



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 16, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- On May 15, Tamil Nadu's Covid-19 count - crossed the 10,000 mark with 434 people testing positive, 309 of them in Chennai.
- ✓ The state's death toll rose to 71, with five more fatalities reported on the day.

Keeping count | A tracker, across parameters, on how the pandemic has affected the State so far

	Until May 8	May 9	May 10	May 11	May 12	May 13	May 14	May 15	Total
Cases reported	6,009	526	669	798	716	509	447	434	10,108
Recovered and discharged	1,605	219	135	92	83	42	64	359	2,599
Deceased	40	4	3	6	8	3	2	5	71

Persons tested



Active cases	Discharged	Died	In hospitals
7,365	2,240	66	4,614
7,435	2,599	71	4,598

Districts with maximum cases

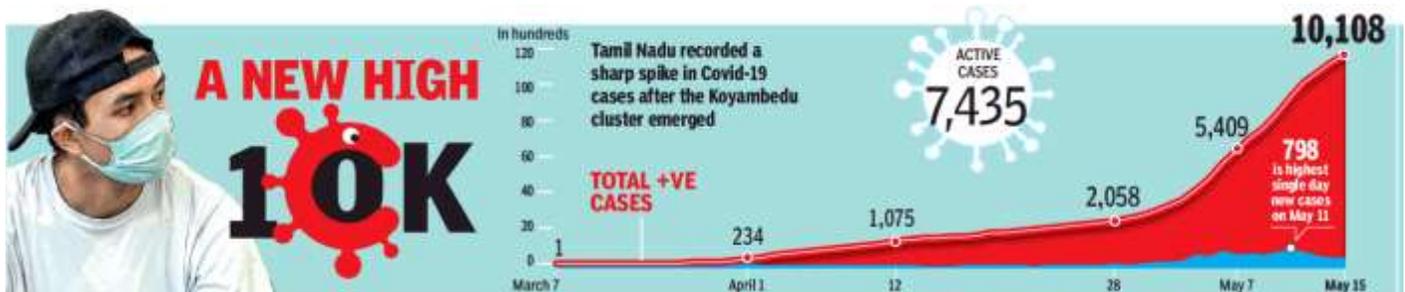
Chennai	5,946
Thiruvallur	516
Chengalpattu	450
Cuddalore	416
Ariyalur	348

*Changes in 24 hours As on May 14, 6 p.m. As on May 15, 6 p.m.

Active Cases + Discharged + Died will not equal Total Cases as 2 deaths were cross-notified to other States and 1 patient, who initially tested positive for COVID-19, later tested negative after death, as per the Health and Family Welfare Department.

- ✓ As on date, Chennai has more than half the cases in the state with 5,946 cases
- ✓ The city has also reported 48 of the 71 deaths so far, including four on the day.
- ✓ Chennai's neighbours registered double-digit increases in infections with Tiruvallur reporting 21 cases, Chengalpet 20 and Kancheepuram 11 — while nine other districts recorded single-digit increases.
- ✓ A total of 359 patients were discharged from various hospitals in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of people recovered to 2,599.
 - ✓ With this, nearly a quarter of the patients have recovered and the mortality rate in the state stands at 0.70%.

- ✓ On the day, a 32-year-old man and a 53-year-old woman, both residents of Chennai, admitted to Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH), a 34-year-old man admitted to Thoothukudi Government Medical College Hospital, a 57-year-old resident of Chennai admitted at the Government Medical College Hospital, Omandurar Estate and a 61-year-old man at Government Stanley Medical College Hospital were reported to have succumbed to the infection
- ✓ There are 7,435 people under treatment in either hospitals or at Covid care centres or in home isolation.
- ✓ The number of people tested, however, dropped by around 900 for the second consecutive day to 10,883.
 - ✓ Earlier, on May 7, two days before permitting interstate and international passengers, the state had tested 14,102 people.
- ✓ The first case in the state was reported on March 7 when a 45-year-old patient who came to Chennai from Oman tested positive.



- ✓ On April 12, the state crossed the 1,000-mark, after 36 days of reporting the first case
 - ✓ The cases jumped from 1,000 to 2,000 in 16 days and doubled from 2,000 to 4,000 in a week.
 - ✓ Six days later, on May 11, it crossed the 8000-mark and further reached 10,108 four days later.
- **On May 15, the state government - introduced six-days-a-week work plan, including Saturdays, for all government employees.**
- ✓ The move is part of its phased exit plan and to compensate for the loss of working days during the lockdown
- ✓ As per a government order, all offices will function with 50% staff strength from 10am to 5.45pm from May 18, and the required bus facility will be provided to the staff.
- ✓ Currently, staff strength in government offices during the lockdown period is capped at a maximum of 33%.
- ✓ The general public would be allowed entry into offices only with masks.
- ✓ However, all group 'A' officers drawing pay from ₹59,300 to ₹1.98 lakh to ₹1.28 lakh to ₹2.25 lakh and all head of offices irrespective of pay will attend office on all working days.

