



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 22, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **Tamil Nadu - reported 776 fresh cases, taking its tally to 13,967 on May 21.**
- ✓ Seven deaths were also recorded on the day, taking the toll to 94.
- ✓ Among the fresh cases, 76 people had come by road from Maharashtra and 11 from other states and countries.
- ✓ Meanwhile, state's hotspot Chennai reported 567 cases, taking its cumulative tally to 8,795.
- ✓ Chennai's neighbouring districts, Tiruvallur, Chengalpet and Kancheepuram, together had reported 89 cases.
- ✓ The remaining 33 cases were spread across 14 districts in the state
- ✓ So far, 61 passengers who had returned from other countries tested positive upon arrival.

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

	Until May 14	May 15	May 16	May 17	May 18	May 19	May 20	May 21	Total
Cases reported	9,674	434	477	639	536	688	743	776	13,967
Recovered and discharged	2,240	359	939	634	234	489	987	400	6,282
Deceased	66	5	3	4	3	3	3	7	94

Persons tested



Active cases	Discharged	Died	In hospitals
7,219	5,882	87	5,059
7,588	6,282	94	5,315

*Changes in 24 hours ■ As on May 20, 6 p.m. ■ As on May 21, 6 p.m.

Districts with maximum cases

Chennai	8,795
Chengalpattu	655
Thiruvallur	636
Cuddalore	421
Ariyalur	355

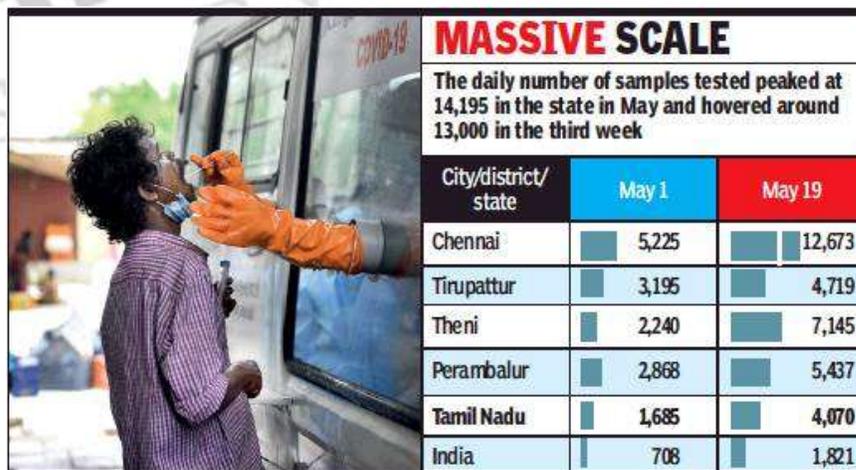
Active Cases + Discharged + Died will not equal Total Cases as 2 deaths were cross-notified to other States and 1 patient, who initially tested positive for COVID-19, later tested negative after death, as per the Health and Family Welfare Department.

- ✓ Five districts, Coimbatore, Erode, Namakkal, Tiruvarur and Tiruppur don't have any cases in them.

- ✓ On the day, three deaths were recorded at government hospitals and four in private hospitals.
- ✓ A total of 7,588 active cases were under isolation in hospitals, covidcare centres and homes
- ✓ The recovery rate went up to 44% as 6,282 people, including 400 on the day, were declared cured and discharged.



- ✓ The revised ICMR guideline, announced on May 10, now allows hospitals to discharge patients with no fever for 10 consecutive days.
- ✓ This reduces waiting time for patients and speeds up the discharge rate
- ✓ As per the data of Greater Chennai Corporation, the number of samples being tested for the viral infection in the city and state has more than doubled in the past three weeks.
- ✓ For instance, on May 1, the number of tests per million population for Chennai stood at 5,225, which rose to 12,673 on May 19.
- ✓ Similarly, Tamil Nadu had done 1,685 tests per million population on May 1, which also increased to 4,070 on May 19.



- ✓ The corresponding national figures are 708 and 1,821, reported on May 1 and May 19 respectively.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the government has announced that it will distribute information booklets to help people with diabetes, hypertension, heart and kidney diseases, and cancer cope with the situation
- ✓ This was announced by the state health minister C Vijayabaskar.

