



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–AUGUST

10 2021

### TAMIL NADU

- **The Chennai Corporation – has launched 30-minute free wi-fi facility at 49 locations in Chennai from August 17**
- ✓ The locations include Anna Tower Park, CDH, Tondiarpet, Gemini Junction, Marina Beach, Ashok Pillar, T Nagar and CMBT.
- ✓ The service will be offered near smart poles that have CCTV cameras and emergency call buttons, which are connected to the command centre at Ripon Buildings.
- ✓ Users need to select 'smart city Wi-Fi' and enter the one-time password sent to their mobile phones.
- ✓ The connection will stop 'automatically' after the completion of 30 minutes.

### STATES

- **India's cleanest city Indore - has now been declared as the first 'water plus' city of the country**
- ✓ Indore in Madhya Pradesh becomes the first Swachh Bharat Mission Water+ certified city under Swachh Survekshan 2021
- ✓ A Water Plus city certificate is provided to a city for maintaining cleanliness in rivers and drains under its administration.
- ✓ A city can be declared as Water Plus only after all wastewater released from households, commercial establishments etc., is treated to a satisfactory level before releasing it to the environment.
- ✓ There are a number of criteria that need to be met before a city is declared Water Plus
- ✓ Firstly, it must be ensured that the dirty water from the city does not go into any river or drain.
- ✓ Secondly, all public toilets in the city must be connected to sewer lines and must be cleaned.

- ✓ And finally, 30% of the city's sewer water has to be recycled and reused by people at construction sites and by citizens for gardening purposes
- **Assam's Kaziranga National park – becomes the first national park to be equipped with satellite phones in the country**



- ✓ Assam Chief Secretary had handed over 10 satellite phones to the forest personnel of the Kaziranga National Park
- ✓ The step to provide satellite phones to the forest personnel would boost anti-poaching measures and ensure coordinated functioning in the park.
- ✓ The national park, spread over a massive 430 sq km area and divided into six ranges in upper Assam, has certain regions with poor to no connectivity
- ✓ The satellite phones would draw signals from satellites instead of mobile towers and will ensure connectivity in most of the remote locations
- ✓ The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) procured the ten satellite phones for the National Park at an estimated cost of Rs. 16 lakh.
- ✓ BSNL will be the service provider and has trained forest personnel to operate the satellite phones
- ✓ Kaziranga National Park hosts two-thirds of world's great one-horned rhinoceroses and has also been listed as a World Heritage Site
- ✓ It was known for the highest density of tigers among protected areas in the world and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006

## NATIONAL

- **India – announces new category of single entry e-visa facility called the ‘e-Emergency X-Miscellaneous visa’ for Afghan nationals on August 17**
- ✓ The Ministry of Home Affairs announces new visa category to fast-track applications of Afghans who want to come to India in view of the prevailing situation
- ✓ These visas will be valid for six months only and will be granted only after security clearance

- ✓ India does not have a refugee policy and grants shelter to foreigners facing persecution in their countries on a case-to-case basis.
  - ✓ India already provides X Miscellaneous category visa to foreigners whose purpose of entry into India does not match with any prescribed category
  - ✓ In the case of Afghanistan, the e-visa facility was not extended to the nationals of that country until now.
  - ✓ Notably, Afghanistan already falls under the Prior Reference Category (PRC) countries for grant of visa to India.
  - ✓ Other foreigners in this category include those from Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, foreigners of Pakistani origin and stateless persons.
- **On August 17, the Ministry of Road Transport – has announced changes in the Central Motor Vehicle Rules to provide incentives to promote the scrapping of old and polluting vehicles**
- ✓ Henceforth, it will be mandatory for the state governments to offer a discount on road tax or motor vehicle tax, while registering new vehicles bought against scrapped ones



- ✓ The mandatory discount will be from 1% to 15% for commercial vehicles and 1% to 25% for private vehicles.
- ✓ The states can decide on the final discount rates in road tax.
- ✓ The government has notified the complete waiver of registration fee for new vehicles bought against scrapping old ones.
- ✓ According to the new national vehicle scrappage policy, a certificate will be issued on the scrappage of old cars
- ✓ The discount in road tax, waiver in registration and discount of up to 5% on the cost of new vehicle by vehicle manufacturers can be availed only after producing a valid scrapping certificate.
- ✓ Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Vehicle Scrappage Policy recently at the investor summit in Gandhinagar at Gujarat on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2021
- ✓ The policy will help phase out unfit and polluting vehicles in an environment-friendly manner
- ✓ It is also aimed at bringing in investments of around Rs 10,000 crore in the country