- ✓ The order is applicable for all offices, including, commissions, boards, corporations, universities, companies, institutions, and societies of the state.
- ✓ During the non working days, all officers/staff must be available for official work and should be accessible through electronic mode of communication.
- ✓ The essential departments such as police, health, district administration, treasury, local bodies and others will continue to function as per orders issued on March 25
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has assured the manufacturing units that their production sites will not be sealed or shut, in case a factory worker turns Covid-19 positive.**
- ✓ The government has asked the industry to divide the work force into teams and zones, so that a stand-by option is created when a worker turns positive for the virus.
 - ✓ In that case, the production would not stop, instead only the section and person should be isolated
- ✓ Meanwhile, the government has identified two locations, one in Salem for medical textiles, and the second in southern Tamil Nadu for an integrated textile park in the state.
- ✓ In a related move, the government has issued an order allowing all industrial units including textile firms to operate in non-containment urban areas, excluding those under Chennai City Police Commissionerate's jurisdiction
- **International news magazine 'Newsweek' - has rated 'Sankara Nethralaya' as among the four best ophthalmic institutions in the world for 2020.**
- ✓ It was the only Indian hospital to make it to the top 100.
- ✓ Sankara Nethralaya is a not-for-profit missionary institution for ophthalmic care headquartered in Chennai
- ✓ It was established in 1978

NATIONAL

- **On May 15, India – was ranked at the 11th spot among countries with the highest number of reported Covid-19 cases, overtaking China's official count**
- ✓ The fresh infections reported from across the country continues to remain higher than 3,500 for sixth consecutive day.
 - ✓ On the day, a total of 3,787 new cases were reported from states, taking India's caseload so far to 85,786.
 - ✓ China, from where the virus originated, has officially reported 84,031 cases.
- ✓ The day's death toll was 105, back in three digits after dropping to 99 a day earlier.
- ✓ Maharashtra, with 1,576 new infections, continued to lead the numbers, followed by Tamil Nadu (434), Delhi (425), Gujarat (340) and Rajasthan (213).

- ✓ On the positive side, India hasn't seen a new peak in daily cases for five days since touching a high of 4,308 on May 10.
- ✓ For the 10th day in a row Maharashtra continued to add 1,000 new Covid cases.
 - ✓ As on date, the total number of cases in the state crossed the 29,000 mark and was at 29,100 cases.
 - ✓ A day after Maharashtra recorded 1,000 deaths, it registered 49 deaths on the day — the third highest deaths recorded in a single day.
 - ✓ With the addition of 933 new cases on the day, Mumbai recorded its second highest single-day count, taking its total count of fresh infections to 17,671.
 - ✓ The state's capital has recorded as many as 34 of the 49 deaths reported on the day
- ✓ Delhi continued to show a surge in Covid-19 infections, taking the total tally to 8,895. The capital also recorded eight deaths as the toll from the virus went up to 123.
- ✓ Meanwhile, new cases in Rajasthan hit another high of 213, with Jaipur alone reporting 23 cases.
- ✓ Madhya Pradesh too continued to register a high number of cases, with 187 reported on the day, with Indore contributing more
- ✓ In Gujarat, the count of fresh cases has remained largely steady around 350 over the past few days.
 - ✓ The state reported 340 on the day, with the total count standing at 9,932
- ✓ In Odisha and Jharkhand, returning migrant workers continued to be the main source of infections, with Odisha adding 48 and Jharkhand 12 to their Covid numbers.
 - ✓ Jharkhand has reported 100 fresh cases in the 11 days since May 5, when tests results of returning migrants started coming in, taking its tally to 215.
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh, the main destination of returning migrants, registered 159 new cases
- ✓ As per the government estimates, as many as 79% of the over 81,000 confirmed Covid-19 cases in India are concentrated in 30 municipal regions
- ✓ Globally, Covid-19 cases stand at 42.48 lakh with 2.94 lakh deaths and a fatality rate of 6.92% while India's fatality rate is 3.23%
- ✓ The doubling time of cases improved to 12.9 days in the last week from 3.4 days in the pre-lockdown week, according to the health ministry.
- ✓ **The top eight states with high Covid-19 case fatality rates are also those which have the highest population (six crore and above), as per the data available.**
 - ✓ The only exception from the list is Telangana, which has a population of 3.69 crore but ranked seventh in the list, just above Uttar Pradesh.
- ✓ West Bengal, with a population of 9.45 crore and confirmed cases of 2,377, has the highest fatality rate of over 9%.
- ✓ It is followed by Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Telangana and UP, in that order.

