

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS-OCTOBER 21, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- On October 20, Tamil Nadu FibreNet Corporation Ltd (TANFINET) - signed the Master Service Agreement for the implementation of BharatNet Project in Tamil Nadu with system integrators.



- ✓ The project seeks to provide 1 Gbps bandwidth connectivity to all Gram Panchayats in the state.
- ✓ The State had signed the agreement with L&T (for Package C), ITI Ltd (Package D) and Third-Party Agency, BECIL in the presence of Information Technology minister T Mano Thangaraj and IT Secretary Neeraj Mittal.
- ✓ Earlier, the multi-crore BharatNet project had to be scrapped twice after corruption allegations were levelled by the anticorruption NGO – Arappor Iyakkam
- ✓ The ₹1,815-crore project will cover 12,525 village panchayats in Tamil Nadu through optical fibre cable to provide high-speed bandwidth connectivity.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu FibreNet Corporation Limited (TANFINET), a special purpose vehicle, is implementing the project in the state.
- ✓ To implement the project, four packages - A, B, C and D - were formed district wise and four system integrators were identified, one for each package
- ✓ A Third-Party Agency (TPA) is also identified to inspect and audit the implementation.

- ✓ After the disposal of the pending litigations in Package A and Package B, the other packages of the project will be implemented in various Gram Panchayats
- ✓ BharatNet aims to offer affordable, quality digital services, e-education, telemedicine and triple-play services to all village Panchayats of Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ The initiative will provide high-speed internet services to government offices, schools, colleges and business enterprises in the targeted districts.
- ✓ This would expedite the delivery of government services and in turn, would generate employment in rural areas.
- ✓ The Package C will cover 3,326 Gram Panchayats in Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Thiruvavur, Pudukottai, Namakkal, Karur, Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Tiruchirappalli districts
- ✓ The Package D will cover 3,103 Gram Panchayats in Kanyakumari, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Theni, Tuticorin, Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar, Tenkasi, Dindigul, Sivagangai districts

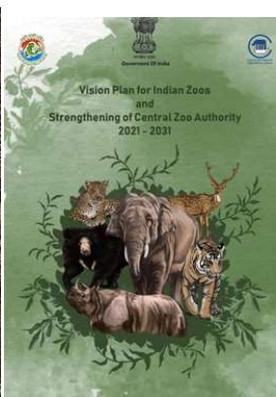
NATIONAL

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - addressed a joint conference of Central Vigilance Commission and Central Bureau of Investigation through video conferencing in New Delhi on October 20, 2021**



- ✓ The joint conference was held at Kevadia, Gujarat
- ✓ In a strong message against corruption, PM Modi said that it deprives common citizens of their rights while affecting the collective progress and strength of the nation.
- ✓ In addition, the Prime Minister also remarked that in the last seven years, the government has instilled a belief in people that corruption can be avoided.
- ✓ According to the PM, the Union government has taken measures to reduce the interference of the government in the lives of the people by focusing on 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' instead of 'Maximum Government Control'
- ✓ The PM also spoke about the 'PM Gatishakti National Master Plan' and said that it aims to tackle the issues arising during decision-making
- ✓ He asserted that with growing technology, cybercrime and cyber fraud are also posing a big challenge

- ✓ In his concluding remarks, PM Modi said that it is important for one to consider 'Nation first'
- **On October 20, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) – launched NPCI Tokenization System (NTS) to support tokenisation of RuPay cards**
 - ✓ The launch comes after the Reserve Bank of India mandated tokenisation of cards from 1 January 2022.
 - ✓ 'Card tokenisation' refers to a process that replaces details of a card, such as its number and CVV, used for making a transaction with an encrypted algorithmically generated token
 - ✓ The token is generated either by the card issuer or payments network.
 - ✓ The NTS will act as an alternative to store card details with merchants and expected to secure sensitive financial data of customers and curb cyber frauds.
 - ✓ Acquiring banks, aggregators and merchants can get themselves certified with NPCI as token requestors and save the Token Reference Number against all card numbers saved
- **Indian Railways – has decided to close down the 'Indian Railways Stations Development Corporation' (IRSDC)**
 - ✓ This is the second organization of the Ministry of Railways to be shut down after the closure of the Indian Railways Alternative Fuels Organization on September 7, 2021
 - ✓ The IRSDC was set up to redevelop railway stations across the country.
 - ✓ Among many other projects, IRSDC, which was set up in March 2012, has been recently involved in the bidding process for the redevelopment of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai.
 - ✓ The decision to shut down was taken based on a report prepared by the Chief Economic Adviser, Sanjeev Sanyal
 - ✓ He also announced plans to manage facilities for 90 railway stations across southern India
 - ✓ The report also recommended the merger of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) with Indian Railway Construction Limited (IRCON)
 - ✓ The RVNL carries out projects related to the construction and enhancement of railway infrastructure, while IRCON specializes in construction infrastructure.
 - ✓ The stations operated by IRSDC will now be handed over to the area's private railways.
 - ✓ IRSDC was a special purpose vehicle which is a joint venture of Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA), RITES and IRCON International.
- **The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change - has released the Vision Plan (2021-2031) for Indian zoos in the National conference for zoo directors and veterinarians held recently at the Sardar Patel Zoological Park, Kevadia, Gujarat.**



