

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 19, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **Chief Minister M K Stalin - launched his pet project of redressing public grievances through the newly created Department of 'Ungal Thoguthiyil Muthalamaichar' (chief minister in your constituency) on May 18.**



- ✓ The Chief Minister marked the inauguration of the programme by handing over welfare measures sought by ten petitioners
- ✓ Chief secretary V Iraianbu and special officer of the department Shilpa Prabhakar Sathish were present during the event
- ✓ The new department was created ten days ago by the state government
- ✓ Resolving the grievances within 100 days after formation of the government was one of the key electoral promises of Stalin when he went around the state receiving petitions from the public during election campaign.
- ✓ According to government, about four lakh petitions were received from public across the state during Stalin's tour.
- ✓ The petitions, locked in 72 wooden boxes and 275 cartons, were handed over to the 'Ungal Thoguthiyil Muthalamaichar' department.
- ✓ The petitions were handed over to Shilpa Prabhakar Sathish soon after the department was formed.

- ✓ The petitions were segregated district wise and were uploaded online through Tamil Nadu E- Governance Agency (TNeGA).
 - ✓ Once uploaded, an SMS would be sent to the petitioner along with the unique identification number allotted to the petition.
 - ✓ Subsequently, the petition would be scrutinised and a field inspection would be done, after which they are forwarded to authorities concerned for due action.
 - ✓ The petitions would be broadly categorised into three – those of personal nature like requests for house patta and old age pensions, those seeking social assets like anganwadi buildings and those requesting civic infrastructure like bridges and flyovers.
 - ✓ Marking the inauguration of the scheme, the Chief Minister gave away welfare assistance like old age pension, widow pension, disabled pension, sewing machine, house patta and a hearing aid to six people.
 - ✓ Another four requests seeking benefits for the common public like anganwadi building, check dam, public drinking water tap and road were also granted.
- **Tamil Nadu - reported the highest number of new cases in the country on May 18, with 33,059 people testing positive.**
- ✓ This is the first time the state has topped the number of fresh cases since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020
 - ✓ With this, the cumulative Covid tally of the state stood at 16,64,350
 - ✓ The state's death toll at 18,369 is the fourth highest in the country

STATUS REPORT

Region	New Cases	Cases discharged on Tuesday	Deaths	Persons under treatment, including home treatment, as of Tuesday
CHENNAI	10,966	8,489	169	81,248
NORTH	3,442	2,236	36	25,516
CENTRAL	4,169	2,208	47	27,276
SOUTH	6,003	4,062	62	49,210
WEST	8,479	4,367	50	59,677
OTHERS	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	33,059	21,362	364	2,42,929

- ✓ As on day, 2,42,949 patients are undergoing treatment in healthcare centres and in their homes.
- ✓ Chennai continued to be the hotspot with 6,016 people getting infected on the day
- ✓ Coimbatore, which is the second worst-affected district in the state, had 3,071 new cases.
- ✓ As far as vaccination was concerned, a total of 50,091 got their jabs on the day — 20 % less compared to the previous day's total of 63,101.
- ✓ So far, a total of 70,13,735 people have got vaccinated in the state.

- ✓ Meanwhile, Greater Chennai Corporation has announced that it will start imposing a fine of ₹2,000 on Covid-19 patients under home isolation if they step out
 - ✓ If the offence is repeated, then they will be taken to a Covid care centre (CCC).
 - ✓ Family members of positive patients who are found violating the rules will also be penalised.
 - ✓ A total of 2000 FOCUS volunteers had been assigned to help home-isolated patients avail food and medicines, according to GCC
- **The National Highways in Chennai – fail to secure top rankings in the National Highway Authority of India's (NHAI) recent ranking report**
- ✓ Not a single highway stretch near Chennai managed to secure a spot in the top-150 list.
 - ✓ NHAI's National Rating ranked 219 key NH stretches across the country based on highway efficiency (45 marks), road safety (35 marks) and user services (20 marks).
 - ✓ Consultants, who were hired to rank these stretches, named Ahmedabad-Vadodara as the best highway in the country.
 - ✓ In Tamil Nadu, the 148-km long road between Krishnagiri and Walajapet on NH-48 secured the sixth position with a score of 87.15 out of 100.
 - ✓ The 21-km stretch between Poonamalle and Sriperumbudur near Chennai on the same NH-48 has secured 183rd rank by scoring only 55.63 out of 100.
 - ✓ NHAI consultants rated the stretch as poor in terms of safety due to frequent road accidents

