



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper II

- Xi sends a message to Modi, offers China's help
- Demand for MGNREGA work spikes
- Do not clamp down on citizens' SOS calls via social media: SC



Xi sends a message to Modi, offers China's help

China's President Xi Jinping sent a message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi offering China's support in dealing with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Highlights:

Mr Xi's message, the first such known communication between the two leaders following the pandemic and last year's border crisis, was followed by a telephone call on Friday from China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi to his counterpart S. Jaishankar. Mr Wang also sent a message to Mr Jaishankar on Thursday offering China's support.

Demand for MGNREGA work spikes

Highlights:

1. The demand for MGNREGA work so far in the month of April has increased to 2.57 crore households, 92% higher than a year ago, and a record high for April since 2013, as per State Bank of India (SBI) Research.
2. "This indicates the extent of reverse migration from the lockdown States to their native States," SBI group chief economic adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh said.
3. The government had allocated ₹73,000 crores in this year's Budget for the MGNREGA, nearly 34.5% lower than last year's revised estimates of ₹1.11 lakh crore, on the assumption that the economic recovery would alleviate the need for such spending.
4. The originally budgeted spending for the scheme for 2020-21 was around ₹60,000 crore but was enhanced over the year as the national lockdown and large-scale reverse migration from urban employment centres to the hinterland triggered greater demand under the scheme.
5. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in Parliament that the government would allocate more funds for the rural jobs scheme for 2021-22 if needed, over and above the ₹73,000 crore outlay proposed in the Budget.



Do not clamp down on citizens' SOS calls via social media: SC

The Supreme Court warned the State governments and the police against clamping down on the spread of information or calls for help through social media from citizens affected by COVID-19.

Highlights:

1. The court said any move by any State to punish citizens who take to social media to seek help for oxygen cylinders, COVID-19 drugs, beds and hospitals amid a rampaging second wave would attract contempt of court action.
2. "We don't want any clampdown of information. We will treat it as a contempt of court if such grievances are considered for action. Let a strong message go to all the States and DGPs of the States. Clampdown of information is contrary to basic precepts," Justice Chandrachud made a categorical statement in court.
3. Justice Chandrachud said the free flow of information in the 1970 famine enabled the government to tackle problems effectively as compared to the clampdown during the 1918 pandemic.

Vaccine to illiterates

1. At one point, Justice Chandrachud questioned how the Centre intended to ensure registration for vaccines for illiterate people, considering the fact that registration on the CoWIN app was mandatory.
2. The Bench also asked how the Centre expected a sense of equity from the vaccine manufacturers.