



Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Exam – 19 March 2020

Contents:

1. The importance of 'contact tracing' - Controlling COVID-19 Spread - 'Once-in-100-Year' virulence
2. FDA urges virtual patient visits
3. Pandemic could make another 25 million jobless
4. New Bill halves terms of presidents, VPs of local bodies
5. SC strips Manipur Minister of his office
6. 'Call data being used to improve quality': Surveillance Concerns
7. Nod for 83 LCA Tejas Mk-1A

[THE IMPORTANCE OF 'CONTACT TRACING' - CONTROLLING COVID-19 SPREAD - 'ONCE-IN-100-YEAR' VIRULENCE](#)

Focus: GS-III Disaster Management, Science and Technology, Prelims

Why in news?

- Reported spreading of



infection by Coronavirus infected people, to a large number of other people that they came into contact with, makes the **issue of tracing contacts very crucial.**

- Beginning from the second phase of the epidemic — local transmission — which Indian Council of Medical Research Director-General (ICMR) claims the nation is currently couched in, contact tracing is an integral part of fighting the epidemic on the ground.
- Properly done, contact tracing and follow-up health interventions will ensure that the infection spread is limited and retard or stop the pace of the epidemic to the third stage — community transmission.

What is contact tracing?

- Contact tracing is the process of identifying, assessing, and managing people who have been exposed to a disease to prevent transmission.
- As per ICMR guidelines, which are also directions that have sound public health sense behind them, people who may have been exposed to the virus are to be followed for 28 days from the date of the probable last exposure/arrival from affected countries.
- Any person who has had contact with the index patient under investigation/treatment for suspected, probable or confirmed case of SARS-COV-2, should be monitored for the appearance of symptoms.

Who is a contact?

- Anyone who provided care for the suspect or confirmed case, including a health care worker (including those involved in cleaning, waste management, laboratory technicians, doctors) or family member, or anyone who had close physical contact; anyone who stayed at the same place (lived with, or visited) while the index patient was symptomatic.



Hunting down the virus

Health workers identify, assess and manage people who have been exposed to a disease to prevent onward transmission. This part of their job is called "contact tracing"

WHO ARE "CONTACTS"?	WHAT IS THE DATA THE HEALTH WORKERS ARE SUPPOSED TO COLLECT IN THE FIRST 48 HOURS	IF THE CONTACTS ARE...	
<p>Index patient who tests positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Health workers Room-mates Visitors Close physical contacts Partners Schoolmates Colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health worker should visit the contact Identify the contact, monitor for 2-8 days Collect demographic details, date of exposure with the patient Date of onset of symptoms, if any 	<p>...symptomatic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer for isolation Perform tests Initiate medical management If tested positive, move contact to a health facility 	<p>...asymptomatic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place under home quarantine for 28 days Watch for symptoms Maintain a daily list of contacts

A traveller being scanned at the Ernakulam railway station on Wednesday.
THULASI KAKKAT

- If symptoms appear within the first 28 days following the contact, the individual should be considered a 'probable' case and reported through the Integrated Diseases Surveillance Programme network to the National Centre for Disease Control.

Tracing contacts

- As soon as the single event (confirmed SARS-CoV-2) is detected, contact tracing must be aggressively implemented, and preferably to be completed within 48 hours.
- The contact tracing shall preferably be done by visiting the local residence of the contact(s) by a member of the health services team. In certain circumstances or for follow-up, phone calls may be made too, as per the rules.
- On meeting the 'contact person', the visiting health worker should explain the purpose of contact tracing and collect data in a prescribed format. It is important to identify the social networks of the first patient and travel history during the 28 days after the onset of illness.



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- The patient, his or her family members, colleagues, school or college mates are sources of information about the contacts, as are others with knowledge of the patient's recent travel and activities.
 - Contacts should be traced and monitored for at least 28 days after the last exposure to the case patient for evidence of COVID-19 symptoms to emerge. Case-wise line listing of all exposed contacts will be maintained, with the following information: demographic information, date of last exposure or date of contact with the case patient, and date of onset of fever or other symptoms, if any.

