

MANY EXPRESS CONCERN OVER ECONOMIC IMPACT

SAARC leaders discuss virus fightback plan, India proposes emergency fund

Pak raises J&K, says 'lockdown must be lifted immediately'

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

IN AN unprecedented initiative, as SAARC leaders held a summit via video-conference to discuss the way forward to fight the coronavirus pandemic, India on Sunday proposed creation of a COVID-19 emergency fund, for which it committed "an initial offer of US\$ 10 million".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who initiated the idea of holding a summit via video-conference, was joined by Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Health Zafar Mirza.

During the hour-and-a-half-long summit, many of the

RELATED REPORTS
PAGE 6

Rajasthan: Italian couple who got anti-HIV drugs test COVID-negative

HAMZA KHAN & ABANTIKA GHOSH
JAIPUR, NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

TWO ITALIAN tourists — a 69-year-old man and his 70-year-old wife — who were administered the Lopinavir/ Ritonavir combination, usually a second-line HIV medication, after they tested positive for COVID-19 in Jaipur earlier this month, have



Workers line up the luggage of Indians who were airlifted from Italy, at the airport in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Highest single-day jump in new cases, over 450 airlifted from Iran and Italy

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

WITH 26 NEW novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases being reported on Sunday — the biggest single-day rise so far — the total number of positive cases jumped to 110, including 17 foreign nationals.

While 13 people have recovered,

two have died. Of the new cases, 18 were reported from Maharashtra, 2 from Telangana, 3 from Kerala and 1 each from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. At 32, Maharashtra has now overtaken Kerala (22) as the state with the highest number of cases.

The health ministry clarified that a 71-year-old man from Maharashtra's Buldhana, who

was admitted to a private hospital and died on Saturday, tested negative for coronavirus infection. He had returned from Saudi Arabia recently and had diabetes and high blood pressure.

With the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring COVID-19 a pandemic, over 4,000 people who had come in contact with the positive cases have been

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INSIDE



ITALY RECORDS 368 DEATHS IN ONE DAY, TOTAL TOLL 1,809

TRUMP TESTS NEGATIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

VIRUS TESTING IN INDIA, ELSEWHERE

DAUGHTER OF KARNATAKA MAN WHO DIED TESTS POSITIVE

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Congress MLAs returned from Jaipur to Bhopal on Sunday. PTI

MP Speaker defiant on floor test, says virus bigger worry

MILIND GHATAI
BHOVAL, MARCH 15

WITH THE Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker striking a defiant note, there was no clarity if the floor test ordered by the Governor would take place on Monday, the first day of the Budget Session of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, even as the fate of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath-led Congress government hung in the balance.

In a late night letter to Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Saturday, Governor Lalji Tandon

had said that prima facie he was convinced that the Congress government was in minority and to "protect democratic principles", Nath must win the trust of the House immediately after the Governor's address on Monday. "The proceedings will begin on Monday and in every circumstance will not be cancelled, delayed or suspended," the Governor said while asking that voting should be by division, not

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RELATED REPORT
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Gujarat: 4 Cong MLAs resign ahead of RS polls, 41 sent to Jaipur resort

VAIBHAV JHA, KAMAAL SAIYED, GOPAL KATESHIYA
AHMEDABAD, SURAT, RAJKOT, MARCH 15

FOUR GUJARAT Congress MLAs tendered their resignation to the Assembly Speaker on Saturday, triggering panic in the party ahead of the March 26 election to four Rajya Sabha seats from the state. One more MLA was reported to have gone "unreachable" since Sunday morning, leading to speculation that he too has joined the rebels.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Speaker Rajendra Trivedi con-

firmed that he had accepted the resignations of four MLAs of the Opposition party. Trivedi, however, refused to share their names, saying he would do so only in the House.

According to sources, the four MLAs who resigned are Soma Patel from Surendranagar, J V Kakadiya from Dhari, Mangal Gavit from Dang and Pradhyumansinh Jadeja from Abdasa.

Sources in the Congress said they were suspicious when Mangal Gavit, a two-time Congress MLA from Dang in South Gujarat, left Gandhinagar for Dang during the ongoing

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Reading of Faiz poem 'unsuitable to time, place': IIT-K panel

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

THE RECITATION of Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem by students protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) on campus last year was "unsuitable to the time and place", a committee set up by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur has concluded.

It has also found the role of five teachers and six students, who participated in the protest, "to be less than desirable" and recommended that the institute should "counsel" them.

The six-member committee was set up by the institute to look into a complaint against a students' demonstration on December 17, where Faiz's poem, 'Hum Dekhenge', was read to express solidarity with students of Jamia Millia Islamia, who were beaten up by Delhi Police during a protest against the amended citizenship law.

The complaint by Vashi Mant Sharma, a temporary teacher at IIT-Kanpur, claimed the poem hurts his religious sentiments. The complaint was provoked by the reading of two lines from the poem: "Jab arz-e-Khuda ke Ka'abe se, sab buutt utthwaae jaayenge/Hum ahl-e-safa mardood-e-haram, masnad pe bithaaye jaayenge/Sab taaj ucha haley jaayenge, sab takht giraaye jaayenge", roughly translated as, "From the abode of God, when the icons of falsehood will be removed/ When we, the faithful, who have been barred from

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THE GOVERNANCE PAGE



TELANGANA: 22% RISE IN INSTITUTIONAL DELIVERIES
PAGE 12

BUSINESS AS USUAL



There shouldn't be a cap on withdrawal of ministerial statements.

UP property damage ordinance: Tribunal can hear ex-parte, can't be questioned

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

APURVA VISHWANATH & MAULSHREE SETH
NEW DELHI, LUCKNOW, MARCH 15

UNDER THE new Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance promulgated by Governor Anandiben Patel on Sunday, sweeping powers have been granted to a new claims tribunal, including on collecting compensation ex-parte if required, that is, without hearing the individual who is accused of vandalism. Further, the ordinance states that the award of compensation made by the tribunal will be final and cannot be appealed against before any civil court.

The ordinance makes provi-

EXPLAINED Law may face SC test

THE TIMING of the ordinance is significant as it was promulgated four days after the SC refused to stay the Allahabad HC's order, and a day before the HC's deadline for removing the state government's name-and-shame posters of alleged rioters. What remains to be seen is whether the state's decision will pass the SC test.

sions for the setting up of claims tribunals, one or more, to "investigate the damage caused (during protests) and to award

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