

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JUNE 28, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- ✓ **The Centre - has directed the state to scrap the ₹2,000-crore BharatNet tenders, that aim to provide high-speed internet connectivity to villages in the state**
- ✓ The tenders were floated by state government firm TANFINET
- ✓ The cancellation of tenders was ordered by the centre after noticing that the bidding conditions were 'restrictive and discriminatory in nature'.
- ✓ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry directed the Department of Telecom to take corrective action, immediately cancel the tenders and float re-tender with changed and non-restrictive qualification criteria.
- ✓ The BharatNet was a Central government-funded scheme and an ambitious project of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to provide high-speed internet connectivity to all villages across the State.
- ✓ The project was aimed at providing internet services to rural masses, including 65 lakh students who were given free laptops by successive governments since 2011.
- ✓ The project was intended to connect all the 12,524 village panchayats in the state with a bandwidth of 1 Gbps, which could be further scaled up, using optical fiber cable (OFC)
- ✓ On September 14, 2015, the Chief Minister had announced that the project would be implemented in the state through a special purpose vehicle (SPV) named Tamil Nadu FibreNet Corporation Limited.
- ✓ Subsequently, TANFINET came into existence under the Companies Act on June 8, 2018

- ✓ **Tamil Nadu's Covid-19 death toll - breached the four-digit mark to touch 1,025 with 68 fatalities reported on June 27.**

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

	Until June 20	June 21	June 22	June 23	June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27	Total
Cases reported	56,845	2,532	2,710	2,516	2,865	3,509	3,645	3,713	78,335
Recovered and discharged	31,316	1,438	1,358	1,227	2,424	2,236	1,358	2,737	44,094
Deceased	704	53	37	39	33	45	46	68	1,025

Persons tested



Active cases



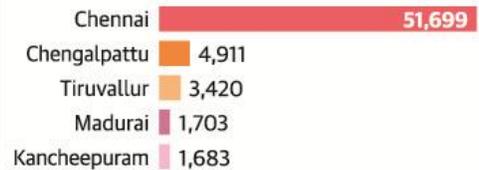
Discharged



Died



Districts with maximum cases



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 died after turning negative, as per the Health and Family Welfare Department.

- ✓ With this, Tamil Nadu becomes the fourth state, after Maharashtra (7,273 deaths), Delhi (2,558) and Gujarat (1,790), to report more than 1,000 fatalities.
 - ✓ The state reported 831 deaths in June, compared to one in March, 26 in April, and 167 in May
 - ✓ Out of the total casualties, Chennai has reported 776 deaths so far, followed by 75 in Chengalpet and 58 in Tiruvallur.
 - ✓ The case fatality rate has gone to 1.3% from 0.9% a fortnight ago.
 - ✓ However, it is much lower than other worst-performing states such as Maharashtra's 4.5%, Delhi's 3.1% and Gujarat's 5.8%.
- ✓ For the third consecutive day, Tamil Nadu reported 3,000-plus coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases
 - ✓ The state added 3,713 fresh cases on the day, taking the total caseload to 78,335.
 - ✓ The number of active cases in the state stands at 33,213, including 19,877 in Chennai.
- ✓ Chennai reported the most number of cases (1,939) followed by Chengalpet (248), Madurai (217) and Tiruvallur (146).
 - ✓ Further, there were 146 cases in Tiruvallur, 118 in Vellore, 110 in Tiruvannamalai, 98 in Kancheepuram, 96 in Ranipet and 93 in Ramanathapuram.
- ✓ A total of 34,805 samples were tested during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of samples tested so far to 10,77,454.
- ✓ Meanwhile the State government, through the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation, has issued procurement orders for 1,200 vials of Tocilizumab, 42,500 vials of Remdesivir and 1,00,000 vials of Enoxaparin for the treatment of Covid-19 patients
- ✓ In another development, based on a request from the state government, Southern Railway has cancelled all seven daily special trains that were being operated as part of resuming services from June 29 till mid-July

- ✓ However the special superfast train from New Delhi to Dr. MGR Chennai Central Station would still be operated.

BEING SAFER THAN SORRY

While refunds are automatic for online bookings, counter tickets will be refunded for up to 6 months from the journey date

THE DAILY TRAINS CANCELLED	
> Trichy-Chengalpet-Trichy (via Vridhachalam)	> Madurai-Villupuram-Madurai
> Trichy-Chengalpet-Trichy (via Mayiladuthurai)	> Coimbatore-Katpadi-Coimbatore
> Arakonam-Coimbatore-Arakonam	> Coimbatore-Mayiladuthurai-Coimbatore
	> Trichy-Nagercoil-Trichy

Chennai-Delhi Rajdhani alone will be operated twice every week

- ✓ According to the Railways, full refund will be given to those who made advance reservation and those who booked tickets online will get refunded automatically
- **The Working Women's Forum - has instituted a new award in women's cooperatives in South India in the name of renowned social worker, Jaya Arunachalam**
- ✓ The announcement of the new regional excellence award was made on the occasion of her first death anniversary falling on June 29.



- ✓ All the 13 branches of the forum would announce the prizes for the best women's cooperatives in their areas.
- ✓ This was announced by Nandini Azad, who is the incumbent president of WWF and the Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW)
- ✓ Besides Chennai, the WWF has branches in Kancheepuram, Vellore, Dharmapuri, Adiramapattinam and Dindigul and in other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.
- ✓ Jaya Arunachalam was the founder of Working Women's Forum (WWF) and the Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW), a non-governmental organization working for the welfare of marginalized women.
- ✓ She was a pioneer of the women's self help group movement in the state and country

- ✓ Through WWF, she helped several lakhs of women from underprivileged background to equip them becoming financially independent.
- ✓ A recipient of Padma Shri and Nari Shakti Puraskar, Jaya Arunachalam passed away on June 29, 2019

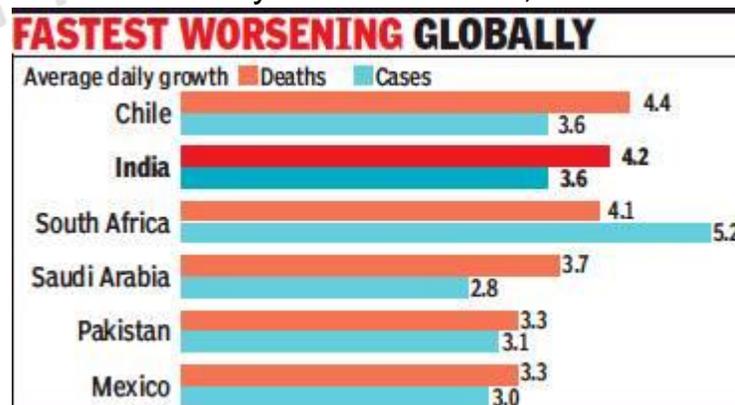
STATES

- **As a first by any state, the Uttar Pradesh government - has announced that roads will be built up to the houses of the toppers in this year's Class X and Class XII board examinations**
- ✓ The initiative was announced by the state on the instructions of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath as a special recognition of the student's achievement.
- ✓ Further, the state announced that the top 10 merit rank holders will get ₹1 lakh cash and a laptop

NATIONAL

- **The insurance regulator, IRDAI - has announced two standardized Covid-19 health insurance policies, Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak, for the general public.**
- ✓ These policies will be offered by all non-life and health insurance companies mandatorily from July 10.
- ✓ Corona Kavach is a regular indemnity policy covering the disease with the tenure ranging from 3.5 months to 9.5 months
- ✓ Corona Rakshak is an optional standard benefit policy, which pays out a fixed amount
- ✓ According to the regulator, every insurance company has to follow the same nomenclature.
- ✓ The sum insured under the policy ranges from ₹50,000 to ₹5 lakh.
- ✓ The regulator has asked insurance companies to ensure that the premium is kept affordable.
- ✓ Further, there is also a 5% discount for healthcare workers.
- ✓ While the policy is restricted to Covid-19 infection, the cover will include the cost of treatment of any co-morbid condition, including pre-existing co-morbid conditions for treatment of Covid-19.
- ✓ The policy also covers homecare treatment expenses for up to 14 days per incident.
- **On June 27, India – has reported more than 20,000 new cases across the country, nearly 1,500 more than the previous 'peak' recorded just a day earlier.**

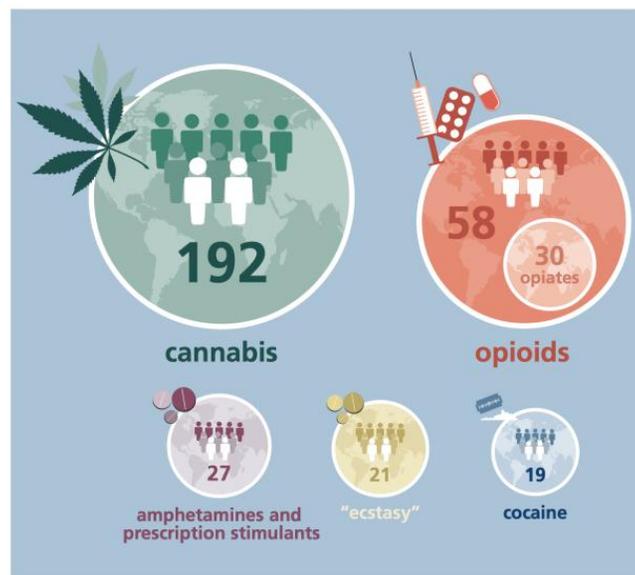
- ✓ The country saw 20,060 fresh infections on the day, just a day after breaching the 18,000 mark for the first time.
- ✓ Maharashtra reported the highest jump in numbers with 6,368 new cases, while Mumbai's count crossed 2,000 for the first time
- ✓ Further, at least nine other states and Union territories witnessed their highest single-day surge in infections
- ✓ These were Tamil Nadu, with 3,713 fresh infections, Telangana (1,087), Karnataka (918), Andhra Pradesh (796), Gujarat (615), Bihar (301), Kerala (195), Goa (89) and Puducherry (87)
- ✓ Moreover, the infections continued to be high in Delhi, which reported 2,948 fresh cases, Uttar Pradesh (607), Haryana (543) and Bengal (521), among others.
- ✓ A total of 414 deaths from the virus were reported on the day, taking the overall toll past 16,000, to 16,095.
- ✓ The total Covid-19 cases in India stood at 5,29,533 while active cases crossed the 2 lakh mark and the number of patients who have recovered rose to nearly 3.09 lakh, as per data collated from state governments.
- ✓ Telangana became the fourth state in the country after Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi to register over 1,000 cases in a single day
- ✓ It had reported 1,087 people as positive for the virus, taking the total count of cases in the state to 13,436.
- ✓ **According to health ministry, eight states – Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Telangana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal – contribute 85.5% of the active Covid-19 caseload and 87% of total deaths due to the disease in India**
- ✓ The doubling time of Covid-19 cases has improved to 19 days from three days before the lockdown
- ✓ As on date, India has a recovery rate of 58.13%, while the fatality rate is near 3%.



- ✓ The samples tested in the last 24 hours have increased to 2,20,479 taking the total cumulative number of samples tested, as on date, to 79,96,707.
- ✓ India now has 1,026 diagnostic labs dedicated to Covid-19 with a capacity of 3 lakh samples testing every day.
- ✓ This includes 741 in the government sector and 285 private labs

- ✓ **Among the countries that are in the global top 20 lists by cases and deaths, India has the second highest daily growth rate of deaths (4.2%) and of cases (3.6%) over the last 15 days.**
 - ✓ Deaths are growing faster only in Chile at 4.4% a day, while cases are increasing more rapidly in South Africa at 5.2% a day.
 - ✓ Within South-Asia, India already has the highest case fatality rate of 3.1%.
 - ✓ Among the regions, South Asia and South America are the fastest growing new epicenters of Covid pandemic
- **The United Nations – has released the latest ‘UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report’**
- ✓ As per the report, about 26.9 crore people used drugs in 2018, which was 30% more than the 2009 estimates
 - ✓ The adolescents and young adults have accounted for the largest share of drug users globally.

Number of past-year users in millions, 2018



- ✓ Compared with earlier estimates from a survey done in 2004, overall opioid use in India is estimated to have increased fivefold.
- ✓ Seizures of amphetamines across the world quadrupled between 2009 and 2018.
- ✓ Quantities of seized methamphetamine reached a new record high, at 228 tonne-equivalents, in 2018
- ✓ Crystalline meth market has grown significantly in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- ✓ The amount seized in the first six months of 2019 — 657 kg — signalled a huge jump over the previous year.
- ✓ The stimulant scene is dominated by cocaine and methamphetamine, and use of both the substances is rising in their main markets.
- ✓ The production of heroin and cocaine remains among the highest levels recorded in modern times.

- ✓ While about 19 million people used cocaine in 2018, which was quite popular in North America and Western Europe, close to 27 million people used amphetamines the same year
- **In a first, the Jammu & Kashmir administration - launched a special exercise to distribute domicile certificates among west Pakistan refugees, Balmiki Samaj members, and Gurkhas on June 27**
- ✓ Till now, over 25,000 domicile certificates have been distributed under the new law brought after the abrogation of J&K's special status on August 5, 2019
- ✓ Under the new domicile rules, all those persons and their children who have resided for 15 years in Jammu and Kashmir, or have studied for seven years and appeared in the Class X or Class XII examination in an educational institution in the Union Territory, are eligible for grant of domicile.
- ✓ Till last year, the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir's Article 370 and Article 35A barred non-locals and outsiders from seeking residency in the state.
- ✓ Domicile certificates are mandatory for buying land, applying for jobs, and in educational institutes in the Union Territory.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On June 26, the United States - reported record high for a third consecutive day with 45,300 new Covid-19 infections, eclipsing the previous high of 40,000 registered a day earlier.**
- ✓ This brings the total number of Americans who have tested positive to at least 2.48 million, as on date.
- ✓ Globally, countries reported more than 1,91,000 new infections — a single-day record as the total number of cases neared 10 million.
- ✓ At least six US states — Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Oregon, South Carolina and Utah — reported their highest single day case totals on the day.
- ✓ Meanwhile, China reported 17 new cases in the capital Beijing, the most in a week, among the total count of 21.
- ✓ Brazil signed a \$127 million deal to start producing locally AstraZeneca's vaccine
- ✓ European Union bloc is planning to bar travellers from the US and other countries considered too risky, including Russia

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **On June 27, India – said that Pakistan's proposal for reopening the Kartarpur Corridor on June 29 to mark the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a "mirage of goodwill".**



- ✓ Earlier, Pakistan has offered access to the Kartarpur gurdwara for Indian pilgrims on the death anniversary of the founder of the 19th century Sikh empire and ruler of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh
- ✓ The Kartarpur Corridor was inaugurated by Prime Minister Imran Khan in the presence of Indian dignitaries on November 9 last year to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion.
- ✓ The gurdwara at Kartarpur is considered sacred to pilgrims as it is believed that the guru spent a considerable part of his later life at this place.

COMMITTEES

- **The 15th Finance Commission – had set up a panel for recommending expanded agricultural reform measures in States**
- ✓ The committee includes agricultural economist and FC member Ramesh Chand, as well as Union Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal.
- ✓ The panel will devise a mechanism for providing incentives to States in areas of agricultural reforms agenda for the purpose of inclusion in the Finance Commission's recommendations in its final report
- ✓ In the framework for the FC's interim report for 2020-21, it was recommended to give performance incentives to States on the basis of three measurable indicators of agricultural reforms
- ✓ Accordingly, if State Legislatures enact the Centre's Model Acts on agricultural marketing and contract farming, as well as the Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016, prepared by NITI Aayog, they would be eligible for financial incentives from the Commission from 2021-22.
- ✓ However, the Centre issued central ordinances on both agricultural reforms and contract farming earlier this month, as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, bypassing the need for States to enact the Model Acts.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **On June 27, the government – issued a revised clinical management protocol for treating Covid-19 patients**

- ✓ As per the new protocol, the government has allowed the use of commonly used corticosteroid dexamethasone for Covid-19 patients
- ✓ Dexamethasone was the first drug to show improved survival in severe patients of SARS Cov2 virus in recent trials by Oxford University.
 - ✓ As per the research findings, dexamethasone was found to reduce fatality in those needing oxygen by 20% and by 35% in those on a ventilator.
- ✓ Dexamethasone is part of the National List of Essential Medicine and is under government price control, which makes it highly affordable.
 - ✓ A strip of 20-tablets of 0.5mg each is priced at ₹6.38.
 - ✓ The drug is also easily available in India as local firms have been manufacturing it for decades.
- ✓ The use of dexamethasone has been allowed as an alternative to methylprednisolone for managing moderate to severe cases.
 - ✓ Both these drugs are steroids with anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressant effects
- ✓ Dexamethasone is a type of corticosteroid medication that is being used for the treatment of a wide range of infections such as eye pain after eye surgery, asthma, skin diseases, etc
 - ✓ The drug was tested in hospitalised patients with Covid-19 in the 'RECOVERY' clinical trial in the United Kingdom
- ✓ Earlier, the Covid-19 Subject Expert Committee had made recommendations to allow remdesivir and favipiravir, which subsequently were granted marketing approval by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

DEFENCE

- **The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) – has built a crucial bridge near China border within a record time of five days**



- ✓ The crucial bridge located on the Munsyari-Milam road near the India-China border in Uttarakhand collapsed on June 22 when an earthmover was being taken across it
- ✓ According to BRO, the reconstruction of the bridge was taken up on priority since it is a “strategically important link” for movement of vehicles involved in a road construction

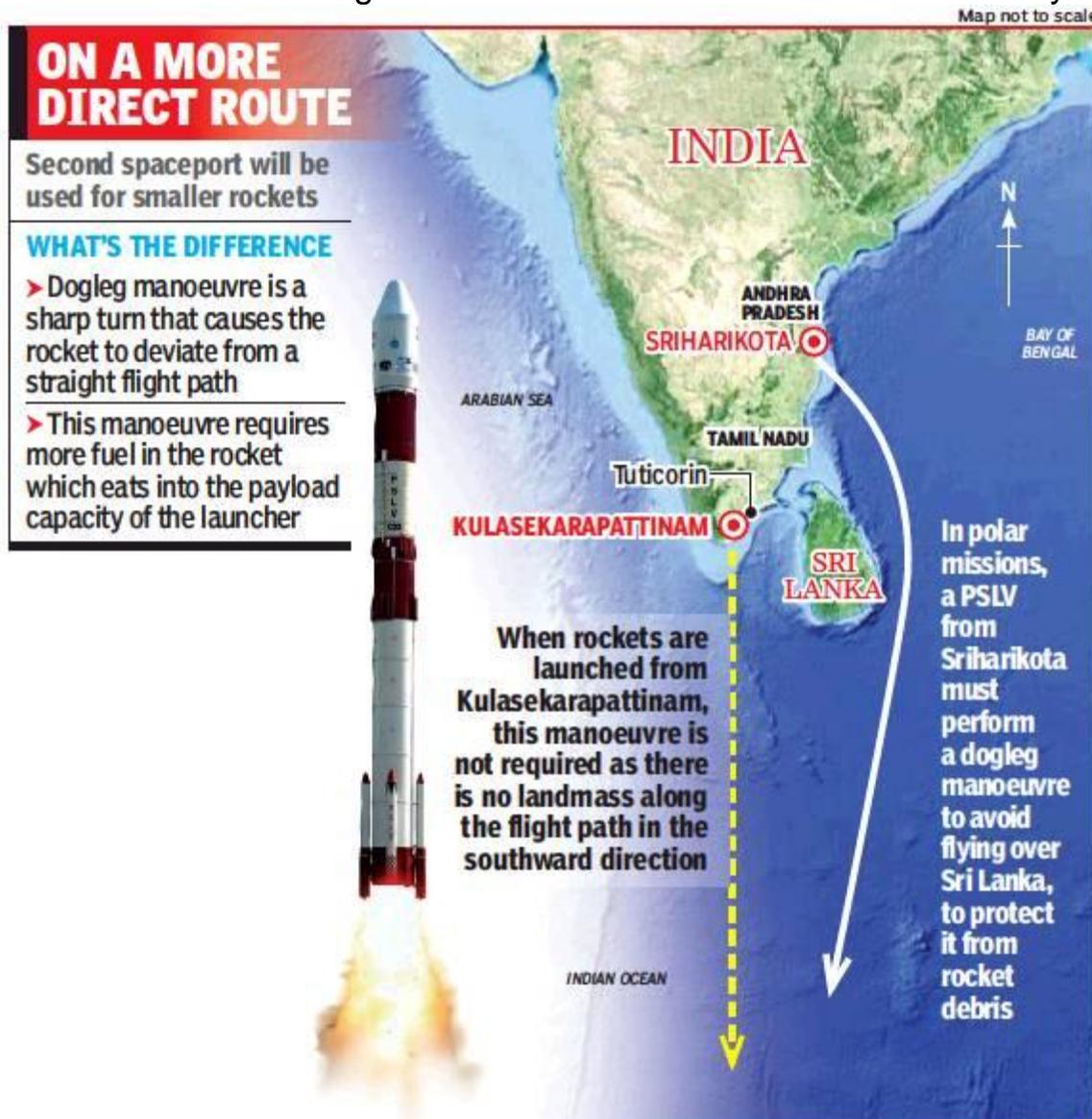
- ✓ The 110-foot-long bridge with a capacity of carrying a weight of around 30 tonnes, is important for BRO's construction of the 64-km-long Munsyari-Milam Road
- ✓ The road, once completed, will facilitate easy movement of Army and ITBP personnel to the higher Himalayan posts along the China border.

ECONOMY

- **President Ram Nath Govind – has promulgated the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 on June 27, to ensure safety of depositors across banks**
 - ✓ The ordinance empowers the Reserve Bank of India to undertake revival plans for banks without imposing a moratorium to avoid disruption of the financial system.
 - ✓ The ordinance amends the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 as applicable to Cooperative Banks
 - ✓ It enables reconstruction or amalgamation of a banking company for protecting the interest of the public, depositors and the banking system and for securing its proper management, even without making an order of moratorium, so as to avoid disruption of the financial system.
 - ✓ In case of Yes Bank, for instance, the government and the RBI first decided to put a moratorium which capped the amount of withdrawal by depositors
 - ✓ The amendments do not affect existing powers of the state registrars of cooperative societies under state cooperative laws.
 - ✓ The amendments also do not apply to primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) or cooperative societies whose primary object and principal business is long-term finance for agricultural development, and which do not use the word “bank” or “banker” or “banking” and do not act as drawees of cheques.
- **Global private equity major ‘The Carlyle Group’s CA Clover Intermediate II Investments’ – has announced an investment of 20% stake in Piramal Pharma, the pharma business of Piramal Enterprises Ltd (PEL)**
 - ✓ The Carlyle group has invested \$490 million (₹3,700 crore) in Ajay Piramal-controlled conglomerate, PEL
 - ✓ The move makes it one of the largest private equity deals in the pharma sector.
 - ✓ The transaction values PEL's pharma business at an enterprise value of \$2.8 billion, with an upside component of up to \$360 million, depending on its performance in FY 21.
 - ✓ The deal is expected to close in calendar year 2020, subject to customary closing conditions and regulatory approvals.
 - ✓ The pharma business will be created as a separate subsidiary, Piramal Pharma from the holding company, PEL, and will be listed in the “near future”.

WHY KULASEKEKARAPATTINAM IN TN WAS SELECTED AS THE NEXT SPACEPORT? – A REPORT

- ISRO - has announced the land acquisition for the country's second launchpad in Kulasekarapattinam, a town in the Thoothukudi (Tuticorin) district of Tamil Nadu in December 2019.
- ✓ Isro's first spaceport, the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, is located in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh, at about 100km north of Chennai
- ✓ The second spaceport is expected to launch Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), a smaller version of the PSLV.
- ✓ The geographic location of town has a strategic advantage over the two launch pads in Sriharikota — small satellite launch vehicles (SSLV) can fly straight to the South Pole without burning fuel to swerve around Sri Lanka on the way.



- ✓ During polar (pole-to-pole) missions, big launch vehicles follow a trajectory where they fly in the southeast direction after liftoff from Sriharikota to avoid flying over Sri Lanka, protecting the landmass from any debris of the rocket.
- ✓ The rocket then takes a sharp manoeuvre and proceeds towards the South Pole.
- ✓ This manoeuvre that results in the rocket deviating from a straight flight path requires more fuel, limiting the rocket's payload capacity.
- ✓ When launched from Kulasekarapattinam, this manoeuvre is not required and the rocket can be launched straight in south direction at higher latitudes over the Lakshadweep sea
- ✓ This saves the rocket's fuel as well as improving the payload capability.
- ✓ The payload loss in big vehicles is manageable.
- ✓ However, in case of small satellite launch vehicles, such manoeuvres won't give any payload capability.
- ✓ The new spaceport is expected to launch smaller satellites weighing 500kg into low-earth orbit less than 2,000km above the earth's surface in a SSLV.
- ✓ Further, ISRO has its Liquid Propulsion at Mahendragiri in Tirunelveli district, where the second and fourth stages of the PSLV rocket engines are assembled.
 - ✓ In this regard, logistically, the launchpad at just 100 km away in Kulasekarapattinam is easier to shift the rocket's second and fourth stage directly from Mahendragiri
- ✓ Launched in 1971, the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, spread over 145sqkm, has two launch pads for PSLV and GSLV flights
- ✓ Around 2,300 acres of land has been earmarked across three villages — Mathavankurichi, Padukapathu and Pallakurichi for setting up the space station in Tuticorin district
- ✓ At present, the Tamil Nadu government is expected to pass an order that will allow Isro officials to enter the property and start work soon
- ✓ Recently, the space ministry announced the setting up of the new Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE) to encourage greater private participation in the country's space activities.

