

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – AUGUST 20, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- On August 19, - Tamil Nadu added 5,795 Covid-19 cases and 116 deaths, pushing the case tally beyond 3.5 lakh to 3,55,449 and the cumulative toll to 6,123.
- ✓ A total of 2,96,171 persons have been discharged from hospitals so far, with another 6,384 persons being discharged after treatment on the day.
- ✓ As on date, 53,155 people were under treatment as 'active cases' in the state

TN COVID TRACKER (As on August 19)

ZONES	New Cases	Deaths	Active
Chennai Region	2,151	32	21,403
South	1,233	35	10,997
West	942	18	6,951
North	832	22	8,142
Central	633	9	5,503
Other	4	0	159
TOTAL	5,795	116	53,155

- ✓ Health minister C Vijayabaskar launched the state's first post-Covid care centre at the Government Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital on August 19
- ✓ The Centre is meant for the check-up of all the patients who have recovered from the viral infection after four weeks of discharge.
- ✓ The doctors in the centre will screen, counsel and prescribe treatment to patients who have residual problems or post-Covid complication.
- ✓ After basic blood tests and clinical examination, they will be sent for chest x-ray and CT, in case of any abnormal health condition.
- ✓ The clinic will function from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on all days, except Sundays
- ✓ The second such clinic is also coming up soon at the Government Rajaji Hospital in Madurai

- ✓ Going forward, all major government medical college hospitals in the State will have follow-up such clinics to monitor the health of persons who have recovered from COVID-19, as per the Health Minister.
 - ✓ On August 19, Chennai reported the maximum number of 1,186 new cases
 - ✓ The neighbouring districts of Tiruvallur (393), Chengalpet (315) and Kancheepuram (257) reported 965 cases and 16 deaths totally
 - ✓ Other districts with high three-digit numbers included Coimbatore (394), Salem (295), Theni (288), Virudhunagar(184), Tirunelveli (151), Kanyakumari (122), Tiruvarur (120), Thanjavur (114), Dindigul (111), Madurai (109) and Pudukottai (105)
 - ✓ The state has tested 67,720 samples in the last 24 hours, taking the total samples tested to 39,13,523
- **The Union Government – has set up a target year of 2024 to Tamil Nadu for providing one crore water tap connections under its ambitious Jal Jeevan Mission**
- ✓ It had further warned the state that it may lose grant-in-aid since financial progress was very low.
 - ✓ For the record, Tamil Nadu stands 17th in the country with just 20% of the 1.3 crore rural households given tap connections.
 - ✓ Telangana and Goa top the list in the entire country under the Mission
 - ✓ In this regard, Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and his team held an hour-long video conference with chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on August 18.
 - ✓ During the meeting, the Centre highlighted the case of 12,522 of the 12,525 villages having piped water supply, but the state government provided only 17,120 house tap connections last year against the target of 21.03 lakh.
 - ✓ This year, the state has provided only around four lakh house tap connections so far against the targeted 34 lakh.
 - ✓ The state made little progress despite the Centre allocating Rs 373 crore last fiscal under Jal Jeevan Mission and a matching share from the state government.
 - ✓ The Central allocation this year has been increased to Rs 922 crore with the state supposed to spend a similar amount.
 - ✓ The Union minister also noted that six districts -- Kallakurichi, Karur, Madurai, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Villupuram -- are affected by Japanese encephalitis (JE) and acute encephalitis syndrome (AES).
 - ✓ At least 739 AES cases and 77 JE cases were reported in the last decade in the districts, where 20% of 19 lakh vulnerable households alone have tap connections despite separate funding from the Centre since 2012.
- **The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (Tangedco) - has sought ₹30,000 crore as part of the Centre's ₹90,000 crore liquidity injection package for State distribution companies.**

