

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—JANUARY 17, 2022

TAMIL NADU

- **The forest department - will kick off statewide bird census on January 24.**
- ✓ The objective of the exercise is on exploring species diversity, species richness, relative and absolute attendance and migratory pattern of birds
- ✓ It will be conducted in three phases for the first time



- ✓ The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (Sacon) that have expertise in ornithological science are participating in the massive and critical exercise
- ✓ After the completion, a consolidated report will be submitted to the chief wildlife warden, who will forward it to the Union Environment Ministry
- ✓ The data gathered as part of the exercise will also be used as inputs for the National Birds Action Plan, which is currently being prepared by WII
- ✓ The first phase will be conducted for two days on coastal and shorebirds, while the second phase will commence a week later on important inland wetlands.
- ✓ The third phase will focus on census of the terrestrial birds in inland conservation areas such as the five tiger reserves, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries and important identified bird areas

- ✓ A pre-census survey conducted estimates the presence of a record seven lakh birds in the southern coasts of Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ Usually, the census is carried out in the month of February.
- ✓ However, this year, it was decided to advance it to the last week of January, which is when the bird numbers are expected to peak
- ✓ Migratory birds are found in record numbers this year due to good monsoon in the last two years
- ✓ The seasonal practice of migration occurs every year over the Central Asian Flyway, comprising 29 countries, including Iraq, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, India, Myanmar, and Maldives
- ✓ The birds take the long non-stop haul from Arctic and European regions in winter to South Asia, and usually stopover in the coastal swamps at the Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary at Kodiyakarai in Nagapattinam.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the 12th edition of the Thamirabarani waterbird count will be held on January 21 and 22.
- ✓ Further, the Madras Naturalists Society is also planning for the annual Asia Waterbird Census in January 2022

NATIONAL

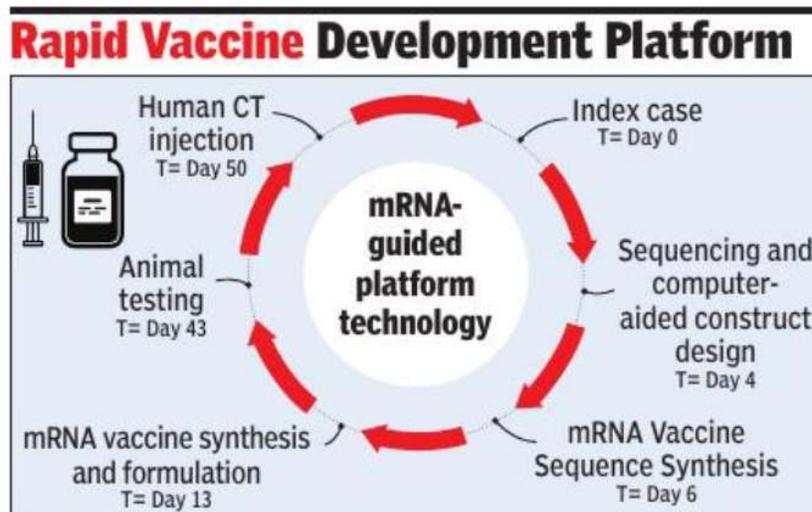
- **The Covid vaccination programme - is set to start for the 12-15 age group from the end of February, 2022**

