

DAY 9: TESTING, TRACING, ISOLATION
must remain our focus, Modi tells States

MOBILISING FUNDS, MEDICAL RESOURCES
vital for corona fight: Chief Ministers to PM

PM WILL SHARE VIDEO MESSAGE
with nation at 9 a.m. today

PM to CMs: Plan phased un-lockdown

Calls for a common strategy, underlines grim global numbers, possible second wave

KRISHN KAUSHIK & VARINDER BHATIA
NEW DELHI, CHANDIGARH, APRIL 2

UNDERLINING THAT "in the next few weeks, testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine should remain the areas of focus" in the country's war against the coronavirus threat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Chief Ministers of all states Thursday to "formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends" on April 14.

He, however, warned that the global situation remains "far from satisfactory" and there was speculation of a "possible second wave of spread of the virus in some countries".

Interacting with the Chief Ministers via video-conference from New Delhi, the Prime Minister, according to an official statement, said "considering that this is the time to harvest crops, the government has given some relaxation from lockdown, but it is necessary to continuously monitor and maintain social distancing as much as possible".

He asked the states to "think of other platforms for procuring grains apart from APMC (agricultural produce market committee), and explore the possibility of creating pooling platforms for rural areas, like that in ride sharing apps, which can be used for this purpose".

In a tweet later in the day, Modi said: "At 9 AM tomorrow morning, I'll share a small video

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

This warrants a lock-up vastly distanced from every faith.



INSIDE



TRUMP DOUBTS CHINA NUMBERS, UK TO RAMP UP TESTS

PAK LOCKS DOWN TABLIGHI CENTRE, 40 CLERICS POSITIVE

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message with my fellow Indians." On the need to maintain social distancing even after the lockdown, Modi, one of the meeting participants said, warned that people should not come out in hundreds on the roads. He suggested that the lifting of the lockdown be staggered.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with CMs via video-conference Thursday. ANI

Option gaining ground: Rapid antibody tests in hotspots advised, decision left to states

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 2

NINE DAYS into the national coronavirus lockdown, with looming economic distress across sectors, discussions have commenced in the government on the way forward at the end of the 21-day period, including an exit strategy.

Giving a glimpse of one possible option, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Chief Ministers during a video-conference Thursday that it is "impor-

tant to formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends".

He asked the states to brainstorm and send suggestions for the strategy. Within his government, meanwhile, a "limited lockdown" in some areas is an option that seems to be gaining ground, at this point.

But what forms these "limits" would take depends on a host of factors, the key being the nature of the spread of the virus.

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EXPLAINED

SIMPLY PUT

TO DO RAPID TESTS OR NOT

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HOURS AFTER it advised "rapid antibody tests" in "hotspot areas" in an interim advisory on Thursday, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) left the decision to the states, and put out a list of such tests that had been approved earlier.

In its interim advisory earlier in the day, the ICMR said: "Population in hotspot areas may be tested using rapid antibody test, and antibody positives to be confirmed by RT-PCR using throat/nasal swab. Antibody neg-

atives to be quarantined at home." It said the recommendation would be finalised at the meeting of the national task force in the evening.

But this advisory was pulled down at night. Instead, the ICMR, put out a list of antibody-based (IgM, IgG) rapid tests that have

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Govt pushes speedy sourcing of protective gear, medical items

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 2

THE GOVERNMENT is trying to rapidly source ventilators, personal protection equipment (PPE), N95 masks and medicines — hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin, to equip itself and all states in the fight against the spread of Covid-19.

The government shared information on the number of isolation beds and ventilators in Covid-19 dedicated hospitals during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with Chief Ministers Thursday morning. The Centre and states, together, have 47,483 isolation beds and 4,809 ICU beds in 258 Covid-19 hospitals. It was pointed out that only 17 states have notified dedicated hospitals so far.

Information shared with states (see chart) suggests that the Centre has already initiated a major sourcing push given that

STOCKING UP FOR FUTURE	
VENTILATORS	N95 MASKS
Available for Covid beds 16,435	Available with states 14.98 lakh
Orders placed 47,187	Orders placed 1.1 crore
Supplied so far 316	Already supplied 12.34 lakh
IN THE OFFING:	IN THE OFFING:
April 30: 10,500, May 30: 18,000, thereafter 10,000 per month	April 7: 26 lakh, thereafter 7 lakh per week
PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT	
Available with states 3.98 lakh	
Orders placed 1.6 crore	
Supplied so far 93,000	
IN THE OFFING:	
April 4: 3 lakh, April 15: 15 lakh, thereafter 10 lakh per week	
MEDICINES	
Hydroxychloroquine (200 mg) 11.45 crore	
Azithromycin (500 mg) 25 lakh	
HCC tablets received and distributed 65 lakh	
IN THE OFFING:	
April 7: 2 crore, April 15: 1 crore, balance by May first week	

the existing stock of masks, medicines, PPEs and ventilators may not be sufficient for a worse case scenario.

The presentation made to states during the video confer-

ence noted that in six states/UTs, the number of confirmed cases was doubling at a rate faster than the all-India average of four days. These are Andhra Pradesh,

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Need to add new test & quarantine plan to lockdown: ICMR research

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 2

A soon-to-be-published mathematical model by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) suggests that while the 21-day lockdown to check the spread of COVID-19 is expected to bring down daily new cases, instead of extending it, the lock-

down needs to be combined with enhanced test-and-quarantine measures.

