

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WHO,
health ministry says India count 60

CENTRE TELLS STATES
to invoke Epidemic Diseases Act

14-DAY QUARANTINE FOR
travellers from seven countries

India quarantines itself

All visas — except diplomatic, official, UN — suspended till April 15, entry barred for OCI card-holders too

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

ON A day that the World Health Organisation (WHO) said the novel coronavirus (COVID 2019) outbreak could now be "characterised as a pandemic", India on Wednesday took the unprecedented decision to suspend all visas, barring select categories, till April 15, effectively closing its borders for a month.

The Centre also advised all states and Union territories to invoke provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, which will enable them to enforce advisories as and when needed.

"All existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/international organisations, employment, project visas, stand suspended till 15th April 2020. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on 13th March 2020 at the port of departure. Visa free travel facility granted to OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India) card holders is kept in abeyance till April 15th, 2020. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on 13th March 2020 at the port of departure. Any foreign national who intends to travel to India for compelling reason may contact the nearest Indian Mission," the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said in a statement.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Group of Ministers (GOM) constituted to

WORLD



MERKEL SAYS VIRUS LIKELY TO INFECT 70% OF GERMANS
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EXPLAINED

SIMPLY PUT
THE HUNT FOR TREATMENT
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review, monitor and evaluate the preparedness and measures taken to fight the COVID outbreak. It means that no foreign tourists can enter India for over a month now, affecting an already stressed economy. Several sporting events, including the IPL and the India Open badminton tournament were also scheduled to start this month.

The GoM meeting, chaired by

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Foreign tourists being scanned at Junagarh fort in Bikaner on Wednesday. PTI

Collateral: Almost 1 mn tourists a month; aviation, hotel slowdown

1.74 mn in March, April '19 — 15% of annual tourist arrivals

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

THE CENTRE'S move to virtually lock its borders down for a month by suspending all existing visas, barring certain categories, sent officials of domestic and international airlines with operations in India to rush into meetings late Thursday in an attempt

to understand the impact of this decision on the aviation sector — foremost in the line of fire.

However, in addition to airlines, a cascading impact is expected to be seen on allied sectors such as airports and hospitality.

"We will study passenger loads for the next few days and will decide — on the basis of that — whether or not to cancel

flights to foreign destinations," a senior executive at a domestic airline said. Indian airlines handle nearly one-third of India's international air traffic every year while foreign airlines carry the rest. According to the official, a chunk of foreign nationals who arrive into India are flown in by overseas carriers.

The move is also expected to

Foreign players, stadium crowd: Question mark over Badminton Open and IPL

MIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to suspend "all existing visas" until April 15 in the wake of coronavirus outbreak has put a big question mark on the Indian Premier League scheduled to begin on March 29. India's one-day international matches against South Africa, with the opening game to be played in Dharamshala on Thursday, are likely to be played behind closed doors after the sports ministry issued directives to state administrations late Wednesday night to "adhere to the advisory issued by the health ministry in letter and spirit."

Sports Secretary Radhey Shyam Julaniya said he spoke with Chief Secretaries of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and asked them to ensure that mass gatherings are avoided at the matches. The ODI series between India and South Africa begins in Dharamshala Thursday, followed by a match in Lucknow on March 15.

"So the sporting event may go on but public gathering has to be avoided," Julaniya told *The Indian Express*.

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Jyotiraditya Scindia at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday. Tashi Tobgyal

Day after, Scindia joins BJP and gets a Rajya Sabha ticket

BJP moves Madhya Pradesh MLAs to Manesar, Cong takes its flock to Jaipur

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

THE DAY after resigning from the Congress, former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia joined the BJP Wednesday in the presence of party president J P Nadda. Hours later, Scindia, who had served the Congress for 18 years, was rewarded — the BJP named him for a Rajya Sabha seat from Madhya Pradesh.

Scindia's official joining comes in the backdrop of an intensifying political crisis in Madhya Pradesh where the Kamal Nath-led Congress government is on the brink with both sides scrambling to send their legislators to safer places to protect them from walking over — or being lured — to the

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other side. Along with Scindia, 22 MLAs from Madhya Pradesh Assembly, where Nath enjoys a slender majority, resigned and reduced the

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BY SUHAS PALSHIKAR
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CITY



ED BOOKS TAHIR HUSSAIN, PFI ON CHARGES OF MONEY LAUNDERING

THREE MONTHS AFTER POLICE ACTION, JAMIA LIBRARY OPENS
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HOME MINISTER DEFENDS DELHI POLICE IN PARLIAMENT DEBATE

300 from UP... riots a plot, no one to be spared: Shah in LS

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah Wednesday called the Delhi riots a conspiracy that had been hatched well in advance and assured Parliament that the rioters, irrespective of which side they belong to, will not be spared.

"How these riots spread so fast is a good question... we have registered a case of conspiracy in the matter. I am of the firm belief that it can spread so fast only after advance planning," Shah said during his reply to a debate on the Delhi riots in the Lok Sabha. Beginning his speech with



Shah at Parliament House Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

expressing grief over the deaths in the riots, he reiterated multiple times that strict action would

be taken against anyone behind the violence. "The Narendra Modi government will not spare anyone from any side... A scientific investigation is being conducted. No innocent will face any trouble. They may be called for questioning, but no one will be arrested without evidence," Shah said.

