

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 20, 2022

### TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu - recorded 61% voting in the single phase urban local body polls held on February 19 to elect more than 12,500 ward members to 640 urban local bodies in the state



- ✓ The counting of votes would start on February 22 at 268 centres across the state
- ✓ At 43.59%, Chennai district recorded the lowest turnout, lower than 51.6% recorded in 2011, while Karur polled the maximum of 75.84%, according to the Tamil Nadu State Election Commission (TNSEC).
- ✓ Madurai recorded 52.73% turnout while Tiruppur district registered overall polling of 60.66% and the Coimbatore Corporation recorded 55.81% polling.
- ✓ Among the municipalities, Dharmapuri registered the maximum turnout of 81.37% and Nilgiris recorded the lowest voter turnout of 59.98%
- ✓ On the whole, the town panchayats and municipalities recorded a good voter turnout of 74.68% and 68.22% respectively, while the corporations saw a low turnout of 52.22%
- ✓ The polling in 21 corporations, 138 municipalities and 489 town panchayats in the state remained by and large peaceful on the day
- ✓ A total of 74,416 candidates including many independents were in the fray.
- ✓ The local body polls were last conducted in 2011 when the AIADMK was in power in the state.

- ✓ The NOTA button (None of the Above) was not an option on the EVMs this poll
- ✓ However, around hundred people invoked the Section 71 of the election rules and got their fingers inked by marking their attendance but refusing to cast any vote
- ✓ According to the Tamil Nadu Town Panchayats, Third Grade Municipalities and Municipal Corporation Councils (Elections) Rules 2006, if a voter decides to not cast his vote, he can invoke Section 71 which is his right.
- ✓ The voter has to inform the presiding officer of his decision.
- ✓ Earlier the form 49(O) was publicised, but it was removed after the NOTA was added to the EVMs in assembly polls
- ✓ The voting was extended by one hour till 6 pm to facilitate Covid-19 patients and people with Covid-19 symptoms to vote.

## STATES

- **Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar - said that February 15 would henceforth be commemorated as “Shahid Diwas” in the state**



- ✓ The day will be observed in memory of the 34 freedom fighters who were shot dead by police in Tarapur town of Bihar's Munger district on February 15, 1932.
- ✓ The Tarapur massacre was the biggest carried out by the British police after the one in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in 1919
- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi had referred to the Tarapur massacre in his Mann ki Baat radio address of January 2021.
- ✓ On February 15, 1932, a group of young freedom fighters planned to hoist an Indian national flag at Thana Bhavan in Tarapur
- ✓ Even as the police carried out a brutal lathicharge, a young freedom fighter Gopal Singh succeeded in raising the flag at Thana Bhavan.
- ✓ The police responded by opening indiscriminate fire on the crowd.
- ✓ After about 75 rounds were fired, 34 bodies were found at the spot, even though there were claims of larger number of deaths

- ✓ Out of the 34 martyrs, only 13 could be identified and remaining 21 were unidentified

## NATIONAL

- **On February 18, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – virtually flagged off 100 'Kisan drones' for spraying pesticides and farm chemicals in different cities and towns of India**



- ✓ He also addressed a group of farmers gathered at Manesar near Gurgaon, from where the “Drone Kisan Yatra” was flagged off.
- ✓ The PM labelled it as a “milestone” for Indian agriculture and said new technologies would bring a “world of opportunities for farmers and youth”
- ✓ During his speech, the PM shared that Garuda Aerospace is in the process of making 100 thousand ‘Made in India’ drones in the next two years
- ✓ An agricultural drone, which typically operates using Internet-based smart technologies, can undertake precise farm operations, from spraying to monitoring crop health.
- ✓ Costing between ₹5-10 lakh, the drones have been manufactured by Chennai-based Garuda Aerospace, a home-grown start-up
- ✓ According to the PM’s tweet, the company informed him that it would manufacture 100,000 drones in the next 2 years
- ✓ Kisan drones will be used for crop assessment, digitization of land records, and spraying of insecticides and nutrients.
- ✓ The drone will spray about 5 to 10 kg of pesticide on about one acre of land in just 15 minutes.
- ✓ This will save time, will require less effort besides ensuring uniform spraying.
- ✓ These drones will also be used to carry vegetables, fruits, fish, etc to the markets from the farms
- ✓ The Drone Kisan Yatra was launched with the aim to promote chemical-free farming in India.

