

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS-MARCH 15, 2022

### TAMIL NADU

- **On March 14, Chief minister M K Stalin - urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to drop the Centre's proposal to set up the India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) at Pottipuram village in Theni district.**
- ✓ The project is located 4.9 km off Mathikettan Shola National Park and falls in Bodi Hills West Reserve Forest in the southern Western Ghats.
- ✓ In his letter to the PM, the CM cited his earlier memorandum dated June 17, 2021, in which he had requested the PM to shelve the proposal to set up the INO at Pottipuram village.
- ✓ The CM had sought his intervention to scrap the project to conserve the rich wildlife and biodiversity of the region as the project would cause "irreversible damage to the ecosystem".
- ✓ The chief minister recalled making a specific request to PM Modi during his visit in June last year, considering the "serious repercussions" from the project.
- ✓ Further, a ministerial delegation from the state called on Union minister for industries and commerce, Piyush Goyal in September 2021.
- ✓ The Mathikettan-Periyar Tiger Corridor has a critical function of maintaining the genetic flow, which will be destroyed by the project activities, said the CM.
- ✓ There have been strong protests from local villagers and activists, besides MDMK leader Vaiko, against the project.
- ✓ The chief minister pointed to the observations of the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) in November 2017, while processing the proposal for granting environmental clearance.
- ✓ The authority said the tunnelling work involved blasting the hard and composite rock mass and required a huge quantity of high strength explosives to break it.
- ✓ It also involved excavation of 6 lakh cubic metres of Charnockite rock from the mountain.

- ✓ The project is a multi-institutional effort aimed at building an underground laboratory with a rock cover of about 1,200m for non-accelerator-based high energy and nuclear physics research in India.

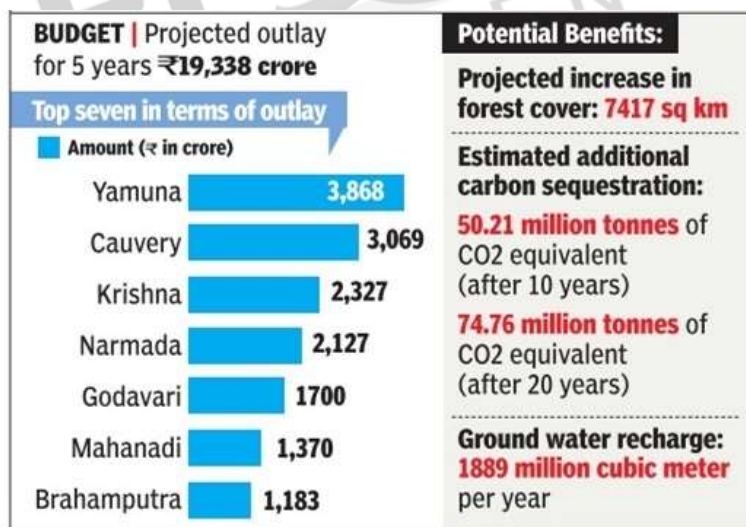
## NATIONAL

- **India - will start the Covid-19 vaccination of children aged 12 to 14 years from March 16, 2022**
- ✓ The children will be administered Corbevax vaccine manufactured by Hyderabad-based Biological E.
- ✓ Biological E Ltd has supplied 5 crore doses of Corbevax to the Centre and the vaccine has been distributed to states
- ✓ So far, India had included adolescents in the 15-17 year age group in the Covid vaccination drive
- ✓ In another significant decision taken, the Centre removed the co-morbidity criterion for those above 60 years of age who are eligible for the precautionary third dose.
- ✓ This means, everyone aged 60 years and above will now be able to get precaution doses



- ✓ Corbevax vaccine is India's first indigenously developed Receptor Binding Domain (RBD) Protein sub-unit vaccine against covid-19.
- ✓ The Corbevax vaccine is administered through an intramuscular route with two doses scheduled 28 days apart
- ✓ It is stored at 2 to 8 degrees' Celsius temperature and presented as 0.5 ml (single dose) and 5 ml (10 doses) vial and 10 mL (20 doses) vial pack.
- ✓ The vaccine is built on the traditional sub-unit platform, which triggers an immune response by using fragments, such as the spike protein, instead of the whole virus.
- ✓ Corbevax got emergency use authorisation (EUA) from India's drug regulator on February 21 for the age group of 12-18 years
- ✓ Last September, Biological E. received approval to conduct a Phase II/III clinical trial on Corbevax in children and adolescents aged 5-18 years

