



**Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel blames Centre for crisis**  
page 8



**Set up ₹1 lakh cr. corpus for MSMEs, Jairam Ramesh tells govt.**  
page 8



**Industrial output grows 4.5% in Feb.; may plunge drastically in March**  
page 13

**British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's health improving**  
page 12



PRINTED AT · CHENNAI · COIMBATORE · BENGALURU · HYDERABAD · MADURAI · NOIDA · VISAKHAPATNAM · THIRUVANANTHAPURAM · KOCHI · VIJAYAWADA · MANGALURU · TIRUCHIRAPALLI · KOLKATA · HUBBALLI · MOHALI · MALAPPURAM · MUMBAI · TIRUPATI · LUCKNOW · CUTTACK · PATNA

## NEARBY



### 3 deaths, 51 new cases reported in the Capital

**NEW DELHI**  
Three deaths due to COVID-19 and 51 new cases were reported in Delhi on Thursday, pushing the toll to 12 and the total number of patients to 720, stated a daily health bulletin of the Delhi government. A total of 2,664 people are in different quarantine facilities, while around 18,500 people are home-quarantined.

CITY • PAGE 3

### Arrivals at Azadpur Mandi drop over 50%

**NEW DELHI**  
The COVID-19 lockdown caused a 53% drop in the volume of major fruits and vegetables arriving at the Azadpur Mandi, according to an analysis of the market's arrivals data. Even for kitchen staples such as onions, potatoes and tomatoes, volumes are down over 40%. The Azadpur Mandi is Asia's biggest vegetable market and handles almost 50 lakh tonnes of produce every year.

CITY • PAGE 3

**You just need 30 days to Master IAS Prelims?**  
Try our '10-Red Books for GS Prelims' (E-Books & PDF)  
crack IAS Immediate Download. 70+ Qs Assured. 921-7070707

# No significant rate of increase in COVID-19 positive cases: ICMR

Nationwide deaths at 169; Maharashtra toll climbs to 97 with 1,142 active cases

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Thursday said the country has maintained a steady rate of COVID-19 positive cases – 3% to 5% over the past month and half – and has registered no significant increase in this trend so far.

The country currently has 5,865 confirmed cases and 169 deaths. This includes 591 new cases and 20 deaths in the last 24 hours, Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agrawal said at the daily press briefing. He added that 473 people had recovered and been discharged so far.

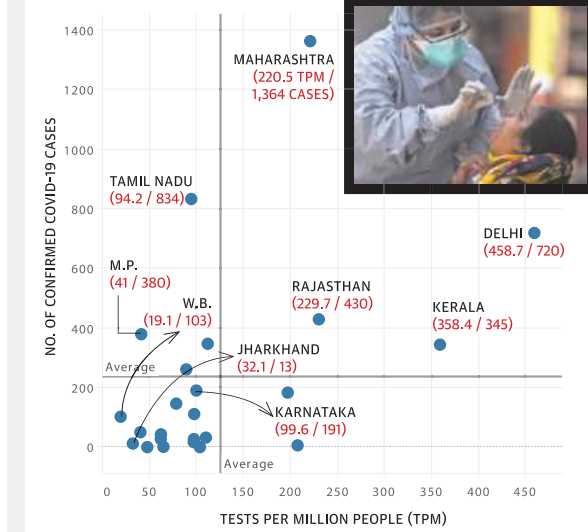
## COVID-19

The ICMR noted that 1,44,910 samples from 1,30,792 individuals had been tested as on April 9. Of these, 5,734 samples tested positive till date. "Positivity rate ranges between 3%-5% with no major increase. On Wednesday, we tested 13,143 samples," said ICMR official Manoj Murhekar.

