

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 26, 2021

STATES

- **Punjab cabinet - approves setting up 'State General Category Commission' for unreserved classes**
 - ✓ A decision to this effect was taken during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi
 - ✓ The new commission is to be created to safeguard the interests of the unreserved classes besides ensuring effective implementation of various welfare schemes for the benefit of poor belonging to unreserved classes
 - ✓ Apart from Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have already set up "State General Category Commission".

- **The Gujarat government - decided to celebrate the first ever 'Nadi Utsav' (River Festival) between December 26 and 30 to honour the three main rivers of the state – Narmada, Tapi and Sabarmati.**
 - ✓ A decision in that regard was taken in the weekly cabinet meeting of the state government chaired by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.
 - ✓ The inaugural state level function of the River Festival will be held in Surat on the banks of Tapi river
 - ✓ It will be concluded at a function on the banks of Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad where CM Bhupendra Patel will offer Maha Arti
 - ✓ During the five-day celebration, various functions will be held on the banks of the three rivers like offering Arti, conducting marathon and carrying out river cleaning campaigns.
 - ✓ **Meanwhile, the celebration of rivers, Nadi Utsav 2021 was celebrated across the country from December 16 to 23, 2021**
 - ✓ It was a pan India celebration which was jointly organized by National Mission for Clean Ganga, Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Tourism

- ✓ Nadi Utsavs are organized to celebrate rivers such as River Brahmaputra, Indus, Narmada, Sabarmati, Mahanadi, Krishna, Godavari, Cauvery, Ganga, Yamuna, amongst several others



- ✓ The celebrations are being organized across the country under the four chosen themes of Cleanliness, Patriotism, Nature and Ecology, Devotion and Spirituality
 - ✓ The various activities conducted during the celebrations include plantation drives, cleanathons, Ganga artis, drawing and painting competitions, slogan writings, nadipujans, river marathon, boat race, storytelling sessions, etc.
 - ✓ For Nadi Utsav 2021, events are being held in over 22 states and more than 170 districts to celebrate 10 major rivers as well as many other rivers in the country.
 - ✓ During his Mann Ki Baat on 26th August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the nation to organize and celebrate river festivals at least once a year.
- **The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) - has been chosen to join a research project backed by the Space Application Centre of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) under a NASA-ISRO collaborative programme.**



- ✓ NASA and ISRO are jointly developing a space-borne 'Synthetic Aperture Radar' NISAR
- ✓ NISAR will produce high resolution data for large areas with the capability for systematic observation of earth resources.
- ✓ It will provide time-series data for eco-systems applications benefiting several operational activities related to agriculture, forestry, wetlands, and soil moisture estimation
- ✓ KUFOS has been selected as one of the nodal agencies in South India to implement the project
- ✓ Under this programme, ground truth data validation is planned prior to NISAR launch through collaboration with other research institutions such as the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management
- ✓ NISAR will be the first radar imaging satellite that uses dual frequencies.
- ✓ It will be used for remote sensing as well as to observe & understand natural processes on Earth.
- ✓ Under the agreement between NASA and ISRO, NASA will provide L-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR), a solid-state recorder, a high-rate telecommunication subsystem for scientific data GPS receivers, and a payload data subsystem.
- ✓ On the other hand, ISRO will provide a S-band synthetic aperture radar, satellite bus, launch vehicle, and associated launch services.
- ✓ NISAR satellite will be launched from India on January 29, 2023, aboard a GSLV Mk II to the sun-synchronous orbit
- ✓ The planned mission life of the satellite is three years.

NATIONAL

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - announced that "precaution doses" (boosters) of Covid vaccines for health and frontline workers as well as for those above 60 with co-morbidities will begin from January 10.**

'AVOID PANIC, RUMOURS; BE CAUTIOUS'

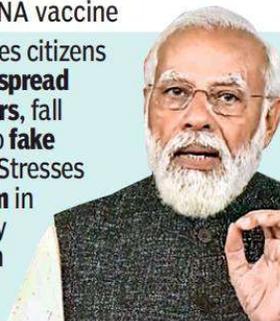
▼ Amid demands from various quarters following reopening of schools & colleges, PM Modi announces **vaccination for children aged 15-18 from Jan 3**

▼ From **Jan 10**, 'precaution dose' (addl or booster shot) to be given to frontline workers and those above 60 suffering from comorbidities

▼ Modi says **no cause for panic** on Omicron, India has readied 18L isolation beds, 5L oxygen beds, 1.4L ICU beds and 90,000 paediatric ICU and non-ICU beds

▼ PM says **90%** of India's eligible population has received **first dose** of Covid vaccine. Country will soon have a nasal vaccine and world's first DNA vaccine

▼ Urges citizens **not to spread rumours**, fall prey to **fake news**. Stresses **caution** in holiday season



- ✓ During his speech, the PM also said vaccination for children aged 15-18, using Covaxin, will begin from January 3.
 - ✓ The PM made the announcement as part of an 'Address to the Nation' on December 25
 - ✓ On December 25, the drug regulator granted emergency use authorisation to Bharat Biotech's locally developed Covaxin for children above 12 years of age.
 - ✓ Covaxin is the second vaccine, after Zydus Cadila's ZyCoV-D, to get the regulatory nod for restricted use among children in the 12-18 age bracket.
 - ✓ The vaccination programme, however, will currently cover children above 15 only.
 - ✓ PM Modi also said approvals for a nasal vaccine and the world's first DNA vaccine are on the anvil.
 - ✓ People above 60 with comorbidities will have the option to take the 'precaution' or booster dose on the advice of their doctors, the PM said
- **22 farmer groups in Punjab that belonged to the umbrella organization Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) - formed a political front on December 25**

NO TIE-UP WITH ANY PARTY

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sanyukt Samaj Morcha (SSM) says won't tie up with any political party ➤ Biggest farm groups in Punjab – BKU Ekta Ugrahan, BKU Ekta Sidhupur and BKU Ekta Dakaunda – stay away from SSM, but say they won't oppose the new front ➤ Sanyukt Kisan Morcha 	<p>(SKM), a conglomerate of 475 farm groups across the country, which led protests that forced the govt to repeal three farm laws, will decide on Jan 15 whether the 22 Punjab farm organisations can remain part of it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ SKM warns of disciplinary action if its name is used for political purposes
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- ✓ These 22 farm associations were among 32 farmer organisations in Punjab which participated in the over-a-year-long protest against the three Central farm laws
- ✓ Farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, started protesting at Delhi border points -- Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur -- on November 26, 2020 against the three contentious farm laws
- ✓ The protest was suspended on December 9 after the government agreed to fulfill the pending demands
- ✓ The SKM had spearheaded the farm protests that forced the government to repeal its new farm laws on November 29
- ✓ The new front, named Sanyukt Samaj Morcha (SSM), is led by senior farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal.
- ✓ It follows the launch of the Sanyukt Sangharsh Party by Gurnam Singh Channi a week ago
- ✓ The new front will contest all 117 seats in the upcoming Punjab assembly election on its own.

- ✓ The biggest farmer organisations in Punjab— BKU Ekta Ugrahan, BKU Ekta Sidhupur and BKU Ekta Dakaunda — have, however, stayed away from the formation of the SSM.
- **Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari - launched the country's first 'Intelligent Transport System' (ITS) on Eastern Peripheral Expressway at Dasna, Ghaziabad on December 23**



- ✓ The 135-km long six-lane expressway connects Haryana and Uttar Pradesh through Ghaziabad and Palwal.
- ✓ The new system aims to minimize traffic pile-ups and enhance safety of commuters.
- ✓ The ITS can detect any accident and receive alerts to ensure that ambulance reaches the spot within 10-15 minutes.
- ✓ It involves automatic and real-time management of traffic signals based on estimations of traffic congestion and demand.
- ✓ The concept of ITS was first discussed in 2016 when a high-powered committee of the ministry of urban development had proposed it as a means to decongest the roads of Delhi
- ✓ This type of system is used successfully in Japan and Russia
- ✓ A total of 1,16,496 road accidents occurred on National Highways {NHs}, including Expressways, in 2020, causing 47,984 deaths.
- ✓ Overall, around 1.5 lakh people are killed every year in 5 lakh accidents across the country
- **NITI Aayog - has signed a Statement of Intent with the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to address issues related to the inclusion of millets in government programmes**



- ✓ The focus of the agreement will be on giving importance to millets and strengthening climate-resilient agriculture for improved food & nutrition security in India.
 - ✓ The two signing parties will collaborate in four phases, beginning with the creation of a best practice compendium on millet mainstreaming and a scale-up strategy
 - ✓ In India, the government has taken several steps to promote millets
 - ✓ This includes the establishment of a centre for excellence, the inclusion of nutri-cereals in the National Food Security Act, and the establishment of Millet Missions in multiple states.
 - ✓ Recognizing the importance of millets, Government of India observed 2018 as a year of millets to encourage and promote the millet production
 - ✓ Leading this initiative further, the Government spearheaded the United Nations General Assembly resolution for declaring 2023 as International Year of Millets.
- **The Centre - has notified its new semiconductor policy to promote the manufacturing and refining of semiconductor chips within the country.**
- ✓ The semiconductor policy was cleared by Cabinet recently, in line with the National Policy on Electronics 2019
 - ✓ Under the policy, the government will be providing up to 50% of the cost for setting up two semiconductors and two display fabs units
 - ✓ As per the notification, establishment of semiconductor fabs in India will be supported by purchase preference in procurement of electronic products under Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order 2017.
 - ✓ The application window for this scheme will open on January 1, 2022, for 45 days.
 - ✓ The government had recently announced a \$10-billion package to incentivise companies to set up production in India, which will be spread over six years to boost chip production as well.
 - ✓ The Government will also provide additional infrastructure support under the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme.
 - ✓ Semiconductor chips are required for items like smartphones, laptops, PC components, automobiles, electronic appliances, solar panels and more

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh - launched Rashtriya Ekta Geet composed by the National Cadet Core cadets in 22 languages during the grand finale of Vijay Shrankhla aur Sanskrityon ka Mahasangam campaign held recently**



- ✓ Rashtriya Ekta Geet is based on the theme of national integration.
- ✓ The mega event was conducted in New Delhi by NCC as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to commemorate 75 years of India's Independence.
- ✓ The campaign ended with 'Sanskritiyon ka Maha Sangam' wherein selected NCC cadets from across the country congregated in Delhi and showcased their shared cultural heritage

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Nasa's James Webb Space Telescope - was launched on December 25 from the northeastern coast of South America**



- ✓ The Telescope was built to analyse on the first view of the universe as it existed when the earliest galaxies formed
- ✓ The revolutionary \$9 billion infrared telescope was carried aloft inside the cargo bay of an Ariane 5 rocket that blasted off from the European Space Agency's (ESA) launch base in French Guiana.

- ✓ After a 27-minute, hypersonic ride into space, the 6,350-kilo Telescope was released from the upper stage of the French-built rocket about 1,392km above the Earth.
 - ✓ Webb will reach its destination in solar orbit 1 million miles from Earth in two weeks.
 - ✓ Webb will view the cosmos in the infrared spectrum, allowing it to peer through clouds of gas and dust where stars are being born.
 - ✓ The telescope will study every phase in the history of our Universe, ranging from the first luminous glows after the Big Bang, to the formation of solar systems capable of supporting life on planets like Earth, to the evolution of other planetary systems in the universe.
 - ✓ Its primary mirror — consisting of 18 segments of gold-coated beryllium metal — has a big light-collecting area, enabling it to observe objects at greater distances than any other telescope.
 - ✓ James Webb Space Telescope is the first big telescope to go past Earth's atmosphere since the Hubble Space Telescope, which launched in 1990
 - ✓ It is six times larger and 100 times more powerful than its predecessor
 - ✓ The telescope is an international collaboration led by NASA in partnership with the European and Canadian space agencies.
 - ✓ Northrop Grumman Corp was the primary contractor and the Arianespace launch vehicle is part of the European contribution.
 - ✓ Developed by scientists, engineers from 14 countries of the world, the most-sensitive telescope required 40 million hours of work to be ready before it was loaded on top of the rocket
- **The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) - has approved world's first injectable treatment 'Apretude' to reduce the risk of HIV**
- ✓ Apretude is given as two initiation injections administered one month apart, and then every two months thereafter.
 - ✓ Its generic name is "cabotegravir extended-release injectable suspension".
 - ✓ The drug provides an alternative to daily pills like Truvada and Descovy, which are effective up to 99% on preventing the sexual transmission of HIV
 - ✓ Apretude has a list price of \$3,700 per dose and is expected to be shipped to wholesalers and specialty distributors in the U.S. in 2022.

DEFENCE

- **INS Khukri, the first of the indigenously built missile corvettes - was decommissioned after 32 years of service at a ceremony held at Visakhapatnam on December 24**
- ✓ During the event, the national flag, naval ensign, and the decommissioning pennant were lowered at sunset in the presence of Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command, Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta



- ✓ The corvette was built by the Mazagon Dock shipbuilders on August 23, 1989 and had the distinction of being part of both the Western and Eastern Fleets.
- ✓ The ship was commissioned in Mumbai by the then defence minister Krishna Chandra Pant and Sudha Mulla, wife of late Captain Mahendra Nath Mulla, MVC with Commander (now Vice Admiral retired) Sanjeev Bhasin as her first Commanding Officer.
- ✓ INS Khukri was affiliated with the Gorkha Brigade of the Indian Army
- ✓ During her service in the Indian Navy, the ship was commanded by 28 commanding officers and traversed a distance of over 6,44,897 nautical miles
- ✓ This is almost three times distance between the Earth and the Moon, or is equivalent to navigating 30 times round the globe.
- ✓ At present, Indian Navy has four Corvettes - INS Kamorta, INS Kadmatt, INS Kiltan and INS Kavaratti, which were commissioned in the Indian Navy in 2014, 2016, 2017 and 2020 respectively.
- ✓ In 2020, the Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane had commissioned the last of 4 indigenously built anti-submarine warfare (ASW) stealth corvettes 'INS Kavaratti' under Project 28.
- ✓ The ships under Project 28 have been designed locally by the Navy's in-house Directorate of Naval Design (DND).
- ✓ These were built by Kolkata based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers with 90% indigenous content.
- **The Indian Army - launched a contemporary internal messaging application named, ASIGMA (Army Secure Indigenous Messaging Application).**
- ✓ The new generation web-based messaging application is developed entirely in-house by the team of officers of the Corps of Signals of the Army

- ✓ The new ASIGMA application is being deployed on the Army's internal network, as a replacement of the AWAN (Army Wide Area Network) messaging application which has been in service for the past 15 years.



- ✓ ASIGMA application has been deployed on Army-owned hardware and is supported with future updates
- ✓ In addition, the app hopes to offer a more secure messaging network for internal use, rather than relying on external servers like WhatsApp and Signal that are subject to privacy concerns.
- ✓ ASIGMA has been developed in line with the Government of India's, Make in India initiative.

RANKINGS

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah - released the Good Governance Index (GGI)-2021 on December 25 on the occasion of Good Governance Day**
- ✓ Gujarat has topped the overall ranking of states, followed by Maharashtra and Goa
- ✓ Delhi topped the list among all Union Territories with an improvement of 14% over GGI-2019.



- ✓ As many as 20 states have improved their composite GGI scores in 2021.
- ✓ Gujarat registered an over 12% increase and Goa registered a nearly 25% increase over the indicators recorded by these states in the last index issued in 2019.
- ✓ A big surprise was Uttar Pradesh which has shown incremental growth of nearly 9% over its 2019 performance and in fact secured the top position in the commerce and industry sector
- ✓ Among states, Gujarat has performed better in 5 of the 10 sectors including in economic governance, human resource development, public infrastructure and utilities, social welfare and development, judiciary and public safety
- ✓ Maharashtra scored strongly in agriculture and allied sectors human resource development, public infrastructure and utilities, social welfare and development.
- ✓ Goa has performed well in agriculture & allied sector, commerce and industry, public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare and development, and environment.
- ✓ Delhi has performed better in agriculture and allied sectors, commerce and industry, public infrastructure and facilities, social welfare and development.
- ✓ The Good Governance Index helps assess the status of governance in states and Union Territories, covering 58 indicators of good governance across 10 sectors
- ✓ In the GGI-2021, the ranking has been given by dividing the states and union territories into four categories – Group A, Group B, Northeast and Hill States, Union Territories

