



## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 12, 2022

### TAMIL NADU

- On February 11, Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin - inaugurated the eight part of excavation at Keeladi in Sivaganga district via video conferencing at the State Secretariat in Chennai



- ✓ During the event, the CM also launched the third part at Sivagalai in Tuticorin district and the first ever excavation at Vembakottai in Virudhunagar district, Perumbalai in Dharmapuri district and Thulukkarpatti in Tirunelveli.
- ✓ The second phase of excavations in Gangaikondacholapuram in Ariyalur district, and Mayiladumparai in Krishnagiri district were also launched during the occasion
- ✓ Earlier, the government allotted Rs 5 crore to the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) after taking over in May 2021 for carrying out excavations in these 7 locations during the next one year
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu state archaeology division is conducting the excavations.
- ✓ The eighth part of the excavation at Keeladi and its cluster villages of Konthagai, Manalur and Agaram would carry forward the earlier discoveries of brick constructions

- ✓ Keeladi, a Sangam era site, proved the concept that Tamil Nadu had a flourishing riverbed civilization just like the Ganges civilization before 2,600 years
    - ✓ Also, it has been confirmed that the people who lived there have been literate as early as within the sixth century BCE.
    - ✓ Over 15,000 artefacts, including ring wells, iron dagger, terracotta beads, and earthen pot ware, have been unearthed from the Keeladi cluster so far in the seven phases.
  - ✓ The third part of the excavation at Sivagalai will strive to substantiate the presence of previous civilization on the banks of the river Porunai (Thamirabarani).
    - ✓ Scientific evaluation of the dehusked paddy grains present in Sivagalai have fixed the age of the civilization at 3,200 years
  - ✓ In Thulukkarpatti, there's an archaeological mound 2.5 km off the Thulukkarpatti – Kannanallur Street, which dates back to the Iron age
  - ✓ An archaeological mound located over a space of 25 km in Vembakottai identifies the period between from the palaeolithic interval to mesolithic interval.
  - ✓ The excavations would also concentrate on discovering the traces of the celebrated Korkai Port of the Sangam era, the place where commerce flourished with different nations.
  - ✓ The TNSDA also plans to take up a Reconnaissance Survey in association with the Indian Maritime University and the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) to identify and assess the archaeological potentiality of the then port city
  - ✓ Permission for the excavations was granted by the Central Advisory Board for Archaeology (CABA) in January 2022
  - ✓ The CABA has also given its nod for undertaking two archaeological explorations to identify Neolithic sites in Vellore, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Tiruvannamalai, and Salem districts and to identify potential archaeological sites on the banks of Thamiraparani river in Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi.
  - ✓ For the first time, publicity materials on the archaeological excavations were released in Hindi by the government as part of its plans to take the “past glory” of Tamils to a wider audience
- **Tamil Nadu government - has scrapped the rule that mandates non-service medical students to provide bank guarantees for 20 lakh to 40 lakh for attending postgraduate or superspeciality studies in any of the state-run colleges**
- ✓ Instead, these medicos will henceforth submit a simple undertaking that on completion they will serve in the state for a certain number of years
  - ✓ Besides bank guarantee, the government also instructed the Director of Medical Education to return the certificates of students with immediate effect
  - ✓ All non service PG and superspeciality doctors in government medical colleges sign a bond during admission ageing to work for two to five years, on case to case basis.

- **On February 11, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) Pravartak Technologies Foundation - has partnered with Asha for Education to launch two rural technology centres in Tamil Nadu**



- ✓ These centres are launched to take forward computer science literacy to remote, rural government schools, thereby tapping the potential of school students in rural areas.
- ✓ Under the partnership, two Asha-IIT Madras Pravartak Rural Technology Centres were inaugurated in Kanakamma Chathram and Seethanjeri villages in Tiruvallur district
- ✓ The centres, which will train students of classes 9 to 12, is being funded by IIT Madras Pravartak Technologies Foundation.
- ✓ Asha for Education is a worldwide action group formed in 2015 to educate students in both digital literacy and computational thinking through partnership with elementary and middle schools
  - ✓ The group uses advanced block-based programming tools such as ‘Scratch’ from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and ‘Blockly’ from Google to teach programming.
- ✓ Based on the assessment of students’ levels, the Asha Team is planning to start two courses on Basic Digital Literacy and Basics of Programming
- ✓ While instructions will be provided for two-thirds of the course, one-third of the course will be left for project work where the children create a presentation or software program of their own
- ✓ These two basic courses will be followed up with other Code.org courses on animation, webpage design, and hardware-based programming, among others

## **NATIONAL**

- **The Indian railways – has introduced a digital payment system using QR code in the stations under the Southern railways**
- ✓ The passengers can avail both platform tickets and travel tickets by scanning the QR codes appearing on the screen of the Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVM) through any UPI payment mobile applications.



