



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 26, 2021

TAMIL NADU

- The 'Vote from Home' facility - has been offered for the first time to senior citizens (above 80 years of age) and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) to around 7,300 voters in Chennai on March 26



- ✓ Greater Chennai Corporation, which is also the Chennai district election office, will deploy 70 teams consisting of its ground-level staff, a police constable and micro observers
- ✓ The teams will set up a polling booth at residences of the target voters and gives them around 30 minutes to mark a tick or cross on the candidate of their choice.
- ✓ Covid patients were also given the option, but since they would have already recovered by April 6, none of them chose it
- ✓ The entire process is expected to be finished in 5-7 days, as per the instructions of the Madras high court
- ✓ When an election team goes to a voter's house to collect his ballot, the entire process, except the vote casting, would be videographed and then the ballot would be transferred into a box
- ✓ One representative per party will be allowed with each team
- ✓ The voter will be intimated in advance about the arrival of the election team

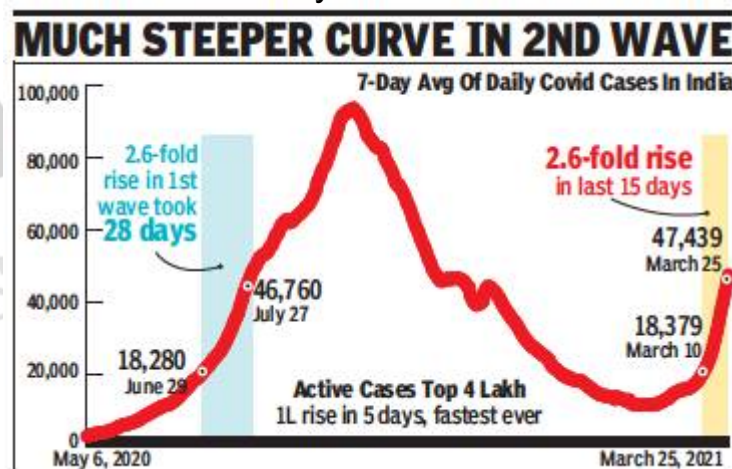
- ✓ In case the voter isn't at home, only one more chance will be given.
- ✓ However, those unable to cast ballot thus can't vote on April 6.
- ✓ On April 6, time has been extended to 7pm to allow Covid patients to vote.
- ✓ The 50 lakh-odd voters in 16 assembly constituencies in Chennai will vote on April 6 alongwith the entire state in the assembly elections

STATES

- **On March 25, Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru - created history when its northern runway re-opened for operations alongside its southern runway**
- ✓ This makes it the only airport in south India to have parallel operation runways.
- ✓ The renovated runway has new lighting and two additional taxiways that can help reduction of taxiing time of the aircraft at the airport.

NATIONAL

- **On March 25, India – recorded the fastest 1-lakh rise in the active case count since the beginning of the pandemic**
- ✓ The active Covid-19 cases in the country crossed 4 lakh mark on the day, after going past the 3-lakh mark five days earlier



- ✓ India recorded 59,117 fresh cases on March 25, the highest single-day count since October 17, 2020
- ✓ Maharashtra reported another all-time high of 35,952 new infections in a single day.
- ✓ The fastest increase of 1 lakh cases before this was the rise from 9 lakh active cases to 10 lakh in six days during the peak of the pandemic in mid-September last year.
- ✓ The second wave of the Covid-19 infection might last up to 100 days counted from February 15, says a research report from SBI.
- ✓ The report predicts that India might reach the peak in the second half of April

- ✓ It estimates the second wave to result in a total of around 25 lakh Covid-19 cases across the country based on trends till March 23
 - ✓ The report, titled 'Second wave of infections: The beginning of the end?', also mentions Covid vaccination as a key tool to combat the pandemic
 - ✓ Meanwhile, India has administered over 5.3 crore vaccine doses.
 - ✓ The government has now decided to open up Covid vaccination for all above 45 years from April 1, irrespective of co-morbidities
- **The Lok Sabha – witnessed a record 114% productivity in the budget session, which was adjourned sine die on March 25**
- ✓ The Union budget was discussed for 14 hours and 42 minutes in which a total of 146 members participated.
 - ✓ The Rajya Sabha witnessed high productivity of about 90% and passing of 19 bills during 23 sittings in the budget session
 - ✓ The upper house functioned a total of 104 hours 23 minutes against the total scheduled time of 116 hours and 31 minutes, as per its Chairman Venkaiah Naidu
 - ✓ During the budget session, 17 government bills were introduced and a total of 18 bills were passed by the Lok Sabha.

