

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS-OCTOBER 24, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- On October 23, Chief minister M K Stalin - announced a seven-member committee for social justice and appointed Dravidian ideologue Suba Veerpandian as its chairman.



- ✓ The committee is constituted to monitor the implementation of social justice criteria in education, employment, postings, promotions and appointments.
- ✓ The members of the committee include retired bureaucrat K Dhanavel, former pro vice-chancellor of Periyar Maniammai Institute of Science and Technology, Swaminathan Devadoss, poet Manushyaputhiran, an expert in laws for Adi Dravidar and Scheduled Castes, A Jaison, economic expert R Rajendran and Federation of All India Backward Classes general secretary G Karunanidhy.
- ✓ The committee will monitor and guide social justice programmes, besides recommending to the government to initiate action if the criteria are not properly implemented.
- ✓ The announcement to set up the committee was made last month on the sidelines of the centenary of the first order issued for communal reservation by the Justice Party government in the then Madras Presidency.

- ✓ The state government's social reforms secretary will be the member-secretary of the committee
- **Tamil Nadu government - has decided to introduce a new cement brand, Valimai, at subsidised rate in the open market through the state PSU Tamil Nadu Cement Corporation (Tancem).**
- ✓ Tancem is already manufacturing and selling Arasu cement at rates much lower than private brands.
- ✓ The agency is selling 90,000 tonnes of cement under the brand Arasu cement in the open market every month.
- ✓ Since March this year, cement price had shot up by 4.7% due to coal shortage, price rise for coal and transit charges for coal imports.
- ✓ Around 30,000 tonnes of low-priced and high-quality Valimai brand cement would be sold monthly in the initial phase to reduce the retail price.

EXISTING BRANDS

➤ **Arasu cement** costs ₹350-360/bag, ₹90 less than private brands

➤ Tancem sold 3.67 lakh tonnes of cement between March and September last year, 7.68 lakh tonnes this year

➤ **Amma cement** is sold at ₹216/bag through civil supplies corpn

➤ Procured from seven private producers, Amma cement is sold for new houses (1,500sqft), repairs and beneficiaries of government housing schemes

- ✓ Cement price stood at around ₹470-₹490 per bag on October 6, but it fell to ₹440-₹450 due to the government's intervention.
- ✓ Tancem's Ariyalur and Alangulam cement plants managed to produce 8.13 lakh tonnes last year
- ✓ Tancem is hopeful of producing 15-17 lakh tonnes this year with the demand rising.
- ✓ The low-priced Amma cement from Tancem for the economically weaker sections sells about 25,000 tonnes a month.
- ✓ An individual with an annual income not exceeding ₹3 lakh could get 750 bags of cement at ₹216/bag via online booking, provided the applicant attaches village administrative officer's and revenue inspector's certificates to prove the credentials.
- ✓ The sale price of Amma cement was fixed by a committee last December.

- **On October 23, Chief Minister M K Stalin - inaugurated the sale of palm jaggery at rations shops and departmental stores.**
- ✓ He also launched a mobile application 'tnkhadi' to buy khadi products and inaugurated a department exclusively for textiles at the secretariat
- ✓ The CM inaugurated various schemes of the handlooms, handicrafts, textiles and khadi departments.



- ✓ Following the intensive effort of Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited, Kallakurichi wood carving, Karuppur Kalamkari paintings, Thanjavur Netti works and Arumbavur wood carvings received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- ✓ The CM released the GI tag certificates for the selected handicrafts.
- ✓ The app 'tnkhadi' of the Tamil Nadu Khadi and village industries board was launched with the aim to attract younger buyers and online shoppers.
- **Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) – will be introducing printed QR-code tickets for contactless travel to metro rail commuters soon**

PUSH FOR CONTACTLESS TRAVEL

➤ Commuters can soon purchase **printed QR code tickets**



➤ **Vending machines** will be installed at all stations

➤ Upon purchase, commuters must place the QR code facing the scanner at the AFC gates for entry or exit

➤ These will eventually replace **reusable tokens which are expensive to procure and must be sanitized after every use**

➤ Printed QR code tickets will **make ticket purchase contactless and safe**



SAFE TRAVEL: An official said trials are on at present and machines will be installed soon

- ✓ These QR-coded paper tickets will eventually replace the reusable tokens, which have to be sanitized after every use and are being issued now only at ticket counters
- ✓ The paper tickets will have a QR-code similar to the code printed on boarding passes issued at the airline counters in airports.

