

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – JUNE 5, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu - has set up a 14-member task force chaired by former IAS officer R Poornalingam to assist the expert committee headed by CM MK Stalin for management of Covid-19 activities.



- ✓ Besides working in several departments, Poornalingam has also served as state health secretary in the 90s.
- ✓ The committee will have four non official members - former city health officer Dr P Kuganandam, former director of public health Dr K Kolandaswamy, NIE director Dr Manoj Murhekar and senior epidemiologist Dr Jayaprakash Muliyl.
- ✓ They will be assisted by nine official members including health secretary, officer on special duty (health), DMS, DME, DMH, National health Mission managing director, TNMSC MD, MRB MD and joint secretary, health and family welfare.
- ✓ The committee will have an advisory role and will conduct meetings periodically.
- **On June 4, state ministers I Periyasamy, P T R Palanivel Thiagarajan and P Moorthy - ceremonially opened the shutters of the vaigai dam.**
- ✓ After a gap of 12 years, water was released from Vaigai dam for irrigation in the first week of June month.

- ✓ The water will irrigate 45,000 acres of agricultural land in Madurai and Dindigul districts.
- ✓ It may be recalled that water was released from the Mullaperiyar dam too for the first time in 14 years on June 1, 2021.
- ✓ Previously, it was in 2008 that water was released from Vaigai in the first week of June.
- ✓ According to Cooperatives Minister I Periyasamy, 900 cusecs would be released for 45 days and then through the turn system for the remaining 75 days.
- ✓ The water would also be released for the tailend districts of Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram soon, as per the Minister
- ✓ A total of 45,041 acres of land stands to benefit now, including 1,797 acres in Nilakottai block in Dindigul district, 16,452 acres in Vadipatti block in Madurai and 29,792 acres in Madurai north block.
- ✓ The Mullaperiyar dam shutters were opened by the Minister I Periyasamy on June 1 for irrigation of 14,707 acres of land in Theni district for the first crop of the double crop area.
- ✓ Water is released from the Mullaperiyar dam if the level crosses 120 feet.
- ✓ The last time the water level crossed the mark in June was on the first of the month in 2006, when it rose upto 124.4 feet.
- ✓ The water level in Vaigai dam stood at 67.9 feet on June 4, with an inflow of 648 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs.
- **A nine-year-old lioness - died of suspected coronavirus infection on June 3 at the Arignar Anna Zoological Park (AAZP) in Vandalur near Chennai.**
- ✓ Nine more lions at the zoo have tested positive for SARS CoV-2.

CONFIRMATION AWAITED Representative image

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Infected animals show loss of appetite and some have nasal discharge ➤ Nasal swab, rectal swab and faecal samples were collected from 11 animals ➤ National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases in Bhopal has confirmed that samples were positive for SARS CoV-2 ➤ The zoo has 13 lions, including 7 females |  |
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- ✓ Specimens collected from the animals were sent to National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal, on 24th and 29th May after some animals showed infection symptoms, including nasal discharge.
- ✓ The institute confirmed the virus infection on June 3.

- ✓ As per protocol, any suspected death due to coronavirus in zoos must be reconfirmed by Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly, and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad.
- ✓ Samples have been sent to these institutes for confirmation and results are awaited.
- ✓ The CCMB is the approved virus sequencing centre of the Central Zoo Authority
- ✓ It will carry out genome sequencing of the virus strain for better understanding of transmission to prevent further spread of the infection.
- ✓ The virus could have been transmitted from humans (animal keepers/workers), even though the cause of spread to the lions could not be ascertained
- ✓ The virus can reach up to two meters and can be alive for three days.
- ✓ All the lions that tested positive are under observation and treated by in-house veterinary team in coordination with Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (Tanuvas) experts.
- ✓ At present, Vandalur zoo houses six lions and seven lionesses, but no cubs.
- ✓ The Vandalur zoo was closed on April 24 after the state government announced a lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19.

