

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS-SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **On September 19, Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - laid the foundation stone for the construction of a check dam across Vaigai river at Thirumangalam through video conferencing from the secretariat.**
 - ✓ The project, along with other renovation works, will be executed by the water resources organisation (WRO) of the public works department (PWD) at an outlay of ₹24.9 crore.
 - ✓ The check dam across Vaigai at Madakulam in Thiruparankundram taluk at an outlay of ₹17.4 crore was announced by the CM in 2018.
 - ✓ It was one of the projects announced to reduce river water from going waste into the sea and to improve the drinking water sources and irrigation.
 - ✓ The check dam will improve water supply in Madurai Corporation limits by improving water availability and recharging the groundwater table.
 - ✓ It will provide water to Madakulam, Keelamathur and Thuvariman tanks and facilitate storing 215.9 million cubic feet water in the waterbodies
 - ✓ Further, it will also provide water to irrigate 3,360.13 acres under cultivation.

- **Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - unveiled three new IT policies on - Artificial intelligence, Blockchain and Cybersecurity**
 - ✓ The new policies were aimed at addressing the emerging growth areas in IT industry and e-governance in the state.
 - ✓ They are launched by the state Chief Minister at the CII Connect 2020 event on September 19
 - ✓ Nicknamed ABC policies, they are said to be first of its kind in the country
 - ✓ The policy on artificial intelligence intends to provide a framework for inclusive, safe and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence in the government domain and to build fairness, equity, transparency and trust in AI assisted decision making systems.

- ✓ It also aims to provide access to open data, data models, and computing resources.
- ✓ The AI policy is also meant to promote investments in AI R&D in the state.
- ✓ The policy on blockchain technology is designed to bring transparency and efficiency to government processes, especially considering its huge role in e-Governance.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Here are some of the aims of the policies

<p>Artificial intelligence To train and skill people in AI and establish guidelines for evaluation of AI systems before it's rolled out for public use</p>	<p>Blockchain Technology To modernise workflow and design citizen-centric applications that cater to governance</p>
<p>Cyber security To create and maintain testing infrastructure and facilities for IT security product evaluation and compliance verification as per global standards and practices</p>	

- ✓ Both the policies were drafted by the TN e-Governance agency.
- ✓ The policy on cybersecurity proposes to define the overall ambit of the cybersecurity-related agencies in the state, through formation of the 'Security Architecture Framework' of Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ It covers information assets that include hardware, applications and services provided by these agencies to other government departments, industry or citizens.
 - ✓ This policy was drafted by ELCOT in association with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing.
 - ✓ Under the policy, security policies of each department will follow the Guidelines and Best Practices, as customised and defined to their specific assets.
 - ✓ Further, there will be a procurement policy to create and maintain testing infrastructure and facilities for IT Security, an e-Mail and e-Mail Retention Policy in all the servers to save space on e-Mail Server
 - ✓ Also, a social media policy will be drafted to determine how the government departments and its employees conduct themselves via the Web.
- **The Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC) - has partnered with global online learning platform, Coursera to train 50,000 unemployed youth in the state**
 - ✓ The State government, through TNSDC, is making 4,000 courses across eight sectors on Coursera — covering various in-demand skills — available to youths across the state.
 - ✓ The partnership is part of Coursera's global rollout of the 'Workforce Recovery Initiative', where any State or country can provide unemployed workers with free access to online learning.

- ✓ The programme aims to provide free access to the courses like data science, cloud computing, blockchain, AI and the Internet of Things so as to equip the unemployed youth for the future jobs.
 - ✓ Interested youth can visit the portal, www.tnskill.tn.gov.in, launched by CM Edappadi K Palaniswami on September 19 and enrol by October 31.
 - ✓ A total of 50,000 candidates will be selected for the course on a first-come-first basis.
 - ✓ They will be given access to the lessons until the end of the year to complete the courses.
 - ✓ TNSDC was formed to transform the State into a skill hub, by training the youth to enhance their employability and match the needs of the industry.
 - ✓ Last year, TNSDC trained over 1.25 lakh persons across the State.
- **Guidance, the nodal agency of the Tamil Nadu government for investment promotion and single-window facilitation - has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian School of Business (ISB) for mutual collaboration.**
- ✓ According to the agreement, both agencies will work on a broad objective of economic recovery and growth monitoring, especially in the post-Covid-19 period.
 - ✓ The ISB will be using its resources to address critical issues of economic recovery as well as investment promotion.
 - ✓ ISB will specifically look at developing a strategy for the pharma and chemicals sector in Tamil Nadu, in sync with environmental sustainability.
 - ✓ It will also come up with means of investments in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ ISB will be executing the identified projects through its initiative JumpStartIndia@ISB
 - ✓ The current batch of ISB students will work with the research team and expert faculty on specific problems of importance for economic recovery and growth
- **The National Water Development Agency of the Union Jal Shakti ministry - submitted the draft detailed project report for implementing the Cauvery-Vaigai-Gundar river interlinking project last week**
- ✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami is planning to start work on the ₹700 crore project in December.
 - ✓ The project envisages diverting 8.5tmcft of surplus water from Cauvery near Mayanur barrage in Karur to Vaigai river in Madurai and further to Gundar via channels.
 - ✓ Meanwhile, the public works department has approached the state environment impact assessment authority seeking its clearance for the project.
 - ✓ The Cauvery-Gundar link is the last leg of the Mahanadi-Godavari-Krishna-Penna-Cauvery-Vaigai-Gundar river interlinking project envisaged by the Centre.

