



Rahul Gandhi hits out at Modi on the state of the economy

page 12



No doubtful category in NPR even if a person fails to give details: Shah

page 12



SBI board clears ₹7,250 crore investment in troubled Yes Bank

page 15

IPL 2020 likely to be played in empty stadiums

page 18

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NEARBY



CBI seeks maximum punishment for Sengar

NEW DELHI
The CBI on Thursday sought maximum punishment for expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar and others, who have been held guilty in the two cases linked to the death of the Unnao rape victim's father in 2018.

NATION • PAGE 9

'FT members' term linked to conviction rate

GUWAHATI
The Assam government decides the tenure of a Foreigners' Tribunal member based on how many foreigners he or she declares, Amnesty International said, basing its assertion on the performance appraisal data submitted by the State in an affidavit in court.

NORTH & EAST • PAGE 6

7 arrested for head constable's murder

NEW DELHI
Seven persons have been arrested in connection with the killing of head constable Ratan Lal during riots in north-east Delhi's Gokulpuri last month. The police said that "a conspiracy was hatched to attack the police party" and that the accused are "both conspirators as well as active rioters".

CITY • PAGE 3

FRIDAY REVIEW • 4 PAGES

India's first COVID-19 death in Karnataka; cases touch 74

Fresh cases in Maharashtra, Delhi, Ladakh, A.P., U.P.; MEA advises BCCI against IPL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

Health officials in Karnataka reported the country's first COVID-19 death late on Thursday after samples of a 76-year-old man, who was a suspected COVID-19 patient and passed away on Tuesday night, tested positive for the disease. The patient from Kalaburgi also had co-morbidities such as asthma, hypertension and diabetes.

He had returned from Saudi Arabia on February 29. According to reports, he fell ill soon after and was admitted to a private hospital and later shifted to the Gulbarga Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS). His throat swab was sent to check for COVID-19 infection.

Despite efforts by the District Health Officer to convince his family that he be shifted to the GIMS isolation ward, he was transferred to a private hospital in Hyderabad. Later, he was discharged from the hospital and was being brought back to Kalaburgi when he died en route.

The Union Health Ministry confirmed the COVID-19 death in a late night statement.

Karnataka Health Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey, who confirmed that



Geared up: An ambulance driver at a screening and isolation facility at the Government Medical College Hospital, Ernakulam, on Wednesday. • THULASI KAKKAT

the patient's samples tested positive for COVID-19, said contact tracing, isolation and other measures as per protocol are being carried out. The government of Telangana has also been informed.

Earlier in the day, the Union Health Ministry said the number of patients in the country has risen to 74, with fresh cases reported from Maharashtra, Delhi, Ladakh, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, as well as one foreign national. India is still seeing local transmission, the Ministry said.

The rise in the number came a day after the World Health Organization (WHO)

declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

The Ministry of External Affairs advised the BCCI not to go ahead with the cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL). Following a directive from the Sports Ministry, the remaining two ODIs between India and South Africa in Lucknow and Kolkata, and the Indian Super League football tournament final in Goa are among the events to be played in empty stadiums.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 12
43 ISOLATED • PAGE 8
CENTRE JUSTIFIES VISA
SUSPENSION • PAGE 12
NOT A TIME TO PANIC • EDITORIAL

No travel from Europe: Trump

President Donald Trump has suspended travel from Europe to the U.S. for 30 days in an effort to halt the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ban will not include travellers from the U.K. • PAGE 14

Regulations in place in Haryana

Haryana declared COVID-19 an epidemic on Thursday. According to a Health Department notification dated March 11, the Governor issued certain regulations to contain the spread of the disease. The regulations came into force immediately and will remain valid for a year. • PAGE 5

Vaccine at least two years away

Senior health officials have said a COVID-19 vaccine will take at least two years to develop, even with expedited clinical trials and approvals. Indian scientists have managed to isolate the COVID-19 virus. • PAGE 9

Sensex slumps 2,919 points, Nifty sinks to 33-month low

Indian benchmarks register their biggest single-day fall

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A day after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, equity markets worldwide went into a bear phase – denoted by more than 20% fall from the recent highs of the benchmarks.

The Indian benchmarks registered their biggest single-day fall on Thursday, with the Sensex plunging 2,919.26 points, or 8.18%, to close at 32,778.14 – over 22% lower than its January high of 42,273.87. This was the lowest close for the index in nearly two years.

Deep losses

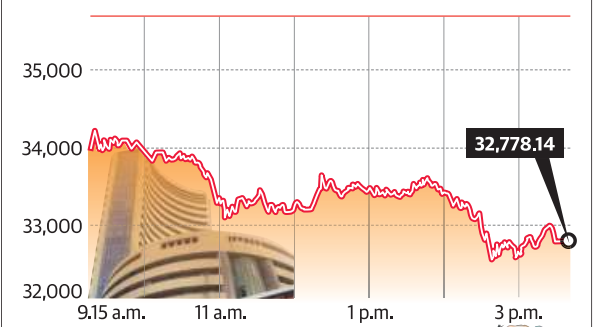
All 30 stocks in the Sensex ended the day with deep losses, with heavyweights such as HDFC Bank, TCS, Axis Bank, ONGC, State Bank of India (SBI) and ICICI Bank shedding over 9% each on Thursday. Most of the Sensex constituents touched their 52-week lows.

