

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS –JUNE 10, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The seventh phase of excavation - was resumed in Keeladi and surrounding villages on June 9.**
- ✓ It was temporarily stopped earlier due to the imposition of lockdown on May 10
- ✓ The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has conducted the first three phases of excavation, followed by fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh phases being conducted by Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department.
- ✓ During the fourth phase, 5820 artefacts were unearthed, while the next phases resulted in the discovery of skeletons, and brick structures.
- ✓ In the seventh phase, burial urns with skeletons, a cubical terracotta dice, terracotta pots, and black red earthenware were discovered alongwith a gold ornament in April 2021
- ✓ In another development, a boundary stone belonging to the 13th century and an idol of Ayyanar belonging to the 17th century have been found near Rajapalayam in Virudhunagar district.



- ✓ The boundary stone has a conch, chakra and 'namam' on it indicating that it is a Vaishnavite stone.
- ✓ On the left side of the stone, the words "Paru tharai kudi kaal ru" are engraved in Tamil, indicating the old name of the place as Parutharaikudi, which is now known as 'Paravakudi'

- ✓ These two structures were found near a local tank near Karivalamvanthanallur village.
- ✓ The idol of Ayyanar has been found with its hair let down and a belt on the hip

STATES

- **Maharashtra government - has launched “Corona-free Village Contest” to encourage the villagers in rural areas to follow the Covid-19 precautionary norms**



- ✓ This contest was announced as part of the ‘My Village Corona Free’ initiative announced by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray
- ✓ The participating villages will be judged, on the basis of 22 criteria, by a committee set up exclusively for this purpose.
- ✓ Three village panchayats in each of the six revenue divisions of the state will be given prizes for effectively managing the pandemic.
- ✓ The first prize will be Rs 50 lakh while the second and third prizes will be Rs 25 lakh and Rs 15 lakh respectively.
- ✓ The winning villages will also get an additional amount equal to the prize money as incentive.

NATIONAL

- **On June 9, the Union Cabinet - announced new support prices for 14 kharif (summer sown) crops, which includes oilseeds, pulses and less water-consuming nutri-cereals such as Bajra and Jowar.**
- ✓ The MSP of most popular crop paddy got a modest hike of ₹72 per quintal to ₹1,940 for 2021-22 marketing season in comparison to last year
- ✓ The highest absolute increase in MSP over the previous year was announced for sesamum, a nutritional oil seed, (₹452 per quintal), followed by tur and urad dals (₹300 per quintal each).
- ✓ The expected returns to farmers over their cost of production will be highest in case of Bajra (85%) followed by urad (65%) and tur (62%).
- ✓ For the rest of the crops, return to farmers over their cost of production is estimated to be at least 50%, as per the policy of the government.

PADDY GETS MODEST RAISE

New MSP of kharif crops in 2021-22

CROP	NEW MSP*	% (ABSOLUTE*) HIKE
Sesamum	7,307	6.6%
Groundnut	5,550	5.2%
Tur	6,300	5%
Urad	6,300	5%
Bajra	2,250	4.6%
Jowar	2,738	4.5%
Cotton	5,726	3.8%
Paddy	1,940	3.8%
Niger Seed	6,930	3.5%
Ragi	3,377	2.5%
Sunflower Seed	6,015	2.2%
Soybean	3,950	1.8%
Moong	7,275	1.1%
Maize	1,870	1.1%

*₹ per quintal; Paddy (common), Jowar (hybrid), Cotton (medium staple)



- ✓ The announcement comes after the recent ₹76,000 crore procurement by the government at the end of the Rabi season
- ✓ This included a ₹26,000 crore direct payment to Punjab farmers, for the first time, without being routed through market middlemen
- ✓ The overall hike was approved by the Cabinet on June 9
- ✓ It has been announced as per the government's plan to encourage farmers to go for coarse cereals (nutri-cereals), oilseeds and pulses in a big way by moving away from water-guzzling paddy
- ✓ The government has been fixing MSPs at least 1.5 times of All-India weighted average Cost of Production (CoP), as announced in the Union Budget 2018-19
- ✓ The Minimum support price (MSP) is the rate at which government buys grains from farmers
- **Bharat Biotech – to conduct phase 4 clinical trials of its indigenously developed vaccine 'Covaxin' to check real-world effectiveness**
- ✓ It will also apply for full licensure after data from the final analysis of phase 3 studies is available in July.
- ✓ The phase 4 trials are also being done to ensure its vaccine met every rigorous scientific standard for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorisation (EUA)
- ✓ Covaxin had received EUA in early January, while phase 3 trials were underway, resulting in a controversy.
- ✓ The company will first submit the phase-3 trial data to Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), followed by the data from the peer-reviewed journals

