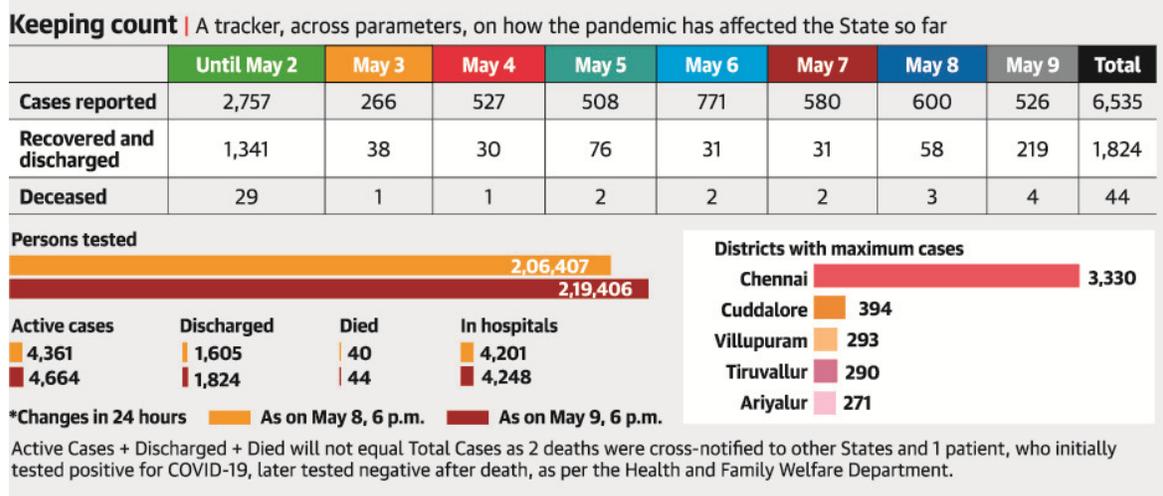


EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 10, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- On May 9, Tamil Nadu's Covid-19 positive infections - rose to 6,535, after 526 more people (360 male and 166 female) from 20 districts tested positive for the disease
- ✓ This was the fifth consecutive day, which saw over 500 persons being tested positive for the viral disease.



- ✓ Four women died on the day with the highest single day increase in deaths, taking the toll due to the disease to 44
 - ✓ It includes a 73-year-old woman with comorbidities and a 58-year-old woman admitted at the KMC hospital, a 67-year-old woman, who was admitted to Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and a 70-year-old woman from Ramanathapuram district with comorbidities, who was admitted to Sivaganga Medical College Hospital
- ✓ On the day, Chennai reported 279 cases including a 5-day-old child, taking the total number of cases in the city to 3,390, of which 2,757 are active cases

- ✓ While 40% of cases reported in the city were linked to the Koyambedu cluster, Chennai, Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Villupuram, Tiruvallur and Perambalur, top six districts in infection, had 88% of their cases linked to the cluster.
 - ✓ Cuddalore had the second highest number of cases with 394, followed by Villupuram, 293; Tiruvallur, 290; Ariyalur, 271; and Chengalpattu, 224.
 - ✓ Kancheepuram's tally surpassed the 100-mark with the day's new cases.
- ✓ Of the 526 people who tested positive on the day, 278 were a part of the Koyambedu cluster, taking the total number of people in the cluster to 1,867.
- ✓ There were 67 cases in Villupuram, 40 in Chengalpattu, 26 in Tiruvallur, 17 in Kancheepuram, all from the Koyambedu cluster and 15 in Tiruvannamalai.
 - ✓ The cases continued to increase in Ariyalur and Perambalur, that reported 16 and 31 cases, respectively.
 - ✓ Apart from these districts, there were 10 cases from Ranipet, eight in Tirunelveli, four in Tirupattur, three in Cuddalore, two each in Ramanathapuram and Theni, and one each in Dindigul, Kallakurichi, Namakkal, Nilgiris, Thanjavur and Tiruchi.
- ✓ As many as 219 patients were discharged on the day, taking the number of recovered persons to 1,824
- ✓ A total of 4,248 persons suspected to have symptoms of the disease are in isolation wards.
- ✓ A total of 13,254 samples were tested on the day
- ✓ This takes the number of samples' tested so far to 2,29,670, while the testing of 559 samples are under process.
- ✓ Meanwhile, one more testing facility has been approved in the government sector — the District Headquarters Hospital, Tiruppur.
 - ✓ With this, there are 37 testing facilities in government and 16 in private sector.

➤ **On May 9, the Tamil Nadu government - announced further relaxation of lockdown regulations from May 11 in non-containment areas in the entire state**

- ✓ The state government has granted permission for take-away services at tea shops, and allowed shops selling essential goods such as groceries, vegetables and medicines to remain open from 6am to 7pm, across the state from May 11.
- ✓ The government has stipulated strict social distancing norms for tea shops, and no customer will be allowed to eat on the premises.
- ✓ Shops must be "disinfected five times a day" and those shops violating the guidelines will be sealed immediately.
- ✓ The new norms are a follow-up to the relaxations announced by the state on May 2 and revised guidelines issued by the Union home ministry.

Other relaxations

- ✓ All standalone and neighbourhood shops, except salons, spa and beauty parlours, can be opened between 10.30am and 6pm in Greater Chennai Police limit

A looser lockdown

Relaxations applicable outside containment zones, from May 11



On the front line: A sanitation worker sprinkling disinfectant in Chennai. ■ M. VEDHAN



• Petrol pumps in Chennai to operate from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. In rest of T.N. 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. And, on National and State Highways, round the clock



• Tea stalls (parcel only) and essential goods shops across T.N. from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.



• Standalone and neighbourhood shops (except barber shops, salons, spas and beauty parlours) from 10.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. in Chennai and from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. in other areas

• Private offices (only standalone ACs), construction companies and film post-production units



in Chennai to operate with 33% staff from 10.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. with permission from Chennai Corporation Commissioner/Collectors. In rest of T.N., from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.



• Construction material and electrical shops to function from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. No restriction on transport of construction material



• Standalone shops dealing in sales and service of mobile phones, computers, household articles, motors and spectacles to function from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. across T.N.

- ✓ All private offices (where standalone air conditioners are used), including construction companies and real estate developers' back offices, are permitted to function with 33% staff strength between 10.30am and 6pm in Greater Chennai Police limits and 10am and 7pm in rest of the state.
- ✓ In a relief for film industry, five employees will be permitted to take up post-production work for television and film programmes from 10am to 7pm after taking due permission from district collectors by the private entities.
- ✓ The fuel pumps are allowed to operate between 6am and 6pm in Greater Chennai Police limits, between 6am and 8pm in other parts of TN, and 24x7 on highways
- ✓ The shops that are permitted now includes shops selling construction hardware, cement, construction material, sanitaryware, electrical material and shops selling and servicing mobile phones, computers, household appliances, motors and optical shops.
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has constituted a 24-member committee comprising of economists, industrialists, bankers and educationists to assess the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the state.**
 - ✓ This is the 16th committee formed by the government to tackle issues arising out of the pandemic.
 - ✓ It will present a report to the state government in three months
 - ✓ The government's finance secretary S Krishnan will be the coordinator for the committee.
 - ✓ The committee will assess the overall immediate and medium-term impact of the pandemic on different sectors of the economy

- ✓ It will formulate strategies to improve the economy, considering the impact of the lockdown, additional costs and implications due to social distancing and other precautionary measures.
- ✓ The committee will also provide suggestions to the government regarding the medium-term policies that are to be implemented to tackle the economical impact of the pandemic.
- ✓ It may also interact and seek views from industry bodies, trade associations, stakeholders, economic and other experts in India and overseas
- ✓ Earlier, a similar committee has been formed by the government of Punjab too.

WAY FORWARD

The committee's first meeting will be next week, via video-conferencing

COMMITTEE HEAD | Former RBI governor C Rangarajan



SOME OF THE MEMBERS | Former chief secretary N Narayanan, chairman of TVS Motor Venu Srinivasan, TNAU and University of Madras VCs N Kumar and P Duraisamy, former Murugappa Group chief A Vellayan, India Cements VC N Srinivasan, Indian Bank chairman Padmaja Chundru, MD and CEO of Equitas Bank P N Vasudevan, UNICEF Chennai coordinator Pinaki Chakraborty, Prof Suresh Babu of IIT Madras

Committee members (Non-official)

- ✓ Former Chief Secretary N. Narayanan, who served as Finance Secretary for years under the chief ministership of M. Karunanidhi and J Jayalalithaa;
- ✓ Vice chancellors of Madras and Agricultural University P. Duraisamy and N. Kumar;
- ✓ Directors of Madras School of Economics and Madras Institute of Development Studies K. R. Shanmugam and P.G. Babu;
- ✓ Three industrialists A. Vellayan, former chairman of the Murugappa Group, N. Srinivasan, vice chairman and managing director of India Cements and Venu Srinivasan, chairman of TVS Motors;
- ✓ MD of Indian Bank Padmaja Chunduru;
- ✓ MD and CEO of Equitas Bank P.N. Vasudevan;
- ✓ Public finance expert M. Govinda Rao;
- ✓ Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras M. Suresh Babu; and
- ✓ UNICEF coordinator in Chennai Pinaki Chakraborty
- ✓ Other bureaucrats in the committee includes - Principal Secretaries in charge of Industries, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Housing and Urban Development, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Handlooms, Handicrafts,

Textiles and Khadi departments; Additional Chief Secretaries looking after Labour and Employment, Tourism and Culture departments and the Secretary of the Information Technology department.

➤ **Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi - to implement the new Electricity (Amendment) Bill, only after 'thoroughly' discussing the proposed changes with the state governments.**

- ✓ The CM said that the Bill goes against the rights of states and was detrimental to public interest.
- ✓ He contended that there would be serious difficulties in implementing direct benefit transfer in the electricity sector.
- ✓ It would work against the interest of farmers and domestic consumers
- ✓ The proposed amendment Bill also seeks to take away the power of the state government in deciding the constitution of the state electricity regulatory commission. The commission has been so accommodative with the state government that even the mandatory tariff revision has not been happening for years in Tamil Nadu.

Key points of the new Electricity (Amendment) Bill

- ✓ The Draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 was unveiled last month by the Ministry of Power
- ✓ This was the fourth amendment done to the bill, since 2014
- ✓ This is important because two draft versions of amendments to the Electricity Act of 2003 floated by the Union power ministry in 2014 and 2018 failed to become law
- ✓ The new bill seeks to introduce the private players in generation, distribution and transmission of electricity, which, by and large, remains state-owned discoms' monopoly as of now.
- ✓ As per the bill, the discoms have the authority to levy power charges from all types of consumers.
- ✓ The government will be directly transferring the subsidy component to the beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- ✓ The electricity regulatory commission will be fixing tariffs without accounting for subsidies.
- ✓ This means, cross-subsidising some sectors – agriculture, huts and domestic connections - by levying higher tariffs on other sectors – commercial and industrial connections - will stop.
- ✓ The free power distribution to agriculture sector and hutments will be stopped, which includes the 100 units of free power offered by the state to all domestic consumers.
- ✓ The state will not be able to even meter agriculture power consumption.
- ✓ The Bill also seeks to put an end to delayed payment by discoms to power generation firms.

- ✓ One of the key amendments in the Bill is creation of 'Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority', aimed at enforcing contractual obligations by all stakeholders across the country.
 - ✓ It will have the powers of a civil court.
 - ✓ This new authority has been proposed following various issues that arose in the power sector in Andhra Pradesh after the change of government
 - ✓ The authority will have the sole jurisdiction to adjudicate on obligations under contracts regarding sale, purchase and transmission of electricity.
 - ✓ The Bill has also introduced the concept of a 'distribution sub-licensee', which would allow a state-run discom to authorise a 'distribution sub-licensee' to distribute electricity in an area, without the latter requiring a separate licence.
 - ✓ It has also made changes to the existing concept of a 'distribution franchisee'—whose functions are similar to those of a distribution sub-licensee—and mandated that such an entity would not need separate approval from state regulators.
- **For the first time, a Shramik Special train - was operated from MGR Chennai Central station to Jagannathapur in Odisha on May 9.**
- ✓ Around 1,100-odd guest workers from different parts of Odisha boarded the 24-coach train from the railway station to their native state.



- ✓ A group of 120 workers stuck in Salem were brought to Chennai earlier in the day and they also left in the train to Odisha.
- ✓ After taking them to the railway station, the authorities screened them and checked their temperatures
- ✓ The Aadhaar cards of the migrants was checked to ensure only people who registered to travel through the state government portal boarded the train.
- ✓ Before they entered the station, they were also given food packets.
- ✓ The workers were brought to the railway station by special MTC buses around two hours before departure.
- ✓ Another Shramik train to move migrants will be operated to Manipur via Vijayawada and Guwahati on May 10.

- ✓ On May 9, as many as three trains, each with 1,130 passengers, departed to Jaunpur and Akbar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh and Dhanapur in Bihar from Coimbatore
- ✓ A train was also operated from Vellore to Patna in Bihar carrying 1,138 patients and their caregivers.
- ✓ The 24-coach train was commissioned at Katpadi junction after the district authorities got concurrence of Bihar government to receive the batch.
- **On May 9, the two Air India Express flights with the Chennai residents - landed into the city from Dubai**

Pic: R Ramesh Shanka

HOW FLYERS ARE SCREENED



A passenger is screened at the city airport

After disembarking a thermal test was done at the int'l arrival terminal

At immigration check, passengers handed over health declaration form given to them at Dubai airport

After collecting luggage, passengers moved to quarantine registration counters (15 counters) inside the terminal

3 OPTIONS

- > Free govt accommodation
- > Medium-range hotels (₹1,500 to ₹2,500)
- > Star hotels

Swab test at health counters outside the terminal

- ✓ All the passengers who arrived by the first two rescue flights were sent to quarantine centres after their throat and nasal swabs were taken at Chennai airport.
- ✓ The government had provided three choices for the people for the 14-day isolation – stay at government facility, paid accommodation in medium level hotels and at star hotels.
- ✓ The first flight IX 612 had 179 passengers and the second 177.
- ✓ The passengers were checked using thermal scanners before being allowed for immigration.
- ✓ Those who opted for free government arranged quarantine were moved to VIT campus in the southern suburb of the city.
- ✓ In addition to the routine preparations, pilots and cabin crew have to take three Covid-19 tests for each flight - one before the flight and two on return.
- ✓ The third test done four days after arriving from a trip should be negative for the crew to be assigned another flight
- ✓ The cabin crew also undergone training on the new inflight procedures as they will be carrying passengers from infected regions.
- ✓ In the next few days, there is going to be more or less one flight a day into the city, carrying the passengers from the State

- **The Tamil Nadu Government – has commenced the ‘online’ filing of applications seeking documents under the Right to Information (RTI) Act through a new software**
 - ✓ The facility of online filing of petitions under Section 6(1) and First Appeals under Section 19(1) of RTI Act will be rolled out shortly.
 - ✓ This will be done using the software available with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) with suitable changes as per the requirements of the State.
 - ✓ In the first phase, a trial run of the software for filing of petitions will be conducted in the Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department at the Secretariat.
 - ✓ After analysing the performance, a pilot run will be conducted in a major department such as School Education Department, which has a wide penetration of officers in the State
 - ✓ The government also decided to accept ‘online payment’ pending amendment to the Tamil Nadu RTI (Fees) Rules
 - ✓ In this regard, the State Bank of India will act as a merchant banker for providing payment gateway.
 - ✓ Till now, applications under the RTI Act are submitted in the State only through typed or handwritten applications.
 - ✓ Karnataka, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh and Delhi already have the provision of online applications.
- **Tamil Nadu’s Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) - has dropped by one point, from 16 to 15 per 1,000 live births in 2018**
 - ✓ This was revealed by the latest Sample Registration System (SRS) data of the State Government
 - ✓ The State’s IMR has consistently declined from 37 per live births in 2006 to 20 per live births in 2014.
 - ✓ There was a reduction in neonatal mortality from 6.8% in 2017 to 5.7% in 2018
 - ✓ To achieve the milestone, the Special Newborn Care Units (SNCU) in government hospitals played a crucial role in saving several sick babies.
 - ✓ Moreover, the state has always been keen on ensuring 100% immunisation coverage of babies.

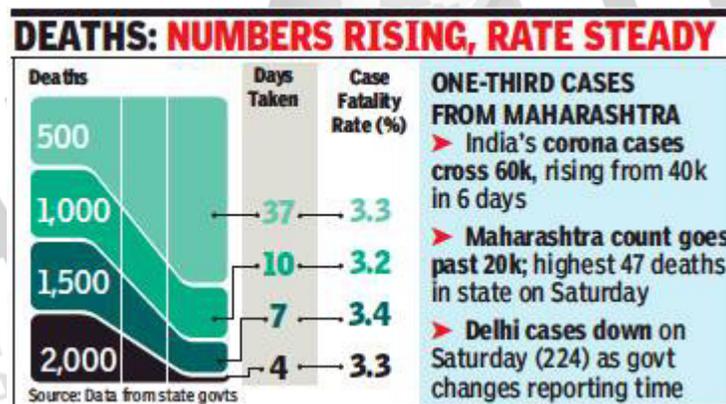
STATES

- **On May 9, Maharashtra - relaxed labour laws under the Factories Act of 1948 and approved 12-hour daily work shifts (four hours more than the current 8 hours daily) till the end of next month**
 - ✓ Similarly, a day earlier, Odisha and Goa also amended the Factories Act to relax labour laws for a period of three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - ✓ All three states said the workers would be paid overtime for the extra ‘legal’ working hours.

- ✓ The announcement came after representations from industry bodies and employers' unions for longer work hours to compensate the lost time and production and to restart the economy.
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat had already extended daily working hours in the past two days.
- ✓ In Maharashtra, a weekly cap of 60 hours is kept along with a condition that they cannot be allowed to work all seven days.
- ✓ In Odisha, no adult worker will be allowed or required to work in a factory for more than 12 hours in any day and 72 hours in any week
- ✓ Similarly, no female workers will be allowed or required to work in a factory between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless specifically permitted by the government.

NATIONAL

- **On May 9, India's Covid-19 count - crossed 60,000, with the number of fresh cases remaining over 3,000 for the fourth consecutive day**
- ✓ India's number of positive cases stood at 62,900 while 3,156 fresh cases were reported on the day, as per reports from states



- ✓ The country has taken just six days to reach the milestone after going past the 40,000 mark on May 3
- ✓ On the day, 113 people succumbed to the disease - the second-highest single-day toll so far - raising the death toll above 2,000
- ✓ Again, Maharashtra accounted for 42% of all fatalities on the day, with deaths surging to 48 — the highest in any state in a day — and 27 in Mumbai alone.
- ✓ The growth rate of the viral disease has again begun to drop to 6.8% on the day, as compared to 7.1% two days earlier.
- ✓ Maharashtra also crossed 20,000 Covid-19 cases, nearly equal to the next three states put together.
 - ✓ As many as 1,165 people tested positive for Covid-19 in Maharashtra on the day.
 - ✓ The state has so far recorded 20,228 cases and 779 deaths.

- ✓ Of these, 722 new cases and 27 fresh deaths were reported from Mumbai, which accounts for 64% of all cases and 63% of all deaths in the state.
- ✓ Delhi's case count dropped to 224, from 338 reported a day earlier
 - ✓ Meanwhile, the Delhi government issued directions to Covid-19 testing labs to give out results within 24 hours.
- ✓ Gujarat recorded 23 deaths and 394 positive cases in a day, taking its tally to 7,797 and death toll to 472, the second highest in the country.
 - ✓ Of these, Ahmedabad alone recorded 280 new cases and 20 more deaths
- ✓ Andhra Pradesh registered 43 new cases and 3 more deaths, taking its cumulative infections tally to 1,930 and a toll of 44.
- ✓ Kerala, which hadn't reported any new case for four consecutive days, reported two new ones, both expatriates flown back to the state from the UAE.
 - ✓ They have been admitted to Covid hospitals in Kochi and Kozhikode while all their co-passengers have been put under surveillance
- ✓ After a brief lull, Telangana saw a sudden surge in Covid-19 positive patients, after reporting 31 new cases and one death.
 - ✓ With this, the state's infections tally now stands at 1,163.
- ✓ Bihar recorded 17 new Covid-19 cases of migrant workers, taking the total number of coronavirus patients to 595.
- ✓ In Jharkhand, 2 people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Dhanbad, taking Jharkhand's tally to 156
- ✓ As per the Government data, only 1,000 to 2,000 beds are utilised out of over 1.30 lakh beds earmarked with ICU and oxygen support, as on date.
- ✓ This means, less than 1.5% of over 1.30 lakh hospital beds set aside for Covid-19 patients across the country are currently being utilized
- ✓ In dedicated hospitals, 99,000 beds have oxygen support and 35,000 are in ICUs.
- ✓ While most of the capacity is in the public sector, around 10% of the beds are in private hospitals, mostly in metro cities.
- ✓ According to Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, fifteen districts are contributing 64% of the Covid-19 cases in the country and out of these five account for 50% of the cases
- ✓ **These five districts include Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Chennai.**
- ✓ Of these, five highest contributors are Mumbai (17%), Delhi (11.3%), Ahmedabad (9.8%), Chennai (5%) and Pune (3.4%)
- ✓ In the five-day median average of cases, exponential growth is seen in four of the top five districts.
- ✓ Delhi has the highest recovery rate at 32.3%, while Chennai has the lowest recovery rate (12.3%) with Mumbai reporting a 15.7% recovery rate.
- ✓ Ahmedabad has the highest fatality rate of 6.4%, while Delhi has the lowest at 1.1%
- ✓ The doubling rate in the top five districts is much worse than the national average.
- ✓ The doubling rate in Chennai is 3, Delhi 3.6, Pune 4.7, Mumbai 6.4 and Ahmedabad 6.1.

- ✓ In terms of contribution to the states, Mumbai, which accounts for 17% of the cases in Maharashtra, contributed 61.3% to the state's cases.
- ✓ Ahmedabad contributed 71.5% to the cases in Gujarat.
- ✓ Chennai contributed about 50% to the cases in Tamil Nadu while Pune accounted for 12.4% of the state's cases.
- ✓ In another move, the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) has dissolved a key committee, which was part of the National COVID-19 Task Force (NTF) and tasked with developing a research protocol, a team and partners for vaccines and drug development.
 - ✓ The group for 'Vaccines/Drug Research and Development' — one among five constituted by ICMR Director-General Balram Bhargava on April 6 — was entrusted to identify 'research priorities, review evidence and develop concept notes'.
 - ✓ The other groups constituted as part of the NTF include a clinical research group headed by Dr. Randeep Guleria of AIIMS and on Research on Diagnostics and Biomarkers headed by D.A. Gadkari.
- **The health ministry – has announced new guidelines for very mild, mild and moderate Covid-19 cases, which need not be tested prior to the discharge of patients from hospital.**
- ✓ The announcement is likely to reduce India's need for Covid-19 testing kits

OLD vs NEW NORMS

Old Directive: Patients had to test negative twice prior to discharge from Covid hospital

New Directive: Mild and moderate cases do not need to be tested prior to discharge. For severe cases, patient would need to test negative only once as against twice earlier

➤ Patient will be advised to follow home isolation for 7 days

- ✓ As per the earlier norms, patients had to test negative twice prior to discharge on the 14th and 21st day after confirmation of the infection.
- ✓ The new directive is part of the revised policy for discharge of Covid-19 patients from hospitals.

New testing guidelines

- ✓ The patient would need to test negative only once, as against twice earlier, even for severe cases
- ✓ However, mild/very mild/presymptomatic cases admitted to a Covid care facility will undergo regular temperature and pulse oximetry monitoring.
- ✓ The patient can be discharged after 10 days of the onset of symptom and no fever for 3 days.
- ✓ There will be no need for testing prior to discharge.

- ✓ At the time of discharge, the patient will be advised to follow the home isolation for further 7 days
 - ✓ At any point of time, prior to discharge from Covid care centre, if the oxygen saturation dips below 95%, patient has to be moved to Dedicated Covid Health Centre (DCHC) with ICU facility.
 - ✓ After discharge from the facility, if the patient again develops symptoms of fever, cough or breathing difficulty, they should contact the Covid care centre or state helpline or 1075.
 - ✓ The patient's health will again be followed up through tele-conference on the 14th day
 - ✓ Moderate cases have been categorised as those whose symptoms resolve within three days and maintains oxygen saturation above 95% for the next 4 days.
 - ✓ Such patients will be discharged after 10 days of symptom onset, in case they don't have fever without anti-pyretics, resolution of breathlessness and no oxygen requirement.
 - ✓ The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention too had revised the guidelines on May 6, saying that no negative test for the virus is needed before a hospitalised person can be discharged.
 - ✓ Till the morning of May 9, 15.23 lakh samples were tested for Covid-19.
 - ✓ According to the ministry, the capacity has been ramped up to test around 95,000 samples per day across 332 government and 121 private labs.
- **As on May 9, around 3,500 Indians - stranded abroad had been brought back into India as part of the country's Vande Bharat Mission**
- ✓ While eight flights landed across India till now, an equal number was expected on May 10.
 - ✓ The entire operation had been conducted smoothly so far with officials tracking each flight from departure to destination and beyond
 - ✓ In the first phase, five of the flights which returned with Indian nationals on May 9 were from the Gulf region, while four more from the region are scheduled on the next day.
 - ✓ Apart from Gulf, repatriation flights over the weekend have been mostly from London, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Dhaka.
 - ✓ Next week under the Phase II, the government is planning to expand the Mission to Europe and central Asian countries next week as many Indians have registered from these countries to return.
 - ✓ The government is using an online platform created by MEA, on which requests received by Indian missions from those wishing to return are being uploaded, to ensure better coordination between Union ministries and states.
 - ✓ The platform has not been made accessible for all though because of privacy issues.
 - ✓ Apart from this, under Operation Samudra Setu, an additional 1,800-2,000 people were being brought back by two Indian naval ships from the Maldives.

- ✓ A total number of 64 flights carrying approximately 15,000 returnees from 12 countries will land at 14 airports across India during the first week of the Mission.
- ✓ Of all the flights in the first week, as many as 27 will be from the Gulf, with eleven of these from UAE.
- ✓ From the neighbourhood, seven flights are scheduled from Bangladesh.
- **On May 9, the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) - announced research collaboration with Bharat Biotech International Ltd (BBIL) to develop a vaccine for coronavirus infection.**
- ✓ In this regard, the ICMR had already transferred the virus strain isolated at the National Institute of Virology, Pune (an ICMR institute) to BBIL.
- ✓ Bharat Biotech is a Hyderabad-based leading Vaccine manufacturing company.
- ✓ This is BBIL's third stated initiative in developing a COVID-19 vaccine.
- ✓ Earlier, on April 20, the Department of Biotechnology had announced funding support to the company to develop a vaccine candidate utilising the inactivated rabies vector platform.
- ✓ Further, on April 3, the company had said it was working on 'CoroFlu', a one-drop COVID-19 nasal vaccine built on a flu vaccine "backbone" that had proven to be safe in humans.
- ✓ For developing that vaccine, BBIL was part of an international collaboration of virologists at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and vaccine company FluGen.
- ✓ Globally, around 100 vaccine candidates are in different stages of development across the world.
 - ✓ Of these, the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom has begun multi-national clinical trials of its candidate vaccine.
 - ✓ The first two volunteers were injected with the vaccine on April 23, 2020.
 - ✓ Israel also made breakthrough development recently towards the development of a vaccine candidate by successfully isolating a coronavirus antibody
 - ✓ Recently, Germany had also approved its first clinical trials of the Covid-19 vaccine on human volunteers

INTERNATIONAL

- **On May 9, South Korea's capital, Seoul - closed down more than 2,100 bars and other nightspots because of the emergence of a new cluster of coronavirus infections**
- ✓ Meanwhile, Germany geared itself to contain fresh outbreaks at three slaughterhouses, while Italian authorities were worried about new bouts of virus at cocktail houses during the country's first weekend of eased restrictions.
- ✓ Globally, the virus has infected nearly 4 million people and killed more than 276,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University based on data reported by governments.

TRACKING OUTBREAK			
Countries	Infected	Death	
United States	12,97,549	77,744	187 countries/ regions hit
Spain	2,22,857	26,299	
Italy	2,18,268	30,395	39,91,010+ infected globally
United Kingdom	2,16,525	31,662	
Russia	1,98,676	1,827	2,76,815+ have died
France	1,76,202	26,233	
Germany	1,70,998	7,510	13,46,319+ have recovered
Brazil	1,48,670	10,100	
Turkey	1,37,115	3,739	
Iran	1,06,220	6,589	Source: Johns Hopkins University

- ✓ Meanwhile, in New York, three children have died and at least 73 children have been diagnosed with symptoms similar to Kawasaki disease — a rare inflammatory condition involving swollen blood vessels and heart problems in children — and toxic shock syndrome, following the Covid-19 infection
- ✓ On May 9, Pakistan lifted the weeks-long lockdown that was enforced to contain the spread of the coronavirus
 - ✓ The country reported 1,637 new cases of infections and 24 casualties in the last 24 hours
- ✓ Russia is now the fifth-hardest-hit country with nearly 200,000 confirmed infections, with more than 10,000 new ones confirmed every day this week.
- ✓ Brazil also emerged as a potential centre of the outbreak in Latin America and announced a record number of deaths on May 8, with 751 deaths bringing its toll to almost 10,000.
- ✓ On May 9, Iran warned that coronavirus infections were rising in the southwest despite falls in other regions, as it announced more than 1,500 new confirmed cases.
- ✓ On May 8, the US food and drug administration announced that it had granted emergency authorisation for the first at-home saliva collection kit to test for the coronavirus.
 - ✓ The test kit was developed by a Rutgers University lab in partnership with Spectrum Solutions and Accurate Diagnostic Labs.
 - ✓ Rutgers got FDA permission last month to collect saliva samples from patients at test sites but it has been allowed now to sell the collection kits for individuals to use at home.
 - ✓ However, the usage of the kits must be ordered by a physician
- ✓ Meanwhile, three aides working for US President Donald Trump, Vice-president Mike Pence, and first daughter Ivanka Trump have tested positive for the coronavirus this week.

- ✓ Following the incident, the White House has now updated its protocol to include daily tests for everyone entering the complex
- ✓ Meanwhile, U.S. lawmakers have introduced legislation in Congress to give unused green cards to nurses and doctors to meet the urgent needs of the healthcare sector in the country.
- ✓ The move is likely to benefit a large number of Indian nurses and doctors, who are either on H-1B or J2 visas

ECONOMY

- **The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) - has signed an agreement with the Indian government to provide funds worth USD 500 million to support India's "COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project".**
- ✓ The project will assist the country in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and boost the nation's public health preparedness.
- ✓ It will also enable India to slow and limit the spread of the infection by providing immediate support to enhance disease detection capacities
- ✓ The funding will also provide support to research on COVID-19 by Indian and other global institutions working in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research
- ✓ The main beneficiaries of the project will include the infected people, high-risk populations, medical and emergency personnel.
- ✓ This is the first health sector support from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to India, covering all States and Union Territories.
- ✓ The "COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project" is being jointly funded by the World Bank and the AIIB.
 - ✓ For the project, World Bank will be providing USD 1 billion, while the AIIB will be providing USD 500 million.
 - ✓ Earlier, in April 2020, the Indian Government announced that Rs 15,000 crores would be allocated for the project to contain the spread of the virus
 - ✓ The project will be implemented by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), National Health Mission (NHM) and the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Union Health Ministry.
- ✓ Similarly, the AIIB had also approved 335 million USD to China as a part of its emergency health project.

