

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—OCTOBER 22, 2020**

### **TAMIL NADU**

- **On October 21, the Greater Chennai Corporation - announced the results of the second sero-prevalence study done in Chennai in October**
- ✓ The survey indicated that one in three people in Chennai has been exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.
- ✓ The first survey in June showed one-fifth of the city was exposed to the virus.
- ✓ Earlier this month, health workers collected blood samples from nearly 6,500 people from across the city.
- ✓ After testing 6,388 samples, scientists found 2,062 people have Immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibodies.
- ✓ This means, at least 32.3% people have been exposed to the virus and have developed immunity against it.
- ✓ The study is still going on and the GCC is yet to release a detailed report covering zone or ward wise information.
- ✓ The study was done by the GCC along with the National Institute of Epidemiology and National Tuberculosis Research Institute.
- ✓ In the first sero surveillance conducted in June, 2,673 of the 12,405 people were found to have developed antibodies.
- ✓ This time the agencies conducted the survey in the same streets in the 51 wards across 15 zones of the civic body with only 50% of the sample size as against the first survey
  
- **Tamil Nadu - announced it will continue convalescent plasma therapy for patients admitted with Covid-19 symptoms at government hospitals across the state.**
- ✓ The announcement came a day after the Centre announced that it will discontinue the plasma therapy as a randomized trial failed to benefit patients.

## HOW IT'S DONE

➤ In convalescent plasma therapy, plasma from a person who has recovered from Covid-19 is transfused into a critical coronavirus patient

➤ The therapy uses antibodies from the plasma of the recovered patient to treat another patient by helping the infected person develop antibodies

➤ People who have recovered donate plasma

- ✓ Earlier, ICMR had permitted use of plasma therapy as an experimental treatment in the national clinical management of Covid-19 protocol.
- ✓ On October 20, ICMR director-general Dr Balram Bhargava said it could be discontinued soon from the national guidelines after discussions with the national task force
- ✓ The country has tested 464 patients across 39 hospitals and with more than 350 authors.
- ✓ Tamil Nadu, like many other states, set up plasma banks to match potential donors with recipients.
- ✓ Till now, Tamil Nadu has offered the therapy to more than 400 patients, with more than 95% of patients recovered from the viral infection without any post-Covid complications
- **The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) – has announced that the aspirants writing Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) from now will be issued certificates valid for lifetime, instead of the earlier certificates valid for seven years.**
  - ✓ This provision would have prospective effect and for those who already have a TET certificate, NCTE would take a legal opinion and will act accordingly
  - ✓ The decision to this effect was taken at the general body meeting of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) held on September 28.
  - ✓ In 2013, 75,000 candidates qualified in TET, which remains the highest so far.
  - ✓ Tamil Nadu has fixed the maximum age limit of 40 years for OC and 45 years for other categories for recruiting teachers.
- **On October 21, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami- announced that all shops and commercial establishments, including vegetable, grocery, restaurants and tea shops, are allowed to operate till 10pm starting October 22.**
  - ✓ At present, all shops are closed at 9pm.

- ✓ In a statement, the chief minister said the shops and establishments should adhere to the standard operating procedures.
  - ✓ The decision has been taken considering the upcoming festive season and the need to retrieve the economy.
  - ✓ The CM emphasized people should wear masks, maintain a physical distance of at least six feet, and wash hands frequently with soap.
- **On October 21, Tamil Nadu – reported 3,086 new Covid-19 cases and 39 deaths, taking the total case count stood to 6,97,116 and death toll to 10,780**
- ✓ A total of 35,480 persons were still under treatment at various health facilities, after the discharge of 4,301 persons on the day
  - ✓ With this, 6,50,856 persons have recovered from the viral infection
  - ✓ Chennai continued to have the maximum number of infected people with 845 positive cases
  - ✓ Its neighbours, Tiruvallur and Chengalpattu recorded 180 and 159 cases respectively, while Kancheepuram reported 106 cases
  - ✓ Coimbatore (314), Salem (198), Tiruppur (120) and Erode (108) reported fresh infections in three-digit figures.
  - ✓ With 81,782 samples tested in the last 24 hours, the State has so far tested 91,93,849 samples.

## STATES

- **On October 21, Maharashtra government – decided to exercise its power to withdraw “general consent” to the CBI from investigating any case in the state without its prior consent or the permission of the higher judiciary**
- ✓ The announcement comes a day after the CBI responded to a request from UP police and orders from the Centre to take over a ‘TRP scam’ probe in Lucknow

### STATES VS CENTRE

<p><b>Maharashtra</b> currently 4th state to withdraw general consent to CBI. <b>Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Uttarakhand</b> had earlier done so, but later overturned the decision</p> <p><b>Rajasthan:</b> Gehlot govt withdrew GC to CBI on July 19, amid political crisis in Congress due to Sachin Pilot's revolt</p> <p><b>Bengal:</b> Withdrew GC in Nov 2018. But Calcutta HC said CBI could probe central govt officers even if GC was withdrawn</p>	<p><b>Punjab:</b> Specifically withdrew CBI probe into 2015 sacrilege cases in Sept 2018 after assembly passed resolution. CBI continued probe but HC and SC both upheld state govt's right to take back probe from CBI</p> <p><b>Chhattisgarh:</b> Bhupesh Baghel govt withdrew GC in Jan 2019. Interestingly, in Sept 2018, CBI had charged Baghel with 'circulating a fake CD'. He refused to seek bail and walked into prison, accusing BJP of vendetta politics</p>
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- ✓ The CBI will now have to approach the State government on a case-to-case basis seeking permission to conduct investigations.

- ✓ The Mumbai police are already investigating the alleged manipulation of viewership ratings by Republic TV and four other channels, after registering the case on October 8
- ✓ The CBI took over the probe based on an FIR filed in Uttar Pradesh on October 20
- ✓ Maharashtra is currently the fifth state to block CBI, besides West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and Chhattisgarh – all opposition-ruled.
- ✓ The CBI is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946, which makes consent of a state government mandatory for conducting an investigation in that state.
- ✓ The general consent is normally granted by states to help the CBI carry out its probe.
- ✓ Now, Maharashtra has withdrawn its consent given to members of the Delhi Police Establishment on February 22, 1989
- ✓ As a result, the CBI will not be able to step in to inquire into the TRP scam
- ✓ In a petition before the Bombay high court on October 19, Republic TV had sought the transfer of the Mumbai police case to CBI.

## NATIONAL

- **The Department of Space (DoS) – has released the draft version of the Spacecom Policy-2020, which will replace the existing Satcom Policy.**
- ✓ As per the proposed policy, private Indian firms are allowed to not just use existing space assets for communication services, but also develop new systems, launch satellites and sell services to foreign customers
- ✓ Companies will be allowed to set up control centres outside India and use overseas space assets

<b>FOCUS ON NATIONAL SECURITY TOO</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Under Spacecom, private firms can establish telemetry, tracking &amp; command earth stations and satellite control centres in or outside India</li> <li>➤ Use overseas space assets and sell services to foreign customers</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New policy will incorporate measures to monitor &amp; authorise use of space assets for communication to or from Indian territory</li> <li>➤ Bring more assets under India's control to utilise space-based communication for national needs</li> </ul>

- ✓ The new policy will have everything the Satcom Policy has in terms of protection of assets, creation of new assets, monitoring and operations
- ✓ It also proposes measures to monitor and authorise use of space assets for communication to or from Indian territory

- ✓ The policy also lists steps to bring more assets under India's control for enhancing ability to utilise space-based communication for national needs.
  - ✓ Firms can avail Indian and non-Indian orbital resources to establish systems for services within and outside India.
  - ✓ Indian resources can be availed from designated entities under the department of space on a commercial basis, while foreign resources can be used following the new guidelines.
- **IIT-Kharagpur's 'Covirap', a novel technology to test for Covid-19 - has been certified by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for commercial use.**
- ✓ This new testing method implements a highly reliable and accurate molecular diagnostic procedure, conducted in a low-cost portable device unit and costs around Rs 500 per test.
  - ✓ Various commercial units have already approached the institute for 'technology licensing' to enable rapid reach of this innovation to the people.

