

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS-SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) - has approved setting up of a National Investigation Agency (NIA) branch office in Chennai.**
- ✓ Apart from Chennai, the MHA had sanctioned two additional branches of NIA at Imphal, and Ranchi.
- ✓ Two teams of NIA officials from Kochi branch were deputed to identify a suitable location in Chennai
- ✓ Last week, the Ministry of Finance cleared the financial approval for the branch office in Chennai
- ✓ A Superintendent of Police (SP) and more than 20 officials will be appointed for the branch office.
- ✓ In July 2019, NIA cracked down up on the Ansharullah module of Islamic State (IS) and arrested 14 suspects, who had been deported from UAE.
- ✓ NIA had conducted simultaneous searches in Chennai, Madurai, Theni, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli in June in the houses of IS suspects.
- ✓ Most of them were from coastal district of Nagapattinam.
- ✓ At present, the NIA has nine branches in the country, which are located at Mumbai, Jammu, Guwahati, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Kochi, Kolkata and Raipur
- ✓ The NIA came into existence with the enactment of the National Investigation Agency Act 2008 by the Indian Parliament on December 31, 2008.
- ✓ It was passed after the brutal 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai.

- **Greater Chennai Corporation - has announced a penalty of 2% for those who fail to pay property tax within stipulated dates**
- ✓ This decision was taken at a council meeting on September 22.
- ✓ Property tax is to be paid by residents owning properties between April 1-15 and October 1-15 every year (half-yearly).

- ✓ According to GCC, those who fail to pay it within these dates would be penalised 2% (excluding education and library cess).
 - ✓ However, GCC has announced that the property tax paid before due date will make the owners eligible for a rebate of 5% (up to ₹5,000)
 - ✓ Property owners are also urged to pay property tax which is pending post an appeal, within 15 days of receiving the order.
- **On September 28, the phase-2 human clinical trials of vaccine Covishield, developed by Oxford University - commenced in the state**
- ✓ Earlier, the health department invited volunteers to enroll and participate in the trials on September 9.
 - ✓ The safety and immunogenicity or the immune response of the candidate will be studied upon administering vaccine shots to healthy volunteers.
 - ✓ Two medical institutions in the city are among the 17 sites chosen for the trials initiated in the country by Serum Institute of India (SII)
 - ✓ The SII has an agreement with AstraZeneca that has collaborated with Oxford University.
 - ✓ In Tamil Nadu, trials involving 110 to 150 volunteers will take place at Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Porur.
 - ✓ Dr T S Selvavinayagam, director of public health is the principal investigator of the project
 - ✓ According to the Clinical Trials Registry, India, 1,600 volunteers of more than or equal to 18 years will be enrolled in the study across 17 sites in the country.
 - ✓ Covishield was made from ChAdOx1 virus, a weakened version of a common cold virus that causes infections in chimpanzees that has been genetically changed.
- **On September 28, Tamil Nadu – registered 5,589 fresh Covid-19 cases and 70 deaths**
- ✓ This takes the cumulative casecount in the state to 5,86,397, while 9,383 deaths have occurred till now.

TN COVID TRACKER

Zones	Fresh cases	Deaths today	Active Cases	Recoveries	Total toll
Chennai Region	1,928	23	15,716	2,32,881	4,582
North	758	14	5,794	81,335	1,116
Central	675	8	5,063	44,944	705
South	589	8	5,299	1,03,381	1,850
West	1,639	17	14,405	65,902	1,129
Other	0	0	29	2,265	1
Grand Total	5,589	70	46,306	5,30,708	9,383

- ✓ A total of 5,554 persons were discharged on the day, taking the total recoveries to 5,30,708.
- ✓ There were 46,306 people still under treatment for the viral infection.
- ✓ The state tested 80,465 samples for the viral infection on the day across its testing laboratories, taking the total tested to 71,81,125 samples.
- ✓ Chennai reported 1,283 fresh cases, while its neighbours Chengalpet logged 249, Kancheepuram 147 and Tiruvallur 249 cases.
- ✓ Further, Coimbatore and Salem recorded 587 and 256 cases respectively.

NATIONAL

- **On September 28, Union health minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan – launched a ‘vaccine web portal’ and national clinical registry for the Covid-19 pandemic**



- ✓ The move is aimed at ensuring accessibility and transparency of Covid-19 related clinical and laboratory data
- ✓ During the event, the Minister also launched the Indian Council of Medical research (ICMR) history timeline depicting 108 year journey of the institution.
- ✓ The portal will provide all important information on Covid-19, vaccine development, ongoing clinical trials and progress made in this area, locally and globally
- ✓ The national registry will collect systematic data on clinical signs and symptoms, laboratory investigations, management protocols, clinical course of Covid-19, disease spectrum and outcomes of patients.
- ✓ The ‘vaccine web portal’ and ‘National Clinical Registry for Covid-19’ have been developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research
- ✓ The portal is available at vaccine.icmr.org.in for the updated information on vaccines.
- ✓ The three leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates in India — Covishield, Covaxin and ZyCov-D — are mentioned in the portal
- ✓ The portal also has information on the underlying technology of these vaccine manufacturing, the trials that have so far been completed and current progress on the trials.

- ✓ It also has information on vaccines for the Human Papilloma Virus, Shigella, hepatitis, cholera and typhoid
- ✓ The National registry was launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) New Delhi
- **On September 28, the country – reported 66,251 fresh infections and 783 deaths due to Covid-19**
- ✓ The sharp fall in the numbers is attributed to almost 50% of drop in sample testing count on the day
- ✓ A total of about 80,000 patients recovered from the infection, taking the total number of active cases a little over 9.5 lakh.
- ✓ Maharashtra reported 11,921 new cases and 180 deaths, taking the total cases in the state to 13,51,153 and the total fatalities were 35,751.
- ✓ Further, Karnataka reported 6,892 fresh infections.

COURT VERDICT

- **On September 27, a Delhi court - declared Nitin and Chetan Sandesara, the fugitive Gujarati businessmen and promoters of Sterling Biotech Ltd (SBL), as ‘fugitive economic offenders’**



- ✓ The court had also ordered confiscation of their properties
- ✓ Chetan Sandesara's wife Dipti and family member Hitesh Patel have also been declared fugitive economic offenders.
- ✓ The court's order comes two years after the ED moved an application in a politically sensitive money laundering case of ₹14,500 crore.
- ✓ All four had pending non-bailable warrants against them and have been shifting locations from country to country, including Nigeria, the UAE, the UK and the US, to escape arrest since 2018.
- ✓ The case has a political connection, with Congress treasurer Ahmed Patel having been questioned four times by ED in July during the lockdown for his alleged connection with the Sandesaras.

- ✓ Sandesaras fled the country with their family members just before the CBI and the ED registered cases against them in 2017 for allegedly siphoning off loans of government banks worth ₹15,000 crore
- ✓ Out of this amount, ₹10,000 crore was taken from overseas branches and ₹5,000 crore in India.

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

- **The Ministry of external affairs – is creating a new Oceania territorial division with Australia at the centre of the initiative**
- ✓ The division brings together the country's Indo-Pacific and Asean policies under a single unit
- ✓ Essentially, the move is intended to align policies in the region stretching from western Pacific (with the Pacific islands) to the Andaman Sea
- ✓ By focusing administrative and diplomatic attention, India wants to signal its own focus on the region to counter the Chinese influence
- ✓ Reenat Sandhu, additional secretary and formerly India's ambassador to Italy, will head the new vertical, assisted by two senior directors, Geetika Srivastava and Paulomi Tripathi.
- ✓ The Oceania division will include Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands
- ✓ Australia has been growing in importance in India's foreign policy, but within the MEA structure, it was part of the 'South' division.
- ✓ In 2019, former foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale created the Indo-Pacific division to include Asean, Quad and Indian Ocean Rim Association.
- ✓ Earlier, the MEA had created the Indian Ocean division, bringing together Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles.
- ✓ In late 2019, MEA included Madagascar, Comoros and Reunion Islands into the IOR division, expanding its ambit.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **On September 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – held a virtual bilateral meeting with his Danish counterpart Mette Frederikson**



- ✓ With this, Denmark became the first European country with which India held a virtual summit
- ✓ Earlier, on September 26, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of Intellectual Property Cooperation was signed between both the countries to deepen and promote IP relations
- ✓ The two countries also resolved to mutually collaborate on a 'strategic green partnership'.
- ✓ The mutual agreement is aimed at strengthening cooperation on addressing global challenges, with focus on implementation of the Paris Agreement and climate change goal
- ✓ The Prime Minister also mentioned that Denmark has been continuously participating in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit since 2009.

DEFENCE

- **India's new Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) - comes into force from October 1**
- ✓ The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)- 2020 was released by the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on September 28
- ✓ It seeks to empower the domestic defence industry with the aim of turning India into a global manufacturing hub
- ✓ The DAP abolishes offsets in government-to-government, IGA (inter-governmental agreement) and single-vendor deals, enables leasing of military equipment and simplifies cumbersome trial procedures.
- ✓ Under the 15-year-old offsets policy, at least 30% of the total contract value had to be committed back into India as reinvestments
- ✓ On the negative side, the policy "loaded extra costs" into contracts while failing to bring critical military technology into the country.
- ✓ Foreign companies are known to increase the contract price by around 8-10% to honour their offsets commitments
- ✓ This is significant considering the latest CAG report tabled in Parliament last week

MAKE-IN-INDIA PUSH

- New DAP seeks to empower domestic defence industry through 'Make in India' initiative
- MoD officials say 15-year-old offsets policy "loaded extra costs" into contracts
- So, offsets will not be applicable in govt-to-govt, inter-governmental agreement & ab initio single-vendor deals

- ✓ The report faulted French defence majors Dassault Aviation and MBDA for their failure so far to fulfil offsets obligations in offering "high technology" to India under the ₹59,000 crore Rafale fighter jets deal signed in September 2016.

- ✓ The deal has a 50% offset clause to be executed by the French companies.
 - ✓ The CAG had called for a major overhaul of the entire offsets policy
 - ✓ As per the new DAP guidelines, offsets will continue in deals that have a multi-vendor competition and bidding.
 - ✓ Further, preference will be given to manufacture of complete defence products instead of just components in India.
 - ✓ Thus, it also protects the interests of Indian domestic industry.
 - ✓ It has incorporated new category 'Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)' to encourage foreigners to setup 'manufacturing or maintenance entities' through its subsidiary in the country .
 - ✓ The other major change in the new DAP was the introduction of the new provision on leasing, which will allow the armed forces to quickly hire transport planes, mid-air refuelling aircraft, helicopters, simulators and the like for urgent operational requirements without huge initial costs and paying for their upkeep.
 - ✓ The draft was finalised by a committee headed by Apurva Chandra, Director General Acquisition, MoD, which was set up in August 2019.
 - ✓ The DAP is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- **On September 28, the defence ministry - approved arms acquisitions worth another ₹2,290 crore**
- ✓ The approval includes procurement of 72,000 more assault rifles from the US firm SiG Sauer
 - ✓ The Rajnath Singh-led Defence Acquisitions Council (DAC) cleared the ₹780 crore acquisition of assault rifles from US.
 - ✓ The 13-lakh strong Army has already inducted 72,400 SiG Sauer rifles, under a ₹647 crore fast-track procurement (FTP) deal signed in February last year.
 - ✓ The SiG Sauer rifles are 7.62x51 mm caliber guns with an effective "kill" range of 500-metres
 - ✓ Further, the DAC also gave the nod for the indigenous procurements of smart anti-airfield weapons for ₹970 crore and static HF trans-receiver sets for ₹540 crore.

APPOINTMENTS

- **The government - has appointed senior bureaucrat P D Vaghela as chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai)**
- ✓ Vaghela, a 1986-batch IAS officer of Gujarat cadre, will succeed R S Sharma, who retires at the end of this month.
 - ✓ Sharma was appointed as the Trai chairman in 2015 for a period of three years by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet
 - ✓ However, in August 2018, the government had extended his term till September 30 this year.

- ✓ Vaghela has been appointed as the Trai chief for a period of three years, or till he attains the age of 65



- ✓ Vaghela was due to retire on September 30.
- ✓ Vaghela is currently serving as a Secretary in the Pharmaceuticals department (DoP) which is under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers
- ✓ Prior to this job, he served as the commissioner of Commercial Tax in Gujarat and played a key role in the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), in 2017.

SPORTS

- **The Tamil Nadu government – allowed the resumption of sporting events in the state, after a six-month break caused by the Covid-19 pandemic**
- ✓ As per the government announcement, state leagues and tournaments are allowed to be conducted, without any spectators.
- ✓ The government's decision will serve a huge boost for numerous athletes across the state.
- ✓ About 32 associations under TNOA, barring cricket and chess, have already started their preparations for organising leagues and tournaments and also in age-groups of U-14, U-16, U-19 and U-21 categories as well.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

- **World Heart Day - September 29**



USE ♥ TO BEAT 
For society, your loved ones and you

- ✓ The day is observed to raise awareness about cardiovascular diseases (CVD), including heart disease, stroke, heart failure etc., and their prevention

- ✓ It is an initiative by the World Heart Federation, which was launched in the year 2000.
- ✓ Every year, over 17.9 million people die due to cardiovascular diseases, as per the WHO
- ✓ This accounts for over 31% of global deaths
- ✓ Out of this, 75 % cases come from low and middle-income countries.
- ✓ As per the Lancet report of September 2018, CVDs contributed to around 28 % of the total deaths in India in 2016 as compared to 15.2 % in 1990.
- ✓ As per the report, the CVDs are more widespread in Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where it accounts for at least 5000 per 100,000 people.
- ✓ Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are the only states where the persons affected with CVDs are less than 3,000 per 100,000 people.
- ✓ Overall, In India, the cardiovascular diseases affect 54.5 million people.
- ✓ India's National Health Policy, 2017 has been launched with an aim to reduce premature mortality from CVDs, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases to 25% by the year 2025.
- ✓ The World Heart Federation is a nongovernmental organization, with its headquarters located at Geneva, Switzerland.