### Plasma therapy

Dr. Murhekar added that the Centre was in the final stages of drawing up a protocol for trial on convalescent

**Testing tales** | Kerala has recorded relatively fewer confirmed cases despite a high testing rate for COVID-19, while Delhi leads all States/UTs. While Jharkhand and West Bengal have among the lowest testing rates, Maharashtra leads in total cases



CONFIRMED CASE COUNT IS AS OF 9 P.M. ON THURSDAY.

plasma therapy, for which approvals have to be taken.

"In this therapy, plasma from a COVID-19 recovered patient is transfused into an infected severely ill patient so that the specific antibodies in the blood of the recovered patient can help fight the infection. This is done for very ill patients on ventilators and has given good results in some studies abroad," he said.

The nationwide death toll touched 205 on Thursday,

State Health Departments reported. The number of active cases was 5,815. Maharashtra continued to report the maximum number of deaths, at 97, as well as active cases at 1,142. Tamil Nadu reported 799 active cases, with 96 new cases, while Delhi has 683 active cases with more than three deaths since Wednesday.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8  
MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12

# Odisha becomes first State to extend lockdown till April 30

Saving lives is topmost priority now, says CM Naveen Patnaik

**PRAFULA DAS BHUBANESWAR**

Odisha on Thursday extended the lockdown till April 30. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made the announcement after a Cabinet meeting held through videoconferencing.

He said one had to decide between protecting the lives of the people and economic activity at this crucial juncture, and the Cabinet decided that saving lives was the topmost priority now.

In a video message, Mr. Patnaik announced that the State would recommend to the Central government to extend the national lockdown up to April 30. "We will also request the Centre not to start airline and railway services till April 30." Educational institutions in the State would remain closed till June 17, he noted.

### Help for those stranded

As regards the people from Odisha who are stranded in various parts of the country, Mr. Patnaik said his government's intervention for their well-being would be through the State governments concerned. "We will take care of all the people who are stranded in Odisha."

Activities related to agriculture, animal husbandry and MGNREGS would be fa-



**Reaching the people:** Vendors selling vegetables from a bus stop in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

## 'Final decision on April 11'

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said a final decision on extending the lockdown would be taken on April 11 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in consultation with all CMs. "My understanding is that stringent restrictions would need to be continued for some more time." ► PAGE 10

## Paper doubted lockdown

A few scientists of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in a study in February, questioned the efficacy of a lockdown, saying that it could lead to "long-lasting adverse health outcomes". Instead, they favoured "civil society-led self-quarantine and self-monitoring". ► PAGE 8

cilitated during the lockdown period, he said. Food security was a major priority of the government. "There will not be any problem in transport of goods."

The government was leaving no stone unturned in scaling up testing and treat-

ment facilities. "We propose to do one lakh rapid tests in the State in the earliest possible time," he said.

He thanked doctors from all over the country who had offered their services for the telemedicine helpline launched on Wednesday.

## ₹15,000 crore sanctioned to States

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The Centre on Thursday announced that ₹15,000 crore has been sanctioned to States under the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package.

The 100% Centrally-funded scheme will be utilised for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response (₹7,774 crore) and rest for medium-term support (1-4 years). This is to be provided under a mission mode approach.

Announcing this, the Union Health Ministry noted that the key objectives of the package include mounting emergency response to slow and limit COVID-19 through the development of diagnostics and dedicated treatment facilities.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

# 2 cardiac patients test positive at premier Delhi hospital

Six healthcare staff, one doctor and five nurses quarantined

**NIKHIL M BABU NEW DELHI**

Two persons, admitted to the East Block of Max Hospital, Saket with cardiac problems and later shifted to Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital after the former was turned into a dedicated COVID-19 treatment facility, tested positive for the virus on Thursday.

"Two patients admitted to Max Hospital, Saket, for cardiac problems have tested positive for COVID-19 this morning [Thursday]. The patients, who were admitted at Max Smart hospital, have been moved back to Max Hospital, Saket, East Block, which is a dedicated COVID-19 facility. The contact tracing for these two persons has started and we propose to test the primary contacts immediately. All those pre-

sently identified as 'in contact' have been quarantined, awaiting their test results, which are expected by Friday," a hospital spokesperson said. The functioning of both the hospitals, which are on the same road separated by an empty plot, has not been affected as the two persons were kept in isolation, the spokesperson said.

