

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 21, 2019

TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu Government – had instructed government-funded schools to begin the admission process from April 1 for the next academic year**
 - ✓ Usually, the admissions for the government schools begin only on June 1 and by then, the private schools would have finished their admission process
 - ✓ To overcome this discrepancy, the revised admission procedure is notified to all district-level officials
 - ✓ The state had recently launched Montessori-based Kindergarten classes in 2,381 government middle schools with Anganwadi centres

- **Tamil Nadu Government – declares 17 districts and 38 blocks in 7 other districts – as drought hit**
 - ✓ These districts have recorded a rainfall between 19% and 59% last year
 - ✓ The 17 affected districts are Chennai, Karur, Salem, Vellore, Trichy, Perambalur, Tiruvallur, Namakkal, Virudhunagar, Kancheepuram, Madurai, Dindigul, Erode, Pudukottai and Sivaganga
 - ✓ 38 blocks in 7 other districts, including Thanjavur, Villupuram, Tiruvannamalai, Ariyalur, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore and Ramanathapuram had an annual rainfall deficiency, even though the north east monsoon was normal last year
 - ✓ Dharmapuri tops the list in water shortage followed by Krishnagiri and Chennai
 - ✓ The declaration of drought is a pre-requisite for Central and state governments to provide relief for the affected including waiver of crop loan in cooperative banks
 - ✓ Chief Minister had sanctioned Rs 158 crore to Metro Water and Twad to tackle the summer water crisis in January

- **IIT, Madras – sets up country’s first solar-powered desalination plant near Vivekananda Memorial at Kanyakumari**



- ✓ It has a capacity to generate 10,000 litres of freshwater per day
- ✓ The Ministry of earth sciences has funded the Rs 1.22 crore experimental project
- ✓ The surface sea water is pumped in and converted into heat by a collector, trapping sun's radiation
- ✓ This is used to heat sea water to around 37 degree Celsius to 70 degree Celsius and above
- ✓ The hot water is pushed into a flash chamber under vacuum and around 1% turned into vapour
- ✓ The vapour is sent to a condenser and cooled with sea surface water to generate fresh water
- ✓ The sun's energy is used to heat water and generate power through photovoltaic panels to operate the plant
- ✓ The plant needs about 15kv power a day to function
- ✓ Since it is completely solar powered, it can be operated only during the day between 9am to 4pm
- ✓ The freshwater generated has only 2ppm of dissolved salts. However, for drinking, WHO recommends water with 500ppm. Hence, this water is mixed with local municipal water for consumption.

NATIONAL

- **Social media platforms including Facebook, Google and Twitter – agreed to remove 'illegal' poll content within 3 hours**
- ✓ The Election commission has notified a 48-hour pre-poll 'silence period' during the current Lok sabha election
- ✓ A 'voluntary code of ethics for general elections 2019' was signed by Election Commission, Internet and Mobile Association of India along with the social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Google, ShareChat, Tiktok etc.,
- ✓ As per the code of ethics, any content in violation of Section 126 of Representation of the People Act will be removed within 3 hours, while the other violations will be dealt 'expeditiously' based on their nature

- **Ministry of Defence – approves capital procurements for the armed forces worth Rs 2,355 crore**
 - ✓ The purchases includes a Rs 530 crore project to manufacture 10 lakh ‘multi-mode’ hand grenades for the army by a private company, Economic Explosives Ltd of Nagpur
 - ✓ The Defence acquisition council had also cleared the procurement of the latest fire control systems for the ‘Teg’ and ‘Talwar’ class stealth frigates and Sarayu class of patrol vessels

- **India – likely to boycott China’s second Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for a second time**
 - ✓ It had boycotted the first BRF in 2017 after protesting over the ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’(CPEC) laid through the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir
 - ✓ CPEC is a \$60 billion project, which aims to connect China’s Xinjiang province with Pakistan’s Gwadar port, with a host of road, rail, gas and oil pipelines