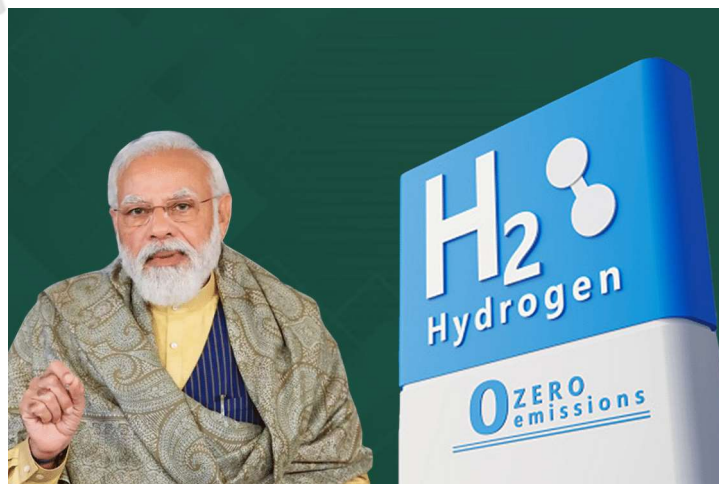


- ✓ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman first announced the initiative in her Budget speech in February 2022 with focus on farmers' lands in 5-kilometre-wide corridors along the river Ganga in the first stage
  - ✓ The Union Budget 2022-23 announced a special push for Kisan (farmer) drones
  - ✓ Farmers' producer organizations or large collectives are now eligible to receive grants up to 75% of the cost of the drone for demonstrations.
  - ✓ The government has also announced a contingency expenditure of ₹6000 per hectare to implementing agencies that do not want to purchase drones but will hire them for demonstrations.
  - ✓ The contingent expenditure to implementing agencies that purchase drones for drone demonstrations would be limited to ₹3000 per hectare.
  - ✓ These grants for promotion drone technologies will be available till March 31, 2023
  - ✓ Drone hiring centres will also receive special funding to provide agricultural services through drones.
  - ✓ This includes 40% of the basic cost of drone and its attachments or ₹4 lakh, whichever is lower.
  - ✓ On February 10, Anand Mahindra, the chairman of Mahindra group, announced a major decision to scale up farm drones in the country
  - ✓ Further, the government recently banned the import of drones to encourage their manufacturing in India.
- **On February 19, PM Narendra Modi - inaugurated Asia's biggest bio-CNG plant in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, via video conferencing and praised the city for setting an example.**



- ✓ The inauguration event was attended by Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

- ✓ The municipal solid-waste-based plant, also called 'Gobar-Dhan plant', can process 550 metric tonnes of wet waste every day and convert it into 17,000 kg of bio-CNG gas and 100 tonne of high-quality compost every day.
  - ✓ The plant will produce CNG with 96% pure methane gas.
  - ✓ The Indore Municipal Corporation will purchase bio-CNG at Rs 5 per kg and use it to fuel nearly 400 of its buses.
  - ✓ The plant works on the basis of a zero-landfill model, where no rejects will be generated.
  - ✓ The plant has been set up by the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) on public private partnership (PPP) model
  - ✓ It has been implemented as per the Centre's 'wealth-to- waste' initiative with an initial investment of Rs 550 crore
  - ✓ Around 10 tonnes of cow-dung is used at the plant daily to treat wet waste, which will be purchased from nearby villages
  - ✓ During his speech, the PM appreciated the efforts of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and his team in setting up the bio-CNG plant in a short span at Devguradia
  - ✓ He said that the government aims to set up similar Gobar-Dhan plants in 75 big municipalities to make Indian cities become pollution free and support the ongoing 'green energy' revolution.
  - ✓ The technology will help purify the air quality of densely populated cities by mitigating 1,30,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.
  - ✓ It has to be recalled that Indore has been ranked India's cleanest city for the fifth year in a row by Swachh Survekshan 2021
- **On February 17, the government – has unveiled the first phase of the National green hydrogen policy and green ammonia policy**



- ✓ The policy was notified by the power ministry, a year after finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman first revealed about India's plan to harness green hydrogen in her 2021 budget speech