- ✓ According to the company, the late-stage clinical trials indicated that the vaccine is safe and immunogenic.
  - ✓ The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase.
  - ✓ The vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started on February 2 last year.
  - ✓ The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions.
  - ✓ Further, the country launched vaccination for all aged more than 45 years from April 1, 2021.
  - ✓ The Centre then decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1 last year.
  - ✓ The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced on January 3 this year for adolescents aged 15-18 years with Bharat Biotech's Covaxin
  - ✓ Apart from Covaxin and Corbevax, Zydus Cadila's ZyCov-D and Serum Institute of India's Covovax have also been approved for emergency use in those above 12 years of age
- **On March 14, the Centre - announced a plan to rejuvenate 13 rivers spread across 24 states and two Union territories, through forestry intervention**
- ✓ The project will be taken up at an outlay of more than ₹19,000 crore over the next five years.



- ✓ In this regard, Union environment minister Bhupender Yadav jointly released 'detailed project reports' (DPRs) of 13 rivers with Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.
- ✓ Under the proposed plan, various afforestation programmes and related activities will be taken up in the catchment areas of these rivers
- ✓ Apart from the Cauvery, the rivers identified for the rejuvenation model include Yamuna, Krishna, Mahanadi and Brahmaputra

- ✓ The plan seeks to develop green cover along the rivers and their tributaries to up ground water recharge, reducing erosion and recharging aquifers.
  - ✓ Under the DPRs, the 13 rivers along with their tributaries will see forestry interventions in the catchment areas under different landscapes — natural, agricultural or urban.
  - ✓ The different models of forestry plantations including timber species, medicinal plants, grasses, shrubs and fuel fodder and fruit trees are aimed to augment water, ground water recharge and contain erosion.
  - ✓ A total of 667 treatment and plantation models are proposed in all the 13 DPRs meant for the proposed forestry interventions and supporting activities, in different landscapes.
  - ✓ The DPRs focus on protection, afforestation, catchment treatment, ecological restoration, moisture conservation, livelihood improvement, income generation, eco-tourism by developing river fronts and eco-parks.
  - ✓ The length of the 13 rivers, including their 202 tributaries within the delineated riverscapes, is 42,830km.
  - ✓ Thirteen rivers collectively cover a total basin area of over 18. 90 lakh sq km that represents 57.45% of the geographical area of the country.
- **The country's first 'steel slag road' - has come up in Surat, after the successful completion of the 1. 2 km six-lane connectivity stretch of the Hazira Port**
- ✓ The latest innovation promises a huge potential to reduce the demand for aggregates in road construction.
  - ✓ Aggregates are inert granular materials such as sand, gravel and crushed stone used in road construction.
  - ✓ The new technique will also pave the way for utilisation of huge mounds of steel slag lying as waste across the country.
  - ✓ This research project under the steel ministry was sponsored by ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel under the technical guidance of the Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI).
  - ✓ This stretch has been built by substituting natural aggregates with 100% processed steel slag aggregates in all layers of bituminous pavement.
  - ✓ Considering its higher strength, the thickness of the road has also been reduced by 30%.
  - ✓ Three other major steel majors — Tata Steel, JSW Steel and Rashtriya Ispat — are participating as industrial partners to accomplish the steel slag utilisation in road construction.
  - ✓ Annually, nearly 18. 5 million tonnes (MTs) of steel slag is generated from various integrated steel plants.
  - ✓ Only in Vizag, around 60MT of steel slag is lying unused.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **Sahityotsav, the Festival of Letters of Sahitya Akademi – concluded in New Delhi on March 15, 2022.**
- ✓ India's most inclusive literature festival, Sahityotsav began on March 10, 2022
- ✓ The Festival of Letters 2022 is being celebrated to commemorate 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's Independence.
- ✓ The festival featured a special corner to display the books related to India's Freedom Movement and other materials relevant to the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.
- ✓ During the festival, the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Awards were presented to the 24 Award winners at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi.



