

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 28, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- On July 27, Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched the distribution of free face masks through PDS outlets in the state.



- ✓ Under the scheme, two reusable face masks each would be distributed to 6.74 crore persons attached to 2.08 crore ration cards across the State.
 - ✓ Excluding Greater Chennai Corporation, the scheme will be initially implemented in urban local bodies, including corporations, municipalities and town panchayats, to benefit 69.1 lakh families.
 - ✓ The reusable masks have been procured at a cost of ₹30.1 crore
 - ✓ The civil supplies staff will distribute tokens at doorstep on August 1, August 3 and August 4.
 - ✓ Subsequently, cardholders can get the masks, from August 5
- **On July 27, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami - laid the foundation stone for eight projects bringing investments of ₹2,368 crore to the state**
 - ✓ He also inaugurated 11 projects worth ₹3,185 crore that are expected to provide jobs to more than 6,000 persons.

- ✓ Industries Minister M.C. Sampath and Neeraj Mittal, MD and CEO, Guidance, Industries Department, were present during the occasion
- ✓ Industrialists from across the State joined in through a video conferencing to watch this event.
- ✓ The MoUs for all these projects were signed during the first and second editions of the Global Investors Meet (GIM) and also during other occasions.
- ✓ Some of the key projects for which the foundation stone was laid include International Tech Park Chennai (ITPC) promoted by the CapitaLand group.
 - ✓ CapitaLand India has announced an investment of around ₹1,500 crore in developing a 2.3 million sq ft, International Tech Park in Chennai.
 - ✓ The project, coming up over 23 acres of land, will eventually offer 4.6 million sq ft in two phases
 - ✓ CapitaLand India is part of Singapore-based CapitaLand, which is Asia's largest diversified real estate group



- ✓ The proposed IT Park will come up near Pallavaram on the Radial Road connecting OMR and GST Roads.
- ✓ The MoU for the project was signed in January 2019 during the second edition of the Global Investors Meet.
- ✓ The Phase I of the project will be ready for occupation by the third quarter of FY 2022.
- ✓ Another key venture is from Tata Chemicals, which has proposed to establish a project for manufacturing Silica in SIPCOT Industrial Park, Cuddalore, with an investment of ₹350 crore.
- ✓ The foundation stone was also laid for Nissei Electric, Japan, which will manufacture electric and electronic components bringing in investments worth ₹105 crore.
- ✓ The Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for other projects which includes - Usui Susira, Japan (₹100 crore), Dinex (₹100 crore), Steel Shoppe for manufacturing steel parts for the automobile industry (₹150 crore), MRC Mills textile project in Sipcot Industrial Park, Cuddalore (₹47 crore), and Sri Raajarajeshwari Life Care (₹16 crore).
- ✓ Among these, Sri Raajarajeshwari Life Care is planning to manufacture COVID-19 drugs in this facility in Kambur Village, Viluppuram.

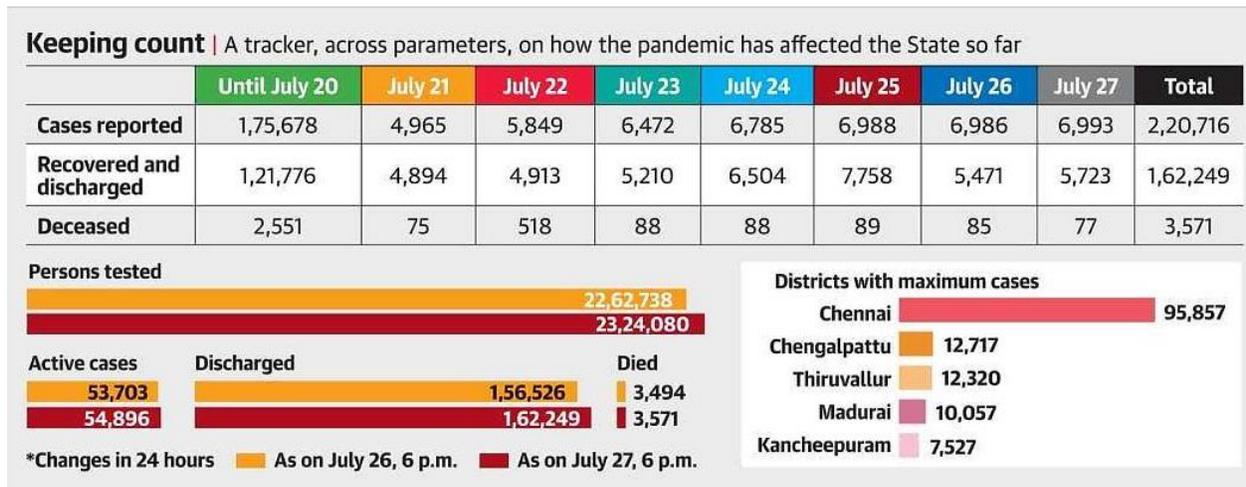
- ✓ Further, the foundation stone was laid for the AEROHUB – Advanced Computing and Design Engineering Centre for Aerospace and Defence Industries — at the upcoming Aerospace Park in Sriperumpudur, established by TIDCO in a joint venture with TIDEL with a ₹250 crore investment.
- ✓ Last week, the government signed several MoUs in various sectors.
 - ✓ In the first round, eight MOUs worth ₹10,399 crore to bring in job opportunities for over 13,507 people were signed.
 - ✓ Then, 16 more MoUs worth ₹5,137 crore to create employment opportunities for over 6,555 people were signed
- **On July 27, Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched a drinking water project in Tiruttani town panchayat worth ₹109.7 crore from the state secretariat through video conferencing.**
 - ✓ In addition, the CM also inaugurated buildings constructed by Greater Chennai Corporation worth ₹18.2 crore.
 - ✓ More than 52,000 residents in Tiruttani will be benefitted by the proposed drinking water scheme
 - ✓ In another development, J. Persis, daughter of trader P. Jayaraj and sister of J. Benicks, the victims of alleged police custodial torture in Sattankulam in Thoothukudi district — has been offered a job as Junior Assistant in the Revenue Department.
 - ✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami handed over the appointment order at the Secretariat on July 27
 - ✓ The event was conducted in the presence of Information Minister Kadambur C. Raju, Chief Secretary K. Shanmugam and Thoothukudi Collector Sandeep Nanduri and senior officials.
- **The state government - will launch 3,501 mobile ration shops within a week across the state to take the commodities to the doorstep of beneficiaries**



