

PEOPLE ORDERED INDOORS
to break coronavirus transmission chain

IF NOT HANDLED IN 21 DAYS,
can take you, your family back 21 years: Modi

DOCTORS, NURSES, MEDIA
risking own life to save others, he says

1.3 billion, 21 days, lockdown is key



Modi addressing the nation Tuesday evening. PTI

Don't step beyond your home's Lakshman Rekha, it's the only way out: PM

ABANTIKA GHOSH & LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

ENFORCING THE longest stay-at-home order as health authorities try to break the coronavirus transmission chain, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a complete lockdown across the country for 21 days from Tuesday midnight.

Underlining social distancing as the only way to deal with the outbreak threat, the Prime Minister, in his second address to the nation on the pandemic, said the lockdown "is like a curfew" and while "21 days of lockdown is a long time", "it is equally essential for your safety and that of your family...jaan hai toh jahaan hai".

With folded hands, Modi urged citizens to adhere to his

call, saying it is applicable to everyone — from the Prime Minister to a citizen in a village. "Currently, India is at a stage where our current actions will determine how much we are able to minimise the impact of this disaster."

"The next 21 days are of critical importance for us. As per health experts, a period of at least 21 days is extremely critical to break the infection chain of coronavirus. If the situation is not handled in these 21 days, the country and your family could go back 21 years. If the situation is not handled in these 21 days, several families will get devastated forever. Hence, you must forget what going out means for the next 21 days. Stay inside your home, stay inside your home, and do just one thing — stay inside your home," he said.

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Minutes after the announcement of a 21-day lockdown, people in Nerul, Navi Mumbai, made emergency purchases. Amit Chakravarty

Modi assures essentials open; rules underline adherence, with threat of penal action

DIPANKAR GHOSE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

SEVERAL STATES had announced a lockdown in the wake of the Sunday Janata curfew but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a 21-day lockdown from midnight Tuesday, under the Disaster Management Act, standardises and extends the shutdown across the country. In doing so, it signals the resolve of the government to en-

sure social distancing at a scale unprecedented in history coinciding with the increasing possibility that the pandemic could have entered Stage 3 — community transmission.

Within minutes of his address, there were reports of panic buying for groceries and provisions from across the nation which had, until then, hunkered down for a lockdown until March 31. But quick tweets from Modi attempted to assuage fears. "My fellow citizens, there is



absolutely no need to panic. Essential commodities, medicine etc would be available. the

Centre and various state governments will work in close coordination to ensure this," he said.

His next tweet seemed to acknowledge the confusion. "By converging around shops, you are risking the spread of COVID-19. No panic buying please. Please stay indoors. I repeat — the Centre and State governments will ensure all essentials are open."

This tweet referred to guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs — after the PM's

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Compliance norms eased for firms, FM says financial package 'sooner than later'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman Tuesday announced a series of regulatory and compliance related relaxations for taxpayers, MSMEs, company directors and bank customers, but said the government was readying an economic package on priority in the wake of the coronavirus lockdown and would present it 'sooner than later'.

"Work is going on and we are very close to coming up with an economic package, which will be announced sooner rather than later," Sitharaman said. On the volatility in the financial markets, she said, "...all the regulators, the Reserve Bank and the Ministry of Finance are all working together... we are in contact... let me give you (that) assurance that monitoring is happening thrice a day."

Announcing a string of compliance-related relaxations, she said, "Many statutory and com-

EXPLAINED
Why this is critical

FM'S DECISION to extend deadlines by three months for filing I-T returns, GST summary returns, Aadhaar-PAN linking, and also the *Vivaad se Vishwas* scheme, was critical. An economic package, that protects the bottom of the workforce pyramid, and helps companies at a time when both demand and supply have collapsed, is now awaited.

compliance issues, since we are in the month of March, we need to address. We have come up with comprehensive announcements in this regard."

In a significant relief for

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

VIRUS IN A GLOBALISED INDIA
BY SANJAYA BARU
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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Trucks stuck, rail staff stopped, online delivery staff assaulted: Essential supplies hit hurdle

PRANAV MUKUL, AVISHEK G DASTIDAR & SURBHI GUPTA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

AHEAD OF Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing a 21-day countrywide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19, long queues had formed on highways of trucks carrying essential goods and commodities, includ-

ing medicines, milk, fruits and vegetables, by Tuesday, hours into several states sealing borders. While goods trains fall in the exempted category, freight services too were hit as states did not mention 'Railways' as essential service in their respective orders.

