

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 26, 2020**

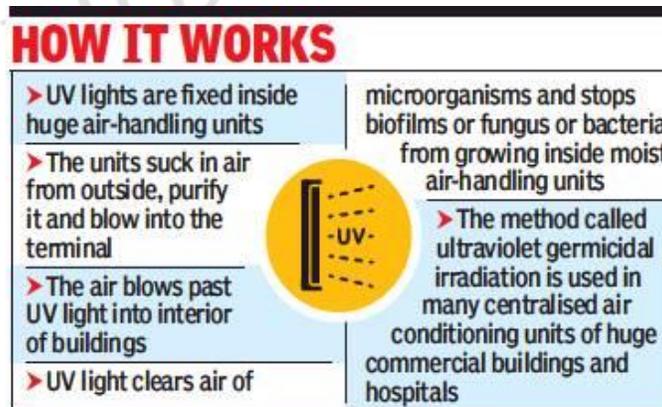
### **TAMIL NADU**

- **The Tamil Development and Information Department - has formally taken possession of Veda Nilayam, the residence of former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa, in Poes Garden locality in Chennai.**



- ✓ The State government has decided to convert Veda Nilayam into a memorial of the former Chief Minister
- ✓ The house will shortly be transferred to the proposed Tamil Nadu Puratchi Thalaivi Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Memorial Foundation
  - ✓ The 12-member foundation will be headed by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, as per an ordinance promulgated on May 22 by Governor Banwarilal Purohit
  - ✓ With Deputy CM O Panneerselvam being named as one of the members, the foundation will receive all immovable and movable properties of the building, upon completion of the acquisition of the property.
  - ✓ Apart from maintenance and upkeep, the foundation will prepare an action plan for conversion of the property into a memorial and send to the government for approval.
  - ✓ It can also receive donations and grants from any persons, including the government and raise funds in any manner as it deems fit

- ✓ Till now, the land and the three-storeyed building - in a state of disuse for more than three years - was under the control of the Chennai Collector.
- ✓ The government does not have any plan to use a portion of the property as the official residence of Tamil Nadu chief minister, as per the suggestion of the Madras High Court
- ✓ The takeover was preceded by the land acquisition award passed by N. Lakshmi, Revenue Divisional Officer, South Chennai Division, a few days ago.
  - ✓ According to the award, the land, measuring 24,322 sq. ft., has been valued at about ₹29.33 crore, based at the rate of ₹12,060 per sq. ft.
  - ✓ After taking into account the present value of other components, the total value of the award amount is about ₹67.9 crore.
  - ✓ The state government has deposited ₹68 crore in the court towards compensation for acquiring the house of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa
- ✓ The inventory of the government says that the property has 32,371 immovable items including 8,376 books, gold and silver items
- ✓ There were three claimants for the property — J. Deepa and J. Deepak, niece and nephew of Jayalalithaa and declared by the High Court as legal heirs — and the Income Tax department
- ✓ The I-T Department had maintained that around ₹36.87 crore was due from the former Chief Minister and the property had been under attachment.
- **Airports Authority of India (AAI) – is planning to install ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) lamps in the air conditioning units at Chennai airport.**
- ✓ The lamps that will be installed inside the air-conditioning units for the terminals and buildings will ensure the air circulated is free of bacteria and microorganisms



- ✓ The UV lamp attacks the DNA of microorganisms and kills them, apart from preventing its growth in air-handling units.
- ✓ Such a system is often used in centralised air conditioning units of large buildings including hospitals
- ✓ These UV lamps assumes more significance in the present context, because of the risk of Covid-19 spread in air conditioned environments

- ✓ AAI has flouted a tender to procure and install UVGI, to reduce the possible risk of spread of infection.
  - ✓ AAI has already started to minimize use of air conditioning in its office buildings
  - ✓ These types of lamps will be ideal in some of the steel and glass terminal buildings, which have been built in such a way that air conditioning cannot be avoided.
  - ✓ The measure is expected to help passengers and staff, as staff spend 8 to 10 hours daily while passengers spend at least two hours in the airport buildings
  - ✓ Also, more than 5,000 passengers use the domestic terminal alone daily.
  - ✓ To minimize Covid-19 risk, Bengaluru airport had increased the AC temperature maintained in the buildings and terminals
  - ✓ A UV-C (254nm wavelength) irradiation with an exposure time of 15 minutes at particular irradiation intensity will completely 'inactivate' SARSCoV.
  - ✓ This has been mentioned in a Covid-19 guidance document for air conditioning and ventilation released by Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers in April
  - ✓ An ultra violet baggage scanner was also tried out in Chennai airport to disinfect bags.
- **On July 25, Tamil Nadu - became the second State in the country to cross two lakh cases of Covid-19, after Maharashtra which has around 3.57 lakh infections.**
- ✓ The State has reported 6,988 cases, the highest so far, and 89 deaths on the day
  - ✓ With a cumulative 3,409 deaths, Tamil Nadu ranks third in terms of fatalities, after Maharashtra and the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

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

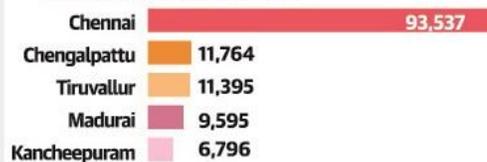
	Until July 18	July 19	July 20	July 21	July 22	July 23	July 24	July 25	Total
<b>Cases reported</b>	1,65,714	4,979	4,985	4,965	5,849	6,472	6,785	6,988	<b>2,06,737</b>
<b>Recovered and discharged</b>	1,13,856	4,059	3,861	4,894	4,913	5,210	6,504	7,758	<b>1,51,055</b>
<b>Deceased</b>	2,403	78	70	75	518	88	88	89	<b>3,409</b>

**Persons tested**



\*Changes in 24 hours    As on July 24, 6 p.m.    As on July 25, 6 p.m.

**Districts with maximum cases**



- ✓ The first case in Tamil Nadu was reported on March 7.
- ✓ While it took 118 days for the State to cross the one-lakh mark on July 3 (1,02,721 cases), it took just 22 more days to add another 1.4 lakh cases.
- ✓ Out of the two lakh cases, the Chennai region accounted for 59.7% of the total cases, while the remaining 40.3% of infections came from other districts.

- ✓ On a happier note, the active cases in the state stood at 52,273, which accounts for 25% of the total cases compared to 42% on July 1.
  - ✓ A record total of 7,758 persons were discharged on the day, taking the total recovered to 1,51,055.
  - ✓ On July 25, Chennai reported 1,329 cases, accounting for 19% of the fresh cases Chennai's three neighbours --Chengalpet, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur -- together reported 1,276 cases.
  - ✓ Further, other districts reporting huge numbers include - 376 in Virudhunagar, 317 in Tuticorin, 301 in Madurai, 199 in Trichy and 270 in Coimbatore
  - ✓ Chennai reported 20 deaths followed by 9 each in Madurai and Virudhunagar.
  - ✓ The State has tested 2,200,433 persons so far — the highest in the country.
  - ✓ Tamil Nadu added one more private laboratory on the day, taking the total number of laboratories to 115.
- **The Tamil Nadu government - informed the Madras high court that it has extended permission for the state forest department to shoot and kill wild boars that damage agricultural produce in nine districts.**
- ✓ Tamil Nadu has several lakh wild boars in hilly areas and the average lifespan of these boars is eight to 10 years
  - ✓ The first order to kill wild boars was issued on July 22, 2017, and its validity was 12 months.
  - ✓ Later, based on the recommendation of forest department, the order was extended by 12 more months on January 25, 2019.
  - ✓ On May 6, the department once again recommended extension of the shooting order by a further 12 months.

## STATES

- **On July 25, the J&K administration - issued the certificate of geographical indication (GI) registration for saffron grown in the Kashmir Valley**



- ✓ J&K Lieutenant-Governor G.C. Murmu described it as “a momentous decision of the Centre”

- ✓ According to the LG, this was the first major step to put saffron produced in the Kashmir Valley on the world map with authentication.
  - ✓ The GI tag would also stop adulteration prevalent in its trade, apart from boosting the sales of the spice.
  - ✓ Pampore, the hub of saffron in Kashmir, is expected to have a bumper crop of the spice this season due to initiatives taken by the National Mission on Saffron (NMS).
  - ✓ Under the NMS, a project of Rs 411 crore was approved by the Union government under which an area of 3,715 hectare for saffron was proposed to be rejuvenated
  - ✓ Kashmir saffron is the only one in the world grown at an altitude of 1600 metres
  - ✓ It is differentiated from other varieties due to its unique characteristics like longer and thicker stigma, natural deep-red colour, high aroma, bitter flavor and chemical-free processing.
  - ✓ However, Kashmir saffron saw a steep decline in production by around 65%, from 16 tonnes to 5.6 tonnes in 2018.
  - ✓ According to an official data, land under saffron cultivation has also come down to 3,715 hectares in 2009-10 from 5,707 hectares in 1996.
  - ✓ A new state-of-the-art Spice Park will be inaugurated next month in the region, which is expected to provide more prominence to the Kashmir Saffron
- **Jharkhand state government - has decided to impose heavy penalties and jail term for the violation of Covid-19 health measures in the State**
- ✓ The state cabinet has approved the Jharkhand Contagious Disease Ordinance 2020, under which anyone who violates Covid-19 protocols will be handed a jail term up to 2 years and fine of up to Rs 1 lakh.
  - ✓ The new penalties were intended to ensure that people follow Covid-19 health protocols such as wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing.
  - ✓ This is important to keep themselves healthy and avoid being carriers of the deadly virus.
- **Rajasthan Government – has proposed to set up the first plasma bank of the state in Jaipur.**
- ✓ The first ever plasma bank of India was established in Delhi.
  - ✓ It is the only Plasma bank that operates at the national level
  - ✓ The second national level plasma bank was inaugurated in Tamil Nadu.
  - ✓ Further, the state governments of Kerala and Odisha have also started plasma banks
  - ✓ Maharashtra Government recently announced that about its launch of plasma banks in Malegaon and Dharavi.
  - ✓ Under Plasma Therapy, the blood plasma collected from a Covid-19 recovered patient is transfused into an active Covid-19 patient.
  - ✓ The blood plasma is the fluid left after the components of blood, such as RBC, WBC, and platelets, are removed.

- ✓ The recovery rate of Covid-19 has been increasing in India and is currently at 63.54%
- ✓ This is also another reason for the Government to push the concept of plasma banks and start using Plasma therapy

## NATIONAL

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - will inaugurate three new high-throughput labs of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on July 27, 2020 through video conferencing.**
  - ✓ The three new labs have been constructed in Mumbai, Noida and Kolkata
  - ✓ These labs will be assisting the Union government's 3T strategy, test-track-treat, for early detection and containment of the coronavirus.
  - ✓ They will also boost the nation's Covid-19 testing capacities.
  - ✓ Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Uttar Pradesh Chief Ministers Yogi Adityanath and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee are expected to take part in the virtual inaugural event.
  - ✓ The ICMR along with Bharat Biotech has also developed a COVID-19 vaccine candidate COVAXIN, which is undergoing its first phase of human trials.
  - ✓ ICMR is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world.
  - ✓ It mainly helps in coordinating and promoting biomedical research in the country
  - ✓ The country has around 1,300 labs at present, including the private-owned, from just a lab in January 2020.
  - ✓ These labs perform around 3.5 lakh Covid-19 tests in a day
- **The operational guidelines for Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) scheme – were issued by the Ministry of housing**
  - ✓ According to the new norms, people belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities; widows, working women, divyang and minorities from economically weaker sections or low income groups will get 'first' preference in allotment of flats or dormitories under the affordable rental housing scheme.
  - ✓ They will be charged a monthly rental of ₹3,000 in the case of renting out of government-funded flats in Delhi, which are largely in its outskirts and ₹3,000 in other places including Faridabad, Agra, Ludhiana and Ernakulam.
  - ✓ To begin with, 1.1 lakh completed houses will be rented out.
  - ✓ The government will provide income tax and GST exemption on the profit made for the private and public entities, including land owners, implementing this scheme for urban poor and migrants
  - ✓ Moreover, these entities will also get loans at lower interest rates through concessional window under 'Affordable Housing Fund' by housing finance companies and priority sector lending by commercial banks
  - ✓ This move is aimed to make construction and operation of ARHCs a lucrative business model for the potential investors.