- ✓ According to the PM, vehicles will not just be scrapped by their age, but also if they are found to be unfit in automated testing.
  - ✓ During the launch event, PM Modi oversaw virtually the signing of six MoUs to set up registered vehicle scrappage facilities (RVSF) in Gujarat, and one in Assam
  - ✓ Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, who was present at the event along with Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, said 450-500 vehicle fitness centres would be opened under the new policy.
  - ✓ The announcement comes in weeks after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a voluntary vehicle scrapping policy to phase out old and unfit vehicles.
  - ✓ The voluntary vehicle scrapping policy announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22 provides for fitness tests after 20 years for personal vehicles, while commercial vehicles would require it after the completion of 15 years.
  - ✓ The old vehicles will be required to undergo mandatory fitness and pollution tests in automated facilities, which will be introduced in a phased manner in the coming weeks.
  - ✓ These automated fitness tests will be set up under public private partnership (PPP) mode while the government will assist private partners and state governments for scrapping centres.
  - ✓ Driving such vehicles that fail to pass automated tests will attract huge penalties and also be impounded.
- **Four more wetlands from India – have been recognised as Ramsar site of international importance**



- ✓ This takes the number of such sites in the country to 46, covering a total area of 1,083,322 hectares
- ✓ The Ramsar list aims to conserve an international network of wetlands that are important for sustaining biological diversity
- ✓ The wetlands that received the tag are Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary and Sultanpur National Park from Haryana and Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and Wadhvana Wetland from Gujarat

- ✓ These are the first two wetlands in Haryana to be recognised under the Ramsar Convention, while Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary from Gujarat was given the tag in 2012
  - ✓ With eight wetlands, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of sites that have received the tag.
  - ✓ The Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary, a human-made freshwater wetland and the largest one in Haryana, supports more than 10 globally threatened species
  - ✓ The Sultanpur National Park from Haryana supports more than 220 species of resident, winter migratory and local migratory waterbirds, along with supporting more than 10 globally threatened and critically endangered birds.
  - ✓ The Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary from Gujarat lies on the Central Asian Flyway and supports more than 320 bird species
  - ✓ The Wadhvana Wetland is important as it provides wintering ground to migratory waterbirds, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway
- **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) - has started the door-to-door delivery of 'High Speed Diesel' to meet the growing demand of fuel**



- ✓ The initiative of door-to-door delivery is being done through mobile dispensers
  - ✓ BPCL has already launched 63 mobile dispensers in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and the North-East states.
  - ✓ For the purpose, BPCL has commissioned 1588 FuelKarts and 129 FuelEnts within a span of about two years across the industry.
- **The Union environment ministry - notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021) that prohibits identified single-use plastic items**
- ✓ The Rules prohibit the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of identified single-use plastic items which have “low utility and high littering potential” from the 1st July, 2022.
  - ✓ The ban will not apply to commodities made of compostable plastic.

- ✓ The list of around 20 plastic items that will be banned by the government are mostly manufactured and sold by small or medium-scale manufacturers and traders.
  - ✓ The products that have been banned include earbuds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocool) for decoration, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straw, trays, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners of less than 100-micron thickness.
  - ✓ Further, the permitted thickness of plastic bags, currently at 50 microns, will be increased to 75 microns from September 30 this year and to 120 microns from December 31, 2022.
- **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs - has recently launched 'SonChiraiya', a single brand and logo to promote and market the products made by urban Self-Help Groups (SHG)**



- ✓ Over 5.7 lakh SHGs have been formed across various states/UTs with almost 60 lakh members
- ✓ Many of these SHGs are engaged in livelihood activities, producing goods such as handicrafts, textiles, toys, eatables etc.,
- ✓ The Ministry's flagship scheme, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) has focussed on equipping the urban poor women with adequate skills and opportunities
- ✓ The ministry has also entered into MoUs with e-Commerce portals as Amazon and Flipkart, to promote the cause of women empowerment
- ✓ Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this partnership has successfully sold on e-Commerce portals over 2,000 products of nearly 5,000 SHG members across 25 states and UTs

## INTERNATIONAL

- **Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and his cabinet - have resigned amid infighting within his coalition and the surging Covid-19 cases in the country**



