

SAVING LIVES TOP PRIORITY,
says CM Patnaik, ordinance promulgated

AGRI, MGNREGA, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY
activities to be facilitated during lockdown

KARNATAKA CM SAYS CABINET
unanimous on extending shutdown

Extending lockdown: Odisha leads the way

Shut until April 30, state wants no rail or air; draws contours of roadmap for others

SAMPAD PATNAIK & RAVISH TIWARI
BHUBANESWAR, NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

CORONA COUNT
5865 CASES 169 DEATHS
478 RECOVERED
1,44,910 samples have been tested as on April 9, 2020

EVEN AS the Centre and states are still weighing their options on extending the 21-day lockdown beyond April 14, Odisha became the first state to clearly spell out its plan of action: that its statewide lockdown will continue till April 30. The state government also said it would recommend to the Centre to extend the national lockdown to the same date and request for rail and air services to the state to be stopped until then.

"The state Cabinet, which met today, decided that saving lives of our people is the top most priority at this juncture," Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said in a written statement that was shared by the state government on Thursday. "We have decided to extend the lockdown till April 30. We will recommend to the Government of India to extend the national lockdown (up to the same time period)... We will also request the Union Government not to start airline and railway services till April 30," the statement added.

The state also promulgated an ordinance amending a section of The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, with a provision of imprisonment for up to two years

for those found violating the epidemic regulations.

While state after state has signalled their intention to extend the lockdown — Karnataka being the latest to say that the Cabinet wants the lockdown to be "continued for another 15 days" — Odisha's announcement is seen as a step forward, setting the tone for deliberations on exit strategies when Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Chief Ministers on Saturday morning. Odisha's announcement is set to impact the options being considered by other states as they formulate their exit strategies. More so, because Odisha has a relatively low coronavirus positive case load at 44 in about 5,865 cases across the country. The state has so far reported one death and two recoveries, and tested 2,841 samples.

Odisha's request to stop train and flight services to the state until April 30 is likely to have a cascading effect on any policy

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Nurses from Mumbai's KEM hospital on their way to work. The hospital has reported at least 10 COVID-19 deaths over the last week. Prashant Nadkar

No let-up in Maharashtra: 25 deaths, 229 new cases is highest single-day jump

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

IN ITS highest single-day spike so far, Maharashtra reported 229 fresh COVID-19 cases and 25 deaths on Thursday, taking the total count to 1,364 cases and 97 deaths.

The deaths counted today include some which occurred over the last three days but were notified Thursday.

The Union Health Ministry reported 20 deaths and 591 fresh cases across the country in the last 24 hours. The total number of cases in the country is now 5,865, of whom 169 died while

478 recovered. With 876 cases, Mumbai now accounts for more than half the total cases in Maharashtra. However, the higher number in the state could also be due to increased tests. In the last two days, almost 10,000 samples have been tested in the state. While 20,877 samples had been tested till April 7, the number touched 30,299 on Thursday.

Pune recorded 10 deaths on Wednesday alone, its highest in a day so far; eight more people have died in the city since then. Nine deaths were reported in Mumbai, and one each in Malegaon and Ratnagiri over the

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A nurse tests positive and a quiet birthday for daughter in a ward

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

ON WEDNESDAY, the daughter of a nursing officer from Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) turned four. Typically, there would have been a small party at home — her eight-year-old son would have decorated their 2BHK house, while the birthday girl would have been gifted a new doll. Instead, the children and their mother spent the birthday inside a COVID-19 ward at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality hospital.

The nursing officer from Dilshad Garden's DSCI is among 22 staffers who have tested positive for coronavirus. The test



22 of the DSCI staff have tested positive in Delhi. Praveen Khanna

was conducted on April 3 and the result came on April 6, after which she reached Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, with

her children in tow. "My husband went to visit my mother in Pathanamthitta in Kerala, as she

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Investors unfazed by March mayhem, equity MF inflow at 12-month high

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

EVEN THOUGH stock markets went into a tailspin in March and benchmark indices crashed in line with the global trend, mutual fund investors don't seem to have pressed the panic button.

Data for March released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) shows that net inflows into equity-oriented schemes amounted to Rs 11,722 crore, a 12-month high, and gross fund mobilisation for

equity schemes — total money invested — stood at Rs 30,109 crore, a 24-month high.

There was also an addition of 7.1 lakh new equity accounts during the month — the highest monthly addition in at least 12 months.

