

BOARD, JEE EXAMS PUT OFF | 1ST POSITIVE CASE IN ARMY | INDIA ON RIGHT PATH: WHO

PM to address nation today, random tests to include more pneumonia cases

Second batch of results to check for community spread by ICMR also negative

ABANTIKA GHOSH & KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

INDIA IS looking at expanding the pool of random testing samples for COVID-19 to include patients with atypical pneumonia, which presents symptoms slightly different from pneumonia. WHO country representative Dr Henk Bekeidam told *The Indian Express* that India does need to test more, and is already moving in that direction by looking at atypical pneumonia patients.

On Wednesday, the number of positive cases rose to 151. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the nation on Thursday at 8 pm to talk about steps being taken against the virus. This was announced at a review meeting he chaired on Wednesday evening.

The government also ordered the CBSE, National Institute of Open Learning and all higher education institutions to postpone ongoing examinations for 10 days. Following the order, the CBSE postponed Board examinations scheduled from March 19 to March 31, including re-exams scheduled for students in Northeast Delhi affected by the recent riots. The Board will announce the new schedule by **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



Amidst coronavirus fears, Marine Drive in Mumbai wears a deserted look on Wednesday. Prashant Nadkar

One COVID-19 positive infects 1.7 in India, lower than in hot zones

Climate to lockdown may be factors but scientists say don't know exact reason yet, figure may change

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, MARCH 18

ONE REASON for the relatively slow increase in the number of novel coronavirus patients in India, as of now, could be the fact that every infected person has been passing on the virus only to another 1.7 people on an average. This is remarkably lower than what has been observed in the worst-affected countries, a study by scientists at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Chennai shows. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

INFECTION TABLE (Reproduction number in countries/regions that have had the most infections)

Qatar	3.06 (+/- 0.44)
Switzerland	2.96 (+/- 0.26)
Spain	2.74 (+/- 0.1)
Iran	2.73 (+/- 0.22)
Germany	2.58 (+/- 0.14)
New York	2.49 (+/- 0.29)
Italy	2.34 (+/- 0.14)
Japan	2.16 (+/- 0.25)
Hubei, China	2.14 (+/- 0.18)
California	2.13 (+/- 0.09)
Washington	2.06 (+/- 0.51)
South Korea	1.80 (+/- 0.17)
Diamond Princess ship	1.70 (+/- 0.12)
UK	1.65 (+/- 0.17)
France	1.39 (+/- 0.09)

255 Indians in Iran plus 21 more abroad positive; 600 others flown back



Photo released by the Office of Iranian Presidency of a Cabinet meeting being held in Tehran on Wednesday

SHUBHAJIT ROY & ADIL AKHZER
NEW DELHI, SRINAGAR, MARCH 18

THE GOVERNMENT Wednesday confirmed that 255 Indians in Iran were infected with coronavirus, apart from 12 Indians in the UAE, five in Italy and one each in Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Kuwait and Rwanda.

In a written reply, the government told the Lok Sabha

Wednesday, "The Indian Embassies, in respective countries are in touch with the Indian citizens regarding appropriate medical attention, in cooperation with local authorities."

Sources said there was no change in the government position that they will bring back only those Indians who test negative for COVID-19. In line with this, on Wednesday, 195 Indians who don't have the infection were brought back by **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

CORONA COUNT

151 CASES **3** DEATHS

14 RECOVERED

Taken for test, youth back from Sydney jumps to death at hospital

SOMYA LAKHANI & ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

A 25-YEAR-OLD man allegedly committed suicide by jumping off the seventh floor of New Delhi's Safdarjung hospital, where he had been brought Wednesday night to be tested for coronavirus. The man, who hailed from Balachaur in Punjab, had arrived from Sydney on an Air India flight, that landed at IGI Airport in the evening.

Additional DCP-I (Southwest) Ingit Pratap said the man was taken to the hospital from the airport. Police received a PCR call at 9.39 pm.

DCP (Southwest) Devender Arya said, "It was informed by the nodal officer that he was admitted only as a suspected coronavirus patient. Preliminary enquiry has revealed he had been living in Sydney for a year. He had a headache and was brought to the hospital."

The Health Ministry, in a statement, also said the man was taken to the hospital after he complained of a headache.

"Patient reached around 9 pm and was taken to the seventh floor for admission and evaluation. When doctors reached the room, he wasn't inside. At the same time, another doctor coming out of the building observed a body on the floor around 9.15 pm," the Ministry said in a statement.

Safdarjung and RML are the two main hospitals where those found in the country are taken for testing if an infection is suspected. Ten people have tested **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

CDR collection: Govt comes under fire for 'surveillance' bid, says fixing call drops

HARIKISHAN SHARMA & PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

THE GOVERNMENT came under attack in Lok Sabha Wednesday for seeking call data records of all mobile subscribers across pockets of the country, with the Congress calling it a "matter of great concern" and demanding adjournment of business in the House to discuss the matter.

The *Indian Express* reported Wednesday that cellphone operators had red-flagged 'surveillance' after local units of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) sought call data records of all mobile subscribers across several pockets of the country for specific days over the past few months.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Communications said: "There is no infringement of privacy of any person. No personal details are collected. There is no tracking of any phone number." It said data of calls had been sought to address "numerous complaints" regarding "quality of service of Telecommunications Network, call drops, echo, cross connections, incomplete or poor caller experience".

In a notice of adjournment motion sent to the Secretary General of Lok Sabha, Congress MP Manickam B Tagore said: "Elevating questions of surveillance and alleged violation of

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY



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 & SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

TELECOM OPERATORS of various networks and alleged violation of user privacy guidelines emanating from the Department of Telecommunications has been sending red-flag messages to all mobile subscribers across several pockets of the country for specific days over the past few months. The annual report has

Not in line with revised rules
ISCTI has already issued a notice to all operators asking them to stop such practices. The annual report has

The *Indian Express* report on March 18

consumer privacy pointers mandated by the Supreme Court, the federal government has been searching for call knowledge **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

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GLOBAL TOLL MORE THAN 8,000

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TN SAYS 'DOMESTIC' CASE; HOSPITALS PUT OFF SURGERIES

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STATE OF ECONOMY

17 state budgets, 1 story: Stressed fisc, deep cuts in expenditure

UDIT MISRA, NUSHAIBA IQBAL & HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

AS THE coronavirus outbreak keeps the nation on edge, among the countless unknowns it has brought, there are only a few certainties. One is the fact that it's the states, more than the Centre, that constitute the first line of defence in what could rapidly become a full-blown public health emergency.

How well managed and managed these states will be a function largely of their finances. An analysis of 17 state budgets

by the Express Research Group reveals that it's not going to be easy.

For, these states may be starting at an actual revenue shortfall closer to Rs 3 lakh crore this fiscal vis-à-vis the numbers projected at the time of their last budgets. And it is states that account for nearly 69 per cent of the total government expenditures on health.

An analysis of the budgets reveals the following key trends across several states:

■ All states, barring Assam, found their revenue receipts plummet through the current financial year. Bihar, for instance, saw its revenue receipts fall by



around Rs 25,500 crore — roughly a fall of 14 per cent over the Budget Estimates.

■ The fall in state revenues is largely due to a decline in the total taxes collected (a fraction of which is shared with the states) by the central government. This, in turn, is due to a slowing economy.

■ Less money in hand made states cut back on their total spending in the current financial year. Worse still, most states have budgeted meagre increases in expenditure for the next financial year (2020-21).

■ Some states, namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Assam, even propose to cut expenditure in 2020-21. For instance, Assam's total expenditure next year will fall by 4 per cent even though it expects its economy to grow by over 9 per cent.

■ Spending cuts disproportionately affect capital expenditure, that is, money spent on building assets such as hospitals. For health care provisioning, this

is bad news since, on average, most states spend only about 5 per cent of their total money on health — a far cry from the 15 to 16 per cent (on average) states spend on education.

■ Assam, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh typically spend the most on health while Bihar, Karnataka, Punjab and Haryana spend the least (as a proportion of their total expenditure).

■ States facing Assembly elections in the next 12 months saw a flurry of sops and freebies (such as free electricity) being announced — both BJP and non-BJP states did this. A notable **CONTINUED ON PAGE 19**

EXPLAINED Why state budgets matter

STATES, TAKEN together, spend one-and-a-half times more than the Centre and employ five times more people. Their financial health is more important in determining not just overall economic growth but also ability to provide services like healthcare. This is more so as the cost of COVID-19 pandemic looms.

