

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—OCTOBER 21, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- **The Directorate of Public Health - to conduct a serological survey in 45 health units across all districts.**
- ✓ As part of the exercise, at least 30,000 samples collected from 888 clusters will be tested at the state public health laboratory.
- ✓ A total of atleast 30 samples will be collected from each of these clusters
- ✓ These tests, also called antibody tests, will estimate the numbers of people previously infected with Covid-19.
- ✓ The aim of these tests is to see if they have developed antibodies for the SARSCoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19.
- ✓ Antibodies are specialized protein molecules that the immune system produces in response to foreign invaders called antigens.
- ✓ The antibodies, with a Y-shaped structure, bind with a matching site on antigens and then destroy them to prevent infection.
- ✓ Chennai (123) will have the maximum number of clusters followed by Coimbatore (42), Madurai (38), Trichy (32) and Salem.
- ✓ The state has ensured samples are lifted from both rural and urban regions of all districts
- ✓ Active cases, however, were excluded from the test.
- ✓ Those with Influenza-like illness symptoms such as fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough, headaches, fatigue or any other symptom of the viral infection also did not qualify for the test.
- ✓ Scientists at the public health lab on Anna Salai will use chemi-luminescent immunoassay (CLIA) technique for the testing.
- ✓ The CLIA method uses the emission of electromagnetic radiation caused by a chemical reaction to produce light and identify antibodies.
- **Chennai – to get its second botanical garden, ‘Senganthal Poonga’, next month**



- ✓ The 5.73-acre garden was designed on the lines of Semmozhi Poonga and including only native species of trees
 - ✓ Located on the state agri-horticulture society premises on Radhakrishnan Salai, the garden is set to be inaugurated next month.
 - ✓ Semmozhi Poonga, now a big tourist attraction, had been created on 7.83 acres of land
 - ✓ The ₹5 crore new garden, named after Tamil Nadu's official flower Senganthal (*Gloriosa superba*), will have only native species of trees, flowering trees and shrubs.
 - ✓ This new park will have at least 350-400 species of flowers, while Semmozhi Poonga has as many as 500 species of plants, including exotic ones
 - ✓ Ensuring the need for the judicious use of water, the park is equipped with a micro-irrigation system that includes drip and sprinkler systems
 - ✓ The park will also have a rock garden with attractive paintings, a separate area for an open gymnasium, a solar hut-cum-yoga centre and a play area for children
- **Tamil Nadu – has reported 3,094 fresh Covid-19 cases and 50 deaths on October 20**
- ✓ This takes the state's caseload to 6,94,030 and death toll to 10,741
 - ✓ A total of 4,403 people were discharged on the day, leaving 36,734 people under treatment with the viral infection.
 - ✓ With this, 6,46,555 persons have been discharged so far.

AS IT STANDS | The Covid situation in Tamil Nadu as on Tuesday

Zones	Cases	Death	Active Cases	Cured	Total Toll
Chennai Region	1,278	23	15,524	2,73,599	5,158
North	345	4	3,697	96,038	1,311
Central	313	4	3,122	58,654	824
South	311	7	3,765	1,15,535	1,971
West	847	12	10,612	1,00,410	1,475
Other	0	0	14	2,319	2
Total	3,094	50	36,734	6,46,555	10,741

- ✓ Chennai continued to top the casecount among districts with 857 fresh cases.
- ✓ Five other districts had cases in three digits – Coimbatore (328), Chengalpet (242), Salem (169), Tiruvallur (137) and Tiruppur (125).
- ✓ The recovery rate in the state remains at 93% and the case fatality rate at 1.55%.
- ✓ Chennai's neighbours - Chengalpet (191), Tiruvallur (137), and Kancheepuram (93) - together logged 421 cases.
- ✓ In the last 24 hours, 80,371 samples were tested, taking the total number of samples tested till date to 91,12,067.
- ✓ As of date, there are 66 government testing facilities and 128 private laboratories in Tamil Nadu.

STATES

- **Punjab - became the first state in the country to pass bills rejecting the centre's contentious three farm laws**



- ✓ On October 20, Punjab assembly unanimously passed three agriculture bills to amend the three laws and negate the Union legislation
- ✓ Further, the assembly also passed the fourth bill protecting the state's farmers from attachment of their land holding up to 2.5 acres in any recovery proceeding by any court in Punjab.
- ✓ The assembly also passed a unanimous resolution seeking immediate annulment of the Centre's three agri-marketing laws
- ✓ It also sought an ordinance to protect minimum support price (MSP) and ensure continuance of procurement of foodgrains by Centre through FCI and other agencies.
- ✓ The four bills, tabled by CM Captain Amarinder Singh, were passed by a voice vote with the two BJP MLAs skipping the special session.
- ✓ The three bills provide for imprisonment of not less than three years and fine for a person who "harasses/ compels a farmer to sell his agricultural produce below MSP"
- ✓ The new amendments aims to protect the interest of farmers, farm labourers and those engaged in ancillary and incidental activities related to production, sale and marketing of agricultural produce