- ✓ Of them, Godavari, Krishna and Penna have already been linked in Andhra Pradesh.
 - ✓ Cauvery, despite being a deficit basin, is the lifeline of central Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ The proposed 260km long flood diversion link canal will pass through Karur, Trichy, Pudukottai, Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram districts.
 - ✓ The project is expected to irrigate 2.19 lakh acres.
 - ✓ Without waiting for the project approval, the state has set up special land acquisition units for phase I
 - ✓ About 993 hectares of patta and poramboke land will have to be acquired for the project, according to the estimates.
- **On September 19, Tamil Nadu - recorded 5,569 new Covid-19 cases and 66 deaths, pushing the cumulative case count to 5,36,477 and the death toll to 8,751.**
- ✓ The state has 46,453 active cases undergoing treatment as on date.

TN COVID TRACKER					
ZONE	New Cases	Discharged Today	Death Today	Active Case	Toll Total
Chennai Region	1,737	1,710	20	14,989	4,364
North	976	1,302	17	7,608	1,024
Central	630	524	9	5,285	637
South	662	891	6	5,854	1,787
West	1,551	1,128	14	12,669	938
Other	13	1	0	48	1
Grand Total	5,569	5,556	66	46,453	8,751

- ✓ The doubling period for the infection has increased to 63 days compared to 46 days on August 31.
- ✓ A total of 5,556 persons were discharged from hospitals after treatment, taking the total recoveries to 4,81,273 persons
- ✓ The recovery rate rose to 89.7% while the fatality rate stands at 1.6%.
- ✓ The capital Chennai reported the maximum of 987 cases while neighbouring Chengalpet (293), Tiruvallur (282), and Kancheepuram (175) together reported 750 cases.
- ✓ Coimbatore (565) had the second highest number of fresh cases after Chennai.
- ✓ Further, Cuddalore (289) and Salem (286) recorded more than 200 cases.
- ✓ A total of 83,265 persons were tested in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of persons tested in the State so far to 61.9 lakh.

STATES

- **On September 19, J&K lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha - unveiled a ₹1,350-crore economic package to “ensure more money in people’s pockets” and to revive the business sector to create new jobs**

- ✓ The package comes with incentives such as a 50% waiver of fixed electricity and water charges for industrial and commercial consumers up to a year and stamp duty exemption for borrowers till March 2021.
- ✓ This is different from the ₹1,400-crore central assistance under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan scheme to the UT, which has also allotted ₹6,000 crore for power sector reforms etc
- ✓ During the event, the LG said that the centre is working on a separate structured package for transporters, drivers, auto operators, houseboat owners etc.,
- ✓ The Centre is also working on a new industrial policy for the UT.
- ✓ The package is announced based on the recommendations of a committee headed by LG's adviser KK Sharma after consulting 35 industrial delegations from different sectors.
- ✓ Kashmir's top business body, the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) had projected losses of around ₹42,000 crore in the last one year

RELIEF ON INTEREST

- 5% interest subvention for all borrowers, irrespective of the size of their loans, for six months of the current fiscal
- Separate structured package soon for transporters, drivers, auto operators, houseboat owners and shikarawallahs
- Centre also working on new industrial policy for UT

- ✓ The main component of the package was 5% interest subvention for all borrowers, irrespective of the size of their loans, for the six months of the current financial year
- **Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha - has launched the National Generic Document Registration System for the region on September 18**
 - ✓ This is an online registration system for transactions in purchase or sale of land.
 - ✓ The registration system was developed under Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DGLRMP) by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
 - ✓ This system will enable access to the information from anywhere for both the common public and enforcement agencies
 - ✓ Earlier, this system has been adopted in three states including the Punjab Rajasthan and Maharashtra.
 - ✓ Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Mizoram, Manipur, Bihar and Jharkhand have also decided to launch the system

- ✓ The DGLRMP is aimed at digitising maps and carrying out survey in order to update records using the new techniques such as Geographic information system (GIS) mapping.
 - ✓ The programme is centrally funded and was launched in 2016.
 - ✓ The primary aim of the program is to create error-free land records and to enable easy access to information.
- **A 67-year-old tree, whose branches were cut off - is being given ayurveda treatment in a village in Kottayam to bring it back to life.**



- ✓ The rain tree was a major landmark of Thidanad village and used to shade the entire junction.
- ✓ A roundabout was constructed around the tree and the branches of the tree need to be axed as they were posing a threat to human lives.
- ✓ Kottayam Nature Society, Meenachil River Protection Forum, and a collective of farmers and nature lovers in Thidanad came together on social media and decided to nurse it back to life.
- ✓ They consulted K Binu, the 'tree doctor' who has brought back several trees to life.
- ✓ Binu first obtained a stay order from the court stopping any further move by the authorities to chop down the whole tree.
- ✓ The treatment began earlier this week with the tree being washed and cleaned first and an ayurvedic paste was applied over it.
- ✓ The concoction had 14 ingredients - Termitary, earth from the ground where the tree stands, earth from a paddy field, cow milk, ghee, cow dung, plantain (kadali), honey, sesame, licorice, black gram, powdered cuscus grass, boiled rice, and green gram.
- ✓ After applying the medicine, the entire tree was covered with a cloth.
- ✓ As per Binu, the new branches will sprout in six months.

