

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS –JUNE 16, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu school education department - formed a ten-member panel to decide on the evaluation criteria for state board Class XII students, whose exams have been cancelled due to the pandemic.**
- ✓ The panel will be headed by School Education Secretary, Kakarla Usha and comprises of nine other members.



- ✓ The other members named in the panel are - higher education secretary D Karthikeyan, school education commissioner K Nanthakumar, Madras University vice-chancellor S Gowri, director of government examinations C Usharani, SCERT (State Council for Education Research and Training) director N Latha and director of matriculation schools S Karupasamy and three headmasters - A Stella Amalorpava Mary from Tiruppur, U Ganesan from Tirunelveli and H James Sathyaraj from Chennai (one each from government, government-aided and private school)
- ✓ The panel is likely to study the evaluation criteria to be followed by CBSE and other boards before arriving at a decision.
- ✓ However, a 13-member expert panel which was set up by CBSE is yet to submit its recommendations.
- ✓ The state panel is expected to submit its recommendations within two weeks.

- **On June 15, Chief minister M K Stalin – announced a commission headed by former chief justice of the Delhi high court Justice, D Murugesan**



- ✓ The panel will study the poor enrolment of government school students in professional courses like engineering, agriculture, veterinary, fisheries and law.
 - ✓ Earlier, the state government introduced 7.5% special reservation for government school students in medical admissions last year.
 - ✓ The commission will study the social and economic background of government school students to identify the obstacles faced by them
 - ✓ It will recommend remedial measures if the enrolment of government school students is considerably poor in the professional courses.
 - ✓ The commission is to submit its report to the government within a month
- **Tamil Nadu's allocation under the Union government's flagship scheme, Jal Jeevan Mission – was increased by more than 300%, from ₹922 crore last year to ₹3691.2 crore this financial year.**
- ✓ The Centre has also released the first instalment of ₹614.3 crore to Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ The mission, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019, aims at providing tap water to every household in the country by 2024.
 - ✓ As of now, in Tamil Nadu, 88.8 lakh households are to be given tap water connections before the scheduled target.
 - ✓ The target set for 2020-21 was only 16.1 lakh tap water connections
 - ✓ When Jal Jeevan Mission was launched in 2019, Tamil Nadu had 21.6 lakh rural households with tap water connection.
 - ✓ It was expected to increase by 40.4 lakh households in 22 months.
 - ✓ Once the Central fund is released, the state has to contribute a matching share and the money has to be transferred to the nodal agency's (TWAD Board) account within 15 days.
 - ✓ The state government has been asked by the centre to focus on 18 districts this year, where more than 70% of the rural households have no tap water connections.
 - ✓ They are Salem, Virudhunagar, Tiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, Tiruvallur, Krishnagiri, Villupuram, Madurai, Sivaganga, Nagapattinam, Tuticorin,

Pudukkottai, Dharmapuri, Tirupur, Kallakurichi, Thanjavur, Ramanathapuram and Erode.

- ✓ The Nilgiris is one of the 15 districts where more than 75% households do not have tap water connection.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu has an assured availability of ₹4,068.7 crore Central grant, including ₹3,691.2 crore of Central allocation and ₹377.5 crore unspent balance left at the end of the last financial year.
 - ✓ The corresponding state's matching share for this year is ₹4,359.5 crore, including shortfall of ₹290.8 crore during last fiscal.
 - ✓ The total assured fund availability for the implementation of the Mission in the state for this year is ₹8,428.2 crore.
- **The Union ministry - has granted environmental clearance for the ₹381 crore expansion of Tuticorin airport.**



- ✓ The expansion project includes the extension of runway with blast pad, runway safety area, taxiway, apron, ground support equipment area, isolation bay and a new domestic terminal building.
- ✓ Earlier, on May 27-28, the expert appraisal committee of the aviation ministry recommended granting environmental clearance to the project subject to certain conditions during a meeting held via video conferencing.
- ✓ The construction of a centralised airconditioned domestic terminal building in an area of 10,800sqm shall handle 600 passengers during peak hours with all modern facilities and amenities.
- ✓ There used to be six flights a day in pre-Covid days from the Tuticorin airport.
- ✓ The existing airport has 76.31ha of land, while the state government has handed over 243.2ha of additional land free from all encumbrances for the proposed development.

