



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 24, 2021

### STATES

- **The Adani Group – to take control of Visakhapatnam-based Gangavaram Port (GPL) soon**
- ✓ In this regard, on March 23, Adani Port and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) signed an agreement with the private port's promoters, D V S Raju and family, to acquire their 58.1% stake with an investment of ₹ 3,604 crore.
- ✓ Earlier, APSEZ signed a deal to acquire Warburg Pincus's 31.5% stake in GPL for ₹1,954 crore
- ✓ The present deal will take the Adani Group's stake to 89.6% in the Visakhapatnam-based port operator.
- ✓ The acquisition of the GPL promoter's 30 crore shares will be done at ₹120 each, the same price for which Adani acquired the Warburg Pincus stake.
- ✓ The transaction is subject to the requisite regulatory approvals from Andhra Pradesh government and the Competition Commission of India, and is expected to be completed in six months
- ✓ Andhra Pradesh government holds 10.4% stake in the port

### NATIONAL

- **On March 23, the government - announced that every citizen above 45 years of age, irrespective of co-morbidities, will be eligible for Covid-19 vaccination from April 1**
- ✓ The decision seeks to expand coverage of the vaccination programme and step up the fight against a re-emergence of Covid-19 infections
- ✓ Around 34 crore people are estimated to be now eligible for vaccinations.
- ✓ At present, people above 60 and those in the 45-60 age group with specified co-morbidities are eligible for vaccinations.
- ✓ Till March 23, 2.1 crore people above 60 years and 45.6 lakh people between 45 to 60 years with specified co-morbidities were inoculated with the first dose of the vaccine.

- ✓ The cut-off date for the above 45 years category is those born before January 1, 1977.
  - ✓ The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting on March 23 based on recommendations from the National Expert Group for Vaccination Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC)
  - ✓ India administered over 5 crore vaccine doses, with 4.2 crore receiving the first dose, as on March 23
  - ✓ On March 23, India reported the highest single-day death toll from the Covid-19 pandemic this year with 276 fatalities
  - ✓ The country also recorded 47,281 fresh cases, the highest daily count since November 11, 2020
  - ✓ Maharashtra alone accounts for 62.71% of the total 3.45 lakh active cases in the country.
  - ✓ As much as 81% of 401 fresh samples sent by Punjab for genome sequencing have tested positive for the UK Covid variant that is suspected to be causing a second wave in the state.
- **The Centre - has dropped its decision to allow scientific field trials of transgenic crops, including the indigenously developed BT brinjal**
- ✓ The decision is attributed to the pressure of RSS-linked farm outfit Bhartiya Kisan Sangh and unwillingness of some states
  - ✓ The central regulator, Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, had allowed the trials of two new transgenic varieties of BT brinjal to be carried out in eight states - Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and West Bengal – during 2020-23.
  - ✓ The Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) and other groups urged Centre and state governments not to give 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) for biosafety field trials of Bt brinjal.
  - ✓ The GEAC had asked to begin the trial only after taking NOC from states concerned and confirmation of availability of isolated stretch of land for this purpose.
  - ✓ Field trial of GM crops is a mandatory requirement for applying for commercial release in future.
  - ✓ Presently, Bt cotton is the only GM crop that has been approved for commercial cultivation in the country.

## **SUPREME COURT VERDICT**

- **On March 23, the Supreme Court - ruled that waiver of interest on interest would apply to loans of all amounts in the six-month moratorium period from March 1 to August 31 last year during the Covid-19 pandemic**
- ✓ The verdict in this regard is passed by a bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R S Reddy and M R Shah

- ✓ The bench opined that there shall not be any charge of interest on interest/compound interest/penal interest for the period during the moratorium from any of the borrowers
- ✓ The government had waived off interest on interest for deferred EMIs for loans up to ₹2 crore taken by MSMEs, educational loans, auto and housing loans, personal loans and credit card dues.
- ✓ However, the bench ruled that there is no rationale to restrict such relief with respect to loans up to ₹2 crore only

## INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On March 23, India - abstained from voting on a contentious resolution on Sri Lanka at the United Nation Human Rights Council**
- ✓ The resolution sought to fix responsibility for war crimes and human rights violations against Tamils by Sri Lankan authorities during the country's long civil war, which ended in 2009.



- ✓ The resolution titled "Promotion of Reconciliation Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka" was taken up by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- ✓ It was sponsored by a group of countries that includes the UK, Germany, Canada, Malawi, Montenegro and North Macedonia
- ✓ The resolution was approved by 22 in favour, 11 against and 14 abstentions during the UNHRC's 46th regular session.
- ✓ China, Russia, Pakistan and Bangladesh rejected the resolution, while India's neighbor Nepal abstained from the voting
- ✓ In 2012 and 2013, India had voted in favour of similar resolutions at the human rights council.