THE ROLLOUT TIMELINE

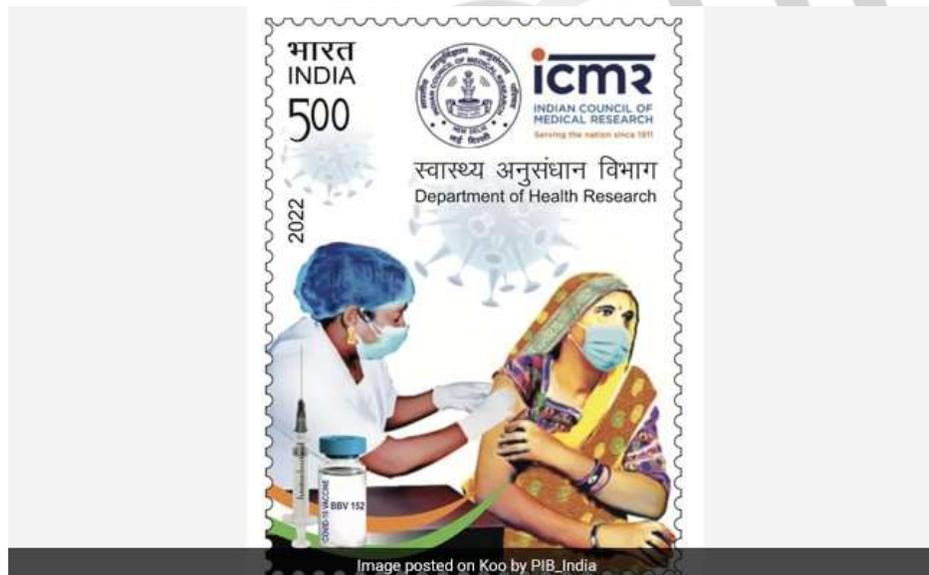
45% of kids in 15-17 age group have got first shot of Covaxin just 13 days into the vaccination drive	Feb-end or early March, govt hopes to begin vaccinations for 12-14 group
7.4 crore , or entire population of children aged 15-17, will get 1st shot by Jan-end, by govt projections	2-17 years , the age group for which Covaxin has been given emergency use nod
2nd shot of vaccine for 15-17 group aimed to be completed by February-end	5-14-yr-olds with comorbidities must get vax first, rather than 12-14 age group, say some experts
<p>“ Today we mark one year of vaccine drive. I salute each and every individual associated with the drive... It has led to saving lives and thus protecting livelihoods PM NARENDRA MODI</p> 	

- ✓ As per the government, a total of 3.3 crore children in the age bracket of 15 to 18 years have so far received their first dose, accounting for almost 45% coverage
- ✓ The vaccine coverage has commenced for this age group on January 3 this year.
- ✓ The government is aiming to cover all the 7.4 crore adolescents in the 15-18 age bracket with the first dose by January-end and finish the second dose by February-end.

- ✓ Meanwhile, Covaxin, which is currently being given to adolescents, has been found safe and effective in children's trials in the 2-18 age bracket.
- **The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) - warned educational institutes of de-recognition in case they tie-up with edtech companies to offer online or conventional programmes**
 - ✓ In this regard, the two bodies have issued a notice on January 16
 - ✓ As per the notice, the two bodies asked higher education institutes (HEIs) to cancel all existing agreements with edtech companies.
 - ✓ They have also advised students and parents to check the recognition status of any programme on their websites before enrolling in any course.
 - ✓ In a similar public notice, the AICTE has also warned against the franchise arrangement between institutions and Ed-tech companies
 - ✓ The move follows after recent advertisements offering educational degrees and diplomas through edtech firms in distance learning and online mode under 'franchise' agreement with varsities and universities
- **Pune-based Gennova Biopharmaceuticals – is developing the country's first indigenous variant-specific Covid vaccine against Omicron using the messenger or mRNA-technology platform**
 - ✓ The laboratory-generated vaccine to combat the fast-spreading Omicron variant will be tested for efficacy and immunogenicity soon
 - ✓ Gennova received the required regulatory permission to develop the variant-specific vaccine recently, and has already started manufacturing it for human trials.
 - ✓ The company has, meanwhile, also submitted Phase 2 trial data for over 3,000 subjects pertaining to its two-dose mRNA vaccine against the Delta variant.



- ✓ It is close to completing Phase 3 trials and has started manufacturing the vaccine “at risk” so that vials can be rolled out in sufficient quantities if and when the formulation gets the regulatory nod.
 - ✓ India’s drug regulator is expected to review the data this week and take a decision regarding the approval soon.
 - ✓ Bharat Biotech recently claimed that a booster shot of its Covaxin would neutralise the Omicron variant, but the data is yet to be studied by the regulator.
 - ✓ Globally, too, Moderna, Janssen, Sinopharm, Gamaleya, Novavax and AstraZeneca are being tested to check their efficacy against Omicron, while many others are in development.
 - ✓ According to Pfizer, its mRNA vaccine that targets the Omicron variant would be ready in March 2022.
- **On January 16, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya – has released a postage stamp on indigenously-developed Covaxin to mark one year of the inoculation drive.**