- ✓ Once data from final analysis of phase 3 studies is available, Bharat Biotech will apply for full licensure for Covaxin
- **The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi – has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on sustainable urban development between India and Japan**
- ✓ The MoC will be signed between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Japan
- ✓ The new MoC will supersede the existing MoU on urban development signed between both the countries in 2007
- ✓ To implement the programmes under the MoC, a Joint Working Group (JWG) will be constituted, which will meet once a year alternately in Japan and in India.
- ✓ The MoC will be in operation from the date of signing till the period of 5 years and renewed automatically thereafter for the next 5 years
- ✓ It is expected to bring more job opportunities in the areas of Urban Planning, Smart Cities Development, Affordable Housing, (including rental housing), Urban Flood Management, Sewerage and Waste Water Management, Urban Transport (including Intelligent Transport Management System, Transit-Oriented Development and Multimodal Integration) and Disaster Resilient development.
- ✓ A similar MoU on cooperation in the field of sustainable urban development was signed between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Maldives in February this year
- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - has recently approved second home-based Rapid Antigen Test kit named “PanBio COVID-19”, developed by Abbott Rapid Diagnostics Division, Chicago.**



- ✓ The self-use kit has been given provisional approval till 5th July, after which its selling price will be decided

- ✓ Earlier, ICMR had given its approval to “CoviSelf test kit” which was developed by Pune-based Mylab Discovery Solutions.
 - ✓ Rapid Antigen test is advised only for symptomatic individuals and immediate contacts of positive cases.
 - ✓ Individuals who test positive will be considered as true positives while symptomatic individuals who test negative will be tested again by RT-PCR.
- **Research Designs & Standards Organization (RDSO) wing of Indian railways - has become India’s first institution to be declared as ‘Standard Developing Organization’ (SDO) under “One Nation One Standard” mission of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**



- ✓ Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the National Standards Body, is an Institution under Department of Consumer Affairs
 - ✓ To attain “One Nation One Standard” vision of the Government, BIS has launched a scheme which provides for “Recognition of SDO”.
 - ✓ RDSO, Lucknow, is the sole R&D Wing of Ministry of Railways
 - ✓ It is one of country’s leading standard formulating body undertaking the standardization work for railway sector.
 - ✓ The scope of RDSO’s recognition as SDO, as approved by the Bureau (BIS), is “Standards Developing Organization for products, processes and services for railway transportation sector in India”.
 - ✓ The recognition is valid for 3 years and will require renewal after completion of the validity period.
- **Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan – launched recently the revamped Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and the Umbrella schemes of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) and Health Minister’s**

Discretionary Grant (HMDG) on National Health Authority (NHA)'s IT platform



- ✓ With this, all these government's flagship health schemes have become paperless, cashless and citizen-centric.
- ✓ CGHS is comprehensive health scheme to serve pensioners, employees, ex-MPs, Members of Parliament and dependent family members.
- ✓ The RAN scheme provides financial assistance of Rs. 15 lakh to poor patients suffering from major life-threatening diseases or rare diseases or cancer for treatment at government hospitals.
- ✓ Similarly, under HMDG a maximum amount of Rs.1,25,000/- is provided to patients whose annual income does not exceed Rs.1,25,000/- towards the expenditure on hospitalization/treatment in government Hospitals
- ✓ The beneficiaries of these schemes are decided on the basis of BPL threshold in States and Union Territories.

INTERNATIONAL

- **El Salvador - has become the first country in the world to adopt bitcoin as legal tender**
- ✓ The country's lawmakers approved President Nayib Bukele's proposal to accept the cryptocurrency.
- ✓ Lawmakers voted in favour of creating a law to adopt bitcoin, despite concern about the potential impact on El Salvador's \$1 billion programme with the IMF.
- ✓ Bukele has approved the use of bitcoin to help Salvadorans living abroad to send remittances back home, while maintaining that the US dollar will also continue as legal tender.
- ✓ The use of bitcoin will be optional for individuals and would not bring risks to users
- ✓ The government guaranteed convertibility to dollars at the time of transaction through a trust created at the country's development bank 'Bandesal'.

- ✓ Under the law, bitcoin must be accepted by firms when offered as payment for goods and services.
- ✓ Tax contributions can also be paid in the cryptocurrency.
- ✓ Its use as legal tender will begin in 90 days, with the bitcoin-dollar exchange rate set by the market.
- ✓ Bitcoin is the first decentralized cryptocurrency which was released in 2009.

