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**COVID-19 coverage**  
 As COVID-19 spreads across the world, information about the disease, messages on preventive measures, news of cures in the process of development, all these are of prime importance. *The Hindu* has therefore decided to publish an e-book on essential information that will be available for free download from our site. Also, the number of articles that can be read for free is now 20 for a period of 30 days.  
 Editor

**NEARBY**



**No metro services in Delhi, Noida tomorrow**  
 NEW DELHI  
 Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to observe 'janata curfew' on March 22, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation and the Noida Metro Rail Corporation on Friday announced that metro services will not be available on Sunday. The DMRC said that the step was being taken to encourage people to remain indoors and maintain social distancing. Similarly, the NMRC said the move was part of "preventive measures".  
 CITY PAGE 4

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## Kamal Nath resigns ahead of floor test; BJP set to form govt.

With a strength of 104 MLAs in truncated House, saffron party has clear majority

**SIDHARTH YADAV BHOPAL**  
 Ending 18 days of political drama, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Friday submitted his resignation to Governor Lalji Tandon, ahead of the Supreme Court-mandated floor test.  
 Mr. Nath said he would rather stick to his political values and principles of 40 years than compromise. "I will continue to stick to my values. This is my strength," he told reporters at his official residence. "I will continue to struggle along with each member of the Congress family in people's interest."  
 Mr. Tandon accepted the resignation and asked Mr. Nath to continue as caretaker Chief Minister, Raj Bhavan sources said.  
 Earlier, on Thursday night, M.P. Assembly Speaker



**Conceding defeat:** Kamal Nath addressing a press conference in Bhopal before submitting his resignation. •A.M. FARUQUI

N.P. Prajapati accepted the resignation of 16 rebel Congress MLAs, who are at a resort in Bengaluru since March 9, sealing the fate of the embattled government. The Speaker had accepted resignation of six rebel MLAs on March 14.  
 The strength of the Congress in the 231-member House was down to 92. On Friday morning, BJP MLA Sharad Kol, who in the past had cross-voted with the Congress, also quit.  
 With the resignations, the strength of the Assembly stands at 205, with the simple majority mark at 103. The BJP with 104 MLAs has a clear majority.  
 Moments after the government fell, BJP leader Arvind

Bhadoriya said independent MLAs as well those from the BSP and the SP had shifted their support to the saffron party.  
 Speaking to reporters after Mr. Nath's resignation, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is the front-runner for the top post again, said the Congress-led government had fallen under its own weight.  
 "The BJP has never been in the game of saving or toppling governments. The situation turned so explosive that Congress's own friends got upset seeing the State's downfall under Mr. Nath," he added. Those around Mr. Nath, including Congress MP Digvijaya Singh, created such a situation that the government fell, Mr. Chouhan said, adding: "They must inspect."  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 12**

## Singer's COVID-19 status has politicians worried

Leaders who attended events with Kanika also met President

**OMAR RASHID LUCKNOW**  
 Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor's announcement on Friday that she had tested positive for COVID-19 triggered a scare among several top politicians who had attended a series of events with her in Lucknow recently as well as those who were in contact with them.  
 Many have since announced that they were going into quarantine.  
 Following Ms. Kapoor's revelation on Instagram, BJP leader and former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje stated that she, along with her son and MP Dushyant Singh had attended a dinner where Ms. Kapoor was present, and as a matter of "abundant self-caution" were immediately adopting self-quarantine.

**Quick progression**  
 The number of COVID-19 cases in India crossed the 200 mark on Friday. While it took nine days for the first fifty cases to spread, the last 50 cases took just two days

**HOW TO KEEP SAFE AND AVOID GETTING INFECTED**

- Regularly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap
- Avoid groups and stepping out of home unless it is absolutely essential
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay home if you feel unwell, even with mild symptoms. If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice

DATA SOURCE: MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

### Throwing caution to the wind



Despite the government ordering closing down of malls till March 31 as a preventive measure against COVID-19, people still hanging out at V35 Mall in New Delhi on Friday. •SANDEEP SAXENA (REPORT ON PAGE 3)

**COVID-19**

Mr. Singh was among many MPs who attended a breakfast meeting hosted by President Ram Nath Kovind on March 18 as well as a parliamentary panel meeting attended by around 20 MPs later in the day.  
 While Rashtrapati Bhavan is yet to issue any statement, it is learnt that Mr. Kovind would follow all protocols prescribed. The Uttar Pradesh government has not revealed the names of politicians, bureaucrats and socialites who allegedly attended the event.  
 Late on Friday, an FIR was lodged against Ms. Kapoor for negligence. She was booked under Sections 188, 269 and 270 of the IPC.  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 12**  
**SESSION UNDER CLOUD PAGE 13**

## 236 positive cases; PM holds meeting with CMs

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
 With as many as 75 fresh cases being reported on Friday, the number of COVID-19 positive persons in the country stood at 236, the ICMR said.  
 Several States have imposed prohibitory orders to deal with the pandemic, more trains were cancelled as the country went into a semi-lock down mode.  
 In an advisory to hospitals and medical institutions, the Union Health Ministry said all pneumonia patients must be notified to the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme so that they can be tested for COVID-19. It added that no suspected COVID-19 patient should be turned away from any hospital, and the admission of any such patient should be notified immediately.  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a video-conference with Chief Ministers and said the COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force would devise a suitable approach to effectively tackling the economic challenge.  
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**MORE REPORTS PAGE 3, 8 & 13**  
**DEATHS CROSS 10,000 PAGE 14**

## Four Nirbhaya convicts hanged to death at dawn

Sentence carried out after SC rejects last-ditch appeal

**SAURABH TRIVEDI SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH NEW DELHI**  
 Death row convicts in the Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder case Pawan Gupta, 25, Vinay Sharma, 26, Akshay Kumar, 31, and Mukesh Kumar, 32, were hanged to death in Tihar jail on Friday.  
 Sandeep Goel, Director General of Tihar jail, confirmed that the four convicts were hanged at 5.30 a.m.  
 A five-member panel of the Deendayal Upadhyay Hospital forensic department performed the post-mortem and handed over



**Final countdown:** People at Tihar jail on Friday in anticipation of the death sentence being carried out. •V.V. KRISHNAN

the bodies to the convicts' families.  
 A jail official said the convicts had not expressed any "last wish" or will.  
 Hours before their hanging, the convicts made a last-ditch appeal at 2.30 a.m. on

Friday before a Supreme Court Bench, which did not stay their hanging.  
 Earlier, they approached the Delhi High Court on Thursday night, but to no avail.  
 Outside Tihar jail, several people gathered and started a countdown a minute before the time scheduled for the hanging.  
 The moment the news of the execution was confirmed by the jail authorities, people broke into applause and thanked the judiciary and the Delhi police for delivering justice to Nirbhaya.  
 "I was passing by the area when I got to know about the hanging. I am happy that finally Nirbhaya got justice. The convicts should have been hanged much earlier but they made a mockery of our judicial system," said Jagvir Singh, a local.  
**Two refuse to eat**  
 According to the jail authorities, Mukesh and Vinay had dinner on Thursday night, but Akshay and Pawan refused.  
 "They spent a sleepless night and all of them repeatedly asked the staff on duty if there was any update from the court on their fate. At 3.30 a.m., the jail staff reached their wards to prepare them for the execution and asked them to bathe," said the jail officer.  
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**MORE REPORTS PAGE 2 & 12**

## Odisha CM urges Modi to postpone Census work

State machinery fighting COVID-19, says Naveen Patnaik

**STAFF REPORTER BHUBANESWAR**  
 Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to postpone house-listing, National Population Register and Census-related activities in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.  
 "The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued notifications for conduct of Census 2021 and updating of NPR throughout the country. I am given to understand that the States have been given schedules to complete the first phase for house-listing, hous-



Naveen Patnaik. •FILE PHOTO

involved to collect data by visiting each household during the first phase. This has to be preceded by elaborate training, awareness campaign and related activities," he noted.  
 Stating that the State was fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and all efforts were directed towards its containment, Mr. Patnaik said, "Mobilisation for Census will pose a great risk for field functionaries and people as well." A decision to postpone the Census-related work should be taken immediately, he said.

### Govt. approves land use change

**DAMINI NATH NEW DELHI**  
 The Centre on Friday notified the change in land use for seven plots in the Master Plan for Delhi-2021, paving the way for the redevelopment of Rajpath and the construction of a new Parliament House and Prime Minister's residence.  
 The government had announced in October 2019 its plan to revamp the 3-km-long Central Vista from Rashtrapati Bhavan till India Gate, construct a new Parliament and develop a new Central secretariat along the stretch.  
**DETAILS ON PAGE 4**

## Panel wants police to act on riots case

DMC also asks for list of all detainees since February 23

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
 The Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) has sent a notice to the DCP North East Delhi seeking details about the case of an alleged attempt to murder during communal violence in the area on February 24. The DMC attached four photos of the alleged attempt on Mohammad Zubair at an underpass near Bhajanpura market, which it claimed has been published widely, and asked what action has been taken in the case.  
 "Since the faces of a number of attackers are clearly

visible and one has been identified from his Facebook page, you are directed to take this accused man into custody and interrogate him to know his role and the role of other attackers seen in the photographs," the DMC said. DCP (North East) Ved Prakash Surya has been asked to submit the details to the commission by March 26.  
**'Haphazard arrests'**  
 The panel has also sent a notice to the DCP claiming that it has received several reports of haphazard arrests of youth in the age group of 20-30 in the district without any charges or warrants and that they are being pressured to own up or to implicate others in crimes they have apparently not committed.  
 "We are getting information that in some cases such arrested youth are forced to pay huge bribes and if they do, they are let off. We take all this as a serious violation of the human and civil rights of the people arrested. You are directed to issue clear instructions to all SHO's under your jurisdiction to desist from such illegal practices," DMC Chairman Zafarul Islam Khan said in his notice to the DCP.

## Haryana restricts gatherings to 20 people

Up to five persons allowed in Gurugram; Section 144 of CrPC imposed Statewide

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM**  
 The Haryana government on Friday decided to impose Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code in both urban as well as rural areas across the State restricting gatherings to not more than 20 people. In Gurugram and Faridabad, the permissible limit will be up to five persons.  
 Public transport in the State will also remain suspended from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on March 22 in view of the call for "janata curfew" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.  
 The decisions were taken



Thermal screening device being used in Faridabad. •FILE PHOTO

Haryana Roadways has also been authorised to decide on the frequency of public transport both operating inside and outside the State depending on the ridership. Though the frequency of buses could be reduced up to 40%, the roadways authorities have been told to ensure that passengers do not suffer. The city bus service in Gurugram will be curtailed till further orders.  
 In a separate order, the Haryana Chief Secretary restricted public access to district and State Secretariats. The public will be provided telephone numbers to seek any information and service during office hours. Also, all heads of departments have been directed to advise "vulnerable" employees, including those above 50 years of age, pregnant women and those with medical conditions, to work from home. However, no employee will be allowed to leave the station while working from home. In a related development, Gurugram Police Commissioner Muhammad Akil ordered the setting up of a special task force in each police district of the city to guard the quarantine centres and isolation wards.