

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—FEBRUARY 3, 2022

### TAMIL NADU

- **On February 2, chief minister M K Stalin - invited leaders of various political parties to nominate their partymen as representatives for the recently announced national forum for social justice**
- ✓ In this regard, the CM has written a letter to 37 non-BJP leaders cutting across regional and political parties, calling upon them to unite for the sake of social justice.
- ✓ The list of invited leaders include Sonia Gandhi, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Farook Abdullah, Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee, D Raja, Sitaram Yechury, N Chandrababu Naidu, Arvind Kejriwal, Mehboobha Mufti, K. Chandrasekara Rao, Uddhav Thackarey, Akhilesh Yadav and Raj Thackeray.
- ✓ AIADMK coordinator O Panneerselvam has also been invited besides PMK founder S Ramadoss, DMK's allies Thol Thirumavalavan, Vaiko and M H Jawahirullah.
- ✓ On Republic Day, CM Stalin announced forming the All India Federation for Social Justice
- ✓ The forum aims to bring leaders, members of civil society and likeminded individuals to a common platform "to achieve the principles of federalism and social justice at national level".

### NATIONAL

- **On February 2, Pharma major Zydus Cadila - announced that it has started supplying its Covid vaccine ZyCoV-D to the Union government**
- ✓ ZyCoV-D is a three-dose Plasmid DNA vaccine injected intradermally or in the skin with the painless PharmaJet needle-free system called 'Tropis' on Day 1, day 28 and day 56
- ✓ The vaccine was cleared by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) in August last year for emergency use in adolescents (12-18 age group) and adults.

- ✓ It was the first vaccine to be granted EUA for an age group below 18, even though Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech's twin-dose Covaxin is the only jab, which is being used to vaccinate teenagers
- ✓ In November, the Centre had placed an order for 1 crore doses with Zydus at ₹358 for each dose.
- ✓ The vaccine will be priced ₹265 per dose and the applicator ₹93 per dose excluding GST.
- ✓ The vaccine is being prepared from the newly commissioned, state-of-the-art Zydus Vaccine Technology Excellence Centre at the Zydus Biotech Park in Changodar, Ahmedabad
- ✓ At present, three vaccines are in use in India—Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V.
- ✓ Two more shots (Covovax and Corbevax) are in the pipeline, having received the Drug Controller General of India's clearance last year for emergency use.
- ✓ Zydus VTEC manufactures the drug substance for the needle-free DNA Plasmid vaccine
- ✓ Zydus has signed an agreement with Shilpa Medicare Limited, a contract manufacturing organisation, to produce doses of ZyCoV-D
- ✓ It also has an agreement with Enzychem Lifesciences of the Republic of Korea for the manufacturing license and technology transfer for the vaccine.
- ✓ According to Zydus, the vaccine would initially be used in districts in Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal having low first dose coverage

## INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On February 2, India and Nepal – signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for construction of a 110-metre motorable bridge over Mahakali river in the next three years' time**



- ✓ In this regard, an agreement was signed between India's ambassador, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, and Nepal's secretary of physical infrastructure and transport, Ravindra Nath Shrestha

- ✓ Nepal's minister for infrastructure and transport, Renu Yadav was present on the occasion
- ✓ The proposed bridge is to separate India and Nepal in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district
- ✓ It will connect India's Dharchula tehsil in Pithoragarh with Nepal's Darchula by means of Indian assistance
- ✓ India will bear all the cost of constructing the bridge and preparation of detailed project report for the bridge has already been completed
- ✓ This will be the second motorable bridge between the two countries, the first one being at Banbasa in Champawat district.
- ✓ The MoU was to be signed during Nepal PM Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to India, which got cancelled later due to the pandemic.
- ✓ The bridge will be 10.5 metre wide, with a 7.5-metre wide carriageway, have two lanes and footpaths on either side, and is estimated to cost around Rs 48.5 crore.
- ✓ The project will enhance cross-border connectivity between the Sudurpaschim province of Nepal and the Uttarakhand state of India across the Mahakali river.
- ✓ In January, the Indian government had approved signing of the MoU between the two countries for construction of the bridge.

