

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 15, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The Department of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments – has invited applications for the one-year junior Saiva Archakar certificate training course**
 - ✓ The government is planning to relaunch the course for the second batch of students in six major temples in the state from March next year
 - ✓ The relaunch of the course was part of the DMK’s poll promise to take forward the ideology of social justice by ensuring that all Hindus can become priests irrespective of their castes.
 - ✓ The programme was launched in 2007 by then chief minister and DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi to admit a total of 207 students in six of the centres across the state
 - ✓ However, the course was discontinued after the AIADMK came to power.
 - ✓ The Tamil Nadu government under CM, M K Stalin has appointed 24 non-Brahmins trained Archakars from the first batch as priests and Othuvars in several HR&CE temples as per respective temple’s Agama (rules).
 - ✓ The government has also assured jobs to the remaining 170 trained Archakars in a phased manner in existing vacancies.
 - ✓ The certificate courses will be conducted in the six temples at Trichy, Chennai (Triplicane), Palani, Thiruchendur, Madurai and Tiruvannamalai.
 - ✓ While training centres in Srirangam temple and Parthasarathy Swamy temple offer Vaishnavism course, the four other centres conduct Shaivism courses.
- **The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) - has estimated an exploitable priority sector credit potential for Tamil Nadu for the year 2022-23 at Rs 4.13 lakh crore.**
 - ✓ This is an increase of over 20% over the projections made for the year 2021-22, which was Rs 3.43 lakh crore.

- ✓ The estimate was revealed on December 14, when NABARD's State Focus Paper for 2022-23 was launched by minister for finance and human resources Palanivel Thiaga Rajan

NATIONAL

- On December 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – addressed the 98th anniversary celebrations of Sadguru Sadafaldeo at Swarved temple of Vihangam Yog Sansthan in Umraha Gram at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh



- ✓ UP Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also attended the celebrations along with PM Narendra Modi
- ✓ In his speech, PM Modi said Sadguru gave the mantra of Swadeshi during the freedom movement and made huge contributions to India's freedom struggle
- ✓ The Swarved Temple is the physical representation of the spiritual treatise 'Swarved', authored by Sadguru Sadafaldeoji Maharaj
- ✓ It is a meditation centre dedicated to the mankind for their moral and spiritual growth.
- ✓ Once completed, the Swarved Temple, which will not have images or idols of any deity, will have the capacity to host 20,000 people practising yoga.
- ✓ The temple is expected to be completed in 2 years.
- ✓ Sadguru Sadafaldeoji Maharaj was born in the year 1888.
- ✓ He practiced Vihangam Yoga for 17 long years in his self-made cave at various sacred places and founded a Yoga school in 1924
- ✓ Vihangam Yoga is an ancient meditation technique which was revived by Sadguru Sadafaldeoji Maharaj.
- ✓ PM Modi is currently on a two-day visit to his parliamentary constituency Varanasi.
- ✓ On the first day of his visit, the PM inaugurated phase 1 of the newly-constructed Kashi Vishwanath Dham at a cost of around Rs 339 crore

- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing visit to Varanasi coincides with the 100th anniversary of the then Prince of Wales' royal visit to the temple town in December 1921
 - ✓ Earlier on the day, the PM chaired a four-hour 'good governance' meeting with 12 Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand along with Deputy CMs from Bihar and Nagaland
 - ✓ The 12 CMs explained 5 best practices and other development initiatives in their states to the PM using presentations.
- **On December 14, Rajya Sabha - passed two crucial bills through a voice vote to replace ordinances promulgated in November**
- ✓ The bills seek the extension of the tenure of the directors of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) to a maximum of up to five years
 - ✓ The new bills prescribe the limit of the tenure replacing the earlier provision that stated "a minimum of two years" but did not specify the upper limit for the tenure of directors of the CBI and the ED.
 - ✓ According to the government, the bills were introduced to check corruption and ensure and enhance transparency.
 - ✓ With this, the two bills have cleared both Houses of Parliament, with the Lok Sabha passing them on December 9.
 - ✓ Later, the government said in the Rajya Sabha that over 14 crore unique health IDs have been generated under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission till December 3
 - ✓ The mission was launched nationwide by PM Narendra Modi in September with an aim to create a complete digital health ecosystem
- **A kilo of Assam's speciality orthodox tea from Manohari Tea Estate in Dibrugarh - fetched a record price of ₹99,999 at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) on December 14.**



- ✓ This was the most expensive tea sold in an auction in the country.

