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NEARBY



Curfew in Jaipur's Walled City as man tests positive

JAIPUR
 An indefinite curfew was clamped in the Walled City of Jaipur on Saturday to contain the spread of COVID-19 after a 45-year-old man, who returned from Oman on March 12, tested positive.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

One new COVID-19 case reported in Delhi

NEW DELHI
 One new case of COVID-19 was reported in Delhi on Thursday, taking the total number of cases to 40. The new case is of a 33-year-old man, who is admitted at AllMS Jhajjar, according to the Delhi government. He has a travel history to Philippines.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Provide shelterless riot victims places to stay: HC

NEW DELHI
 The Delhi High Court on Friday ordered the Delhi government to ensure that all the riot victims, who may be shelterless, are provided with accommodation either at the community centres or at the night shelters, operated by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board in the North East district.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

RBI cuts rates, allows loan moratorium

To ease impact of lockdown, repo and reverse repo rates reduced; EMIs deferred for three months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has opened up the liquidity floodgates for banks even as it reduced the key interest rate sharply by 75 bps and allowed equated monthly instalments (EMIs) to be deferred by three months in a move to fight the economic impact of the countrywide lockdown to check the spread of novel coronavirus. The repo rate was reduced to 4% from 4.4% while the reverse repo rate was cut by 90 bps point to 4%. The higher reduction in the reverse repo rate was aimed at prompting banks to lend more rather than keeping their excess liquidity with the RBI.

Unprecedented crisis

"We are living through an extraordinary and unprecedented situation. Everything hinges on the depth of the COVID-19 outbreak, its spread and its duration," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said. "Clearly, a war effort has to be mounted to combat the virus, involving both conventional and unconventional measures," Mr. Das said. The meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which was scheduled for March 31 and April 1, 3, was advanced to March 27 due to the unprecedented crisis.

Easing the burden

The Reserve Bank of India has permitted a three-month deferral on all term loan repayments, even as it moved to inject more liquidity in the system. A look at RBI's moves and observations:

- Repo rate cut by **0.75 percentage points** to 4.4%
- For all **term loans** (home, auto, personal, agricultural, retail and crop loans) outstanding as of March 1, lenders can grant a moratorium, i.e., a **temporary halt**, of three months on payment of instalments
- Instalments include equated monthly instalments, credit card dues, principal or interest payments and bullet payments
- Tenure for such loans will be extended by three months after the moratorium period. This means that the instalments are **deferred but not waived**
- Interest **shall continue** to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium. Thus, at the end of three months, the interest will be added to the outstanding loan and that amount **will have to be repaid**
- Tweaks to the cash reserve ratio and marginal standing facility, apart from long-term repo auctions, to inject liquidity of **₹3.74 lakh crore** into the system
- Centre's estimates for **GDP growth for Q4 and the whole year** are now at risk

All lending institutions shall frame policies for providing the relief to eligible borrowers

from pandemic's impact



FinMin pulls up banks on shut branches

MANOJIT SAHA
MUMBAI

The Union Finance Ministry has asked banks to explain why several branches are closed.

"In view of the novel coronavirus lockdown, the government is monitoring the functioning of bank branches across the country. Accordingly, the daily data on the number of bank branches (of all scheduled commercial banks in the country), which are open and functioning is being collected by Indian Banks Association (IBA), and monitored by Department of Financial Services," the Ministry said in the communication to banks.

The Ministry cited the data and asked public sector banks to submit reasons on "why large number of branches are not functioning across the country". On private banks, it has asked the IBA to compile reasons.

The bank unions, however, cited the problems the staff faced in reaching the branches.

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Centre flags gap in screening travellers

States told to track 15 lakh passengers



Need for monitoring: Evacuees from Iran being examined at the Jodhpur airport recently. ■PTI/ @SPOKESPERSONMOD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba has asked the States to effectively monitor 15 lakh international air passengers who came from January 18 to March 23 as there appeared to be a "gap" between the actual monitoring that "may seriously jeopardise the efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19."

Mr. Gauba wrote a letter to the Chief Secretaries that the list of such passengers as compiled by the Bureau of Immigration had been shared with all the States and Union Territories.

"We initiated screening of international incoming passengers at the airports with effect from January 18, 2020. I have been informed that up to March 23, 2020, cumulatively, the Bureau of Immigration has shared de-

tails of more than 15 lakh incoming international passengers with the States/UTs for monitoring for COVID-19. However, there appears to be a gap between the number of international passengers who need to be monitored by the States/UTs and the actual number of passengers being monitored," Mr. Gauba said.

"It is important that all international passengers are put under close surveillance to prevent the spread of the epidemic," the letter said. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) had repeatedly emphasised the importance of monitoring, Mr. Gauba noted.

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DETAILS OF AIR PASSENGERS LEAKED ONLINE ▶ PAGE 9

Kollam sub-collector jumps quarantine

State govt. suspends him for violation

STAFF REPORTER
KOLLAM

Kollam sub-collector Anupam Mishra, a 2016-batch IAS officer, has been suspended by the Kerala government for violating the COVID-19 quarantine norms.

Mr. Mishra had recently visited Singapore and was asked to remain in home isolation for 14 days on his return on March 19.

However, he reportedly left for his home in Uttar Pradesh the same day without informing Health Department officials and the District Collector.

Mr. Mishra initially misled health officials by creating an impression that he was still at Kollam whenever they contacted him. His neighbours, however, noted his absence and informed

the authorities. "When health officials went to his place as part of their routine visits to those under quarantine, they found him missing," Kollam Collector B. Abdul Nasar told mediapersons on Friday.

