

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 13, 2022

SCHEMES

- On February 12, Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar - launched the Central sector scheme 'SMILE: Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise' in the presence of Ministers of States



- ✓ The scheme aims to provide welfare and rehabilitation to the transgender community and the people engaged in the act of begging.
- ✓ The umbrella scheme is designed by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- ✓ The scheme has two sub schemes - 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons' and 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Engaged in the Act of Begging'
- ✓ The Ministry has allocated Rs 365 crore for the scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26

- ✓ The sub-scheme - 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons'- includes various components such as scholarships for transgender students studying in IX standard and till post-graduation.
 - ✓ It also has provisions for Skill Development and Livelihood under the PM-DAKSH scheme
 - ✓ The provision of Transgender Protection Cell in each state will monitor cases of offences and to ensure timely registration, investigation, and prosecution of offences
- ✓ The National Portal and Helpline are available to provide necessary information and solutions to the transgender community and the people engaged in the act of begging when needed.
- ✓ The sub-scheme - 'Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the act of Begging' - will focus on survey and identification, mobilisation, rescue/ shelter home and comprehensive resettlement.
- ✓ Further, pilot projects have been initiated on comprehensive rehabilitation in 10 cities namely Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Indore, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Patna and Ahmedabad

STATES

- **On February 12, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar - prorogued the state Legislative Assembly with effect from February 12 after exercising power vested with him under Article 174 of the Constitution**
 - ✓ Prorogation is discontinuing a session of the Parliament or a legislative assembly without dissolving it.
 - ✓ The Governor also clarified that his decision comes after a recommendation from the state government.
 - ✓ Following this, the state government will have to take permission from the Governor to commence the next session of the Assembly and it would have to begin with a speech by him.
 - ✓ The Budget session of the Assembly was scheduled to commence either in February or March in view of the ongoing civic body polls in the state.
 - ✓ Dhankhar has been engaged in confrontation with the Mamata Banerjee government since he assumed the chair of the governor on July 30, 2019
- **Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai - to launch a new app “Nanna Shale Nanna Koduge” on February 14, 2022**
 - ✓ The new App, meaning ‘My School, My contribution’, was developed by Department of Primary & Secondary Education in Karnataka
 - ✓ The app aims to address infrastructure needs of government schools, shortage of teachers, optimal use of learning aids and utilisation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

- ✓ The app will list out the things required by each government school and will also provide details of any government school
- ✓ It will also provide accessibility to donors across the world to improve schools and school education in Karnataka.

NATIONAL

- **On February 9, the government - banned import of foreign drones except those used for R&D, defence and security purposes, as part of efforts to promote domestic manufacturing of drones and security concerns**
 - ✓ The new rules announced by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), do allow the import of drone components without any approval
 - ✓ Import of drones by government entities, educational institutions recognised by central or state government, government recognised R&D entities and drone manufacturers for R&D purpose will be allowed
 - ✓ On January 25, the government issued the drone certification scheme to stipulate minimum safety and quality requirements that will help boost drone manufacturing in the country.
 - ✓ The new rules allow import up to five drones at maximum for prototyping, testing, technology transfer with allied countries for an R&D body, or a government-certified institution, or a drone manufacturing company, etc.
 - ✓ Last year, the Centre relaxed rules on the use of drones to make it easier to acquire licenses and allowed heavier payloads so the devices can potentially be used as unmanned flying taxis
 - ✓ The recent order follows the government mandates issued in August last year that had issued liberalised drone rules, a drone airspace map, and had also extended the PLI (production linked incentive) scheme to drone manufacturing in September 2021
 - ✓ The Rs 120 crore PLI scheme is also expected to boost the total turnover of the domestic industry to Rs 900 crore in FY24 up from an estimated Rs 60 crore in FY21.
 - ✓ The new guidelines are in line with the Drone Shakti and the Kisan Drones initiatives that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced during Budget 2022
 - ✓ The single-window Digital Sky platform was also introduced last year so that drone owners could easily register their devices.
 - ✓ According to BIS Research, India's drone market is estimated to account for about 4.25% of the global drone market worth about \$28.5 billion in FY22.
- **India's first commercial-scale biomass-based hydrogen plant - will come up at the Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh**
 - ✓ The plant will produce a tonne of hydrogen per day, from 30 tonnes of biomass feedstock, apart from producing biochar and methane.

