



Kerala nurse raring to return to duty after defeating COVID-19
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Father-daughter duo in Madhya Pradesh recover completely
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Life insurance policy holders get 30 more days to pay premium
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Pope opens Holy Week amid pandemic, says now is the time to serve
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NEARBY



Five militants, 3 soldiers dead in Kupwara strike
 SRINAGAR
 Five militants have been killed in an ongoing operation along the Line of Control in north Kashmir's Kupwara. Three soldiers were killed during the operation, said an Army spokesman.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Some schools monitor lamp lighting by students

NEW DELHI
 Parents cried foul on Sunday as several schools monitored whether their students lit diyas at 9 p.m., as urged by the Prime Minister, pressured by a letter from the Ministry of Human Resource Development asking for an action-taken report. The Ministry later clarified that no coercion was intended.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Capital records 58 new cases, one death

NEW DELHI
 The total number of COVID-19 cases in the Capital crossed 500 after 58 new cases were reported on Sunday, the Delhi government said. One person died taking the toll to seven. Of the new cases, 19 are connected to the Nizamuddin centre. In all, 503 cases have been reported in Delhi so far.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Cases doubled in 4.1 days due to Tablighi Jamaat event: govt.

We are chasing the virus, say officials as new cases rise in Maharashtra, T.N.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

India's death toll from COVID-19 rose to 83 on Sunday, with 11 fatalities since Saturday. The number of confirmed infections across the country stood at 3,577 cases, with 505 new cases; 274 persons have recovered, the Union Health Ministry said.

"We are chasing the virus rather than the other way around and India's strategy continues to be preventive. We rather be over prepared," Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said at Sunday's press briefing.

COVID-19

The Ministry maintained that last month's Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Delhi has pushed up the doubling rate of cases in India to 4.1 days from the estimated 7.4 days.

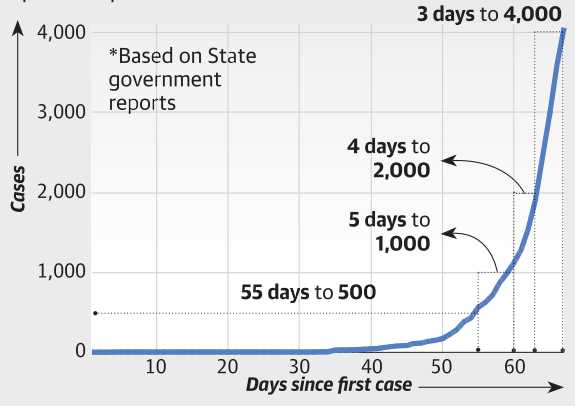
Reports from State Health Departments put the death toll across the country at 127, with 3,603 active cases. The maximum number of cases continued to be reported from Maharashtra at 748, with 13 fatalities in the past 24 hours. Tamil Nadu followed with 559 active cases, reporting two fatalities since Saturday.

Rapid increase

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in India crossed 4,000* on Sunday. While it took 55 days for 500 cases, it took only one day for it to jump from 3,500 to 4,000



Acting early: A nurse adjusting a face shield to protect a newborn from COVID-19 at a hospital in Samut Prakan province, Thailand. • AP



Stating that there is no evidence to suggest airborne transmission of the novel coronavirus, head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases with the Indian Council of Medical Research Raman Gangakhedkar said rapid antibody-based blood test for COVID-19 would be deployed by Wednesday for high prevalence areas and hotspots across India.

Asked about concerns raised by doctors of AIIMS, Delhi, and other cities on the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), Mr. Agarwal said the situation should ease in a few days.

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MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11
300 TABLIGHI JAMAAT MEMBERS TEST POSITIVE IN PAK. ▶ PAGE 12

'Ready to stop academic loss'

The government will take a decision on reopening of schools and colleges on April 14 after reviewing the COVID-19 situation in the country, Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said. He added that the safety of students and teachers is of utmost importance and his Ministry is prepared to ensure that there is no academic loss if the lockdown is extended. ▶ PAGE 8

Puzzling cases in Karnataka

As 22 of the 151 positive cases in Karnataka don't have any foreign travel or contact history, State health officials are at a loss to understand how they could have contracted the infection. While the cases raise questions as to whether it is the beginning of community transmission, officials have been denying it. The patients have spread the infection to eight others. ▶ PAGE 5

PM lights lamp as nation joins hands against virus

Fireworks, conches join nine-minute event across country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

People across the country switched off lights in their houses and balconies in solidarity with the rest of the country in combating COVID-19 at the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mr. Modi had, in a video message last week, asked Indians to light a lamp or flash a torch from their mobile phone at 9 p.m. on Sunday for nine minutes. The Prime Minister lit a lamp at his official residence at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg and tweeted a Sanskrit verse, seeking health and prosperity for all and the defeat of all enemies.

Mr. Modi wore a white south Indian mundu (dhoti) and an Assamese gamocha (towel) and lit a traditional oil lamp from south India. This was to convey, sources said, solidarity with all corners of the country.

President Ram Nath Kovind and First Lady Savita Kovind also lit lamps as did Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu. Several political party leaders, including YSRCP chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Eddapadi Palaniswami, joined in.

Union Health Minister



United effort: Nurses of J.N. Ray Hospital in Kolkata expressing solidarity in the fight against the pandemic. • PTI

Harsh Vardhan lit a lamp along with AIIMS doctors and staff, whom he called "Corona warriors", on the Delhi campus.

'Victory of good'

"Let the brightness of the lights ignite our energies and ensure the 'victory of good over evil. My prayers go out for all those million homes across the planet who are suffering because of coronavirus," he said.

As the clock struck 9, lights went out in most houses and people gathered in balconies and at doors, flashing lights, while many lit candles and lamps. The sound of fireworks, conches, beating of vessels, whistles and police sirens broke the silence of the lockdown. At

some places, Hindu devotional songs, mantras and the national anthem were also played.

The event passed off without any disruption to the national electricity grid after the government and utilities put in place elaborate plans to deal with the sudden drop and then a quick spurt in demand.

India has been on a 21-day lockdown from March 25 to check the spread of coronavirus pandemic that has claimed over 83 lives in the country and 65,000 globally, while more than 12,00,000 declared cases have been registered in 190 countries since the epidemic first emerged in China in December 2019.

(With PTI inputs)

U.P. lockdown to end in phases: Adityanath

CM seeks legislators' advice on plan

OMAR RASHID
 LUCKNOW

The lockdown imposed to stem the spread of COVID-19 will come to an end in Uttar Pradesh on April 15 but in phases, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said.

"15 April se lockdown samapt hone wala hai (The lockdown will come to an end on April 15)," Mr. Adityanath said while interacting with MLAs in the State through videoconferencing on Saturday.

He, however, stressed the need to end the lockdown in phases. "On April 15, once we end the lockdown, if crowds gather at once, all the efforts will go down the drain. We have to ensure that the crowding doesn't take place. Your help and cooperation is needed in this regard," he said.

The Chief Minister sought



Yogi Adityanath

the MLAs' suggestions in deciding which establishments should be opened first.

Mr. Adityanath told the legislators that there is a need to fully defeat the virus by November-December.

He also connected with all MPs and Ministers in the State through videoconferencing and appealed to them to ensure that the common man standing on the last rung gets benefits of the State government's schemes.

Sample survey



Watchful eyes: Doctors collecting samples of people having cold and cough for testing for COVID-19 at a clinic near the containment area of Ambavadi in Dahisar in the northern suburb of Mumbai on Sunday. • AADESH CHOUDHARY

Rapid antibody testing for hotspots first: ICMR

The rollout is likely on Wednesday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said the rapid antibody-based blood test for COVID-19 will be deployed by this Wednesday in clusters and hotspots showing high incidence of confirmed cases.

Raman R. Gangakhedkar, head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases Division of the ICMR, explained that overall testing for COVID-19 using real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), a laboratory technique combining reverse transcription of RNA into DNA, is increasing and that India would be approaching full capacity soon.

"At the same time, we are expecting delivery of rapid test kits (blood-based) for use in response to COVID-19

Free testing and treatment

The Centre has decided to provide free testing and treatment of COVID-19 under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme. The move will benefit more than 50 crore beneficiaries across India. ▶ PAGE 8

situation. By Wednesday, this should be up and running," he added.