- ✓ Later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the National Hydrogen Energy Mission in his Independence Day speech in August.
- ✓ The new policy offers a range of incentives to investors, generation companies (gencos) and distribution licensees (discoms) to focus on the development and deployment of green ammonia and green hydrogen
- ✓ According to the new policy, India plans to set up separate manufacturing zones to become production and export hub and provide priority connectivity to electric grids to green hydrogen and ammonia producers in a bid to incentivise production.
- ✓ The ultimate aim of the government is to bring down the cost of green hydrogen to \$1 per kg from the current \$3-6.5 per kg
- ✓ Under the new policy, the government aims to achieve a production target of close to 5 million metric tonnes per annum of green hydrogen capacity along with related renewable energy capacity by 2030.
  - ✓ The five million tonnes production target is half of that of the EU, which plans to produce 10 million tonnes of hydrogen from renewable energy by 2030.
- ✓ The government has offered incentives like waiver of inter-state power transmission charges for 25 years for green hydrogen producers for projects set up before June 2025
- ✓ Manufacturers of green hydrogen/ammonia and the renewable energy plant will also be given connectivity to the grid on “priority basis” to avoid any procedural delays.
- ✓ The policy also allows manufacturers to set up their plants in any of the existing or upcoming renewable energy parks or even in any of the “manufacturing zones”, to be set up as per the roadmap being prepared by the government.
- ✓ The manufacturer can also ‘bank’ or ‘store’ the unconsumed renewable power up to 30 days with any discom and take it back when required.
- ✓ The policy also clarified that hydrogen and ammonia produced from biomass or a renewable energy source that has been ‘banked’ will also be considered as “green” hydrogen and “green” ammonia.
- ✓ The policy seeks to make it more economical for main users of hydrogen and ammonia such as the oil refining, fertiliser and steel sectors to produce green hydrogen for their own use.
  - ✓ These sectors currently use grey hydrogen or grey ammonia produced using natural gas or naphtha.
- ✓ The government is also planning to launch a single portal for all clearances required for setting up green hydrogen production
- ✓ The second phase of the green hydrogen policy is likely to be about mandating (refineries, fertiliser companies etc) the usage of green hydrogen and green ammonia in a phased manner and also offering PLIs
- ✓ It will require a Cabinet approval and is currently under review with the expenditure finance committee.

- ✓ The announcement of the green hydrogen policy is in line with India's efforts to move away from fossil fuels, reduce crude oil imports and become a net-zero carbon-emitting economy by 2070
  - ✓ Green hydrogen is considered environmental-friendly as it is entirely produced through the use of renewable energy sources like wind or solar sources by electrolysis process of splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen, instead of the traditional method of steam reforming of natural gas.
  - ✓ The hydrogen produced can be combined with nitrogen to make ammonia, avoiding hydrocarbons in the production process.
  - ✓ Green ammonia is used to store energy and in fertilizer manufacturing.
  - ✓ India currently accounts for 9% of the global grey hydrogen capacity
  - ✓ Last year at COP26, Glasgow, 32 countries including the United States, China, and India, plus the European Union, announced collaboration so that "affordable renewable and low-carbon hydrogen is globally available by 2030".
  - ✓ Already the United Kingdom, Russia, Colombia, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, Chile, Norway, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal have announced their national hydrogen plans.
  - ✓ While green hydrogen is not currently made in India on a commercial scale, the country's richest men Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani have announced plans to produce it.
  - ✓ Power minister RK Singh has previously noted that Germany and Japan could be key markets for green hydrogen produced in India.
  - ✓ India's total hydrogen demand is expected to touch 11.7 million tonnes (mt) by 2029-30 from the current 6.7 mt.
  - ✓ Around 54% or 3.6 mt of India's annual hydrogen consumption of 6.7 mt is utilized in petroleum refining and the rest in fertilizer production.
- **The fertiliser ministry - has proposed to bring an 'Integrated Plant Nutrition Management Bill' to promote the use of bio fertilisers and non-chemical fertilisers.**
- ✓ In the proposed Bill, the ministry has recommended the setting up of a regulatory body to control prices, supply and import of fertiliser
  - ✓ The Bill proposes appointing 'fertiliser inspectors' with sweeping powers, including to enter and search premises
  - ✓ They are also empowered to confiscate stock if they have "a reason to believe" that the nutrients manufactured, imported, sold, offered for sale, stored, exhibited for sale or distributed in contravention to any of the provisions of the proposed Act or the rules.
  - ✓ As per the draft Bill, the Centre may fix the maximum price at which fertilisers would be sold
  - ✓ It may also fix separate prices for fertilisers having different periods of storage or for different areas or for different classes of consumers considering the local conditions.

- ✓ It also proposes to set up an Integrated Plant Nutrition Management Authority of India to regulate the manner of registration for manufacturers of fertilisers
- ✓ The Authority would also set out technical standards with respect to the quality of fertilisers and promote sustainable use of innovative varieties.
- ✓ The Bill proposes hefty fine and also jail term for violators of the proposed law.

