

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – AUGUST 14, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- On August 13, Tamil Nadu - reported 119 Covid-19 deaths and added 5,835 fresh cases, taking the cumulative death toll to 5,397 and case tally to 3,20,355.

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

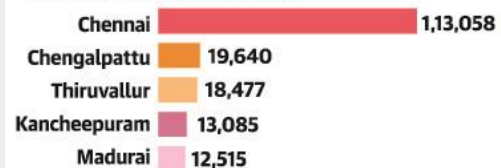
	Until Aug. 6	Aug. 7	Aug. 8	Aug. 9	Aug. 10	Aug. 11	Aug. 12	Aug. 13	Total
Cases reported	2,79,144	5,880	5,883	5,994	5,914	5,834	5,871	5,835	3,20,355
Recovered and discharged	2,21,087	6,488	5,043	6,020	6,037	6,005	5,633	5,146	2,61,459
Deceased	4,571	119	118	119	114	118	119	119	5,397

Persons tested



*Changes in 24 hours As on Aug. 12, 6 p.m. As on Aug. 13, 6 p.m.

Districts with maximum cases



- ✓ As on date, 53,499 people were still under treatment, after the discharge of 5,146 persons
- ✓ With this, a total of 2,61,459 persons have been cured of the viral infection.
- ✓ Chennai continued to be the hotspot with 989 cases and 18 deaths.
- ✓ The neighbouring districts – Chengalpattu (453), Tiruvallur (390) and Kancheepuram (243) -- reported 1,086 cases and 17 deaths
- ✓ There were 289 cases in Coimbatore, 286 in Theni, 258 in Cuddalore, 243 in Kancheepuram and 219 in Virudhunagar.
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, 67,275 samples were tested, taking the total samples tested close to 35-lakh mark at 34,99,300
- ✓ One more private laboratory — the Cancer Institute in Adyar, Chennai — has been approved for COVID-19 testing.

- ✓ With this, there are 134 testing facilities — 73 in private sector and 61 in government — in the State.
- **Tamil Nadu - has successfully treated 89 patients with blood plasma as part of the national trial of 'Convalescent plasma therapy'**
 - ✓ This was announced by the health minister C Vijayabaskar on August 13
 - ✓ This is the maximum number of patients treated by any state in the country using the therapy.
 - ✓ The health Minister visited the newly inaugurated plasma bank at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH) in Chennai
 - ✓ South India's first plasma bank was set up at a cost of ₹2.34 crore at RGGGH.
 - ✓ A total of 76 persons donated plasma, and it was transfused to 89 patients at the Hospital
 - ✓ Convalescent plasma therapy is an experimental treatment recommended by the ICMR for people with moderate symptoms.
 - ✓ People who recover from the infection develop antibodies — proteins the body uses to fight off infections — to the disease in their blood.
 - ✓ The blood from people who have recovered is called convalescent plasma.
 - ✓ The plasma loaded with antibodies can help patients develop the ability to fight the virus and prevent them from becoming more ill.
 - ✓ Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami urged people who have recovered from Covid to consider donating blood through the government plasma banks.
 - ✓ People can donate 500ml of plasma – up to two times in a gap of 15 days – two weeks after they recover from the infection.
 - ✓ The 500ml plasma can be administered to a maximum of two patients.
 - ✓ The Indian Council of Medical Research has granted approval for plasma banks in Chennai, Madurai and Tirunelveli.
 - ✓ Apart from this, equipment is being readied for installation in six medical colleges for plasma donations.
- **Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) – decided to operate functional Covid care centres (CCC) only in government buildings belonging to TN Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB), Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB) or in open grounds like the Nehru stadium in Vepery.**
 - ✓ The civic body has submitted a proposal to the government indicating that Covid care centres in educational institutions can be slowly 'phased out'.
 - ✓ This is also in anticipation of a decision to reopen colleges.
 - ✓ Covid care centres are places where asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic patients who don't have any co-morbidities are admitted.
 - ✓ These patients don't need intense medical care, however, doctors are posted at such centres and oxygen cylinders kept ready in case of an emergency.
 - ✓ These are operated free of cost for citizens.

- **On August 6, the Tamil Nadu government - announced the Chief Minister's Special Award for 27 frontline workers, who were at the forefront of the State's battle against COVID-19**
- ✓ They will receive a gold-plated medal and an appreciation certificate on Independence Day.
- ✓ The awardees are from departments such as Health and Family Welfare, Police, Revenue and Disaster Management, Fire and Rescue, Municipal Administration, Water Supply and Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection.
- **The Greater Chennai Corporation - will launch a dynamic lighting system on all its 37 bridges and subways.**



- ✓ On August 13, the dynamic lighting system was tested in bridges such as Napier Bridge and T.T.K. Road Bridge near the Music Academy.
- ✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami is expected to launch the project on August 14.
- ✓ The city's dynamic lighting system will be able to generate millions of colours using the combination of red, green and blue.
- ✓ It will be controlled by the command and control system
- ✓ The system will also reflect the mood of each festival
- ✓ Further, it will be able to change the colour at frequent intervals, creating a pattern
- ✓ The system will be energy efficient and will be used to promote tourism in the city.
- **On August 12, Cooperation minister Sellur K Raju - launched a National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)-funded programme for setting up of post-harvest infrastructure by Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.**
- ✓ The minister handed over the sanction letter from NABARD to Tamil Nadu State Apex Cooperative Bank at a function.
- ✓ The minister thanked NABARD for the financial support extended to cooperative banks in the state for onboarding core banking solution and sought similar assistance for the computerisation of PACS.
- ✓ The initiative will empower cooperatives at grass root level by enhancing the market linkage through value addition with enabling post-harvest infrastructure

such as warehouses, cold storages, pack houses, agro processing units etc and make PACS more vibrant with services to farmers.

- ✓ This will give better remuneration to the farming community.
- ✓ The Centre under the Atmanirbhar Bharat programme has launched the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.
- ✓ The scheme will provide medium to long-term debt financing for setting up of new investments for post-harvest management.

STATES

- **The Kerala government – has allowed the state police to collect the call detail records (CDR) of people testing positive for Covid-19 for the purpose of contact tracing**
- ✓ The police are empowered under Section 91 of CrPC as well as Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act to summon CDRs for the purposes of investigation.
- ✓ Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan had announced that the state government was using the CDR of corona patients to chart out a “route map” in order to trace who they came in contact with.
- ✓ According to the government, the process of obtaining CDR does not constitute violation of a person’s fundamental right to privacy, as it will not be used for any investigation.
- ✓ The 2017 right to privacy judgment lays down a three-part test for any action that could potentially violate one’s fundamental right to privacy.
- ✓ It needs to be towards a legitimate purpose, needs to be legal and proportional to the ends it seeks to address

NATIONAL

- **On August 13, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - launched a “Transparent Taxation — Honouring the Honest” platform that provides faceless assessment, faceless appeal and a single taxpayers’ charter.**
- ✓ While the faceless assessment and taxpayers’ charter came into force on August 13 itself, the faceless appeal system will be available from September 25, the birth anniversary of Deendayal Upadhyaya.
- ✓ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was also present on the occasion along with Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur.
- ✓ This was earlier announced by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as “Tax Charter” in Budget 2020-21.
- ✓ The Charter will ensure trust between the taxpayer and government administration.
- ✓ This will reduce harassment and will also increase respect for wealth creators.
- ✓ The PM urged citizens to be more taxcompliant, pointing to the fact there are just 1.5 crore taxpayers in a country with a population of 130 crore.

- ✓ The assessment system seeks to eliminate corrupt practices by removing the territorial jurisdiction of income-tax offices.