- ✓ The booklets will explain the importance of drug, diet and exercise regimens for pregnant women, elderly, children and people with comorbidities
- **On May 21, the Tamil Nadu government - announced several austerity measures to regulate expenditure due to rising cost of Covid-19 control measures and falling revenue**
- ✓ This includes a ban on creation of new posts in all departments in the state for a year.
- ✓ The fiscal control measures are expected to help the government save ₹700 crore this year.
- ✓ As per the new order, all general transfers, except mutual request transfers, will be stopped immediately.
- ✓ The departments are not allowed to purchase new computers or accessories, except to replace old and repaired systems, or new vehicles.

Tightening belt

Cuts imposed in the allocations made in the Budget Estimates for 2020-21 under Demands for Grants

- A flat 20% cut in the overall budgeted amount for office expenses and other contingencies

- A 50% cut in the amount for office furniture

- A 25% cut in the budgeted amount for advertising and publicity

- An overall cut of 25% of the budget provisions for machinery and



Rescue Services departments

equipment, except for essential services providers like Health & Family Welfare and Fire &

- A total ban on the purchase of new vehicles, except for medical/ambulatory services, police and fire services, VVIP security, etc.

- The purchase of new computers and accessories will not be allowed, except for the replacement of very old and dysfunctional systems

- Secretaries to the government and heads of departments to be personally responsible for enforcing the austerity measures and issuing suitable instructions to subordinate officers

- ✓ Leave travel concession, which was extended to families of employees once every four years, shall stand deferred for all categories of staff and teachers.
- ✓ The departments must hold regular meetings through video conferencing and teleconferencing as permission for official travel will be restricted
- ✓ The foreign travel programmes at government's cost and all flight travel within the state are banned, unless the cost of airfare is less than or equal to the cost of eligible train fare.

- ✓ Resident commissioners of Tamil Nadu House will attend Union government meetings in New Delhi as far as possible, even though flight travel in executive class is not permitted for officers of any grade.
- ✓ The state has recently announced freezing of dearness allowance hike till 2021 and suspension of earned leave encashment.
- ✓ However, recruitment against existing vacancies in entry-level posts, including appointments on compassionate ground, and promotions and recruitment by transfer shall continue with the approval of staff committee.

STATES

- **The Odisha government - has promulgated an ordinance allowing investors and farmers to enter into agreement for 'contract farming' in the state, against the backdrop of the continuing uncertainties due to Covid-19 pandemic.**
- ✓ The ordinance is aimed at facilitating both farmers and sponsors to develop mutually beneficial and efficient contract farming system.
- ✓ The ordinance has been promulgated, as the state assembly is not in session.
- ✓ The new system is expected to improve production and marketing of agricultural produce and livestock while promoting farmers' interest.
- ✓ However, the government has made it clear that no title, rights, ownership or possession of land or other such property will be transferred or vested in the sponsor or its successor or agent.

NATIONAL

- **On May 21, India's Covid-19 tally - reached 1.13 lakh with half of those getting reported in the last fortnight**
- ✓ The recent cases were attributed to the large-scale movement of guest workers in special trains and arrival of stranded Indians and expatriates from abroad.
- ✓ The nationwide death toll due to the deadly virus infection has crossed 3,400 with a mortality rate of 3.06%
- ✓ Around 46,000 patients have recovered so far.
- ✓ At least 15 other countries have recorded more deaths than India so far.
- ✓ As per the government, the mortality rate in India has remained less than half of the global average of 6.65%
- ✓ However, India's tally of active cases at over 63,000 is now the fifth largest in the world after the US, Russia, Brazil and France.
- ✓ While India is the 11th worst-hit in terms of the number of overall cases detected so far, some of the 10 most-affected countries now have fewer active cases than India and those include Spain, Italy, Germany, Turkey and Iran

- ✓ Meanwhile, the Centre asked all states to ensure strict implementation of the existing lockdown conditions, including a night curfew from 7pm to 7am, following instances of violation of the restrictions at several places.
- ✓ In a circular to all states and Union territories, the Union home ministry asked strict adherence to its guidelines, including for wearing of face covers, ensuring social distancing at work, transport and in public places, maintaining hygiene and sanitation etc, for containing the spread of the viral infection.
- **Severe cyclonic storm Amphan's nine-hour travel through seven south Bengal districts - left 72 dead, including 15 in Kolkata alone.**