### Patients not related

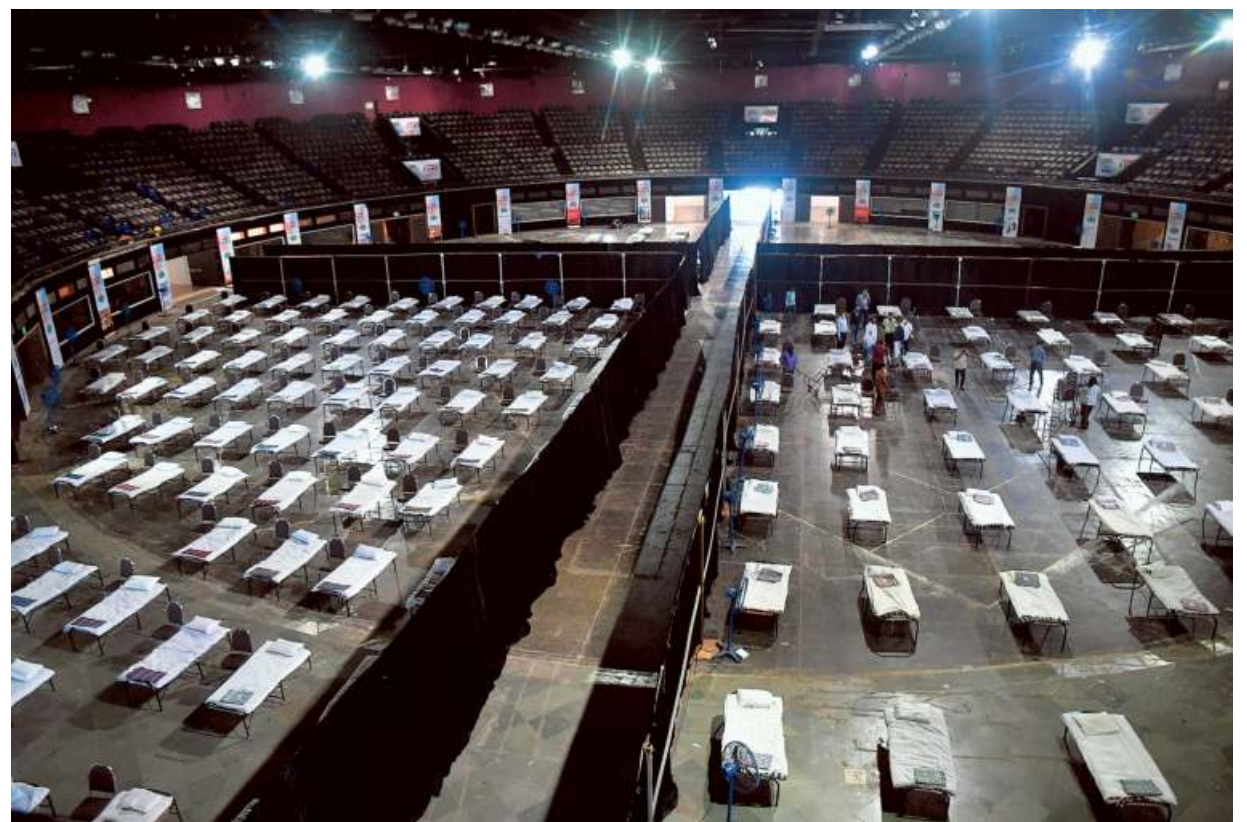
The two patients are unrelated and were admitted 10 days ago at the East Block of the hospital. They were then moved to Max Smart hospital. "There is no chance that they would have contracted the virus from COVID-19-positive patients at the East Block, as such patients were kept in isolation wards," the hospital spokesperson told *The Hindu*.

