

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 29, 2021

### TAMIL NADU

- The state department of public health and preventive medicine and Unicef - have launched a Covid-19 Vaccine Beneficiary Assistance System (CVBAS), a WhatsApp-based Chatbot.
- ✓ The new chatbot has been developed to provide relevant and accurate information on Covid-19 vaccination
- ✓ The WhatsApp-based Chatbot is designed to deliver Covid-19 vaccine information through a combination of text and multimedia images.
- ✓ One of the distinct features of the Chatbot is the two-way communication path, where beneficiaries can send their feedback as well.
- ✓ It can be accessed at <https://wa.me/919319357878?text=covas> or in +91 919319357878 in the phone through WhatsApp to begin interaction.
  
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi – addressed the nation in his monthly radio programme ‘Mann Ki Baat’ on March 28
- ✓ During his address, the Prime Minister praised Coimbatore resident Marimuthu Yoganathan, popularly known as the ‘Tree Man’



- ✓ Yoganathan, a bus conductor with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC), gives a sapling along with tickets to passengers.

- ✓ Yoganathan had planted more than three lakh saplings in the last 30 years
- ✓ He had received awards including 'Eco Warrior' from the Vice-President and 'Sutru Suzal Seyal Veerar' of the state government.

## NATIONAL

- **On March 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – cautioned people against slackening against the coronavirus during his monthly address in 'Mann ki Baat' radio broadcast**



- ✓ The prime minister lauded the large number of elderly, who have stepped up to get vaccinated against the coronavirus
- ✓ PM Modi also spoke on the need for modernisation of the agriculture sector and the tourism potential of lighthouses in the country.
- ✓ The PM again pitched for bee farming as the foundation of a 'sweet revolution'
  - ✓ The farmers from Darjeeling and Sundarbans to Banaskantha in Gujarat and Yamuna Nagar in Haryana have taken to bee farming to increase their income, said the PM
  - ✓ He referred his proposal for bee farming in 2016 at the Banaskantha meeting.
- ✓ Further, PM Modi lauded India's 'Nari Shakti' in sports, lauding cricketer Mithali Raj and shuttler P V Sindhu for their feats.
  - ✓ Raj became the first Indian woman to complete 10,000 runs across formats, while Sindhu finished runners-up at the Swiss Open earlier this month.
- ✓ On the tourism front, the PM said India was working towards strengthening tourism facilities in 71 lighthouses that have been identified for developing a tourism circuit and appreciated the efforts of lighthouse keepers in doing their duty diligently.
- ✓ PM Modi also said Mann ki Baat's 75th episode coincides with 'Amrit Mahotsav', a celebration of 75 years of Indian independence.
- ✓ **The government has identified 71 lighthouses to develop them as major tourist attractions and plans are being prepared to fast-track these projects, said the PM**

- ✓ In all these lighthouses, depending on their capacities, museums, amphitheaters, open air theatres, cafeterias, children's parks, ecofriendly cottages and landscaping will be built.
  - ✓ In July last year, the shipping ministry had held a review meeting to prepare the road map for 194 existing lighthouses in the country to develop them as tourist spots and as tourism centres to help spread awareness of their rich history.
  - ✓ The work has started to identify the lighthouses which are more than 100 years old.
  - ✓ The plan for developing these iconic structures for tourism was first suggested in 2015, but there was little progress made.
- **Union road transport minister Nitin Gadkari - told Parliament last week that at least four crore vehicles registered across the country are more than 15 years old and nearly 50% of these are older than 20 years.**
- ✓ Karnataka tops the list with approximately 70 lakh 15-year-old plus vehicles followed by Uttar Pradesh with more than 56.5 lakh vehicles.

### K'ATAKA TOPS OLD VEHICLES' LIST

Top 5 states; Older vehicles age-wise

State/ UT	15-20 yrs	20 yrs+	Total
Karnataka	31.9 lakh	38 lakh	70 lakh
Uttar Pradesh	32 lakh	24.5 lakh	56.5 lakh
Delhi	15 lakh	35 lakh	50 lakh
Kerala	14.5 lakh	20 lakh	34.5 lakh
Tamil Nadu	18 lakh	15 lakh	33 lakh
All States/ Uts	1.9 crore	2.1 crore	4 crore

(Digitised vehicle records of centralised Vahan 4. Data for Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana & Lakshadweep not included)

- ✓ According to government data, Tamil Nadu has 33.4 lakh old vehicles.
- ✓ Earlier, the government announced its plan to mandatorily deregister old vehicles — 15 years old commercial and 20 years old personal vehicles — if they fail to pass the fitness test from June 1, 2024.
- ✓ The actual number of such vehicles, however, could be more since it has been collated from the digitised vehicle data from the central vehicle registration database of Vahan 4
  - ✓ The database doesn't include data from Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana.
- ✓ Delhi has nearly 50 lakh registered vehicles that are over 15 years old and the national capital has the third highest share of such vehicles in the country.
- ✓ At least 70% of these are more than 20 years old.

