

Pattern of postponed entrance tests won't change: Edu Secy

RITIKA CHOPRA NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

THE PATTERN of questions in competitive exams for admission to centrally run educational institutions will not change even if the tests are deferred till July due to the coronavirus lockdown, Education Secretary Amit Khare told The Indian Express.



Amit Khare.

are definite, will not change even if the exams are held in July. If we say 'let's have one paper instead of two', that will put all the students, who have prepared as per a set pattern, at a big disadvantage. They have put in a year's hard work. We can't have a shortcut here," he said.

On March 28, The Indian Express reported on how 45 lakh students preparing for major competitive exams over the next three months are stranded, with the lockdown impacting the calendar by at least a month.

The tests expected to be delayed include JEE (Advanced), JEE (Main), NEET, UGC-NET, CSIR UGC-NET and Indian

Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) AIEEA.

The Board exams for Class 12, Khare said, "are critical as these marks are used for admission in different universities".

"There are certain core subjects left. Having (these) exams from home will not be proper. We will have to conduct the regular exam as soon as the lockdown is lifted," he said.

On the options before the government, if the lockdown is extended, Khare said CBSE may still have to go ahead, keeping in mind the sanctity of the process and without putting any section of students at a disadvantage.

"The numbers (of candidates) are huge, and the centres dispersed. Secondly, it should not be unfair to some students who are dependent on public transportation to reach the test centres. The well-off can use their own vehicles. We will ensure the children are not put to a disadvantage," he said.

The CBSE could consider having multiple sets for each of the remaining core papers and stagger the dates for students of different regions, he said.

The CBSE had to defer 41 pa-

pers of Classes 10 and 12 in the wake of the virus outbreak. Of these, six are "major subjects" of Class 12 — Business Studies, Geography, Computer Science, Hindi (Core and Elective), Home Science and Sociology.

About 3.5 lakh students are expected to appear for Business Studies, one lakh for Geography, 2.5 lakh for Information Practice and Computer Science, 3.4 lakh for Hindi (Core and Elective), 58,000 for Home Science and 45,000 for Sociology.

For KVs, CBSE schools and Central Tibetan Schools, Khare said, the government has asked NIOS to "prepare a class-wise and subject-wise schedule for the online content so that students can follow it".

"Whenever schools reopen, there will be no learning loss as students would have studied some of the chapters in a systematic manner. We have also requested NIOS to air lessons over radio. For junior classes, we have asked them to work with Kendriya Vidyalayas on the new academic session plan," he said.

INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

'Opened daal-bhaat centres, giving 2-month ration to 2.55 cr under PDS'

DEVENDRA KUMAR TIWARI, the top bureaucrat in Jharkhand, which has till date not reported any confirmed case of coronavirus, tells ABHISHEK ANGAD that the state administration is ready to address the situation if there's an outbreak. Excerpts:



Jharkhand has a substantial population in the unorganised sector - around 90 per cent of the workforce. Is there any data to help these people in the aftermath of the lockdown?

The figures have changed, but as of now 2.55 crore people in Jharkhand have been covered under PDS (public distribution system), and we are in the process of giving two months' ration to them. Around 8 lakh people whose applications were pending for ration cards will be given 10 kg rice. We are reaching out to all of them. If the crisis escalates, proper measures will be taken.

What measures have been taken so far to mitigate their suffering?

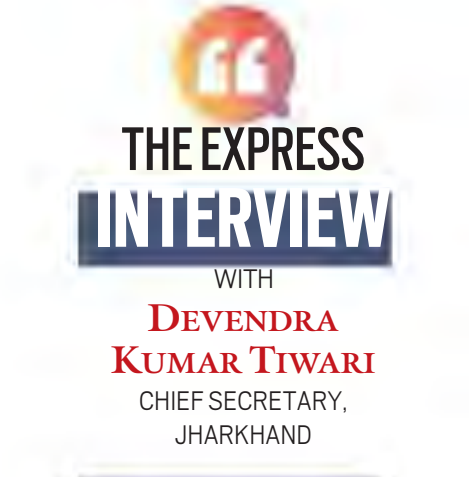
We have 25 lakh active MGN-REGA card-holders and Rs 150 crore have been pumped into the system to clear their dues till date. More work will be given to them if the crisis continues. We will give three-month pension to the beneficiaries in Jharkhand. Around 9 lakh construction workers are registered with us and we have Rs 400 crore out of cess that we get, though we are yet to decide on how to help them monetarily. Central government schemes (such as) PM Kisan and Ujjwala will continue side by side.

On the ground, there are many holes in the schemes you talked about. How are you ensuring that the people get food?

Around Rs 3.19 crore is in the process of being allocated to open 498 'daal-bhaat' centres (to serve rice and daal) in all 24 districts. Additional such centres have been opened in 342 police stations. Each centre will feed around 200 people every day, with a total of 1,68,000 people in the state for two months. We will review the situation as per need. In distant villages, were it is not possible to supply cooked food, we will distribute packets consisting of 2 kg flattened rice, jaggery and whole black gram.

Is the government planning any other direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme? Don't you think many villagers will need cash in hand?

There are no other DBT announcements. Even during the lockdown we have kept the village economy sustained by allowing groceries, vegetable, weekly markets to function while maintaining social distancing. I don't



think they would need cash in hand as of now.

Jharkhand Milk Federation did not procure milk from dairy farmers for three days. Around 4 lakh litres of milk is accumulated. Is a move such as distributing that, at say half the price, being considered?

That will hurt the economy. We are in talks with Bihar and Chhattisgarh to take the milk and convert it into powder. Some solution will be reached at.

Jharkhand has zero COVID-19 cases as of now. Is that a case of under-reporting?

