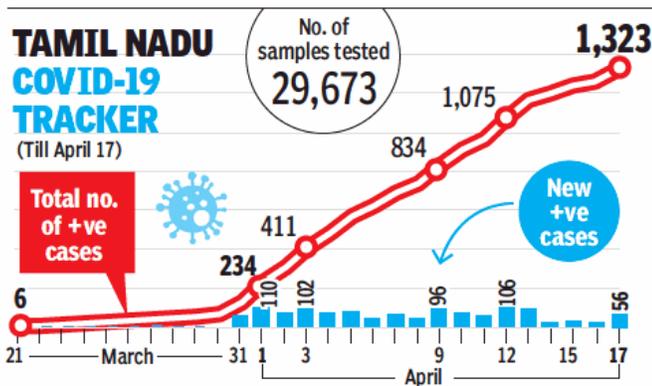


## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS - APR 18, 2020

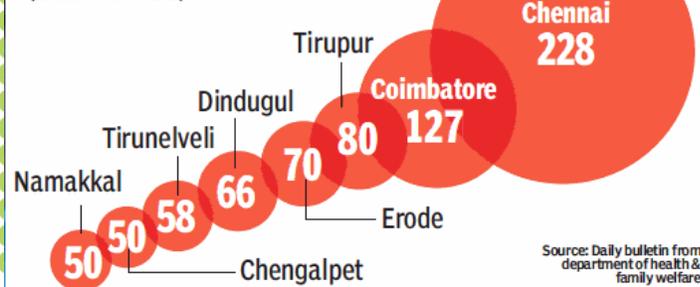
### TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu - recorded 56 more Covid-19 positive cases on April 17, taking the total count in the state to 1,323 cases**
- ✓ On the day, a total of 103 patients were cured and discharged from hospital across the state, taking the total number of discharges to more than 20% of the cases recorded so far
- ✓ Of the 103 discharged, 65 were from four hospitals in Chennai including 30 patients from the Government Medical College Hospital, Omandurar Estate, a designated COVID-19 facility.



### ABOVE 50 +ve CASES

(District wise)



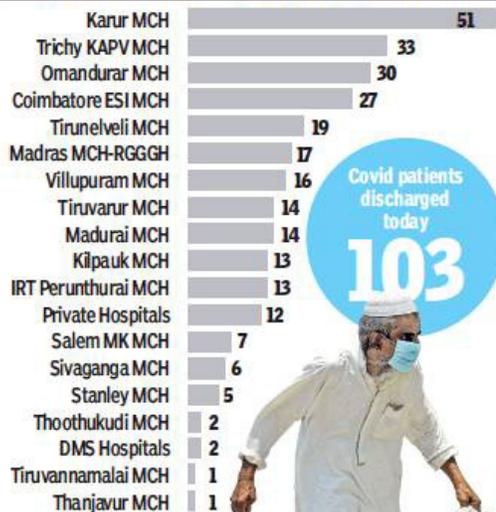
- ✓ Apart from that, 54 patients walked out of the Karur Medical College Hospital, while 33 got discharged in Trichy.
- ✓ Among the new positive cases, 49 were from the Single source event (TJ Cluster)
- ✓ While 14 of them were participants of the Delhi conference, 35 were close contacts of their family members.
- ✓ Of the new cases, Thanjavur reported 17 patients, while 11 more persons tested positive in Chennai.
- ✓ Chennai continued to top the infection list with a total of 228 patients.

- ✓ Till date, Tamil Nadu had 1,323 confirmed cases, 283 recovered and 15 deaths.
  - ✓ Meanwhile, the State Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami announced the arrival of 24,000 rapid test kits ordered by the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation from China on April 17.
  - ✓ The antibody-based testing kits will be used for 'community' testing in the state
  - ✓ On April 16, the number of samples tested in the state went up to 29,673 from 26,005.
  - ✓ Presently, 23,934 persons are under home quarantine, while another 34 are in government quarantine facilities.
  - ✓ The doubling period (time taken for the number of positive cases to double) in the state came down to a week in early April
  - ✓ Now it is about 10 days, with 56 cases being reported on April 17, while 25 were recorded on April 16, 28 on April 15 and 31 on April 14.
  - ✓ The state was reporting double these numbers before April 14.
  - ✓ For the past three days, the average number of fresh cases in the state has been 35.
- **The Indian Council of Medical Research – has directed Tamil Nadu to use the rapid antibody testing kits only for epidemiological studies and surveillance, particularly in hotspots**
- ✓ As per the directive, the state will not be using the kits for diagnosis purpose
  - ✓ The rapid antibody test kits give the results in 30 minutes against the five hours taken by RTPCR (real-time polymerase chain reaction) tests.
  - ✓ If the rapid antibody test turns out to be positive, samples are sent for an RT-PCR test, where nasal and throat swabs are collected.

B A Raju

## HEALING TOUCH

Although no cured patient has tested positive in India, doctors advise strict home quarantine for those discharged



### ICMR ON RAPID TESTS

➤ ICMR says the gold standard frontline test for Covid-19 is real time PCR based molecular test

➤ Rapid antibody test cannot replace the frontline test and has to be treated as a supplementary tool to assess prevalence of the disease in a specified area

➤ Data about rapid tests is emerging and their utility in diagnosis is still evolving

➤ Rapid tests are for surveillance purpose

### ELIGIBLE FOR SCREENING

➤ Symptomatic individuals who have undertaken international travel recently

➤ Symptomatic contacts of laboratory-confirmed cases

➤ Symptomatic healthcare workers

➤ Patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (fever and cough and/or shortness of breath)

➤ Asymptomatic direct and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case should be tested



Thirty Covid-19 patients were discharged from the Omandurar Hospital in Chennai on Friday

### WHAT'S BEING DONE GLOBALLY?

➤ Around 16,000 tests are being a day in the UK

➤ The government wants to conduct 1,00,000 tests a day by the end of this month

➤ Korea was testing 20,000 people a day by the fourth week of March

➤ By early April, it had tested 443,273 people

➤ Germany is conducting 50,000 coronavirus tests a day

➤ It has conducted 918,460 tests till first week of April



- ✓ As per the ICMR recommendations, the gold standard frontline test for Covid-19 diagnosis is RT-PCR, which is aimed at early virus detection.
  - ✓ The rapid antibody test can be used as a supplementary tool to assess prevalence of the disease within a specific area
  - ✓ The rapid antibody test cannot replace the frontline test (RT-PCR)
  - ✓ It can only be done after a minimum of seven days of onset of symptoms.
  - ✓ The rapid antibody test has to be used only in hotspots.
  - ✓ While the RT-PCR test is used in people with symptoms for less than week antibody test is done in patients showing symptoms for more than a week.
  - ✓ In addition, the state will use the resources from the National Institute of Epidemiology to do random tests across the state to study if there is community transmission of the infection.
  - ✓ The state expects 3.75 lakh more rapid test kits from China.
- **The state government - has appealed to farmers to start the preparatory work for short-term kuruvai cultivation**
- ✓ The cultivation is normally carried out on 5 lakh acres in the Cauvery delta, starting from June.
  - ✓ The Union government's consolidated guidelines for post-April 20, permit agricultural and horticultural activities to remain fully functional.
  - ✓ Summer crop cultivation has already commenced in three delta districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam in 2.9 lakh acres using groundwater potential.
  - ✓ In northern parts of the state, like Villupuram and Cuddalore, and in some parts of Thanjavur, farmers have also started preparation of nurseries for early kharif season
  - ✓ The Mettur reservoir's storage was 66.24tmcft as on April 17 at 70% of the total dam level, which stood at 101.8ft

## STATES

- **Rajasthan - became the first State to carry out 'rapid testing' for COVID-19 on April 17.**
- ✓ The rapid test helps in quickly isolating a person who tests positive in order to contain the spread of the virus.
  - ✓ However, it is not a confirmatory diagnosis for the SARS-CoV-2 infection
  - ✓ As per the ICMR guidelines, RT-PCR test is the conclusive diagnosis of the Covid-19 disease
  - ✓ All the 52 persons tested were found to be negative.
  - ✓ The tests were planned to be conducted on a large scale in hotspots such as vegetable-vendors, shopkeepers and grocery store persons

# NATIONAL

- **The nationwide count of fresh cases - dropped to a five-day low of 905, as per reports from states, taking the overall infections well over 14,000 on April 17**
- ✓ The death toll, however, continued to be high as 38 more fatalities were registered, taking the total to 490 so far
- ✓ Madhya Pradesh led the count with 14 deaths
- ✓ Maharashtra, which reported 118 new cases (against 286 on the previous day), registered seven more deaths in the state.
- ✓ Gujarat's toll increased by five even as the number of cases increased by 170, the highest reported by any state on the day.
- ✓ Meanwhile, Gujarat reached the grim milestone of 1,000 positive cases with 170 cases added over the past 24 hours.
- ✓ Another state which recorded a surge in cases was Karnataka — 44 on the day, the highest in a single day for the state, taking the total to 359
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh too continued to register a relatively high number of new cases, with 100 reported the day.
- ✓ The viral disease at an alarming rate in Madhya Pradesh, with the number of cases tripling in a week's time and zooming to 1,310 by April 17
- ✓ With 69 deaths, Madhya Pradesh has the second highest fatalities after Maharashtra.
  - ✓ It also has the highest death rate in the country.
  - ✓ In the state, every 19th patient was reported to be dead.
  - ✓ It has announced as many as 14 deaths in the past 24 hours – perhaps the highest single-day toll of any state.
  - ✓ Also, there have been 29 deaths in less than a week.
  - ✓ From 86 positive cases on April 1, it has seen an increase of 1,500% as on date
- ✓ India witnessed a significant decline of 40% in growth of Covid-19 cases since April 1, compared to a fortnight earlier
- ✓ Also, the rate of doubling of cases fell from every three days before the national lockdown began to 6.2 days, currently