- ✓ The commemorative stamp design features a healthcare worker inoculating a senior citizen with a Covid vaccine, along with an image of the "Covaxin" vial
- ✓ Covaxin is one of the two mainstays of India’s immunisation programme against Covid-19, along with Covishield
 - ✓ It was developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Ltd in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research.
- ✓ The world’s largest vaccination drive against Covid-19 was rolled out on January 16, 2021.
- ✓ In an achievement unprecedented in both scale and reach, India has fully vaccinated nearly 70% of its adult population with two doses of Covid jabs in one year

- ✓ While more than 93% of adults have been covered under the programme with at least one jab, over 46% of adolescents in the 15-17 age group have also received the first dose.
- ✓ Besides, 42.98 lakh 'precaution dose' has also been administered so far.
- ✓ The latest 10 crore doses were given in only 14 days, as against 85 days taken during the initial 10 crore vaccinations.
- ✓ While 12 states and Union territories have achieved 100% coverage of first dose of Covid jabs, 26 states have more than 90% coverage for the same.
- ✓ Seven states and UTs have more than 95% adults fully vaccinated.
- ✓ Overall, a total of 157 crore doses have been administered in the country till January 16 — this includes 86% Covishield and 13% Covaxin.
- ✓ Currently, the monthly production capacity of Serum Institute of India's Covishield stands at 25 crore, whereas that of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is six crore.
- ✓ Apart from these, the other approved vaccines include Cadila Healthcare's ZyCoV-D with a production capacity of one crore doses per month, recently-approved Biological E's Corbevax with a monthly supply of six crore doses and SII's Covovax with a supply of 10 crore doses a month.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **India - to dispatch an infantry battalion for UN peacekeeping operations in the oil-rich Abyei region in Africa by next month**
- ✓ The Abyei region spreads out in both northern and southern Sudan and is hotly contested by both.
- ✓ The Indian infantry group with around 570 soldiers will be deployed under the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)
- ✓ The UNISFA is tasked with monitoring the volatile border between north and south and facilitating humanitarian aid.
- ✓ It is also authorised to use force in protecting civilians and humanitarian workers in Abyei.
- ✓ Indian Army is the world's third largest troop contributor to peacekeeping operations after Bangladesh and Nepal
- ✓ India has currently deployed 5,300 soldiers in eight of the 12 UN ongoing missions around the globe
- ✓ The decision to send another infantry battalion comes amidst India's ongoing two-year tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council since January last year.
- ✓ This is the eight instance India has a seat at the 15-member UNSC.
- ✓ The 13-lakh strong Indian Army has contributed over 2.58 lakh troops in 51 of the 71 UN missions since the first one for Korea in 1953-54
- ✓ A total of 159 Indian soldiers have also laid down their lives in the operations.
- ✓ The deployments have ranged from Yemen, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia-Eritrea to Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, Lebanon, Congo and Sudan.

- **India - has handed over 1,000 houses built to Indian-origin beneficiaries, mostly Tamils, in Sri Lanka's plantation areas on the occasion of Pongal**



- ✓ As many as 4,000 houses are being constructed with grant assistance from India in plantation areas under the third phase of the housing project in Sri Lanka
- ✓ These houses for the estate workers were spread across seven districts of Sri Lanka
- ✓ High Commissioner Gopal Baglay, minister of youth and sports, minister of development coordination and monitoring and state minister of digital technology and enterprise development Namal Rajapaksa and minister of state for estate housing and community infrastructure Jeevan Thondaman jointly handed over the house keys.
- ✓ The houses were handed over on a day Sri Lankan finance minister Basil Rajapaksa and external affairs minister S Jaishankar held discussions on projects by India that would strengthen the economy of the island nation.
- ✓ Around 3,000 houses have already been handed over to beneficiaries till date and handing over of close to 750 houses is being scheduled under this phase.
- ✓ Remaining houses are at various stages of implementation and as many as 46,000 houses were built or repaired in the country's northern and eastern provinces in the first two phases.

