



on Sunday



Four militants killed, building damaged in south Kashmir's Kulgam  
page 6



Udhav warns of action against those spreading divisive messages  
page 6



Shah Rukh Khan offers his office for BMC quarantine facility  
page 7



Pro-European centrist Keir Starmer is the new leader of Labour party  
page 8

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## 59 fresh COVID-19 cases in the Capital

NEW DELHI  
Fifty-nine new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi on Saturday, taking the total number to 445. No death was reported. Of the 59 cases, 42 are from the Tablighi Jamaat centre in Nizamuddin.

## 108 Ganga Ram Hospital staff placed in quarantine

NEW DELHI  
One hundred and eight staff of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, including doctors and nurses, have been quarantined after they came in contact with two patients at the hospital who later tested positive for COVID-19.

CITY PAGE 3  
MAGAZINE PAGE 8  
CLASSIFIEDS PAGE 4

# 42% of patients between 21 & 40 years

Death toll rises to 75 in India with 2,904 cases, ICMR gives nod for rapid, antibody-based testing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

About 42% of those confirmed positive for COVID-19 in India are between the ages of 21-40 years old, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday, for the first time throwing light on the demography of the disease in India. Only 17% of those testing positive were over 60.



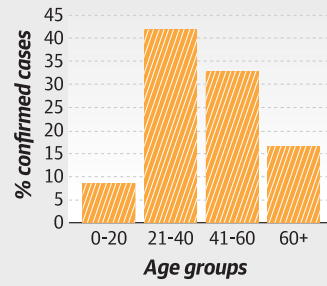
By comparison, data from the U.S. Centres for Disease Control said 29% of those affected were in the 20-44 age group and 32% were above 60. India recorded 2,904 cases and 75 deaths as on Saturday compared to the 2,79,355 cases and 7,451 deaths in the United States. However, Joint Secretary



Celebrating their success: A patient who recovered interacting with staff at a hospital in Vijayawada on Saturday. ■ PTI

## Under threat

An analysis of the ages of confirmed COVID-19 cases reveals that a majority belong to the 21-40 age group in India



in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal, who shared the data with the media, did not provide any age-specific analysis on mortality in the country, only saying that most of those who succumbed to the disease were "aged" and also had underlying

complications such as the diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Mr. Agarwal added that 9% of those testing positive were below 20 years. The Ministry said the number of new cases recorded nationwide between Fri-

day and Saturday was 601, with 58 critically ill in Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. The death toll from the outbreak, according to data from State Health Departments, rose to 103 with Maharashtra reporting the maximum at 32. The most

number of active cases were also reported from Maharashtra at 551, followed by Tamil Nadu with 476 and Delhi with 431 of the total 3,196 cases.

## Quick results

As the number of cases continued to rise, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) issued an advisory to start rapid antibody based blood tests in areas reporting clusters and in large migration gatherings or evacuee centres. The results of such tests will be available in 15-30 minutes.

The Health Ministry said nearly 30% of the cases were linked to last month's Tablighi Jamaat meet in Delhi.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6  
MORE REPORTS ON PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8

# PM chairs meet on COVID-19 readiness

He takes stock of nationwide facilities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday directed officials to ensure sufficient availability of all essential medical equipment such as personal protective equipment, masks, gloves and ventilators after reviewing India's preparedness to deal with COVID-19.

Presiding over a meeting of the various empowered groups set up to respond to the pandemic, he took stock of the availability of hospitals, isolation and quarantine facilities as well as disease surveillance, testing and critical care training, the Prime Minister's Office said in a series of tweets.

Last Sunday, the government had constituted 11 em-



Narendra Modi met various empowered groups set up to respond to the pandemic.

powered groups to suggest measures to scale up health care facilities, put the economy back on track and mitigate problems faced by citizens as quickly as possible after the 21-day lockdown, which was imposed on March 25.

MODI TO BRIEF FLOOR LEADERS ON APRIL 8 PAGE 6

# Pak. vows to appeal against acquittal of Omar Sheikh

Verdict caused reservations: Qureshi

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

Faced with strong criticism from the United States and a possible threat of India raising the case at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Pakistan on Saturday said the acquittal of Omar Ahmed Sheikh Saeed (Omar Sheikh) and three others for the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl will be appealed.

On Thursday, the Sindh province court pronounced on Omar Sheikh's appeal of his 2002 conviction for the kidnapping and brutal murder of Pearl that year, saying the prosecution had failed to produce "strong unim-

peachable corroborative evidence" in the case.

The U.S. State Department said the verdict was an "affront to victims of terror everywhere". Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted that the U.S. would continue to demand justice for Pearl's murder. "This decision caused reservations," Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Saturday. The U.S.'s concerns were "natural", he noted. "The Sindh Home Department has decided to detain the accused for 90 days under the Public Safety Act," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Ready for action



Taking precautions: Policemen in protective gear deployed at the Salem Government Hospital on the 11th day of the nationwide lockdown on Saturday. ■ E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

# Pandemic drives oncologists to tweak cancer treatments

They are switching patients to less aggressive therapies

JYOTI SHELAR  
MUMBAI

The COVID-19 outbreak has posed a unique challenge for oncology experts across the country — to balance the higher risk of exposure to the virus on account of the treatments and the risk of progression of cancer in their patients. To tackle this, oncologists are switching patients to less aggressive therapies, postponing surgeries where possible and opting to individualise the treatment approach for each patient.

Since February, when the SARS-CoV-2 virus had found its way to India, Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) in Mum-



The aim is to balance the risk of exposure to the virus on account of the treatments.

said medical oncologist Shripad Banavali of TMH. "These patients are thus at high risk of catching the infection," he noted.

## Data from China

Dr. Banavali, also the director of academics at the centre, said they relied on data from China, which showed a high mortality rate due to COVID-19 in cancer patients on active treatment. "We don't know if it will affect the cancer outcome in the long run. But we have to look at what is more harmful in the present scenario."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

# Good news for COVID-positive doctor, wife

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A day after a resident doctor and his pregnant wife tested positive for COVID-19 at AIIMS, Delhi, the couple were blessed with a healthy baby boy on Friday.

The baby was delivered through C-section, said doctors at AIIMS. Sources said the isolation ward was converted into an operation theatre and a team of 10 doctors was deputed for the delivery. This is the first case in India of a COVID-19 patient delivering a child and so far there is no virus transmission to the baby.

# Inspector sets up community kitchen for poor

Officer and some RWA members took initiative after watching plight of migrants

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI

On March 27, inspector Suman Kumar, while on duty as night checking officer, intercepted hundreds of migrant workers braving the rain while walking to their home towns in the dead of the night. He tried his best to find a shelter for them but could not succeed given the apprehensions related to the novel coronavirus.

Since then, the Sarita Vihar resident, who is posted as inspector (investigation) at the local police station, has set up a community kitchen in his own neighbourhood, seeking to ensure that as ma-



Food from the Sarita Vihar community kitchen being distributed to the needy. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ny as 300 poor people do not go hungry.

"Around 1 a.m., while patrolling, I saw hundreds of poor families walking in the rain with small children. I made several calls, knocked on several doors, including those of religious places, but

those in charge, understandably, said nothing could be done right away. I could not stop the workers from marching on," said the officer.

That morning eight days ago, the officer made calls to the RWA members in his society — Mrinal Singh, Vijay

Kher, Ramprakash and Harish Bhargava — and sought their help. By 8 a.m., a team of three cooks was ready, hand-stoves, wheat flour, vegetables, fruits were arranged. Women in the area joined hands to prepare food and wrap it in paper packets at the community centre in Pocket-C, Sarita Vihar.

"I couldn't help those whom I met that night but, since that morning, we have been routinely providing food to anyone in need. We have distributed food at slum clusters such as Madanpur Khadar, Mohan industrial area, Jasola intersection among others," he said.