### Novel solution

A look at how the new COVID-19 testing device works



**Virus alert:** Researchers with the COVIRAP device at IIT Kharagpur.

- SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT
- COVIRAP machine resembles a box and comes with a kit
- Kit has three master mixes which are markers of different genes to confirm the virus
- RNA samples are extracted from **nasal swabs** and mixed with the master mix in tubes
- Tubes are put in the machine which is set at a specific temperature and programmed to run for a fixed period
- Once the heating is over,

it's mixed with another solution and reheated

- A paper strip is dipped into reaction product
- Coloured lines develop, like in a pregnancy kit, to indicate presence or absence of virus
- A smartphone app can grab image of the strip and convey results
- COVIRAP can deliver results in an hour

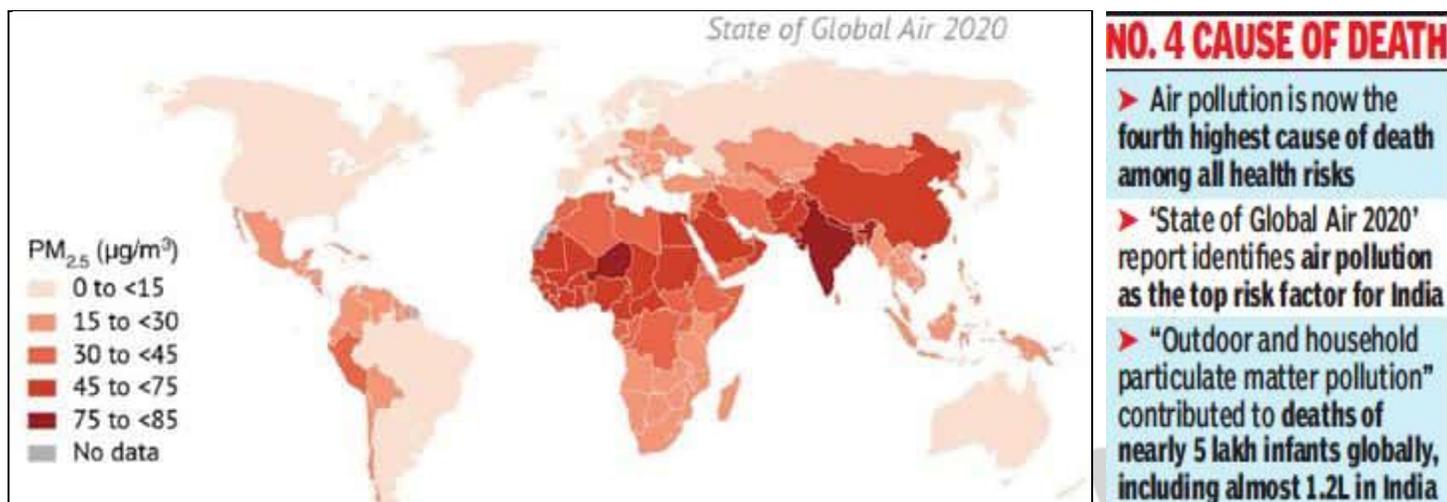
**KEY DIFFERENCES WITH RT-PCR**

- While RT-PCR machines can cost up to ₹25 lakh, the COVIRAP machine cost the IIT researchers only **₹5,000**
- COVIRAP test kits cost about **₹500**
- RT-PCR needs to be operated by a molecular biologist
- COVIRAP can be operated with minimal training

- ✓ After rigorous testing with patient samples by an authorised ICMR laboratory, ICMR granted certification for this diagnostic test.
  - ✓ The test has been designed to be fairly easy to conduct, affordable and can produce results within one hour.
  - ✓ It is portable and can be operated on very low energy supply at any place with minimally trained youth
  - ✓ However, the viral RNA would still have to be extracted in a lab.
  - ✓ The machine, costing about Rs 5000, was having 94% sensitivity and 98% specificity in comparison to gold standard, RT-PCR.
  - ✓ A RT-PCR machine cost up to ₹25 lakh, and needed to be operated by a molecular biologist in an air-conditioned laboratory
- **On October 21, the Cabinet - approved immediate disbursement of Rs. 3,737 crore bonus to 30.67 lakh non-gazetted central government employees including from railways, postal department, EPFO, ESIC and defence production.**
- ✓ This amount will be credited within a week in a single installment to all the employees.
  - ✓ The Union Cabinet approved productivity-linked bonus and non-productivity linked bonus for 2019-2020 to boost demand during the festive season
  - ✓ Recently, two major rail workers association had set a deadline for the government to issue order for the disbursement of their performance linked bonus, otherwise they would stop the running of railways.
  - ✓ In a circular, the railway board said that its non-gazetted employees except RPF and PRSF personnel will get 78 days wages as performance-linked bonus.
  - ✓ The government had earlier suspended the Dearness Allowances or DA for central government employees after the outbreak of coronavirus.
- **On October 21, the Union Cabinet - approved extension of the market intervention scheme (MIS) for procurement of apples in Jammu & Kashmir for 2020-21 on the same terms and condition as was done during last season.**
- ✓ The procurement of apples will be done by NAFED through designated agency in the Union territory directly from apple farmers of J&K
  - ✓ The payment to the apple farmers will be made through direct benefit transfer into their bank account.
  - ✓ Twelve lakh tonnes of apples can be procured under this scheme
  - ✓ The Centre has also allowed NAFED to utilise government guarantee of Rs. 2,500 crore for this operation.
  - ✓ The losses, if any, to be incurred in this operation will be shared between central government and UT administration of J&K on 50:50 basis

# REPORT

- The annual 'State of Global Air 2020' report - was released on October 21



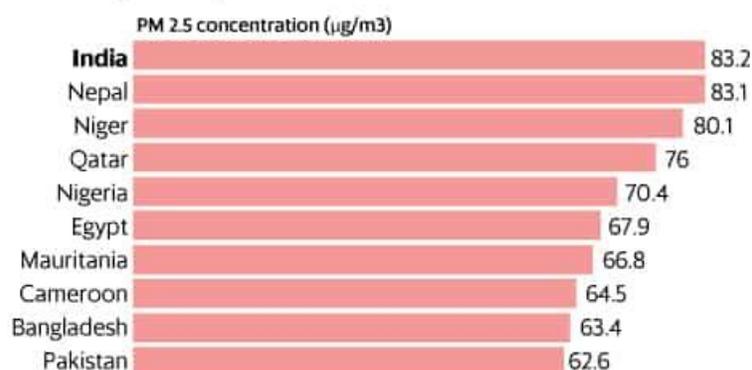
- ✓ The report was released by the Health Effects Institute (HEI), an independent, non-profit research institute funded jointly by the US Environmental Protection Agency, industry, foundations, and development banks.
- ✓ As per the report, long-term exposure to air pollution contributed to around 6.7 million deaths globally from stroke, heart attack, diabetes, lung cancer, chronic lung diseases and neonatal diseases in 2019
- ✓ Two countries, China (1.8 million) and India (1.6 million) together accounts for more than half of such deaths

Chart 1

## Where PM2.5 exposure is highest

In 2019, over 90% of the world's population experienced annual average PM2.5 concentrations that exceeded the World Health Organisation's air quality guideline of 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. India remains on the top of this list. Population-weighted annual average concentration is the average level of exposure of a country's population to particulate matter.

Top 10 countries with the highest population-weighted annual average PM2.5 exposures in 2019



Source: State of Global Air 2020

- ✓ The report states that air pollution is the largest risk factor for deaths for India, followed by high blood pressure.

- ✓ Globally, air pollution is the fourth highest cause of death, ranking just below high BP, tobacco use and poor diet
- ✓ The report, however, notes the success of the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Household LPG' programme.
- ✓ As per the report, the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Household LPG' programme helped dramatically expand access to clean energy, especially for rural households and helped reduce "household air pollution exposure".
- ✓ The HEI, for the first time, did a comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on the newborn
- ✓ As per its findings, "outdoor and household particulate matter (PM) pollution" contributed to the deaths of nearly 5,00,000 infants globally, including 1,16,000 infants in India, in their first month of life.