## RATE OF RECOVERY RISING

- Average growth factor of 1.2 since April 1, a 40% decline from 2.1 between March 15 & March 31
- Rate of recovery also rising. As on Thursday, Kerala had max recoveries (245), followed by Telangana (186), TN (180), Maharashtra and Rajasthan (164 each)
- Delhi has low recovery

- rate of 3% (51 patients) so far
- Kerala has reported just 32 new cases from April 11 to 17 while 129 patients have recovered during this period
- 19 states and UTs, including Kerala, TN, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Bihar, Haryana and Ladakh have recorded a doubling rate lower than India's average

- ✓ As on April 16, Kerala recorded the maximum recoveries (245), followed by Telangana (186) and Tamil Nadu (180).
  - ✓ Kerala has reported just 32 new cases from April 11 to 17 while 129 patients have recovered from the infection during this period.
  - ✓ 19 states and Union territories, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Bihar, Haryana and Ladakh, have recorded a doubling rate lower than the country's average.
  
- **On April 18, the home ministry - allowed nonbanking financial companies (NBFCs), including housing finance companies and microfinance institutions, to resume operations during the extended lockdown period with bare minimum staff.**
  - ✓ Also, cooperative credit societies were permitted to function in non-containment areas
  - ✓ These directions were issued according to a fresh order issued on April 16 in continuation of the revised MHA guidelines of April 15.
  - ✓ The agricultural and horticultural activities allowed shall cover collection, harvesting and processing of minor forest produce and non-timber produce by the Scheduled Tribes and other forest-dwellers in the forest areas.
  - ✓ Also, plantation activities permitted include bamboo, coconut, areca nut, cocoa and spices plantation as well as their harvesting, processing, packaging, sale and marketing.
  - ✓ The construction activities in rural areas, which include water supply and sanitation, laying/erection of power transmission lines and laying of telecom optical fibre and cable along with related activities were also permitted
  - ✓ **In a separate announcement, Government announced that toll collection will resume across the national highway network from April 20 after a gap of 25 days.**
  - ✓ The road transport ministry authorised the NHAI to resume the collection of user fee.
  - ✓ The move follows the home ministry's relaxation to "allow a lot of activities with effect from April 20, including commercial and private establishments" and allowing construction with certain riders.
  
- **India - is planning to locally produce 10 lakh kits per month each of RT-PCR testing and rapid antibody detection tests for Covid-19 from May**
  - ✓ The efforts in areas of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines are also being monitored on a war footing, as per the health ministry
  - ✓ The present ventilator manufacturing capacity in India is 6,000 a month.
  - ✓ Till April 17, a total 1,919 dedicated Covid-19 facilities were identified across the country with 1,73,746 isolation beds and 21,806 ICU beds.

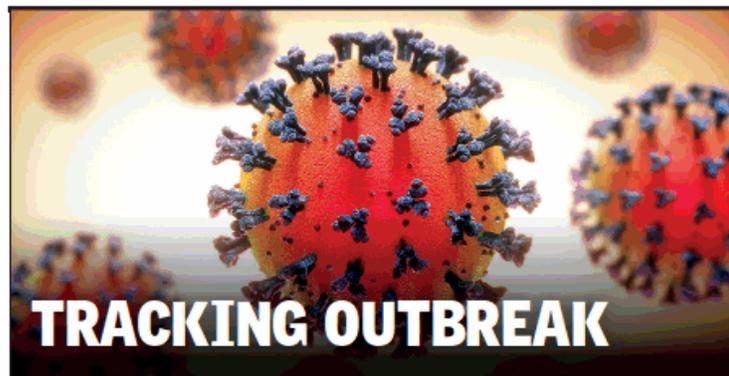
- ✓ The 1,919 facilities include 672 dedicated Covid hospitals for serious patients needing tertiary care and 1,247 dedicated Covid healthcare centres for patients with moderate symptoms.
- **The Union Agriculture Ministry - has launched a 'Kisan Rath' mobile application**
- ✓ The app will connect farmers and traders to a network of more than 5 lakh trucks and 20,000 tractors.



