

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JULY 31, 2020

TAMIL NADU


- **The Tamil Nadu government - announced extension of the lockdown till August 31, following the surge of cases in the state**
- ✓ This was announced by the Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on July 30
- ✓ Accordingly, the ban on public and private bus transport services, malls, gymnasiums and cinema halls will continue till the end of the month.
- ✓ All private offices and establishments have been allowed to function with 75% workforce.
- ✓ Further, Intense lockdown will continue to be enforced on all Sundays in August across the state.

IN NON-CONTAINMENT AREAS OF GREATER CHENNAI POLICE LIMITS, THE FOLLOWING FACILITIES CAN FUNCTION	
➤ Pvt offices, industrial & export units (with 75% staff)	capacity
➤ Delivery of all goods by e-com firms allowed	VEGGIE, GROCERY SHOPS: 6am-7pm; other shops: 10am-7pm
RESTAURANTS: 6am-7pm dine-in with 50% capacity; takeaway: 6am-9pm	➤ Small temples, mosques, darghas, churches in panchayats, town panchayats & municipalities allowed
TEA SHOPS: 6am-7pm at 50%	

- ✓ However, there will be no relaxation in containment zones.
- ✓ In the areas under the Chennai city police, groceries and provision stores would be allowed to operate between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m., with a one-hour extension
- ✓ Restaurants and tea shops can accommodate customers up to 50% of their seating capacity between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. in non-air-conditioned dining facilities
- ✓ E-commerce companies are allowed to deliver both essential and non-essential goods
- ✓ Industrial and commercial establishments are asked to encourage employees to work from home and adhere to standard operating procedures.
- ✓ The e-passes from district collectors/Greater Chennai Corporation commissioner are mandatory for inter-district and inter-state movement.

- ✓ Shopping malls, schools, colleges, training and coaching institutions are not permitted.
 - ✓ The other prohibited activities include, international air travel of passengers, except permitted by the Union government, metro rail and suburban trains, halls, swimming pools, entertainment parks, theatres, bars and auditoriums, assembly halls, beaches, zoological parks, museums and similar places.
 - ✓ Independence Day will be celebrated in the state, adhering to social distancing norms and wearing of masks.
 - ✓ Small temples (with an annual income less than ₹10,000), churches and mosques in village panchayats, town panchayats and municipal limits would be allowed to open for worship with permission from the Collectors.
 - ✓ Prominent places of worship and those within the Chennai Corporation limits would not be allowed to open
- **Chennai-based BCG Vaccine Laboratory – to send out the first batch of anti-tuberculosis vaccine from its new building on July 31 for indigenous use.**
- ✓ This is the first batch of commercial production in the lab
 - ✓ The licence of the 72-year-old laboratory was suspended in 2008 over the absence of good manufacturing practices
 - ✓ Between June 2020 and March 2021, the lab plans to manufacture at least 170 lakh doses of BCG required for the universal immunization programme.
 - ✓ By March 2022, the capacity of the lab will be increased to 400 lakh doses
 - ✓ On January 16, 2008, the Centre suspended production at the Chennai lab, Pasteur Institute in Ooty and CRI in Kasauli.
 - ✓ In October 2019, the Chennai lab was granted the manufacturing licence from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) after complying with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)
 - ✓ The lab has the capacity to manufacture 600 lakh doses of the vaccine.
 - ✓ Until 2008, around 600 lakh doses – nearly 75% of the country’s demand – came from this lab.

SENDING OUT VACCINES TODAY

<p>2008 The lab, which makes around 600 lakh doses of BCG Vaccine, is shut by the Centre</p>		<p>Oct 2019 Centre says the trial batches of vaccine made by the lab were of standard quality</p>
<p>2013 Construction of new building begins</p>		<p>July 31, 2020 BCG Vaccine Laboratory sends 1st batch of anti-TB vaccines for universal immunization programme. It uses a strain from <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> BCG. Each vial has 10 doses</p>
<p>2016 The lab receives certification from CDSCO to start trial vaccine production in the new building</p>		

- ✓ After that, the Centre has been buying most drugs for the vaccination programme from private manufacturers.

- ✓ In 2010, the suspension of licence was revoked on the condition that the laboratories put in place GMPs and infrastructure.
- ✓ Between 2012 and 2015, the lab gave about 100 lakh doses it manufactured from the old building, but suspended work due to construction of the new building
- ✓ In 2016, following the approval of CDSCO for trial vaccine production in the new building, small batches, as per standard protocol, were tested for consistency and quality.
- ✓ The lab was established in 1948 with assistance of Statens Serum Institut (SSI) Copenhagen, Denmark and World Health Organization (WHO)
 - ✓ It uses a strain from Mycobacterium bovis BCG for developing the vaccine.
 - ✓ The liquid bulk is filled in glass vials with high sterile 'fully automated filling online' equipment and frozen to powder before being sent out for use.
- **The school education department – has announced the new guidelines for online education, keeping in view the health of students after prolonged view of gadgets.**
- ✓ The guidelines have been developed considering the Pragyata guidelines issued by the Central government and the inputs from the School Education Commissioner, the Directors of School Education, matriculation schools and the State Council for Educational Research and Training.

