



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – APRIL 15,

2021

NATIONAL

- **On April 14, the Centre – announced its decision to cancel the CBSE Class X Board exams and reschedule Class XII Boards, amidst the rising Covid-19 cases in the country**
- ✓ The fresh dates for the Class XII board exams will be decided on June 1, 2021
- ✓ The decisions were taken at a review meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ✓ The Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations, a private Board with a much less number of affiliated schools, will announce its plans in the next two days.
- ✓ According to CBSE, this is the first instance when the Board has to scrap the Class X Board exams altogether.
- ✓ Last year, due to the riots in North East Delhi and Coronavirus infections, the exams were partially cancelled.
- ✓ A formula based on marks scored in the exams attended by the student was used to calculate a final result.

15-DAY NOTICE BEFORE BOARDS BEGIN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ CISCE will announce its plans in next 2 days➤ Class 12 exams were to be held from May 4 to June 14. Notice of at least 15 days will be given before start of exams➤ It was felt that Class 12 exams have significant bearing on higher education choices and shouldn't be scrapped right now➤ Class 10 students unhappy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">with results can take the tests whenever they are held next➤ Class 10 exams were partially cancelled last year due to NE Delhi riots and Covid. A formula based on marks scored in exams a student took was used to calculate final result➤ 21,50,761 students were to appear in Class 10 exams, 14,30,243 had registered for Class 12 boards
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- ✓ This year, 21,50,761 candidates were scheduled to appear in Class X exams, which is nearly 2.5 lakh more than 2020.
- ✓ A total of 14,30,243 candidates registered for the Class XII exams, which is again 2.15 lakh more than last year.
- ✓ The meeting to review the examinations was attended by education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal, the principal secretary to the PM, the cabinet secretary, school and higher education secretaries and other top officials.
- ✓ The Board exams for Class XII are scheduled to be held from May 4 to June 14
- ✓ A notice of at least 15 days will be given before the start of the examinations.
- ✓ CBSE will prepare objective criteria for results of Class X students.
- ✓ Any candidate who is not satisfied with his or her marks on this basis will be given an opportunity to sit in an exam as and when the conditions are conducive to hold it.

➤ **The agriculture ministry - has selected 100 villages in six states for pilot projects on digital farming**

- ✓ The six states chosen includes Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh
- ✓ The projects will use technology, data and artificial intelligence in supporting farmers in multiple activities.
- ✓ In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture has signed an MoU with Microsoft India to develop farmers' interface for post-harvest management and distribution.
- ✓ The project aims to reduce input costs for farmers and make farming easy.
- ✓ Microsoft India has joined its local partner, CropData, to do the pilot projects in 100 villages across 10 districts in six states.
- ✓ Digital technology and data will be used to assist farmers in taking right and cost-effective decisions.

INTERNATIONAL

➤ **New Zealand - has become the first country in world to introduce a Climate change law for financial firms**

- ✓ The new law will require banks, insurers and investment managers to report the impacts of Climate Change on their business
- ✓ The new legislation is applicable to all banks with total assets of more than NZ\$1 billion (\$703 million), insurers with more than NZ\$1 billion in total assets under management, and all equity and debt issuers listed on the country's stock exchange
- ✓ It also mandates the financial firms to evaluate the companies they are lending in terms of environmental impacts.
- ✓ The financial firms will now have to document how they will manage climate related risks and opportunities.
- ✓ The bill has been introduced to the country's parliament on April 12, 2021

- ✓ New Zealand has fixed the year 2050 as the deadline to reach net-zero carbon emissions.
- ✓ It has decided to reduce green house gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030
- ✓ Earlier, the country has amended the Climate Change Response Act, 2002 in the year 2019
- ✓ According to the amendment, New Zealand intended to implement climate change policies in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The researchers from IIT Guwahati - has developed a simple and cost-effective method to remove microplastics from contaminated seawater before it is used to produce edible salt**
- ✓ The team used a hollow fibre polypropylene microfiltration membrane with a pore size of less than 10 micrometre
- ✓ With the membrane, the team filtered synthetic seawater made from dissolving branded salts in distilled water
- ✓ The results of the filtration indicated that it could remove up to 99.3% of tiny plastic particles.
- ✓ Polypropylene is a polymer used in making medical devices and is considered safe.

PLASTIC ON YOUR PLATE

IIT Guwahati team developed a simple method for removal of microplastics from contaminated seawater that is used to produce salt. The team collected 12 samples of refined & unrefined sea salt from Gujarat and Chennai and refined rock salt from Mumbai, Gurgaon and Haryana

FINDINGS

➤ Size of microplastics found ranged from greater than 20 micrometre and less than 5 millimetre

➤ They were mostly in the form of fragments or fibre

➤ 1,400-1,900 particles found in 1kg of refined sea salt

➤ 1,900-2,300 particles in 1kg of unrefined sea salt

➤ 200-400 particles in 1kg of rock salt

➤ Highest incidence of microplastics in the unrefined salt sample from Chennai (around 1832 particles per kg salt) and lowest in sample of refined rock salt from Haryana (around 275 particles per kg salt)



WHAT THE TEAM DID

➤ Synthetic seawater was prepared by dissolving edible salt in 50 litres of distilled water

➤ This was sent through a hollow fibre polypropylene microfiltration membrane

➤ 99.3% of microplastics were removed from the synthetic seawater without reduction in salt concentration

