

# Diagnostic centres mushroom, but most are laboratories of neglect

## Untrained Staff Running Many Centres Flouting Norms, Safety Protocols

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**New Delhi:** There are hundreds of pathological laboratories in Delhi but no law to regulate them. Due to this, malpractices in running of these crucial healthcare establishments go largely unchecked.

Delhi government has issued a public notice recently, with reference to a health ministry notification on minimum standards for medical diagnostic laboratories, and directed the owners of all pathological labs to display a signage in their premises regarding the category: basic composite, medium and advanced path labs.

"The report of basic composite laboratory, whenever the interpretation of medical report is required, is to be signed by a doctor having minimum MBBS degree and the reports of which contain only numerical value or result of the test or technical analysis of samples, then signing of the report by MBBS doctors may not be essential," the public notice says.

It adds that reports of medium and advanced categories can be signed by doctors having a PG degree or PhD in pathology, microbiology, biochemistry and laboratory medicine. If the reports provided by a path lab is not signed in accordance with the aforementioned directions, the notice says,

### DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEMS WITH THESE LABS



PATH LABS		
No. of diagnostic labs and sample collection centres across NCR <b>Over 1,000</b>	Less than 5% are NABL-accredited	No trained staff   Many path labs in Delhi are being run by technicians. Pathologists are on the rolls only for namesake. In some cases, the same pathologist is registered with multiple labs
Lack of quality equipment   Many labs use old and uncalibrated equipment resulting in erroneous reports		
SAMPLE COLLECTIONS CENTRES		
Lack of space   Most collection centres do not even have proper sitting space. Some of them near AIIMS, Deen Dayal Upadhyay hospital and GTB hospital, for example, are run from rooms as big as a paan shop	Improper storage   Few collection centres have facilities for refrigeration, reagents and supplies, maintenance of patient records and water purification. This can lead to defilement of the sample	Improper transportation   The samples—blood, urine and faeces—need to be transported in colour-coded specialised containers with correct preservatives. Most centres don't follow it

## Power stir: LG brings ESMA for 6 months

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Following the discoms' plea to invoke Essential Services Management Act (ESMA) in the wake of an all-India strike being planned by electricity unions, lieutenant governor Anil Bajaj issued an urgent order prohibiting strike/agitation by power company employees in Delhi for six months in larger public interest.

According to Tata Power Delhi and BSES discoms, any such strike would have crippled life in Delhi. "It is imperative that the necessary provisions under ESMA may be invoked well before January 8 to prohibit strikes which may lead to the total disruption of essential services in Delhi," they wrote to the government.

The employees have planned a one-day strike on January 8 or 9 to join a nationwide strike called by central trade unions on one of these days.

It is unclear how many discom employees were expected to take part in the strike, but a source said employees across the power sector would have stayed off work. Trade unions have a list of 12 demands, ranging from minimum pay to curbing price rise to pensions, is pegged as one of the biggest the country has seen in the last few years.

## JNU attendance policy worst among 21 countries'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** In a report released by Members of Parliament on Friday, Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) initiated a fresh attack against the JNU administration for its implementation of the compulsory attendance system by claiming that in their survey of teachers from 75 universities of 21 countries, they found their attendance policy to be "antithetical to the university's values."

JNUTA stated that the JNU administration, "without any consultation with the statutory bodies of the university, unilaterally imposed a new rule for daily attendance for the faculty, starting with daily signing of an attendance register held by the school/centre office. There are plans to soon replace the registers with biometric devices for attendance that are currently being installed across the university."

This, they say, was never a part of the agenda of the 146th (A) Meeting of the academic council held on July 13.

"The administration has since then been coercing all faculty members to accept this system of control and surveillance by denial of processing of any papers, including those related to leave, medical coverage, fellowships, conferences, and administration of research projects."

The teachers' association stated that they had written several letters to the JNU administration, asking for an explanation about the academic logic behind such an exercise in a university that is recognised for its research, teaching and learning environment.

To prove that the policy is wrong, JNUTA, through its members, contacted teachers working in universities/institutions of higher learning to document the practices of academic accountability of faculty members working in university systems across the world. JNUTA got responses from teachers working in 75 highly ranked universities spread across 21 countries. "Almost all teachers who responded to our survey expressed shock and outrage at the new attendance policy instituted by the JNU administration and found the policy to be antithetical to the idea of a university and fostering good teaching and research," stated JNUTA.