- ✓ The new system will help the passengers to buy tickets using UPI applications, in lieu of taking tickets via cards
- ✓ Further, a discount of 0.5% can be availed on renewal of suburban season tickets using UPI QR Code.
- ✓ The customers can use all mobile wallets including Google Pay, Paytm and Phone Pe for making payments for tickets.
- ✓ At present, the smart cards issued by railways were used to take tickets from ATVMs
- ✓ The new system can be used to renew the season tickets as well as to recharge the smart cards
- ✓ This facility, in addition to the existing smart card based payment, will facilitate quick transactions and hassle-free cashless payments through ATVMs.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On February 11, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar – participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> QUAD Foreign Ministers’ meet in Melbourne, Australia alongside his US, Japanese, and Australian counterparts**



- ✓ Jaishankar is on an official visit to Australia from February 10-13 at the invitation of his Australian counterpart Marise Payne
- ✓ This is his first visit as External Affairs Minister to Australia.

- ✓ The meeting seeks to expand cooperation in areas including economy, security, Covid-19 pandemic and free and open Indo-Pacific.
- ✓ Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken participated in the meeting
- ✓ Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison delivered the opening remarks in the meeting
- ✓ This was the third in-person meeting of Quad foreign ministers, following their meeting in Tokyo in October 2020 and the inaugural meeting in New York in September 2019
- ✓ The ministers last held talks virtually in February last year.
- ✓ Further, External Affairs Minister and his Australian counterpart will be co-chairing the 12th Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue on February 12, 2022
- ✓ On that same day, Jaishankar is set to co-chair the inaugural Foreign Ministers' Cyber Framework Dialogue (FMCyFD) with Payne
- ✓ The Quad has been focusing cooperation in areas such as producing vaccines, connectivity projects, facilitating the mobility of students, and looking at promoting startups and technology collaboration.
- ✓ The last meeting of QUAD FM's took place in October 2020
- ✓ In March last year, US President Joe Biden hosted the first-ever summit of the Quad leaders in the virtual format
- ✓ It was followed by an in-person summit in Washington in September for which Prime Minister Narendra Modi had travelled to the US
- ✓ Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is an essential group that was initially created as an informal alliance to collaborate on disaster relief efforts
- ✓ In 2007, the then Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe formalised the alliance with an aim to establish an Asian segment of Democracy
- ✓ However, it was dissolved due to a lack of cohesion among the members and in 2017, four nations including India, Japan, Australia and the United States affirmed their stance on the QUAD
- ✓ The Quad vaccine partnership was announced in March last year with an aim to deliver one billion doses of vaccines to the Indo-Pacific region by the end of 2022.
- ✓ Following the launch of the Quad working group on critical and emerging technologies in March last year, four subgroups were established, with each country leading on one group.

## **PERSONALITIES**

- **On February 11, the board of Tata Sons Ltd, the holding company and promoter of \$110 billion Tata group companies - has reappointed Natarajan Chandrasekaran as Executive Chairman for another five years.**

- Ratan N Tata who was a special invitee to this meeting expressed his satisfaction on the progress and performance of the Tata group under the leadership of Chandrasekaran



- ✓ Chandrasekaran's current tenure as the chairman of the company expires at the end of this month
- ✓ Tata Trusts, headed by Ratan Tata, holds a majority 66% stake in Tata Sons
- ✓ Chandrasekaran joined the board of Tata Sons in October 2016 following a 30-year business career at TCS
- ✓ He was appointed Chairman in January 2017 following the acrimonious exit of former Chairman Cyrus Mistry
- ✓ Chandrasekaran also chairs the boards of several group operating companies, including Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Tata Power and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) – of which he was Chief Executive from 2009-17
- ✓ Chandrasekaran rose through the ranks at TCS to become CEO and Managing Director of the leading global IT solution and consulting firm.
- ✓ TCS has also been placed among the "Big 4" most valuable IT services brands worldwide, ranked as one of the world's most innovative companies by Forbes and recognized as a global top employer by the top employers Institute across 24 countries.
- ✓ Under Chandrasekaran, Tatas sold the mobile phone business of Tata Teleservices to Bharti Airtel in an attempt to reduce losses.
- ✓ In May 2018, the group made one of the biggest acquisitions to date when Tata Steel took over Bhushan Steel by paying ₹35,200 crore under the insolvency process.
- ✓ In May 2021, Tata Sons acquired Big Basket at a reported valuation of ₹9,500 crore
- ✓ In October last year, Tata Sons made a winning bid for Air India, bringing back an airline that the group had originally founded.
- ✓ The Tata group now has three airlines - Tata SIA Airlines, AirAsia India and Air India with a combined market share of over 25%.
- ✓ There are 29 publicly-listed Tata enterprises with a combined market capitalisation of \$314 billion (Rs 23.4 lakh crore) as on December 31, 2021.