- **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change - has finalised the first draft of the comprehensive amendments to the Indian Forest Act, 1927**
 - ✓ The amendments provide definitions to important terms that were missing from the law
 - ✓ The amendment introduces a new category of forests namely production forests, which will be forests with specific objectives for production of timber, pulp, pulpwood, firewood, non-timber forest produce, medicinal plants or any forest species to increase their production
 - ✓ The amendments have been proposed based on the inputs of a core committee Inspector General of Forests (Forest Policy) Noyal Thomas

INTERNATIONAL

- **Pakistan – constitutes a 7-member Supreme Court bench to define the word ‘terrorism’ and the cases that fall within the category**
 - ✓ The 7-member bench will be headed by the Chief justice of Supreme Court, Asif Saeed Khosa

- **British Prime Minister, Theresa May – asks European Union to postpone UK’s departure plan, Brexit until June 30**
 - ✓ As per the earlier date, UK was supposed to exit EU by March 29, 2019
 - ✓ However, May could not get the Parliament’s approval for her twice-rejected Brexit deal

➤ **European Union – fines Google 1.49 billion Euros – for abusing its dominant role in Online advertising market**

- ✓ In the latest ruling, Google and its parent company, Alphabet were found to have breached EU rules by imposing restrictive clauses in contracts with websites that used its AdSense advertising business, which has prevented the rivals of Google to place their ads on these sites
- ✓ The AdSense For Search service, or AdSense, lets Google acts as a middleman between advertisers and website owners who want to make money selling space for ads
- ✓ AdSense allows web publishers such as newspapers and bloggers to place text ads on their websites, with the content of the ads based on results from search functions on their sites
- ✓ Microsoft filed a complaint with the EU in 2009 about Google's service and the commission formally launched its probe in 2016

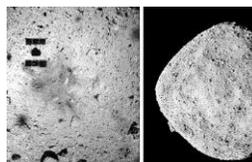
➤ **Kazakhstan – renames its capital 'Astana' to 'Nursultan' – to honour the outgoing President Nursultan Nazarbayev**



- ✓ Nursultan Nazarbayev served nearly 30 years as leader of the nation
- ✓ He was the first president of Kazakhstan and led Kazakhstan since it emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s
- ✓ It was Nursultan Nazarbayev who moved Kazakhstan's capital from the southern city of Almaty, near the Kyrgyz border, to northern Astana

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

➤ **NASA's OSIRIS-Rex mission - discovers evidence of water, particle plumes on asteroid Bennu**



- ✓ Bennu is a carbonaceous asteroid in the Apollo group and is a potentially hazardous object
- ✓ It has a more rugged surface than expected, posing a challenge for the mission team to collect sample materials
- ✓ NASA's Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer (Osiris-REx) mission is aimed at studying Bennu Asteroid
- ✓ The mission began orbiting the asteroid on December 31 last year and is expected to return samples to Earth in 2023

RANKINGS

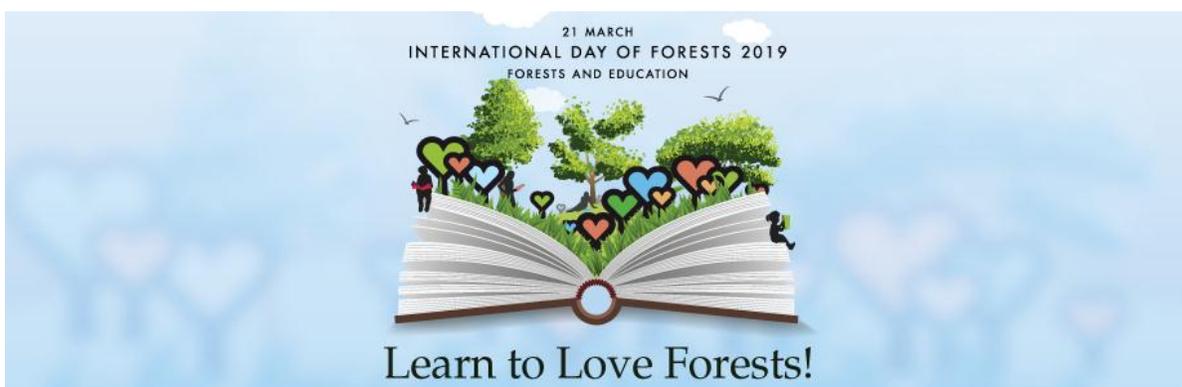
- World Happiness Report – released by UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network