- ✓ This speciality tea was made from leaf buds with the finest clove: P-126 and was sold to Saurav Tea Traders
 - ✓ In 2018, a kilo of Manohari Gold Tea was sold for ₹39,100, but in less than a month, a kg of Golden Needles tea variety produced by the Donyi Polo Tea Estate in Arunachal Pradesh became the costliest at ₹40,000.
 - ✓ In 2019, Manohari returned to take top spot with ₹50,000 a kg at the auction.
 - ✓ However, Maijan Orthodox Golden Tea broke the record the same year with ₹70,501 a kg.
 - ✓ That feat lasted only a week as a kilo of Dikom Tea Estate's Golden Butterfly tea was sold for ₹75,000 and kept its position until now.
- **The Indian Railways - is constructing the world's tallest bridge pier in Manipur as part of 111 km long Jiribam-Imphal railway project**
- ✓ The bridge, which is being built at a pier height of 141 metres, will surpass the existing record of 139 meter of Mala - Rijeka viaduct, Montenegro in Europe
 - ✓ The work on the bridge being constructed at Noney Valley in Manipur will be completed by December 2023.
 - ✓ The total anticipated cost of the bridge is ₹374 crore with 61% of the bridge comprising of tunnels
 - ✓ The bridge will reduce the time taken to travel between the 220km-Jiribam and Imphal (NH-37) to just 2.5 hours from the present 12 hours
 - ✓ The ambitious project in Manipur seeks to connect Imphal, the capital of Manipur with the broad gauge network of the country.

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On December 14, the Supreme Court - allowed widening of major portions of the strategic Char Dham road project in Uttarakhand taking into consideration the country's security challenges**
- ✓ The SC also set up an oversight committee headed by former Justice AK Sikri to report to it directly on the project.
 - ✓ The oversight committee shall receive all support from the Defence Ministry, Ministry of Road Transport, Uttarakhand Government and all district magistrates.
 - ✓ It shall ensure all remedial measures are taken in the interest of the environment and also to ensure the recommendations of High Powered Committee under environmentalist Ravi Chopra are implemented
 - ✓ The strategic 900-km road widening project worth Rs. 12,000 crore aims to provide all-weather connectivity to four holy towns in Char Dham circuit — Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath – in Uttarakhand
 - ✓ The proposed double lane of the project will enable speedy deployment of men, machinery and armament by the armed forces on the India-China borders

- ✓ The apex court has now allowed widening of three hill stretches in Uttarakhand — Rishikesh to Mana, Rishikesh to Gangotri and Tanakpur to Pithoragarh – forming part of the Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna.
- ✓ This will be in the Double Line-Paved Shoulder (DL-PS) format with a width of 10 metres (7 metre doubleline carriageway and 1.5 metre paved shoulders on either side) as prescribed by the December 5, 2020 circular of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).
- ✓ This will provide an additional two-metre width to strategic roads for easy and rapid transportation.

DEC 2016: PM laid foundation stone for Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna in Dehradun.	road having a carriageway width of 7 m (or 7.5 m in case there is a raised kerb)" with 8-10 m formation width to "meet the requirement of the Army".
MARCH 2018: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) set standard specification of carriageway width of 5.5 m with 2-lane structures (7m) for national highways and roads in hilly and mountainous terrains.	DEC 2020: MoRTH amended specifications to a 10-m tarred surface for mountain highways.
AUG 2018: SC started hearing the case after an NGO, Citizens for Green Doon, flagged the impact on ecology.	JAN 2021: MoD changed its position, now seeking a 10-m carriageway with 12-14 m formation width.
AUG 2019: SC formed a high-powered committee (HPC), which submitted two reports in July 2020 after members disagreed on the ideal width for hill roads.	FEB 2021: Attorney General told SC that there was no link between the Char Dham Highway development project and the recent flash floods on Dhauliganga river.
SEPT 2020: SC upheld the minority recommendation of the HPC to limit carriageway width to 5.5 m.	APRIL 2021: SC decided to hear only urgent matters due to the pandemic; government in May sought expeditious hearing of matters related to border routes.
NOV 2020: Ministry of Defence (MoD) filed an appeal seeking "a double-lane	NOVEMBER 2021: Daily hearing begins on November 8.

- ✓ The bench of Justices D Y Chandrchud, Surya Kant and Vikram Nath modified SC's September 8, 2020 order asking the MoRTH to stick to its 2018 circular on the width of roads in hill terrain in the execution of the project.
- ✓ The 2018 guidelines prescribed a width of 5.5 m for the carriageway.
- ✓ Laying the foundation stone in December 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the project as a tribute to those who lost their lives during flash floods in the state.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Malta – to become the first country in Europe to approve plans to legalise possession and cultivation of cannabis for personal use**
- ✓ Adults will be allowed to have up to 7gm of cannabis and grow up to four plants at home for their personal use

