

Current Affairs of the Day

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➤ International Relations:

1. EU, India to meet on resuming FTA negotiations.
2. India dropped for not involving actively in rail project, says Iran.

PAPER 3:

➤ Environment & Biodiversity:

1. Rangers guide three tigers out of Kaziranga.
2. About Kaziranga National Park (KNP).

➤ Science & Technology:

1. ICMR caution on itolizumab, tocilizumab.
2. About Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

➤ Defence & Security:

1. More Spike missiles to be ordered.



Rangers guide three tigers out of Kaziranga

- Wildlife officials and rescue workers at the flooded **Kaziranga National Park (KNP)** had to provide a “safe passage” for three tigers in less than two days, guiding them to the relative safety of the hills beyond a highway along the southern edge of the park.
- About 95% of the park has been flooded this year, with 173 of the 223 anti-poaching camps inundated.
- So far, 51 animals have been killed and 102 rescued during two waves of flood since May 22. A majority of the animals either drowned or were hit by vehicles while crossing the highway. The rescued animals include a rhino and a tiger.

Value Added Information

About Kaziranga National Park (KNP):

- Kaziranga National park’s 430 square kilometer area sprinkled with elephant-grass meadows, swampy lagoons, and dense forests is home to more than 2200 Indian one-horned rhinoceros, approximately 2/3rd of their total world population.
- Formed in 1908 on the recommendation of Mary Curzon, the park is located in the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots – Golaghat and Nagaon district in Assam
- In the year 1985, the park was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.
- Along with the iconic Greater one-horned rhinoceros, the park is the breeding ground of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer.
- Over the time, the tiger population has also increased in Kaziranga, and that’s the reason why Kaziranga was declared as Tiger Reserve in 2006.
- Also, the park is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International for the conservation of avifaunal species. Birds like lesser white-fronted goose, ferruginous duck, Baer’s pochard duck and lesser adjutant, greater adjutant, black-necked stork, and Asian Openbill stork specially migrate from the Central Asia during the winter season.



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<http://www.sriramsias.com>

- The park has successfully managed to grow the population of Greater one-horned rhinoceros, an endangered species.
- The vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests undoubtedly makes the park look beautiful but it's the presence of Brahmaputra river, which makes it look enigmatic.
- Due to the difference in altitude between the eastern and western areas of the park, here one can see mainly four types of vegetation' like alluvial inundated grasslands, alluvial savanna woodlands, tropical moist mixed deciduous forests, and tropical semi-evergreen forests.
- Kumbhi, Indian gooseberry, the cotton tree, and elephant Apple are amongst the famous trees that can be seen in the park.

ICMR caution on itolizumab, tocilizumab

- There is yet no evidence from trials that itolizumab and tocilizumab, two drugs, one of which has been developed by Bengaluru-based

Viral tracker

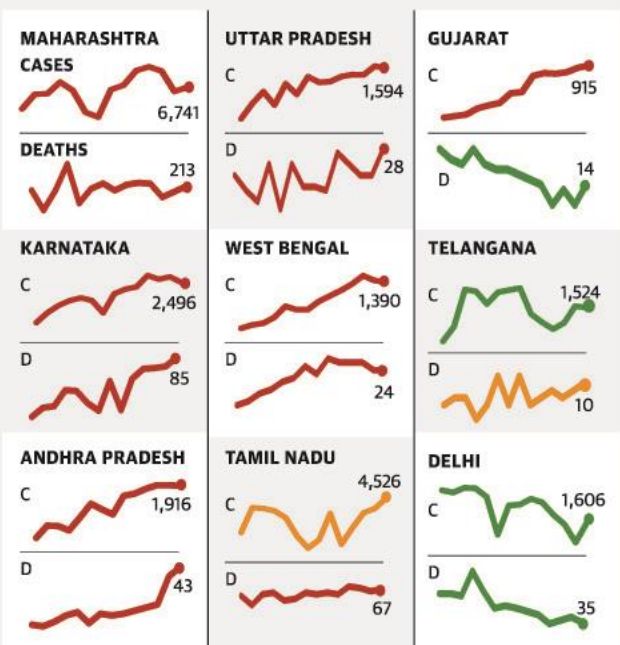
India recorded 29,829 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, the highest single-day rise. Total infections stood at 9,36,418 as of 10.45 p.m.

