



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 20, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR & CE) department - proposes to digitize moveable and immoveable properties of 44,000-odd temples under its purview, within the next eight months**
 - ✓ The department is also planning to take up drone surveys to develop 3D images of the temples and their properties, which can be viewed by the devotees from any part of the world.
 - ✓ The department has proposed the move following instructions from HR & CE minister P K Sekar Babu
 - ✓ Through the initiative, the government aims to introduce transparency and efficiency in the administration of all the 44,227 temples located across the state.
 - ✓ So far, the HR & CE department has uploaded data related to 32,239 temples in the existing Thirukoil web portal.
 - ✓ The department would engage an external agency to develop digital elevation and surface models, covering the entire 4.95 lakh temple properties with survey numbers.
 - ✓ The task is expected to take six to eight months for completion.
 - ✓ The Minister urged the officials to upload all the information related to the administration of temples, festivals and consecrations in the department portal.
- **The Union territory of Puducherry - to launch an online integrated temple management system (ITMS) connecting all the 243 temples and mutts in the territory.**
 - ✓ Lieutenant governor (additional charge) Tamilisai Soundararajan formally launched the system in the presence of other officials
 - ✓ After Tamil Nadu, the UT of Puducherry is only the second region in the country to launch such a system.
 - ✓ The system at <http://hri.py.gov.in> will enable devotees to register for poojas and have darshans online.

- ✓ The system integrates all the temples under one portal
- ✓ Using the portal, the devotees can book the online registration for poojas and other e-services.
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu government shared its software module and the National Informatics Centre (NIC) developed the ITMS using its technical expertise.
- ✓ The ITMS will bring greater transparency in the administration including managing movable and immovable properties of the temples and trusts.
- ✓ Further, it will be useful for the authorities to monitor and regulate the income and expenditure of the temples and mutts.
- ✓ The system will also help in identifying and preserving the architectural values of the temples and religious institutions.
- ✓ People can view the renovation and repair works in the temples using the system and those interested can also participate in the works.
- ✓ The system also aims to link the temples of other states, so that people can access their portals from a single webpage.
- ✓ The portal will enable all announcements, circulars, instructions issued under the Pondicherry Hindu religious act and rules to reach the public easily.

NATIONAL

- **On May 19, the health ministry – issued new guidelines to the general public for taking the anti-Covid vaccines**
- ✓ As per the new norms, people with other serious illnesses requiring hospitalisation or ICU care should wait for 4-8 weeks before receiving the Covid vaccine after being discharged from hospital
- ✓ Those infected with Covid-19, including people who contracted the infection after receiving the first dose of the vaccine, should take the jab three months after recovering from the disease
- ✓ All lactating women are advised to take the vaccine, even though a technical advisory group on immunisation is studying data to evaluate if it can be allowed for pregnant women, as per the ministry
- ✓ Blood can be donated after 14 days of either receiving an anti-Covid shot or testing RT-PCR negative, if having suffered from the disease.
- ✓ The decisions were based on recommendations made by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC).
- ✓ So far, the government's advisory was to wait for 4-8 weeks after recovery from Covid-19 symptoms in case of infection before receiving the vaccine.
- ✓ The NEGVAC suggested that those who have received anti-SARS-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma should defer Covid-vaccination by three months from the date of discharge from the hospital.
- ✓ The health ministry clarified there is no requirement for screening of vaccine recipients by Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) prior to Covid-19 vaccination.

- ✓ The Centre has advised states to ensure effective dissemination of the information to service providers as well as the general public, through use of all channels of information and communication in local languages
- **On May 19, the India Meteorological Department – issued an update on the possibility of cyclonic formation over the Bay of Bengal**
 - ✓ According to IMD, the ‘low pressure area’ was very likely to form over north Andaman Sea and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal around May 22
 - ✓ It is expected to intensify gradually into a cyclonic storm towards end of this month.
 - ✓ If formed, the cyclone will be named ‘Yaas’ — the name given by Oman which means despair or disappointment.
 - ✓ The system is very likely to move north-westwards and reach West Bengal — Odisha coasts around May 25 evening, according to the IMD
 - ✓ The formation will bring light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy falls at isolated places in Odisha, West Bengal and adjoining Assam and Meghalaya from May 25 evening.
- **On May 19, the Centre - has decided to increase the fertilizer subsidy outlay for the year by ₹14,775 crore**
 - ✓ The decision was taken in a high level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the prices of fertilizers
 - ✓ This will take the fertilizer subsidy outlay for 2021-22 to ₹94,305 crore from a budgeted outlay of ₹79,530 crore
 - ✓ PM Modi decided to increase the subsidy for diammonium phosphate (DAP) fertiliser from ₹500 per bag to ₹1200 per bag, which is an increase of 140%
 - ✓ Last year, the actual price of DAP was ₹1,700 per bag, in which the Central Government was giving a subsidy of ₹500 per bag
 - ✓ Following the recent increase in international prices of phosphoric acid, ammonia etc., by about 60% to 70%, the actual price of a DAP bag is now coming to ₹2,400
 - ✓ In 2020-21 as well, the centre had increased the fertilizer subsidy outlay from ₹ 71,309 crore to ₹1.34 lakh crore, a jump of nearly 88%
 - ✓ This is the second major step of the government in the interest of the farmers after the recent transfer of eighth instalment of ₹ 20,667 crore to the farmers account under PM-KISAN scheme.
- **The Mahratta Chamber of Commerce Industries and Agriculture and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) – jointly launched the country’s first Agricultural Export Facilitation Centre at Pune on May 15, 2021**
 - ✓ This centre will serve as a one-stop-shop for all types of exporters engaged in the agricultural sector.