- ✓ The plant is being constructed on a joint venture of Watomo Energies Ltd and Biezel Green Energy at an investment of ₹24 crore.
 - ✓ Biezel Green, the technology partner, owns the technology for a 'thermally accelerated anerobic digestion (TAD) reactor' that can produce hydrogen, methane and biochar from biomass.
 - ✓ Watomo Energies, headquartered in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh will act as a 'consulting, marketing, implementation and project management' company
 - ✓ Biezel Green will own 50% in the yet-to-be named joint venture, while the other 50% will be contributed by interested farmers
 - ✓ Biezel Green is a company promoted by Prof Preetam Singh, who teaches at the IIT Bhuvaneshwar
 - ✓ Prof Singh, was a student of Prof John Goodenough, who won the Nobel Prize in 1999 for his discovery of the Lithium-ion chemistry for batteries
 - ✓ Biomass is a renewable organic resource, which includes agriculture crop residues (like wheat straw or corn stover), special crops grown for energy use (like switchgrass or willow trees) forest residues, animal waste and organic municipal solid waste
- **The Mumbai Central Division of the Western Railway zone - has achieved a milestone of operating the 100th Textile train in the country**
- ✓ The train was flagged off from Chalthan, located in the Surat area, to Sankrail of South Eastern Railways' Kharagpur Division.
 - ✓ Major destinations covered by the textile train include Shankrail, Shalimar in the South Eastern Railway zone as well as Danapur and Narayanpur in the East Central Railway zone.
 - ✓ The textile express trains fetched a total revenue of Rs 10.2 crore for the Indian Railways.
 - ✓ On September 1 last year, the first textile train was flagged off by the Minister of State for Railways and Textiles Darshana Jardosh from Udhna in Gujarat.
 - ✓ It consisted of 25 new modified goods wagons, which were customised to carry textile material, and ran from Gujarat to the state of Bihar
 - ✓ The textile trains are significant for textile market of Surat region because they are economical, faster and safer mode of transport.
- **The Union Ministry of Culture – to organize a first-of-its-kind global Summit on 'Reimagining Museums in India' on February 15-16, 2022.**
- ✓ The summit will witness participation from 25 museum professionals who will highlight reimagined priorities and practices for Museums
 - ✓ The Summit will be inaugurated by G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Culture and is being organised in partnership with Bloomberg
 - ✓ The online summit will be organised under four broad themes - Architecture and Functional Needs; Management; Collections (including Curation & Conservation practices); and, Education and Audience Engagement.



- ✓ The Summit is being arranged under the aegis of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, the flagship program to mark 75th anniversary of India's independence

INTERNATIONAL

- **Billionaire tech entrepreneur Elon Musk's ambitious Starlink project – lost almost 40 satellites after they were damaged by a geomagnetic storm recently**
- ✓ SpaceX, the Elon Musk-owned commercial space company, launched 49 satellites to a low deployment orbit, 130 miles above Earth, on February 3
- ✓ Following the geomagnetic storm, nearly 40 satellites will re-enter or already have re-entered Earth's atmosphere after being prevented from reaching their intended orbit on February 4
- ✓ The high speed internet satellites that failed to reach their orbit pose “zero collision risk” with other satellites
- ✓ When they enter Earth's atmosphere, these satellites will die on their own, indicating there will be no orbital debris and no satellite part will hit the ground
- ✓ A geomagnetic storm, which is a space weather event, is caused by ejections of the solar corona into space
- ✓ It will lead to disturbances in the Earth's upper atmosphere and increased drag on objects in low orbits.
- ✓ The company aims to ultimately operate a constellation of more than 12,000 satellites in low-Earth orbit as part of the Starlink project
- ✓ The project seeks to provide low latency broadband services across the world, even in areas not covered by terrestrial systems
- ✓ In India, the government instructed Starlink to refund all pre-orders until it secured licences to operate in the country.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On February 11, India – signed an MoU with UN World Food Programme for sending 50,000 MT of wheat to Afghanistan through the land border with Pakistan**



- ✓ Earlier, on January 29, India has supplied three tonnes of medicines to Afghanistan as part of its fourth batch of medical assistance under humanitarian aid to the war-torn country
 - ✓ India had already supplied three shipments of medical assistance, consisting of 500,000 doses of Covid vaccine and essential life-saving medicines to Afghanistan
 - ✓ Earlier, in December 2021, the UN World Food Program revealed that it would require \$220 million every month in order to feed roughly 23 million Afghans
 - ✓ International assistance has been cut off, Afghan government assets have been frozen, and international sanctions against the Taliban have pushed Afghanistan to mass starvation
- APRIL 2022
- **India - has agreed to provide a grant to Sri Lanka to implement a 'Unitary Digital Identity framework', which is similar to the Aadhaar card.**
 - ✓ The government of Sri Lanka has decided to speed up the implementation of a Unitary Digital Identity framework in the country.
 - ✓ The personal identity verification program is a digital tool that can be used to identify the identity of individuals in cyberspace based on biometric data
 - ✓ India had previously agreed to provide a grant to implement the Unitary Digital Identity framework, after bilateral talks between the Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019
 - ✓ Since the start of 2022, India has provided an assistance of \$1.4 billion to Sri Lanka to cope with its dollar crunch and import food, medicines and fuel due to shortages.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On February 11, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - addressed the global 'One Ocean Summit' that discussed maritime issues faced by the international community**
- ✓ In his virtual address, PM Modi highlighted that India has always been a maritime civilisation and extended the nation's support to the French initiative.



- ✓ He further urged the international community to take immediate measures towards underwater plastic pollution and urged leaders to make legally binding treaties.
- ✓ The PM further pledged India's commitment towards reducing single-use plastic consumption and reducing our plastic waste
- ✓ PM Modi informed the global leaders that 100 Indian Navy ships will be cleaning plastic waste from the sea this year
- ✓ The One Ocean Summit was organised by France from February 9 to February 11, in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank
- ✓ Apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several global leaders, including Germany, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, and Canada participated in the event.
- ✓ The goal of the Summit was to mobilize the international community to take action towards preserving and supporting healthy and sustainable ocean ecosystems.
- ✓ During the summit, several initiatives were launched towards marine ecosystem protection and sustainable fisheries aimed at reducing underwater pollution
- ✓ United Nations has designated the decade between 2021 and 2030 as the 'Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development', in a bid to restore declining marine life and raise awareness.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **NASA - has selected two science missions to help improve the understanding of the Sun-Earth connection, the dynamics of the Sun, and the constantly changing space environment**
- ✓ The two missions chosen by NASA are Multi-slit Solar Explorer (MUSE) and HelioSwarm missions, which aim at studying the sun's corona and also measuring the magnetic field of the solar wind
- ✓ They will provide deeper insights into the universe, and offer critical information to help protect astronauts, satellites and communication signals, including satellites used for navigation.
- ✓ The MUSE mission will be led by Bart DePontieu of the Lockheed Martin Advanced Technology Center (LMATC) in California.

- ✓ The mission will offer deeper insights into heliophysics, using a powerful instrument known as a multi-split spectrometer, to capture the surface of the Sun in minute detail
 - ✓ MUSE is designed to obtain high-resolution images of solar flare ribbons over a field of view focused on a large, active region of the Sun.
- ✓ The HelioSwarm mission will be conducted by Harlan Spence from the University of New Hampshire.
 - ✓ HelioSwarm is not one satellite, but a swarm of nine spacecrafts, with eight co-orbiting small satellites around one hub spacecraft.
 - ✓ The hub spacecraft is responsible for all contact between the HelioSwarm and Earth, while maintaining radio contact with the eight other satellites in the swarm
 - ✓ The setup of the swarm is designed based on the requirement of simultaneously measuring plasma from different points, in order to study solar wind turbulence across large areas.
- ✓ Both the missions have combined funding of \$442 million.
- **On February 10, Australian government – has listed koala as an endangered species in its eastern states.**



- ✓ The decision is attributed to the destruction of eucalyptus-rich habitat of koala as a result of drought, land clearance and widespread bushfires.
- ✓ The government has upgraded the conservation status of the marsupials from 'vulnerable' to 'endangered' in Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory
- ✓ The government's decision to announce a national recovery plan for koala was based on the recommendation of the threatened species scientific committee
- ✓ According to fossil records, Koala species have inhabited parts of Australia for at least 25 million years
- ✓ But today, only one species remains — the *Phascolarctos cinereus*, which are found in the forests of the southeast and eastern sides of Australia — in coastal Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.
- ✓ Koala survives on a strict diet of up to a kilogram of eucalyptus leaves every day.