- ✓ Muhyiddin tendered his resignation to the king Al-Sultan Abdullah after losing the majority in Parliament
- ✓ Muhyiddin has been under constant pressure since he came to power in March 2020 as head of a new Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition
- ✓ He would remain as a 'caretaker' prime minister, till the new Government takes over after the elections
- ✓ Muhyiddin is the shortest-serving Prime Minister in Malaysian history, spending 17 months in office

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The Working Group of Agriculture from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) – met virtually recently for talks.**
- ✓ The group stressed on having closer ties in strengthening cooperation and research in the field of agriculture
- ✓ “BRICS Partnership for Strengthening Agro Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition Security” was the theme of the meeting
- ✓ The implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development noted that BRICS countries are well positioned to take a leading role in helping to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate hunger and poverty.
- ✓ BRICS Agriculture Research Platform has been developed by India to promote cooperation in the areas of agricultural research, extension, technology transfer, training and capacity building
- ✓ The Joint declaration of the eleventh meeting of BRICS and Action Plan for 2021-24 for agricultural cooperation of BRICS countries and BRICS Agriculture Research Platform were discussed in depth.
- ✓ The BRICS Working Group meeting endorsed the Action Plan of 2021-24 for adoption in BRICS meeting.
- ✓ The 12<sup>th</sup> edition of BRICS Summit was hosted by Russia on November 17, 2020 virtually amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Researchers - have developed a new cheaper, faster and more accurate Covid-19 diagnostic test that uses pencil lead**

- ✓ A team from University of Pennsylvania in US has developed a Covid test that uses electrodes made from graphite to test the SARS CoV-2 Virus.
- ✓ The graphite electrodes in the new test reduce the cost to \$1.50 per test and require only 6.5 minutes to deliver the results.
- ✓ The Low-cost Electrochemical Advanced Diagnostic (LEAD) test gives 100% accurate results from saliva samples and up to 88% accuracy in nasal samples
- ✓ Previously the research team worked on a Covid-19 testing kit called 'RAPID', which uses screen-printed electrodes.
- ✓ LEAD is easier to assemble, it can be used by unskilled personnel and the materials are cheaper and more accessible than those required in 'RAPID'

## AWARDS

- **The Union Government – has recently announced the Prime Minister's Shram Awards (PMSA) for the year 2018**



- ✓ These awards are to be awarded to 69 workers employed in the Departmental Undertakings & Public Sector Undertakings of the Central and State Governments and Private Sector Units employing 500 or more workers
- ✓ The awards were conferred in recognition of their distinguished performance, innovative abilities, outstanding contribution in the field of productivity and exhibition of exceptional courage and presence of mind
- ✓ This year the Prime Minister's Shram Awards are given in three categories -
  - ✓ Shram Bhushan Awards which carry a cash prize of Rs.1,00,000/- each,
  - ✓ Shram Vir/Shram Veerangana Awards which carry a cash prize of Rs. 60,000/- each and
  - ✓ Shram Shree/Shram Devi Awards which carry a cash prize of Rs.40,000/- each
- ✓ For the year 2018, four (4) nominations for the Shram Bhushan Awards, twelve (12) nominations for Shram Vir/Shram Veerangana awards and seventeen (17) nominations for Shram Shree/Shram Devi Awards have been selected
- ✓ Out of the total awardees, 49 awardees are from the public sector while 20 awardees are from the private sector.
- ✓ Out of the total 69 awardees, 31 awardees are from Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL).

- ✓ This is the highest number of PM's Shram awards won by the employees of any organization during the year
- ✓ PM's Shram awards were instituted in 1985 with the objective of recognizing outstanding contributions made by employees in accordance with Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY

### ➤ World Elephant Day - August 12



- ✓ The observance of the Day aims to raise awareness about the importance of elephants in our ecosystem and the steps needed to be taken for their preservation, protection and conservation
- ✓ The celebration of the Day was first initiated by the Thailand-based Elephant Reintroduction Foundation and Canadian filmmakers Patricia Sims and Michael Clark in 2011
- ✓ The World Elephant Society, of which Patricia Sims is the founding president, manages World Elephant Day
- ✓ The first international Elephant Day was celebrated on August 12, 2012.
- ✓ World Elephant Day was launched to highlight the difficulty of Asian and African elephants, which face many threats like poaching, habitat loss, conflict with humans and being mistreated in captivity.
- ✓ India has already launched a beta version of Suraksha, a national platform on human-elephant conflict.
- ✓ As per recent data of World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), around 440,000 elephants are present across the globe.