### India's previous votes on resolutions on Sri Lanka at UN Human Rights Council

Year	Resolution	Main Sponsor/s	Votes (Y-N-A)	India's Vote
2009	Resolution S-11/1	Sri Lanka	29-12-6	Yes
2012	Resolution 19/2	United States	24-8-15	Yes
2013	Resolution 22/1	United States	25-13-8	Yes
2014	Resolution 25/1	US, UK, Mauritius, Montenegro, Macedonia	23-12-12	Abstain
2015	Resolution 30/1	North Macedonia, Montenegro, United Kingdom, United States		Adopted without a vote
2017	Resolution 34/1	North Macedonia, Montenegro, United Kingdom, United States		Adopted without a vote
2019	Resolution 40/1	Canada, Germany, North Macedonia, Montenegro, United Kingdom		Adopted without a vote

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- ✓ In 2014, though, it abstained from voting on a resolution calling for a probe into alleged war crimes.
- ✓ It has also voted in favour of a resolution sponsored by Sri Lanka at the special session in 2009.
- ✓ The resolution recognised the importance of preserving and analysing evidence relating to violations and abuses of human rights in Sri Lanka to ensure accountability
- ✓ It also seeks to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet to “collect, consolidate, analyse and preserve information and evidence” through a central international database
- ✓ The total cost for implementing the resolution, which calls for strengthening the capacity of the office of the High Commissioner, is around \$2.8 million.
- ✓ Last month, Sri Lanka unilaterally decided to develop the Colombo port’s East Container terminal through a state firm, despite having signed a trilateral pact with India and Japan last year
- ✓ Sri Lanka offered Indian conglomerate Adani Group to develop and operate West Container Terminal as a public-private partnership for 35 years.
- ✓ Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 13 to ask for India’s support for the Sri Lankan position in the UN body.

## ECONOMY

- **On March 23, Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman - raised the limit for tax exemption on interest earned on provident fund contribution by employees**
  - ✓ The limit has been increased to Rs 5 lakh per annum in specified cases as against Rs 2.5 lakh proposed in the Budget
  - ✓ This exemption, however, is subject to condition that the up to Rs 5 lakh contribution does not include employer's contribution beyond the statutory limit of up to 12% of the basic pay.

- ✓ The new provision would come into effect from April 1.
- ✓ The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has over six crore subscribers.
- ✓ The Finance Bill was later passed by the Lok Sabha with 127 official amendments by voice vote.
- ✓ The amendments also included offering a tax holiday of up to 10 years for development finance institutions
- ✓ Further, the government has also mandated a default fee of up to ₹1,000 for not intimating Aadhaar number while specifying a fine of ₹5,000 in case tax returns are not filed by the prescribed deadline.
- ✓ However, in case the income is under ₹5 lakh, the penalty will be capped at ₹1,000.
- ✓ With the passage of the Finance Bill, which contains tax proposals for the next financial year, the Lok Sabha has completed the budgetary exercise for 2021-22.
- ✓ The government has budgeted Rs 1.75 lakh crore from stake sale in public sector companies and financial institutions, including two PSU banks and one general insurance company, in the next fiscal year beginning April 1.

## SPORTS

- **India's Angad Singh Bajwa and Ganemat Shekhon – won gold in the skeet mixed event at the ongoing ISSF World Cup at Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, New Delhi**



- ✓ In the final game, the Indian pair defeated Kazakhstan's pair of Olga Panarina and Alexandr Yechshenko
- ✓ This is second gold medal for Angad, who won the gold in men's skeet team final on March 22
- ✓ Both the events are non-Olympic events and Angad couldn't win a medal in individual skeet event.
- ✓ World record holder Angad has already qualified for the Tokyo Games
- ✓ The second Indian pair of Mairaj Khan and Parinaaz Dhaliwal lost the bronze by a single point to Qatari pair of Reem Al Sharshani and Rashid Hamad.
- ✓ Mairaj too has qualified for the Olympics.

- ✓ India is top of the medals tally with seven gold, three silver and four bronze, while USA are second with 2 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY

### ➤ World Tuberculosis Day - March 24



- ✓ The day is observed to raise public awareness regarding the impact of TB on health, social and economic wellbeing of the afflicted person, so as to step up efforts to end the global epidemic.
- ✓ Theme 2021 - “The Clock is Ticking”
- ✓ The proposal to proclaim March 24 as World TB day was put forward by International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) in the year 1982
- ✓ The day was first observed on March 24th, 1982, on the 100th anniversary of Dr Robert Koch's presentation, who discovered the Tuberculosis Bacillus virus.
- ✓ This bacterium was discovered by Dr Robert Koch at the University of Berlin's Institute of Hygiene on March 24, 1882
- ✓ This proclamation was a part of year-long centennial effort by IUATLD and World Health Organization under the theme “Defeat TB: Now and Forever.”
- ✓ The first ever World TB Day was hosted by WHO and Royal Netherlands Tuberculosis Foundation (KNCV) in the fall of 1995 in Den Haag, Netherlands.
- ✓ TB is an infectious disease, affecting lungs usually, caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) bacteria.
- ✓ Half of the TB cases are found in 8 countries namely, India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Philippines and South Africa.
- ✓ Tuberculosis kills an estimated 4.8 lakh Indians every year, or more than 1,400 every day
- ✓ Each day, nearly 4000 people die due to TB and close to 28,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease