

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 29, 2021**

### **TAMIL NADU**

- **On December 28, Tamil Nadu government - announced an increase in dearness allowance from 17% to 31% to its employees and pensioners, incurring an additional annual expenditure of ₹8,724 crore to the state exchequer.**
- ✓ Chief Minister M K Stalin ordered the increase of 14 percentage points in dearness allowance from January 1, next year.
- ✓ On September 7, the CM had informed the assembly, while making a statement under Section 110, about the state government's intent to increase the dearness allowance for its employees and pensioners from January 1, 2022
- ✓ The CM also sanctioned an additional ₹170 crore as Pongal gift for category 'C' and 'D' employees, besides pensioners, those on special timescale and those who retired from such services and former village administrative officers.
- ✓ The category 'C' and 'D' employees will receive ₹3,000 as Pongal gift, while the pensioners will get ₹500.
- ✓ People on special timescale will receive ₹1,000 and former village administrative officers and those retired from special timescale will receive ₹500 as Pongal gift from the state government.
  
- **The board exams for Class X and XII state board students - will be held in May 2022 after two revision tests in January and March 2022**
- ✓ This was announced by school education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi on December 28.
- ✓ As per the schedule released by directorate of government examinations, the first revision test will be held from January 19 to 28 followed by the second one from March 21 to 29.
- ✓ The marks scored by the students in these tests are likely to be used as backup in case board exams are cancelled due to another Covid wave.

- ✓ The Minister also said that the officials were directed to ensure display of helpline number 14417 in classrooms and schools to create awareness among students.
- ✓ Schools should have a complaint box to receive sexual harassment complaints, said the Minister
- **The TN tourism advisory committee - has been renamed as TN tourism promotion and development committee**
  - ✓ This was announced in an order issued by the Government
  - ✓ The tourism secretary will be the vice-chairman of the panel.
- **The Madras high court - has announced that proceedings would be held only in-person from January 3, 2022 at both the principal seat in Chennai and at the Madurai bench.**
  - ✓ All virtual hearings on video-conferencing platforms will remain suspended with effect from January 3, 2022.
  - ✓ From January 3, advocates and the registered advocate-clerks are permitted to enter the high court premises through all gate-entries
  - ✓ Entry is subject to strict adherence of the prevailing security and Covid protocol norms.
  - ✓ The restrictions on the entry of litigants, parties appearing in person and other persons will, however, continue to remain in force.
  - ✓ However, those whose presence is specifically required by the courts concerned in relation to the court proceedings and witnesses for the purpose of deposition before the courts, etc., will continue to be allowed inside the premises
- **The school education department – directed to set up students’ councils in all schools in order to include students in the decision-making process**
  - ✓ The council will be constituted in all schools as part of the reforms in the School Management Committees (SMCs).
  - ✓ The students in the council will discuss among themselves their requirements and notify the school management committee about the same.
  - ✓ Every school must have a SMC mandated under Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, whose members would comprise of parents and representatives of the local body.
  - ✓ The SMC is a 20-member committee with a convener and a joint convener with parents, local body members and school education department officials.
  - ✓ The committee monitors various activities of the institution, including preparation of school development plan, overseeing distribution of financial aid from the state government and other agencies, and monitoring the noon meal programme.
- **Periyar University - has bagged the second place with A++ in the all-India ranking of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).**

- ✓ With a score of 3.61 out of 4, Periyar University has secured the first place in the state and the second place at the national level among the state government universities.
  - ✓ This is the first time the university has achieved the top coveted position
  - ✓ The NAAC peer team inspected the university between December 22 and December 24.
- **A group of students from Bharathidasan University in Trichy - has discovered a Jain sculpture dating back to the 10th century near a village temple in Pudukkottai district.**



- ✓ The team has also discovered a stone replica of an impalement device (Kazhumaram) used in the previous centuries to torture and execute people.
- ✓ The sculpture measuring 84cm in height and 54cm in width was identified to be that of Mahavira also known as Vardhamana, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism.
- ✓ The sculpture was found near a village temple at Iraiyr village near Keeranur.
- ✓ The sculpture of Mahavira is seen meditating with a tree in the backdrop.

## STATES

- **On December 28, Telangana - became the first large state in the country to achieve 100% first dose Covid-19 vaccine coverage.**
- ✓ The first dose was administered to the targeted population of 2.77 crore people in the state
  - ✓ The state has achieved 66.1% coverage with respect to the second dose
  - ✓ Nationally, the country's first dose coverage stands at 90% and the second dose coverage stands at 63.1%
- **The Punjab government – has imposed fresh restrictions following the Omicron threat and made Covid vaccine mandatory for all to access public places.**
- ✓ In this regard, state's home affairs and justice department has issued a government order

- ✓ Only fully vaccinated people will be permitted at public places such as markets, malls, hotels and cinema halls in Punjab with effect from January 15, as per the order.
- ✓ The government ordered private and public sector banks, hotels, bars, restaurants, malls, shopping complexes, cinema halls, gyms and fitness centres to allow only fully vaccinated adults.
- ✓ All government, board and corporation offices in Chandigarh will henceforth allow only fully vaccinated people
- ✓ Recently, the Punjab government had asked its employees to furnish details regarding Covid-19 vaccination and said if they fail to do so, they will not be able to draw their salaries

## NATIONAL

- **On December 28, the Central Drug Authority - approved two new Covid vaccines — Serum Institute of India's Covovax and Biological E's Corbevax — for restricted use in emergency situation with certain conditions**
- ✓ The apex drug regulator has also granted emergency use authorisation (EUA) to anti-Covid pill Molnupiravir for treatment of adult patients with mild-to-moderate Covid-19
- ✓ The announcement was made by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya following the recommendations by the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-199 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- ✓ With this approval, the number of Covid vaccines which have received emergency use authorisation in the country has increased to eight.
- ✓ Six Covid-19 vaccines — Serum Institute's Covishield, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, Zydus Cadila's ZyCoV-D, Russia's Sputnik V and the US-made Moderna and Johnson and Johnson — had already received EUA from the Indian drug regulator
- ✓ Corbevax vaccine is India's first indigenously developed RBD protein sub-unit vaccine against Covid-19 and the third vaccine developed in India
- ✓ The 20-dose vials of Corbevax, to be given in two doses of 0.5ml each at a gap of 28 days via intramuscular injection, can be stored between 2-8 degree Celsius.
- ✓ Approval of Molnupiravir, developed by Merck and its partner Ridgeback, is beneficial for high-risk individuals and people with weakened immunity as it is the world's first medicine to treat symptomatic Covid-19.
- ✓ It will be used to treat Covid-19 patients with SpO2 93% and those with a high risk of disease progression
- ✓ Around 13 major local pharmaceutical companies have received permission to manufacture the drug.
- ✓ The pill is intended to be taken twice a day for five days by people at home with mild to moderate Covid-19.
- ✓ The drug should only be sold by retail under the prescription of medical specialists

- ✓ The Nanoparticle Vaccine, Covovax, is to be administered through an intramuscular route.
  - ✓ It has a two-dose schedule to be spread out between 21 days.
  - ✓ The vaccine needs to be stored at a low temperature of 2 to 8 degrees Celsius.
  - ✓ It will be given in 0.6 ml single-dose and 5 ml for 10 doses vial pack
  - ✓ In August 2020, the US-based vaccine maker Novavax Inc had announced a licence agreement with SII for the development and commercialisation of NVX-CoV2373, its own Covid-19 vaccine candidate, in low and middle-income countries and India.
  - ✓ The DCGI approval comes after the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued an emergency use listing for Covovax on December 17
  - ✓ India still has at least two more promising candidates in the vaccine pipeline that may get approval next year.
  - ✓ Gennova Biopharmaceuticals has developed India's first mRNA vaccine called HGC019, which is currently under Phase 2/3 trials.
  - ✓ The company is expected to complete the process by January end.
  - ✓ Bharat Biotech is also developing a nasal vaccine, which the company says cuts transmissibility by attacking it at the point of entry — nose and upper respiratory tract.
  - ✓ The vaccine has completed Phase 2 trials and is also likely to seek early approval in 2022.
- **On December 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - inaugurated Kanpur Metro Rail Project, the fastest built metro rail project in the country.**



- ✓ The completed 9 km long section of the Metro Rail Project runs from IIT Kanpur to Moti Jheel.
- ✓ The entire length of the project is 32 km and a total of 11,000 crore is being spent on this project.
- ✓ The European Investment Bank (EIB) has also proposed to provide a €650 million loan for this project.
- ✓ The construction of the project was started by CM Yogi Adityanath on November 15, 2019.

- ✓ The feasibility study for this project was done in June 2015 by RITES
  - ✓ The PM also inaugurated the Bina-Panki Multiproduct Pipeline Project, extending from the Bina refinery in Madhya Pradesh to Panki in Kanpur.
  - ✓ It would help in easy access to petroleum products from the Bina refinery.
  - ✓ The 356-km long, Rs.1,500 crore Bina-Panki project has a refining capacity of 3.45 million metric tonne per annum
  - ✓ During his address, PM Modi talked about Kanpur's role in the development of the country.
  - ✓ The PM mentioned stalwarts leaders like Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sundar Singh Bhandari, who hail from Kanpur.
  - ✓ The PM also listed the major achievements of the UP govt including the upcoming largest international airport, longest expressway of the country and Dedicated Freight Corridor hub that is being built in the state.
  - ✓ Earlier, Prime Minister attended the 54th Convocation Ceremony of IIT Kanpur, where he launched blockchain-based digital degrees.
  - ✓ PM also talked about the world's first CNG filling station developed in Varanasi by the incubated company of IIT Kanpur.
- **Union Government - has advised the Automobile Manufacturers to start manufacturing Flex-Fuel Vehicles and Flex-Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles complying with BS-6 Norms in a time-bound manner within a period of six months.**
- ✓ This was announced by Road Transport and Highways Minister, Nitin Gadkari
  - ✓ The suggestion has been made in line with Prime Minister's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and government's policy on promoting ethanol as an alternate transport fuel
  - ✓ Flex-Fuel Vehicles are capable to run on a combination of 100% Petrol or 100% bio-ethanol and their blends.
  - ✓ According to the Minister, this move will drastically reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions from vehicles, thereby enabling a shift from fossil fuels
  - ✓ It will also help India to comply with its commitment made at COP-26 to reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030.
  - ✓ Recently, the Government has introduced the "Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme" that has included automobile, auto components and auto components of flex fuel engines, in order to accelerate the introduction of Flex Fuel vehicles.
  - ✓ Earlier, NITI Aayog has formulated road map for Ethanol blending for 2020-2025 period in June 2021 in collaboration with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas as a basis for Ethanol blending programme (EBP).
  - ✓ Flexible-fuel vehicles are also called as "dual-fuel vehicle" or a flex-fuel vehicle.
  - ✓ In these vehicles, the engine usually runs on gasoline blended with either ethanol or methanol fuel.

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - conferred 'unforgeable' digital degrees to students of IIT-Kanpur at its 54th convocation on December 28.**



- ✓ Block chain technology was used in developing the digital degrees.
- ✓ The digital degrees, developed by IIT-Kanpur under the National Block Chain Project, can be verified globally and are unforgeable.
- ✓ A total of 1,723 students received their degrees and three honorary doctorate degrees were awarded to persons of eminence.

## INTERNATIONAL

- **On December 28, Pakistan PM Imran Khan's cabinet - approved the country's first national security policy (NSP) aimed at guiding the country's economic foreign and defence policies.**
- ✓ The policy was approved a day earlier at the meeting of the national security committee (NSC), the government's top consultative and decision making body for coordinating issues pertaining to national security.
- ✓ The five-year policy document covering 2022-26 is the first ever strategy paper of its kind that sets out the state's national security vision and guide-lines for the attainment of those goals.
- ✓ The policy, however, has not been publicly shared yet.
- ✓ The policy reportedly covers both traditional and non-traditional security challenges, including economy, food, water, military security, terrorism, population growth and dealings with the external world.
- ✓ It has been prepared by the national security division.
- ✓ Over 600 academics, analysts, civil society members and students across Pakistan have been consulted to make the policy process inclusive.

## INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **India - will chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee of UN Security Council in January 2022 for the first time after 2012**
- ✓ Earlier this year, on January 8, 2021, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador TS Tirumurti had declared that India will chair 3 important committees at UN Security Council in 2022-23
  - ✓ This includes the Taliban Sanctions Committee, Libya Sanctions Committee and the counter-terrorism Committee.
- ✓ In November 2020, India's annual resolution on the issue of counter-terrorism was co-sponsored by over 75 countries.
- ✓ It was adopted by consensus without a vote in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly.
- ✓ The Counter-Terrorism Committee was established by Security Council resolution 1373 adopted unanimously on 28 September 2001 after the 9/11 terror attacks in the US.
- ✓ The Committee was tasked with monitoring implementation of resolution 1373
- ✓ The resolution 1373 requests countries to implement a number of measures aimed at enhancing their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities at home and around the world

## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

- **Chinese scientists – have developed world's first AI 'prosecutor' that can identify crimes with more than 97% accuracy and file charges against criminals**



- ✓ The AI technology, which runs on a standard desktop PC, was developed by China's largest district public prosecution office named 'Shanghai Pudong People's Procuratorate'
- ✓ The AI-driven machine was manufactured from the already existing AI tool known as System 206 that the Chinese prosecutors were using to assess the evidence
- ✓ 'AI prosecutor' will work on cases ranging from credit card fraud, dangerous driving, theft, fraud and obstruction of official duties
- ✓ It will then analyze the human-made case descriptions at lengths to accordingly press the criminal charges on the suspects or the accused.

- ✓ AI prosecutor was trained from a database of at least 17,000 criminal and other cases in Shanghai between 2015 to 2020
- ✓ China also employs AI to monitor and surveil the government employees' activities in order to detect scandals and state-based corruption.

## DEFENCE

- **The DRDO - has handed over the technology to manufacture some extreme cold weather clothing systems (ECWCS) for soldiers to five Indian companies.**
- ✓ The ECWCS technology was handed over by DRDO chairman G Satheesh Reddy
- ✓ The technology is required by the Army for its “sustained operations” in Himalayan peaks.
- ✓ The Army has been importing ECWCS and several special clothing and mountaineering equipment (SCME) items for its troops deployed in high-altitude areas like the Siachen Glacier-Saltoro Ridge region
- ✓ The indigenous ECWCS is an ergonomically designed modular technical clothing
- ✓ It has improved thermal insulation and physiological comfort required at various ambient climatic conditions in Himalayan regions during different levels of physical activity
- ✓ The three-layered ECWCS offers protection over a temperature range from +15° to -50°C with different combinations of the layers.
- ✓ The ECWCS has physiological concepts related to reduction in respiratory heat and water loss, unhindered range of motions and rapid absorption of sweat
- ✓ It also provides water-proof and windproof features with adequate breathability and enhanced insulation for high-altitude operations.

