



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JANUARY 2, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **In Tamil Nadu, the nationwide dry run for Covid-19 vaccination - will be conducted at 17 locations across five districts on January 2**
- ✓ The dry run will replicate every step of the real vaccination drive to check the state's preparedness in all aspects
- ✓ It would be conducted in Chennai, Tiruvallur, Coimbatore, the Nilgiris and Tirunelveli districts.
- ✓ The locations include Rajiv Gandhi Government GH in Chennai, ESI Hospital in Coimbatore and Ooty Medical College Hospital besides selected primary health centres in corporation and rural areas.
- ✓ The state is expected to vaccinate more than five lakh health workers in the first phase of inoculation.
- ✓ Each of the 17 centres will have a vaccination team consisting of five people — a doctor, a staff nurse, a village health or urban health nurse, a computer operator who will also handle CoWin app, and another member
- ✓ The aim of the drive is to check if multiple steps like assembling beneficiaries, checking identity, administering shots, recording data and observing patients for 30 minutes can be done without any technical issues.
- ✓ The exercise will also monitor the time taken to vaccinate one person and ease of using the CoWIN app that will generate a certificate for the vaccinated person.
- ✓ Further, health officials will check if the vaccination booths have proper entrance and exit, waiting area, cold storage facilities and separate enclosure for people to wait after vaccination for observation.
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation and the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine have taken up the work of creating infrastructure to preserve the vaccine for around 2.5 crore persons in the first phase
- ✓ The Directorate of Public Health will also test if it can send messages to the health worker's phone on the time they should be at the site and the follow-up date and time for booster dose.


- ✓ After health workers, the state will vaccinate other frontline workers such as police, armed forces, home guard and disaster management staff.
- **The State Health Department – has commissioned a research project to test the goodness of the fermented rice or ‘pazhayathu’ as called in Tamil.**
- ✓ The project, launched at a cost of ₹2.7 crore involving 600 patients, aims to study the effect of probiotics in fermented rice (pazhaya soru) in treating inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) like Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis (UC).
- ✓ Crohn’s disease, which has become a common now, is being reported on every alternate day at government hospitals in Chennai
- ✓ In India, the prevalence of the disease is 45 per 1,00,000 people.
- ✓ IBD treatment normally involves taking steroid drugs, immunosuppressants and anti-cancer drugs, and in some cases surgical intervention.

3-YEAR STUDY

- TN health dept to study 600 patients on the effect of fermented rice in treating Crohn’s, Ulcerative Colitis
- IBDs cause diarrhoea, bloody stools, anaemia, loss of body weight
- Fermented rice, acting as probiotic, can produce good bacteria. It’s also a rich source of fibres, vitamins, minerals

- ✓ The fermented rice is prescribed by the state doctors to cure the IBD alongwith other medications
- ✓ A three-year research study, funded by the State Development Policy Council, is aimed at proving the curative properties of fermented rice
- ✓ Human intestine contains millions of good bacteria that help in digestion and improve immunity.
- ✓ Unhealthy diet or stress can affect the bacterial balance in the gut triggering an inappropriate immune response thereby causing inflammation and IBD.
- ✓ Fermented rice, which contains adequate healthy bacteria, can correct the bacterial imbalance and improves immunity.
- ✓ It also has fibre, vitamins and other digestible minerals.
- ✓ The research study will involve three steps –
 - ✓ Choosing the right variety of rice such as unpolished samba rice or ‘ponni’ or organic rice
 - ✓ Determining the right condition for fermentation by trying it in residential areas, sea shores (to see the impact of sodium chloride) and hospital environment and
 - ✓ To involve at least 600 patients in clinical trial