STATES

- **The Andhra Pradesh government - has decided to make English medium compulsory across all government and private aided and unaided degree colleges in the state from the academic year 2021-22.**

- ✓ The department of higher education decided that introduction of English medium education at the under-graduate (UG) level would enhance the career prospects of graduates.
- ✓ According to the findings in India Skills Report of 2019, English figured among the top three skills, along with learning agility and adaptability, which employers look for in the job aspirants.
- ✓ Out of over 2.62 lakh students, who have taken admissions into degree colleges across the state, only 65,981 students are admitted into Telugu medium during 2020-21.

➤ **Madhya Pradesh government – to launch a new initiative named ‘Yuva Shakti Corona Mukti Abhiyan’**

- ✓ The new campaign aims to make people aware about the Covid pandemic with the help of a youth power
- ✓ Under the new initiative, college teachers and around 16 lakh students will be educated about Covid-19 infection by learning Covid appropriate behavior and vaccination.
- ✓ This campaign will be organised by the State Higher Education and Technical Education Department in collaboration with the Public Health and Family Welfare Department.
- ✓ Further, a mobile app has also been developed for effective real time online monitoring of the new campaign.

NATIONAL

➤ **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) – has given approval to a new low-cost portable device named ‘iSave (Individualized System for Augmenting Ventilator Efficacy)’**



- ✓ iSave can help at least two patients get ‘customised’ respiratory support from a single ventilator at the same time
- ✓ It will also allow the remote monitoring of the patients’ health status by the doctors through a tablet

- ✓ It was designed by an Indian-origin researcher, Shriya Srinivasan, from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
 - ✓ The device is now being used in hospitals in Chennai, Bengaluru and Vishakapatnam
 - ✓ It helps expand the ventilation capacity of hospitals by using the existing ventilators, minimises the need to procure additional ventilators during emergency situations as well as reduces the exposure of medical experts to the infection.
- **The mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery and artefacts – is to be implemented across the country from June 16, 2021.**
- ✓ According to the centre, the system will come into force in a phased manner and initially will be implemented in 256 districts of the country that have Assaying marking centres.
 - ✓ Accordingly, from June 16, jewellers in 256 districts will be allowed to sell only 14, 18 and 22 carats of gold jewellery.
 - ✓ Further, gold of additional 20, 23 and 24 carats will also be allowed for hallmarking
 - ✓ Further, the government has exempted jewellers with annual turnover of up to Rs 40 lakh from mandatory hallmarking
 - ✓ The mandatory hallmarking has also been exempted on those who export and re-import jewellery as per the government's trade policy, jewellery meant for international exhibitions as well as for government-approved B2B domestic exhibitions
 - ✓ Also, the government has exempted mandatory hallmarking gold on watches, fountain pens and some special types of jewellery
 - ✓ A decision in this regard was taken after a meeting chaired by Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal with industry stakeholders.
 - ✓ In November 2019, the government had announced that hallmarking of gold jewellery and artefacts would be made mandatory across the country from January 15, 2021.
 - ✓ However, the deadline was again extended for four months till June 1 and later till June 15 after the jewellers sought more time in view of the pandemic
 - ✓ Gold hallmarking is a purity certification of the precious metal and has been voluntary in nature so far.
 - ✓ The mandatory hallmarking will protect the public against lower caratage and ensure consumers not getting cheated while buying gold ornaments and get the purity as marked on the ornaments.
 - ✓ The BIS has been running a hallmarking scheme for gold jewellery since April 2000 and around 40% of gold jewellery is being hallmarked currently.
 - ✓ India has around 4 lakh jewellers, of which only 35,879 have been BIS certified
 - ✓ According to the World Gold Council, India imports 700-800 tonne of gold annually.

- **The Office of Principal Scientific Adviser to Government – has recently initiated “Project O₂ for India” to cater to the increase in demand for medical oxygen across the country during the pandemic**
 - ✓ It aims to ensure adequate supply of oxygen for future medical needs and ramp up the manufacturing capacity accordingly.
 - ✓ Under the project, a National Consortium of Oxygen will be set up which would enable adequate national level supply of critical raw materials like zeolites.
 - ✓ It would also set up small oxygen plants, manufacture compressors and final products like oxygen plants, concentrators & ventilators.
 - ✓ Further, a committee of experts has been constituted to evaluate critical equipment like concentrators, oxygen plants and ventilators from India-based start-ups, manufacturers and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

- **Indian Coast Guard - have launched ‘Operation Olivia’ to protect the endangered Olive Ridley turtles in Odisha**



