

## EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 24, 2020

### TAMIL NADU

- On July 23, the Tamil Nadu government - signed 16 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with investors to attract fresh industrial investments of ₹5,137 crore into the state.
- ✓ The investments will be put in varied sectors, including IT, auto components and food products to generate direct employment to more than 6,500 people.



- ✓ The MoUs were signed in the presence of chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami at the state secretariat.
- ✓ Over the last three months, Tamil Nadu has signed MoUs to attract over ₹30,000 crore new project investments from both Indian and overseas players.
- ✓ These projects, when completed, are likely to generate direct employment to over 67,000 people in the state.
- ✓ On May 27, the state signed 17 MoUs for attracting new investments worth ₹15,128 crore.

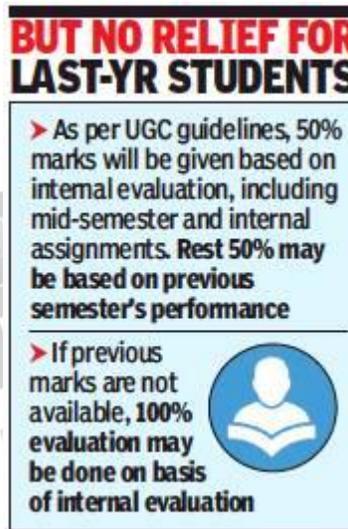
- ✓ Early this week, it signed 8 MoUs to bring a combined investment of ₹10,399 crore.
- ✓ The new projects will come up across districts, including Chennai, Chengalpet, Kanchipuram, Coimbatore, Dindigul and Tirunelveli.

## MAJOR MOUS SIGNED ON THURSDAY

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Adani Enterprises will invest ₹2,300 crore in establishing a data park at Siruseri Sipcot IT campus</li> <li>➤ Singapore's Princeton will be investing ₹750 crore to set up a data park in Siruseri</li> <li>➤ Super Auto Forge has agreed to invest ₹500 crore in establishing forged steel and aluminium parts unit in Sipcot industrial estate in Vallam - Vadagal</li> <li>➤ Airflow Equipments plans to invest ₹320 crore</li> </ul> |  | <p>in Vallam - Vadagal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ATC Tires has promised to invest ₹250 crore in a technology enhancement project at Sipcot's Gangaikondan industrial estate</li> <li>➤ TN has added over ₹30,000 cr cumulative inflow pipeline in last 3 months. These projects, when completed, are likely generate direct employment to over 67,000 people</li> </ul> |
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- ✓ Adani Enterprises, the flagship company of the Adani Group, will invest ₹2,300 crore in establishing a data park at Siruseri Sipcot IT campus to generate jobs for 1,000 people.
- ✓ Singapore's Princeton Digital group will be investing ₹750 crore to set up a data park also in Siruseri, but with an employment opportunity for only around 100 people
- ✓ Super Auto Forge, which makes cold and warm forged steel and aluminium parts, will be investing ₹500 crore in establishing a facility in Sipcot industrial estate at Vallam - Vadagal in Kancheepuram district.
- ✓ Airflow Equipments, a major supplier of equipment and products to the transport industry, plans to invest ₹320 crore, also in Vallam-Vadagal, and employ 500 people in its industrial unit to make components for the logistics sector.
- ✓ ATG Tyres, a fully owned subsidiary of Yokohama Rubber Co. Ltd., Japan, has proposed to invest ₹250 crore in a technology enhancement project at Sipcot's Gangaikondan industrial estate in Tirunelveli to generate job opportunities for 400 people.
- ✓ Visteon Automation Systems will invest ₹100 crore at Maraimalainagar in an auto component unit.
- ✓ In addition, a leading vermicelli brand Top Anil Marketing will invest ₹100 crore in a food products unit in Dindigul district and will employ 1,000 people.
- ✓ BPL-FTA and Srivaru Motors will invest ₹300 crore and ₹150 crore in lithium Ion battery and e-bike manufacturing units respectively.
- ✓ The other MoUs signed involved the companies - Corestack (₹35 crore); Swirepay (₹23 crore); Radus Digital (₹21 crore); bitWise Academy (₹21 crore); Plethy (₹22 crore); Tier1 Network Solutions Inc (₹25 crore); and Continube (₹20 crore).

- **The state government - announced cancellation of exams for all college students and promoted them to the next level in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.**
- ✓ Final year students, however, are exempted and they may have to undergo some form of assessment, such as online exams, as per the earlier guidelines issued by the UGC.
- ✓ The decision is said to be “a one-time measure” this year as semester exams scheduled to be held between March and May could not be conducted due to the extraordinary situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ The students will be awarded marks as per the UGC and AICTE guidelines issued on April 29
- ✓ This was announced by the State Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on July 23



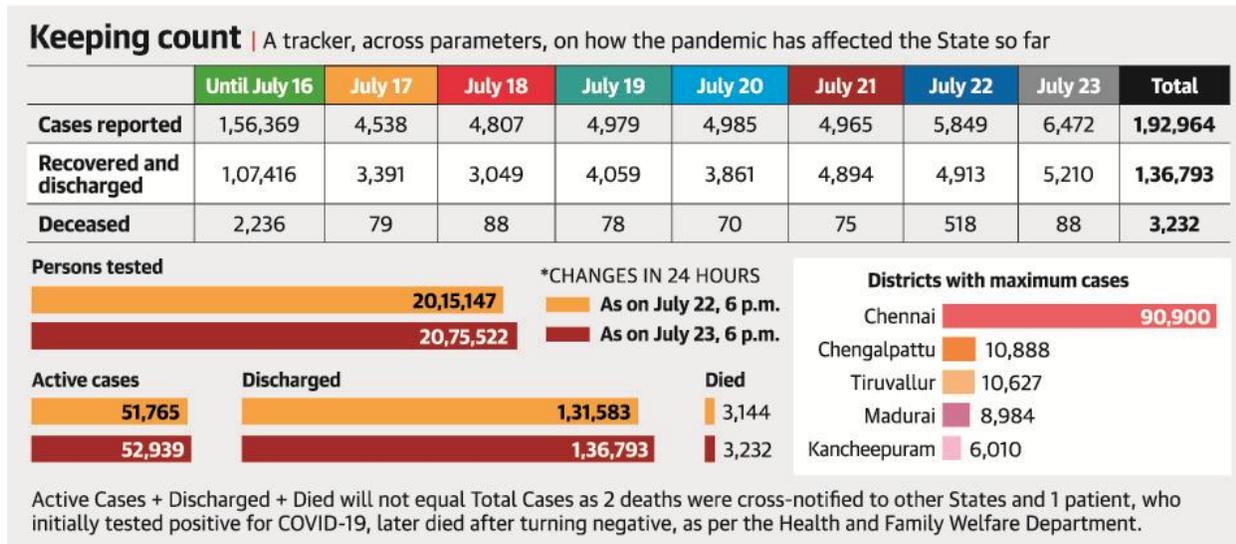
- ✓ Except those appearing in final semester, all students studying BA, BSc, MA, MSc, BE/B Tech/B Arch, ME/M Tech, MCA and diploma courses have been promoted to the next academic year.
- ✓ Earlier, the state government had set up an 11-member expert panel to finalize the modalities for conducting exams.
- ✓ As per the UGC guidelines, 50% marks would be awarded based on internal evaluation and remaining 50% marks can be awarded based on the previous semester.
  - ✓ The internal evaluation can be a continuous one factoring in mid-semester, internal assignments and other assessments.
  - ✓ If the previous semester or previous year's marks are not available, evaluation may be done based on internal assessment.
- ✓ Students are also allowed to appear for special exams in next semester.

- **On July 23, the phase-1 human clinical trials of indigenous Covid-19 vaccine, called Covaxin - began at SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre in Kattankulathur, Chennai.**
- ✓ On the first day, two volunteers were administered the first set of doses of 0.5 ml through injections.
- ✓ They will receive the next dose of injection again on the fourteenth day.
- ✓ SRM was one of the 12 institutions chosen by ICMR to conduct the trials for the vaccine
- ✓ Covaxin was developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR and the Pune-based National Institute of Virology.

| BEING TESTED   | VACCINES ON TRIAL ACROSS THE WORLD  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ University of Oxford and AstraZeneca found that their vaccine was safe and caused no severe side effects in the phase 1 and 2 trials</li> <li>➤ Vaccine by German company BioNTech, US company Pfizer and Chinese firm Fosun is likely to start phase 3 trials by July-end. It immune cells called T cells</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chinese firm Sinopharm started phase 3 trials in UAE. The vaccine, which contains inactivated virus, has so far found to be safe and provoke immune response</li> <li>➤ Indian firm Zydus Cadila Healthcare has begun phase 1 and 2 human trials of its vaccine 'ZyCoV-D'</li> </ul> |

