

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – APRIL 27, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu Government – allows Sterlite plant at Tuticorin to operate for four months for the production of medical-grade oxygen**
- ✓ This decision was taken in an all-party meeting called by Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on April 26
- ✓ For the operation of the plant, electricity will be supplied by state-run power utility Tangedco, and Sterlite’s own power plant will not be used for the purpose.
- ✓ The Sterlite unit will not be permitted to produce copper.
- ✓ A monitoring committee led by the collector and including representatives of public, environmental organisations and anti-Sterlite groups would be set up to oversee the functioning of the oxygen plant.
- ✓ Further, the meeting resolved that the oxygen produced in the unit should meet the requirements of Tamil Nadu, and the surplus alone could be sent to other states
- ✓ On April 27, the Supreme Court will hear Vedanta’s plea to open the unit to produce 1,000 tonnes of oxygen.
- ✓ The unit has remained shut since May 2018 after protests erupted over environmental concerns and resulted in 13 deaths in police firing.
- ✓ Sterlite had oxygen production capacity of 1,050 tonnes a day but only 35 tonnes can be used for medical purposes, according to the State government
- ✓ Liquid oxygen with 99.4% and above purity can only be used for medical purpose
- ✓ But, Oxygen produced in Sterlite will have purity of only 92%-93% as it was designed for industrial use
- ✓ This apart, Sterlite has to install compression and bottling plants to convert gaseous oxygen to liquid oxygen.
- ✓ Eight recognised parties -- the AIADMK, the DMK, the BJP, the Congress, the PMK, the DMDK, the CPM and the CPI—were invited to the meeting by the government.

- **On April 26, SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre (SRM MCHRC) – administered third booster dose of Covaxin to seven people**
- ✓ The vaccination was provided as part of a study to find out if it gives immunity for a longer period.
- ✓ The seven people have received the second dose six months before.
- ✓ A total of 190 people will receive the booster dose in eight different sites including New Delhi, Patna and Hyderabad.
- ✓ In Chennai, around 20 to 25 people will receive the shot at SRM.
- ✓ The indigenous vaccine is developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Virology.
- ✓ The participants, who aged between 18 and 55, will be monitored for the next six months.
- ✓ This is a continuation of the phase-2 trials to see if the booster dose triggers the long-term memory cells or plasma cells enough to memorise the immunity and give lifelong immunity to the system.
- ✓ The participants, who received 6mcg of Covaxin containing Algel-IMDG, an immuno-modulator to enhance immunogenicity during phase-2 trials, received the same as the booster dose.
- ✓ If the study gives good results, then a person receiving two doses of the vaccine within a gap of 28 days, will receive the booster dose four to six months after the second dose to give them lifelong immunity
- ✓ Recently, the vaccine developers said Covaxin showed an overall interim clinical efficacy of 78% against mild, moderate and severe Covid-19 disease.
- ✓ The full efficacy results of phase-3 trials of Covaxin may be released next month

NATIONAL

- **The Indian Army - recently initiated the Ladakh Ignited Mines Project to provide educational opportunities for the Ladakhi students.**
- ✓ The project has been launched in association with HPCL (Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited) and a Kanpur based NGO called the National Integrity and Educational Development Organisation.
- ✓ In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Leh between the three stakeholders
- ✓ The project aims to train forty-five students from Kargil and Leh districts for JEE and NEET entrance examinations.
- ✓ UPSC recently added Leh as its exam centre.

- **Google and Microsoft - have recently announced their support to help India fight Covid-19 pandemic**
- ✓ Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai has announced Rs. 135 crore funding support for India's pandemic handling activities

- ✓ Google's Rs 135 crore package includes a Rs 20 crore grant to the non-government organisation (NGO) GiveIndia to provide cash assistance to families hit hardest by the crisis



- ✓ Further, the funding will also help UNICEF to get urgent medical supplies, including oxygen and testing equipment
- ✓ Earlier, Sun Microsystems' co-founder Vinod Khosla promised to help with plane loads of oxygen on April 24
- ✓ E-commerce major Amazon also said that it is donating oxygen concentrators and other equipment to several hospitals.
- ✓ It is working with industry partners and NGOs, including ACT Grants, Temasek Foundation, Pune Platform for COVID-19 Response (PPCR)
- ✓ Amazon will urgently airlift over 8,000 oxygen concentrators and 500 BiPAP machines from Singapore to bring them to India.
- ✓ A majority of these shipments are expected to land in India by April 30.
- **The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare - recently announced that around 14,491 hectares of land in Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been certified as organic.**
- ✓ This is the first large contiguous territory to be certified as 'organic' under a government scheme.
- ✓ The organic certification was provided under the 'Large Area Certification' Scheme of the 'Participatory Guarantee System-India' (PGS-India) certification programme.
- ✓ Under the scheme, each village is considered as one cluster or group.
 - ✓ The farmers in a cluster have to adhere to the standard requirements and get certified 'enmass' upon verification.
- ✓ Additionally, to bring isolated individual farmers to the certified organic fold, the ministry has also launched an organic certification support scheme under PKVY (Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana).
 - ✓ Under the scheme, individual farmers can avail financial assistance for certification under any of the prevailing certification systems of NPOP (National programme for organic production) or PGS-India.

