

IN NEW DELHI'S COVID HOTSPOT
441 are symptomatic, sent to hospital

SPREAD SLOWER THAN ELSEWHERE,
government tells Supreme Court

PARTS OF NIZAMUDDIN WEST UNDER
strict lockdown, with drones, police personnel



Buses head from Nizamuddin West to quarantine facilities in Delhi on Tuesday afternoon. *Praveen Khanna*

As US deaths cross 3,400, ICMR compares: infection probability is low in India

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

EVEN AS A Tablighi Jamaat congregation in the Capital has emerged as a common link between many COVID-19 positive cases, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said on Tuesday that the "probability" of infection in India was still "very low" as compared to the US, now the global hotspot of the outbreak.

With 146 positive cases, including two deaths, being reported in the last 24 hours, the total count has gone up to 1,397 (124 recovered, 35 dead).

Dr R R Gangakhedkar, head of the department of epidemiology and infectious diseases,

INSIDE



DEADLIEST DAY YET IN SPAIN AND U.S.

FIRST TABLIGH LINK WAS SPOTTED ON MARCH 17

TUMKUR VICTIM TRACED TO DELHI GATHERING

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ICMR, said there were many differences between the outbreaks in India and the US.

Responding to a question on whether India should change the guidelines on use of face masks, he said: "You need to understand, where risk of exposure is more, you need masks. You wear a mask so that you do not touch your face or nose. There is a hell-and-heaven difference in the outbreak here and in America. My probability of infection is very low, that is why we are saying only a person who has symptoms should wear masks. If you make a habit of not touching your face, there is no need to fear. This depends on the risk of exposure."

This comes amid reports that **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Across nation, race to trace contacts of Tabligh meeting

Day 7: Alarm bells ring in 20 states & UTs, 50 test positive in a single day in Tamil Nadu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, CHENNAI, BENGALURU, LUCKNOW, MARCH 31

CORONA COUNT
1397 CASES
35 DEATHS
124 RECOVERED

AS MANY AS 20 states and Union Territories are scrambling to identify, quarantine and test all those who attended a gathering of almost 4,000 people at Markaz Nizamuddin, the headquarters of Tablighi Jamaat in New Delhi, in the middle of March.

Cases are showing up in different states, with Tamil Nadu announcing that 50 of the 57 COVID-19 positive cases Tuesday were of those who participated in the congregation. A day earlier, Telangana said five who died and tested positive for COVID-19 were present at the event.

The movement of people, including that of foreign nationals

from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and other countries, from Delhi to other states after the gathering, has presented a complex contact tracing task before the health and law enforcement authorities.

Delhi evacuated 1,548 people over the last three days, and with 18 from the area testing positive, the area was put under a strict lockdown.

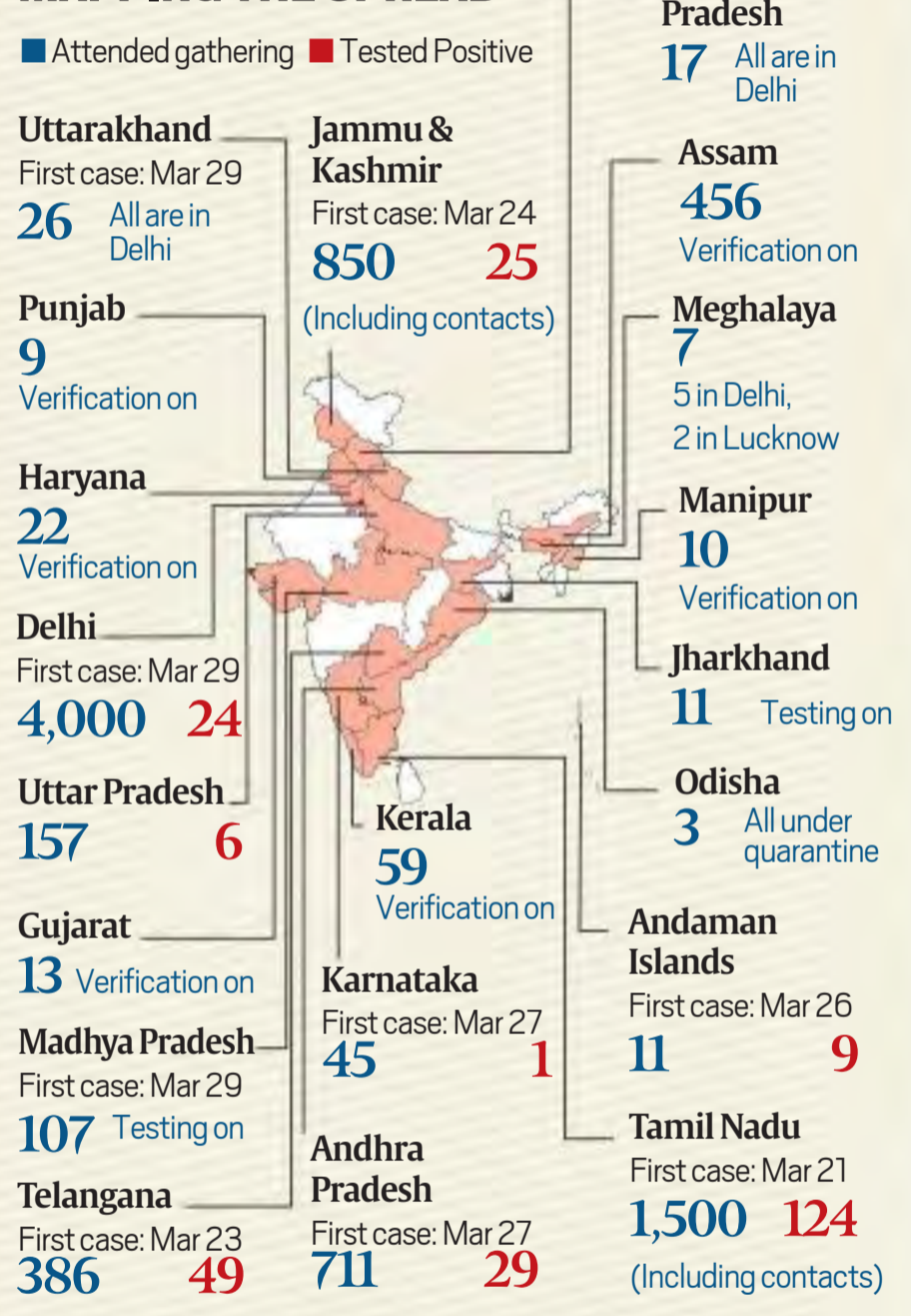
Andhra Pradesh has identified 711 persons who were at the gathering. From neighbouring Telangana, at least 400 persons