- ✓ Operation Olivia aims to protect the population of Olive Ridley turtles during their nesting seasons from May to December every year
- ✓ Initiated first during the early 1980s, Operation Olivia is carried out off the coast of Odisha, the primary habitat range of the turtles, where they congregate along the coast for breeding and nesting
- ✓ During the period, 24x7 surveillance is conducted by the Coast Guard using fast patrol vessels, air cushion vessels, interceptor craft and Dornier aircraft
- ✓ From November 2020 to May 2021, the Coast Guard devoted 225 ship days and 388 aircraft hours to protect 3.49 lakh turtles that laid eggs along the Odisha coast.
- ✓ Further, the Coast Guard conducts awareness programmes to involve the local community in the conservation of Olive Ridley Turtles.
- ✓ Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary consists of the world's largest rookery of sea turtles
- ✓ The Olive Ridley is classified as ‘vulnerable’ according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- ✓ Sea turtles found in India have been included in Schedule I of Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

- ✓ They are also listed in Appendix I of Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna and Flora.
- **Indian Institute of Technology, Ropar - has developed a device 'Jivan Vayu', which can be used as a substitute for CPAP (Continuous positive airway pressure) machine**



- ✓ This is the country's first such device that functions even without electricity and can function with both kinds of oxygen generation units like O₂ cylinders and oxygen pipelines in hospitals.
- ✓ These features are not available in the existing CPAP machines, which are operated through electricity.
- ✓ The device has been manufactured using 3D printing and has also been tested mechanically at the Advanced Materials and Design Lab
- ✓ It has an inbuilt viral filter, which ensures that the air does not bring in any pathogens from the environment
- ✓ 'Jivan Vayu' can deliver high flow oxygen in the range from 20 to 60 Litres per minute, while maintaining a continuous positive pressure of up to 20 cm H₂O.
- ✓ The device is designed to maintain a FiO₂ of above 40% with a PEEP (positive end-expiratory pressure) of 5-20 cm H₂O.
- ✓ Traditionally, CPAP machines are used for patients suffering from breathing problems and sleep apnea
- ✓ The therapy is also used to treat infants whose lungs have not fully developed.

INTERNATIONAL

- **China – to send the first three crew members to its new space station, Tiangong, for three months on June 17**
- ✓ The spacecraft, Shenzhou-12, with three male astronauts - Nie Haisheng, Liu Boming and Tang Hongbo - will be launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in Gobi Desert on a Long March-2F carrier rocket
- ✓ This will be the first time China will send humans into space, since the 30 days stay undertaken during the 2016 mission.

- ✓ This will be the first manned mission during the construction of the space station and the three astronauts will be assisting the repair and maintenance operations
- ✓ The mission is being launched ahead of the 100-year celebrations of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) to be held next month.
- ✓ Earlier, China launched its space station core module Tianhe on April 29
- ✓ The space station still under construction is expected to be ready by next year.
- ✓ China's space station has been equipped with a 15 metres robotic arm over which the US has raised concerns for its possible military applications and for grappling other satellites
- ✓ The Chinese space station is expected to be a competitor to the ageing International Space Station (ISS), which is a modular space station in low Earth orbit.
- ✓ The ISS is a multinational collaborative project involving five participating space agencies -- NASA (US), Roscomos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe) and CSA (Canada).

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – addressed recently a virtual dialogue on desertification, land degradation and drought at the United Nations on 14th June 2021.**



- ✓ During the event, PM Modi said that India is on track to achieve its national commitment of land degradation neutrality with the addition of around 3 million hectares of forest cover over the last 10 years
- ✓ He also said that over the last 10 years, India has enhanced the combined forest cover to almost one-fourth of the country's total area.
- ✓ The Prime Minister gave the example of the Banni region in Rann of Kutch in Gujarat to illustrate how land restoration can start a virtuous cycle of good soil health, increased land productivity, food security and improved livelihoods
- ✓ Further, the PM added that India is working towards restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030
- ✓ This would contribute to India's commitment to achieve an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, as per the PM

