



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 29, 2019

TAMIL NADU

- **R Jai Jaswanth, a 10-year-old boy from Theni district - swam across the Palk Strait from Talaimannar in Sri Lanka to Arichalmunai near Dhanushkodi, covering the distance of 32 km in just 10.5 hours**



- ✓ With the feat, Jaswanth becomes the youngest to swim across the Palk Strait in the Under-11 year category in the shortest time
- ✓ Indian coast guard officials monitored him once he reached the International Maritime Boundary Line
- ✓ The boy received a rousing welcome from relatives and officials, including DGP, railway police, Sylendra Babu, when he completed the journey
- ✓ Jaswanth, studying in Class IV, took to swimming only in 2016
- ✓ Recently, Jaswanth won gold at the national open water competition, organised by Swimming Federation of India, in Karnataka in February
- ✓ Kutraleeswaran, who was 12 then, had swam across the Palk Strait in April 1994 in 16 hours

STATES

- **Assam Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Sahu - launched the 'Enajori' initiative in Guwahati – to help out Persons with Disability (PwD) voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls**



- ✓ It is a joint initiative of CEO Assam and the state's Social Welfare Department
- ✓ Under this initiative, comprehensive mapping of PwDs will be done in consultation with Booth Level Officers, Divyang Sarothis and a woman mascot-Chandraprabha
- **Telangana government - has launched a digital business networking portal for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises MSMEs – Telangana State GlobalLinker (ts-msme.globallinker.com)**

<http://ts-msme.globallinker.com/>



- ✓ It will also allow MSMEs to create a digital profile for their business and connect with other global MSMEs

NATIONAL

- The Centre – announced the draft amendment to the Indian Forest Act

MORE POWER TO FOREST OFFICERS



<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Forest officers get more immunity for using firearms to prevent offences➤ No prosecution sanction against such officer unless an inquiry by executive magistrate➤ Indemnity will be in addition to the immunity provided to certain categories of public servant under Section 197 of the CrPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Any forest officer (not below the rank of an assistant conservator of forests) can search any such place in which he has reason to believe that any forest produce or tool to commit forest offence is concealed➤ Any person, forest officer, any officer of state government cannot withdraw forest offence cases registered under the Act
--	--

Adding muscle

The Indian Forest Act, 2019 is envisaged as an amendment to the Indian Forest Act, 1927



How will it help?

The legislation gives India's forest officers the power of a civil court to prevent offences

Mandate to officials:

- Every forest officer, police officer or revenue officer shall prevent, and may interfere for the purpose of preventing, the commission of any forest offence
- Any person, forest officer, or any officer of the State cannot withdraw forest offence cases
- **New cess:** It proposes a forest development cess, upto 10% of the value assessed of the mining products extracted from the forests and water for irrigation or in industries

- ✓ The 123-page draft, proposes a 'forest development cess' that can be deposited in a "special fund"
- ✓ This amount will be used exclusively for reforestation, forest protection and other ancillary purposes connected with tree planting, forest development and conservation
- ✓ The proposed amended Act is intended to replace the British period IFA, 1927.
- **The Coffee Board - is launching a blockchain-based e-market place 'app' for trading coffee**



On the Boil

- The blockchain platform is the first marketplace in the country on blockchain
- Eka Software tied up with Coffee Board to create the blockchain platform for coffee farmers
- It aims to help farmers get a good price for the product
- It offers roasters and exporters the data on quality of the crop

- ✓ The objective is to bring transparency in the trade and ensure the farmers are fairly paid for the produce by cutting intermediaries
 - ✓ Initially it will be a pilot project for two months, with about 20 farmers.
 - ✓ In the app, the farmers can provide verifiable details of how much their coffee is worth at all stages of the supply chain
 - ✓ Upon the success of the 'app', the board will approach the Centre for a full-scale implementation benefitting eventually all the 3.5 lakh coffee producers in the country
 - ✓ Stakeholders like farmers, traders, coffee curers, exporters, rosters, importers and retailers need to register on the platform to make trade transactions
 - ✓ The coffee farmer registers credentials like the place where the coffee is grown, details of the crop, elevation, certificates if any, and other relevant information
 - ✓ Coffee Board is collaborating with Bengaluru-based commodities trading solutions provider Eka Software for this initiative
 - ✓ Only two other countries, Ethiopia and France, have a coffee blockchain system in place.
- **Tashigang, a small Himachal Pradesh village -has got the distinction of the highest polling station in the world**



- ✓ Tashigang is located at an altitude of 15,256 feet
 - ✓ It falls in one of the 17 assembly segments of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, which is the second largest constituency in India
 - ✓ The polling station has 48 voters, of which 30 are men and 18 women
 - ✓ Earlier the tiny settlement of Hikkim in Himachal Pradesh positioned at an altitude of about 14,400 ft, was the highest polling station in the country
- **Power Finance Corporation (PFC) – becomes the country’s second largest Government-owned Financial Firm after SBI, based on market capitalisation**
 - ✓ PFC has recently bought the 52.63% controlling stake in REC Ltd (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited) through Rs 14,500 crore deal with Union government
 - ✓ This acquisition has impacted union government beneficially, as it exceeded the disinvestment target of Rs 80,000 crore for the fiscal year 2018-19

INTERNATIONAL

- **European Union - to ban ‘Single-use’ plastic consumer items including plates, cutlery and straws as of 2021 to help clean up oceans**
 - ✓ The prohibition also applies to beverage cups, food containers and cotton bud sticks
 - ✓ The European Commission, the bloc’s executive arm, proposed the curbs in May 2018 and representatives of EU governments and the 751-seat Parliament reached a negotiated deal in December.
 - ✓ The new legislation also sets a 90% collection target for plastic bottles by 2029 and a 30% goal for recycled material in them by 2030
- **Israeli cave explorers - announced that a salt cave with striking stalactites near the Dead Sea is the world's longest - beating the current record-holder in southern Iran's Qeshm island (over 6 km)**



- ✓ The cave named Malham, stretches over 10 kilometres (6.25 miles)
 - ✓ It runs through Mount Sodom, Israel's largest mountain, and spills out to the southwest corner of the adjacent Dead Sea
 - ✓ Pale salt stalactites hang from the ceilings, and some of the walls sparkle with salt crystals.
 - ✓ Drops of salty water are visible at the tips of some of the stalactites.
 - ✓ Malham became known to researchers through the work of Amos Frumkin, founder and director of Hebrew University's Cave Research Centre, who in the 1980s mapped around 5 kilometres of it.
- **Brunei – to make Gay sex or adultery – punishable with death by stoning from April 3, 2019**



- ✓ The new laws also prescribe amputation of hand or feet as a punishment for robbery
- ✓ The penalty would be amputation of the right hand for first-time offenders, and the left foot for a second offence
- ✓ Brunei, a small Southeast Asian nation, announced the enforcement of a strict 'Sharia law' in the country
- ✓ Brunei had first announced its introduction in 2013, which was suspended later following vast international protest
- ✓ With the move, Brunei becomes the first and only country in East Asia to introduce Sharia law into its penal code
- ✓ The sovereign Islamic nation is ruled by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, whose wealth amounts to billions of dollars, courtesy Brunei's oil riches
- ✓ He gained power as the head of the state on January 1, 1984, when the nation gained its independence from the United Kingdom

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Astronomers from the University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with Google - have discovered two hidden planets in the data collected by the Kepler space telescope



- ✓ The 2 newly discovered planets were named as K2-293b and K2-294b
- ✓ They both are hot planets, have short orbital periods and are slightly larger than Earth
- ✓ They are discovered from the Kepler's extended mission, called K2
- ✓ K2-293b – It orbits a star 1,300 light-years away in the constellation Aquarius
- ✓ K2-294b – It orbits a star 1,230 light-years away, also located in Aquarius.