- ✓ It has been launched to ease the disruption of agricultural supply chains, especially for perishable produce
- ✓ The application was developed by the National Informatics Centre
- ✓ It intends to help farmers and traders who are searching for vehicles to move produce.
- ✓ The app will be helpful in organising primary transport from the farm to the shops, local warehouses or the collection centres of farmer producer organisations, as well as the secondary transport from the local shops to intra-and inter-State shops, processing units, railway stations, warehouses or wholesalers.
- ✓ The application can be downloaded from Google Play Store.
- ✓ Usually, Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) currently offers tractors to farmers for agricultural transportation.
- ✓ There are over 14,000 Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) that have more than 20,000 tractors to offer.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

- **The United States toll - has increased by more than 2000 per day over the past 72 hours, including a sharply-revised 6,185 deaths on April 14 on account of deaths that were previously not attributed to the coronavirus.**
- ✓ On April 17, President Trump's unveiled the three-phase guidelines, even as the national toll increased up to over 34,000 dead
- ✓ As per the guidelines, the US began re-opening for business in some thinly-populated states, which were largely unaffected by the coronavirus pandemic



Countries	Infected	Death	
United States	6,79,374	<b>34,180</b>	<b>185</b> countries/ regions hit
Spain	1,88,068	<b>19,478</b>	
Italy	1,72,434	<b>22,745</b>	<b>22,04,511+</b> infected globally
France	1,68,241	<b>18,681</b>	
Germany	1,38,497	<b>4,193</b>	<b>1,49,378+</b> have died
United Kingdom	1,09,769	<b>14,607</b>	
China	83,760	<b>4,636</b>	<b>5,60,980+</b> have recovered
Iran	79,494	<b>4,958</b>	
Turkey	78,546	<b>1,769</b>	
Belgium	36,138	<b>5,163</b>	Source: Johns Hopkins University

- ✓ On the day, China raised its coronavirus death toll by 50% in Wuhan, the city where the outbreak first emerged
- ✓ The new figure stands now at 3,869 deaths from the coronavirus in Wuhan, an increase of 1,290 from the previous figure.
  - ✓ The number of cumulative confirmed infections in the city was also revised upward to 50,333, an increase of 325.
  - ✓ The move appeared to be a response to growing questions about the accuracy of China's official figures.
  - ✓ As on date, China had reported over 82,000 cases and over 46500 deaths.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the deaths in Italy rose by 575 on the day, up from 525 the day before, while the number of new cases declined slightly.
- ✓ Singapore announced a record jump in virus cases for the second day in a row
- ✓ It has reported around 728 new infections, which was mostly seen in crowded dormitories for migrant labourers, many from India and Bangladesh.
- ✓ France registered 761 more virus deaths on the day, bringing the total to 18,681, but the number of people in hospital has declined for a third day.
- ✓ Globally, the virus has infected over 2.2 million and killed over 149,000.

# SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) – has announced that it will begin a new trial next week to study the efficacy of BCG vaccine in preventing Covid-19**
- ✓ The results are expected to help the government decide if the vaccine can be recommended to frontline healthcare workers taking care of patients.
- ✓ The possible effects of BCG vaccine in boosting anti-viral immunity has been the subject of considerable debate recently
- ✓ It is because some studies were pointing to higher fatalities in some European countries that have discontinued vaccination.
- ✓ Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) is a vaccine primarily used against tuberculosis.
- ✓ One dose is recommended for healthy babies as close to the time of birth as possible
- ✓ Apart from this, work is also going on anti-virals like remdesivir, found useful against Ebola, and plasma or immune therapies besides research on an anti-Covid-19 vaccine.

## ECONOMY

- **On April 17, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) – announced additional measures to cushion the economy and maintain financial stability amid the coronavirus lockdown in the country**
- ✓ The RBI lowered the reverse repo rate by 25 basis points to 3.75%, thus discouraging banks from keeping their surplus funds with it.

### BANKS BARRED FROM PAYING DIVIDEND

 <p><b>Measure:</b> ₹50,000cr made available to banks lending to NBFCs through targeted long-term repo operations</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Relief to small NBFCs that missed out on a similar scheme earlier</p>	<p><b>I:</b> Will help banks conserve capital and absorb credit losses. To be reviewed after Sept 30</p>
 <p><b>M:</b> Special refinance facilities of ₹25,000 crore to NABARD, ₹15,000 crore for SIDBI and ₹10,000 crore for National Housing Bank</p> <p><b>I:</b> Will benefit lenders to agri, small business and housing finance companies</p>	<p><b>M:</b> Reverse repo rate cut by 25 basis points from 4% to 3.75%</p> <p><b>I:</b> Banks, which are currently parking ₹6.9 lakh cr with RBI, will be incentivised to lend</p>
 <p><b>M:</b> Commercial banks and cooperative banks barred from paying dividend for FY20</p>	<p><b>M:</b> NBFCs can extend the date of competition for commercial real estate projects by one year</p> <p><b>I:</b> Gives relief to developers as they have more time, relief to NBFCs as they can delay NPA classification</p> <p><b>FULL COVERAGE P 12</b></p>

- ✓ The reverse repo rate was last cut on March 27 from 4.9% to 4%
- ✓ Among the measures announced was liquidity infusion of ₹1 lakh crore, of which ₹50,000 crore is exclusively for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), via banks, under its targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO)

- ✓ In addition to the ₹50,000 crore to finance companies, RBI set aside another ₹50,000 crore for farm lending, SME lending and housing finance
- ✓ This is routed through a special refinance facility of ₹25,000 crore for National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), ₹15,000 crore for Small Industries Development Board of India (SIDBI) and ₹10,000 crore for the National Housing Bank.
- ✓ The RBI also asked banks to skip dividend for FY20 and use the money to make up for any bad loans.

## CENTRAL BANK'S MEASURES & IMPACTS

 <p><b>Measure:</b> The 90-day NPA norm shall exclude the moratorium period</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> Banks will not have to classify some (non-NPA) stressed borrowers as defaulters even if they had trouble repaying before the moratorium period</p>	 <p><b>M:</b> Overdraft facility for state government under Ways and Means Advances doubled to 60% of borrowing limit</p> <p><b>I:</b> Will ensure that state governments do not end up paying high-interest rates by bunching up all their borrowings at the beginning of the year</p>
 <p><b>M:</b> 210-day limit for revolving loans in default extended by 90 days</p> <p><b>I:</b> Freezes the clock during the lockdown period. Gives relief to banks on finalising resolution plans</p> <p><b>M:</b> RBI eases liquidity coverage ratio for commercial banks to 80% from 100%. To be restored by April 1, 2021</p> <p><b>I:</b> More money to be released for banks to lend</p>	 <p><b>M:</b> Banks to maintain a higher provision of 10% on moratorium loans over two quarters</p> <p><b>I:</b> Will ensure that banks separate borrowers facing temporary liquidity and those that have longer-term problems</p>

- ✓ It has allowed real estate developers up to one more year to start repayment of loans availed from non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).
- ✓ In a relief to the micro, small and medium enterprises the RBI said the period for the resolution plan could be extended by 90 days beyond the 180 days' window the banks were given for coming up with a resolution plan.
- ✓ To help state governments with liquidity, the RBI also increased the ways and means advances (WMAs) by 60% over their March 31 limit.
- ✓ The RBI has allowed states to borrow about ₹19,200 crore more from the central bank through its Ways & Means Advance (WMA) window
- ✓ Under the enhanced limit, all states together can now borrow up to ₹51,500 crore from the RBI.
- ✓ After the announcement, Tamil Nadu can now borrow ₹3,960 crore under the 'Ways and Means Advances' (WMA) facility for State governments
- ✓ WMA is a temporary loan facility provided by the RBI to States to enable them to tide over temporary mismatches in the cash flow of their revenue receipts and expenditure.
- ✓ The tenure of the facility is three months, with a 21-day overdraft permitted.
- ✓ The increased limit will be available till September 2020.
- ✓ According to RBI, Tamil Nadu did not borrow under the WMA facility during 2019-2020.

# INTERNATIONAL DAY

## ➤ World Heritage Day – April 18, 2020



- ✓ The day is also observed as the International Day of Monuments and sites
- ✓ It is celebrated to create awareness about diversity, heritage and vulnerability of the monuments and heritage sites.
- ✓ Theme 2020 - Shared Culture, Shared heritage and Shared responsibility
- ✓ In India, five Delhi monuments will be illuminated by Archaeological Survey of India to celebrate the day.
- ✓ These five monuments include Humayun's Tomb, Qutub Minar, Safdarjung's Tomb, Red Fort and Purana Qila.
- ✓ In the year 1982, the International Council on Monuments and Sites announced April 18 as World Heritage Day.
- ✓ It was later approved by the UNESCO in 1983.

