



Fighting the pandemic on a war-footing, says Yediyurappa

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Donald Trump says peak U.S. death rate likely in two weeks

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New investors flock to market as stocks fall to multi-year lows

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Olympics to be held between July 23 & August 8 next year

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NEARBY



25 new COVID-19 cases in Delhi in one day

NEW DELHI
Twenty-five new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Monday, taking the total number to 97, according to the Delhi government. This is the biggest single-day jump in the number of cases in the city so far.

CITY PAGE 3

AIIMS Trauma Centre is city's COVID-19 hospital

NEW DELHI
The Trauma Centre of AIIMS, Delhi, has been designated as the city's COVID-19 hospital with the administration now looking at augmenting the bed strength from 242 to 260. The move comes following Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba's direction for dedicated COVID-19 hospitals in every State.

CITY PAGE 3

Bhilwara screens 24 lakh people over nine days

JAIPUR
After screening as many as 24 lakh people for COVID-19 symptoms by deploying 650 teams of health workers over a nine-day period, the administration in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district has readied facilities to quarantine 15,000 persons to meet an emergency situation. Bhilwara has been the State's worst-hit area in the ongoing crisis after the infection spread in a private hospital.

NEWS PAGE 9

India still in local transmission: govt.

Health Ministry says implementation of early lockdown is proving to be a step in the right direction

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

Reiterating that India continues to be in the local transmission phase despite the country registering a spike from 100 to 1,000 cases in 12 days, the Union Health Ministry on Monday said India's precautionary and early lockdown is proving to be a step in the right direction.

India registered more than 60 new cases and four deaths in the past 24 hours, with a total of 1,071 cases and 29 deaths so far, the Ministry said, clarifying that no orders had been passed to "conduct large scale disinfection of people but protocol has been put in place for sanitising large public spaces, etc."

Joint Secretary in the Ministry Lav Agrawal told the

COVID-19

media that the growth graph of COVID-19 showed that India had taken 12 days to go from 100 to 1,000 cases.

"This graph in developed countries with less population and better facilities had risen anywhere between 3,000 to 8,000 cases starting from the same line and in this 12-day initial period. India is seeing this result because of early measures of isolation and lockdown. The takeaway from this is that we are on the right path and that we should stay on this. But this is a daily battle and non-compliance by even a

Rising numbers

India is among the 41 countries which crossed the 1,000 COVID-19 cases mark as of Sunday. But among these countries, the rise in cases in India has been relatively slower



BPL card holders waiting in a queue to collect essentials from a PDS shop in Delhi's Vishwas Nagar on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

- 1 As many as 176 countries have registered at least one COVID-19 case
- 2 Among these, 103 countries registered at least 100 cases
- 3 Of them, 41 countries registered at least 1,000 cases. India is among them

single individual can put us back," he said.

According to reports from State Health Departments, there are 1,284 confirmed cases nationwide, with 1,139 active cases.

The number of deaths rose to 37 on Monday, with two fatalities reported from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and one each from West Bengal and Punjab. Kerala added 32 new cases in its tally of 234; 12 new cases took Maharashtra's tally to 215.

With seven evacuees from Iran testing positive, the

number of cases in Rajasthan rose to 69. Tamil Nadu saw a sharp spike with 17 new cases.

Local transmission

When asked about a government document that said "India in the current phase of COVID-19 pandemic is showing local transmission and limited community transmission," Mr. Agarwal said, "We should use the word community in a limited context. In fact, the government will be the first to announce that the infection has entered the next phase

because we would need a heightened level of preparation and cooperation from the general public. Technically, we continue to be in the local transmission phase." He, however, confirmed that India is seeing "a small percentage of asymptomatic individuals".

Mr. Agarwal, however, refused to answer a question about a possible extension of the 21-day lockdown.