- ✓ It consists of agro-exporters alongwith serving and retired state and union government officials for providing inputs
 - ✓ The centre will help exporters on all aspects of the chain of agro-exports.
 - ✓ The various process dealt by the centre includes export registration, market assessment, standards of recipient countries, and adjustments required to match those standards, the kind of logistics involved in the operation, among other issues.
 - ✓ The Centre also proposes to develop a 'knowledge bank' where activities and knowledge related to different aspects of exports would be available
 - ✓ It would guide the prospective exporters on various relevant aspects through experts in areas like pesticide residue management, global gap certification etc.,
 - ✓ In 2018, India launched Agri Export Policy, which aims to double the agricultural exports to \$60 billion by 2022.
- **On May 17, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs – signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Microsoft to support the digital transformation of tribal schools under its purview**

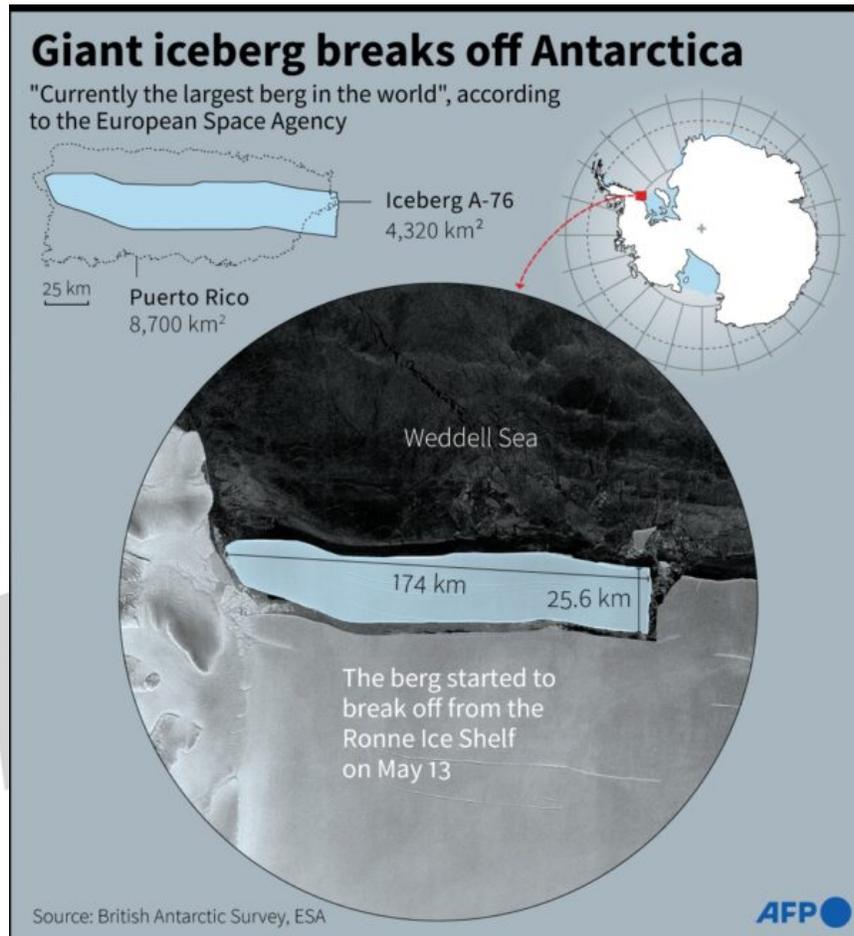


- ✓ The agreement would be applicable to schools such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and Ashram Schools, among others under the Ministry
- ✓ This partnership will train tribal students in technologies such as artificial intelligence, coding, and data science in English and Hindi languages.
- ✓ The initiative will also enable the professional development of teachers, enabling them to use technology in classrooms.
- ✓ The schools under the Ministry will be equipped with the technology, training, and tools required to transform them into Microsoft Showcase Schools
- ✓ Under this program in the first phase, 250 EMRS schools have been adopted by Microsoft
- ✓ Out of the 250 schools, 50 EMRS schools will be given intensive training and 500 master trainers would be trained in the first phase.

