

DAY 10: TESTING GAINS MOMENTUM, 10,034 SAMPLES IN A DAY, 69,245 SO FAR

Tablighi spread grows larger: 647 cases across 14 states

In 3 days, cases double across India, 25% linked to Tablighi meet

ABANTIKA GHOSH & ARUN JANARDHANAN
NEW DELHI, CHENNAI, APRIL 3

CORONA COUNT
2547 CASES
62 DEATHS
163 RECOVERED

WHILE THE number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases across the country has doubled in the last three days, from 1,251 on March 31 to 2,547 on April 3, over 25 per cent of the positive cases so far are linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in the Capital last month.

Of the 478 new cases reported in the last 24 hours — the highest single-day spike so far — at least 247 have been traced to the gathering at Markaz Nizamuddin attended by over 4,000 people.

Briefing the media Friday, Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said 647 cases linked to the congregation had been reported from 14 states so far. On Thursday, the tally was 400.

Many states have seen a sharp spike in cases in the last few days, fuelled by those who

attended the gathering and their contacts. Tamil Nadu, for instance, reported 102 new cases on Friday, of which 100 were linked to the Delhi meet.

Telangana reported 75 new cases, all linked to the Tablighi Jamaat gathering. In Uttar Pradesh, 40 of the 48 new cases reported in the last 24 hours were traced to the congregation.

"If we look at the last few days, the primary reason for increase is the number of cases at a particular level. Otherwise, because of our efforts to promote social distancing and effectively implement the lockdown, cases were coming, but the rate of increase had not gone up. We have

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At the Yamuna Sports Complex auditorium in Delhi, Friday. It houses the homeless and migrants stopped by police. *Amit Mehra*

For 9 minutes at 9 pm on Sunday, light diyas: PM

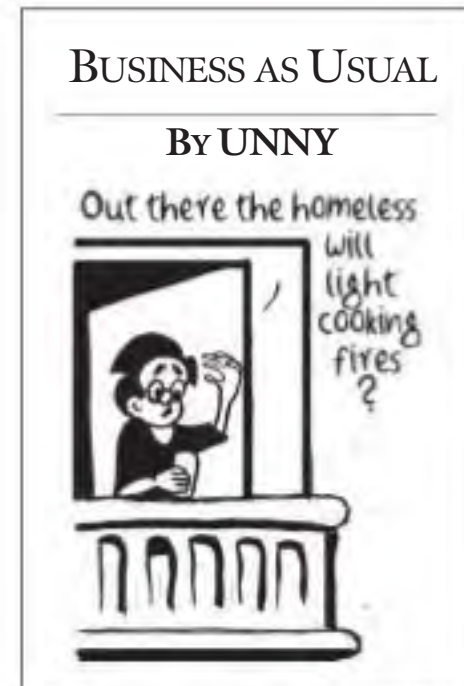
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

FIFTEEN DAYS after he exhorted citizens to clap, ring bells, and beat utensils to thank the providers of essential services during the Janata Curfew of March 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked for the unleashing of the "superpower of 130 crore Indians"

to challenge the darkness of the coronavirus crisis with the "glory of light".

In a video address to the nation at 9 am, Modi asked people to light candles and diyas, or switch on torches or mobile phone flashlights, for nine minutes at 9 pm on Sunday, April 5, to "illuminate the common purpose we are all fighting for".

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IIT, IIM class of 2020: Job offers in hand but up in the air, alarm bells on campus

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

BY MARCH this year, the country's top three Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), had secured job offers for almost 4,000 students. Placement season is usually celebration time on campus but this year is different — than any other in recent history.

Earlier this week, a leading US-based consultancy rescinded its offer to 11 students across IIT-Delhi, IIT-Kanpur and IIT-Madras and six at IIM-Calcutta this week. This is being seen as an early warning sign across campuses, putting as it does a question mark over jobs secured by the graduating batch of these top engineering and business schools. The COVID-19 lockdown and the looming economic distress, the IITs and IIMs fear, could force many more companies to rethink their placement offers.

The All IITs' Placement Committee (AIPC), in anticipation of problems, has reached out to all companies (that visited

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Bhilwara District Collector Rajendra Bhatt (centre) with patients discharged in the city Friday. *Express*

Relief in hotspot Bhilwara: No case in four days, 17 recover, nine are discharged

DEEP MUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, APRIL 3

SEVENTEEN PEOPLE have recovered from the COVID-19 infection in Rajasthan's Bhilwara, which had emerged as a hotspot for the outbreak last month, and nine of them have been discharged from hospital, state officials said Friday.

The district, which had topped the state's coronavirus chart with 26 cases and two deaths, has not reported any fresh case since March 30, officials said. "This has been possible because of heavy containment and working in coordination with the district administration, which implemented the curfew in totality. An extensive survey of more than 20 lakh people was carried out and we identified people with influenza-like symptoms," Additional Chief Secretary (Health), Rohit Kumar Singh, told *The Indian Express*.

Singh said the 17 who recovered were treated "with hydroxychloroquine (HCO), Tamiflu and HIV drugs".