STATES

- **Punjab and Haryana – have become the last two states in the country to implement direct cash transfer of the minimum support price (MSP) under the “One Nation, One MSP, One DBT” scheme of the government**
- ✓ With this, the online payment system of ‘Direct Benefit Transfer’ (DBT) has become universal across the country
- ✓ The Centre disbursed around ₹76,000 crore directly to farmers’ accounts while procuring the wheat during the ongoing rabi marketing season (RMS).
- ✓ For the first time, farmers in Punjab have received more than ₹26,000 crore in their accounts directly, while ₹16,700 crore has been transferred to farmers’ accounts in Haryana.
- ✓ According to food ministry, about 44.43 lakh farmers have benefitted from the ongoing RMS procurement operations with MSP value of nearly ₹81,200 crore.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the government has also revised the current wheat procurement target to 433 lakh tonnes, an increase of six lakh tonnes, as almost every state is reporting highest ever procurement.
- ✓ Last year the total procurement of wheat during the RMS was 390 lakh tonnes.
- **The Lakshadweep administration – has announced new steps to improve the security of the region by deploying government officials on board local fishing boats to gather intelligence.**
- ✓ The administration has also decided to monitor local fishing boats and crews for any suspicious activities

- ✓ It will also give out instructions to intensify checking of motorised and other passenger vessels arriving in Lakshadweep.
- ✓ The decisions were taken following a May 28, 2021 meeting to review the security of the islands.
- ✓ The meeting was chaired by the principal secretary-cum-adviser to the administrator.

➤ **On June 4, the Punjab government - withdrew its order on selling Centre-allocated Covid-19 vaccines to private hospitals**

- ✓ The decision has been criticized by the opposition and the Centre on the charge of profiteering amid a pandemic
- ✓ The Amarinder Singh-led state government has been diverting vaccine doses allocated by the Centre to private hospitals in the state and earning profit.
- ✓ The government is alleged to have sold doses of Covaxin, procured for ₹400, to private health facilities for ₹1,060, which then charge people ₹1,560 a shot.
- ✓ According to the government, only 600 doses out of about 42,000 doses allotted to private hospitals were administered to people in the age group of 18-44 years.
- ✓ The state government has directed private hospitals to return all vaccine doses available with them
- ✓ The government said it will refund the amount deposited by the private hospitals in the vaccine fund.

NATIONAL

➤ **Biological E's recombinant protein Covid-19 vaccine, Corbevax - could be the cheapest and most affordable of vaccines in the Indian market, once it gets emergency use approval.**

- ✓ It is expected to be rolled out at a price lesser than ₹500 or even ₹400 not for one dose, but for both the doses
- ✓ Serum Institute's Covishield is priced at ₹300 a dose for state governments and ₹600 a dose for private hospitals, while the corresponding figures for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin are ₹400 and ₹1,200.
- ✓ Russian vaccine Sputnik V has been priced at ₹995 a jab by Dr Reddy's Laboratories and will be available only to state and private hospitals.
- ✓ Following the promising results of phase I & II trials of Corbevax, the Centre has pre-booked 30 crore doses for an advance payment of ₹1,500 crore or ₹50 per dose
- ✓ At present, Corbevax is undergoing phase III trials
- ✓ Biological E's Corbevax vaccine is being developed in collaboration with Texas-based Baylor College of Medicine

➤ **The Delta variant or B.1.617.2 strain, which was first detected in India - is found to be the reason behind the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic**

- ✓ This was revealed in a study conducted by a team of scientists from different Indian institutions
 - ✓ The Delta variant is more infectious than the Alpha variant or B.1.1.7, first detected in UK
 - ✓ As per the study, B.1.617.2 shows high transmissibility (50% greater than B.1.1.7), high viral load and surges without any increase in case fatality rate (CFR).
 - ✓ The scientists noted B.1.617.2 is capable of creating “very fast-rising outbreaks”, importantly with “vaccination breakthroughs” (infections after vaccination).
 - ✓ The study was conducted by scientists from National Centre for Disease Control, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIRIGIB), Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG) and others.
 - ✓ For the study, samples from 10,427 and 9,918 people were obtained in Phase 1 and 2 respectively
 - ✓ On the origin of SARSCoV-2 outbreaks in north India this year, the study noted that the outbreak in April in Delhi was preceded by outbreaks in Kerala, Maharashtra and Punjab.
- **Chief Justice of India N V Ramana - has unveiled an ambitious plan to set up a National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation (NJIC) to build modern and self-sufficient judicial infrastructure across India.**



- ✓ The CJI announced this after the two-day-long deliberations with high court chief justices in four sessions on June 1 and 2
- ✓ The NJIC would be tasked to build “comprehensive, self-contained, all-inclusive and modern court complexes across the country to augment judicial infrastructure”.
- ✓ In smaller towns and rural areas, the deficient infrastructure and lack of use of information technology are highlighted as a major stumbling block for speedy delivery of justice
- ✓ Justice Ramana’s plan envisages that the NJIC will be managed by a CJI-led committee comprising SC judges who would become CJIs in future.
- ✓ The NJIC managing committee will also include finance secretaries to the Union/state governments and HC CJs having long tenures.