LONG WAY TO GO

How highways in Tamil Nadu are rated nationally			
Highway stretch	Total Length (km)	Score (out of 100)	National Rank
TOP THREE IN TN			
Krishnagiri-Walajapet	148.3	87.15	6
Karur-Dindigul Bypass	77.72	81.37	22
Hosur-Krishnagiri	59.87	81.34	23
LAST THREE IN TN			
Poonamallee-Sriperumbudur	21.2	55.63	183
Trichy-Karur Bypass	41.05	51.66	196
Pondicherry-Tindivanam	38.60	48	207
POONAMALLEE-SRIPERUMBUDUR HIGHWAY			
Highway efficiency	Safety	User services	
26.2/45	18.4/35	10.9/20	

- ✓ Chennai Bypass, another stretch in the city's suburbs, too has been ranked low at 173rd position with 58 marks.
- ✓ The poor show was attributed to the inefficiency of the Vanagaram toll plaza and excess traffic.

- ✓ The 38-km stretch connecting Tindivanam with Puducherry was at the bottom of the NHA rating at 207th ranking with 48 marks.

NATIONAL

- **The Ministry of Labour and Employment - recently notified Section 142 of the Social Security Code, 2020, which covers applicability of the Aadhaar.**

- ✓ As per the notification, the Ministry of Labour and Employment is empowered to collect Aadhaar details from the beneficiaries, including migrant workers, for various social security schemes.
- ✓ The migrant workers are allowed to register themselves in the government portal by submitting the details of Aadhaar
- ✓ The data provided in the portal will be used by various schemes of the Government
- ✓ The National Informatics Centre is developing a National Database for unorganised workers and migrant workers
- ✓ According to Section 142, Aadhaar details are compulsory for an employee or unorganised person or any other person to get benefits of government schemes.
- ✓ The Social Security Code was introduced in 2019 by clubbing eight existing laws – including Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, Employment Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, Employees State Insurance Act, 1948, Compensation Act, 1923.
- ✓ It introduced universal social security for unorganised workers and also health and insurance benefits for gig workers.

- **The Department of Telecommunications - recently allowed mobile operators to conduct 5G trials for a period of 6 months without the collaboration of Chinese companies**

- ✓ The Telecom Department has allowed Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and MTNL to conduct trials using 5G technology.
- ✓ These service providers have tied up with original equipment manufacturers such as Nokia, Ericsson, Samsung etc., for the trials
- ✓ However, the Reliance Jio has announced that it will conduct trials using its own technology.
- ✓ The trials include model tuning, testing indigenous technology, evaluating chosen equipment and vendors, testing applications such as tele-education, tele-medicine, drone based agricultural monitoring.
- ✓ The operators will be allowed to use their existing spectrum of 2500 MHz, 1800 MHz, 900 MHz and 800 MHz to conduct the trials.
- ✓ It is compulsory for the telecom operators to conduct trials in rural and semi-urban areas on non-commercial basis.
- ✓ The 5G technology is expected to deliver better user experience in terms of data download rates of atleast five times faster than the 4G.

- **The National Commission for Women (NCW) - recently launched a new WhatsApp number '9354954224' exclusively for pregnant women.**
- ✓ It is a “message only” helpline number that aims to provide 24x7 medical assistance to expectant mothers all over the country.
- ✓ The agency has also set up a dedicated team to look after the grievances raised by the pregnant women on the number.
- ✓ The NCW was established under the National Commission for Women Act in 1992.
- ✓ The body reviews legal and constitutional safeguards of women.
- ✓ Jayanti Patnaik was the first Chairperson of National Commission for Women.
- ✓ According to fifth edition of National Family Health Survey, anaemia among pregnant women has increased in more than half of the states and union territories.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Denmark - has passed a law to allow the screening of foreign investments to prevent any threats to the National Security.**
- ✓ The new legislation has been enacted to protect the country against Huawei of China and its drive to build 5G network in the country.
- ✓ As per the law, the foreign investors will be evaluated based on their potential link to foreign governments, armed forces and criminal activities.
- ✓ However, the new law is not applicable to Greenland and Faroe Islands, which are sovereign territories under the Kingdom of Denmark.
- ✓ Earlier, countries like US, Australia, Vietnam etc., have also passed new legislation and took other key measures to protect their National security against Huawei.
- ✓ Huawei manufactures kits such as gateways, network switches and bridges for 5G systems.
- ✓ This implies that the Governments should take extra care in protecting their data.
- ✓ Various countries fear that the Chinese Government might use Huawei as a backdoor to breach into the national security system.

