

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – AUGUST 13, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- On August 12, Tamil Nadu - added 119 deaths and 5,871 fresh Covid-19 cases, which took the cumulative toll to 5,278 and the total case load to 3,14,520.
- ✓ Chennai accounts for a total of 2,370 deaths, followed by Chengalpet (322), Tiruvallur (309) and Madurai (303).
- ✓ There were 52,929 people under treatment in various hospitals, as on date.

COVID TRACKER

ZONES	ACTIVE CASES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	DISCHARGED
Central	5,005	19,959	249	14,705
Chennai Region	20,447	1,62,182	3,160	1,38,577
North	9,091	40,723	443	31,187
South	13,194	69,904	1,111	55,599
West	5,032	19,738	314	14,392
Other	160	2,014	1	1,853
Total	52,929	3,14,520	5,278	2,56,313

- ✓ Chennai, the worst affected district, reported 993 cases and 20 deaths.
- ✓ The adjacent districts had 1,217 cases – Chengalpet (439), Tiruvallur (407) and Kancheepuram (371).
- ✓ Other districts with higher incidence of cases includes Cuddalore (339), Virudhunagar (292), Theni (282), Coimbatore (294), Ranipet (252) and Salem (217)
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, a total of 71,575 samples were tested in the State, taking the total number of samples tested to 34,32,025.

- ✓ A total of 5,633 persons were discharged, taking the total number of people cured to 2,56,313.
 - ✓ As of date, there are 72 testing facilities in the private sector and 61 in the government sector, with the addition of few more private laboratories.
 - ✓ **The Greater Chennai Corporation has added four more symptoms for tracking Covid-19 among its residents**
 - ✓ Earlier only those exhibiting fever, cough, cold and sore throat were being monitored daily.
 - ✓ Now, those with a headache, lack of taste or smell, body pain and vomiting will also be tested immediately.
- **Five women inspectors from Tamil Nadu and an inspector from Central Crime Branch will receive the Union home minister's medal for excellence in investigation for the year 2020.**
- ✓ They are among the 120 police personnel to be awarded across the country
 - ✓ T. Vinothkumar, Inspector, Central Crime Branch, Greater Chennai Police; G. Janci Rani, Inspector, Perunazhi circle, Ramanathapuram district; M. Kavitha, Inspector, All-Women Police, Keeranur, Pudukottai district; A. Ponnammal, Inspector, Prohibition and Enforcement Wing, The Nilgiris district; C. Chandrakala, Inspector, All-Women Police, Jeyamkondam, Ariyalur district; and A. Kala, Inspector, Arumbavur, Perambalur district, will receive the awards.
 - ✓ The medal is given to police personnel and members of central investigation agencies in recognition of their outstanding service in investigation and to promote the standard of investigation.
- **A research team from National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) – discovered a red seaweed, which is a potential natural source for perfumes in Gulf of Mannar after an underwater survey**
- ✓ The red seaweed, *Portieria Hornemannii*, is known for its anticancer and antibacterial properties
 - ✓ It grows on dead corals and has a pungent fragrance, providing a natural basenote for perfumes



- ✓ According to NCCR, a lab under the ministry of earth sciences, the findings are part of their work in documenting the resources in the Gulf of Mannar and the impact of climate change in this biologically rich, ecologically sensitive and protected region
- ✓ The research team found the algae in the coral crest of three of the 21 islands in the region - Hare, Manoli and Manoliputti.
- ✓ Macroalgae or seaweed is dominant in the Gulf of Mannar compared to Kutch or Lakshadweep regions.
- ✓ This is the first time this particular species has been studied for its fragrance
- ✓ According to the State forest department, there are 181 seaweed species in the region

SMELL COULD BE BOTTLED

Researchers from National Centre for Coastal Research, during an underwater study, found *Portieria Homemannii*, a red seaweed (alga), on the reef crest of Hare, Manoli and Manoliputti islands in Gulf of Mannar

Where does it grow?

It grows on dead corals in shallow reef area or on live branching *Acropora* sp coral. Also found entangled with other seaweeds like *Turbinaria* sp (Pyramid seaweeds)

About the fragrance

> NCCR researchers said chlorinated compounds in the species could be the source of the fragrance from the seaweed and could be a potential source of base fragrance in perfumes

> At the lab, the fragrance of the species persisted for a few days in room temperature. When placed in distilled water for a few weeks and boiled in coconut oil, both the water and oil released fragrance

> Further studies are required to establish the actual chemical components behind the fragrance

Other properties | Studies have shown the species to have halomon, a chemical compound that has potential use as an antitumor agent, has anticancer and antibacterial properties

Other marine sources used in perfumes |

Ambergris, an intestinal concretion produced by sperm whale is used as a fixative in the perfume industry; some species of seagrass, mangroves

- ✓ Back in the lab, researchers said an analysis found that the source of the fragrance was due to the presence of chlorinated compounds in the algae
- ✓ The fragrance from the raw seaweed persisted for a few days at room temperature and also when infused in distilled water and coconut oil.
- ✓ Considering its potential, the researchers suggest the species could be a 'base note', one of the three scents in a perfume sensed after application, which constitutes 10-20% in perfumes

- **Tamil Nadu - is all set to bring in tuberculosis (TB) medical officers for the national teleconsultation service, eSanjeevaniOPD.**
- ✓ The State recently added antiretroviral therapy (ART) medical officers to provide teleconsultations for people living with HIV/AIDS
- ✓ It has also brought in obstetricians and gynaecologists to the platform, and is currently working on expanding to more specialities.

Doctors on call

Tamil Nadu is working on expanding the scope of eSanjeevaniOPD by bringing more specialities under its ambit

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE TOP CONDITIONS FOR WHICH TELECONSULTATIONS ARE BEING SOUGHT

- Myalgia
- Headache
- Gastritis
- Acute upper respiratory tract infection
- Fever
- Antenatal care
- Low back pain
- Cold
- Abdominal pain

WHAT'S NEW

- **Obstetricians and gynaecologists** have been roped in
- Antiretroviral therapy (ART) medical officers for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Soon, **tuberculosis (TB) medical officers** will be part of the teleconsultation service

- ✓ As of now, 732 doctors were registered on this service in the State.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu has topped the number of teleconsultations in the country on this platform — achieving close to 43,000 consultations till date
- ✓ The government is actively working on adding specialities including medicine, surgery, cardiology, neurology, psychiatry, and also AYUSH to the service.
- ✓ On an analysis of 18,000 health records, the top five conditions for which people sought teleconsultations were myalgia, headache, gastritis, acute upper respiratory tract infection and fever.
- ✓ The eSanjeevani platform is user-friendly and is based on the Android platform
 - ✓ Once the App is downloaded, users will have to go through a simple process of registration.
 - ✓ They will receive an OTP for login and then token will be generated for general/speciality OPD
- ✓ The web-based comprehensive Telemedicine solution eSanjeevani has so far provided 1.58 lakh online consultations according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

- ✓ The online platform was operationalised in more than 23 states, covering more than 75% of population in the country.
- ✓ There are two types of teleconsultation under the platform - eSanjeevani (doctor-to-doctor) and Patient-to-doctor (eSanjeevani OPD)
- ✓ The eSanjeevani is implemented under Ayushman Bharat health initiative.
 - ✓ So far, 12,000 health professionals have been provided training through 3,000 of the health and wellness centres
 - ✓ The scheme aims to connect all the 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres established under Ayushman Bharat.

STATES

- **On August 12, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S Jagan Mohan Reddy - launched the 'YSR Cheyutha' scheme.**
- ✓ Under this scheme, each woman in the age group of 45-60 years, will get an annual financial assistance of ₹18,750, which amounts to ₹75,000 in four years
- ✓ Nearly 23 lakh women of SC, ST, BC and minority communities would be benefited by the scheme, as per the CM.
- ✓ The government would spend an amount of Rs 17,000 crore on the scheme

LAUNCH TODAY

YSR Cheyutha scheme, which will be launched on Wednesday, is expected to benefit 23 lakh women of SC, ST, BC and minority communities in the age group of **45-60** years

Each eligible beneficiary to get **₹75,000** in four years at the rate of **₹18,750** pa



YSR Cheyutha is unique in the sense that it gives freedom to eligible women to use the amount...for any purpose of their choice

Vijay Kumar Reddy, I&PR commissioner

Govt to spend an amount of **₹17,000** crore on the scheme

Women who invest in establishing business units would be provided marketing and technical support

Beneficiaries who become eligible after attaining **45** years as on August **12** of every year will receive the benefits of the scheme

- ✓ Unlike other schemes, YSR Cheyutha is unique in the sense that it gives freedom to eligible women to use the amount deposited in their bank accounts for any purpose of their choice.
- ✓ Women who invest the amount on setting up business units as suggested by the government would be provided marketing and technical support.
- ✓ They also become eligible for bank loans and will be provided entrepreneurial guidance by the government.