- ✓ Dr Satyajit Mohapatra was named as the principal investigator for the human clinical trials at the hospital
  - ✓ A total of 375 healthy individuals, aged between 18 and 55 with no co-morbidity, will be recruited as volunteers for phase-1 trials across all the 12 sites with each site having around 40 volunteers.
  - ✓ The vaccine contains the inactivated virus, which is a weakened version of the coronavirus to provoke an immune response.
  - ✓ After getting the injections, the volunteers will have to visit the hospital for follow-ups on day 28, 42, 104 and 194 when their response to the vaccination will be assessed by immunogenicity testing.
  - ✓ SRM is carrying out five major projects related to Covid-19 at the clinical trial facility.
  - ✓ It includes a BCG vaccine trial against Covid-19, an ICMR-led study on hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis for healthcare workers, an international multi-centric clinical trial for Covid-19 patients with certain drugs and a siddha-based kabasurakudineer for Covid-19 patients
- **On July 23, Tamil Nadu – reported its highest ever fresh Covid-19 infections of 6,472 cases, taking its total caseload to 1,92,964.**
  - ✓ The day also registered 88 deaths, taking the cumulative toll in the state to 3,232.

- ✓ With the state permitting pooled testing (RT-PCR) in 21 districts, the number of people tested increased to 60,375 on the day, compared to 58,475 a day earlier and 50,055 on July 21.
- ✓ The number of active cases remains at 52,939 after the discharge of 5,210 persons on the day, taking the total cured to 1,36,793.



- ✓ Chennai's overall tally breached the 90,000-mark as the capital city recorded 1,336 cases on the day.
- ✓ Chennai's neighbours Chengalpattu (375), Kancheepuram (330) and Tiruvallur(416) together reported 1,121 cases.
- ✓ Three districts — Tiruvallur (416), Thoothukudi (415) and Virudhunagar (480) — had over 400 cases each.
- ✓ Other districts reporting more cases included Ranipet 214, Tiruvannamalai 193, Kallakuruchi 134, Vellore 117, and Villupuram 112

## STATES

- **On July 23, 2020, the Karnataka cabinet – gave its approval for the formation of a new company called as 'Karnataka Digital Economy Mission'**
- ✓ The new company will be incorporated under the provision of Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- ✓ It has been created to promote over 7,000 start-ups, e-commerce and other gig economy companies in the State
- ✓ This was the first such mission launched in India by a state government where a company (or a group or a mission led by a group) under Section 8 is led by industrialists
- ✓ In the new company, the Karnataka Government will hold 49% of shares of the companies and the rest 51% will be held by the industries and other stakeholders
- ✓ Of the nine directors of the company, six are from the industry.
- ✓ The chief executive officer (CEO) will be a professional from the industry.

- ✓ Till now, start-ups, e-commerce and other gig economy companies were operating in the State under the 'Technology Mission' and governed by three to four government agencies or departments.
- ✓ With the new cabinet approval, the companies will come under one roof.
- ✓ To promote the State as an ideal investment destination, the Karnataka government formed a company called 'Invest Karnataka' in 2016
- ✓ The Industries Minister is the Chairman of Invest Karnataka.
- ✓ **Meanwhile, on July 23, the Karnataka Cabinet approved the New Industrial Policy 2020-25**
- ✓ The new policy proposes a series of incentives to industries, including turnover-based incentives for the first time in the country, to invest in the State.
- ✓ It plans to attract investments outside Bengaluru by declaring backward regions as "Special Industrial Regions".
- ✓ It has set an ambitious target of ₹5 lakh-crore investments to create job opportunities for 20 lakh people.

## NATIONAL

- **On July 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - laid the foundation stone for Manipur Water Supply Project through video conferencing.**



- ✓ The virtual event was attended by Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla, Chief Minister N Biren Singh, DoNER Minister Jitendra Singh along with other senior MPs and MLAs of the state.
- ✓ The project is being undertaken under the centre's Jal Jeevan Mission
- ✓ Under the mission, funds were provided to the state to provide freshwater household tap connections to all the remaining households in Manipur- including the Greater Imphal Planning area, 25 towns and 1,731 rural habitations covering 2,80,756 households across 16 districts.
- ✓ The total expenditure of the project is expected to be around Rs 3054.58 crores with a loan component funded by the New Development Bank.
- ✓ During the launch, the PM stated that the project will significantly reduce the water shortage problems faced by the people in many cities and villages of the state.

