

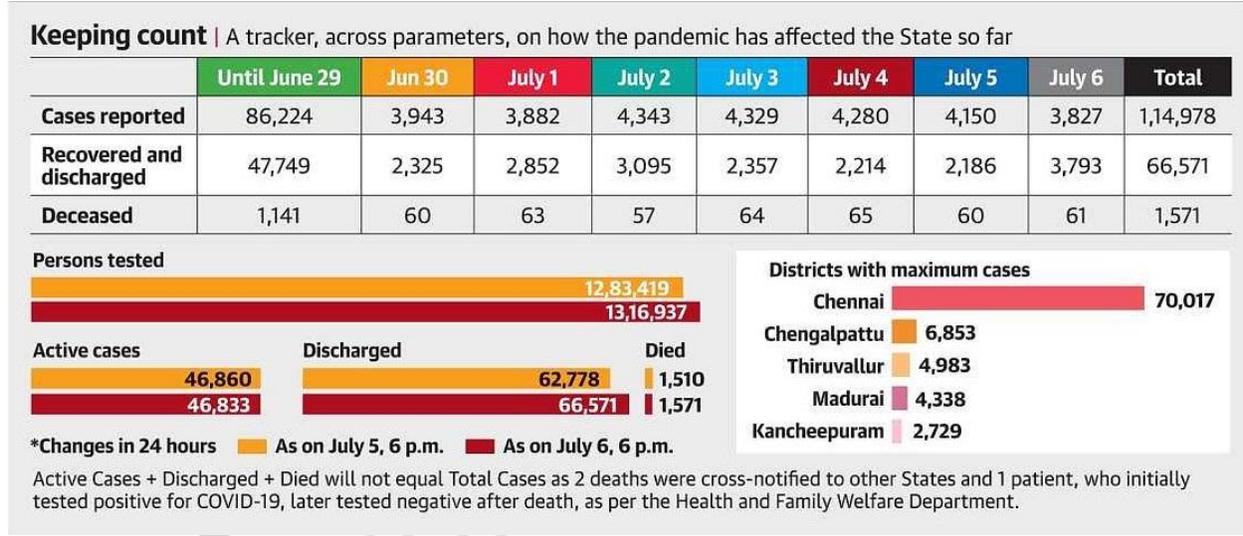
EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 8, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **On July 7, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami - inaugurated a 750-bed Covid-19 facility at the National Institute of Ageing in Guindy, Chennai.**
- ✓ The health centre has been converted into Covid-19 hospital along with Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine with 500 beds to admit patients in South Chennai
- ✓ Both these centres will cater to patients from Tambaram, Pallavaram, Alandur, Guindy and other suburban areas
- ✓ They will reduce the burden on Chengelpet Medical College hospital and Chrompet General Hospital, which were the only two tertiary care centres in South Chennai till now.
- ✓ The facility at the Ageing institute in Guindy will have space for yoga and video conference to connect patients with their relatives, apart from other facilities like oxygen supply, operation theatres, ICUs, ventilators and CT scans.
- ✓ A budget of Rs 1.8 crore has been spent for improving the infrastructure facilities in the 128-year-old Government Thoracic hospital in Tambaram.
- ✓ **On the same day, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami also laid the foundation stone, through video-conferencing, for the construction of a Government Medical College Hospital in Ariyalur district.**



- ✓ The new hospital will come up at Ariyalur South village at a total cost of ₹347 crore
- ✓ It will have an intake of 150 MBBS students
- **On July 7, the number of Covid-positive patients reported in the state – dropped to a significantly lower 3,616, after crossing 4,000-mark in the last four days**
- ✓ With this, the overall caseload in the state stands at 1,18,594
- ✓ The total number of recovered patients increased to 71,116, with another 4,545 discharged from hospitals across the State.
- ✓ In fact, this was the highest figure on a single day so far, taking the overall recovery rate close to 60%.



- ✓ The state has 45,839 persons as 'active cases' under treatment.
- ✓ A total of 65 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative toll to 1,636.
- ✓ Out of the total 3,827 cases, Chennai reported a sharp drop in cases at 1,203, its neighbours Chengalpet (89), Kancheepuram (106), Tiruvallur (217) together accounted for 412 cases.
- ✓ A high number of cases were reported from the southern districts.
- ✓ While Madurai reported 334 cases, Kanyakumari had 119, Theni 94, Tuticorin 144, Tirunelveli 181, and Virudhunagar 253 cases.
- ✓ On the day, another 36,938 samples were tested during the last 24 hours in the State.
 - ✓ This took the total number of tests to 14,13,435, while a total of 13,52,360 individuals was tested.
- ✓ One more government testing facility has been approved - the Government Hospital, Padmanabapuram.
- ✓ With this, there are 50 laboratories in the government sector and 46 in the private sector.

STATES

- **The West Bengal government-run M.R. Bangur Hospital, a Covid-19-designated facility located in south Kolkata - has set aside separate beds for Covid-19 patients belonging to the transgender community.**
- ✓ This is the first hospital in the entire country to earmark beds for Covid-affected patients from the transgender community.
- ✓ The hospital has kept two beds exclusively for transgender women and men in the female and male wards
- ✓ On July 6, the hospital admitted its first coronavirus patient — a transgender woman — who worked in a diagnostic laboratory and possibly picked up the infection while collecting blood samples.
- ✓ The transgender woman presently admitted in M.R. Bangur Hospital lives in Prantakatha premises in south Kolkata, since nobody were willing to rent her accommodation

NATIONAL

- **Face masks and hand sanitisers – are kept out of the purview of Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and removed from the list of essential products**
- ✓ The central law empowers the government to fix price and cap on stock of such items apart from authorising states to regulate distribution, production, and pricing of these items
- ✓ The consumer affairs ministry's notification to treat these two items as essential commodities ended on June 30.
- ✓ The notification was not extended after the due date, considering there is surplus supply and these items can now be exported.
- ✓ Medical devices and face masks have been notified as drugs that can fall under price control regime under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).
- ✓ However, the drug prices regulator, National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, has not yet fixed price of masks under DPCO
- ✓ On March 13, the Union Consumer Affairs Ministry had declared face masks and hand sanitisers as essential commodities for 100 days in order to ensure adequate supply and prevent hoarding of these items during the current pandemic outbreak.

- **In a first ever such exercise, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) – has decided to carry out the rating of nearly 25,000 km of completed National Highway (NH) stretches on a scale of 0 to 100**
- ✓ After the completion of exercise by October, the final scores will be available in the public domain for every stretch of NH
- ✓ The exercise would assign the rating to all 570 NH stretches where the toll is being paid by the users for using the highway

- ✓ For completing the process, each section between two toll plazas will be taken as one stretch and analysed for the promised riding quality and other facilities
 - ✓ The exercise would be undertaken twice in a year for the assessment using 45 parameters in identified stretches
 - ✓ Efficiency, which includes riding quality, maintenance, structures and waiting time at toll plazas, will have the maximum 45 marks, followed by 35 marks for safety.
 - ✓ The maximum score of 17 has been assigned for the operating speed and riding quality on each stretch.
 - ✓ The remaining 20 marks will be allocated for amenities along the highway.
- **Twelve people, including the managing director and chief executive officer, along with two directors of LG Polymers Private Limited - were arrested on July 7 for alleged negligence leading to the recent gas leak in Visakhapatnam**
- ✓ It may be recalled that styrene monomer vapour leaked from a storage tank on May 7, killing 12 persons and hospitalising over 550.
 - ✓ The company's managing director and chief executive officer are South Korean nationals, who are staying in Visakhapatnam
 - ✓ Further, the Andhra Pradesh government suspended three senior officials of the Andhra Pradesh pollution control board (APPCB) for negligence.
 - ✓ The arrests and suspensions came a day after the high-powered committee, set up by the state government to probe the circumstances leading to the industrial accident, blamed the company management and APPCB officials for the tragedy.
 - ✓ According to the committee's observations, poor design of the storage tank, inadequate refrigeration and faulty cooling system, absence of circulation and mixing systems, inadequate measures and parameters, poor safety protocol, inadequate safety awareness were found to be reasons that led to the accident
 - ✓ The suspended officials include two environment engineers, who were charged with allowing operations of LG Polymers without environmental clearance, allowing import and storage of a large quantity of styrene without verifying safety and environmental concerns and without a real-time styrene monitor at the plant.
- **India - recorded more than 1.57 lakh Covid-19 cases and 3,236 deaths from the virus in the first week of July alone, in the worst seven days of the pandemic in the country in terms of infections.**
- ✓ On July 7, fresh cases crossed 23,000-mark, while the day's death toll stood at 473.
 - ✓ With this, the country's total Covid-19 caseload reached 7.43 lakh, a day after crossing the 7-lakh mark, as per data collated from state governments.
 - ✓ The total number of casualties as on date remains at 20,628 while the number of active cases is more than 2.65 lakh.
 - ✓ While the worst-hit states of Maharashtra (5,134 new cases), Tamil Nadu (3,616) and Delhi (2,008) reported a drop in numbers, infections touched a new single-