- ✓ The government has already signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with multinational companies such as Amul, ITC, HUL, P&G and Reliance, and banks to realise the goal of women empowerment
- ✓ About eight lakh widows and single women in the said age group, who are already receiving monthly social pensions, would also be eligible for YSR Cheyutha scheme.
 - ✓ The annual amount received by women eligible for social pension is Rs 27,000 at the rate of Rs 2,250 per month.
 - ✓ In addition to it, they would receive Rs 18,750 per annum under YSR Cheyutha, taking the total grant to Rs 45,750 per annum
- ✓ However, those who are currently enrolled and cross the upper age limit of 60 years will cease to receive the benefits as such beneficiaries will move on to Pension Kanuka, subject to their eligibility.

NATIONAL

- **On August 12, India - overtook Britain to emerge as the fourth country in the world to have the most Covid-19 deaths, with its second-highest single-day tally of 934 fresh deaths taking the total casualties beyond the 47,000-mark to 47,065.**

INDIA NOW NO. 4 IN COVID DEATHS

Country	Total Deaths	CFR*	Deaths/Mn
US	1,68,219	3.2	508
Brazil	1,03,099	3.3	485
Mexico	53,929	10.9	418
India	47,065	2.0	34
UK	46,706	14.9	688

*CFR: Case Fatality Rate | Figures as of Wednesday night India time
Source: Worldometer

- ✓ India has now climbed to the number four position — behind US, Brazil and Mexico — just 13 days after it overtook Italy to emerge as the fifth worst affected country in terms of total Covid casualties.
 - ✓ Britain's casualties stood at 46,706, as on date.
- ✓ However, India's case fatality rate of 2 is much lower than that of the other countries, particularly the UK which has the highest CFR of 14.9.
- ✓ Similarly, India's deaths per million stands at 34 which is much lower than the figure of other countries, which is in the range of 400 to 700.
 - ✓ At 688, the UK has the highest deaths per million, followed by the US where the figure stands at 508
- ✓ India also registered its second highest single-day peak at 64,610 fresh cases, taking the country's caseload to 23,91,650.

- ✓ The record daily peak was registered on August 8 with 65,410 fresh cases.
 - ✓ On the positive side, 16,90,097 people have recovered from the virus
 - ✓ Maharashtra reported its single highest daily cases and deaths at 12,712 and 344, respectively.
 - ✓ The state's caseload reached 5,48,313 while the cumulative toll is 18,650.
- **On August 12, the Ministry of Home Affairs – announced the 'Union home minister's medal for excellence in investigation' to 121 police personnel, including CBI officers who cracked the Narendra Dabholkar murder case**
- ✓ The Awards recognize the high standards of investigation by law enforcement officers
 - ✓ This category of police medals was instituted in 2018 with the objective of promoting high professional standards of investigation of crime and to recognise excellence in investigation.
 - ✓ Among the personnel who have been conferred the medals this year, 15 are from CBI, 10 each from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra Police, eight from Uttar Pradesh Police, seven each from Kerala and West Bengal Police, and the remaining from the other state/UT police.
 - ✓ As many as 21 winners, or one-sixth of the awardees, are women.
- **The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change - has compiled the best practices of human-elephant conflict management in India to mark World Elephant Day on August 12**
- ✓ The publication running over 40 pages presents a pictorial guide on various practices that have resulted in successfully removing elephants from human habitations
 - ✓ It also points out that the majority of existing prevention strategies are driven by site-specific factors that offer short-term solutions
 - ✓ The best practices include elephant-proof trenches in Tamil Nadu, hanging fences and rubble walls in Karnataka, use of chili smoke in north Bengal and playing the sound of bees or carnivores in Assam.
 - ✓ The document also talks about an elephant corridor initiative where 25.37 acres of private land was purchased at Edayarahalli-Doddasampige in Karnataka as part of conservation efforts.
 - ✓ The document details a process of individual identification and monitoring of elephants in south Bengal.
 - ✓ Other ideas include sending SMS alerts to warn of elephant presence.
 - ✓ These best practices have been discussed under several categories such as retaining elephants in their natural habitats by creating water sources and management of forest fires
 - ✓ The document also points out that India has the largest number of wild Asian Elephants, estimated at 29,964 according to the 2017 census by Project Elephant.
 - ✓ The figure amounts to about 60% of the species' global population.

