

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – DECEMBER 24, 2022

STATES

- **Uttarakhand governor Lt Gen Gurmit Singh – gave his nod to the Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill 2022**



- ✓ With the governor's approval, the bill has now become an Act in Uttarakhand.
 - ✓ The Uttarakhand Religion Freedom Amendment Bill, which provides stricter provisions for "forceful and unlawful conversions", was passed in the state assembly on November 30 this year.
 - ✓ The legislation makes unlawful conversion a "cognisable and nonbailable offence" punishable with imprisonment of at least two years to a maximum of 10 years and a fine of at least Rs 50,000.
 - ✓ The offender can also be fined amounts ranging from Rs.25,000 to Rs.10 lakh.
 - ✓ The previous law had a provision for a jail term of one to five years.
 - ✓ Along the lines of Uttar Pradesh, the Uttarakhand government also came up with "stricter" provisions to check forceful and illegal conversions in the state.
- **Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot - recently announced that the government will provide 12 cooking gas cylinders annually to poor households at a subsidised rate of Rs 500 from April 1, 2023**
 - ✓ Currently, the price of domestic cooking gas cylinders in Rajasthan is Rs 1,050.



- ✓ The reduced price of liquefied petroleum gas will be available for those below the poverty line and enrolled in the Ujjwala scheme.
- ✓ The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, launched by the BJP government at the Centre, provides free cooking gas connections to families living below the poverty line.
- ✓ The announcement comes ahead of the Assembly elections that are expected to take place in the state next year

NATIONAL

- **On December 23, both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha - were adjourned sine die, bringing an end to the winter session six days ahead of schedule**
- ✓ The decision has been taken after the opposition forced repeated adjournments over their demand for a discussion on the India-China border issue among others.
- ✓ In his valedictory address, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said productivity of the House was 97% during the 13 sittings totalling 62 hours and 42 minutes.
- ✓ During the 13 sittings, a total of seven bills were passed while nine bills were introduced in the House
- ✓ These include the bill for supplementary demands for grants, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022 and the Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill.
- ✓ In Rajya Sabha, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said productivity of the House was 102% while the House held 13 sittings totalling 64 hours 50 minutes.
- ✓ This was Jagdeep Dhankhar's first session as chairman of the Rajya Sabha, after his election as vice president on August 10.
- ✓ The House passed and returned nine bills during the period, while 31 private member bills were also introduced in the House
- ✓ On December 22, the Rajya Sabha also passed The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill of 2022 and The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Fourth Amendment) Bill of 2022 which was moved by Tribal Minister Arjun Munda.
- ✓ During the sessions, Rajya Sabha passed The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, three bills relating to The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment), The

New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (Amendment) Bill, The Maritime Anti Piracy (Amendments) Bills.

- ✓ PM Narendra Modi, Congress parliamentary party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Piyush Goyal were among those present on the last day of the session.
 - ✓ The Winter Session of Parliament which started on 7th of December was scheduled to end on 29th December.
 - ✓ This was the eighth consecutive session to be cut short from the original schedule
 - ✓ This session was held for 13 days and it was one of the shortest in the 17th Lok Sabha, with the other being the 2020 monsoon session held for 10 days during the Covid pandemic
- **On December 23, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) - arrested former ICICI Bank Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD&CEO) Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar in connection with the Rs 3,250 crore Videocon loan scam**

'IRREGULARITIES' IN ₹3.3k CR LOAN TO VIDEOCON

<p>CBI has accused Chanda Kochhar, 59, of criminal conspiracy and cheating for alleged irregularities in a ₹3,250cr loan ICICI gave Videocon Group in 2012 when she was heading the bank</p>	<p>A letter by a whistle-blower stated that Venugopal Dhoot-owned Supreme Energy lent ₹65cr to Deepak Kochhar's NuPower. Supreme Energy later acquired a 95% stake in NuPower through a series of share transfers. Dhoot transferred Supreme Energy to his associate Mahesh Punglia. After ICICI Bank sanctioned the loan to Videocon, Punglia transferred his stake to a trust controlled by Deepak Kochhar for ₹9 lakh</p>	<p>Jan 24, 2019 CBI registered FIR in case. ED also registered a case the same year, conducted searches and questioned the Kochhars</p> <p>2020 ED attached Kochhar's flat at CCI chambers in Churchgate. It was earlier owned by Videocon. Agency arrested Deepak Kochhar</p> <p>Dec 23, 2022 CBI calls Chanda and Deepak Kochhar for questioning, books them under sections of cheating, criminal conspiracy, and prevention of corruption Act, and arrests them</p>
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- ✓ Chanda Kochhar, her husband and Venugopal Dhoot of the Videocon group were booked by the CBI along with others in a case related to criminal conspiracy
- ✓ The ICICI Bank-Videocon case is one of the most high-profile scams witnessed by Indian banking industry
- ✓ Chanda Kochhar was accused of misusing her position in the ICICI bank in granting loans to Videocon group promoter Venugopal Dhoot in 2009 and 2011
- ✓ It was alleged that Venugopal Dhoot invested crores in Deepak Kochhar's company Nupower Renewables, after receiving the loan from the ICICI bank.
- ✓ The loan to Videocon turned into a Non-Performing Asset (NPA) and later was deemed as a 'bank fraud'.
- ✓ Chanda Kochhar had to step down from her position in the ICICI bank in 2018 because of this multi-crore scam, as the investigation began

- ✓ The case against the Kochhars was registered by CBI in 2019
 - ✓ In September 2020, the Enforcement Directorate arrested Deepak Kochhar, while Chanda Kochhar was arrested by Enforcement Directorate in connection with the same case in 2021
 - ✓ On May 1, 2009, Chanda Kochhar has taken over the charge of ICICI Bank as Managing Director and CEO
 - ✓ She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the third highest civilian decoration, in 2011
- **On December 23, the Centre – has announced the supply of free foodgrain — rice, wheat and coarse grains — to more than 81 crore poor people under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) for one year from January 1, 2023**
 - ✓ At present, under NFSA, every beneficiary is entitled to a monthly quota of 5kg of grain through the public distribution system (PDS) at highly subsidised rates — Rs.3 for every kg of rice, wheat at Rs.2 a kg and coarse grains at Rs.1 per kg.
 - ✓ For the poor people covered under Antodaya Anna Yojana, every individual is entitled to 7kg of subsidised foodgrain a month.
 - ✓ In addition, since the outbreak of Covid, the Centre has been providing additional 5kg to the beneficiaries free of cost under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which is due to end this month.
 - ✓ The free foodgrain programme will cost the government Rs.2 lakh crore.
- **India's first intranasal Covid vaccine iNCOVACC - has been approved by the health ministry as a booster or precautionary dose for those aged 18 years and above.**



- ✓ On December 23, Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that Bharat Biotech's iNCOVACC would be added to the CoWin app and be available at private hospitals to start with.
- ✓ The vaccine, which was developed in collaboration with Washington University at St Louis, is a recombinant replication deficient adenovirus vectored vaccine with a pre-fusion stabilized spike protein.
- ✓ It can be used as a precautionary dose for people who have taken either Covaxin or Covishield for primary vaccination

- ✓ Unlike the existing vaccines for Covid that are injectable, iNCOVACC can be delivered through the nose, as a two-dose series, four weeks apart.
- ✓ A total of eight drops (0.5ml per dose), four drops into each nostril, will be administered, according to Bharat Biotech.
- **On December 23, the Union Cabinet - approved revision of the 'One Rank One Pension' scheme for defence personnel and their families**
 - ✓ The increase in pension would also be extended to family pensioners, including war widows and disabled pensioners.
 - ✓ The scheme, which will take retrospective effect from July 2019, will benefit over 25.13 lakh pensioners, including 4.52 lakh more recent retirees, and their families
 - ✓ Under the scheme, ex-servicemen who have retired before June 30, 2019 will be covered
 - ✓ The estimated additional annual expenditure for the implementation of the revision will be around Rs.8,450 crore.
 - ✓ The decision of the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was announced by information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur
- **The union government – to conduct a nationwide mock drill on December 27 to assess emergency response for handling Covid-19 cases**
 - ✓ According to the government, both public and private hospitals involved in Covid management will participate in it.



- ✓ The decision to carry out a mock drill comes a day after the Prime Minister's review meeting on the Covid situation
- ✓ In the mock drill, doctors and nurses posted in the out patients facilities will conduct physical examination of patients with respiratory symptoms wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs).
- ✓ The emergency and ICU facilities will work with full strength – as in a real situation.

- ✓ An assessment will be carried out to assess the operational readiness of PPEs, oxygen supply, monitors, defibrillators and ventilators.
- **The Rajya Sabha - passed the Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill 2022 by voice vote recently on December 21**
 - ✓ The bill was moved for consideration and passage in the Rajya Sabha by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar
 - ✓ According to the Minister, the bill has provisions for the prevention of maritime piracy, will strengthen India's maritime security and give it an effective legal instrument to combat the menace.
 - ✓ The Bill enables Indian authorities to take action against piracy on the high seas.
 - ✓ It applies to the sea beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone, which is beyond 200 nautical miles from India's coastline.
 - ✓ The Bill defines piracy as any illegal act of violence, detention, or destruction against a ship, aircraft, person, for private purposes, by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft.
 - ✓ In the bill, the government has added provisions for death penalty and life imprisonment for those convicted of maritime piracy
 - ✓ It would enable India to discharge its obligations under the United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
 - ✓ The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on December 19.
 - ✓ The bill was initially introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 9, 2019 and referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs for examination
 - ✓ Out of 18 recommendations of the Standing Committee, 14 have been incorporated suitably in the bill introduced now.
- **Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal - rolled out Government e-Marketplace services (GeM) through Common Service Centres (CSC) and India Post, Department of Post in New Delhi recently on December 21**



- ✓ The integration of India Post and CSC with GeM will be beneficial for last-mile buyers, sellers, and service providers in public procurement.
- ✓ During the event, the Minister also launched the Government e-Marketplace Seller Samvaad Booklet.

- ✓ The booklet is a compilation of testimonials from sellers and service providers based on their experience on the GeM portal.
 - ✓ GeM Seller Samvaad events were held in around 26 cities across the country in collaboration with Press Information Bureau
 - ✓ These events facilitate an informal interaction of GeM sellers and service providers with members of regional and local media to document their experiences in public procurement.
- **The Union Cabinet – has recently approved the National Geospatial Policy that aims to promote entrepreneurship for the socio-economic development of the country**
- ✓ The policy also seeks to promote the use of geospatial products and services
 - ✓ It also intends to generate useful insights from geospatial data and strengthen India's geospatial infrastructure and capabilities.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Japan – recently adopted a new policy to promote use of nuclear power to tackle energy crisis**
- ✓ The new policy promotes use of nuclear energy to ensure a stable power supply amid global fuel shortages, to reduce carbon emissions and to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels
 - ✓ As per the new policy, Japan must maximize the use of existing nuclear reactors by restarting as many of them as possible, prolong the operating life of old reactors beyond their 60-year limit, and develop next-generation reactors to replace them.
 - ✓ Earlier, Japan has planned to phase out nuclear energy by 2030 after the 2011 Fukushima disaster
 - ✓ The government's new basic policy is for bringing about a green transformation, including the new nuclear policy
 - ✓ The government also plans to raise about 20 trillion yen (about \$151 billion) through issuing green transformation bonds to boost investment in decarbonisation projects
 - ✓ The government is aiming for nuclear power to account for 20 to 22% of electricity production by 2030, part of efforts to reach carbon neutrality by 2050
 - ✓ Japan is also planning to use renewable as main energy source
 - ✓ It also plans to promote hydrogen and ammonia as well as off-shore wind power and other forms of energy to promote decarbonization, supply resilience and economic security.
- **The UAE - launched a biometric service at the Abu Dhabi airport under which no passport or ticket will be required and a passenger's face will serve as the boarding pass**



