

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 4, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The National Green Tribunal (NGT) - has given its clearance to the functioning of Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited's crude oil pipeline project connecting Chennai port with Manali refinery.**
- ✓ The project was objected by the local fishermen welfare association that claimed the process of dismantling old pipes and replacing them with new ones by the contractor had affected ground water quality
- ✓ Both CPCL and the contractor objected to these claims and stated that they had obtained clearances from coastal zone regulatory authorities.
- ✓ To ascertain this, NGT constituted a joint committee to look into the allegations and called for a final report, based on which a decision could be taken.
- ✓ This committee told NGT that there was no violation or damage caused to the environment because of the project.
- ✓ The panel's stand was based on an IIT Madras study on ground water samples collected from the project area which concluded that there was no contamination.
- ✓ The report filed by the committee further stated that state-of-the-art safety measures were in place at CPCL's 42nd crude oil pipeline project.
- ✓ Based on these findings, NGT dismissed the plea filed by the fishermen.

- **Madhavaram – has been chosen to house Chennai's largest metro rail train maintenance depot**
- ✓ It will serve as a nodal centre for the upkeep of driverless trains that will operate across the 118.9km of phase-2 in a few years.
- ✓ Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) has invited bids for the construction of the depot expected to come up across a 69-acre plot in Madhavaram Milk Colony.
- ✓ The depot, whose area will surpass the existing 64-acre Koyambedu depot, is likely to come up in less than three years.
- ✓ So far, CMRL has floated 19 tenders for the construction of the 118.9km phase-2 lines and two depots.

- ✓ In January, CMRL invited bids for the construction of a depot at Poonamallee, which will maintain the fleet operated on the Lighthouse-Poonamallee corridor-4.
 - ✓ CMRL plans to procure 70 of the 112 driverless trains for the 118.9km phase-2, while the rest will be operated on lease.
 - ✓ The depot will handle all major repair and maintenance work.
 - ✓ With two depots planned in phase-2, CMRL will have a total of four depots, including ones at Koyambedu and Wimco Nagar.
- **An apartment complex in Velachery - has won the green award for the year 2019 by TNPCB for best solid waste management and rain water harvesting practices.**
- ✓ The chief minister will present the award at the secretariat at a later date.
 - ✓ The Green award was won by Malles Arcadiaa at AGS Colony, which houses more than 120 families.
 - ✓ The complex has started using rain water harvesting to fulfill its requirement of at least 90,000 litres of water per day to serve every apartment.
 - ✓ The residents also put in place a sound solid waste management practice.

NATIONAL

- **President Ram Nath Kovind - was administered the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in New Delhi on March 3**



- ✓ After getting vaccinated, the President urged all eligible citizens to get vaccinated.
- ✓ The government has lifted the time restriction to boost the speed of vaccination.
- ✓ People can now get vaccinated 24x7 according to their convenience
- ✓ Initially, only those private hospitals that were empanelled under Ayushman Bharat, CGHS and state health insurance scheme were involved in Covid vaccination.

- ✓ The government also relaxed the 9am to 5pm slot for sessions and instead allowed hospitals to organise sessions beyond 5pm with flexibility on the Co-Win platform to facilitate the same.
- ✓ The second phase of vaccinations is being extended to people aged above 60 and between 45-60 with specified co-morbidities increasing risk from the infection
- **Covaxin, India's first indigenous coronavirus vaccine - has demonstrated nearly 81% efficacy in preventing Covid-19 after the second dose in those without prior infection**
 - ✓ This was revealed by the results of interim Phase 3 trials on March 3
 - ✓ This interim efficacy trend puts Covaxin on par with other global front-runner vaccines
 - ✓ Covaxin is developed by Bharat Biotech in association with the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR)
 - ✓ The results are evaluated by an independent data safety and monitoring board
 - ✓ Covaxin demonstrated significant immunogenicity against the rapidly emerging variants across a wide range of age groups