- ✓ In its bid to discourage people to hold on to their old vehicles, the government has started taking a series of steps including the move to formulate guidelines for imposition of “green tax” on such vehicles.
  - ✓ The road transport ministry has circulated the proposal to states for their comments.
- **On March 28, President Ram Nath Kovind - gave his assent to a bill that provides executive power to Delhi's lieutenant governor (LG) over the elected government.**
- ✓ The central government announced about the presidential assent to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 through a gazette notification.
  - ✓ According to the legislation, the “government” in Delhi means the “lieutenant governor”
  - ✓ The elected government will now have to seek the opinion of the L-G before taking any executive action.
  - ✓ The Parliament passed the bill last week— Lok Sabha on March 22 and Rajya Sabha on March 24.
- **The defence ministry - is now setting up a specialised Project Management Unit (PMU) as part of the overall reforms process to streamline and speed up the entire arms procurement process.**
- ✓ The decision to set up PMU is in line with the government’s goals to ensure “faster decision-making”
  - ✓ It will also work towards reducing the time taken for capital acquisitions.
  - ✓ The Rajnath Singh-led defence acquisitions council last month also issued directions that all capital procurement contracts, other than design and development cases, should be concluded in two years
  - ✓ The PMU will facilitate obtaining advisory and consultancy support in specified areas to support the procurement process
  - ✓ At present, it often takes several years after a case gets the initial “acceptance of necessity” (AoN), which is followed by the floating of the initial tender or RFP (request for proposal), field trials, commercial evaluation etc., before the final contract is close to being signed.
- **Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar - will make an official visit to Tajikistan on March 30-31, 2020.**
- ✓ He will be undertaking the trip at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan Sirojiddin Muhriddin.
  - ✓ During the visit, the two Ministers are expected to discuss all aspects of the bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest.
  - ✓ The Indian External Affairs Minister is also expected to pay a visit to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, during the visit

- ✓ The External Affairs Minister is scheduled to attend the 9th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) on Afghanistan in Dushanbe on March 30, 2021 at the joint invitation of Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Tajikistan.
- ✓ Dr. Jaishankar had earlier visited Dushanbe, the capital and largest city of Tajikistan in June 2019 to attend the 5th Summit of Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia.

## INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On March 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina - virtually inaugurated the 'Mitali Express' passenger train between Dhaka and New Jalpaiguri.**



- ✓ The 'Mitali Express' passenger train was jointly inaugurated by PM Sheikh Hasina and PM Modi at 6.38 pm through video conference from the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's Office in Tejgaon.
- ✓ The two countries have agreed to start a new passenger train service 'Mitali Express' between Dhaka cantonment and New Jalpaiguri on the Chilhati-Haldibari train link.
- ✓ The Chilhati-Haldibari train link is a significant one as it connects north Bangladesh with north Bengal.
- ✓ PM Modi was on a two-day visit to a neighbouring country.

## DEFENCE

- **On March 28, India and US – kicked off two-day naval exercise 'PASSEX' in the Bay of Bengal**
- ✓ Indian Navy deployed its warship Shivalik and long-range maritime patrol aircraft P8I in the 'PASSEX' exercise while the US Navy was represented by the USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group.
- ✓ A carrier battle group or carrier strike group is a mega naval fleet comprising an aircraft carrier, accompanied by a large number of destroyers, frigates and other ships.

- ✓ The 100,000-tonne USS Theodore Roosevelt is one of the ten such American Nimitz-class supercarriers, each of which can carry 80 to 90 F/A-18 ‘Super Hornets’ fighters as well as early-warning aircraft and helicopters.
- ✓ It is accompanied by warships like the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Russell and USS John Finn.
- ✓ **In a first, the IAF also deployed Sukhoi-30MKI fighters armed with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, which are based at the Thanjavur airbase, to “enhance jointmanship” in the exercise**
- ✓ The naval exercise was aimed at consolidating the synergy and interoperability achieved during the Malabar exercise that took place in November 2020 in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea after a gap of 13 years
- ✓ Besides India, the US and Japan, which have been participating in the Malabar series of exercises, the Australian navy had joined the drill for the first time in 2020, making it an exercise of the forces of the Quad countries.
- ✓ In July 2020, the Indian Navy carried out a military exercise with a US Navy carrier strike group led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz off the coast of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- ✓ France has invited the four Quad countries for its “La Pérouse” naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal from April 4 to 7
- ✓ The new exercises come after the back-to-back visits by US secretary of defence Lloyd Austin and South Korean defence minister Suh Wook, both former Army generals, to India this month to discuss bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to bolster security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.
- ✓ India, incidentally, has also signed reciprocal military logistics pacts with the other three Quad nations as well as France, South Korea and Singapore to enhance its strategic reach in the entire Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

## AWARDS

- Renowned Hindi writer Professor Sharad Pagare - has been selected for the prestigious Vyas Samman-2020 for his novel ‘Patliputra ki Samragi’.



- ✓ Professor Sharad Pagare is one of the well-known writers of Hindi literature and has been known as one of the distinguished researchers, professors, and scholars.

- ✓ For his contribution to Hindi literature, he has also been honoured with various awards including Bharat Bhushan Samman and Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Akademi.
- ✓ So far, the writer has written six story collections, 5 novels, dissertations, and two performs.
- ✓ Professor Pagare's works have also been translated into various languages such as Oriya, English, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, and Telugu.
- ✓ The Vyas Samman is given by KK Birla Foundation and the awards started in the year 1991.
- ✓ The Samman is conferred or outstanding work in Hindi literature authored by an Indian citizen.
- ✓ The recognized work must be published in the last 10 years and it must be in the Hindi language.
- ✓ The prestigious award comes with a cash prize of Rs. 4,00,000 along with a plaque and a citation.
- ✓ Last year, Nasira Sharma won the award for the collection 'Kagaz ki Nav' (Paper boats)

## SPORTS

- **Indian shooters - recorded their most successful outing in a single edition of the ISSF Shooting World Cup stage by bagging 30 medals at New Delhi**
- ✓ Overall, India's medal count stood at 15 gold, nine silver and six bronze.
- ✓ USA and Italy finished second, with a total of eight and four medals, respectively.



- ✓ Tamil Nadu shooter Prithviraj Tondaiman teamed up with Kynan Chennai and Lakshay Sheoran to help India win gold in the men's trap team event.
- ✓ Shreyasi Singh, Manisha Keer and Rajeshwari Kumari combined to shoot India's first gold of the day when they defeated Kazakhstan in the final of the women's trap team competition.