- **Saudi Arabia - recently announced that it is to join Canada, US, Qatar and Norway in forming the Net Zero Producers Forum.**
- ✓ The forum has been launched for the oil and gas producers to discuss the implementation of Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- ✓ It aims to develop practical 'net zero' emission strategies, reduce the usage of methane and develop carbon capture and storage technologies.
- ✓ Also, it will target in advancing the circular carbon economy approach and promote development and deployment of clean energy.
- ✓ The United States has set a target of cutting emission levels by 50% to 52% as compared to that of 2005 levels.

- ✓ This was announced during the Leaders Summit on Climate held in April 2021.
- ✓ Saudi Arabia has resolved to reduce its carbon emissions by generating 50% of its energy requirements from renewable sourced by 2030.
- ✓ Canada has set a goal of reducing its green house gas emissions by 30% as compared to that of 2005 levels.
- **The Climate Action Tracker - recently released a report highlighting the impacts of the recent US Climate Summit.**
- ✓ According to the report, global temperature are expected to increase by 2.4°C by 2100 as compared to that of pre-industrial levels, even after implementing the ambitious climate goals of the summit
- ✓ The report tracked the policies of 36 countries along with the European Union, which together accounted for 80% of the world carbon emissions.
- ✓ Prior to the summit, the Climate Action Tracker predicted that the global temperatures are to increase by 2.6°C by 2100.
- ✓ According to the report, most of the countries are lagging behind their stated climate targets and pledges.
- ✓ At this pace, the global temperature is expected increase by 2.9°C by 2100.
- ✓ Hence, the countries should increase their voluntary emission targets under the Paris Agreement before Glasgow summit.
- ✓ The Glasgow Summit, COP26 is to be held in November 2021.
- ✓ According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world will face severe impacts if the global temperature increases beyond 1.5°C.
- ✓ The Climate Action Tracker is a collaboration of two organisations, New Climate Institute and Climate Analytics, that tracks climate actions of governments

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **The Defence Research and Development Organisation - recently developed the Single Crystal Blade Technology.**



- ✓ The DRDO has delivered sixty of such blades to the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.
- ✓ Apart from India, only a few countries like UK, USA, Russia and France possess this technology.

- ✓ The single crystal blade technology provides powerful and compact aero engines to the helicopters, which can operate in extreme conditions
- ✓ The single crystal blades, made of nickel based super alloys, are capable of withstanding low temperatures.
- ✓ The blades developed under this technology have longer life, more corrosion resistant and can withstand high pressures at larger temperatures

- **The SpaceX of Elon Musk - recently launched the fifth high altitude flight test of the future Mars rocket prototype, Starship SN15, successfully**
- ✓ This is the first test flight of SpaceX in SN series that did not explode.
- ✓ Earlier the initial attempts made to launch the rocket ended in explosions in mid air.
- ✓ This is mainly due to the methane-based propellant used by SpaceX.
- ✓ The first two prototypes of Starship rockets (Serial Number –SN 8 and 9) that were launched in December 2020 and February 2021 failed to land properly and exploded.
- ✓ The SN15, equipped with 3 Raptor engines, flew at an altitude of ten kilometres and then flipped and descended.

- **Oxitech technology, a biotech firm in the US - recently launched the field test of Genetically Modified mosquitos in Florida to fight insect-borne diseases like dengue fever and Zika virus**
- ✓ The Bill Gates-funded biotech firm based in the UK has launched the test in collaboration with Florida Keys Mosquito Control District
- ✓ Under the project, around 12,000 mosquitoes are expected to emerge every week for approximately 12 weeks
- ✓ The researchers have bioengineered male *Aedes aegypti* that do not bite to control the invasive, disease-spreading female *Aedes aegypti*.
- ✓ Accordingly, the bioengineered male *Aedes aegypti* mosquito carries a gene that passes to their offsprings and kills the female progeny alone in early larval stages.
- ✓ The male offspring will not die and will become the carriers of the gene and will pass on to the future generations.
- ✓ As more and more female offspring dies, their population should dwindle over a period of time.
- ✓ The female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos make up only 4% of total mosquito population in Florida.
- ✓ However, they are responsible for all diseases transmitted by mosquitos such as zika, chikungunya, dengue and yellow fever.
- ✓ The Genetically modified mosquitos carry a gene that makes them glow when exposed to a particular type of light.
- ✓ This will help in identifying the Genetically Modified mosquitos.
- ✓ The residents of Florida were fighting against this field test