participated in the meeting. While returning, a group from Karimnagar in the state brought along 10 Indonesians. They travelled from Delhi by train in a sleeper coach, alighted at Ramagundam in Peddapalli district on March 13, and visited mosques while travelling in autorickshaws. The next day, they went to Karimnagar, visited four mosques, and interacted with students. One of the Indonesians tested positive on March 17, and the remaining nine the next day.

Meanwhile, of the 711 identified, Andhra Pradesh quarantined 122 at private hospitals and isolation facilities, 207 at government hospitals, and 297 in their homes. The remaining 87 are untraceable. "We are trying to gather information if anyone else travelled to Nizamuddin for

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MAPPING THE SPREAD



ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

IN A move that signals the transmission of lower rates that will end up pinching small savers especially amid the looming economic distress, the government has decided to cut small savings interest rates sharply by 70-140 basis points for the April-June quarter. This sharp cut follows the Reserve Bank of India's cut in the repo rate by 75 basis points, alongside a slew of liquidity-enhancing measures to counter the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interest rate for Senior Citizens Savings Scheme has been slashed to 7.4 per cent from 8.6 per cent, while that for National Savings Certificate has been cut to 6.8 per cent from 7.9 per cent. Public Provident Fund will now fetch 7.1 per cent interest as against 7.9 per cent earlier. Kisan Vikas Patra will fetch 6.9 per cent interest (maturity in 124 months) from 7.6 per cent (maturity in 113 months) earlier. Interest rate for Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme has been reduced to 7.6 per cent from 8.4 per cent.

This is the first sharp cut in

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNAY



ACCEPTING THE Centre's submission that mass movement of migrant workers during the lockdown was the result of "panic created by fake news" that it would continue for more than three months, the Supreme Court Tuesday directed the media to "refer to and publish the official version" of the developments.

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

Underlining that "we do not intend to interfere with the free discussion about the pandemic", the bench of Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and L Nageswara Rao said "we expect the media (print, electronic or social) to maintain a strong sense of responsibility and ensure that unverified news capable of causing panic is not disseminated".

"The migration of large number of labourers working in the cities was triggered by panic created by fake news that the lockdown would continue for more than three months. Such panic-driven migration has caused untold suffering to those who believed and acted on such news."

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As Tabligh's Nizamuddin centre is cleared, Kejriwal warns of a surge in cases

SOMYA LAKHANI
& SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

OVER THE past three days, 1,548 people have been evacuated from the Markaz Nizamuddin, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Tuesday. Of these, 441 are symptomatic and have been sent to the hospital for coronavirus testing, while others have been quarantined.

Nizamuddin West continued to be under strict lockdown, with heavy police deployment

on Tuesday, a day after 18 people from the area tested positive for COVID-19. A gathering at a mosque in the area mid-March has emerged as the epicentre of the outbreak, with cases emerging not just in the national capital but in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, the Andaman islands, Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and other states.

