



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 16,

### TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC) - has floated global tenders for 3.5 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines that can be stored at 2 to 8 degrees celsius.**
- ✓ The vaccines, in any of the forms of oral, injectable, liquid or freeze dried, should have a shelf life of at least six months.
- ✓ The TNMSC procures medicines and equipment for government hospitals in the state
- ✓ As per the tender terms, the winning bidders should complete delivery of the stock within 180 days of the purchase order.
- ✓ The tender stipulates that if the bidder is a vaccine manufacturer, the company should have delivered at least 200 million doses – 50 million in the last one year – to any of the countries.
- ✓ Bidders who are not manufacturers must have supplied at least 50 million doses -- 25 million doses in the last one year—anywhere in the world.
- ✓ The TNMSC reserved the right to split the order to more than one bidder depending on factors such as delivery schedule, and the right to purchase more than one vaccine at a differential price based on cost, efficacy and availability.
- ✓ The technical bids will be opened on June 5.

### STATES

- **The Black Fungus disease - has been declared as notified disease in Haryana.**
- ✓ This means that the Government Authorities have to be informed by the doctors about every case detected with Black Fungus Disease in the state
- ✓ This will help authorities to collect information of the spread of the disease, monitor the disease and provide early warnings to the public
- ✓ Notified diseases are any disease whose occurrence has to be reported to the Government by law.

- ✓ Currently the WHO list on notified diseases is limited only to four main diseases namely yellow fever, cholera, plague and Covid-19.
  - ✓ In general, only the State Governments have powers to declare notified diseases as Health is a state subject
  - ✓ However, the Central Government maintains a list of Notified diseases.
  - ✓ In India, various notified diseases include AIDS, Hepatitis B, Dengue Fever, Malaria, Whooping cough, Anaemia, Measles, Rabies, typhoid, scarlet fever, polio, cerebrospinal fever, leprosy, Cholera, tuberculosis, small pox, plague, measles, influenza, diphtheria, chicken pox etc.,
- **The Punjab Government - announced recently that it is planning to join COVAX facility in order to increase Covid-19 vaccine supplies to the state.**
    - ✓ The COVAX facility has so far been operating only at the level of nations.
    - ✓ The facility aims to make sure that Covid-19 vaccines reach both low-income level and high-income level countries in an 'equitable' manner.
    - ✓ However, it is not clear if a State can join the facility.
    - ✓ Moreover, COVAX system itself is struggling to get vaccine supplies in the present situation.
    - ✓ Under the COVAX initiative, more than 59 million vaccine doses have been provided to 122 countries.
  - **Punjab Government - has decided to bring one hectare of land under Direct Seeding Technique this year**
    - ✓ This is being done as the Government is expecting shortage of migrant labour.
    - ✓ In the Direct Seeding Technique, the seeds are sown in the field directly rather than transplanting the seedlings.
    - ✓ A tractor powered machine is used to drill the seeds in to the soil.
    - ✓ There is no nursery preparation required in Direct Seeding technique.
    - ✓ In the traditional method, where the paddy is transplanted, the farmer first prepares nurseries.
    - ✓ The seeds are sown in these nurseries and raised to young plants, which are then uprooted and sown in the field.
    - ✓ The technique reduces cost by Rs 6000 per acre and uses 30% less water.
    - ✓ However, this technique needs more number of seeds and requires timely sowing for the crops to come out properly before monsoon rains.

## NATIONAL

- **Scottish explorer Cairn Energy Plc - has sued loss-making state-run national carrier, Air India in the US district court for the Southern District of New York**
  - ✓ Cairn moved the court to force recovery of a \$1.2 billion international arbitration award it won in December against the Indian government's retrospective tax claim

- ✓ Cairn filed the lawsuit asking Air-India to be declared as the “alter ego of Indian government” by virtue of control and “legally indistinct from the state-itself ” as a state-owned company.
  - ✓ The petition also argued for Air-India to be “held jointly and severally responsible for India’s debts, including from any judgment resulting from recognition of the (arbitration) award.”
- **On May 15, the government - opened up the import of Tur, Moong and Urad pulses**
- ✓ In this regard, the commerce ministry amended the import policy of these three key kitchen pulse items by moving them from “restricted” to “open” category.
  - ✓ The move is aimed at increasing availability of pulses and to have a control over their price rise.
  - ✓ The consumer affairs ministry had urged the state governments to verify the stocks of these items under the Essential Commodities Act.
  - ✓ It had flagged that there is a “sudden spurt” in prices of pulses and it may be due to hoarding of the item by stockholders.
  - ✓ According to the commerce ministry, the relaxation for import of pulses will be applicable till October 31 and all the imports under this modified norm will have to arrive on or before November 2021.
- **The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) - recently announced that it provided Rs 1,236 crore to Assam in 2020-21 from its Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF).**
- ✓ The RIDF was created in 1995-96 with an initial corpus of Rs 2,000 crore.
  - ✓ Further, Rs 29,848 crore was allocated to RIDF in the year 2020-21.
  - ✓ The fund shall be used for 37 eligible activities as approved by the central government.
  - ✓ These eligible activities are classified under the three broad categories.
  - ✓ They are social sector, agriculture and related sector and rural connectivity.
- **The National Bamboo Mission - recently launched a ‘Management Information System’ (MIS) to boost the domestic Agarbatti industry**