- **China – to promote ‘red tourism’ on the occasion of 100th anniversary of Chinese Communist Party in 2021**
- ✓ The ‘red tourism’ aims to encourage people to visit places that have historical and cultural importance for the communist party.
- ✓ Nanhu Lake in Zhejiang, East China and Mao Zedong’s birthplace Shaoshan are among the places in China which have cultural and historical significance
- ✓ Red Tourism, originally launched in 2004, is a term coined by China referring to the importance of visiting sites which have modern revolutionary legacy
- ✓ It aims to create awareness regarding history of communist party starting with its origins.

- **The United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF and vaccine manufacturer Moderna Inc., - have signed a long-term agreement for the supply of Covid-19 vaccine on behalf of the COVAX Facility as part of the agreement announced in May 2021**
- ✓ As per the agreement, Moderna will supply its vaccine to UNICEF and its procurement partners like Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
- ✓ Accordingly, they will get 34 million doses of Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine in the fourth quarter of 2021 and up to 466 million doses in 2022
- ✓ The UNICEF’s Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility aims to ensure ‘equitable’ global access to vaccines including in low- and middle-income countries around the world.
- ✓ On April 30, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an Emergency Use Listing (EUL) for Moderna’s Covid-19 vaccine in individuals 18 years of age and older.
- ✓ UNICEF also announced that it has signed four other supply deals for Covid-19 vaccines, including agreements with the Serum Institute of India, Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Human Vaccine

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **India - recently launched a global Initiative named ‘Mission Innovation CleanTech Exchange’**
- ✓ The initiative aims to create network of incubators across member countries to accelerate clean energy innovation

- ✓ The network was launched virtually at the 'Innovating to Net Zero Summit' hosted by Chile
- ✓ The goal of the initiative is to make clean energy affordable, attractive and accessible for all, to hasten action towards the goals agreed in 2015 Paris agreement and achieve net zero emission targets
- ✓ Mission Innovation 2.0 is the second phase of the global Mission Innovation initiative, launched in conjunction with the Paris Agreement (2015).
- ✓ The Paris Agreement aims to limit global warming to well below two degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels
- ✓ Overall, 22 countries and the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union) are part of the launching event of the Mission Innovation 2.0
- ✓ The launch of Mission Innovation 2.0 is a key milestone in the build-up to the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, UK, in November.
- ✓ Since 2015, Mission Innovation member governments have increased clean energy innovation investments by a cumulative total of \$18bn.

COMMITTEES

- **Dr. K.P. Krishnan committee on 'variable capital company' - has submitted its report to Injeti Srinivas, the Chairperson of International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), GIFT City, Gujarat**
- ✓ The committee was set up to analyse the feasibility of Variable Capital Company as an alternate fund management tool in International Financial Services Centres in India.
- ✓ The IFSCA set up this Committee to explore the potential for allowing an additional option through which asset managers could pool the investors' funds.
- ✓ Conventionally, pooling of funds in India is undertaken through three types of entities, namely, limited liability companies governed under the Companies Act, 2013; limited liability partnerships under the Limited Liability Partnership Act; and trusts governed under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882.
- ✓ The Committee recommended the adoption of a VCC-like legal structure for the purpose of conducting fund management activity in IFSCs

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory (CSIR-NCL), Pune - has launched a new technique called SWASTIIC for disinfecting and purifying water by using natural oils.**
- ✓ The new technique aims to improve water quality and prevent water-borne diseases like diarrhea, cholera and typhoid
- ✓ The technique involves boiling the liquid as a result of pressure reduction (or hydrodynamic cavitation) and uses natural oils having antimicrobial properties for disinfection.

Novel Hybrid Technology 'SWASTIIK' for Safe & Clean Drinking Water

SWASTIIK can eliminate harmful bacteria, including antimicrobial-resistant bacteria, economically from water

It integrates Indian traditional knowledge of Ayurveda for complete disinfection of water & offers possible health benefits of natural oils

Technical process has resulted in increased efficiency and reduced cost of water treatment



- ✓ The 'disinfection' process removes pathogenic microorganisms that are responsible for causing water-borne diseases
 - ✓ However, the usual chemical methods of disinfection, such as chlorination, include the formation of harmful or carcinogenic by-products.
 - ✓ The technology is efficient in eliminating harmful bacteria including antibiotic-resistant strains in an economical manner
 - ✓ It was developed by CSIR-NCL with the help of Water Technology Initiative of the department of science and technology (DST)
 - ✓ This new technology will act as a big boost to the centre's ambitious National Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims to ensure assured tap water supply to all rural households under the "Har Ghar Jal" mission by 2024.
- **Two Russian cosmonauts, Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov - performed spacewalk outside the International Space Station (ISS) recently to prepare for the arrival of a new Russian module 'Nauka'**