AT 9%, BENGAL TOPS FATALITY RATE

States	Population (in cr)	Covid cases	Deaths	Fatality (%)
W Bengal	9.4	2,377	215	9.0
Gujarat	6.4	9,592	586	6.1
MP	7.9	4,426	237	5.3
Maharashtra	12.2	27,524	1,019	3.7
Karnataka	6.3	1,032	35	3.4
Rajasthan	7.4	4,589	125	2.7
Telangana	3.7	1,414	34	2.4
UP	22.3	3,902	88	2.2
All India	128.8	82,264	2,649	3.2

Source: Population figures from MHA as per 2017 projection and Covid-19 data from Covid19India.org/MoHFW as on May 14

- ✓ Though UP has the highest population among all states of 22.26 crore, it has one of the lowest fatality rates, 2.25%, with just 3,902 confirmed cases and 88 deaths.
 - ✓ Bihar, with a population of 10.54 crore, has reported 1,005 confirmed cases so far and seven deaths with fatality rate of 0.69%.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu, with a population of 6.98 crore and 9,674 confirmed cases, has a fatality rate of 0.68% with 66 deaths.
 - ✓ Delhi, which is ranked fourth, after Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, in the number of confirmed cases, has reported 115 deaths out of 8,470 confirmed cases with a fatality rate of 1.35%
 - ✓ India has a low case fatality rate of 3.22%
 - ✓ It is significantly lower than China which has reported 84,024 confirmed cases and 4,637 deaths with a fatality rate of 5.5% and Japan where the confirmed cases stand at 16,049 and deaths at 678 with a fatality rate of 4.2%.
 - ✓ South Korea has reported 10,991 cases and 260 deaths with a fatality rate of 2.4%.
 - ✓ France, UK, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands and Sweden have reported a fatality rate of 12-16%.
- **On May 15, the Centre - announced three crucial, long-pending reforms to reshape the architecture of farmer-market ties in the third tranche of the ₹20-lakh-crore 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' stimulus package**
- ✓ The new announcements allow the farmers to sell their produce without any restrictions, and also unveiled an immediate ₹1 lakh-crore fund to build agri infrastructure to raise productivity and make the sector globally competitive.

- ✓ The ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund will be financed and managed by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)
- ✓ Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the fund and said the policy reforms were part of an 11-point action plan to revive the agriculture sector and ensure better returns for farmers.
- ✓ The third tranche also included plans to strengthen infrastructure in food processing, fisheries, animal husbandry, horticulture, herbal cultivation and beekeeping with a total funding of ₹50,000 crore, including funds allocated earlier in the budget.

WIDE-RANGING REFORMS UNVEILED

KEY MEASURES	CENTRAL LAW WILL BE ANNOUNCED TO PROVIDE:	Package	Date	Amount (₹ L cr)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amendments to Essential Commodities Act to enable farmers to get better prices ➤ Cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions, potato to be deregulated ➤ Stock limit to be imposed under exceptional circumstances like national calamities ➤ Agriculture marketing reforms to give farmers marketing choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adequate choices to farmer to sell produce at attractive price ➤ Barrier free inter-state trade; framework for e-trading of produce 	PM Garib Kalyan Yojana	March 26	1.7
		RBI measures	March-April	5.2
		Tranche 1	May 13	5.9
		Tranche 2	May 14	3.2
		Tranche 3	May 15	1.6
		Total so far		17.7
		Total package		20
		To be announced		2.3

AGRI PRODUCE PRICE & QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Legal framework will be created to enable farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, large retailers, exporters in fair & transparent manner; will allow pvt sector investment in inputs, knowhow

Big Numbers: ₹1L cr agri infra fund; ₹20,000cr for fishermen; ₹15,000cr animal husbandry infra development fund; ₹10,000cr fund to help micro food units build brands and go global



- ✓ The government will amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, to make a central law on agriculture marketing and create a legal framework to provide price assurance to farmers and help improve the quality of their produce.
- ✓ The ₹1 lakh crore agri infrastructure fund would be spent on creating infrastructure projects at farm-gate and aggregation points (primary agricultural cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations, agriculture entrepreneurs and startups).
- ✓ Henceforth, the farmers should be able to directly sell farm produce to any private entity or food processing company from farm-gates and registered warehouses
 - ✓ In future, they don't need any licensing mechanism of registered mandis (agri markets) currently run under the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act.
- ✓ The reforms unveiled by the FM are aimed at boosting contract farming while private sector involvement will help attract better technology, inputs and market knowledge for farmers

- ✓ Other measures include a ₹10,000-crore scheme for formalisation of micro food enterprises to follow a cluster-based approach to promote local produce through export.

Booster dose

The third tranche of the measures announced under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** focuses on agriculture and allied activities

- Funds worth **₹1 lakh crore** to be given to agricultural cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations and start-ups for boosting farm-gate infrastructure
- **₹10,000 crore** for formalisation of micro-food enterprises; cluster-based farming approach to be followed
- **₹20,000 crore** for fishermen under PM Matsya Sampada Yojana; expected to pave way for additional fish production of 70 lakh tonnes over 5 years
- **₹13,000 crore** drive to achieve 100% vaccination of cattle, buffalos, sheep, goats and pigs
- **₹15,000 crore** boost for animal husbandry infrastructure
- **₹4,000 crore** for promotion of herbal cultivation; 10 lakh hectares to be covered
- **₹500 crore** for beekeeping initiatives
- Essential Commodities Act, 1955, to be amended to de-regulate **cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onion and potato**
- Marketing reforms to be undertaken to provide adequate choice for **farmers to sell produce** at prices of their choice



A farmer carries strawberries after harvesting them in Srinagar on Friday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

- ✓ The finance minister cited examples such as “makhana” in Bihar, mango in UP, saffron in J&K, bamboo shoots in the north-east, chillies in Andhra Pradesh and tapioca in Tamil Nadu among several others for promotion and support through the cluster-based approach
 - ✓ This method is aimed at promoting the government’s vision of “vocal for local” with a global approach
- ✓ The “Atmanirbhar Bharat” policy, announced by the Prime Minister, is aimed at making the Indian economy competitive and emerging as a major player in the global supply chain with ‘Make in India’ products.
- **The Centre – has announced the deregulation of the sale of six types of agricultural produce, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes, by amending the Essential Commodities Act, 1955**
 - ✓ It will amend the Act to provide for notifying stock limits for a retailer or wholesaler only if retail prices increase abnormally—by 100% in case of perishable items like onion, potato and tomato and 50% in the case of non-perishable essential commodities.
 - ✓ The government will shortly bring in an ordinance to effect changes in the Act
 - ✓ The government has also worked out a formula for taking a decision to impose stock limit.

- ✓ As per the formula, the current price of an essential commodity will be compared with the average price of the same item for past one year and past five years, whichever is lower.
 - ✓ The decision to amend the law was announced by the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman
 - ✓ As per the FM, the stock limit can be imposed under very exceptional circumstances like national calamities, famine etc which may lead to abnormal surge in prices.
 - ✓ The Essential Commodities Act is used by the government to put a cap on prices and specify stock limit for essential items.
- **On May 15, the Centre - said it was increasing the scope of 'Operation Greens' from priority crops 'TOP' (tomato, onion and potato), to 'Total' (all fruits and vegetables)**
- ✓ It has also announced measures for beekeeping and promotion of herbal cultivation on 10 lakh hectares that include a corridor for medicinal plants along the Ganga.
 - ✓ Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government had allocated ₹4,000 crore for promoting cultivation of herbal plants and there would be a network of regional 'mandis' for medicinal plants in the country.
 - ✓ This plan will be implemented by the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB)
 - ✓ The board has already supported 2.25 lakh hectares under cultivation of medicinal plants.
 - ✓ The shift from 'TOP to Total' is aimed at helping farmers who are the mercy of the weather and markets and often sell their perishable fruits and vegetables for a lower price.
- **The work generated under the job guarantee scheme MGNREGA - has shot up by four times in the last fortnight while the number of persons provided work went up by three times during this period**
- ✓ The activities under MGNREGA were opened up on April 20 when the Centre relaxed the lockdown restrictions after a complete halt since March 25.
 - ✓ After the first nine days, as many as 3.59 crore person days of work was generated till April 29 and during this period, 49 lakh persons were provided work
 - ✓ Till May 14, MGNREGA has reported 14.81 crore person days of work in which 1.58 crore persons have participated.
 - ✓ The key indicator for MGNREGA is the year 2019-20 when the scheme generated a total of 264 crore persondays of work with the participation of many as 7.87 crore persons.
 - ✓ Andhra leads the table with three crore persondays of work while Chhattisgarh has generated 2.7 crore persondays.

- ✓ Bihar has reached 1.5 crore persondays and West Bengal has 1.35 crore persondays.
- ✓ In contrast, Rajasthan has created only 81.28 lakh persondays with a participation of 8.10 lakh workers while Maharashtra has 35.54 lakh persondays with 4.33 lakh workers.
- ✓ Gujarat still has just 15.84 lakh persondays through 2.1 lakh workers.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu too is lagging behind with 18.64 lakh persondays via 3.94 lakh workers.

➤ **India's foodgrain production in 2019-20 is estimated to be record 295.67 million tonnes (MT) — 3.6% higher than the output in 2018-19**

- ✓ This was announced by the agriculture ministry on May 15.
- ✓ The Government has set a higher production target with a record 298 MT for 2020-21 crop year (July-June cycle)
- ✓ On May 14, the government had decided to supply free foodgrains to migrants for two months and bring higher number of people under beneficiaries' net through national portability of ration cards.
- ✓ As per the agriculture ministry, the total foodgrain output was higher by 10.46 MT than the output of 285.21 MT achieved during 2018-19
 - ✓ The total production of rice during 2019-20 is estimated at record 117.94 MT
 - ✓ It is higher by 8.17 MT than the five years' average production of 109.77 MT.
 - ✓ Similarly, production of wheat during 2019-20 is estimated at record 107.18 MT
 - ✓ It is higher by 3.58 MT as compared to wheat production during 2018-19 and is higher by 11.02 MT than the average wheat production of 96.16 MT in the country.
- ✓ The ministry attributed the high production of most of the crops in 2019-20 to good monsoon rainfall last year.

➤ **The government - has notified new telemedicine guidelines as part of Indian Medical Council (IMC) Regulations**

- ✓ The new guidelines enable registered medical practitioners to provide consultation and write prescriptions based on telephone conversations
- ✓ The IMC (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002 was amended to include telemedicine guidelines
 - ✓ The guidelines were issued by the Medical Council of India's board of governors (BoG) along with Niti Aayog on March 25.
- ✓ The consultation through telemedicine by registered medical practitioners under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, shall be permissible in accordance with the telemedicine practice guidelines, as per the notification.

- **India's manufacturing capacity for Personal Protective Equipment for medical personnel treating Covid-19 patients – is expected to touch the projected requirement of 2 crore body coveralls (PPEs) by June-end**
- ✓ The country's capacity had touched 3 lakh PPEs this week
- ✓ So far, around 50 lakh PPEs have been manufactured and another 50 lakh are expected to be ready by the end of this month.
- ✓ Around one crore PPEs are expected to be manufactured over June, according to the textiles ministry.
- ✓ The PPE kits are being sent to the states by the health ministry for use by medical personnel.
- ✓ As per the ministry of textiles, around 400 manufacturers have been certified so far
 - ✓ Out of the 400 'certified' manufacturers, around 100 are supplying to HLL Lifecare Limited, the designated single-window procurement agency for hospitals and healthcare organisations under the health ministry
 - ✓ The rest of the certified manufacturers are ready for taking orders directly from states.

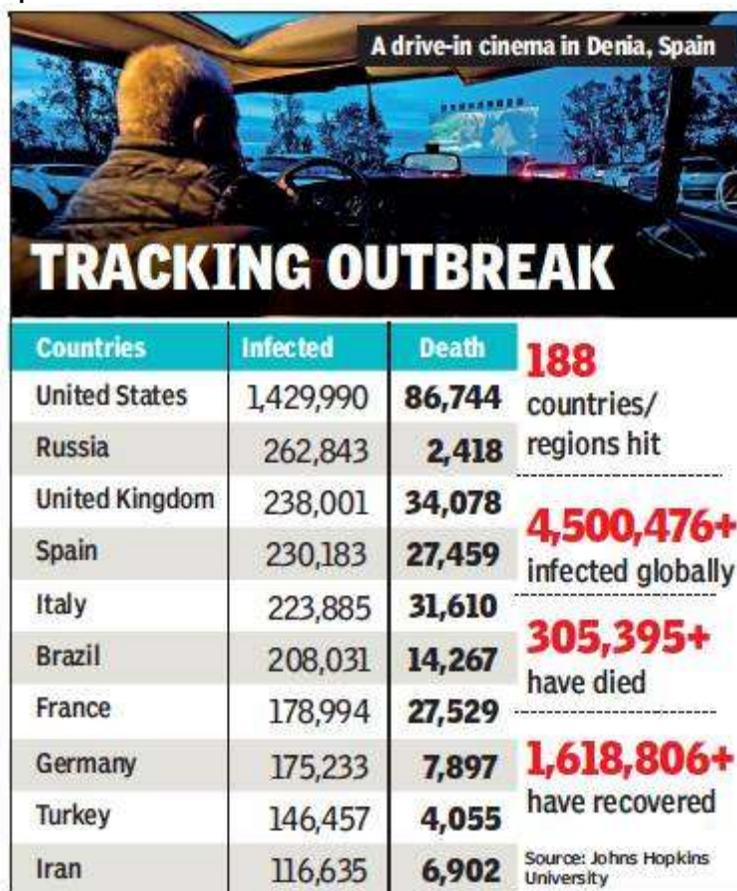
SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On May 15, the Supreme Court - allowed the Tamil Nadu government to resume sale of liquor through Tasmac outlets from May 16, 2020**
- ✓ A special bench of Justice L Nageswara Rao, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice BR Gavai stayed a May 8 order of the Madras high court that had closed these outlets due to violation of conditions imposed by it.
- ✓ Further, Tasmac announced reopening of about 3,600 outlets across the state, except in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts.
 - ✓ Shops in Chengalpet and Kancheepuram districts falling under the jurisdiction of Greater Chennai Police, too, will also remain closed.
 - ✓ Also, the liquor shops would not be reopened in malls, shopping complexes and containment zones.
- ✓ In order to ensure social distancing, authorities will issue liquor coupons in seven different colours valid for each day of the week.
 - ✓ The tokens would be issued once in two days and police will be involved in issuing them.
 - ✓ Also, sale would be restricted to 500 customers per day per shop.
 - ✓ Customers should wear masks when they visit the liquor shops.
- ✓ Earlier, on May 4, Tamil Nadu government announced reopening of Tasmac outlets from May 7.
- ✓ On May 6, the high court permitted liquor sale with conditions like Aadhar proof, social distancing and liquor rationing.
- ✓ However, on May 8, citing violation of conditions, the court ordered closure of liquor shops.

- ✓ Tasmac, which had done business for ₹195 crore during the two days, moved the apex court challenging the closure order.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On May 15, Slovenia - became the first European country to open its borders after declaring an “end to its Covid-19 epidemic”, despite new infections still being reported.**
- ✓ More parts of Europe opened up on the day as the world tried to get back on the road to recovery from coronavirus, despite fears of a second wave of the pandemic
- ✓ Meanwhile, the virus continuing to ravage the US and Russia and a report warning that a quarter of a billion Africans were at risk of being infected.



- ✓ The German economy suffered its worst decline since the 2008 global financial crisis, shrinking by 2.2% in the January-March period from the previous quarter and pushing Europe’s powerhouse into recession.
- ✓ Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia created their own “Baltic circle”, allowing free movement among them.
- ✓ Meanwhile, France called for self-restraint as it prepared for its first weekend since its lockdown was eased on May 11

- ✓ On May 15, Russia's COVID-19 case tally rose above 2,60,000, placing it at the second place among the country's with highest number of infections after the United States,
 - ✓ Russia's death toll rose by 113 overnight to reach 2,418, Russia's coronavirus task force said, while the case tally jumped by 10,598 to hit 2,62,843.
 - ✓ Moscow, the epicentre of Russia's outbreak, started mass antibody testing of residents on the day to try to work out what portion of the population has already been infected and to identify infected people with no symptoms.
 - ✓ The country's capital is planning to perform over 2,00,000 such tests a day by the end of May
- ✓ On the day, the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Pakistan crossed 38,300 while fatalities climbed to 822, prompting the government to make wearing masks mandatory in public.
- ✓ In the vaccine front, ChAdOx1nCoV-19, developed by Oxford researchers and drug firm AstraZeneca has shown promising results in six monkeys
 - ✓ As per the preliminary data, some of the monkeys given a single vaccine shot developed antibodies against the virus within 14 days, and all developed protective antibodies within 28 days.
 - ✓ The vaccine is being tested currently on humans too.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **For the first time, Kathmandu - has set up an armed police force border outpost near Kalapani at Chhangru, on the Nepalese side of the border.**
- ✓ Earlier, there used to be just a regular police post in Chhangru, which is the last village before the border.
- ✓ The Nepal government has allotted 11 crore Nepalese rupees for setting up the post.
- ✓ The post has been set up almost 18km from the Lipulekh Pass
- ✓ Earlier, Nepal lodged a protest against India for inaugurating an almost 80-km link-road near Lipulekh Pass, saying it passed through its territory
- ✓ On May 8, Defence minister Rajnath Singh had inaugurated the Tawaghat-Lipulekh road, which was expected to cut travel time to Kailash Mansarovar significantly.
 - ✓ The road was constructed by the Border Roads Organisation
 - ✓ It enable vehicles to go near Lipulekh Pass, which is marked by the Kalapani river, one of the headwaters of the Kali river in the Kumaon Himalayas at an altitude of 3,600-5,200 metres and is claimed by the Nepalese as their territory.
 - ✓ The foreign ministry has announced that the area lies "well within Indian territory"

DEFENCE

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh – commissioned a ship ‘ICGS Sachet’ and two interceptor boats (IB) ‘C-450 and C-451’ into the Coast Guard in Goa via videoconference from New Delhi on May 15.**
- ✓ This is the first time in the Indian maritime history that the coast guard ship was commissioned through the digital medium.
- ✓ With this, the Coast guard has achieved two landmarks – 150 ships and boats along with 62 aircrafts.
- ✓ The ships, on joining the fleet, will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, coastal security and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard charter of duties, to safeguard the maritime interests of the nation,
- ✓ The Ship ‘ICGS Sachet’ is the first in a series of five offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) being built by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) under CGOPV (Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vehicle) project.
 - ✓ The 105-metre long ship displaces approximately 2,350 tons and is propelled by two 9,100 KW diesel engines designed to attain a maximum speed of 26 knots, with an endurance of 6,000 nautical miles.
 - ✓ It is designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter and four high-speed boats and one inflatable boat for swift boarding and search and rescue operations.
 - ✓ The ship can also carry limited pollution response equipment to undertake oil spill pollution response at sea
- ✓ The Interceptor Boats, C-450 and C-451, are designed & built by the Larsen & Toubro Shipyard, Hazira, Gujarat
- ✓ The 30-metre long boats are capable of achieving speeds in excess of 45 knots and designed for high-speed interception, close patrol and low intensity operations.
- ✓ Further, 40 ships were in various stages of construction at different Indian shipyards and 16 Advanced Light Helicopters under production at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.
 - ✓ They are expected to boost the surveillance capabilities of the Coast Guard to deal with the ever-dynamic maritime challenges.
- ✓ In another event, the Navy formally inducted landing craft utility (LCU) L57 into service at Port Blair.
 - ✓ This is the seventh LCU in the series of the MK-IV class.
- ✓ The CGOPV project was a follow-on project of the earlier six ship CGOPV project that was completed in 2017.
 - ✓ Under the CGOPV that completed in 2017, six Samarth-class ships were commissioned to the Indian Coast Guard, which are now in operation
 - ✓ The Samarth Class OPV were preceded by the Vishwast Class OPV and succeeded by the Vikram Class OPVs.

- **On May 15, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh - approved the launch of Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)**
 - ✓ The scheme has an outlay of ₹400 crore
 - ✓ It is launched to create state-of-the-art testing infrastructure for domestic defence and aerospace manufacturing sector.
 - ✓ The facilities will be used to test UAVs (Unmanned Vehicles), radars, drones, rubber testing, telecom equipment testing, shock testing, noise testing, ship motion testing, blast testing, environment test facilities testing, etc.
 - ✓ The scheme has been launched for the duration of five years and aims to set up six to eight new test facilities in partnership with private industry.
 - ✓ This will facilitate indigenous defence production and consequently reduce imports of military equipment
 - ✓ The projects under the scheme will also be provided with up to 75% government funding in the form of 'Grant-in-Aid'.

- **The first four Rafale fighter jets - will arrive in India to the Ambala airbase from France by the end of July 2020, as against the earlier deadline of May 2020**

