

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—MARCH 18, 2022

TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu governor R N Ravi - has given his nod to the state's decision to start a Siddha University in Chennai**
- ✓ This was announced by the state health minister Ma Subramanian
- ✓ The new university will now come up in the 20 acres of land belonging to the Madhavaram dairy of the Tamil Nadu Co-operative milk producers' Federation limited.
- ✓ The university buildings are expected to be completed within a year
- ✓ Earlier, the state had announced that it would construct a “model” university for Siddha in its 2021 budget.

STATES

- **On March 17, the Gujarat government - announced that the Bhagwad Gita will be taught to students from classes VI to XII beginning June 2022.**
- ✓ In another significant decision, the government has decided to introduce English as a compulsory subject from Class I.
- ✓ So far, English as a subject has been taught from Class 3 in the State
- ✓ The decisions will be applicable to the schools affiliated to the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board (GSHSEB).
- ✓ Gujarat Education Minister Jitu Vaghani made these announcements in the Assembly during the Education Budget discussion
- ✓ According to the Minister, the decision to introduce the values and principles enshrined in the Bhagavad Gita in school curriculum is in line with the new National Education Policy (NEP) unveiled by the Centre
- ✓ As per the Government, the Gita will be introduced in the form of storytelling and recitation — which will also be evaluated — in Class 6-8
- ✓ Schools will also organise activities based on the Gita such as prayers, shloka recitation, comprehension, drama, quiz, painting and elocution competitions

- ✓ In 2012, the Gujarat government decided to introduce English as a compulsory subject in the second semester of Class 3 from the 2013-14 academic session

NATIONAL

- On March 17, the University Grants Commission (UGC) - released the new four-year-undergraduate programme (FYUP) and the revised PhD regulations.
- ✓ The draft regulations were approved by Commission's 556th meeting on March 10 and have now been uploaded on the UGC's website for public feedback, after which they will be brought into effect.

SALIENT FEATURES OF UG/PG DEGREES

Curricular Framework and Credit System for the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP)

UG programmes will either be for a duration of 3 or 4 years (preferred option), with multiple entry and exit points and re-entry options

- Certificate after completing 1 year (2 semesters) of study in the chosen fields
- Diploma after 2 years (4 semesters)
- Bachelor's degree after 3 years (6 semesters)
- Bachelor's degree with honours after 4 years (eight semesters) or with research after 4 years (eight semesters)



Master's degree

- 2-year master's degree with the second year devoted to research for those with 3-year bachelor's degree
- 1-year master's degree programme who have completed a 4-year bachelor's degree programme with research
- Undertaking a doctoral programme is expected to require either a master's degree or a 4-year bachelor's degree with research

Features of the Credit System

- Flexibility to move from one disciplinary area of study to another within the duration of study by securing the required credits in the chosen disciplinary/interdisciplinary area(s)
- Facilitating switches to alternative modes of learning



(face-to-face, ODL and online learning, and hybrid modes of learning)

- Flexibility for learners to move from one institution to another to enable them to have a multi- and/or interdisciplinary learning



- ✓ As per the new guidelines, the 160-credit FYUP will replace the present three-year choice-based credit system (CBCS) and enable students to directly join PhD programmes upon completion of four-year degree programmes.
- ✓ Under the new credit system, learners can move from one institution to another and switch to alternative modes of learning (face-to-face, open & distance learning, online and hybrid).

NO HARD SEPARATION

➤ **160-credit 4-yr-undergrad programme will replace 3-yr choice-based credit system** & enable students to **directly join PhD programmes** upon completion of 4-yr course

➤ New undergrad programmes **will not have 'hard' separations between 'arts' and 'sciences'**, between 'vocational' and 'academic' streams