- ✓ Upon purchasing a ticket, commuters will have to place them on the automatic fare collection (AFC) gate to enter the platform level.
- ✓ They may also have to place them on the AFC gates to exit a metro station after their journey.
- ✓ Trials are underway for the QR-code printed tickets and soon machines will be installed at all 40 stations where commuters can purchase them.
- ✓ At present, commuters are given the option to purchase QR-code tickets on the CMRL app.

STATES

- **Kerala Kalamandalam - has started accepting girl students for their course in Kathakali for the first time in its more than 90 years of existence**



- ✓ Nine out of the ten students who have been accepted to the Kathakali section in Class VII this year are girls
- ✓ Kathakali is considered a highly masculine art form and female roles are traditionally handled by men.
- ✓ However, more women had started practising this art between 1970 and 1990.
- ✓ The Kerala Kalamandalam Deemed University has called for applications this year from girls for admissions to eighth standard in kathakali vesham -- Vadakkan (northern) and Thekkan (southern) styles
- ✓ Till now, only boys have been admitted to the course.
- ✓ When the girls are admitted to eighth standard, they can complete 10 years in Kerala Kalamandalam and pass out with an MA degree

NATIONAL

- **P S Vinodraj's Tamil film "Koozhangal" (Pebbles) - has been unanimously chosen as the Indian entry for the Oscars 2022 Best International Feature Film category**
- ✓ The decision was announced in Kolkata on October 23 by director Shaji N Karun, who chaired the selection jury



- ✓ The jury comprised Ananya Chatterjee, Indraadip Dasgupta, Arghyakamal Mitra, Ruma Sengupta, Sumit Basu, Pampally, AVM K Shanmugam, P Sukumar, Naganna, G Bhageeradha, Vipul Mehta, Ravindra Jadhav, Umamaheshwar Rao and Navaniat Singh.
- ✓ Koozhangal was picked from a list of 14 films that were compiled by a 15-member jury for a screening process for selecting India's entries.
- ✓ Malayalam feature Nayattu, Tamil film Mandela, filmmaker Shoojit Sircar's Sardar Udham, Vidya Balan-starrer Sherni, Farhan Akhtar's Toofan, Captain Vikram Batra biopic Shershaah and Marathi film Godavari, were in the race.
- ✓ Now, Koozhangal should make it to the final list of nominations in the Foreign Language Film category by competing in several rounds.
- ✓ Koozhangal has been produced by Nayanthara and Vignesh Shivan and it featured music by Yuvan Shankar Raja
- ✓ The movie follows an alcoholic abusive husband who, after his long-suffering wife runs off, tries to find her with his young son to bring her back.
- ✓ The film has been a winner of several awards at film festivals already.
- ✓ Koozhangal had won the top honour, the Tiger Award for best film, at the 50th International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), earlier this year in Netherlands
- ✓ In addition, Koozhangal was selected for the North American premiere of New Directors New Films Festival, Jeonju International Film Festival, Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles and Kyiv Molodist International Film Festival.
- ✓ The 94th Academy Awards will be hosted in-person at Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre on March on March 24, 2022.
- ✓ No Indian film has ever won an Oscar.
- ✓ The only Indian films to have been nominated for an Oscar so far have been Mother India (1958), Salaam Bombay (1989) and Lagaan (2001).
- ✓ India's entry for the 2021 Oscars was the Malayalam feature Jallikattu, directed by Lijo Jose Pellissery.

