

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MAR 20, 2020

TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu – records third positive case of coronavirus disease on March 19
- ✓ A 21-year-old student who flew in to Chennai from Dublin in Ireland was tested positive for Covid-19 and admitted at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital.
- ✓ He landed in Chennai on March 17 and sent on home quarantine as he did not show symptoms

L R Shankar



TN COLLEGES TO BE CLOSED

- Major churches and mosques have been advised to temporarily bar entry of pilgrims till March 31
- Private sector firms told to take steps to allow staff to work from home
- Weekly market and large retail outlets with centralised air-conditioning facility including readymade and jewellery outlets will be shut till March 31
- Fluid samples of a 65-year-old, who travelled to New Zealand, sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune
- Interstate bus transportation will be cut. Railways requested to slash incoming trains

TOUGH TIMES: A worker sprays disinfectant at St. Thomas Mount Shrine

➤ All major temples, including Madurai Meenakshi, Tiruchendur Murugan, Srirangam and Tiruvannamalai shrines, will be closed for devotees till March 31

TN COVID-19 TRACKER

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|---------------------|--------------|------------------|------------|
| Home quarantine | 3,481 | Positive cases | 3 |
| Hospital quarantine | 39 | Under treatment | 2 |
| Samples drawn | 320 | Samples negative | 232 |



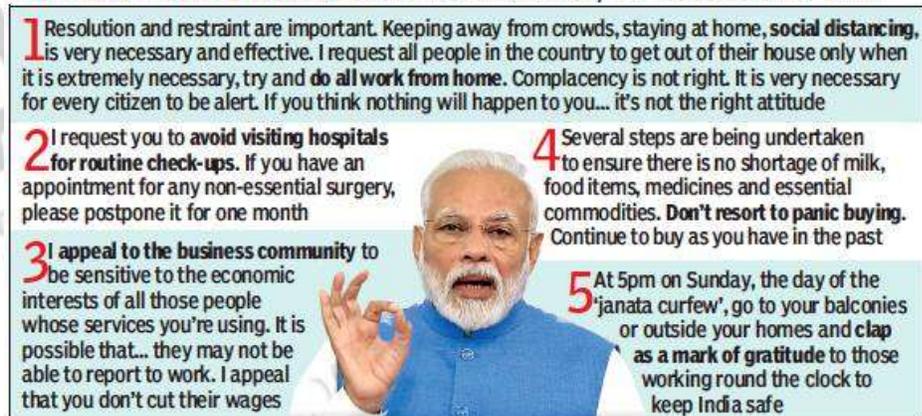
- ✓ On March 18, the patient visited the hospital with symptoms of cough, fever and shortness of breath.
- ✓ In the meantime, to combat Covid-19, the state has ordered all large retail textile and jewellery showrooms with centralized air conditioning to stay closed from March 20 till March 31
- ✓ However, vegetable and fruit markets, grocers, medical stores, and restaurants would remain open as usual.
- ✓ Also, all major temples have also been closed to devotees, though priests would continue daily poojas.
- ✓ Churches and mosques have been asked to avoid large gatherings till March 31.
- ✓ The temples and churches across the state have cancelled their annual festivals to prevent people from gathering in large numbers.
- ✓ The state government also reduced interstate bus services and asked the railways to cut services wherever possible
- ✓ In order to maintain cleanliness and hygiene, airports, railway, bus and metro rail stations would be disinfected thrice a day.
- ✓ All these decisions were taken during a government meeting chaired by chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami to discuss strategies to combat Covid-19
- ✓ It has to be recalled that the state's first Covid-19 patient tested negative after treatment in Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and discharged on March 16
- **Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - announced in a suo motu statement in the assembly that all types of electricity consumers would get smart meters in Greater Chennai area soon**
- ✓ According to the CM, about 42 lakh digital meters will be replaced with smart meters at a cost of Rs 4,300 crore.
- ✓ After Chennai, in all other districts too, digital meters will be replaced with smart ones later.
- ✓ A smart meter records power consumption and transmits the data to servers.
- ✓ The total consumption of power, on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, is sent to the consumer as SMS and email.
- ✓ Currently, digital meters are being replaced with smart ones only in T Nagar area as part of the smart city project.
- **The Tamil Nadu government - will roll out intra-state portability of family cardholders across Tamil Nadu from April 1.**
- ✓ It is a prelude to the Centre's 'One Nation, One Ration card' scheme, which is proposed to be launched across the country from June 1
- ✓ The decision of the Government in this regard was announced by Minister for Food and Civil Supplies R Kamaraj in the assembly on March 19

