

PASSENGERS FROM THREE MORE COUNTRIES BANNED

Third death, Govt allows use of anti-HIV drugs for high-risk patients above the age of 60

63-yr-old dies in Mumbai; ICMR says in talks with 51 private labs

ABANTIKA GHOSH & KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

INDIA REPORTED its third novel coronavirus (COVID-19) death Tuesday — a 63-year-old man in Mumbai with a travel history to Dubai, and had underlying conditions of high blood pressure and heart disease.

With more fresh cases being reported, the total number of confirmed cases has climbed to 137, including 14 people who have recovered.

And after two COVID-positive 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, recovered in Jaipur, the Union Health Ministry recommended use of the antiviral drugs on a "case-to-case basis" for "high-risk patients" aged above 60 years with underlying conditions.

Meanwhile, India extended the travel ban to passengers from Afghanistan, Philippines and Malaysia, after barring the entry of those from "the European Union, the European Free Trade Association, Turkey and United Kingdom" on Monday.

"Travel of passengers from Afghanistan, Philippines, Malaysia to India is prohibited with immediate effect. No flight shall take off from these countries to India after 1500 hours Indian Standard Time (IST). The airline shall enforce this at the port of initial departure," the new travel advisory said.

On reports that 254 Indians in Iran had tested positive, MEA Joint Secretary Dammu Ravi said: "All Indian pilgrims in Iran

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CSMT station, Mumbai, at 7.15 pm Tuesday. It's usually packed during rush hour. Prashant Nadkar

A mad scramble home for students after India bans all flights from UK

SHALINI NAIR & RITIKA CHOPRA
BRIGHTON, NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

IT WAS at 2 am Tuesday when Wasim Akram finally managed to book a flight back home. He will leave for India on a 11 am British Airways flight on March 18.

Akram, who is pursuing a masters degree in conservation biology at the University of Kent, is among the lucky few to have just managed to evade India's ban on the entry of all passengers from Europe, the United Kingdom (UK) and Turkey starting March 18.

The UK has reported 1,950 confirmed cases till now and 71 deaths. According to the UK government's statement to the House of Commons's Health Committee Tuesday, as many as 55,000 people are estimated to be infected.

Indians make up the third-largest group of international

ICMR random tests show no community spread, WHO praises Govt

KARISHMA MEHROTRA & ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

THE FIRST batch of results for tests done by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in March to check for community transmission of coronavirus are negative.

The ICMR had picked 1,020 random samples of people with severe acute respiratory illness pneumonia and influenza-like symptoms for testing for Covid-19. The results of 500 samples are negative, a sign that community-level transmission of the coronavirus may not be taking place in India still. The results of the remaining 520 samples will be available by Wednesday.

Earlier, another batch of random tests, done upto February 29, had come out negative.

The 1,020 samples tested in



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TWO NEW CASES IN NOIDA, COUNT 3; SECOND CASE IN GURGAON IN 2 DAYS

LADAKHIS IN IRAN CLAIM 250 INDIANS TEST POSITIVE, MEA SAYS SOME CASES
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students in the UK, with more than 30,000 receiving a Tier 4 (study) visa last year alone. When the government announced the travel ban Monday evening, it led to a mad scramble among them

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Cellphone operators red-flag 'surveillance' after Govt wants call records of all users

COAI to DoT Secy: Local units asking for CDRs in several states including Delhi with 'numerous VVIP zones'

PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

RAISING QUESTIONS of surveillance and alleged violation of user privacy guidelines mandated by the Supreme Court, the government has been seeking call data records (CDRs) of all mobile subscribers across several pockets of the country for specific days over the past few months.

This unusual request has been routed to telecom operators through the local units of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). Records have been sought for consumers in the circles of Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab.

"It has been happening for several months now but during January and February, we started seeing these mass requests," said a senior executive of a telecom operator on the condition that he not be named.

Indeed, on February 12, the Cellular Operators Association of India, which represents all major telecom operators, red-flagged these requests in a complaint to Anshu Prakash, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications.