- **The Tamil Nadu government - has allocated ₹111 crore for phase-II of the long-term flood mitigation project that has been taken up in Chennai and neighbouring districts.**
- ✓ The project aims to
 - ✓ create an effective water management system to augment water storage capacity,
 - ✓ restore missing links of water bodies, and
 - ✓ avoid flood in highly vulnerable areas in Chennai, Kancheepuram, Chengalpet, Tiruvallur and Cuddalore districts.
- ✓ The project is handled by the state public works department's water resource wing, which has mapped highly vulnerable areas during the 2015 floods
- ✓ Earlier, the state government had sanctioned ₹238 crore in September 2019 for phase-II of the project.
- ✓ However, the unspent money of ₹187 crore was surrendered to the state.
- ✓ Now, the government has issued an order, sanctioning ₹111.46 crore from the surrendered fund for undertaking the ongoing works.



Representative image

Phase II of long term flood mitigation work in Adyar sub basin boundary

WORK IN PROGRESS

Orathur flood buffering reservoir ₹55.84cr	<p>> Over 70% of the work was completed</p> <p>PHASE I flood mitigation work implemented in Kancheepuram at a cost of ₹84.7cr</p> <p>> Flood regulators have been constructed at seven places in the Adyar sub basin to limit the flooding during monsoons</p>
Varadharajapuram flood regulator ₹11.12cr	
Somangalam flood regulator ₹4.68cr	
Kilkattalai cantilever retaining wall ₹16.75cr	
Tambaram big tank cut and cover drain ₹13.73cr	

- ✓ The authorities have given utmost importance to creation of riverine reservoirs to augment water storage and mitigate flooding of Adyar river banks.
- ✓ **Further, Chennai and its suburbs will get real time flood forecasting system by February 2022.**

Catchment area

The area covered by the waterbodies in six river basins in and around Chennai:

Adyar: **869 sq km**

Cooum: **473 sq km**

Kosasthalaiyar: **1,949 sq km**

Kovalam: **782 sq km**

Nandhiyar: **581 sq km**

Nagariyar: **320 sq km**

- ✓ The forecasting system will cover waterbodies in 4,974 sq km of area in the limits of Greater Chennai Corporation and other local bodies
 - ✓ Currently, eco restoration projects are undertaken in rivers such as the Cooum and the Adyar
 - ✓ The consultant has submitted the hydrology report for six river basins in Chennai and its neighbouring districts.
- **Arittapatti, a cluster of seven hillocks near Melur in Madurai district - is likely to be declared a bioheritage site by the Government soon.**
- ✓ It is home to rare birds including 20 species of birds of prey, raptors and a variety of plants and animals
 - ✓ The hillocks, which were about 300 to 500 feet high, are home to rare birds including legger falcon, which have been sighted for the first time in the region apart from northwest India.
 - ✓ The majestic peregrine falcon, its resident subspecies Shahseen falcon are also seen breeding in the hillocks.
 - ✓ According to renowned ornithologist Salim Ali in one of his books, Shahseen falcon was considered endemic to Western Ghats only.
 - ✓ Raptors like Bonelli's eagle and migrant species like booted eagle were also sighted in these hillocks.
 - ✓ The hillocks have around 72 water bodies, including natural springs, which supply water to the biodiversity
- **The Vellore postal department - have started a philately park in their district headquarters, to kindle interest on stamp collecting among children**
- ✓ The park has been set up in 200 metres-long and 15 meters-wide area.



- ✓ The park contains boards with stamps released on Vellore including its personalities and monuments.
- ✓ Each board mentions the year of release, the denomination of the stamp and also details about the person or monument on the stamp.