- ✓ Earlier, the intra-state portability of ration cardholders was launched in two districts on a pilot basis
- ✓ It would enable cardholders to procure foodgrain from any fair price shops of the public distribution system (PDS) within the state.
- ✓ The state, as part of the 'One Nation, One Ration card' scheme, had launched the scheme in Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts on February 1, 2020
- ✓ Once the programme is launched across the state, it will facilitate the 2.02 crore cardholders in Tamil Nadu to draw their groceries from any of the 35,244 fair price shops in the state.

NATIONAL

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - urged the nation to take all possible precautionary measures in the fight against coronavirus on March 19, 2020 in his live nation-wide television address**
- ✓ The PM called on citizens to observe a “Janata Curfew” by staying indoors on March 22 between 7am and 9pm to express their resolve in avoiding public interaction to the bare minimum
- ✓ India is fighting against all odds to prolong stage II of the novel coronavirus and avoid the start of stage III, which is the most dangerous ‘community transmission’ phase.

SOCIAL DISTANCING NECESSARY, EFFECTIVE: PM



1 Resolution and restraint are important. Keeping away from crowds, staying at home, **social distancing**, is very necessary and effective. I request all people in the country to get out of their house only when it is extremely necessary, try and **do all work from home**. Complacency is not right. It is very necessary for every citizen to be alert. If you think nothing will happen to you... it's not the right attitude

2 I request you to **avoid visiting hospitals for routine check-ups**. If you have an appointment for any non-essential surgery, please postpone it for one month

3 I appeal to the **business community** to be sensitive to the economic interests of all those people whose services you're using. It is possible that... they may not be able to report to work. I appeal that you don't cut their wages

4 Several steps are being undertaken to ensure there is no shortage of milk, food items, medicines and essential commodities. **Don't resort to panic buying**. Continue to buy as you have in the past

5 At 5pm on Sunday, the day of the 'janata curfew', go to your balconies or outside your homes and **clap as a mark of gratitude** to those working round the clock to keep India safe

- ✓ According to the PM, the risk could be averted if people showed “resolve” and exercised “restraint”, emphasising on the importance of “social distancing” for citizens to protect themselves and others from being infected.
- ✓ Modi stressed that the world was yet to find a cure for the pandemic and no medicine or vaccine was available
- ✓ He also said that the coronavirus pandemic had severely affected the economy
- ✓ Keeping in mind the challenges posed by the outbreak, a task force headed by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had been constituted to meet the challenge.

- ✓ The 'Covid-19 Economic Response Task Force' will consult stakeholders for feedback, on the basis of which decisions will be taken to meet the economic challenges following the outbreak of Covid-19.
 - ✓ The task force will also ensure implementation of decisions taken to meet these challenges.
 - ✓ The PM also asked the business community and higher income groups to look after the economic needs of those in lower income brackets, from whom they take various services
 - ✓ He urged them not to cut salaries on days in which they are unable to work due to the failure in arriving to the workplaces
 - ✓ The PM also asked citizens to record their appreciation for frontline workers like doctors and nurses, those at hospitals and airlines, railway and bus staff, media and home delivery riders by clapping, ringing bells or banging steel plates at doors and windows of their houses at 5pm on March 22.
 - ✓ A siren will be played out to signal the beginning of the salutation.
 - ✓ The PM had also requested people to put off non-essential visits to the doctor and reschedule surgeries that could be postponed
- **The government - imposed a blanket ban on commercial international airlines from operating to India for a week from March 22 to curb the spread of Covid-19**
- ✓ The government has already blocked foreigners from entering India by suspending most visas

ELDERS, KIDS ADVISED TO STAY HOME

Photo: Manoj Chhabra

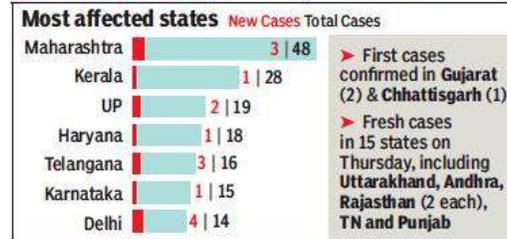
- Citizens above 65 years and children below the age of 10 asked to stay indoors
- Concessional rail tickets, including for senior citizens, suspended from March 20 midnight to discourage travel. Patients, students and disabled exempted
- Only 50% of Group B and C (non-gazetted) employees of all central ministries & depts to attend office on any given day over next fortnight



- ✓ The Centre also asked Metros, railways, buses and airlines to decrease frequency of services and consider alternative seating to ensure social distancing
- ✓ Apart from the travel restriction, the government also advised that children below 10 years of age and those above 65 years should stay at home as much as possible.
- ✓ The government maintained that these were preventive measures and there was no evidence of community transmission so far.

- ✓ **India - recorded its fourth death due to Covid-19 on March 19**
- ✓ The country's fourth coronavirus victim was a 70-year-old man from Punjab, who had returned from a two-week trip to Germany via Italy.

27 NEW CASES; C'GARH, GUJ ENTER LIST

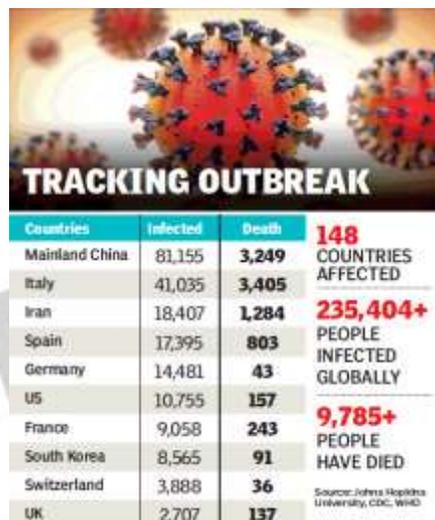


- ✓ As many as 27 new cases were reported on March 19 from 14 states, taking the total number of cases recorded in India so far to 198
- ✓ Out of these cases, the health ministry has confirmed 173 cases so far.
- **In a first in living memory, the Venkateswara temple in Tirumala - will be shut to devotees for a week starting March 20 while the Puri Jagannath temple will remain closed till April 1**
- ✓ However, daily rituals will be conducted inside the sanctum sanctorum of these two of the country's holiest and most-visited shrines behind closed doors
- ✓ This is the first instance in the last 128 years that public worship has been suspended at the 2,000-year-old Tirumala temple.
- ✓ According to temple records, the last such shutdown was in 1892 for unspecified reasons
- **Lok Sabha - passed a bill on March 19 that provides the status of institution of national importance to a Jamnagar-based cluster of ayurveda institutes**
- ✓ The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda, Jamnagar will be granted institution of national importance by combining the cluster of ayurveda institutes at Gujarat Ayurveda University campus in Jamnagar.
- ✓ The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill was moved by the Minister of state for Ayush Shripad Yesso Naik for passage
- ✓ As per the Minister, the agreements had been signed with 14 nations on Ayurveda and 28 information centres were working for promotion of ayurveda in 58 countries
- **The four convicted men in the Nirbhaya case - to be hanged to death at Tihar jail on March 20 at 5.30am**
- ✓ Mukesh Singh, 32, Akshay Thakur, 31, Pawan Gupta, 25, and Vinay Sharma, 26 were on death row since 2017, with their execution postponed three times as they availed legal remedies.
- ✓ The first execution date was set for January 22 but it was postponed to February 1 and later to March 3

- ✓ The President rejected the petition of one of the convicts - Pawan Gupta on March 4, clearing the decks for hanging of all four convicts.
- ✓ This was the last mercy petition, as the President had previously rejected the mercy petitions filed by the other three convicts
- ✓ The death sentence was awarded to the four convicts by a Delhi court on September 13, 2013
- ✓ The tragic incident of Nirbhaya occurred on the night of December 16, 2012

INTERNATIONAL

- **Italy's death toll from coronavirus - overtook that of China's on March 19**
- ✓ A total 427 deaths were registered in Italy over the past 24 hours
- ✓ This increases the nationwide tally in Italy to 3,405 since the outbreak surfaced on February 21.