The dampened investor sentiments could be further gauged from the fact that more than 500 stocks touched their lower circuit on the BSE, even as 2,265 stocks ended in the red against only 201 gainers.

The broader Nifty fell below the psychological 10,000 mark to close at its

Market madness

Stocks in the oil and gas sector registered the highest decline as the BSE Sensex crashed to its worst single-day fall in history on Thursday



Sector	Fall	%-fall
Oil & gas	-1,118.43	-9.82
Realty	-183.53	-9.5
Metal	-685.28	-9.39
Bank	-2,855.51	-9.38



Big loss: Worried faces at the BSE on Thursday. • EMMANUEL YOGINI

lowest level since June 2017. The index lost 868.25 points, or 8.30%, to close at 9,590.15.

The India VIX index jumped over 31% after witnessing a jump of 35% on Monday last.

The announcement by President Donald Trump restricting travel to the U.S. from Europe further dented investor sentiments.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 12

WORLD STOCKS PLUNGE INTO
BEAR MARKET • PAGE 15

Retail inflation eases to 6.58%

Retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index slowed to 6.58% in February, while the industrial production growth as measured in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) quickened to 2% in January amid subdued performance by the manufacturing sector, official data released on Thursday showed. • PAGE 15

NPR work in T.N. put on hold: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has "put on hold" work towards updating the National Population Register (NPR) in the State, pending certain clarifications sought on the issue from the Centre.

"So far, the notification for updating the NPR has not been issued. We will take it up only after we receive clarification from the Centre. Until then, the updating of the NPR has been put on hold," Revenue Minister R.B. Udhayakumar told journalists in Chennai on Thursday.

The government has sought clarifications from the Centre over three specific questions pertaining to the mother tongue, details of the parents and spouse of the resident during enumeration.

Delhi declares COVID-19 an epidemic, shuts schools, colleges and cinemas

L-G holds meeting with CM Kejriwal, reviews preparedness

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 was declared an epidemic by the Delhi government on Thursday. Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal chaired a meeting at Raj Niwas with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to review the preparedness to contain the disease.

All cinemas, schools and colleges – except those where exams are on – will remain shut till March 31. Disinfecting all public and private places will be made compulsory.

The Delhi government is preparing more quarantine facilities.

As a related measure, Rashtrapati Bhavan will remain closed for exploratory tour visits from March 13 till further notice. In addition, the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum Complex and the



A DTC bus being disinfected in the city on Thursday. • PTI

Change of Guard ceremony will also not be open to public till further notice.

'Fully prepared'

"All the officials of the Delhi government, as well as Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain, were present today at the meeting with the L-G. The Delhi government is fully prepared to handle the corona crisis. All the measures in the wake of the outbreak were reviewed today," Mr. Kejriwal told reporters after

the meeting.

"We have sufficient beds in case people are to be quarantined. We are arranging DUSIB [Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board] flats which have remained unoccupied for long, and rooms in under-construction hospitals of the Delhi government. More than 500 beds are ready to be installed in Delhi government hospitals," he added.

MORE REPORTS ON • PAGE 5

M.P. Speaker serves notice on 13 rebel MLAs

They should say they quit on their own

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Amid the political turmoil in Madhya Pradesh, Assembly Speaker N.P. Prajapati has served notice on 13 rebel MLAs, asking them to appear before him immediately and attest that they had resigned of their own accord as legislators. Six of them in Bengaluru were served notice on Wednesday.

On Thursday, Mr. Prajapati told reporters, "Today, I am going to serve notice on another seven. The Speaker is bound by rules and regulations. And it is his duty to follow them. Accordingly, he is acting."

The Speaker has asked the MLAs to verify in person that they had submitted their resignations independently and under no duress. The letters of 19 of the 22

rebel MLAs were carried by former BJP Minister Bhupendra Singh from a Bengaluru resort to the Speaker on Tuesday.

Sources in the Assembly said the Speaker would serve notice on the remaining six MLAs on Friday.

Rajya Sabha member Vivek Tankha, in Bhopal to contain the situation, said, "It's odd that the BJP has brought their letters, while the MLAs have not appeared themselves. They are being held hostage with their mobile phones off. Even Congress members can't contact them."

He said that if the BJP continued holding Congress MLAs "hostage", the party might take legal recourse.