The way forward | The State's advisory for online classes is in line with the Centre's Pragyata guidelines

- Classes can be scheduled between **9 a.m. and 5 p.m.**

- Schools asked to restrict electronic communication about classes and assignments

between **8 a.m. and 6 p.m.**

- Teachers to focus on well-being of students, which includes educating them about the pandemic and its prevention, cultivating an individualised rapport, **nurturing a healthy mental connect and making children feel comfortable**

- Responsible adult supervision as well as implementation of systemic safe **online practices for which a teacher or counsellor can be put in charge**

- Formulate a cohesive plan that takes into **account the number of students and devices available**



- ✓ According to the new norms, the duration of online classes should be restricted to 30 to 45 minutes with a mandatory break of 10 to 15 minutes between each session to give rest to the students.

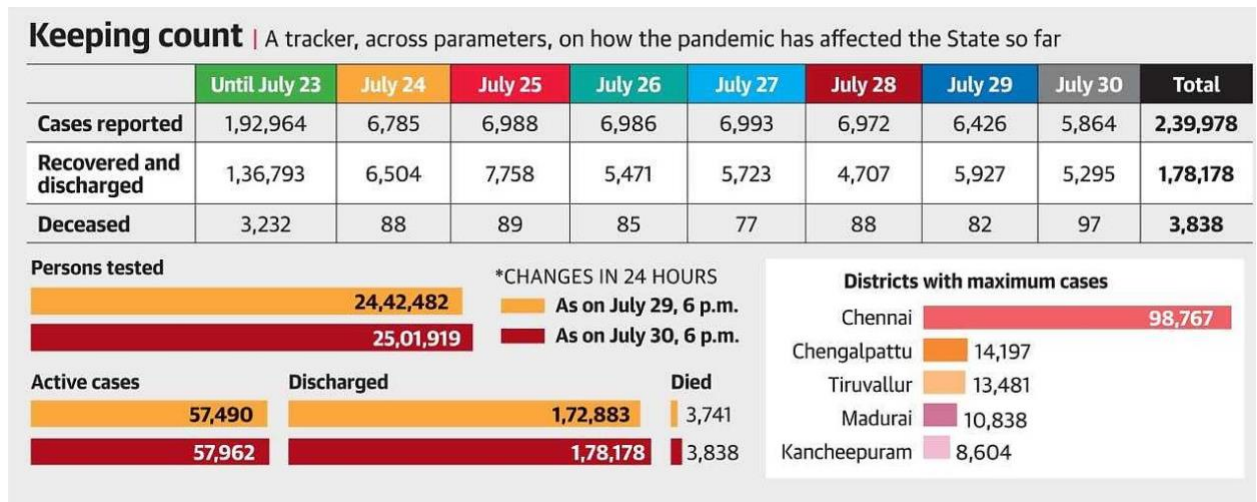
- ✓ For students in Classes IX to XII, a maximum of four sessions of 30 to 45 minutes a day can be conducted
- ✓ For students in Classes I to VIII, only two sessions a day are allowed
- ✓ For pre-primary classes, no online classes may be scheduled for teaching curriculum.
- ✓ But, online sessions may be scheduled for interacting with parents and guiding them for not more than 30 minutes
- ✓ The guidelines, issued as per a Madras high court order, mandates that teachers set aside five minutes in each session for warm up, exercise and creative activities.
- ✓ It also said parents must ensure adult supervision before providing gadgets like smart phones and laptops with data connectivity to their children.
- ✓ To avoid the burn out among teachers, the government has fixed a maximum number of classes for them.
 - ✓ A teacher may take a maximum of six classes a day subject to a maximum of 28 classes a week
 - ✓ Classes may be scheduled between 9am to 5pm on working days.
 - ✓ All other electronic communication regarding online classes or assignments must be restricted to between 8am to 6pm.
- ✓ Assessments must be made an integral part of online learning programmes to ensure achievement of learning outcomes at each level.
- ✓ However, the assessment shall be meant only for monitoring purposes and shall not be in any case linked to the performance assessment for final grading
- ✓ Further, the schools must add that attending online classes should not be made mandatory.
- ✓ It also asked the schools to orient students, teachers and parents about cyber safety and security.
- ✓ For those children who could not access the online classes due to lack of facilities, the school should work out another alternate mode of imparting education and should give them intensive coaching after reopening of schools
- ✓ The guidelines state that, as far as possible, it is best to avoid separate learning groups for students with special needs and they should be treated on a par with other students.
- **The Tamil Nadu government - has planned to provide incentives to farmers who grow vegetables through organic farming.**
 - ✓ An incentive, ranging from ₹2,500 per hectare to ₹5,000 per hectare, will be offered, depending on the crop.
 - ✓ The move is expected to benefit as many as 60,000 farmers.
 - ✓ A sum of ₹15 crore has been set aside for the initiative and a government order is expected to be issued shortly
 - ✓ The aim of the move is to promote organic cultivation of vegetables such as greens, brinjal, cabbage, ladies' fingers and cauliflower.

- ✓ In terms of area, the government aims to target around 76,000 acres or 30,850 hectares this year through organic farming, though the aim is one lakh acres (about 40,470 hectares).
 - ✓ At present, according to an estimate, the total extent of organic farming in the State is about 65,610 acres (approximately 26,550 hectares).
 - ✓ As of now, five major organic vegetable growing districts are The Nilgiris (1,287 hectares), Coimbatore (77 hectares), Dindigul (55 hectares), Namakkal (49 hectares), and Tiruppur (47 hectares).
- **Former advocate-general of Tamil Nadu and designated senior advocate A L Somayaji - has been appointed special senior counsel for government to deal with cases of “special importance and complicated nature”.**



- ✓ The appointment, has been made with immediate effect
 - ✓ It is based on a government order dated July 29 sanctioning the creation of the “one temporary post”.
 - ✓ As per the government order, the post will carry a monthly retainer fee of ₹75,000 and other remuneration facilities as applicable to the advocate-general of Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ In March 2013, Somayaji was appointed as advocate-general of the state after a brief stint as additional advocate general.
 - ✓ In August 2016, he tendered his resignation.
 - ✓ However, as a senior counsel, he was still being engaged by the Tamil Nadu government and the AIADMK in many cases.
- **On July 30, Tamil Nadu - recorded a drop in new Covid cases at 5,864, after reporting more than 6,000 cases every day for the past one week**
- ✓ This took the state’s cumulative tally to 2,39,978
 - ✓ The state’s death toll reached 3,838 after reporting a new high of 97 deaths on the day.
 - ✓ A total of 5,295 people were discharged, taking the total recoveries to 1,78,178.
 - ✓ There were 57,962 people still under treatment as on date
 - ✓ Chennai continues to be the hotspot with the reporting of 1,175 cases

- ✓ Its three neighbours, Chengalpet reported 354, Kancheepuram 175 and Tiruvallur 325 cases.



- ✓ Further, Coimbatore had 303 cases, Tirunelveli 277 cases, Ranipet 272, followed by 261 in Theni, 248 in Kanyakumari, 244 in Virudhunagar, and 220 each in Tuticorin and Madurai.
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, a total of 61,202 samples were tested, taking the total number of samples tested to 25,97,862

STATES

- **Andhra Pradesh government – to collaborate with Amazon Web Services (AWS) for skilling and promotion of entrepreneurship and digital governance in the State**
- ✓ AWS has presented a ‘Vision for A.P.’ as per its commitments to invest in start-ups and skill initiatives in India and to align with the Centre’s ambitious ‘Digital India’ programme.
- ✓ Going forward, the state plans to sign an MoU with a time-bound action plan, and set up a steering committee to ensure accountability
- ✓ The State government was already collaborating with Amazon for the empowerment of women entrepreneurs under the ‘Amazon Saheli’ programme.
- ✓ The government was also making efforts to bring back a large number of Telugu people employed in the field of IT to strengthen the sector in the State.
- ✓ Amazon is planning to set up a Centre of Excellence out of the proposed 30 skill development centres in the State.

NATIONAL

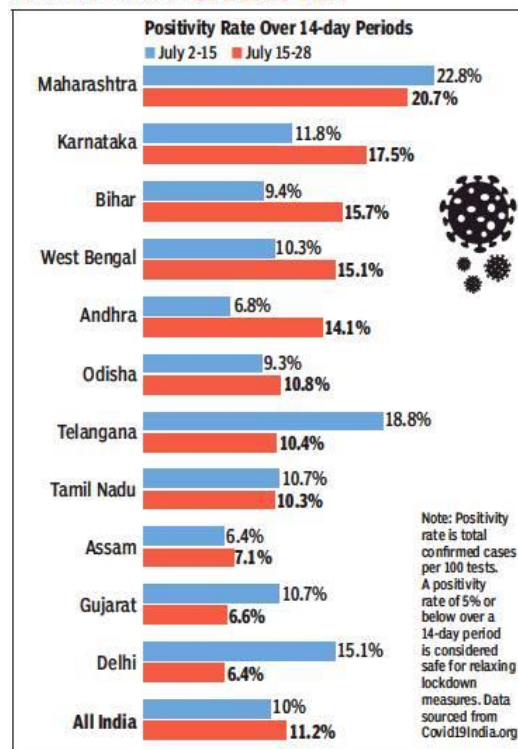
- **On July 30, India – reported two grim record highs of 54,211 cases and 786 deaths, taking the total caseload over 16 lakh and the death toll to 35,748**
- India now has the fifth highest Covid-19 death toll in the world after surpassing Italy’s fatality count of 35,132.

ANDHRA MOVES FROM NO.11 TO NO.2

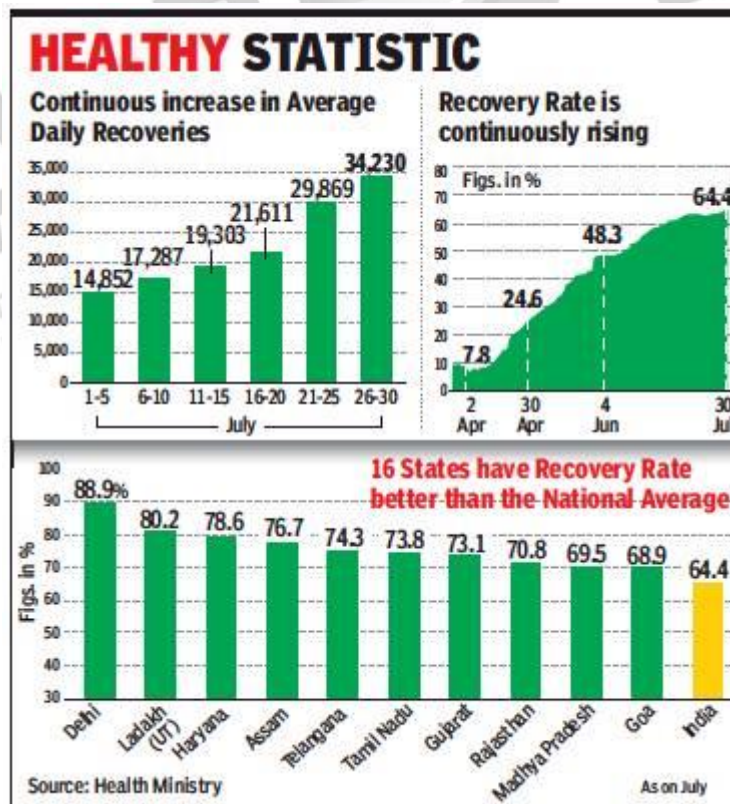
Avg. Daily Cases June 1-4			July 1-4		July 26-29	
1	Maha	2,535	Maha	6,326	Maha	8,571
2	Delhi	1,290	TN	4,209	Andhra	7,930
3	TN	1,231	Delhi	2,460	TN	6,844
4	Gujarat	454	K'taka	1,577	K'taka	5,391
5	Bengal	344	T'gana	1,493	UP	3,475
Andhra No. 11			Andhra No. 7		Delhi No. 13	
Cases on Thursday			Deaths on Thursday		Total Deaths	
54,211			786		35,748	
Source: Data from state govts					Deaths up by over 5,000 in a week	

- ✓ Only the US with over 1.5 lakh deaths, Brazil (90,000-plus), the UK (45,999) and Mexico (45,361) have reported higher Covid-19 fatalities than India.
- ✓ Out of the total deaths, 18,356 have come in July alone, which was more than all Covid-19 deaths in the previous months put together
- ✓ Maharashtra reported 11,147 fresh infections, the highest in a single day in any state, taking its total tally to 4,11,748.
- ✓ Andhra Pradesh reported 10,167 new cases, becoming the only state to report 10,000-plus daily cases two days in a row.
- ✓ Andhra Pradesh with a caseload of 1,30,557 is in the fourth spot in terms of overall cases, and is set to overtake Delhi, which has 1,34,403 cases so far.
- ✓ **Maharashtra continues to top the positivity rate chart, which refers to the total confirmed cases per 100 tests**
- ✓ For the entire country, the positivity rate stands at 11.2% as on date.

MAHA STILL WORST-HIT



- ✓ Maharashtra has a positivity rate of 21% and followed by Karnataka (18%), Bihar (16%), West Bengal (15%), Andhra Pradesh (14%) and Odisha (11%).
 - ✓ Erstwhile hotspots such as Delhi, Gujarat and Telangana are now at the 11th, 10th and 7th positions, respectively.
 - ✓ A positivity rate of 5% or below over a 14-day period is considered safe for relaxing lockdown measures.
 - ✓ Anything above that is considered a 'red zone'
 - ✓ India is aiming to bring down sample positivity rates below 10% and eventually below 5% as per WHO recommendation.
 - ✓ At present, 21 states and UTs have less than 10% positivity rate.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have seen a slowdown with the positivity rate coming down from 11% to 10% in TN and 11% to 7% in Gujarat.
- ✓ **Recoveries from Covid-19 crossed the 10-lakh mark in India, bringing the national average recovery rate to 64.4% from 48.3% in the first week of June and 25.6% in April-end.**
- ✓ **The fatality rate has also witnessed a sharp decline, dropping to 2.2% from 3.3% in June**
- ✓ India's fatality rate is much lower compared to other developed countries with only Russia (1.6%) an exception.



- ✓ The world average for Covid-19 fatality rate is 4%, with the US at 3.5%, Brazil 3.6%, Iran 5.5%, Mexico 11% and the UK 15.3%.

- ✓ **In a related development, the health ministry has suggested states may de-notify the containment zones in 14 days after discharge of the last confirmed case, instead of 28 days as specified earlier.**
- ✓ The move is aimed at providing relaxations in containment zones and buffer zones to remove them from lockdown for a prolonged period.
- **On July 29, the Union Power Minister, Raj Kumar Singh – announced the completion of three wind energy projects with a total capacity of 800 MW and dedicated them to the nation.**
- ✓ These projects, SECI 1, 2 and 3, were awarded to Sembcorp Energy India Limited (SEIL) by Solar Corporation of India (SECI) in 2016.
- ✓ Sembcorp Energy India Limited (SEIL) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore-based Sembcorp Industries
- ✓ With this, the private sector power generator Sembcorp's renewable energy capacity in India touched 1730MW.
- ✓ Thus, Sembcorp became the first independent power producer to fully commission its projects awarded in the first three wind power auctions held by the SECI.
- ✓ This is also the largest operational wind capacity with any developer to date from SECI auctions



- ✓ Under the first SECI auction, Sembcorp installed 250 MW of wind power capacity in Chandragiri district of Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu and a further 250 MW and 300 MW under subsequent auctions in Bhuj, Gujarat.
- ✓ The SECI 1 project was commissioned in October 2018.
- ✓ Sembcorp's SECI 3 project is the first in the country to install 2.1MW G122-127m wind turbines which are designed to work efficiently even at low wind speeds.
- ✓ SEIL has introduced an advanced digital tool, Virtual Brain Renewables (VBR) in its renewable operations that helps in monitoring more than 30 wind energy sites and provides real time data
- ✓ SEIL entered the Indian market in the year 2011
 - ✓ It has a presence across 9 states and operates 35 assets

- ✓ The private power generator produces a total power capacity of 4,370MW including 1,730MW of renewable energy.
- ✓ **Tamil Nadu is the top state for wind projects in terms of cumulative numbers**
- ✓ The state accounts for 25% of overall wind installations in the country with over 9.3 GW of wind projects as of June 30, 2020.
- ✓ Gujarat came in second with 7.6 GW of cumulative wind capacity, accounting for a 20% share of the country's wind generating capacity.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On July 30, Johnson & Johnson - kicked off US human safety trials for its Covid-19 vaccine**
- ✓ According to its study in monkeys, its best-performing vaccine candidate offered strong protection in a single dose, against all other vaccines which required two doses.
- ✓ Meanwhile, US deaths from the coronavirus surpassed 1,50,000, the highest official toll in the world
- ✓ One person in the US died about every minute from Covid-19 as 1,461 new deaths were recorded on July 29, the highest one-day increase since 1,484 on May 27

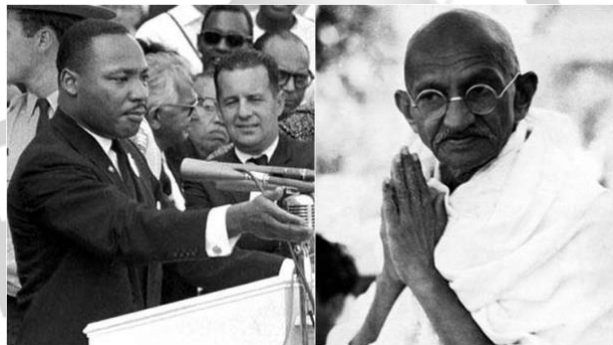
INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **On July 30, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Mauritius counterpart Pravind Kumar Jugnauth - jointly inaugurated the new Supreme Court building at Port Louis, Capital of Mauritius**



- ✓ The construction of the SC building was completed with Indian assistance as part of the country's thrust on cooperation with countries in the Indian Ocean Region through its 'SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region' initiative
- ✓ The court structure construction is one of the five projects under the \$353 million Special Economic Package (SEP) extended by India in 2016.

- ✓ The four other priority infrastructure projects built under India's SEP for Mauritius include Metro Express Project, which was inaugurated jointly in October 2019, by both the Prime Ministers.
- ✓ India had also announced Lines of Credit worth \$600 million at concessional terms to Mauritius, with a primary focus on developmental projects.
- **The Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative Act – was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 29**
- ✓ The Bill was authored by American civil rights leader and lawmaker John Lewis, who passed away recently on July 17, 2020
- ✓ It seeks to establish an annual scholar and student exchange programme between India and the U.S.
 - ✓ The programme aims to study the work and legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.,
 - ✓ In this regard, the students will make visits to historic sites in India and the U.S., relevant to the India's freedom struggle and the U.S.'s civil rights movement



- ✓ The Bill was co-sponsored by Indian American Congressman from California Ami Bera
 - ✓ Bera heads the influential Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and Non-proliferation
 - ✓ Other co-sponsors included Indian American Democratic lawmakers Pramila Jayapal (Washington State), Ro Khanna (California) and Raja Krishnamoorthi (Illinois).
- ✓ **The Bill also seeks to establish the Gandhi-King Global Academy**, a conflict resolution initiative based on the principles of non-violence.
- ✓ **It also proposes the establishment of the U.S.-India Gandhi-King Development Foundation** set up by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Government of India, organised under Indian law.
 - ✓ The Foundation has a proposed budget of up to \$30 million per year for five years through 2025
 - ✓ It is tasked with administering grants to NGOs that work in health, pollution and climate change, education and empowerment of women.