NEW CASES AND DEATHS

CASES 29,829	DEATHS 580
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7 DAY-CHANGE +16.6%	7 DAY-CHANGE +18.1%
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The graphs depict the new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. If average cases/deaths in the last seven days are higher than the previous seven days, then the cases/deaths are rising ■; if they are lower, then dropping ■; if they are similar, then flatlining ■



FIGURES IN THE GRAPHS DEPICT NEW CASES AND DEATHS RECORDED ON TUESDAY

Biocon Biologics, reduce death in severely ill COVID-19 patients, Director-General of the ICMR Balram Bhargava said at a Health Ministry press briefing on Tuesday.



- Both drugs are lab-cloned antibodies, and work at thwarting or reducing a rush of chemicals called pro-inflammatory cytokines that are released by the immune system to counter the coronavirus attack on lung cells.
- Cytokines prime the immune system to send special cells to neutralise virus particles.
- However a 'cytokine storm' that is manifested usually as an Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) ends up causing inflammation and aggravating lung damage and harm to other organs and is said to be responsible for killing a large fraction of the 3%-5% of COVID-19 patients that die.
- Tocilizumab has a history of use in immune-system-disorder diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, and itolizumab in acute psoriasis.

Value Added Information

About Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR):

- ICMR is India's apex scientific body for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research.
- It was established in 1911 as Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) making it one of oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world.
- The ICMR functions under Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- Its Governing Body is presided over by Health Minister.
- It is assisted in scientific and technical matters by Scientific Advisory Board comprising eminent experts in different biomedical disciplines.
- ICMR's research priorities coincide with national health priorities such as control and management of communicable diseases, fertility control, maternal and child health, control of nutritional disorders, research on major non-communicable diseases like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and mental health research and drug research (including traditional remedies) and developing alternative strategies for health care delivery.



EU, India to meet on resuming FTA negotiations

- Seven years after talks on a free trade agreement were suspended, India and the European Union (EU) are set to agree on a “high-level dialogue on trade and investment” to restart negotiations.

EU-India Summit:

- The announcement is expected at a virtual EU-India Summit, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who will engage with President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.
- During this summit, India and the EU are expected to conclude several agreements including a roadmap for cooperation, an agreement on research sharing for civil nuclear cooperation and launch a maritime security dialogue as well as negotiations between Europol and the CBI.
- Tackling COVID-19 and its impact on the economy and the global order will be high on the agenda. In particular, medical developments on vaccines and treatment will be discussed along with the withdrawal of the U.S. from multilateral organisations (like the World Health Organisation), and concerns over an ‘assertive’ China.
- The trade and investment dialogue, to be conducted between Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and EU Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan, is expected to give a boost to negotiations on the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) as the EU-India FTA is known.

Trade:

- Trade with India formed under 3% of the EU’s global trade, which is “far below” what was expected of the relationship. Conversely, the EU is India’s largest trading partner and investor, and accounts for 11% of India’s global trade.
- The EU has reservations about the model “**Bilateral Investment Treaty**” (BIT) that New Delhi has proposed, especially on dispute mechanisms in Indian courts.



- EU had welcomed India's election to the UN Security Council next year, and that India's role would be important in reconciling the UNSC "paralysed by vetoes and infighting".

India dropped for not involving actively in rail project, says Iran

- Iran dropped India from the Chabahar rail project because of "absence of active Indian engagement."
- Iran remains open to all, including India, for collaboration and investment but Tehran expects future projects should be safeguarded from third party unilateral sanctions.
- It was expected that in addition to the investment in Chabahar Port, India could also play a more crucial role in funding and constructing this strategic transit route from Chabahar to Zahedan and from Zahedan to Sarakhs at the border with Turkmenistan, which in the absence of an active Indian engagement and partnership, currently is under construction by Iranian funding and engineering capacities.
- Iran had gone ahead with the important transit project on its own citing delays from the Indian side in funding.
- The delay has also indicated at possible impact of U.S. sanctions on India's projects with Iran. Though India secured exemption for the Chabahar port from U.S. sanctions, bilateral ties with Iran took a hit in February after the riots in Delhi drew condemnation from Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.
- India had firmed up the railway plans in May 2016 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tehran.

More Spike missiles to be ordered

- The Army is set to place a repeat order for **Spike-LR (long range) Anti-Tank Guided Missiles from Israel** as part of emergency procurement, a defence source said on Tuesday.



- The decision comes days after the Army's decision to place a repeat order for 72,400 Sig Sauer assault rifles from the U.S.
- The emergency procurements come in the backdrop of continuing tensions on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. The Spike order will be a repeat order for 12 launchers and around 250 missiles under emergency procurement, the source stated.