A total of 845 candidates - are contesting in the election for the 39 Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu

- Of the 845, a whopping 559 candidates are independents, 57 are from recognised national parties and 55 from recognised State parties apart from 174 from other registered parties
- Of them, 779 are men and 65 are women and one is a transgender who is contesting from South Chennai constituency
- Significantly, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections too, exactly 845 candidates were in the fray
269 candidates will be in the contest in the by-polls for the 18 Assembly constituencies in the state.

The Election Commission - told the Supreme Court that counting VVPAT slips of 50% of EVMs would delay declaration of results of the general elections by five days.

- The commission also said that several assembly constituencies had more than 400 polling stations, which would require about 8-9 days to complete the VVPAT slip count.
- At present, the EC counts VVPAT slips of one randomly selected EVM per assembly segment and matches it with the vote count in the machine.
- There are 10.35 lakh polling stations in the country with an average of 250 polling stations per assembly constituency.
- The Election Commission – said that PM Modi’s address to the nation on the successful test-firing of an anti-satellite missile did not violate the model code of conduct
  - The panel took the decision based on the report of a panel of senior officers which concluded that the speech did not violate the provisions in the code
  - India shot down one of its satellites in space with an anti-satellite missile to demonstrate this complex capability on March 27, becoming fourth country to have used such a weapon
  - The PM declared India has now established itself as a global space power after the success of ‘Mission Shakti’
  - The missile hit a live satellite flying in a Low Earth Orbit after it traversed a distance of almost 300 km from earth within three minutes of its launch.

- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) - launched ‘Mobile methadone’ vans to provide treatment to opioid addicts in inner-city neighbourhoods in New Delhi.
  - As a pilot project, the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) of AIIMS has initiated the new service of delivering methadone through a mobile van in East Delhi
  - Opioids are a class of drugs that act in the nervous system to produce feelings of pleasure and pain relief.
  - Some opioids are legally prescribed by healthcare providers to manage severe and chronic pain
  - Some other opioids, such as heroin, are illegal drugs of abuse

- The Union Government - constituted a “Multi-Disciplinary Terror Monitoring Group” (MDTMG) on March 29, 2019
  - It will focus on concerted action against terror financing and other terror related activities in the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)
  - The Additional Director General of Police (CID) of J&K Police will head the MDTMG
  - The group will meet on a weekly basis and submit its action report regularly
  - IT Major, Wipro and IIT Kharagpur – ties up to undertake industry-focused applied research in the areas of 5G and artificial intelligence (AI)
  - The research will focus on the application of AI in the healthcare, education and retail sectors as well as in domains such as climate change and cybersecurity
  - It will also concentrate on the industry challenges related to the design, planning and operations of 5G networks

- Facebook - has banned praise, support and representation of ‘white nationalism, white supremacy and white separatism’ on its platforms
  - White Supremacy and white nationalism are belief systems with tenets like “whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds”
White Separatism is a form of white supremacy which emphasizes that white people should exist separately from all inferior, non-white races.

“Bhonga”, a hyper-local connectivity app – launched in Mumbai
- It was developed by a Mumbai-based Company, Linkus Infratech
- It will enable connecting users to their neighborhood people in the city even without an Internet connection
- “Bhonga” is a Marathi word which means megaphone or loudspeaker
- This app automatically provides the lists of the user living within the radius of one kilometer
- Anyone can open their phone and send a message that is delivered to other users in the neighborhood, wherever they are
- It also supports photos and voice messages

INTERNATIONAL

XPRIZE - announces that it will offer a $1 million Moonshot Award
- The award will be given in recognition of an XPRIZE team demonstrating the achievement of a “moonshot” technological feat
- The first edition of the award will be given to Israel’s, SpaceIL, whose mission to become the first private, non-government entity to land on the surface of the Moon is underway, with an anticipated landing of spacecraft Beresheet on April 11, 2019

SpaceIL is a former Google Lunar XPRIZE team
- It was founded in 2011 by Yariv Bash, Kfir Damari and Yonatan Winetraub, in order to compete in the Google Lunar XPRIZE
- In 2015, SpaceIL became the first team to announce a launch contract, and they launched for the Moon on a SpaceX Falcon 9 on February 21, 2019
- XPrize is a global leader in designing and operating incentive competition
UK lawmakers - rejected the Theresa May government’s exit agreement with the European Union for a third time on March 29

The House of Commons voted 286-344 against the withdrawal agreement struck between PM May and the EU
Last week, EU granted an extension to May 22 had the divorce deal been approved by Friday — or to April 12 if rejected
Britain voted in June 2016 to leave the EU, and two years after it set its departure date as March 29, 2019
The 58-vote margin of defeat for the deal Friday was narrower than in previous votes in January and March

Indonesian President Joko Widodo - inaugurated the country’s first mass rapid transit (MRT) system on 24th March