- ✓ Hence, Oxitech launched the test trials of the mosquitos in Panama, Brazil, Malaysia, and Cayman Islands.
- ✓ The US Environment Protection Agency has recently approved to conduct the trials in Florida.
- ✓ Based on the success of the trials, it is to be extended to the entire US.

DEFENCE

- **The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) - recently launched the joint military exercise called “DEFENDER-Europe 21” in the port of Durres in Albania**
- ✓ The exercise is an annual US-led multinational military exercise that focuses on defensive strategies and avoiding aggression
- ✓ This year, the exercise is to focus on building operational readiness and interoperability among the forces
- ✓ The exercise began on April 26, 2021 and will conclude on June 10, 2021
- ✓ Around 28,000 troops of the US and NATO forces from 26 countries are participating in the drills
- ✓ The exercise is held in more than 30 training areas in 12 countries ranging from Black sea, Balkan regions to Baltics and Africa.
- ✓ It is the first such large-scale exercise since the World War II in the western Balkan region

ECONOMY

- **After Cairn energy, a subsidiary of Mitsui – moves arbitration court against India’s retrospective tax demand of ₹2,400-crore**
- ✓ Earlyguard, a British subsidiary of Japanese conglomerate Mitsui & Co, has commenced arbitration under the India-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty

TROUBLING HISTORY

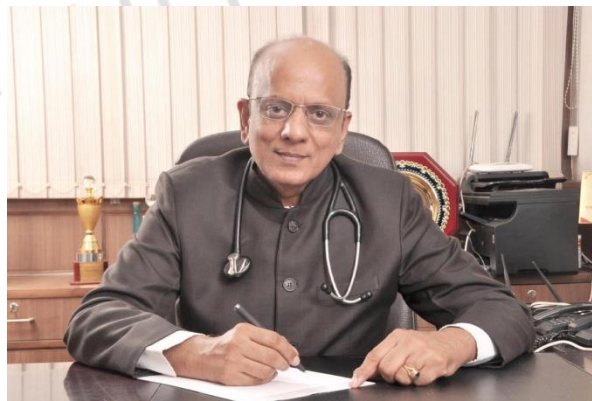
2006-07 Cairn undertakes restructuring of Indian operations ahead of IPO	2014 Tax dept probe in Cairn IPO starts
April, 2007 Mitsui arm Earlyguard sells shares of Finsider, UK company, that holds 51% in Sesa Goa	2014 Vodafone invokes provisions of India, Netherlands bilateral investment treaty, seeks arbitration
May, 2007 Vodafone acquires Hutch's 67% interest in India telecom unit	2015 Cairn commences international arbitration under India-UK treaty
2008 Following Vodafone case, tax law amended retrospectively mandating withholding tax	Sept, 2020 Vodafone gets favourable ruling from arbitration tribunal in Hague
2010 Bombay HC orders Vodafone to pay tax	Dec 2020 India challenges Vodafone award in Singapore
Jan 2012 Vodafone wins case in SC	➤ International tribunal rules in Cairn Plc's favour, asks govt to pay \$1.2 bn
2012 Pranab Mukherjee amends law retrospectively	March 2021 Govt challenges Cairn award



- ✓ The move is related to income tax authorities raising a ₹2,400-crore demand related to a transaction that took place in 2007.
- ✓ Earlyguard commenced arbitration proceeding in February and Mitsui & Co disclosed the details in its financial results earlier this month.
- ✓ The Indian tax authorities have demanded capital gains on the sale of shares of Finsider International Co — a UK company that owned a 51% stake in iron ore miner Sesa Goa — by Earlyguard.
- ✓ Like several other entities (Hutch and Cairn), proceedings against the Mitsui subsidiary was started retrospectively
- ✓ In this regard, the amendment to the Income Tax Act was introduced by the then FM Pranab Mukherjee in 2012
- ✓ This was done after the government discovered that it could not realise any tax on the sale of Hutch Whampoa's 67% stake in an Indian telecom firm to Vodafone in what was then the largest deal in the country.
- ✓ Then, the government retrospectively amended the Income Tax Act to levy capital gains tax on transactions that took place outside India but involved assets located in the country.
- ✓ Already, the government had challenged two adverse international awards against the amendment.
- ✓ First Vodafone and then Cairn Energy Plc have won arbitration cases in international tribunals for violation of bilateral investment treaties.

