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1. The Election Commission of India has announced the dates for the Legislative Assembly elections in four states—including Tamil Nadu and Kerala—and the Union Territory of Puducherry. Accordingly, the election in Tamil Nadu will be held in a single phase on April 23.

(i) Elections will also be conducted in a single phase on April 9 in the Union Territory of Puducherry and the states of Kerala and Assam. In West Bengal, voting will take place in two phases, on April 23 and April 29. The counting of votes for these Assembly elections is scheduled to take place on May 4.

(ii) The Chief Election Commissioner of India, Gyanesh Kumar, issued this announcement during a press conference held in Delhi. He was accompanied by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, among others.

(iii) Following the announcement of the Assembly election dates, the Chief Election Commissioner stated that the Model Code of Conduct would come into immediate effect in the states and the Union Territory where the elections are being held. Consequently, various regulations—including the mandatory requirement to carry appropriate documentation when transporting cash exceeding ₹50,000—have been implemented.

2. Amidst a nationwide shortage of cooking gas cylinders—triggered by the geopolitical situation in West Asia—the Central Government has prohibited individuals who possess a Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connection from utilizing Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders.

(i) To this end, the Central Government has effected necessary amendments to the "Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000," under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act.

(ii) In a notification issued regarding this matter, the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas stated: "In accordance with the amendments to the LPG Distribution Order, individuals who have obtained a piped gas connection are neither permitted to retain an existing LPG cylinder connection nor allowed to procure LPG cylinders. It is mandatory for those currently holding both connections to immediately surrender their cylinder connection."

(iii) Furthermore, the notification stated: "Similarly, oil companies and distributors are strictly prohibited from supplying LPG cylinders to individuals who have already secured a piped gas connection."

(iv) As the ongoing conflict in the Middle East creates a scenario conducive to fuel shortages, the Government is actively implementing various measures to address the situation. Prior to this, the Central Government had issued an emergency order—invoking the Essential Commodities Act—directing an immediate increase in the production of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

(v) The order further stipulated that the chemical inputs utilized for LPG production must not be diverted for any alternative purposes. It mandated that the LPG produced and supplied by oil refining companies be distributed exclusively for domestic cooking purposes. The order also warned that strict punitive action would be initiated against any entity found to be in violation of these directives.

3. In retaliation for the U.S. attacks on Kharg Island, Iran has further intensified its attacks against Gulf

nations and Israel.

(i) The United States carried out sustained bombing attacks on Kharg Island and Abu Musa Island, which serve as Iran's primary crude oil production hubs.

(ii) Iran has stated that these attacks resulted in no damage and that crude oil production continues to proceed as usual.

(iii) Nevertheless, in retaliation for the attacks on Kharg Island, Iran further escalated its attacks against Gulf nations. Iran launched missile and drone attacks against Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates; however, these were intercepted and destroyed by the respective nations. Accusing the United States of utilizing ports and airbases near Dubai in the UAE to launch attacks on Kharg Island, Iran has issued a warning stating that it intends to strike three ports within the UAE in retaliation, and has urged those currently present there to evacuate immediately.

(iv) Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates has issued a denial, asserting that U.S. forces did not utilize its territory to conduct attacks against Iran.

4. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has criticized the UN Security Council, stating that it does not reflect the contemporary world. Speaking to reporters in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, regarding this matter, Guterres stated the following:

- Everyone must acknowledge that there is a problem within the UN Security Council. This is because the Council reflects the post-1945 world, rather than the contemporary world.
- Within the UN Security Council, the permanent member nations—comprising three countries from Europe (France, Russia, and Britain), one country from Asia (China), and the United States—possess veto power.
- When wars erupt in the world, attempts to halt them are often obstructed by the veto power. Because the permanent member nations exercise this authority, the UN Security Council is unable to bring an end to conflicts. He added that he holds no hope that this situation will change in the short term.
- The UN Security Council was established in 1945. India has consistently maintained that the Council is ill-suited for the 21st century and that it fails to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.

(i) In light of this, it is noteworthy that India has been consistently advocating for reforms within the Council.

5. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) announced that the annual FASTag fee for the 2026-27 fiscal year is being increased from ₹3,000 to ₹3,075.

(i) This new fee comes into effect on April 1st. The annual FASTag fee system was introduced on August 15th of last year with the aim of reducing the financial burden on vehicles traveling on national highways.

6. Resolution of the Ladakh crisis :-

(i) Historical and Legislative Background (2019)

- Abrogation of Article 370: The current tensions in the region trace back to August 2019, when the Central Government revoked the special status of Jammu & Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories: Jammu & Kashmir (with a legislature) and Ladakh (without a legislature).



- **Loss of Representation:** Before the transition, Ladakh had four assembly constituencies. Under the new Union Territory status, all administrative and decision-making powers were transferred directly to central officials, leading to a sense of political alienation among locals.

