



CORONA WATCH



A police officer makes coronavirus-related announcements in Kolkata. Partha Paul

Pan Masala, gutkha banned in UP

Lucknow: The state government on Wednesday banned the manufacture, supply, and sale of pan masala and gutkha during the 21-day nationwide lockdown. The step was announced by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi. Meanwhile, the government said about 10,000 gram pradhans had been called from the 1076 helpline, which was set up by the Chief Minister, to gather information about people from outside the state. ENS

Two test positive in Amaravati

Amaravati: A 52-year-old man and a 22-year-old tested positive for coronavirus in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday night, taking the total number of cases to 10 in the state, the state health department said. While the 22-year-old youth had returned from the US to Vijayawada, the 52-year-old returned to his native town Guntur after attending a religious congregation in Nizamuddin Mosque in New Delhi, the department said in a bulletin. The youth was admitted to a local government hospital in Delhi on March 21 upon his arrival from Washington and discharged the next day. PTI

Those evicting doctors to face legal action

Jaipur: Rajasthan Health Minister Raghu Sharma on Wednesday said legal action can be taken against landlords who are evicting doctors and paramedical staff from their houses. He said doctors and paramedical staff are risking their lives and some landlords are mounting pressure on them to vacate their houses. Additional Chief Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said, "Government has taken a serious note of it and a notification preventing such actions has been issued..." PTI



FLYING OFF THE SHELVES

Nearly empty shelves at a supermarket in Navi Mumbai on Wednesday, a day after a 21-day nationwide lockdown was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to combat the coronavirus outbreak in the country. Amit Chakravarty

Kerala plans public kitchens, says no one should starve

SHAJU PHILIP THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 25

TO ENSURE that the 21-day lockdown does not leave anyone starving in Kerala, the state government on Wednesday announced community kitchens run by local bodies. People can dial for food, which would be served by volunteers at their doorstep. Local bodies will also provide food to those under home quarantine.

The government has also entrusted local bodies and the revenue department to ensure food and accommodation for migrant workers still in Kerala.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "The prevailing situation would push people into starvation. But, nobody should be left starving in Kerala during the lockdown. Local self-governing bodies should take up the responsibility to supply food to those who cannot prepare food..."

He said, "Everyone's problems cannot be solved from a single centre. So, an elaborate decentralised system would be in place to address the issue. The

FOOD FOR STUDENTS, ELDERLY IN DEHRADUN

Dehradun: Students with no cooking arrangements and senior citizens will be provided daily meals in Dehradun, according to officials. Dehradun has a large number of students who reside in hostels and rented homes. "Administration will tie-up with restaurants to cook and deliver meals to needy students," said Sonia Pant, deputy municipal commissioner. ENS

ward-level volunteer system would be applied."

Vijayan said local self-governing bodies—village panchayats to municipal bodies—should establish community kitchens. Every local body should make an assessment on the people who will require food, he said.

"Some persons with false pride may not directly demand food. But, if a phone number is given, they would. Such persons should not be avoided on the ground that they did not seek any

help," he said. He said local bodies would have to find cooks and volunteers for distributing food. Families in isolated areas should not be left unattended, he added.

The state government has also decided to take care of migrant workers in Kerala, mainly from North and Northeastern states. The Pathanamthitta district administration on Wednesday entrusted tehsildars with finding lodging for migrant workers.

In Ernakulam, secretaries of village panchayat have been asked to ensure accommodation and food for the migrant workers.

The Cabinet also decided to recommend to the Governor the promulgation of Kerala Epidemic Diseases Ordinance 2020. The proposed law would give more powers to the state government to control programmes held by individuals and groups. Accordingly, the state can seal its borders and restrict private as well as public transport. It also has provisions through which the government can restrict or ban crowds at public places and religious institutions and control functioning of government and private institutions.

Tripura to set up community kitchen for free food to urban poor

DEBRAJ DEB AGARTALA, MARCH 25

AMID THE lockdown, Tripura has asked self-help groups (SHG) and urban local bodies to provide cooked food packets and set up community kitchens for the poor.

Urban Development Director Dr Shailesh Kumar Yadav asked top executives of 20 urban local bodies of the state to set up community kitchens at a single location in every urban body.

"Any good Area Level Federation of SHG under DAY-National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) may be deployed for cooking and making food packets. Distribution of food packets to be urban poor twice daily may be done by using one or more dedicated vehicles by the respective urban local bodies", the official wrote in his order.

He said the distribution staff would be provided with gloves and hand sanitisers.

The state's Food and Civil Supplies Department was asked to arrange rice and pulses for all district authorities to ensure emergency food supply.

Meanwhile, the state government has set up control rooms in all eight districts for coordinating information pertaining to the coronavirus. An emergency number-102-was activated to manage queries about emergency ambulance services. Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb launched 50 such ambulances on Wednesday.

Over 948 persons who had recent travel history to affected countries or showed preliminary symptoms are under home quarantine in Tripura. Nobody has tested positive with COVID-19.