- ✓ Over 500 humans are killed in encounters with elephants annually, and crops and property worth millions are also damaged
- **On August 12, the Council of Architecture (CoA) - clarified that the BArch programme shall be of minimum duration of five academic years.**
- ✓ Only if a candidate is not able to complete the course in the prescribed duration (maximum period of eight years), the university or institution may provide an exit option for the candidate if they have completed and earned all credits for the first three years of study.
- ✓ The candidates however will not get a degree in Bachelor of Architecture, but a suitable diploma or degree.
- ✓ This exit option is only for those candidates who could not complete the course, but had earned all the due credits for the first three years
- ✓ Due to Covid-19 and subsequent disruption in board exams, the eligibility condition for admission to the first year of five-year BArch programme of having to score 50% marks physics, chemistry and mathematics each and an overall aggregate of 50% in the Class XII exams has been relaxed for this year.
- ✓ For admission, the 50% weightage given to the aptitude test conducted by National Aptitude Test in Architecture (NATA) or Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) would continue
- **The National Statistical Office – has released a report highlighting various yardsticks of academic indicators for Muslims, in comparison with SCs and STs**
- ✓ As per the report, the Muslims perform as bad as or even worse than SCs and STs, even though it has been a decade and a half since the Sachar Committee highlighted the issue.

EDU INDICATORS OF TRIBALS, DALITS & MUSLIMS			
Indicator	ST	SC	Muslim
Male literacy	77	80	81
Female literacy	61	64	69
GROSS ATTENDANCE RATIOS			
Primary	101	102	100
Upper primary	90	94	89
Secondary	80	86	72
Higher secondary	53	60	48
Above higher secondary	14	18	14
NEVER ENROLLED (AGE 3 - 35 YEARS)			
Male	15	13	17
Female	22	20	22

All figures in %
Source: NSS 75th Round

- ✓ Among the various social groups, the literacy rate for those aged 7 years or more was the highest for “others”, which is non-SC/ST/OBC population groups, at 91% for men and 81% for women.

- ✓ When compared to the OBCs alone, this proportion declines to 84% for OBC men and 69% for OBC women.
- ✓ For SCs, the ratio was 80.3% for men and 64% for women and for STs 78% for men and 61% for women.
- ✓ Among religious groups, Christians had the highest literacy rate, followed by Sikhs and Hindus
 - ✓ Among Christians, 88% of men and 82% of women were literate, the highest proportions for both genders.
 - ✓ The literacy rate of 80.6% among Muslim men was equivalent to that for dalits and marginally higher than the rate among tribals.
 - ✓ The literacy rate for Muslim women was higher than dalit or tribal women, but lower than for women of any other religious group.
- ✓ The Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) was the lowest for Muslims among various social and religious groups at all levels of education except above higher secondary, where it was the between the rates for dalits and tribals.
- ✓ The GAR refers to people attending a level of education as a proportion of the population of the corresponding age group

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On August 12, the Supreme Court - decided to resume limited physical hearing of cases after two weeks, while continuing virtual courts all along.**
- ✓ A seven-judge panel of Justices N V Ramana, Arun Mishra, R F Nariman, U U Lalit, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and L Nageswara Rao announced the decision after consulting medical experts and bar leaders including Manan Kumar Mishra, Dushyant Dave and S Jadhav
- ✓ The bench proposed a hybrid system that would include opening of two to three courts with necessary precautions for physical hearing of long-pending matters, while continuing to adjudicate fresh matters through videoconferencing.
- ✓ After taking into consideration the views of all concerned, the committee forwarded its recommendation to CJI S A Bobde
- ✓ However, only a limited number of lawyers at a time would be permitted in a courtroom given the strict adherence to social distancing norms.
- ✓ The committee said the CJI could fix a date for resumption of physical hearing after two weeks on trial basis after the courtrooms were ready for the purpose.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On August 11, Democratic nominee Joe Biden - picked California Senator Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential running mate for the 2020 US presidential election.**
- ✓ Joe Biden was the Vice President of the US during President Barack Obama's tenure.