NATIONAL

- **On September 19, the government and opposition parties – have decided to curtail the scheduled monsoon session of Parliament after passage of important bills**
- ✓ The move follows the Covid-19 positive tests for some Union ministers and MPs
 - ✓ The session is expected to end by the middle of next week

- ✓ This was decided in an emergency business advisory committee meeting called by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla
- ✓ A final decision will be taken by the Cabinet committee on parliamentary affairs.

30 MPs TEST POSITIVE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Parliament session may end by middle of next week. Final call to be taken by cabinet committee on parliamentary affairs ▶ Some opposition parties told govt that holding a full 18-day session (Sept 14-Oct 1) would be a risky affair, according to sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 30 MPs have tested +ve for Covid, including ministers Nitin Gadkari & Prahlad Patel. Both attended the ongoing session ▶ All MPs undergoing periodic RT-PCR tests. Parl staffers and journalists covering session to take daily rapid antigen test
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- ✓ The monsoon session of the Parliament had started on September 14 and was scheduled to conclude on October 1.
- ✓ Of late, most state assemblies have had very short 1-3 day sessions and passed several bills on a single day.
- ✓ At the beginning of the session, the government had listed 23 new Bills for consideration and passage
- ✓ This includes 11 Bills replacing ordinances issued since March, when the Budget session ended.
- ✓ Two Union ministers — Nitin Gadkari and Prahlad Patel — who attended the current Parliamentary session have tested positive.
- ✓ Some MPs like BJP's Vinay Sahashrabuddhe also tested positive for the viral infection.
- ✓ So far, 30 MPs have tested positive, including 20 after the session started.
- ✓ The Lok Sabha has passed six bills, including the three bills to replace agriculture sector-related ordinances in the current session.
 - ✓ The other three bills, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020; Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 — will come up in the Rajya Sabha on September 20
- ✓ Also, both the Houses have cleared a bill to replace an ordinance for cutting the salaries of MPs by 30% to contribute funds in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ In order to prevent the spread of coronavirus within the Parliament complex, the government has put a new protocol in place.
 - ✓ Accordingly, reporters and parliamentary staff entering the premises now have to undergo the rapid antigen test mandatorily on a daily basis
 - ✓ Besides, members of both Houses are undergoing RTPCR tests on regular intervals on a voluntary basis.

- ✓ Also, the government officials accompanying their respective ministers during the bill discussions also have to show a negative report of RTPCR test taken within the last 72 hours of their visit to the complex.
- **On September 19, the government - introduced three new Bills to amend and consolidate labour laws**
- ✓ The new bills are aimed at expanding the social security net to include migrant and gig economy workers, while also seeking to provide greater flexibility to businesses to hire and fire employees.
- ✓ Labour minister Santosh Gangwar introduced the three crucial bills - Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020, the Code on Social Security, and the Industrial Relations Code
- ✓ Gangwar also withdrew the 2019 versions of the Bills, which were introduced and then referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour.
 - ✓ The Minister said the government had accepted 74% of the 233 recommendations of the committee.
 - ✓ The three Bills are part of the government's labour law reforms agenda, of which the Code on Wages, was passed in 2019.
 - ✓ He said 29 labour laws are to be amalgamated into four codes.
 - ✓ The Bills had been drafted after nine tripartite consultations, four sub-committee meetings, 10 regional conferences and 10 inter-ministerial consultations.
- ✓ The proposed Social Security Code defines migrant workers and also enlarge the scope of the current scheme to cover the gig economy and those outside the organised sector
 - ✓ It also recognizes the emergence of online platforms and aggregators that provide access to migrant workers.
 - ✓ The Bill has mandated registration of all unorganised and gig and platform workers and provision of insurance, maternity, creche and old age protection benefits.
- ✓ As part of the Industrial Relation Code Bill, 2020, companies with not less than 300 workers are proposed to be allowed to hire and fire workers without seeking prior government permission.
 - ✓ It mandates companies with 300 or more workers to prepare and submit to the government standing orders regarding the conditions of service, including shift timings and termination of employment.
 - ✓ As per the earlier norms under the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, only those industrial establishments with less than 100 employees are permitted to hire and fire employees without government permission.
 - ✓ The bill also reflects the changing nature of the economy, the growth of the gig sector and the vulnerability of sections of workers, from migrant labour to household helpers