- ✓ Before Koozhangal, director Vetri Maaran's Visaranai was selected as India's official entry to Oscars from the Tamil film industry in 2016
- **On October 23, the ministry of power - announced new guidelines to sustain economic viability of the sector, ease financial stress of various stakeholders and ensure timely recovery of costs involved in electricity generation**
 - ✓ The rules notified by the ministry of power under the Electricity Act, 2003 also seeks promotion of clean energy to meet India's commitment towards climate change
 - ✓ The rules include Electricity (Timely recovery of costs due to Change in Law) Rules, 2021 and Electricity (Promotion of generation from renewable sources of energy by addressing Must Run and other matters) Rules, 2021
 - ✓ According to the government, new rules would help in meeting the renewable energy generation targets and ensure consumers have access to green and clean energy
 - ✓ India has already announced international commitment to set up 175 GW of Renewable Energy capacity by 2022 and 450 GW by 2030
- **Government think-tank Niti Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) – launched a digi-book “Innovations for You” to showcase the success stories of start-ups set up under the Atal Innovation Mission in different domains.**
 - ✓ The digi-book was unveiled in the presence of Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, Dr. V K Paul, Member Health, NITI Aayog, Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog among others
 - ✓ The first edition of this book is focused on innovations in Health Care
 - ✓ It features a compilation of 45 health tech startups, incubated at Atal Incubation Centres spread across the country
 - ✓ These startups have utilised frontier technologies such as AI, IoT, ICT and others to provide socially relevant solutions to problems like Anemia, Malaria, dental care, mental health, neonatal and child care and monitoring human vitals, among others
 - ✓ The subsequent editions of the book will focus on other emerging sectors like AgriTech, EduTech, Mobility, EV among others.
 - ✓ The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Centre's flagship initiative to promote innovation and entrepreneurship culture in the country
- **The Ministry of Rural Development - launched 152 SAKSHAM Centres (Centre for Financial Literacy & Service Delivery) as part of Amrit Mahotsav**
 - ✓ These Centres were launched across 77 districts of 13 states under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)



- ✓ The States include Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh.
 - ✓ The SAKSHAM Centres act as one stop solution/single window system for basic financial needs of Self-Help Group (SHG) households in rural areas
 - ✓ The main objective of the Centres is to provide financial literacy & facilitate delivery of financial services (savings, credit, insurance, pensions etc.) to SHG members and rural poor.
 - ✓ These Centres were managed by SHG network after providing the required training facilities
 - ✓ Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has also developed a mobile & web-based application called “SAKSHAM”
 - ✓ This App will be used by the community resource person of the Centre to know the penetration of various financial services for each SHG & village, identify major gaps and accordingly provide training and deliver the required financial services.
 - ✓ This application will also measure the impact of the programme on regular interval for mid-course correction in strategy, if any.
- **The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) - has launched a helpline number ‘1800118711’ for the candidates belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD)**
- ✓ The objective of the helpline number is to assist the aspirants of the reserved category if they are facing any difficulty in filling up the application form of any Examination/ Recruitment or for any queries concerning the Commission’s Examinations/ Recruitments
 - ✓ The initiative is part of celebrations under the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence.
 - ✓ The Helpline will remain operational on all working days (during office hours) to assist the aspirants.
 - ✓ The UPSC conducts civil services exams to select officers and bureaucrats in India.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Former US President Donald Trump - has announced plans to launch a new social media platform, called 'TRUTH Social'**



- ✓ Trump's new social media platform "TRUTH Social" is up for pre-registration in the Apple App Store
 - ✓ An early beta version of his latest venture will be open to invited guests next month, and will have a "nationwide rollout" within the first three months of 2022
 - ✓ The platform will be owned by Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG), which also intends to launch a subscription video on demand service
 - ✓ The social media app is likely to be the first project of the Trump Media and Technology Group (TMTG) after its merger with Digital World Acquisition Group with the former US president as the chairman.
 - ✓ Donald Trump was blocked by Twitter, Facebook and Google's YouTube in the aftermath of the January 6 insurrection at the US Capitol
 - ✓ Trump has sued Twitter, Facebook and YouTube in July to get his social media accounts restored
 - ✓ Earlier in October, he filed a motion asking a federal judge to order Twitter to restore his account.
 - ✓ Trump had 89 million followers on Twitter when his account was closed
- **Saudi Arabia - hosts the inaugural Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) and The Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) in Riyadh from October 23 to 25, 2021**
 - ✓ Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled the SGI and MGI in March to counter environmental degradation and climate change
 - ✓ He announced the introduction of the first package of initiatives representing investments worth more than 700 billion Saudi Riyals (\$186 billion)
 - ✓ Both initiatives provide an ambitious roadmap for the kingdom's Vision 2030 and to meet worldwide emissions targets.
 - ✓ The SGI and MGI aim to collectively plant 50 billion trees, covering an area double the size of the Great Green Wall in the Sahel region and represents 5% of the global tree planting target.