## INTERNATIONAL

- **United Kingdom – scraps the “golden visa” fast-track scheme for foreign investors with ‘immediate’ effect, over charges of money laundering and security risks**
  - ✓ Also referred to as the tier 1 investor visa, the scheme targets investors with a commitment to invest £2 million (Rs 20 crore or \$2.7 million) in the UK.
  - ✓ Under the scheme, the visa was processed within three weeks – far easier than an asylum application.
  - ✓ On getting this visa, individuals get an immediate right to live in the UK for three years followed by a two-year extension.
  - ✓ A quicker way for permanent residency was investing £10 million (Rs 100 crore) after which they would get permanent residency after two years.
  - ✓ According to a report released by a UK-based anti-corruption charity, Indians have ranked as the 7th nationality of the super-rich to have availed this visa during the period from 2008 to 2020.
  - ✓ This visa has facilitated nearly 254 Indian millionaires to settle in the UK since 2008.
  - ✓ Diamond merchant Nirav Modi is believed to have been living in the UK on an investor visa applied in 2015
  - ✓ China topped the list at 4,106, followed by Russia (2,526), Hong Kong (692), the United States (685), Pakistan (283) and Kazakhstan (278) ahead of India
  - ✓ Saudi Arabia at 223, Turkey at 221 and Egypt at 206 complete the list of the top 10 countries to have been issued the visa allowing applicants residency rights in the UK
  - ✓ The British government has been reviewing the visas for investors since 2018, shortly after the poisoning for former Russian agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury.
  - ✓ This incident also led to a deterioration in relations between Russia and the U.K

## AWARDS

- **Microsoft founder and philanthropist Bill Gates - has been conferred with Hilal-e-Pakistan, the second highest civilian honour of Pakistan**
  - ✓ Pakistan President Arif Alvi conferred the award to Gates at a special investiture ceremony held at Islamabad for his efforts to help eradicate polio in Pakistan
  - ✓ Gates is on a day-long visit to Pakistan and has also met with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on February 17, 2022
  - ✓ This is Gate's first-ever visit to Pakistan



- ✓ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been a major contributor in worldwide polio eradication through Gavi, the vaccine alliance



- ✓ Gavi is a public-private global health collaboration that aims to improve vaccination access in low-income countries
- ✓ Pakistan, along with neighbouring Afghanistan, is one of two countries in the world where polio continues to circulate.
- ✓ No children have been paralysed by wild polio in Pakistan in more than a year, according to the Gates Foundation, but the virus was detected in December in sewerage samples in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.
- ✓ Born in 1955 in Seattle Washington, Bill Gates is a co-founder of Microsoft Corporation, the world's largest personal-computer software company
- ✓ Currently, he co-chairs the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with Melinda French Gates and supports a wide range of public health projects, granting aid to fight transmissible diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, as well as widespread vaccine programs to eradicate polio
- ✓ In 2010, Bill and Melinda pledged \$10 billion over the next 10 years to help research, develop, and deliver vaccines for the world's poorest countries.
- ✓ In 2017, the foundation committed \$300 million to help farmers in Africa and Asia cope with climate change.
- ✓ In 2020, it had committed about \$1.75 billion to support the global response to Covid-19.

## SPORTS

- **India - won the right to host the 2023 International Olympic Committee's (IOC) session in Mumbai**
- ✓ Mumbai received 99% of the votes from the delegates participating in the process, with 75 members endorsing its candidature to host the IOC session in 2023
- ✓ This will be the first time in four decades and the second time overall that India hosts the IOC session, after 1983 when it was last held in New Delhi.

- ✓ The session, to be held in May or June next year, could possibly see the election for the host country for the 2030 Winter Olympics and sports programme for LA 2028 Olympic Games.
- ✓ The Session will be hosted at the state-of-the-art, brand new Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai.
- ✓ Situated in the heart of the city at Bandra Kurla Complex, the JWC is the largest convention centre in India and will start operations in early 2022.
- ✓ The Indian delegation made the presentation to IOC members during the 139th IOC session, being held alongside the ongoing Winter Olympics in Beijing.
- ✓ The Indian delegation comprised of the country's first individual Olympic gold medallist (Beijing 2008, shooting) Abhinav Bindra, IOC member Nita Ambani, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Narinder Batra, and Youth Affairs and Sports minister Anurag Singh Thakur
- ✓ Nita Ambani is the first woman to be elected as an IOC member from India
- ✓ An IOC Session is the annual general meeting of the IOC's 101 members with voting rights, 45 honorary members, and 1 member without voting right.
- ✓ Senior representatives from over 50 international sports federations also attend the meet.
- ✓ It is the IOC's supreme organ, and its decisions are final.
- ✓ It discusses and decides on the key activities of the global Olympics movement including adoption or amendment of the Olympic Charter, the election of IOC members and office bearers and election of the host city of Olympics.
- ✓ Ordinary IOC Sessions are held once a year and Extraordinary IOC Sessions are convened either by the IOC President or by written request of at least one-third of members.
- ✓ India had earlier bid to host the 2032 Olympics but was effectively eliminated from the race as the edition went to Brisbane
- ✓ Earlier, India hosted marquee events like the Commonwealth Games in 2010