"CDRs sought for specific

EXPLAINED

Not in line with revised rules

RULES FOR obtaining call records were tightened following a row in 2013 over unauthorised access to CDRs of several politicians. Under the new guidelines, only an officer of the rank of SP and above was authorised to seek details from telecom operators, and inform the DM of CDRs obtained every month. The current request is not in line with these guidelines.

routes/areas may lead to allegations of surveillance, especially in a state like Delhi having numerous VVIP zones having offices and residences of ministers, MPs, Judges, etc," the COAI said in its note to Prakash.

In the Delhi circle, with nearly 53 million subscribers, The Indian Express has learnt, CDRs of consumers were sought by the DoT for February 2, 3 and 4 this year. Incidentally, protests

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Ex-SC judges say Gogoi in RS clouds judiciary's independence, he says am for nation-building

SEEMA CHISHTI & LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

A DAY after former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi was nominated to Rajya Sabha by the government, retired Supreme Court judges Justices A K Patnaik, Kurian Joseph and J Chelameswar joined Justice Madan B Lokur in both questioning and expressing disappointment on the decision, saying the nomination and its acceptance have "certainly shaken the confidence of the common man" and "will raise a lot of doubt about the independence of the judiciary".

Justice Patnaik, who was appointed by the Supreme Court to inquire whether there was a

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

MR R GOGOI, MP Supreme Court is larger than one judge but by saying yes to government, former Chief Justice has hurt it PAGE 12

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Crunching data by day, poetry by night, Maharashtra officer has his hands full



FROM TESTING SAMPLES TO TRACKING CONTACTS AND TREATING PATIENTS, MEET THE MEN AND WOMEN, UNSEEN AND UNHEARD, ON THE FRONTLINES OF INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, MARCH 17

IT'S 2 PM Monday, the day before Maharashtra recorded its first coronavirus death, and a tense silence grips the surveillance unit at the Health Department office in Pune — a report has come in of another positive case in Yavatmal, and data from Navi Mumbai on a Philippines national.

Dr Pradeep Awate, the state surveillance officer in charge of the epidemiology section, steps out of the small cubicle where he shares space with three health officers who are managing a helpline. Turning away from a bunch of colleagues waiting for a 10-minute lunch break, he heads to the data section.

After a quick check with



Dr Awate compiles data to be sent to the CM. Ashish Kale

manager Shravani Kulkarni and entomologist Dr Mehru Rajee, Awate takes a deep breath, reaches for the phone and dials the Chief Minister's office. The latest data will be sent in 15 minutes, he says.

It's a daily routine, these days — and a challenge. Awate's team of seven has to compile updates

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Member of panel that picked Jamia V-C changes mind, tells President: Remove her

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

PRITAMPAL SINGH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

A MEMBER of the search committee tasked to look for candidates to be appointed as Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia University in Delhi has written to President Ram Nath Kovind to recall the appointment of Dr Najma Akhtar, who currently heads the university.

In his letter to the President

on written on March 8, Ramakrishna Ramaswamy, a member of the search committee formed in 2018, claimed that the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) had denied vigilance clearance to Akhtar in an office memo (OM) dated January 10, 2019.

Ramaswamy quoted newspaper reports to claim that the CVC had recommended not considering Akhtar for any post-retirement assignment or re-employment in any organisation, institution or university under the ambit of the Human Resource Development Ministry.



Najma Akhtar had slammed police action on campus

His letter does not spell out what was the CVC objection or why it denied vigilance clearance to Akhtar.

Three months ago, Akhtar, Jamia's first woman V-C, had criticised the Delhi Police for barging into the Jamia campus following violence during anti-CAA protests in south Delhi.

Soon after police entered the campus, vandalised the library and beat up students on the night of December 15, Akhtar had put out a video message criticising the police, and saying she stood with her students. The next day, she called a press conference where, surrounded by senior officials, she reiterated that police entry and action on

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