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MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2020

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# Capital curbs won't be eased today

**LOCKDOWN** Delhi opts out of plan to provide certain relaxations from April 20 proposed by Centre

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**NEW DELHI:** Delhi will not immediately ease any restrictions clamped under the national lockdown because coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases are on the rise in the national capital, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday, even as several other states announced relaxing some norms beginning Monday to jump-start the virus-hit economy.



Hindustan Times reported on Sunday that the Delhi government intended to keep all restrictions in place

Hindustan Times reported on Sunday that the Delhi government did not want to ease restrictions on April 20 on the grounds that the city-state was a "high-risk zone". All 11 revenue districts in the state are now designated as virus hot spots, with one remaining district (north-east Delhi) joining the list.

At a news conference on Sunday morning, Kejriwal said the government will assess the situation after one week. "There have been instances where people without symptoms were found infected by Covid-19," the chief minister said. "Delhi has 2% of the country's population but 12% of the total active cases," he added.

Kejriwal said many people were facing difficulties because of the lockdown. "But if we give

relaxations and if there is a shortage of ICU, ventilators, oxygen in hospitals and people lose their lives, we wouldn't be able to forgive ourselves. Hence, the decision to not relax lockdown was taken," he added.

Out of 736 samples collected recently, 186 people were found to be infected by Sars-CoV-2 on Saturday and all of them were asymptomatic, he said, adding that the people did not suspect they had contracted the disease. "This suggests that they would have compromised with isolation norms and potentially spread the virus without even knowing. This is a scary situation."

At 2,003 cases -- 110 people tested positive on Sunday -- Delhi has the second most Covid-19 infections after Maharashtra, which has 4,200. The city has

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A man wearing a face mask rests on a cart during the nationwide lockdown, in New Delhi.

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**NEW DELHI:** E-commerce companies such as Amazon and Flipkart are not allowed to sell products unless they are in the essential items list, the Union home ministry said in an order on Sunday, clarifying an earlier announcement that did not specify if these companies could start delivering products such as laptops, mobile phones and appliances from April 20.

On April 15, the government put e-commerce in the list of what will be allowed once some curbs are lifted from areas with no Covid-19 outbreak. It seemed to suggest that sale of all products would be allowed, prompting trader lobbies to criticise this as discriminatory against brick-and-mortar retailers.

"Supply of non-essential goods by e-commerce companies to remain prohibited dur-

**THE HOME MINISTRY CLARIFIED AN EARLIER ORDER THAT DID NOT SPECIFY IF THESE COMPANIES CAN START DELIVERING ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS**

ing Lockdown 2.0 to fight Covid," said a spokesperson of the ministry of home affairs citing the new order, which, he said, clarifies a misinterpretation of last week's directions.

Clause 14 (v) of e-commerce companies in revised consolidated guidelines on April 15 was technically misinterpreted as allowing the delivery of non-essential items, since the clause did not specify "essential or non-essential items", a home ministry official said, asking not to be named.

On Saturday, the opposition

Congress too opposed the April 15 decision, saying the government was doing injustice to retail traders by allowing e-commerce companies to deliver non-essential items. Similar objection was raised by the Confederation of All-India Traders in a letter to the PM.

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday the move will help in creating a level playing field.

Amazon India, one of the biggest e-commerce websites, said Sunday's decision will affect customers who may need some products essential to working or studying from home.

"The new guideline will disappoint not only the consumers whose list of essentials had expanded to work from home and study from home products but also the thousands of small businesses, sellers and manufacturers across the country,"

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**Massive spikes in cases in Gujarat and Maharashtra**

**MUMBAI/AHMEDABAD:** Maharashtra and Gujarat recorded a sharp spike in the number of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases on Sunday as infections of the highly contagious disease continued to rise across the country.

Maharashtra, which has the most infections than any other state, reported its highest one-day increase of 552 new positive cases on Sunday, out of which 456 are from Mumbai.

With this, the state's Covid-19 caseload is 4,200 including 223 deaths, health officials said.

Gujarat also reported 367 new patients, taking the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state to 1,743.

It is now the third-most affected state in the country after Maharashtra and Delhi.

The death toll in Gujarat stands at 63, after 10 fatalities were reported on Sunday.

FULL REPORT ON P4

**Eateries, offices to open in some states**

**NEW DELHI:** Hotels in Kerala, highway dhabas in Haryana, tea gardens in West Bengal and mining in Jharkhand will be among the establishments that will open for business from Monday as states across India partially lift curbs in an effort to get their battered economy back on track.