First COVID-19 death reported in Tamil Nadu

ARUN JANARDHANAN CHENNAI, MARCH 25

THE STATE reported its first COVID-19 death on Wednesday after a 54-year-old building contractor in Madurai succumbed to the infection. The same day, the total number of coronavirus cases reached 23 after five more people tested positive.

State health minister, CVijaya Baskar, said the five positive cases include four Indonesian nationals and their Chennai-based guide. All of them had been in quarantine since March 22. They are now being treated at the Government Medical College in Salem.

The Indonesian nationals had reached Salem via Delhi and Chennai visiting several mosques. Health department workers are currently tracing people who came in close contact with the foreign nationals during their journey. The state health secretary, Beela Rajesh, told The Indian Express that all four Indonesian nationals, two Thailand nationals, and the building contractor from Madurai, who passed away on Wednesday, had attended a religious outreach programme at Erode (about 100 km from Coimbatore). "All of them were part of the meeting held in Erode," Rajesh said.

A senior health official said that at least a dozen people who had come in close contact with two Thai nationals have been ad-



Police personnel set up blockades near Chennai airport in view of the 21-day lockdown on Wednesday. PTI

mitted to a government isolation ward in the state as they were in the high-risk category, while nearly 150 people who visited the two mosques in the area have been instructed to stay in home quarantine.

Last week, a 49-year-old Thai national, who had accompanied the group and travelled to Erode, died in Coimbatore Medical College. The team reached Delhi on March 6 and left for Erode on March 10 onboard the Millennium Express after visiting several places in the capital. However, the cause of death of the Thai national was officially recorded as complications from diabetic nephropathy, sepsis and pulmonary oedema.

Following the rise in cases, the state administration officials on

Tuesday began tracing about 80,000 people, who have landed in India since March 1.

Until Tuesday night, the total number of people in home quarantine across the state was 15,492 against neighbouring Kerala's 71,994. While the former has so far tested 890 samples (757 were negative), the latter tested 4,516 samples (3,331 were negative).

Health secretary Rajesh said a team of officials are assessing data from the Centre. "About 80,000 Indian passport holders from Tamil Nadu are to be traced... This includes those who have already been quarantined and those who live outside Tamil Nadu... We will complete the segregation and verification and revenue officials will be tracing them..." she said.

MP reports first death; journalist tests positive

MILIND GHATAWI BHOPAL, MARCH 25

MADHYA PRADESH reported its first COVID-19 death after a 65-year-old woman, who was under treatment in Indore, passed away Wednesday.

A resident of Ujjain, the woman was admitted in Indore's M Y Hospital. Neither the woman nor any of her close relatives had travelled abroad. Principal Secretary (Public Health and Family Welfare) Pallavi Jain Goyal told The Indian Express that it COULD BE a case of "community spread" and all precautions are being taken by the administration.

The locality in Ujjain where the deceased lived has been sealed and her relatives have been isolated. The state has so far reported a total of 15 cases.

A journalist who attended the press conference addressed by former Madhya Pradesh Chief

Minister Kamal Nath prior to his resignation on March 20 has also tested positive.

Many Congress MLAs, then state ministers, journalists, including those who came from Delhi, and officials of the government's publicity department were present at the press conference.

The journalist's daughter, who returned from London on March 18, had also tested positive. However, her brother, who accompanied her from Delhi to Bhopal on train, mother, and at least six others who spent time with her have tested negative. The father-daughter duo is being treated in AIIMS, Bhopal.

On Wednesday, curfew was imposed in Indore and Ujjain after five positive cases—four from Indore and one from Ujjain—were reported. Curfew has also been imposed in Gwalior, Shivpuri, Bhopal and Jabalpur from where the remaining nine cases have been reported in the last few days.

85-yr-old woman second COVID-19 victim in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: An 85-year old woman from Ahmedabad, who had recently travelled back from Saudi Arabia, died due from a COVID-19 infection at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital on Wednesday.

This is the second death in the state. So far, the total number of positive cases in Gujarat on Wednesday was 40 with new cases reported from Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot.

The deceased woman was suffering from co-morbid conditions, according to deputy municipal commissioner Om Prakash Machra.

He added that 28 others who had come in close contact with her had been institutionally quarantined at Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) facilities since the past 3-4 days. So far, a total of 717 samples have been tested in the state, according to principal health secretary Jayanti Ravi. ENS

Modi to join G-20 session on COVID-19 chaired by Saudi king

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will on Thursday join a virtual summit of G-20 leaders, organised to discuss the coronavirus pandemic, which will be chaired by Saudi King Salman.

Modi tweeted on Wednesday, "The #G20 has an important global role to play in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to productive discussions tomorrow at the #G20VirtualSummit, being coor-

dinated by the Saudi G20 Presidency."

Saudi Arabia's King Salman will chair the virtual summit on March 26 to advance the global coordinated response to the pandemic. Apart from the leaders of G-20, the heads of state of Jordan, Spain, Singapore and Switzerland are also scheduled to participate. The UAE will also take part in its capacity as sitting president of the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

In a separate video conference earlier this week, G-20 finance ministers and central bankers agreed to develop an action plan

to respond to the outbreak, which the IMF expects will trigger a global recession.