# Bhilwara aims to stop spread of virus with 'all-down curfew'

Containment efforts pay off, only one positive case in 4 days

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

Determined to snap the chain of COVID-19 transmission, authorities in Rajasthan's Bhilwara have now imposed an aggressive 11-day-long "all-down curfew" with even essential services being severely curtailed. The textile city, which had emerged as the State's first hotspot of COVID-19 infection a fortnight ago, appears to have already had a measure of success in containing the spread of the novel coronavirus, with only one positive case detected during the last four days, and 17 of the 27 infected persons having recovered after treatment.

The containment efforts, which included an indefinite curfew that was clamped on March 20 even before the nationwide lockdown began, has had some tangible impact. Nine of the 17 patients were discharged from the Mahatma Gandhi Government Hospital on Friday, followed by two on Saturday, after multiple tests confirmed their full recovery. "They have been advised home quarantine for 14 days as a precautionary measure," Bhilwara's Chief Medical and Health Officer Mush-taq Khan told *The Hindu* on Saturday. "Even the person detected positive today was asymptomatic and was found in the house-to-house survey," he said.

The infection had initially



A road during lockdown in Bhilwara. ■ FILE PHOTO

spread in a private hospital which has since been sealed, and all the cases in Bhilwara were those of the hospital staff, patients and their subsequent contacts. Kiran Kumar (name changed), who worked as a medical ward in-charge at the hospital, said he felt as if he had won a war after his discharge.

## Doctors' resolve

M.G. Hospital's Medical Superintendent Arun Gaur said the doctors' team had resolved to "convert the pain into energy" and decided the treatment regimen for each patient after studying his or her history. "We still have patients in the isolation ward," said Dr. Gaur. "Their blood tests, X-ray reports and echocardiography depict that they are on the way to recovery... we will overcome this phase," he said.

Bhilwara Collector Rajendra Bhatt said the administration was working on the

two fronts of identification of patients and containing the spread of the virus. No person would be allowed to step out of home in the city of 4 lakh people till April 13, with special arrangements having been made to provide essential services at the doorstep, he said.

Of the 6,800 people who were home-quarantined, 4,300 have completed the mandatory two-week isolation. The district administration has acquired hotels, hostels and dharamshalas in the town to arrange 1,500 quarantine beds and 14,400 normal beds to meet an emergency situation.

While all curfew passes, issued since March 20, had been cancelled and the district's borders sealed, a 3,000-strong police force, along with the home guards and the State Disaster Response Force personnel, was enforcing the curfew, which started on Friday.

# Grounding of planes affects IMD's weather data supply

Data relayed from aircraft on temperature and wind speed are used in dynamical models

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

The grounding of the country's civilian aircraft has strangled a key source of weather data that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) uses for its forecasts.

Officials, however, clarified that India's annual monsoon forecast system was on track, with the first forecast scheduled to be issued in mid-April.

Aircraft relay data about temperature and wind speed in the upper atmosphere to meteorological agencies the world over and this is used in the dynamical models, the ones which are run on super computers and relied on to



From the skies: The inputs sent by aircraft are important as they determine the initial conditions. ■ SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

give weather forecasts three days, or even two weeks in advance.

"Inputs from aircraft are important for the dynamical

models as they determine the initial conditions for these models," D.S. Pai, Chief Forecaster, IMD Pune, told *The Hindu*.

"However, for the monsoon forecast, which is a long-term forecast, this isn't significantly affected."

Beginning mid-March, India began restricting incoming international flights into the country and by March 24 imposed a total shutdown on domestic air travel as well.

## Traditional system

This year, the IMD will likely rely on its traditional statistical forecast system — the workhorse, developed on the basis of historical data.

India had begun to move away from this system and started to rely on its dynamical models as it better captures developing changes in

the atmosphere. However, India's dynamical models are still not as adept as meteorologists want them to be, for warning of a drought or extreme changes in monsoon rainfall.

That, and limited data from aircraft as well as a general decline in land-based information because of a shortage of manpower to send observations, are forcing the agency's hand.

"We need multiple observations from weather stations from all parts of the country," said Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6