- ✓ In general, the villages with chemical input usage history will have to undergo a transition period of two to three years to get qualified as organic.
- ✓ This transition period has been removed under the Large Certification Scheme.
- ✓ The organic certification will help farmers get direct access to the emerging organic food market of the country.
- ✓ India now has more than 30 lakh hectare area registered under organic certification.
- ✓ As per an international survey report (2021), India ranks at 5th place in terms of area under organic farming and is at the top in terms of total number of producers with base year 2019
- ✓ The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana was launched in 2014 to promote natural farming.
- ✓ The Participatory Guarantee Scheme is a scheme that certifies organic products.
- ✓ The scheme is implemented by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare.
- ✓ The certification is issued based on the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations and notified by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India in 2017.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **India - has renewed its offer to Bangladesh to set up a co-production facility in Bangladesh to manufacture Covaxin**
- ✓ Bangladesh recently suspended the next round of vaccination with Covishield from Serum Institute
- ✓ The initial offer for manufacturing Covaxin was first made by India in December 2020 and is yet to receive a response from Bangladesh.
- ✓ Bangladesh preferred to import Covishield from Serum Institute and sell to its citizens.
- ✓ The Indian offer was based on two advantages — one, that Bangladesh would be able to manufacture for its citizens, and two, it could also be exported in the region.
- ✓ India has sent 103 lakh doses of Covishield to Bangladesh so far
- ✓ The first consignment sent on January 21— 33 lakh has been gifted and 70 lakh purchased by the Bangladeshi government.
- ✓ It has ordered another 20 lakh doses which has been delayed now, given India's own demands.
- ✓ India had even agreed to fund phase 3 trials for Covaxin in Bangladesh but there has been no response from the Bangladeshi government.
- ✓ Bharat Biotech and International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, had signed an agreement in December to conduct phase 3 trials for Covaxin in Bangladesh.

- **Bhutan – permits resumption of construction work of a private oxygen plant, based on a request from India**
- ✓ In this regard, Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck issued a royal decree on April 26
- ✓ This was announced by Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma
- ✓ The construction works of the plant was hit due to a lockdown in the Himalayan country last year.
- ✓ The plant will have a daily oxygen generating capacity of 50 MT
- ✓ It is being set up jointly by two entrepreneurs of Bhutan and Guwahati at Samdrup Jongkhar district bordering Assam's Baksa district.
- ✓ Once the plant starts functioning, the manufactured oxygen will be bought by India

DEFENCE

- **India - remains the third biggest military spender in the world, after the US and China**
- ✓ However, the US spends more than 10 times and China spends almost four times for their defence budget, in comparison to India
- ✓ This was revealed in the latest data released by global think-tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on April 26
- ✓ The total global military expenditure rose to \$1,981 billion in 2020, an increase of 2.6% in real terms from 2019
- ✓ During this period, the global gross domestic product contracted by 4.4% due to the Covid pandemic's economic impact
- ✓ The 10 biggest military spenders were the US (\$778 billion), China (\$252 billion), India (\$72.9 billion), Russia (\$61.7 billion), UK (\$59.2 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$57.5 billion), Germany (\$52.8 billion), France (\$52.7%), Japan (\$49.1 billion) and South Korea (\$45.7 billion).
- ✓ The top five together accounted for 62% of global military expenditure.
- ✓ China's military expenditure, in particular, grew for the 26th consecutive year
- ✓ China's uninterrupted increase was the largest by far among the top 15 countries over the 2011-2020 decade.
- ✓ Pakistan (\$10.3 billion) was ranked 23rd in the list.

SPORTS

- **The husband-wife pair of Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari - produced the best-ever show for India in individual events of the archery World Cup**
- ✓ Both of them won gold medals in the World Cup Stage I at Sport Complex Los Arcos in Guatemala City on April 25.
- ✓ The Indian archers bagged four medals on the last day of the competition.
- ✓ Deepika won her first gold alongwith Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari in the women's recurve team summit clash after defeating Mexico



- ✓ Later, Atanu won a bronze medal in the mixed team event after partnering with Ankita Bhakat and defeating the US
- ✓ In the individual event, former world number one and two-time Olympian Deepika, seeded third, won her third career-stage victory
 - ✓ She had defeated USA's eighth seed Mackenzie Brown in the final.
- ✓ Finally, Atanu bagged his maiden individual World Cup gold medal in the final against Spain's Daniel Castro.
- ✓ The Kolkata boy's previous best in the individual section has been a fourth place finish in Antalya-2016.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **World Immunisation Week - Last week of April (April 24th to 30th)**



- ✓ The World Immunisation week is celebrated every year to promote the use of vaccines for saving millions of lives.
- ✓ Theme 2021 – Vaccines bring us closer
- ✓ Immunization is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful health interventions
- ✓ There are an estimated around 20 million children in the world today who are not getting the required vaccines
- ✓ As part of the WHO campaign this year, the health agency aims to increase trust and confidence in vaccines, besides striving to increase investment in vaccine manufacturing