**Released Vision Plan
(2021-2031)
for Indian
ZOOS
to upgrade them to
Global Standards**

- ✓ The vision plan for the Indian zoos aims to upgrade them to global standards and strengthening of Central Zoo Authority
- ✓ The plan mentions 10 pillars of change to be realized in 10 years for the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and Indian zoos
- ✓ During the release event, a 'WASH' Manual for Zoos was released, which focused on access to water and sanitation in public spaces
- ✓ The WASH Manual for Zoos contains guidelines to zoos for creating and maintaining WASH facilities within their premises for staff and visitors
- ✓ It was prepared by the Central Zoo Authority in collaboration with UNICEF
- ✓ Finally, the annual Prani Mitra Awards were given under 4 categories of outstanding contribution by zoo director/ curator, biologist/ educationists, veterinarian and the animal keeper/ zoo frontline
- ✓ As part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, a coffee table book compiling 75 species across 75 zoos was also launched
- ✓ As on date, there are more than 150 recognized zoos and rescue centers in the country that adhere to the guidelines and high standards of wild animal welfare.
- ✓ India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land area, yet accounts for 7-8% of all recorded species, including over 45,000 species of plants and 91,000 species of animals
- ✓ It is home to about 7.6% of the world's mammals, 14.7% of amphibians, 6% of birds, 6.2% of reptilians, and 6.0% of flowering plant species.
- **The National Capital Region (NCR) Planning Board – has approved the Draft Regional Plan-2041 with the condition that the final modifications be submitted by March 2022**
- ✓ The main aim of 'Draft Regional Plan 2041' is the development of NCR's urban areas
- ✓ According to the draft regional plan, The National Capital Region is likely to shrink to 100-km radius from Rajghat
- ✓ At present, the NCR spans around 150-175 kilometres, covering entire districts and their rural areas

- ✓ The Regional Plan 2021 had identified seven metro centres - Faridabad-Ballabgarh, Gurgaon-Manesar, Ghaziabad-Loni, Noida, Greater Noida, Meerut, and Sonapat-Kundli.
 - ✓ The Draft plan aims a future-ready, slum-free National Capital Region with air ambulance facility and high-speed connectivity through helitaxis, road, rail and inland waterways.
 - ✓ The Plan also proposes to explore the feasibility of a 30-minute Mass Transit Rail System (MTRS) within major cities of NCR
 - ✓ Under the NCRPB plan, Delhi, two districts of Rajasthan, eight districts of Uttar Pradesh and 14 districts of Haryana are covered totalling around 55,083 square kilometres.
- **Union Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Giriraj Singh - launched Climate Resilience Information System and Planning (CRISP-M) tool under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**



- ✓ Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth in the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Lord Tariq Ahmad also attended the virtual launch event
- ✓ The CRISP-M tool will help to integrate climate information in the GIS-based planning and implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS
- ✓ It was developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in association with MP Council of Science and Development for the Ministry of Rural Development with the support from FCDO's Infrastructure for Climate Resilient Growth (ICRG) programme
- ✓ This tool will be used in seven states where in the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, Government of UK and Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India are jointly working towards climate resilience.
- ✓ The 7 states are Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Rajasthan.
- ✓ The tool has already been successfully piloted in 18 village panchayats of Niwali Block in Badwani, Madhya Pradesh
- ✓ The Ministry of Rural Development have already prepared GIS based plans for 1.82 lakhs Gram Panchayats out of total of 2.69 lakhs Gram Panchayats of India,

which is around 68%, with the help of Remote Sensing Technology, based on Ridge to Valley approach

- **The Department of Biotechnology – has launched the country’s first ‘One Health’ consortium recently through video conferencing**



- ✓ It was launched by Secretary of Department of Biotechnology, Dr Renu Swarup.
 - ✓ The initiative aims to carry out surveillance of important bacterial, viral and parasitic infections of zoonotic pathogens
 - ✓ The project also looks into the use of existing diagnostic tests and the development of additional methodologies for the surveillance and understanding the spread of emerging diseases
 - ✓ The ‘One Health Consortium’ consists of 27 organisations led by DBT-National Institute of Animal Biotechnology, Hyderabad
 - ✓ The consortium includes AIIMS, Delhi, AIIMS Jodhpur, IVRI, Bareilly, GADVASU, Ludhiana, TANUVAS, Chennai, MAFSU, Nagpur, Assam agricultural and veterinary university and many more ICAR, ICMR centres and wildlife agencies
- **Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur - launched a new mobile application ‘MyParkings app’ recently in New Delhi**
 - ✓ The Smart Parking App will enable people to book parking slots online under the jurisdiction of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC)



- ✓ It is a first-of-its-kind initiative launched with the aim of tackling the issue of congestion of vehicle parking
- ✓ The app will provide information about the total capacity of vehicles to be parked, used spaces and space available for parking in each parking site.