DEFENCE

- **Indian and Russian navies - conducted an international PASSEX (Passing Exercise) in the Arabian Sea on January 14**
- ✓ Indian Navy's indigenous guided missile destroyer INS Kochi participated in the exercise with Russian Federation Navy's RFS Admiral Tributs
- ✓ The exercise included tactical manoeuvres, cross-deck helicopter operations and seamanship activities
- ✓ The Russian Federation Navy's ship, Admiral Tributs was accompanied by two other ships including missile cruiser Varyag and Russian tanker Boris Butoma for its two day visit to India



- ✓ All the three ships had arrived on a two-day 'goodwill' visit to Cochin for participating in the joint Russian-Indian naval exercise PASSEX at the port of Cochin
- ✓ Apart from the exercise, various professional interactions were also planned between both the navies during the two-day visit
- ✓ Notably, India and Russia continue to engage annually in naval exercises such as the exercise 'Indra' which is a joint millennial military exercise conducted between both countries since 2003.
- ✓ INS Kochi, the indigenously designed second ship of the Kolkata-class stealth guided-missile destroyers was built under the code name of Project 15A for the Indian Navy
- ✓ It was constructed by Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL) in Mumbai and was later commissioned to the Indian Navy services on September 30, 2015, after undergoing extensive sea trials
- ✓ Earlier, it took part in many other naval services including the 'Zayed Talwar 2021' bilateral exercise with the United Arab Emirates Navy's Baynunah-class guided missile corvette UAES Al-Dhafra in August 2021
- ✓ It was followed by the Indian Navy's maiden naval exercise with the Royal Saudi Navy, 'Al-Mohed Al-Hindi' in Al Jubail

SPORTS

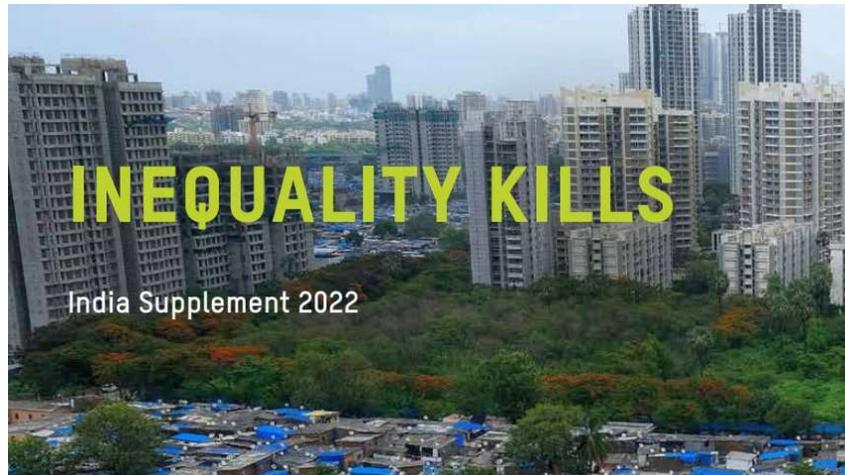
- **India's Lakshya Sen - secured his maiden BWF World Tour Super 500 title by winning the Yonex-Sunrise India Open badminton at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi on January 16**
- ✓ In the final of the men's singles event, Sen caused the biggest upset of his career when he stunned world champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore in straight sets to win the Super-500 badminton tournament
- ✓ In another final, the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty shocked three-time world champions Mohd Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan of Indonesia to claim their first India Open crown



