



**Farooq Abullah calls for release of all J&K detainees**  
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**Tharoor-led panel flags delay in revamping film certification**  
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**Russian-Turkish patrol on Syrian highway cut short by protests**  
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**Axelsen stuns top seed Tien Chen, clinches All England title**  
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## NEARBY



**Bhim Army floats party, eyes Bihar election**  
GHAZIABAD  
The Bhim Army announced the launch of Azad Samaj Party, its political arm, at a glittering ceremony in Noida on Sunday. "We are not here to be servants, we are here to rule the country," Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad said at the event.

NEWS PAGE 12

## 4 militants killed in Anantnag encounter

SRINAGAR  
Four militants — three affiliated to Lashkar-e-Taiba and another to Hizbul Mujahideen — were killed by security forces in Anantnag on Sunday. "Two AK-47 rifles, two pistols, ammunition and other incriminating materials were recovered from the encounter site," police said.

NEWS PAGE 12

## Man murders friend over argument on petty issue

NEW DELHI  
A man allegedly stabbed his friend to death after a fight over a petty issue in south Delhi's Yusuf Sarai, the police said on Sunday. The accused, Alok Singh, and the victim, Suman, were allegedly under the influence of alcohol when the incident happened. Alok has been arrested.

CITY PAGE 3

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EDUCATIONPLUS PAGES 16 & 17

# Confirmed COVID-19 cases rise to 114

First case in Uttarakhand; experts call for more testing to check for community transmission

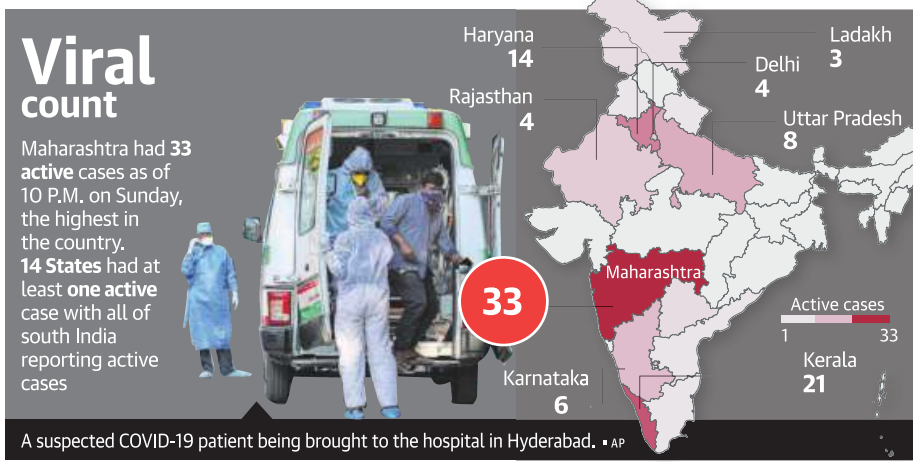
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Figures released by the Union Health Ministry late on Sunday put the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country at 110. However, according to reports from States, 114 persons have tested positive. Of the new cases, two were from Maharashtra, two from Kerala and one each from Rajasthan, Karnataka, Telangana and Uttarakhand.

Ten persons have so far been discharged after treatment.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan reviewed action taken by States and Union Territories and preparedness regarding prevention, containment and management, along with senior officials.

The government has maintained that no cases of community transmission —



## COVID-19

people testing positive for the virus who have no traceable link to travellers who've come into India from abroad — have been detected.

However, a senior researcher at an institution affiliated to the Union Science

Ministry, who did not wish to be identified, said "it is likely" that community transmission is ongoing in India but has not been recorded in official counts due to inadequate testing.

Uttarakhand reported its first confirmed case with a probationer at the Forest Research Institute (FRI) testing

positive. The probationer had returned from Spain on March 11, Director (Health) S.K. Gupta said.

Samples from a 45-year-old woman in Kalaburagi, who was in contact with the 76-year-old man who died of COVID-19 in the district last week, have tested positive. The number of infected per-

sons in Karnataka has now risen to seven, including the victim.

A third case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Telangana of a 48-year-old man, who returned from the Netherlands and was admitted to the Gandhi Hospital on March 11.

Two people, including a U.K. national, tested positive in Kerala, taking the total number of affected in the State to 21, as the government launched a "break the chain" initiative to prevent the spread of the virus.

