

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAY 6, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu government's new set of restrictions to contain the Covid-19 pandemic spread - will come into force from 4am on May 6.**
- ✓ Public transport, railways, metro rail, public and private buses and cabs will be allowed to operate at a maximum capacity of 50%.
- ✓ The standalone grocery and vegetable shops will be permitted till 12 noon without air conditioning facility.
- ✓ Only 50% customers will be allowed at a time.
- ✓ The differently-abled will be fully exempted from attending office during the 15-day period.
- ✓ All other shops, other than grocery and vegetable shops will remain closed.
- ✓ The big format shops in an area of 3,000sq ft and above, shopping complexes and malls have already been prohibited to function since April 26 onwards.
- ✓ The grocery and vegetable shops in shopping complexes and malls are also not permitted.
- ✓ The state government/public sector undertakings-run outlets will be permitted between 8am and 12 noon
- ✓ However, pharmacies, supply of milk and other essential services will continue as usual.
- ✓ Take away service alone will be permitted in all restaurants, hotels, bakeries, and mess from 6am to 10am, 12 noon to 3pm and 6pm to 9pm.
- ✓ Tea shops will be permitted to operate till 12 noon.
- ✓ The government also prohibited social/political/sports/entertainment/ academic/ cultural/ festival gathering in open and closed spaces.
- ✓ Cinema theatres will remain shut.
- ✓ All offices of governments will function with 50% workforce for a fortnight beginning May 6.
- ✓ Private offices also will have to function with 50% workforce.

NATIONAL

- **The Centre - has allowed 20 entities, including Swiggy, Dunzo and SpiceJet, to carry out experimental flights of drones “beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS)”**
- ✓ Accordingly, restaurant, medicine and grocery delivery aggregators, including Swiggy and Dunzo, will soon be able to deliver through drones in this pandemic.
- ✓ In this regard, the test runs in controlled environments have already started.
- ✓ The Union aviation ministry said in a statement on May 5 it has “granted conditional exemption from Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2021, to these 20 entities.
- ✓ Once this protocol is established after successful experimental flights, drones could be used for various purposes like delivering Covid vaccines, medicines and meals, while ensuring safety and security issues.
- ✓ Last-mile delivery through drones is difficult in India because rooftops do not have clear landing zones and are often obstructed with power lines
- ✓ India is preparing for drones operations “beyond line of sight”
- ✓ It basically means flying them over a distance where the operator can't see this “remotely piloted aircraft (RPA)” during the flight while piloting it to the destination and back.
- ✓ Once successful, this will eventually pave the way for hi-tech purposes like using drones for deliveries, e-commerce and even air taxis in those areas of India where there are no security concerns for using them.
- ✓ Except some “red zones” like those in vicinity of airports, international borders and sensitive installations, drone operations are allowed, subject to clearances in other areas.
- ✓ As of now, drones have to flown while remaining in the visual range of the operator.

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On May 5, the Supreme Court - refused to re-examine its 1992 verdict, which put a cap of 50% on quota**
- ✓ The apex court turned down the plea made by various states that the ceiling fixed by court be scrapped and they be allowed to grant reservation beyond it.
- ✓ A five-judge Constitution bench said the Supreme Court's three decade-old verdict in the Indra Sawhney case has stood the test of time.
- ✓ The bench comprised of Justices Ashok Bhushan, L Nageswara Rao, S Abdul Nazeer, Hemant Gupta and S Ravindra Bhat
- ✓ It had unanimously decided that the quota cap was fixed “to achieve principle of equality and with an object to strike a balance which cannot be said to be arbitrary or unreasonable”.