- ✓ Under the new system, passengers can use their faces to get a boarding pass at the airport.
- ✓ The face recognition services will be implemented at select self-service baggage touchpoints, immigration e-gates, and boarding gates and then applied across all passenger touchpoints at the airport, eventually.
- ✓ This advanced AI technology is designed by Abu Dhabi-based tech company, NEXT50.
- ✓ The systems will use hi-tech biometric cameras to verify passenger details along several touchpoints in the airport
- ✓ Once the project is fully realised, the airport will be the only airport in the region with biometric solutions implemented across all customer touchpoints
- **The members of European Union – have recently agreed in-principle to implement a global minimum 15% tax on multinational businesses with annual revenues of \$790 million (€750 million)**
- ✓ This is done in accordance with Pillar 2 of the global tax agreement framed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) last year.
- ✓ The other half of the OECD framework, Pillar 1, would cover the allocation of taxing rights over large multinationals to jurisdictions where profits are generated.
- ✓ It is estimated that the minimum tax rate would boost global tax revenues by \$150 billion annually.
- ✓ In October 2021, 136 countries had agreed on a plan to redistribute tax rights across jurisdictions and enforce a minimum tax rate of 15% on large multinational corporations.
- ✓ Large multinational companies have traditionally paid taxes in their home countries even though they did most of their business in foreign countries.
- ✓ The OECD plan tries to give more taxing rights to the governments of countries where large businesses conduct a substantial amount of their business

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **PTC India - has entered into an agreement with Bhutan's electricity utility firm Druk Green Power Corporation Limited to supply 600 MW power to Bhutan during the winter season**



- ✓ Bhutan, which has been exporting hydro power to India over the years, needs to import electricity to meet its increased domestic energy requirement during the winter season.
- ✓ Bhutan has also executed an agreement with the settlement nodal agency for settlement of grid operation related charges
- ✓ PTC India Limited is the leading provider of power trading solutions in India

PERSONALITIES

- **Renowned athlete PT Usha - became the first nominated Rajya Sabha MP to join the panel of Vice-Chairpersons in the upper house**



- ✓ The decision was announced by Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar at the house recently on December 20
- ✓ This is the first time a nominated member has been entrusted with this responsibility
- ✓ The panel of chairpersons is those who conduct the house proceedings in the absence of the chairman and deputy chairman.
- ✓ Along with Usha, YSRCP leader V Vijayasai Reddy has also been nominated as another chairperson in the panel
- ✓ Others in the panel are Bhuvneshwar Kalita, Saroj Pandey, Surendra Singh Nagar (BJP), Sukhendu Shekhar Ray (Trinamool Congress), L Hanumanthaiah (Congress), Sasmit Patra (BJD), and Tiruchi Siva (DMK)

AWARDS

- **Renowned researcher and Madras IIT Professor Pradeep Thalappil - has won the VinFuture Prize 2022 instituted by the VinFuture Prize Council to honour breakthrough research projects.**
- ✓ Thalappil has been awarded the 'Special Prize dedicated to Innovators from Developing Countries' for his development of a low-cost filtration system to remove arsenic and other heavy metals from groundwater.



- ✓ The prize consists of a cash award of Rs 4 crore.
- ✓ Earlier, Thalappil was conferred with the Padma Shri in honour of his work to develop affordable and safe drinking water solutions using nanomaterials
- ✓ The award was presented by Prize Council Chairman Richard Friend at a ceremony in Vietnam's capital Hanoi.

SPORTS

- **Indian female wrestler Antim Panghal - has been nominated for the honour of United World Wrestling Rising Star of the Year.**



- ✓ In addition to Panghal, five women nominated for the award include Nonoka Ozaki of Japan, Amit Elor of the US, Emma Malmgren of Sweden, and Andreea Ana of Romania.
- ✓ Antim Panghal made history this year by winning India's first-ever gold medal in the World U20 Wrestling Championships 2022 in August
- ✓ In 44 editions of the junior world meet prior to Antim, six Indian wrestlers had advanced to the finals but none had won a gold medal.
- ✓ Antim also earned gold medals in the U20 World Championships, U20 Asian Championships, and the senior category competition known as the Zouhaier Sghaier Ranking Series.

