

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 18, 2022

STATES

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - will inaugurate, dedicate and lay foundation stones for projects worth over Rs.6,800 crore in Meghalaya and Tripura on December 18**
- ✓ The projects to be inaugurated are across various sectors like housing, road, agriculture, telecom, IT, tourism and hospitality, among others.
- ✓ In Shillong, PM Modi will participate in the golden jubilee celebration of the North Eastern Council.
- ✓ Later, he will inaugurate, dedicate and lay foundation stones for multiple projects worth over Rs 2,450 crore.
- ✓ The PM will dedicate to the nation 4G mobile towers, inaugurate the new campus of IIM-Shillong at Umsawli and inaugurate the Shillong-Diengpasoh Road.
- ✓ Further, he will inaugurate four other road projects in Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.
- ✓ In Meghalaya, the PM will inaugurate the Spawn Laboratory at the Mushroom Development Centre to enhance mushroom spawn production and also provide skill training to farmers and entrepreneurs.
- ✓ He will also lay foundation stones for six road projects across Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.
- ✓ After this, the PM will travel to Agartala and inaugurate and lay foundation stones for various key projects worth over Rs 4,350 crore
- ✓ This includes the launch of the Grih Pravesh programme for over two lakh beneficiaries under PMAY in Agartala
- ✓ He will also inaugurate a project to widen Agartala bypass (Khayerpur–Amtali) on NH-8, which will help ease traffic congestion in Agartala.

NATIONAL

- **The 48th GST Council meeting - was held on December 17, 2022 in New Delhi via video conferencing**

- ✓ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the meeting, with the presence of the Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Choudhary and Finance Ministers of states and Union Territories (with legislature)



- ✓ The meeting clarified several tax related issues and proposed series of measures to streamline compliance under the GST law

Highlights of the 48th GST Council meeting

- ✓ With regard to the decriminalisation of offences under GST, the Council proposed to raise the minimum threshold of the tax amount for launching prosecution from Rs.1 crore to Rs.2 crore.
 - ✓ This would be applicable in all cases except those involving the issue of invoices without the supply of goods/services or the issue of fake invoices
- ✓ The offences which are to be decriminalised are "obstruction or preventing any officer in discharge of his duties"; "deliberate tempering of material evidence"; and "failure to supply the information"
- ✓ Further, the Council proposed to reduce the compounding amount from the current range of 50% to 150% of the tax amount to the range of 25% to 100%.
- ✓ The Council also proposed to facilitate e-commerce for micro-enterprises.
 - ✓ This is based on the in-principle approval in the previous Council meeting that allowed unregistered suppliers and composition taxpayers to make intra-state supplies of goods through an e-commerce operator.
 - ✓ The scheme may be implemented from 1st October 2023.
- ✓ There was a proposal put forth into conducting a pilot for biometric-based Aadhaar authentication and the risk-based physical verification of registration applicants in Gujarat.
- ✓ The government also plans to amend the CGST Act, 2017, in order to restrict the filing of returns or statements to a maximum of three years from the deadline of filing of the relevant return or statement.
- ✓ The Council also decided that there will be no GST payable where a residential dwelling is rented to a registered person if rented in their personal capacity for use as their own residence and on their own account, i.e. not for business.

- ✓ Besides, incentives paid by the Central Government to banks under the scheme for the promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions will not be taxable.
 - ✓ The GST Council also took certain other decisions, such as providing clarity that the 'No Claim Bonus' offered by insurance companies will be deductible for the valuation of insurance services, and no GST will apply on the same
 - ✓ Further, it was decided that a higher rate of compensation cess of 22% would apply to SUVs with an engine capacity exceeding 1500 cc, a ground clearance of 170 mm or above, and length exceeding 4000 mm
 - ✓ GST rate on "ethyl alcohol supplied to refineries for blending with motor spirit (petrol)" has been reduced from 18% to 5%.
 - ✓ There were also certain GST rate reductions and rate clarifications given.
 - ✓ However, no GST rate hikes were announced in this Council meeting.
 - ✓ The 48th GST Council meeting holds significance as it is the last before the Union Budget which will be tabled in Parliament on February 1, 2023
 - ✓ The GST Council is the highest decision making body of the one-nation, one-tax 'Goods and Services Tax' (GST) regime
 - ✓ The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is headed by the Union finance minister and comprises representatives of all states and Union Territories (UTs).
- **On December 17, Union home minister Amit Shah – chaired the eastern zonal council (EZC) meeting in Kolkata**



- ✓ West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren and Bihar's deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav attended the EZC meeting while Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik sent two of his ministers.
- ✓ During the meeting, the Union home minister said that it was the joint responsibility of the states sharing international borders and the Border Security Force to check border crimes

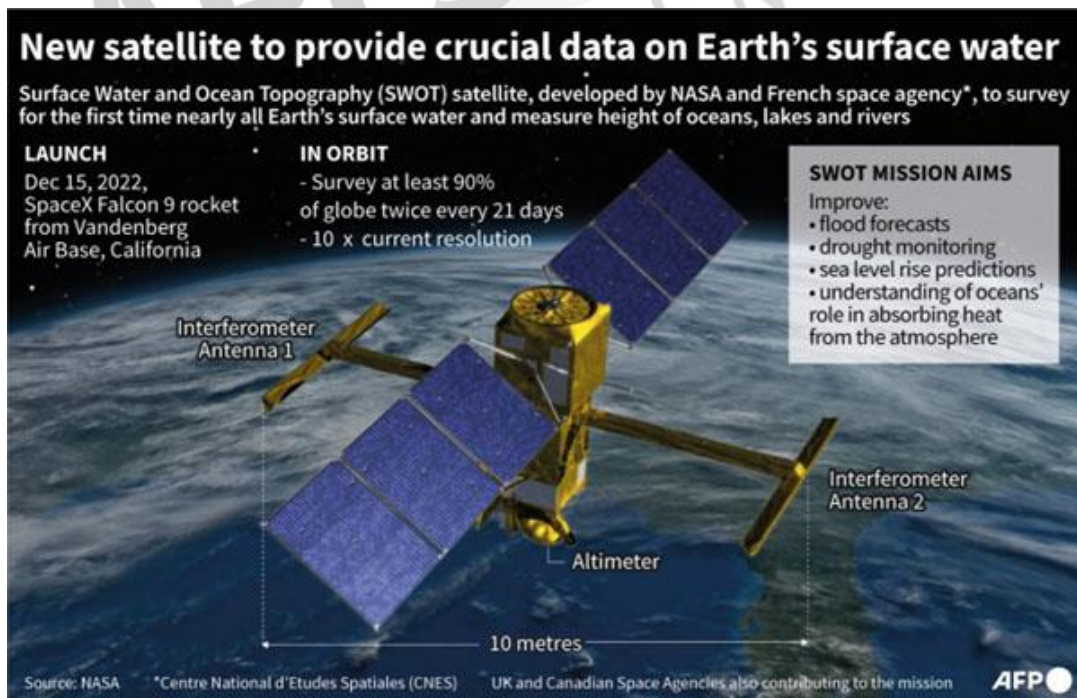
- ✓ The home minister highlighted the need for strengthening border security and pointed to problems in setting up BSF check posts to curb infiltration and smuggling.
 - ✓ He also raised the issue of fencing along the India-Bangladesh border.
 - ✓ The states also raised the issue of fund release for the districts hit by Left-Wing extremism, with all of them seeking a higher share and prompt release of money.
 - ✓ Jharkhand raised water sharing problems related to the stored water of Massanjore dam built on Mayurakshi river
 - ✓ The home minister assured to set up a panel with representatives from DVC, West Bengal and Jharkhand to resolve the issue.
- **India - will soon immunize girls aged 9-14 against cervical cancer with the indigenously developed Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (HPV) under a national vaccination program.**
- ✓ The nationwide drive will begin by mid-May 2023
 - ✓ The quadrivalent vaccine called Cervavac is developed by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in collaboration with the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Science and Technology Ministry, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
 - ✓ It will offer protection against four strains of HPV — 16, 18, 6, and 11.
 - ✓ The vaccines available in the market currently are priced at Rs 2,500-3,300 per dose but with the nationwide drive it will be priced at Rs 200-400 per dose
 - ✓ In 2016, the government of Sikkim launched a campaign to provide vaccines to all girls between 9 and 14 years old as part of their routine immunization program
 - ✓ The approval of SII's vaccine was granted by the country's drug regulator (DGCI) in July this year.
 - ✓ Until the approval of this vaccine, there were only two international HPV vaccines – Gardasil vaccine (first ever vaccine approved by the FDA in 2006) and Cervarix.
 - ✓ Cervical cancer develops in an individual's cervix, which is the passage that connects the vagina (birth canal) to the upper part of the uterus.
 - ✓ In India, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women after breast cancer
 - ✓ The states of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu recorded the highest estimated incidences of cervical cancer and the highest number of related deaths in 2020.
- **Rajya Sabha - passed New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (Amendment) Bill, 2022 recently on December 14**
- ✓ The Bill amends the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Act, 2019
 - ✓ The new Bill renames the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre as the India International Arbitration Centre
 - ✓ Earlier, the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre replaced the International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution.
 - ✓ The 2019 Act requires the Arbitration Centre to facilitate the conduct of international and domestic arbitration and conciliation



- ✓ The new legislation expands this to include the conduct of other forms of alternative dispute resolution.
- ✓ The Bill also allows the government to provide for removing any difficulties in implementing the Act up to five years from the date of commencement of the Act
- ✓ Earlier, the Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 5, 2022

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- On December 16, the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) - launched a new Earth science satellite to track nearly all the water on Earth's surface.



