

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – APRIL 17, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The State Archaeological department – has unearthed a granite plough and a tiny terracotta cubical dice during the latest excavations at Keeladi ancient site in Tamil Nadu**
- ✓ The cubical dice had been found at a depth of 1.36 metre.
- ✓ It has numbers one, two, three, four, five and six marked on it with depressions.
- ✓ The three-sided granite plough is indicative of the fact that the people of Keeladi were engaged in farming.

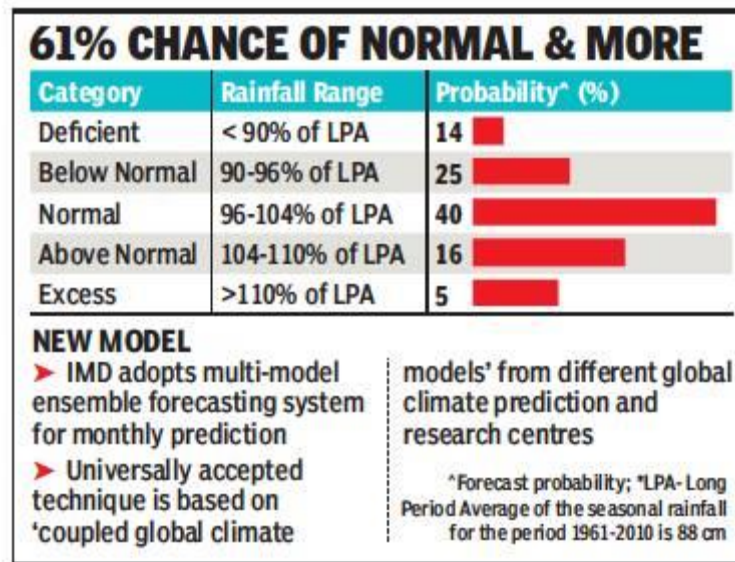


- ✓ The seventh phase of excavation began in the Keeladi cluster on February 13
- ✓ The cluster include Keeladi, Manalur, Konthagai and Agaram
- ✓ A cluster of pots was found a few weeks ago during the excavation at the site.

NATIONAL

- **The India Meteorological Department (IMD) - has forecast a 'normal' monsoon for most parts of the country during the monsoon months of June-September 2021**

- ✓ The official weather agency has released its first long-range forecast for the 2021 southwest monsoon season on April 16
- ✓ As per the prediction, the seasonal rainfall across India is likely to be 98% of the Long Period Average (LPA), with a model error of $\pm 5\%$.
- ✓ The four-month southwest monsoon season brings India about 70% of its annual rainfall
- ✓ If the forecast is accurate, this will be the third consecutive year of normal monsoon in the country.



- ✓ India earlier had three consecutive years of 'normal' or 'good rainfall' in 1996, 1997 and 1998.
- ✓ In 2020, rainfall in India was 109% of Long Period Average, while in 2019, it was 110% of Long Period Average
- ✓ As per IMD, there will not be any development of El Nino conditions in the Pacific Ocean this year
- ✓ El Niño refers to the abnormal warming of surface waters of the equatorial eastern Pacific Ocean, leading to subdued south west monsoon in the country
- ✓ A condition opposite to El Niño is La Niña, which has favoured the Indian summer monsoon mostly.
- ✓ The LPA refers to the average monsoon rainfall from 1961-2010, which stands at 88 cm (880.6 mm to be precise).
- ✓ The rainfall to an extent of 96-104% of the LPA is considered 'normal' while the 104-110% of the LPA is taken as 'above normal'.
- ✓ Accordingly, the forecast of 98% indicates that a total of around 86.2 cm rainfall is expected across the country during the entirety of this year's monsoon season
- ✓ As per the forecast, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh are likely to receive above-average rainfall in most places.
- ✓ Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Haryana, Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand and Meghalaya are expected to receive below-average rainfall during the monsoon season

- ✓ These forecasts are prepared using the state-of-the-art Statistical Ensemble Forecasting System (SEFS) that was developed indigenously by the IMD.
 - ✓ Following this first stage forecast in April, the IMD will also release the second stage of its seasonal monsoon outlook by the end of May 2021
 - ✓ Private forecaster Skymet also predicted a 'normal' monsoon, a few days ago.
 - ✓ For the first time at this stage of forecast, IMD released a map, showing state-wise probability of the monsoon's status.
 - ✓ The IMD will also for the first time unveil a "monthly probabilistic forecast" for the 'monsoon core' region from May onwards.
 - ✓ The IMD will release the prediction of 'onset' of monsoon over Kerala in mid-May.
 - ✓ The 'normal' rainfall indicates good acreage of Kharif crops (paddy, pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals), and adequate water storage in major waterbodies across the countries for use in next crop season and hydro-power generation
- **On April 16, the Centre - extended the scope of its Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to those with repayment overdues of up to 60 days.**
- ✓ The facility would be available to 26 stressed sectors identified by a committee headed by ICICI Bank former chief K V Kamath.