The aim is to ease the traffic congestion in the capital Jakarta
Passengers can ride for free until the end of the month
Jakarta is one of the top three traffic-congested cities in the world, according to a traffic index developed by the navigation systems company, TomTom
India and the United States - signed the first amendment to the Statement of Guiding Principles (SGP) on triangular cooperation for global development on March 29, 2019

- The SGP agreement was initially signed in November 2014
- It underscores the contribution of India-US partnership to meet the developmental aspirations of partner countries, particularly in Asia and Africa
- The first amendment to the SGP agreement extends its validity up to 2021

India and Bolivia - signed eight Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on March 29, 2019

- The agreements were made in the fields of culture, Visa waiver arrangement for diplomats, the exchange between diplomatic academies, mining, space, traditional medicine, establishment of Centre of Excellence in IT and Bi-Oceanic Railway project
- President Ram Nath Kovind is on a three-day visit to the country
- During his visit, President Kovind was conferred with the highest State honour of Bolivia, “Condor de Los Andes en el Grado de Gran Collar” by the President of Bolivia, Evo Morales in Santa Cruz.
- India offered $100 million Line of Credit to Bolivia for financing development projects
- President Ram Nath Kovind is on a three-nation visit to Croatia, Bolivia and Chile from March 25 to April 4, 2019
Leading London-based NRI industrial tycoons, the Hinduja family has topped the ‘Asian Rich List 2019’ for the sixth successive year with £25.2 billion (over Rs 2.3 lakh crore) wealth.

- Steel magnates, Lakshmi Mittal and his son Aditya Mittal were ranked second with £11.2 billion (over Rs 1 lakh crore) wealth.
- Petrochemicals billionaire, SP Lohia was ranked third with £5.8 billion (over Rs 53,000 crore) wealth.
- The List ranks 101 wealthiest Asians living in UK.

Former US president Jimmy Carter – becomes the longest living chief executive and President in American history at 94 years and 172 days on March 22.

- He was elected as the 39th President of the United States.
- He overtakes the lifespan of former President George H.W. Bush, who died last November at the age of 94 years, 171 days.
- Mr. Carter has enjoyed the longest post-presidency in American history after leaving the White House in 1981.
**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

- NASA’s Anne McClain and Nick Hague - took a spacewalk on 22nd March to replace ageing batteries on the International Space Station (ISS)

![Image](image_url)

- Two American astronauts worked for several hours to swap three nickel-hydrogen batteries with more powerful lithium-ion ones
- Later, NASA astronauts Nick Hague and Christina Koch connected a set of three lithium-ion batteries on a pair of the station’s solar arrays, replacing a set of six older, less powerful nickel-hydrogen batteries
- This followed after one of the earlier newly installed batteries hasn’t been charging properly
- The space station uses solar panels to generate power but the batteries are used when it is in the dark and not getting power from the sun.

**DEFENCE**

- “Operation Sunrise”, a Military operation jointly coordinated by India and Myanmar armies - destroyed at least 10 camps belonging to an insurgent group in Myanmar

![Image](image_url)

- These groups have become a threat to India’s mega ‘Kaladan Project’ in the neighbouring country.
- The Kaladan project connects Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border
- It creates a multi-modal platform for cargo shipments from the eastern ports to Myanmar and to the North-eastern parts of the country through Myanmar.
ECONOMY

- **State Bank of India** - has signed a pact with the Bank of China to boost business opportunities
  - Through this pact, both SBI and BoC will be able to use the vast combined network to expand their businesses abroad.
  - Both SBI and BoC will also gain direct access to their respective markets of operation

- **Exim Bank (Export-Import Bank of India)** - signed a loan agreement of $83.11 million to Congo for financing three solar power projects at Congo
  - It will support and finance three solar photovoltaic power projects with a total capacity of 35 megawatts in the three provinces — Karawa, Mbandaka, and Lusambo.

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das** - called for ‘permanent status’ to Finance Commission
  - RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das is also the member of the fifteenth finance commission
  - The permanent status will also provide for continuity between the successive finance commissions

APPOINTMENTS

- **Sanjay Jayavarthanavelu**, chairman and managing director, Lakshmi Machine Works, Coimbatore - has been elected chairman of CII Southern Region for the year 2019-20
  - He was the deputy chairman of CII Southern Region in 2018-19.
He was also the chairman of CII Tamil Nadu State Council during the year 2006-07
Satish Reddy, chairman, Dr Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd, Hyderabad, has been elected deputy chairman for the year 2019-20
He is a Member of CII National Council from 2014-19

➢ **Kenichi Ayukawa** – reappointed as MD and CEO of Maruti Suzuki for a third three-year term

He first took over as MD and CEO of the company in March 2013 as Shinzo Nakanishi had attained the age of retirement
He played a major role in expanding the company's market share beyond 50%

➢ **AWARDS**


He was awarded Padma Shri in 2004 apart from other awards, including Sahitya Akademi Award, Akashvani National Award and Uttarakhand Gaurav Samman.
The award recognises outstanding literary work in Hindi authored by an Indian citizen and published during the last 10 years
It was instituted in 1991 and given by the KK Birla Foundation, carrying a cash prize of Rs 4 lakhs
Jaguri was picked for the 28th Vyas Samman 2018 by a jury headed by eminent littérateur Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari
Apart from the Vyas Samman, the KK Birla Foundation every year presents the Saraswati Samman, which carries a prize of Rs 15 lakh
Saraswati Samman is given to an outstanding literary work by an Indian citizen in any of the languages mentioned in Schedule VIII of the Constitution.
India’s Muskan Kirar - claimed a hat-trick of medals in the opening leg of the Asia Cup archery meet in Bangkok – for the second year in a row

The 18-year-old Madhya Pradesh archer, who was recently named to India’s world championship team – along with Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Raj Kaur – shot 147 out of a possible 150 points in the 15-arrow 50-metre gold medal match

More than 200 archers from 23 countries are competing in Bangkok, which is one of the first world ranking events on the annual calendar

The first stage of the 2019 Asia Cup took place on 25-30 March in Bangkok, Thailand

Chennai Super Kings' player, Suresh Raina - has become the first ever cricketer to reach 5,000 runs in Indian Premier League (IPL)

He reached the landmark in the opening match of the 12th edition of the IPL against RCB (Royal Challengers Bangalore)

RCB captain Virat Kohli is the second highest run-scorer in IPL, with 4,954 runs in 156 IPL innings
National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) - was awarded the ‘Best Sports Federation’ award in the country by the Association Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM)

NRAI secretary-general D.V.S. Rao and secretary Rajeev Bhatia received the trophy from Director General of SAI Neelam Kapoor and cricketer Madan Lal

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra - was named to lead a 39-member Indian athletics team for next month's Asian Championships in Doha

National record holders, Mohd Anas (400m), Jinson Johnson (800m and 1500m), Dharun Ayyasamy (400m hurdles), Avinash Sable (3000m steeplechase), Tajinder Pal Singh Toor (shot put), Hima Das (400m), Annu Rani (javelin throw) and Dutte Chand (200m) were also among those named in the team
WHY US IS RUSHING TO RETURN TO THE MOON

A return to the moon has been on the cards for the United States for some time now, but on Tuesday, vice president Mike Pence told Nasa to pick up the pace. But he has set an ambitious and possibly unrealistic target for the space agency — to return to the moon by 2024. A look at what triggered Pence’s urgent directive and if Nasa is up to the task.

MOON IS THE FIRST STOP BEFORE MARS

➤ Setting up a base on the moon has become a necessary first step before a manned mission to Mars becomes viable
➤ A lunar base would act as a testing ground and stopover for Mars exploration missions
➤ Speaking at the US Space and Rocket Centre in Alabama, Pence pressured Nasa to return to the moon in by 2024 instead of the initial 2028 target

We’re actually being told the earliest we can get back to the moon is 2028. Now that would be 11 years after the US president directed Nasa to return American astronauts to the moon. ... That’s just not good enough”

MIKE PENCE

CAN NASA MAKE IT HAPPEN?

➤ The US still has the edge in the human spaceflight sector
➤ It’s one of three nations, alongside Russia and China, with operational human space programmes and the only one to have landed a man on the moon
➤ But Nasa has hit some snags, making its new five-year target unrealistic
➤ Its Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, the heavy launch vehicle at the centre of Nasa’s deep space exploration missions, is behind schedule and over budget
➤ Pence suggested alternatives to SLS might be necessary and NASA chief Jim Bridenstine recently said using a commercial rocket, like SpaceX’s launchers, might be a possibility

THE LAST TIME HUMANS WERE ON THE MOON

Nasa’s Apollo 11 mission in 1969 landed the first of 12 Americans on the moon, it marked the height of the Cold War space race with the Soviet Union

A NEW SPACE RACE HAS BEGUN

➤ The US has been a long-standing leader in the field but China is hot on its heels and India is catching up too
➤ And the space race is no longer dominated by national space agencies with private players making considerable advancements
➤ Among the leaders from the private sector is Elon Musk’s SpaceX, which has revolutionised rocket launchers, making them reusable and cost-effective
➤ Billionaires Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson have also set up spaceflight companies Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic, respectively
➤ The stakes have never been higher for the US. After decades of unchallenged dominance, able competitors are finally rising up and the US risks losing its edge in space
➤ Already China has made history by landing a rover on the far side of the moon earlier this year, with the 2030s as their target to land astronauts on the moon, and India has joined an elite club of nations with its recent anti-satellite weapon test