- ✓ The initiative will cut carbon dioxide emissions in the Middle East by 60%
- ✓ These energy-related initiatives were designed to reduce Saudi Arabia’s carbon emissions by 278 million tonnes annually by 2030, more than doubling the kingdom’s target
- ✓ Meanwhile, Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz announced that the Kingdom’s goal is to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2060.
- ✓ Saudi Arabia will join the Global Methane Pledge, which aims to reduce methane emissions globally by 30%
- ✓ Further, Saudi Arabia plans to join Global Oceans Alliance, Sports for Climate Action Agreement, Alliance to Eliminate Plastic Waste in Oceans & Beaches as well as to establish a global centre for Sustainable Tourism.
- ✓ Saudi Arabia would also be joining a Non-Profit foundation for exploring the seas and oceans.
- ✓ Saudi Arabia also look forward for joining Middle East Green Initiative Summit.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On October 22, India - handed over the 34.9 km-long cross-border rail link connecting Jaynagar in Bihar to Kurtha in Nepal to the Nepal government**
- ✓ The Jaynagar-Kurtha section is part of the 68.7km Jaynagar-Bijalpura-Bardidas rail link built under the Government of India's grant assistance of NPR 8.77 billion
- ✓ The linking project will pass through the historical city of Janakpur and will further boost people-to-people connectivity between India and Nepal
- ✓ The handing over ceremony took place in the presence of Indian ambassador to Nepal Vinay M. Kwatra and Nepal minister for physical Infrastructure & transport Renu Kumari Yadav.
- ✓ The executing agency for the project, IRCON International Ltd, on behalf of the Government of India handed over the assets of the section to Nepal Railway Company Limited during the event.



- ✓ Once operational, this will be the first broad gauge cross-border rail link between India and Nepal, boosting connectivity and trade relations between both nations.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **South Korea - has launched its first space rocket to be completely developed and built in the country, 'Nuri', on October 21, 2021**



- ✓ But the rocket failed to successfully deploy a test satellite into orbit after its launch
- ✓ The 47-meter rocket was launched from the country's Naro Space Center, which is on a small island off South Korea's southern coast.
- ✓ Nuri is the country's first space launch vehicle developed and built completely with South Korean technology.
- ✓ The three-stage rocket is powered by five rocket engines to complete its first and second stages, while another engine is used during the rocket's final stage.
- ✓ The rocket is designed to carry a payload of up to 1.5 tons to an orbit of 600 to 800 kilometers above Earth.
- ✓ The space agency, Korea Aerospace Research Institute said it was planning to form an inspection committee soon to study the cause of failure and to make improvised plans for the next test launch

- ✓ After depending on other countries to launch its satellites since the early 1990s, South Korea is now trying to become the 10th nation to send a satellite into space with its own technology.
- ✓ The country is also hoping to send an explorer to the moon by 2030.

DEFENCE

- **The Indian and US armies - have commenced the joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas 2021' at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson in Alaska, United States**



- ✓ The 14-day bilateral exercise is designed to enable exchange of knowledge, ideas and concepts between the two militaries on enhancing cohesion and interoperability.
- ✓ The joint exercise will focus on 'Combined Arms Manoeuvres' in cold climatic conditions and is primarily aimed at sharing tactical level drills
- ✓ The US troops participating in Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2021 include the First Squadron (Airborne) of the 40th Cavalry Regiment, US Army, and the Indian contingent is represented by 7th MADRAS Infantry Battalion Group
- ✓ A total of 300 US Army soldiers and 350 Indian Army soldiers are participating in the exercise
- ✓ The joint training exercise includes counter insurgency / counter terrorism environment activities under United Nations (UN) mandate.
- ✓ The 17th edition of the exercise commenced on October 15 and is hosted alternately between both countries.
- ✓ The previous edition of this exercise was held at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan's Bikaner in February 2021.

ECONOMY

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - imposed a monetary penalty on payment system operators, Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PBBL) and Western Union Financial Services Inc for deficiencies in regulatory compliance**



- ✓ The RBI had imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 1 crore on Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL), while a penalty of Rs 27.78 lakh was levied on Western Union Financial Services
- ✓ The RBI further stated that the penalties have been imposed in the exercise of powers vested in RBI under the provisions of Section 30 and Section 31 of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007

