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Two deaths, 93 new cases in the Capital

NEW DELHI
The Capital on Friday reported two deaths and 93 new COVID-19 cases. The death toll now stands at six with the total number of cases jumping to 386. Of the 93 new cases, 77 are from the centre run by the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Lockdown lifts Delhi's air quality to 5-year high

NEW DELHI
The lockdown has pushed pollution levels in Delhi to a 5-year low and, across India, the number of cities that recorded 'good' on the air quality index jumped from 6 on March 16 to 30 on March 29, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Supreme Court quashes I-T case against NDTV

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Friday quashed an income tax reassessment notice issued against New Delhi Television Limited. The department had accused NDTV of "round-tripping" finances in connection with a July 2007 issuance of step-up coupon bonds amounting to \$100 million through its U.K. subsidiary.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Coronavirus toll touches 62; revised testing norms likely

2,653 cases confirmed across country, 647 of which are from Nizamuddin cluster

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The number of COVID-19 cases continued to rise in the country with 336 new cases reported in the past 24 hours taking the total tally to 2,547, while 18 more deaths were reported, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday. India has registered 62 deaths due to COVID-19 so far, while 162 patients have been discharged. Nationwide, 66,000 samples have been tested so far, which includes repeat tests on patients to confirm health status.



"India, due to its early measures, had been able to keep its COVID-19 numbers low but one incident has caused our numbers to rise, which highlights the need for absolute compliance. The 647 coronavirus cases reported over the last two days are linked to the religious gathering of the Islamic sect Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi. These cases are spread across 14 States. Some deaths have also been linked to this," Joint Secretary at the Union Health Ministry Law Agarwal said at the Minis-



In the slow lane: Essential commodities being transported on a bullock cart in New Delhi on Friday, amid the lockdown restrictions. •R.V. MOORTHY

try's daily press briefing. According to reports from State Health Departments, the total number of confirmed cases nationwide was 2,947 with 2,655 active cases. The death toll rose to 83. Maharashtra continued to report the most cases at 417, followed by Tamil Nadu and Delhi where numbers have spiked to 411 and 386 respectively. Kerala reported 286 cases, while Telangana reported 229 cases. Despite the rise in cases, Mr. Agarwal said the revised testing guideline is still un-

der consideration and would be released by Saturday. He added that the Ministry's newly launched app - Aarogya Setu - had been downloaded by 30 lakh people. **Rapid antibody test** In an interim advisory, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommended the use of the rapid antibody test in the country's coronavirus hotspots. The decision was taken at an emergency meeting on Thursday of the National Task Force dealing with the

COVID-19 crisis. "Population in hotspot areas may be tested using rapid antibody test. Antibody positives to be confirmed by RT-PCR (reverse transcription-PCR) using throat/nasal swab, and antibody negatives to be quarantined at home," the ICMR advisory said. The official said the Health Ministry was in touch with the States to trace, track, isolate and treat cases. **CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 8 **MORE REPORTS** ▶ PAGES 5, 6, 9, 10 & 12

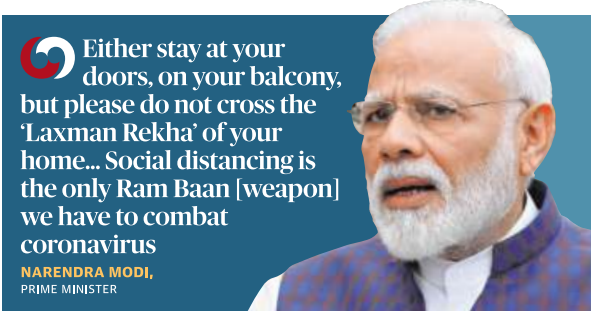
PM: on Sunday, light lamps for 9 minutes from 9 p.m.

He calls for demonstration of collective will to fight virus

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

On the 10th day of the nationwide lockdown imposed due to the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the countrymen to demonstrate a collective will to fight coronavirus, a token demonstration of which, he said, would be to light candles, lamps and hold mobile phone torches for nine minutes from 9 p.m. on April 5. In an address to the nation, he noted, "There is no bigger force than our conviction and resolve. There is nothing we cannot achieve with these forces." Mr. Modi made it very clear that the coronavirus threat could only be combated with the full cooperation of the people, and that the collective strength was what would take the country out of what he termed "darkness that engulfs us" in the form of coronavirus.

'We are not alone' The plight of the poor, with the grinding halt of all economic activity, was also foremost in the Prime Minister's speech. "We have to take our poor brethren towards the light and certainty. To defeat this darkness, we have to shine the light in every direction," he said.



Either stay at your doors, on your balcony, but please do not cross the 'Laxman Rekha' of your home... Social distancing is the only Ram Baan [weapon] we have to combat coronavirus
NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

Disappointing, says Oppn.