- ✓ The request comes after the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs allowed a one-time relaxation in working capital lending limits on August 19
- ✓ Tangedco will be able to avail loans now from the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC)
- ✓ As per the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) norms, banks and financial institutions can lend a maximum of only 25% of a distribution company's revenue in the previous year for working capital.
- ✓ Now, the Cabinet has allowed the two financial institutions to lend above the 25% cap.
- ✓ As of June, Tamil Nadu had outstanding dues of ₹18,077 crore to power generators, the second highest after Rajasthan.
- ✓ The Centre had announced the ₹90,000-crore-package in the form of State guaranteed loans (to be equally funded by the PFC and the REC).
- ✓ These loans will provide relief to the stressed State distribution companies and enable them to clear outstanding dues to power generators and transmission companies.
- ✓ It would also help in restarting the cash-flow cycle of the power sector to an extent
- ✓ The PFC and the REC have sanctioned over ₹30,000 crore each as part of the liquidity package to distribution companies till July 31, 2020.

STATES

- **The Uttar Pradesh government – has enacted a new law under which transgender people in the state are allowed to inherit ancestral agricultural land**
- ✓ The new law comes into force after the Yogi Adityanath cabinet cleared an amendment to the UP Revenue Code of 2006
- ✓ The move is aimed at providing equal rights and social recognition to the community, as per the cabinet note
- ✓ With the new amendment, the limitations of nomenclature in inheritance laws that only mention “sons”, “daughters”, “married”, “unmarried” and “widow” is removed.
- ✓ The proposal for a law acknowledging the inheritance rights of the “third gender”, as recognised by the Supreme Court, had been submitted by the State Law Commission to CM Adityanath in March 2019.
- ✓ Commission chairperson Justice A N Mittal had pointed out that all inheritance laws leave out the third gender, who face social estrangement despite measures to protect them.
- ✓ In the UP Revenue Code (Amendment) Act, 2020, changes have been made to Sections 4(10), 108 (2), 109 and 110 to include people of the third gender as members of a landowner's family to give them succession and physical rights to the property.

NATIONAL

- **On August 19, the Union Cabinet - approved the setting up of a multi-agency body called the National Recruitment Agency (NRA)**
- ✓ The agency will be responsible for conducting an online common eligibility test (CET) to screen and shortlist candidates for non-gazetted Group 'B' and Group 'C' posts in central government and public sector banks.
- ✓ Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said the Cabinet had taken the "historic" decision at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to benefit 2-3 crores candidates who apply for jobs every year

Single exam | The National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET) for recruitment to government jobs

- The NRA will initially conduct the CET for three sectors – Railway Recruitment Board, Staff Selection Commission and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection
- It will be held separately for three levels – graduate, 12th pass and 10th pass – for the non-technical posts of the three agencies
- Examination will be conducted online twice a year in 12 languages and will be based on a common curriculum
- Scores will be valid for a three-year period. Students can write the test multiple times and their best score will be taken into account
- According to the DoPT Secretary, there are 1.25 lakh vacancies every year in Group B and C for non-gazetted officers, and about 2.5 crore people apply every year for examinations to fill these vacancies



- ✓ The proposal for such an agency was mentioned in finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's 2020-21 budget speech on February 1 this year.
- ✓ The decision to create a new body will benefit large number of aspirants who currently have to separately take separate exams for different services
- ✓ In all, CET is intended to replace 50 separate examinations held by different recruiting agencies for around 1.25 lakh government jobs advertised each year
- ✓ The CET will serve as a platform for a single and standardised online test with scores valid for three years.
- ✓ Initially, CET will replace the Tier 1 exam held by Staff Selection Commission, Railway Recruitment Boards and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) for recruitment to Group B and C posts.

