

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS –JULY 18, 2021

STATES

- **Kunariya village in Kutch district in Gujarat – to become the first village in the country to elect a Balika Panchayat (Girls Council)**
 - ✓ Located at around 18km from the district headquarters at Bhuj, the village has a population of around 4,000 people
 - ✓ The panchayat is aimed at addressing issues around female adolescents — of the girls, by the girls, for the girls – and empower women in the village
 - ✓ Young females from the village, aged between 10 and 21 years, will contest elections for this unique panchayat.
 - ✓ This “girls only” council will run parallel to the adult village version, but only address issues pertaining to adolescent girls and women in the village.
 - ✓ The election for Balika Panchayat is scheduled for July 19 and the result will be declared on the same day
 - ✓ Four candidates were vying for the post of sarpanch in the new Council

- **State government employees in Nagaland – are mandated to get vaccinated with the first dose and get a Covid-19 negative test report every 15 days**
 - ✓ The salary of those employees, who fail to abide by the directive, will be stopped from July 31.
 - ✓ This was communicated by an order on July 17 by Nagaland chief secretary
 - ✓ The order will be applicable to all employees and staff working in the Nagaland Civil Secretariat and Directorates
 - ✓ As per the order, the Covid tests are to be done through either RT-PCR/True-Nat/CBNAAT on self-payment basis as per Government approved rates

- **Bihar – reported the maximum of 401 deaths due to lightning in the period between April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021**
 - ✓ This was revealed in India’s second annual lightning Report, which was released recently

- ✓ Bihar is followed by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, which have reported 238 and 228 deaths respectively during the select period
- ✓ Odisha with 156 deaths and Jharkhand with 132 deaths complete the Top 5 states with most casualties caused by lightning
- ✓ In general, most of the states have reported decline in deaths caused due to lightning between 2019 and 2020, except Bihar.
- ✓ Bihar recorded a jump of 81% in deaths from 221 deaths in 2019-20 to 401 in 2020-21
- ✓ Overall, there has been a 34% increase in lightning strikes in the country.
- ✓ It has increased from 1.38 crore strikes in 2019-2020 to 1.85 crore strikes in 2020-2021.
- ✓ Punjab reported a 331% rise, while Bihar registered 168% increase in lightning strikes.
- ✓ It is followed by Haryana (164%), Puducherry (117%), Himachal Pradesh (105%), and West Bengal (100%).

NATIONAL

- **Bankers working in sensitive positions, including treasury operations and currency chests - to get a surprise holiday of at least 10 working days or more in a single spell every year**
- ✓ This is part of the modified risk management guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India
- ✓ The announcement of a 'mandatory leave' policy is as part of the risk management measure of RBI
- ✓ It will be applicable to all banks, including rural development banks and cooperative banks
- ✓ During the mandatory leave, the bank employee will not have access to any physical or virtual resources related to the work
- ✓ However, the employee can access internal/ corporate email, which is usually available to all employees for general purposes.
- ✓ The details of 'mandatory' leave will not be intimated to the employees, thereby maintaining an element of surprise
- ✓ Banks, as per a board-approved policy, have been asked to prepare a list of sensitive positions to be covered under 'mandatory leave' requirements and also review the list periodically.
- ✓ RBI has asked banks to comply with the revised instructions within six months.
- ✓ As per the earlier circular issued in April 2015, sensitive positions or areas of operations include treasury, currency chests, risk modelling, and model validation.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The US, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan - have agreed in principle to establish a new quadrilateral diplomatic platform focused on enhancing regional connectivity.**