- ✓ There are boards with a stamp on Christian Medical College which was released in 2006, on Kirubananda Variyar who was born in Kangeyanallur, Vellore, in 1906 and a stamp on Vellore Fort released in 1984.
 - ✓ There is also a board for the stamp on Vellore mutiny, which took place in 1806 and which was released in 2006 to observe its 200th year and one on Voorhees College which was also released in 2006
 - ✓ Apart from this, there are boards with a collection of stamps on famous women from Tamil Nadu, and historical places in the State.
 - ✓ Besides, a philately stall will also be set up in the Vellore district headquarters from January 4 to 6, where people can purchase stamps.
- **A new mobile App 'Namma Tiruvannamalai'- was released by Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Minister Sevvoor S. Ramachandran in Arani on January 1**
- ✓ The app is expected to help in ensuring two-way communication between the district administration and the public.
 - ✓ It was designed and developed by the district administration with the help of a private agency,
 - ✓ The app can be downloaded from the Google Playstore.
 - ✓ It will highlight various government schemes, development works and new projects.
 - ✓ The app will aid in grievance redress and has contact information of officials.
 - ✓ Further, the public are encouraged to actively participate in social awareness campaigns like plastic-free Tiruvannamalai, Swachh Bharat and Jal Shakti Abhiyan through the App
 - ✓ It will have all relevant information about Tiruvannamalai district and can be downloaded from www.tiruvannamalaimaavattam.com.
- **Puducherry - has bagged the award for the 'Best Performing Union Territory in India' for Implementing the PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) Scheme**



- ✓ K. Mahesh, Secretary (Housing) received the award at a function in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister for Housing, gave away awards virtually.
- ✓ The awardees were Parimala G. from Karaikal, Devaki K. in Mahe and Kamma Radha Kumari in Yanam.
- ✓ The beneficiaries received the award in the presence of respective Collectors/Regional Administrator.
- ✓ This is the second time Puducherry has been selected for excellence in implementation of PMAY.
- ✓ The award is based on the performance of the UT in a number of parameters such as achieving the demand, number of houses approved, number of houses completed, monthly progress and DBT transfer to the beneficiaries
- ✓ PMAY is an affordable housing scheme implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- ✓ It was launched by the Ministry in 2015 to meet the housing needs of urban poor.
- ✓ The Government of Puducherry has been implementing PMAY-U (Urban) scheme since 2016.
- ✓ The Town and Country Planning Department was the State-level nodal agency for implementing the “Housing for All Mission” by 2022.

NATIONAL

- **On January 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - laid the foundation of six Light House Projects in six major cities as part of the Global Housing Technology Challenge-India initiative of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)**
- ✓ In each of these projects, nearly 2.7 units of houses will be built per day using advanced construction technologies from countries such as the USA, Germany, Finland, France, New Zealand and Canada.
- ✓ The aim of the programme is to build around 1,000 houses each in Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Agartala (Tripura) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) over a period of next 12 months
- ✓ For the construction of these houses, six distinct technologies were chosen out of 54 such shortlisted technologies.
- ✓ The government expects to complete these houses before January 26, 2022
- ✓ According to the PM, these technologies will be subsequently used across the country for faster construction of houses with the best quality
- ✓ The houses being built using new technologies will take less time to build and will be resilient, affordable and comfortable.
- ✓ This is as per the government’s vision towards achieving the ‘Housing for All’ target in 2022.
- ✓ The Light House Project is to be implemented by Union Urban Ministry.
- ✓ The PM said in Ranchi, houses will be built using Germany’s 3D construction system.

Providing a roof

A look at some of the features of the Light House Projects

- 1,000 houses each will be built in Indore, Rajkot, Chennai, Ranchi, Agartala and Lucknow
- Prefabricated sandwich panel system will be used in Indore
- Modern construction practices from France, Germany & Canada will be adopted
- In Chennai, precast concrete system will be used for faster, cheaper construction



- ✓ In this, each room will be made separately, and then the entire structure will be put together much like toymaker Lego's building blocks.
- ✓ The cost of each house is Rs 12.59 lakh.
- ✓ Out of this, Rs 7.83 lakh will be provided by the Central Government and State Government, while the remaining Rs. 4.76 lakh will have to be paid by the beneficiaries.
- ✓ Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), sanction has been accorded for building 1.62 lakh storeyed tenements and 3.42 lakh individual houses at a total cost of over ₹27,000 crore.
- ✓ In 2017, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry asked the states and union territories to select six locations for the light house project under GHTC-India
- ✓ In Chennai, the project will be launched at Perumbakkam by using precast concrete system imported from Finland and the US
- ✓ Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri and senior officials were present.