- ✓ Under the new proposal, states would be required to fund modern court complexes through a one-time grant.
- ✓ It has to be recalled that High Courts are functioning only with 660 judges against a sanctioned strength of 1,079 judges, which is another area of concern.

DEFENCE

- **Sagar Purvi, one of the oldest coastal research vessels (CRV) belonging to Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) - has been decommissioned.**



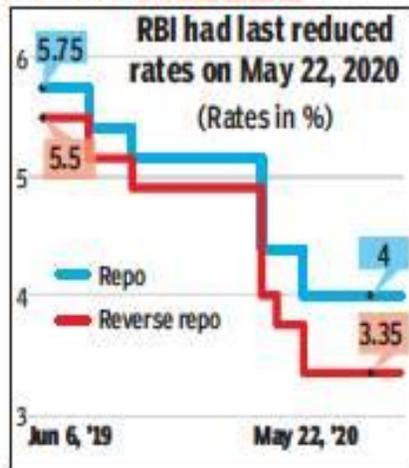
- ✓ It has been undertaking several operations, including rescuing fishermen stranded at sea, collecting data to improving weather forecast models to monitoring marine pollution along the 7,500km Indian coast and collecting rocket debris from deep sea during launches at Sriharikota
- ✓ The ship has completed 650 scientific cruises over 6,000 days at sea in a span of 25 years.
- ✓ The vessel is the first in the fleet of research vessels under the Ministry of Earth Sciences to be decommissioned
- ✓ It was disposed-off on June 2 through Metal Scrap Trade Corporation Limited.
- ✓ Since its commissioning in 1996, the indigenously made vessel with laboratories onboard has helped Indian scientists collect data on coastal pollution, weather, geology, oceanographic and marine biology
- ✓ These data were used for developing numerous models for weather forecast and pollution monitoring which are now in use.
- ✓ The vessel played a major role in identifying locations for the installation of desalination plants for potable water for the people of Lakshadweep.
- ✓ More than 60 research institutions including Isro, IMD, INCOIS, IISc, IITs and IMU have used the vessel to collect scientific data in Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- ✓ At present, the Ministry of Earth Sciences has a fleet of six ships including Sagar Kanya, Sagar Sampada, Sagar Nidhi, Sagar Manjusha and recently procured vessels Sagar Tara and Sagar Anveshika.

- ✓ While bigger ships like Sagar Sampada and Sagar Nidhi have a lifespan of 35 years equal to a cargo vessel, comparatively smaller ships like CRV Sagar Purvi can last only 25 years.
- **On June 4, India - formally approved the long-pending ₹50,000 crore (almost \$7 billion) 'Project-75 India (P-75I)' to construct six new-generation stealth submarines with foreign collaboration**
- ✓ These submarines will be developed as part of the plan to counter China's expanding naval footprint in the Indian Ocean.
- ✓ The Rajnath Singh-led defence acquisitions council (DAC) approved the tender or RFP (request for proposal) in this regard
- ✓ The tenders are issued to defence shipyard Mazagon Docks (MDL) and private ship-builder L&T for the mega 'Make in India' conventional submarine-building programme, P-75I.
- ✓ The two, in turn, will tie-up with one of the five shortlisted foreign shipyards under the 'strategic partnership' model
- ✓ The foreign firms shortlisted include Rosoboronexport/Rubin Design Bureau (Russia), Naval Group-DCNS (France), ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (Germany), Navantia (Spain) and Daewoo (South Korea)
- ✓ The foreign shipyards will have to undertake comprehensive transfer of technology to its Indian partner, as per the terms
- ✓ It will take around a decade from now for the roll-out of the first of these six diesel-electric submarines
- ✓ They will have a capacity to carry a total of 18 land-attack cruise missiles and heavyweight torpedoes as well as air-independent propulsion (AIP) for greater underwater endurance.

ECONOMY

- **The Reserve Bank of India - asked banks to lend to contact-intensive sectors such as hotels, restaurants, tourism, bus operators and other services by opening a ₹15,000 crore liquidity window for the lenders.**
- ✓ It provided another ₹16,000 crore to SIDBI to meet the short- and medium-term credit requirements of micro, small and medium enterprises.
- ✓ Further, the apex bank had announced an expansion of the loan restructuring window for loans taken by individuals and MSMEs, with the eligibility limit for debt doubled to ₹50 crore.
- ✓ These decisions were announced by RBI governor Shaktikanta Das on June 4 in a fresh round of Covid relief measures
- ✓ It comes within a month of a separate loan facility being made available by the RBI for the healthcare sector
- ✓ Last month, RBI had said that banks could restructure loans up to ₹25 crore advanced to individuals and small business.