"Among the 17 people who have recovered, nine have tested negative for coronavirus thrice," said Bhilwara District Collector Rajendra Bhatt. These nine patients were discharged Friday and directed to stay in home quarantine for 14 days.

However, the administration is not taking any chance and has decided to extend the curfew imposed in the district by 10 days till April 13. "During this period, even shops of essential commodities such as groceries and medicines will remain closed, and goods will be delivered at the doorstep of residents. All that the public needs to do is to call the helpline and tell us about their requirement. Vegetables will be supplied only twice during this 10-day-period," said Bhatt.

"We don't want to lose this advantage because of one lapse, and that is why this even more intense 10-day-long curfew has been imposed because this period is critical," said ACS Singh.

According to a March 26 report by the District Collector's office, the first positive case was

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BJP chief Nadda cautions party leaders: Don't give corona a communal twist

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

BJP PRESIDENT J P Nadda is learnt to have urged his party leaders to refrain from giving any "communal colour" or create any "division or differences" over the Covid-19 outbreak.

This comes after more than 400 positive cases and 15 corona deaths have been reported across the country which, officials said, can be traced back to a Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Nizamuddin in Delhi in mid-March.

In a meeting with national office bearers Thursday evening,



No provocative remark or statement, he said

Nadda is said to have told them that no party leader should make any provocative or divisive remark but support the efforts of the Prime Minister as well as that

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Gujarat arrests 7 for sharing hate messages

VAIBHAV JHA
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 3

SEVEN PERSONS have been arrested across Gujarat for circulating a message on social media that cited the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi — which has emerged as a COVID-19 hotspot — to call for social and economic boycott of the minority community.

They have been booked under Section 505 of the IPC (statements conducing to public mischief).

Three more persons have been booked, but haven't been arrested so far.

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Yogi orders NSA against 'unruly' Tablighis: What they did is a criminal act

MAULSHREE SETH & AMIL BHATNAGAR
LUCKNOW, GHAZIABAD, APRIL 3

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Friday directed the Ghaziabad administration to invoke the stringent National Security Act against six quarantined members of the Tablighi Jamaat after nurses and medical staff of a Ghaziabad hospital alleged that the men not only refused to maintain social distancing but also misbehaved with them.

In Madhya Pradesh too, NSA has been slapped on four of seven arrested for attacking a medical team in Tatpatti Bakhal locality of Indore on Wednesday.

The NSA is a stringent law

the law, neither will they listen to the administration. They are enemies of humanity. What they did with the female medical staff in the hospital, it is a criminal act. National Security Act is being imposed and the guilty will not be spared," Adityanath said, a day after the Ghaziabad hospital's chief medical superintendent forwarded the staff's complaint to police.

These people will not follow

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Kerala nurse who cared for elderly couple free of virus, ready for duty



Reshma Mohandas (centre) left hospital in Kottayam, Friday.

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 3

ON FRIDAY, doctors and other health staff at the Kottayam Medical College, Kerala, lined up to give an emotional farewell to Thomas, 93, and his wife Mariamma, 88, one of the oldest couples to fight back COVID-19. Minutes later, another patient walked out of the isolation ward: 32-year-old Reshma Mohandas, one of the nurses who had attended to the couple and who later tested positive for the virus.

On Friday, Reshma, whose samples have since tested negative for the virus, left the hospital

following an 11-day isolation period. It was her first visit home since March 12, when she left for COVID-19 duty at the hospital.

"I was posted at the operation theatre of the hospital. But when the COVID-19 isolation unit was readied at the hospital, I volunteered for duty there. My family was initially unsure when I opted to take care of COVID-19 patients," says Reshma, adding that she managed to convince her husband Unnikrishnan, an engineer.

"Since we were working in the isolation unit, my fellow nurses and I decided it was safer for us to stay together at a hostel," she says.

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WORLD



UK PLANS IMMUNITY PASSPORTS FOR KEY WORKERS

HALF THE WORLD ORDERED INDOORS, SPAIN DEATHS SOAR
PAGE 10

Political row later, Centre climbs down on J&K order, reserves all jobs for UT domiciles

NAVEED IQBAL, ADIL AKHZER & LIZ MATHEW
SRINAGAR, NEW DELHI, APR 3

TWO DAYS after introducing a new domicile clause redefining residence and recruitment rules for Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre on Friday amended its order to reserve all jobs in the Union Territory for only its domiciles.

The previous order included



Lockdown at Bandipora in north Kashmir. *Shuaib Masoodi*

protections for level 4 jobs with a pay scale not exceeding Rs 25,500.

The move had triggered a row with almost all shades of political opinion questioning its intent and timing, and criticising the Centre for "heaping insult on injury" upon the residents of the UT.

The earlier order of the Ministry of Home Affairs, while providing limited protections for

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

BLAME TABLIGHIS, NOT MUSLIMS
BY JAVED ANAND
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INSIDE

BLACKLISTING OF TABLIGHI JAMAAT FOREIGNERS: MORE THAN A THIRD CAME FROM INDONESIA
PAGE 8

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

In lockdown, volatility marks price rise in aloo, pyaaz, dal, cheeni

PRANAV MUKUL & ANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

IN WHAT clearly indicates supply-side disruptions after states enforced lockdown to stymie the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, wholesale prices of essential commodities, especially vegetables, have shown a sharp increase during the last fortnight of March.