- ✓ These mobile ration shops will be stocked with sacks of rice, sugar, dal, and sachets of edible oil along with the required staff carrying point of sale (PoS) devices
 - ✓ The proposed mobile shops, estimated to cost ₹9.7 crore, will be launched in 37 districts in the state
 - ✓ On a pilot basis, the department has been running 48 mobile shops till now.
 - ✓ Out of these, two shops cover 54 streets of north Chennai while the rest cater to 278 villages in Dharmapuri, Erode, Namakkal, Nilgiris, Salem, Trichy, Tirunelveli, Tirupur, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore and Villupuram.
 - ✓ A ration shop usually covers a maximum capacity of 800 in urban areas, 500 in rural and 400 in hilly areas.
 - ✓ During the initial phase of the Covid pandemic, districts like Tiruvannamalai provided free ration to the cardholders at their doorstep by hiring tractors and farmers
- **The State civil supplies and consumer protection department - has decided to opt for biometric fingerprint readers in all fair price shops**
- ✓ This process of biometric system is now being implemented on a pilot basis in Trichy, Ariyalur, and Perambalur districts from July 27.
 - ✓ According to the new system, only the family members listed in the smart cards, which are further linked to Aadhaar, can procure the ration items.
 - ✓ Such authentication would be effective in preventing pilferage of PDS rice and other ration items.
 - ✓ There are more than two crore cardholders in Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ The department has opted for the biometric system to facilitate the state to get aboard the Centre's 'One Nation-One Ration Card' scheme.
 - ✓ It would enable cardholders to avail ration items due to them from any ration shop
 - ✓ The State government decided to adopt the One Nation One Ration Card on April 1 this year.
 - ✓ However, it was put on hold following the onslaught of Covid-19.
- **On July 27, the Tamil Nadu government - issued 10-point standard operating procedures (SOP) to bring in guest workers from other states.**
- ✓ As per the SOP, the employers have to apply to the respective district collector through Tamil Nadu e-pass and furnish all details, including name, Aadhaar card details and place of work.
 - ✓ Henceforth, it has been made mandatory for employers to enrol the guest workers in the labour department's online portal.
 - ✓ The industries should also bear the expenses of the transportation and ensure all labourers are screened before boarding the vehicles
 - ✓ On arrival, all individuals should be tested for Covid-19 through RT-PCR with the company bearing the cost for testing.

- ✓ If any of the labourers test positive, their treatment cost should be borne by the respective company/manpower agency.
 - ✓ Those who test negative should be provided with a room quarantine facility for 14 days.
 - ✓ If anyone develops symptoms during the 14 days, they should again be tested for Covid-19.
 - ✓ The workers should be deployed on work only after a mandatory 14-day period
 - ✓ The nationwide lockdown that had started on March 24 to prevent the spread of Covid-19, had led to an exodus of nearly four lakh guest workers to their home states
 - ✓ This brought several industries, particularly construction, textile, engineering and allied industries, to a standstill.
- **All retired Chief Secretaries and Additional Chief Secretaries of the Tamil Nadu government - will now be entitled to employ a servant at home by paying a salary of ₹10,000 per month.**
- ✓ The Tamil Nadu government issued an order on June 23 giving effect to the gesture
 - ✓ The order will also be applicable to retired chief secretaries and retired additional chief secretaries of the government, who are appointed on re-employment in a government sector or in statutory commission
 - ✓ However, the new order will not be applicable to retired Director-General of Police and Principal Chief Conservator of Forest rank officers, who belong to the same pay scale, in the All India Service.
 - ✓ The order has been issued with the concurrence of the finance department.
 - ✓ Already a similar allowance is being paid in neighbouring states like Karnataka, where “servant allowance” of ₹10,500 a month was extended to retired bureaucrats as ‘post-retirement’ benefits
 - ✓ The Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service officers while in service in the State are entitled to an allowance of ₹12,000 per month for paying Residential Office Assistants to work at home
- **On July 27, Tamil Nadu – reported 6,993 fresh Covid-19 cases, pushing the total tally to 2,20,716.**
- ✓ The state reported 77 deaths on the day that took the cumulative toll to 3,521.
 - ✓ As many as 5,723 patients were discharged in the last 24 hours, taking the total figure to 1,62,249
 - ✓ A total of 4,896 patients were still under treatment as ‘active’ cases.
 - ✓ Chennai continued to be the worst hit district after reporting 1,138 fresh cases and 21 deaths in the last 24 hours
 - ✓ Chennai’s neighbours, Tiruvallur (474) Chengalpeta (448) and Kancheepuram (362) together recorded 1,284 cases.

- ✓ As Chennai's overall tally surpassed 95,000 cases, Madurai became the fourth district to have more than 10,000 cases.
- ✓ Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur account for 12,717 and 12,320 cases, respectively.



- ✓ Further, other districts recording high incidence of infection includes – Tuticorin (349), Virudhunagar (338), Coimbatore (313), Theni (280), Ranipet (273), Tiruvannamalai (267), Madurai (249), Kanyakumari (239) and Kallakurichi (238).
- ✓ The State tested 63,250 samples in the last 24 hours.
- ✓ A private laboratory — Huma Specialists Hospital and Research Centre, Chennai — was approved for testing, taking the total labs in the state to 117.

NATIONAL

- **The Ministry of IT – announced a fresh ban on 47 more Chinese apps on July 24, after receiving a recommendation from Ministry of Home Affairs**
- ✓ Earlier, the government had banned 59 Chinese apps by invoking the power conferred under 69A of the Information Technology Act on June 29, 2020
- ✓ The 59 banned apps includes Tik-Tok, Helo, Likee, Shareit, and CamScanner, UC Browser, WeChat, Shein for “engaging in activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order”.
- ✓ With the recent ban, the total number of mobile applications blocked has increased to 106.
- ✓ The apps now banned include clones and different versions of some of the original apps
- ✓ The fresh ban included CamScanner HD, and lighter versions of censored apps such as Likee, TikTok, Shareit, Bigo Live, and Helo, among others.
- ✓ Among other reasons for ban, the government attributed the data collection and data harvesting practices of these apps and feels that these processes may be prejudicial to the security of the country.

- **On July 27, the Union government - told the Supreme Court that money in a public charitable fund, like the PM CARES Fund, could not be transferred to a statutory fund like the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)**
 - ✓ The government was responding to petitions, including one from the Centre for Public Interest Litigation, represented by senior advocate Dushyant Dave and advocate Prashant Bhushan, to transfer funds from PM-CARES to the NDRF to help fight the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - ✓ PM CARES Fund was voluntary in nature in contrast to the NDRF, whose corpus was built by allocation of central funds and gets budgetary allocations from the Centre.
 - ✓ PM CARES Fund is estimated to be ₹11,000 crore, after getting contributions from individuals and corporates under CSR initiative.

- **On July 27, the government - released guidelines of four incentive schemes for the development of bulk drugs and medical device parks across the country**
 - ✓ The schemes are aimed at reducing the country's dependence on China for raw materials to produce key antibiotics, anti-HIV drugs, vitamins, and cardio medicines, and in production of medical devices, for which India is crucially dependent upon imports.
 - ✓ The production linked incentive schemes were approved by the Cabinet in March and are worth over Rs 10,000 crore.
 - ✓ The scheme primarily deals with production of 53 critical active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) or key starting materials (KSMs)

- **On July 27, Consumer affairs minister Ram Vilas Paswan - launched two websites of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**
 - ✓ During the occasion, the Minister launched a mobile app "BIS-Care" while terming it as a tool to empower the consumers



- ✓ By using the App, it is possible to check the authenticity of ISI and Hallmark quality of products before buying them
 - ✓ People can simply key in the licence number to get the details of the authentic product.
 - ✓ The app can also be used for registering a complaint, wherein each complaint received will get a reference number to check the status
- ✓ So far, BIS has set 20,866 standards and 358 products have been brought under the mandatory regime while similar mandatory standards are being developed for another 239 products.
- ✓ **Further, the government is planning to bring around 371 categories of items such as toys, steel bars, steel tubes, consumer electronics, telecom items, heavy machinery, paper, rubber articles and glass which are largely imported from countries such as China under the mandatory Indian Standards (IS) regime by next March.**
- ✓ The norms for this will be in place by December for most products and the rest by March 2021
- ✓ The move aims to put a curb on the import of sub-standard items, which are identified by the commerce ministry last year.
- ✓ The process has been expedited to meet the requirement under Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative to reduce imports and increase exports.
- ✓ BIS is also planning to improve the enforcement of Standards at government-owned major ports such as in Kandla, JNPT and Cochin by deploying officers
 - ✓ The officials deployed at ports will work closely with the customs department officials and carry out tests on the spot
- ✓ BIS is targeting to increase the surveillance visits at factories and markets by five-fold - from only 20,000 in 2019-20 to more than a lakh this year.
 - ✓ In this regard, the Union Minister directed BIS to carry out intense market surveillance for violation of MRP and other packaging standards such as country of origin, dates of manufacturing and expiry, since these impact all consumers.
- ✓ **The government has extended an earlier deadline for mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery and artefacts by four months to June 1, considering the Covid-19 pandemic**
- ✓ This was announced by Consumer Affairs Minister Ramvilas Paswan on July 27.
- ✓ Last November, the Consumer Affairs Ministry set the deadline for January 15, 2021.
- ✓ Till now, gold hallmarking, which is a purity certification of the precious metal, was voluntary.
- **On July 27, India - had added 46,357 fresh Covid-19 infections, taking the total caseload to 14,81,301, as per the data collated from state governments**
- ✓ This was the first time in the last five days that the total count remained less than 50,000

- ✓ The day's toll, at 638, was also the least in a week.
 - ✓ The active cases in the entire country stood at over 4,97,000 on the day, while recoveries had moved beyond 9.5 lakh.
 - ✓ The death toll crossed 33,000 and stood at 33,410 by the day's end.
 - ✓ Maharashtra led the count on the day with 7,924 cases and 227 deaths.
 - ✓ At least eight states registered their highest single-day jump in cases, led by Tamil Nadu, where nearly 7,000 (6,993) new infections were reported.
 - ✓ The other states were Karnataka (5,324 new cases), UP (3,578), Rajasthan (1,134), Haryana (795, also reached on July 17), Jharkhand (587), Punjab (557) and Goa (258).
- **The Corporate Affairs Ministry - has amended certain Indian Accounting Standards (Ind-AS), including the standard that is related to leases, amid the ongoing pandemic.**
- ✓ The government has carried out amendments in Ind-AS 103, 116, and some other standards.
 - ✓ The Accounting Standard, Ind-AS 103 pertains to the business combinations, while Ind-AS 116 is related to principles for presentation, recognition, and disclosure of leases.
 - ✓ In this regard, a notification to amend the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 was issued on July 24, 2020.
 - ✓ The amended rules were finalized by the ministry in consultation with the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).
 - ✓ Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many lessors have extended the rent concessions to the lessees.
 - ✓ Hence, to avoid the practical difficulties, the ministry has amended the rules
 - ✓ These amendments are intended to provide relief to entities from lease modification accounting due to the Covid-related concessions.
 - ✓ Among others, the ministry has also amended the rules regarding Ind-AS 103.
 - ✓ The rules aim at helping the entities to determine whether a transaction needs to be accounted for as an asset acquisition or as a business combination.
 - ✓ NFRA is an independent regulator that acts under Companies Act, 2013.
 - ✓ The concept of NFRA was suggested after the Satyam Scandal came into light in 2009 and finally created in 2018.
 - ✓ The former IAS officer Rangachari Sridharan is the chairperson of NFRA.
 - ✓ NFRA is responsible for investigations, sanctions and auditing firms.
 - ✓ Indian Accounting Standards is issued and supervised by the Accounting Standards Board, which was constituted in 1977.
 - ✓ It consists of representatives from CII, ASSOCHAM and FICCI.
 - ✓ The Ind-AS are named and numbered the same way as that of the International Financial Reporting Standards

- **On July 27, Earth Sciences Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan - launched a mobile application named 'Mausam' which will provide nowcasts, city-wise weather forecasts, and other warnings.**



- ✓ The app 'Mausam' has been designed and developed jointly by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).
 - ✓ It is available for public download on Google Play Store and Apple App Store.
 - ✓ The Earth Sciences Ministry launched the app on IMD's Foundation Day celebrations on July 27, 2020.
 - ✓ Apart from the weather forecasts, users will also be able to access the radar images that provide warning about the future weather events.
 - ✓ The app will also issue alerts twice a day for all the districts for the next 5 days in colour code (Orange, Red, and Yellow), in order to warn the citizens of dangerous weather
 - ✓ Under nowcast, a three-hourly warning of localized weather phenomenon and their intensity will be issued for districts of India and for about 800 stations.
 - ✓ Further, data on the humidity, current temperature, direction, and wind speed for 200 cities will be updated 8 times a day along with information on sunrise, sunset, moonrise, and moonset.
- **The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) - will set up its own warehouse in Vietnam to boost cotton exports.**
 - ✓ Further, India will sign Memorandum of Understanding with Bangladesh to export 1.5 to 2 million bales of cotton.
 - ✓ The CCI has so far procured 12.1 million bales of cotton
 - ✓ Out of this, it has managed to 900,000 bales of cotton this season through its agent Maharashtra State Cooperative Marketing Federation
 - ✓ India has chosen Bangladesh and Vietnam as they have duty-free access to markets of US, Europe, and China.
 - ✓ The CCI is responsible for distribution of cotton and aids in import of cotton

- ✓ It is governed by the Textile Policy 1985 that was issued by the Ministry of Textiles.
- ✓ The Government of India announced in 2019 that a new Textile Policy, 2020 will be rolled out in mid of 2020.

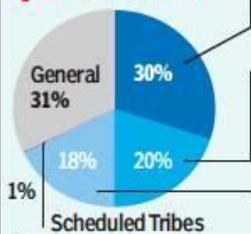
HIGH COURT VERDICT

- **On July 27, the Madras high court - has approved OBC reservation under the all India quota (AIQ) medical seats in State government-run medical and dental colleges in the State**
- ✓ It has given three months time period for the Centre to take a decision on the percentage.
- ✓ The first bench of Chief Justice A P Sahi and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy ruled that there is no legal or constitutional impediment for extending the benefit of reservation to OBC in the state-surrendered AIQ seats of the UG/PG medical courses in state-run medical colleges within Tamil Nadu, subject to any further directions or orders of the apex court
- ✓ The bench rejected the contention of the Medical Council of India that AIQ in non-central institutions was created at the instance of the Supreme Court in 1984, and hence only the latter could order OBC reservation under that quota.
- ✓ It has further referred the issue to a committee to fix the percentage and to provide the terms of implementation of the OBC reservation
- ✓ The court also made it clear that any decision of the committee would apply only to future academic years and not this academic year.
- ✓ The issue relates to non-availability of MBBS and post-graduate medical seats in state government medical colleges under AIQ for OBC candidates.
 - ✓ While SC/STs and economically weaker section candidates have access to AIQ through reservation, OBCs were not included in the quota net
 - ✓ All top parties in Tamil Nadu, except the BJP, jointly initiated the present legal proceedings seeking 50% reservation for OBCs in 15% of undergraduate and 50% of postgraduate seats under AIQ in government-run colleges.
- ✓ The States surrender 15% of their medical seats in their government medical colleges to the AIQ medical seats since 1984 (Pradeep Kumar Jain case)
 - ✓ Yet, till the Supreme Court decided the Abhay Nath case in 2009, the Centre did not provide a single seat for any reserved category candidate.
 - ✓ Since then it has been providing reservation only for SC (15%) and ST (7.5%) candidates, as per the central scheme.
 - ✓ But, there was no mention of OBCs (for a reservation of 27%) till the present round of litigation.

FOR A FAIR SHARE

The fight for reservation with the Centre for other backward communities goes back nearly three decades

TAMIL NADU QUOTA MATRIX



Other Backward Communities (OBCs | 26.5% and OBC Muslims | 3.5%)

Most Backward Communities

Scheduled Caste (SCs 15%, Arunthathiyars 3%)



STATE'S RESERVATION HISTORY

SEPT 16, 1921 | The Justice Party in government passed the first Communal Government Order, becoming the first elected body in India to legislate reservations

1946 | Quota for SCs increased from 8.33% to 12.33%

1951 | OBC reservation of 25%, along with 16% for SC/ST introduced

1971 | OBC quota increased to 31% and SC/ST quota to 18%

1980 | AIADMK government of M G

Ramachandran introduced 'creamy layer' and income ceiling for quota benefits. After protests, he withdrew it, and increased OBC quota to 50%, taking reservation percentage to 68%

1989 | Due to Vanniar Sangam protests, M Karunanidhi government split the 50% OBC quota and granted 20% for MBCs. An 1% exclusive quota for STs was added, taking total reservation percentage to 69%

1992-1994 | Though the Supreme Court kept 50% ceiling for reserva-

tions in the Mandal judgment in 1992, the J Jayalithaa government insulated it from judicial review. Several rounds of litigations ensued, and batches of cases are still pending before the Supreme Court



ALL INDIA QUOTA ROW

1984 | In the Dr Pradeep Jain case, the Supreme Court created AIQ and asked states to surrender 15% of medical seats in government colleges to a central pool

2007 | In the Abhaya Nath case, the apex court directed the Centre to offer 15% reservation for SCs and 7.5% reservation for STs in AIQ medical seats

2015 | Saloni Kumari moves court seeking reservation of at least 27% as per the central scheme for OBC candidates under AIQ medical seats. The case is still pending

JUNE 16, 2020 | Almost all political parties from Tamil Nadu, except the BJP, moved the Supreme Court seeking 50% OBC quota under AIQ medical seats. SC directed them to approach the Madras high court

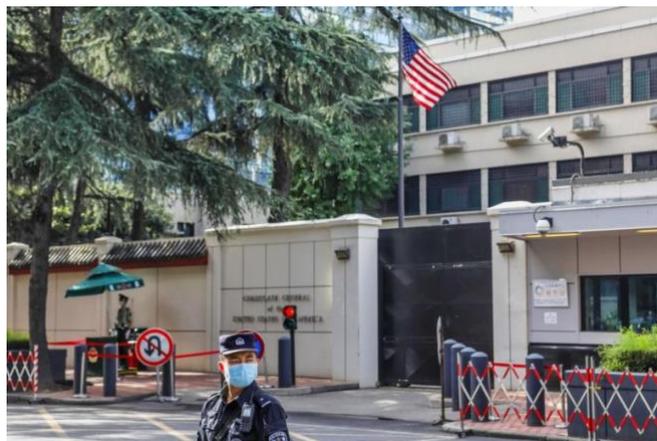
JULY 27 | Madras high court holds there is no bar to extend OBC reservation under AIQ, gives the Centre three months to form a committee and decide on quota quantum

- ✓ However, the question over the quantum of the quota is still to be answered.
 - ✓ It could be 27% of available seats under AIQ seats for OBCs, as per the central scheme, or 50% for OBCs as per the Tamil Nadu scheme.
 - ✓ The Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and of appointments or posts in the Services under the State) Act of 1993 provides for 50% reservation for OBCs, 18% for SCs and 1% for STs
 - ✓ If the 50% OBC quota under AIQ category is enforced, more than 250 MBBS seats and about 430 postgraduate medical seats would go to OBC candidates every year.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The World Health Organisation (WHO)** – has announced that the Covid-19 pandemic people is easily the worst global health emergency faced by the agency
- ✓ On July 27, the Head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a virtual news briefing in Geneva that the coronavirus pandemic has infected more than 16 million people till now.

- ✓ He stressed the need of strict adherence to health measures, from wearing masks to avoiding crowds, to beat.
- ✓ He also praised Canada, China, Germany and South Korea, which have controlled outbreaks by implementing these measures.
- ✓ Tedros said he will reconvene the body's emergency committee later this week to re-evaluate the pandemic, as required under global health regulations.
- ✓ Resurgences of the virus in various regions are alarming the world, with deaths nearing 6,50,000.
- ✓ **On July 27, Alphabet Inc's Google said that it would allow employees, who do not need to be in the office, to work from home until the end of June 2021.**
 - ✓ Earlier in May, Google had said that it would begin reopening more offices globally as early as June this year, but most Google employees would likely work from home until the end of 2020
- ✓ **On July 27, the world's biggest Covid-19 vaccine study got under way in United States**
 - ✓ US National Institute of Health and the biotech company Moderna collaborated to develop the vaccine.
 - ✓ The study, a Phase 3 clinical trial, is to enroll 30,000 healthy people at about 89 sites around the country.
 - ✓ Half will receive two shots of the vaccine, 28 days apart, and half will receive two shots of a saltwater placebo.
- ✓ Further in August, the final study of the Oxford vaccine shot begins, followed by plans to test another vaccine developed from Johnson & Johnson in September and Novavax in October.
- ✓ Pfizer Inc. plans its own 30,000-person study this summer.
- **On July 27, China - took over the premises of the U.S. consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu**
 - ✓ The facility was asked to be vacated by the Chinese government in retaliation for the closure of Chinese consulate in Houston, Texas last week.



- ✓ On July 24, Beijing announced that it had asked the U.S. to close its Chengdu post, and gave the Americans 72 hours to vacate
- ✓ Earlier, China was given the same 72 hours to leave its Houston mission, which was shut on July 24.
- ✓ The Chengdu consulate was opened by the then Vice President George Bush in 1985 and had almost 200 employees, including about 150 locally hired staff
 - ✓ It was an important embassy for US as it covered large regions of China including controversial autonomous region of Tibet.
- ✓ The ongoing trade war between US and China has strained the tensions between US and China.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **On July 27, an Israeli team, led by a “high ranking” research and development (R&D) defence officials - arrived in Delhi for collaborating with India on Covid-19 technologies.**
- ✓ The team will be working on a multi-pronged mission, code-named “**Operation Breathing Space**”, with Indian authorities on the Covid-19 response
 - ✓ It will be coordinated by Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of Health
- ✓ As part of the joint-initiative, the teams will work on four different kinds of rapid tests, test high-tech equipment to minimise exposure of medical staff to the virus, advanced respirators and special sanitisers developed in Israel
 - ✓ These tests will be jointly developed after trials on Indian COVID-19 patients
- ✓ The tests that the Israeli teams will be conducting trials for include an audio test, a breath test, thermal testing, and a polyamino test which seeks to isolate proteins related to Covid-19
 - ✓ In the audio test, a patient’s voice would be recorded and evaluated through artificial intelligence and machine learning
 - ✓ In the breath test, a patient would be asked to blow into a tube, which would be analysed through specialised “high-frequency” methodology.
- ✓ The simple tests have been tried on a small sample of Israeli patients, and now would be tried in the next stage on a larger sample of Indian patients, after which they would be recalibrated depending on results, using “big data” analysis.
- ✓ The team will work initially at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)
- ✓ It has also brought robotic equipment, and wrist monitors that will help doctors and nurses monitor a patient without increasing risks of infection to themselves.
- ✓ In addition, the team has brought 83 “advanced respirators” to help patients with severe symptoms.
- ✓ These have been banned for export in Israel, but have been allowed for Indian use by a special waiver
- ✓ The decision to cooperate on Covid-19 R&D activities, and to allow the Israeli team to conduct trials in India was decided between Prime Minister Narendra

Modi and Premier Benjamin Netanyahu, who have spoken thrice since the pandemic broke out

- **India - has extended \$1 million worth of medical assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK).**



- ✓ The medical assistance to North Korea in the form of anti-tuberculosis medicines has been given in response to a request received from the World Health Organisation (WHO)
- ✓ These medicines would be used for the ongoing World Health Organisation's (WHO) anti-tuberculosis programme in the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea
- ✓ The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed about the assistance on July 25, 2020
- ✓ It is to be noted that North Korea is under sanctions from United Nations Security Council since 2006
 - ✓ Further, several Countries have imposed sanctions against North Korea, which includes Australia, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States
 - ✓ However, India's medical assistance is under the aegis of WHO anti-Tuberculosis programme and therefore exempted from sanctions
- ✓ India has also been North Korea's major food aid provider and its biggest trade partner.
- ✓ As per the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), in 2013, India's export to North Korea has been amounting to more than US\$60 million.
- ✓ India is committed to the target of eliminating Tuberculosis from the country by 2025
 - ✓ The WHO has set the target of 2030 to eradicate TB from the world completely.
- ✓ In achieving the ambitious target, India has launched the National Tuberculosis Programme to work on the target.

- ✓ According to the annual Tuberculosis Report, 2020 released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Tripura and Nagaland are the best performing states under the programme.
 - ✓ Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli are the least performers.
- ✓ Under the programme, a dedicated information system for TB under the name 'Nikshay ecosystem' has been set up
- ✓ A campaign 'TB Harega Desh Jeetega' was launched in 2019

ECONOMY

- **On July 27, Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman - announced that the central government has been working on completing the stake sale process of about 23 public sector companies whose disinvestment has been cleared by the cabinet.**
- ✓ The central government as part of the Atmanirbhar Package had announced opening up of all the sectors for private participation.
- ✓ In those 'strategic' sectors, the private participants will be allowed to come in but the public sectors will be limited to a maximum of 4 units.
- ✓ For the fiscal year, 2020-21, the central government has set a disinvestment target of Rs. 2.10 lakh crore.
- ✓ Out of this, Rs. 1.20 lakh crore will come from the disinvestment of PSUs and another Rs. 90,000 crores from the stake sale in financial institutions.

DEFENCE

- **On July 27, the first five Rafale fighters - commenced their 7,000-km flight from France to India**



- ✓ The three single-seat and two twin-seat omni-role fighters were flown by seven IAF pilots led by commanding officer Group Captain Harkirat Singh
- ✓ They will touch down in Ambala to launch the 17 'Golden Arrows' squadron on July 29.

- ✓ India's ambassador Jawed Ashraf flagged off the five Rafales from the Merignac airbase in Bordeaux (France)
- ✓ Later, they landed at the Al Dhafra airbase in UAE on the same day after flying for over seven hours.
- ✓ They were refuelled by a French Air Force tanker aircraft midair over the sea around Greece or Israel before landing in UAE.
- ✓ The trainers will have the RB series tail numbers to honour Air Force Chief RKS Bhadauria who played an important role in finalising the Rafale deal between India and France.
- ✓ The five jets are part of the 36 Rafales contracted from France in fly-away condition with 13 India-specific enhancements (ISE) under a €7.87-billion (₹59,000 crore) Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in September 2016
 - ✓ The first Rafale fighter jets were earlier supposed to be delivered by 2019.
 - ✓ Later the delivery date was pushed to May 2020 and it was postponed again by two months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ The fighters, dubbed "game-changers" by IAF, will reach the country in the middle of the ongoing military confrontation with China
- ✓ IAF has already deployed an adequate number of Sukhoi-30MKIs, MiG-29s and Mirage-2000s in forward areas along the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China to take care of any contingency.
- ✓ Once the Rafales, with their 'Meteor' air-to-air missiles (120-150 km strike range), 'Scalp' air-to-ground cruise missiles (over 300 km) and other armaments, are fully-operational, they will add to the qualitative and quantitative edge of the IAF.
- ✓ In addition to these, with the ongoing border tensions, the IAF has decided to procure HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) medium-range air-to-ground missiles for the Rafales
- ✓ These procurement are being done under the emergency powers given by the Defence Ministry to the armed forces recently for off-the-shelf purchase of weapon systems up to ₹300 crore.
- ✓ The Rafales will be able to outgun and outrun Pakistani F-16 and JF-17 as well as the Chinese Chengdu J-20 fighters.
- ✓ France has till now delivered 10 Rafales to India, with the other five being kept back at Merignac to train additional IAF pilots and technicians over the next nine months
- ✓ All the 36 Rafales, which can also deliver nuclear weapons, are slated to be delivered by end-2021.
- ✓ The Ambala and Hashimara airbases will house 18 each for the western and eastern fronts.
- ✓ In October 2019, on a visit to France for the second India-France ministerial-level annual defence dialogue, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh took formal delivery of the first Rafale jet built for India
- ✓ The IAF pilots have since been undergoing training on the jets in France.

- ✓ During the defence dialogue, the French side agreed to consider the Indian request for 8-10 Meteor missiles to be given to India by 2020 with the first four aircraft.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ World Hepatitis Day – July 28

**WORLD HEPATITIS DAY,
JULY 28**

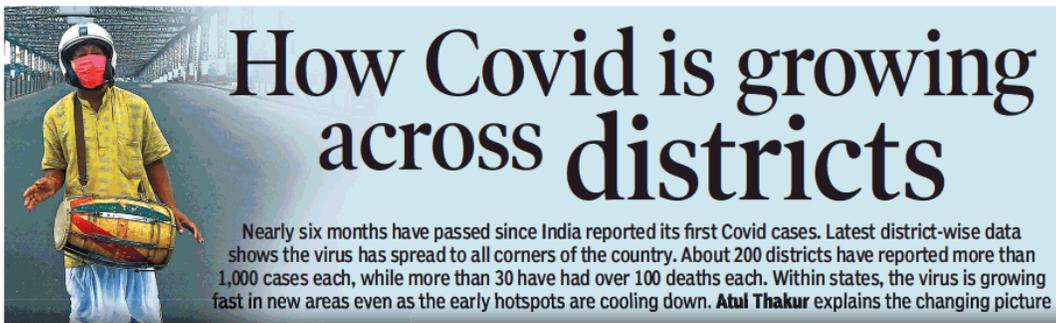
- In India, over 3L deaths a yr caused by viral hepatitis
- National Action Plan was devised to implement National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme in July 2018
- Superstar Amitabh Bachchan, who has been living with Hepatitis B for over two decades, is face of national campaign
- Programme was launched exactly a year ago in Mumbai

Programme aim

- Eliminate Hepatitis C by 2030 & cut deaths caused by Hepatitis B

- ✓ The World Hepatitis Day is observed to create awareness of different forms of hepatitis and about the vaccine coverage for hepatitis
- ✓ The Day highlights the prevention, screening and control activities of viral hepatitis
- ✓ It is marked by the World Health Organization and various other organizations all over the world
- ✓ Theme 2020 - Hepatitis-Free Future
- ✓ The day July 28 marks the birthday of Nobel Prize winner Dr Baruch Blumberg, who discovered Hepatitis B virus.
 - ✓ He also developed a diagnostic test and a vaccine to identify and treat the virus.
- ✓ There are five main strains of Hepatitis Virus namely A, B, C, D and E.
 - ✓ Out of these, the Hepatitis B and C are the most common strains causing deaths.
 - ✓ Around 1.3 million lives are lost because of these two strains every year according to WHO
- ✓ World Hepatitis Day is one of the eight major Global Public Health campaigns marked by WHO
- ✓ The other 7 campaigns are - World Health Day, World Blood Donor Day, World Immunization Week, World Tuberculosis Day, World No Tobacco Day, World Malaria Day and World AIDS Day

COVID-19 PROGRESS IN INDIA – A REPORT



How Covid is growing across districts

Nearly six months have passed since India reported its first Covid cases. Latest district-wise data shows the virus has spread to all corners of the country. About 200 districts have reported more than 1,000 cases each, while more than 30 have had over 100 deaths each. Within states, the virus is growing fast in new areas even as the early hotspots are cooling down. **Atul Thakur** explains the changing picture

Half the districts have 500-plus cases

By Sunday, 190 districts had reported more than 1,000 cases each. Another 140 had 500-1000 cases each while only 22 of the 686 for which covid19india.org has collated data had reported fewer than 10 cases each

LESS THAN 10 CASES	22
10 TO 100	87
101-500	247
501-1000	140
1,000+	190

78% have had at least 1 Covid death

Six districts have reported over 1,000 deaths each while another 28 have seen more than 100 each. Even now, there has been no Covid death in 154 districts

NO DEATHS	154
1 TO 10 DEATHS	322
11 TO 50	139
51 TO 100	37
101 TO 1000	28
1,000+	6

Old hotspots are cooling down

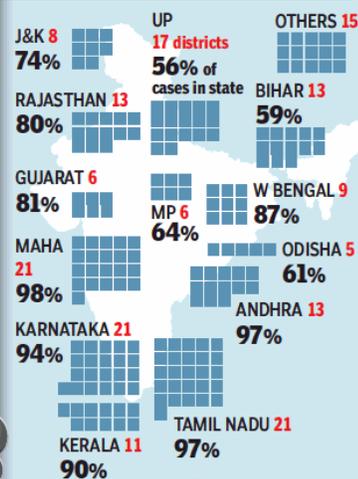
Districts like Mumbai, Delhi (all districts), Chennai and Ahmedabad, which saw an explosion of cases, have slowed down in July. Among the 190 districts with over 1,000 cases each, these early hotspots had the lowest growth rates in the past 2 weeks

DISTRICT	CASES	GROWTH RATE OF CASES	DEATHS	GROWTH RATE OF DEATHS
Ahmedabad (Gujarat)	25,692	0.8%	1,575	0.3%
Delhi, all districts	1,30,606	1.1	3,827	0.9
Mumbai (Maharashtra)	1,09,161	1.2	6,093	1.0
Agra (Uttar Pradesh)	1,629	1.2	99	0.4
Hapur (Uttar Pradesh)	1,076	1.3	19	0.4
Bharatpur (Rajasthan)	2,380	1.4	49	1.3
Jajpur (Odisha)	1,096	1.4	2	5.1
Chennai (Tamil Nadu)	94,695	1.5	2,008	3.4
Jaipur (Rajasthan)	4,874	1.6	182	0.4
Gurugram (Haryana)	8,612	1.6	120	1.0

New districts in Covid's grip

Of the 11 districts that have reported double-digit growth rates in the past two weeks, five are in Andhra Pradesh. Karnataka has two such districts while Kerala, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra have one each

DISTRICT	CASES	GROWTH RATE OF CASES	DEATHS	GROWTH RATE OF DEATHS
East Godavari (Andhra)	13,486	12.3%	122	21.5%
Vizianagaram (Andhra)	3,172	12.2	36	12.4
West Godavari (Andhra)	8,412	12.1	79	15.9
Visakhapatnam (Andhra)	6,781	12.1	73	12.0
Thiruvananthapuram (Ker)	3,506	11.7	11	4.4
Srikakulam (Andhra)	4,574	11.5	60	11.5
Belagavi (Karnataka)	2,149	11.5	46	10.1
Bengaluru Rural (K'taka)	1,633	11.3	9	1.8
Ranchi (Jharkhand)	1,566	10.5	17	6.5
Gaya (Bihar)	1,583	10.2	14	11.6
Ahmednagar (Maha)	3,259	10.1	48	6.5

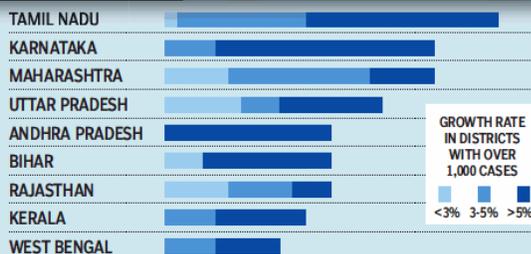


83% of cases in 190 districts

The 190 districts with 1,000-plus cases account for 83% of the country's total Covid tally. For many states, the overwhelming majority of cases are still concentrated in their worst-hit districts

Wide variation among states

Within states, different districts are in different stages of the outbreak. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, one district with 1,000-plus cases has a sub-3% daily growth rate, 10 are growing at 3-5% and 15 others at more than 5%. In Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, more than 10 districts with 1,000-plus cases have grown at more than 5% in the past two weeks



Graphics: Sajeew Kumarapuram | Source: covid19india.org, Districtwise data not available for Telangana. Data for all districts in Assam and Goa not available