- ✓ They also ensure that no sale or purchase of wheat or paddy shall be valid unless the price paid for it is equal to or greater than the MSP.
- ✓ Punjab's bills also restore the primacy of Agriculture Produce Market Committee Act over the central legislations.
- ✓ They also protect consumers from hoarding and black marketing of agricultural produce.
- ✓ Later, the CM presented Governor VP Singh Bandore a copy of the four bills and the resolution passed by the assembly for his nod.

NATIONAL

- **The Centre – notifies the higher expenditure ceiling recommended by the Election Commission for all polls to be held during the Covid-19 pandemic.**
 - ✓ Accordingly, a 10% hike has been proposed to the poll spending limit for candidates in Bihar assembly poll as well as the impending bypolls to one Lok Sabha seat and 59 assembly seats
 - ✓ This is in accordance with the EC's proposal sent to Law ministry last month
 - ✓ The Union Ministry of Law and Justice notified the amendment to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.
 - ✓ Thus, the limit for all states/ UTs where the cap for Lok Sabha poll was ₹70 lakh, has been raised to ₹77 lakh and for states/UTs with ₹54 lakh as existing limit, to ₹59.4 lakh.
 - ✓ For assembly polls, candidates in states/UTs with ₹28 lakh as the expenditure limit, can now spend up to ₹30.8 lakh and those with ₹20 lakh as existing limit, can spend up to ₹22 lakh.
 - ✓ As per the notification issued by the law ministry, the enhanced poll expenditure limits will remain in force till such date as may be notified by the central government.
 - ✓ The raised limits are set to come as a relief for political parties and candidates as they deal with additional expenditure on public rallies and meetings in view of precautions that need to be taken in line with Covid-19 health protocols.
 - ✓ These include additional expenditure on sanitisers, masks and regulation of crowds so as to adhere to social distancing norms.
 - ✓ The last time the expenditure ceiling was enhanced was in 2014 just ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.
- **The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) - has decided to allow the students who have passed Class X to enrol with the institute**
 - ✓ The new rule announced by the industry body would help aspirants turn chartered accountants six months in advance
 - ✓ The ICAI said it will allow students to provisionally register for the entry-level CA foundation course after passing the Class X examinations.

- ✓ Though registration is allowed after Class X, the admission will be regularised only if the student clears Class XII.
 - ✓ Earlier, students could register for the course only after appearing in their Class XII examinations and write the foundation exam only after a four month study period.
 - ✓ Under the new system, this study period can be completed while pursuing Class XI and XII.
 - ✓ Thus, students who appear for the Class XII examinations in February/March will now be eligible to appear in the CA foundation examination in May, and won't have to wait for the November exams
 - ✓ CA foundation exams are held twice a year — in May/June and in November/December.
 - ✓ This year, the exams will be held in December.
 - ✓ The foundation course comprises four papers, out of which two are subjective and two objective types.
- **On October 20, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) - has held that environmental clearance (EC) granted to the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP), after completion of substantial work, by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) “in violation of law”**
- ✓ For that purpose, it has directed the MoEF&CC to constitute a seven-member expert committee preferably out of Expert appraisal committee (EAC) members to analyse the extent of damage caused by the project between 2008 to 2017 and suggest relief and rehabilitation measures
 - ✓ The NGT had directed the committee to complete its exercise within six months
 - ✓ The Principal bench, comprising Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, Judicial Member Justice S.P. Wangdi and expert member, Dr. Nagin Nanda, delivered the verdict on the plea
 - ✓ The plea held that the construction of the project was started without environmental and other statutory clearances and in violation of the Forest Conservation Act.
 - ✓ KLIP is a multipurpose irrigation project of the Telangana government, constructed on the meeting point of River Godavari and River Pranahita
 - ✓ It was earlier called as the Pranahita Chevella project and later renamed as Kaleshwaram project in 2014.
 - ✓ The project is designed to provide irrigation and drinking water to backward areas of Telangana
- **On October 19, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Indian government - have signed an agreement for the grant of a loan of \$177 million**
- ✓ The loan has been approved to upgrade 450 kilometers of state highways and major district roads in Maharashtra.

- ✓ The assistance would be used to improve connectivity between rural areas and urban centres in Maharashtra.
 - ✓ The project will upgrade 2 major district roads and 11 state highways in the state
 - ✓ It will also provide training to the Maharashtra Public Works Department project staff in the areas of climate change adaptation and disaster resilient features in road design, maintenance, planning and safety.
 - ✓ The project would also strengthen the road safety measures by developing road safety audit framework
- **Union Minister Nitin Gadkari - laid the foundation stone for India's first multi-modal logistics park in Assam on October 20, 2020.**



- ✓ This multi-modal logistic park will be developed under the Bharatmala Pariyojna with an estimated budget of ₹694 crore.
 - ✓ The project would provide direct connectivity through air, road, rail and waterways to the people
 - ✓ The Bharatmala Pariyojana was announced by the union minister of Road Transport and Highways of India, Nitin Gadkari in 2017.
 - ✓ It was launched in order to improve connectivity in the country by 2022
 - ✓ The government-funded scheme was also supported by the cess collected on petrol and diesel and the tax collected at toll booths.
- **The Ministry of Tourism - has released the Indian Tourist Statistics report recently.**
- ✓ As per the report, Uttar Pradesh attracted the highest number of domestic tourists (23.1% of the total tourists) in year 2019.
 - ✓ As a whole, the country hosted 28.9 million foreign visitors in 2019, which is an increase of 2.2% as against the earlier year
 - ✓ The top five countries contributing to the most number of visitors include Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.
 - ✓ The total foreign exchange figure touched \$29 billion in the sector of tourism alone, as per the report.

- ✓ Further, the top destinations of Indian tourists in 2019 include Thailand Singapore, Malaysia, Dubai, United States, Sri Lanka, Australia, Japan, Bhutan, Maldives.
- ✓ Taj Mahal in Uttar Pradesh and Gateway of India in Mumbai were the top spots of domestic tourism.
- ✓ Uttar Pradesh has also stands at third position in attracting foreign tourists.
- ✓ The other states that hosted the higher number of tourists include Kerala, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir.
- ✓ The highest e-tourist visa were applied from UK, US and China.

- **The scheduled elections for the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council-Leh (LAHDC) on October 22 - will be the first major electoral exercise in the post-Covid period**
- ✓ More than 90,000 voters will elect 26 councillors from among 94 candidates in the fray.
- ✓ A record 162 candidates had filed their nomination.
- ✓ For the first time, use of postal ballots has been expanded beyond the services to include senior citizens above 65 years, differently abled, those who are quarantined or in home isolation and health workers deployed on Covid duty.
- ✓ The polling will be held in 294 booths spread across an area of 45,000 square km, including some of the world's most hostile and isolated locations.

- **NITI Aayog – to establish the Frontier Technologies Cloud Innovation Centre (CIC) in association with Amazon Web Services (AWS)**
- ✓ The first-of-its-kind centre will be launched to address societal challenges through digital innovation.
- ✓ This CIC is a part of the AWS CIC Global Programme
- ✓ It will assist various agencies and stakeholders to come together and identify challenges, to test new ideas, to apply design thinking, and to access the technology expertise of AWS
- ✓ The Frontier technologies CIC will enable the budding innovators and start-ups to start using the state-of-the-art, cloud-centric digital innovations by using the emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, robotics and blockchain.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The first-ever Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Start up Forum - will be launched on 27th October 2020, ahead of the SCO trade ministers meeting scheduled on 28th October**
- ✓ Further, SCO or the Shanghai Pact Heads of Government meeting will be hosted by India on 30th November 2020.
- ✓ The Start up forum will help the member countries to develop their startup ecosystems collectively

- ✓ It will also identify other areas of cooperation by launching multiple entrepreneurial activities
- ✓ SCO, founded on June 15, 2001, has eight Member States namely- China, India, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- ✓ It comprises of four Observer States that seeks full membership namely- Afghanistan, Belarus, Mongolia and Iran.
- ✓ The organization also comprises six Dialogue Partners namely- Armenia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan, Cambodia and Turkey.

PERSONALITIES

- **A minute-long video of 16-year-old Asha Patwal - is among the top 10 global finalists shortlisted by the UN World Data Forum for its '1 Minute Voices of Youth' contest.**



- ✓ In the video without any audio, the deaf-blind teen from Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag town makes a case for the inclusion of those with dual disabilities in Census enumeration
- ✓ The New York-based UN World Data Forum, which operates under the United Nations Statistics Division, had put out a call for videos from those between the ages of 15 and 24, saying why data matters.
- ✓ In the video, Asha said that there is no official data of deaf-blind, even though there are 0.5 million deaf-blind in the country
- ✓ The video was created with support from Sense India, an Ahmedabad-based NGO that works with those who have multiple disabilities.
- ✓ Asha, studying in Class X, was born with visual impairment and lost her hearing, after contracting meningitis

DEFENCE

- **India - successfully test fired the Stand-Off Anti-Tank Missile named as SANT on October 19, 2020 from the Chandipur test range.**



- ✓ The missile has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).
- ✓ It has the capability of lock-on before launch and lock-on after launch.
- ✓ The missile, to be inducted in the Indian Air Force, is a variant of Nag missile and an upgraded version of the HELINA.
- ✓ HELINA is yet another variant of the NAG missile.
- ✓ The missile was first test fired in November 2018 from Pokhran.
- ✓ This upgraded version comprise of a nose-mounted active radar homing seeker that has an extended range of 15 to 20 km.