### Prof gets Infosys honour, but says leave to receive award rejected by VC

**Bengaluru:** Kavita Singh, professor and dean at JNU's School of Arts and Aesthetics, who is one of the six recipients of the Infosys Science Foundation Awards 2018, was introduced by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen as someone whose work is known across the world.

But after collecting the award, Singh said, "I must thank, among others, my university, but things are changing at JNU. They are comically bad. After I arrived today, I got an email that my leave application to come here has been rejected by the vice-chancellor. So, I'm here illegitimately."

Singh was awarded the Infosys Prize in humanities for her work on Mughal, Rajput and Deccan art, as well as her "insightful writing on the historical function and role of museums".

Interested in the politics of museums, 'No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia' is among Singh's noted works. **TNN**

## Corpn plans mobile schools to teach kids of migrant labourers

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**New Delhi:** South Delhi Municipal Corporation education committee plans to run mobile schools/crèches to educate children of migrant labourers.

Primary schools of all three civic bodies have been witnessing alarming levels of drop-out rates, and the corporations have constantly argued that migration of parents in one of the major reasons behind the figures.

Nandini Sharma, chairperson of the committee, said these schools would run under Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan and exclusively focus on large construction sites where many labourers are employed. "The construction activity goes on for several years on many large projects. The children remain in the vicinity depriving them of education," Sharma said.

The civic body plans to limit its expenditure on the project by bringing it under the ambit of Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan. "We will get the staff under this mission, while the expenditure will be limited to buses and drivers. This little step will help in educating and saving the future of thousands of kids," she added.

As per the proposal mooted in the budget, only those

### How education will reach them

- South corporation plans mobile schools/crèches at construction sites to bring kids of migrant labourers under education net
- 3-month crash course on reading, writing and basic arithmetic to be offered
- Scheme to be run in coordination with Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan
- Sites where construction will go on for at least 6 months will be selected



sites would be selected which have construction period of four to six months.

The three-month crash courses would be provided under '3R' scheme — basic reading, writing and arithmetic. "Many of these children have dropped out from one school or the other. At the end of three months, we want them to have some basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, which will serve as basic life skills for them," Sharma said.

The committee has proposed that a new head of account be made in the budget, which is estimated to be finalised by January-end in the house of councillors, this year to incorporate this "schools at construction site" project. Sharma has recommended Rs 1 crore be reserved for the project in the next financial year.

Corporation also plans to double the existing fleet of mobile health vans from two to four. These vans would be

### CONSTANT FREE FALL

No. of students in 581 SDMC schools	
2017-18	2,48,297
2016-17	2,65,832
2015-16	2,76,901
2014-15	2,93,436
2013-14	3,02,832

Migration of labourers cited as a key factor behind the drop in enrolment rates

purchased under the school health scheme. Since most of the students in primary primary schools come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, another proposal to provide basic sanitation goods has also been approved.

"Many of our children fall ill due to lack of basic amenities. I have proposed a new head of account to provide hand driers, liquid soaps, napkins, hair brushes for lice, sanitary napkin vending machines at our schools," Sharma said.

citizens can complain either to the state health secretary or the Delhi Medical Council.

Out of nearly 1,000 diagnostic labs in NCR, only about 10% are accredited with the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). It means that they have undergone third-party assessment for availability of qualified manpower, proper equipment and storage facilities, among others.

Doctors say many collection centres are run by untrained staff without knowledge of the protocols to be followed for storage and transportation of the samples, which can affect results and thus the decision-making ability of the treating doctor. Many labs have their collection centres that are run from rooms as big as a paan shop and without proper facilities for refrigeration, reagents and supplies and water purification.

Though the Centre has passed the Clinical Establishment Act, a law that sought to regulate hospitals and labs, Delhi is yet to implement it. Sources said the state government is planning to introduce a separate law — the Delhi Health Bill — to regulate city's hospitals and labs. "Health minister Satyendar Jain has already approved the Bill, which will be presented before the cabinet soon for further approval," said a source.

### Univ spent ₹13L on babas: JNUSU

**New Delhi:** Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union, in an RTI query, has found that the administration spent nearly Rs 13 lakh to host spiritual leaders. The union alleged that while the administration has not updated or provided facilities for visually challenged students citing lack of funds, they had spent nearly Rs 87,000 alone on flight tickets for one such leader.