- ✓ The Global Housing Technology Challenge is aimed at identifying innovative technologies from across the globe that are sustainable and disaster-resilient

- ✓ Under the challenge, the Centre has sanctioned the construction of 1,152 tenements, on an area of 413 sq. ft. each, at Perumbakkam at a total cost of ₹116.27 crore.
 - ✓ The project would include social amenities such as a ration shop, two anganwadi centres, a library, a milk booth and six shops, besides a sewage treatment plant and an electrical sub-station.
 - ✓ To overcome the difficulties faced by the urban slum families, the late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa had unveiled Tamil Nadu Vision-2023, which envisaged slum-free cities in the State by 2023.
- **On January 1, the Drugs Controller General of India - recommended emergency use authorisation (EUA) for Pune-based Serum Institute of India's 'Covishield' developed by Oxford University and pharma major Astra-Zeneca.**
- ✓ The final marketing approval will also be given by a subject expert committee (SEC) and the first shots are expected to be given in the next seven to 10 days.
 - ✓ Bharat Biotech has been asked to furnish more data demonstrating the efficacy of its candidate, Covaxin
 - ✓ The SEC gives its recommendation to the DCGI which is the approving authority for drugs and vaccines.

FIRST SHOTS IN NEXT 7-10 DAYS?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ First shots expected to be given in the next 7-10 days, most likely to health workers ➤ Aim to inoculate 'priority population' of around 30 crore by July; govt likely to add sanitation workers and pharmacists to list ➤ Panel suggests emergency nod for 2 full doses to be given in a gap of 4-6 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The company may also be asked to report adverse events every 15 days ➤ First order for 10 crore doses will be funded through PM Cares ➤ SII has offered price of ₹225-250 per dose for first tranche, Bharat Biotech has offered ₹350, according to a source ➤ Covishield can be stored at 3-8°C, making it preferred option
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- ✓ The authorization will commence the government's massive effort to inoculate the "priority population" of 30 crore by July 2021.
- ✓ The 30 crore "priority population" includes healthcare and frontline workers, people above 50 years of age and those below 50 but with serious comorbidities.
- ✓ Once supplies improve, the government will simultaneously start inoculating other categories apart from healthcare workers.
- ✓ India is likely to follow the dosing guidelines similar to those approved by the UK
- ✓ Accordingly, UK plans to inoculate as many people with the first dose as possible and follow a gap of four to 12 weeks
- ✓ Apart from marketing authorisation, DCGI will approve the label for vaccine vials.
- ✓ Once the label with requisite conditions or details are approved and printed, they will be stuck to the vials before dispatch.

