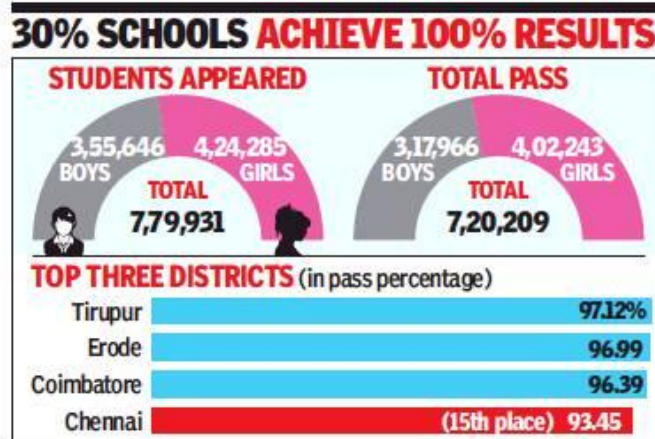# EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 17, 2020

TAMIL NADU

➢ **The school education department - declared results of Class XII board exams on July 16.**

✓ The students this year were the first to take the exams under the revised syllabus and a new question pattern.

✓ As has been the practice for the last few years, the School Education Department did not release the list of toppers.

30% SCHOOLS ACHIEVE 100% RESULTS

STUDENTS APPEARED			TOTAL PASS		
3,55,646 BOYS		4,24,285 GIRLS	3,17,966 BOYS		4,02,243 GIRLS
	TOTAL 7,79,931			TOTAL 7,20,209	

TOP THREE DISTRICTS (in pass percentage)

District	Pass %
Tirupur	97.12%
Erode	96.99
Coimbatore	96.39
Chennai	(15th place) 93.45

✓ The overall pass percentage was 92.3%, which was an increase by 1% from the last year

✓ The pass percentage among girls was 94.8%, while for boys it stood at 89.4%

✓ Also, commerce stream students fared better this year than those who studied in science groups.

✓ Tirupur district topped the list with 97.12 % pass.

✓ Erode came second with 96.99% and Chennai district secured 15th position with 93.45% pass.

✓ Of the 7,127 schools, 2,120 secured a 100% pass rate.

- ✓ The results of 700 students who were absent for final Class XII exam on March 24 will be released after the re-exam on July 27.

Better performance

The State's pass percentage in the Plus Two exams, which was taken by 7.79 lakh students, stood at 92.3

Group-wise pass percentage	
Science group -	**93.4**
Commerce group -	**92.96**
Art group -	**84.65**
Vocational group -	**79.88**

School-wise pass percentage	
Government schools -	**85.94**
Aided schools -	**94.30**
Matriculation schools -	**98.70**

- ✓ Of 2,835 differently-abled students, 2,506 have cleared the exams, while 50 of the 62 prisoners who wrote the exams passed
- ✓ The pass percentage of Class XII students in 32 Greater Chennai Corporation higher secondary schools dipped by 5% this year.
  - ✓ They secured a pass percentage of 85.8% as against the 90.49% last year.
  - ✓ The pass percentage of boys is 78%, while the girls recorded 90%
- ✓ The corporation higher secondary school in West Mambalam had a 100% pass percentage among 32 schools.
  - ✓ Last year, four schools had achieved 100% pass percentage.
- ✓ Only seven schools have improved their performance compared to last year.
- ✓ According to Corporation commissioner G Prakash, a committee will be formed to analyse the performance of the students and the teachers, and a report would be submitted.

- ➢ **The health department - has planned to conduct a Statewide 'Covid Sero Survey' to ascertain the infection rate and community spread of Covid-19 in Tamil Nadu**
- ✓ Under the initiative, Greater Chennai Corporation will launch a city-specific sero study with the collaboration of two ICMR institutions - National Institute of Research in Tuberculosis and National Institute of Epidemiology.
- ✓ The state survey aims to test at least 25,000 people across all districts using antibody testing kits.
- ✓ An antibody test is a blood test that determines whether a person has ever been infected with the Covid-19.
- ✓ Separately, Greater Chennai Corporation will draw blood samples from at least 12,000 people across all wards.
- ✓ The city samples will help the civic body to devise micromanagement plans specifically for Chennai, which is the worst hit district.

044-24339436 044-42867555 9840226187

- ✓ A survey done in May by ICMR in Chennai, Tiruvannamalai and Coimbatore districts as part of the national survey showed that the sero-prevalence was between 1% and 2% of the population.
- ✓ While real time RT-PCR is the frontline test for clinical diagnosis for the viral infection, antibody tests are critical for surveillance to understand the proportion of the population that has been exposed to infection.
  - ✓ Though antibody tests are scientific and ideal for testing large numbers, the State has made RT-PCR the sole test for diagnosing the viral infection.
  - ✓ Many states use a combination of antigen and RT-PCR tests, but the State health department said it will use only the latter
- ✓ The antibody tests are quick and reveal the presence of antibodies within just 15 minutes.
- ✓ These tests checks for antibodies Immunoglobulin-G (IgG) and Immunoglobulin-M (IgM) in the blood.
  - ✓ If IgG is detected, the person will be deemed to have recovered from Covid-19 and has the antibodies.
  - ✓ If IgM is detected, the person will have to undergo RT-PCR test to confirm if he/ she has Covid-19.
  - ✓ If the person tests negative for both, then they have not been exposed to the virus so far

- ➢ **On July 16, the Tamil Nadu government - informed the Madras high court that it has only sent a proposal to the central wildlife board to de-notify a portion of Vedanthangal bird sanctuary and without the Centre's approval, the state cannot proceed with the demarcation.**
- ✓ The move has been criticized of benefitting commercial and industrial development, including that of Sun Pharmaceuticals which has operations bordering the sanctuary.
- ✓ Since 1998, Vedanthangal tank and the area within 5km of its boundary have been a part of the wildlife sanctuary with full protection under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- ✓ But on January 23, based on the advice of the principal chief conservator of forest and chief wildlife warden, the Tamil Nadu government tabled a proposal with the state board for wildlife to denotify an area contained in a circular band within 3km of the tank

- ➢ **A 15-bedded pre-fabricated, collapsible and portable hospital unit, suitable for Covid-19 treatment – has been designed and developed by a startup incubated by Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M)**
- ✓ It can be installed within eight hours by four people in any soil condition
- ✓ It is ideal for use as either an isolation ward or a mobile unit to treat Covid-19 patients in their local communities.
- ✓ These 'micro' hospital units were named as Medi-CAB

✓ They were developed by a startup named ''Modulus Housing calls'

✓ The portable unit is made with a prefabricated modular structure design technology meant for housing
✓ It has a telescopic frame that allows the unit to be shrunk to one-fifth of its original size, making it cost-effective for transportation.
✓ It comprises separate rooms for doctors, isolation and medical checks, in addition to an intensive care unit.
✓ The foldable structure has four zones - a doctor/healthcare workers room that can accommodate up to 10 people, an isolation ward, a medical room/ ward that can accommodate 12 to 15 people and a twin-bed ICU.
    ✓ The wards are maintained at a negative pressure to ensure good inflow of air.
✓ The unit was launched recently as a pilot project in Wayanad, Kerala, to treat Covid-19 patients.
    ✓ Modulus Housing collaborated with Thiruvananthapuram-based Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology for inputs on certification and customisation.
    ✓ Habitat for Humanity's Terwilliger Centre for Innovation in Shelter funded the deployment in Kerala.
✓ Post-pandemic, the cabins can be remodelled into micro-hospitals or clinics in rural areas.
✓ Modulus Housing was founded by two IIT alumni in 2018, and is supported by IIT-M's incubation cell.
    ✓ It has set up its manufacturing unit in Chengalpattu, around 35 km from Chennai.
    ✓ The start-up has already supplied foldable cabins to clients such as L&T, the TATA group, Shapoorji Pallonji group and Selco, among others.

➢ **State health minister C Vijayabaskar – said that more than 6,000 people have used the app 'e-Sanjeevani' since the state government launched it in May**
✓ The App provides a platform to offer healthcare services to general public in containment zones or isolated regions of the state.

- ✓ The State is also planning to offer e-consults from more super specialists for not just Covid-19 patients but also those with chronic ailments, elderly and pregnant women soon.
- ✓ Patients were issued tokens and asked to log in to the platform to talk to doctors over video-conferencing and obtain medical advice.
- ✓ The prescription will be sent on mail and drugs can be collected from the nearest Government Hospital.
- ✓ At least 617 doctors have offered consultations to more than 6,641 patients in the past three months

- ➢ **On July 16, Tamil Nadu - reported 4,549 fresh Covid-19 cases, taking the state's cumulative tally to 1,56,369.**
- ✓ This is the second time this week that the daily Covid-19 count in the State surpassed the 4,500-mark.
- ✓ Sixty-nine persons died of the infection, taking the state's toll to 2,236
- ✓ Chennai leads the casualties with 1,341 deaths, while there have been 176 deaths in Chengalpattu, 141 in Tiruvallur and 134 in Madurai in total.
- ✓ A total of 5,106 persons were discharged on the day
- ✓ Currently, 46,714 persons are under treatment, while the total number of persons discharged stands at 1,07,416.

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

	Until July 9	July 10	July 11	July 12	July 13	July 14	July 15	July 16	Total
Cases reported	1,26,581	3,680	3,965	4,244	4,328	4,526	4,496	4,549	1,56,369
Recovered and discharged	78,161	4,163	3,591	3,617	3,035	4,743	5,000	5,106	1,07,416
Deceased	1,765	64	69	68	66	67	68	69	2,236

Persons tested

16,65,273   *CHANGES IN 24 HOURS   As on July 15, 6 p.m.
17,09,459   As on July 16, 6 p.m.

Active cases	Discharged	Died
47,340	1,02,310	2,167
46,714	1,07,416	2,236

Districts with maximum cases
Chennai — 82,128
Chengalpattu — 8,908
Tiruvallur — 8,107
Madurai — 7,597
Kancheepuram — 4,310

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.

- ✓ In Chennai, 1,157 persons tested positive for the viral infection, while Tiruvallur reported 526 new cases.
- ✓ Further, Madurai reported 267 new cases, Vellore 250, Tiruvannamalai and Chengalpattu had 203 and 179 cases
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, a total of 45,888 samples were tested in the State.
- ✓ With this, a total of 17,82,635 samples and 17,09,459 individuals have been tested in the State.

STATES

- ➢ **On July 15, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik - inaugurated the first plasma bank for the treatment of critical Covid-19 patients at SCB Medical College.**
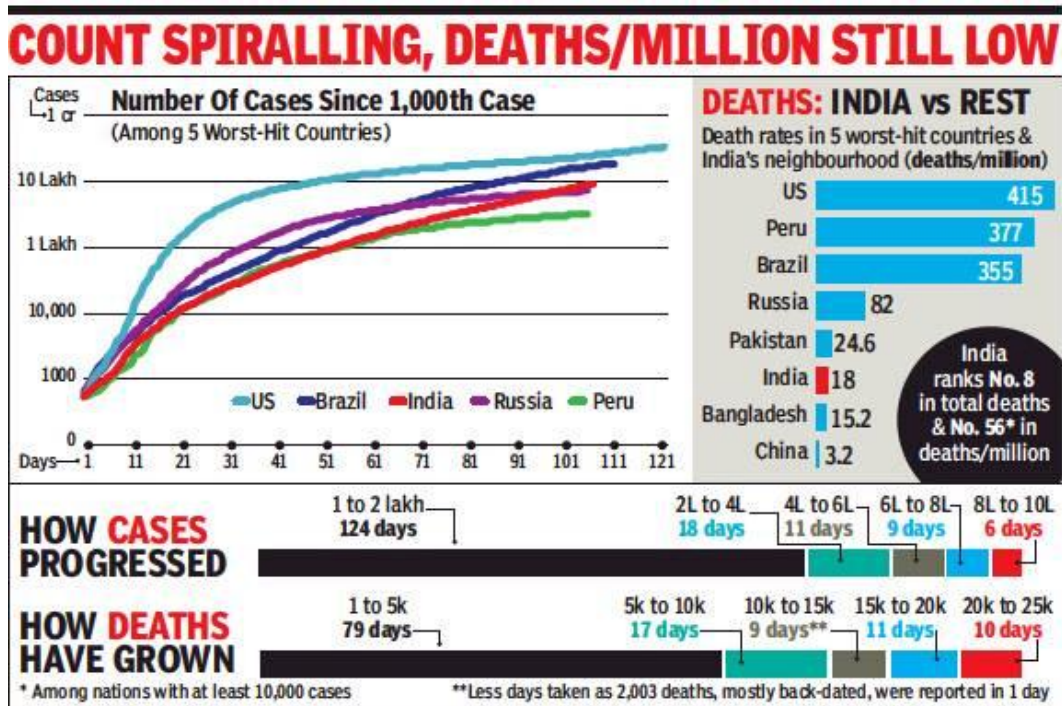

- ✓ After Delhi and Maharashtra, Odisha has become the third state to provide the facility of plasma bank for the treatment of patients suffering from the viral disease.
- ✓ During the inauguration, the State CM announced that Plasma Therapy will be free of cost for the people of Odisha.

- ➢ **The Assam government – has announced several incentives to reach out recovered Covid-19 patients across the country for plasma donation**
- ✓ In this regard, the State has decided to treat as a "state guest" anyone from outside offering to be a plasma donor.
- ✓ Donors willing to travel to Assam from elsewhere in the country will be provided air tickets to and from Guwahati, free accommodation, a personal letter of appreciation from the health minister and a plasma donor certificate.
- ✓ Plasma donors in Assam may get preference in jobs and government schemes as a special incentive for helping fight the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ Donating plasma can also provide extra marks in interviews, in case a person ties with some other candidate.
- ✓ Recovered Covid-19 patients from within the state need to dial 104 if they wish to donate plasma.
- ✓ Each donor will receive a plasma donor certificate, which automatically guarantees preferential access to government schemes.

- ✓ That means, the name of someone at the bottom of the beneficiary list for PMAY [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana] will be put on top if that person is a plasma donor
- ✓ Plasma therapy is proving to be one of the successful treatments of Covid-19.
- ✓ As per the medical experts, bodies of the people who have recovered from the viral disease produce an antibody/plasma in the blood to help the person in fighting against the virus.
- ✓ Plasma therapy had no negative impact and 90% of patients recovered if plasma was donated to a patient in a moderate state of illness.
- ✓ Symptomatic patients can donate their blood plasma 28 days after their recovery till a period of three months.
- ✓ Around 400gm of plasma from each donor can save two lives.

NATIONAL

- ➤ **On July 16, India - has crossed twin milestones of recording more than 1 million Covid-19 cases and 25,000 deaths from the virus.**
- ✓ The country recorded 36,139 fresh infections and 684 deaths during the day, both by far the highest in a single day.
- ✓ With this, India's Covid-19 caseload rose to 10,04,806, as per the data collated from the State governments.
- ✓ India is the third country, after the US and Brazil, to register 1 million Covid-19 cases and the eighth to register over 25,000 deaths.
- ✓ The United States has close to 3.5 million and Brazil has 1.97 million cases.

COUNT SPIRALLING, DEATHS/MILLION STILL LOW

Number Of Cases Since 1,000th Case (Among 5 Worst-Hit Countries) — US, Brazil, India, Russia, Peru

DEATHS: INDIA vs REST
Death rates in 5 worst-hit countries & India's neighbourhood (deaths/million)

Country	deaths/million
US	415
Peru	377
Brazil	355
Russia	82
Pakistan	24.6
India	18
Bangladesh	15.2
China	3.2

India ranks No. 8 in total deaths & No. 56* in deaths/million

HOW CASES PROGRESSED: 1 to 2 lakh 124 days | 2L to 4L 18 days | 4L to 6L 11 days | 6L to 8L 9 days | 8L to 10L 6 days

HOW DEATHS HAVE GROWN: 1 to 5k 79 days | 5k to 10k 17 days | 10k to 15k 9 days** | 15k to 20k 11 days | 20k to 25k 10 days

* Among nations with at least 10,000 cases   **Less days taken as 2,003 deaths, mostly back-dated, were reported in 1 day

- ✓ Maharashtra led the count with 266 deaths — its second-highest 24-hour toll so far

- ✓ Karnataka became the third state, after Maharashtra and Delhi, to register 100 deaths in a single day after adding 104 to its toll.
- ✓ The day's toll was also high in Tamil Nadu (69), Delhi (58), Andhra Pradesh (40), Uttar Pradesh (34), Bengal (23) and J&K (16)
- ✓ In what would be another record, at least 11states reported their highest single-day surge in cases
- ✓ Maharashtra, recorded a massive record-breaking 8,641 new infections, while the other states includes Tamil Nadu (4,549), Karnataka (4,169), Andhra Pradesh (2,593), Uttar Pradesh (2,083), Bengal (1,690), Bihar (also 1,690), Kerala (722), J&K (490), Jharkhand (381 since Wednesday night) and Chhattisgarh (218).
- ✓ Karnataka became the third state to report 4,000 or more cases in a day
  - ✓ The state also crossed 50,000 cases and 1,000 deaths.
- ✓ Maharashtra leads the number of infections in the country with 2,84,281 cases, very close to the 3 lakh mark.
  - ✓ The state also reported 266 deaths, the second-highest toll for a day so far, taking the total toll past 11,000

- ➢ **On July 16, Bengaluru - reported the highest number of fresh cases of coronavirus among all metros in the country for the second consecutive day**
- ✓ As on date, Karnataka has a doubling rate of 10 days, emerging as the highest among the big states in India.
- ✓ The country, as a whole, has a doubling rate of 21 days
- ✓ The doubling rate of the country is the fastest such rate among countries with the highest case load in the world.
- ✓ Karnataka's doubling rate is second only to Meghalaya (five days) in the country.
- ✓ The state has seen a sharp rise in cases in the past two weeks and has registered a daily growth rate of 7.2%.
- ✓ For the second consecutive day, Bengaluru's fresh cases, 2,344, were far higher than the three worst hit metros - Delhi (1,652 cases), Mumbai (1,476) and Chennai (1,157).
- ✓ Bengaluru surpassed the other metros in fatalities too, with its 70 deaths far ahead of Delhi's 58, Mumbai's 56 and Chennai's 23.
- ✓ With 507 deaths till date, the Karnataka capital's fatality rate stands at 2%.
- ✓ The doubling rate refers to the number of days for positive cases to double from its value.

- ➢ **Madhya Pradesh – was found to be the most vulnerable to the long-term effects of Covid-19 pandemic, followed by Bihar and Telangana, as per the latest study published in the medical journal 'Lancet.'**
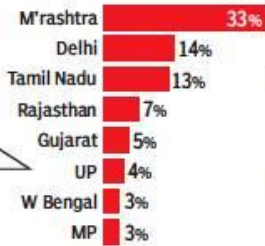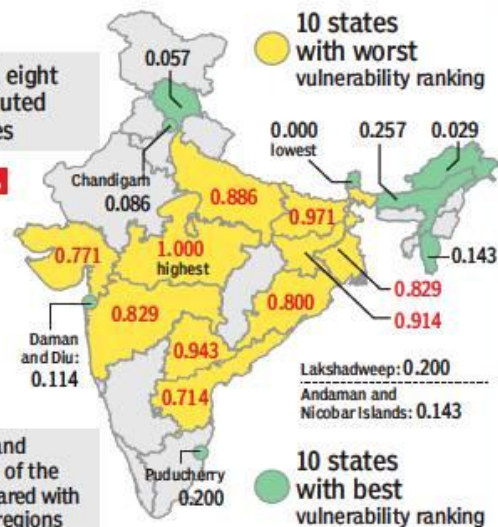
HOW VULNERABLE?

Cases reported in 627 (98%) of 640 districts | As of June 17, 2020, eight states have contributed to over 80% of cases

Of these eight states, five had a high vulnerability index value (ranging from 0.771 to 1.000). The remaining had medium vulnerability

M'rashtra	33%
Delhi	14%
Tamil Nadu	13%
Rajasthan	7%
Gujarat	5%
UP	4%
W Bengal	3%
MP	3%

Most of the northeast, much of the south and western parts of India, and the hilly region of the north have relatively low vulnerability compared with districts from the north, east, and central regions

10 states with worst vulnerability ranking

10 states with best vulnerability ranking

0.057
0.000 lowest   0.257   0.029
Chandigarh 0.086
0.886
0.971
0.771
1.000 highest
0.143
0.829
0.829
0.800
0.914
Daman and Diu: 0.114
0.943
Lakshadweep: 0.200
Andaman and Nicobar Islands: 0.143
0.714
Puducherry 0.200

✓ The study, 'A vulnerability index for the management of and response to the Covid-19 epidemic in India: An ecological study', shows Sikkim at score '0' in the rankings, making it the least vulnerable state.

✓ Madhya Pradesh has scored '1' on the overall vulnerability scale while Bihar's vulnerability is calculated to be 0.971

✓ According to the report, Madhya Pradesh has the highest vulnerability due to housing and hygiene condition (0.971) which is highest among all states.
  ✓ Also, vulnerability is high due to socio economic conditions (0.886) and weak healthcare infrastructure (0.857).

✓ Bihar's main vulnerability in the fight against Covid-19 is nonavailability of healthcare (0.971).
  ✓ It has fared poorly on hygiene (0.800) and socio-economic conditions (0.714) as well.

✓ The aim of the study is to measure the vulnerability of the population to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

✓ The study points out that those districts with higher vulnerability are more likely to get poorer.

➢ **The road transport ministry - has notified changes to the comprehensive norms for number plates to be used in all types of motor vehicles**

✓ Accordingly, driving a new vehicle with a temporary registration number pasted on the number plate will now be an offence.

✓ Further, the norms provide a detailed colour code for alphanumeric details of the registration number and the background of the number plate for 11 categories of vehicles.

✓ The changes have been made under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules (CMVR), which prohibit use of any alphabet except capital letters in English and Arabic numerals on the number plate.

✓ This means plates displaying registration number in regional languages or small letters will be deemed illegal.
✓ Even VIP registration numbers auctioned by states must comply with these norms
✓ The CMVR specifies the dimensions of the number and alphabets to be written on any number plate.
✓ For example, in the case of all motor vehicles except two and three wheelers, the height, thickness and space have been specified at 65mm, 10mm and 10mm respectively

➢ **After a gap of 55 years, a container ship - was flagged off from Kolkata carrying TMT steel bars and pulses to Agartala via Chattogram (Chittagong) port in Bangladesh on July 16.**

✓ This is the first time since 1965, Bangladesh is allowing its port to be used as transit for cargo movement from any part of India to north-eastern states.
✓ The two TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) carrying TMT steel bars are destined for West Tripura district and two TEUs carrying pulses are heading for Karimganj in Assam.
✓ After reaching Chittagong port, the consignment will move to Agartala on Bangladeshi trucks.
✓ The road transport ministry has given a special permission for Bangladeshi trucks to transport goods from Chittagong port to West Tripura district.
✓ In the meantime, the road transport ministry has also started to prepare a Standard operating procedure (SoP) for movement of passenger and cargo vehicles among the neighbouring countries
✓ This will enable the movement of goods by sea route from any port in India to north-eastern states through Bangladesh.

➢ **The government - has notified new provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, which will come into force from July 20 across the country**

- ✓ Accordingly, from July 20, consumers can file complaints at district or state consumer commissions linked to the place where he stays or works rather than from where he bought any product or service.
- ✓ The new provisions provide rights to consumers' to file cases against manufacturers, sellers or distributors of adulterated and spurious products in regular courts while they can file complaints in consumer commissions to seek compensation.
- ✓ The Act has prescribed the quantum of punishment that a normal court can award, which is up to six months jail and fine of up to ◻1 lakh even if such products do not result in any injury to the consumer.
- ✓ The punishment can be seven years jail and ◻5 lakh fine in case there is grievous injury to the consumer.
- ✓ If it results in death, the offender can face at least seven years in jail, which may extend to life imprisonment, and with fine not less than ◻10 lakh
- ✓ As per the new norms, the consumer commissions at district, state and national level can accept complaints from one individual or a group
- ✓ The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) will have the authority to take up cases for investigation suo motu and also forward cases for class action suit to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), where a large number of consumer are adversely impacted.
- ✓ The CCPA will also have power to deal with misleading advertisements including by the celebrity endorsers.
- ✓ It will also have authority to order recall of faulty products, seize such items and even order refund to consumers
- ✓ The CCPA will work in close coordination with the National Consumer Helpline Number, an agency engaged by the ministry to receive and resolve consumer complaints

- ➢ **India - has created its first set of 'air bubbles' with the US, France and Germany to resume some form of international air travel soon**
- ✓ The 'air bubble' concept will enable people to travel directly to and from these countries on airlines of both sides till regular flights are resumed once the Covid-19 crisis subsides.
- ✓ Air Bubble is the term coined during Covid-19 times, referring to the transport and people connectivity between specific regions in the world
- ✓ In this regard, a bilateral agreement with France has already been finalised, which allows Air France to operate 28 flights from July 18 to August 1 between Paris with Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru.
- ✓ Another deal with Germany for Lufthansa and with UK are at an advanced stage of discussions
- ✓ This was announced by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri on July 16.

- ✓ France is the third country to get a nod after the U.S. and the UAE were given permission to start flights to India earlier this month.
- ✓ U.S. carrier United Airways will operate 18 flights from Thursday from July 17 to July 31, while similar arrangements are in place with the UAE till August 26
- ✓ Travel under the interim arrangement of air bubbles will be regulated depending on entry requirements of each country, including India, and not everyone like a tourist can fly till specifically allowed.
- ✓ According to the agreement signed, India is to allow only overseas citizens, stranded Indian nationals and card holders and a certain category of foreigners with business and diplomatic visas, including OCI card holders

- ➢ **The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India - has declined to 113 in 2016-18 from 122 in 2015-17 and 130 in 2014-2016**
- ✓ This was announced in a special bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2016-18, released by the Office of the Registrar General's Sample Registration System (SRS).
- ✓ One of the key indicators of maternal mortality is the MMR, defined as the number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births.
- ✓ The target 3.1 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set by the United Nations aims to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 1,00,000 live births.
- ✓ The MMR of various States according to the bulletin includes Assam (215), Bihar (149), Madhya Pradesh (173), Chhattisgarh (159), Odisha (150), Rajasthan (164), Uttar Pradesh (197) and Uttarakhand (99).
- ✓ The southern States registered a lower MMR — Andhra Pradesh (65), Telangana (63), Karnataka (92), Kerala (43) and Tamil Nadu (60).
- ✓ Maternal mortality in a region is a measure of reproductive health of women in the area.
- ✓ As per the World Health Organization, maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, due to any related cause or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management

- ➢ **On July 16, the Election Commission - said that the postal ballot facility for electors above the age of 65 in the Bihar Assembly elections would not be implemented**
- ✓ This would have been the first time it would have been used since the Centre had notified it on June 19
- ✓ The EC said the decision was taken for the Assembly elections and bypolls due soon due to logistical challenges.
- ✓ The poll body said the option of postal ballots would be available only to electors over 80 years of age, persons with disabilities, essential service workers and those infected with Covid-19 or suspected to be.

- ✓ Earlier, the Law Ministry notified the extension of postal ballots to electors over 65 on June 19.

- ➢ **On July 13, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) - announced a refinance scheme for the financial institutions and banks with an allocation of Rs. 5,000 crores**
- ✓ The new scheme aims to provide finance to the beneficiaries of its 2,150 watershed development projects.
- ✓ The projects cover 2.3 million hectares of the watershed, rainfed area, and tribal development project areas.
- ✓ The move of refinancing will enhance the economic activities in areas struggling with reverse migration.
- ✓ According to NABARD, the concessional line of assistance will be available for three years, that is, from 2020-2021 to 2022-2023.
- ✓ NABARD made the announcement in its first 'Digital Choupal' which was organised to mark its 39th Foundation day.
- ✓ **The financial institution also allotted another Rs. 5,000 crores for turning Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS) into multi-service centres.**
- ✓ It will be a one-stop-shop for meeting the varied needs of the farmers.
- ✓ This will enable the transformation of these ground-level entities to provide seamless credit services to their farmer members.
- ✓ PACS are the building blocks of the country's cooperative banking structure.
- ✓ They provide support to the farmers in post-harvest and marketing activities.
- ✓ Further, they also play a key role in the financial and physical supply chain of commodities by acting as 'middlemen' to the upcoming Gramin Agriculture Markets (GrAMs).
- ✓ A target has been set to upgrade around 5000 PACS in 2020, 15000 PACS in 2022, and 15000 in 2023.