This, when both the Sensex and Nifty have lost 23 per cent in March as the COVID pandemic roils markets and threatens global growth.

The equity assets under management, however, fell 18 per cent over February to Rs 650,146 crore on account of the mark-to-market

losses. The overall industry average asset under management fell to Rs 24.7 lakh crore in March, from an all-time high of Rs 28.28 lakh crore in February 2020.

Data shows that equity investors took the March fall as an opportunity to invest. Despite the sharp decline of up to 13 per cent in a day in the premier indices in March and the index hitting the circuit twice in a month — forcing exchanges to shut — they not only continued with their investments but also came in with fresh investments.

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Shows markets have got deeper

LOW EQUITY valuations provide an opportunity to generate higher returns when interest rates are falling and fixed deposit and small savings rates have seen deep cuts. The record inflow underlines the deepening of the market and signals investor hope that these hard times will pass.

For supply of HCQ, Trump and Bolsonaro thank Modi and India

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro thanked India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the "timely assistance" in releasing ingredients for anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), seen as useful in the treatment of COVID-19.

"Extraordinary times require even closer cooperation between friends. Thank you India and the Indian people for the decision on HCQ. Will not be forgotten! Thank you Prime Minister @NarendraModi for your strong leadership in helping not just India, but humanity, in this fight!" Trump tweeted late on Wednesday night.

Prime Minister Modi Thursday said India will do everything possible to help humanity's fight against COVID-19, responding to Trump thanking him for allowing the export of hydroxychloroquine. HCQ is deemed as a potential preventive drug for the deadly coronavirus. "We shall win this together," Modi said, responding to a tweet by Trump.

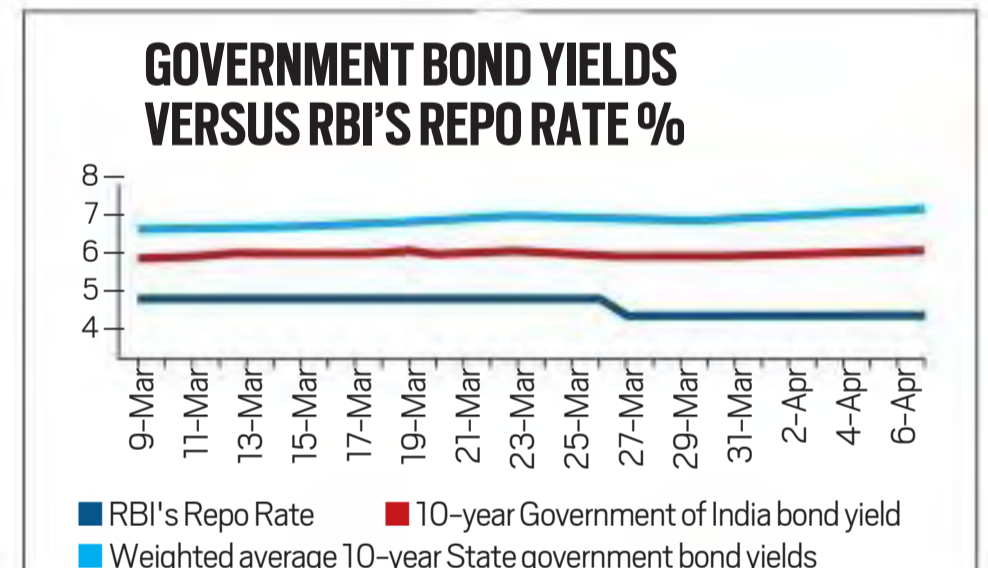
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Higher spend, slump in revenues start straining finances of states

NUSHAIBA IQBAL & HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE EFFECTS of a slump in their revenues from the lockdown, coupled with higher spending to deal with the novel coronavirus pandemic, are starting to show on the finances of state governments.

On Tuesday, 19 states sought to borrow an aggregate sum of Rs 37,500 crore through sale of bonds, with tenures ranging from two to 15 years, conducted on the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) auction platform.



As against the notified amount, they were able to mobilise only Rs 32,560 crore.

But more than the shortfall, what is striking is the cost of the

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BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY

Play the market and pray harder.
Bain Nibant
Mahaivir Jyotiraj
Good Friday

COVID-19 POINTS TO RURAL DISTRESS
BY CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT & HEMAL THAKKER PAGE 8

Bihar tests, finds migrants haven't added to state tally of positive cases

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, APRIL 9

JUST 10 DAYS ago, when migrants started returning to their homes in Bihar in large numbers, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was concerned about the potential spread of COVID-19 in the state. But after screening about 1.8 lakh migrants, who are living either with their families or at the 3,115 quarantine centres, the state is heaving a sigh of relief that none of the migrants have tested positive so far.

According to the Bihar health department, 4,991 people have



Medical staff distribute sanitisers to policemen in Patna. PTI

been tested so far, including about 2,000 migrants, those with overseas travel history, and also their relatives. Of those tested, 58 turned out to be COVID-19 posi-

tive, most with overseas travel history, or contact with persons who travelled abroad.

State government officials

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UN flags concern to Govt Covid group: Need to fight targeting of certain sects

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

A DAY before the Union Health Ministry issued an advisory asking people not to label any community or area for the spread of COVID-19, the UN representative in India urged the government to fight "stigmatisation of certain sects of people".

On Tuesday, at the seventh meeting of the empowered group coordinating with the private sector, NGOs and international organisations, Renata Lok-

Dessallien, UN Resident Coordinator in India, "pointed out the need to address the issues of migrant labourers and fighting stigmatisation of certain sects of people," said a source who was part of the meeting chaired by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

In the wake of finger-pointing at Muslims after the spike in positive cases across the country was traced to a March congregation of the Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi, the Health Ministry issued an advisory Wednesday: "Public health emergencies during an outbreak

of communicable diseases may cause fear and anxiety leading to prejudices against people and communities, social isolation and stigma." Such behaviour, it said, may culminate into increased hostility, chaos and unnecessary social disruptions.

On April 2, BJP president J P Nadda had urged his party leaders to refrain from giving any "communal colour" or create any "division or differences" over the COVID-19 outbreak. He told them to support the efforts of the Prime Minister as well as that of

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

In zero-case Nanded, a worry: 4,000 stranded Punjab pilgrims

IRAM SIDDIQUE
NANDED, APRIL 9

TEST REPORTS FROM THE FIELD
TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

ON WEDNESDAY, 12 Indonesians who arrived in Nanded on March 15 after attending the Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Delhi — linked to many coronavirus cases — finished quarantine with their COVID-19 test results negative. It was the end of just one excruciating wait for the administration in the district, among only nine in worst-hit Maharashtra with zero cases. Nanded has on

its minds another gathering: of nearly 4,000 pilgrims from Punjab stranded at the historic Gurdwara Langar Saheb.

Resident Deputy Collector Dr Sachin Khalla said all the 3,755 pilgrims have been screened for

symptoms of COVID-19 such as cold and sore throat over the past two days, and none is so far showing any. However, the tougher part is ensuring that the pilgrims don't venture out of the premises of the gurdwara, one of the five most prominent Sikh shrines in the country that draws nearly 30 lakh visitors a year.

Section 144 has been imposed in the area, with three policemen guarding a major road leading to the gurdwara, and a barricade to stop vehicles.

The pilgrims arrived between March 1 and March 20 and have



A langar at Gurdwara Langar Saheb in Nanded. Express

been unable to head back. They have moved into the gurdwara's five 'hostels' — a total of 1,200 rooms, in different sizes.

The administration is aware of the risks of having so many under one roof amidst the pandemic, with little means of ensuring social distancing. Nanded Superintendent of Police Vijay Kumar Magar says that after Section 144 was invoked, the first two days posed a major challenge as pilgrims kept heading into the city.

"After that we held a meeting with religious heads and asked

them to keep the pilgrims in their rooms and even serve food to them there instead of in the community kitchen," says Magar.

But that is easier said than done. Bachendar Singh, a priest at the gurdwara, says their faith does not allow them to turn anyone away from a langar, including non-Sikhs. "The concept of a langar was never to restrict people. Langars are not constructed with gates. How do we even close?" he asks.

Every day, as people sit in rows to eat and the women make the meals of rice, roti, dal and

sabzi, food is prepared for nearly four lakh people, to be sent throughout Nanded and its surrounding areas. The wheat, rice and dal supplies for the gurdwara are generally received in the form of donations twice a year from Punjab, while other things are purchased locally.

The stranded pilgrims say the only way to ensure their safety and that of others is to get them home. "If the government wants us to maintain social distance, they should make arrangements for us to return," says

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