Symptomatic contacts

- Persons who have fever and cough and a history of contact with a confirmed case within the last 28 days should be referred for isolation for strict infection control.
- Samples must be collected and sent to the designated laboratory for testing, and appropriate medical management must begin. If contacts show symptoms, they may be isolated at a health care facility or at home until the results come in. Once confirmed as positive for SARS-CoV-2, they must be shifted to a proper health facility.

Asymptomatic contacts

- They must remain at home (home quarantine) for at least 28 days after the last exposure with the patient. The contacts should start monitoring their health and watch for symptoms of fever and cough, within 28 days of the last exposure to the patient, and maintain a list of people they are in contact with, on a daily basis.
- If he or she develops symptoms, as defined, the contact must wear a mask, self-isolate at home, and inform the local health authority. For 28 days after this, health officials will do an active monitoring of these people.



Health workers

The rules also require the health officials to follow certain precautions while they meet contacts. They are required to maintain a distance of at least two metres from the contact, wear masks, and maintain standard infection prevention and control measures, especially hand-washing.

National Centre for Disease Control

- National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC; previously known as National Institute of Communicable Diseases) is an institute under the Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It was established in July 1963 for research in epidemiology and control of communicable diseases and to reorganize the activities of the Malaria Institute of India (MII).
- The NCDC in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has set up the Global Disease Detection (GDD) Regional Center in New Delhi, India.
- This will lead to long-term public health collaboration between the Government of India and the United States in many areas including establishing high quality research and surveillance on important human infectious diseases, establishing the Indian EIS (Epidemiological Intelligence System) program, and developing the NCDC as an international nodal agency in South Asia.

World grapples with 'once-in-100-year' virulence



- Hundreds of millions of people worldwide were adjusting on 18th March 2020, to once-in-a-generation measures to battle the COVID-19 pandemic that is not only killing the old and vulnerable but also threatening prolonged economic misery.
- The fast-spreading disease that jumped from animals to humans in China has now infected about 2,00,000 people and caused over 8,000 deaths in 164 nations, triggering emergency lockdowns and injections of cash unseen since Second World War.
- There was particular alarm in Italy, which has experienced an unusually high death rate — 2,503 from 31,506 cases — and was drafting thousands of student doctors into service before final exams to help an overwhelmed health service.
- Around the world, rich and poor alike saw lives turned upside-down as events were cancelled, shops stripped, workplaces emptied, streets deserted, schools shut and travel at a minimum.
- The crisis has created a wave of solidarity in some countries, with neighbours, families and colleagues coming together to look after the most needy, including dropping supplies



at the doors of those forced to stay indoors.

[FDA URGES VIRTUAL PATIENT VISITS](#)

Focus: GS-III Science and Technology, To be used as example in Science and Technology Mains Paper

Why in news?

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on March 18 2020, recommended **switching to virtual patient visits instead of in-person monitoring** for clinical studies, as signs emerge that the rapid spread of the coronavirus outbreak is disrupting trials.
- The companies said these measures were taken to ensure the safety of the patients being tested and the medical staff.
- The FDA said the outbreak may impact clinical trials of products including drugs and devices, as travel limitations and other considerations cause protocol deviations.
- The restrictions have begun to disrupt the global pharmaceutical industry, as companies cancel public meetings.

Virtual Visits

- Virtual healthcare refers to the “virtual visits” that take place between patients and clinicians via communications technology — the video and audio connectivity that allows “virtual” meetings to occur in real time, from virtually any location.
- A virtual visit can be a



videoconference between a doctor and a patient at home.

- It could mean that a patient can interact with an offsite medical specialist via a high-definition conference hook-up at his or her local clinic, instead of traveling to another city.
 - It can also give patients the chance to more readily find qualified second opinions online.
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PANDEMIC COULD MAKE ANOTHER 25 MILLION JOBLESS

Focus: GS-III Indian Economy, Science and Technology, Prelims

Why in news?

The COVID-19 pandemic will significantly increase global unemployment, leaving up to 25 million more people out of work, and will dramatically slash workers' incomes, the United Nations said on 18th March 2020.

Views of The International Labour Organization

The economic and labour crisis sparked by the coronavirus will have far-reaching impacts on labour market outcomes and income losses.

- This is no longer a global health crisis, it is also a major labour market and economic crisis that is having a huge impact on people.



- the world should prepare to see a significant rise in unemployment and underemployment in the wake of the virus.
- Even in the best-case scenario, 5.3 million more people will be pushed into unemployment.
- At the higher end - 24.7 million more will become jobless, compared to the 2008-9 global financial crisis increased global unemployment by 22 million.
- Underemployment is also expected to increase on a large scale, as the economic consequences of the virus outbreak translate into reductions in working hours and wages.
- Self-employment in developing countries, which often serves to cushion the impact of economic shifts, might not do so this time due to the severe restrictions being placed on the movement of people and goods.
- Reductions in access to work will also mean large income losses for workers.
- The number of people who live in poverty despite holding one or more jobs will also increase significantly.
- The strain on incomes resulting from the decline in economic activity will devastate workers close to or below the poverty line.
- Some groups will be disproportionately impacted by the jobs crisis, including youth, older workers, women and migrants, in a way that could increase already soaring inequality.

Recommendation of ILO

- The ILO called for **urgent, large-scale and coordinated measures to protect workers in the workplace, stimulate the economy and employment and support jobs and income, including through social protections, paid leave and other subsidies.**
- In 2008, the world presented a united front to address the consequences of the global financial crisis, and the worst was averted, We need that kind of leadership and resolve now.

International Labour Organization



- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social justice and promote decent work by setting international labour standards.
- It was the first specialised agency of the UN.
- The ILO has 187 member states: 186 of the 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands are members of the ILO.
- The tripartite structure is unique to the ILO where representatives from the government, employers and employees openly debate and create labour standards.
- The International Labour Office is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization.
- It is the focal point for International Labour Organization's overall activities, which it prepares under the scrutiny of the Governing Body and under the leadership of the Director-General.
- Unlike other United Nations specialized agencies, the International Labour Organization has a tripartite governing structure that brings together governments, employers, and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- The structure is intended to ensure the views of all three groups are reflected in ILO labour standards, policies, and programmes, though governments have twice as many representatives as the other two groups.

[NEW BILL HALVES TERMS OF PRESIDENTS, VPS OF LOCAL BODIES](#)

Focus: GS-II Governance, Prelims

Why in



news?

In an attempt to bring about major changes in the functioning of the rural local bodies in Karnataka, the government on 18th March 2020, tabled a new Bill to reduce the term of the offices of presidents and vice-presidents of gram panchayats, taluk panchayats, and zilla panchayats from five years to 30 months.

Details

- The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2020, tabled in the Assembly by Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister is aimed at amending the 1993 Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 Act.

Powers of State Legislature

- The Constitution of India provides for a legislature in each State and entrusts it with the responsibility to make laws for the state.
- However, the composition of a state Legislature can be different in different states. It can be **either bicameral or unicameral**.
- Each State Legislature exercises law-making powers over the subjects of the **State List and the Concurrent List**.
- In case a state has a unicameral legislature, i.e., in case it has only State Legislative Assembly, all the powers are exercised by it.
- However, even in case it is a bicameral state legislature with state Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad) as the upper house and state Legislative Assembly as the lower house, almost all the powers are exercised by the latter.
- The Legislative Council plays only a secondary and minor role.



State list

The State

List or List-II is a list of 61 items. Initially there were 66 items in the list in Schedule Seven to the Constitution of India.

Panchayati Raj in India

- In India, the Panchayati Raj generally refers to the local self-government of villages in rural India as opposed to urban and suburban municipalities, this system was introduced by a constitutional amendment in 1992.
- This Panchayati Raj system was formalized in 1992, following a study conducted by a number of Indian committees on various ways of implementing more decentralized administration.
- In India, the Panchayati Raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of local administration.
- The system has three levels: Gram Panchayat (village level), Mandal Parishad or Block Samiti or Panchayat Samiti (block level), and Zila Parishad (district level).
- It was formalized in 1992 by the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution. Currently, the Panchayati Raj system exists in all states except Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, and in all Union Territories except Delhi.