- ✓ He said once the project is commissioned, there will be a “water revolution” in four years.
  - ✓ The project will not only provide clean and safe drinking water to all the people in the state but it will also provide employment to many people.
  - ✓ The central government had launched the Jal Jeevan Mission to provide safe and clean drinking water to every rural household of the country by 2024 with the slogan ‘Har Ghar Nal Se Jal.’
- **On July 23, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah – launched a new plantation drive ‘Vriksharopan Abhiyan’, organised by NLC India Ltd (NLCIL), at Mines II in Neyveli through video-conferencing.**
- ✓ During the launch, the mass planting of 1,15,000 saplings at 14 project locations of NLCIL was undertaken across the country
  - ✓ The Abhiyan is being organized by the Ministry of Coal which involves all coal and lignite PSUs.
  - ✓ The drive was aimed at maximising the green cover through ecological reclamation of mined-out areas and dumps, plantation in and around mines and avenue plantation.
  - ✓ Under the campaign, trees will be planted in colonies, mines, and offices in 10 different coal and lignite bearing states
  - ✓ The campaign has been launched in the presence of Pralhad Joshi, Union Coal, and Mines Minister.
  - ✓ **Under the campaign, the Union Home Minister has also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of six eco-parks and tourism sites.**
  - ✓ The eco-parks will provide space for the adventure, water sport, recreation, bird watching, etc. for the people in the respective localities.
  - ✓ ‘Going green’ initiative is one of the key focus area of the coal sector in India
  - ✓ The initiative by the Coal Ministry has been launched through active participation of Coal and lignite PSUs as well as the private miners in India.
  - ✓ In 2020, three coal and lignite PSUs- NLC India Limited (NLCIL), Coal India Limited (CIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL) - have set a target to cover 1,789 hectares of an area in and around the coalfields
  - ✓ In this area, the target has been set to create grassland (70 hectares), bio-reclamation and plantation (1626 hectares), bamboo plantation (3 hectares) and hi-tech cultivation (90 hectares).
- **On July 23, the Union Government – announced restrictions on public procurement from countries that share a land border with India on the grounds of defence and national security.**
- ✓ The Department of Expenditure issued a detailed order on public procurement to boost India’s defence and national security.

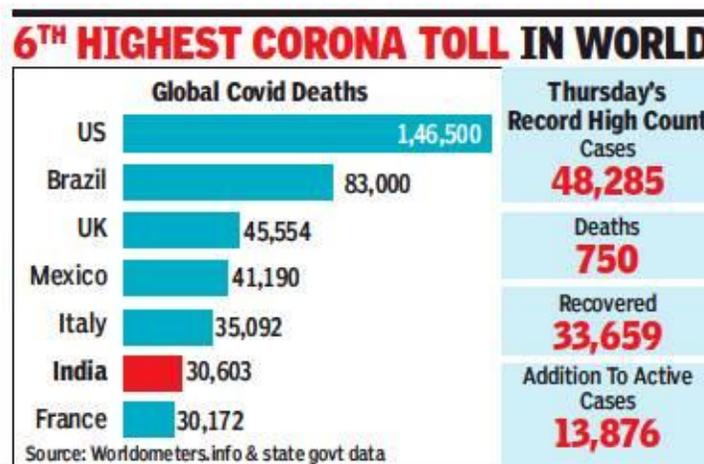
- ✓ Under the order, any bidder from countries sharing a land border with India can offer bid for the procurement of any goods or services, only if they are registered with the Competent Authority.
- ✓ The Competent Authority for registration will include the Registration Committee, which was set up by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- ✓ Besides this, the bidders will require 'mandatory' political and security clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

| <b>PANEL TO VET APPLICANTS</b>   |  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bidders for countries sharing land border with India will be eligible to bid for govt contracts <b>only if registered with "competent authority"</b></li> </ul> | <p><b>China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, their subsidiaries, or substantially controlled by entities in these countries or their Indian agents</b></p>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sub-contracting too faces curbs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Controlling interest to mean <b>25% or more</b> share of capital or profit</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New rule <b>won't apply to cases where order already placed or contract awarded</b></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Registrations to be cleared by panel comprising officers from <b>home, external affairs ministries and industry dept</b></li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Restriction to apply to entities which are registered in</li> </ul>   |  |

- ✓ The government order amended the "General Financial Rules 2017" to allow the Centre to intervene in matters that directly or indirectly relate to defence and national security.
- ✓ Though the order does not name any country, it is clearly aimed at scrutinising and imposing curbs on Chinese investments and partnerships in Indian projects.
- ✓ The new rules seek to block supply of stationary, turbines and telecom equipment as well as award of road and power contracts to companies that have a link with China.
- ✓ The move follows a recent ban on 59 Chinese apps and comes in the backdrop of the continued military stand-off in Ladakh.
- ✓ Earlier, on April 17, the Government had blocked FDI through the automatic route from China
- ✓ However, the order does not apply to private sector procurement and will apply to all new tenders only in government sector
- ✓ Regarding the tenders already invited, if the first stage of evaluation of qualifications has not been completed, bidders who are not registered under the new order will be treated as 'not qualified'.
- ✓ If the first stage has been crossed, the tenders will be cancelled and the process will be again started 'afresh'.
- ✓ The order will also apply to state government and other forms of public procurement, which includes goods, services (including consultancy services and non-consultancy services) or works (including turnkey projects)

- ✓ The order will also cover public sector banks and financial institutions, autonomous bodies, central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) and PPP projects receiving financial support from the government or its undertakings.
  - ✓ In this regard, the government has written to the chief secretaries of states invoking provisions of Article 257(1) of the Constitution for the implementation of this order
  - ✓ In case of the states, the competent authority will be constituted by them but political and security clearance from the central ministries will remain necessary.
  - ✓ Relaxation has been provided in certain limited cases, including for procurement of medical supplies for Covid-19 till December 31, 2020.
  - ✓ By a separate order, countries to which the government extends lines of credit or provides development assistance have been exempted from the requirement of prior registration.
- **The Central Seat Allocation Board (CSAB) - has decided to relax the eligibility criterion for admissions to the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and other centrally funded technical institutions (CFTIs)**
- ✓ As per the new norms, those who have cracked JEE (main) 2020 will only need to secure passing marks in Class XII examinations to be eligible for admissions in the NITs and CFTIs.
  - ✓ Till now, for admission to NITs and CFTIs, a general category rank holder in JEE (main) candidate also should have either scored at least 75% or figure in the top 20 percentile of his/her Board results to secure a seat.
  - ✓ Similarly, an SC/ ST candidate should have either scored at least 65% or fulfil the top 20 percentile requirement.
  - ✓ Earlier, the joint admission board for the IITs announced the relaxation of the eligibility conditions on July 17.
  - ✓ The JEE (main) examination has been postponed twice and will now be held from September 1 to 6.
  - ✓ A final merit list will be announced based on the results of the JEE (main) held in January and JEE (main) September.
- **All rail tickets, including platform tickets - will now come with QR code for contactless entry to stations and trains on the lines of airports.**
- ✓ This will be applicable to 'online' ticket reservations too
  - ✓ This was announced by Railway board chairman V K Yadav on July 23
  - ✓ In case a person buys a physical ticket from the reservation counter, the SMS along with the link will be sent to his/her mobile number
  - ✓ On clicking the link in the smartphone, a QR code will be generated
  - ✓ The TTEs at stations or inside trains can read the QR code and capture the ticket details using their hand-held devices or mobile phone
  - ✓ Further, the Railways will be launching a revamped IRCTC website next month

- ✓ The new website will use artificial intelligence (AI) for quick search and suggestions for alternative trains.
  - ✓ The Railways is also planning to issue tickets in a single booking for connecting trains on the lines of airline tickets, if someone has to take more than one train to reach the destination.
  - ✓ AI will be used to see demand for certain destinations and timing of connecting trains will be changed accordingly.
- **Hyderabad – has been ranked at 16<sup>th</sup> place in the list of world’s top 20 most surveilled cities.**
- ✓ It has almost 30 cameras for every 1,000 people
  - ✓ Hyderabad and London at No. 3 are the only cities outside China to make it to the top 20
  - ✓ These details were revealed by Comparitech, a consumer portal which analysed public CCTV cameras in 150 most densely populated cities of the world.
  - ✓ Globally, there are already 770 million cameras in use, with 54% of these in China.
  - ✓ As per the report, little correlation has been noticed between the number of public CCTV cameras and crime or safety.
  - ✓ Comparitech collated data from several government, police, and public resources and reports.
  - ✓ World’s most populated cities, like Mumbai, are not in the top 20.
  - ✓ However, Chennai has been ranked at 21<sup>st</sup> place, while Delhi is at 33, to make it to the top 50.
- **On July 23, the deaths from the Covid-19 pandemic in the country - crossed 30,000 and India’s toll rose to the sixth highest in the world**
- ✓ Meanwhile, the number of fresh cases surged to another new high, crossing 48,000 for the first time.
  - ✓ At 750 fatalities, the day witnessed the highest-ever deaths recorded in a single day so far.



- ✓ India went past France's Covid-16 death toll of 30,172 to climb to the sixth spot among countries that have suffered most deaths from the pandemic.
- ✓ The country registered 48,285 cases on the day, as per data collated from state governments.
- ✓ On the brighter side, India also reported the highest single-day recoveries from the virus at 33,659.
- ✓ Maharashtra again registered the biggest rise in cases, recording its second-highest single-day count of 9,895
- ✓ Further, as many as 11 states reported their highest spike in cases.
- ✓ These were led by Andhra Pradesh which reported a massive rise of nearly 8,000 infections (7,998).
- ✓ Overall, it is at the fifth position in the country with a caseload of 72,711, behind Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Karnataka.
- ✓ The others states which added their highest single-day count of cases were Tamil Nadu (6,472 fresh infections), Karnataka (5,030), Uttar Pradesh (2,529), Bengal (2,436), Odisha (1,264), Kerala (1,078), Gujarat (1,078), Jharkhand (518), Punjab (441) and Chhattisgarh (286)
- ✓ Maharashtra reported 298 deaths, the highest ever recorded in a single day, taking its toll to 12,854.

## INTERNATIONAL

- **On July 23, China - launched its first ambitious Mars Rover Mission- 'Tianwen-1' aboard Long March 5 rocket from Hainan Island's Wenchang Satellite Launch Center.**



- ✓ The rocket carried the Mars probe for 36 minutes before successfully placing it on the looping path, which will take it beyond Earth's orbit and eventually into Mars' more distant orbit around the sun.
- ✓ Tianwen-1 includes a Mars orbiter, a lander and a rover.
- ✓ The mission, if successful, will mark a huge first in human history, as it includes a Mars orbiter, lander and rover all in one launch.
- ✓ Tianwen-1 is China's first fully indigenous Mars mission.

- ✓ The name of the Mars probe has been taken from a poem by Qu Yuan, who lived from the 4th -3rd B.C., with the meaning “Questions to Heaven.”
- ✓ China’s Mars orbiter aims to study Mars and its atmosphere for about one Martian year- approximately 687 Earth days.
- ✓ The orbiter has two cameras, Mars-orbiting subsurface exploration radar, a detector to study the Martian magnetic and gravitational field and three other scientific instruments.
  - ✓ Using the Mars-orbiting subsurface exploration radar instrument, the orbiter will be able to investigate soil characteristics and water-ice distribution on the red planet.
  - ✓ The Mars orbiter will also serve as a relay back to Earth for communicating with the rover component of the mission.
- ✓ China will attempt to land the rover/ lander of its Mars probe in the ‘Utopia Planitia’ region in the mid-northern Martian latitudes.
  - ✓ This region is a huge basin that was reportedly formed by a large impact way back in Mars' history
  - ✓ China has isolated a portion of the vast plain as a candidate landing area, running from Isidis Planitia to the big volcano Elysium Mons.
  - ✓ NASA’s Viking 2 mission had touched down there in 1976.
- ✓ Tianwen-1 will reach Mars in February 2021, at the same time as UAE’s Hope Orbiter and NASA’s Perseverance rover.
  - ✓ However, China’s rover/ lander will take about 2-3 months from then before attempting its landing on the Martian surface.
- ✓ China’s first Mars Mission was an orbiter called Yinghuo-1
  - ✓ It was launched aboard a Russian rocket along with Russia's Phobos-Grunt mission in November 2011.
  - ✓ However, the launch failed and all spacecraft aboard eventually fell back to Earth
  - ✓ The spacecraft failed to get out of Earth’s orbit after launching from Kazakhstan, eventually burning up in the atmosphere.
- ✓ China’s Mars probe launch is the second Mars mission to be launched this month, following the launch of UAE’s Hope space probe to Mars on July 19, 2020.
- ✓ Further, NASA is planning to also launch its Mars Perseverance rover from Cape Canaveral, Florida, next week.
- ✓ All three missions are expected to arrive at Mars next year, aiming to take advantage of the rare window of 26 months when Mars and the Earth are closer than usual.
- ✓ Only two countries have successfully landed on Mars so far - the United States and the Soviet Union.
  - ✓ However, the 1971 Soviet mission had lost contact after less than two minutes.
  - ✓ Only the U.S. has successfully landed a spacecraft on Martian soil, doing it eight times since 1976.

- ✓ So far, US, Russia, India and European Union have successfully sent missions to mars.
- ✓ India was the first Asian country to send Mars orbiter under a mission called Mission Mangalyaan.

## **INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES**

- **India and Israel – have announced to work together to develop a set of new generation Covid-19 tests that aim to complete the entire testing process within a few seconds and widely available to all countries.**
- ✓ Using artificial intelligence and machine learning, these breakthrough technologies will be tested in India
- ✓ If proven successful, the technologies will be manufactured in India and marketed jointly by India and Israel to the world.
- ✓ A special flight will be dispatched from Israel in the coming week which will include Israeli military R&D scientists and tech specialists for the initiative.
- ✓ The Israeli team will work with an Indian team under the Prime Minister's principal scientific adviser K Vijayaraghavan at AIIMS for about two weeks.
- ✓ The special flight will also include representatives from some Israeli companies chosen by their defence ministry and the Israel Defence Forces
- ✓ The “breakthrough technologies” that would be tested in India include –
  - ✓ AI-based voice test,
  - ✓ Breathalyzer test based on Terra-Hertz waves,
  - ✓ Poly amino acids test and
  - ✓ Isothermal test.
- ✓ The voice test analyses recording of a human voice and identifies changes in the patient's voice and/or deterioration in the condition of his/her respiratory system as part of system developed for detecting the virus using Terra-Hertz (THZ) waves.
- ✓ Isothermal testing allows detection of the virus in a saliva sample with the help of a chemical reaction and produces a result within 30 minutes
- ✓ Polyamino acid tests also detect virus proteins in a saliva sample in a few minutes.
- ✓ While Israel has a global edge in early stage development of breakthrough technologies and therapeutics, India contributes massive data and global manufacturing capability.
- ✓ PM Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu have spoken three times since the outbreak of the pandemic
  - ✓ Both the leaders have promised mutual assistance in dealing with the virus and committed to joint technological and scientific research between the countries
- ✓ India aims to manufacture these Israeli technologies on a mass scale for its own huge demand as well as for third countries.

# SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The drug regulator, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) - has decided to lift export restrictions on Oseltamivir, the popular drug for H1N1, also sold under the brand name Tamiflu**
- ✓ While many local generic drug makers make Oseltamivir in India, they were required to seek permission from the CDSCO before supplying the medicine to other countries.
- ✓ In a recent meeting of the Drugs Consultative Committee, it was decided that since swine flu was no longer widespread and demand of the drug had come down drastically, companies could be allowed to freely export Oseltamivir
- ✓ Besides, many countries are also trying to re-purpose Oseltamivir for treatment of Covid-19
- ✓ The sale of the drug is restricted in India and chemists are required to maintain a copy of the doctor's prescription while selling the medicine.
- ✓ CDSCO had earlier imposed restrictions on export of the drug in view of its demand in the wake of H1N1 or swine flu outbreak.
- ✓ Now, local demand has come down substantially after the H1N1 pandemic got over.
  
- **The Defence Research Development Organization - has established a Covid-19 testing facility in Leh at Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR).**
- ✓ The facility will identify Covid-19 cases in the union territory of Ladakh.
- ✓ It has the capability to screen 50 samples a day.
- ✓ The testing facility was inaugurated by Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur.
- ✓ DIHAR laboratory is working on cold agro animal technologies.
- ✓ It is currently screening and identifying medicinal and aromatic plants to use them for defence purposes.
- ✓ Also, the laboratory is working on Greenhouse technologies for high altitude and cold desert areas.
- ✓ The DIHAR was established in 1962 in the name of Field Research Laboratory.
- ✓ It was renamed as DIHAR in 2008.

## DEFENCE

- **The Defence ministry - has finally issued the formal order to grant permanent commission (PC) to women officers in eight more branches of the Army**
- ✓ The order specifies the grant of permanent commission to SSC women officers in eight new streams - Army Air Defence (AAD), Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC), and Intelligence Corps.

- ✓ They are already eligible for PC in the Judge and Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC) branches.
- ✓ The Army would be following the same procedure for male SSC officers to women also in granting the permanent commission.
- ✓ There are around 1,600 women in the 43,000-strong officer cadre in the Army.
- ✓ The military brass for long opposed PC and command roles for women due to “operational, practical and cultural problems” but had to relent after the court directive to end gender bias in the force.
- ✓ Women officers, unlike their male counterparts, were not mandated to undergo the “junior command course” and other “adjunct courses” as young captains or majors to be eligible for “command appointments” till now.
- ✓ Women are not allowed to join main combat arms like infantry, mechanised infantry, artillery and armoured corps in the Army.
- ✓ They also cannot serve on board warships and submarines in the Navy.
- ✓ The ministry order follows a Supreme Court verdict in February that directed the government that women officers be granted PC and command postings in all services other than combat
- ✓ Earlier on July 7, 2020, the Supreme Court had given the central government one month’s time to follow the court’s orders on granting the PC to all the serving SSC women officers in the Indian army.
- ✓ The decision of granting PC to the women officers in the Indian Army is a step towards empowering them in the 13-lakh strong Indian Army

## ECONOMY

- **On July 23, Flipkart - announced that it has acquired parent company, Walmart Inc’s loss-making ‘Best Price’ wholesale cash-and-carry business in India.**

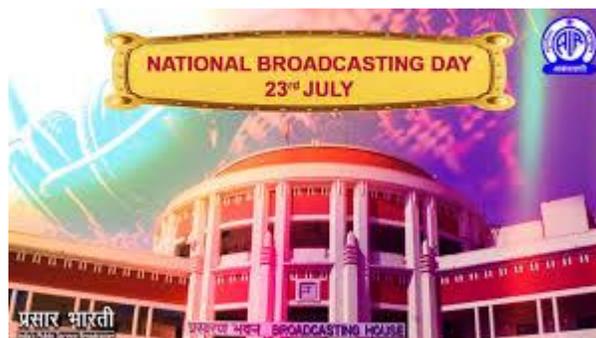


- ✓ The move will allow Flipkart to launch a new digital marketplace called ‘Flipkart Wholesale’ next month.
  - ✓ It will be a business-to-business (B2B) platform that will cater to independent retailers and small and medium businesses, including kirana stores
- ✓ US retail giant, Walmart has been running the ‘Best Price’ wholesale cash-and-carry stores in India since 2009.

- ✓ The American retail giant had bought a controlling stake worth \$16 billion in Flipkart in 2018.
  - ✓ Flipkart Wholesale faces intense competition from RIL's JioMart, which was launched in December 2019.
    - ✓ JioMart is an omnichannel tech-platform that works to unite customers, with Kirana stores and local traders and producers.
  - ✓ It will also face competition from other large cash & carry players such as Metro Cash & Carry, Amazon's B2B arm and Udaan.
  - ✓ Flipkart Wholesale will launch its operations next month and will pilot services for the grocery and fashion categories.
    - ✓ It will be headed by Adarsh Menon, a Flipkart veteran, while Sameer Aggarwal, who was recently promoted to the post of CEO at Walmart India, will get a global role within Walmart
  - ✓ The 12-year-old Walmart India will see its employees transition to the Flipkart Group, without any lay-off.
  - ✓ Walmart has overall 28 Best Price wholesale stores, two fulfillment centers and more than 1.5 million members, largely comprising Kirana stores in India.
- **On July 23, the stock price of Reliance Industries, the most valued company in India - recorded its all-time high of ₹2,079**
- ✓ With this, the market cap of the company also crossed the ₹13-lakh-crore mark for the first time.
  - ✓ In the process, RIL also became the first Indian companies to enter the global top 50 most-valued companies' club.
  - ✓ At the close of trading, with a market capitalisation of about \$185 billion, the energy-to-telecom major was valued ahead of global giants like Oracle (\$177 billion), and Unilever (\$155 billion).

## INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **National Broadcasting Day – July 23**



- ✓ The day is celebrated to commemorate the first ever radio broadcast aired in India.
- ✓ The first radio broadcast was made on July 23, 1927 from Bombay Station.

- ✓ The station was then owned by a private company called the Indian Broadcasting Company.
- ✓ The Government took over the broadcasting on April 1, 1930 and renamed it as Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS)
- ✓ It was initially started on an experimental basis and later permanently came under government control in 1932.
- ✓ The All India Radio was established on 8th June 1936.
- ✓ The motto of AIR is “Bahujan Hitaya Bahujan Sukhaya”.
- ✓ AIR broadcasts 414 stations in 23 different languages.
- ✓ It is one of the largest public broadcasting organizations in the world as it broadcasts in 179 dialects