- ✓ Gradually, all Central government recruitment agencies would be brought under the NRA and CET ambit.
 - ✓ While the CET for all posts will be held simultaneously, there will be different tests depending on the specific job and applicant eligibility criteria such as graduate, 12th pass and 10th pass for non-technical posts.
 - ✓ Initially, the NRA would conduct CET for only three recruitment agencies, it will be further expanded to all 20 different agencies.
 - ✓ Based on a CET score, an aspirant can apply for higher tiers of recruitment to be conducted by these agencies.
 - ✓ CET, which will use an ICT interface with a secure central server, seeks to cut costs, inconvenience and time — for the government, recruiting agencies and candidates — in the recruitment process.
 - ✓ The aspirant will be allowed unlimited attempts within a prescribed age limit to better his CET score, with the best being considered.
 - ✓ Applicants need not travel outside their respective district to access a test centre, with 1,000 centres proposed countrywide with at least one per district.
 - ✓ Importantly, centres will be set up in 117 aspirational districts, for which a budget of Rs 600 crore has been earmarked.
 - ✓ Also, money spent on fees for multiple recruitment tests will be saved.
 - ✓ The CET score, which will be generated immediately, shall be made available to the candidate as well as the individual recruitment agency and can be expected to improve transparency.
 - ✓ The test, to be conducted twice in a year, can be taken in 12 different languages to start with.
 - ✓ Candidates from the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes would be given a relaxation in the age limit as per the government's policy
 - ✓ The Rs.1,517-crore NRA proposal is considered as one of the most landmark reforms in the area of recruitment to central government services
- **On August 19, the home ministry - ordered withdrawal of more than 10,000 security personnel from Jammu and Kashmir, who were brought to the erstwhile state before August 5 last year.**
- ✓ This the first time such a large number of Central forces are being pulled out of J&K
 - ✓ The ministry had moved at least 400 companies to J&K before nullification of Articles 370 and 35A and re-organisation of J&K into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019.
 - ✓ Each company comprises 100-110 men which means over 10,000 personnel are to be moved out of J&K now.
 - ✓ The de-induction coincides with the appointment of a politician, former Union minister Manoj Sinha, as lieutenant governor in place of G C Murmu.

- ✓ The replacement is seen as reflecting the Centre's assessment that the security situation may have stabilised, opening a window to explore revival of the political process.
- ✓ At least 40,000 additional troops were deployed across J&K prior to last year's nullification of Article 370 and dividing the erstwhile state into two UTs.
- ✓ They were positioned for almost four months — from August to November 2019 — on all streets and sensitive places to contain possible protests and to deal with law and order issues.
- ✓ The remaining troops sent to J&K last year — at least 300 companies — continue to be stationed in Kashmir and their withdrawal will depend on the second review by the MHA next month.
- ✓ The break-up of 100 companies that are being pulled out of J&K now include 40 companies from CRPF, 20 from BSF, 20 from SSB and 20 from ITBP.
- ✓ Around 7,000 personnel were withdrawn from J&K in December last year.

- **The Centre – has announced the safety protocol for engineering and medical admission tests — JEE (Main) and NEET — to be held by the National Testing Agency (NTA) between September 1 and September 13 for nearly 25 lakh aspirants**
- ✓ This year, there will not be any frisking, while the provision of staggered time-slots for reporting and contact-less verification of documents like admit cards will be part of the safety protocol
- ✓ Candidates will be required to carry a self-declaration regarding their Covid-free health status on the day of the test and those with body temperature higher than the recommended will be allowed to take the test in isolated rooms.
- ✓ As per the standard operating procedures (SOP) finalised by NTA, three-tier measures are being put in place — pre-examination, conduct of exam and post-exam phases.
- ✓ As part of pre-exam measures, all centres would keep gloves, masks, hand sanitisers, sponges/ cloth, disinfectant liquid with 1% sodium hypochlorite, disinfectant backpack spray machines for sanitising floors and walls, thermo guns and individual water bottles for staff and candidates.
- ✓ All floors, walls and gates of the exam centre will be sanitised with disinfectants before the exam starts and those on exam duty will wear masks and gloves after the staff verification.
- ✓ At the entry, body temperature of the candidates will be recorded and if it is found to be more than the permissible range, the candidate will be taken to an isolation room.
- ✓ The process of frisking and document verification for such candidates will be done after 15 to 20 minutes.
- ✓ By this time if the temperature doesn't come down, they will be allowed to take the exam in a separate room.

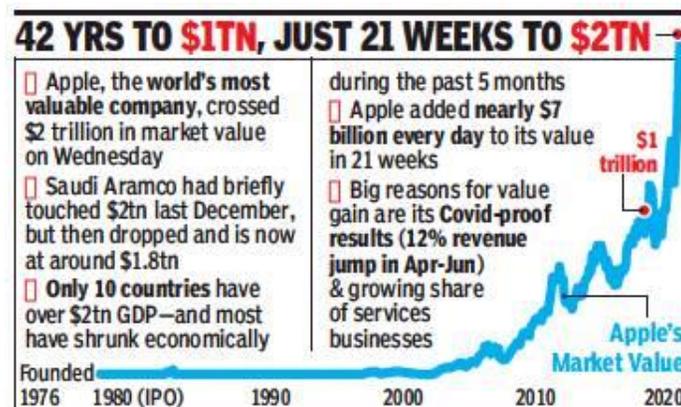
- ✓ Candidates will be allowed in batches of 15 girls and 15 boys in different registration rooms.
 - ✓ Inside the exam hall, the candidates will be allowed to carry face mask, gloves, a personal transparent water bottle, a small hand sanitiser and exam-related documents like admit card and identity card.
 - ✓ For document verification, a table of approximately 3 feet width will be kept and the candidate will display the documents for the exam functionary to view without touching.
- **The government - has prepared a plan to invest nearly Rs 65,000 crore in more than 200 economic zones in the next five years**
- ✓ This was suggested in a proposal made under the National Master Plan for providing multi-modal connectivity to various economic zones.
 - ✓ The road, railways, shipping and civil aviation ministries have prepared a detailed connectivity road map for these economic zones such as food and agro zones, fishing and defence clusters, electronic, textile and pharmaceutical parks.
 - ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted a review meeting on the preparation of the Master Plan on August 17
 - ✓ After the meeting, the PM noted that this move will boost productivity, infrastructure, economic progress and opportunities for youngsters.
 - ✓ A total of seven infrastructure ministries and seven others have come together to prepare the National Master Plan with the view to align efforts of each ministry or department with a national perspective.
 - ✓ The plan also aims to ensure that all missing gaps are removed for seamless movement of people, goods and services within a given time frame so far as connectivity is concerned.
 - ✓ **Three big industrial areas at Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Tumkur in Karnataka and Dadri in Uttar Pradesh have been identified under this plan.**
 - ✓ The government has also identified the industries that would come up at these three big industrial areas and these include food products, textiles, electronics, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and cold storage.
 - ✓ The SEZs are created to promote investment, generate employment opportunities and also administer the economic areas in a better way.
 - ✓ The SEZ Policy was announced in 2000 to attract foreign investment in the country.
 - ✓ The policy was reviewed in 2018 by a committee under the chairmanship of Baba Kalyani.
 - ✓ There are more than 230 SEZs that are operational in India.
 - ✓ Of these, 65% of them are located in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.
 - ✓ In 2018-19, around 20 lakh jobs were created through the SEZs in the country.