The

Panchayats receive funds from three sources:

1. Local body grants, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission
2. Funds for implementation of centrally sponsored schemes
3. Funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions



SC STRIPS MANIPUR MINISTER OF HIS OFFICE

Focus: GS-II Governance, Prelims

Why in news?

In an extraordinary display of its constitutional powers, the Supreme Court on 18th March 2020, stripped Manipur Cabinet Minister, who is facing disqualification proceedings for defection, of his office and banned him from entering the Assembly with immediate effect.

Article 142

1. The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or orders so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe.
2. Subject to the provisions of any law made in this behalf by Parliament, the Supreme Court shall, as respects the whole of the territory of India, have all and every power to make any order for the purpose of securing the attendance of any person, the discovery or production of any documents, or the investigation or punishment of any contempt of itself.



What is anti-defection law?

The Tenth

Schedule of Indian Constitution is popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act. Original constitution had no such provisions. It was included in the Constitution in 1985 by the Rajiv Gandhi government. The main intent of the law was to deter “the evil of political defections” by legislators motivated by the lure of office or other similar considerations.

What are the grounds for disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law?

1. If an elected member voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party;
2. If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorised to do so, without obtaining prior permission.

As a pre-condition for his disqualification, his abstention from voting should not be condoned by his party or the authorised person within 15 days of such incident.

['CALL DATA BEING USED TO IMPROVE QUALITY': SURVEILLANCE CONCERNS](#)

Focus: GS-III Science and Technology, Prelims

Why in



news?

Amid questions over possible surveillance and violation of privacy following bulk call data records being sought by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), the government on 18th March 2020, asserted that the data was only being collected to analyse and improve the quality of telecom services and ruled out any form of surveillance.

Details

- The DoT said that given the numerous complaints about quality of service on the country's telecommunications networks including call drops, echo, cross connections, incomplete or poor caller experience, the DoT had developed a software tool to analyse big data and accurately ascertain call drops in any area.
- For this purpose, data on calls made from mobiles in any tower coverage area is analysed to ascertain calls terminated within 30 seconds and made again.
- DoT will be better equipped to take up such cases and areas with the telecom service providers based on actual data.
- For this purpose, total data of calls made during any particular time period from the identified cell phone tower locations from where the complaints are received is collected to enable analysis
- **There is also no question whatsoever of ascertaining the content of the call. The data collected is anonymised.**
- **There is no surveillance of any kind.**
- **The data was anonymised and did not contain the names of either the maker or receiver of the calls.**
- **Hence, there was no threat of infringement of privacy of any person.**



Focus: GS-III Internal Security, Science and Technology, Prelims

Why in news?

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister on 18th March 2020, accorded approval for the procurement of 83 indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk-1A from the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) by “finalising the contractual and other issues”.
- The proposal will now be placed for consideration of the Cabinet Committee on Security [CCS].
- The MoD statement said following the separation of duties between the Department of Defence (DoD) and the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) headed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the first meeting of the DAC was held with the “Acquisition Wing being the Secretariat of the DAC”.

Who is (CDS) Chief of Defence Staff?

- CDS is a four-star general and will act as principal military adviser to defence minister on all tri services matters.
- He will also head the department of military affairs
- CDS was recommended by Kargil review committee after Kargil war.
- In 2017, intelligence and security officials had said that the absence of a CDS was hampering India’s combat capabilities

Functions of CDS



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- Procurement for defence services other than capital acquisitions.
 - Charter says that, in 3 years, jointness in operation, logistics, maintenance, communication, repairs should be effective.
 - CDS heads the department of military Affairs, and will also be the permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
 - CDS will not exercise any military command including over three service chiefs.
 - Rationalization of man power in military and ensuring adequate capital investment to all the 3 forces without discrimination and bias towards his own army.

Cabinet Committee on Security

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) of the Central Government of India discusses, debates and is the final decision-making body on senior appointments in the national security apparatus, defence policy and expenditure, and generally all matters of India's national security.

The CCS is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.