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# COVID-19: PM calls for people's curfew

Task force to reduce economic impact; employers told to pay employees in full

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NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged Indians across the country to face the coronavirus pandemic with collective determination and patience to make sure that "humanity and India prevails". In his address to the nation on television, Mr. Modi also announced the setting up of the COVID-19 task force, under Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, for measures to mitigate some of the economic hardships engendered by the pandemic.

There were nine calls to action in Mr. Modi's address, including a self-imposed 'janata curfew' (people's curfew) on March 22, not to resort to panic-buying, asking senior citizens to stay indoors, social-distancing, avoiding elective surgery or routine health check-ups not to overburden health services, asking employers to pay employees in full when they have to stay home and to stay away from rumours.

## Serious situation

The pandemic, he said, was a serious, global crisis, "involving more countries than any previous natural or political crisis, even during World War I or World War II."

Mr. Modi said that as there was no clear treatment, medicine or vaccine to counter the coronavirus, it was incumbent on people

## Fighting a crisis

There were several calls to action in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation. The key ones are:

**Janata curfew:** People were urged to follow a curfew on Sunday (March 22) from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. They were requested to not go out or gather in their societies, and stay at home

**Panic buying:** Amid reports that some were stocking up on food items, the PM said essentials, including medicines, should not be hoarded

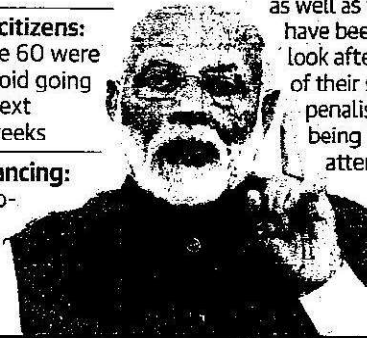
**For senior citizens:** Those above 60 were urged to avoid going out in the next couple of weeks

**Social distancing:** He told people to give up the attitude

that all was well or that they would escape the disease

**Health services:** People should avoid elective surgery or routine checkups to not overburden health services. On Sunday, at 5 p.m., he urged them to express appreciation for those employed in hospitals, airports, railways & police

**For employers:** Traders as well as the affluent have been asked to look after the interest of their staff and not penalise them for being not able to attend work due to travel and other restrictions



to observe escalation via social-distancing. He asked all Indians to observe a voluntary people's curfew between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Sunday. This would be observed and implemented by the people themselves, not to stir

out of their houses.

He also asked that on Sunday, at 5 p.m., people should step out on their balconies, verandas or doorways and clap or beat *thalis* (metal plates) to express their appreciation for the work of work-

## No new local cases in China

China on Thursday reported no new local infection for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak three months ago, a milestone in its battle against the virus. China has hailed its success as evidence of what can be achieved when a vast, top-down bureaucracy is mobilised in pursuit of a target. However, China is not out of danger from a revived contagion. Questions have been raised about the accuracy of its statistics. ▶ PAGE 12

## Indian dies in Iran

One of the 255 Indian pilgrims in Iran suffering from COVID-19 has died. The death of the pilgrim came on a day when the Indian Embassy opened a hostel to house a part of the pilgrims who had tested positive. The Ministry of External Affairs has assured those unaffected by the infection that they will be evacuated to India. ▶ PAGE 7

ers at hospitals, airports, railways, and other essential services, who, he said, "were our bulwark, till now against the pandemic."

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