ECONOMY

- **The Department of investment and public asset management (DIPAM) – to go ahead with the strategic sale of four public sector companies**
- ✓ It is planning to invite bids/expression of interest (Eoi) for oil marketing company BPCL, Shipping Corporation, Concor and BEML next month
- ✓ These four companies can help the government realise close to ₹49,000 crore based on current market value of the shares.

UNLOCKING VALUE		
PSU	Eoi date	Expected value (₹ cr) ^
BPCL	Nov 16*	39,460
Concor	Nov	7,000 (30% stake sale)
Shipping Corp	Nov	1,543
BEML	Nov	720 (28% stake sale)
Air India	Mid-Dec	NA

*Deadline for submission; ^ Value based on current market cap

- ✓ In case of Air India, one of the most keenly watched disinvestment deals, a ministerial panel headed by home minister is expected to clear the process this month, paving the way for calling expression of interest around mid-December.
- ✓ But the transaction is only expected to be closed during the first quarter of the next financial year.
- ✓ The BPCL disinvestment, which is key to achieving the ₹1.2 lakh crore target for the year, is expected to get moving now due to significant buyer interest

OBITUARY

- **Wing Commander Vijayalakshmi Ramanan (retd), the first woman officer of the Indian Air Force (IAF) - passed away on October 18 due to age-related ailments.**



- ✓ The 96-year old Vijayalakshmi was living in Bengaluru along with her daughter.
- ✓ Born on February 27, 1924, Vijayalakshmi joined the Madras Medical College for the MBBS course in 1943.
- ✓ She was Best Outgoing Student in 1948, and a recipient of the Balfour Memorial Medal for Medicine and prize for surgery by Madras University.
- ✓ She did her MD in obstetrics and gynaecology and worked in Egmore Maternity hospital in Chennai as an assistant surgeon.
- ✓ Vijayalakshmi was commissioned in the Army Medical Corps on August 22, 1955 and seconded to the IAF the same day, making her the first woman IAF officer.
- ✓ She was posted at Air Force hospitals in Jalahalli (Bengaluru), Kanpur and Secunderabad, among other places.
- ✓ She also had administrative duties of the medical board and family planning and took classes for nursing officers.
- ✓ During the wars in 1962, 1966 and 1971, she had extra duties in wards treating wounded soldiers.
- ✓ Vijayalakshmi was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 1977, years after she got the Permanent Commission in 1971
- ✓ She retired as Wing Commander in 1979.
- ✓ Vijayalakshmi had also designed the IAF uniform for women
- ✓ Married to Wing Commander K V Ramanan (retd), who passed away in 1971, they were the first couple of the IAF

SPORTS

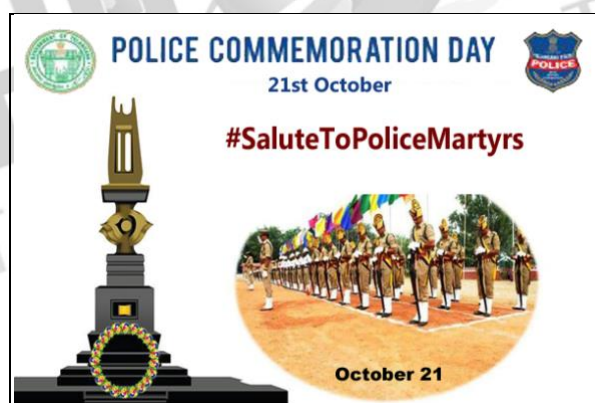
- On October 20, Auckland medium pacer Ben Lister - became the first COVID-19 substitute in cricket



- ✓ Ben Lister replaced teammate Mark Chapman in the Plunket Shield First Class championship.
- ✓ Chapman reportedly felt sick a day earlier, following which he underwent Covid-19 test

NATIONAL DAY

- Police Commemoration Day – October 21



- ✓ The day is observed to pay tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in service to the nation.
- ✓ The Day is celebrated every year to pay honour to ten police officials, who lost their lives on October 21, 1959
- ✓ On that day, Chinese forces attacked and trapped a patrol party of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) at the Indo-Tibetan border.
- ✓ The Police Commemoration Day Parade is being held at the National level at the Police Memorial, Chanakyapuri since 2012.