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

AT LEAST FIVE of seven big businessmen summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the Yes Bank probe have cited different reasons — personal and professional — for their inability to appear before the agency.

While Anil Ambani of Reliance and Kapil Wadhawan of DHFL skipped the summons on Monday and Tuesday, respectively, Subhash Chandra of Essel Group and Naresh Goyal of Jet Airways failed to appear before the agency on Wednesday. Sameer Gehlot of Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd, summoned for appearance on Friday, has also written to the ED, expressing his inability to make it, sources said.

Anil Ambani cited "personal reasons" for his inability to appear before the ED on Monday, and has now been called Thursday.

Wadhawan and Gehlot both pointed to the threat of coronavirus and expressed their inability to travel and appear before the agency. In a communication to the ED, Gehlot said he was in the UK and all flights had been cancelled due to the coronavirus threat. Wadhawan had on Tuesday written to the ED that it was not advisable for him to travel due to the spread of virus.

According to sources in the ED, Naresh Goyal said he was tending to his sister who was suffering from cancer and hence could not honour the summons. He did not respond to messages sent by *The Indian Express*.

On his part, Subhash Chandra **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

KAVITHA IYER
MUMBAI, MARCH 18

URMILA MAURYA, in her early thirties and a mother of three, can put into practice none of the protective measures against COVID-19 that are advised by the World Health Organisation. The family of five lives in a 10x10 ft room in Janata Nagar, at the farthest edge of Mandala, a slum of about 4,000 shanties. "Wash our hands frequently?" she says, only a little incredulous. "Sometimes I have to skip bathing to save water for cooking."

sprawl along Mumbai's eastern suburbs, but its conditions are almost exactly the same as those in dozens of other slum colonies across the city. In each of these colonies, the measures that other Mumbaikars are putting in place are entirely impractical.

While Maharashtra has seen 45 cases of infections and a death from coronavirus, there has been no evidence of community transmission. But in slums such as these, with population densities among the highest anywhere in the world, social distancing is an impossibility. Though few have history of foreign travel, common to most of

the cases in India, the slums are home to taxi-drivers, autorickshaw-drivers, vegetable vendors, carpenters, scrap-purchasers, delivery boys, waiters, domestic helps and employees of hotels, hospitals, stores, and more, making them extremely vulnerable in case the virus spreads beyond local transmission.

Mandala is one of Mumbai's shanty colonies with neither household water connections nor community water standposts. Of three public toilets located within 1 km from Janata Nagar, one has been locked for months. A slab collapse in another toilet killed three residents



At Mandala slum, Mumbai. The city now has 45 cases. Kavitha Iyer

in 2017. With nearly 6,000 people using a single toilet block, hundreds of men and children defecate in the small open space adjoining Janata Nagar.

The Mauryas live in a lane between this open ground and a fetid creek, beyond which lies the Deonar dumping ground, home to all of the financial capital's garbage, occupying an area the size of 70 football fields, where toxic, compacted garbage stands about 10 stores tall. The wind brings the dump's odours into these homes.

Social distancing, hand-washing, respiratory hygiene, early medical care are all quite

impossible, say Urmila and her neighbour Sumari Kanojia.

Currently the biggest worry for slum-dwellers, who have all watched hand hygiene videos on WhatsApp in the past week, is access to clean water.

In Mandala, Nooran Khatun has five sons and three daughters. The one boy with a steady income from a garage was laid off last month. Her husband goes door-to-door collecting scrap, and customers are negotiating tougher deals for their waste than ever before. With such a large family, Nooran spends at least Rs 100 a day on water.

The water comes from a

filthy hose-like pipeline that snakes along the edge of the open-toilet *maidan* before it reaches the bylanes of Janata Nagar, where an assortment of plastic drums and the ubiquitous blue plastic jerry cans keep vigil outside homes. "There's no predicting when the water will be available through the pipe, sometimes it's after two-three days," she says.

The residents of Janata Nagar pay Rs 20 for 105 litres (three jerry cans of 35 litres each), which adds up to Rs 190 for 1,000 litres, mostly through illegal connections from the main **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**