



Current Affairs of the Day

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- Bureaucrats cannot be State Election Commissioners: SC
- Quad leaders for 'open, free' Indo-Pacific

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- Bring down benzene emission at fuel outlets, says the panel
- Novavax reports 96.4% efficacy on original virus



Bureaucrats cannot be State Election Commissioners: SC

News: The Supreme Court on Friday held that independent persons and not bureaucrats should be appointed State Election Commissioners.

Highlights:

1. A Bench, led by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman, in a judgment, said giving government employees the additional charge of State Election Commissioners is a “mockery of the Constitution”.
2. The top court directed that the States should appoint independent persons as Election Commissioners all along the length and breadth of the country.
3. It said government employees holding the post of State Election Commissioners as additional charge should give up the post. The Supreme Court said its direction should be followed strictly.
4. “Under the constitutional mandate, it is the duty of the State to not interfere with the functioning of the State Election Commission,” the Bench said.

Quad leaders for ‘open, free’ Indo-Pacific

News: Members of the Quadrilateral framework, or Quad, will become “closer than ever before”, Prime Minister said, in his address to the first-ever leadership summit of the grouping.

Important Pillar Of Stability In The Region:

1. Leaders highlighted cooperation among the member countries to beat the global pandemic, with the joint partnership on vaccines and emphasised the need for an “open” and “free” Indo-Pacific region.
2. “We are united by our democratic values and our commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Our agenda, covering areas like vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies, make the Quad a force for global good. We will work together, closer than ever before on advancing our shared values and promoting a secure, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific,” said Mr Modi, who described the Quadrilateral framework as an “important pillar of stability in the region”.
3. The Quad members agreed to ensure “equitable” access to vaccines. A joint statement issued after the summit said: “We will join forces to expand safe, affordable, and effective vaccine production and equitable access, to speed economic recovery and benefit global health.”



4. “And we’re renewing our commitment to ensure that our region is governed by international law, committed to upholding universal values and free from coercion. We’ve got a big agenda ahead of us,” Mr Biden said.

Bring down benzene emission at fuel outlets, says the panel

Green concern: Fuel stations are a major source of emission, according to the National Green Tribunal. Fix vapour recovery system to improve air quality: NGT-appointed committee.

Highlights:

1. A joint committee appointed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to study air pollution in Kerala has recommended the installation of a vapour recovery system at fuelling stations and retrofitting of diesel vehicles with particulate filters to improve air quality.
2. The report pointed out that petrol refuelling stations were a major source of benzene emissions, volatile organic compounds, and particulate matter 2.5 concentration. Therefore, the installation of vapour recovery systems is an important step in improving air quality. This is to be implemented in coordination with the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization [PESO].
3. The panel recommended stringent action against industrial units that do not comply with emission norms.
4. Diesel generators: The Pollution Control Board has already suggested retrofitting emission control devices of generators and replacing diesel generators with gas-based ones.
5. Other recommendations include promoting battery-operated vehicles and banning old diesel vehicles in a phased manner, greening open areas, and creation of green buffers along traffic corridors.
6. The short term measures recommended include strict action against visibly polluting vehicles (to be initiated by the Motor Vehicles Department), the introduction of wet/mechanised vacuum sweeping of roads, controlling dust pollution at construction sites, and ensuring the transport of construction materials in covered vehicles.



Novavax reports 96.4% efficacy on original virus

News: Novavax, a U.S.-based biotechnology company developing a recombinant vaccine for COVID-19, announced a final efficacy of 96.4% against mild, moderate and severe disease caused by the original SARS-CoV-2 strain in a pivotal Phase-3 trial in the U.K. The Serum Institute of India has an agreement with Novavax to manufacture a substantial volume of the vaccine.

Highlights:

1. It is likely to conduct a bridging study that determines the vaccine's safety and immunogenicity in Indians.
2. Efficacy was 96.4% against the original virus strain and 86.3% against the so-called U.K. variant.
3. An analysis of trial results by the company in January suggested that prior infection with the original COVID-19 strain might not completely protect against subsequent infection by the variant predominantly circulating in South Africa.
4. However, the complete analysis of the South Africa trial indicates that there could be a late protective effect of prior exposure with the original COVID-19 strain.