(ii) The Protest and Legal Action (2025)

- On September 24 and 25, 2025, environmentalist and social activist Sonam Wangchuk led a massive hunger strike and protest movement.
- The agitation turned violent, resulting in 4 deaths and injuries to 45 individuals, including 22 police officers.
- Following the unrest, the Central Government arrested Sonam Wangchuk and detained him under the National Security Act (NSA) for six months.

(iii) Current Developments and Release (March 2026)

- On March 15, 2026, the Central Government unexpectedly withdrew the NSA charges against Sonam Wangchuk, leading to his release from prison.
- The Ministry stated that this sudden move was intended to create a conducive environment for constructive dialogue with all regional stakeholders to find a permanent solution to the Ladakh issue.
- Despite the release, the Apex Body of Leh (ABL) has stated it will continue its struggle until its primary demands for separate statehood and special protections are met.

(iv) Key Concerns and Demands of Ladakh

- A significant 97% of Ladakh's population belongs to tribal communities.
- Residents fear that new residency rules will allow outsiders to purchase land and secure government jobs, potentially diluting their unique cultural and linguistic identity.
- The protesters are demanding that Ladakh be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution (Articles 244(2) and 275(1)), which would allow for the creation of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). These councils would grant the local population legal authority over their land, forests, water resources, agriculture, and public health.

(v) Legal and Constitutional Constraints

- The Central Government has argued that the Sixth Schedule is constitutionally reserved for North-Eastern states (Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura).
- While the Government claims it is legally restricted, a constitutional amendment could extend these protections to Ladakh if the political will exists.

(vi) Call for Future Peace

- Ladakh's Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar, emphasized that there is no place for violence in a democracy and that peaceful dialogue is the only way to resolve regional grievances.
- The release of Wangchuk is seen as a critical first step toward establishing long-term peace in the sensitive border region.

7. Factual analysis of Tamil Nadu's financial state :-



(i) Fundamental Financial Concepts

- Debt as an Investment Tool: The sources state that debt is not necessarily a sign of failure but a tool used by governments to make investments and achieve growth.
- Judging a state's financial health solely by the total amount of debt is described as "meaningless". Instead, it must be compared to the state's economic strength, specifically the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
- GSDP represents the total monetary value of all goods and services produced within the state in a single year.
- Debt-to-GSDP Ratio: This is the correct metric for evaluating financial health, as it determines whether the debt remains within manageable limits relative to the state's income.

(ii) Tamil Nadu's Financial Facts (2024-2026)

- Tamil Nadu's total debt stands at ₹9.29 lakh crore, while its GSDP is valued at ₹35.6 lakh crore.
- The state's debt-to-GSDP ratio is 26.07%.
- The 15th Finance Commission set a maximum debt ceiling of 28.07%; Tamil Nadu has successfully kept its ratio well below this limit.
- Under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, the fiscal deficit must remain within 3% of the GSDP; Tamil Nadu's deficit is currently near the 3% mark, which is within the limits set by NITI Aayog.
- In the 2024-25 fiscal year, Tamil Nadu's GSDP saw a significant growth of 16%.

(iii) Comparison with Other States (The UP Case Study)

- While Tamil Nadu's ratio is 26.07%, UP's debt-to-GSDP ratio is higher at 29% to 30%, exceeding the Finance Commission's recommended limits.
- Tamil Nadu's average per capita income is ₹3,61,619, which is 3.3 times higher than UP's average of ₹1,08,572.
- Despite having a population of 7 crore compared to UP's 19 crore (UP is 2.7 times larger), Tamil Nadu produces significantly more economic value with fewer human resources.

(iv) Revenue and Expenditure Strategy

- Tamil Nadu generates 75% (three-fourths) of its revenue from its own tax and non-tax sources, relying on the Central Government for only 25%.
- In contrast, states like UP depend on the Central Government for more than half of their total revenue.
- A major reason for the recent increase in debt was the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the Central Government allowed states to borrow additional funds to manage the crisis.
- Debt is primarily utilized for social welfare and infrastructure:
 - Education: ₹54,000 crore (13% of the budget).
 - Health: ₹20,000 crore (5% of the budget).
 - Infrastructure: ₹57,000 crore for roads, water supply, urban development, and industrial corridors.

(v) Socio-Economic Outcomes

- Human Development Index (HDI): Tamil Nadu's HDI is 0.69, which is notably higher than the national



average of 0.64.

- Educational Success: The investments have led to increased school enrollment and a significant reduction in dropout rates.
- Maintaining the debt-to-GSDP ratio within legal limits despite receiving inadequate financial resources from the Central Government is a "historical achievement" for Tamil Nadu.