TAXPAYERS' CHARTER UNVEILED

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I-T dept committed to provide fair, courteous & reasonable treatment to taxpayer, according to a charter unveiled by PM ➤ The dept shall treat every taxpayer as honest and provide a mechanism for appeal and review ➤ It shall collect correct amount of tax, respect privacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dept expects taxpayers to be honest, informed, aware of compliance obligations. Keep accurate records, respond in time, pay taxes in timely manner
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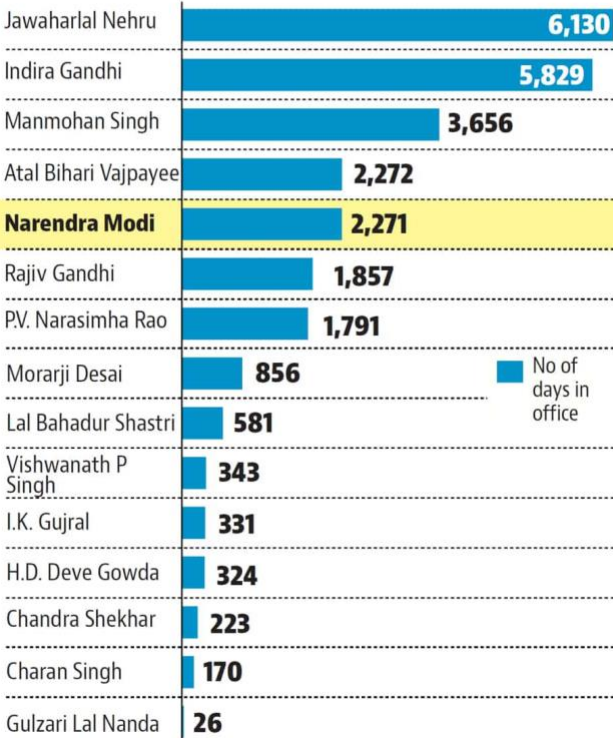
“The tax administration should be seamless so that it solves the problem instead of complicating matters. Technology and simple rules will make the system painless. And, faceless in a way that the taxpayer and the tax officer should not be bothered

—PM Narendra Modi

- ✓ With the help of technology, the cases of scrutiny will now be allocated randomly to any official in any part of the country.
- ✓ The document identification numbers will be issued from the Central database.
- ✓ Review of orders will also be done by another team at some other place, chosen randomly using data analytics and artificial intelligence.
- ✓ Under this system, a taxpayer will not have an opportunity to know people in the tax department or exert influence
- ✓ Minutes after his speech, the Central Board of Direct Taxes expanded the scope of the faceless assessment, launched last year, and asked its officers to pass all assessment orders via the National e-Assessment Centre.
- ✓ From now on, the unit that undertakes assessment of tax returns has been barred from conducting surveys
- ✓ Going forward, officials in the Directorate General of Income Tax (Investigation) and the Principal Commissioner of I-T/Chief Commissioner of I-T (TDS) will be the only competent authorities for approving survey actions to gather information for scrutiny and assessment.
- ✓ There are only three countries in the world that have enshrined rights of its taxpayers - Canada, Australia and US
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - has become the longest serving non-Congress PM of the country, surpassing the 2,268 days that his BJP senior Atal Bihari Vajpayee had clocked in his three terms combined**
- ✓ Modi, who is in the second year of his second tenure, now boasts of the fourth longest PM tenure after Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh, all belonging to Congress.

PMs in Office

First PM Nehru had the longest tenure in office



Narendra Modi becomes longest serving non-Congress PM; 4th longest serving overall

The Statesman August 14, 2020

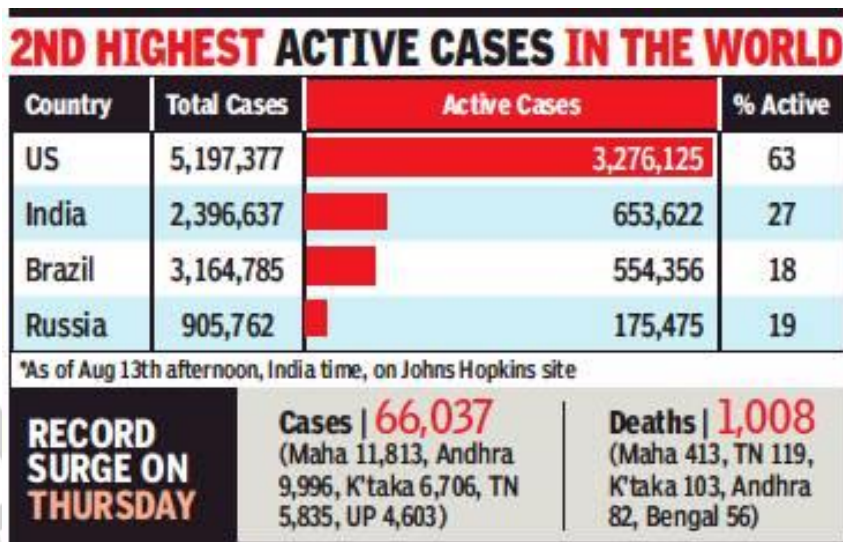


file Photo

PM Modi on Thursday becomes the fourth longest serving PM of independent India. He also becomes the longest serving non-Congress origin leader to serve as Prime Minister. PM Modi surpassed late Atal Bihari