The state governments are expecting 10 to 25% of the industries to start operations, multiple officials said on Sunday. The ministry of home affairs (MHA) had, in its guidelines issued on April 15, allowed factories in special economic zones (SEZs) and Export Oriented Units (EOUs), industrial estates and industrial townships, apart from industries in rural areas, to open from April 20. Everything barring essential services has been shut from March 25, when a nationwide lockdown was clamped to arrest the spread of Covid-19.

Most industry leaders said they were gearing up for teething

**WORKERS CAN MOVE WITHIN STATE**

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre on Sunday said stranded migrant workers will be allowed to work in the states they are currently in but there will be no interstate movement during the lockdown enforced to curb the virus's spread.

FULL REPORT ON P5

problems in the first few days and are expecting production to reach up to 50% of capacity by the first week of May. Almost all of these establishments will run in areas with few or no infections -- known as orange and green zones, respectively.

FULL REPORT ON P5

**Covid-19 doesn't see race, religion: Modi**

**NEW DELHI:** The coronavirus disease does not distinguish between race, religion, caste, colour and borders and humanity's response to this "common challenge" should be based on unity and brotherhood, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, calling on Indians to innovate a new work culture for the world.

Modi's comments come at a time when some sections of the society have sought to introduce a communal element in the discourse surrounding Covid-19 when the nation is still in the midst of the battle

against the pandemic.

Unlike previous moments in history, when countries or societies faced off against each other, the world today is facing a common challenge, the Prime Minister said in an address to professionals from various fields on the social media platform LinkedIn. The future will be about togetherness and resilience, he added.

India, with the right blend of the physical and the virtual, can emerge as the global nerve centre of complex modern multinational supply chains in the post Covid-19 world, he said.

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**Refrain from taking bookings: DGCA to airlines**

**MUMBAI:** The DGCA on Sunday directed airlines to refrain from resuming online ticket bookings a day after aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri told them to restart the process only after a decision is taken to end the ban on flight operations. DGCA said none of its circulars on the lockdown allowed airlines to restart bookings from May 4.

**Silent spread fears grow as asymptomatic cases spike**

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**NEW DELHI:** Roughly two-thirds of all Covid-19 cases in 10 major states comprise people who did not show any symptoms at the time of testing, according to state government data that reinforced growing evidence that "silent spreaders" were unknowingly infecting others, and underlined the need for extensive testing to isolate such patients.

An analysis by HT found that 65% of Maharashtra's 3,648 cases and 75% of Uttar Pradesh's 974 cases did not show symptoms at the time of testing. In Assam, 82% of 34 cases were of people with no symptoms. In Delhi, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that all 186 people diagnosed with Covid-19 the previous day had exhibited no symptoms of illness.

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**WORRYING SIGNS**

Experts say majority of patients who did not show symptoms at time of test are in 20-45 age group

STATES	ASYMPTOMATIC CASES	TOTAL CASES
Maharashtra	65%	of 3,648 cases
Uttar Pradesh	75%	of 974 cases
Karnataka	50%	of 384 cases
Haryana	65%	of 232 cases
Punjab	75%	of 182 cases
Odisha	78%	of 61 cases
Uttarakhand	50%	of 42 cases
Chhattisgarh	63%	of 36 cases
Jharkhand	98%	of 36 cases
Assam	82%	of 34 cases

All cases as of Saturday night

**Patients needing dialysis turned back by hospitals**

**NEW DELHI:** Private hospitals are allegedly turning back patients with chronic kidney diseases who come for the dialysis treatment -- a procedure to filter blood -- fearing that such patients, who already have low immunity, could be infected with the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) and spread it.

**In city cemetery, a mix of closure and caution**

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**NEW DELHI:** Until the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) hit Delhi, he had never seen human bodies being treated like "untouchable objects", says Mohammad Shamim, the 38-year-old supervisor at Jadid Qabristan Ahle Islam, a graveyard near Delhi Gate. In many cases, even their own sons are reluctant to carry the dead on their shoulders, he adds.

Twenty-six Covid-19 victims have been buried under

Shamim's watch, which involves ensuring all funerals are in line with procedures laid down by the government.

The cemetery has earmarked a separate area for the burial of Covid-19 victims -- a large clearing about 150 metres away from the main burial site. "In a normal burial, the grave is dug by our gravedigger; and it is generally three feet deep. But for the Covid-19 victims, the grave is 10 feet deep, and we have to use earth-moving machines to dig the graves," Shamim says.