- ✓ In 2017-18, the exports from SEZs have grown to about 13% as compared to that of 2016-17.
 - ✓ The Centre is providing several incentives to boost activities in these Economic Zones, which includes 100% income tax exemption on export income and duty free domestic procurement to develop, operate and maintain SEZs.
- **On August 19, the Union Cabinet – announced its decision to lease out three airports – Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram - for operation, management and development to Adani Enterprises Ltd for a period of 50 years under public-private partnership (PPP) mode**
- ✓ The AAI will receive ₹1,070 crore as an upfront amount from the private operator for leasing these airports and this fund will be used to develop airports in smaller cities.
 - ✓ These three airports were among a total of six where Adani Enterprises Limited emerged as the highest bidder last year during the privatisation process initiated by the AAI.
 - ✓ While Lucknow, Ahmedabad and Mangaluru were approved for handing over to the private player, the remaining three airports weren't because of legal cases.
 - ✓ Adani Enterprises Ltd. had earlier this year sought an extension of six months for taking over Lucknow, Ahmedabad and Mangaluru airports citing uncertainty due to the pandemic.
 - ✓ The Adani group is also developing the Vizhinjam Sea Port, which is close to the airport.
 - ✓ The Airports Authority of India had on December 1, 2018 released a request for proposal for these airports through global competitive bidding with per passenger fee as parameter.
 - ✓ The technical and financial bids were opened in February 2019, and Adani Enterprises Ltd won them by quoting the highest per passenger fee for all of them.
 - ✓ However, the move to privatize Trivandrum airport has kicked up a political row in the state, with both LDF and UDF opposing it.
 - ✓ Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, protesting the unilateral decision of the Centre and requested the PM to reconsider the Cabinet decision
 - ✓ The state government had also proposed to form a company to take over the airport, citing its experience of managing the Kochi and Kannur airports, but the Centre rejected it.
 - ✓ For Trivandrum airport, Adani Group submitted a bid amount of Rs 168/passenger, followed by Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) at Rs 135 and GMR Group at Rs 63.
 - ✓ India was the ninth largest civil aviation market in the world in 2017
 - ✓ The domestic air traffic in the country is estimated at 205 million, contributing to 21.5% during the year 2017.

- ✓ The country has set the target of becoming largest civil aviation market by 2030, with the air traffic in India expected to grow at an average annual rate of 10%-11% till 2030-31.
 - ✓ The passenger traffic in India is expected to increase to 421 million in 2020.
 - ✓ The travel and tourism industry in India is to grow at 6.66%.
 - ✓ The AAI is responsible to create, upgrade, maintain and manage civil aviation infrastructure in the country, managing 137 airports in the country.
 - ✓ It was established under Airports Authority of India Act, 1994.
- **On August 19, India - registered a record number of fresh Covid-19 cases, crossing the 70,000-mark for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic.**
- ✓ With 70,101 new cases, the country's tally crossed the 28-lakh mark at 28,33,015.
 - ✓ The country has also added 978 fresh deaths, taking the cumulative toll to 53,929.
 - ✓ On the day, Maharashtra became the first state to cross the 13,000-mark with 13,165 people testing positive for the virus
 - ✓ Maharashtra also registered 346 new deaths, taking the overall fatalities beyond the 21,000-mark to 21,033.
 - ✓ After Maharashtra, Karnataka accounted for maximum fatalities with 126 deaths, followed by Tamil Nadu with 116 casualties.
 - ✓ Besides Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh reported 5156 fresh cases
 - ✓ Andhra Pradesh reported 9,742 new cases and became the fourth state to reach the 3 million mark in Covid-19 tests.
 - ✓ Uttar Pradesh (39.6 lakh), Tamil Nadu (38.4 lakh) and Maharashtra (32.6 lakh) are the only other states which have conducted more than three million Covid-19 tests.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Apple – became the first US enterprise to reach \$2 trillion in market value**
- ✓ It took only two years to move from \$1 trillion to the present mark, whereas the company has taken 42 years to reach \$1 trillion in value.



- ✓ All of Apple's second \$1 trillion came in the past 21 weeks, while the global economy shrank faster than ever before in the coronavirus pandemic.
- ✓ On August 19, Apple became the first US company to hit a \$2 trillion valuation when its shares climbed 1.2%.
- ✓ It was another milestone for the maker of iPhones, Mac computers and Apple Watches, cementing its title as the world's most valuable public company.
- ✓ Apple is the second publicly traded firm to hit \$2 trillion.
- ✓ Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, went public in December and briefly exceeded the \$2 trillion mark.
- ✓ It remained the world's most valuable company until Apple surpassed it briefly last month.
- ✓ Apple's rapid rise to \$2 trillion is particularly astonishing because the company has not revealed any new initiative in the past two years.
- ✓ Apple has repurchased more than \$360 billion of its own shares since 2012, by far the most of any company, and has announced plans to spend at least tens of billions of dollars more on Apple stock.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **India - will supply Covid vaccine to Bangladesh on a priority basis as and when it gets the nod and mass production starts, signaling the importance of the bilateral relationship**
- ✓ This was announced by foreign secretary Harsh Shringla in Dhaka on August 19.
- ✓ The Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) recently allowed China to carry out the Phase III human trial of the anti-COVID-19 vaccine produced by China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd.
- ✓ Chinese pharmaceutical company, SinoPharm, has promised that its vaccine would be available by the year-end.
- ✓ India earlier lifted a ban on export of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) for supply to many countries needing the anti-malarial drug.
- ✓ In recent weeks, with ramped up domestic production of PPEs, India has supplied the critical PPE kit to a number of countries, the latest being Lebanon.
- ✓ India has already promised vaccine doses to Bhutan and the Maldives.
- ✓ Shringla met his Bangladeshi counterpart Masud bin Momen on August 19, a day after calling on Bangla PM Sheikh Hasina.
- ✓ He also discussed the proposal for a travel bubble for flights with Bangladesh that will allow smooth movement for business, official and medical personnel.
- ✓ Bangladesh has asked India to use its non-permanent membership at the UN Security Council during 2021 to increase pressure on Myanmar for the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees in the Chittagong hills
- ✓ The Sheikh Hasina government has recently reached an agreement with China over building of a \$1 billion irrigation project at the Teesta, which will benefit the country's farmers in the Rangpur region during the lean seasons.

PERSONALITIES

- On August 19, Maharashtra governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, who was sworn in as governor of Goa at Raj Bhavan - took the oath of office in Konkani.



- ✓ Koshyari, a former Uttarakhand CM and ex-journalist, thus became the first governor of Goa to take his oath in Konkani.
- ✓ He was sworn in by Bombay high court chief justice Dipankar Dutta, and after that, reviewed the guard of honour accorded by Goa police.
- ✓ The 78-year-old will continue as Maharashtra governor, with additional charge of Goa.

ECONOMY

- In a first, the 18-month-old startup Pixxel- has raised what is perhaps the largest seed funding of \$5 million to send satellites into space from India.



- ✓ This also marks the first investment in the sector by established institutional venture capital firms Lightspeed India and Blume Ventures.
- ✓ Started by 22-year-old Awais Ahmed and Kshitij Khandelwal, the startup plans to send its first earth-imaging satellite into space in November.
- ✓ GrowXVenture, Inventus Capital India, Stanford Angels and Ryan Johnson, who co-founded satellite imaging firm Black Bridge, have also participated in the fund raising.

- ✓ Pixxel has signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and letters of intent with leading agriculture and oil & gas firms in India and the US, who would use the image data.
- ✓ The new capital would largely be allocated to get the satellites into space and also build its proprietary data platform.
- ✓ While its operations are across Bengaluru and Chennai, Pixxel is moving all its operations to the capital of Karnataka.

SPORTS

- **UK-based safety and security operating company Restrata- has secured the deal to build the bio-security bubble for the Indian Premier League (IPL) in UAE this year.**
- ✓ Restrata, which operates out of the United Kingdom and the UAE, pipped the Tata group to secure the deal.
- ✓ The company, which specialises in “covering last-mile safety, security and mobility operations”, had worked with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the London Games in 2014
- ✓ Most recently, Restrata was hired by the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to build the biosecure bubble for the series against the West Indies and Pakistan, when cricket returned after a five-month break.



- ✓ Restrata has offered to introduce ‘track and trace’ technology to keep tabs on the number of people who will be working in specified zones to ensure all Covid-related health compliances and the mandatory social distancing.
- ✓ **On August 19, the Indian Premier League (IPL) governing council announced Dream11 as the new title sponsor for the 2020 edition.**
- ✓ The bidding for the rights took place on August 18 through an “Expression of Interest” that the BCCI had called for.
- ✓ Under the new arrangement, Dream11 will hold the league’s title rights from now until December 31 after submitting a winning bid of Rs 222 crore.