- ✓ The Bill was inspired by John Lewis's visit to India in 2009 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's visit to India
- ✓ The Bill will need to be voted through the House and Senate before it becomes law.
- ✓ John Lewis was a civil rights hero not only in the US but across the globe who fought for equality, human rights, justice, and democracy for all, through his actions of non- violence
- ✓ He was also a contemporary of fellow civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On July 28, the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman - took part in the 5th Annual Board of Governors Meeting of AIIB- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank through a video conference.**



- ✓ The meeting focused on various topics of official business, including a roundtable discussion on the theme 'AIIB 2030- Supporting Asia's Development over the Next Decade' and election of AIIB President.
 - ✓ During her speech, the Finance Minister praised the efforts of AIIB for fast-tracking the financial assistance of about \$10 billion to the member countries which include India to combat the effect of Covid-19 pandemic.
 - ✓ The Finance Minister also focused on the launch of National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) 2020-2025 along with an estimated expenditure of \$1.4 trillion that has created fresh investment opportunities in infrastructure development with AIIB's partnerships.
- **6th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting – was held on July 30, 2020 via video conferencing.**
 - ✓ The meeting was held under the Presidency of Russia.
 - ✓ Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar represented India at the meeting
 - ✓ The Environment Ministers of the five BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) participated in the meeting



- ✓ During the meeting, the Union Minister highlighted the efforts taken by India in areas relating to sustainable urban management, tackling marine litter, air pollution and the cleaning of rivers.
 - ✓ He had also mentioned that India launched Air Quality monitoring index in 10 cities in 2015 to control air pollution, which has now been extended to 122 cities.
 - ✓ The Minister also spoke about the launch of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019, which aims to reduce particulate pollution by 20-30% relative to 2017 levels by 2024.
 - ✓ During the meeting, the Ministers expressed their concern that the impact of Covid-19 pandemic poses a serious threat to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - ✓ They noted that due to Covid-19, climate change negotiations have been delayed and that the 26th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP26) will now be held in November 2021
 - ✓ The Ministers also noted that the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) that was scheduled to take place in Kunming, China in October 2020 has been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - ✓ All BRICS nations agreed on the need to work as a group to adopt the post 2020 Biodiversity framework at CBD COP15
 - ✓ The BRICS Environment Ministers welcomed the establishment of BRICS Environmentally Sound Technology (BEST) Platform
 - ✓ The platform aims to facilitate the exchange of information views and sharing of the best practices on BRICS countries including post Covid-19 environment/sustainable development recovery programmes.
 - ✓ India is scheduled to take over the BRICS Presidency in 2021.
- **On July 30, Ayush Minister, Shripad Naik - chaired a webinar of AYUSH/health ministers of all the states and UTs**
- ✓ During the webinar, the Minister reviewed the National AYUSH Mission and the operationalization of AYUSH Health & Wellness centres.



- ✓ He also launched a dedicated web-portal for the National AYUSH Mission for submitting Utilization certificates, State Annual Action Plans, information related to DBT, Physical & Financial Progress Report, etc.
- ✓ The new portal ensures transparency and ease of doing work

PERSONALITIES

- **Former Samata Party President Jaya Jaitly and two others – gets 4-year jail term for criminal conspiracy and corruption charges**
- ✓ A special CBI trial court sentenced Jaya Jaitly, her former political colleague Gopal Pacherwal and Major General S P Murgai (retired) for a jail term of four years
- ✓ They were charged of influencing defence purchases during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA government for monetary gains.
- ✓ The cases against them were registered by the CBI following a sting operation by a news portal, Tehelka in the year 2001.
- ✓ Jaya Jaitly was a close associate of former defence minister George Fernandes
- ✓ The Tehelka sting expose forced Fernandes to quit as defence minister, causing a major embarrassment to the government at that time.

STUNG IN OP WEST END

Dec 28, 2000 | Journalists posing as representatives of fictitious London-based arms company West End International taped several politicians, Army officers and bureaucrats allegedly accepting bribes and other inducements to swing defence deals

Politicians included Samata Party chief Jaya Jaitly (in pic) & treasurer RK Jain (close aides of then defence minister George Fernandes) &



then BJP chief Bangaru Laxman Fernandes was forced to step down as defence minister for 7 months, Laxman resigned as BJP chief. Army officers faced court-martial or administrative action

NDA govt set up Phukan Commission to inquire case

Oct '04 | UPA-I govt wound up commission, handed over cases to CBI

July 30, 2010 | Jaitly & 2 others sentenced to 4 yrs' jail for graft

- ✓ The judgment marked a huge setback to Jaitly, known for her pioneering work in promoting handicrafts through her Dastkari Haat Samiti and setting up Dilli Haat.
- ✓ However, she will not be sent to prison now, as the Delhi High Court admitted her appeal against the trial court verdict and suspended her sentence.
- ✓ In the sting operation, Jaya Jaitly was seen accepting ₹2 lakh from Mathew Samuel, who represented a non-existent firm named Westend International.
 - ✓ The retired Major General received ₹20,000.
- ✓ Jaitly is the second influential person to have been targeted by the Tehelka sting or 'Operation Westend'.
- ✓ Late Bangaru Lakshman, the then BJP chief, was caught taking money in video by journalists of the news portal who had approached him, while Jaitly and others posed as representatives of a company dealing in defence supplies.
 - ✓ BJP sacked Bangaru who was later convicted in a separate case arising from the sting operation.
- ✓ Jaitly was the president of Samata Party, as JD(U) was known in its previous incarnation.
- ✓ Pacherwal was a senior-office bearer of Samata Party at the time of the sting operation.
- ✓ Jaitly was accused of conspiring with Pacherwal and Maj Gen Murgai to assist a fictitious firm, Westend International, in pushing handheld thermal imagers to the Indian Army.
- ✓ The special CBI court had on July 21 convicted Jaitly, Pacherwal and Murgai under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) of IPC and Section 9 (taking gratification for exercise of personal influence with public servant) of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Nasa – has launched its Perseverance Mars rover and Ingenuity helicopter on a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket from Space Launch Complex 41 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida on July 30**