- ✓ It was their first spacewalk, lasting about 7 hours and 19 minutes, after arriving at the ISS in April 2021
 - ✓ The 'Nauka' multipurpose laboratory module will replace the existing Pirs docking compartment in the spacestation
 - ✓ The two cosmonauts, during the spacewalk, focused on the undocking and disposal of the existing equipment and antenna from the Pirs compartment
 - ✓ The launch of the Russian Nauka lab module has been continuously delayed since 2007 over technical issues and is planned for launch on July 15, 2021
 - ✓ ISS is a habitable modular space station in low Earth orbit.
 - ✓ It is a multinational collaborative project with five participating space agencies - NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), ESA (Europe), JAXA (Japan) and CSA (Canada).
- **American space agency, NASA - has announced two new missions namely DAVINCI+ and VERITAS to study the planet, Venus**
- ✓ The two robotic missions will be part of the agency's Discovery Program.
 - ✓ The missions will study how Venus became the hottest planet of our solar system, alongwith its similarities to Earth
 - ✓ These missions will be launched between 2028 and 2030 at a budget of USD 500 million each
 - ✓ NASA had shortlisted four missions in February 2020 during its Discovery 2019 competition and finalised two missions ultimately.
 - ✓ DAVINCI+ stands for Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging
 - ✓ It is aimed at measuring the components of Venus' atmosphere
 - ✓ VERITAS is the acronym for Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy.
 - ✓ It will map the surface of the planet Venus to understand its geologic history.
 - ✓ Further, DAVINCI+ is going to demonstrate the Compact Ultraviolet to Visible Imaging Spectrometer (CUVIS) while VERITAS will host Deep Space Atomic Clock-2.
 - ✓ The mission VERITAS will become the first to study the surface of Venus after the Magellan spacecraft which was also sent by NASA in 1990

RANKINGS

- **Auckland - tops The Economist's annual survey of the world's most liveable cities in 2021**
- ✓ It was followed by Osaka and Tokyo in Japan, Adelaide in Australia and Wellington in New Zealand
 - ✓ These cities have shown a swift response to the Covid pandemic and were highly successful with their approach in containing the pandemic, allowing the society to remain 'open'

The most and least liveable cities in 2021

According to The Economist Intelligence Unit index

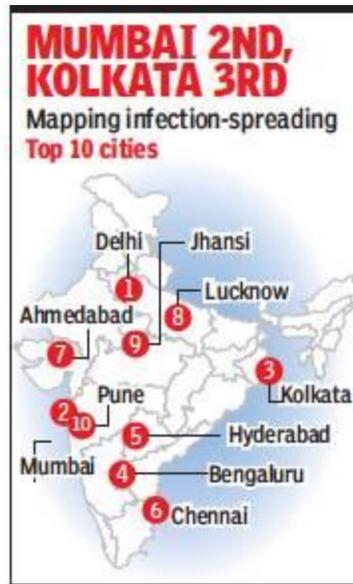
- Most liveable
- Least liveable

Factors considered:

- ▶ Living standards
- ▶ Crime
- ▶ Transport infrastructure
- ▶ Access to education and healthcare
- ▶ Political and economic stability

AFP Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit - The Global Liveability Index 2019

- ✓ In contrast, European cities fared particularly poorly in this year's edition
 - ✓ Vienna, previously the world's most liveable city between the year 2018-20, fell to 12th place.
 - ✓ Eight of the top 10 biggest falls in the rankings are European cities
 - ✓ The biggest fall overall was the port city of Hamburg in Germany, which fell 34 places to 47th.
 - ✓ The European countries had a "deteriorated healthcare score" caused by the "stress on hospital resources"
 - ✓ The most notable rise was by Honolulu in the US, which was ranked 14th.
 - ✓ It moved up 46 places because of its containment of the pandemic and fast vaccination drive.
- **Delhi – tops the 'hazard map' of spreading Covid-19 infection, followed by Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai.**
 - ✓ The 'hazard map' identifies areas from where pandemic outbreaks can spread rapidly.
 - ✓ Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune have created the 'hazard map' of 446 cities and towns, which have populations of over 1 lakh
 - ✓ IISER's physics department used transportation networks and mobility patterns to create the map, indicating that the lower the rank, the higher is the hazard level.
 - ✓ According to researchers, infections can travel out from these cities because of the large, well-connected transport hubs.
 - ✓ The project also used mobility and transport data to assign a risk score to cities if an outbreak occurs in another town or city.



- ✓ For example, Mumbai is ranked 1 (faces most risk) if Pune reports an outbreak, while Satara is ranked 19 and Latur 50.
- ✓ The project has been funded by a special MATRICS grant of the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB).