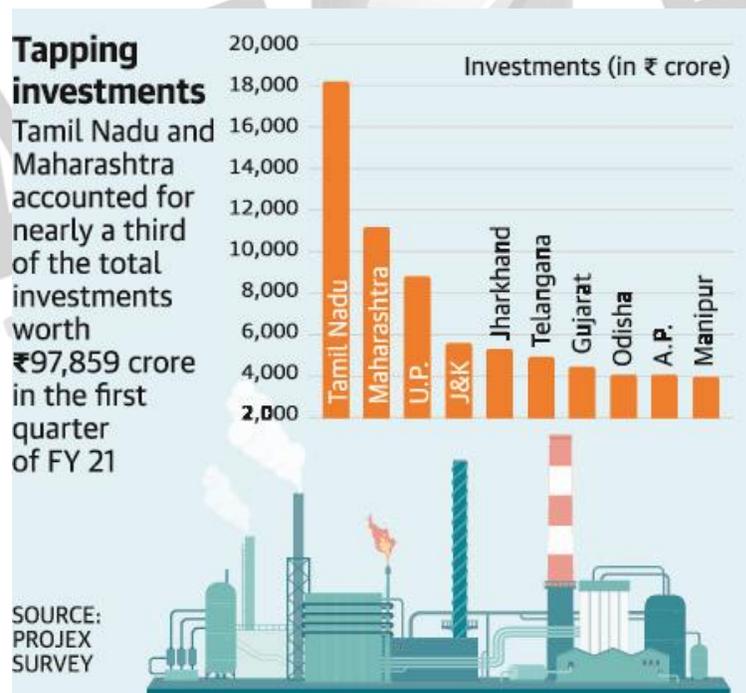


EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 18, 2020

TAMIL NADU

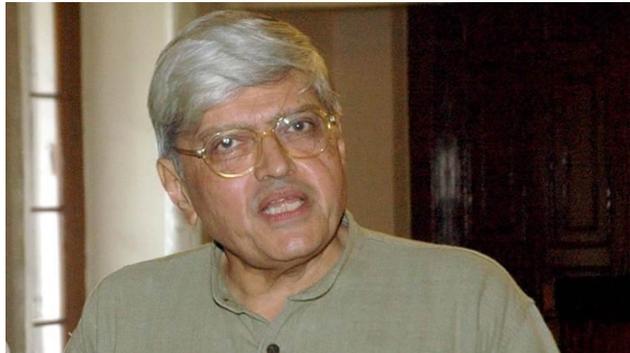
- **Tamil Nadu - has emerged as the country's top investment destination in the first quarter of this financial year**
- ✓ However, overall fresh investments in the country dropped to the lowest in five years in the midst of an extended pandemic-induced lockdown.



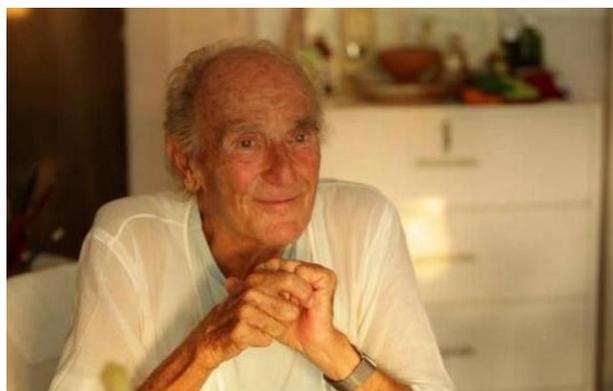
- ✓ These findings were reported in the latest 'Projex Survey' released by Projects Today, an independent firm that tracks investment projects in the country.
- ✓ An investment of ₹97,859 crore has been made in the entire country to execute 1,241 projects in the first quarter
- ✓ Out of this, Tamil Nadu accounted for 18.63% of the investment announcements
- ✓ In the same quarter last year, India had seen the announcement of 2,500 new projects worth ₹3,86,673 crore.

- ✓ The Tamil Nadu government had signed 17 MoUs (memorandums of understanding) with investors on May 27, 2020, which gave ₹18,236 crore investment potential to the state in the quarter between April and June.
 - ✓ Maharashtra was second to Tamil Nadu with fresh investments worth ₹11,228.8 crore.
 - ✓ Maharashtra had signed 12 MoUs with firms from Singapore, South Korea and the U.S. through a virtual summit.
 - ✓ In all, private promoters announced 266 new projects worth ₹38,242.9 crore during this period.
- **Greater Chennai Corporation – is planning to make ‘mandatory’ for all private sector entities in the city including banks, IT companies, factories and media houses to test their employees for Covid-19 using antibody test kits soon.**
- ✓ The move is aimed to check the employees whether they have been infected and cured of the Covid-19.
 - ✓ The decision, taken by Greater Chennai Corporation, comes after it tested more than 1,000 frontline workers in Ripon Building, the corporation headquarters, using these kits.
 - ✓ Out of these workers, it was found that at least 15% of them had developed antibodies after they recovered from the viral infection, while about 5% of them tested positive.
 - ✓ Results for the test using antibody kits are quick and cost effective.
 - ✓ As of now the state government uses RT-PCR tests to diagnose Covid-19 cases.
 - ✓ The Rotary Club of Madras, the oldest such institution in the state, is planning to test a protocol as a pilot project to ensure industries have healthy workers and seamless workflow.
 - ✓ The project, approved by the state industries department, will first test employees of Saint-Gobain, Boyce and Cookson India before it hands over the protocol for enlarged use across the state
 - ✓ The pilot project will be undertaken for 60 days from July 27
- **Starting from July 18, the Greater Chennai Corporation - will send healthcare professionals to residents’ doorsteps to collect blood samples for a sero-survey.**
- ✓ Besides detecting the virus, a serosurvey will also help find out if a person has recovered from the infection without being aware of it.
 - ✓ The serosurvey would be completed in 10 days, covering all parts of the city.
 - ✓ As part of the initiative, random blood samples will be collected from 12,000 residents for the serosurvey
 - ✓ In a serosurvey conducted several weeks ago, ICMR had found that 2% of Chennai’s residents had been exposed to SARS-CoV-2.

- ✓ But a serosurvey conducted for Corporation staff on July 16 showed that 15% to 20% of them were exposed to SARS-CoV-2.
- **Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former Indian High Commissioner to Pretoria and former Governor of West Bengal - will deliver the 3rd Nelson Mandela annual lecture on July 18 from Coonoor in Tamil Nadu**
- ✓ The annual lecture is planned on the occasion of Nelson Mandela's 102nd birth anniversary.

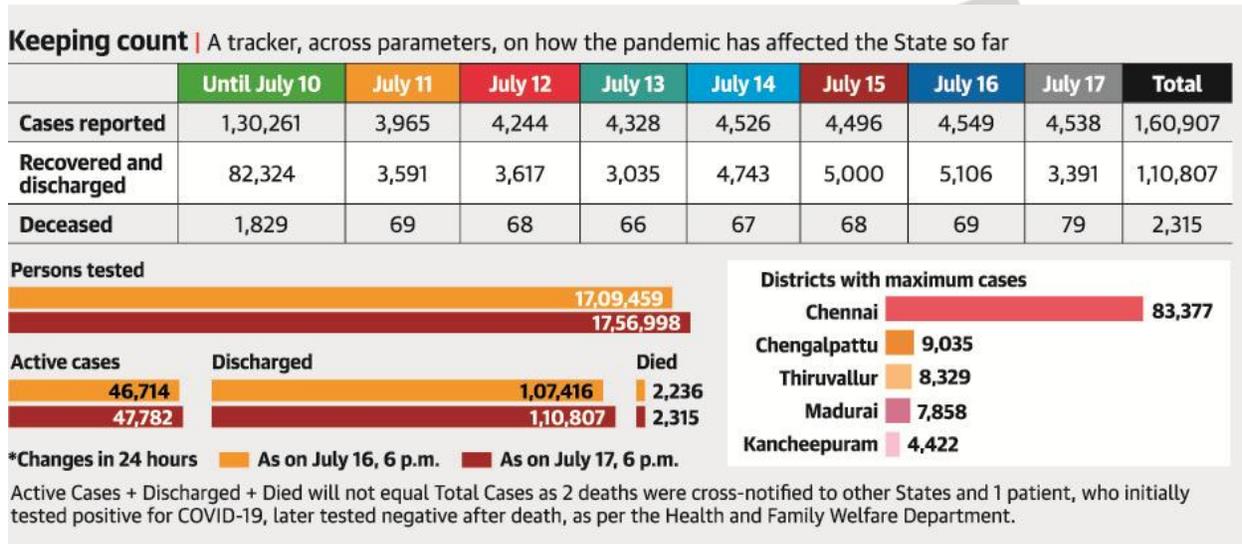


- ✓ The lecture was instituted in 2018 to commemorate Mandela's centenary year.
- ✓ The lecture will be held as a special webinar hosted by the India International Centre, (IIC), New Delhi.
- ✓ Gopalkrishna Gandhi was India's High Commissioner when Nelson Mandela was the President of South Africa.
- ✓ N. N. Vohra, President, IIC, and former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, will chair the webinar.
- ✓ Suhas Borker, Convener Working Group on Alternative Strategies and South African High Commissioner to New Delhi, Joel Sibosiso Ndebele will also speak on the occasion.
- **92 year old Paolo Tommasi, an Italian architect-artist who helped design the Matrimandir at Auroville - died of Covid-19 on July 16.**



- ✓ Matrimandir is the sphere-shaped centrepiece of Auroville
- ✓ Tomassi was among the few persons still around, who had interacted with Mirra Alfassa -- 'The Mother' to her followers

- ✓ 'The Mother' is the spiritual associate of Sri Aurobindo, who established the universal township of Auroville in 1968.
 - ✓ Tomassi was closely associated with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram since 1965
 - ✓ Tomassi hails from the city of Ancona, Italy
 - ✓ He came to India and played a crucial role in helping French architect Roger Anger in designing the Matrimandir and the 12 gardens surrounding the premises.
 - ✓ Paolo permanently settled in Puducherry in 2010 and continued his artwork.
 - ✓ His sketches and paintings were displayed in various galleries around the world and Auroville.
- **On July 17, Tamil Nadu - reported 79 fatalities, the highest number of deaths in one day, taking the death toll to 2,315.**
- ✓ Among them, Chennai reported 36 deaths, while another 14 persons died in its neighbouring districts.



- ✓ The state added 4,538 fresh cases on the day, taking its total caseload to 1,60,907
- ✓ While Chennai continued to remain the most affected region with 1,243 cases, its adjoining districts, Chengalpet (125) Kancheepuram (110) and Tiruvallur (220) reported another 455 cases.
- ✓ Madurai (263) continued to be the district adding the most number of cases, followed by Virudhunagar (196), Vellore (183), Tuticorin (189), Theni (175), Dindigul (163) and Kanyakumari (151)
- ✓ At the end of the day, 3,391 patients were discharged from various hospitals, taking the total number of persons cured so far to 1,10,807
- ✓ The State has a recovery rate of 67%, the highest in the country.
- ✓ A total of 47,782 active cases are undergoing treatment across the State.
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, a total of 48,669 samples were tested, taking the total number of samples tested so far up to 18,31,304.

- ✓ The Government Headquarters Hospital, Mettur, and a private laboratory — Sudha Diagnostic Centre, Erode — were approved for testing.
- ✓ With this, the State now has a total of 109 testing facilities.

STATES

- **On July 17, Haryana - began the first phase of human clinical trials of an indigenous Covid-19 vaccine 'Covaxin' on three volunteers in the State**
 - ✓ The volunteers were administered their first dose of the vaccine at the Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak.
 - ✓ The trial of Covaxin, developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, has started in 12 health institutes across the entire country, including PGIMS-Rohtak and AIIMS-Delhi.
 - ✓ The volunteers are aged between 30 and 55 years
 - ✓ As per the doctors, the volunteers were observed to have no side-effects of the vaccine during the three-hour observation period.
 - ✓ The second dose will be administered after two weeks, and if all goes well during the trial period, more volunteers will join the trial
 - ✓ The entire process might take six months and the final assessment on the safety and the anti-bodies produced would be made by the safety board.
- **On July 17, Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan - announced community transmission of Covid-19 in two coastal hamlets, Poonthura and Pulluvila, of Thiruvananthapuram.**
 - ✓ Over 150 cases each have been reported from these two regions and all of them are contact cases.
 - ✓ As many as 791 cases were reported in the state on the day, taking the total count to 11,066.
 - ✓ A total lockdown will be enforced in these areas from July 18.
 - ✓ Tests have been increased in these areas and as many as 112 cases were detected here on July 17 alone.
 - ✓ The movement of people within these regions will be restricted while no one will be allowed to enter these regions from outside.

NATIONAL

- **On July 17, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – addressed the valedictory of high-level segment of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) session**
 - ✓ The annual session was conducted on the theme “Multilateralism after COVID-19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?”



- ✓ It was held on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.
- ✓ The address was PM Modi's first speech at the United Nations after India's elections to the Security Council as a non permanent member for the next two years
- ✓ The PM addressed the ECOSOC gathering virtually, along with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
- ✓ PM Modi had earlier delivered his address at the 70th anniversary of ECOSOC on January 22, 2016.
- ✓ During his speech, the PM declared it was important to "assess the UN's role and relevance in today's world" while making a strong pitch for a "reformed global multilateral system"
- ✓ The Prime Minister used the examples of Indian initiatives to set up the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure as practical examples of multilateralism in action to address climate change, which "brings together all relevant stakeholders for a comprehensive approach".
- ✓ Outlining India's fight against the pandemic, the PM said that India had extended assistance to more than 150 countries, and helped set up a SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Covid-19 emergency fund in the South Asian neighbourhood.
- ✓ The PM also recalled India's contribution to the ECOSOC while mentioning that India was among the 50 founding members of the United Nations immediately after the Second World War in 1945.
- ✓ He reminded the UN that an Indian was the first president of the first ECOSOC
- ✓ The PM further highlighted the fact that India, one of the largest members of the UN system and the oldest, did not yet head even one of the bigger UN organizations
- ✓ On June 17, 2020, India won the non- permanent seat for the eighth time with 184 votes out of the total 192 polled.
- ✓ The first meeting of UN ECOSOC was held on January 23, 1946, in London.
- ✓ India was the first President of ECOSOC in 1946 and the inaugural presidency of ECOSOC was held by Shri Ramaswami Mudaliar of India.
- ✓ The organisation was established as one of the six principal organs of the UN

- ✓ It undertakes the coordination of social, economic, and cultural activities of the United Nations.
- ✓ It also has a responsibility for advancing International social and economic cooperation and development.
- ✓ The UN Security Council consists of 15 members.
- ✓ Out of this, 10 are non-permanent members and 5 are permanent members.
- ✓ The permanent members are US, UK, Russia, China and France.

- **As on July 17, India – has recorded a 21% higher sown area of kharif (summer) crops compared to the corresponding period last year.**
 - ✓ This indicates an encouraging sign for the farm sector and the rural economy, ensuring the smooth progress of agriculture operations across the country
 - ✓ The acreage of all major kharif crops such as paddy, pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds has crossed last year's corresponding figures despite the Covid-induced lockdowns.
 - ✓ This is due to the fact that sale of seeds, fertilisers and farm equipment was not disrupted much during the pre-monsoon phase when farmers were getting ready for the peak sowing season (June-August).
 - ✓ Good monsoon rains in most parts of the country witnessed steady sowing operations right from early June.
 - ✓ It resulted in kharif acreage of 692 lakh hectares as on July 17 compared to 571 lakh hectares during the corresponding period last year.
 - ✓ Though nearly 40% of area is still to be covered, the pace of sowing at this juncture indicates that kharif acreage this year will cross the normal sown area of 1,063 lakh hectares much before the sowing season ends.

- **The Ministry of Consumer Affairs – has proposed new norms by amending the Legal Metrology Act**
 - ✓ As per the new guidelines, selling any packaged item at more than the maximum retail price (MRP) would attract ₹5,000 to ₹15,000 fine for the first offence and up to ₹1 lakh for repeat offence.
 - ✓ The proposal also includes de-criminalising offences by replacing the jail terms with fines.
 - ✓ The ministry has proposed fines of up to ₹10 lakh for repeat offences under different sections instead of the provision of jail terms.
 - ✓ Besides high fines, it has proposed starting the process to cancel the licence of such entities which commit the offences.
 - ✓ The provision of fine for selling packaged items over MRP would be applicable for commodities such as packaged water, packaged food products and all other consumer durable and non-durable items.
 - ✓ The provisions of the Act are applicable only for packaged commodities.
 - ✓ Currently, fine of up to ₹5,000 can be imposed for over pricing under the Packaged Commodities Rules.

- **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.
- ✓ India's MMR used to be about 556 in 1990 and 254 in 2004-06.
- ✓ Assam continues to be the state with the highest MMR over the last three sample surveys conducted, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, an order unchanged since the 2014-16 survey.
- ✓ Similarly, over the same period, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in that order continue to have the lowest MMR.
- ✓ Among some of the other states which saw an increase in MMR, the most alarming increase was in Chhattisgarh where it went from 141 in the 2015-17 survey to 159 in the current one.
- ✓ The main causes for maternal mortality are severe bleeding, mostly after child birth, infection following child birth, high blood pressure during pregnancy causing seizures or complications during child birth, and unsafe abortions
- ✓ Thus it was believed that these causes could be addressed if deliveries happened in health institutions where trained health personnel would be available.
- ✓ Hence, there was a huge government push to increase institutional deliveries which was just 43% in 2004.
- ✓ By 2018, institutional deliveries constituted 83% of all child births in India.
- ✓ 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
- **India - had the biggest reduction in the number of multi-dimensionally poor people estimated at 273 million during the 2005-15 period**
- ✓ This was revealed in a new report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

- ✓ As per the report, 65 of the 75 studied countries significantly reduced their multidimensional poverty levels between 2000 and 2019
 - ✓ The multidimensional poverty index (MPI) is a measure that monitors income prospects and access to safe water, health, education, electricity, food and four other indicators.
 - ✓ Four countries—Armenia (2010–2015/2016), India (2005/2006–2015/2016), Nicaragua (2001–2011/2012) and North Macedonia (2005/2006–2011) – have halved their global MPI value and did so in 5.5–10.5 years
 - ✓ They account for roughly a fifth of the world’s population, mostly because of India
 - ✓ As per the report, 1.3 billion people are still living in multidimensional poverty today
 - ✓ Among them, more than 80% are deprived in at least five of the ten indicators
- **On July, 17, 2020, India and United States - begin discussions on storing petroleum reserves or stockpile in the US soil**
- ✓ World’s third-largest oil consumer India is planning to store crude oil in the US to create an emergency strategic petroleum reserve abroad
 - ✓ With the historic drop in global crude oil prices, India is actively increasing its oil stockpiles both inside the country and also overseas.
 - ✓ The move aims to take advantage of low prices and guard against possible supply disruptions.
 - ✓ This was revealed by oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan after co-chairing the second India-US strategic energy partnership talks with his US energy secretary Dan Brouillette
 - ✓ India-US strategic energy partnership works to support sustainable energy development.
 - ✓ Under this, the countries collaborate on smart grids, renewable energy, clean energy and unconventional sources of energy.
 - ✓ Under the partnership, India-US has increased their hydrocarbon trade in the last three years.
 - ✓ The bilateral hydrocarbon trade was \$9.2 billion between 2019-20.
 - ✓ The Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) is the Indian Company responsible for maintaining strategic petroleum reserves of India
 - ✓ It is operated by the Oil Industry Development Board that functions under Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
 - ✓ The ISPRL maintains emergency fuel store of 5.33 million tonnes or about 38 million barrels that is equivalent to provide 10 days of consumption.
 - ✓ In comparison, the US has the world’s largest storage at 714 million barrels.
 - ✓ India’s daily oil consumption stood at 4.5 million barrels/day before the coronavirus pandemic hit demand.
 - ✓ The crude oil storages are maintained at three underground locations namely Mangalore, Padur and Vishakhapatnam

- ✓ Further, in 2017-18 budget, the then finance minister Arun Jaitley announced two more petroleum reserves are to be set up in Bikaner, Rajasthan and Chandikhole and the doubling of the capacity of Padur petroleum reserve
 - ✓ The projects have been approved by the cabinet and are under implementation.
 - ✓ These additional petroleum reserves will increase India's capacity to 12.33 million tonnes.
 - ✓ The US has emerged as India's 6th largest oil supplier since the first US crude shipment reached Paradip in Odisha in October, 2017.
 - ✓ State-run refiners such as Indian Oil, which has term contract for US oil, could buy the oil
 - ✓ The oil can be sold at a profit when prices rise or brought to India for refining, depending upon what makes more economic sense or will reduce the cost of crude for India.
- **India – has reported over 35,000 fresh Covid-19 cases for the second day running**
- ✓ A total of 671 deaths were added to the overall toll on the day, taking the total deaths past 26,000.
 - ✓ It is the second-highest single-day number so far after a record 684 deaths reported a day earlier.
 - ✓ The active coronavirus cases across the country crossed the 3.5 lakh mark while total recoveries from the disease went past 6.5 lakh, representing nearly 63% of the total cases.
 - ✓ With 35,065 fresh cases recorded on the day, India's caseload has risen to 10,39,108, as per data collated from state governments.
 - ✓ A day earlier, India had recorded its highest single day count of 36,139 cases.
 - ✓ On July 17, the Indian government allowed the airlines of US, Germany and France to bring in certain categories of passengers and fly out Indians from here.
 - ✓ This comes a day after the government announced the creation of travel bubbles with these countries.
 - ✓ So far, airlines like United and Lufthansa were operating only cargo flights to India to fly out foreigners from here.
- **Among India's nine largest urban centres (with 5 million plus population), Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune - are witnessing the most rapid rise in Covid cases, as on date.**
- ✓ The earlier epicentres — Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Ahmedabad — have started showing signs of the outbreak slowing down, as per the data available.
 - ✓ Bengaluru has seen the highest rate of increase in cases, in which cases have increased at an average 12.9% per day in the past four weeks.
 - ✓ The city has also seen a surge in deaths with fatalities growing at 8.9% per day for the same period.

Urban Agglomeration	Growth rate (last 4 weeks)		CFR	Cases	Deaths
	Cases	Deaths		Per million	
				Cases	Deaths
Bengaluru	12.9	8.9	1.9	2,061	39
Hyderabad	7.8	0	0.1	3,342	3
Pune	4.5	2.4	2.6	6,383	169
Surat	4.3	2.9	2.7	1,205	33
Kolkata	4.1	2.4	3.4	1,855	64
Delhi	3.4	2.2	3	5,874	175
Chennai	3.3	4.1	1.6	8,595	140
Mumbai	2.4	2.2	4.5	7,583	345
Ahmedabad	1.1	0.7	6.8	2,866	193

- ✓ When it comes to case fatality rate (deaths per 100 cases), Ahmedabad continues to top the list followed by Mumbai and Kolkata.
- ✓ Chennai has the highest density of cases with 8,595 per million of its population.
- ✓ It is followed by Mumbai, Pune and Delhi in case density.
- ✓ Mumbai has witnessed 345 deaths for every million of its population, which is the highest in the country, and is followed by Ahmedabad and Delhi

HIGH COURT VERDICT

- **On July 17, the Madras high court - permitted all self-financing educational institutions in Tamil Nadu to collect an 'advance' fee of 40% from students before August 31.**
- ✓ The verdict provides a big relief to private schools and colleges that were barred by the state government from collecting any fee
- ✓ However, the Private Schools Fee Determination Committee, headed by a retired High Court judge, was yet to fix the fee for the years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- ✓ In this context, the state government had provisionally fixed this year's fee at 75% of the fee collected last year
- ✓ Taking note of this fact, the court ordered that the balance 35% of the fee (deducting the 40% advance) shall be collected within two months from the date of reopening of institutions and commencement of physical classes.
- ✓ The institutions have also been permitted to collect last year's arrears, if any, by September 30.
- ✓ The directions were issued by Justice N Anand Venkatesh on a batch of petitions filed by associations of private educational institutions.
- ✓ The institutions were challenging a government order prohibiting them from demanding fees during lockdown.
- ✓ The fee-fixation committees for private schools and colleges have also been directed by the judge to immediately start the process of the determining the

tuition fees for the respective institutions, and make an attempt to complete the process within eight months from August.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group's chief Noor Wali Mehsud - has been designated as a global terrorist by the United Nations**
- ✓ Mehsud has been designated for participating in the financing, planning and perpetrating acts on behalf of and in support of entities associated with al-Qaida.



- ✓ The UN Security Council's 1267 ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee added Mehsud to its sanctions list on July 16
- ✓ The move leads to an asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo to the Pakistani National, Mehsud.
- ✓ The list currently contains the names of 261 individuals and 89 entities.
- ✓ The US state department's bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs welcomed the move.
- ✓ In June 2018, Mehsud was named the leader of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, following the death of former TTP leader Maulana Fazlullah.
- ✓ The TTP was blacklisted by the United Nations on July 29, 2011 for its association with al-Qaeda.
- ✓ The TTP is responsible for many deadly terrorist attacks in Pakistan.
- ✓ Under Wali's leadership, TTP has claimed responsibility for many attacks across Pakistan, including an attack on security forces in North Waziristan in July 2019 and a bomb strike against Pakistani soldiers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in August 2019
- ✓ The US designated Noor Wali as a terrorist in September 2019.
- ✓ Pakistan too welcomed the terrorist designation for Mehsud
- ✓ The group had claimed responsibility for an attempted bombing in Times Square on May 1, 2010
- ✓ In April 2010, it had launched a multi-pronged assault against the United States Consulate in Peshawar, killing at least six Pakistanis and wounding 20 others
- ✓ The U.S. domestically designated Noor Wali as a terrorist in September 2019

- ✓ In a similar move in May 2019, the United Nations had designated Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) Chief, Masood Azhar as a global terrorist
- **On July 17, British Airways – has announced that it will retire its entire fleet of Boeing 747 airplanes**
- ✓ The aviation company attributed the decision to the travel downturn caused by coronavirus pandemic and the aircraft's high operating costs.



- ✓ Even 50 years after their introduction, the sight of the massive 747s gliding into their docks, dwarfing other planes, is a sight to watch for most travellers.
- ✓ The world's first jumbo jet, Boeing 747, is also known as the "Queen of the Skies"
- ✓ Boeing 747 had revolutionised travel for the masses, but in recent years it was mostly retired due to high operating costs.
- ✓ The final commercial flight of a Boeing 747 by a US carrier took place at the end of 2017.
- ✓ But British Airways had continued, operating the world's largest fleet of the planes, with 31 of them in service.
- ✓ Some commercial carriers still fly the Boeing 747, including Air India, Korean Air and Lufthansa.
- ✓ British Airways was set to retire the last of its Boeing 747s in 2024, but Covid-19 pushed forward the time frame
- ✓ British Airways received its first Boeing 747-400 in 1989 and its last in 1999
- **United States – has announced an exemption to the travel ban of spouses of H-1B and L-1 visa holders**
- ✓ These category of passengers were left stranded in India following the visa ban announced by US President Trump on June 22
- ✓ According to a recent guidance issued by the US state department, they will be able to get their visas stamped and fly to the US once the consulate offices open.
- ✓ Certain exceptions from the visa-ban proclamation, which currently extends till December 31, have been provided in the guidance
- ✓ The exceptions cover spouses and dependent children of the principal non-immigrant who is holding certain categories of valid work visas.
- ✓ Currently there are 5.83 lakh H-1B visa holders in the US, of which a significant number, estimated to be higher than 3 lakh are Indians

- ✓ Majority of them are said to be employed in the technology sector.
- ✓ L-1 workers are those who are on intra company transfers and their numbers are much lower.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **India and Bhutan - opened up a new trade route on July 15, 2020, between Pasakha in Bhutan and Jaigaon in West Bengal.**



- ✓ The land route will help to move industrial raw materials and goods destined for Pasakha Industrial Estate.
 - ✓ In this regard, an additional Land Customs Station has been opened up at Ahllay, Pasakha by the Indian government.
 - ✓ The new route provides temporary access through Ahllay for the movement of trucks and heavy vehicles from India to Bhutan.
 - ✓ It will boost bilateral trade and commerce and will lead to the decongestion of vehicular traffic along the Jaigaon-Phuentsholing route.
 - ✓ India had recently proposed to build road in Yeti territory of Bhutan which China claimed recently.
 - ✓ The road will reduce distance between Guwahati and Tawang by 150 kilometres
 - ✓ It will also help India access Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh quickly.
- **Nepal's Department of Archaeology - is holding cross-ministerial meetings to explore an archaeological site in Thori near the border town of Birgunj**
 - ✓ The development comes four days after Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli said the real birthplace of Lord Ram is located in Thori village around Birgunj, a major border town.
 - ✓ Thori is known to have a cluster of ancient Hindu religious sites that draw pilgrims from different parts of Nepal.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On July 15, the Union Minister of State for Defence, Shripad Naik - inaugurated the conference on Aerospace and Defence Manufacturing Technologies in New Delhi.**



- ✓ The conference is being held to promote Centre's ambitious 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' and 'Make in India' initiative.
- ✓ The theme of the 5th edition of the conference was 'Empowering India with Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission'
- ✓ The conference was jointly organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Tamil Nadu Technology Development and Promotion Centre, Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers.
- ✓ The conference will help India achieve its defence target of \$26 billion of domestic production by 2025.
- ✓ It is also a stated objective of the Defence Production Policy of the country.
- ✓ In his inaugural address during the conference, the Minister informed that the Aerospace and Defence Industry in India is estimated to reach around 70 billion dollars by 2030 from \$42.83 billion in 2017-18.
- ✓ The Defence industry in the country has grown at 9.7% between 2008 and 2016.
- ✓ The Technology promotion centre of Tamil Nadu participated as one of the two defence industrial corridors of the country is located in the state.
- ✓ The other is located in Uttar Pradesh.

➤ **On July 15, 2020, the Union Minister of Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal - inaugurated the Digital Indo-Italian Business mission on Food Processing**



- ✓ The event is to be held for two days.

- ✓ During the event, trade fairs, digital conferences and back to back meetings are to be conducted.
- ✓ Around 23 Italian companies are to exhibit their products and services.
- ✓ The Mission will focus on key areas such as fruits and vegetables, milk, cereals, dairy processing, bottling and packaging.
- ✓ India is focusing to invest in mega food parks and agricultural export zones in the future.
- ✓ The country is now trying to become self sufficient in every industry through Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan
- ✓ Under the scheme, Rs 10,000 crore was allocated to Formalisation of Micro Food Enterprises
- ✓ The fund allocated will support micro food enterprises, self help groups, farmer producer organizations and cooperatives.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Scientists at the Hyderabad-based R&D centre of the science and technology ministry - has developed a ‘baggage disinfection system’ to control the spread of infection through baggage at airports and railway stations**
- ✓ It was co-developed by the International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI), Hyderabad, and Noida-based Vehant Technologies
- ✓ The system is designed to disinfect 360-degree surface of any baggage within eight seconds.



- ✓ The system is called as Kriti Scan UV Baggage Disinfection System
- ✓ It can be ideally for rapid baggage disinfection at metro stations, bus stands, hotels, commercial establishments and private complexes to effectively fight against Covid-19.
- ✓ Kriti Scan disinfection system has a specially designed motorised conveyor to guide the baggage into the disinfection tunnel

- ✓ The disinfection tunnel uses UltraViolet-C light with appropriate irradiance to inactivate microbes and viruses.
- **Zydus Cadila - plans to complete late-stage trials for its COVID-19 vaccine candidate by February or March and could produce up to 100 million doses a year initially if it is successful**
- ✓ Zydus Cadila's vaccine candidate, ZyCov-D, is one of dozens being developed around the world to fight the pandemic.
- ✓ The early-stage Phase 1 and 2 human trials of the vaccine are likely to be concluded in the next three months
- ✓ Zydus Cadila is also planning to produce the drug remdesivir that is in high demand globally after it showed promise in treating severe patients with COVID-19.
- ✓ Zydus Cadila was among several Indian firms that signed a pact with the U.S. firm Gilead Sciences last month, gaining a licence for developing countries, including India, to make and sell the drug.
- ✓ The Company is among India's top 10 drug makers by revenue

DEFENCE

- **The Indian Navy - is conducting a major exercise off the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago**
- ✓ The move is seen as a clear display of strategic intent against China amid the ongoing military confrontation along the border in eastern Ladakh.
- ✓ The Indian naval manoeuvres come at a time when two American super aircraft carriers, USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan, are conducting rare dual combat drills in the South China Sea
- ✓ Several Indian warships, including destroyers, frigates and submarines as well as maritime patrol aircraft, are conducting the exercise near the A&N archipelago
- ✓ The exercise was led by eastern naval fleet chief Rear Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan
- ✓ It is being conducted with warships and aircraft from both the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) headquartered in Visakhapatnam.
- **On July 15, 2020, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) - empowered the Indian Armed Forces to decide on urgent capital acquisitions up to Rs 300 crores**
- ✓ The DAC was chaired by the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.
- ✓ The decision of DAC will help Indian Armed Forces to meet their emergent operational requirement.
- ✓ The DAC was held as there is need to strengthen armed forces in Eastern Ladakh
- ✓ Earlier in July 2020, the DAC approved procurement of cruise missile system and long-range land attack missiles with a range of 1,000 km.

- ✓ Also, DAC approved procurement of 33 frontline fighter aircrafts and Astra missiles at a cost of Rs 38,900 crores.
- ✓ The 33 fighter aircrafts include 12 Su-30 MKI and 21 MiG-29.
- ✓ Also, in June 2020, the government granted financial powers up to Rs 500 crores per project to acquire ammunition and weapons

ECONOMY

- **On July 17, Roshni Nadar-Malhotra – became the next Chairperson of the \$9.9-billion technology firm, HCL**
- ✓ She replaces her father and the incumbent Chairman Shiv Nadar, who founded the company in 1976.



- ✓ With the appointment, the 38 year old Roshni has become the first woman chairperson of an Indian IT services company.
- ✓ HCL is today the third-largest in the industry, after TCS and Infosys, and has been among the fastest growing for many years now.
- ✓ Shiv Nadar turned 75 on July14.
- ✓ At rival Wipro, a similar transition happened last year when Azim Premji handed over the reins to his son Rishad.
- ✓ Premji turns 75 on July 24 (coincidentally, Nadar and Premji were born just 10 days apart).
- ✓ Roshni was the vice-chairperson of HCL Technologies before her elevation.
- ✓ She was ranked 54 on the 2019 Forbes World's 100 Most Powerful Women list.
- ✓ In the same year, IIFL Wealth Hurun rankings estimated her wealth at Rs 36,800 crore.
- ✓ The promoter group owns 60% in HCL, which is valued at about ₹1.7 lakh crore.
- ✓ An alumnus of Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Nadar-Malhotra briefly worked with Sky News UK and CNN America as a news producer.
- ✓ At 27, she became a whole-time director and CEO of HCL Corporation, the holding company for HCL's operating companies.
- ✓ She was responsible for treasury operations, brand-building and social initiatives in the Company

- ✓ Roshni is also a trustee of the Shiv Nadar Foundation and passionate about wildlife and conservation.
 - ✓ In 2018, she set up The Habitats Trust, which works to protect natural habitats and indigenous species.
 - ✓ Shiv Nadar will continue to be the chief strategy officer of the IT company HCL Technologies.
 - ✓ Nadar is also a major philanthropist, and has invested over \$800 million through the Shiv Nadar Foundation, helping over 30,000 students from poor backgrounds.
 - ✓ He founded HCL 44 years ago to make calculators and microprocessors
 - ✓ HCL initially had a hardware DNA, with many firsts in India, including the first Unix operating system, multiprocessor architecture, parallel Fortran and the PC.
- **For the very first time, the digital transactions – have exceeded the ATM withdrawals in the country for two successive quarters of the FY 2019-20**
- ✓ The development is seen as an early sign that India is finally turning into a digital payment economy less dependent on cash.
 - ✓ For the first time, in the fourth quarter of 2019, the value of card and mobile payments at ₹10.6 lakh crore exceeded ATM withdrawals which amounted to ₹9.1 lakh crore.
 - ✓ After overtaking cash withdrawals, digital payments extended the lead in the first quarter of 2020.
 - ✓ Card and mobile payments are now at ₹11 lakh crore, even as ATM withdrawals declined 5% to ₹8.7 lakh crore
 - ✓ India's posted the sharpest growth in digitisation in this period compared to America, the UK, Thailand and Singapore, due to the increased UPI transactions
 - ✓ While UPI payments did post a slight dip in April to ₹1.51 lakh crore, it soon recovered to ₹2.18 lakh crore in May, higher than pre-Covid levels.
 - ✓ In December 2019, UPI saw ₹2 lakh crore transactions versus card payments totalling about ₹1.5 lakh crore
 - ✓ By May 2020, ₹2.18 lakh crore UPI transactions were reported versus ₹80,300 crore in card payments
 - ✓ According to RBI data as on July 10, sufficient currency was in circulation, which stood at ₹26.8 lakh crore, up 21.4% year-on-year.
 - ✓ Mobile payments initiated by payment apps comprising account-to-account transfers and payments made from stored-value accounts rose 163% to \$287 billion in 2019.
 - ✓ By comparison, point-of-sale transactions completed using debit and credit cards, including online and in apps, rose only 24% to \$204 billion.