44 LAKH AFFECTED IN ODISHA

<p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">Photos: Reuters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 72 deaths across Bengal, including 15 in Kolkata; no casualties in Odisha. Bangladesh toll 26 ➤ 88,000 hectares of paddy and 1 lakh hectares each of vegetable and sesame crops destroyed in Bengal ➤ In Kolkata, 5,000-odd trees and 2,500 electricity poles uprooted; 14 lakh consumers without power till late on Thursday ➤ Damage in Odisha restricted to northern part; standing crops damaged and 44 lakh people across 6,745 villages affected 	 <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">A bus damaged by a fallen tree due to Cyclone Amphan in Kolkata</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee announces ₹2 lakh compensation each to kin of dead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ PM Narendra Modi to visit Bengal & Odisha today, hold review meet with CMs

- ✓ The South 24-Parganas, which was destroyed mostly due to the cyclone's impact, reported 12 deaths, while North 24-Parganas registered 27 deaths
- ✓ The rivers over ran farmlands throughout the Sunderbans, damaging acres and acres of standing crops.
- ✓ The damage, still being assessed, is believed to be more extensive than what cyclone Aila had caused 11 years ago.
- ✓ The state has lost more than 88,000 hectares of paddy and one lakh hectares each of vegetable and sesame crops
- ✓ Meanwhile, the state government created a ₹1,000-crore fund to repair damaged embankments and houses and restore water supply to the affected areas.
- ✓ The state's CM, Mamta Banerjee announced compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased.
- ✓ The PM Modi is expected to visit Bengal and Odisha on May 22 to witness the scenario and discuss relief and rehabilitation measures with the CMs of both states.
- **The government - has fixed minimum and maximum fares for domestic flights that will resume operations on May 25.**

- ✓ However, airlines will need to sell 40% seats below midpoint of the fare band on each flight.
- ✓ Based on flying time, there are seven categories of fares — from ₹2,000 to ₹6,000 for those with a flying time of 40 minutes to those in the range of ₹6,500 to ₹18,600 which fly for 3 to 3.5 hours

PRICE BANDS & NEW SOPs	
Category: Flight Time: Fare ▶ A. Under 40 mins: ₹2,000-6,000: Delhi-Jaipur ▶ B. 40-60 mins: ₹2,500-7,500: Delhi-Lucknow ▶ C. 60-90 mins: ₹3,000-9,000: Delhi-Varanasi/Patna ▶ D. 90-120 mins: ₹3,500-10,000: Delhi-Pune or Bhubaneswar ▶ E. 120-150 mins: ₹4,500-13,000: Delhi-Agartala/Bangalore/Goa ▶ F. 150-180 mins: ₹5,500-15,700: Delhi-Imphal/Kochi/Mangalore ▶ G. 180-210 mins: ₹6,500-18,600. Delhi-Coimbatore/Thiruvananthapuram	Key Rules For Flyers ▶ Flyers not allowed to consume any eatables except on health grounds ▶ Pregnant women and those with health issues advised to avoid air travel in first phase ▶ Those staying in containment zone and those who are Covid +ve can't fly. Will face penal action ▶ Web-check-in, only one cabin bag, one check-in bag allowed ▶ Download bag tag & stick its printout on check-in bag. If unable to take printout, write name and PNR on paper and string it to bag ▶ Children below 14 don't need Aarogya Setu app

- ✓ The government has also issued new protocol for the flyers
 - ✓ According to the new guidelines, eating on board (except on health ground) is strictly prohibited and pregnant women, elderly and people with health issues are advised not to fly for now.
 - ✓ The check-in bag tags that passengers used to get would be replaced by SMSs under the new protocol.
 - ✓ The government has also barred people staying in containment zones and those who have been detected with Covid-19 infection in the last two months from flying
 - ✓ It has announced strict penal action will be taken against the violators
 - ✓ Already, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have opposed plan to resume domestic flights
 - ✓ The DGCA had approved summer schedule of 24,409 weekly domestic flights.
 - ✓ Meanwhile, the government has not taken any decision regarding resuming international flights in the near future.
- **The health ministry - has issued guidelines permitting states to continue birth dose vaccinations at health facilities, irrespective of the categorisation of zones.**
- ✓ However, health facility-based sessions and outreach sessions were barred in the areas which were enlisted as 'containment/ buffer zone'

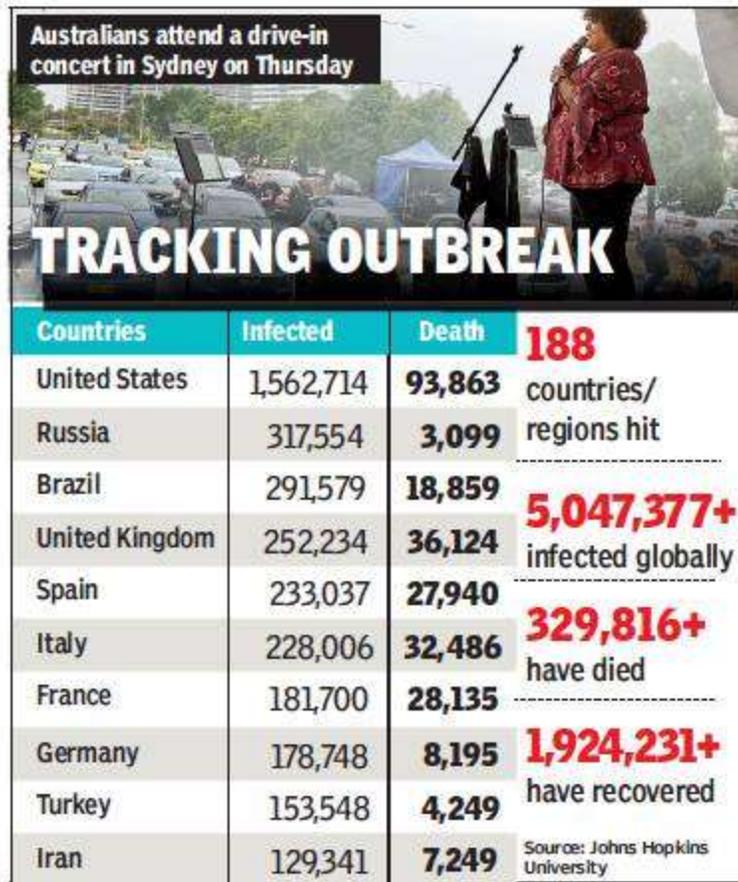
- ✓ Still, health facility-based immunisation can be allowed 'on demand' in even containment and buffer zones for the walk-in beneficiaries
 - ✓ But, the outreach sessions will remain barred in these areas.
 - ✓ The Health ministry has released the "Guidance note for immunisation services during and post COVID outbreak" recently
 - ✓ As per the guidelines, an area exiting containment or a buffer zone category can start facility-based and outreach immunisation activities only after a minimum gap of 14 days.
 - ✓ In general, immunisation services will be classified under two heads — immunisation in containment and buffer zone and immunisation in areas beyond the buffer and green zone.
 - ✓ In areas beyond the buffer and green zone, immunization can be initiated immediately.
- **Researchers at MIT - downgraded the rating of India's contact tracing app, Aarogya Setu, from two to one out of five stars (1/5)**
- ✓ The downloading of the App, Aarogya Setu, was made compulsory for air travel on May 21
 - ✓ This time, the country further lost points on the parameter of "data minimisation", which means the app collects more data than the information it needs for the purpose of contact tracing.
 - ✓ Meanwhile, technology giants Google and Apple released their "privacy-centric" software tool to enable governments across the world to build their own contact tracing applications to monitor Covid-19.
 - ✓ As per the experts, one of the major differences between the technologies used by Google and Apple and the ones used to build Aarogya Setu, is that the former does not collect location data.
 - ✓ Aarogya Setu makes use of both Bluetooth and GPS location data for its contact tracing app, while the Google and Apple API use only the bluetooth technology.
 - ✓ According to MIT, at least 28 countries are using the contact tracing technology to control the spread of the pandemic.
 - ✓ Until last week, Aarogya Setu was rated two stars (2/5) but researchers downgraded its rating after a revised set of policies were introduced.
 - ✓ In the initial ratings, the App lost points because of lack of transparency, making it compulsory and not defining who the data is shared with.
- **The University Grants Commission (UGC) - has approved a proposal to allow students to pursue two degree programmes at the same time.**
- ✓ According to the proposal one of the degrees has to be in the regular mode, while the other can be either through open, distance learning or online mode
 - ✓ Also, a student can pursue two degrees in different streams as well as from different institutions
 - ✓ At present a student is not allowed to pursue two degrees simultaneously.

- ✓ A student interested in having a dual degree can also choose different streams.
 - ✓ They may also opt for the same institution, provided it offers multiple modes of learning or separate institutions.
 - ✓ The UGC has asked universities and colleges to consider adopting the 124 Swayam (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) MOOC (Massive Online Open Courses) as 'credit courses' for the July 2020 semester.
 - ✓ The students will then be able to sit for the Swayam semester exams in November and get the credits transferred to their regular course, thus minimizing the academic loss due to the lockdown.
 - ✓ Currently there are 82 UG and 42 PG MOOC courses on offer under Swayam or 'Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds'
 - ✓ Swayam is an Indian massive open online course (MOOC) platform launched by the Ministry of human resource development in 2017 under 'Digital India' initiative to offer free online courses.
 - ✓ According to MHRD, since the lockdown from March 23, 2020, over 50,000 learners have accessed 1,900 MOOCs, while another 25 lakh students have already enrolled in the January 2020 semester of Swayam.
- **The CRPF - will now have a dedicated VIP security wing made up of five battalions comprising around 5,000 personnel led by an inspector general-level officer.**
- ✓ The VIP security headquarters will be located at R K Puram in New Delhi.
 - ✓ Recently, the home ministry has approved CRPF's proposal for a separate range and training centre and asked it to set up the dedicated VIP security wing with its existing resources.
 - ✓ The VIP security was earlier coming under the purview of an IG who was primarily handling the intelligence wing.
 - ✓ Henceforth, a separate IG (VIP security) will exercise all requisite statutory and financial powers for the VIP security wing.
 - ✓ CRPF currently handles the personal security of 56 VVIPs, including Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra ever since they were stripped of their SPG cover last year.
 - ✓ This will possibly help National Security Guard to be removed completely out of VIP security duties and retained as an elite anti-terror force.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On May 22, global coronavirus cases - surpassed 5 million, with Latin America overtaking the United States and Europe in the past week to report the fresh wave of daily cases.**
- ✓ The virus has infected more people in under six months than the annual total of severe flu cases, which the WHO estimates is around 3 million to 5 million globally.

- ✓ On May 19, there were 106,000 cases reported to WHO - the most in a single day -since the outbreak emerged last December in China.



- ✓ Meanwhile, health workers in Britain and Thailand have started taking part in a trial to determine whether two antimalarial drugs can prevent Covid19
- ✓ The study seeks to determine whether chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine could be used in the fight against the coronavirus.
- ✓ It involves over 40,000 health workers across Europe, Africa, Asia and South America
- ✓ US President Trump has recently announced that he has been taking hydroxychloroquine to boost his immunity.
- ✓ **The US has secured 300 million doses out of the first one billion doses planned for AstraZeneca's experimental Covid-19 vaccine by pledging up to \$1.2 billion**
 - ✓ The vaccine, previously known as ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 and now as AZD1222, was developed by the University of Oxford and licensed to British drugmaker AstraZeneca.
 - ✓ The deal allows the next stage — Phase III — clinical trial of the vaccine with 30,000 people in US.
 - ✓ As per AstraZeneca, it had concluded agreements for at least 400 million doses of the vaccine and secured manufacturing capacity for one billion doses

- ✓ The first deliveries of the vaccine are due to begin in September.
- ✓ The company has already agreed to deliver 100 million doses to people in Britain, with 30 million as soon as September.
- ✓ The US has already struck deals to support vaccine development with other firms such as Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Sanofi
- ✓ AstraZeneca has been in talks with governments and partners around the world — such as the Serum Institute of India — to increase vaccine access and production.
- ✓ **In another development, the US Senate approved a new legislation - with a clear majority - that could bar Chinese companies such as Alibaba and Baidu from being listed on US stock exchanges**
 - ✓ The new legislation seeks the firms to certify that they are not under the control of a foreign government.
 - ✓ In future, Chinese companies will require to be audited by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board for three consecutive years
 - ✓ Further, US has indicated that companies that trade on the NYSE and Nasdaq exchanges will have to adhere by US accounting rules.
- ✓ **Meanwhile, President Donald Trump has announced his decision to withdraw from another major arms control accord**
- ✓ **The President will inform Russia on May 23 that the US is pulling out of the ‘Open Skies Treaty’**
 - ✓ The treaty was negotiated three decades ago to allow nations to fly over each other’s territory with elaborate sensor equipment to assure they are not preparing for military action.
 - ✓ The US intelligence agencies have maintained that the Russians are using flights over the US to map out critical infrastructure that could be hit by cyberattacks.
- ✓ **In a separate announcement, the British government has extended a Covid-19 Bereavement Scheme to all healthcare staff and social care workers**
 - ✓ The scheme grants indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK free of charge to the family members of overseas medics who die on the frontline duty of fighting coronavirus
 - ✓ The scheme will be applicable to not only to the families and dependents of foreign doctors and nurses, but also to lower-paid National Health Service support staff.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **The Nepalese government – is planning to deploy armed police personnel on the border with India at three outposts in Uttarakhand**
- ✓ The move comes days after the Nepalese government opened an armed police border outpost (BOP) at Chhangru village near the Lipulekh Pass, for the first time.