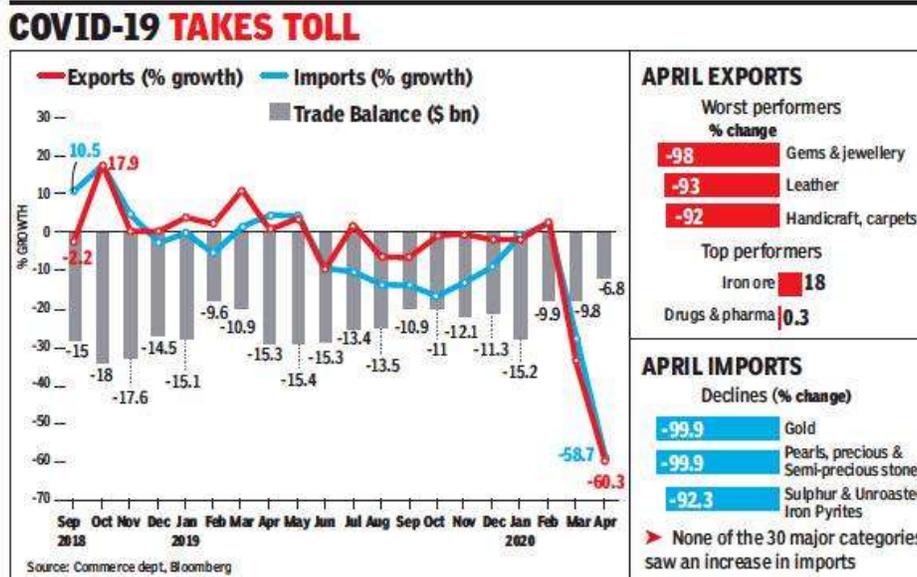


- ✓ The delivery of combat aircrafts was postponed by two months in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.
- ✓ The first four Rafale aircraft will include three twin-seater trainer aircraft and one single-seater fighter aircraft.
- ✓ The aircraft will have the tail numbers of the 'RB series' to honour Air Force Chief RKS Bhadauria who played a significant role in finalising India's largest-ever defence deal for 36 Rafale combat aircraft.
- ✓ The first aircraft to be flown in is set to be piloted by the Commanding Officer of the 17 Golden Arrows' squadron along with a French pilot.
- ✓ India had signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with France in September 2016 to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets in fly-away condition for €7.8 billion within six years.

- ✓ Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had on India's behalf received the first Rafale aircraft on October 8, 2019 during a handing over ceremony at Mérignac in Bordeaux, France.
- ✓ Rafale is a twin-engine, canard-delta wing, multirole combat aircraft
 - ✓ It has been designed and built by the French company Dassault Aviation.
 - ✓ The aircraft was introduced in 2001

ECONOMY

- **The country's exports - fell over 60% in April, the worst in almost 30 years, with the monthly value of outbound shipments at \$10.4 billion being the lowest in 14 years.**
- ✓ The pace of decline in exports was the worst since 1991 as data prior to that period was unavailable.



- ✓ The Covid-19 induced lockdown, which halted almost all economic activity in the country, also resulted in a 59% slump in imports to \$17.1 billion
 - ✓ It is the lowest monthly import value since February 2009
 - ✓ The problem with the export sector was so acute that 28 of the 30 major sectors saw a fall in exports, with drugs, pharma and iron ore being the sole exceptions.
 - ✓ In case of imports, none of the 30 major sectors saw higher value of shipments, resulting in trade deficit reducing to \$6.8 billion in April, lowest in four years.
 - ✓ Although some economic activity has begun, exporters from key sectors such as garments, engineering goods and gems/jewellery are unlikely to be better in May too when compared with the previous month.
- **On May 5, the multilateral agency, World Bank – has announced a ‘social protection’ assistance of \$1 billion to India**

- ✓ It is also in talks with the government for funding initiatives to assist micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- ✓ Earlier in April, the bank had approved a \$1 billion loan to support India's health sector, taking its total commitment to India's COVID-19 response to \$2 billion now.
- ✓ The bank's support for social protection will be funded in two phases – an allocation of \$750 million before the end of June and a \$250 million second tranche by June 2021.
- ✓ In the first phase, the funding is meant to support Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, announced in March by the Centre
 - ✓ It will be used to improve the public distribution system and direct benefit transfer apart from supporting other initiatives such as social protection for workers engaged in the fight against Covid-19
- ✓ The second phase will provide the fund after July 2020
 - ✓ It will be used to provide additional cash and in-kind benefits based on local needs through state governments and portable social protection delivery systems.
- ✓ The assistance is meant to tackle problems faced by the urban poor and migrants and ensure portability of social benefits and cash transfers using Aadhaar.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ **International Day of Light – May 16**



- ✓ The day celebrates the role of light in art, culture, science, sustainable development and education
- ✓ It is observed every year by UNESCO
- ✓ The day marks the first successful operation of LASER in 1960.
- ✓ The first successful LASER operation was done by an engineer and physicist Theodore Maiman.
- ✓ The day is administered by International Basic Science Programme that is conducted by UNESCO.

CHINA vs INDIA – COVID19 – A REPORT



In 106 days, India shoots past China

China was where it all began, in a wet market in Wuhan. Till January-end, there were only a few cases outside China. And then the coronavirus spread around the world. India's numbers started rising steadily from March, and on Friday, India became the 11th country with more Covid-19 cases than China. India's numbers will keep rising, but the good news is the country's growth rate is much slower than that of many countries – like the US – when they had around 80,000 cases. Though China had initially been hailed as a success story, a second wave appears to have hit parts of the country – a new cluster was identified in the northeastern city of Jilin – and Wuhan is testing every one of its 11 million residents to prevent a resurgence. **Atul Thakur** looks at how India compares with the other countries that have crossed the 80,000-mark