Opposition leaders expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video message asking citizens to light lamps in their homes on Sunday. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor called him a "showman and a photo-op Prime Minister", while

former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram questioned why the government had not announced a second financial action plan. CPI leader D. Raja said people expected Mr. Modi to come out with substantial measures. •PAGE 8

Mr. Modi acknowledged that being under a lockdown could be a lonely experience full of anxiety and assured the people that "we, none of us, are alone" and that the "collective will of 1.3 billion people of India was with us in this time of crisis". As his earlier exhortation to applaud essential services workers during the Janata Curfew of March 22 saw instances of mass gatherings

in some parts of the country, Mr. Modi made it a point to say that nobody should repeat it. "Either stay at your doors, on your balcony, etc., but please do not cross the 'Laxman Rekha' of your home," he said. "Social distancing is the only Ram Baan [weapon] we have to combat coronavirus." **EDITORIAL** ▶ PAGE 6

NSA to be filed against 6 for harassing nurses

They used obscene language, gestures

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW/ GHAZIABAD**

The Uttar Pradesh government has said that six persons associated with the Tablighi Jamaat who have been accused of misbehaving with women staff at the district hospital in Ghaziabad will be charged under the National Security Act (NSA). Though the government is yet to issue an official statement, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awasthi attributed the direction to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "Ye na kanoon ko manenge, na vyavastha ko manenge, ye manavta ke dushman hai..." [They don't follow the law or the system, they are enemies of humanity]," Mr. Awasthi said in an

official WhatsApp group quoting Mr. Adityanath. The police had filed an FIR against the six persons who attended the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Delhi and were admitted to the MMG District Hospital. Nurses there accused them of inappropriate behaviour and complained to Medical Superintendent Ravinder Singh, who wrote to the Uttar Pradesh police. Dr. Singh said the six were using obscene language and were making vulgar gestures at the staff. His letter said that some of them were moving around in a state of undress and were demanding bidis and cigarettes. **CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 8

A battle won



Hailing a hero: Colleagues cheer as nurse Reshma Mohandas leaves the Kottayam Medical College Hospital after being cured of COVID-19 on Friday. She got infected while treating two elderly patients, who too have been discharged. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SC calls for quick end to Kerala-Karnataka border row

Patients seeking treatment in Mangaluru denied access

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the Centre, Kerala and Karnataka to confer immediately and "formulate parameters for passage of patients for urgent medical treatment at the interstate border at Talapadi". The order by a Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Deepak Gupta came on a series of petitions highlighting Karnataka's blockade of the border. The blockade, the court was informed, had resulted in deaths as ambulances bound for Mangaluru (in Karnataka) were not being permitted to cross the border. The court listed the case for hearing next on April 7. The order came on petitions to facilitate the free movement of vehicles carry-



The Supreme Court has listed the case for April 7.

ing persons for urgent medical treatment across the border between Kerala and Karnataka (Talapadi). The court, meanwhile, issued formal notice on an appeal filed by Karnataka against the Kerala High Court order of April 1 allowing patients to cross the border for treatment. Karnataka has argued that the blockade was in the in-

terest of public health. The situation regarding coronavirus was "really dire", it said. Karnataka has warned that opening the blockade would cause a law and order issue as the local population wanted the border to remain sealed. Karnataka argued that Kerala was the "worst-affected" State in the country with nearly 194 coronavirus cases. In this, Kasargod, adjoining Karnataka, was the "worst-affected" district of Kerala with over a 100 positive cases. The court separately considered a writ petition by Kasargod MP Rajmohan Unnithan for an order to forthwith open the border. He said Karnataka's blockade was "ill-planned and dangerous" and had already led to the loss of lives.

Doctors who escaped mob return next day

'Country needs us... don't step back'

**SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL**

A day after they were heckled, pelted with stones and chased away from a locality in Indore, doctors Trupti Kattare and Zakiya Sayyed returned to the same spot. Back to finish an incomplete task, they refuse to abandon the role that could help save lives. "I am not afraid. The profession we picked is a noble one," says Dr. Sayyed in a message. "And right now, the country needs us. So, don't step back, step forward and help the country." The incident in Indore on Wednesday, where cases have soared to 112, left both the doctors, and the country, shocked and outraged. "Not even in our dreams could we imagine it," says Dr. Kattare. As they traced contacts of a patient in Tatpatti



Trupti Kattare and Zakiya Sayyed in Indore. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bakhal, tempers flared on requests for quarantine, and a mob chased them out. Dr. Kattare fell to the ground and hurt herself, while others were injured as stones landed from behind. After managing to escape in the tehsildar's car, they met the Collector who motivated them. But the push from their husbands proved most useful: "They said you should not give up this easily," says Dr. Kattare. And they returned the next day. **36 QUARANTINED IN INDORE** **LOCALITY** ▶ PAGE 4

In Coimbatore, take your daily bread & leave cash in the box!

Stall set up by baker elicits good response from locals

**R. AKILESH
COIMBATORE**

With physical distancing being underscored repeatedly to avoid the spread of COVID-19, a sweet shop owner at Rathinapuri in Coimbatore city, has set up a temporary stall outside his closed shop, stocked with loaves of bread but with no shop attendant. The customers can simply pick up a loaf and leave ₹30 in a cash box placed nearby. With grocery shops being instructed to down their shutters before 2 p.m. amid the COVID-19 lockdown, this initiative has garnered a good response from the residents, said A. Vignesh, owner of Moondru Kambam Nellai Muthu Vilas Sweets and Bakes. "We set up this stall last Tuesday evening itself," he said, referring to March 24, when prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc came into force across Tamil Nadu at 6 p.m. About 300 bread loaves are left at the makeshift stall daily. The stall is open



Assured supply: A customer collecting bread from the self-service counter of a shop in Coimbatore. •M. PERIASAMY

throughout the day. The bread is baked in Mr. Vignesh's bakery behind the sweet shop. "A simple meal would cost ₹40. There are some who cannot afford it. At least they can have this bread for one meal," says the 24-year-old.