➤ Researchers suggest that the brine generated from desalination plants can be explored for sea salt production at low cost if they are pre-treated using the membrane

- ✓ The researchers studied 12 different samples of refined and unrefined sea salt and refined rock salt purchased from different cities
 - ✓ They had demonstrated the methodology in their lab using a salt sample from Chennai which had the highest incidence of microplastic particles.
 - ✓ Based on the results, the team suggested that brine generated in desalination plants could be explored for production of microplastic-free sea salt by pre-treating it using the membrane.
 - ✓ The researchers are now working to set up a pilot plant along the coast to test the membrane directly with seawater.
- **The launch of the country's most advanced earth observation satellite, Gisat-1 by GSLV-F10 - is re-scheduled for May 15, as per Isro**
- ✓ The satellite will allow India to better monitor the subcontinent, including its borders with Pakistan and China.
 - ✓ The launch of the 2,268-kg satellite in the first week of this month was stopped due to a technical glitch related to a voltage fluctuation issue in the satellite.
 - ✓ The delay in the launch of Gisat-1 will postpone other launches, including the first test-flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV or mini PSLV), this year.
 - ✓ Equipped with high resolution cameras, Gisat-1 will allow the country to monitor the Indian landmass and oceans, particularly its borders, continuously
 - ✓ The satellite will provide near real-time imaging of the large area region of interest at frequent intervals.
 - ✓ It will also help in quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic and any short-term events.
 - ✓ The geo-satellite will also obtain spectral signatures for agriculture, forestry, mineralogy, disaster warning, cloud properties, snow & glaciers and oceanography.
- **Sports Car maker, the Porsche - has joined with Siemens Energy to produce eFuel by 2022 through Haru Oni project in Southern Chile**
- ✓ This will be the world's first integrated, commercial, industrial-scale plant for making synthetic climate-neutral fuels (e-fuels)
 - ✓ The project will use green hydrogen produced by wind power to produce eFuel
 - ✓ In the pilot phase, around 130,000 liters of e-fuels will be produced by the year 2022.
 - ✓ In the next two phases, capacity is to be increased to about 55 million liters of e-fuels a year by 2024, and around 550 million liters of e-fuels by 2026.
 - ✓ Porsche, which will invest €20 million (£18m) initially, is planning to use the fuels in vehicles for Porsche motorsports, at the Porsche Experience Centres and in serial production sports cars
 - ✓ Other partners in the project are the energy firm AME and the petroleum company ENAP from Chile and Italian energy company Enel.
 - ✓ The German Government has also supported the project with €8 million (£7.2m).

- ✓ Chile, with its excellent climate conditions for wind power and the associated low cost of electricity, has a very high potential for producing, exporting and locally using green hydrogen
- ✓ eFuel is a complex hydrocarbon, whose cost of production is \$10 per litre
- ✓ It is type of Electro Fuel or Synthetic fuel
- ✓ The Electro Fuels are the emerging class of carbon neutral fuels, which are seen as an alternative to biofuels.
- ✓ They are made by storing electrical energy from renewable sources in chemical bonds of liquid of gas fuels.

ECONOMY

- **The National Housing Bank - recently launched the Special Refinance Facility, 2021.**
- ✓ The main objective of the facility is to provide short term refinance support to the housing finance companies and other eligible primary lending institutions
- ✓ A financial grant of Rs 10,000 crore has been allocated for the refinance facility to support the housing sector.
- ✓ The facility will aid in meeting the short-term liquidity requirement in the public lending institutions.
- ✓ The National Housing Bank has launched the initiative with the support from Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ✓ It may be recalled that last year during May-August 2020, the National Housing Board provided refinance support of Rs 14,000 crore under the Additional Special Refinance Facility and Special Refinance Facility.
- ✓ This short-term liquidity support for a year was part of Special Liquidity Facility (SLF) granted by the RBI under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan announced by the Finance Minister.
- ✓ During the period April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, NHB had extended an amount of ₹ 42,823.93 crore as refinance to Primary Lending Institutions (PLIs)
- ✓ The PLIs includes Housing Finance Companies, Scheduled Commercial Banks including Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Small Finance Banks (SFBs)

SPORTS

- **Heath Streak, former captain of Zimbabwe – banned for eight years by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for involvement with bookies**
- ✓ Streak admitted to multiple breaches of the anti-corruption codes across leagues and international matches.
- ✓ In the Indian Premier League (IPL), Streak was the bowling coach of KKR in 2018.
- ✓ Streak has been found guilty of disclosing inside information, facilitating introduction of other participants with bookies, failing to report an approach and obstructing investigation.



- ✓ Streak has admitted to being involved in activities which aid betting in the 2018 IPL, 2017 Bangladesh Premier League, 2018 Afghanistan Premier League, Pakistan Super League and international matches involving Zimbabwe between 2016 and 2018.
- ✓ In relation to IPL, Streak's offences are disclosing information and providing contacts — of players and officials — besides failing to report to designated anti-corruption officials.
- ✓ Streak has confessed to sharing of contacts of players in Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
- ✓ The ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit started investigating the activities in mid-2018 when a few international captains reported to the world body.
- ✓ Following subsequent investigations, Streak was removed by KKR as the bowling coach.
- ✓ Streak, Zimbabwe's highest wicket-taker in Tests and ODIs, was the coach of the national team until early 2018, when he resigned.