- ✓ Dr. Chandrashekhra Kambar, President, Sahitya Akademi presented the awards to awardees.
- ✓ Dr. Bhalchandra Nemade, eminent Marathi poet and critic was Chief Guest at the Award Presentation Ceremony.
- ✓ The awardees include Tamil feminist writer CS Lakshmi, known by pseudonym Ambai, who won the Sahitya Akademi award for her short story collection 'Sivappu Kazhutthudan Oru Patchaiparavai'
- ✓ Ambai is only the fourth Tamil woman writer to receive the prestigious literary award, the others being Rajam Krishnan (1973), Lakshmi (1984) and G Thilakavathi (2005).
- ✓ Award-winners in Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu engaged in conversation with eminent scholars in those languages in the 'Face to Face' programme conducted as part of the festival
- ✓ During the festival, various panel discussions, symposiums, national seminar, writer's meet and a tribal writers meet were held along with a book exhibition conducted by the Academy

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **On March 13, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray – virtually launched the Mumbai Climate Action Plan (MCAP)**
- ✓ The plan highlights a target of achieving total carbon neutrality or net zero emissions by 2050 in the state
- ✓ This target is two decades ahead of the Government of India's promised deadline set at the Glasgow COP 26 summit in 2021.
- ✓ The action plan outlines the risks posed to the city under five different categories — coastal erosion, landslides, heat, air pollution and floods — and aims for “mitigation targets” both in the interim and the long term.
- ✓ The various targets specified in the plan include 30% greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction by 2030 and 44% by 2040 before achieving full neutrality by the middle of the century.
- ✓ To finalise the plan, a vulnerability assessment and an inventory of GHG and natural green cover was carried out over the last six months
- ✓ This work was undertaken by the BMC with technical support from the World Resources Institute (WRI) India and the C40 Cities network.
- ✓ MCAP has been built on scientific data and focuses on six sectors in order to provide sector-specific mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- ✓ The six key sectors include energy and buildings, sustainable mobility, urban greening and biodiversity, air quality, urban flooding and water resource management
- ✓ The priority activities to be undertaken in the six sectors include
  - ✓ decarbonizing Mumbai's power grid through use of clean fuels and renewable energy like solar as well as building energy-efficient and climate-resilient infrastructure
  - ✓ promoting low carbon mobility solutions such as cycling and pedestrianisation for sustainable mobility
  - ✓ a zero landfill waste management plan
  - ✓ increasing vegetation cover with an emphasis on biodiversity
  - ✓ building flood-resilient systems and
  - ✓ improving air quality through better monitoring and decentralised planning.

## APPOINTMENTS

- **Tata Sons chief N Chandrasekaran - has taken charge as the chairman of Air India on March 14**
- ✓ The development came days after Ilker Ayci, former chairman of Turkish Airlines, turned down the Tata Group's offer to be the chief executive officer and managing director of Air India
- ✓ Ayci, the former Chairman of Turkish Airlines, was chosen as the debt-ridden carrier's first CEO in mid-February