When contacted over the phone, Mr. Mishra said he was staying at Bengaluru with his brother, who is a doctor. But the police traced him to Sultanpur in U.P. He reportedly told officials who demanded an explanation that he went to his hometown for his safety.

The police have filed a case against the officer for violating government instructions.

Members of his staff, including the driver and gunman, are currently under home isolation.



Anupam Mishra

Govt. to add 40,000 ventilators by June to battle virus

Death toll rises to 17 even as 75 fresh cases are added in the last 24 hours, including a 10-month-old infant from Karnataka



No-go zone: A view of a deserted street in Jaipur on Friday. ■ROHIT JAIN PARAS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As the ICMR on Friday confirmed 75 fresh cases and 17 deaths in the COVID-19 outbreak, the Union Health Ministry announced that it was scaling up measures to combat the virus by bringing in 40,000 more ventilators in the next three months.

According to data released by the Ministry, a total of 724 individuals have tested positive; 27,688 samples from 26,798 individuals have been tested for the SARS-CoV2 virus as on March 27, an ICMR release said.

According to reports from States, the toll from the outbreak has touched 21, with 159 fresh cases in the last 24 hours. Karnataka reported its third death of a 60-year-old man, along with nine new cases, including a 10-month-old infant from Dakshina Kannada. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh

India to join WHO drug trial

India is all set to join World Health Organisation (WHO)'s "Solidarity Trial" aimed at rapid global search for drugs to treat COVID-19 infection. It will test four different drugs or combinations and compare their effectiveness. ▶ PAGE 9

reported one fatality each. Kerala reported the maximum number of cases at 179 with 39 new cases, while Maharashtra had 153 cases. Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Luv Agarwal said India is working on the guidelines prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to isolate, test, track and treat.

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Migrant workers continue to exit Capital on foot

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Even two days after the lockdown, hundreds of migrant workers could be seen walking through Ghaziabad to reach home. Ramautar, a daily labourer in Delhi's Burari, had started at 4 in the morning with his wife and 12-year-old son for their home in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh.

"Before I lose my meagre savings and my father, who is ill, I should reach my village," he said at the Link Road in Ghaziabad. On the U.P. government promising help for people like him, Ramautar said: "Sarkar ki madad aane main time lagta hai (Govt. help takes time to reach)."

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 2

After ossification test, court grants minor bail

He was arrested during Feb. riots in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Over a month after a boy was charged with rioting and arrested by police during the communal violence in north-east Delhi and subsequently sent to Mandoli jail, a Delhi court granted him bail on Friday following results of the bone ossification test confirming he is a minor.

Age contested

The minor's age was contested at the time of arrest, with his family, residents of Chand Bagh, claiming he was 13 years old. The police, which picked him up on February 25 even as riots continued the area, had claimed that the boy said he was 22. Police asked for an ossification test in the court. The family said the boy, a

Class 5 dropout, had gone to look for his 10-year-old brother who they thought was out on the streets when riots broke out. The police charged him with rioting, unlawful assembly, assault on public servant, mischief by fire and damage to public property, among others. Advocate Abdul Gaffar, appearing for the boy, said that the report stated that he was 15 years old. Metropolitan Magistrate Rakesh Kumar Rampuri granted bail to the juvenile. "In view of the tender age of the accused and suspension of work of regular courts and in view of the epidemic situation of coronavirus, accused is granted bail on furnishing a bail bond of ₹10,000 with one surety of like amount," the court said.

Kerala man was among Kabul gurdwara attackers

Mohsin had left for UAE two years ago

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A man from Kasaragod in Kerala is said to be one of the three terrorists who stormed a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25 and killed around 25 worshippers, a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

The official said at least three terrorists of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) had attacked the gurdwara. All were killed by Afghan security forces. "We know that at least one of them is an Indian, and the identity of the other two is being ascertained," the official said.

The attacker was identified as Abu Khalid Al-Hindi by *Al Naba*, the ISKP's propaganda wing. The magazine published a photo-



Abdul Khayoom

graph of the Indian attacker. The other aliases used for him were Abdul Khayoom and Abdul Khalid.

The official said the person was identified as Mohsin from Thrikaripur in Kasaragod. He was 29 years old and a school dropout. His family has moved to Kannur. He left for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) more than two years ago.

POLICE NOT INFORMED ▶ PAGE 8

Indian seafarers stranded in Iran due to global shutdown

Trainee seamen are stuck on boats without money

M. KALYANARAMAN
CHENNAI

Among the over 250 Indians stranded in coronavirus-hit Iran are fishermen and seafarers. Many of these seafarers are trainee ratings, who have been marooned in boats abandoned by the owners in ports such as Khorramshahr, Bandar Mahshahr and Bushehr. The Iranian crew in the boats have left for their homes.

The abandoned vessels are practically dead ships with no power or fuel. The trainees who can't leave the port are making do with whatever supplies they can muster and keeping their spirits alive. Many say they



At sea: Some of the fishermen and seafarers stuck on a vessel at a port in Iran. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

have received no medical attention though none of them has shown any visible symptoms of COVID-19.

For many of these trainees, the 12-months they serve on the small Iranian ships – practically boats that ferry loose cargo from Dubai and back – will enable them to become certified seamen in India. Many have fore-

gone salaries and some have put up money to agents in India to serve as trainees and become full-fledged seafarers so they can make a career in the merchant navy. Some of them have completed 12 months but have been unable to leave.

SEAMEN IN IRAN ADVISED TO STAY WITH VESSELS ▶ PAGE 8