ALMOST 7L JABS GIVEN ON WED

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ About 6.9 lakh people got vax doses on Wednesday. Of these, 3.2L were 60 yrs and above. In all, 8.4L senior citizens have got jabs since Monday ➤ 1st dose for over 1L with co-morbidities (aged 45-59), 32,364 on Wednesday alone ➤ 33,016 healthcare workers nationwide got first dose on Wednesday while 1.1 lakh got their second dose ➤ Over 67.7 lakh healthcare 	 <p>workers have got 1st dose since drive began, 28.2 lakh have got 2nd dose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 57 lakh frontline workers given 1st shot, close to 2 lakh on Wednesday alone <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">(Figures till 7pm on Mar 3)</p>
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- ✓ Meanwhile, the Centre has allowed 24x7 vaccinations at hospitals with surplus capacity and resources
- ✓ According to the Hyderabad-based vaccine maker, the inclusion of the Algel-IMDG adjuvant in the vaccine enhances T-cell immune responses to Covid-19, leading to long-term protection.
- ✓ The 80.6% efficacy figure was arrived at after 43 cases of Covid-19 were reported among the 25,800 phase 3 trial participants.
- ✓ The volunteers participating in the phase 3 efficacy study, touted as the largest such study in India so far, are aged between 18 and 98 years.
- ✓ These include 2,433 participants over the age of 60 and 4,500 volunteers with comorbidities.

- **The National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) – is planning to launch ‘AI Game Changers’ program to promote artificial intelligence (AI)-led innovation across the country**
 - ✓ It is being run in collaboration with Microsoft, the innovation partner
 - ✓ The program was launched under the “AI for India” Mission.
 - ✓ It will help in recognizing the innovators for their successful AI implementation at the Xperience AI Summit of NASSCOM.
 - ✓ The summit will serve as a platform for the start-ups, academia, governments, enterprises and NGOs to showcase their AI based products & solutions.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **India and Norway - will jointly conduct marine spatial planning (MSP) in Lakshadweep and Puducherry**
 - ✓ This will ensure that human activities at sea take place in an efficient, safe, and sustainable manner in areas such as energy, transportation, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism etc.,
 - ✓ The marine spatial planning is globally identified as a tool for sustainable and integrated ocean management.
 - ✓ It is also one of the key areas of work in India’s proposed ‘Blue Economy’ policy.
 - ✓ The MSP is part of the Indo-Norway integrated ocean initiative under the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the two countries in 2019.
 - ✓ Lakshadweep and Puducherry have been identified as pilot sites for the project
 - ✓ The marine spatial planning initiative will be implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences through National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) for India.
 - ✓ The NCCR had earlier developed coastal management plans for Chennai, Goa, and Gulf of Kachchh.

- **Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhaduria - is now in Colombo to take part in the 70th anniversary celebrations of the Sri Lankan Air Force**



- ✓ The event will also include aerobatics by the aircraft “Suryakiran” and helicopter “Sarang” teams as well as a flying display by the Tejas fighter of the IAF.
- ✓ The IAF chief arrived in Colombo on March 3 for a two-day visit on an invitation from his Sri Lankan counterpart Air Marshal Sudarshana Pathirana

- ✓ He will also hold discussions on measures to further bolster defence cooperation between the two countries.
- **On March 2, India - opened a first-of-its-kind 'Energy Office' in Moscow to coordinate the energy investments with Russia**



- ✓ The office represents five Indian government oil and engineering companies — ONGC Videsh, IndianOil, GAIL, Oil India and Engineers India
- ✓ It aims to present a common interface for expanding cross-investments in the energy sector.
- ✓ The office was inaugurated by petroleum secretary Tarun Kapoor
- ✓ The strategic tie-up between India and Russia could help both the countries to mutually support each other in their projects
 - ✓ Earlier, Russia called for Indian oil majors to participate in the Vostok project in the Arctic
 - ✓ Further, India is looking for buyers for India's second largest state-run oil refiner and fuel retailer Bharat Petroleum.
- ✓ Russia is a major oil producer in the Opec-Plus grouping and one of the world's largest gas producers, while India is the world's third-largest oil consumer
- ✓ The idea of opening the energy office was first suggested by oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan when he was in Russia around the time of the Prime Minister's September 2019 visit to Vladivostok as the chief guest at the Eastern Economic Forum

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – will address the top-level combined commanders' conference (CCC) to be held this week**

