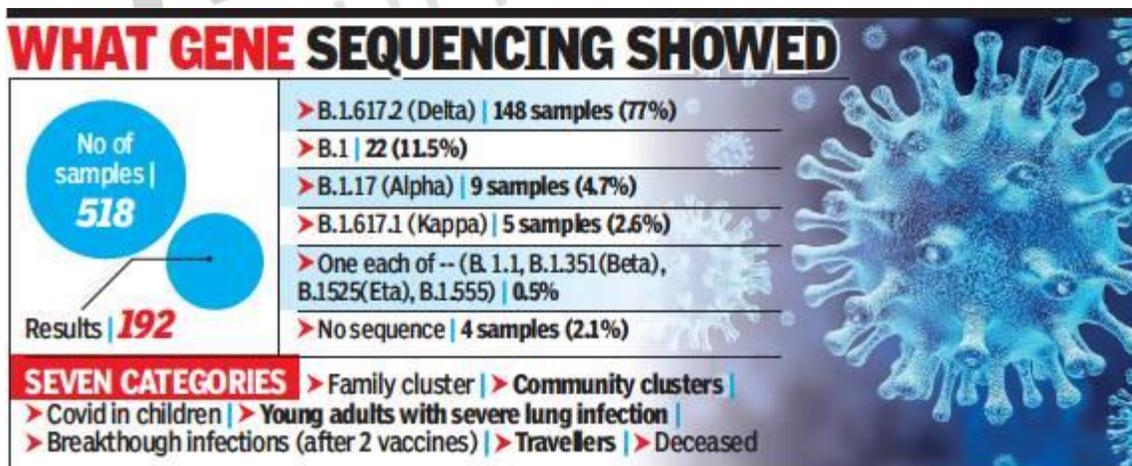


EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JUNE 3, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- **The Tamil Nadu public health laboratory - to set up a genome sequencing lab for the state by the end of June.**
- ✓ The lab will sequence genomic code of new variants of the SARS-Cov 2, which may carry mutations and offset vaccine efficacy
- ✓ In general, as the virus multiplies, tiny changes or mutations accumulate in its genetic code.
- ✓ The lab, costing a budget of about ₹2 crore, will provide information about the patterns of transmission and an insight into how the virus has evolved.
- ✓ This may help researchers find methods for rapid diagnosis or develop new drugs to stop the virus spread



- ✓ Although several institutions in the state have facilities to sequence the genomes, the state health department does not have a specialised unit for the job.
- ✓ The proposed lab will help the state to track the variants of vector borne diseases and superbugs resistant to antibiotics.
- ✓ As per the public health department, the most common strain seen in the state, like in most parts of the country, is the double mutant B.1.617, now named Delta.

- ✓ Until now, Tamil Nadu has sent more than 600 samples – at least 518 between April and May – to the Bengaluru-based In-Stem, as per recommendations from the Centre.
 - ✓ InStem is part of INSACOG, a consortium of 10 labs that track variants in Covid samples
 - ✓ The results of more than 192 samples returned by the lab showed that 77% of samples drawn during the peak were Delta.
 - ✓ The remaining samples contained four other variants including Alpha and Beta.
 - ✓ Samples from across the state were divided into categories – family clusters, community clusters, Covid in children, young adults with severe lung infection, breakthrough infections (infected 14 days after two vaccinations), samples from deceased and travellers.
- **Southern Railway – to run trains operated by private players from Chennai and other cities in the state soon**
- ✓ In this regard, the Railway Board will be selecting the firms by the end of the month and the private trains may start running by end of the year or even earlier
 - ✓ The financial bids for running trains, including on 11 routes in Chennai cluster, will be opened by June-end.
 - ✓ The project cost for Chennai cluster will be Rs 3,221 crore, covering around 1,052 km, the highest after Mumbai.
 - ✓ The routes identified include Chennai to Madurai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Mumbai, Mangalore, Secunderabad and Delhi.
 - ✓ According to the Railway Board, more than 10 players are eligible for bidding
 - ✓ The private operator will bring rolling stock, fix fare and run the train using railways' crew.
 - ✓ As per the arrangement, railway zones were told to identify stations, maintenance yard, washing lines, pitlines within existing facilities for maintaining the private trains or set aside land for the operator to build such facilities near the stations.
 - ✓ Tambaram could be a terminal for south-bound private trains while Tondiarpet yard was being considered for maintaining private trains.

NATIONAL

- **On June 2, the Union Cabinet, chaired by the PM Narendra Modi - approved the Model Tenancy Act (MTA) which aims to protect the interests of both tenants and landlords.**
- ✓ The government had first released the draft of the act in 2019, more than six years after it was first mooted by the Centre
 - ✓ The creation of the act was first announced in budget speech of 2019 by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman

- ✓ While announcing, Union housing and urban affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that the MTA will provide a legal framework with respect to rental housing across the country.