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More reports pages 5, 8, 9

Testing and quarantines helped defeat virus page 10

'No extension in lockdown'

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba has denied that the Centre had plans to extend the three-week lockdown, which is scheduled to end on April 14. "There are rumours & media reports, claiming that the government will extend the #Lockdown21 when it expires. The Cabinet Secretary has denied these reports, and stated that they are baseless," a tweet from the official Press Information Bureau handle said on Monday.

'Emergency reports fake'

The Army has described as "absolutely fake" messages circulating on social media about the "likely declaration" of a state of Emergency in April. "Fake and malicious messages are circulating on social media about likely declaration of Emergency in mid-April and employment of #IndianArmy, #Veterans, NCC and NSS to assist the civil administration. It is clarified that this is absolutely FAKE," the Army's official Twitter handle clarified on Monday.



Safety check: People walking to board a bus to a quarantine facility in the Nizamuddin area of Delhi. ■ REUTERS

200 evacuated from Nizamuddin area

They developed COVID-19 symptoms

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

Around 150 people were evacuated by district authorities from the Nizamuddin area in New Delhi to various hospitals after they developed symptoms of COVID-19, a police officer said on Monday. On Sunday, 34 persons from the same area had been moved to hospitals.

The Delhi police have cordoned off the area around the Markaz Masjid, located around 100 m from the Nizamuddin dargah. Drones have been deployed in the area to ensure strict implementation of lockdown orders, the officer said.

Around 8,000 people from across the country as well as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Saudi Arabia attended a gathering at Alami Markaz Banglewali Masjid, the headquarters of the

Tablighi Jamaat in the Nizamuddin area of south Delhi earlier this month. While many returned home, others stayed back at the mosque. The persons evacuated were staying in the Markaz, the officer said.

Speaking to the media, Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said, "In all such cases, a set protocol is put in place where our team goes in to collect samples, trace contacts and recommend quarantine and basic precautions. The same has been done for this area."

Cases of COVID-19 have surfaced in several States in persons linked to the Nizamuddin gathering. On Friday, six persons, who had attended the Delhi meet, tested positive in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Continued on page 8

'Moderate humidity may deter coronavirus'

Monsoon could slow down spread

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Coronaviruses are sensitive to humidity and are less likely to thrive at moderate levels of humidity, a series of experimental studies over the years have shown.

Earlier this month, a study by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States said that regions experiencing a monsoon might see a slowing - but not a stop - to the transmission of the virus and, therefore, could help mitigation strategies in tropical countries such as India.

The maximum number of cases were reported in regions with an average humidity range of 3-9 g/cubic metre, which comprised the

United States and several European countries that are inundated by COVID-19 infections.

Tests or temperature?

However, while warmer and humid countries such as Singapore, Australia, Taiwan and Qatar had comparatively fewer infections - attributable to higher testing - it was possible that warmer temperatures retarded the spread of the virus, the authors - Qasim Bukhari and Yusuf Jameel - contend.

The study isn't yet peer-reviewed and is available at the open access repository Social Science Research Network.

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Migrant workers given mass disinfectant bath in Bareilly

Action ordered against officials; those exposed to chemical to be examined

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Migrant labourers returning to Bareilly were forced by the district administration to take an open-air bath with a disinfectant before being allowed entry into the district.

Sodium hypochlorite solution, commonly used as a bleaching agent to remove stains, was used on the migrants, officials later admitted.

Footage of the incident showed the group of migrants, including women, squatting on the road near a checkpoint in as officials in protective gear sprayed the solution through a hose pipe on them. While at least two officials film the incident, one of them is heard asking the migrants to close their

eyes, telling them that the solution affects the face.

The nodal officer for COVID-19 control in Bareilly, Ashok Gautam, said the administration did spray the migrants with liquid disinfectant, but insisted it was not a chemical solution. He said the administration had taken the step following the arrival of several hundred migrants. "We tried to keep them safe; asked them to shut their eyes," he said.

Following the incident, District Magistrate Nitish Kumar ordered action against the officials concerned. The district chief medical officer was asked to conduct a medical check of persons exposed to the liquid.

Continued on page 8



Hosed down: Healthcare workers spraying disinfectants on migrant workers in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday. ■ PTI

Gautam Buddha Nagar DM transferred after leave request

B.N. Singh's move was prompted by angry outburst from CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GHAZIABAD

Gautam Buddha Nagar District Magistrate B.N. Singh was transferred to Lucknow and attached to the Board of Revenue on Monday after he sought to proceed on three-month leave on a day the number of COVID-19-positive persons in the district touched 38, the highest in Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Singh's move was prompted by an angry outburst from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who reprimanded district officials for passing the buck to each other over rising cases in the State.

A leave application he wrote on Monday to Chief Secretary R.K. Tiwari citing "personal reasons" was rejected by the State govern-

ment, which initiated a departmental inquiry against Mr. Singh and replaced him in Gautam Buddha Nagar with Suhas L.Y., a 2007-batch IAS officer who has served as DM in Prayagraj and Azamgarh.

In the letter, Mr. Singh, who has been in charge of the district for the last three years, said, "In the present scenario when there should be no administrative slackness, I request that some other officer be given the charge."

Viral video

In a short video that has gone viral, the Chief Minister can be seen telling the officials that due process was not followed in checking the rise in the number of cases

that have been linked to the fire security firm whose British auditor allegedly passed on the infection. So far, 23 cases have been found to be linked to the firm.

At one point Mr. Adityanath can be heard shouting, "Apni bakwas band karo (Stop your nonsense)." He said the districts were alerted two months ago but suitable action was not taken to isolate foreign nationals.

Mr. Singh pleaded that he had been working 18 hours a day, but the Chief Minister was apparently in no mood to listen. Sources said Mr. Adityanath also took Chief Medical Officer Anurag Bhargav to task.

Makeshift camp near F1 race track page 2

Rabi harvest to be affected for want of farm workers

Farmers also worry about govt. procurement and the ability to sell crops as markets are still closed

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

The lakhs of migrant workers streaming to their home villages due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown have left many farmers across the country bereft of agricultural labour just before the crucial harvesting season of the rabi or winter crop.

Farmers also worry about government procurement and their ability to sell their crops, given that many mandis or agricultural markets are still closed, despite fresh Home Ministry orders to exempt all such farming activities from the shutdown.

Wheat, mustard, rabi paddy, maize, chickpeas and soyabean are amongst the major crops harvested during this season.



Crucial link: Farm workers harvesting chili in Rachapudi village of Andhra Pradesh. ■ KOMMURI SRINIVAS

"Most of the agricultural workers in Haryana and Punjab come from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and will not be there for this harvesting season. For the wheat harvest, farmers may be able to use mechanical combine harvesters. But Punjab's mandis alone employ

3.5 lakh agricultural workers during this season, to load, weigh, clean and bag the produce. How is procurement going to be possible without them?" asked Ramandeep Singh Mann, a Haryana-based farmer activist.

He noted that many of the

mechanical combine harvesters owned by Punjab and Haryana farmers are also stuck in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat, which harvest their wheat earlier than the northern States.

"They have been caught by the lockdown, usually with four or five workers accompanying them. Now they have to cross multiple State lines to return, so it is unclear how many will make it on time, leading to shortages," he added. "At the end of the day, harvesting cannot be postponed beyond 7 or 8 days, or the grain will shatter."

Both northern States have delayed wheat procurement to April 15, in the hopes that the lockdown will be over by then. Haryana

has written to the Central Food Ministry, asking for incentives to farmers in a bid to stagger the procurement process and prevent congestion at mandis in late April. It wants to offer an additional ₹50 per quintal for those able to store their crops and wait to sell until May 5, and ₹125 for those willing to hold on till June.

Relief on crop loans

On Monday, the Centre offered some relief on crop loans up to ₹3 lakh which are due for repayment between March and May, by deciding to extend 2% interest subvention to banks and 3% prompt repayment incentive to all farmers up to May 31, 2020.

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