- ✓ The Surface Water and Ocean Topography (SWOT) spacecraft was launched atop a SpaceX rocket from Space Launch Complex 4E at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California

- ✓ The satellite built for NASA and the French space agency Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) lifted off on its way to low-Earth orbit
- ✓ According to NASA, the satellite will measure the height of water in freshwater bodies and the ocean on more than 90% of Earth's surface.
- ✓ This information will provide insights into how the ocean influences climate change; how a warming world affects lakes, rivers, and reservoirs; and how communities can better prepare for disasters, such as floods.
- ✓ According to NASA, SWOT will cover the entire Earth's surface between 78 degrees south and 78 degrees north latitude at least once every 21 days, sending back about one terabyte of unprocessed data per day.
- ✓ The scientific heart of the spacecraft is an innovative instrument called the Ka-band radar interferometer (KaRIn), which marks a major technological advance
- ✓ The SWOT mission will also provide a significantly clearer picture of Earth's freshwater bodies.
- ✓ It will provide data on more than 95% of the world's lakes larger than 15 acres (62,500 square meters) and rivers wider than 330 feet (100 meters) across.

DEFENCE

- **The indigenously built guided missile destroyer 'INS Mormugao' - will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on December 18, the liberation day of Goa**



- ✓ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will attend the event to commission the ship at the naval dockyard in Mumbai.
- ✓ Regarded as one of the most powerful warships ever built in India, the majestic ship has a displacement of 7,400 tonnes and measures 163 metres in length by 17 metres in width
- ✓ The warship is equipped with a variety of highly advanced sensors, cutting-edge radar, and armament systems such as surface-to-surface missiles and surface-to-air missiles.

- ✓ The ship's anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities are provided by the indigenously developed rocket launchers, torpedo launchers and ASW helicopters.
 - ✓ The ship is equipped to fight under nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) warfare conditions and it is fitted with modern surveillance radar which provides target data to the gunnery weapon systems.
 - ✓ The ship, which bears the name of the historic Goan port of Mormugao, made its inaugural sea sortie on December 19, 2021, the 60th anniversary of Goa's independence from Portuguese dominion.
 - ✓ INS Mormugao was built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. at a cost of Rs. 35,800 crore after being designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau.
 - ✓ It is the second of the four destroyers in the "Visakhapatnam" class, after INS Visakhapatnam
 - ✓ The P15B stealth-guided missile destroyer is propelled by four powerful gas turbines and it is capable of achieving speeds in excess of 30 knots.
 - ✓ A unique feature of this ship is the high level of indigenisation of about 75% incorporated in the production aimed at achieving the national objective of 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat'.
 - ✓ The purpose of the Indian Navy's Project 15B is to develop stealth destroyers having maximised indigenous inputs.
 - ✓ They will be commissioned in Visakhapatnam, Mormugao, Imphal and Surat.
 - ✓ The project's first vessel – INS Visakhapatnam – was commissioned into the Indian Navy in November 2021.
- **The 6th edition of Indo-Kazakhstan joint training exercise "KAZIND-22" - began at Umroi Military Station in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya on December 15.**



- ✓ The fortnight-long joint exercise aimed at enhancing the level of defence cooperation and fostering bilateral relations between the two nations
- ✓ The two countries launched a joint annual training exercise in 2016 as 'Exercise Prabal Dostyk', which was later upgraded to a company-level exercise and renamed 'Exercise Kazind' in 2018.

- ✓ The Kazakh soldiers were drawn from their South-based Regional Command while the 11 Gorkha Rifles will be participating in the exercise representing the Indian Army
- ✓ The exercise will conclude on December 28

APPOINTMENTS

- **The Union government - has appointed senior advocate A R L Sundaresan as additional solicitor-general of India for the Madras high court, for a three-year term.**



- ✓ Senior advocate R Shankarnarayanan, who was holding the post so far, has been appointed as the additional solicitor-general of India (south zone).
- ✓ Sundaresan, son of former Supreme Court Judge Justice A R Lakshmanan, enrolled as an advocate on September 21, 1990, and designated as a senior advocate on February 23, 2006.
- ✓ He has more than 32 years of professional experience in original side, constitutional, administrative, civil, criminal, taxation, company and environmental laws.

SPORTS

- **Croatia - finished third in the 2022 FIFA World Cup winning the play-off against Morocco 2-1 at the Khalifa International Stadium, Qatar**



- ✓ This is the second time Croatia, the 2018 runners-up, have won the bronze medal.
- ✓ They had earlier won the bronze in 1998 in their first appearance
- ✓ This was the second time the two teams were meeting in this World Cup with their first encounter in the group stage ended in a goalless draw
- ✓ Morocco's fourth-place finish is the highest by any African team in the World Cup
- ✓ This is the 11th World Cup in a row a European team has finished third.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ International Migrants Day - December 18



- ✓ The day is observed every year to highlight the social and economic problems faced by the migrants around the world.
- ✓ The International Migrants day was adopted to protect the basic and human rights of the migrants
- ✓ In recent years, violence, instability, and the consequences of climate change, war, and conflict have all contributed to forced migration, whether within nations or beyond borders
- ✓ As per the United Nations report, over 281 million people migrated internationally in 2020, and by the end of 2021, over 59 million people were internally displaced
- ✓ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed December 18 as International Migrants Day on December 4, 2000
- ✓ On this day in 1990, the UNGA adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- ✓ Integrating migrants into the primary healthcare system is the main theme of International Migrants Day 2022.
- ✓ The WHO Global Action Plan "Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants" (2019–2023) aims good migration governance and protection for refugees and migrants depend on their physical well-being.