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- **On March 25, the Supreme Court - introduced 'indirect discrimination' criterion in Indian jurisprudence for the first time ever**
- ✓ The court observed that, in order to achieve substantive equality prescribed under the Constitution, indirect discrimination must be prohibited
 - ✓ The bench observed that the distinction between direct and indirect discrimination lies in the fact that the former is based on 'intent' and the latter is based on 'effect'
 - ✓ This concept was introduced in the case relating to 86 women Short Service Commission officers seeking grant of permanent commission in the Army
 - ✓ In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court allowed the pleas of women SSC officers to be fairly evaluated for permanent commission
 - ✓ A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said the process by which women officers were evaluated did not address the gender discrimination concern raised in the verdict delivered by the apex court last year.
 - ✓ The bench noted that the structure of our society is created by males for males where talk of equality is a farce.
 - ✓ The SC bench listed the achievements of 26 outstanding women Army officers who are disqualified by the Army for permanent commission (PC).
 - ✓ It had cited the cases of Lt Col Shikha Yadav, who was awarded the COAS commendation, Lt Col Tashi Thapliyal, who was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal and Major Pallavi Sharma who has a proven track record in shooting championships, but still denied the PC by the Army

- ✓ The SC had directed that within three months, all serving SSC women officers have to be considered for permanent commission irrespective of them having crossed 14 years or, as the case may be, 20 years of service.
- ✓ The women officers had first moved the Delhi high court in 2003 seeking permanent commission, which was allowed by the court in non-combat units in 2010.
- ✓ In its landmark verdict delivered on February 17, 2020, the apex court had directed that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission
- **On March 25, the Supreme Court - in principle decided to resort to the never used constitutional provision for engaging retired high court judges to tackle the huge pendency in HCs**
- ✓ At present, vacancies in HC judges had touched 40% of the sanctioned strength, while the pendency of cases in HCs touched half a million

SC SEEKS SOPS FOR EX-JUDGES

According to Art 224A
 "The chief justice of an HC, with the previous consent of the President, request any person who has held the office of judge of that court or of any other high court to sit and act as a judge of the HC for that state."

- > Of the 1,080 high court judge posts across India, 420 are currently vacant
- > There are cases pending for 25 to 30 years in some high courts
- > Why was the government sitting over 45 names recommended for appointment as judges and not sending them to the SC collegium for scrutiny, asks a CJI-bench of the SC

- ✓ A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices Sanjay K Kaul and Surya Kant sought responses from HCs on framing standard operating procedures to recall retired HC judges under Article 224A of the Constitution.
- ✓ It said the exercise would be completed on April 8, the next date of hearing.
- ✓ According to Article 224A, "The chief justice of an HC for any state may at any time, with the previous consent of the President, request any person who has held the office of judge of that court or of any other high court to sit and act as a judge of the high court for that state."
- ✓ Judges who have retired after spending 15-20 years in HCs would be eminently suitable to adjudicate old cases and their tenure will end once the pendency is dealt with, the CJI said
- ✓ There have been precedents of recalling retired judges to work as SC judges under Article 128 of the Constitution, but that practice went into disuse after 1975.
- ✓ However, no retired HC judge was ever called back for another innings.
- ✓ As on date, there is a huge vacancy of 420 posts in the sanctioned strength of 1,080 judges in HCs

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi – to arrive in Dhaka for the 'Bangabandhu' Mujibur Rahman anniversary celebrations on March 26**

- ✓ The birth centenary of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also marks 50 years of diplomatic relations between both the countries
- ✓ Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty has been asked to compose a new Hindustani classical raga for the occasion
- ✓ The new 'Raga Moitree' will be performed by Pandit Chakraborty in songs in Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali on March 26
- ✓ The raga will be included in the curriculum of students on both sides of the border henceforth.
- ✓ PM Modi will be taking 1.2 million vaccine doses to Bangladesh during his visit
- ✓ The Modi-Hasina summit on March 26 will include restricted and delegation level talks between the two leaders.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **On March 24, AstraZeneca – said that its vaccine was 76% effective at preventing Covid-19 based on a more recent data**
- ✓ Earlier, on March 22, the company announced the interim results of its US clinical trial with the vaccine efficacy of 79%
- ✓ As per the recent complete results from its 32,000-person study, its vaccine was found to be 76% effective.
- ✓ The confusion over AstraZeneca's US trial results followed a safety issue in Europe that resulted in over a dozen countries temporarily suspending use of the vaccine.
- ✓ On March 25, Denmark announced it would prolong its suspension of the AstraZeneca vaccine by three weeks while they continue evaluating a potential link with blood clots
- ✓ However, the EU regulators who looked into the issue have cleared the vaccine for use.
- ✓ Sweden, which last week suspended the use of the AstraZeneca shot, said the country would resume its use for people over 65 but keep them on hold for other age groups while awaiting additional data.
- ✓ Meanwhile, Pfizer and BioNTech began testing their Covid-19 vaccine in children under 12, with hopes of expanding vaccination to that age range by early 2022.
- ✓ The first volunteers in the early-stage trial were given their first injections on March 24.
- ✓ The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was authorised by US regulators in late December for people age 16 and older.
- ✓ The pediatric trial, which will include children as young as 6 months, follows a similar vaccine launched by Moderna last week.