- ✓ Vajpayee had three terms as PM — a 16-day tenure from May 16 to June 1 in 1996, followed by a 13-month tenure from 1998-1999 and a full five-year term from 1999 to 2004.
- ✓ Nehru, the first PM, remains the longest serving with a 17-year spell spread over three terms.
- ✓ His daughter Indira Gandhi was the second longest serving, holding office for 11 years from 1966 to 1977.
- ✓ She lost in 1977 but regained office in 1980 and held it until 1984.
- ✓ Manmohan Singh was in office for a decade, from 2004 to 2014.
- **On August 13, the UGC - told the Supreme Court that it is invalid to cancel the final year college exams citing the Covid-19 pandemic**
- ✓ Earlier, the states of Maharashtra and Delhi governments have cancelled these exams
- ✓ Further, UGC said that the states couldn't override the UGC's directions to universities to conduct final year exams by September 30 through online or offline modes.
- ✓ As per UGC, neither the Disaster Management Act, 2005, nor the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, empower the state to take decisions that affect or impact the standards of higher education.

- ✓ Under the UGC Act, it is the UGC alone which is mandated to maintain such standards
 - ✓ In an earlier statement, the UGC had said of the 640 universities that had submitted responses, more than 400 had either completed final exams or planned to do so using the prescribed modes.
 - ✓ The UGC emphasised the need to conduct terminal or final examinations, saying it was a crucial step in the academic career of a student.
- **On August 13, India – witnessed a record high of fresh infections as well as deaths from the virus**
- ✓ New infections during the day rose to 66,037, while fatalities touched 1,008.
 - ✓ With this, the total caseload of the country crossed 24 lakh.



- ✓ Meanwhile, India now has the second highest count of active Covid-19 cases in the world after the US, according to the latest data from Johns Hopkins University.
- ✓ The number of active cases India has gone past the count in Brazil after that country showed a sharp drop in active Covid-19 cases, as per Johns Hopkins data.
- ✓ Brazil had the second highest number of active cases till a few days ago.
- ✓ India's active cases stood at 6,53,622 while the corresponding number in Brazil was 5,54,356.
- ✓ The US had by far the most active cases in the world at 32,76,125.
- ✓ Maharashtra topped the death toll on the day with 413 fatalities, which included pre-dated deaths.
- ✓ The state also continued to add a large number of new Covid19 cases (11,813), taking its total cases to 5,60,126 by breaching the 5.5 lakh mark
- ✓ The most worrisome spike was in Assam, which reported as many as 4,593 cases on the day.

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On August 13, the Supreme Court – asked the Centre to publish draft Environment Impact Assessment notification in all local languages**
- ✓ The Supreme Court stayed contempt proceedings against the Centre for alleged "willful disobedience" of a Delhi HC judicial order
- ✓ On June 30, Delhi HC directed Centre to translate draft Environment Impact Assessment notification into other languages as well, or at least in all 22 languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution within 10 days
- ✓ A SC bench comprising Chief Justice, Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian passed the order in this regard
- ✓ Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde has said that the government should consider amending the Official Languages Act of 1963 to include more vernacular languages in governance, and not just confine it to Hindi and English.

<p>OBJECTION: Proposal to allow ex-post facto approval to projects will encourage illegality and violation of green norms</p>	<p>CLARIFICATION:</p> <p>1 Not reducing process of public hearing but making it more meaningful in certain categories to save time</p>	<p>3 Expansion of projects above 10% increase in production capacity will require recommendation of environment appraisal committee (EAC)</p>
<p>CLARIFICATION:</p> <p>1 Previous violation will be made liable to stringent penal action as per statutory provisions</p> <p>2 Idea is to bring all violators under regulatory regime</p>	<p>2 Allowing expansion without public hearing only in cases where it does not lead to increase in pollution load</p>	<p>OBJECTION: Allowing validity of EC tenure from seven years to 10 years will encourage land grab and forest encroachment</p>
<p>OBJECTION: Proposal to reduce time period for public hearing before granting environment clearance (EC) in certain cases while doing away with it in some others will hamper post-EC project monitoring and reporting. It is a violation of the spirit and provisions of Environmental Protection Act, 1986</p>	<p>OBJECTION: Doing away with Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) before granting EC in many cases of expansion will harm overall environment</p> <p>CLARIFICATION:</p> <p>1 Every expansion will require submission of environmental management plan</p> <p>2 If the expansion is more than 25% in terms of production capacity, then EIA will be needed</p>	<p>CLARIFICATION: Will help ease-of-doing business without compromising on environmental protection</p> <p>OBJECTION: It gives central government full power to appoint state environment impact assessment authority (SEIAA), violating spirit of cooperative federalism</p> <p>CLARIFICATION: It proposes appointing SEIAA by the Centre only if state fails to do so within a reasonable time</p> <p>Text: Vishwa Mohan</p>

- ✓ The court was hearing an appeal filed by the Centre challenging the legality of a Delhi High Court judgment of June 30
- ✓ The SC appreciated the spirit of the Delhi HC verdict given by Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan to ensure maximum public participation, so that people studied the draft and responded with suggestions and objections.
- ✓ In another courtroom, the Centre informed the Madras High Court that the Tamil translation of the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification is ready and it will be published soon

- **Finding it difficult to decipher medical records, the Orissa High Court - has directed the State government to issue circular asking doctors to write prescriptions in capital letters and in a clearly 'readable' manner.**
- ✓ During the hearing of a bail petition, Justice S.K. Panigrahi expressed dissatisfaction that while verifying the medical documents put up for the perusal of the court
- ✓ The medical documents containing the prescription by the doctor was of pathetically poor legibility and far beyond the comprehension of any common man or even of the court
- ✓ As per the HC, the prescriptions of physicians, outdoor patient department slips, post-mortem reports and injury reports, perforce, are required to be legible and fully comprehensible
- ✓ The judgment quoted a notification of the Medical Council of India (MCI) issued on September 21, 2016, which directed physicians to prescribe drugs with generic names and preferably in capital letters.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The President of the United States, Donald Trump - helped broker a historic peace agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates on August 13, 2020.**



- ✓ Under the accord, Israel has agreed to suspend annexing areas of the occupied West Bank as it had been planning to do
- ✓ It also provides opposition to regional power Iran, which the UAE, Israel and the US view as the main threat in the region

- ✓ The announcement makes the UAE the first Gulf Arab state to have active diplomatic ties to Israel and only the third Arab nation to do so.
 - ✓ Israel had signed peace deals with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.
 - ✓ But the UAE, along with most other Arab nations, didn't recognise Israel and had no formal diplomatic or economic relations with it until now.
 - ✓ A joint statement issued by the three nations said Trump, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed had "agreed to the full normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE"
 - ✓ The agreement, to be known as the **Abraham Accords**, also gives Trump a foreign policy accomplishment as he seeks re-election.
 - ✓ A signing ceremony, including delegations from Israel and the UAE, is due to be held at the White House in the coming weeks.
 - ✓ The UAE said it would remain a strong supporter of the Palestinian people and that the agreement maintained the viability of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.
 - ✓ Netanyahu said the deal represented a "historic day" for his country
 - ✓ The UAE along with other Arab nations have been supporters of the Palestinian cause in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.
- **On August 12, the US Department of State - has permitted foreign nationals to seek an H-1B or an L-1 visa and return to the US to resume their previously held employment.**
- ✓ In addition, individuals — including those in the information technology (IT) sector — may also qualify for entry to the US under 'national interest exception' norms, subject to meeting certain conditions.

'VITAL FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY'

➤ There additional exceptions for specialists and senior managers whose travel is necessary to facilitate immediate and continued economic recovery of the US

➤ Such individuals need to prove they meet at least 2 of the 5 indicators that are listed here:



- 1 Employer has a continued need for their work even during the pandemic
- 2 They make a significant contribution to a critical infra need
- 3 They are paid at least 15% more than the prevailing wage
- 4 They have an unusual expertise in the industry
- 5 Their employer would suffer financial hardship if their visa was denied

- ✓ These relaxations are a huge relief to hundreds of US job holders who were visiting India for dealing with family emergencies and functions
- ✓ Under the updated guidance, an exception from the travel ban, which remains effective at least until December end, is available to H-1B and L-1 workers who are "seeking to resume ongoing employment in the US, in the same position, with the same employer and with the same visa classification".

- ✓ In addition, H-1B or L-1 applicants (the latter visa is used for intra-company transfers) may also enter the US if they qualify for national interest exception.
- ✓ This applies in certain cases, such as for those engaged in battling Covid-19 or those whose roles facilitate economic recovery in the US.
- ✓ Workers across a wide range of industry verticals, which include not merely healthcare but also extend to IT, could qualify for the national interest exception, subject to meeting the set conditions
- ✓ US President Donald Trump had issued a proclamation on June 22 suspending the issuance of temporary work visas including H-1B visa for the rest of the year.
- ✓ The step was reportedly taken to protect and help millions of Americans who lost their jobs due to the ongoing economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ The proclamation came into effect on June 24, 2020.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **With focus on greater connectivity, India - announced several developmental projects in the Maldives on August 13**
- ✓ The announced projects include a \$500 million Greater Malé Connectivity Project (GMCP), billed as the largest ever civilian infrastructure project in the country.



- ✓ This was announced by the external affairs minister S Jaishankar, after a meeting with his Maldives counterpart Abdulla Shahid
- ✓ The Minister also announced the creation of an air bubble with the Maldives to facilitate movement of people from both sides for employment, tourism, medical emergencies
- ✓ India will support implementation of GMCP in Maldives, through a financial package consisting of a grant of \$100 million and a new Line of Credit of \$400 million.
- ✓ The project will consist of a number of bridges and causeways to connect Male to Villingili, Thilafushi (new industrial zone) and Gulhifahu Gulhifahu (where a port is being built under Indian LoC) islands that span 6.7 km

- ✓ The \$400 million Line of Credit comes in addition to a previous LoC of \$800 million that was announced by New Delhi in December 2018.
- ✓ India also announced the commencement of a direct cargo ferry service between India and the Maldives
- ✓ It has further extended an urgent financial assistance of \$250 million, given the financial challenges faced by the island nation due to the Covid-19 situation.
- ✓ The minister announced that India had decided to extend in-principle urgent financial assistance to the Maldives by way of a soft loan arrangement.
- ✓ Exact modalities of the loan arrangement are being finalised by the two sides.
- ✓ On August 10, 2020, India and Maldives signed a contract to develop five eco-tourism zones in Addu Atoll of the Island nation
 - ✓ These projects are to be implemented under high-Impact Community Development Project (HICDP) scheme that involves 5.5 million USD to Maldives
 - ✓ Currently, there are nine such projects being implemented in Maldives

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Ahmedabad-based Zydus Cadila - announced the launch of its anti-viral Remdesivir drug at ₹2,800 per 100-ml injection vial, making it the “most economical” brand in the country**
- ✓ A minimum of six vials are required to treat a patient suffering from severe Covid-19 symptoms, as per the protocol.
- ✓ Zydus’ price of its drug, Remdac, is nearly 50% cheaper than Hyderabad-based Hetero’s drug at ₹5,400, which was the first entrant in June.
- ✓ Cipla’s drug costs ₹4,000, and Mylan has priced it at ₹4,800 per vial.
- ✓ Recently, Jubilant Life Sciences launched its version at ₹4,700 per injection.

SPORTS

- **The INOX group - will be the official sponsor of the Indian team for the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics**
- ✓ This was announced by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on August 13.
- ✓ The Tokyo Olympics was rescheduled to next year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ It will be held from July 23 to August 8 in 2021.
- ✓ As part of the partnership, the Group will also support team's promotions through its entertainment company -- INOX Leisure Limited, which owns a chain of multiplexes in the country.
- ✓ INOX Group has earlier supported various sporting events, teams and leagues in table Tennis, football, badminton, running, basketball and cricket