The study, led by Sandip Mandal of the ICMR's Department of Health Research, estimates that the current 21-day lockdown will reduce epidemic peak (or the highest number of new COVID-19 cases in a single day) by 43 per cent and total mortality (COVID-19-related

deaths) by 19 per cent. And that the lockdown, when combined with an aggressive test-and-quarantine strategy, can bring down epidemic peak by 71 per cent and mortality by 40 per cent.

Mandal was also the lead author of a February mathematical model of the ICMR, which has largely informed the government's COVID-19 strategy

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As growth slows, demand for work under MNREGA shoots to 9-yr high

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 2

AS THE economy slows down, the demand for work by households under the MGNREGA programme surged to a nine-year high in 2019-20.

According to figures up-

loaded on the MGNREGA official portal, 5.47 crore households sought MGNREGA works, the highest since 2010-11, when the number was 5.5 crore. It was 5.27 crore in 2018-19.

More individuals too worked under MGNREGA in 2019-20, with 7.86 crore employed at various sites across the country. This

is the highest since 2012-13, when 7.97 crore individuals worked under this programme. The national job guarantee scheme was launched in 2006 from 200 districts.

The new MGNREGA figures coincide with the sharp fall in GDP growth rate to 5 per cent in

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National death count from Tablighi meeting now 15 — and almost a fifth of total cases

ASTHA SAXENA, SOURAV ROY BARMAN & ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 2

CORONA COUNT

2069 CASES
53 DEATHS
156 RECOVERED

THE TABLIGHI Jamaat congregation in Delhi last month has emerged as the biggest hotspot, accounting for about one-fifth of the COVID-19 positive cases across the country so far. Of the total 53 deaths, 15 have been linked to the gathering.

In Delhi, the number of positive cases almost doubled on Thursday, fuelled largely by those evacuated from Markaz Nizamuddin on Tuesday and Wednesday testing positive.

Of the 141 new cases in the Capital, 129 are people evacuated from Markaz Nizamuddin, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat, where a congregation of over 4,000 was held last month.

The samples of two persons who died last month — a person who was at Markaz Nizamuddin and a resident of Nizamuddin West — tested positive, taking the death toll in the city to four. Officials said they are still verifying if the latter was in contact with the Markaz gathering.

With 182 of the 293 cases in the Capital so far being linked to

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

LIFE AND DEATH

The criminal negligence by Tablighi Jamaat organisers undermines fight against the virus, hurts people of all faiths

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the congregation, the Delhi government is bracing for rigorous testing in the coming days.

Across the country, the total number of positive cases is now 2,069 (155 recovered, 53 dead), with 235 new cases being reported in the last 24 hours. Of these, 400 positive cases have been linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation.

Of the 53 deaths, at least 15 have been linked to the Delhi meet — nine in Telangana, and one each in Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Mumbai, Kashmir

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After first two cases, Maharashtra cancelled go-ahead for Tablighi meet timed with Delhi



Outside the police quarters in Worli, Mumbai on Thursday after a positive case was detected. Prashant Nadkar

MOHAMED THAYER, SADAF MODAK, MANOJ MORE
MUMBAI, PUNE, APRIL 2

AROUND THE same time members of the Tablighi Jamaat gathered at the Nizamuddin dargah in Delhi, a congregation was scheduled in Vasai, 50 km from Mumbai. The Maharashtra government, however, cancelled permission for the event, preventing what could have become a Delhi-like Covid-19 hotspot.

A Tablighi Jamaat jitema or

congregation "expecting attendance of 50,000 people" was planned at Suncity in Vasai on March 12-13. The organisers had received permission for the same earlier in the year. However, on March 6, four days after Maharashtra registered its first two Covid-19 cases, the state government realised it would be wise to cancel the event. The organisers also agreed, officials said.

"On January 22, the Tablighi Jamaat had sought permission for holding the congregation in Vasai. The permission was given

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Doing good to do well: Holding on to migrant labour workforce

When lockdown lifts, will need trained, skilled labour pool, says Coimbatore-based KPR Mill which has 17,500 workers on premises

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 2

IN MOST industrial centres across India, factories were compelled to let go their workers, mostly migrants, when the government imposed a 21-day nationwide lockdown from March 25 to combat the novel coronavirus. For most factory owners, it was a knee-jerk reaction, prompted both by the suddenness of the announcement and

the uncertain road ahead. But there are some stories of manufacturing companies choosing not to leave their workers in the lurch — a decision having elements of large-heartedness as well as taking a more long-term business view.

One illustrative example is the Coimbatore-based KPR Mill Ltd, which employs around 22,000 workers, 90 per cent of them women, at four spinning mills and three garmenting factories in Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Erode

districts of western Tamil Nadu. Since March 25, the company's mills, with a combined 3.54 lakh spindles capacity, haven't produced a single kilo of yarn. The same goes for its garmenting units, which can manufacture up to 9.5 crore of knitted inner and outerwear annually for supplying to the likes of H&M, Primark, Kmart and Marks & Spencer.

Yet, the company, which recorded sales of Rs 3,264.22 crore in 2019-20, hasn't shed any



At the KPR Mill, before the lockdown

of its 22,000 workers. That includes 17,500 migrant labourers who are all being housed in hostels within the premises of its factories.

"About 5,000 of them are from Odisha, while 2,500 belong to Bihar, Assam and Himachal Pradesh, 2,000 to Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and 8,000 to other districts of TN. We are continuing to give food and accommodation to all the 17,500. The remaining 4,500 are locals coming from within 1-2 hours of travelling distance and who preferred to be with their families," said K P Ramasamy, chairman of KPR Mill.

He has sought permission from district authorities

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