



Supreme Court to go digital mode for social distancing

page 9



Shivraj Singh Chouhan sworn in as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister

page 12



Government amends law to enable excise duty increase on fuel

page 15

Canada, Australia to quit Tokyo Olympics unless postponed

page 18

## NEARBY



**AAP gov. presents ₹65,000-crore budget**

NEW DELHI  
Delhi Finance Minister Manish Sisodia presented a ₹65,000-crore budget in the Assembly here on Monday with continuing focus on education, transport and health sectors. The Opposition BJP, however, termed it "disappointing and a juggling of statistics". Mr. Sisodia said the budget contained an allocation of ₹50 crore to confront the COVID-19 crisis in the city.

CITY ► PAGE 2

**Riot victims asked to vacate Idgah relief camp**

NEW DELHI  
Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, riot victims at the Idgah relief camp in north-east Delhi alleged that they were being asked to vacate the premises at the earliest. Without their own place to go to, they stare at an uncertain future. The victims claimed that three tents were removed in the last two days and volunteers "rudely" told them to vacate the camp, which was set up by the Delhi Waqf Board.

CITY ► PAGE 4

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## As virus toll rises to nine, States put in place tougher measures

Domestic flights grounded; first fatalities in West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

As the death toll from COVID-19 touched nine on Monday, the government announced a slew of measures, including the suspension of all domestic flight operations until the end of March, to slow down the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Thirty States and Union Territories moved to a complete lockdown mode, and governments warned of strict punitive action against those who violate preventive measures.

The number of cases confirmed by the Union Health Ministry rose to 471. Data from the States put the total number of cases at 476, with 443 active cases.

West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh reported their first fatalities.

In view of the continuing spread of the virus, Parliament curtailed its session and adjourned *sine die* after passing the Finance Bill.

**650 aircraft grounded**

The Ministry of Civil Aviation ordered the shutting down of all domestic flight operations hours after an announcement was made by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal suspending all incoming flights to the capital.

The new restriction will be effective from Tuesday

### In limbo



**Caught unawares:** Workers from other States wait to return home at the Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M.G. Ramachandran Central Railway Station, Chennai on Monday. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

• 30 States & U.T.s (with 548 districts) are under complete lockdown (with provisions for essential services & supplies). Sikkim & Mizoram are yet to issue orders

• M.P. (37 districts), Odisha (5) and U.P. (16) have imposed partial lockdowns

### COVID-19

midnight, a day after the ban on international flights came into effect.

A total of 650 aircraft operated by various Indian airlines will now be grounded across airports. The Centre's move comes after several States, including West Bengal and Bihar, requested a ban on flights.

Kerala and Maharashtra, which are facing the brunt of the crisis, with 95 and 97 cas-

es respectively, announced more sweeping measures.

Following 28 new cases on Monday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said shops, offices and establishments barring essential services will be closed. Camps will be prepared for migrant labourers, who will be provided food and given medical examinations, as economic activities come to a complete halt in the State.

Announcing a State-wide curfew, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray

said: "People are not listening and they were stepping out as if the virus threat had diminished. However, that is not the case. I am forced to say this because there are still those who have not understood the seriousness of what we face."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again urged people to take the lockdown seriously.

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12**  
**MORE REPORTS ► PAGES 8, 9, 13,**  
**LOCKDOWN AND BEYOND ► EDIT**

## Curbs in the Capital get off to a stuttering start

With some venturing out, police to issue 'curfew passes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Fewer vehicles plied on Delhi roads, but several people ventured out on the first day of extensive curbs implemented by the Delhi government to control the spread of COVID-19.

The Delhi police registered 100 FIRs against violation of lockdowns. The police conducted checks on the borders and requested people to return home if they hadn't stepped out in order to perform essential services.

The government said that if people were not going to comply with the restrictions through persuasion, it would have to enforce them by booking people under relevant sections of the law. Delhi Police said people associated with essential services will be issued "curfew passes" and that all border pickets will be sealed with "immediate effect" as the execution of the prohibitory orders in the national capital was "not up to the mark today".

**Workers' woes**

At the Kapashera border, several workers could be seen crossing into Delhi by foot trying to make their way to railway stations and bus stops to find some means of transport home. Many private vehicles were seen trying to persuade the police to let them cross the border but



Passengers waiting for transport amid curbs imposed by the government, at Chaudhary Charan Singh Marg in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

were sent back if they did not have a valid reason.

Arvind Pal, who works at an MNC in Noida, said that after the announcement of the "lockdown", he had not received any message from his office regarding a work-from-home option, so he decided to venture out but was sent back. "Monday was a little chaotic as most offices did not give instructions and many people tried to cross the border, causing traffic jams. Once the public knows that it is being enforced strictly, I am sure that nobody will defy the curbs," said Mr. Pal.

Shops selling groceries and medicines were open but markets continued to sport a deserted look.

Various residents' welfare associations in the Capital

tried to strictly implement the shutdown, granting no entry to house helps, drivers and newspaper vendors on the society premises. While common areas like swimming pool, clubs and gym were already shut since the past few weeks to avoid COVID-19 spread, society associations have now locked the children parks along with restrictions on assembly of more than four people.

Munish Jain, president of the Aditya Mega City Residents' Welfare Association in Indrapuram, said that social distancing is necessary and they were implementing it in the most efficient way possible, and that people largely followed them.

**MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGES 3 & 4**

## Markets bleed, Sensex dives 4,000 points

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

With the country in a virtual lockdown mode and companies announcing temporary shutdowns as the number of COVID-19 cases breached the 450 mark, the stock market went into a free fall mode on Monday and benchmarks registered their biggest single-day fall in both absolute and percentage terms.

**Trading halt**

The Sensex hit the 10% lower circuit in the very first hour of the trading session, resulting in a 45-minute trading halt for the second time this month. The Nifty had hit the 10% circuit breaker on March 13.

The reopening of the session provided no respite either as the Sensex plunged over 4,000 points — 4,035.13 to be precise — to touch a low of 25,880.83, before ending the day at 25,981.24, down 3,934.72 points, or 13.15%.

All the Sensex constituents ended the day with heavy losses, with most of them currently trading at multi-year lows.

As many as 21 stocks in the Sensex pack lost over 10%, with financial sector heavyweights, including Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, and State Bank of India, along with Maruti Suzuki India, Bajaj Auto and Reliance Industries contributing significantly to the day's fall.

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12**

## Virus alarm



**Chock-a-block:** People who arrived from different parts of the country amid the COVID-19 outbreak taking a bus from the Mithapur bus stand in Patna on Monday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

## T.N. announces dedicated hospital for COVID-19 patients

Govt. multispeciality hospital in Chennai to house facility

RAMYA KANNAN  
CHENNAI

The Omandurar Government Multispeciality Hospital on Mount Road is being converted into a special facility with 350 beds to treat COVID-19 patients, Tamil Nadu Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar said.

Other operations of the hospital in Chennai would be wound down and it will be dedicated to the treatment of the SARS-CoV-2 infected patients.

"Since it is a new hospital and has a lot of space, we decided to commandeer it. With other hospitals, there is a restriction in shifting out

in-patients already receiving treatment... which is why we looked at the Omandurar hospital," Dr. Vijayabaskar explained. New beds and ventilators will be procured for the facility, he added.

The Minister said a task force of 10 senior doctors has been formed to study treatment protocols across the world.

They will suggest changes to the treatment protocols in the State as necessary, he added. In addition to the new facility at the Omandurar Hospital, after discussions with the management of Apollo Hospitals, and Christian Medical College (CMC),

Vellore, the Health Department managed to secure a commitment of 100 beds (Apollo) and 250 beds (CMC) to treat COVID-19 patients.

**Payment for testing**

The Minister also said provision would be made under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance scheme to compensate the private hospitals for the expenses incurred on poor patients who may not be able to afford the fees of ₹1500 (if negative) or ₹4,500 (if positive) for testing for the infection.

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12**

## Reckless residents spook Central Delhi colony

Govt. officials paste notices outside four flats for flouting self-isolation directive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Residents of a colony in Central Delhi were spooked on Monday when government officials turned up with notices, directing the occupants of four flats to remain indoors, given the recent travel history of their family members.

As it turned out, one of the quarantined persons had returned from Nepal in the second week of March.

"He did not adhere to the government's advice that all those returning from abroad should remain isolated for 14 days. He did not even inform the neighbours. We came to know about it only when the notice was pasted outside his flat," said an angry resident, stating that such reckless be-

haviour endangered the lives of others.

The anxious neighbours approached the person, who confirmed that he had visited Nepal and on his return was screened at the airport and advised to approach the authorities concerned if he developed any symptoms of the COVID-19 infection.

A member of the residents' welfare association said another person had recently visited Australia, while two others worked as air hostesses. "We will request the families to observe self-quarantine, as per the government's directions. If necessary, we will provide them all the help to ensure that they don't go out during the quarantine period," he said.

The development came on a day when the association members stopped the entry of "outsiders" and made arrangements for sanitisers for those entering the gated residential complex. "The residents have been requested to pick up all the deliveries at the entrance gate itself," said the member.

**FIR against family**

The Delhi police on Monday registered an FIR against a family in Dwarka under sections of Epidemic Diseases Act for violating quarantine rules during COVID-19 outbreak, said a police officer.

The police said they received a complaint from residents' welfare association of Dwarka Sector 4. On inspection, no member of the fami-

ly was found at the address that was marked as 'home quarantine'. After an extensive search, the family was found staying at a house in Dwarka Sector 10.

One of the members of the family said, "My daughter-in-law works as an air hostess. She landed on March 17 from the U.S. She was asked to be in 'home quarantine'. We are staying in one part of Dwarka while her parents stay in another sector. We had gone to collect her belongings from her parents' house during which some staff arrived and found us absent. They immediately contacted us. We returned and sorted out the matter." An apology was also issued by the family members and they promised not to repeat the mistake.