RATE FREEZE



UP TO ₹50CR LOANS CAN BE RESTRUCTURED

What Is New?

RBI's ₹15,000 crore refinance to encourage banks to lend to service sectors and a ₹16,000 crore facility to MSMEs from SIDBI

Who Are Eligible?

All contact services like hotels & restaurants; tourism—travel agents, tour operators and adventure/heritage facilities; aviation ancillary services, bus operators, car repair services, rent-a-car service providers, event organisers, spa clinics, and beauty parlours

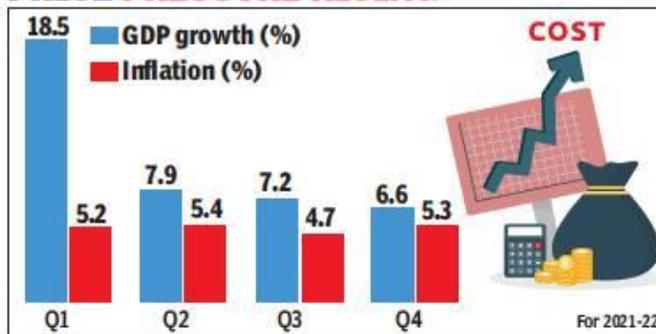


What's The Relief For Lockdown-Hit Biz?

Borrowers with loans up to ₹50 crore are eligible for loan restructuring, which allows them to delay repayment without being classified defaulters. This covers two-thirds of borrowing companies

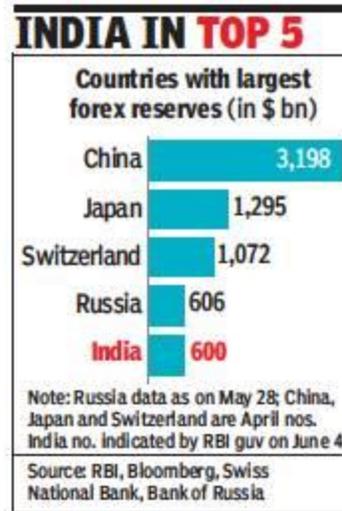
- ✓ The restructuring would give the borrowers more time to repay without classifying them as defaulters thus ensuring continued support from the banking system.
- ✓ This limit has now been increased to ₹50 crore.
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - left key policy rates unchanged with Repo rate kept at 4% and reverse repo rate at 3.35%, as per the bi-monthly monetary policy unveiled on June 4**
- ✓ However, it had slashed its growth estimate for 2021-22 to 9.5% from a projection of 10.5%, citing the impact of the second wave of the pandemic.
- ✓ The central bank, however, raised the inflation estimate a bit higher to 5.1% due to gathering price pressures.

PRICE PRESSURE RISING



- ✓ Taking the Covid-induced factors into consideration and the forecast of normal monsoon, real GDP growth is now projected at 9.5% in 2021-22, consisting with the economy projected to expand 18.5% in the June quarter.
- ✓ **Further, the RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said that India's foreign exchange reserves is likely to have crossed a new record of \$600 billion in the first week of June**
- ✓ Officially, however, the weekly numbers released by the RBI pegged reserves at \$598.2 billion as on May 28, which is also a record.

- ✓ India has seen an accretion of nearly \$105 billion over the last year, with \$5.3 billion added during the last week of May alone.



- ✓ Forex reserves are closely watched by policymakers given that it had dropped to \$5.8 billion in 1991 when India had a balance of payments crisis.
 - ✓ In March, India had overtaken Russia as the country with the fourth-largest foreign exchange reserves, however, it has slipped to the fifth place again now
 - ✓ China, Japan and Switzerland continue to top the list of countries ranked by forex reserves.
 - ✓ The RBI adds to its reserves by purchasing dollars from the market.
 - ✓ India's forex reserves ended FY21 at \$579 billion, which indicates that the RBI has bought over \$20 billion in nine weeks.
- **Bags and travel accessories retailer, Witco – has announced the closure of its operation, after 70 years of retailing.**



- ✓ Covid induced travel restrictions have severely affected travel business with airlines, luggage retailers and the hospitality sector reeling under losses.
- ✓ Witco has seen only negative growth since 2016, the year of demonetization, till which it has reported a 20% YoY growth
- ✓ Witco was started in 1951 by founder MPC Mohamed and was taken over by his sons — VP Nurdeen and VP Harris — after his demise.