- ✓ The approval for the scheme will be granted by the state and local governments to the private/government entities according to a single window system within 30 days
- ✓ If not approved within the time period, the proposed project will be considered as 'deemed approved' for construction.
- ✓ The administration would also provide other necessary infrastructure facilities such as roads, sanitation services, water, sewerage, drainage and electricity up to site without any additional cost to the private or government entity.
- ✓ Projects only with at least 40 dwelling units or 120 dormitory beds will be eligible to get the benefit under ARHC.
- ✓ To ensure these projects are primarily meant for poor workers, there will be 33% cap on the number of double bedroom in any project.
- ✓ The housing ministry will provide grant of ₹1 lakh per dwelling unit in case of double bedroom.

➤ **India – reported its second-highest single-day count of cases on July 25 after reporting 48,539 cases, despite Telangana not releasing its coronavirus bulletin**

- ✓ This takes the total caseload to 13,84,589, as per the data collated from the State governments.
- ✓ The country also reported 695 deaths, taking its cumulative toll beyond 32,000-mark

CORONA COUNT	
<b>CASES</b>	
Saturday	Total
48,539*	13,84,589
<b>DEATHS</b>	
Saturday	Total
695*	32,058
Active 4,68,759	
*Telangana did not release its Covid-19 numbers on Saturday	

- ✓ Maharashtra reported a marginal drop in new infections as well deaths, with the day's case tally at 9,251 and fatalities at 257.
- ✓ Meanwhile, seven states registered their highest single-day spike in cases, led by Tamil Nadu, where 6,988 fresh infections emerged.
- ✓ The other states were Karnataka (5,072 new cases), Uttar Pradesh (2,984), Bihar (2,803), Rajasthan (1,120), Kerala (1,103) and Gujarat (1,081).
- ✓ The only exception is Delhi, where cases have fallen by 53%.
- ✓ The maximum rise has been observed in Andhra Pradesh, which reported an average of 6,783 during July 20-24.
- ✓ On July 24, India tested 4.20 lakh samples, the highest so far on a single day
- ✓ It also recorded the highest number of new cases at 48,894 and tests per million (TPM) of 11,485 on the same day.

- ✓ However, the overall positivity rate is still above 10% at 11.61%
- ✓ On July 25, the health ministry recorded a further decline in fatality rate to 2.35% from over 3% in the beginning of July.
- ✓ Currently, India has 1,301 labs across the country as against just 121 labs in March.
- ✓ Of these, 902 are managed by the government and 399 are in the private sector.
- ✓ Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has tested positive for Covid-19 — the first CM to be infected by the virus.
- ✓ He has been admitted to a private hospital.
  
- **IIT-Bombay – has announced that the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) for this year will include subjects in humanities and social sciences**
- ✓ GATE is a qualifying exam for those seeking admissions to masters and PhD programmes in science & technology and placements in public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- ✓ GATE 2021, scheduled in February, will be conducted by IIT-Bombay
- ✓ Accordingly, students from commerce and arts background too can appear for these exams
- ✓ The eligibility criteria, too, has been modified from 10+2+4 to 10+2+3, enabling students in their third year of undergraduate studies to appear for the examination.
- ✓ The students from humanities and social sciences are not eligible for ministry of human resource development scholarships, till now.
- ✓ With GATE scores, they will have an added advantage of government scholarships.
- ✓ Since PSUs recruit aspirants using GATE scores, it will open up new job opportunities for arts and commerce students too
  
- **On July 24, the Ministry of Shipping – has announced to waive ‘inland’ waterway usage charges for the next three years**
- ✓ The move is aimed at promoting inland water support and increasing the inland waterway traffic to 110 million tonnes in 2022-23.
- ✓ Currently the inland waterway traffic stands at 73 MMT in 2019-20.
- ✓ It will also help in promoting the inland waterway traffic as an eco-friendly, supplementary, and cheaper mode of transport.
- ✓ As per the Shipping Minister, Mansukh Mandaviya, the government’s decision will help in attracting the industries to use National waterways for their logistical needs.
- ✓ Being cheap, the waterway transport will not only reduce the congestion on the other transport modes but also promote the ease of doing business.
- ✓ Currently, Inland Waterways Authority of India imposes the waterway usage charges at a rate of 2 paise per gross registered tonnage per km for the plying of Inland Cargo vessels.

- ✓ Further, the charges were at 5 paise per gross registered tonnage per km for the plying of Cruise Vessels on the National waterways.
- **The TRIFED, operating under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs - has signed an agreement with IIT Delhi to implement Unnat Bharat Abhiyan**



- ✓ The Agreement will facilitate the tribal entrepreneurs, working under the Van Dhan programme of TRIFED, to access 2600+ research works of several institutions that are part of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan
- ✓ As per the new agreement, the tribal forest dwellers engaged in Minor Forest Produce will be able to access new processing technologies, mentorship, transformational digital systems, product innovation and handholding by experts.
- ✓ The IIT-TRIFED partnership will also be supported by the VIBHA (Vijnana Bharati science) movement.
- ✓ The VIBHA movement creates awareness about major developments of science and technology in India
  - ✓ It will document the innovations and reach out to various stake holders to strengthen Van Dhan Yojana
  - ✓ The VIBHA movement was founded by the eminent scientists of Indian Institute of Science, IISc.
- ✓ The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resource and Development.
  - ✓ It aims to associate a higher education institute with at least 5 villages for their uplift and development.
  - ✓ The institutes using their knowledge base will contribute to social and economic betterment of these village communities
  - ✓ So far 13,702 villages have been adopted by 2,474 institutes.
- **The Central government - had achieved a reduction in the average completion time for houses under restructured 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin'**
- ✓ The number of days taken for the completion of houses has come down now to 114 days from the earlier 314 days