## DEFENCE

- **The government - has decided to convert the “experimental” scheme for induction of women as fighter pilots in the IAF into a “permanent” one**
- ✓ This was announced by defence minister Rajnath Singh on February 1.
- ✓ IAF had rolled out the “experimental scheme” to induct women as fighter pilots for a period of five years in 2016
- ✓ Till now, the IAF has commissioned 16 women into its fighter stream, with most of them already flying supersonic jets like the MiG-21 Bison' solo.
- ✓ Flight Lieutenants Avani Chaturvedi, who had become the first woman to fly a MiG-21 solo in 2018, and Bhawana Kanth are currently flying the Russian-origin Sukhoi-30MKI fighters.
- ✓ Flight Lt Shivangi Singh, in turn, has become the first woman to fly new French-origin Rafale omni-role jet as part of the 17 'Golden Arrows' Squadron in Ambala.
- ✓ In this year's Republic Day parade, the first woman Rafale fighter jet pilot Shivangi Singh was seen on the IAF tableau.
- ✓ Last year, Flight Lieutenant Bhawna Kanth became the first female fighter pilot to be part of the IAF tableau
- ✓ The Supreme Court allowed inducting women in a landmark order in October 2021.
- ✓ Thereafter, over 1.77 lakh women candidates applied for entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA).
- ✓ The National Defence Academy is set to induct its first batch of women cadets in June 2022.

- ✓ In the year 2020, the Navy inducted 28 women officers on board 15 frontline warships, including the INS Vikramaditya.
- ✓ In May 2021, the army inducted the first batch of women into the Corps of Military Police, the first time they were allowed to join the military in the non-officer cadre.
- ✓ There are more than 9,000 women currently serving the army, navy and air force
- ✓ They were permitted to join the armed forces outside the medical stream for the first time in 1992
- ✓ Despite increased women participation in the armed forces, the representation is 0.59% and 1.08% in the Army and Air Force, respectively, with the Indian Navy topping the list with 6% of women representation

## APPOINTMENTS

- **On February 1, Lt General Manoj Pande - took over as the new vice-chief of Indian Army**



- ✓ Lt Gens Upendra Dwivedi and R P Kalita took over as the new General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of the Udhampur-based Northern Command and Kolkata-based Eastern Command respectively.
- ✓ Lt Gen Pande, who was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers in December 1982, has succeeded Lt General C P Mohanty, who retired on January 31.
- ✓ Pande, comes to Army headquarters after commanding the eastern command in Kolkata
  - ✓ The Eastern Command is responsible for guarding against China in the eastern sector in states like Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.
- ✓ He was the commander-in-chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command before he took charge of the Eastern Command.
- ✓ Lt Gen Pande commanded an Engineer Regiment during Operation Parakram in the sensitive Pallanwala Sector along the Line of Control of Jammu and Kashmir
  - ✓ The General Officer also served as Chief Engineer in the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
  - ✓ For his illustrious service he has been conferred with the award of Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Vishisht Seva Medal, the Chief of Army Staff Commendation and GOC-in-C Commendation twice

- ✓ Lt Gen Pande is in line to be the next Army chief when Gen M M Naravane either becomes the next chief of defence staff (CDS), as is expected, or retires on turning 62 in April as scheduled.
- ✓ Lt Gen Kalita, who was commissioned into the Kumaon Regiment in June 1984, has succeeded Lt Gen Pande as the Eastern Command chief.
- ✓ Lt Gen Dwivedi, commissioned into the Jammu & Kashmir Rifles in December 1984, in turn, has replaced Lt Gen Y K Joshi at the Northern Command.
- ✓ The government till now has not named the next CDS after the untimely death of Gen Bipin Rawat, who had assumed charge as the country's first ever CDS on January 1, 2020, in a Mi-17 V5 helicopter crash in December.
  - ✓ While a CDS can serve till the age of 65, the Army, Navy and IAF chiefs serve till 62 or for three years, whichever is earlier.