A WOMAN OF MANY FIRSTS

➤ Kamala Harris (55) is the first black and Indian-American, and also only the **third woman**, to be the vice-presidential candidate of a major US party

➤ Her grandmother, Rajam Gopalan, was an outspoken community organiser. Rajam's husband, P V Gopalan, was an



Indian civil servant & diplomat

➤ Her mother, Shyamala Gopalan, left Chennai in 1960 to pursue a doctorate at UC Berkeley where she met Donald Harris, a Jamaican who was studying economics. They married and had two daughters, before divorcing when Kamala was seven

➤ Kamala was California's first



Kamala with her sister Maya | 1968

black and Indian-origin attorney general; also became **first Indian-origin and second black woman** to join the Senate



Joe Biden nailed this decision... She is more than prepared for the job. She's spent her career defending our Constitution and fighting for folks who need a fair shake

— Former US President Barack Obama

- ✓ Born to Shyamala Gopalan, a cancer researcher originally from Chennai, and Donald Harris, an economics professor from Jamaica, Kamala has decades of public service to her name
- ✓ Harris, who was born in Oakland, California, will be the first Black and Indian-American on a major US party ticket.
- ✓ She is also only the fourth woman in history to be chosen on a major party's presidential ticket.
- ✓ If she's elected, Harris will make history as not only the first woman to hold the office but also the first person with Asian or African origin to do so.
- ✓ So far, only two other women have vied, unsuccessfully, for the position — Sarah Palin in 2008 and Geraldine Ferraro in 1984.

US Veeps Who Became Prez

14 US vice presidents have gone on to serve as president, 7 of them in the past century but none in the last three decades. The list includes founding fathers of the country like John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, but no woman has been veep, or president. A look at those who made the transition since 1900, and how

	VEEP	PREZ	BECAME PREZ AFTER...
Theodore Roosevelt	 1901	1901-09	Assassination of incumbent William McKinley. Won reelection in 1904
Calvin Coolidge	1921-23	1923-29	Death of Warren Harding. Reelected in 1924
Harry S Truman	1945	1945-53	Death of Franklin D Roosevelt. Reelected in 1948
Richard Nixon	1953-61	1969-74	 Winning election
Lyndon B Johnson	1961-63	1963-69	Assassination of John F Kennedy. Reelected in 1964
Gerald Ford	1973-74	1974-77	Nixon stepped down. Had become Nixon's veep after Spiro Agnew quit
George H W Bush	1981-89	1989-93	Winning election 

- ✓ Harris, 55, who abandoned her own presidential campaign last December citing lack of funds, already has an impressive list of achievements.

MEET COMMA-LA

In a 2019 interview with ABC, Kamala Harris cleared up the pronunciation of her name, something most Americans struggle with. "Just think like 'comma,' and add a 'la'", she said. In Sanskrit it means lotus



1964 Born in Oakland, California, to Indian mother Shyamala Gopalan and Jamaican father Donald Harris

1990s Begins legal career. Assistant district attorney in Oakland, California, in 1990; in San Francisco in 1998

2000s Became San Francisco district attorney in 2004, the first Black woman elected to the post in California

2019 Announced her bid for presidency, but pulled out of the race in December

1980s Graduated from Howard University in Washington, DC, in 1986 and received her law degree in 1989 from the University of California

2011 Became California state attorney general, defeating a popular white Republican attorney by a wafer-thin margin

2016: Won the election to the US Senate, the first Black woman elected in a decade



- ✓ She became the first black person to serve as California's attorney general in 2010.
- ✓ Prior to this, she served as the district attorney in San Francisco since winning the first election in 2003
- ✓ She is also one of only three Asian-Americans in the Senate since 2016 and the first Indian-American ever to serve in the chamber.
- ✓ She also serves in high profile committees in the Senate such as Judiciary Committee and Intelligence Committee.

HER PARTNER

Married Doug Emhoff, a corporate lawyer, in 2014. He has two children from a previous marriage

ON HER PLATE

Asked if she grew up eating south Indian food, Harris told Indian-American actress Mindy Kaling, "Lots of rice and yogurt, potato curry, dal, lots of dal, idli", and in her book, she writes about making biryani at home

Source: Media reports

HER PARENTS Mother Shyamala (left), a Tamil cancer researcher, immigrated to the US to pursue a doctorate in endocrinology. Her father, a professor at Stanford University, left Jamaica to study economics. They attended UC Berkeley in the 1960s and met during protests at the peak of the civil rights movement. After she was born, her parents would often take her to protests in a stroller. When Kamala was 7, her parents divorced. She was raised along with her sister Maya by their mother



- ✓ The move puts Kamala in a powerful position to lead the Democratic party in the near future and with a shot at the presidency in four to eight years.
- ✓ There are about 1.3 million Indian-American voters, with nearly 200,000 in battleground states like Pennsylvania and 125,000 in Michigan.
- ✓ Earlier, the House of Representatives voted to impeach President Trump in 2019.
- ✓ This was the first time a serving president of the USA was impeached during his first term.
- ✓ The 59th Quadrennial US Presidential election is scheduled in November 2020
- ✓ According to Article 2 of the US Constitution, for a person to serve as US president a person has to be a natural born US citizen.

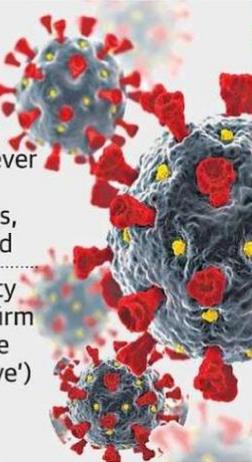
- ✓ Also, he or she should have attained age of 35 years and should have resided in the country for at least 14 years.
- ✓ The 22nd amendment of the US constitution states that a person cannot be elected as a president more than twice.
- ✓ The Presidential Election is to occur simultaneously with elections to House of Representatives and Senate.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) - is planning to set up “mega labs” to ramp up testing for COVID-19 as well as improve the accuracy rate.**

Genome study | A look at how Next Generation Sequencing works

- Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) involves scanning the entire virus genome
- This can help identify more places where the SARS-CoV-2 virus differs from related viruses and can also help develop new diagnostic tests
- Two lineages of the virus, never seen before in Indian genomes, were also found
- The sensitivity (ability to confirm those who have virus as 'positive') of NGS was 97.53%



- ✓ The labs will be using large machines called Next Generation Sequencing machines (NGS)
- ✓ These NGS machine are normally used for sequencing human genomes
- ✓ They will be repurposed to sequence 1,500 to 3,000 viral genomes at a go to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- ✓ The NGS machine can substantially detect the presence of the virus even in several instances where the traditional RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) tests fail, on usage in optimal conditions with appropriate modifications
- ✓ This is primarily because the RT-PCR test identifies the SARS-CoV-2 virus by exploring only specific sections, whereas the genome method can read a bigger range of virus genome and provides more certainty about the coronavirus
- ✓ It can also trace the evolutionary history of the virus and track mutations more reliably.
- ✓ Unlike the RT-PCR that needs primers and probes, the NGS only needs custom reagents.
- ✓ For the project, the CSIR has partnered with the U.S.-based Illumina, a company that specialises in the manufacture of NGS machines.
- ✓ Five such sequencers, costing ₹4 crore each, are currently available in India.

- ✓ Based on the pilot tests conducted so far, about 99% of confirmed RT-PCR positive samples were identified also by the NGS method.
- ✓ More importantly, nearly half of the samples that the RT-PCR termed 'inconclusive' were identified as either positive or negative by the NGS method.
- ✓ Hence, the NGS method can also be used as a confirmatory test

DEFENCE

- **India - has deployed two of its new indigenous Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) in Ladakh amid the ongoing military confrontation with China along the LAC.**
 - ✓ The LCHs were deployed in addition to the heavy-duty Apache attack and Chinook heavy-lift choppers acquired from the US
 - ✓ The twin-engine LCH is the lightest attack helicopter in the world
 - ✓ It was designed and developed by the defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) to meet the specific and unique requirements of Indian armed forces.
 - ✓ The IAF and the Army need 160 LCHs and the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved an initial order for a batch of 15.
 - ✓ The IAF has since issued the Request for Proposal (RFP) for 15 limited series production (LSP) helicopters, 10 for IAF and five for the Army
 - ✓ HAL had already submitted its response for the production of 5.5-tonne class choppers
 - ✓ Such LCHs figure in the negative arms import list announced by the defence ministry on August 9
 - ✓ As per the arms embargo list, the acquisition of 101 weapon systems and platforms from abroad will be progressively banned from December 2020 to December 2025, in a bid to boost the indigenous defence production sector
 - ✓ The Indian LCHs, which are currently equipped with 70mm rockets and chin-mounted cannons, do not yet have anti-tank and air-to-air missiles.
 - ✓ The LCH, however, has the distinction of being the first attack helicopter to land at forward bases in the Siachen Glacier-Saltoro Ridge region, 4,700 meters above sea level with a 500-kg load.
 - ✓ IAF vice Chief Air Marshal Harjit Singh Arora also flew in the LCH, which is powered by two Shakti engines, during his visit to forward air bases in Ladakh last week.

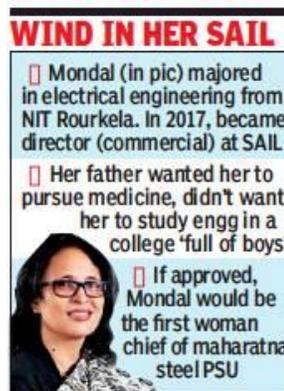
ECONOMY

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - is set to unveil the much-awaited ambitious platform called "Transparent Taxation-Honouring the Honest" to reward honest taxpayers on August 13 to bring in greater transparency to the process**

- ✓ In the 2020-21 budget, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a Taxpayers' Charter, which is among the set of measures that the PM is expected to announce on August 13
- ✓ Over the last few weeks, CBDT has been publicising the faceless tax assessment scheme – where the identity of assesses and the tax officers are not known -- that was launched last year.
- ✓ **The platform includes three major reforms- faceless assessment, faceless appeal and taxpayers' charter.**
- ✓ The faceless assessment and taxpayers' charter reforms have been brought into effect from August 13, while faceless appeal service will be available from September 25.
- ✓ The platform aiming to carry forward the journey of direct tax reforms was launched through a video conference.
- ✓ The steps are a part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.
- ✓ The platform aims to be a transparent and accountable system using data analytics and artificial intelligence.
- ✓ The Tax Charter will ensure trust between the taxpayer and government administration
 - ✓ It aims to reduce harassment and will also increase respect for wealth creators.
 - ✓ There are only three countries in the world that have enshrined rights of its taxpayers - Canada, Australia and US
- ✓ Earlier, the Government also brought in Direct Tax “Vivad Se Vishwas Act, 2020” scheme, under which declarations to settle pending tax disputes are being filed.

APPOINTMENTS

- **The Public Enterprises Selection Board - has recommended Soma Mondal to be the next chairperson of the country's largest steelmaker SAIL**
- ✓ The recommendation would make her the first woman to head the state-run steel giant.



- ✓ Mondal is currently serving in the capacity of Director (commercial) in SAIL

- ✓ The appointment of Mondal is yet to be ratified by the appointments committee of the Cabinet
- ✓ If approved, she will take over as chairperson of the maharatna PSU from Anil Kumar Chaudhary, who retires in December.
- ✓ Her proposed elevation is significant as she is one of the very few women who have emerged to head public sector companies.
- ✓ In 2013, Nishi Vasudeva became the first woman to head a navratna PSU when she was named CMD of state-run oil major Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd
- ✓ Mondal majored in electrical engineering from NIT Rourkela and joined state-run aluminium maker Nalco in 1984.
- ✓ After spending several years at Nalco, she joined as director (commercial) at the Steel Authority of India (SAIL) in 2017

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AND RELAXATIONS ACROSS 17 INDIAN CITIES – A REPORT