# DEFENCE

- **US and Russia – have confirmed the participation in India’s biggest-ever maritime exercise ‘Milan 2022’ to be held from 26 February to 4 March 2022**



- ✓ A total of 46 countries have been invited, out of which over 35 have confirmed participation
- ✓ Around 15 countries are expected to send their ships and submarines for the exercise, while others will send a delegation
- ✓ Among the many countries that will be sending ships or delegations are the United States, Russia, Japan, and Australia.
- ✓ Other countries invited include the United Kingdom, France, Israel, Kenya, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE and Mauritius, among others
- ✓ The exercises aim to sharpen operational skills, instill best practices and procedures, and enable doctrinal learning in the maritime domain through professional interaction between friendly navies.
- ✓ 'Milan' is a biennial multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy.
- ✓ For the first time, the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the exercise is being held in Visakhapatnam under the aegis of Eastern Naval Command, instead of the Andaman and Nicobar Command, where it has been held since 1995.
- ✓ Visakhapatnam has been chosen as the venue this year because of the scale of the exercise, adding that more ships will be participating, which meant that more anchorage space as well as wider sea is needed for exercise.
- ✓ This year's exercise will see the participation of frigates and destroyers, unlike the earlier editions, which saw the participation of mainly long-range patrol ships and similar classes.

- ✓ For the first time, the Indian Navy is organising anti-submarine warfare exercise during the sea phase of Milan 2022
- ✓ Also, the complexity of the exercise is increased, which will see the participating countries being divided into multiple groups
- ✓ The theme of the Milan exercise is 'Camaraderie–Cohesion–Collaboration'
- ✓ The exercise is divided into two phases- the harbour phase (February 26-28) and the sea phase (March 1-4).
- ✓ The exercise was supposed to take place in 2020 as it's a biennial event, but was called off due to Covid-19
- ✓ The last edition of the exercise was held in 2018, being attended by 17 countries.
- ✓ Milan started off in 1995 in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with the participation of just four countries — Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Thailand.
- ✓ From 1995 to 2000, Milan focused on South Asian and South-East Asian countries.
- ✓ In 2014, participation increased from six regional countries to eighteen

## ECONOMY

- **The Securities and Exchange Board of India - has barred Anil Ambani, Reliance Home Finance Ltd and three of the company's executives from the securities market for a period of 3 months for alleged fraudulent activities involving the company.**



- ✓ The other three executives covered by the SEBI interim order include Amit Bapna; Pinkesh R Shah and Ravindra Sudhalkar.
- ✓ Anil Ambani has been barred for allegedly misusing funds from his company Reliance Home Finance and diverting them to their other groups to clear debts, impacting 28 individuals and entities
- ✓ After the ban, the barred individuals cannot buy, sell or deal in securities, directly or indirectly
- ✓ SEBI was probing the manner in which the loans were given by Reliance Home Finance in the 2018-19 period

- ✓ The irregularity was noticed by Price Waterhouse & Co. (PWC), which later resigned as the statutory auditor of the company
- ✓ Reliance Housing Finance Ltd is a subsidiary of Reliance Capital Ltd and Anil Ambani was the promoter for the period of investigation.
- ✓ In November 2021, the Reserve Bank of India has superseded the board of Reliance Capital and referred it for insolvency

## SPORTS

- **On February 11, the Delhi high court - suspended the executive committee of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) for six months and appointed an administrator in its place**



- ✓ Justice Rekha Palli delivered the verdict while dealing with the petition filed by the Commonwealth Games gold medallist and Khel Ratna awardee Manika Batra
- ✓ She said that the report of the three-member committee appointed by it showed that TTFI "safeguarded the interests of its officials" and that "instead of promoting players, TTFI is dictating terms"
- ✓ Batra held that the national coach Soumyadeep Roy pressurized her to throw away an Olympic qualifier match at Doha in favour of one of his personal trainees in March 2021
- ✓ Batra, who was left out of the Indian contingent for the Asian Table Tennis Championships, had moved the court last year after she was issued a show cause notice by the TTFI for refusing to work with Roy during the Tokyo Olympics
- ✓ TTFI had excluded her as she did not attend the national camp before the event.
- ✓ The petition has asserted that the national coach, in a clear conflict of interest, was running a private table tennis academy simultaneously
- ✓ In November last year, the Delhi HC had constituted a three-member committee to look into Manika Batra's allegation of a match-fixing attempt by the national coach.
- ✓ The three-member committee was headed by former judge of the Supreme Court Justice (retd) Vikramjit Sen and including Justice (retd) AK Sikri and 1962 Asian Games gold medallist Gurbachan Singh Randhawa.

- ✓ On September 23 last year, the court had stayed the TTFI's rules mandating compulsory attendance of players at the National Coaching Camp for selection for international events.