- ✓ Meanwhile, a nationwide dry run to assess the preparedness on field for the vaccination process is scheduled to be held on January 2.
 - ✓ This will be conducted in all state capitals in at least three session sites.
 - ✓ So far SII has built up a stockpile of 50 million doses intended for use in India.
 - ✓ The first order is likely to be for 10 crore doses that will be funded through PM Cares.
 - ✓ SII has offered a price of ₹225-250 per dose for the first tranche, whereas Bharat Biotech has offered ₹350.
 - ✓ A total of around 96,000 vaccinators have been trained so far for the vaccination programme.
 - ✓ Covishield was approved by the health regulator in the U.K. under emergency use conditions on December 30.
 - ✓ It is similar to the 'Oxford vaccine' developed by the Oxford University vaccine group and marketed by AstraZeneca,
 - ✓ Covishield is currently being tested in 1,600 volunteers as part of its Phase-2/3 trial.
- **On December 31, the Department Of Science And Technology (DST) – has released the draft of the new Science, Technology, Innovation Policy (STIP)**
- ✓ The draft policy aims to transform the national STI environment with emphasis on PM Modi's Atmanirbhar call and global competitiveness
 - ✓ It has proposed new establishments and reforms through short, medium and long-term mission-mode projects that will develop end-to-end science and technology ecosystem.
 - ✓ The policy proposes creation of a national STI observatory that will act as a central repository for all data related to and generated from the STI ecosystem.
 - ✓ Further, a technology support framework will be created to facilitate a two-way approach of creating indigenous technology and indigenization of technology.
 - ✓ A strategic technology board will be constituted to act as a link connecting different strategic departments.
 - ✓ An institutional architecture to integrate Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS) and grassroots innovation into the overall education, research and innovation system will be established.
 - ✓ The policy has proposed a Strategic Technology Development Fund to incentivize the private sector and Higher Educational Institutions.
 - ✓ By-product (Spinoff) technologies resulting from larger projects will be commercialized and used for civilian purposes.
 - ✓ Besides, each state has to set aside a percentage of the state allocation for STI-related activities under a separate budget head.
 - ✓ Foreign MNCs will collaborate with domestic private and public-sector entities on projects aligned to national needs and priorities
 - ✓ An STI development bank will be set up to facilitate a corpus fund for investing in direct long-term investments in select strategic areas on various long and

medium-term projects, commercial ventures, start-ups, technology diffusion and licensing.

- ✓ It mandates at least 30% women in all decision-making bodies, including selection and evaluation committees
- ✓ It also seeks to provide the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ+) community retirement and spousal benefits.
- ✓ To boost gender neutrality, the policy suggests a dual recruitment policy so that couples do not face the challenge of choosing a spouse's career over theirs.
- ✓ The policy proposes an 'equity and inclusive (E&I) charter' that will tackle discrimination— gender, caste, religion, geography, language, disability and other exclusions and inequalities— by drawing ideas from different E&I frameworks like Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter 14.
- ✓ Renowned scientist Prof Rohini Godbole chaired the committee on equity that made many of these recommendations

➤ **The flights between India and the UK - to resume partially from January 8**

- ✓ However, only 15 flights per week by Indian carriers and 15 flights by UK airlines — 30 totally — will initially be allowed to and from four metros only.
- ✓ This will be in place till January 23, 2021 to and from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru & Hyderabad only.
- ✓ The regular flights were suspended on December 23 due to the new and more infectious Covid strain in the UK
- ✓ Till then, 67 flights per week were operated between London and 10 Indian cities, including Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Goa, Amritsar and Kochi, under the air bubble agreement.
- ✓ British Airways had 29 flights, while Air India had 23, Virgin Atlantic eight and Vistara seven.

➤ **The central government - has decided to extend disability compensation to all its employees if they get disabled in the line of duty and are retained in service despite such disablement.**

- ✓ The move was announced by minister of state of personnel Jitendra Singh on January 1
- ✓ It will particularly benefit personnel of the central armed police forces (CAPFs) like BSF, CRPF etc, who are more prone to disability in performance of their duties
- ✓ At present, these personnel were not entitled to disability pension if appointed after 01.01.2004 and are covered under the National Pension Scheme (NPS).
- ✓ As per the new order issued by the department of pensions in the ministry of personnel, the employees covered under NPS will also get benefits under Rule (9) of Extra Ordinary Pension (EOP).
- ✓ In other words, the scheme will benefit a government servant, who gets disabled while performing his duties and this disablement is attributed to government service

- ✓ In case, the personnel is still retained in the service in spite of disablement, a lump sum compensation will be paid to him as per the capitalised value of the disability element
- **The government - is aiming to ensure E-20 vehicles running on fuel blended with 20% ethanol enter the market by 2025**
- ✓ The decision on this behalf was taken at a review meeting with stakeholder ministries on designing the roadmap for ethanol fuelled vehicles in India.
- ✓ To push the production of E-20 vehicles, the government has also set up a committee of three Union ministers comprising Nitin Gadkari, Dharmendra Pradhan and Piyush Goyal.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the road transport ministry has issued draft automotive industry standard (AIS) norms for vehicles that can run on fuel with 20%, 85%, 95% blending of ethanol and the ones running on 100% pure ethanol.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The outgoing US President Donald Trump - has extended the ban on H-1B and L-1 work visas through March 2021**
- ✓ In June 2020, Trump signed a proclamation suspending the issuance of certain categories of worker visas through December 31, 2020
- ✓ H-1Bs and L-1s are used extensively by Indian IT companies, as also by US technology companies to recruit Indian talent.
- ✓ The latest move will impact IT professionals who were already issued H-1B visas for the 2021 fiscal beginning October 1, 2020.
- ✓ However, it is not clear whether President-elect Joe Biden will rescind the ban when he takes office on January 20.
- **On December 30, the WHO – said that it has cleared the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine for emergency use**
- ✓ This means poorer countries may soon get access to the vaccine shot that is already available in Europe and North America.
- ✓ Every country that has a drug regulatory agency will have to issue its own approval for any Covid-19 vaccine, but countries with weak systems usually rely on WHO to vet the shots.
- ✓ The Pfizer shot has already received clearance in the US, Britain, the EU and a dozen other nations
- ✓ According to WHO, the shot has met the must-have criteria for safety and efficacy prescribed by it.
- ✓ The-Pfizer vaccine has to be stored at ultra-frozen temperatures.
- **Israel – is all set to become the first country to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19**

- ✓ Over 10% (1 million) of the country's population has already received the first of two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine by the 12th day of a vaccination programme, which began on December 20.
- ✓ The rapid pace and scope of the programme has far outpaced the rest of the world
- ✓ Israel, with a population of 9 million, is followed by the tiny Gulf nation of Bahrain, which has vaccinated around 3.4% of its population of 1.5 million people.
- ✓ Less than 1% of the population of the US has been vaccinated, and in many European nations only tiny fractions of the population have got the vaccine.