The Health Ministry added that all States/UTs had been issued guidelines for implementing these tests and reports may be entered into the ICMR portal, similar to results of real-time RT PCR tests for COVID-19.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Taking COVID-19 news to remote corners of Odisha

17 community radio networks are spreading awareness in rural areas with limited Internet access

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
 BHUBANESWAR

At a time when people are keen on understanding the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 17 community radio networks are proving to be a refreshing tool for the customised dissemination of information to rural audiences in Odisha.

"Our experience shows that for more than 60% of the rural population, DTH (direct to home) and Internet-based media are still out of reach. Moreover, neither television nor any other sources of information would provide them with news related to the small geographical area they live within," said N. A. Shah Ansari, founder of Radio Namaskar and president of

Odisha's Community Radio Association.

Urging labourers

The past one week has been very hectic for community radio operators. Apart from passing on the government's instructions, they kept prodding their target audiences, especially migrant labourers who had returned from outside the State, to inform their respective gram panchayats of their arrival.

"We deliberately did not utter the word quarantine as it causes panic. We just urged migrant labourers to go to panchayat offices and inform them of their arrival. Our approach clicked. According to the feedback we have received, most of them went and disclosed



Keeping informed: Villagers tuning in to a community radio station in Odisha. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

their travel history," said Mr. Ansari.

Villagers turn up the volume on radios for groups of listeners with emphasis on social distancing.

Verified information

"In the lockdown situation, the timings and location of

weekly markets, adhering to rules on safe distance, and the status of local ATMs are critical messages that community radio can disseminate effectively. When misinformation is flooded on social media, people get confused, but we broadcast verified

information," said Pradeeptha Dutta, chairman of Radio Kisan which operates from Balipatna in Khordha district.

The most common question asked by listeners was if the coronavirus could be transmitted by domestic animals or stray dogs.

Sibani Suar of Phulbani's Radio Muskan added: "We work in close coordination with the district administration. Awareness messages and warnings on health hazards are sourced from very authentic sources."

Community radio stations are operating in remote pockets of Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Khordha, Nuapada, Balasore and Koraput districts.

Delhi lab to offer 'drive-through test'

DDL to start sample collection at Punjabi Bagh centre today

JACOB KOSHY
 NEW DELHI

To work around the challenges of home-based testing in the country, Dr. Dangs Lab (DDL) plans to offer 'drive-through test' for COVID-19.

South Korea leads the world in the number of tests per million to check for coronavirus infection and it has been able to do it, partly, by allowing those who feel sick to drive up to a test centre where nurses wearing protective gear collect a nose or throat sample from the car itself. Results are mailed or messaged in a day. This method of mass testing has allowed reduced contact between patients and health-care workers, thereby lessening the chances of transmission.

"Inspired" by the South Korean approach, Arjun Dang, CEO, DDL, said the test

would conform with the guidelines of the Indian Council of Medical Research that mandates only those who have a doctor's prescription to be offered a test.

"What we have seen so far is that many are uncomfortable with the home collection process. They are worried that lab personnel – despite being fully protected – may infect family members," Dr. Arjun told *The Hindu*.

Testing apprehensions

Navin Dang, president, DDL, said that some people are worried that lab personnel visiting home in full protective gear would scare the neighbours. "There are also instances when spouses of some of our own lab personnel have been told by their partners to live separately for a month. It's to address such concerns that we are offering

this facility," he said.

The drive-through test, which the lab will begin to offer at its Punjabi Bagh centre in west Delhi from Monday, would require those wanting a test to pre-register, pay online and provide details of their car. There would be a 30-metre gap between cars. "A stretch in the parking lot will be used for this purpose. The cars will be parked in designated spots, windows rolled down, samples collected and they will drive off. Each test should take about 20 minutes," Dr. Arjun said.

Testing for COVID-19 costs ₹4,500 and the drive-through test cost will be "similar", he added, but didn't specify the exact price. People are already signing up online for the test, but the days ahead are likely to see an up-tick in such visits, he said.