

**A MINUSCULE NUMBER OF**  
asymptomatic people testing positive: Govt

**CASES VERSUS DEATHS NUMBERS**  
invite second look from officials

**PARTS OF NIZAMUDDIN WEST UNDER**  
strict lockdown, with drones, police personnel

# Day 6: Govt zeroes in on 10 hotspots

## Delhi, Mumbai, Noida in list with several clusters; to see more testing

ABANTIKA GHOSH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

**CORONA COUNT**  
1251 CASES  
32 DEATHS  
101 RECOVERED

AS THE number of COVID-19 cases reached 1,251 across the country (101 recovered, 32 dead), India is set to ramp up testing in 10 identified "hotspots" where "unusual" transmission has been detected. Of these, two — Dilshad Garden and Nizamuddin — are in Delhi, the others being Noida, Meerut, Bhilwara, Ahmedabad, Kasaragod, Pathanamthitta, Mumbai and Pune. In the last 24 hours, 227 cases and five deaths have been reported.

A source in the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme said, "Normally we define any area where there are more than 10 cases as a cluster. Places where there are several clusters are treated as hotspots. Sometimes the cases are localised, sometimes so widespread that the entire city has to be covered. Ahmedabad is an exception — there have been just five cases, but three deaths. Our assessment normally is that there are 100 cases for every death. That is why Ahmedabad is a hotspot in our list. Three deaths and five cases do not add up."

A senior official in the Health Ministry confirmed, "We are

stepping up testing in the hotspots. But testing will be done only as per testing protocol." The government position remains that there is no community transmission so far.

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health, Lav Agarwal said Monday, "We are studying the emerging hotspots. We will follow rigorous surveillance and containment measures in these places." He added that only a "minuscule percentage" of asymptomatic people have tested positive in the country. India has so far done 38,432 tests.

Explaining the rationale behind the decision to step up testing in hotspots, the source said that by the 100 cases to one death surveillance ballpark, India's current number of cases is less than half of what it should be. "We may be missing out something. There is as of now no change in testing strategy, but we are pulling out all the stops in the door-to-door containment plan."

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Migrant workers, heading home, cross the Chambal bridge on the Dholpur-Morena border in Madhya Pradesh, Monday. Gajendra Yadav

## Delhi area under watch: Officials link 5 Telangana deaths, trace 1,600 people

ASTHA SAXENA & SOMYA LAKHANI  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

A gathering at a mosque in Nizamuddin West mid-March has emerged as the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak not just in parts of the region now put under strict lockdown, but in Telangana, which announced Monday five COVID-19 related deaths of persons who were part of this gathering. It is also being

linked to cases in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andaman islands, Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh.

Parts of southeast Nizamuddin West in Delhi have been put under a strict lockdown — with barricades, a drone and over 100 police personnel — as health officials said there is a possibility of a coronavirus outbreak in the area. Of the 25 new cases of COVID-19 reported from Delhi on Monday, 18 are from Nizamuddin West. The total number of confirmed cases in

Delhi now stands at 97.

Further, the Health Department has shifted 85 people from the area to Delhi government's Lok Nayak hospital after they developed symptoms of coronavirus. The hospital has 174 suspected patients admitted in total, of which 153 are from Nizamuddin West.

This comes a day after 23 new cases were recorded in the capital — six of whom were traced to a gathering at a mosque in Nizamuddin West last month.

The six are a part of the Tablighi Jamaat outfit and are believed to have come in contact with many others, with authorities saying around 1,600 are being traced across the country. Cases in some other states, including Telangana, Tamil Nadu, the Andaman islands and Kashmir, have also been linked to the gathering.

In Hyderabad, health department officials said Telangana recorded five more coronavirus

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



IN TAMIL NADU, 2 THAI NATIONALS INFECTED 31 PAGE 5



Trucks lined up in Chandigarh, Monday. Jaipal Singh

## Drivers abandon loaded vehicles, trucks stuck as state borders still clogged

PRANAV MUKUL & AASHISH ARYAN  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

THE CENTRE'S clarification on Sunday allowing movement of all trucks, carrying essential as well as non-essential goods, has not helped unclog choke points across many state borders, with road transporters facing fresh problems caused by the massive reverse migration from economic centres including Delhi and Mumbai to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.

Truck owners said almost half the number of drivers fled to their native towns and villages following a pile-up of vehicles at inter-state borders, with some

even leaving behind vehicles loaded with goods worth crores of rupees unattended along the highway. Transporters also reported incidents of stranded trucks being looted at locations such as the Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh border.

In addition to this, some truckers have reported traffic jams along major routes and highways at the border entry points of states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Maharashtra and West Bengal. "We have received reports of some looting of fruits and vegetables in Maharashtra and goods like rice and flour in some villages of Punjab. We have offered our empty trucks to carry some of

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## Walking with the migrants, across four states, one story: What do we have here?

TEST REPORTS FROM THE FIELD  
TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

DIPANKAR GHOSE  
MORENA (MP), MARCH 30

THEY BUILT homes, offices, even cities. They worked in technology companies. They cooked the food we ate, cleaned the roads we travelled. But now, many of them walk, run, dodge and hide. There are blisters on their feet, and their shoulders hurt from bags and the children.

They are at the Anand Vihar Bus Terminal in Delhi. They are on the Yamuna Expressway in UP. On the Chambal Bridge in MP. On National Highways. On



Savitri Bai and her family in Morena, on their way from Agra to Ambah in MP. Gajendra Yadav

State Highways. They are going home. In the hundreds. Left without work and food in the big cities, they say that's the only way. Even if borders are shut, a 14-day quarantine awaits and governments, at the Centre and the state, have resolved to lay down the hard line on the lockdown.

As the national lockdown entered its second week, The Indian Express travelled across four states to track this unprecedented exodus, examine what social distancing and isolation means in towns and villages off camera and off the highway — and what could await the first

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## Behind 93-yr-old's recovery, several miracles: '6 times we thought we lost him'

SHAJU PHILIP & VISHNU VARMA  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KOCHI, MARCH 30

ONE OF the 10 'hotspots' in the country, Pathanamthitta district in Kerala got a news to warm its heart on Monday. A couple, 93-year-old Thomas and Mariamma, 88, suffering from age-related illnesses and underlying diseases, tested negative for coronavirus and are set to be discharged from hospital. He had a heart attack while hospitalised, she a bacterial infection, while a nurse who tended to them also tested positive.

Five other members of the family — the couple's son, daughter-in-law, grandson and two other relatives — left hospital on Monday after being declared clear of COVID-19. The

staff, including doctors, bid a tearful farewell as the five left the General Hospital in Pathanamthitta.

The son's family came from Italy to the family home at Aythala in Pathanamthitta on February 29 and is believed to have passed on the virus to the couple. Said the couple's son, 55, "We were planning to come on leave in August. But father said he may not survive until then."

The three-member family had to face the ire of Kerala's Health Department and public censure after it became clear that they had skipped the screening at the Kochi airport upon their arrival and not informed the authorities of their foreign travel. They had not practised social distancing either, attending functions and travelling, including to post-offices, banks

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## Yogi pulls up officials over Noida cases, DM shunted out



UP CM conducts an aerial survey in Ghaziabad and Noida on Monday. ANI

AMIL BHATNAGAR  
NOIDA, MARCH 30

THE DISTRICT Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar, BN Singh, was shunted out and a probe ordered against him hours after he attended a meeting chaired by Yogi Adityanath in Greater Noida, where the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister expressed displeasure over the handling of coronavirus cases linked to a fire-safety firm.

Following the meeting, Singh issued a statement saying he did not wish to continue in the post.

"A departmental enquiry, which will be headed by an IAS officer, has been set up against BN Singh. The primary charge against the official is that the fire safety firm in Noida was not sealed in time, which contributed to the rise of coronavirus cases in the district. He stands attached to Board of Revenue in the interim," said a government spokesperson.

At one point during the meeting Monday, sources said, the Chief Minister is learnt to have told Singh, Chief Medical Officer Dr Anurag Bhargava and other officials: "Bakwaas band karo (Stop this nonsense)". Video clips of the incident were also shared on social media.

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WHY THEY WALK HOME  
BY PARTHA MUKHOPADHYAY & MUKTA NAIK  
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WORLD



PEAK IN 2 WEEKS, KEEPING TOLL TO 1 LAKH WOULD BE A GOOD JOB: TRUMP

CHINA BUILDING HOSPITAL FOR PAK TO TREAT PATIENTS  
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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

## Initial focus on China, Europe as virus sneaked in through Gulf

KRISHN KAUSHIK & MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

AS OF Monday evening, more than half the patients (53.97%) who tested positive for COVID-19 in the worst-hit states Maharashtra, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, had an overseas travel history. Significantly, two of every three of them (67.22%) had returned from or via a country in the Gulf other than Iran.

An analysis by The Indian Express of the travel history of positive cases from 10 states

Maharashtra, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and West Bengal — together, these account for more than 70 per cent of all cases in India — shows that more than half (54.94%) of them with international travel history had come from or through the Gulf nations.

Even considering the total number of cases in these 10 states, travellers from the Gulf account for over one in every four positive cases. They have also contributed to indirect cases transmitting it to people came in contact with them.

One possible factor is that

curbs on travellers from the Gulf came late, almost three months after the government's first global travel advisory related to the outbreak on January 17 — when it called for avoiding travel to China.

Since then, it issued as many as eight advisories that included suspension of a e-visas for Chinese nationals (February 3); avoid travel to Iran, Italy and South Korea and screening of passengers based on risk assessment (February 26); suspension of all visas for travellers from Iran, Italy, Japan, China and South Korea (March 3); 14-day home quarantine for those with travel

### 2 OF 3 WITH TRAVEL HISTORY TOUCHED GULF

| State              | Total cases | International travel | From Gulf nations   |
|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Maharashtra        | 203         | 71                   | 36                  |
| Kerala (Mar 29)    | 181         | 154                  | 135                 |
| Karnataka          | 74          | 49                   | 22                  |
| Uttar Pradesh      | 96          | 25                   | 8                   |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>554</b>  | <b>299</b>           | <b>201 (67.22%)</b> |
| Telangana          | 71          | 35                   | 6                   |
| Gujarat            | 70          | 32                   | 18                  |
| Rajasthan (Mar 29) | 57          | 30                   | 10                  |
| Tamil Nadu         | 67          | 26                   | 4                   |
| Punjab             | 39          | 8                    | 0                   |
| West Bengal        | 19          | 5                    | 0                   |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>877</b>  | <b>435</b>           | <b>239 (54.94%)</b> |

history to China, Italy, Thailand, Iran, France, Spain and Germany (March 10).

It was only on March 16 when the Government started mandatory quarantine of passengers coming from the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait. The same day, passengers from EU, Turkey and the UK were banned and on March 22, all international flights were suspended.

Incidentally, the Gulf countries, especially United Arab Emirates and Qatar are major ports of transit for flights between India and most of the western world, including Europe, Africa and North and

South Americas.

Barring in Iran, the number of positive cases in the Gulf countries has not been very high, which could have explained India allowing travellers from the region to come in unchecked.

According to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, the total number of cases in UAE on Monday were just 570, and there were 1299 positive cases in Saudi Arabia, 634 in Qatar, 515 in Bahrain, and 266 in Kuwait.

As the epicentre of the global pandemic was China, followed by Iran and Italy and now the US, India focused on China, southeast

Asia and Europe in trying to control Indians traveling to these regions and screening or prohibiting travellers coming from there. The virus, meanwhile, sneaked in largely through travellers coming back from the Gulf countries, who have passed on the virus to others in their home states.

A senior health official from a state with more than 50 positive cases said: "Initially, if we had focused on the Middle-East, we would have been better off. We were focusing more on Spain, Italy, the US, the UK, China. We missed out on the Middle-East and Dubai. We were a bit late."

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