

18th December, 2021 Current Affairs

1. India-Poland has signed treaty on assistance in criminal matters:



Recently, Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved India and Poland treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

Key Points:

- This treaty is basically targeted at enhancing capability and effectiveness of India as well as Poland in investigation and prosecution of crimes through mutual legal assistance. It will also include crimes related to terrorism.
- It also intended to enhance effectiveness in investigation and prosecution of crime, through mutual legal assistance.
- With respect to transnational crime and its linkages to terrorism, the treaty will provide a legal framework for a bilateral cooperation with Poland in investigation and prosecution of crime.
- It will also provide for bilateral cooperation in tracing, preventions and confiscation of proceeds & instruments of crime including funds meant to finance terrorist acts.
- The treaty will also enhance the effectiveness of India in tackling criminal activities by involving Poland.

Relations between India-Poland:

- Diplomatic relations between India and Poland was established in 1954. Following this, India opened its Embassy in Warsaw in 1957.
- Both the countries shared the same ideological perceptions on the basis of their opposition to colonialism, racism and imperialism.
- Bilateral relations between both were close and cordial during 1944 and 1989, supported by regular high-level visits, planned trade and economic interactions among state trading organizations.
- A cordial political relationship has emerged between them in recent years, especially after Poland joined the European Union in 2004. And consequently, Poland became India's major economic partners in Central Europe.

Economic & Commercial Relations:

Poland is the largest trading partner and exporter country of India, in the Central European region. And in last 10 years bilateral trade has increased to seven-fold. Indian investments in Poland stands at more than USD 3 billion, while Polish investment in India is at USD 672 million.

Cultural Bonding:

There is a tradition of Indology studies in Poland. Polish scholars having translated Sanskrit into Polish in 19th Century. In 2019, Polish Mission had organised the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. On June 21, 2015, the first International Day of Yoga was also organized across 21 cities in Poland.

2. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Index:



In the Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, West Bengal has topped in the large states category.

Four Categories of states in Index:

The Index has divided states into four categories:

1. Large states
2. Small states
3. North East
4. Union Territories

Which organisation prepares the index report?

The report on 'Index on Foundational Literacy & Numeracy' is prepared by 'Institute for Competitiveness'. It is being released by chairman of Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), Bibek Debroy.

Salient features of the report:

- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Index serves as an indicator of literacy among children aged below 10 years.
- In the 'large states' category, Bihar is at the bottom.
- In 'small states' category, Kerala has topped the Index.
- Jharkhand emerged as the worst performer on the index.
- Kerala scored 67.95 in large state category while West Bengal scored 58.95 in small state category.
- Among Union Territory, Lakshadweep topped the index with score of 52.69.

- Mizoram topped the list in Northeast category, with score of 51.64.
- More than 50 % of the states scored below the national average of 28.05.

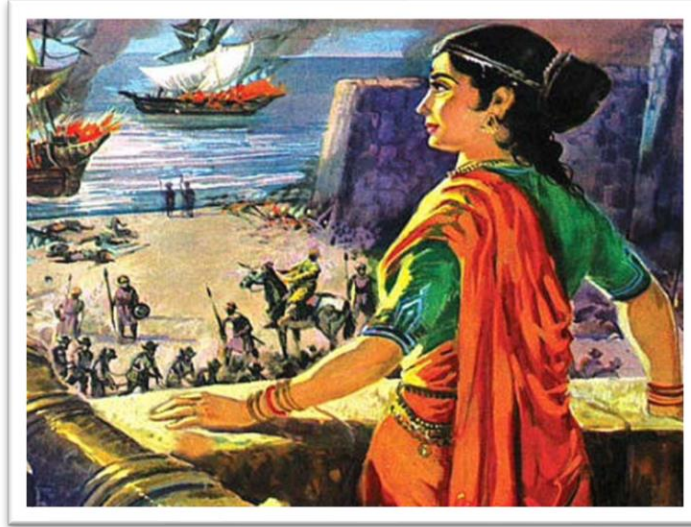
Worst Performers:

- In Union Territory category, Ladakh was at the bottom.
- In North East Category, Arunachal Pradesh came last.
- Index on Foundational Literacy & Numeracy
- The 'Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy' establishes an understanding of overall state of Foundational Learning among children below ten years across states and Union territories in India. It has five pillars, comprising of 41 indicators. The five pillars include:

1. Educational infrastructure
2. Access to education
3. Basic Health
4. Learning outcomes and
5. Governance

Out of the five pillars, states have performed worse particularly in governance pillar.