Six healthcare staff, one doctor and five nurses have been quarantined as of Thursday afternoon after the two patients tested positive.

According to hospital officials, the two patients were tested before they were moved to Max Smart hospital as a precautionary measure. "They did not have any symptoms at that time. Since their results were awaited, both of them were kept in isolation at Max Smart hospital," the hospital spokesperson said. Max Smart has sent samples of more people for COVID-19 testing and the results are awaited.

Delhi Health Minister Saatyendraraj and Secretary of Department of Health and Family Welfare Padmini Singla did not respond to multiple calls and messages seeking comment.

## Every inch matters



**Safe arena:** The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has converted the National Sports Club of India's indoor stadium into a 500-bed quarantine facility in view of the COVID-19 crisis. • VIVEK BENDRE

# Kejriwal launches 'Operation SHIELD' against COVID-19

Sealing, quarantining, doorstep delivery in containment zones

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The Delhi government will carry out 'Operation SHIELD' at 21 locations identified as containment zones in the Capital, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced here on Thursday.

'Operation SHIELD', which includes sealing, identifying and quarantining people in containment zones, doorstep delivery of essential items and door-to-door checking of people in those areas, will be undertaken by the Delhi government, he said.

"We have begun Operation SHIELD... S for sealing of the immediate area after geographical marking, H for home quarantine of all in the



Arvind Kejriwal

be done after taking samples," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal also spoke about the need to wear masks before stepping out of homes. "This has been advised based on recent observations and news from across the world where authorities are advising everyone, and not just people infected with coronavirus, to wear masks to protect themselves," he said. "We have issued orders that everyone stepping out of their homes in Delhi should wear masks. If you do not have a mask, you can use a clean cloth or a handkerchief to cover your nose and mouth," he said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

# Lockdown robs Mumbai's dabbawalas of lunch

As thousands switch to working from home, the iconic deliverymen have lost their livelihood

**GAUTAM S. MENGLE MUMBAI**

Less than a month ago, they ensured that home-cooked food reached thousands everyday on the dot across this bustling metropolis. Yet, today the iconic *dabbawalas* of Mumbai are staring at starvation as the 21-day nationwide lockdown has left them without a livelihood.

On March 19, the *dabbawalas*, who have been an integral part of the city's history for more than a century, had announced that they would be suspending services in light of the coronavirus crisis. Less than a week later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the complete lockdown.

With almost all workplaces switching to work-from-home, there is now no demand for their services.

"We are facing an unprecedented situation for the first time in the 130 years that we have been operational. If we have no customers, we have no earnings. Our stomachs depend on the stomachs of our customers," said Ulhas Muke, president of the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Trust.

Depending on how far a tiffin box had to be delivered, a *dabbawala* could earn between ₹13,000 to ₹15,000 a month. "This amount, along with whatever our spouses could earn, had to suffice for all



**Hard times:** Dabbawalas at work in south Mumbai before the lockdown was announced. • VIVEK BENDRE

expenses, including house rent, children's education and other expenditure, including emergencies," Vinod Shete, spokesperson of the Trust said. "A lot of us hail from Pune and nearby areas;

about half of us managed to return just before the lockdown. The rest are stuck in Mumbai, unable to arrange for two meals a day," he added. The *dabbawalas'* predicament is exacerbated

by the fact that many of their wives, who worked as cooks or domestic help, have also been laid off due to the need for minimal outside contact and social distancing with the virus outbreak.

The *dabbawalas* have now approached charitable trusts and institutions they once visited as guest lecturers to speak about supply chain management, for help. On Thursday, they also sent out a WhatsApp SOS. "There are 5,000 of us and we have always enjoyed a wonderful relationship with this city. We are not expecting much but every small effort counts in times of crisis and this city always takes care of its own," Mr. Shete said.