JNUSU has called for a two-day strike on January 8 to 9 against the "financial corruption." **TNN**

## IN COLD CITY, SUPPORT SYSTEMS FAILING THEM

# Among homeless, over 1L have mental health issues

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**New Delhi:** Say the word 'homeless' and the image that crops up is of an impoverished and unemployed person. But experts at a national seminar observed on Saturday that mentally ill people, even those from affluent families, are as likely to be homeless. Delhi itself has over one lakh mentally ill people living on the streets and the number across the country is only rising.

Nimesh Desai, director of Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Science, joint organiser of the seminar on homelessness, pointed out that homelessness among the mentally ill is growing significantly and is a major concern that needs to be addressed quickly.

The two-day seminar was organised at India International Centre by IHBAS along with the National Legal Services Authority, Delhi State Legal Services Authority, Indian Psychiatric Society and the State Mental Health Authority.

Citing case studies, doctors, psychiatrists and bureaucrats said that homeless people suffer poor nutrition, substance abuse and higher exposure to violence like robberies and beatings.

Justice A K Sikri, who was also in attendance, added, "It is no longer just a health issue now. It is an issue of their human rights. The homeless have the right to live like any other person but are not getting an environment suitable for their life."

Justice Sikri's comments came two days after a Supreme Court bench observed that chaining people suffering from mental illness was violative of their rights under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain felt that modern lifestyles were leading to mental setbacks. "The major issue in the growth of mental disorder is greed and that is the area where we need to work on," Jain said. He also attributed the increase in psychological problems to

**“It is no longer just a health issue now. It is an issue of their human rights. The homeless have the right to live like any other person but are not getting an environment suitable for their life”**

JUSTICE A K SIKRI  
Supreme Court judge

people spending an inordinate amount of their time on social media instead of interacting with each other in person.

The speakers emphasised that the homeless in cities not only lost their identity, but also community support, living in a state of anonymity. Though the homeless contributed to the unorganised labour economy, society was loath to accept them and many of the homeless are

even disconnected from their families. One official said that once the elders in a family — from all classes of society — transferred the property to their children, they were often thrown out of the house. Forced to live on the streets, they frequently end up as mental wrecks.

Not surprisingly, a fifth of the homeless are estimated to be suffering from severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia.

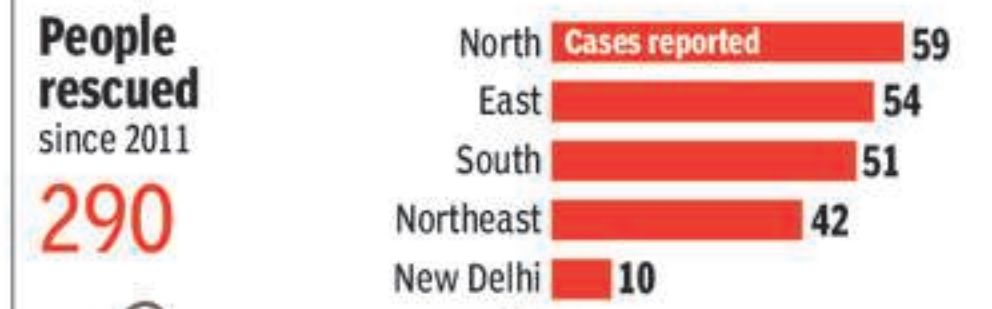
Many have a history of prior hospitalisation for psychiatric conditions, often coupled with one or more physical problems, psychiatrists said.

According to a survey, mental health contributes to 8% of the global burden of disease, and over 15% of adults in developing countries are believed to suffer from mental illness.

This perpetuates a vicious cycle in which the stress of homelessness.

## HELPING HAND NOT REACHING

Mobile mental health unit has been there for homeless people since 2011. But according to data released by IHBAS in 2018, so far it has attended to or has been able to help more men than women



COMMON AILMENTS	HOW TO REHABILITATE THEM?
Schizophrenia	The rehab home should not become a dumping ground for the homeless
Bipolar affective disorder	These homes should be self-sufficient in terms of day-to-day operations like cooking, cleaning, washing, etc
Substance abuse disorder	They must be reintegrated with society
Obsessive compulsive disorder	

Delhi has over 1 lakh people with mental health disorders living on the streets

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