- ➢ **The Union Ministry of Home Affairs - has directed the paramilitary forces to ban Facebook for their personnel and ex-servicemen.**
- ✓ This will be applicable to all paramilitary forces including CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP and NSG.
- ✓ The Home Ministry had also asked to extend the ban of foreign apps in paramilitary forces as well.
- ✓ The Indian Army had earlier issued a directive, asking its personnel to delete 89 mobile apps including Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Tinder, PUBG.
- ✓ The banned apps include video streaming apps like Zoom, LiveMe, social media apps like SnapChat, Instagram, Facebook, e-commerce apps like Ali Express, Shein, Club Factory and dating apps like Tinder, Bumble, TrulyMadly, Couch Surfing, Coffee meets Bagel and Hinge.

INTERNATIONAL

➤ **Chinese state-owned pharmaceutical company, Sinopharm - has commenced the Phase III clinical trials of a Covid-19 vaccine in Abu Dhabi by using up to 15,000 volunteers from July 15**

✓ This was announced by the UAE government on July 16.
✓ The human trial is a partnership between Sinopharm's China National Biotec Group, Abu Dhabi-based company Group 42 (G42) and the Abu Dhabi department of health.
✓ The study is the world's first Phase III trial of an inactivated vaccine
✓ Inactivated vaccines have been used to protect against influenza and measles.
✓ The trial will test two vaccine strains and a placebo.
✓ Two doses three weeks apart will be administered and volunteers will be followed up for a year.
✓ The vaccine had already passed Phases I and II of clinical trials with 100% of volunteers generating antibodies after two doses in 28 days

➤ **China - has become the first major economy to return to growth since the Covid-19 started spreading across the world earlier this year.**

✓ China's GDP expanded 3.2% in the three months to June from a year ago, overcoming a 6.8% decline in the first quarter and surpassing the median forecast of 2.4%.
✓ In the first half, however, output is still down 1.6% compared to the same period in 2019.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

➤ **Researchers at the University of Oxford – announced that the vaccine under development by the institute may provide "double protection" against the coronavirus following early stage human trials**

✓ Blood samples taken from UK volunteers who were given a dose of the vaccine showed that the vaccine stimulated the body to produce both antibodies and "killer T-cells"
✓ The discovery is promising because studies have suggested that antibodies may fade away within months while T-cells can stay in circulation for years
✓ The vaccine development is undertaken by the university's Jenner Institute
✓ It is being supported by the UK government and AstraZeneca, which will support the production phase.
✓ The company said last month that phase I trials were due to finish and a phase III trial had begun
✓ Under phase III trial, the vaccine will be given to thousands of people to test it for efficacy and safety.

APPOINTMENTS

- **P. Praveen Siddharth - has been appointed Private Secretary to President Ram Nath Kovind**
- ✓ Siddharth is a 2001 batch Indian Revenue Service Income Tax cadre officer

- ✓ He has replaced Vikram Singh, who has now been appointed Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Shipping.
- ✓ Siddharth is already serving as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the President's Secretariat.

SPORTS

- **England paceman Jofra Archer – became the first cricketer to be dropped in a test match for violating the 'bio-secure' bubble environment to tackle the spread of Covid-19**
- ✓ Archer was ruled out of the second Test against the West Indies for breaking coronavirus protocols

- ✓ Both teams have been living in "bio-secure bubble" sites at the Ageas Bowl, the venue for last week's first Test, and Emirates Old Trafford, where the final two matches of the series will take place.
- ✓ Sussex fast bowler Archer broke the rules by going home to Brighton on July 13 following the end of the first Test, before the team travelled up to Manchester.