- ✓ Among the 13 Acts the Occupational Safety Code proposes to subsume is the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, which has been highlighted during the recent migrant workers crisis due to Covid-19.
- **On September 19, Rajya Sabha - passed the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020, intended to ensure safety of healthcare workers during the Covid-19 pandemic**
 - ✓ The new bill provides for up to five years in jail for attacks on doctors and healthcare workers fighting the outbreak.
 - ✓ Further commission or abetment of acts of violence will be punishable with an imprisonment for a term of three months to five years, and with a fine of ₹50,000 to ₹2,00,000.
 - ✓ The bill will replace an ordinance brought in by the government in April to prevent any form of violence against healthcare workers.
 - ✓ The Cabinet promulgated The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance 2020, to provide protection to healthcare service personnel and property, including their living and working premises, against violence during epidemics.
 - ✓ It seeks to amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897
 - ✓ The bill also intends to ensure that any situation akin to the current pandemic is also covered under the law.
 - ✓ Personnel include public and clinical healthcare service providers such as doctors, nurses, paramedical workers and community health workers, any other people empowered under the act to take measures to prevent outbreak of the disease or its spread and anyone declared as such by state governments.
 - ✓ The penal provisions can be invoked in instances of damage to property including a clinical establishment, any facility identified for quarantine and isolation of patients, mobile medical units and any other property in which the healthcare service personnel have a direct interest in relation to the epidemic.
 - ✓ Offences will be investigated by an officer of the rank of inspector within a period of 30 days, and trial completed in one year, unless extended by the court for reasons recorded in writing.
- **On September 19, the Rajya Sabha - approved the amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**
 - ✓ The latest amendments prohibits initiating any fresh insolvency proceedings against companies affected by the Covid-19 pandemic for at least six months starting March 25 and which can be extended by up to one year.
 - ✓ The law provides for carrying out insolvency and bankruptcy proceedings against corporate debtors as well as personal guarantors together.
 - ✓ The amendment to the IBC will be applicable only for the Covid period and “not a blanket ban has been imposed”, as per the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

- **On September 19, Lok Sabha - passed a bill to further amend the Companies Act and decriminalise various compoundable offences and promote ease of doing business.**
 - ✓ The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020 seeks to decriminalise various penal provisions and introduce a new chapter related to producer organisations in the legislation.
 - ✓ The decriminalisation of various provisions under the companies law will also help small companies by reducing litigation burden on them.
 - ✓ Around 48 sections of the Companies Act, 2013 will be amended to decriminalise various offences

- **The Centre - plans to bring the draft National Public Health (Prevention, Control and Management of Epidemics, Bio-terrorism and Disasters) Bill to empower the governments to handle unforeseen situations like the Covid-19 outbreak with a structured legislation**
 - ✓ As per the planned Bill, States and local bodies can take multiple measures, ranging from quarantining people to decontamination of areas, isolation of the infected, destruction of animals or birds and surprise inspections during any public health emergency
 - ✓ Health minister Harsh Vardhan told the Rajya Sabha that the government is working on a National Public Health Act for the past few years and it will be brought to the House.
 - ✓ The bill will address the deficiencies of the National Disaster Management Act and Epidemic Diseases Amendment Bill.
 - ✓ The draft bill was twice circulated in the past in 2009 and 2018 for stakeholder comments
 - ✓ It proposes to empower state and local authorities to take appropriate actions to tackle public health emergencies like epidemics and bioterrorism for a wide range of subjects.
 - ✓ The proposed bill will talk of terms like epidemic, isolation, quarantine and social distancing and have clear definitions for public health emergency of international concern, ground crossing, disinfection, de-ratting and decontamination.

- **On September 19, Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar - said that eight beaches of the country have been recommended for the 'Blue Flag' international eco-label.**
 - ✓ The minister said this on the eve of 'International Coastal Clean-Up Day' that is being celebrated across 100 countries since 1986.
 - ✓ The Minister also announced India's own eco-label 'Beach Environment and Aesthetics Management Services' (BEAMS) under its Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) project.
 - ✓ The eight beaches that have been recommended under the BEAMS includes- Shivrajpur in Gujarat, Ghoghla in Daman and Diu, Kasarkod and Padubidri in

Karnataka, Kappad in Kerala, Rushikonda in Andhra Pradesh, Golden in Odisha and Radhanagar in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- ✓ The BEAMS, which is also referred as the Beach Management Services, has been started under the integrated coastal zone management project of India
- ✓ It has been started by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to reduce pollution content along beaches
- ✓ The Blue Flag Certification is awarded by a Denmark based non-profit organization called the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).
- ✓ For the Blue Flag certificate, beaches needs to certify 33 criteria related to environmental, educational, access and safety.
- ✓ The Blue Flag Programme was started in France in 1985, originally.
- ✓ South Africa became the first country from outside Europe to join the programme in 2001
- ✓ Currently, there are more than 4000 blue flag beaches worldwide, with Spain leading the list
- ✓ It is mandatory for the Blue flag beaches to provide clean and hygienic bathing water to the tourists, besides the basic infrastructure.
- ✓ Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha is India's first beach to get the blue flag certification.
- ✓ It is also Asia's first beach to get the Blue Flag certification.
- ✓ In the year 2019, the Indian government has identified 12 beaches for the certification
- ✓ It included Kovalam beach from Tamil Nadu

- **The government – is planning to collect the blood and faecal samples of all the captive elephants across the country, under the aegis of Project Elephant**
- ✓ These elephants will be provided a unique identity number based on their DNA, just like an Aadhaar card
- ✓ The move is aimed to reduce atrocities against captive jumbos in the country like the tragic death of elephants in Kerala in June this year
- ✓ Genetic mapping will ensure that captive elephants are only kept by authorised persons after getting a nod from the state chief wildlife warden.
- ✓ Currently, most captive elephants are in Assam (around 1,000).
- ✓ This is followed by Kerala (500) and Tamil Nadu (300).
- ✓ Incidentally, genetic mapping was first conducted in Kerala in 2018.
- ✓ The mapping enables tracking of elephants in need of treatment or food, apart from keeping a track on its population
- ✓ Doon-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is co-ordinating the exercise.
- ✓ The data collected will be kept at the Elephant Cell of WII, which had been inaugurated last year.
- ✓ Asia has around 55,000 elephants in the wild, of which over 30,000 are in India.