- ✓ The move assumes significance following the escalation of tensions along the Indo-Nepal border
- ✓ Recently, the Nepalese government registered its protest at an almost 80-km long road that was inaugurated by Union defence minister Rajnath Singh on May 8
- ✓ The road will allow vehicular movement till near the Lipulekh Pass, regarded as the gateway to Tibet.
- ✓ Nepal has been claiming the Pass as part of its own territory
- ✓ The border outposts will be set up at Jhulaghat, Laali and Pancheshwar — all bordering Pithoragarh district — and are expected to be up in the coming week.
- ✓ Notably, all these places also have bridges that are used in facilitating cross-border movement between the two countries.
- ✓ The Indian side of the border at all the three points is manned by the Sahastra Seema Bal.
- ✓ On the Nepalese side, till now, regular police personnel used to patrol the border.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The UN's annual climate conference - will take place during autumn 2021 in the United Kingdom.**
- ✓ The 26th session of the climate conference (COP26) was scheduled to be held in Glasgow in November, 2020.
- ✓ It was postponed by the UK amid worsening Covid-19 situation early last month.
- ✓ Under the Paris Agreement, countries including India are expected to take climate actions as per their respective commitments to keep the average global temperature rise within 2 degree celsius by 2100 from the pre-industrial (1850-1900) level.
- ✓ The Agreement will be operationalised from January 1 next year
- ✓ The COP26 provides a crucial platform where countries were expected to raise their ambition for climate action towards their respective targets

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Zydus Diagnostics, a unit of Ahmedabad-based pharma major Cadila Healthcare Limited - has supplied the first batch of 30,000 antibody detection test kits for Covid-19 free of cost to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).**
- ✓ These antibody detection test kits were named as Covid Kavach Elisa
- ✓ They have been manufactured by Zydus through a technology transfer with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Virology (NIV) of Pune
- ✓ The robust antibody tests are primarily used for surveillance purposes and understanding the proportion of population exposed to SARS-COV-2 infection.

- ✓ Earlier, ICMR-NIV had successfully developed the country's first indigenous IgG Elisa test for antibody detection for Covid-19
- ✓ Last week, it had transferred the technology to Zydus for mass production of the antibody detection test kits at the company's plant at Moraiya in Ahmedabad.
- ✓ The test kits manufactured by Zydus were validated by NIV and were found to have high sensitivity and specificity.
- ✓ Incidentally, the test kits have been manufactured within just four days of receiving all necessary materials from ICMR–NIV by Zydus.

SPORTS

- **On May 22, Sports Authority of India - unveiled its revised and final 'Standard Operating Procedure' (SOP) guidelines to resume sports activities in the country**
- ✓ Recently, the central government gave its go-ahead to reopen stadia and sports complexes across the country.
- ✓ As per the guidelines, athletes will have to sign a consent form if they wish to resume formal on-field training at various Sports Authority of India-managed (SAI) regional centres and national centres of excellence (NCOE).
- ✓ The country's sports authorities will not be held accountable if the athletes — who represent India on the international stage — get infected during their stay at national camps
- ✓ The 45-page document detailed various measures for resuming training at the SAI centres following the government's guidelines regarding health, social distancing and hygiene.
- ✓ As per the new norms, SAI has permitted limited activities in athletics, hockey, boxing, wrestling, badminton and shooting disciplines