MAY HAVE IMPACT ON EWS QUOTA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > SC refuses to revisit 1992 Indira Sawhney judgement, which fixed reservation limit at 50%, except in 'extraordinary circumstances' > 5-judge Constitution bench says 50% cap was fixed 'to achieve principle of equality and with an object to strike a balance which cannot be said to be arbitrary or unreasonable' > The verdict may have implications on EWS quota, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> which also breaches the 50% rule; case is pending before SC > SC strikes down Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act, 2018, which seeks to extend education and jobs quota to Marathas in excess of 50% fixed by SC > Separate quota for Marathas violates right to equality under Article 14 and due process of law under Article 21, says SC
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- ✓ The verdict may have implications on reservation to economically weaker sections (EWS), which also breaches the 50% rule and the matter is pending before SC.
 - ✓ Almost all the state governments presented their case with unity before the Supreme Court to press for removal of the cap.
 - ✓ The bench, however, stood firm, holding that the 50% cap can be breached only in extraordinary and exceptional cases.
 - ✓ The SC also declared that the Maharashtra state law to grant reservation to Maratha community unconstitutional and held that the community is not socially and educationally backward to be eligible to be brought within the ambit of affirmative action.
- **On May 5, the Supreme Court – declared by a majority that only the President (i.e. the Centre) can take decisions for declaring socially and educationally backward communities for granting reservation**

STATES EXCEEDING 50% CAP

<p>Maharashtra: After including 13% Maratha quota in jobs (it was 12% in education), the total reservations reached 75%. It is back to 62% now. This includes Centre's 10% EWS quota</p> <p>Bengal: 55% after adopting Centre's 10% EWS quota (for upper castes) in 2019</p> <p>Punjab: 60% after including Centre's EWS quota</p> <p>Haryana: 60% after adopting 10% EWS quota</p> <p>Bihar: 60%, including 10% EWS quota</p> <p>Kerala: 60% in jobs; but in educational institutions it is 50%</p> <p>TN: 69% after AIADMK govt brought a law in Feb this year, dividing OBC quota (total 20%) into three categories</p> <p>Gujarat: 59%, after including EWS quota</p>	<p>MP: 50% right now. The then Kamal Nath govt had increased it to 73% but HC stayed the move</p> <p>Chhattisgarh: Govt proposed to raise it from 58% to 82% in 2019 (by increasing OBC pie to 27% and including 10% EWS quota), but HC stayed the decision</p> <p>Rajasthan: 64%, including 10% for EWS and 5% for MBCs, but the matter is being heard in court</p> <p>Andhra Pradesh: The then Naidu govt had proposed to breach 50% ceiling by giving 5% quota to Kapus, but the the decision</p> <p>Telangana: Right now 50%, but KCR govt proposes to increase quotas for STs and Muslims by 4% and 8%, respectively</p>
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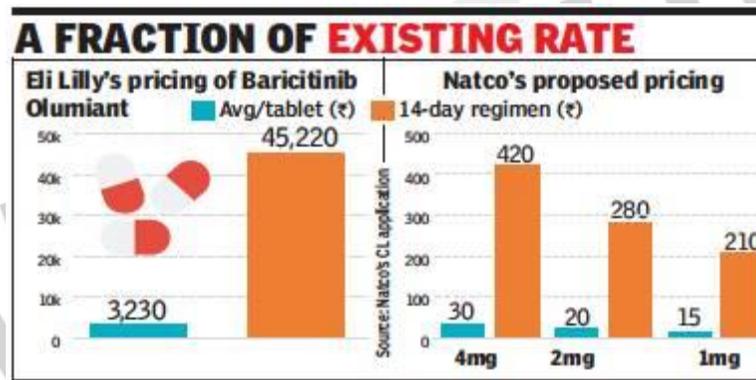
- ✓ In this regard, the apex court had upheld the 102nd constitutional amendment denuding the power of states
- ✓ A five-judge Constitution bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, L Nageswara Rao, S Abdul Nazeer, Hemant Gupta and S Ravindra Bhat was unanimous on the validity of the 102nd constitutional amendment
- ✓ However, the judges differed on the implication of the amendment for recognising socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs).
- ✓ The majority, comprising Justices Rao, Gupta and Bhat, concluded that the amendment has taken away the power of states to decide on designating SEBCs and now only the President can take a decision.
- ✓ However, Justices Bhushan and Nazeer held that states can also identify SEBCs for granting reservation in their respective territories
- ✓ They contended that there would be two lists — central and State lists — of backward communities as has been the practice for the last 68 years.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On May 5, the World Health Organisation – issued fresh guidelines for limiting sodium content**
- ✓ It had noted that excessive salt in food and beverages is putting people at greater risk of potentially fatal heart disease and strokes
- ✓ According to WHO, an estimated 11 million deaths globally are associated with poor diet each year, including 3 million attributable to high sodium intake
- ✓ Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt and sodium is a mineral that regulates the amount of water in the body.
- ✓ In many wealthy countries, and increasingly in lower income nations, a significant proportion of sodium in the diet comes from manufactured foods such as bread, cereal, processed meats and dairy products including cheese
- ✓ The norms have been issued for 64 food and drink categories and are aimed at guiding authorities in its 194 member states.
- ✓ For example, potato chips should contain a maximum of 500 mgs of sodium per 100g serving, pastries up to 120 mgs and processed meats up to 360mgs, according to the WHO.
- ✓ Excess dietary sodium intake increases blood pressure and consequently increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases.
- ✓ Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of deaths from non-communicable diseases worldwide, responsible for 32% of all deaths
- ✓ High sodium intake is associated with obesity, chronic kidney disease and gastric cancer
- ✓ The WHO recommends that people consume less than 5g of salt (or less than 2g of sodium) per day.
- ✓ Its global target, set in 2013, is for a 30% reduction in the population average intake of salt by 2025