The average countrywide prices of vegetables such as onions and tomatoes, which were softening in the first fortnight of March, recorded a perceptible

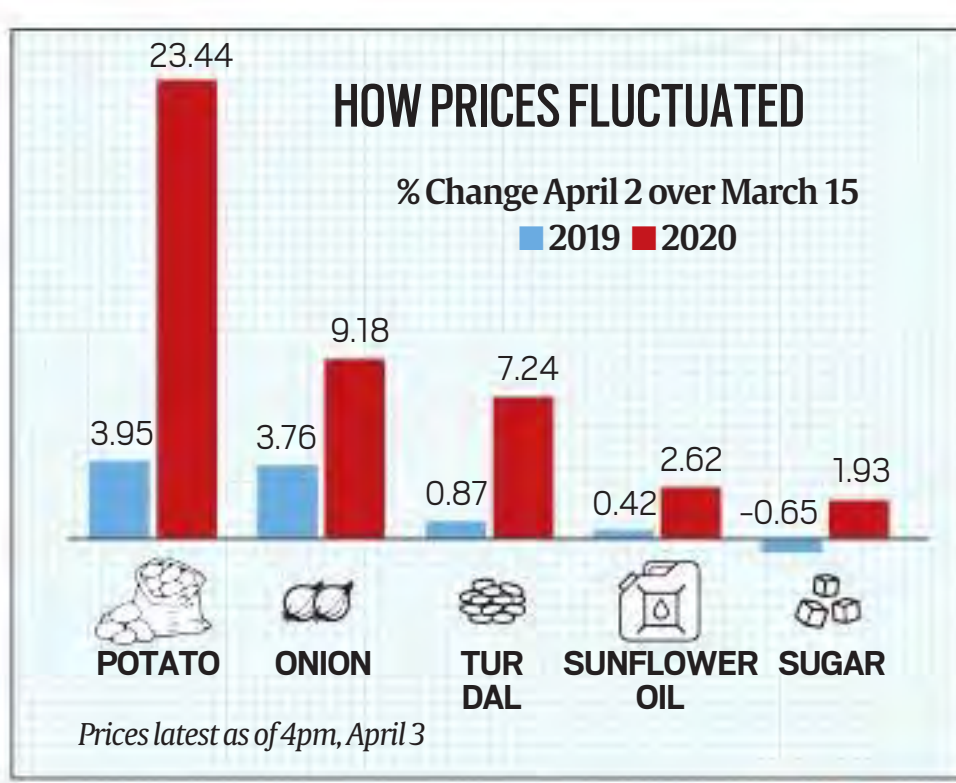
spurt in the second half of the month after March 15 when lockdowns became effective, according to data compiled by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

In the normal scenario, if there are disruptions in supply chains, retail prices increase and wholesale prices drop. But, now, since there is possibly a glut of stocks at one place and goods are not moving, wholesale prices are also showing an increase, economists and agri experts said.

The experts attributed the rise in prices of the essential commodities such as vegetables to purely supply-side issues, instead of production-linked prob-

lems. They also specifically pointed to the lack of transportation and labour to lift stocks from wholesale markets, leading to disruptions in the movement of stocks from production centres to the retail level, even as prices of certain commodities like edible oils have been impacted because of a slowdown in production due to factory closures and labour shortage.

A closer look at the detailed breakup of prices of essential commodities shows that after the drop during early-March, onion prices rose 9 per cent between the first half and second half of March, more than double



EXPLAINED
Availability low, prices affected

SUPPLY-CHAIN disruptions, and not so much, production related problems, led to volatility and increase in prices of essential items in the first 15 days of March. Stocks lasted at the retail end, but now, lower production due to labour shortage, is affecting both prices and availability.

the rise from last year's level, according to the data. Though the wholesale price of tomatoes is at a lower level than last year, prices shot up by nearly 37 per cent during the March 15-April 3 period to Rs 1,751 a quintal (as on April 3) as against a 3.8 per cent fall during the preceding fortnight.

Prices of potatoes and tomatoes at the wholesale level jumped 37.5 per cent and 46.6 per cent, respectively between March 1 and March 31. At the retail level too, prices have increased sharply during the period. Prices of potatoes increased 30.5 per cent (to Rs 27.59 per kg

on an average) and tomatoes increased by 32.6 per cent (to an average Rs 25.33 a kg). In last three days, the prices did soften.

Also, what has affected consumers is the volatility in prices during the last 20 days, primarily due to sporadic release of supplies. For example, the wholesale prices of perishables such as tomatoes rose 7 per cent on March 27 — the second day of the 21-day lockdown. The third day, the prices fell 1 per cent, only to rise almost 4 per cent on March 9. The prices of both potatoes and tomatoes dropped over the next five days till Friday.

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