

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 25, 2021**

### **TAMIL NADU**

- **The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) - has decided to foreclose at least four major highway projects in Tamil Nadu**
- ✓ The decision was taken as contractors are unable to procure soil for earthwork and have been waiting for months to get their statutory clearances.
- ✓ The NHAI has also decided to de-scope works in 6 more projects, for which the agency is yet to get land from the state government agencies and also waiting for different clearances.
- ✓ The projects to be foreclosed include 4-laning of the stretch from Tamil Nadu-Kerala Border to Kanyakumari and two projects of 6-laning from Sriperumbudur to Walajapet.
- ✓ For the projects of 4-laning from Vikravandi to Cholapuram and Pollachi-Coimbatore 4-laning project, the state government is yet to provide the required land and hence the NHAI decided to close the contracts by descoping the works
- ✓ Earlier, the road transport ministry has written to the state chief secretary stating its “constraint” to carry out the ongoing works on a dozen of crucial highway projects in the state which have been delayed.
- ✓ Chief Secretary V Irai Anbu had conducted a meeting in July with 25 district collectors to sort out the issues.
- ✓ He also held an inter-departmental meeting with the water resources department, forests and Tangedco to ensure the issues of NHAI were resolved.
- ✓ On December 16, PWD and highways minister E V Velu held a five-hour meeting with 22 collectors, heads of line departments and NHAI chief general manager.
  
- **A new variety of rose - has been named after eminent agricultural scientist M S Swaminathan.**
- ✓ MS Viraraghavan, a leading horticulturist based in Kodaikanal, has developed a new variety of rose and named it “MS Swaminathan Rose”.

- ✓ The rose is highly disease resistant with rich magenta purple colour and stimulating aroma.



- ✓ Viraraghavan has bred more than 100 new varieties of roses registered in his name.
  - ✓ The new rose shrub grows up to 4-5 feet with dark green granular surface large leaves with regular thorns.
  - ✓ The new variety of rose has been developed from a series of crosses with a 'News' variety of rose and other purple roses.
  - ✓ Another new variety of pinkish floribunda rose has been named "Jewel of Monkompou", which was bred by KSG Son, a nursery based in Bengaluru
  - ✓ These two varieties were handed over by Narendra Dadlani, floriculture scientist and former director, horticulture, Government of India, New Delhi, to father of Green Revolution, M S Swaminathan in Chennai.
- **The annual Indian dance festival - began at Mamallapuram on December 23, after a break last year due to Covid-19.**



- ✓ Dancers from various parts of India perform at the festival and tales from Mahabharata, Rade Krishna, Valli Muruga, Shiva Shakthi and numerous ancient lore are portrayed through delicate dance forms in the festival.

- ✓ The festival presents various dance forms such as Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Bharatnatyam, Odissi, Bhangra among others alongwith folk arts such as Oyilattam, Karagattam, Kavadi and Thappaattam.
- ✓ The 30-day festival organised by the Tamil Nadu Tourism Department concludes on January 23.
- ✓ In 2019, 1.9 lakh tourists, including 95,000 foreigners enjoyed the event.
- ✓ The dance festival in Mamallapuram was launched in 1992
- ✓ It was later called as Indian dance festival with the Union government sponsoring the event.

## STATES

- **On December 24, the Karnataka government - was forced to defer tabling the anti-conversion bill in the legislative council on the last day of the legislature's winter session due to lack of majority**
- ✓ The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021 will now be introduced in the next session
- ✓ The ruling BJP had ensured smooth passage of the Bill in the assembly on December 23
- ✓ On December 24, both Houses — the Legislative Assembly (lower house) and Legislative Council (upper house) were adjourned sine die without the anti-conversion bill being passed in the latter.
- ✓ The proposed law prohibits conversion from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, fraud, allurement or marriage
- **On December 24, the Maharashtra Government – proposed a super vice-chancellor for its public universities**
- ✓ In this regard, the state government tabled amendments to the Maharashtra Public Universities Act to introduce the post of a pro-chancellor for the varsities
- ✓ The post of pro-chancellor will be occupied by minister of higher and technical education.
- ✓ The pro-chancellor's powers ranges from chairing the university's senate, its high-level decision-making body to presiding over the convocation ceremony in absence of the chancellor.
- ✓ The state has also proposed altering the selection method of the vice-chancellor.

## NATIONAL

- **The government – has issued new orders to telecom companies directing them to keep internet use data and call records of subscribers for two years**
- ✓ The amendment in the Unified License Agreement comes after requests from security agencies on security concerns
- ✓ Previously, the duration of archiving call data and internet usage records of subscribers was one year

- ✓ The amendments in the licences were issued by the Department of Telecom (DoT) on December 21 and extended to other forms of telecom permits on December 22.
- ✓ Telecom companies may destroy the data stored thereafter if there is no direction from the DoT.
- ✓ The internet data records of subscribers includes login and logout details of all subscribers for services provided such as internet access, e-mail, internet telephony services like calls made from mobile applications or Wi-Fi calling.

## INTERNATIONAL

- **Bhutan - becomes the first country in the South Asian region to administer booster doses, amidst the threat of Omicron variant**
- ✓ The Himalayan kingdom has started giving Covid booster shots to senior citizens and priority groups with 'mix and match' policy to ensure higher efficiency
- ✓ Those aged 65 and older, overseas travellers, health workers, sufferers from chronic ailments and all adults living in "high risk" areas are eligible for booster doses
- ✓ Bhutan planned to inoculate more than 2,28,000 people in a week, even though it has not reported any cases of Omicron so far.
- ✓ The nation of about 7,50,000 people has vaccinated more than 93% of people older than 12 with the second dose.
- ✓ Bhutan has reported just three deaths related to Covid and 2,659 cases since the pandemic started.

## INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **India and UAE - have completed negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement**
- ✓ In this regard, an announcement will be made during PM Narendra Modi's visit to UAE and Kuwait in the first week of 2022.
- ✓ The trade agreement is only the second pact to be signed by India after the one with Mauritius
- ✓ The agreement seeks lowering of tariffs, easier investment norms and import duty concessions for food products
- ✓ It is also expected to include key provisions for easier movement of Indian professionals and workers to Emirates.



- ✓ In return, some of the products from the petrochem value chain will be allowed lower duty access into India.
- ✓ The proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is set to boost trade and investment from the UAE
- ✓ In late September, India and the UAE officially began negotiations on a mutually beneficial CEPA
- ✓ India has focused on easing market access for major exports such as textiles, gems and jewellery and heavy engineering items.
- ✓ Food, the medical and financial sectors and digital trade are among the sectors being eyed by the UAE
- ✓ UAE is part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was negotiating a free trade agreement with India several years ago, until the talks were abandoned.
- ✓ India as well as GCC had paused talks with several trading partners.
- ✓ The bilateral trade agreement with UAE also marks a significant change in India's stance after its exit from RCEP due to the presence of China.
- ✓ Since then, it has entered into negotiations with the European Union, the UK, Australia and Israel with some of the FTAs expected to be worked out in the coming months.
- ✓ UAE was India's third largest trading partner during the last financial year, behind China and the US.
- ✓ During April-October this year, it was the second largest export destination for Indian goods.

## DEFENCE

- **Indian Navy's sail training ship INS Sudarshini - is now visiting Iran and has anchored at Iran's Port Sahid Bahonar at Bandar Abbas.**



- ✓ The ship will remain in port for three days and during this time many types of training will be given, including a briefing on the functioning and features of the ship.
- ✓ During the stay, the ship will also share training experiences with the sailors of the Iranian Navy.
- ✓ INS Sudarshini is currently in its final stages of deployment in the Gulf region

- ✓ The deployment seeks to highlight friendly foreign navies on various aspects of Indian Navy operations and expand the 'Bridge of Friendship' by training on board sail training platforms
- ✓ Iranian Navy trainee officers called 'Sea Riders' will also embark on INS Sudarshini for a sail training experience over a day's sortie.

## AWARDS

- **Delhi-based Sushmit Ghosh and Rintu Thomas's debut documentary feature 'Writing with Fire' - has been shortlisted in the documentary section of the next round of the Oscars.**



- ✓ This documentary is about a newspaper 'Khabar Lahariya' started as a social experiment by an NGO
- ✓ It is India's only rural newspaper run by Dalit women since 2002
- ✓ It was started by Delhi-based NGO Nirantar from Chitrakoot in the Bundelkhand region.
- ✓ It is published across Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in rural dialects of Hindi, including Bundeli and Awadhi
- ✓ It is India's only women-run brand of ethical and independent rural news reaching 5 million people every month through multiple digital platforms.
- ✓ The feature documentary captures 'Khabar Lahariya's switch from print to digital medium to stay relevant in modern times amidst all the political and personal chaos.
- ✓ It has been shortlisted among 15 entries, selected from a pool of 138 entries, in the Documentary Feature category of the 94th Academy Awards to be held at Los Angeles
- ✓ The documentary has won 28 international awards — including double wins at Sundance Film Festival, Audience Award at The International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, Best Feature documentary at San Francisco, and double wins at Black-Star

- ✓ Incidentally, acclaimed Tamil film 'Koozhangal' (Pebbles) that was selected by a jury in Kolkata as India's official entry to the 94th Academy Awards failed to make it to the final nomination list.
- ✓ As the Oscars 2022 ceremony is scheduled for March 27, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences unveiled its shortlists in 10 categories
- ✓ These categories include documentary, international features, documentary short subject, makeup and hairstyling, original score, original song, animated short, live-action short, visual effects, and sound.
- ✓ The nominations' voting will begin on January 27 and results will be announced on February 8

## NATIONAL DAY

### ➤ Good Governance Day – December 25



- ✓ Good governance Day is observed every year to create awareness about the duties and responsibilities of the citizens towards the government of the country
- ✓ The day is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of India's former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- ✓ On December 23, 2014, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (posthumously) were announced as recipients of India's highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna
- ✓ Following the announcement, the government announced that the birth anniversary of the former Prime Minister would be observed as Good Governance Day from 2014
- ✓ The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions is celebrating 'Good Governance Week 2021' from December 20 to December 25 with the motto of taking good administration down to the villages.
- ✓ The theme of Good Governance Week is "Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur" which will be celebrated as part of the 75th 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebration
- ✓ In 2018, on the eve of the day, PM Modi inaugurated the Bogibeel Bridge and the Maharashtra government had launched Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee International Schools in Mumbai on the occasion of the 94th birth anniversary of the late Prime Minister



- ✓ In the year 2017, The Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions launched the electronic-Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS) on the occasion of Good Governance Day
- ✓ Among other tributes to the leader, the world longest tunnel at Rohtang located on the Leh-Manali highway was named as Atal Tunnel.
- ✓ The third longest cable stayed bridge in India located over the Mandovi river has been named as Atal Setu.
- ✓ Also, the Government of Chhattisgarh changed the name of Navya Raipur to Atal Nagar.
- ✓ A B Vajpayee served as the PM of India between 1996 and 2004 in three non-consecutive terms - May 1996 (for 13 days), 1998–1999 (for 11 months) and 1999–2004, making him first PM from outside the Congress party to serve a full term
- ✓ He was elected to the Indian Parliament more than ten times (Lok Sabha nine times and Rajya Sabha two times) and served as the external affairs minister in the Prime Minister Morarji Desai cabinet
- ✓ During his tenure, Pokhran-II nuclear test was conducted and India fought Kargil war
- ✓ During the tenure of Vajpayee, the major successful schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and National Highways Development Project were launched
- ✓ Also, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan that aims to improve quality of education in primary and secondary schools were launched during his tenure.
- ✓ In 2009, he had retired from active politics due to health concerns.