HIGH DRAMA • PAGE 13
I HAVE SACRIFICED EVERYTHING,
SAYS SCINDIA • PAGE 13

Nath govt. will survive BJP machinations: Baghel

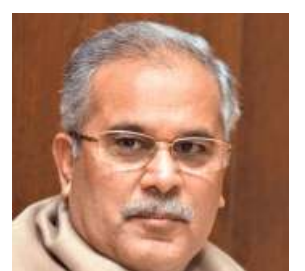
'MLAs feel betrayed by Scindia's move'

VARGHESE K GEORGE
NEW DELHI

The Congress government in Madhya Pradesh will "certainly survive the machinations of the BJP," the party's Chief Minister in neighbouring Chhattisgarh Bhupesh Baghel said on Thursday.

The defection of senior leader Jyotiraditya Scindia from the Congress to the BJP, accompanied by the announcement of at least 20 Congress MLAs that they have resigned from the Assembly, has thrown the government of Chief Minister Kamal Nath into a tailspin, but Mr. Baghel, a key strategist of the party, exuded confidence, talking to *The Hindu* here.

"The feedback that we have is that the MLAs who supposedly left the Congress feel deceived. They were taken on the pretext of



Bhupesh Baghel • R.V. MOORTHY

bargaining for a Rajya Sabha ticket, and they feel betrayed by Mr. Scindia's move. They are now unwilling to leave the Congress. They do not want to ruin their politics by joining the BJP. We have the numbers, and I can assure you that the Kamal Nath government will remain in office once this crisis blows over," he said.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 12

Supreme Court refers appeal against posters to larger Bench

But no stay on March 9 order of Allahabad High Court

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A Vacation Bench of the Supreme Court on Thursday did not stay an Allahabad High Court order to the district and police authorities in Lucknow to "forthwith" remove roadside banners displaying the personal details of persons accused of "vandalism" during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) protests in December 2019.

It ordered that the case be listed before an appropriate Bench in the coming week.

The court reopens after Holi vacations on March 16. On Thursday, a High Court Bench, led by Chief Justice Govind Mathur, held that the wayside posters were a violation of individual privacy, a



The Allahabad High Court held that the posters were a violation of privacy.

fundamental right which globally "underpins human dignity and key values of a democracy".

'Elaboration needed'

On Thursday, the Vacation Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and Aniruddha Bose did not interfere with the High Court order. Noting that the

controversy involved "issues which need further elaboration and consideration", it referred the appeal filed by the Uttar Pradesh government to a larger Bench, to be set up by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde "immediately".

Significantly, the High Court had ordered the Lucknow District Magistrate and police chief to remove the posters without delay and file a compliance report on March 16. With no express stay on the High Court order by the Supreme Court, it is to be seen if the State would take down the posters.

Justice Lalit remarked that the State's action was not "covered in law".

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 12

'Never aspired to be CM, want resurgence first'

Rajinikanth shies away from specifying if and when he will launch his political party

UDHAV NAIG
CHENNAI

Claiming that he never aspired to be Chief Minister, actor Rajinikanth on Thursday propagated three political ideas, as a 'preview' to his brand of politics, and declared that he wanted to "see a wave of resurgence" and an endorsement for them from the people before taking the political plunge.

Though he felt that in the absence of former Chief Ministers M. Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa this was an opportune moment to oust the Dravidian parties and create a 1967-like "revolution", he did not specify if and when he would launch his political party.

He did not take any questions at the "press conference" he convened in the city, where he delivered a 30-minute speech.

Mr. Rajinikanth said he wanted to separate the party leadership and the government, induct talented youngsters into politics and create a party council (headed by him), which would appoint a capable and young Chief Minister (and Council of Ministers), and abolish thousands of party posts to prevent party functionaries from influencing governance.

'Push for change'

"People voted 30% for the DMK and the AIADMK and 70% for Kalaingar (Karunanidhi) and Jayalalithaa. This is the best time to enter politics and push for change. We need to create an uprising, revolution, a wave that will sweep away the power of money, men and party structure. I believe that it is possible in Tamil Nadu," the

actor said.

He urged his fans to take this message to every corner of Tamil Nadu. "I want to see that uprising among the people. This should spread throughout India - party and government should be separate," he said.

"Don't do it for Rajinikanth...for Tamil Nadu and people of Tamil Nadu. Political revolution must explode. Otherwise, what is the point? I will just be one of the players - getting 15-20% - and merely divide votes. Do I get another chance? Am I 44 or 50? I am 71. I have survived (after health setback). My body is patched up. I will be 76 in 2026. When you don't accept my idea now, how will you accept it in 2026? Let me see the uprising, revolution among people, I will come then," he said.

Mr. Rajinikanth said that miracles and revolutions are possible in Tamil Nadu.

"I believe that a change is possible. Tamil Nadu is known for revolutions. Gandhi decided to wear only loin cloth in Tamil Nadu. Vivekananda said his famous lines 'Give me 100 youngsters, I will change the world'. It was here in Tamil Nadu that a regional party dislodged the Congress in the 1960s. People should make it happen again in the 2021 Assembly polls. The people will make a miracle happen," he signed off.



B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM