

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 30, 2020

TAMIL NADU

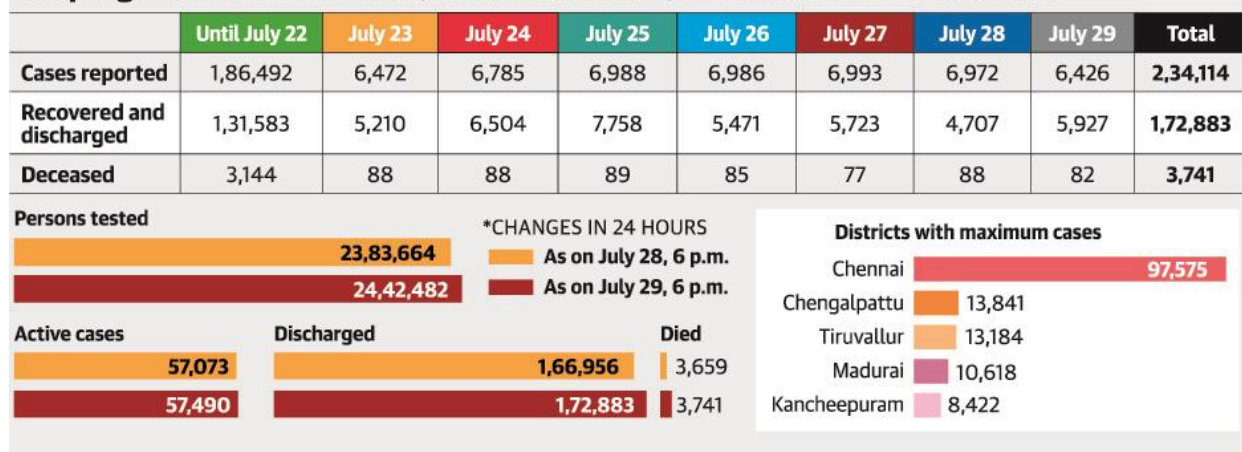
- **On July 29, the state higher education department - asked universities to begin online classes for students from August 3.**
- ✓ This is to ensure that students are taught for the mandatory academic hours for the next semester.
- ✓ The online classes for second and third year students will commence from August 3.
- ✓ It means that the next academic year will start throughout the state on August 3.
- ✓ For conducting a semester, the colleges need at least 90 working days or 450 hours of classes.
- ✓ Due to the prevailing condition, 90 working days in the present semester is not possible hence it was decided to take classes for 450 hours
- ✓ Earlier, the government has promoted all students, except those in the final year, to the next academic year without exams.
- ✓ The state government has decided to give 70% weightage for internal exams and 30% weightage for previous semester exams while deciding marks for college students for exams cancelled due to Covid-19.
- ✓ For allied and optional subjects, 100% weightage will be given to internal assessment. Students have to appear separately for arrear exams.
- ✓ Further, it has been decided to close the first year admission to UG and PG courses before September 10
- ✓ The state government is waiting for the Supreme Court's judgment on conducting final year exams for college students.
- ✓ It is also waiting for a reply from the HRD ministry to a letter from chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami requesting the ministry to cancel the final year exams due to the prevailing situation.

- **The higher education department – announced the new timings for the recently established 50 government arts and science colleges, after abolishing the two shift system**
 - ✓ The move is aimed at improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of the institutions.
 - ✓ As per the new time-table, these colleges will function from 9.30am to 4.30pm, with a one-hour lunch break from 12.30pm to 1.30pm, from the academic year 2020-21
 - ✓ The two-shift system, as opposed to the previously existing day and evening college, came into vogue in 2006.
 - ✓ Of the 109 arts and science colleges, 59 will continue to have two shifts until adequate infrastructure is created.
 - ✓ Although the shifts will be merged, the number of seats in the colleges will remain the same.

- **The Tamil Nadu government - has recently decided to fund startups and incubators anywhere between ₹25 lakh and ₹50 lakh under the Tamil Nadu Startup Seed Grant Fund (TNSSGF)**
 - ✓ The funding decision has been announced as part of implementing the Tamil Nadu Startup and Innovation Policy 2018-2023.
 - ✓ The state government has recently framed guidelines for the TNSSGF
 - ✓ According to the guidelines for the TNSSGF, which has a corpus fund of ₹50 crore, the seed funding is normally offered up to a maximum of ₹25 lakh
 - ✓ The funding would be granted to projects that develop a prototype of a working model to demonstrate proposed technology solutions.
 - ✓ The grants would also cover hiring technical mentors to aid and assist in prototype creation, manpower for product development, test marketing, testing, certification and trials, among others.
 - ✓ The funding is for a maximum of 24 months in instalments as against agreed milestones.
 - ✓ The grants would also support student startups up to a maximum of ₹1 lakh.
 - ✓ Students should be enrolled and studying in any of the colleges/universities within Tamil Nadu and should be working on an innovative idea towards a workable prototype.
 - ✓ The Entrepreneurship Development and Innovation Institute is the nodal agency for implementing the Tamil Nadu Startup and Innovation Policy 2018-2023.

- **On July 29, Tamil Nadu - recorded 6,426 fresh Covid-19 cases and 82 deaths, taking the cumulative caseload to 2,34,114 and death toll to 3,741 respectively.**
 - ✓ A total of 5,927 people were discharged, taking the total number of people recovered to 1,72,883
 - ✓ There were 57,490 people still under treatment across the state

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



- ✓ Chennai continued to remain as the hotspot with the reporting of 1,117 cases
- ✓ Neighbours Chengalpet reported 540 cases, while Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur reported 373 and 382 cases respectively.
- ✓ While Chennai reported 21 deaths, the three districts contributed 12 casualties.
- ✓ Other districts that registered surge in cases included - Tirunelveli 379, Virudhunagar 370, Tuticorin 316, Coimbatore 289, Madurai 225 and Kanyakumari 202.
- ✓ The total number of samples tested in the State so far has crossed 25 lakh.
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, 60,794 samples were tested, taking the total to 25,36,660.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit has isolated himself after three more staff members of Raj Bhavan have tested positive for Covid-19.
- ✓ The governor would be in seven days self-isolation as advised by his doctor
- ✓ Last week, 84 people on Raj Bhavan campus, including security and fire service personnel, tested positive for coronavirus
- ✓ The Greater Chennai Corporation has decided to test and quarantine everyone on a street that reports more than three Covid-19 positive cases, to check the spread of infection
- **Tamil Nadu Director-General of Police J.K. Tripathy - has issued an order to all Commissioners/Superintendents of Police that investigating officers should not arrest suspects involved in cognizable offences where the punishment under law is seven years in prison or less.**
- ✓ In case such an arrest and judicial custody is inevitable, the police should submit a remand report to the judicial magistrate court justifying the decision
- ✓ The order has been issued weeks after the alleged torture of trader P. Jayaraj and his son J. Benicks in the Sattankulam police station on May 19 and their subsequent death in custody a couple of days later.
- ✓ The DGP's order is based on the Supreme Court judgment in the Arnesh Kumar vs State of Bihar case in 2014.

- ✓ The SC directed all State governments to issue suitable direction to police officers not to automatically arrest when a case under Section 498(A) (Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) of IPC is registered and ensure the necessity for the arrest under the parameters laid down under the provisions of Section 41 of Cr.P.C.
- ✓ The Judges noted that the directions in the case shall not only apply to cases under Section 498(A) of IPC or Section 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, but also such cases where offence was punishable with imprisonment for a term upto seven years or more, with or without fine.
- ✓ The judicial magistrate while authorising detention of the accused, should peruse the report furnished by the police officer and only after recording its satisfaction authorise judicial custody.
- ✓ The decision not to arrest an accused should be informed to the court within two weeks from the date of registering the case.
- ✓ As per the Supreme Court order, failure to comply with the arrest guidelines would render the concerned police officers liable for departmental action
- ✓ They shall also be liable to be punished for contempt of court to be instituted before the High Court having territorial jurisdiction.


NATIONAL

- **On July 29, the government - unveiled the new National Education Policy (NEP) after the approval by the Union Cabinet**
- ✓ HRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal and information & broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar jointly announced the launch of NEP, which aims for major reforms in the higher education sector

Learning plan

A look at the key features of the new education policy:

■ R.V.S. PRASAD



- Public spending on education by States, Centre to be raised to 6% of GDP
- Ministry of Human Resource Development to be renamed Ministry of Education
- Separate technology unit to develop digital education resources

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- Universalisation from age 3 to Class 10 by 2030
- Mission to ensure literacy and numeracy skills by 2025
- Mother tongue as medium of instruction till Class 5 wherever possible
- New curriculum to include 21st century skills like coding and vocational integration from Class 6
- Board exams to be easier, redesigned

HIGHER EDUCATION

- New umbrella regulator for all higher education except medical, legal courses
- Flexible, holistic, multi-disciplinary UG degrees of 3-4 years' duration
- 1 to 2 year PG programmes, no M.Phil
- College affiliation system to be phased out in 15 years

Key points of NEP

- ✓ Setting up of a target of 50% gross enrollment ratio by 2035
- ✓ Restructuring of school education by setting out age 3-6 years as pre-school
- ✓ Universalisation of early childhood education from ages 3 to 6 by 2030
- ✓ De-emphasising “high stakes” boards and their exams
- ✓ Introducing a SAT-like university entrance test
- ✓ Offering the option of a four-year bachelor’s degree at the undergraduate level with multiple entry and exit options
- ✓ Abolishing the M.Phil degree
- ✓ Establishing a common higher education regulator with fee fixation for both private and public institutions
- ✓ Introducing a new school curriculum with coding and vocational studies from Class 6

School education

- ✓ The big push in the school education system is to convert it to a “5+3+3+4” system with three years as pre-schooling.
- ✓ There will be school examinations in Grades 3, 5, and 8 to be conducted by an appropriate authority.
- ✓ Board exams for Grades 10 and 12 will be “redesigned” and a new National Assessment Centre, **Parakh** (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), will be set up as a standard-setting body.
- ✓ In the new structure, early childhood care and education (ECCE) from age 3 years is also included
- ✓ Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy by Class 3 has been prioritised
- ✓ A National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will ensure basic skills at the Class 3 level by 2025.
- ✓ No rigid separation between arts and sciences, curricular and extra-curricular activities, vocational and academic streams
- ✓ Vocational education will start in schools from the sixth grade and will include internships.
- ✓ Every state/district will be encouraged to establish “**Bal Bhawans**” as a special daytime boarding school, to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.
- ✓ Students will begin classes on coding as well as vocational activities from Class 6 onwards.
- ✓ Indian knowledge systems, including tribal and indigenous knowledge, will be incorporated into the curriculum in an accurate and scientific manner
- ✓ Education of ‘Gifted’ children
- ✓ 360 degree holistic ‘Progress card’ of children
- ✓ The changes in the Class 10 and 12 board examinations, aiming to test ‘core’ competencies rather than memorized facts, will be implemented from the 2021 academic session (exams to be held in 2022).

- ✓ According to this, all students allowed to take the exam twice

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES IS NOW MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

<p>FOR SCHOOLS From 10+2 to 5+3+3+4: Current 10+2 structure in which policy covered schooling from Class 1 to 10 (age 6-16) and then Class 11-12 (age 16-18) gives way to 5 years of foundational education, 3 of preparatory, 3 of middle & 4 years of secondary schooling</p> <p>Multi-Stream: Flexibility to choose subjects across streams; all subjects to be offered at two levels of proficiency</p> <p>Diluted Board: Board exams to test only core competencies; could become modular (object and subjective) and will be offered twice a year</p> <p>Multilingual: 3-language policy to continue with preference for local language medium of instruction till class 8</p> <p>Bag-Less Days: School students to have 10 bag-less days in a year during which they are exposed to a vocation of choice (i.e. informal internship)</p>	<p>FOR COLLEGES SAT-Like College Test: National Testing Agency to conduct common college entrance exam twice a year</p> <p>4-Year Bachelor: 4-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's programme to be preferred; mid-term dropouts to be given credit with option to complete degree after a break</p> <p>No Affiliation: Over next 15 years colleges will be given graded autonomy to give degrees, affiliation with universities to end, so would be deemed university status</p> <p>Fee Cap: Proposal to cap fee charged by private institutions of higher learning</p> <p>Going Global: Top-rated global universities to be facilitated to come to India, top Indian institutions to be encouraged to go global</p>
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College education

- ✓ The new common university entrance test will be implemented for college admissions in the 2022 academic session.
- ✓ It will be conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA)
- ✓ NEP aims to provide students with flexible curricula and creative combinations of subjects
- ✓ **Replacing the University Grants Commission with a new regulator — the Higher Education Commission of India with verticals for regulation, standard-setting, grants and accreditation.**
- ✓ The regulator will allow more multi-disciplinary study at the college level than is currently possible (**Model Multidisciplinary Education and Research University (MERU)**)
- ✓ The NEP seeks to bring back the concept of four-year degree, a proposal junked in 2014, as the “preferred” option.
- ✓ Accordingly, the Under graduate education can be of three or four years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification, like certificate after one year, advanced diploma after two, bachelor’s degree after three and bachelor’s with research after four years.
- ✓ Further an integrated 5 year’s Bachelor’s/Master’s degree is also proposed
- ✓ After the master’s degree, there will be no M.Phil prior to a Ph.D.
- ✓ The NEP proposes to set up National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit and an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation.

- ✓ It calls for a transparent mechanism for fixing fees with an upper limit, for different types of institutions depending on their accreditation, to be developed so individual institutions are not adversely affected.
- ✓ The policy aims to transform colleges into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and HEI clusters and knowledge hubs, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students.
- ✓ It plans to phase out the system of affiliated colleges in the next 15 years, it will also empower colleges to grant degrees and give them greater autonomy.
- ✓ Graded Autonomy- Graded academic, administrative and financial autonomy will be given to colleges, on the basis of the status of their accreditation.
- ✓ An Academic Bank of Credit will be set up to make it easier for the students to transfer between institutions.
- ✓ A national Professional Standards for teachers to be designed
- ✓ Book promotion policy and digital libraries

Language of study

- ✓ The policy seeks to emphasise learning in regional language or mother tongue
- ✓ The child's mother tongue to be used as the medium of instruction till Class 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond in all public and private schools
- ✓ There will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State
- ✓ Sanskrit will be offered as an option at all levels of school and higher education
- ✓ other classical languages will also be available, possibly as online modules, while foreign languages will be offered at the secondary level

Digital education


- ✓ In promoting the online education in the post-Covid era, a dedicated unit will be set up by the government to bolster the e-education needs of both schools and higher educational institutions.
- ✓ This unit will look into the digital infrastructure, digital content and capacity-building.
- ✓ Besides, an autonomous body — **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)** — will be created to provide a platform for free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to enhance learning, assessment, planning and administration.
- ✓ NEFT seeks to provide the latest knowledge and research as well as the opportunity to consult and share best practices to educational institutions, central and state governments and other stakeholders
- ✓ It will also decide on the induction, deployment and use of technology among these stakeholders.
- ✓ Further, the NEP proposes to introduce new technologies involving artificial intelligence, machine learning, block chains, smart boards, hand-held computing devices, adaptive computer testing for student development and other forms of educational software and hardware

- ✓ Divyang-friendly education software will be developed
- ✓ E-courses will be developed in regional languages
- ✓ Virtual labs will also be developed

Gender equality and acceptance of diversity

- ✓ The NEP seeks to set up a '**Gender Inclusion Fund**' to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transsexual students.
- ✓ The inclusion of transgender students in "Gender Inclusion Fund" is particularly significant in the backdrop of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act that was enacted earlier this year.
- ✓ The policy seeks to focus on socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) which include gender and socio-cultural, and geographical identities besides disabilities.
- ✓ Also all scholarships and schemes available to students from SEDGs will be coordinated and announced by a single agency to ensure that all students are aware of and apply in a simplified manner on such a 'single window system'.
- ✓ Regions with large population of educationally-disadvantaged groups will be declared special education zones (SEZs).

NEW EDUCATION POLICY AFTER 34 YEARS



Education landscape of India	
Universities	1,028
Standalone institutions	45,000
Schools	14 lakh
Students	33cr

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- Universalisation of Early Childhood Care Education for 3-6 years age bracket
- Foundational Stage covering ages 3-8; Preparatory Stage covering ages 8-11; Middle Stage covering ages 11-14; Secondary Stage covering ages 14-18
- Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Class V, but preferably till Class VIII & beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language
- Beginning with mathematics, all subjects could be offered at two levels

HIGHER EDUCATION

To be restructured, made multidisciplinary

- By 2040, all higher education institutions to become multidisciplinary institutions
- To increase Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035
- Autonomous degree-granting colleges that would grant undergraduate degrees with independent board of governors; colleges will be able to grant degrees without univ affiliation
- The UG degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options

Internationalisation

- High-performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries
- Selected universities from among the top 100 universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India
- 4 independent verticals within one umbrella regulator – Higher Education Commission of India

PROMOTION OF INDIAN LANGUAGES, ARTS, AND CULTURE

- Indian arts of all kinds to be offered to students at all levels of education

- Depts & programmes in Indian languages, comparative literature, creative writing, arts, music, philosophy, to be launched across country

- Every higher education institution & even every school or school complex will aim to have artist(s)-in-residence
- National institute(s) for Pali, Prakrit, Persian to be set up within univ campus

Physically challenged students

- ✓ The policy seeks to cater the deaf and those with hearing disabilities, reinforcing the need for inclusive academic material for persons with disabilities.

- ✓ Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardised across the country and national and state curriculum materials will be developed for use by students with hearing impairment.
- ✓ Further National Institute of Open Learning will develop high-quality modules to teach Indian Sign Language, and to teach other basic subjects using 'Indian Sign Language'.
- ✓ Even local sign languages will be respected and taught as well, where possible and relevant.
- ✓ As per the census 2011, there are over 50 lakh deaf and almost 20 lakh people with speech disabilities in India.
- ✓ The NEP aims to provide barrier free access to all 'children with disabilities' with access to assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials (e.g., textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and Braille).
- ✓ This integration model will apply to all school activities including arts, sports, and vocational education.
- ✓ In keeping with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016, the NEP stresses that while preparing the National Curriculum Framework, NCERT will ensure that consultations are held with expert bodies such as National Institutes of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
- ✓ The policy also focuses on the urgent need for additional special educators.

General

- ✓ **The cabinet has approved merger of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and University Grants Commission.**
- ✓ **The cabinet has approved the renaming of Ministry of human resource development as Ministry of Education, dropping the nomenclature which was employed 35 years ago.**
- ✓ It was the Rajiv Gandhi government which had rechristened the education ministry as HRD ministry after merging the ministries of culture and sports into it.
- ✓ P V Narasimha Rao, who later became Prime Minister, was the first to hold charge of the mega-ministry.
- ✓ **This is the first new education policy in 34 years**, and was a poll promise of the BJP in 2014.
- ✓ **A panel headed by former ISRO chief K. Kasturirangan submitted a draft in December 2018**, which was made public and opened for feedback after the Lok Sabha election in May 2019.
- **The Ministry of Home Affairs – has released the new guidelines for Unlock 3 that will be applicable till August 31**
- ✓ As per the new guidelines, the night curfew that restricted non-essential movement during specified post-daylight hours under Unlock 1 and Unlock 2 is removed

- ✓ The gymnasiums and yoga institutes were allowed to open in non-containment areas from August 5.

Exit strategy | A look at some of the Unlock 3 guidelines issued by the government on Wednesday

WHAT'S ALLOWED		WHAT'S NOT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Movement of individuals during night hours ■ International air travel in a limited manner under the Vande Bharat mission ■ Independence Day functions with social distancing and other health protocols ■ Gyms and yoga centres can open from August 5 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Metro services ■ Schools, colleges ■ Cinema halls, theatres, swimming pools, entertainment parks, bars, auditoriums and similar places ■ Social, political, sports, entertainment, academic, cultural, religious functions and other large congregations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lockdown to be implemented strictly in containment zones ■ States may prohibit certain activities outside the containment zones 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or impose restrictions as deemed necessary ■ Face masks and social distancing are mandatory ■ Work from home advised to contain spread of virus 	

- ✓ However, the lockdown restrictions will continue to apply in containment zones across the country till the end of August.
- ✓ The schools, colleges and coaching institutes will continue to remain closed until August 31
- ✓ International air travel, except as permitted by the MHA, will remain on hold.
- ✓ Vande Bharat flights will continue and any further opening up of international air travel will be done in a calibrated manner.
- ✓ Restaurants and eateries can continue to remain open for dine-in customers till late though they still cannot serve liquor.
- ✓ Metro rail services will not resume for now either.
- ✓ Cinema halls, swimming pools, theatres, bars and assembly halls will remain closed.
- ✓ Social, political, sports, entertainment, academic and cultural functions as well as large congregations will remain barred
- ✓ States and UTs, meanwhile, are free to prohibit certain activities outside the containment zones as per own discretion.
- ✓ The home ministry also announced that the National Directives on Covid-19 Management would continue to be followed throughout the country.
- ✓ These bar spitting as well as consumption of liquor, paan, gutka and tobacco in public places.
- ✓ There shall be no restriction on inter-state or intra-state movement of persons and goods.

- ✓ Persons above 65 years of age, children below 10 years, pregnant women and those with co-morbidities have been advised to stay at home, except for essential and health purposes
 - ✓ The lockdown, first imposed in March in the wake of COVID-19, has been relaxed considerably over the past three months.
 - ✓ The Disaster Management Act was invoked for the first time in the country in March in the wake of the pandemic.
 - ✓ The Unlock 2 guidelines issued on June 29 will be in force till July 31.
- **On July 29, India - recorded the biggest surge in fresh Covid-19 cases, breaching the 52,000-mark for the first time**
- ✓ The disease reached alarming proportions in Andhra Pradesh with the southern state becoming the only state after Maharashtra where more than 10,000 patients tested positive for the virus in a single day.
 - ✓ Andhra Pradesh reported 10,093 fresh cases, becoming second only to Maharashtra which had seen a record 10,576 new cases on July 22.
 - ✓ The state tested the highest number of samples - 70,584 - in the last 24 hours.
 - ✓ The state also ranked first in testing the highest number of people per every million.
 - ✓ With 52,898 new cases reported on the day, India's caseload stood at 1,583,483
 - ✓ July has turned out to be the worst month for the country, accounting for 63% of the cases since the pandemic broke.
 - ✓ With 771 casualties on the day - the second highest in a day after 781 deaths reported a day earlier - India's cumulative toll was nearly touching the 35,000-mark at 34,950.
 - ✓ More than half of these deaths were recorded in July alone.
 - ✓ On the positive side, India crossed the 10-lakh mark in recovery, with 32,371 patients recovering from the disease, taking the total number of cured people to 1,019,083.
 - ✓ Maharashtra, which is the worst affected state, crossed the four-lakh mark as 9,211 fresh cases took the state's caseload to 4,00,651.
 - ✓ **Meanwhile, the fatality rate due to the infection has dropped further to 2.23% — the lowest since April 1.**
 - ✓ States like Delhi, Haryana, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan and the Union Territory of Ladakh were among those with over 70% recovery rates.
 - ✓ Others like Meghalaya, Sikkim, Karnataka, Nagaland, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh were part of the bottom ten with a relatively low recovery rate
 - ✓ The recovery rate among patients too has increased to 64.51%.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On July 29, US deaths from the novel coronavirus - topped 1,50,000 mark, the highest level in the world**

- ✓ The death count in the US rose by 10,000 in the last 11 days.
 - ✓ Texas leads the nation with nearly 4,000 deaths so far this month, followed by Florida with 2,900 and California with 2,500.
 - ✓ Further, 21 states were in a “red zone” and needed to take aggressive steps to slow the spread of the virus.
 - ✓ The states in the “red zone”, including California, Florida, Georgia, and Texas — had more than 100 new cases per 100,000 people in the past week.
 - ✓ **Russia plans to register a coronavirus vaccine by August 10-12, which could well be the world’s first official approval of a vaccine against the pandemic.**
 - ✓ The drug developed by Moscow’s Gamaleya Institute and the Russian Direct Investment Fund may be approved for civilian use within three to seven days of registration by regulators.
 - ✓ The vaccine is expected to get conditional registration in August, meaning it will still need to conduct trials on another 1,600 people
 - ✓ The bulk production of the vaccine is expected to begin in September
 - ✓ **Muslim pilgrims, wearing face masks and moving in small groups, began arriving at Islam’s holiest site in Mecca on July 29 for the start of a historically unique and scaled-down haj.**
 - ✓ About 2.5 million Muslims from around the world performed the pilgrimage last year.
 - ✓ This year, Saudi Arabia said it would allow just 1,000 pilgrims, all from within the kingdom
- **On July 29, Turkey - adopted a new social media law to tighten its grip on mainstream media.**
- ✓ The new law aims to clamp down dissenting voices that have resorted to Twitter and other online platforms.
 - ✓ The law was backed by President Tayyip Erdogan’s AK Party and its nationalist allies to make foreign social media sites more accountable.
 - ✓ It requires them to appoint a local representative to address authorities’ concerns.
 - ✓ They must also store local users’ information in Turkey
 - ✓ The law would allow Turkish authorities to remove content from platforms rather than blocking access as they have done in the past.
 - ✓ Companies, including Facebook and YouTube that do not comply could have their bandwidth slashed by up to 90%, essentially blocking access, and face other penalties.

DEFENCE

- **The first batch of five Rafale jets – arrived at the Ambala airbase on July 29 after an 8,500 km flight from Merignac in France**

- ✓ They were received by Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria and Western Air Command chief Air Marshal B Suresh in Ambala.
- ✓ A formal induction ceremony of the Rafale aircraft in 17 Squadron is scheduled for the second half of August
- ✓ The five jets, three single-seat and two twin-seat trainers, were flown by IAF pilots led by Group Captain Harkirat Singh, Commanding Officer of No. 17 'Golden Arrows' Squadron

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ After an 8,500km flight from France via UAE, the first five Rafale jets got a warm welcome of "May you touch the sky with glory" by Indian destroyer INS Kolkata in the Arabian Sea ➤ They were escorted by two Sukhois as they entered Indian airspace ➤ Each fighter was given a water cannon salute at 	<p>Ambala airbase in presence of IAF brass, including Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The 5 Rafales are not going to be deployed anytime soon in the military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh ➤ It will take a few months for jets to settle down in 17 'Golden Arrows' Squadron 	<p>and then be integrated into IAF's war-fighting machinery for action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Under the ₹59,000cr jet deal, all 36 fighters will be inducted by end-2021 ➤ Equipped with deadly weapons like 120-150 km beyond-visual-range Meteor air-to-air missiles, MICA, Scalp cruise missiles & Hammer precision-guided munitions
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- ✓ The 4.5-generation Rafales will remain a part of the 17 'Golden Arrows' Squadron in Ambala
- ✓ Meanwhile, Section 144 has been imposed in four villages around the Ambala air base.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ PM Narendra Modi welcomed the Rafales by tweeting a Sanskrit shloka which said protecting the nation was the biggest of all virtues.
- ✓ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh marked the occasion by calling the jets as 'birds' and warned those who threaten India's territorial integrity
- ✓ He also praised the 17 Squadron, the Golden Arrows, saying that they will continue to live upto their motto of "Udayam Ajasram"
- ✓ The country had already deployed scores of frontline Sukhoi-30MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29 and other fighters along the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control
- ✓ Hence, the IAF does not need the five Rafales to be put into action immediately.
- ✓ They will be integrated into the IAF's war-fighting machinery after tactics and operational procedures are developed for them in Indian conditions
- ✓ All 36 Rafales, under the Rs 59,000 crore (€7.87 billion) contract signed with France in September 2016, will be delivered by end-2021.
- ✓ The Rafales are the first fighters of western origin, since the Mirage-2000s which were inducted from France in the mid-1980s
- ✓ The Rafale jets will be armed with a deadly weapons package and can also deliver nuclear weapons
- ✓ Once armed with their 'Meteor' air-to-air missiles (120-150km strike range), 'Scalp' air-to-ground cruise missiles (over 300 km) and other armaments, they will

be able to outgun their Pakistani and Chinese rivals such as F-16s, JF-17s and J-20s.

<p>ALL 36 TO TOUCH DOWN BY 2021-END</p> <p>The Deal</p> <p>Overall Cost: 7.8 billion euros (Rs 59,000 crore)</p> <p>Inked in: Sept 2016</p> <p>36 fighters (28 single-seat & 8 twin-seat)</p> <p>No Make in India. But has 50% offsets</p>	<p>The Need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > IAF down to just 30 fighter squadrons (16-18 jets each) > At least 42 needed for collusive China-Pak threat > Just 36 Rafales won't make up for the depletion > So, faster induction of 123 indigenous Tejas jets required > India also buying 21 more MiG-29s & 12 Sukhoi-30MKIs 	<p>The Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > First 5 Rafales touch down in India > All 36 by end-2021 > First 18 at Ambala in 17 'Golden Arrows' Squadron > Next 18 at Hasimara in 101 'Falcons' Squadron <p>An IAF Rafale at Ambala airbase on Wednesday</p>
		
<p>THE PUNCH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 4.5-Gen omni-role fighter > Can simultaneously perform both air defence & ground attack missions > Can deliver nuclear weapons > Combat range from 780 km to over 1,650 km depending on mission > Can carry 9.3tonne of weapons 	<p>WEAPONS INCLUDE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 120-150km beyond-visual range Meteor air-to-air missiles > Over 70km range Mica air-to-air missiles > Over 300km Scalp air-to-ground cruise missiles > 20-70km 'Hammer' air-to-ground precision-guided munitions also planned 	

- ✓ Enroute, the jets were subjected to mid-air refuelling, a stopover in the UAE, greeted by Indian destroyer INS Kolkata deployed in the Arabian Sea, escorted by two Sukhois (SU30 MKIs) as they entered Indian airspace and finally given a water cannon salute
- ✓ The acquisition process started with the initial demand of IAF for 126 new medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) way back in September 2000.
- ✓ Then, the present government decided to go in for off-the-shelf purchase of 36 Rafales, without any 'Make in India' component after scrapping the earlier deadlocked MMRCA project
- ✓ 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

SPORTS

- **P. Harikrishna - won the classical format of the Biel chess festival in Switzerland on July 29 and finished second overall.**



- ✓ The World No. 26 missed out on the top spot by half-a-point.
- ✓ Poland's Radoslaw Wotjaszek came first with 37 points.
- ✓ Harikrishna scored 36.5 points from 28 games of classical, blitz and rapid combined.
- ✓ Harikrishna, who lives in Prague, was clearly the best performer in the classical format, scoring 20.5 points

