

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 16, 2021**

### **TAMIL NADU**

- **Tamil Nadu – has reported the first confirmed case of Omicron variant of SARSCov2**
  - ✓ This was announced by the state health minister Ma Subramanian on October 15
  - ✓ The genome sequencing of the sample drawn from the 47-year old man who travelled to Chennai from Nigeria via Doha on December 10 indicated that he carried the variant.
  - ✓ The test was conducted by the ICMR's National Institute of Virology in Pune.
  - ✓ At least seven of his contacts, including six relatives, have tested positive for Covid-19 so far.
  - ✓ All the eight patients are showing mild symptoms, said doctors at the King Institute of Preventive Medicine.
  - ✓ All the patients, except a 16-year-old boy, have taken two doses of the vaccine.
  - ✓ According to International studies, Omicron infects and multiplies nearly 70 times faster than the Delta variant and the wild type of SARSCoV-2 in the human bronchus.
  
- **Chief Minister M K Stalin - flagged off 20 Indco Tea Vehicles at the secretariat in Chennai on December 15.**
  - ✓ The vehicles cost a total of ₹3 crore, which was funded under the special area development programme.
  - ✓ The vehicles are allotted to four districts - Chennai, Coimbatore, Tirupur and the Nilgiris.
  - ✓ Chennai was allotted the highest number of nine vehicles, followed by the Nilgiris (8), Coimbatore (2) and Tirupur (1).
  - ✓ The launch of vehicles is an initiative of Indcoserve, an apex body of 16 industrial cooperative (Indco) tea factories in the Nilgiris
  - ✓ The first batch of five Indco Tea Vandis was rolled out in the Nilgiris in November 2020.

- ✓ The CM has also handed over a sanction letter from the National Cooperative Development Corporation to Keystone, an NGO based at Kotagiri, for a sum of ₹19.98 lakh for conducting training programmes for small tea farmers.

## STATES

- **On December 15, Kerala police - launched a 'Solar Umbrella' project at various places in Kochi city for the protection of traffic police personnel from the scorching heat.**



- ✓ The huge umbrella with a fan fitted inside would function with the power generated from a solar panel fixed above.
- ✓ The project was initiated by the police jointly with Kochi Innerwheel Club and Giridhar Eye Institute here.
- **On December 15, the Balussery government girls higher secondary school in Kozhikode, Kerala - implemented the gender-neutral uniform for its students**



- ✓ It is for the first time that a higher secondary school in the government sector has implemented a common uniform for girls and boys
- ✓ The school has adopted a gender-neutral uniform of blue pants and striped white shirts for 200 girls and 60 boys of Class 11

- ✓ The new dress code is an initiative of the school Parent Teacher Association
- ✓ Nearly a dozen schools in Kerala have already shifted to a gender-neutral uniform.

## NATIONAL

- **On December 15, the Union Cabinet – clears a draft bill on electoral reforms allowing the Election Commission to link Aadhaar number with voter ID on a voluntary basis**
- ✓ The reforms are part of various suggestions made by the Election Commission to the Law Ministry

### SOON, 4 DATES A YR FOR VOTER REGISTRATION?

 <p>➤ EC officials say <b>Aadhaar-EPIC linkage will help realise plan to work towards secure, possibly electronic, voting</b> to help migrant voters exercise franchise even if they are not in constituency where they are registered as voters</p> <p>➤ <b>Draft bill to amend RPA will allow four qualifying dates (Jan 1, Apr 1, July 1 &amp; Oct 1) in a year</b>, rather than only Jan 1, for those above 18 yrs, to register as voters</p> 	<p>➤ Draft bill purportedly proposes to <b>make gender-neutral a provision</b> allowing only the wife of a male service voter to register as a voter in the same constituency as him</p> <p>➤ A fourth likely amendment seeks to <b>empower EC to requisition premises</b> for any purpose related to elections and not just for creating polling stations and storage of ballot boxes</p> 
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- ✓ The draft Bill seeks to amend the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951 and the Aadhaar Act, 2016 to filter out bogus and duplicate entries in electoral rolls.
- ✓ It is likely to be brought before Parliament in the ongoing winter session
- ✓ The bill also seeks to make 'gender-neutral' for service voters.
- ✓ According to the existing rule, an army man's wife is entitled to be enrolled as a service voter, but a woman army officer's husband is not.
- ✓ The new amendment seeks to replace the term 'wife' with 'spouse' related to service voters in the Act.
- ✓ The next likely amendment seeks to empower the Election Commission to requisition premises for any purpose related to elections including for housing central paramilitary forces, its employees and observers and not just for creating polling stations and storage of ballot boxes.
- ✓ The bill proposes to empower the electoral registration officer to seek Aadhaar number of existing as well as new voters, though only on a voluntary basis.
- ✓ Another provision of the bill will allow new voters to enrol on four different dates every year.