## SPORTS

- **On February 2, India's champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra – nominated for the prestigious Laureus 'World Breakthrough of the Year' award**



- ✓ He was chosen by a panel of more than 1300 sports journalists and broadcasters across the globe.
- ✓ Neeraj was the first Indian track and field athlete to win an Olympic gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics on August 8, 2020
- ✓ The 24-year-old from Panipat in Haryana is one of the six nominees shortlisted for the award in this category
- ✓ Other nominations include US Open champion Emma Raducanu, World No. 2 Russian tennis star Daniil Medvedev, FC Barcelona prodigy Pedri, world-record holder triple jumper Yulimar Rojas and the reigning Olympic champion in the women's 200m and 400m freestyle, swimmer Ariarne Titmus.
- ✓ Neeraj, the reigning CWG and Asian Games champion too, is only the third Indian athlete to be nominated for a Laureus award
- ✓ Others being woman freestyle wrestler Vinesh Phogat in 2019 and cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, who won the 'best sporting moment in the last 20 years' award in 2020.

- ✓ The battle for the Laureus 'World Sportsman of the Year' award will be one of the most competitive ever.
- ✓ The short-list includes NFL star Tom Brady, Bayern Munich's prolific goalscorer Robert Lewandowski, reigning Formula One world champion Max Verstappen, tennis World no. 1 Novak Djokovic, and two great Olympians — swimmer Caeleb Dressel, who won five gold medals in Tokyo, and Eliud Kipchoge, who won back-to-back marathon gold medals.
- **Indian GM Arjun Erigaisi – became the country's best junior master and India No 4 in the Open category of the classical format of chess**



- ✓ The 18-year-old Warrangal-based chess wizard climbed 49 places after becoming the fourth Indian to win the Tata Steel Challengers chess tournament in Wijk Aan Zee, Netherlands recently.
- ✓ Among others, Harikrishna won the Challengers in 2012, Adhiban in 2016 and Vidit in 2018.
- ✓ With this win, Arjun joined the top 100 club for the first time in his career
- ✓ Arjun is the world's youngest blitz master in the elite 2700 Elo club
- ✓ He is ranked now as India No 4 after five-time champion Viswanathan Anand, Vidit Gujrathi and Harikrishna Pentala.
- ✓ While the World Chess Federation (FIDE) will update the rating points next month, the 129th ranked Arjun moved 49 places up to a career-best 80th position.
- ✓ Among the junior masters in the world, Arjun jumped five places to become world No 4 and has edged Nihal Sarin for India's No 1 spot.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **World Wetlands Day – February 2**
- ✓ World Wetlands Day is observed every year to raise global awareness about the vital role played by the wetlands for people and planet.
- ✓ This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in the year 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the banks of Caspian Sea



- ✓ This is the first year that World Wetlands Day will be observed as a United Nations international day
- ✓ In this regard, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted Resolution 75/317, co-sponsored by 75 member states on August 30, 2021
- ✓ Theme 2022 - 'Wetlands Action for People and Nature'
- ✓ The UN defines wetlands as ecosystems where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life.
- ✓ Though they cover only around 6% of the Earth's land surface, 40% of all plant and animal species live or breed in wetlands
- ✓ These wetlands, despite being critical for human survival, are disappearing three times faster than forests and are Earth's most threatened ecosystem
- ✓ According to the UN, 35% of the world's wetlands have been lost in the last 50 years.
- ✓ The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- ✓ India has 46 Ramsar sites, which include the Chilika Lake in Odisha, Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan, Harike Lake in Punjab, Loktak Lake in Manipur and Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir
- ✓ These cover 7.7 lakh hectares - or 4.6% of India's geographical area - the highest in South Asia
- ✓ In May 2021, Sultanpur National Park and Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary (both in Haryana) were declared Ramsar sites