- ✓ Finland has been named the happiest country for the second consecutive year
- ✓ None of the world's major economic powerhouses made it to the top 10
- ✓ India has witnessed a drop with a 140th place this year compared with the 133rd place in 2018
- ✓ India featured in the list of five countries that had the largest drop since 2005-2008 in the index, along with Yemen, Syria, Botswana and Venezuela
- ✓ The survey covered around 156 nations around the globe for the rankings
- ✓ The report ranks countries on six key variables that support well-being - income, freedom, trust, healthy life expectancy, social support and generosity

INTERNATIONAL DAY

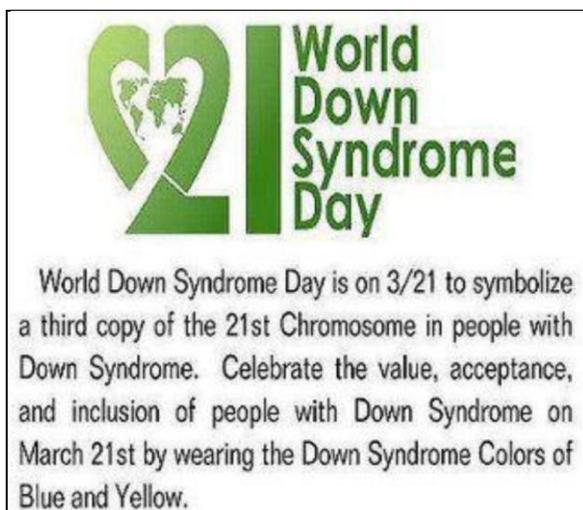
- International Day of Forests – March 21



- ✓ The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.
 - ✓ The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day of Forests on November 28, 2012
 - ✓ The theme for each International Day of Forests is chosen by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) to highlight specific forest contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
 - ✓ Theme 2019 - 'Forests and Education'
 - ✓ International Day of Forests was observed for the first time on March 21, 2013
 - ✓ The theme of the International Day of Forests in 2018 is "Forests and Sustainable Cities"
- **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – March 21**
- ✓ The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 March as the 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination' on 26 October 1966
 - ✓ On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws"

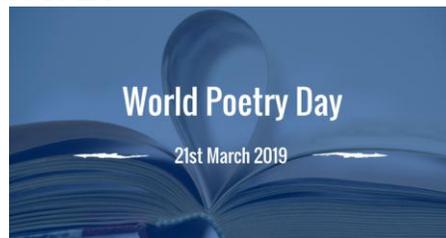


- ✓ Theme 2019 - Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies
- **World Down Syndrome Day – March 21**



- ✓ On this day, people with Down syndrome and those who live and work with them throughout the world organize and participate in activities and events to raise public awareness about the genetic disorder
- ✓ On December 20, 2007, WHO recognized March 21 as the World Down Syndrome Day
- ✓ The general Assembly of the United Nations recognised also the same date on December 19, 2011
- ✓ The first World Down Syndrome Day was observed in 2012

➤ **World Poetry Day – March 21**



- ✓ The purpose of observing the day is to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world
- ✓ It was declared by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) at its session in Paris in 1999

➤ **International Colour Day – March 21**



- ✓ The adoption of an international day of colour was proposed in 2008 by the Portuguese Color Association, whose president, Maria Joao Durao, presented the idea to the International Colour Association.
- ✓ The proposal was agreed in 2009 among the members of this society, comprising of more than 30 countries
- ✓ The choice of the date every year, March 21 is the “equinox” – aequus (equal) and nox (night)
- ✓ Around the equinox, the night and day are approximately equally long, symbolically relating to the complementary nature of light and darkness

➤ **International Day of Happiness – March 20**



- ✓ The day recognizes the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world
- ✓ The observance of the day is conceptualized by UN special advisor Jayme Illien to inspire and spread a happiness movement globally
- ✓ The first ever international day of happiness was observed on March 20, 2013
- ✓ March 20 was chosen for International Day of Happiness 2019 for its significance as the March equinox, when the plane of Earth's equator passes through the centre of the Sun's disk

APP
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