- ✓ China has recorded 3,245 deaths since early January.
- ✓ Italy, with a population of 60 million, has fewer confirmed cases — 41,035 as of March 19 against 80,907 in China.
- ✓ The total number of cases increased to 41,035 from a previous 35,713, up nearly 15% in Italy
- ✓ Spain has been the hardest hit European country after Italy,
- ✓ The number of people who have contracted the disease has grown by around 25% to 17,395
- ✓ Also, 35 of Africa's 54 countries have cases, with the total close to 650
- ✓ **Iran's** supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei planned to pardon 10,000 more prisoners to combat the virus.
- ✓ The country's toll from coronavirus jumped to 1,284 on March 20, with the total number of infections rising to 18,407
- ✓ With more than 150 new confirmed coronavirus cases in all provinces of Pakistan, the number of Covid-19 patients in the country increased to 450 as on March 19.
- ✓ Globally, the number of confirmed cases reached 235,404, with 9,785 deaths, across 160 countries in the world

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **India - had started sending protective gear and other equipment to Bhutan and the Maldives to prevent the spread of coronavirus**
- ✓ Earlier, on March 15, the SAARC nations agreed to jointly combat coronavirus
- ✓ The PM Narendra Modi proposed an emergency fund with an initial offer of \$10 million from India to these countries to fight the Covid-19 disease.
- ✓ India had received requests from neighbouring countries for assistance worth over a million dollars after the Saarc video conference on coronavirus

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Elon Musk's SpaceX - will send astronauts to the International Space Station for the first time in May**
- ✓ This was announced by Nasa after the confirmation of the first crewed launch from the United States to the platform since 2011.
- ✓ SpaceX will launch a Falcon 9 rocket to transport Nasa astronauts Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley in a first for the space agency as a measure of 'cost cutting'
- ✓ In March, Musk's Crew Dragon capsule made a round trip to the ISS with a mannequin on board, before returning to the Atlantic after 6 days in space.
- ✓ ISS is in orbit more than 400 kilometers above Earth
- ✓ Following the last US space shuttle mission in 2011, after 30 years of service, only the Russians have been going back and forth to the ISS
- ✓ SpaceX has made the trip 15 times since 2012, but only to refuel the station
- ✓ It is not the only private company servicing Nasa, apart from Boeing, which has also won a contract and is developing its own Starliner capsule.

DEFENCE

- **India - signed a ₹880 crore deal to acquire 16,479 Israeli light machine guns (LMGs) for its frontline troops deployed on the borders with China and Pakistan on March 19**



- ✓ The contract with Israel Weapons Industries (IWI) was signed by the Acquisition Wing of the Ministry of Defence after due approval from the Union Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh.
- ✓ However, the 16,479 Negev 7.62x51 mm LMGs will fulfil only part of the overall requirement for well over 43,000 such guns for the Army, IAF and Navy
- ✓ The Negev LMGs will greatly improve the lethality and range of soldiers as compared to their existing weapons.

- ✓ The Army had first asked for new assault rifles and close-quarter battle carbines for its 382 infantry battalions (with 850 soldiers each) way back in 2005, while the case for the LMGs was initiated in 2009
- ✓ Then, the government in 2018 decided to procure limited quantities of assault rifles (72,400), close-quarter battle carbines (93,895) and LMGs (16,479) for frontline troops from abroad
- ✓ It has also planned to manufacture the shortfalls eventually in India with lesser technical specifications and parameters at a later stage.
- ✓ The first contract to be signed in February 2019 was for 72,400 assault rifles from US firm SiG Sauer for ₹638 crore, under which inductions of these 7.62x51 mm caliber rifles are almost complete now.
- ✓ These US-origin rifles have an “effective range” of 500 metres.
- ✓ The Korwa ordnance factory in Uttar Pradesh, in turn, is scheduled to progressively manufacture 7,45,000 Kalashnikov AK-203 rifles in a joint venture with Russia.
- ✓ These 7.62x39 mm caliber rifles, a derivative of the iconic AK-47, have “an effective range” of 300 metres.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ International Happiness Day (IHD) - March 20

- ✓ The purpose of celebrating this day is to bring happiness for all and bring peace in humanity



- ✓ Theme 2020 - ‘Happiness for all, together’
- ✓ March 20 has been chosen for the International Day of Happiness because of the observation of March equinox on this day.
- ✓ March equinox appears at the time when Earth’s equator passes through the center of Sun’s disk.
- ✓ The first International Day of Happiness was observed on March 20, 2013
- ✓ The United Nations has declared March 20 as International Day of Happiness on the initiative of Bhutan.
- ✓ Bhutan is the only country that calculates its GDP growth based on the level of happiness.
- ✓ It has declared March 20 as a public holiday so that family members can stay together.