- ✓ India also has the maximum captive elephants followed by Thailand and Sri Lanka where they are primarily used for tourism purposes.
 - ✓ Protecting the captive elephant has been a matter of concern and importance for all countries as the Asian Elephant has been categorised as an 'endangered' species in the IUCN Red List of threatened species.
- **On September 18, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - dedicated the Kosi Rail mahasetu in Bihar to the nation**



- ✓ It is of strategic importance as it is located along India Nepal border.
 - ✓ The 1.8km long bridge provides a short route to the Eastern parts of India
 - ✓ It can also be used to transport army and military related equipment from Northern part of India to North Eastern parts of India.
 - ✓ Apart from this, Prime Minister has also inaugurated 12 Rail Projects related to the passenger facilities for the benefit of Bihar.
 - ✓ In 2003, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee laid the foundation of the bridge after the demand of the people living in the region.
 - ✓ River Kosi is called the sorrow of Bihar, flowing through Nepal, India and Tibet
 - ✓ It is the major tributary of river Ganges.
 - ✓ The flow of the river increases by 18 times during flood season.
 - ✓ The Sagarmatha National Park is located on the banks of the Kosi river.
 - ✓ The park was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979.
- **On September 19, India -reported more than 94,000 fresh Covid-19 cases and 1,145 deaths across the country.**
- ✓ The country's total caseload stands at 53,94,625 after the reporting of 94,145 fresh cases on the day
 - ✓ Meanwhile, India has recorded the highest number of recoveries from the Covid-19 infection in the world.
 - ✓ The number of recoveries in the country, currently at 42,92,112, went past the count in the US (42,01,211) earlier in the day.

- ✓ For the fifth day in a row, Maharashtra reported over 20,000 Covid cases (21,907) and over 400 deaths (425), taking the caseload to 11.9 lakh and toll to 32,216 so far.
 - ✓ Further, Karnataka reported 8,364 fresh cases and Andhra Pradesh logged 8,218 new cases.
 - ✓ On September 18, a little over 8.8 lakh samples were tested for the coronavirus across India, a drop of more than 2.5 lakh (nearly 23%) over the past two days.
 - ✓ India's positivity rate — the percentage of samples that are positive for the virus out of the total tests conducted — is currently around 8.6%-8.7%
 - ✓ As per the experts, the positivity rate should be below 5% for testing to be deemed adequate.
- **The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) - recently extended the price cap on Knee implants by one year till September 2021.**
 - ✓ The current order validity for the price cap ended in August 2020.
 - ✓ The regulator capped the prices of knee implants by 70% in 2017 under the Drug Price Control Order, 2013.
 - ✓ Further in 2019, the NPPA allowed firms to take 10% hike for the year in their implant products.
 - ✓ Under the provisions of DPCO 2013, only the prices of drugs that are included under National List of Essential Medicines can be controlled by NPPA
 - ✓ In August 2018, under the recommendation of Niti Aayog 23 medical devices were notified as drugs and regulated under Drugs and Cosmetics Act
 - ✓ The knee caps were not brought under NLEM.
 - ✓ Only four medical devices - cardiac stents, condoms, drug eluting stents and intra uterine devices – were brought under the NLEM
 - ✓ The NLEM list is prepared by union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
 - **The Government - has approved Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of 74% in defence sector under 'automatic route'**
 - ✓ This will attract more overseas investors in the defence industry.
 - ✓ This announcement was made by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)
 - ✓ The centre has already permitted 100% foreign investments in the defence sector
 - ✓ Till now, the automatic route can be taken upto 49% investment and beyond it, the government approval is required
 - **India's first exclusive private jet terminal - was inaugurated by Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi on September 17**
 - ✓ The exclusive terminal will handle flight operations of private jets.
 - ✓ It can handle up to 150 private jet flights per day in its 57 parking bays



- ✓ The flight operations of private jets are classified under the "general aviation" category.
- ✓ Before the pandemic, the Delhi airport was handling the operations of around 40 "general aviation" flights per day and it is currently handling about 20 such flights.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **Pakistan - has denied visa to Indian diplomat Jayant Khobragade, rejecting his appointment as India's chargé d'affaires in Islamabad.**
- ✓ His name had been officially proposed in June this year.
- ✓ It is rare for either country to reject the appointment of a diplomat at this level.
- ✓ In the same month, India had further cut down diplomatic ties with Pakistan by asking for a 50% reduction in mission strength.

NAME PROPOSED IN JUNE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Jayant Khobragade's name had been officially proposed as India's chargé d'affaires in Islamabad in June ➤ In the same month, India had scaled down diplomatic ties with Pakistan by asking for a 50% reduction in mission strength ➤ India sees Pakistan's rejection of Khobragade as an attempt to hit back over 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> its decision to downgrade ties and over the Kashmir issue ➤ Pakistan's objection is apparently related to Khobragade's seniority as it thinks he is too senior to lead Indian mission ➤ India, however, says it's not for Pak to dictate appointment of Indian diplomats in Islamabad and is likely to respond with reciprocal action

- ✓ Pakistan's objection is apparently related to Khobragade's seniority as it thinks he is too senior to lead the Indian mission when its strength has been halved
- ✓ Also, there's barely any bilateral engagement between the two sides, of late.
- ✓ India believes that Pakistan cannot dictate terms for the appointment of Indian diplomats in Islamabad
- ✓ An IFS officer of 1995 batch, Khobragade is currently serving as a joint secretary in the department of atomic energy.

- ✓ He has in the past served as Indian ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic before working in junior capacity with Indian missions in Russia, Spain and Kazakhstan.
 - ✓ Khobragade has served in Pakistan earlier too
 - ✓ Since the two countries recalled their high commissioners last year, their missions have been led by the chargé d'affaires.
 - ✓ Pakistan PM Imran Khan is likely to raise the Kashmir issue again in his UNGA address on September 25.
 - ✓ The government slammed Pakistan this week at the UN Human Rights Council for creating “false and fabricated” narratives to malign India.
- **On September 16, India - joined Djibouti Code of Conduct as an observer state.**
- ✓ The revised Djibouti Code of Conduct is also called the Jeddah Amendment
 - ✓ It is a regional maritime security cooperation agreement, established by International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2008.
 - ✓ The grouping consists of 19 member states adjoining Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, East Coast of Africa and Indian Ocean Region
 - ✓ The member countries include - Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt, Comoros, Jordan, Djibouti, Maldives, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Oman, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Seychelles, Somalia, UAE (United Arab Emirates), Yemen, United Republic of Tanzania.
 - ✓ The other observers of the grouping are Norway, Japan, UK and US.
 - ✓ The Djibouti Code of Conduct permits the member countries to investigate, arrest and prosecute persons involved in piracy and armed robbery.
 - ✓ It also allows the countries to intercept and seize suspected ships and property abroad, which are suspected of engaged in crimes
 - ✓ Apart from these, the Jeddah Agreement emphasises on the importance of “blue economy” to support sustainable economic growth, food security, employment, prosperity and stability.
- **The Bangladesh Government - recently granted permission for traders to export Hilsa fish to India in the view of forthcoming Durga Pooja.**



- ✓ The Government of Bangladesh imposed a ban on export of Hilsa fish to India in 2012.

- ✓ However, the ban is usually removed during festivals.
- ✓ In 2019, around 500 tonnes of Hilsa fish was imported from Bangladesh during Durga Pooja.
- ✓ The Hilsa fish is the National Fish of Bangladesh.
- ✓ Called as the 'King of fish', Hilsa fish is known for its pleasant flavour and soft texture
- ✓ It falls under the category of "Threatened" as per IUCN
- ✓ The export of the fish from Bangladesh was stopped because of the reducing population of these fishes due to various environmental degradation and commercial activities
- ✓ Bangladesh accounts for more than 75% of the global Hilsa fish production
- ✓ Apart from Ganges And Brahmaputra delta, the fish is also found in Godavari river of Andhra Pradesh.
- ✓ Bengalis include the fish as the major part of their food and offer it to goddess Lakshmi during Navarathri festival.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On September 16, the G20 Environment Ministers meet - was held virtually. India was represented by the Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar at the meet.**



- ✓ The meeting was held as a part of Sherpa Track for the G20 Leaders Summit, 2020.
- ✓ The Global Initiative on reducing land degradation was launched at the meet
- ✓ The main aim of the initiative is to strengthen existing frameworks to prevent, halt and reverse land degradation in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030
- ✓ The theme of the meeting - Realizing opportunities of 21st century for all
- ✓ Sherpa Track refers to meetings of ministers, focusing on education, agriculture, climate, digital economy, anti-corruption, employment, energy, tourism, health, trade and investment
- **On September 17, the BRICS higher level representatives on National Security - met virtually through a video conference**
- ✓ The meet was chaired by Russia.



- ✓ The national security advisors of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa discussed issues related to security and cooperation among BRICS countries
 - ✓ During the meet, the countries exchanged their views on biosafety, cyber security, International Security, Counter Terrorism.
 - ✓ The NSA-level meet is the third high level engagement between India and China.
 - ✓ The Indian National Security Advisor Ajit doval recently walked out of a virtual meeting of SCO NSA as his Pakistani counterpart sat before a new political map that included the disputed regions of Kashmir and Junagadh as a part of its territory.
 - ✓ The BRICS grouping was formed with Brazil, India, Russia and China
 - ✓ Later, South Africa was added in the year 2010
 - ✓ These countries make up to 25% of world geographical region.
 - ✓ Since 2012, the countries are planning to establish optical fibre submarine communication cable system called 'BRICS' cable.
- **On September 16, the External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar - chaired the IBSA Foreign Ministers meet.**
- ✓ IBSA refers to the grouping of India-Brazil-South Africa.