3. **Veera Rani Abbakka awards has been started:**



Ullal Veera Rani Abbakka Utsava committee recently decided to present “Veera Rani Abbakka award” at the time of Veera Rani Abbakka festival in December 2021.

Salient Points:

- This award will be presented to a female achiever on December 21, 2021.
- The award and prizes comprise of cash and award panels.
- December 21 is also the silver jubilee of Veera Rani Abbakka Utsava.
- The utsava will be celebrated on December 21, in the premises Ullal City Municipality.

Who will be the receiver?

- Veerarani Abbakka award will be given to the lady who has made significant achievement in research and culture.
- The Committee would also take mother language and tradition into consideration for presenting the award.
- The Award will be presented to a lady with Tulu background who has made substantial achievement in sports, arts, social service and other such sectors.

About Rani Abbakka Chowta:

- Rani Abbakka Chowta was the first Tuluva Queen of Ullal. She had fought with Portuguese in latter half of the 16th century.
- The queen belonged to the Chowta dynasty, who ruled over parts of coastal Karnataka (Tulu Nadu). Capital of the dynasty was Puttige. The port town of Ullal was their subsidiary capital. Ullal was strategically placed because of which, The Portuguese made several attempts to capture it.
- But the queen stave off their attacks for over four decades. She came to be known as Abhaya Rani, because of her bravery.

4. “Tamil Thai Vaazhthu” declared Tamil Nadu’s State Song:



Recently, the Tamil Nadu government has declared 'Tamil Thai Vaazhthu', as the State Song.

Key Points:

- Tamil Thai Vaazhthu is a prayer song which is sung in praise of Mother Tamil.
- The duration of the song is 55-second and is sung at the beginning of functions across all government offices, educational institutions, public sector undertakings and similar public events, on the line of national anthem.

Kan. Ilango v. State case in HC:

- The observations on Tamil Thai Vaazhthu song were made by Justice G R Swaminathan in Kan. Ilango v. State case, on December 6.
- State was represented by Inspector of Police & Another. HC quashed an FIR registered against a group of individuals headed by Kan. Ilango.
- The group had allegedly entered the Kanchi Mutt branch in Rameswaram in 2018 and raised slogans.
- They also criminally frightened the manager of Kanchi mutt.

What was the matter?

The group protesters belonged to the Naam Tamilar Katchi, which is a Tamil nationalist organisation led by Senthamizhan Seeman. They were protesting against the Pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam who had remained sitting during a function, while Tamil Thai Vaazhthu was played. This had worked as the trigger point for considerable outrage.

Court's stance on Tamil Thai Vaazhuthu:

The court has ruled that Tamil Thai Vaazhthu is a prayer song and not an Anthem. Highest reverence and respect should be shown to the prayer song but it is not mandatory to stand for it.

Reasoning of court's stance:

Court made reference to a call by Government of Tamil Nadu. Then, the government had directed that a song from 'Manonmaneyam', should be sung as prayer song at the beginning of all functions organised by government, local bodies and educational institutions.

Manonmaneyam is a famous Tamil drama written by P Sundaram Pillai.

5. **WHO gave emergency approval for Covovax vaccine:**



Recently, World Health Organisation (WHO) gave approval for emergency use of Covovax vaccine for Children.

Important Highlights:

WHO listed the Covovax as ninth COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use. This move is targeted at increasing the access to vaccination across lower-income countries.

The Serum Institute of India (SII) produces Covovax, under the licence from Novavax.

Background:

Recently, CEO of SII, Adar Poonawalla has announced that SII has planned to launch a COVID-19 vaccine called Covovax for children in next six months. He noted that, this vaccine is under trial and it would offer protection to children aged three years and more.

About WHO's approval?

WHO has recently approved Covovax after it was assessed under its emergency use listing (EUL) procedure on the basis of review of data on quality, safety & efficacy, a programmatic suitability, risk management plan, and manufacturing site inspections which is carried by the Drugs Controller General of India.

About Novavax COVID-19 vaccine:

Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is sold under the brand name Nuvaxovid and Covovax. This subunit COVID-19 vaccine has been developed by Novavax and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). Vaccine is undergoing trials in India under the brand name Covovax and it is stable at 2 to 8 °C.

