

## **Tablighi Jamaat Episode**

### **Why in News?**

Many attendees of a big religious congregation organised by the Tablighi Jamaat held in mid-March have been affected by novel coronavirus .

### **What has happened after this gathering?**

- More than 400 people showing symptoms have been hospitalised in Delhi alone and nearly 240 have tested positive.
- The spectre of large-scale community spread by a few hundred attendees from different States cannot be ruled out.
- That the 3-day event began on March 13 when the Health Ministry said that it did not consider the novel coronavirus as a health emergency.
- After all, WHO had called COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

### **Who is to be blamed?**

- The organisers should have been aware that a similar congregation organised by them in Malaysia in end-February led to a spike in cases there and the attendees carried the virus to other countries.
- Community leaders have been irresponsible, but those in the government have been lax too.
- The Delhi government did nothing to stop such a meeting except issuing an order on March 13 prohibiting the assembly of more than 200 people.
- On March 6, the Centre advised the States to avoid or postpone mass gatherings till the pandemic was contained.
- There is a question on what prevented the State government from following this March 6 advice.

### **Were there such gatherings at national level?**

- There have been several such large gatherings, religious and non-religious in the country, even after India reported its first case.
- Until the lockdown began, many places of worship were open and political events held.
- Each such event could have potentially seeded the virus into the population and should have therefore been cancelled or prevented.
- But India failed despite being aware how global congregations had led to an

alarming spread of the virus, examples being the large outbreaks in South Korea, Singapore, southern Italy and Spain.

### **What could be done?**

- States that already have cases with a link to the Nizamuddin event should now use the lockdown period effectively.
- They should actively find everyone who had attended the event, trace their contacts, quarantine, test and treat them without losing time.
- Both South Korea and Singapore have demonstrated how meticulous tracing of contacts of a church event, isolation and aggressive testing helped prevent the highly infectious virus from spreading widely.
- The last thing that India can afford in the war against the virus is the disease acquiring a religious or class colour.

**Source: The Hindu**