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Hyderabad-based Natco Pharma - has filed for a compulsory licencing (CL) for a waiver of patent rights to manufacture rheumatoid arthritis drug Baricitinib**
- ✓ This is the first instance of a pharma company taking the compulsory licencing route to launch a Covid-19 drug in India
- ✓ The patent is owned by US drugmaker Incyte Holdings, with a license to Eli Lilly, which markets the drug under the Olumiant brand name.
- ✓ Under the TRIPS Agreement, compulsory licences are legally recognised means to overcome barriers in accessing affordable medicines
- ✓ The CL, if granted, will help in improving the accessibility and affordability of the drug, bringing its price down substantially.
- ✓ At present, a limited quantity of the patented drug is available in the country, and that too, at an exorbitant price



- ✓ The application has been filed under Section 92 of the Patents Act, which can be invoked by the Centre due to a national emergency, circumstances of extreme urgency or in case of public non-commercial use.
- ✓ The USFDA granted emergency authorisation for Baricitinib in combination with Remdesivir in November last year.
- ✓ In its application, Natco has cited the unmet medical needs due to the lack of supply and affordability amidst the grave and life-threatening national public health emergency caused by the second Covid wave as the main grounds for seeking the CL.
- ✓ Under the World Trade Organization TRIPS Agreement, CLs are legally recognised means to overcome barriers in accessing affordable medicines.
- ✓ Under the rules, governments allow a company to manufacture a patented drug without the consent of the innovator firm.
- ✓ In 2012, Natco became the first company to get a compulsory licence in India, which was related to a cancer drug called Nexavar.
- ✓ In its application, Natco has urged the Controller General of Patents to grant it a CL to manufacture and market Baricitinib, both as bulk API (active pharmaceutical

ingredient) and finished dosage only for Covid treatment in India till the pandemic prevails.

- ✓ It is also willing to pay a 7% royalty on net profits from Baricitinib sales to the patent-holder.

DEFENCE

- **Three more French-origin Rafale fighters - were scheduled to touch down in India, after mid-air refuelling by tankers of France and UAE, on May 5**
- ✓ The three new jets will add to the 17 such omni-role fighters already available in the country
- ✓ The jets have a combat range of 780km to 1,650km without mid-air refuelling.
- ✓ IAF will get all the 36 twin-engine Rafales, contracted under the ₹59,000 crore deal signed with France in September 2016, by next year.
- ✓ The first Rafale squadron, 17 'Golden Arrows' Squadron, is already operational at the Ambala airbase.
- ✓ The second, 101 'Falcons' Squadron, in turn, will now come up at the Hasimara airbase in West Bengal.
- ✓ The 4.5-generation Rafales are armed with long stand-off weapons like the over 300km range 'Scalp' air-to-ground cruise missiles.
- ✓ The fighters are also being equipped with the top-notch Meteor air-to-air missiles, which, with a strike range of 120 to 150km, can outgun any missile that can currently be unleashed by Pakistani or Chinese jets.
- ✓ IAF has also ordered the "Hammer" air-to-ground precision-guided munitions for the Rafales.

ECONOMY

- **On May 6, the Reserve Bank of India - extended relief to individuals and small businesses who have loans up to ₹25 crore**
- ✓ The RBI had allowed them to seek a loan restructuring if they are affected by the second wave of Covid-19.
- ✓ Further, the central bank had announced a ₹50,000 crore liquidity window to ramp up healthcare infrastructure

₹50K CR WINDOW

➤ RBI also provides a ₹50,000 crore liquidity window to ramp up healthcare infrastructure

➤ Under the scheme, banks can lend to those involved in the war against Covid, including vaccine manufacturers & importers or suppliers of vaccines and priority medical devices

- ✓ The loan recast will be available to individuals and small and medium enterprises that did not restructure their loans in 2020 which were classified as standard accounts till March 2021.
- ✓ The scheme will cover home and other personal loans also
- ✓ RBI also allowed lenders to provide relief to small and individual borrowers, who had availed of the restructuring option last year.
- ✓ Under the ₹50,000 crore scheme, banks can lend to those involved in the war against Covid
- ✓ This includes vaccine manufacturers, importers or suppliers of vaccines and priority medical devices, hospitals and dispensaries, pathology labs, manufacturers and suppliers of oxygen and ventilators, importers of vaccines and Covid related drugs, logistics firms and also patients for treatment.
- ✓ The banks are being incentivised for quick delivery of credit under the scheme to such lending up to March 31, 2022.
- ✓ Lenders can prevent small loans from going bad by doing a customised restructuring and giving them an additional two years to repay.
- ✓ This relief will cover 85%-90% of all bank borrowers in India.

AWARDS

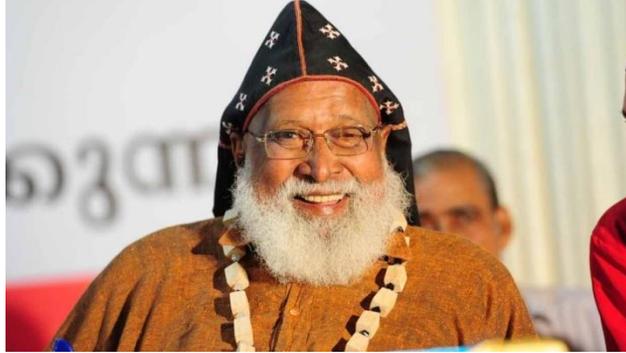
- **Justice Gita Mittal – has been conferred the prestigious Arline Pacht Global Vision Award for 2021**



- ✓ Justice Gita Mittal, the former chief justice of J&K high court is the first Indian jurist to receive this award
- ✓ The award has been given by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), an organisation of 6,000 women judges from over 100 countries
- ✓ The award will be presented on May 7 at IAWJ's biennial conference to be organised virtually by the New Zealand Association of Women Judges in Auckland.
- ✓ Justice Mittal is currently chairperson of the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC), a regulatory body for non-news television channels in India.
- ✓ She is also the first woman to head BCCC.
- ✓ She has been recognised for many of her initiatives she had taken during her 28-month tenure as chief justice of the J&K high court.

OBITUARY

- **The longest-serving bishop of the country, Philipose Mar Chrysostom of Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church - passed away at the age of 103 on May 5**



- ✓ Mar Chrysostom assumed charge as a clergyman after completing his theological studies in Bengaluru.
- ✓ Philipose Mar Chrysostom, popularly known as Valiya Metropolitan, was widely respected and loved for his humanist ideals and sense of humour.
- ✓ He served as a bishop for 68 years which is a record in the Indian church.