Earlier in the morning, an Air India flight from Milan in Italy arrived in Delhi with 218 evacuees. They have been quarantined at the Indo-Tibetan Border Police camp at Chhawla.

TESTING IS THE EASIEST THING TO DO: GAGANDEEP KANG PAGE 9  
MORE REPORTS PAGES 2, 8 & 9

# Modi calls for SAARC emergency fund

Extends \$10 mn as India's contribution

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) should create a fund to fight the threat of COVID-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Sunday.

Addressing the first-ever videoconference of the heads of member countries, he extended \$10 million as India's contribution to the fund.

"We all agree that we are facing a serious challenge. We do not as yet know what shape the pandemic will take in the coming days. It is clear that we have to work together. In this spirit of collaboration, let me share a few ideas on what India can offer to this joint effort. I propose we create a COVID-19 Emergency Fund which could be based on vo-



Narendra Modi

luntary contribution from all of us. India can start with an initial offer of 10 million U.S. dollars for this fund," he said.

He said India's Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and his counterparts from other member countries should meet and decide on the plan for the creation of the fund.

'LIFT CURBS' PAGE 12

# Man who tested positive taken off plane in Kochi

19 people offloaded from Dubai flight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

A tourist from the United Kingdom was evicted from an Emirates flight at the Kochi airport on Sunday after it was found that he had tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

The Dubai-bound flight, scheduled to take off at 9.20 a.m. from Kochi international airport, was delayed by about four hours following the incident.

The 57-year-old man and his wife were part of a group of 19 tourists visiting Kerala. He had been under observation in Munnar, a hill town east of Kochi, when he slipped through the Health Department surveillance. But he was traced to the airport here.

The airport authorities ultimately took 19 persons off the flight.

WIFE IN ISOLATION PAGE 8

# CJI Bobde rules out complete shutdown of courts

'As virtual courts are on verge of commencement, there can only be a possibility of limited shutdown'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

An urgent meeting was called by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde on Sunday to clarify that there cannot be a complete shutdown of courts in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The CJI explained that as virtual courts are on the verge of commencement, there can only be a possibility of limited shutdown at present. The court is reopening on March 16 after the Holi break.

Justice Bobde further clarified that any demand of the Bar and Bench would be subordinated to the medical advice drawn at the meeting attended by doctors.

## Cause list

It was also clarified that the cause list has already been published for March 16 and hence the medical advice that had been sought has to be complied with to facilitate the functioning of the apex court.

The meeting was chaired



CJI Sharad A. Bobde

by the CJI along with Justices Arun Mishra, U.U. Lalit, D.Y. Chandrachud and L. Nageswara Rao.

Six of the 14 courts in the Supreme Court are taking up

urgent cases on March 16. Randeep Guleria from AIIMS, Balram Bhargava from ICMR, along with other experts, attended the meeting on Sunday. Office-bearers of the Supreme Court Bar Association and the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association were also present at the meeting, advocate Joseph S. Aristotle said in a statement.

A common medical advice issued by the medical experts relates to entrants to the apex court declaring if

they have travelled abroad or are showing any symptoms of COVID-19.

Justice Chandrachud, chairman of the e-committee, assured that very soon the "people-to-people" contact will be reduced by introducing court proceedings via videoconferencing. He said e-filings could be made any time of the day and court proceedings and filing procedures would soon go digital and paperless.

Another meeting has been scheduled for March 18.

# Crucial test of strength for Kamal Nath govt. today

It will have to secure votes of at least 112 MLAs

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

The fate of the Congress-led government in Madhya Pradesh is set to be decided in a floor test on Monday.

Although 92 Congress and four Independent MLAs returned to Bhopal from Jaipur on Sunday, there was no sign of either the 107 BJP or 16 rebel Congress MLAs until late on Sunday evening.

The Kamal Nath government was pushed to the brink following the exit of senior Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia and the block of 16 lawmakers owing allegiance to him.

It will now have to secure the votes of at least 112 MLAs to prove its simple majority



Confident gesture: Congress MLAs arriving in Bhopal from Jaipur, Rajasthan, on Sunday  
A.M. FARUQUI

in the Assembly, which has an effective strength of 222 after the resignation of six Congress MLAs and the death of two MLAs in the 230-member House.

Both the Congress and the BJP have issued three-line whips to their MLAs, directing them to attend all As-

sembly sessions from March 16 to April 13.