With confusion at the lower levels about exemptions, transport even within states was hit. Big online grocers such as

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At vegetable, fruit market in Sahibabad, near Delhi. Abhinav Saha

INSIDE



10,000 CASES, 130 DEAD IN A DAY, U.S. MAY EXCEED EUROPE AS EPICENTRE
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Hours into Delhi lockdown, on 101st day of sit-in, Shaheen Bagh cleared, police cite curbs

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

EARLY TUESDAY morning, as the anti-CAA protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh entered its 101st day, the Delhi Police removed protesters and vacated the area citing the lockdown because of the coronavirus outbreak. Nine protesters, including six women, were detained after they refused to leave, said DCP (southeast) R P Meena.

"The SHO and ACP visited the site Monday evening and re-



The protest paraphernalia being removed. Abhinav Saha

quested protesters to leave as a lockdown had been implemented due to coronavirus, but everyone refused. In the morning, too, we asked them to leave, but when they didn't, coercive action had to be taken and people were detained," said Meena. Protesters were removed from the site around 7.30 am.

A map of India made of metal with 'Say No to NRC, CAA, NPR' written on it, the stage, and an India Gate installation at the protest site were dismantled and loaded into trucks. Posters on the

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Freed after 7 months, Omar: Virus fight first, will discuss J&K later

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, MARCH 24

TEN DAYS after his father Farooq Abdullah's detention was revoked by the Jammu and Kashmir administration, former J&K Chief Minister and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah was released from the Srinagar subsidiary jail at Hari Niwas where he was held for over seven months.

Abdullah drove the distance from Hari Niwas on Gupkar Road to his residence on the same



Seeks the release of others held in and outside J&K. Express

road. He was detained ahead of the August 5 announcement ending J&K's special status under Article 370 and its division into two new Union Territories.

In February, Abdullah was charged under the Public Safety Act along with former Chief Minister and PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti who remains under detention.

Sporting a beard, Abdullah stepped outside at 1.25 pm to make a statement. "In my period of detention I had thought a lot about what I would say the

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

First time since WWII, Olympics put off, Japan says next summer

MOTOKORICH, MATT FUTTERMAN & TARIQ PANJA
TOKYO, MARCH 24

THE TOKYO Olympics were postponed on Tuesday to 2021, the first such delay in the Games's 124-year modern history, as the coronavirus crisis wrecked the world's last sporting showpiece still standing this year.

After months of internal discussions, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will postpone the Summer Games scheduled July 24-August 9 in Tokyo, Prime Minister Shinzo

Abe of Japan said. Instead, the Games, the world's largest sporting event, will take place in the summer of 2021, a change that will wreak havoc with sports schedules but should bring great relief to athletes, organisers and health officials who had increasingly pressed that the coronavirus pandemic made it unsafe to go forward with the event.

The Olympic flame, already lit at Olympia in Greece and taken to Japan for a now-cancelled torch relay, would stay in the host nation as a symbol of hope. "Sport is not the most important thing right now, preserv-

ing human life is," IOC president Thomas Bach said. "This Olympic flame will be the light at the end of this tunnel."

The decision became inevitable after the national Olympic committee in Canada announced on Sunday that it was withdrawing from the Games, and Australia's committee told its athletes that it was not possible to train for this summer under the widespread restrictions in place to control the virus. The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, after initially declining to take a stand, joined the fray Monday night, urging the IOC to postpone.



In Tokyo, a countdown display to the 2020 Olympics. AP

Abe said he had asked Bach for a one-year delay and he had "agreed 100%". The IOC said a delay was the only way to ensure that the athletes train safely and the more than \$10 billion Japan has spent to prepare for the Olympics would not go to waste. Tokyo had beat out Madrid and Istanbul in 2013 to win hosting rights. Bach had said last week that cancelling the Games would not be an option.

But postponement has its own complications. The international governing bodies for track and field and swimming are set to hold world championships around that time and will have

to work with their athletes and host cities to push those events back, as will other international federations with major events on the calendar.

Moving the Games to the summer of 2022, another option, carried its own logistical challenges. In 2022, the IOC is set to hold the Winter Games in Beijing. Also, soccer's World Cup, which rivals the Olympics for the globe's biggest audience, is scheduled for the end of 2022. Three events in a calendar year would have put significant financial pressure on Olympic sponsors, which are already reeling under the collapse of the world

economy. At a conference call in March between the World Health Organization and medical officers for the international sports federations that oversee Olympic events, participants had discussed worst-case scenarios, including the possibility of holding the Games without spectators.

The Summer Olympics are the world's largest sporting event, attracting more than 10,000 athletes from more than 200 countries. But, given the costs, in recent years, a growing number of cities and countries have balked at bidding to host

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