NO EVICTION

- Agreements for new tenancies to be 'written' & submitted to Rent Authority
- Owners to give 3-month notice before revising rent
- Security amount should be maximum 2 months' rent for residential & 6 months for commercial property
- No snapping of services like power & water; no eviction during contract period

- ✓ The Act seeks to bring about wide-ranging reforms, including setting up of separate rent authorities, courts and tribunals in every district
- ✓ Under the Act, for residential premises, tenants will have to submit a security deposit of maximum two months' rent, while in case of commercial properties, six months rent will have to be deposited.
- ✓ The Act is not 'compulsory' for implementation by the States
- ✓ States and Union territories can adopt the MTA by enacting fresh legislation or they can amend their existing rental laws suitably.
- ✓ The Act calls for a written agreement for all new tenancies, which will have to be submitted to the concerned district 'rent authority'.
- ✓ The rent and duration of tenancy will be fixed by mutual consent between the owner and tenant.
- ✓ For revision of rent, landlords need to give a written notice three months in advance and the new rent will be on mutual consent.
- ✓ According to the Act, if a tenant fails to vacate the premises let out on rent in accordance with the tenancy agreement, he or she will be liable to pay the landlord twice the monthly rent for the first two months and then four times till the latter continues to occupy the said premises.
- ✓ If any dispute emerges between the owner and tenant, they will have to first approach 'Rent Authority'.
- ✓ If any party is not satisfied with the Rent Authority's order, 'Rent Court' can be approached and then 'Rent Tribunal'.
- ✓ According to the Census 2011, more than 1 crore houses were lying vacant in urban areas across the country.
- ✓ The Government expects MTA will open up large number of residential and commercial properties for rental purposes
- ✓ It is also expected to give an opportunity for private participation in rental housing as a business model in order to address the huge housing shortage

- ✓ The Act was aimed at helping the government to achieve the target of “Housing for All by 2022”.
- **Haffkine Biopharma, a Maharashtra-based PSU - to manufacture Covaxin under technology transfer arrangement with Bharat Biotech Limited**
- ✓ According to the Ministry of Science and Technology, the production would take place at the Parel, Mumbai complex of Haffkine Biopharma and the company will produce 22.8 crore doses of Covaxin in a year.
- ✓ For undertaking production of Covaxin, Haffkine Biopharma has been provided with a ₹65 crore grant by the Centre and ₹94 crore from the government of Maharashtra
- ✓ The Haffkine BioPharmaceutical Corporation Ltd is an offshoot of the 122-year-old Haffkine Institute, which is one of the oldest biomedical research institutes in the country
- ✓ The institute has been named after the Russian bacteriologist, Waldemar Haffkine, who invented the plague vaccine.

INTERNATIONAL

- **US Politicians – have introduced a new bipartisan bill, ‘Equal access to green cards for legal employment’, also known as the ‘Eagle Act’**
- ✓ It seeks to remove the 7% per-country cap on employment-based green cards in a phased manner.
- ✓ After the phase-in period of nine years, employment-based green cards will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.
- ✓ After the enactment of the bill, during the first nine years, skilled legal immigrants will be allowed to file for adjustment of status to green cards if they have got a labour certification
- ✓ Also, two years must have passed since approval of Form I-140, which is filed by the employer sponsoring the employment-based green card
- ✓ Owing to the existence of a per-country cap of 7%, those born in India and China are adversely affected.
- ✓ According to a study, the employment-based green card backlog (EB2 and EB3 skilled category) for those from India had reached 7.4 lakh in April 2020, with an expected wait time of 84 years.
- ✓ However, the bill does not seek to increase the total number of employment-based green cards — the annual limit is 140,000 — nor does it seek to recapture unutilised numbers.
- ✓ To protect American workers, several measures have been put in place under the Act.
- ✓ Employers that hire foreign workers will have to advertise the jobs to American workers on a searchable Department of Labour (DoL) website for at least 30 days.
- ✓ Those with more than 50% foreign workers will not be able to sponsor any more.

- ✓ Business visas (B visas) can no longer be used as work visas.
- ✓ In addition, DoL will be authorised to set a fee to regulate the H-1B worker programme.

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

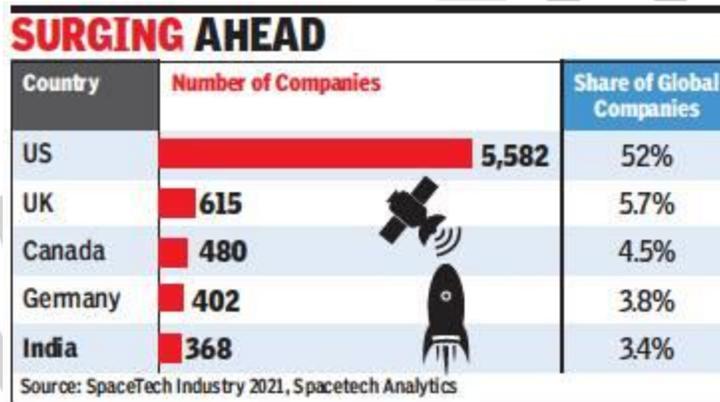
- **The Singapore-registered MV 'X-Press Pearl' container ship – had started sinking off Sri Lanka's main port on June 2**