- ✓ A Centre of Excellence is being set up in India to promote a scientific approach towards land degradation issues, informed the Prime Minister
 - ✓ This high-level event was convened by the President of 75th session of the UN General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir.
 - ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the President of 14th session of Conference of the Parties to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP14 President) at New Delhi in 2019
 - ✓ The meeting was attended by world leaders, ministers and government representatives, agricultural industry leaders, representatives from United Nations institutions, international organisations and civil society groups as well as members of the general public
 - ✓ The Dialogue aims to focus the international community's attention on land degradation issues and implementing land solutions
 - ✓ It will encourage all Member States to adopt and implement Land Degradation Neutrality targets and National Drought Plans.
 - ✓ As per United Nations, one-fifth of earth's land area (more than 2 billion hectares) is degraded, which includes more than 50% of all agricultural land.
 - ✓ If land degradation continues at this rate, over 90% land would be degraded by 2050, affecting one-fifth of the land area and livelihoods of 3.2 billion people or 40% of global population.
 - ✓ Land degradation also accelerates climate change & biodiversity loss and contributes to droughts, wildfires and involuntary migration.
- **The leaders of NATO's 30 member countries - arrived at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium on June 14 to participate in the 31st formal meeting of heads of government of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation).**



- ✓ NATO leaders agreed to step up their collective defence “against all threats, from all directions,” according to their final statement.
- ✓ The summit decided to adapt to climate-related security challenges, called on Russia to drop its designation of two allies – the United States and the Czech Republic – as “unfriendly countries” and committed funds to the Kabul airport.
- ✓ In a first for the Western military alliance, the alliance said China was posing “systemic challenges” for the 30-nation pact.
- ✓ The summit deliberated on NATO’s role in changing geopolitical environment, emerging technologies, collective defence, climate change and cyber security.
- ✓ NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance of 30 European and North American countries.
- ✓ The most recent member state is North Macedonia which joined the organisation on March 27, 2020.
- ✓ The combined military spending of NATO members was over 57% of global nominal total in 2020.

APPOINTMENTS

- **Naftali Bennett - has been appointed as the 13th prime minister of Israel, replacing Benjamin Netanyahu, who served as Israel PM for 12 years**



- ✓ The 49-year old Naftali Bennett, head of a small ultranationalist ‘Yamina’ party, heads a new coalition of eight parties from the political right, left and centre.
- ✓ These parties are united in their opposition to Netanyahu and new elections, even though they disagree on various other issues.
- ✓ The 120-member Israel’s Knesset voted in favour of the 8-party coalition and Bennett is expected to stay on as PM till 2023, as part of the agreement
- ✓ Bennett was elected as the party leader of The Jewish Home in 2012, which he left in 2018 to form the New Right party, which was renamed in 2019 as the Yamina party.
- ✓ Bennett’s Yamina party won just seven seats in the 120-member Knesset in March elections.
- ✓ Naftali Bennett, a modern Orthodox Jew, will be Israel's first prime minister who regularly wears a kippa, the skullcap worn by observant Jews.

- ✓ He is a religious-nationalist and a multi-millionaire former tech entrepreneur who has also served as defence minister.
- ✓ Bennett served under Benjamin Netanyahu as the Chief of Staff for Netanyahu for two years until 2008
- ✓ Under Netanyahu, he also served as Minister of Economy and Religious Services from 2013 to 2015 and as Minister of Education from 2015 to 2019.
- ✓ Before politics, Bennett joined the Israel Defense Forces in 1990 and served in the Special Forces units, commanding combat operations.
- ✓ Post defense, he became a software entrepreneur and co-founded the US company Cyota in 1999, operating in the anti-fraud space.
- ✓ Bennett also served as CEO of Soluto, an Israeli cloud computing service.

RANKINGS

- **India - has been ranked at 14th spot among 114 countries in the 10th edition of World Giving Index 2021, released by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF).**
- ✓ The World Giving Index (WGI) 2021 has been topped by Indonesia, followed by Kenya, Nigeria, Myanmar and Australia respectively.
- ✓ According to WGI 2021, India has consistently been working its way up from 2017, when it was ranked 124.
- ✓ In the years 2018 and 2019, India ranked 51 and 19 respectively and its 10-year average rank is 82.
- ✓ According to the report, 61% of Indians helped strangers, 34% volunteered and 36% donated money to charities/ non-profits, which is 1% less than in 2019.
- ✓ USA, Canada, Ireland, the UK, and the Netherlands -- all fell out of the highest rankings due to the impact of Covid induced lockdowns
- ✓ Only Australia and New Zealand, where the survey was undertaken in the weeks before the first wave of the pandemic took hold, maintained their top 10 rankings.
- ✓ Four African nations are now ranked in the top 10 -- three of them (Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda) for the first time.
- ✓ More than half (55%) of the world's adults – or 3 billion people - reported helping someone they didn't know in 2020.
- ✓ The WGI is a global survey, which has interviewed more than 1.6 million people since 2009