- ✓ Witco announced the closure of 11 shops across Chennai, Trichy and Kozhikode, which totally had 30 employees.
- ✓ The company does 70% of its business from premium luggage business, while schoolbags, office bags and accessories constitute the rest 30% of business.

SPORTS

- **India's freestyle wrestler Sumit Malik (125kg category) - lost his place in the Tokyo-bound Indian contingent after failing a dope test.**



- ✓ The urine sample was taken during the Olympic qualifiers held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in May
- ✓ Malik, from Karor in Haryana's Rohtak district, had won his place for the Olympics at the Sofia event.
- ✓ The banned performance-enhancing drug was 5-methylhexan-2-amine (1,4-dimethylpentylamine) — better known as methylhexanamine — which falls in the category of a “specified” substance.
- ✓ The sample was collected by the United World Wrestling (UWW), the sport's global governing body
- ✓ The UWW subsequently exercised its right to provisionally suspend Sumit for six months till December 2021, indicating that he will not be competing at the Tokyo Games
- ✓ Further, for failing the dope test at an international UWW event, the UWW is likely to impose a hefty fine of around Rs 20 lakh on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), which will be recovered from Sumit
- ✓ If Sumit is found guilty and doesn't pay the fine, the WFI might ban him for life.
- ✓ Sumit would also be required to return Rs 5 lakh to the Haryana sports department, which he was paid in advance last month to prepare for the Games.
- ✓ Sumit has been told by the lab authorities to get his 'B' sample tested latest by June 10.
- ✓ Sumit faces a ban ranging between two and four years, upon final conviction
- ✓ There are two categories of substances – non-specified (anabolic steroids) and specified (stimulants).

- ✓ In the case of a non-specified substance, automatic suspension by the management authority kicks in.
- ✓ While in the case of a specified failure, the athlete is provided a chance to go for a “voluntary” suspension to avoid getting punished with a lengthy ban.
- ✓ Methylhexanamine has been on the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (Wada) list of prohibited substances since 2004 and reclassified as a ‘specified substance’ in 2011.
- ✓ The Wada describes the stimulant as a ‘non-therapeutic’ substance.
- ✓ The drug was in news in India when two track and field athletes and six wrestlers failed the dope test for methylhexanamine ahead of the 2010 CWG and were banned.
- ✓ These included four CWG-bound wrestlers Rajiv Tomar, Sumit, Mausam Khatri and Gursharanpreet Kaur, apart from Joginder Singh and Rahul Mann, along with shot putter Saurav Vij and discus thrower Akash Antil.
- ✓ Later, international judo player Nirupama Devi Laishram and 2017 Asian athletics champion shot putter Manpreet Kaur, too, had failed dope tests for the same stimulant.
- ✓ Internationally, the drug came into limelight in 2009 when five Jamaican athletes Yohan Blake, Marvin Anderson, Allodin Fothergill, Lanceford Spence and woman sprinter Sheri-Ann Brooks were found positive for methylhexanamine.
- ✓ Jamaican 2008 Beijing Olympics sprint relay gold medalist Nesta Carter was banned for returning dope positive for this substance, which cost Usain Bolt his Beijing gold.
- ✓ Korean distance runner, Lee Kyeong-Jae, Tajikistani footballer Khurshed Beknazarov and Britain’s marathoner Claire Squires, who had collapsed and died near the finish line at the 2012 London Marathon, had traces of methylhexanamine in their body system.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ World Environment Day (WED) - June 5



- ✓ The day is observed every year to raise awareness about the significance of nature and environmental protection
- ✓ On the eve of WED this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) has joined ‘UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration’ (2021-2030)

- ✓ It is a global mission to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems and the diversity of life they sustain on every continent and every ocean
- ✓ It aims to revive billions of hectares of forests, farmlands, mountain ecosystem and marine ecosystem.
- ✓ The WHO will work as a collaborating agency for the mission, along with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) among other partners.
- ✓ The United Nations Assembly established World Environment Day in 1972, which was the first day of the Stockholm Conference on the human environment.
- ✓ World Environment Day was first observed in 1974 in the United States with the theme 'Only One Earth'
- ✓ Since then, various host countries have been celebrating it.
- ✓ This year, the WED will be hosted by Pakistan with the theme 'Ecosystem Restoration'
- ✓ The World Environment Day slogan - "Recreate, Reimagine, Restore" - focuses on reversing the damage and restoring our ecosystems