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Health workers and family members perform funeral prayers for a Covid-19 victim at a cemetery in Delhi.

**After 45-day-old infant, 10-mth-old infected in ward**

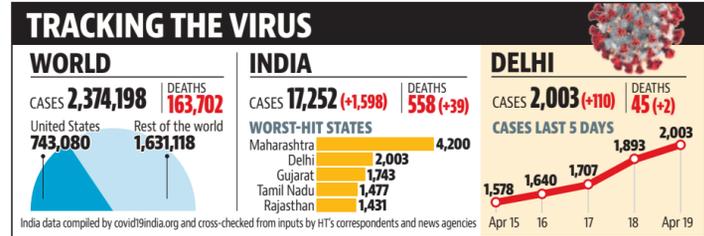
**NEW DELHI:** A 45-day-old baby infected with coronavirus disease (Covid-19) died on Saturday at Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC), making him the youngest fatality in the country.

The baby had been admitted to the hospital's paediatric intensive care unit soon after birth on developing the respiratory ailment. "As per protocol, a sample of the baby was collected for Covid-19. The report came back positive on Friday and the baby died on Saturday morning," said an official of the hospital.

Another 10-month-old child admitted to the same ward tested positive on Saturday.

The paediatric ICU ward of Lady Hardinge Medical College has become a hotbed for Covid-19 infections, with at least nine staff members from the ward testing Covid-19 positive.

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**CM worried as Delhi cases hit 2,000 mark**

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**NEW DELHI:** Delhi on Sunday reported 110 new Covid-19 cases as the number of infections crossed the 2,000-mark, including 45 deaths.

Hours before, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that the "coronavirus is spreading fast".

He also declared all 11 revenue districts of Delhi as hot spots and directed the administration to conduct a fresh assessment of the situation in the Capital by April 27. "We have witnessed an increase in the number of cases. Yesterday, out of the 736 test results processed, 186 tested positive and all were asymptomatic... This is a scary situation," Kejriwal said.

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**RAPID TESTS FOR PLASMA THERAPY**

**NEW DELHI:** The first batch of 42,000 rapid testing kits that arrived in Delhi were deployed to evaluate whether a batch of 92 patients who have recovered from Covid-19 can donate blood for plasma therapy trials. Plasma therapy uses one of the blood components rich in virus-fighting antibodies in people who have recovered to help critical patients.

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**Lok Sabha unveils new austerity drive in Covid aftermath**

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**NEW DELHI:** Tours by members of Parliament, canteens, conferences and many such expenses may come to a halt as the Lok Sabha secretariat, which runs the lion's share of Parliament establishment, has told its staff to not spend more than 20% of its budget in the first quarter (April-June).

The Rajya Sabha secretariat, too, will put similar measures in place, officials said. The Lok Sabha secretariat said that only salaries and "extremely urgent" payments will be made in April and told its 2,000-odd staff not to incur any expenditure without prior approval by their higher authorities.

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**PYRAMIDS SAY STAY HOME**



A laser projection to mark the world heritage day reads 'stay home' on the pyramids in Egypt as the world fights the coronavirus disease pandemic that has affected over 200 countries.

**Europe's toll tops 100,000 as cases touch 1 million**

**PARIS:** The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) has killed more than 100,000 people in Europe, nearly two-thirds of the overall global death toll, while the number of infections topped 1 million, making it the hardest-hit continent. Spain and Italy have recorded the most fatalities after the United States.

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**Trump ups anti-China rhetoric**

**BEIJING/WASHINGTON:** A laboratory in the Chinese city at ground zero of the global coronavirus outbreak has rejected US theories that it spawned the pandemic, as President Donald Trump warned Beijing of consequences if it was "knowingly responsible".

"Was it a mistake that got out of control or was it done deliberately?" Trump said on Saturday, questioning the origins of the

highly contagious disease which first emerged in the city of Wuhan in December.

"If they were knowingly responsible, yeah, then there should be consequences," he said.

The virus was probably first transmitted to humans at a Wuhan market where exotic animals were slaughtered, according to Chinese scientists. But conspiracy theories that

the virus came from a maximum-security virology lab have been brought into the mainstream by US government officials.

"There's no way this virus came from us," Yuan Zhiming, the head of the P4 laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which is equipped to handle dangerous viruses, said in an interview with state media.

"I know it's impossible," he said.

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