➤ Learners can **move from one institution to another**

- ✓ As per the 'Curricular Framework and Credit System for the Four-year Undergraduate Programme' of the UGC, the new undergraduate programmes will not have hard separations between 'arts' and 'sciences', between 'curricular' and 'extracurricular' activities and between 'vocational' and 'academic streams'
- ✓ UG degrees would be of either three or four-year (preferred option as per the document) duration, with multiple entry and exit points and re-entry options within this period.
- ✓ Further, those qualifying FYUP will be eligible for a one-year master's degree programme and direct entry to PhD.
- ✓ The FYUP will comprise 20-22 credits per semester.
- ✓ Semesters 1 to 3 will focus on understanding of all major areas of learning such as natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, mathematical and computational thinking among others.
- ✓ In semesters 4 to 6, students will choose a disciplinary or an interdisciplinary area of learning for specialization as major and minor.
- ✓ In the final two semesters, a student will have to take up research projects along with advanced disciplinary/interdisciplinary courses.
- ✓ As per the 'University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of PhD Degree) Regulations, 2022', apart from the one and two-year master's graduates, students who clear their FYUP with a 7.5 CGPA or above may soon be eligible to attempt the exam for a PhD programme
- ✓ As per the new rules, 60% of the total seats shall be filled from NET/JRF qualified students and the remaining 40% shall be filled through the university common entrance test qualified students on the basis of interviews conducted by the concerned institute.
- ✓ The proposed regulations stress 5 aspects of research subjects that will be encouraged.
- ✓ These are social relevance, local need-based, national importance, global significance, and value creation for the society.

- ✓ The new regulations amending the Regulations Act 2016 propose to extend 5% relaxations in eligibility to economically weaker sections apart from SC, ST, OBC students

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On March 17, India - announced a \$1 billion line of credit to Sri Lanka as part of its financial assistance to help the nation deal with its economic crisis.**



- ✓ The signing ceremony was held at the ministry of finance in the presence of Rajapaksa, external affairs minister S Jaishankar and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- ✓ Visiting Sri Lankan finance minister Basil Rajapaksa was present during the signing of the agreement for the \$1 billion line of credit being extended through the State Bank of India (SBI).
- ✓ Last month, India extended a \$500 million line of credit to Sri Lanka to help it purchase petroleum products as the island nation has been struggling under a severe foreign exchange and energy crisis.

ECONOMY

- **On March 17, Moody's - slashed India's growth estimate for the current year to 9.1% from 9.5% predicted earlier**
- ✓ As per the rating agency, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has significantly altered the global economic backdrop through three main channels — rise in commodities prices, risks to global economy from financial and business disruption and drop in sentiment
- ✓ Russia is the only G-20 economy that will contract this year
- ✓ As per Moody's, its economy will shrink 7% in 2022, and 3% in 2023, down from projected growth of 2% and 1.5% respectively, before the invasion of Ukraine.
- ✓ With regard to India, the agency said the country is particularly vulnerable to high oil prices, given that it is a large importer of crude oil.

- ✓ Moody's Investors Service attributed the country's downgrade to High fuel and potentially high fertiliser costs
- ✓ The agency has forecasted growth of the country for 2023 at 5.4%.
- ✓ The year-end inflation for India has been projected at 6.6% in 2022.

APPOINTMENTS

- **On March 17, US President Joe Biden - named Indian-American public health expert Dr Ashish Jha as the new White House Covid Response Coordinator**
- ✓ Born in Pursaulia, Bihar in 1970, Jha migrated to Canada with his parents nine years later and to the United States in 1983



- ✓ He graduated from Columbia University with a BA in economics and later received his MD from Harvard Medical School.
- ✓ Jha has previously led the Harvard Global Health Institute and has taught at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School
- ✓ Jha is also widely known for his groundbreaking research on Ebola.
- ✓ He has previously served as special assistant to the secretary in the Department of Veterans Affairs from 2009 to 2013.
- ✓ He was also a co-chair of an international commission on the global response to the Ebola outbreak.
- ✓ Jha has been serving as the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health since 2020
- ✓ Jha, a practising physician, will take up the post from April 5, 2022.
- ✓ Jha will be replacing Jeffrey D Zients, who is set to leave the administration next month.
- ✓ For over a year now, Zients has spearheaded the Biden administration's strategy to combat the deadly pandemic.
- ✓ Jha recently advised the White House on the national Covid-19 preparedness plan, which was released by Zients and his team earlier this month.