- ✓ This data has been provided by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, operating under Ministry of Finance
  - ✓ The PMAY-G scheme is expected to achieve a target completion of 2.95 crore houses by March 2022
  - ✓ So far, 1.10 crores of houses were constructed under the scheme, which included 1.46 lakhs of houses to landless beneficiaries.
  - ✓ The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide 'Housing for All' by 2022.
- **The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah - distributed 100 electric potter wheels to artisans who were trained under 'Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana' of KVIC (Khadi and Village Industries Commission).**



- ✓ The electric potter wheels were distributed to the marginalized potter community under Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
  - ✓ The Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana scheme was launched by KVIC to assist potters in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, West Bengal, Haryana, Rajasthan, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha, Bihar, and Gujarat.
  - ✓ The scheme provides support to potters in training for advanced pottery products, market linkages and display opportunities through KVIC exhibitions and latest and new technology pottery equipment, like that of electric Chaak.
  - ✓ The KVIC is a statutory body that was established in 1956 under Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act.
  - ✓ It works under Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- **The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) – has released the national report on safe and secure school environment.**
- ✓ The report was based on a survey conducted in 2018-19 in 26,071 schools (4% of total schools in a state) (government and private) across 201 districts in 12 states and Union Territories
  - ✓ The study was carried out in UP, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Odisha, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Jharkhand and Chandigarh.

- ✓ It covered both government as well as private educational institutions.
- ✓ As per the survey, 22% schools reported working from old and dilapidated buildings and there were cracks in 31% school structures.
- ✓ In terms of fire safety in the schools, 63% schools have fire extinguishers.
- ✓ But, only 59% schools have taken NOC from the fire and rescue department.
- ✓ As per the study, 90% schools had drinking water, but only 45% reported regular water quality inspection from authorities.

### 31% OF STRUCTURES HAVE CRACKS

**BUILDINGS:** 22% of schools reported working from old and dilapidated buildings; 31% schools reported that there were cracks in the structure of the schools



**WATER:** 90% of schools had drinking water but only 45% reported regular water quality inspection from authorities



- ✓ With respect to general hygiene, 96% schools have toilets built inside school premises, but only 74% had inbuilt water facility in toilets.
  - ✓ Also in 11% schools there were common toilets for girls and boys.
  - ✓ In terms of cyber security, only 55% of schools had computer rooms and technological devices, 44% schools had security systems in place to restrict internet and 42% have blocked access to social media use by students.
  - ✓ To keep students safe from any type of cybercrime, just 53% schools (out of 55% of schools with computer rooms) were educating students about safe use of technology.
  - ✓ Also 59% schools educate their students about the cyber rules and regulation and consequences of breaking of cyber laws.
  - ✓ The survey was designed with a dual objective of accessing the safety parameters in a school and to make the schools and children aware of these standards.
  - ✓ The principals of the schools were asked to identify a group of minimum 10 students
  - ✓ These students were designated as 'child inspectorates' and they were given a standardised survey format to capture the details
- **The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – has released the latest United Nations World Wildlife Crime Report for the decade covering 2007-2018.**
- ✓ The report covered the illegal trafficking of various forms of tiger products
  - ✓ As per the report, two-thirds of all wildlife seizures globally were of tiger bones

- ✓ Thailand and India are the main source countries for the seizures of tiger bones
- ✓ The bones that were seized in Thailand came from farmed animals — illegal tiger farms breed them in captivity — while those in India were from the wild
- ✓ Tiger bones are in high demand in underground markets for the medicinal and aphrodisiac qualities attributed to them in some forms of Asian traditional medicine.
- ✓ It is mixed in wine to make tiger wine, boiled down to make cake or ground into a powder to make pills.
- ✓ Tiger wine is currently sold at a market rate of \$1,000 a pop, while Tiger cake is sold like chocolate bars at the same rate.
- ✓ Regarding the trafficking of tigers, of the 155 cases caught, 18% was Indian, with the Chinese (29%) topping the list.
- ✓ The illegal trade in tiger parts has moved on from just medicinal pitches to luxury items, in which India is one of the two biggest suppliers.



- ✓ The report identifies two trafficking routes — the trans-Himalayan (India-Nepal-Tibet) and the Mekong Delta (Southeast Asian countries).
- ✓ From South Asia, parts move across the borders of India and Nepal into China via the northeast India route to Myanmar
- ✓ The markets are in China, Vietnam and Thailand.

## INTERNATIONAL

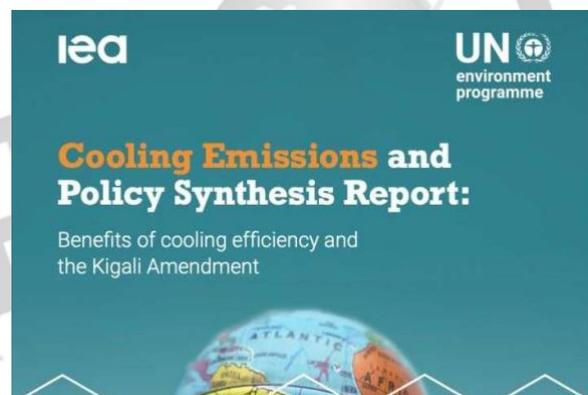
- **On July 24, the US administration – announced that new international students enrolled in completely ‘online’ classes for the ‘fall’ semester in colleges and universities won’t be allowed to enter the US, citing the novel coronavirus pandemic**
- ✓ The policy change was announced in a statement by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- ✓ However, if the institutions certify that they provide at least one course in person for the fall term, the newly enrolling students can come on valid visas

### CHANGING POLICY

- The rule can affect 10-12% of foreign students
- The rule won't be applied to students already in the US and enrolled in American schools on or before March 9
- 12% of institutions are planning online-only classes

- ✓ The agency advised university and school officials not to issue 'Form I-20' to new international students who are outside of the US and plans to take classes fully online.
- ✓ Foreign students need Form I-20, a certificate of eligibility issued by institutions that accept them for admission, to apply for a student visa in their local embassy/consulate and enter the US.
- ✓ The rule will however apply only to new students and not to those already in the US who are actively enrolled in American schools on or before March 9
- ✓ The ICE directive could affect around 10-12% of foreign students since most institutions have now designed either hybrid or fully in-person courses.
- ✓ According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, which is tracking fall semester plans of more than 1,250 colleges, about 50% of the institutions are planning to operate in person and 34% are coming up with hybrid models with only 12% are planning for online-only classes.
- **On July 22, the United Nations – announced its decision that the world leaders have to submit their pre-recorded video statements for the upcoming United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session in September 2020.**
- ✓ This means, the heads of the governments and the states will not be physically attending the annual gathering due to Covid-19 pandemic this year
- ✓ This will be the first time in UN's 75 years history that the high-level session of 193 member states organization will be held in a virtual mode
- ✓ The 75<sup>th</sup> session of UNGA will begin on September 15, 2020.
- ✓ Traditionally, the general debate is held at the start of each session of the General Assembly.
- ✓ It usually runs for over a week as leaders from 193 member states address the world from iconic UNGA hall.
- ✓ Arrangements for 'virtual' sessions are already in place at the UN headquarters since mid-March as the virus spread rapidly across New York.
- ✓ The UN Headquarters has launched the Phase 1 of its reopening on July 20 under which no more than 400 people will be allowed on the premises.
- ✓ In Phase 2, the occupancy of UNHQ will gradually increase from 10 to 40% and in phase 3, the new normal is being designed.

- ✓ The United Nations General Assembly meeting to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN will take place on September 21 and the Declaration will be formally adopted at the meeting.
  - ✓ The General Debate of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the assembly will start from September 22.
  - ✓ As per the schedule, the summit on biodiversity will be held on September 30, the General Assembly meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fourth World Conference on women will be on October 1 and the meeting to promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons will be on October 2, along with the Climate week celebrations.
  - ✓ The UNGA is the main policy making body of the United Nations.
  - ✓ It was created under Chapter IV of the UN charter, which was signed in San Francisco in 1945.
- **The United Nations Environment Programme and the International Energy Agency - released a report on “Cooling Emissions and Policy Synthesis” recently.**



- ✓ The report focused on the benefits of cooling efficiency and Kigali Amendment report.
- ✓ Accordingly, by 2050, the world will need at least 14 billion cooling appliances as against around 3.6 billion appliances in current use globally.
- ✓ As per the report, the Air Conditioners use Hydrofluorocarbons that emit green house gases.
- ✓ Without correct policy interventions, the emissions from the air conditioning and refrigeration are set to increase by 90% as compared to 2017 levels in 2050
- ✓ Energy Efficient Air Conditioners can help reduce energy requirement by 1,300 GW.
- ✓ This is equivalent to entire coal fired power generated in India and China in the year 2018
- ✓ Kigali Agreement is the amendment to the Montreal Protocol.
  - ✓ It was signed in 2016 in Kigali.
  - ✓ The Montreal Protocol was signed in 1985 to phase out hydrofluorocarbons.

- ✓ As of July 2020, 99 members and the European Union have ratified the agreement.
- ✓ The recommendations made in the report are similar to the standards provided by the Delhi based think tank 'Centre for Science and Environment' (CSE).
- ✓ According to Ministry of power, the production of Air conditioners in India grew by 13% since 2010, even though a growth of 15% demand for every year has been forecasted between 2017 and 2027.
- ✓ The Government of India has mandated 24°C as default temperature for ACs

## **INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES**

- **The Government of Canada under Justin Trudeau – has stated this week that they would not recognise the Punjab 2020 Referendum event organised by Khalistani separatist group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) scheduled for November.**
  - ✓ The announcement is seen as a major victory for the Indian diplomacy.
  - ✓ Canada has announced its respect for India's sovereignty and territorial integrity and would not recognise the Referendum 2020.
  - ✓ SFJ had reached out to Trudeau earlier this year to "bless" the event.
  - ✓ Trudeau, whose party and government relies heavily on Sikh support, has been reluctant to act against these groups.
  - ✓ Even on the SFJ event, Canada had maintained an open mind.
  - ✓ But in mutual interactions, India has emphasised firmly the differences between outreach to the Sikh community and tackling Sikh extremism.
  - ✓ For some time, India has been lobbying with the Canadian government on the dangers associated with Khalistani groups in Canada, particularly SFJ.
- **On July 25, 2020, India and European Union - renewed their agreement on scientific and technological cooperation for the next five years at the 15<sup>th</sup> India-EU virtual summit**
  - ✓ The agreement was signed in 2001 and was renewed in the past twice in 2007 and 2015.
  - ✓ The agreement was signed to address challenges such as water, affordable health care, energy, food, and nutrition
  - ✓ Also, it focused on the cooperation in the areas of green transport, water, clean energy, e-mobility, manufacturing, sustainable urban development, nanotechnologies, advanced materials, and ocean research.
  - ✓ In the 15th India-European Union Summit, India was led by PM Modi while European Union was led by its president Ursula von der Leyen

## **COMMITTEES**

- **On July 24, 2020, the Union Minister of Human Resources and Development - has set up a committee under the chairmanship of UGC Chairman D P Singh.**



**Prof. D.P.Singh**

- ✓ The committee will frame guidelines to ensure that more students stay in India and continue their higher studies, instead of flying abroad
- ✓ The Committee is to submit its report on the following –
  - ✓ Mechanisms for starting multi-disciplinary and innovative programmes in India,
  - ✓ Examining the options of joint degree programmes,
  - ✓ Possibilities of bringing online lectures by eminent faculties abroad
  - ✓ Exploring options to link academia and industries and
  - ✓ The lateral entry options to Indian Higher Education Institutes
- ✓ According to the Ministry of HRD, in 2019, around 7,50,000 students travelled abroad to pursue their higher studies.
- ✓ The committee is being set up to address two main issues –
  - ✓ To address the issues of students who aspire to go abroad and
  - ✓ To address issues of students who are returning from abroad due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

## **CONFERENCES & SUMMITS**

- **On July 24, the Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan – represented the country in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Health Ministers' meeting**



- ✓ During the meeting, the Union Health Minister highlighted India's efforts to combat the impact of Covid-19 pandemic.
  - ✓ He mentioned in the meeting that India has one of the lowest cases of Covid pandemic and deaths per million population
  - ✓ The Minister further emphasized about the use of information technology (IT) virtually in every aspect of Covid management.
  - ✓ He spoke about ITIHAS and Aarogya Setu app, which is a tracking technology for the surveillance, RT-PCR app for the testing, Facility app for managing the admitted patients information, and hospital bed capacities, which are all integrated with a single Covid portal.
  - ✓ Further, the Minister talked about using TruNat and CBNAAT tests in addition to antigen-based testing to test Covid-19 and the increase in the country's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) production capacity.
  - ✓ During the meeting, the Minister proposed setting up a new sub-group on traditional medicine under the existing institutional meetings of SCO Health Ministers.
- **On July 23, the Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal - addressed the 10<sup>th</sup> BRICS trade minister's virtual meeting.**



- ✓ In his address, the Minister mentioned the nations who trust each other should come together to build global supply chains.
- ✓ In his virtual address, the Union Minister highlighted that amid the global crisis, it is trust and transparency which will determine the sustainability of the global supply chains
- ✓ BRICS is the association of five major emerging economies of the world- Russia, Brazil, India, South Africa, and China.
- ✓ The 10<sup>th</sup> virtual meet of the trade ministers was conducted to call upon the BRICS nations to stand in solidarity with each other amid the crisis.

## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

- **Researchers from IIT Kharagpur – have unveiled a novel technology for Covid-19 rapid testing, that costs only around ₹400 per test, on July 25**

- ✓ To make it faster, the test results will be available through a mobile application within an hour.



- ✓ The first-of-its-kind device will enable 'affordable' testing at lesser costs to serve the under-privileged community across the world
  - ✓ It is considered as an alternative to specialized laboratory set-up and the expensive RTPCR method.
  - ✓ As of now, a regular RTPCR test can cost anything between ₹2,500-₹4,500
  - ✓ The test is performed using a disposable simple paper-strip for chemical analysis and visualization.
  - ✓ This entire test is conducted with the extracted RNA from the patient saliva samples.
  - ✓ The same portable unit can be used for a large number of tests, on mere replacement of the paper cartridge after each test.
  - ✓ The device is proven to produce no false result with remarkable accuracy and sensitivity compatible to standard RT-PCR tests
- **NASA - is to launch ASTHROS Mission from Antarctica in December 2023**
- ✓ The mission will be spending three weeks observing air currents above the continent.
  - ✓ As per the ASTHROS Mission, football stadium-sized balloons will be set into the stratosphere.
    - ✓ The helium-inflated balloon will observe wavelengths of invisible light from the earth
  - ✓ It consists of a telescope, sub systems, science instruments, electronic systems and cooling system.
    - ✓ A Cryocooler will also be attached with the balloon to keep the superconducting detectors at -268.5 degree Celsius

- ✓ The Mission seeks to find answers about unsolved puzzles of giant stars and their formation in the Milky Way Galaxy
  - ✓ For the first time, the mission will detect and map the presence of two specific types of nitrogen ions.
    - ✓ These ions will help to reveal places where winds from supernova explosions of massive stars helped to reshape the gas clouds.
  - ✓ ASTHROS is Astrophysics Stratospheric Telescope for High Spectral Resolution Observation as Sub millimetre wavelengths.
    - ✓ The mission is operated by Jet Propulsion Laboratory of NASA.
    - ✓ The ASTHROS Mission of NASA aims to create a 3D map of density, motion, and speed of gas.
  - ✓ The Scientific Balloon Programme has been operating for 30 years.
    - ✓ Around 10 to 15 such missions have been launched so far from different locations of the earth
- **An IIT Madras research team - has developed an image processing technique to enhance images captured by surveillance cameras with haze or smoke**
- ✓ The technique can be ideally helpful for law enforcement agencies to solve crimes.



- ✓ The technique could also be applied to self-driving and autonomous vehicles as they require high-quality images to be captured by cameras for efficient and safe navigation
- ✓ Images with haze are formed when suspended particles in the atmosphere reduces the light reflecting from the object while it is being captured by a camera.
- ✓ In addition, the suspended particles themselves reflect the ambient light.
- ✓ To solve the problem of airlight in an image, which is the light scattered or diffused in the air by haze, the degraded image is considered as that consisting of several local patches.

- ✓ Patches that are similar in terms of depth or intensity and are distributed across the image are brought together and combined in a linear way.
  - ✓ This kind of processing is done all over the image in a local manner, with the help of a computer algorithm or software, which has been developed by the researchers.
  - ✓ The processing technique had considered two constraints - one where within the local region in the image, the airlight is assumed to be constant and two, the image intensity also does not change very abruptly within a small region.
- **Digantara, a Space start-up - has developed India's first in-orbit space debris monitoring and tracking system that works on LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) technology.**
- ✓ The system will provide global real-time earth surveillance
  - ✓ This is achieved by deploying a constellation of cost-efficient nano satellites in the Low Earth Orbit.
  - ✓ A Low Earth Orbit lies at an altitude of less than 1000 km.
  - ✓ The system will help international space agencies to track and map space debris.
  - ✓ It will also aid to minimize the major threats of future space exploration
  - ✓ The start-up is planning to establish a small satellite assembly line and production unit to develop small satellites
  - ✓ This is being done to build a satellite constellation which in turn will help India achieve indigenous space surveillance system.
  - ✓ Digantara is India's first air and space surveillance company.
  - ✓ The company received a grant of Rs 25 lakhs from the government for the project.

## DEFENCE

- **The Indian Air Force - has decided to procure HAMMER missiles from France to further boost its combat capabilities.**



- ✓ The HAMMER standoff missiles have the capability to attack any types of targets at the range of around 60-70 km.

- ✓ HAMMER is the short form for Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range.
- ✓ It is a medium-range air-to-ground missile, which was designed and manufactured for the French Air Force and Navy initially.
- ✓ These missiles will be procured under the emergency financial powers granted to the armed forces during the confrontation with China.
- ✓ India is planning to equip its new Rafale fighter jets with the “Hammer” air-to-ground precision-guided munitions amidst the ongoing military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh.
- ✓ The ‘Hammer’ missiles are designed to destroy bunkers, hardened shelters and other targets in all terrains including the mountainous ones in eastern Ladakh
- ✓ A Rafale jet can carry up to six Hammer weapons to hit as many targets simultaneously.
- ✓ The first five Rafale Fighter Jets are expected to arrive in India from France on July 29.
- ✓ These jets were designed to carry advanced weaponry, which includes the over 300km long-range SCALP air-to-ground cruise missiles and 120-150km range Meteor air-to-air missiles.
- ✓ The first five of the 36 Rafales are expected to arrive in India at the Ambala airbase on July 29
- ✓ They are procured from France under the ₹59,000 crore deal inked in September 2016 to meet the emergency requirements of the Indian Air Force
- ✓ The all-weather Hammer munitions are similar to the Israeli-origin “Spice” precision-guided bombs
  - ✓ The ‘Spice’ bombs were used by Indian Mirage-2000 fighters during the Balakot aerial strikes in February last year.
- ✓ Further, India had asked for 13 “India-specific enhancements” on the 36 Rafales, which are expected to arrive by early 2022.
  - ✓ These add-ons range from radar enhancements and Israeli helmet-mounted displays to low-band jammers and “cold start” capability from high-altitude regions
- ✓ The first five Rafale fighter aircraft will be flown in by pilots of the 17 Golden Arrows commanding officer.
  - ✓ The aircraft was supposed to be delivered earlier by May but the delivery got postponed by two months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - ✓ The trainers will have the tail numbers of the RB series to honour Air Force Chief RKS Bhadauria
  - ✓ Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, who was the Deputy Chief of Air Staff then, had headed the Indian negotiation team for the deal.
  - ✓ He played a significant role in finalising India's largest-ever defence deal with France for 36 Rafale combat aircrafts

- **India and Russia - are likely to sign 'Defence Logistics Sharing Pact' at the next edition of the annual summit that is planned by the end of 2020 during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India**
- ✓ The pact will enable both the countries to have seamless access to each other's military bases, exclusive economic zones, mutual ports to refuel and pick up supplies along with other support facilities.
- ✓ The formal agreement will simplify the interoperability and will enable support to military platforms like aircraft and warships.
- ✓ Also, the agreement will help India receive steady supply of weapons under Emergency Purchase Clause.
- ✓ Both countries have also been planning to relaunch the Chennai-Vladivostok shipping route as part of the emerging partnership in the Indio-Pacific region.
- ✓ As per the agreement, Russians will be able to use ports like Vishakhapatnam and Mumbai for refuelling while India will get access to Northern route and ports in the Russian part of Arctic.
- ✓ India has a similar sharing agreement with its largest trading partner- the United States.
- ✓ It has also inked a similar agreement with France in 2018, which is another big ally for joint exercises.
- ✓ India-Australia signed a similar pact in a virtual meeting with the Prime Ministers of both the countries in June 2020.
- ✓ The government has also been going through discussions to finalise the similar agreement with Japan.

## ECONOMY

- **The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman - recently reviewed the performance of Special Window for Affordable and Mid Income Housing (SWAMIH) Fund.**
- ✓ Under the SWAMIH fund, around 81 projects (with 27 in Mumbai and 26 in Delhi NCR) have been approved with an investment of Rs 8,767 crores.
- ✓ It will also assist another 353 stressed housing facilities.
- ✓ The fund was formed to complete stressed housing projects like stalled construction, mid-income housing projects and RERA-registered affordable projects
- ✓ The fund has a target corpus of Rs 12,500 crores, while the green shoe (over allotment) option of the fund is Rs 12,500 crores.
- ✓ The fund was cleared to be set up in November 2019 to revive real estate sector.
- ✓ The Secretary of Ministry of Finance is the sponsor of the fund on behalf of Government of India
- ✓ SBICAP Ventures of the investment manager of the funds.

- ✓ The projects sanctioned under the funds are spread in Chennai, Delhi, Pune, Bengaluru and in Tier-2 locations such as Panipat, Karnal, Lucknow, Dehradun, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Vizag, Nashik and Jaipur.
  - ✓ Using the funding, the government is hoping that around 60,000 residential units will be completed across the country
  - ✓ A revival of the stalled real estate sector is also expected to provide employment to daily-wage earners, besides increasing the demand for inputs such as cement, steel and paints.
  - ✓ Among these projects, investments in 18 projects have been given final clearance and disbursement is at various stages across seven residential projects
  - ✓ The fund will provide relief to around 15,000 home buyers in certain long-stalled projects, which are pending before the Supreme Court for resolution
  - ✓ These could include projects of Unitech group and Amrapali.
- **India and the United Kingdom - affirmed their shared commitment towards a Free Trade Agreement during the 14th Joint Economic and Trade Committee meeting on July 24, 2020.**
- ✓ The virtual meeting was co-chaired by Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and UK Secretary of State for International Trade Elizabeth Truss.
  - ✓ The Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Hardeep Singh Puri and UK's Minister of State for International Trade Ranil Jayawardena had also attended the meeting.
  - ✓ At the conclusion of the meeting, it was decided that a deliberation led by Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and UK Trade Minister Elizabeth Truss will be held in August in New Delhi to carry forward the dialogue.
- **The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) – will be getting the PAN data from IT dept to check suspicious large transactions**
- ✓ The FIU is the nodal agency authorized to obtain cash transaction reports from private and public sector banks.
  - ✓ It receives reports every month to analyse suspicious cases.
  - ✓ This time, the Income Tax Department has allowed sharing PAN details of individuals to further investigate deeper into large suspicious accounts.
  - ✓ FIU forwards suspicious accounts to law enforcement, intelligence agencies and investigative agencies of the Central government.
  - ✓ This will help to check possible instances of tax evasion, money laundering and terror financing.
  - ✓ The FIU is empowered to receive Cash Transaction Reports (CTR) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.
  - ✓ A bank has to furnish CTR to FIU every month incorporating all transactions over Rs 10 lakhs

- ✓ The FIU was set up by India in 2004 as the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing and disseminating information related to suspicious financial transactions.
- ✓ The FIU is an independent body that reports to the Economic Intelligence Council that is headed by the Finance Minister

## **APPOINTMENTS**

- **Former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, who recently entered the Rajya Sabha - has been nominated as a member of the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs**
  - ✓ Former Prime Minister Deve Gowda has been named as a member in the committee on Railways.
  - ✓ Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu finalised and announced the selection of new members on July 23.
  - ✓ Former Congress parliamentarians who have now joined the BJP, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Bhubaneshwar Kalita, have been placed in the committee on Human Resource Development.
  - ✓ BJP leader from Maharashtra Vinay Sahasrabuddhe has been selected to head this committee.
  - ✓ NCP chief Sharad Pawar retains his place on the Defence committee, while former Congress floor leader of Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, as been named in the committee on Commerce.
  - ✓ Former Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi, who as a Lok Sabha MP was in the Parliamentary Committee on Finance, is now been named in the committee on Home Affairs.
  - ✓ JMM leader Shibu Soren is in the committee on Coal and Steel.
  - ✓ These nominations came a day after 45 of the 61 newly elected members took oath in the Rajya Sabha.
- **Sahil Seth - has been appointed an honorary adviser to the steering committee for the BRICS Chamber of Commerce (CCI) young leaders for the period of 2020-2023.**
  - ✓ He is the current deputy Commissioner of Mumbai Customs.
  - ✓ Seth is a 2011 batch Indian Revenue Service Officer
  - ✓ The role of an honorary advisor is on a voluntary basis and there are no financials involved which makes it a no/remuneration appointment.
  - ✓ The purpose of the honorary advisers committee is to organize themselves in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries chapters for the time period of three years with a chair leading the committee.
  - ✓ BRICS CCI is the parent organisation that aims at promoting the commerce and industry in the BRICS nations.

- ✓ The chamber was founded in 2012 with the efforts of the eminent entrepreneurs and professionals.
  - ✓ It is a non-profit and non-governmental organization
  - ✓ The BRICS group consists of five major economies of the world namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
  - ✓ It represents 42% of world population, 23% of world GDP and 18% of world trade.
- **On July 22, 2020, Arun Kumar, Director General, RPF - was nominated as the Vice-Chairman of the security platform, International Union of Railways from July 2020 to July 2022.**
- ✓ He will then take over as Chairman of the Security Platform from July 2022 to July 2024.



- ✓ Vinod Kumar Yadav is the current chairman of the Railway board
- ✓ The decision was taken at the 96th session of UIC General Assembly.
- ✓ The International Union of Railways, headquartered in Paris, is also called Union Internationale Des Chemins (UIC).
  - ✓ It is empowered to develop policy on behalf of rail sector in matters relating to security of persons, installations, and property.
  - ✓ It promotes exchange of information among security agencies of UIC.
- ✓ IUR was founded in 1922 with 51 members.
  - ✓ Today there are 194 members with India being an active member of the union
  - ✓ It has established classification of locomotives, axle arrangements, goods wagons and coaches.
  - ✓ UIC is the largest mover of passengers and freight after China
- ✓ Arun Kumar is a 1985 batch Indian Police Officer.
- ✓ On behalf of Indian Railways, RPF, has always been an active member of the UIC security platform and contributed to discussions, deliberations, exchange of ideas and best practices since long.
- ✓ It has also organized UIC Security Conferences in 2006 and 2015 in New Delhi.

## AWARDS

- **Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., - has won the EHS (Environment Health Safety) National Award at the 7th Global Safety Summit 2020 (GSS) organised by the Fire & Safety Forum & United Nations Global Compact Network, India.**
- ✓ BCCL was recognized in the printing, packaging, paper and media category.
- ✓ The award recognizes the effort, commitment and dedication of organization in maintaining workplace and environmental safety.
- ✓ The Fire & Safety Forum is India's only international certification and assessment body for environment, health and safety practices in compliance with the American National Standard Institute.
- ✓ The World Safety Forum, the international membership wing of the Fire and Safety Forum, has over 88,000 professional members and over 2,000 industrial corporate members across the globe.
- ✓ The Fire & Safety Forum is a member of Quality Council of India and Niti Aayog.
- ✓ The Global Safety Summit EHS Awards are prestigious for their recognition of best practices.

## SPORTS

- **Haryana - will host the fourth edition of the Khelo India Youth Games after the 2021 Tokyo Olympics in Panchkula.**
- ✓ This was announced by the State's Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on July 25.
- ✓ Haryana has done well in all three editions of KIYG.
  - ✓ In 2018, Haryana secured 102 podium finishes (38 gold, 26 silver, 38 bronze).
  - ✓ It came second in 2019 and 2020 (200 medals in 2020 and 159 in 2019)
- ✓ Star Sports has been signed in as the official broadcast of Khelo India Youth Games
- ✓ Khelo India Youth Games, earlier known as Khelo India School Games is held annually in January or February.
  - ✓ The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
  - ✓ The national-level grassroots games in India are held for two categories, under 21 college students, and under 17-year-old school students.
  - ✓ In the games, every year 1000 best kids are given an annual scholarship of Rs. 5 lakh per annum for the time period of 8 years in order to prepare them for the international sporting event.
- ✓ The Sports Authority of India transferred Rs 30,000 to the accounts of Khelo India athletes to help them during Covid-19 crisis
- ✓ To achieve this, a fund of Rs 8.25 crores was allocated.

# INTERNATIONAL DAY

## ➤ Kargil Vijay Diwas – July 26



- ✓ The day marks India's victory over Pakistan in the Kargil war.
- ✓ To commemorate the day, the Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid tribute at National War Memorial.
- ✓ On July 26, 1999, Indian Government launched "Operation Vijay" and declared victory after three-month long battle in Kargil.
- ✓ The Kargil War is an armed conflict between India and Pakistan that took place along Line of Control (LAC)
- ✓ India used its air power on a large scale for the first time in Kargil war after India-Pakistan War in 1971.
- ✓ The operation Vijay was launched by the Indian Army twice in Indian history.
- ✓ The first Operation Vijay was launched in 1961 that led to the capture of Goa, Anjediva islands and Daman and Diu.
- ✓ The operation White Sea was also launched during Kargil war in the year 1999
- ✓ During the operation, Indian Air Force jointly acted with India Army to flush out the troops of the Pakistani army.