- ✓ Due to the low nutritional value of these leaves, koalas tend to sleep for extended periods, often up to 18 hours a day, to conserve energy
- ✓ The number of Koalas in New South Wales declined by between 33% and 61% since 2001, while in Queensland the Koala population decreased by at least 50% during the same period
- ✓ Koalas were classified as “vulnerable” only in 2012.
- ✓ During the catastrophic 2019 bushfires in Australia, now known as the ‘Black Summer’, an estimated 60,000 koalas were impacted and 24% of habitats in New South Wales alone were destroyed
- ✓ In January 2022, Australia’s Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that the government will be spending a record \$35 million over the next four years towards the conservation and recovery of the koala population
- ✓ In 2020, WWF Australia, the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Humane Society International collectively nominated ‘koala’ for upgrading its status to ‘endangered’

OBITUARY

- **Industrialist and former chairman of Bajaj Group, Rahul Bajaj - passed away on February 12 at the age of 83 due to age-related ailments**



- ✓ Born on June 10, 1938, Rahul Bajaj headed the Bajaj group of companies which have presence across various segments ranging from automobiles to wind energy
- ✓ Rahul Bajaj joined the Bajaj group in 1965 and became the CEO of Bajaj Auto in 1968.
- ✓ Under Rahul Bajaj's leadership, flagship firm Bajaj Auto saw its turnover growing to Rs 12,000 crore from just Rs 7.2 crore with the firm's scooters becoming the mainstay
- ✓ The company's Bajaj Chetak scooter became an aspirational symbol for the middle-class Indian families then
- ✓ In 2005, he stepped down from his executive role and his son Rajiv Bajaj became the managing director of Bajaj Auto.
- ✓ On April 30 2021, he stepped down as Chairman of Bajaj Auto and was appointed as firm’s Chairman Emeritus for five years

- ✓ Rahul Bajaj received the Padma Bhushan, country's third-highest civilian award, from then President K.R. Narayanan in 2001.
- ✓ For his outstanding work to the Indian industry, the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee presented him CII President's Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2017
- ✓ Rahul Bajaj also served as a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha in the 2006 – 2010 period
- ✓ He was elected as the president of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) twice in 1979-80 and 1999-2000.
- ✓ He also held many other positions, including the chairman of Indian Airlines and chairman of the board of governors of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.
- ✓ He was also a former chairman of the International Business Council, World Economic Forum and a former member of the South Asia advisory board of Harvard Business School.
- ✓ Besides, he was a former member of the International Advisory Council of the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC
- ✓ The industrialist also spearheaded the CSR activities of the Bajaj Group of companies and charitable trusts including Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation.
- ✓ As on February 2021, Rahul Bajaj was ranked at 421 on the Forbes list of the world's billionaires with a net worth of \$8.2 billion.
- ✓ One of the oldest business groups in India, the group has 25 companies—including Bajaj Auto, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Electricals, Mukand and Bajaj Allianz—with around 36,000 employees.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ **World Pulses Day – February 10**



- ✓ The day has been established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to recognize the importance of pulses as a global food.
- ✓ Theme 2022 - "Pulses to empower youth in achieving sustainable agrifood systems".
- ✓ Pulses, also known as legumes, are the edible seeds of leguminous plants cultivated for food.

- ✓ Dried beans, lentils, chickpeas, peanuts, soybeans and peas are the most commonly known and consumed types of pulses.
- ✓ The UN General Assembly in 2019 decided to celebrate the day to increase awareness about the importance of pulses and their access among underprivileged sections of the global population.
- ✓ Burkina Faso in West Africa proposed that World Pulses Day be observed by member nations
- ✓ The pulses contain a variety of nutrients, minerals and vitamins and are an ideal and affordable source of protein for large sections of the population
- ✓ In 2013, the UN recognised the importance of the crops and declared 2016 to be the International Year of Pulses through its resolution A/RES/68/231.
- ✓ Pulses can be useful for controlling health issues such as obesity, high blood sugar and cholesterol and for management of heart conditions and diabetes
- ✓ These crops are also useful in climate change mitigation since they can reduce dependence on artificial fertilizers for inducing nutrients such as nitrogen into the soil.