ECONOMY

- **The Union Government - to infuse Rs 5042 crore into state-owned Bank of Baroda**
- ✓ The merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda would be effective from April 1, 2019
- ✓ The government announced the merger in September 2018 - to create the third-largest lender after SBI and ICICI Bank

AWARDS

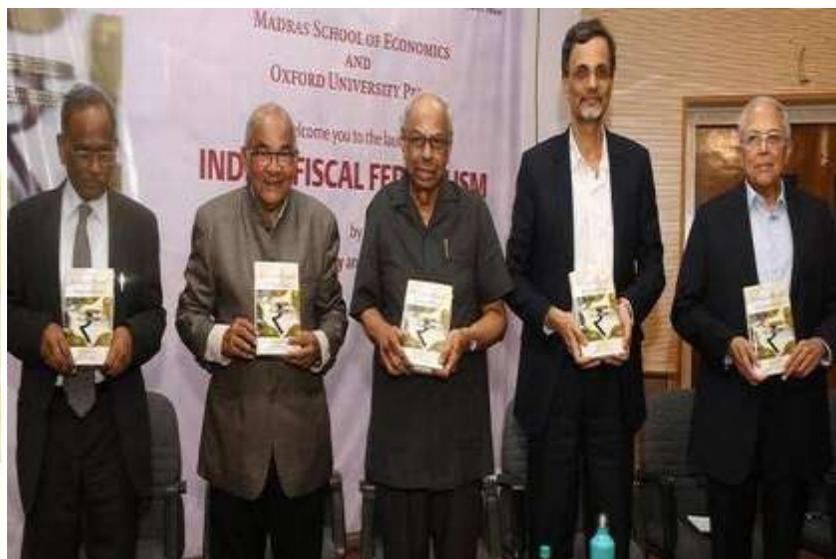
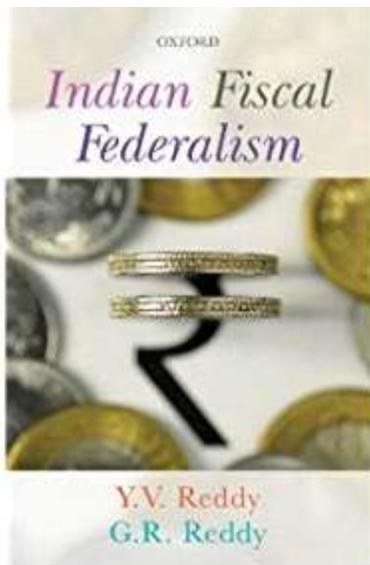
- **Manu Gulati, a Delhi government school teacher - has been honoured with the 'Martha Farrell award for Excellence in Women's Empowerment 2019'**



- ✓ She was awarded a prize money of Rs 1,50,000 for promoting gender quality and women's empowerment
- ✓ She collaborates with America India Foundation's "Market Aligned Skills Training Program", through which she assists the training programs for beauticians, weavers, salesgirls, etc in Jalandhar in Punjab, Betul in Madhya Pradesh and Baramullah in Kashmir.
- ✓ The Awards were first awarded in 2017 in the memory of Dr. Martha Farrell, a prominent activist for gender equality and women's empowerment.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

- **"Indian Fiscal Federalism" authored by Dr. Y.V. Reddy and G.R. Reddy**



- ✓ Released by - Shaktikanta Das, Governor of Reserve Bank of India
 - ✓ Launch addressed by - NK Singh, Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission
 - ✓ Venue – New Delhi
 - ✓ Dr. Y.V. Reddy has served as the Governor of RBI during 2003-2008 and as the Chairman of the 14th Finance Commission of India.
 - ✓ Dr. G.R. Reddy is currently serving as the Advisor (Finance) to the Government of Telangana.
- **“Every Vote Counts” – authored by Navin Chawla**



- ✓ Launch venue – New Delhi
- ✓ Launch by – Hamid Ansari, former Vice President of India
- ✓ Navin Chawla was the former Chief Election Commissioner of India

SPORTS

- **Ravi Kumar and Elavenil Valarivan – wins silver medal in the senior 10m air rifle mixed team event at the 12th Asian Airgun Championships in Taipei**



- ✓ The Indian pair topped the qualification rounds with a score of 837.1 but were beaten in the final by the Korean pair of Park Sunmin and Shin Minki.
- **Former India striker Shivendra Singh - is set to be appointed assistant coach of the national men's hockey team**



- ✓ He will form an integral part of the Indian coaching staff set to be headed by Australian Graham Reid
- **Breakdancing - was among four sports given a provisional green light for inclusion in the Paris 2024 Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)**



- ✓ The Paris 2024 organising committee in February proposed surfing, skateboarding and sport climbing as well as breakdancing for inclusion in the Games
- ✓ A final decision will be made by the board in December 2020 after further monitoring of the four sporting categories