- ✓ The ship carrying chemicals had been on fire for almost two weeks before the blaze was put out this week.
- ✓ Hundreds of tonnes of oil from fuel tanks could leak into the sea, causing pollution, devastating nearby marine life and creating a marine environmental disaster
- ✓ The efforts taken by the experts to tow the ship to deeper waters had failed
- ✓ The reasons for the fire was believed to be the chemicals being transported on the Singapore-flagged vessel
- ✓ It was carrying 1,486 containers, including 25 tonnes of nitric acid and other chemicals that were loaded at a port in India on May15.
- ✓ The fire onboard the ship was put out after eight days' struggle by three ICG ships and four Sri Lankan tugs.
- ✓ ICG's Samudra Prahari which is a specialised pollution response vessel is standing by monitoring for signs of oil and chemicals pollution from the ship.
- ✓ The sinking of the burnt chemical-laden container ship raised concern among Indian authorities about pollution reaching the coral-rich southern coast.
- ✓ The accident site is 300km from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu.
- ✓ National Centre for Coastal Research, a laboratory under the Ministry of Earth Sciences that monitors and conducts coral restoration work in the Gulf of Mannar, said so far there is no sign of pollutants near the Indian shores.
- ✓ Meanwhile, researchers from the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, Hyderabad, another MoES lab, said they would run an oil spill trajectory prediction model once they get data on the initial conditions and spillage from the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **India – has been ranked at fifth place globally in terms of the number of private firms in the space tech sector**
- ✓ The country has more than 350 private firms and it is already more than Japan, China and Russia
- ✓ This was revealed in a global report titled ‘Space-Tech Industry 2021/Q2 Landscape Overview’ done by Spacetech Analytics that analysed more than 10,000 private firms involved in the space sector
- ✓ The report projects the space tech economy to touch \$500 trillion by 2025
- ✓ Out of the 10,000-odd firms analysed, more than 5,500 are in the US, followed by the UK, Canada and Germany.
- ✓ The report lists 368 companies in India compared to 288, 269 and 206 in China, France and Spain, respectively.
- ✓ Japan and Russia have 184 and 56, respectively.



- ✓ As per the global report, most companies (2,820) are in navigation and mapping, followed by 1,000 manufacturing firms, 718 doing space communication, remote sensing (211), aerial imaging (152), spacecraft development (80), space travel (58), and space medicine (48).

ECONOMY

- **Global unemployment - is expected to reach 205 million in 2022, surpassing the level of 187 million in 2019.**
- ✓ This is equivalent to an unemployment rate of 5.7%, as projected by a new assessment by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) released on June 2
- ✓ Excluding the Covid-19 crisis period, such a rate was last seen in 2013.
- ✓ As per the report, the effects of labour market crisis and unemployment triggered by Covid-19 will remain until at least 2023
- ✓ This was revealed in the ILO’s World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021 (WESO Trends)

- ✓ The report projects that the global crisis-induced 'jobs gap' will reach 75 million in 2021, before falling to 23 million in 2022.
- ✓ The related gap in working hours amounts to the equivalent of 100 million fulltime jobs in 2021 and 26 million full-time jobs in 2022.
- ✓ The worst affected regions in the first half of 2021 have been Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and Central Asia.
- ✓ In both regions, estimated workinghour losses exceeded 8% in the first quarter and 6% in the second quarter, compared to global working hour losses of 4.8% and 4.4% in the first and second quarter, respectively.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ World Bicycle Day – June 3



- ✓ The day aims at promoting the use of bicycles for a cleaner environment and a healthy lifestyle.
- ✓ Bicycles are affordable, reliable, clean and environmentally sustainable means of transport.
- ✓ In April 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared June 3 as World Bicycle Day
- ✓ The campaign to promote the UN resolution for World Bicycle Day was led by Professor Leszek Siblisk, who was working as a social scientist in the United States
- ✓ The World Bicycle Day has a logo, a Blue and White one, that was designed by Isaac Feld while the accompanying animation was done by Professor John E. Swanson.
- ✓ The UN Sustainable Transport Conference will take place from 14 to 16 October 2021 in Beijing, China
- ✓ It will focus on the central role that sustainable transport plays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change
- ✓ World Bicycle Day is now associated with promoting a healthy lifestyle for people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes

- ✓ Today there are an estimated 1 billion bicycles in the world – about as many as passenger cars.
- ✓ According to Ministry of housing and urban affairs, 107 cities have registered to be part of the India Cycle4Change challenge and 41 cities are testing cycling friendly initiatives.
- ✓ The India Cycles4Change challenge was launched last year under the Smart Cities Mission by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on June 25.
- ✓ The initiative is aimed at attaining the twin goals of encouraging active mobility in our cities and at the same time promote fitness among people
- ✓ The aim of the India Cycles4Change Challenge is to create extensive cycling networks through low-cost interventions