Covovax's doses:

The vaccine is administered in two doses, 21 days apart.

Subunit vaccine:

Subunit vaccine comprises of purified parts of the pathogen which are antigenic, or necessary to bring forth a protective immune response. It does not contain the whole pathogen, as present in live attenuated or inactivated vaccine. But contains only the antigenic parts like proteins, polysaccharides or peptides.

Stability of the vaccine:

Since subunit vaccine doesn't contain live components of the pathogen, there is no risk of introducing the disease. It is safer and more stable as compared to vaccine containing whole pathogens.

6. Barn owl has been sighted in Bihar:



Recently, forest officials rescued a barn owl in Supaul district of Bihar.

Salient highlights:

- The Barn owl is usually native to the US, the UK and other parts of Europe.
- It is seldom seen in the Indian subcontinent.

About the Barn Owl:

- The Barn Owl is scientifically known as Tyto Alba.
- It is the most widely spreaded species of owl worldwide.
- The species is found almost everywhere in across the world, except for the polar and desert regions, Indonesia, Pacific Islands and Asia north of the Himalayas. It is also called as common barn owl.

Characteristics of the Owl:

- The Barn owl is nocturnal for most of its range. However, in Great Britain and some Pacific Islands, the owl also hunts by day.
- They are specialised in hunting animals on the ground. All of their food comprises of small mammals, which they catch by sound.
- They are a medium in size, pale-coloured owl, having long wings and a short & squarish tail.
- They have a typical wingspan of 80 to 95 cm.

Breeding season:

- In the tropical regions, the Barn owls can breed throughout the year. However, some seasonality in nesting is still evident.
- In the regions of distinct wet & dry seasons, egg-laying generally takes place during the dry season. In arid regions like Australia, breeding might be irregular and might happen in wet periods.

7. **Gabriel Boric became Chile's next President:**



Recently, a leftist millennial Gabriel Boric has become the President of Chile.

Salient highlights:

- He was elected as President, after a campaign against a free-market firebrand likened to former US President Donald Trump.
- Gabriel has won with 56 % of the votes.

Gabriel Boric Font:

Gabriel Boric Font is now the president of Chile. Before this he was a member of the Chamber of Deputies since March 2014, and represented the Magallanes and Antarctic district. In 2013 general election, he was elected as an independent candidate.

He was re-elected in 2017. In both the elections, he received the largest number of votes among all candidates in Magallanes Region.

Chile- Key Points:

- Chile is officially called as Republic of Chile. It is located in western part of South America. The country occupies a long, narrow strip of land between Andes and the Pacific Ocean.
- It is the southernmost country of the world. It is closest to Antarctica also. It shares borders with Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and the Drake Passage.

8. **Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021:**



Recently, Union government has introduced 'The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021' in Lok Sabha, in order to link Aadhaar with electoral roll.

About the bill:

- Election Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021 has allowed electoral registration officers to ask for Aadhaar number of people who want to register as voters, once passed. They will ask for Aadhaar number to establish the identity.
- The Bill also seeks to allow electoral registration officers to ask for Aadhaar number from persons who have already included in the electoral roll. This will be done to certify the entries in electoral roll as well as to identify registration of name of same person in electoral roll of more than one constituency or to identify the registration of name more than once in same constituency.
- The Bill also makes it clear that, "no application will be denied for inclusion of name in the electoral roll and no entries will be deleted for inability of individuals in the electoral roll, to intimate Aadhaar number due to such sufficient cause.
- Such people will be allowed to furnish other alternative documents as may be prescribed.

Which acts will be amended?

- The bill has amended several sections of Representation of the People Act, 1950 and 1951.
- Section 23 of 1950 act has been amended for allowing linking of electoral roll data with Aadhaar ecosystem. This amendment will help in curbing the menace of multiple enrolment of same person in different places.
- Section 14 of 1950 act has been amended to have four “qualifying” dates for eligible people for registering as voters.
- Section 20 of 1950 act and section 60 of 1951 act will allow the elections to become gender neutral for service voters. Amendment will replace the word “wife” with the word “spouse”.
- As per existing electoral law, wife of an Army man was entitled to be enrolled as a service voter however, but a woman Army officer’s husband was not. This provision will change as the word wife will be replaced with word Spouse.