A video conference of senior health professionals of SAARC countries to share their experiences of combating the spread of COVID-19 is also proposed to be held on March 26. The major topics of discussion will be "practical joint action on online training capsules for emergency response teams, setting up of an Integrated Disease Surveillance Portal, creation of a Common Research Platform and coordination of research..."

SUSPECTED TO HAVE PASSED ON INFECTION

J&K lens on man who came via Delhi, UP and tested positive

ADIL AKHZER SRINAGAR, MARCH 25

A SENIOR member of the Tableeghi Jamaat, a non-political Islamic outfit, who has tested positive for coronavirus may turn out to be Kashmir's "super-spreader"—like South Korea's "Patient 31", who is reported to have caused a rapid rise in cases in that country.

A day after the member, a resident of Srinagar, was found positive for COVID-19, Health Department officials said four people, also members of the same outfit, who come from Hajin in Bandipore district, were tested positive on Wednesday, making it eight confirmed cases in Kashmir.

While they are still not sure where the 65-year-old contracted the virus, officials said he travelled to several places in February and March, and health officials are now trying to trace all those he may have come in contact with.

Director Health Services, Kashmir, Dr Samir Matoo told The Indian Express that the person attended religious gatherings in New Delhi, Deoband (UP), in Jammu and also in Sopore, north Kashmir. "He took a train from Deoband to Jammu and a flight from Jammu to Srinagar during his journey," Dr Matoo said. "We are contacting health authorities in Delhi and UP to inform them about the case."



Security forces at a blockade in Srinagar. Shuaib Masoodi

A doctor privy to the case told The Indian Express that the patient had developed symptoms while he was in Deoband. "After arriving in Srinagar, he got himself checked by a physician in Sopore. The doctor is under quarantine," he said.

Sources said seven doctors who have come in contact with the patient are being tested.

According to officials, the 65-year-old first approached Jhelum Valley Hospital in Srinagar on March 21 with serious symptoms of flu. He was treated and sent home. On March 22, he visited Srinagar's SMHS Hospital and was diagnosed as a suspected coronavirus patient. He was then referred to Chest Disease Hospital.

He is currently admitted there and doctors said his condition has improved.

Sources said he entered

Kashmir on March 16 from Jammu. "He has had a long travel history in February and March. He has been in close contact with scores of people. We are yet to figure out the exact number of people he has been in touch with," a senior official said.

The official said the 65-year-old travelled to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kochi (Kerala) and Hyderabad. "He has spent time with several people from Malaysia and Indonesia during religious congregations, and was also in Delhi..." the official said.

Tableeghi Jamaat (group for Spreading Faith) focuses on urging Muslims to return to practising religion as it was practised during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, with focus on rituals, dress, and personal behaviour.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

CONFUSION OVER DESIGNATION OF FISH AS ESSENTIAL COMMODITY

Gujarat's fishing industry grinds to a halt

GOPAL KATESHIYA & VAIBHAV JHA RAJKOT, AHMEDABAD, MARCH 25

LABOUR shortage, transportation problems and confusion that fish is not part of essential commodities has brought the multi-billion dollar industry to a temporary halt.

"Fish has been included in the list of daily essentials whose movement and sale has been exempted from restrictions. It has to be treated as par with vegetables. But somehow, a message has spread or people have assumed that movement of fish is also prohibited. Therefore, traders and processors have stopped buying

fish from fishermen and seafood processing units are suspending their operations," Velji Masani president of Akhil Bharatiya Fishermen Association told The Indian Express on Wednesday.

The last set of 22 fishing trawlers landed with their catch at Jakhau fishing harbor in Kutch on Tuesday. "Police are checking intensively all trucks transporting goods therefore traders are not taking risk..." said Usmangani Sherasiya, Secretary, National Fish-workers' Forum (NFF).

According to Masani, Veraval GIDC, the hub of seafood processing industry in the state, is deserted. Gujarat, which has a 1,650-km long coastline, exports Rs 7,000 crore worth seafood a year. The industry provides livelihood



Gujarat, which has a 1,650-km long coastline, exports seafood worth Rs 7,000 crore every year. Javed Raja

to 3.5 lakh fishermen and their families.

Masani, who is also a member of the NFF, said there are 35,000 active fishing boats in the state. "Each boat supports employment

of around 100 people. The government must do something... Otherwise, all the boats would come to shore and the number of fishermen confined to their boats in fishing harbours would in-

crease," Masani said.

When contacted, Fisheries Minister Jawahar Chavda said, he was aware of the issue. "Therefore, we issued a circular to district collectors Wednesday asking them to ensure that movement of fish, processed seafood and fish-feed is not affected..." he said.

Processors and exporters said the restrictions were forcing them to suspend operations. "Labourers are not turning up for work... On the other hand, clearing and forwarding agents at ports are also not working. Therefore, shipment of fish for export has by and large halted..." said Karshan Salet, vice-president of the Gujarat chapter of Seafood Exporters Association.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com