- ✓ The teachers will also be provided with e-certificates and e-badges from the Microsoft Education centres at the end of the programme

INTERNATIONAL

- **The world's largest iceberg, named A-76 – breaks off in Antarctica, as per the recent satellite images**



- ✓ The finger-shaped iceberg, which is about 4320 square kilometres in size, broke off the western side of Ronne ice shelf into the Weddell Sea in recent days
- ✓ Weddell Sea is a large bay in the Western Antarctic region.
- ✓ Ronne is one of the largest floating ice sheets that connect to Antarctica's landmass and extend out into surrounding seas.
- ✓ The A-76 iceberg measures around 170 kilometers long and 25 kilometers wide
- ✓ The scientists spotted the changes in A-76 in recent satellite images captured by the European Space Agency's Copernicus Sentinel-1 mission.
- ✓ The British Antarctic Survey was the first to notice the breakaway of the iceberg
- ✓ The Antarctica ice sheet is warming faster than the rest of the planet, causing melting of snow and ice covers as well as the retreat of glaciers, especially around the Weddell Sea

- ✓ The world's second-largest iceberg is also located in the Weddell Sea – the A-23A, which is approximately 3,880km square.
- ✓ Last year, currents took iceberg A-68A, the world's largest at the time, from Antarctica to the coast of the South Georgia Island and broke it into pieces

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **India's Biological E. - will produce the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine alongside its own vaccine candidate**
 - ✓ Telangana-based pharmaceutical major Biological E. was looking to contract-manufacture about 600 million doses of the J&J vaccine annually
 - ✓ Last month, J&J had sought permission to conduct a local clinical trial in India for its single-dose vaccine.
 - ✓ However, the Indian government is yet to give J&J permission to conduct a local clinical trial of its single-dose vaccine named 'Janssen'
 - ✓ Biological E., based in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, also plans to produce 75 million to 80 million doses of its own vaccine a month from August 2021.
 - ✓ The drug has been developed with Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and Dynavax Technologies Corp (DVAX.O).
 - ✓ The United States International Development Finance Corporation said in March that it would finance Biological E.'s efforts to produce at least 1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines by the end of 2022.
 - ✓ The Johnson and Johnson's Janssen Covid-19 vaccine was approved by FDA under an Emergency-use Authorization in February 2021 for adults.
 - ✓ Meanwhile, as per the World Health Organisation, the J&J vaccine has an efficacy of 85.4% against severe disease and hospitalisation, observed 28 days after inoculation.
 - ✓ The vaccine has 66.9% efficacy against moderate and severe infections.
 - ✓ It is an adeno virus vector similar to the vaccines manufactured by Moderna and Pfizer, which are two dose vaccines.
- **The US scientists from the Carle Illinois College of Medicine - have developed a new Covid-19 test called 'Scalable and Portable Testing' (SPOT)**
 - ✓ The new technique can provide accurate results from a saliva sample in less than 30 minutes.
 - ✓ The hand-held portable battery-powered device used for testing consists of components that can be 3D-printed easily
 - ✓ The test can detect as little as one viral particle per 1-microlitre drop of fluid, as per the researchers

- ✓ The device is still in the prototype stage and is estimated to cost a maximum price of \$78, while the reagents and other materials needed for testing would amount to \$6-\$7 per test
- ✓ This method of testing uses saliva, which is easier to collect and less invasive than a nasal swab
- ✓ It can also detect multiple genes per sample, making it more accurate than single-gene tests, which can yield incorrect or inconclusive results.
- ✓ The test is very much similar to that of the RT-PCR, except that it uses Reverse Transcriptase - Loop Mediated Isothermal Amplification (RT-LAMP).
- ✓ RT-LAMP is a one step nucleic acid amplification method used to multiply specific sequences of RNA.
- ✓ This technology is considered as an alternate to RT-PCR as it is much cheaper and easier.

OBITUARY

- **Former NSG director general J K Dutt (72 years), who headed the ‘Operation Black Tornado’ commando force during the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks – passed away on May 19 due to complications arising out of Covid-19.**



- ✓ J K or Jyoti Krishan Dutt was a 1971-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the West Bengal cadre.
- ✓ He served as the DG of the National Security Guard (NSG) from August 2006 to February 2009, after which he retired from service.
- ✓ He also worked in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and was once appointed as its officiating chief or director in 2005.
- ✓ Dutt also served the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

INTERNATIONAL WEEK

- **United Nations Global Road Safety Week**
- ✓ This year, the sixth edition of the UN Global Road Safety Week is observed from 17th May, 2021 till 23rd May, 2021
- ✓ Theme 2021 – ‘Streets for Life’
- ✓ Tagline 2021 - #Love30



- ✓ It is a biennial global road safety campaign hosted by the World Health Organisation (WHO)
- ✓ The campaign aims to raise awareness to the general public about the importance of road safety in reducing the road deaths and accidents.
- ✓ The first Global Road Safety Week was celebrated in 2007.
- ✓ As part of 2021 Global Road Safety Week, the Decade Plan of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 was launched by the United Nations.
- ✓ The plan is in line with the Stockholm Declaration.
- ✓ It calls for improving road safety laws, designing roads and vehicles considering the safety aspects and stringent law enforcement on behavioural risks such as alcohol, speeding and driving.
- ✓ India ranks among the top countries globally in terms of number of road accidents.