- ✓ The law also allows for the creation of regulated non-profit associations of up to 500 people each to grow the drug for the exclusive use of its members.
- ✓ The move comes just weeks after Luxembourg announced similar proposals.
- ✓ Personal use and growing of cannabis is also tolerated in Spain and in the Netherlands.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **The second Trilateral Working Group Meeting between India, Iran and Uzbekistan on the joint use of Chabahar port - was held through video conferencing on December 14.**
- ✓ The participants underlined the important role played by Chabahar port during humanitarian crises as well as in enhancing regional connectivity
- ✓ They also took note of the increase in transit traffic between Central Asia and South Asia through the Shahid Beheshti Terminal, Chabahar Port and discussed further development of transportation corridor.
- ✓ Iran has offered to host a high-level Indian delegation at Chabahar next year.
- ✓ It was decided to hold the third session of the trilateral working group meeting in India at a mutually convenient date.
- ✓ During the meeting, the government made a presentation on the operations of the Chabahar port
- ✓ The Indian company, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), through its wholly owned subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ), took over the operations of the Chabahar Port in 2018
- ✓ The Shahid Beheshti Terminal at Chabahar Port is strategically important for handling shipments and trans-shipments from various European and Asian countries
- ✓ Chabahar seaport comprises of two separate ports namely, Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti
- ✓ India is keen to develop this port because it will provide India an alternative route for trade between India and Afghanistan
- ✓ Both the countries signed a bilateral agreement in May 2016, under which India would refurbish one of the berths at Shahid Beheshti port as well as reconstruct a 600-meter-long container handling facility there
- ✓ India's first shipment of wheat to Afghanistan was sent in October 2017, through the Chabahar Port.

APPOINTMENTS

- **French luxury group Chanel - has named Leena Nair, chief human resource officer (CHRO) of Unilever as its global CEO.**
- ✓ This makes Nair, born and brought up in Kolhapur, the second Indian-origin woman to take over as a global CEO after Indra Nooyi (PepsiCo).
- ✓ Incidentally, Nooyi happens to be Nair's mentor.

- ✓ Owner of Unilever, Alain Wertheimer will move to the role of global executive chairman and Nair will assume the role of global CEO based in London, UK.

JOINED HUL IN '92

➤ Leena Nair (52) was Unilever's first female and youngest ever chief HR officer



➤ An alumna of XLRI Jamshedpur, Nair joined Hindustan Unilever in 1992



I am humbled and honoured to be appointed the Global CEO of @CHANEL, an iconic & admired co

- ✓ The \$10-billion Chanel competes with global luxury firms such as \$50-billion LVMH (Louis Vuitton), Hermes, Gucci, L'Oreal, Michael Kors, among others.
- ✓ A gold medallist from XLRI Jamshedpur, 52-year old Nair is a much-celebrated HR leader globally
- ✓ This year, Nair also figured on Fortune India's Most Powerful Women List.

RANKINGS

- **Delhi – ranked first among the cities with million-plus population that has suffered huge economic loss after failing to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards**
- ✓ This was revealed in a recent study published in Nature by scientists of CSIR-NEERI
- ✓ The scientists computed economic damage of more than \$90 billion in 2017, about 3.4% of the country's GDP, from premature mortality due to non-communicable diseases caused by PM2.5 pollution
- ✓ The study focused on the economic losses due to premature mortality caused by PM2.5 exposure in 31 non-attainment cities (NACs), or cities that consistently failed to meet air quality standards.
- ✓ Several cities in other parts of the country including Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Pune and Nagpur are placed behind Delhi in economic losses caused by such premature mortality.
- ✓ Indo-Gangetic plain cities including Delhi, Lucknow, Patna and Kolkata, accounted for more than 43% of the mortality due to pollution from PM2.5 concentrations.
- ✓ Some of the cities with the highest PM2.5 concentrations, such as Ghaziabad, Dehradun, Kanpur, Patna, Delhi and Lucknow had levels several times the prescribed annual average.

HARDEST HIT CITIES IN INDIA

HIGHEST ECONOMIC LOSS
from PM2.5-caused premature
deaths (\$ million, 2024)

Delhi	28,626
Mumbai	9,922
Hyderabad	6,557
Ahmedabad	6,313
Bengaluru	5,888
Kolkata	5,367
Chandigarh	3,521
Jaipur	2,784
Pune	2,515
Nagpur	2,500

**SHARE OF PM2.5-CAUSED
MORTALITIES IN**
total premature deaths (%)

Dehradun	18.4
Ghaziabad	18.2
Delhi	18
Kanpur	16.7
Patna	16.2
Lucknow	15.3
Jodhpur	15.3
Jaipur	14.9
Ludhiana	14.2
Kolkata, Dhanbad	13.9

- ✓ The lowest concentrations were observed in cities in Karnataka, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Odisha because of low population density and favourable meteorological conditions.
- ✓ Despite being subjected to low PM concentration, Ahmedabad and Bangalore reported high mortality cases.