- ✓ This was announced by the U.S. state department on July 16
 - ✓ The partners of the proposed Quad set-up intend to cooperate to expand trade, build transit links, and strengthen business-to-business ties
 - ✓ They will be conducting meetings in the coming months to determine the modalities of this cooperation with mutual consensus
 - ✓ Afghanistan's strategic location has for a long time been considered as a competitive advantage for the US.
 - ✓ Afghanistan is bordered by Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north, and China to the northeast.
 - ✓ Located at the heart of the historic Silk Road, Afghanistan connects Asian countries to Europe, and enhances the religious, cultural, and commercial contacts.
 - ✓ The formation of the new quad group is considered crucial in the midst of China's desire to extend its Belt and Road Initiative to Afghanistan.
- **Cuba - has developed world's first conjugate Covid-19 vaccine named as 'Soberana 2' (Sovereign 2).**
- ✓ According to Cuba, its two-shot Soberana 2 vaccine, delivered with a booster called Soberana Plus, had been 91.2% effective in late stage clinical trials against the Covid-19
 - ✓ If approved, Cuba will become the first Latin American country to manufacture and produce a vaccine against Covid-19.
 - ✓ In total, the Soberana 2 is delivered through a three dose regimen, with two shots of Soberana 2 and one of Soberana Plus taken in a 0-28-56 day regimen
 - ✓ Soberana 2 was developed by the Finlay Institute in partnership with the Centre for Molecular Immunology and the National Biopreparations Centre, Cuba
 - ✓ A "conjugate vaccine" combines the virus's receptor-binding domain with a deactivated form of tetanus in order to trigger the immune response.
 - ✓ At present, Cuba is developing five vaccines totally, including Soberana 2 and Abdala, which has indicated a 92.28% efficacy recently in the clinical trials
 - ✓ Abdala and Soberana 2 are expected to be quickly authorized for emergency use by local regulators and sent up for approval to the World Health Organization.
 - ✓ All five vaccines are protein vaccines, made up of a spike protein derived from the virus, which then binds to human cells to generate an immune response.
 - ✓ These vaccines are generally less expensive to develop and easier to store and transport as they do not require extremely low temperatures for storage

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her Bhutanese counterpart Lyonpo Namgay Tshering – launched BHIM UPI, the Indian government's digital payment app in Bhutan through a virtual ceremony on July 13**

- ✓ Bhutan becomes the first country, in India's immediate neighbourhood, to use the BHIM app for mobile-based payments and to adopt India's UPI standards for its QR code deployment



- ✓ It will also become the only country to both issue and accept RuPay cards as well as accept BHIM UPI.
- ✓ In this regard, NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) and Royal Monetary Authority (RMA) of Bhutan have entered a partnership for enabling and implementing BHIM UPI QR-based payments in Bhutan.
- ✓ The Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan is the central bank of Bhutan and was established under the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan Act of 1982.
- ✓ In 2020-21, BHIM UPI processed 22 billion financial transactions worth Rs 41 lakh crore, which is equivalent to approximately 15% of India's gross domestic product (GDP).
- ✓ The launch will also benefit more than 2 lakh tourists from India who travel to Bhutan each year.
- ✓ Singapore was the first country to adopt BHIM-UPI transactions in November 2019

DEFENCE

- **On July 17, Ordnance Factory of Tiruchirappalli (OFT) - handed over locally assembled 12.7mm stabilised remote control gun (SRCG) system to the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard for enhanced surveillance**
- ✓ The first batch of 25 weapons provided was assembled in Trichy unit through the transfer of technology agreement with the support of an Israel-based defence firm, Elbit Programs.
- ✓ The SRCG system is fitted with a 12.7mm M2 NATO standard heavy machine gun.
- ✓ It can remotely coordinate with small boats with high accuracy during day and night operations.
- ✓ The factory is on contract to supply 123 more weapons.

- **Indian Navy - has recently received its 10th long-range anti-submarine warfare and maritime patrol aircraft P-8I Poseidon from the US-based aerospace company, Boeing.**
- ✓ This is the second of the four additional P-8I aircraft contracted in a deal worth over \$1 billion under an optional clause in 2016.



- ✓ The Ministry of Defence had initially signed a \$2.2 billion contract with Boeing for eight P-8I aircraft in 2009 for Indian Navy.
- ✓ The remaining two were expected to be delivered in the last quarter of this year
- ✓ In addition to maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities, the P-8I can be deployed to assist during disaster relief and humanitarian missions
- ✓ The P-8I is a variant of the P-8A Poseidon used by the US Navy.
- ✓ It is based on Boeing's next-generation 737 commercial airplane
- ✓ The first P-8I aircraft was inducted into the Indian Navy in 2013 replacing ageing Tupolev Tu-142 aircraft, while the ninth P-8I aircraft was inducted in November last year.
- ✓ India was Boeing's first international customer for this aircraft
- ✓ These aircrafts were deployed by Indian Navy to keep track of movement of ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean Region
- ✓ The aircraft are part of the 312A Naval Air Squadron based at Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu
- ✓ Boeing is completing construction of a 60,000 sq. ft. training support and data handling centre at INS Rajali, Arakkonam, and a secondary maintenance training centre at the Naval Institute of Aeronautical Technology, Kochi, as part of a training and support package contract signed in 2019.