- ✓ The list includes various sectors ranging from healthcare, aviation and corporate retail outlets to power, cement, construction and textiles.
- ✓ Borrowers from these sectors with outstanding loans of ₹50-₹500 crore can avail of the special facility.
- ✓ Around 80% of the ₹3 lakh crore ECLGS scheme has been utilized already by various micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) that were facing a liquidity crunch.
- ✓ Initially the scheme was launched exclusively for the MSME sector and later expanded to the hospitality, travel and tourism sectors
- ✓ Now, the scheme will be available to borrower accounts classified as Special Mention Account (SMA)-0 or SMA-1 as of February 29, 2020
- ✓ These accounts are those where the overdue period is between 31 to 60 days.
- ✓ Initially, this facility was available to only those who were up to date with their payments.

- ✓ The scheme would be available to loans sanctioned under the guaranteed emergency credit line during the period from May 23, 2020, to June 30, 2021, or till guarantees for an amount of ₹3 lakh crore are issued, whichever is earlier.
 - ✓ The National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company is the guarantee provider of the ECLGS Scheme
 - ✓ The SMA accounts whose payments are partially or wholly overdue for 1-30 days are called SMA-0 accounts.
 - ✓ The SMA accounts that have payments overdue for 31-60 days are called SMA-1 account.
- **On April 16, the Government - announced financial support to four firms, including Bharat Biotech, to ramp up production of the indigenously-developed Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin**
- ✓ Among the grants, Bharat Biotech, the co-developer of the vaccine, would get ₹65 crore to revamp its new Bangalore facility to increase the capacity of Covaxin production
 - ✓ Maharashtra state-owned Haffkine Biopharmaceutical Corporation Ltd., will be provided around ₹65 crore for setting up a facility to make the inactivated vaccine.
 - ✓ Apart from these two companies, two more public sector undertakings Indian Immunologicals Ltd and Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Ltd will also be getting funds to produce 10-15 million doses per month by August or September.
 - ✓ A separate grant of ₹200 crore is set aside to increase Covaxin production from 1 crore doses a month to around 6 crore a month by August and 10 crore a month by September
 - ✓ The Haffekine facility is expected to produce around 1.5 crore shots by August and 2 crore a month in six months.
 - ✓ With the financial assistance, Bharat Biotech will take its overall Covaxin manufacturing capacity to 700 million doses annually, or almost 60 million per month
 - ✓ Currently, the company's annual capacity to make Covaxin is around 200 million.
 - ✓ Further, ICMR provided ₹10 crore assistance to Serum Institute of India for conducting trials of Covishield vaccine and also extended ₹10 crore to SII for Covovax (Novovax) trials.
 - ✓ Similarly, it gave ₹30 crore to Bharat Biotech for Covaxin trials and financial assistance was also given to Zydus Cadilla for pre-clinical animal trials.
 - ✓ The department of biotechnology and PSU Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council are supporting nearly 15 vaccine candidates with Rs 100 crore.
 - ✓ Under a ₹900 crore programme, five vaccine candidates in advanced clinical development and 19 trial sites are receiving government's assistance.
 - ✓ Three immunogenicity assay labs and three other facilities are also benefiting under this mission.

- ✓ The Centre's assistance to the private sector will support in setting up 11 clinical trial sites with a cohort of 50,000-1,00,000 volunteers each.
- **Union Minister for Communication and IT and Law and Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad - recently launched the "Online Grievance Management portal of NCSC" on April 14, 2021**



- ✓ NCSC stands for National Commission of Scheduled Castes
- ✓ The portal was launched on the occasion of 130th birth anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar.
- ✓ The event was joined by Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment Rattan Lala Kataria, and Chairman of NCSC, Vijay Sampla
- ✓ The Scheduled Caste community can register their complaints in the portal from any part of the country.
- ✓ The portal was designed in collaboration with the Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N)
- ✓ It is a Centre of Excellence under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India
- ✓ This portal is linked to the website of NCSC and one can file one's complaint upon registering on it.
- ✓ The facility to upload documents and audio/video files is also available.
- ✓ The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) was set up under the Article 338 of the Constitution of India
- ✓ The objective of NCSC is to investigate and monitor all issues pertaining to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes under any law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government of India
- ✓ The 65th Constitution Act, 1990 amended Article 338 of the constitution.
- ✓ The amendment replaced the commission from its one-member system to multi-member system.
- ✓ Later, the 89th amendment of the constitution introduced in 2003 separated the National Commission for Scheduled Caste into two different commissions.
- ✓ One was National Commission for Scheduled Caste and the other was National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

- ✓ The Commission consists of a chairperson, vice-chairperson and three other members.
- ✓ All the members of the commission are appointed by the President of India.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On April 16, Russia - asked 10 US diplomats to leave the country as a retaliation measure against a similar US move**
- ✓ Earlier, US had expelled same number of Russian diplomats over alleged involvement in elections and hacking activities
- ✓ The measures were approved by President Putin as a response to a series of US sanctions imposed on Moscow a day earlier, including curbs to its sovereign debt market.
- ✓ It also banned eight top current and former US officials from entering Russia.
- ✓ Those banned included FBI director Christopher Wray and director of National Intelligence Avril Haines.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **UK home secretary Priti Patel - has ordered the extradition to India of Punjab National Bank scam accused billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi.**



- ✓ Nirav, 50, is currently lodged at Wandsworth prison in London.
- ✓ India wants to extradite him to stand trial to face charges of defrauding PNB of ₹6,498 crore, of laundering the proceeds and interfering with witnesses and evidence.
- ✓ On February 25, the UK District judge noted that there is evidence upon which Nirav could be convicted at trial in India.
- ✓ He also said that his extradition would be compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.
- ✓ The extradition order was signed on April 15.
- ✓ Nirav has 14 days to apply for permission to appeal to the UK high court.
- ✓ He may seek leave to appeal against both the decisions of the district judge and of the home secretary.
- ✓ If permission is granted, the high court will go on to consider the appeal.

- ✓ If there is no application to appeal, he must be extradited within 28 days of the secretary of state's decision to order extradition.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The National Investigation Agency - recently conducted a two-day virtual seminar with BRICS countries on “Misuse of Internet by terrorists” on April 13 and 14, 2021**



- ✓ India hosted the seminar as it is holding the BRICS chair for the year 2021.
- ✓ Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla inaugurated the event which consisted of representatives from BRICS nations that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
- ✓ The seminar was held on emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, dark web and anonymisers, exploitation of social media as an arsenal, crypto currency and virtual assets, equipping law enforcement agencies.
- ✓ The terrorists use internet to spread the usage of violence for a religious, political or ideological cause
- ✓ It might contain images, videos, speeches that encourage violence or hatred, affecting the youth who are the most vulnerable

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) - recently signed an agreement with the French Space Agency CNES for the Gaganyaan project**
- ✓ CNES stands for Centre National d'études Spatiales (National Centre for Space Studies)
- ✓ The French Space Agency is to supply space equipment to the Indian crew for the country's first Human Space Mission
- ✓ According to France, this equipment was tested and is still operating in the International Space Station.
- ✓ The CNES will supply fireproof carry bags to shield equipment from radiation and shock.

- ✓ It will also exchange information on food packaging and nutrition programme, as per the agreement signed.
 - ✓ Under the agreement, CNES will train Indian flight physicians and CAPCOM (Capsule Communicator) mission control teams in France.
 - ✓ The training is to be held at the CADMOS centre and at the European Astronaut Centre.
 - ✓ India had already signed agreements with Russia to train four astronauts for the Gaganyaan mission.
 - ✓ India is also in talks with Australia to have a ground station for the Gaganyaan mission at the Cocos island.
- **The Principal Scientific Advisor to Government, Prof. K. Viayaraghavan - recently launched a new mobile application 'MANAS' to promote the mental wellbeing of the citizens across various age groups**



- ✓ MANAS refers to 'Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System'.
- ✓ It is a comprehensive, scalable and national digital wellbeing platform.
- ✓ It has been endorsed as a national program by the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council.
- ✓ The application integrates the health and wellness efforts of various government ministries
- ✓ MANAS was initiated by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India
- ✓ It was jointly executed by NIMHANS Bengaluru, AFMC (Armed Forces Medical College), Pune and C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) Bengaluru
- ✓ The initial version of MANAS focuses on promoting positive mental health in the age group of 15-35
- ✓ The app is supported with tele-consultation facility especially for mental health related problems.
- ✓ It was launched during the 34th Foundation celebrations of C-DAC.

OBITUARY

- **Former CBI director Ranjit Sinha - passed away on April 16 after an illness at his home in South Delhi**



- ✓ Sinha, who had been unwell for the last two days, tested positive for Covid-19 on April 15
- ✓ A 1974-batch Bihar cadre IPS officer, Sinha took over as the 26th director of CBI on December 3, 2012, and retired on December 2, 2014.
- ✓ Prior to this, Sinha served as director general of Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the Railway Protection Force.
- ✓ As the CBI chief, Sinha obtained more financial powers after informing the Supreme Court that he had to route every small file to the government
- ✓ His tenure also saw the agency cracking bribery cases involving the chief executive officer of the Censor Board, a member of the railway board and the managing director of a public sector bank, among others.

SPORTS

- **India's star woman grappler Vinesh Phogat – won the gold medal without losing a single point at the Asian Wrestling Championships in the 53kg category in Almaty, Kazakhstan**
- ✓ The 26-year-old had to her credit three silver and four bronze since the 2013 edition of the championship.



- ✓ She dominated Meng Hsuan Hsieh of Chinese Taipei, pinning Hsieh 6-0 to claim gold medal