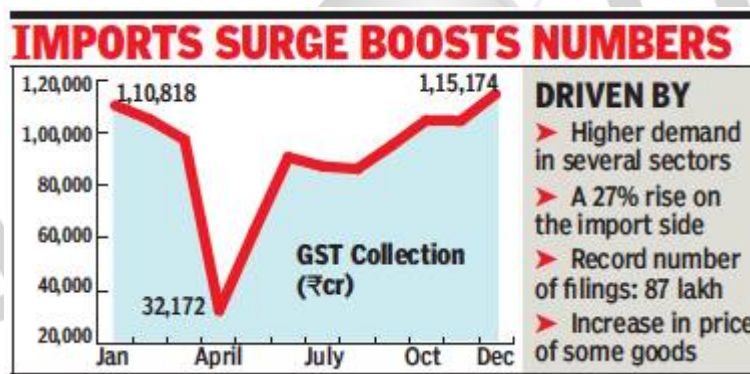
DEFENCE

- **The 13-lakh strong Indian Army - has created a new human rights cell for “greater transparency and probity” in its functioning in disturbed areas like Jammu & Kashmir and the northeast.**
 - ✓ Major general Gautam Chauhan, commissioned into the Gorkha Rifles, has taken charge as the first Additional Director General (Human Rights) at Army headquarters in New Delhi.
 - ✓ He will report directly to the Army vice-chief
 - ✓ The post will serve as the nodal point to examine all human rights violation reports.
 - ✓ The appointment of the ADG (HR) comes soon after the reports of violation of AFSPA powers by the army personnel
 - ✓ An ADG (Vigilance) will also soon be appointed as part of the ongoing restructuring of the Army HQs.
 - ✓ As per the plan, the ADG (HR) will also have an Indian Police Service officer of SSP/SP rank on deputation in his branch
 - ✓ In the reorganisation of the Army headquarters underway, Lt-General Paramjit Singh last month formally took over as the first deputy chief (strategy)
 - ✓ He will be responsible in synergising operations, intelligence, logistics, perspective planning and information warfare while handling emergencies like the ongoing military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh
- **The Army – signed around ₹65 crore contract for 12 new patrol boats in the Pangong Lake with defence PSU Goa Shipyard**
 - ✓ These specialised fast patrol boats will have advanced surveillance gear and other equipment
 - ✓ The deal will also cover spares and maintenance for four years
 - ✓ The decision for the order comes amidst the ongoing eight-month-long military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh
 - ✓ The deliveries of the boats will begin from May this year.
 - ✓ They will be deployed in Pangong Tso (Lake), which is frozen at present

- ✓ Indian and Chinese troops are currently locked in confrontation both on the north and south banks of the 134km-long Pangong Tso, two-thirds of which is controlled by China as it extends from Tibet to India.
- ✓ The Army has 17 QRT (quick-reaction team) boats for patrolling the Pangong Lake, which is located at an altitude of 13,900 feet, since 2012-13.
- ✓ Both Indian and Chinese soldiers patrol their areas of Pangong Lake on foot as well as boats during summer.

ECONOMY

- **Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections - hit a record high in December 2020, with collections of ₹1,15,174 crore**
- ✓ The revenues showed an increase of 12% than a year ago and 9.7% than the previous month's inflows.
- ✓ The previous high of ₹1.14 lakh crore was recorded in April 2019
- ✓ The collections in December refers to the sales and transactions in November
- ✓ It also marks three straight months of more than ₹1lakh crore collections.



- ✓ There was a record increase in monthly filing of returns, estimated at 87 lakh, which was 7% higher than December 2019.
- ✓ The government's decision to closely monitor tax credits and a crackdown on fraudulent transactions has contributed to the increase in collections
- ✓ The collections in December were driven by a 27% increase in collections from imports in November
- ✓ Among the States, Odisha recorded a 20% growth in GST revenues in December, followed by Rajasthan (16%), Andhra Pradesh (14%) and Gujarat (13%).
- ✓ Further, revenues grew by 11% in Jharkhand, 10% in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh, and 8% in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the growth of digitisation of payments in the country.**
- ✓ The RBI-DPI has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period.

- ✓ The DPI for March 2019 and March 2020 is estimated at 153.47 and 207.84 respectively, indicating appreciable growth.
- ✓ The RBI-DPI comprises five broad parameters, which have different weightages to measure the penetration of digital payments in the country
- ✓ The parameters includes - Payment Enablers (25%), Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%) and Supply-side factors (15%), Payment Performance (45%) and Consumer Centricity (5%)
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India is to publish the Digital Payments Index on a semi-annual basis from March 2021.

SPORTS

- **The central government - has changed the service rules for its employees holding elective posts in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and National Sports Federations (NSFs).**
- ✓ As per the new rules, an upper limit of “two terms or for a maximum period of five years” has been fixed for government servants who can hold elective posts in the sports bodies.
- ✓ The original stipulated tenure was either four years or one full-term, whichever is earlier
- ✓ It was further relaxed in August 2019 to a consolidated period of two terms or a maximum of four years in office, whichever is earlier
- ✓ According to the government, the change in service rules has been done to avoid instances where government servants continue to hold elective offices in various capacities for unduly long periods
- ✓ Also, in some cases, the government servants are reported to have either got themselves re-elected after a gap or have got a family member/close relative elected in order to keep control of such bodies
- ✓ Apart from IOA, a majority of federations currently have government servants serving in key positions like presidents and vice-presidents as elected office-bearers.
- ✓ The rule applies to government servants belonging to the central government and employees of PSUs and autonomous bodies of union/state governments.