- ✓ The new system will collect data about Agarbatti production, availability of raw materials, location of stick making units, production capacity, functioning of units, etc.
- ✓ The system will act as an intermediary between the production units and the Agarbatti industry
- ✓ The National Bamboo Mission was launched in 2018-19.
- ✓ It is currently implemented in twenty one states across the country.
- ✓ In May 2021, the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University designed “Oxygen Park” in its premises in Coimbatore with Beema Bamboo.
- ✓ Beema Bamboo, a clone of Bambusa balcooa, is a higher biomass yielding bamboo species.
- ✓ Also, it is one of the fastest growing plants and the best carbon sink to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
- ✓ The Centre has recently inaugurated bamboo clusters to promote the cultivation of bamboo across the country

## INTERNATIONAL

- **The American State of Texas - recently passed the Heartbeat Bill that aims to ban abortions after the heartbeat of the embryo is detected.**
- ✓ The heartbeat of the embryo is usually detected after 6 weeks of gestation
- ✓ North Dakota became the first state in the USA to pass the Heartbeat Bill followed by other states including Ohio, Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, Missouri, Kentucky.
- ✓ However, the Supreme Court of the US held the law unconstitutional.
- ✓ At the stage of six weeks, the embryo isn't a foetus and doesn't have a heart.
- ✓ The bill still bans abortion at such early stages.
- ✓ An embryo becomes a foetus only in the eleventh week of pregnancy.

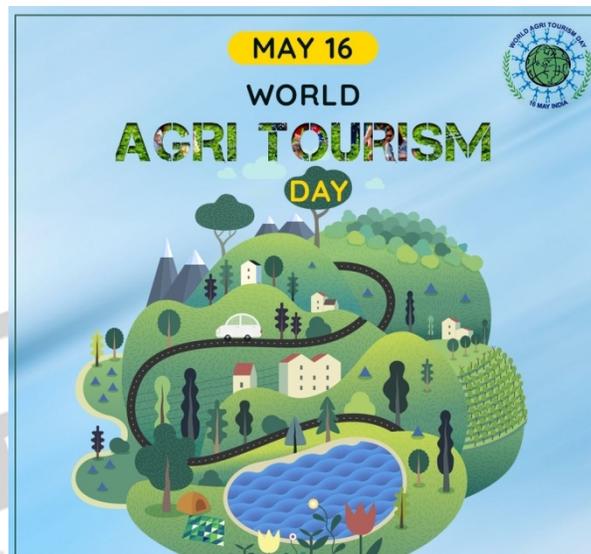
## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Voyager 1 probe - recently picked up humming sound that has been interpreted as interstellar gas activity**
- ✓ The scientists have named this phenomenon as “Plasma Wave Emission”.
- ✓ The Voyager 1 mission will help scientists to understand the interactions between solar winds and the interstellar medium.
- ✓ The hum was of narrow frequency bandwidth.
- ✓ The discovery of humming sound was made by the Plasma Wave System Instrument of Voyager 1.
- ✓ This sound was heard after Voyager 1 exited the heliosphere and entered the interstellar space.
- ✓ The first humming sound was heard after three months the Voyager 1 exited heliosphere.
- ✓ The second sound, which was even louder, was heard after six months the Voyager 1 exited the heliosphere.

- ✓ With this, the scientists conclude that the interstellar medium is getting thicker at faster rate.
- ✓ Interstellar medium is the radiation and matter that exist in the space between the star systems in a galaxy.
- ✓ This medium consists of gas in molecular, atomic or ionic form.
- ✓ The Voyager 1, launched in 1977, was the first spacecraft to enter the heliosphere of the sun in 2012.
- ✓ It was launched to study the outer solar system and planets such as Saturn and Jupiter on its way.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY

### ➤ World Agri-Tourism Day - May 16



- ✓ The celebration of the Day aims to create awareness about Agri-Tourism, which has the potential for increasing farm income and stimulating the development of a dynamic, diversified rural economy
- ✓ In many developed countries, Agri tourism has become an integral part of the tourism industry
- ✓ This year the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of World Agri-Tourism Day is celebrated across the globe
- ✓ Theme 2021 - Rural Women Sustainable Entrepreneurship Opportunities through Agri Tourism
- ✓ In India, Maharashtra is a pioneering state to develop and promote Agri-Tourism in the country
- ✓ To commemorate the Day, Department of Tourism, Maharashtra Government in partnership with Agri-Tourism Development Corporation India, is organising 'International Conference on Agri-Tourism' on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021
- ✓ On the eve of the Day, 'World Agri-Tourism Awards 2021' are given to exceptional stakeholders, who are selected by International Agri-tourism Awards Committee.

- ✓ In India, Agri Tourism Development Corporation, established in 2005, implements the Agri-Tourism Project
- ✓ According to the Agriculture Tourism Development Corporation, around 0.78 million tourists visited the Agri-Tourism Centres in 2020
- ✓ In September 2020, Maharashtra passed Agro-Tourism policy to educate the tourists about the pleasure of farming and also help increase farmer income.