He also defended the Delhi Police which has faced severe criticism for alleged dereliction of duty. "People asked what the Delhi Police was doing. Police should be praised, in fact. About 1.7 crore people live in Delhi. Where the riots happened, 20 lakh people live. It is the most

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In riots debate, BJP MPs take a swipe at judges too

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

ON A day that several members from the Opposition raised the issue of what they called the "sudden" transfer of former Delhi High Court judge Justice S Muralidhar during a debate on the Delhi riots in the Lok Sabha, some key members from the Treasury chose to corner the judiciary over violence in the capital.

Delhi MP Meenakshi Lekhi questioned the wisdom of allowing non-violent protests. "Some judges, I will not take their names, think police shouldn't act until protests turn violent... Under the circumstances, it is difficult to gauge when a peaceful protest will turn violent. Who will decide when will a dharna turn violent?" Lekhi said while participating in the debate.

Lekhi blamed the riots on anti-CAA protests that had been going on in Delhi since December and also alleged that the majority had suffered at the hands of the minority during the riots.

BJP MP from Bettiah and president of BJP's Bihar unit Sanjay Jaiswal, too, held courts

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EXPLAINED



HOW SAUDI-RUSSIA TUSSE TANKED OIL PRICES

35 YRS AFTER DELHI BLASTS, HOW PROSECUTION'S CASE FELL
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Will prove majority, had talked about BJP plot with Scindia, says Kamal Nath

RITUSARIN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

THE BELEAGUERED Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, who has been meeting a stream of visitors at his residence ever since the dramatic exit of Jyotiraditya Scindia Tuesday, appears to be sanguine about averting the fall of his 15-month-old Government.

"I am confident that the Congress will win the floor test



'Everyone talking to everyone' in the Assembly after it convenes as scheduled on March 15. You will see that we will be able to prove our majority in the Assembly," he told *The Indian Express* on Wednesday morning

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Where were you when Delhi burning... This will be your legacy: Oppn to Shah

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

THE OPPOSITION Wednesday held the government squarely responsible for the Delhi riots, with the Congress and other parties seeking the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"When Rome was burning, Nero was playing fiddle or flute

on Palatine Hill and waiting to see the burning of the city in order to build one golden palace, Domus Aurea. It appears Nero has now arrived in India. When Delhi was burning, Nero was in Ahmedabad playing flute with President Donald Trump," Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said.

The Trinamool Congress's Saugata Roy demanded a judicial

inquiry into the riots, telling Shah, "Please acknowledge responsibility. In the name of god, go and do not stay in the Home Minister's position... Otherwise, you will live the rest of your life with the stamp on your forehead that he is the man who could not prevent the riots in Delhi, at a place which is 10 km from the headquarters of the Home Ministry."

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Behind killer cough syrup: Glaring gaps in regulation and its manufacture

PRABHA RAGHAVAN & ARUN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JAMMU, MARCH 11

EARLIER THIS year, around 17 children from Ramnagar in Jammu and Kashmir were hospitalised. More than half of them died of kidney failure. The cause: A batch of "Coldbest" cough syrup containing a chemical that should never have been there in the first place — diethylene glycol (DEG). Over a month of investigations, first by a team of doctors from PGIMER- Chandigarh and later by drug control regulators, revealed on March 2 that the

syrup was, in fact, the culprit. The September batch of Coldbest, manufactured by Himachal Pradesh-based Digital Vision Pharma and sold in several states, contained 34.97 per cent of the poisonous chemical, according to Chandigarh's Regional Drugs Testing Laboratory.

Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana authorities have since filed FIRs, setting in motion further investigations into alleged offences by the company. Last week Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said that the government was seeking "stringent action" — imprisonment of 10 years to life

against the company's executives. Glaring gaps in the regulatory process together with several failures in the manufacturing chain in the company itself could be behind the toxic batch entering the market.

Experts see two possible explanations for why a batch of Coldbest with DEG — reportedly a common impurity in the solvent of such syrups — was in the market. Either it was counterfeit, or Digital Vision, despite reportedly claiming to follow good manufacturing practices, failed to test the quality of its batches.. They suspect the latter. The company had "poorly"



17 children from Ramnagar in J&K were hospitalised, over half died. One of the grieving families. Express file

EXPLAINED
Red flags were ignored

THIS IS India's 4th mass glycol poisoning and yet safeguards are lacking. High levels of toxin point to the failure of internal controls within the company. Regulators had raised red flags regarding the firm but yet these gaps went undetected. The role of the pharmacist is limited if the product itself is suspect.

followed manufacturing processes, Drug Controller General of India VG Somani told *The Indian Express* at the Indian Pharma 2020 conference in Ahmedabad.

"There is no doubt about it. (The syrup) was impure. The person who made it was contravening the provisions of law," said Somani, who heads CDSCO, India's top regulator responsible for ensuring safe and effective medicines.

"He has done everything (tests), but poorly done... Validation, calibration — these things are extremely necessary and it has to be done

properly. If it is not... it can lead to fatal results sometimes."

Digital Vision could have detected DEG in "various" stages of Coldbest's production, starting with the raw material used, said Murali Neelakantan, former global general counsel of Cipla and Glenmark Pharmaceuticals. Depending on its operating procedure, it would "normally" have had to check for "known issues" like impurities and contaminants.

"If you want to, and people do their jobs, you can catch it at any stage. Here, several opportunities to catch the problem have been missed," he said.

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