- ✓ It has been developed by Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited (BECIL).
- ✓ The SDMC operates 145 surface parking sites stretched across all its four zones, besides six multi-level parking sites and two automated parking sites
- ✓ 'MyParking' App will also be integrated with Vahan App, FASTag, E-Challan and other government initiatives.
- ✓ The app will be available to download for free on Android and iOS platforms.

INTERNATIONAL

- **United States – to roll out Covid-19 vaccine soon for more than 28 million American children in the 5-11 age group**
- ✓ The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for the 5-11 age group is set to be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.(CDC)
- ✓ The FDA's independent advisory committee meeting is scheduled for October 26, and the CDC's independent advisory committee meeting is set for November 2 and 3.
- ✓ The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine currently has full approval for use in adults, and the federal government has authorized it for emergency use in children ages 12 to 17.
- ✓ The US administration has already bought enough doses to administer the vaccine to children in the 5-11 age group in smaller doses
- ✓ The exercise will involve over 25,000 pediatricians' offices, hundreds of children's hospitals, and thousands of pharmacies.
- ✓ The massive campaign will make the US one of the first countries to administer the vaccine to 5-11 age children even as many countries have approved it for children over 12.
- ✓ Health officials are planning to introduce a new color-coded cap system for each formulation of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine - Purple-capped vials for adult doses and orange-capped vials for kids aged 5-11.
- ✓ In India, experts have recommended granting emergency use authorisation (EUA) to Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for children aged 2 to 18
- ✓ India has nearly 150 million children in the 5-11 age group.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal - met the Director General of World Trade Organisation, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in New Delhi on October 20, in the backdrop of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled in November-end.**
- ✓ During the discussion, India indicated that it will not sign new agreements at the WTO unless its concerns are addressed
- ✓ India referred to the current draft on fisheries subsidies agreement as "unbalanced" and cannot be accepted for negotiations



- ✓ India is keen to finalise an agreement on fisheries subsidies in the WTO as irrational subsidy benefits and overfishing by many developed countries are hurting domestic fishermen and their livelihood of developing countries
- ✓ India is suggesting that those countries which are engaged in distant water fishing and beyond their natural geographic area, should stop giving subsidies for 25 years in fishing areas beyond their exclusive economic zones (200 nautical miles).
- ✓ Further with respect to agriculture subsidies, India is proposing to reduce their subsidies to not more than 10% of the value of production
- ✓ The Agreement on Agriculture signed in 1994-95, for which India was a party, has given entitlement of giving much higher subsidies to a few countries, particularly developed nations
- ✓ Apart from being the first woman to be elected Director General, Iweala is also only the second non-white and the first person from Africa to head the WTO.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Surgeons in New York - have successfully attached a kidney grown in a genetically altered pig to a human patient**

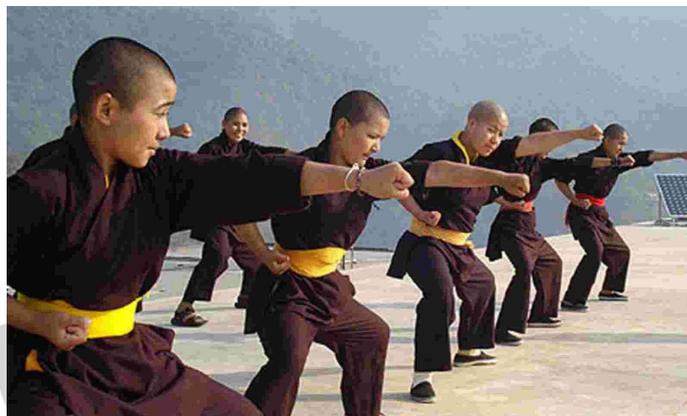


- ✓ After performing the milestone transplant procedure, the organ was found to work normally in the human body
- ✓ In a close simulation of an actual transplant procedure, the kidney was attached to a person who had suffered brain death and was maintained on a ventilator.

- ✓ The kidney, attached to blood vessels in the upper leg outside the abdomen, started functioning normally, making urine and the waste product creatinine “almost immediately”
- ✓ Researchers have long sought to grow organs in pigs suitable for transplantation into humans.
- ✓ A steady stream of organs — which could eventually include hearts, lungs and livers — would offer a lifeline to people on transplant waiting lists.