- ✓ The ministers agreed on issues such as peace, security, climate change, countering terrorism, multilateral trading system, non-proliferation issues, disarmament and South-South Cooperation

- ✓ The leaders also agreed to cooperate with international organizations such as African Union Peace and Security Council, United Nations Security Council, etc.
- ✓ They have further agreed to extend their support in accordance to Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration.
- ✓ Ezulwini Consensus is a position on international relations agreed by African Union
- ✓ The Sirte Declaration followed the Ezulwini Consensus
- ✓ The main intention of African Union, consisting of 55 member states, was to replace Organization of African Unity.

PERSONALITIES

- **18-year old Udit Singhal, who founded a startup to turn glass bottles into sand - has been named among 17 people in the United Nation's 2020 Class of Young Leaders for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

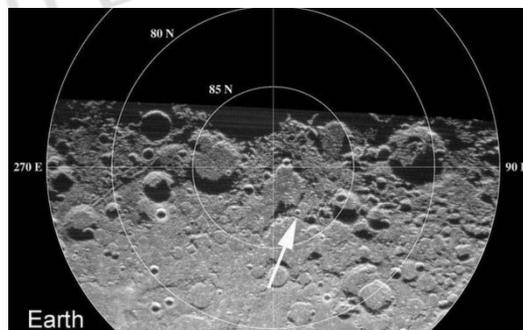


- ✓ The programme is a flagship initiative that recognises the efforts of young people in driving action and galvanising others in support of UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development.
- ✓ The Delhi-based teenager attended the UN 'online' programme function due to the Covid pandemic.
- ✓ Singhal founded Glass2Sand in 2019 as a zerowaste system that turns bottles into economically viable sand.
- ✓ Singhal then imported a machine from New Zealand with a special grant from the New Zealand High Commissioner in India
- ✓ He commenced the work on the project with the help of 65 volunteers, six diplomatic missions and four institutions
- ✓ It takes five seconds to turn one empty glass bottle into sand.
- ✓ The startup has crushed 8,000 kg of bottles into 4,800 kg of high-grade silica sand so far
- ✓ This silica sand is commercially viable because it is used in construction, including roads and as lining in furnaces.
- ✓ It is more valuable than river sand in making concrete

- ✓ Singhal studied in The British School in Delhi and is currently a freshman at University College in London where he is a management sciences student.
- ✓ Other young leaders cited by the UN belong to the United States, Turkey, China, Pakistan, Peru, Egypt, Senegal, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Brazil, Liberia, Ireland, Colombia, Australia, Uganda and Bangladesh

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **On September 19, the Tata Group - has announced that 'Feluda', the Tata CRISPR test, had received regulatory approvals from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for commercial roll-out in accordance with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines.**
 - ✓ The test was developed by CSIR-IGIB (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology)
 - ✓ The test has met high benchmarks, with 96% sensitivity and 98% specificity for detecting the novel coronavirus.
 - ✓ It uses indigenously developed CRISPR technology for the detection of the genomic sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
 - ✓ The Tata CRISPR test is the world's first diagnostic test to deploy a specially adapted Cas9 protein to successfully detect the virus causing Covid-19
 - ✓ The Tata CRISPR test achieves the accuracy levels of the traditional RT-PCR (real-time polymerase chain reaction) tests, with quicker turnaround time, less expensive equipment and better ease of use
- **Union Minister Jitendra Singh – recently said that images sent by Chandrayaan-1 suggest that the moon may be rusting along the poles.**



- ✓ The Minister was referring to a recently published study that found an oxidised iron mineral called hematite (Fe_2O_3) at high latitudes on the Moon.
- ✓ As per the researchers, this lunar hematite is formed through oxidation of the iron on the Moon's surface by the oxygen from Earth's upper atmosphere.
- ✓ The team analysed the data acquired by the Moon Mineralogy Mapper onboard Chandrayaan-1.
- ✓ Along with the oxygen, water on the lunar surface and heat from interplanetary dust also helped in the oxidation process.

- ✓ The paper in Science Advances notes that the hematite is not absolutely absent on the lunar farside.
- ✓ There, a small amount of iron oxides “might be formed under the presence of water and energies induced by interplanetary dust impacts and then be decomposed to hematite.”
- ✓ The hematite formed at lunar craters of different ages may help understand the oxygen of Earth’s atmosphere in the past 2.4 billion years
- ✓ They also reveal facts about the evolution of Earth’s atmosphere in the past billions of years.
- ✓ The team hopes that NASA's ARTEMIS missions can bring some hematite samples, and detailed chemical studies can confirm if the lunar hematite was indeed oxidised by Earth’s oxygen.

