of Indian PSUs.
- ✓ It has ceased to exist since May 2004.
- ✓ He became the Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh in 1983, and then worked with the union government in the ministries of finance, industry, steel, coal and petroleum.

- ✓ His final assignment with the government was as the chairman of the Construction Industry Development Council, which ended in June 2003.
- ✓ The council was set up jointly by the Planning Commission and the Construction Industry to achieve excellence in all areas of the construction activity

SPORTS

- **India's Yashaswini Singh Deswal - won the gold medal in the women's 10m air pistol in the ISSF Combined shooting World Cup at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi**



- ✓ Deswal shot 238.8 to finish on top of the podium in the eight-women final while another superstar Manu Bhaker managed 236.7 to settle for the silver medal
- ✓ Both Deswal and Bhaker are Tokyo Olympics quota holders.
- ✓ The other Indian in the final, Shri Nivetha, settled for the fourth place with 193.5.
- ✓ India bagged five medals on the second day of the competition
- ✓ Saurabh Chaudhary and Abhishek Verma settled for the silver and bronze medals respectively in the men's 10m air pistol final.
- ✓ Further, Divyansh Singh Pawar, World No. 1 in men's 10m air rifle, bagged bronze in men's 10m air rifle event

- **India's Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra – sealed a berth to Tokyo Olympics after winning the mixed doubles finals of the Asian Olympic qualifiers in Doha on March 20**



- ✓ Ranked No. 18 in the world, the Indian pair came up with a stunning come-from-behind win against the World No. 5 South Korean pair of Sangsu Lee and Jihee Jeon

- ✓ The Korean pair cruised to a 2-0 lead after winning the first two games, while the Indian pair took the remaining four sets to secure a 4-2 win
- **Tamil Nadu's Bhavani Devi - won her ninth title at the 31st Senior National fencing championships in Uttarakhand on March 20**



- ✓ Bhavani qualified for the Tokyo Olympics last week
- ✓ In the women's sabre final, Bhavani beat Kerala's Joshna Joseph to claim the national title

INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **International Day of Forests – March 21**



- ✓ The day aims to raise public awareness about the values, significance, and contributions of the forests to balance the life cycle on the earth
- ✓ Theme 2021 - "Forest Restoration: a path to recovery and well being."
- ✓ The UN General Assembly announced March 21 as International Forest Day in November 2012 to raise awareness of the significance of forests.
- ✓ The first UN International Forest Day was marked on March 21, 2013.
- ✓ The year 2011 was declared as the 'Year of Forests'
- ✓ During the day, countries around the world are motivated to undertake local, national, and international efforts to conduct activities for forests and trees, such as tree-planting campaigns
- ✓ According to the UN, deforestation accounts for 12 to 20% of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

- ✓ On the eve of the day, Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, launched a new Nagar Van Scheme to develop 200 urban forests that aims to create an additional carbon sink