AWARDS

- **The world-renowned Kung Fu Nuns of the Drukpa order of Buddhism - has won the prestigious Martial Arts Education Prize 2021 from the UNESCO International Centre for Martial Arts for their brave acts of service**



- ✓ Through martial arts, the Drukpa nuns empower young girls across the Himalayas to defend themselves, build confidence, and take on leadership roles in their communities.
- ✓ This award from UNESCO ICM recognises the Kung Fu Nuns' work among Indian and Nepali communities
- ✓ The Kung Fu Nuns hail from the Drukpa Lineage of Indian Buddhism and began learning Kung Fu to build strength and confidence.
- ✓ They have undertaken recently a 2,500 km "Bicycle Yatra for Peace" from Kathmandu, Nepal, to Ladakh, India, to speak out against human trafficking
- ✓ Earlier, they have refused to evacuate after the 2015 Nepal earthquake in order to deliver critical aid to neglected regions.
- ✓ With over 700 Drukpa nuns in the ranks, there is a long waiting list of women and girls who want to join them.
- ✓ Through their acts of service, and by setting an example of empowerment for the marginalised, the young Kung Fu Nuns have inspired a new generational mindset that women can do anything
- ✓ The nuns are the former recipient of the Atlantic Council's prestigious Unsung Heroes Award 2020 and the Asia Society's Game Changer Award 2019.
- ✓ They were also finalists for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize for their humanitarianism in the Himalayas

- ✓ Kung Fu Nuns are an order of Buddhist nuns, which is a thousand-year-old sect and is led by the Gyalwang Drukpa.
- ✓ They started learning Chinese martial arts in 2008 after the 12th Gyalwang Drukpa authorised training.

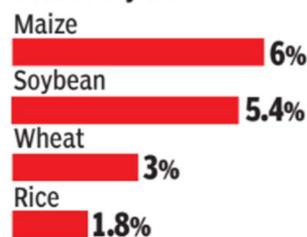
RANKINGS

- **India - is one of the five countries with the highest exposure of vulnerable populations to heatwave (person-days of heatwave exposure) over the past five years**
- ✓ This was revealed in the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change report, 2021 released on October 20
- ✓ The report titled 'Code Red for a Healthy Future' outlined growing risks to public health and climate change across the globe
- ✓ India, China, Indonesia, Egypt and Nigeria were ranked as the Top-5 countries where vulnerable populations had the highest exposure to heatwaves
- ✓ Between 2018 and 2019, India and Brazil registered the biggest absolute increase in heat-related mortality
- ✓ India's vulnerability to the extremes of heat was 15% higher in 2019 as compared to 1990

Climate change threatens to accelerate food insecurity

- Affected 2 billion people in 2019
- Rising temperatures shorten the time in which plants reach maturity
- It leads to smaller yields
- Decline in crop yield in 2020 compared to 1981-2010 levels

Decline in yield



- Average sea surface temperature has increased in the territorial waters of nearly 70% (95 out of 136) of coastal countries analysed, compared to 2003-2005



- This reflects an increasing threat to their marine food security
- Worldwide 3.3 billion people depend on marine food

- ✓ Agricultural workers in countries with low and medium human development indices were among the worst affected by exposure to heat.
- ✓ In any given month in 2020, up to 19% of the global land surface was impacted by extreme drought, even though this value did not cross 13% between 1950 and 1999
- ✓ China figured at the top in the list of vulnerable people older than 65 years followed by India, Japan, USA and Indonesia.
- ✓ Almost 3.45 lakh people above the age of 65 died of heat-related causes in 2019, more than 80.6% of the average recorded from 2000-2005

- ✓ The three most populous countries in the medium-HDI (Human Development Index) group (Pakistan, Bangladesh and India) had the greatest losses of potential work due to heat exposure
- ✓ South-East Asia was the only region with increasing air pollution mortality costs between 2015 and 2019, relative to GDP
- ✓ The report also flagged the potential for outbreaks of dengue, chikungunya and Zika.
- ✓ There are 569.6 million people living less than five metres above current sea levels, who could face rising risks of increased flooding and more intense storms
- ✓ For the first time, the report also measured the effect of heatwaves on people's mental health by analysing over six billion tweets over five years from Twitter users around the world.
- ✓ It found a 155% increase in "negative expressions" during heatwaves in 2020 relative to the 2015-19 average.
- ✓ Calculating the loss, the report said the average loss increased from 2.5 hour/person per day in 1991 to 3.7 hour/person per day in 2020.
- ✓ The Lancet Countdown's sixth annual report tracks 44 indicators of health impacts that are directly linked to climate change and shows key trends are getting worse
- ✓ The 'person-days/ hours' refers to the number of extreme heat days/hours a year multiplied by the exposed population.