- ✓ Currently, those turning 18 on or before January 1 of every year are only eligible to register as voters.
  - ✓ In 2015, the Election Commission had taken up linking of voter card and Aadhaar number as part of its national electoral roll purification and authentication programme (NERPAP).
  - ✓ Around 32 crore Aadhaar numbers were seeded by the time the EC decided to abandon the programme in view of the Supreme Court judgment restricting the use of Aadhaar.
  - ✓ In 2019, the Supreme Court allowed collection of Aadhaar with due amendment in the Aadhaar Act
- **On December 15, Union Cabinet - approved a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for semiconductor and display board production in the country**
- ✓ The PLI scheme involves an outlay of ₹ 76,000 crore in semiconductor production over the next 5-6 years.
  - ✓ As part of the scheme, the incentives include every part of the supply chain ranging from electronic components, sub-assemblies, to finished goods.
  - ✓ The scheme aims to provide incentives to companies engaged in silicon semiconductor fabs, display fabs, semiconductor packaging, semiconductor design, among others
  - ✓ The government has already approved PLI support worth ₹55,392 crore (\$7.5 billion) for large scale electronics manufacturing, IT hardware, SPECS Scheme and modified electronics manufacturing clusters (EMC 2.0) scheme.
  - ✓ In addition, PLI incentives worth ₹98,000 crore (\$13 billion) have been approved for allied sectors comprising of battery, auto components, telecom and networking products, solar PV modules and white goods
  - ✓ Overall, the government has committed monetary support of ₹ 2,30,000 crore to position India as a global hub for electronics manufacturing with semiconductors as the foundation
  - ✓ According to the government, the scheme could create 35,000 direct jobs and attract ₹1.67 lakh crore (trillion) of investment.
  - ✓ The package also envisages setting up a “specialised and independent” India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), led by global experts of the sector, which will supervise “efficient and smooth” implementation of the schemes
  - ✓ The package has two “new” components -- chip-to-startups (C2S), and design-linked incentive (DLI).
  - ✓ The C2S programme aims to create 85,000 “high quality, highly qualified, well trained engineers,” with a 20-year vision for the sector.
  - ✓ Under the DLI scheme the government will bear 50% of the costs incurred by such startups in software tools, computing power, raw materials, validation, testing, cost of intellectual property right, and its actual fabrication

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- The owners of the Serum Institute of India, the Poonawalla family - have announced a £50 million (Rs 500 crore) donation to Oxford University to build a new research centre focused on vaccinology.



- ✓ The donation from Serum Life Sciences, wholly owned by the Poonawalla family, is Oxford University's largest ever gift for vaccines research.
- ✓ It will be used to create a new facility to house over 300 research scientists at the campus.
- ✓ Named the Poonawalla Vaccines Research Building, it will house the headquarters and lab of the Jenner Institute where the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was developed, as well as other teams such as those developing a malaria vaccine.
- ✓ The university had conferred an honorary degree on Cyrus Poonawalla in 2019

## OBITUARY

- **Decorated air warrior Group Captain Varun Singh - died at the IAF Command Hospital in Bengaluru on December 15**

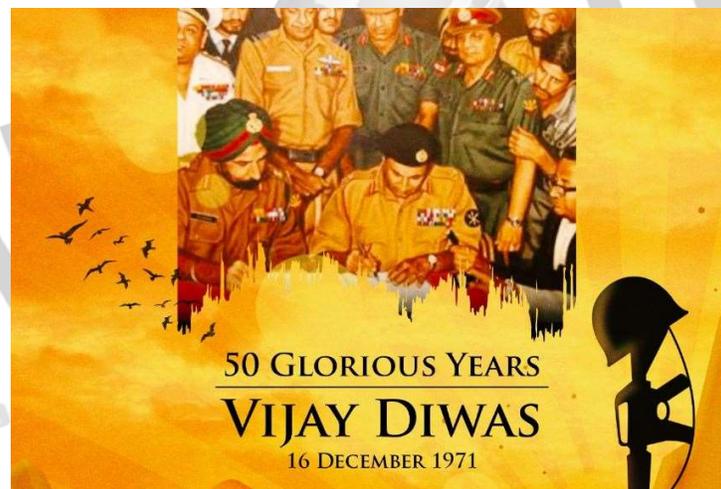


- ✓ Group Captain Singh was being treated for severe burns at a Bengaluru military hospital after he was moved from Wellington in Tamil Nadu's Coonoor
- ✓ Varun Singh was rescued after the helicopter crash that killed Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and 12 others on December 8

- ✓ General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika and 12 others were flying from Sullur Air Base to Wellington when their Mi17V5 Air Force chopper crashed in the hills seven minutes before landing.
- ✓ With Singh's passing, all 14 passengers on board the helicopter have now died.
- ✓ Singh, 39, was serving as Directing Staff at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington
- ✓ A pilot in LCA squadron and a decorated officer, Group Captain Singh was on board the Russian-made chopper as the liaison officer for the visit of General Rawat to the Defence Services Staff College in Wellington.
- ✓ The Air Force officer was conferred the Shaurya Chakra on Independence Day this year for his courage in handling his Tejas fighter aircraft after it was hit by a technical glitch during a sortie on October 12 last year
- ✓ As an aspiring astronaut, Varun had applied for India's Gaganyaan manned space mission, but was not among the final four chosen for the mission

## NATIONAL DAY

### ➤ **Vijay Diwas – December 16**



- ✓ India - celebrates December 16 as Vijay Diwas to commemorate its victory over Pakistan during the 1971 war that led to the birth of Bangladesh.
- ✓ The day is also observed in Bangladesh as 'Bijoy Dibos' to mark the country's formal independence from Pakistan
- ✓ This year marks the completion of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's victory over Pakistan
- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the Homage and Reception Ceremony of Swarnim Vijay Mashaal's at the National War Memorial.
- ✓ The war came into effect due to the continuous genocide of people in East Pakistan by an oppressive military regime guided by General Yahya Khan of Pakistan
- ✓ The then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered then Army Chief General Sam Manekshaw to launch a full-throttle war against Pakistan.

- ✓ The war started when Pakistan launched airstrikes on 11 of India's air bases on December 3, 1971
- ✓ After fighting for 13 days, India won the war against Pakistan on December 16, 1971
- ✓ On this day, the then Major-General in the Pakistan Army, Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, surrendered to the joint forces of Indian Army and Bangladesh's Mukti Bahini with around 93,000 soldiers.
- ✓ Niazi was the Commander of the Pakistan Eastern Command, and had also signed the 'Instrument of Surrender' at Ramna Race Course in Dacca (now Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh).
- ✓ The 'Instrument of Surrender' was signed and accepted by Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, the then General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of India's Eastern Command
- ✓ Operation Trident was initiated by India when the Indian Navy's Western Naval Command successfully conducted a surprise attack on Karachi port
- ✓ In this war, Pakistan suffered the maximum casualty with about 8,000 dead and 25,000 wounded, while India lost 3000 soldiers and 12,000 were injured.
- ✓ On August 2, 1972, India and Pakistan signed the Shimla Agreement under which the former agreed to release all the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war.
- ✓ On this day, India's Defence Minister and the heads of all three wings of the Indian Armed Forces pay homage to the soldiers at Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate in New Delhi.