- ✓ Before heading Tata Sons, Chandrasekaran was chairman of Tata Consultancy Services.
- ✓ He was the third non-Tata, after Nowroji Saklatwala and Cyrus Mistry, to hold the position.
- ✓ The 58-year-old Tata veteran had started his career as a software programmer in 1987
- ✓ In 2016, he joined the board of Tata Sons and took over as chairman in 2017.
- ✓ In February 2022, N Chandrasekaran was reappointed as chairman of Tata Sons for a second term of five years
- ✓ Hindustan Unilever (HUL) chairman & MD Sanjiv Mehta and former General Insurance Corporation chairperson Alice Vaidyan have been inducted into the Air India (AI) board as independent directors.
- ✓ With these appointments, the AI board has expanded to seven members from four.
- ✓ Current AI employees Vinod Hejmadi (director-finance), Captain R S Sandhu (director-operations), Meenakshi Mallik (director-commercial) and Amrita Sharan (director-personnel) are the other four board members.
- ✓ Tata Group had won the bid of over Rs 18,000 crore to acquire the national carrier along with Air India Express and 50% stake in AISATS in October last year.
- ✓ The Tata Group officially took over the management of the national airlines in January.
- ✓ As per the current rules, an airline company has to receive the government's nod before new board members take charge.
- ✓ Typically, the Tata Sons chairman also chairs the boards of companies promoted by it, especially the important ones.
- ✓ Chandrasekaran is the third Tata Sons chairman to head Air India.
- ✓ J R D Tata was the chairman of the carrier till February 1978.
- ✓ His successor Ratan Tata was AI chairman from 1986-87 till early 1990.

## OBITUARY

- **Mina Swaminathan, distinguished chair, Gender and Development, at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and wife of illustrious agricultural**

**scientist M S Swaminathan - passed away in Chennai at the age of 89 on March 14**



- ✓ Mina Swaminathan was a teacher-educator and writer on early childhood education (ECE)
- ✓ She was a renowned educator and child care expert who chaired the committee that recommended what became the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).
- ✓ Mina Swaminathan was one of the founders of the Mobile Creches, a former chair of the Delhi Social Welfare Board, an Emeritus Trustee of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and an international consultant with UNESCO and UNICEF on childhood care and education.
- ✓ She also worked in the field of theatre as a means of social and women's empowerment.
- ✓ Mina Swaminathan was also a founder member of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi in 1987 and Vice Chairman of the organization from 1987 to 1993
- ✓ She served as the chairman of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Committee on 'The Preschool Child'
- ✓ The committee's report on the Preschool Child (1972) led to the setting up of ICDS, the most comprehensive child care service in the developing world.
- ✓ Her contribution to ICDS, particularly in Tamil Nadu, is notable after she moved to Chennai in 1989, setting up mobile training teams – a unique innovation, travelling widely across the state and working with ICDS frontline workers.
- ✓ She is survived by her husband and her three daughters - Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organisation (WHO), Madhura Swaminthan, Professor, Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, and Chairperson MSSRF, and Nitya Rao, Director, NISD, University of East Anglica, UK

## **SPORTS**

- **Five Indian women boxers - grabbed gold medals in the youth competition of the Asian Youth and Junior Boxing Championships in Amman, Jordan on March 14.**

- ✓ Tamanna in 50 kilograms and Nivedita Karki in the 48-kilogram category won gold medals while Shaheen Gill in 60 kilograms, Ravina in 63 kilograms and Muskan in 75 kilograms also bagged gold medals.
  - ✓ Renu, Tanisha Lamba, Prachi, Pranjal Yadav, and Sneha are the other five boxers who secured bronze medals as Indian women bagged a medal in every 12 categories in the youth section
  - ✓ On March 13, Krrish Pal (46kg) and Yashwardhan Singh (60kg) registered impressive victories in the finals and added two more gold medals to India's tally in the junior section.
  - ✓ Indian junior team finished its campaign in second position with 21 medals eight gold, seven silver, and six bronze at the prestigious continental tournament where both the age groups of men and women youth and junior are being played together.
- **Tamil Nadu's CA Bhavani Devi - won individual gold in the women's sabre event at the 32nd senior National fencing championships in Amritsar.**
- ✓ This was the Tokyo Olympian's 10th individual gold at the Nationals.
  - ✓ Bhavani Devi became the first Indian fencer to represent the country at the Tokyo Olympics in July 2021
  - ✓ She lost to World No. 3 Manon Brunet in the Round of 32 in the Games
  - ✓ Bhavani's first international medal came in 2009 -- a bronze in the team event of the 2nd Commonwealth Championship in Malaysia -- and she subsequently won medals in the Asian Fencing Championship in 2010 and a bronze (individual) in Commonwealth Championships in 2012.
  - ✓ She also won a silver in the Tournoi Satellite Fencing Championship in Reykjavik, Iceland, twice (in 2017 and 2018)

