



## Current Affairs of the Day

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## Govt. 'watching' WHO alert on airborne spread of virus

➤ Continuing to rule out community transmission of COVID-19 in the country, the Union Health Ministry on Thursday said it is "closely watching the dynamic evolution of the virus situation in India, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) now indicating that the virus may be airborne".

➤ After earlier denials, the WHO on Tuesday said there is evidence emerging of the airborne spread of the coronavirus, after over 230

scientists across the world urged the global body to update its guidance.

### WHO said what

The WHO on Tuesday acknowledged "emerging evidence" for the airborne spread of the novel coronavirus while previously it had said the virus spreads only through droplet transmission. How the explanations differ:

**Droplet transmission 1** It occurs when a person is within 1 metre of the infector, who coughs or sneezes and so is exposing their mouth, nose or eyes to potentially infective respiratory droplets. Such droplets are >5-10 µm in diameter. Being heavy, droplets fall to the floor soon

**Airborne transmission 2** It refers to transmission via aerosols (smaller droplets <5 µm) which can linger in the air for longer periods before falling to the floor and can be transmitted to others over distances greater than 1 m. Aerosols may get released when infectors breathe heavily, talk or sing loudly apart from coughing and sneezing. Aerosols contain fewer virus particles than larger droplets

A human hair is about 50 µm wide  
5 µm

### The data:

➤ The age-wise COVID fatalities in India as on July 9 indicates that 25% population (above 45 years) has witnessed 85% deaths, while 10% population (above 60 years) has witnessed 53% deaths.



## Cloud over remdesivir:

- The Health Ministry, meanwhile, said it is reviewing the drug remdesivir for use among COVID patients after the drug indicated negative impact on the liver function.

## Nepal blacks out Indian news channels

- Nepal will not allow foreign TV channels that indulge in the character assassination of its leaders and will seek legal remedies against such news outlets.
- The announcement was accompanied by simultaneous blacking out of all Indian news channels, barring Doordarshan, across Nepal.

## India, China diplomats to meet for next round of LAC talks

- Indian and Chinese diplomats and defence officials are expected to meet for the next round of talks about the LAC stand-off and disengagement process on Friday, in the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs (WMCC).

## Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination:

- The WMCC, comprising senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), was established in 2012 and normally meets twice a year, but is now meeting for the second time in two weeks, an indicator of the seriousness of the LAC situation.
- The 16th round of the WMCC will be led by MEA Joint Secretary (East Asia) Naveen Srivastava and Director General of the Department of Boundary & Oceanic Affairs of the Chinese MFA WU Jianghai.
- Officials from the Ministries of Defence and Home Affairs, the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police will join along with their Chinese counterparts.
- With the disengagement process in the Galwan area, Hotspring and Gogra point under way, sources said the next round of Corps commander meetings is also expected to take place next week to discuss the next phase of



disengagement and de-escalation at several points of the LAC where Chinese troops moved in over the past two months, including the Pangong Tso (lake) Finger areas.

- The two sides will also discuss a possible timetable for the demobilisation of troops gathered on both sides along the LAC.

## India-UAE stalemate on flights ends

- After a long stalemate that left many stranded, India and the UAE have agreed to allow each other's airlines to bring passengers into their territory.
- Until now Vande Bharat flights operated by Air India Express were flying empty out of India while bringing back Indians from the UAE. The same was true for airlines such as Emirates and flydubai, which were not allowed to bring passengers into India, but could fly out UAE residents to destinations such as Dubai.
- This arrangement will be in place for a period of 15 days from 12-26 July, 2020.

## PM CARES is separate from NDRF: govt

- The Ministry of Home Affairs on Thursday defended in the Supreme Court the existence of PM CARES Fund to receive "voluntary donations".
- The Ministry also outright rejected a plea to credit the amounts received by PM CARES for fighting the COVID-19 pandemic into the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF). The Ministry told a three-judge Bench that funds like PM CARES were "separate, different, distinct" from the NDRF. "Separate provisions" govern them.
- The government was responding to a writ petition filed by NGO Centre for PIL that said contributions to PM CARES should be transferred entirely to the NDRF.



## India to take call on Australia's inclusion in Malabar exercises

- India will take a decision on whether to include Australia in the **Malabar exercises** with Japan and the U.S. at a Defence Ministry meeting early next week, according to a defence source.
- The decision, if taken, could bring all **Quad** countries together as part of the annual war games.
- Once the government takes a decision to include Australia, as per procedure, the other partner nations — Japan and the U.S. — have to be informed to secure their consent, after which a formal invitation would be extended to Australia. Japan and the U.S. have been keen on Canberra's inclusion for and have been pushing India to consider it.

### About Malabar exercise:

- The Malabar exercise, which has been delayed this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, should take place towards the end of 2020, the source said. The inclusion of Australia in the exercises would mark a major shift for India's Indo-Pacific plans.
- **Started in 1992:** Malabar began as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the U.S. in 1992, and was expanded into a trilateral format with the inclusion of Japan in 2015.
- In April 2017, Australia requested for observer status in the trilateral exercise.
- Since then, Australia has made repeated requests to join the exercises and in January 2018, former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull had said talks on the Malabar exercises were "progressing well".
- However, India did not include Australia in the exercises in 2018 and 2019.

### What is Quad grouping?

- The quadrilateral formation **includes Japan, India, United States and Australia.**
- All four nations find a **common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.**



- The idea was **first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007**. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.

### Significance of the grouping:

- Quad is **an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest**.
- Members share **a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific**.
- It is one **of the many avenues for interaction among India, Australia, Japan and the US** and should not be seen in an exclusive context.

### WHO sets up panel to probe its virus response

- The World Health Organization, which faced fierce U.S. criticism over its handling of the coronavirus crisis, launched an independent panel on Thursday to review its response to the pandemic.
- The Independent panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response will be headed by former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

### U.S. withdrawal:

- The United States on Tuesday formally started its withdrawal from the WHO, making good on Trump's threats to deprive the UN body of its top donor over its management of the pandemic.
- Public health advocates and Mr. Trump's political opponents voiced outrage at the move.
- Mr. Tedros hit out at divisions in the international community and warned of severe consequences if this were not rectified.