DEFENCE

- **The Army - has finally begun the screening of women officers who can be granted permanent commission in 10 of its branches**
- ✓ This was in accordance with the Supreme Court verdict in February to end gender bias in the 13-lakh strong force.
- ✓ The Special No. 5 Selection Board constituted to screen short-service commission (SSC) women officers began its work earlier this week.
- ✓ The Board will select women officers, who can serve for a maximum of 14 years, for grant of permanent commission (PC) in the Army
- ✓ The special board, headed by a Lt-General, includes a woman officer of brigadier rank.
- ✓ Women officers have also been permitted to witness the proceedings as observers in order to add transparency to the entire process
- ✓ Women officers who qualify in the screening process will be granted PC, subject to their being in the minimum acceptable medical category
- ✓ The defence ministry in July had issued the formal order to grant PC to women officers in eight more branches of the Army, in addition to the existing ones of the legal and education wings.
- ✓ The eight branches are Army Air Defence (AAD), Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC), and Intelligence Corps.
- ✓ Women number just over 1,600 in the 43,000-strong officer cadre in the Army.
- ✓ The military brass for long opposed PC and command roles for women due to “operational, practical and cultural problems”.
- ✓ Women officers, of course, are still not allowed to join main combat arms like infantry, mechanised infantry, artillery and armoured corps in the Army.
- ✓ They also cannot serve on board warships and submarines in the Navy.
- ✓ But the IAF, which already had women transport aircraft and helicopter pilots, has commissioned 10 women as fighter pilots since 2016

- ✓ Though women officers (they are not recruited in lower ranks) are being inducted into the armed forces since the early-1990s, they number just 1,653 in the Army, 1,875 in IAF and 490 in Navy in the 65,000-strong officer cadre of the 15-lakh strong armed forces.
- ✓ These figures do not include women officers in the medical, dental and nursing streams, who are inducted through the PC route.
- **On September 19, the decommissioned aircraft carrier INS Viraat - set sail on its last journey from the Mumbai harbour to the Alang ship-breaking yard in Gujarat where it will be dismantled.**



- ✓ The iconic naval ship was sold off for scrap last month after all efforts to convert it into a museum failed.
- ✓ In an e-auction conducted by Metal Scrap Trade Corporation Ltd. (MSTC), the aircraft carrier was purchased by Shree Ram Green Ship Recycling of Gujarat for ₹38 crore.
- ✓ There have been demands from various quarters not to scrap Viraat just like the INS Vikrant, India's first carrier that was scrapped
- ✓ However, none of the proposals put forward by various States came into action.
- ✓ INS Viraat, a Centaur-class aircraft carrier weighing 27,800 tonnes, had served in the British Navy as HMS Hermes for 25 years from November 1959 to April 1984
- ✓ After refurbishment, it was commissioned into the Indian Navy in May 1987.
- ✓ It had operated Harrier fighter jets and was decommissioned in March 2017.
- ✓ Since it was decommissioned, the Navy had been incurring expenditure on the vessel's upkeep
- ✓ It also had been blocking space in the crowded Naval dockyard in Mumbai.

SPORTS

- **Swedish pole vault star Armand Duplantis - surpassed Ukrainian legend Sergey Bubka's 26-year pole vault record**
- ✓ Duplantis set an outdoor pole vault World record of 6.15m at the Diamond League meeting recently.



- ✓ Duplantis, who already holds the World indoor record of 6.18m, bettered the mark of 6.14m achieved by Bubka in July 1994 in Italy.

RANKINGS

- **Mizoram – tops the India’s happiness index, followed by Punjab and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to complete the top three of states and Union territories**
 - ✓ The index was prepared by Rajesh K Pillania, a professor of strategy at the Management Development Institute in Gurugram
 - ✓ The study is based on a nationwide survey by Pillania covering 16,950 people between March and July 2020.
 - ✓ A total of six components — work and related issues such as earning; growth relationships, including family and friends; health including physical and mental; philanthropy, including social concerns, religious and/or spiritual orientation and the impact of Covid-19 on happiness — have been used in the study.
 - ✓ Among the big states, Punjab, Gujarat and Telangana take the top 3 spots, whereas among the smaller states Mizoram, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh feature on top of the index.
 - ✓ Among the UTs, the top three are Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry and Lakshadweep.
- **On September 17, the World Bank - released the annual Human Capital Index.**
 - ✓ India has ranked 116th position in the annual Human Capital Index among 174 countries
 - ✓ In 2019, India ranked 115 out of 157 countries.
 - ✓ The country’s score stood at 0.49 in 2020, as against 0.44 in 2018
 - ✓ The human capital index includes education and health data from 174 countries.
 - ✓ It covers 98% of the world population.
 - ✓ The theme of the rankings for this year is ‘Human capital in the time of covid-19’.
 - ✓ The index is calculated based on three pillars - survival, school and health.

- ✓ The human capital index is released by the United Nations development programme.
- ✓ It uses stunting rate and survival rate to measure health parameters, whereas the Human Development Index uses per capita income for the same
- **Singapore - topped the Smart City index for the year 2020**

Top 10 Smart Cities 2020

Rank	City
1	Singapore
2	Helsinki, Finland
3	Zurich, Switzerland
4	Auckland, New Zealand
5	Oslo, Norway
6	Copenhagen, Denmark
7	Geneva, Switzerland
8	Taipei, Taiwan
9	Amsterdam, Netherlands
10	New York, United States

Source: INSTITUTE OF
MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

- ✓ The rankings, unveiled by the Institute for Management Development (IMD) along with Singapore University, were released on September 17
- ✓ Helsinki and Zurich are at second and third positions respectively.
- ✓ The report highlights that the Indian cities have declined in their technological updates.
- ✓ Among 109 cities ranked this year, Hyderabad was ranked at 85th spot, New Delhi at 86th spot, Mumbai at 93rd and Bengaluru at 95th spot.