Beginning Tuesday morning, people were brought out in batches of 30-35 from the Markaz Nizamuddin building and taken to hospitals or quarantine centres in DTC buses. The drivers were **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

EXPLAINED Cracking the cluster

NEW DELHI'S Hazrat Nizamuddin cluster will significantly alter the nature of spread of the novel coronavirus disease. But because the new cases are in large groups and linked to one source, it may be easier to reliably trace the contacts. But this comes at a time when there are more examples which suggest community transmission.

FULL REPORT
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Contact tracing for Delhi cluster: 3 trains to South on the radar of Railways

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

IN A massive attempt at contact tracing, the Railways is helping states track down movements of those who participated in the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi in the middle of March and later tested positive for COVID-19.

Armed with a list of those at the congregation who tested positive for coronavirus, authorities are looking at passenger lists of at least three trains that set off from Hazrat Nizamuddin station in Delhi between March 14 and 19

— the Duronto Express to Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, the Grand Trunk Express to Chennai, and the Tamil Nadu Express to Chennai.

According to inputs from states, two people who attended the congregation and later tested positive travelled by the Duronto on March 18 in the S8 coach along with "two companions", two of them travelled by the Grand Trunk Express in the S3 coach with two minors, while a couple of others took the Tamil Nadu Express.

With the arrival and departure patterns of those who **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Pre-lockdown stocks running out, stores wait for trucks and labour

PRANAV MUKUL,
PRABHA RAGHAVAN,
AASHISH ARYAN
& AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

SHELVES IN stores are gradually emptying as pre-lockdown stocks run out and replenishment is a big challenge as labour migration poses fresh hurdles across the supply chain — from the manufacturing stage to last-mile delivery.

This is the growing concern among key players in consumer goods, from FMCG majors Dabur India and Hindustan Unilever to wholesaler Metro Cash and



Shortage of raw materials will hit production. *File*

Carry and a slew of stockists and retailers.

There is a sudden dearth of labour: be it for loading and unloading trucks to managing

warehouses, taking supplies from distributors and moving goods to the retailer.

On top of this, is the fact that **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

At Rajasthan border, last check, first responder: 'Yeh toh jung hai'

DIPANKAR GHOSHE
BHARATPUR, MARCH 31

IT'S 10 pm, near pitch dark. In the middle of the road at the Rarah border between Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh is a barricade and three policemen. To the left, hanging from an electrical wire overhead, are three temporary stage lights. Under them is a table — a jug of water and a bottle of hand sanitiser on it — and a doctor in a chair, with hairnet, mask and gloves.

Meet Dr Rajveer Singh, the last line of defence against the

TEST REPORTS FROM THE FIELD TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

coronavirus entering Rajasthan, and among the first responders if and when the infection slips through. For the last two days, from 8 pm to 8 am, he has been screening hundreds of migrants returning on foot who are trying to beat a national lockdown en-

forced with four hours' notice. And across 800 km in four states, Singh, his work station and his work are emblematic of a healthcare system creaking under the weight of an unprecedented crisis, propped up by doctors and health workers in the field, overwhelmed but committed to the cause.

After a quick dinner break, Singh's gloves are back on. He is ready to check a group of three men, with bags slung across their shoulders. His questions are calm, his tone patient: "Where are you coming from? Where are you going? Do you



Dr Rajveer Singh at work on the Rarah border. *Gajendra Yadav*

have any symptoms of fever and cough? Have you met anyone with symptoms of fever and cough?" Finally, he asks: "Have you by any chance travelled to Bhilwara or Jhunjhunu?"

Bhilwara, he knows, has emerged as a worry spot, after six persons working in a private hospital, including doctors, tested positive. Of the 93 cases in Rajasthan, 26 are from Bhilwara — 13 have since tested negative — and the district's population of more than 24 lakh is under surveillance, the town locked down. Based on the answers, Singh decides his next course of action.

In every case, he jots down the person's name, address, contact number and where they were coming from. "But for instance, if they are from Bhilwara or Jhunjhunu, or have fever or contact, I will send them to the district hospital. From there, they could be sent to home quarantine or institutional quarantine. This is what we have done for the last three days," he says.

Last Thursday, the first day of the border checks, they marked people with quarantine stamps. But then, says Singh, there was a shortage of stamps. "So we either sent them to the district

hospital or, based on our lists, sent health workers to homes to paste quarantine stickers," he says. For instance, he says, "over 240" people needed either home or institutional quarantine between 8 pm on Sunday night and 8 am the next morning.

Singh has also watched instructional videos of doctors and nurses in Hazmat suits, peeling off and on different layers. The only layers he has, though, are a pair of extra gloves in his coat pocket, and an extra mask. "Yeh toh jung hai. Har jung mein kami hoti hai (This is war. There are **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**