day high in Uttar Pradesh, which reported 1,346 cases, Gujarat (778), Rajasthan (716) and Odisha (571)

- ✓ Maharashtra, however, added over 200 deaths (224) for the second day in a row, with the toll rising in Mumbai to 64.
- ✓ While the toll in China stood at 4,634, Mumbai reached 5,002 deaths on July 7.
- ✓ **India's total Covid-19 cases and fatalities per million population is one of the lowest in the world, the health ministry claimed**
 - ✓ As per a WHO report, India's Covid-19 cases per million population was 505.37 as against the global average of 1,453.25.
 - ✓ It also said India reported 14.27 deaths per million, compared to the global average of 68.29.
 - ✓ Chile has witnessed 15,459.8 cases of Covid-19 per million population, while Peru, the US, Brazil and Spain have 9,070.8, 8,560.5, 7,419.1 and 5,358.7 cases per million, respectively.
 - ✓ As for mortality, the UK has witnessed 651.4 Covid-19 related deaths per million, while for Spain, Italy, France, and the US, it was 607.1, 576.6, 456.7 and 391, respectively.
- ✓ The recovery rate in the country had increased to 61.13%, as per the health ministry
- ✓ During the last 24 hours, 15,515 Covid-19 patients were discharged, taking total recoveries to 4,39,947.
- **India – has reported the highest growth rate of Covid cases among the countries that maintain not reaching the community transmission stage despite having more than 50,000 cases of Covid-19 and averaging more than a 1,000 new cases a day over the last seven days.**

COUNTRIES WITH 50,000-PLUS INFECTIONS CLASSIFIED AS 'CLUSTER OF CASES'

Country	Till July 7 (Lakh)	7-Day Avg Daily Addition ('000s)	7-Day Avg Growth Rate
India	7.2	21.8	3.5
Russia	6.9	6.7	1.0
Spain	2.5	0.4	0.1
Pakistan	2.3	3.6	1.6
Saudi Arabia	2.1	3.9	2.0
Germany	2.0	3.8	0.2

Source: ECDC & WHO situation reports | Note: Spain and Germany had classified themselves as in 'community transmission' earlier. China, Egypt and Kuwait are not mentioned in the table

- ✓ Among the countries such as Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Germany and Spain, India has by far the highest growth rate of cases, adding on average nearly 22,000 a day at a rate of 3.5%.
- ✓ India and these other countries with a large number of cases have chosen to classify themselves at the stage of "clusters of cases" from that time onwards.

- ✓ The only other countries with more than 50,000 cumulative cases that are currently not classified as being in the “community transmission” stage are Spain, Germany and China, which had over 2 lakh cases each
- ✓ In China, the cases had started declining even before the change in classification methodology announced by the WHO.
- ✓ It had been classified as “local transmission” by the WHO by March 18
- ✓ Totally, there are 22 countries which report over thousand daily average new cases in the past one week
- ✓ Out of this 22 countries, excluding the above six countries, 16 including the US, Brazil, South Africa, Bangladesh and Indonesia have classified their outbreaks as being at the community transmission stage.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On July 7, the World Health Organisation (WHO) - acknowledged “evidence emerging” of the airborne spread of the novel coronavirus**
- ✓ In Geneva, Benedetta Allegranzi, the WHO’s technical lead for infection prevention and control, said there was evidence emerging of airborne transmission of the coronavirus, but that it was not definitive.
- ✓ “...The possibility of airborne transmission in public settings — especially in very specific conditions, crowded, closed, poorly ventilated settings — cannot be ruled out. However, the evidence needs to be gathered and interpreted, and we continue to support this...” she said.
- ✓ Any change in the WHO’s assessment of risk of transmission could affect its current advice on keeping 1-metre (3.3 feet) of physical distancing.
- ✓ Moreover, governments which rely on the agency for guidance policy, may also have to modify public health measures aimed at curbing the spread
- ✓ WHO had previously stated that the coronavirus infection mainly spreads through small droplets that come out of the nose and mouth of an infected person, which quickly drop to the ground.
- ✓ Around 239 scientists from 32 countries have outlined new evidence in an open letter to WHO for revising its recommendations and guidelines for transmission safety against the Covid-19 infection.
- ✓ The evidence shows that floating ‘airborne’ virus particles can infect people who inhale them.
- ✓ The letter was published in the Clinical Infectious Diseases journal on July 6, 2020.
- ✓ Meanwhile, WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said that an apparent outbreak of bubonic plague in China is being “well managed” and is not considered to represent a high risk

➤ **Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro – announced he has tested positive for Covid-19 on July 7**



- ✓ The Brazilian President had been taking hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malarial drug, the effectiveness of which is yet unknown against Covid-19 along with an antibiotic, azithromycin.
- ✓ The Brazilian President had reportedly opposed lockdowns to contain the spread of coronavirus, as he felt it could hurt the economy
- ✓ Brazil, the world's sixth most populous nation, with more than 210 million people, is one of the global hot spots of the pandemic.
- ✓ Brazil had become the second country in the world to pass one million Covid cases on June 20, 2020.
- ✓ Brazil currently has a total of 16,74,655 confirmed coronavirus cases, among whom 10,72,229 have recovered and 66,868 died.

- **The US government - has awarded Novavax Inc \$1.6 billion to cover testing and manufacturing of a potential vaccine for the Covid-19 in the US, with the aim of delivering 100 million doses by January 2021**
- ✓ The award announced by the US department of health and human services is the biggest yet from "Operation Warp Speed"
- ✓ The delivery of the drug will start in the fourth quarter of this year and completed by January or February next year
- ✓ Operation Warp Speed is a public–private partnership initiated by the Federal Government of the United States on May 15, 2020
- ✓ It facilitates and accelerates the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics
- ✓ The initiative 'Operation Warp Speed' has the goal to support the production of 300 million Covid-19 vaccine doses for the US by early 2021

- **Indonesia - imposed a 10% value-added tax on sales by technology firms including Amazon, Netflix, Spotify and Google on July 7**
- ✓ In this regard, the government had already assigned tax identification numbers to Amazon Web Services, Netflix, Spotify and Alphabet's Google for its Google Asia Pacific, Google Ireland, and Google LLC units.
- ✓ It expects a 13% yearly drop in state revenue this year as the Covid-19 pandemic hits business activity.

- ✓ Under the new rules, non-resident foreign firms which sell digital products and services in Indonesia worth at least 600 million rupiah (\$41,667) a year or which generate yearly traffic from at least 12,000 users will be required to pay the 10% VAT.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **On July 6, the Trump administration - ruled that the students undergoing 'online' courses have to leave the country or risk deportation if they cannot attend in-person courses for the fall semester.**
- ✓ The notification by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau could impact more than one million foreign students including 200,000 Indians and 400,000 Chinese.
- ✓ As per the notification, the universities and colleges which offer fully 'online' courses due to Covid-19 will lead to the cancellation of the visas of their foreign students, unless the students get transferred to institutions that offer in-person courses or hybrid model that includes in-person teaching.

COVID-19 IMPACT IGNORED	
Scenario	New Norms
Course is fully online (many institutions have done this due to Covid-19) & student is in US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Student has to leave US; or ➤ Transfer to another university offering hybrid model; If above options are not exercised, he/she can face deportation proceedings
Course is fully online (student is outside US, say in India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Student will remain in active F-1 status; ➤ But if the university opts for a hybrid model, the student will have to enter US to retain valid legal status

- ✓ The US Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has issued a direction asking foreign students in US schools and colleges, whose classes have moved online, to return to their own countries.
- ✓ This direction will be applicable to both F-1 students and M-1 students.
- ✓ F-1 non-immigrant students pursue academic coursework (such as a degree course) and M-1 non-immigrant students pursue vocational coursework.
- ✓ Further, the US government announced that it will not issue student visas to those enrolled in programmes that are fully online during the upcoming fall semester.
- ✓ Against the backdrop of Covid-19, several educational institutions were planning to offer only online courses for the coming 'fall' (autumn) semester, which typically begins in late August or early September.
- ✓ Owing to the pandemic, SEVP had instituted a temporary exemption regarding online courses for the spring and summer semesters.
- ✓ This permitted non-immigrant students to take more courses than permitted.

- ✓ India has asked the US to reconsider its latest order on foreign students, saying it would seriously inconvenience the Indian student community in the US.
- ✓ The U.S. announcement comes weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump suspended H1-B highly skilled worker visas through the end of the year.
- ✓ Most of these visas go to Indian citizens each year.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **A Himalayan butterfly named 'golden birdwing' - is now India's largest butterfly, a record held so far by the 'southern birdwing' for the last 88 years.**



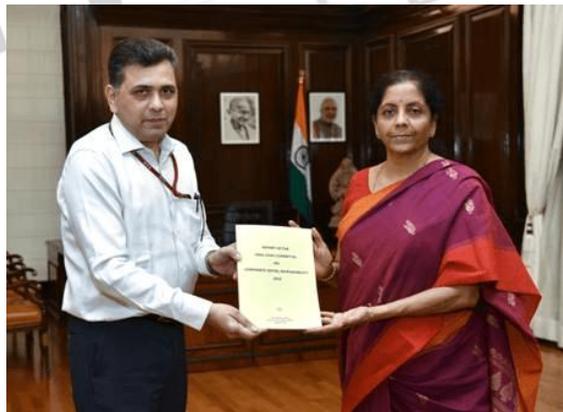
- ✓ With a wingspan of 194 mm, the female of the 'golden birdwing' species is marginally larger than the 190mm wingspan of the 'southern birdwing', which was recorded in 1932 by Brigadier William Harry Evans, a British military officer and lepidopterist
- ✓ But the male golden birdwing (*Troides aeacus*) is much smaller at 106 mm.
- ✓ The new measurements of this and 24 other species of butterflies were published in the latest issue of *Bionotes*, a quarterly newsletter for research on life forms.
- ✓ This new measurement study was done by Peter Smetacek (from Butterfly Research Centre in Nainital districts' Bhimtal town) and Shistee Panthee (from University of Chinese Academy of Science in China's Yunnan Province).
- ✓ The southern birdwing (*Troides minos*) was considered a subspecies of the 'common birdwing'
 - ✓ Brigadier Evans measured the southern birdwing butterfly from the centre of the thorax to the tip of forewing apex, and then doubled the result to obtain the exact measurement.
- ✓ The female golden birdwing was recorded from Didihat in Uttarakhand, while the largest male was from the Wankhar Butterfly Museum in Shillong.
- ✓ The new study also updated wingspan of three other species — all from Uttarakhand — the common windmill (*Byasa polyeuctes*) at 98 mm, the great windmill (*Byasa dasarada*) at 96 mm, and the common peacock (*Papilio bianor*) at 78 mm.

ECONOMY

- **The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) - has released the first tranche of \$50 million of a \$100-million external commercial borrowing (ECB) sanctioned to L&T Infrastructure Finance (LTIF), the wholly-owned subsidiary of L&T Finance Holdings.**
- ✓ L&T Infrastructure Finance is a leading arranger and financier of renewable energy in India.
- ✓ This is the first loan by the Beijing-headquartered multilateral development bank, which invests in sustainable infrastructure, to a non-banking financial company in India
- ✓ The loan proceeds will be used to finance large- and mid-scale wind and solar power infrastructure projects in India.
- ✓ Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank will help L&T Infrastructure bolster its environmental and social capabilities, which will enable it to tap the international market for green finance.

APPOINTMENTS

- **The 1983-batch IAS Officer of Odisha cadre, Injeti Srinivas - has been appointed as a Chairman of the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet for a period of three years.**



- ✓ Injeti Srinivas has retired as the Secretary of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on 31st May 2020
- ✓ IFSCA was established by the Finance Ministry on April 27, 2020, as the unified authority that will regulate all the financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) in India.
- ✓ While working at the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Injeti Srinivas had played an important role in promoting significant reforms in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and Companies Act.

- ✓ Srinivas also ensured an increase in the threshold for initiating the insolvency proceedings under the IBC to Rs. 1 crore, which aimed at insulating Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from the pandemic effect.
 - ✓ As the head of the Insolvency Law Committee, Srinivas pushed for the inclusion of home buyers as financial creditors under the IBC for the housing projects in order to ensure that they had powers to make construction firms accountable.
 - ✓ The main objective of the IFSCA will be to regulate financial products such as financial services, securities, deposits or contracts of insurance and financial institutions that have been previously approved by any appropriate regulator in an IFSC.
 - ✓ As per the notification, IFSCA will be headquartered at GIFT City in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. (GIFT City - Gujarat International Finance Tec-City)
 - ✓ IFSCA will consist of a Chairman, one member to be nominated by each of the regulators under the IFSCA Act 2019 (SEBI, RBI, IRDAI etc are the regulators) and two more members nominated by the Central Government.
- **Fashion designer-turned-BJP spokesperson Shaina NC - has been appointed one of the five part-time members of the Prasar Bharati Board**



- ✓ The appointments were notified by an order of the ministry of information and broadcasting on July 7
- ✓ The other members includes music composer Salim Merchant, journalist-cum-media baron Sanjay Gupta, journalist Ashok Tandon and media professional Alok Agarwal.
- ✓ The posts have been lying vacant for the last five months

SPORTS

- **England takes on West Indies - in the first of a three-Test series at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton**
- ✓ This marks the return of Test cricket for the first time in the last four months

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET RETURNS TODAY

England host West Indies in a Test series as international cricket resumes for the first time since March. **TOI** takes a look at how the game will be played in the shadow of Covid-19



Player Replacement: Teams will be allowed to replace players displaying symptoms of the virus while a Test is on, but not during ODIs and T20Is

Ban On Saliva: Players can't use saliva to shine ball. A team can be issued up to two warnings per innings, but repeated flouting will result in a 5 runs to batting side. Umpires have to clean the ball before play restarts

Local Match Officials: Local officials from ICC's elite and international panels will supervise the match instead of neutral umpires

Additional DRS: An additional unsuccessful DRS review for each team in each innings allowed as there may be less experienced umpires

- ✓ The test series will be the first one to be played without any crowds in the 143-year long history of Test cricket.
- ✓ The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will be conducting the series in a bio-secure environment amidst several restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic
 - ✓ During the games, players were not supposed to apply saliva to the ball
 - ✓ Entire teams must quarantine themselves for a fortnight either side of international travel
 - ✓ Players are stationed in hotels inside the ground itself.
 - ✓ They are being tested for Covid-19 infection twice a week
 - ✓ Covid replacements are now allowed especially in Test cricket.
 - ✓ The umpires are non-neutral, considering the restrictions on air travel.
- ✓ The first test of the England vs West Indies series will be played behind closed doors at the Ageas Bowl cricket ground in Southampton, while the remaining two tests will be played at the Old Trafford in Manchester.
- ✓ West Indies beat England 2-1 in the Caribbean last year but have not won a Test series in England since 1988.
- ✓ The last international cricket match was played on March 13 between Australia and New Zealand behind closed doors.
- ✓ However, their remaining two ODIs were cancelled due to outbreak of coronavirus pandemic.