OBITUARY

- **Padma Shri awardee and eminent cardiologist Dr KK Aggarwal - has died of Covid-19 on May 17**



- ✓ Aggarwal was admitted to the AIIMS, New Delhi for the past 10 days and was on a ventilator
- ✓ The 62-year-old was a cardiologist, head of the Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and former president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA).
- ✓ He received the Dr BC Roy Award in 2005 and the Padma Shri in 2010.
- ✓ Dr Aggarwal was renowned as a pioneer of streptokinase therapy for managing heart attacks and had introduced the colour doppler echocardiography technology in India.

- Tamil Nadu government - will erect a statue in memory of eminent Tamil writer Ki Rajanarayanan at Kovilpatti in Tuticorin district
- ✓ This was announced by the state chief minister M K Stalin on May 18.

A SON OF THE SOIL

➤ Born in Idaiseval, a village in Kovilpatti municipality of Tuticorin district

➤ A farmer himself who has written about peasant life, Ki Ra was imprisoned twice for participating in peasant agitations

➤ His first book 'Katavu', a collection of short stories that had appeared in various journals came out in 1965, won him an award from the Tamil Nadu government



➤ His 1976 novel 'Gopalla Kiraamam' portrays the migration of a group of people from Andhra Pradesh to the southern districts of Tamil Nadu

➤ Its sequel 'Gopallapurathu Makkal' that won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1991, depicts

rural life during the nationalist phase

➤ Wrote in the rural dialect of Kovilpatti, which gives his language a colloquial flavour and documented the folklore of Kovilpatti

➤ Some of the folk tales are 'Tamil Nattu Natoti Kataikal' (1966) and 'Nattu Purakataikal' (Part I & II)

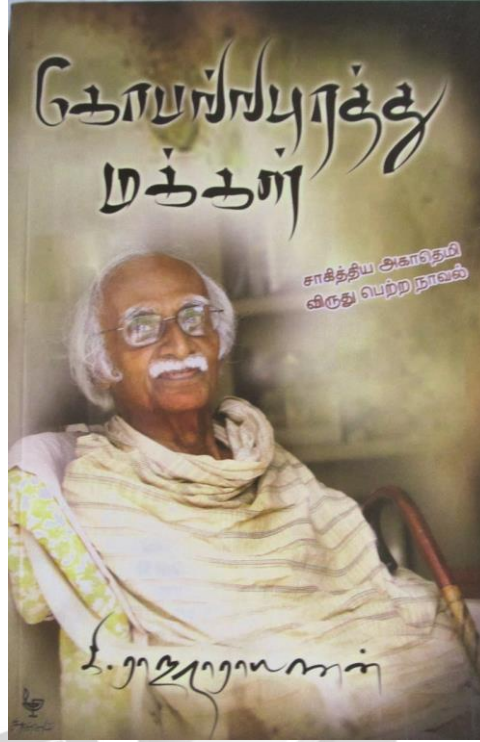
➤ His short stories 'Kidal', 'Current' and 'Vilaivu' were made into movies, other short stories were 'Katavu' and 'Pinjukal'

➤ Some of his essays were 'Makkal Tamil Valka' and 'Karisal Kattu Katutaci'



'Kopallapurattu Makkal' (Inhabitants of Kopalla Village) and 'Kopalla Kramam' (A Village called Kopalla)

- ✓ Ki Rajanarayanan, popularly known as Ki Ra, passed away in Puducherry on May 17 due to age-related illness.



- ✓ According to the CM, the government would renovate the Panchayat Union Middle School at the writer's native village Idaiseval without losing its architectural and heritage value
- ✓ Further, a hall will be established in his memory displaying his rare photographs and works for the public and students to learn about his contribution to Tamil literature.
- ✓ Ki Ra had studied in the school up to Class VII.
- ✓ The last rites ceremony of the writer would be held with full state honours at his native village on May 19.
- ✓ The Puducherry government, where he moved in 1989 to teach at the Pondicherry University, also accorded full state honours to the Sahitya Akademi awardee.