- ✓ The CCC will witness the participation of all top commanders of the Army, Navy and IAF at Kevadia in Gujarat near Sardar Patel's Statue of Unity from March 4 to 6.
 - ✓ The PM will review the operational situation on the China and Pakistan fronts as well as the progress towards setting up tri-Service integrated commands and structures during the CCC
 - ✓ The JCOs, NCOs (junior-commissioned and non-commissioned officers) and other ranks are included this year for a session on 'Morale and Motivation' as an innovative step
 - ✓ The PM will interact with them during the session on March 6, and listen to their views on morale and motivation in the military and the day-to-day functioning on the ground in the three Services
 - ✓ Since taking over as the PM in 2014, PM Modi has pushed for the armed forces to organise meets like the CCC on warships at sea, military cantonments or airbases, instead of restricting them to New Delhi only.
 - ✓ Consequently, the CCC was held on aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya off Kochi in 2015
 - ✓ Later, it was conducted at the Indian Military Academy at Dehradun in 2017 and the Jodhpur airbase in 2018.
 - ✓ The CCC will also take place ahead of the impending creation of two unified tri-Service commands in the shape of the "functional" Air Defence Command (ADC) and the "geographical" Maritime Theatre Command (MTC) this year.
 - ✓ The two new unified commands are part of the biggest-ever military restructuring plan to build integrated land-air-sea warfighting machinery within budgetary constraints.
 - ✓ As of now, India has as many as 17 single-service commands (Army 7, IAF 7 and Navy 3).
 - ✓ The only two existing tri-Service commands came up after the 1999 Kargil conflict.
 - ✓ The Andaman & Nicobar Command was set up as a "geographical" command in October 2001, while the "functional" Strategic Forces Command to handle the country's nuclear arsenal came up in January 2003.
- **The International Kindness Festival (IKF) - will be held virtually from March 5 to 7**
- ✓ The three-day event is an international symposium on the science, politics, ethics and practicality of everyday kindness.
 - ✓ The festival highlights various facets of kindness, breaking stereotypes and the existing perceptions of kindness, philanthropy and charity
 - ✓ It will feature various eminent speakers including Stephen McGown, who is the longest-held Al-Qaeda captive, actor-producer Abhishek Bachchan, poet and teaching artist Anthony Febo and philanthropist Tim Disney
 - ✓ The festival is organized by Mahima Poddar, founder of The Kindness Foundation in October 2019



- ✓ She established the Kindness Week, which is observed every year since 2018 during the Valentine's week
- ✓ By 2020, Kindness Week had more than 40 partners across three cities – Chennai, Pune and Hyderabad.
- ✓ This is the first time that the IKF is being held.
- ✓ The topics are divided under three main themes -- global, local and self.
- ✓ The festival will also feature a virtual art showcase, daily online auctions and mentorship cells.

ECONOMY

- **Adani Group - has signed an agreement to acquire a 31.5% stake in Gangavaram Port from private equity firm, Warburg Pincus for ₹1,954 crore**
- ✓ Adani Group is planning to take control of Gangavaram Port in Andhra Pradesh as it looks to strengthen its position as the country's largest port operator.
- ✓ The enterprise is in discussions with its promoter to purchase their 58.1% interest.
- ✓ Gangavaram promoter D V S Raju's stake is worth Rs 3,662 crore.
- ✓ The Andhra Pradesh government owns the balance 10.4% stake in Gangavaram
- ✓ Gangavaram is the second-largest non-major port in the state with a 64-million-MT capacity.
- ✓ The acquisition expands Adani's market share to 30% across 12 locations in India.
- ✓ Owned by business tycoon Gautam Adani, the \$13-billion enterprise controls Mundra Port, the country's largest, in Gujarat.
- ✓ The Gangavaram deal follows Adani's purchase of Dighi Port in Maharashtra last month.
- ✓ Gangavaram, which handles both dry and bulk commodities including coal, iron ore, sugar, steel, generated a profit of ₹516 crore on a revenue of ₹1,082 crore in FY20.
- ✓ The port's operating profit margin was 59% in the same period.
- ✓ Gangavaram, according to Adani, is debt-free with cash balance of over ₹500 crore.

RANKINGS

- **The status of 'health' of democracy in India – has been downgraded from “free” in 2019 to “partly free” in 2020**
- ✓ This was based on an annual report prepared by Freedom House, a US-based independent watchdog
- ✓ The new ranking was published in the Freedom in the World 2021 report released on March 3.
- ✓ India's overall score dropped to 67 out of 100 in 2020, compared to 71 in 2019.
- ✓ In 2018, India had 75 points.
- ✓ China was categorised as “not free” with a score of 9 out of 100, a further drop of two points from 2019, when it had 11 points.
- ✓ Pakistan scored 37, one down from 38 last year, while Bangladesh remained static on 39.
- ✓ The USA has also dropped from 94 in the year 2010 to 83 in 2020 due to political corruption, lack of transparency in government and punitive immigration policies.
- ✓ Sweden, Finland and Norway scored a perfect 100.
- ✓ According to the report, this year marked the 15th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.
- ✓ The methodology involves using 25 indicators, including free and fair elections, political and civil rights, civil liberties, rights of association and organisation, which together carry a total score of 100.

