Containment of COVID-19 Cases in Kerala

What is the issue?

- With its efforts, Kerala appears to have finally flattened the curve on COVID-19 cases.
- Kerala's steps on the virus are easy to follow, but its success rate is difficult to be replicated in other states. Here is why.

What are the recent developments?

- Kerala had containment strategies in place even before the first case of novel coronavirus was detected there on January 30, 2020.
- Since April 22, except on four days, the number of new cases reported has remained either the same or fewer than the number of recoveries.
- On May 1, 2020 for the first time, the State reported zero new cases, and again on two consecutive days - May 3 and May 4.
- Zero fresh cases on three days in May appear to be a good sign.
- There have been just three deaths, a case fatality rate of 0.6% against the national average of 3.3%.

What could this be credited to?

- Kerala did not wait for directions from the Centre but instead led from the front from the beginning.
- The number of cases increased to 12 on March 10 (a day before WHO declared the coronavirus a pandemic).
- The same day, Kerala -
    i. shut down all educational institutions and entertainment centres
    ii. banned large gatherings
    iii. appealed to people to avoid visiting religious places
- On May 2, the ICMR lauded the State for the "unparalleled" containment and testing strategies and referred to it as the "Kerala model".

What is unique to Kerala?

- Kerala has very good health-care infrastructure in place, down to the primary health-care centres.
- But what sets it apart from other States is the manner in which it followed textbook epidemiology protocols.

- It did this well before the ICMR advocated them.
- Also, the entire health-care infrastructure worked in tandem despite being decentralised.
- Political leadership and the complete involvement of the government at all levels with the bureaucracy and local community have been a huge advantage.
- The very different health-seeking behaviour and high literacy among people have also played a pivotal role.
- The active involvement of all the stakeholders is not something which was put in place during the crisis, but rather a legacy of the State.
- The COVID-19 containment is a success born out of decades-old social revolution and development.
- This is a prime reason why other States, even if they emulate the measures adopted by Kerala to fight the virus, may not be able to achieve the same level of success.

Source: The Hindu