The Samajwadi Party has also issued a whip to its lone MLA to vote in favour of the government.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

UNCERTAINTY OVER MADHYA PRADESH FLOOR TEST PAGE 13

# Two held for 'objectionable' posters in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh police have booked two Congress workers for allegedly putting up posters displaying the "criminal records" of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his deputy Keshav Prasad Maurya and several other BJP leaders at different places in Lucknow.

The two were identified as Sudhanshu Bajpai and Lalu Kanaujia.

The posters refer to the BJP leaders as "rioters", and ask when would they pay damages, in an apparent response to the hoardings put up by the State government displaying personal details of those accused of vandalism during anti-CAA protests last year.

DETAILS ON PAGE 12

# Sky divers



Taking wing: The Mark Jeffery aerobatics team performing during the closing ceremony of the Wings India 2020 aviation show at the Begumpet airport in Hyderabad on Sunday.  
G. RAMAKRISHNA

# Cong. suffers Rajya Sabha setback in Gujarat as four MLAs resign

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

Four Congress MLAs in Gujarat have tendered their resignation to the Assembly Speaker, delivering a blow to the party ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections in the State.

The party was hoping to wrest two of the four seats from the State, but will now have to either withdraw one of the two candidates or face defeat in the second seat.

According to party sources, the high command is likely to take a call on withdrawing one of the candidates.

All three candidates field-

ed by the ruling BJP — Abhay Bhardwaj, Ramila Bara and Narhari Amin, who is a former Congress leader — are likely to win, along with one candidate of the Congress now.

**Announcement today**  
The legislators who resigned are Somabhai Patel from Limbadi, J.V. Kakadia from Dhari, Pravin Maru from Gadhada and Pradhyan-sinh Jadeja from Abdasa.

They tendered their resignation to Speaker Rajendra Trivedi, who is likely to make an announcement in the Assembly on Monday.

"Four Congress legislators have tendered their resignations on Saturday late night," Mr. Trivedi said in a statement.

According to insiders, a few more legislators may submit their resignation as severe infighting has besieged the Opposition party that remains fragmented.

On Saturday, fearing poaching of its legislators by the BJP, the Congress shifted more than a dozen of its MLAs to the party-ruled Rajasthan.

More than a dozen legislators were flown to Jaipur on Saturday evening.

# Fear of statelessness haunts thousands rejected by NRC

Jabeda Begum, rejected despite submitting 15 documents, is a symbol of widespread despair in Assam

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GOROIMARI

The fear of statelessness among Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam has a name now.

Almost everyone in Kamrup district's Goroimari block knows this name — of 50-year-old Jabeda Begum, declared a foreigner in western Assam's Baksa district — that has become the template of despair for those left out of the updated National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Most of some 21,700 households across 75 villages in this block have at least one member left out of the NRC published on August 31,

2019. "Moktar, Joinal, Akbar Ali, Mirchan Nessa... their documents may be considered as they are among one or two members of their families excluded from the list. What will happen to us when they (courts) are rejecting 15-16 documents?" said Jochon Ali, a farmer whose 31-member family does not figure in the NRC.

The number is a reference to Ms. Begum, who submitted 15 documents, including PAN card, land revenue receipt and bank passbook but did not pass muster for the Gauhati High Court to overrule the order of a Foreigners Tribunal (FT) declaring her a



A file photo of villagers checking the final NRC.  
A.P.

foreigner of the "post-March 1971 stream". The court dismissed her petition on February 12.

March 25, 1971 is the cut-off date for detecting and deporting foreigners or illegal

immigrants, or "Bangladeshis", according to the Assam Accord of August 15, 1985.

Since finding themselves among the 19.06 lakh NRC-rejects, Mr. Ali and his three brothers have been trying to salvage any document they might have missed while applying for inclusion in the NRC. But the case of Ms. Begum, who has been absconding after the dismissal of her petition, has made Mr. Ali and thousands like him lose hope as the NRC authorities prepare to issue rejection slips.

The Assam government told the Assembly a few days ago that such slips may be is-

sued from March 30 onwards. A rejected person has to appeal his or her case in a quasi-judicial FT within 120 days of receiving this slip citing the reasons for exclusion.

"What can we show beyond those we have already shown? What will stop them from finding fault with the fresh documents we submit?" said petty trader Jamaluddin. All 26 members of his family were excluded because his father's name had minor alphabetical changes in different "admissible" documents possibly due to clerical errors.

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