- ✓ This is the third Mars-bound spacecraft launched in this month alone

- ✓ Perseverance is a robotic six-wheeled vehicle aiming to look for signs of past life on the Red planet, including whether the life was ancient, long dead or present even today
- ✓ This is the first Mars mission to explicitly search for life since the Viking 1 and Viking 2 missions in the late 1970s.
- ✓ If all goes well, the rover will land on Mars in February 2021, about the same time as UAE's and China's Mars missions.
- ✓ The nuclear-powered vehicle contains seven science instruments, two microphones and 23 cameras to examine the planet's climate and geology
 - ✓ Out of the 23 cameras, nine will focus on engineering, seven for conducting experiments and seven to watch the rover descend to the surface.
 - ✓ The science payload aboard Perseverance includes an X-ray fluorescence instrument, spectroscopy instruments and a number of radars.
- ✓ Together, they'll enable Perseverance to observe the chemistry of its 250-metre landing site, Jezero Crater.
- ✓ Jezero Crater was once an ancient lake filled with water some 3.5 billion years ago and the conditions are ideal to search for possible traces of ancient life
- ✓ **Once Perseverance lands on the surface of Mars, it will release a small helicopter weighing 1.8 gram called 'Ingenuity' from its underside**
- ✓ This is the first instance of a rotorcraft or a small helicopter being landing anywhere outside of Earth's atmosphere
- ✓ Ingenuity is the first-ever inter-planetary technology demonstration and will only fly for a total of 15 minutes at most
- ✓ The rover will also carry another technology demonstration - an instrument to extract oxygen from the carbon dioxide in Mars's thin atmosphere
 - ✓ This will be converted into propellant for future rockets or to produce breathable oxygen for future astronauts.
- ✓ The Perseverance rover will attempt to bring Martian rock samples back to Earth by collecting samples in cigar-sized capsules and scattering them on the surface for a possible retrieval by a future rover by around 2031.
- ✓ The Atlas V is one of the largest rockets available for an interplanetary flight.
 - ✓ It is similar to the one that launched the InSight and Curiosity rover to Mars.
 - ✓ The launch vehicle has been provided by Boeing-Lockheed joint venture United Launch Alliance.
- ✓ The Mars 2020 Perseverance mission is part of America's ambitious 'Moon to Mars' exploration approach that includes missions to the Moon as a way to prepare for Mars exploration.
 - ✓ It plans to send the first woman and next man to the Moon by 2024
 - ✓ Further, NASA plans to establish a sustained human presence on and around the Moon by 2028 through NASA's Artemis program.
- ✓ In the last two weeks, the United Arab Emirates and China have both sent missions to the red planet.
- ✓ The UAE launched an atmospheric probe known as 'Hope' on July 19

- ✓ The mission aims to examine Mars from orbit and provide a holistic view of the planet's atmospheric cycles and includes analysis of its unusual composition of gases.
- ✓ China, by contrast, is attempting a mission to land on Mars' surface.
 - ✓ Its Tianwen-1 mission is composed of three spacecrafts - an orbiter, a lander and a currently-unnamed rover.
- ✓ Nasa's Perseverance mission to Mars has an Indian connection when it touches down at the Jezero crater on February 18, 2021
 - ✓ Bengaluru-born scientist **Swati Mohan** of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has played a major part in designing and developing a new landing technology called 'Terrain Relative Navigation' that will make the touchdown less hazardous
- ✓ NASA's first Mars rover - Sojourner had landed on the red planet way back in 1997.
- ✓ The space agency then sent two more rovers Spirit and Opportunity, which helped reveal the geology of the Martian plains and found evidence of past water formations.
- ✓ NASA also has successfully launched three Mars landers - Pathfinder, Phoenix, InSight.
- ✓ On November 26, 2011, NASA had launched the Curiosity rover, which landed on Aeolis Palus inside Gale crater.
 - ✓ Initially meant to be a two-year mission, the rover's mission life was extended indefinitely in December 2012.
 - ✓ The rover's main objective has been to investigate the Martian climate and geology and find traces of microbial life including role of water.
 - ✓ The curiosity rover is still operational and it recently discovered an ancient oasis on Mars.
- **Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) – has started allowing the “private sector to set up their own launchpad at the Sriharikota launch centre” (SHAR) for launching their rocket or spacecraft**
 - ✓ Currently, Isro has two launchpads and two rocket assembly buildings at Sriharikota.
 - ✓ This was announced by Isro chairman K Sivan
 - ✓ For the launches by Private agencies, Isro will provide all the expertise needed without charging anything.
 - ✓ Simultaneously, Department of Space is in the process of setting up Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE)
 - ✓ The agency is being set up to promote, hand-hold, monitor and supervise space activities by the private sector


ECONOMY

- **On July 29, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) - announced that it has approved \$3 million grant to India from its Asia Pacific Disaster Respond Fund.**
- ✓ The assistance is meant to support India's emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ As per the ADB, the grant will help India in enhancing disease surveillance and help in early detection, treatment, and contact tracing.
- ✓ On April 28, 2020, Asian Development Bank (ADB) had approved \$1.5 billion Covid-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (CARES) programme in order to support India in its pandemic response efforts
- ✓ The CARES program has been funded through Covid-19 Pandemic Response Option (CPRO) which is under ADB's Counter-Cyclical Support Facility.
- ✓ CPRO was established as a part of the Asian Development Bank's \$20 billion expanded assistance for developing member countries' pandemic response, which was announced on April 13, 2020.

- **On July 30, the government – announced its decision to restrict the import of fully-built colour televisions sets by putting them on the “restricted” list, in a move aimed at promoting domestic manufacturing**

'Curbs may not impact TV prices'

- Annual TV market in India: Around 17 million units, with a turnover of about ₹25,000 crore
- Nearly ₹7,000 crore of this is through imports, around 60-65% of which are from China
- The import curbs may not impact TV prices, say company executives



“ This would strengthen a self-reliant India and lead to more technology, investments and jobs in the TV sector

— SUNIL VACHANI,
CHAIRMAN, DIXON
TECHNOLOGIES

- ✓ The move will affect television shipments worth ₹7,000 crore coming in from China, Vietnam, Malaysia and other countries
- ✓ Initially benefitting contract manufacturers, the curbs are unlikely to impact prices
- ✓ The decision will impact the business of companies such as homegrown Vu, and China's TCL.
- ✓ It will also affect the import of some high-end TV models from companies such as Sony, LG, Xiaomi and Samsung, even though a large part of their sales are through locally-made/sourced TVs

- ✓ TV sets along with CCTV camera and set-top boxes are among eight new product categories taken up by the commerce and industry ministry under the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme, where imports will be discouraged to boost domestic production.
- ✓ A roadmap for a dozen products has already been prepared.

APPOINTMENTS

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - has picked a Gujarat-cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Hardik Shah, as his new Private Secretary**



- ✓ Shah replaces Rajiv Topno, who has earlier been appointed Senior Adviser to the Executive Director of the World Bank in Washington DC.
- ✓ Shah has been serving as Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office since last August.
- ✓ He was elevated to the elite IAS in 2015 through selection, when he was Member Secretary of the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB)
- ✓ After his elevation into the IAS, Shah was sent on Central deputation first to the Ministry of Environment and Forest as Private Secretary to the Environment and Forest Minister.
- ✓ In August 2019, Shah was shifted from the Environment Ministry to the Prime Minister's Office as Deputy Secretary.

AWARDS

- **The Ministry of Earth Sciences - has announced the winners of National Awards for excellence in Earth System Science.**
- ✓ The Ministry has awarded the Lifetime Excellence Award 2020 to Professor Ashok Sahni for his major contribution in the field of Biostratigraphy, Geology and Vertebrate Paleontology.
- ✓ The National Award for the Ocean Science and Technology has been awarded to Dr. V.V.S.S. Sharma.
- ✓ He is a Senior Principle Scientist at CSIR- National Institute of Oceanography at Vishakhapatnam.

- ✓ M Ravichandran, Director of National centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa has also been awarded the National Award for Ocean Science and Technology
- ✓ The National Award for the Atmospheric Science and Technology will be presented to Dr. S. Suresh Babu.

SPORTS

- **The Bureau of World football body, the FIFA Council - approved COVID-19 relief plan regulations to the tune of \$1.5 billion on July 29.**
- ✓ It aims to support all 211 FIFA member associations and the six federations in reducing the financial impact of the pandemic by granting 'loans' in two or three phases.
- ✓ The relief plan regulations include audit requirements and strict compliance as well as clear loan repayment conditions which will be under the supervision of a steering committee.
- ✓ The COVID-19 relief plan was originally prepared by the FIFA administration in close cooperation with the confederations.
- ✓ It was subsequently approved by the FIFA Council on June 25, 2020.
- ✓ In the first phase of the plan, the maximum amount of the FIFA Forward operational cost entitlements has been released to the member associations
- ✓ In the second phase, member associations can change the remaining FIFA forward development projects grants into the COVID-19 operational relief funds.
- ✓ However, a minimum of 50% of the released funds need to be allocated to women's football.
- ✓ With the approval, FIFA will implement the 3rd phase of the plan
- ✓ Under the initiative, all 211 member associations of FIFA will receive a \$1 million grant to 'protect and restart' football and can also access interest-free loans up to USD 5 million.
- ✓ Each association will also be receiving an additional \$5,00,000 grant for women's soccer.
- ✓ Each of the six soccer confederations will also be receiving a grant of \$2 million and will have access to loan of up to \$4 million.
- ✓ The funding is expected to be available by January 2021 and the loans for member associations have been limited to 35% of their audited annual revenues.