- ✓ With this, the world No. 10 pair became the first men's team from the country to win the Yonex-Sunrise India Open
 - ✓ Earlier, the doubles pair had won its first Super 500 tournament in Thailand in 2019, besides reaching the final at French Open Super 750 the same year.
 - ✓ The duo also claimed the silver medal at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, besides winning the Hyderabad Open Super 100 and finishing runners-up at Syed Modi International in 2018
 - ✓ They played a crucial role in India earning the historic mixed team gold medal in the 2018 Commonwealth Games.
 - ✓ The pair also had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics last year but couldn't cross the group stage despite winning two out of their three matches.
- ✓ The 20-year-old Sen had claimed his maiden world championships medal with a bronze in Huelva, Spain last month after losing to fellow compatriot Kidambi Srikanth
- ✓ In the final, the Uttarakhand-based Sen, ranked 17 in the world, produced a magnificent effort to overcome the fifth seeded shuttler, Loh and win his third world championship title
 - ✓ Lakshya won his first BWF World Tour title in 2019 after defeating Japan's Yusuke Onodera.
 - ✓ He won his second BWF World Tour title the same year after securing first place at SaarLorLux Open in Germany.
- ✓ In 2021, Lakshya won a silver medal at the Dutch Open after losing to his India Open opponent Kean Yew.
- ✓ With this, Sen became only the third Indian male shuttler to win the India Open singles title after Prakash Padukone in 1981 and Srikanth Kidambi in 2015.
- ✓ In an all-Thailand final, Busanan Ongbamrungphan defeated Supanida Katethong to win the women's singles title.
- ✓ India Open is a BWF World Tour Super 500 Grade international badminton tournament held annually in India since 2008.
- ✓ The first three editions of the India Open were designated as Grand Prix Gold events and it was upgraded to BWF superseries tournament in 2011

OXFAM INDIA REPORT

- **A total of 4.6 crore Indians - are estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2020, as per the Oxfam India's new report**



- ✓ On the other end, during the pandemic period, the number of Indian billionaires grew from 102 to 143
- ✓ The collective wealth of India's 100 richest people hit a record high of ₹57.3 lakh crore (\$775 billion) in 2021.
- ✓ These details were released by Oxfam India, based on the 'Inequality Kills Report: The Davos India Supplement' report released on January 16
- ✓ The report is part of the global report to be released at the World Economic Forum's virtual event 'The Davos Agenda' on January 17.
- ✓ In the report, India was described as 'very unequal' country, as top 10 people in India holds 57% of the wealth, while the share of bottom half is 13%.
- ✓ India has the third highest number of billionaires in the world, just behind China and the United States, says the report
- ✓ In India, the wealth of billionaires during the pandemic (from March 2020 to November 30, 2021) increased from ₹23.1 lakh crore (\$313 billion) to ₹53.2 lakh crore (\$719 billion).
- ✓ In contrast, it is estimated that 84% of households in the country suffered a decline in their income in a year marked by unprecedented loss of life and livelihoods, as per the Consumer Pyramid Household Survey data collated by CMIE for 2021
- ✓ Women accounted for 28% of all job losses and lost two-thirds of their income during the pandemic, as per Oxfam findings.
- ✓ India's 2021 budget allocation for the Ministry of Women and Child Development is less than half of the total accumulated wealth of the bottom ten of India's billionaire list, as per the report
- ✓ The data factsheet on wealth highlights that 142 Indian billionaires own more wealth (\$719 billion) than 555 million people (\$657 billion, bottom 40%).

- ✓ The richest 98 have the same wealth (\$657 billion) as the poorest 555 million people (bottom 40%).
- ✓ The report states that just a 1% wealth tax on 98 wealthiest billionaire families in India can finance Ayushman Bharat, the government of India's national public health insurance fund, for more than seven years
- ✓ Gautam Adani, ranked 24th globally and second in India, witnessed his net worth multiply by eight times in a span of one year from \$8.9 billion in 2020 to \$50.5 billion in 2021.
- ✓ At the same time, Mukesh Ambani's net worth doubled in 2021 to \$85.5 billion from \$36.8 billion in 2020
- ✓ The Oxfam India briefing also points out to the increase in indirect taxes as a share of the Union government revenue last four years, while the proportion of corporate tax in the same was declining
- ✓ The additional tax imposed on fuel has risen 33% in the first six months of 2020-21 as compared to the previous year and is 79% more than pre-Covid levels, it pointed out.
- ✓ The Oxfam report indicates that during India's worst year of Covid-19, the country's healthcare budget saw a 10% decline from the revised estimates of 2020-21.
- ✓ There was a 6% cut in allocation for education, while the budgetary allocation for social security schemes declined from 1.5% of the total Union budget to 0.6%
- ✓ Expenditure on social security schemes for workers under the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the centrally sponsored scheme of the National Social Assistance Programme is abysmally low at 0.6% of total expenditure in 2021-22, a decline from 1.5% of total spending from the previous year