Not at all. We got 175 samples checked and none came out positive. The test compared to the population is more than (what has been done in) other states. Earlier we were following ICMR guidelines, which changed recently. Currently two machines at Ranchi and Jamshedpur are functioning. We are procuring machines from four other medical colleges. The frequency of tests will increase in a few days.

But many migrant labourers who returned were not checked properly.

Around 75,000 people have returned in recent weeks, most of them labourers. Once they reached their village our health workers tracked them and advised them home isolation, among other measures. We arrived at the figure based on the data provided by those workers.

Is Jharkhand equipped to handle the outbreak?

We have ordered supplies. We have made arrangements and at maximum we can deal with 2,000 COVID-19 patients at a time. We have asked all private labs, pathologists, paramedics to join in during the crisis. We will handle it if there's an outbreak.

Tamil Nadu cases touch 50 mark, 21 have same Thailand origin

Chennai: The number of COVID-19 cases in Tamil Nadu reached 50 on Sunday with eight more people testing positive for the virus.

And, as per epidemiological data linking contacts prepared by the state government, a cluster of 21 cases—including the eight fresh ones and a 54-year-old man who died in Madurai—has its origin in Thailand.

A 29-year-old railway doctor and her 10-month-old boy, and two other women, aged 58 and 52, who were in the close contact of doctor, were among the cases reported on Sunday.

Meanwhile, state health secretary Beela Rajesh said thousands of people were screened for COVID-19 symptoms across the state on Sunday as part of a massive drive.



SOS RAIL FOR BAIL

WITH IMAGES of scores of migrant labourers taking to the streets to return to their villages coming in, a clamour arose on social media to run trains to transport them safely. One of them was former Railways Minister and Trinamool leader Dinesh Trivedi. Tagging Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, Trivedi demanded that trains be run for the workers returning home. Trivedi has apparently told in his internal circles that if the Railways wanted, it could marshal "hundreds of trains" in no time for the migrant work force, and things would not have come to such a pass.

SHORING UP DEFENCE

AS INDIA prepares for an aggressive fight against COVID-19, the government is encouraging everyone to contribute in whatever way she/he can. To support the recently announced PM-CARES fund, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved a proposal over the weekend for every employee of the Defence Ministry to voluntarily contribute. The proposal includes employees of Defence Public Sector Units, and the three forces: the Army, Navy and the Air Force. The ministry anticipates the contribution to be in the range of Rs 500 crore. To ensure that it remains voluntary and is not binding on anyone, whoever does not wish to contribute can opt out.

MEETING ONLINE

BESIDES THE corporates, business establishments or offices, political parties have also embraced video-conferencing in the wake of the nationwide lockdown. The Congress, the other day, organised a meeting of all its general secretaries, states in-charge, state presidents, CLP leaders and heads of front organisations to discuss the party's efforts to combat COVID-19 via video-conferencing. Eighty-two people, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and AICC treasurer Ahmed Patel, are said to have participated in the meeting. On Sunday, AICC spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi addressed a press conference via Zoom, a video-conferencing app.

A UNITED FIGHT

THE INTERNATIONAL department of Communist Party of China has sent a handbook—published by the Global MediXchange for Combating COVID-19, founded by Jack Ma Foundation—to the Left parties in India. The book, compiled by frontline and best medical teams in China, is aimed at providing advanced knowledge on COVID-19 and to share its experiences in combating this pandemic. When he received the book, All India Forward Bloc leader G Devarajan forwarded it to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, stating that it could help them in their fight against the pandemic. Vijayan promptly responded to Devarajan, saying that he would go through it.

Cop among 4 held for 'damaging' religious structure in UP

Lucknow: A police sub-inspector (SI) and three others were arrested for allegedly damaging a religious structure at Saduapura village in Sahso police station area of Etawah district on Friday. Police said the S-I, Vijay Pratap, was deployed in the village, which has a significant Dalit population, to ensure that local

residents follow the lockdown directive.

Pratap allegedly told people to gather at a spot in the village and instigated them to damage a religious structure by urging them "not to believe in any God and goddess," police sources said. A police team later got the structure repaired. ENS

Pharma giant readies five-minute test, may bring it to India, too

KAUNAIN SHERIFFM NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

GLOBAL PHARMA giant Abbott, which on Friday announced it has received US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for a portable device that can tell if someone is COVID-19 positive in five minutes, said it plans to "bring more tests forward with the intent to get them to more people in more places around the world".

To a question on whether Abbott planned to bring the test to India, a company spokesperson told The Indian Express, "We are developing COVID-19 tests across our Abbott testing platforms (including laboratory and lateral flow tests) and plan to bring more tests forward with the intent to get them to more people in more places around the world. We are working to produce as many tests as possible, running our production 24/7 and will expand manufacturing capacity when we can."

Currently, the ID NOW COVID-19 test is available only in the United States as this is where most of the company's ID NOW instruments are in use, the Abbott spokesperson said. This platform, introduced in 2014, is currently being used for testing

EXPLAINED Very fast and definitive

THE ABBOTT device will produce a diagnosis in just over five minutes; the conventional RTPCR test kits currently in use across the world take almost a day to provide results. Crucially, Abbott's ID NOW COVID-19 test gives results fast like the antibodies test kits — however, while a negative result does not rule out infection, Abbott's kits, which use RNA amplification technology, give definitive results.

for Influenza A and B in American labs.

It is small, lightweight (6.6 lbs) and portable (the size of a small toaster) — and uses a unique isothermal nucleic acid amplification technology, which provides molecular results in minutes.

The test will deliver positive results for COVID-19 in approximately five minutes, and negative results in 13 minutes.

The device, which Abbott

After five days of tree quarantine, Bengal youths moved to ICDS centre

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA KOLKATA, MARCH 29

AFTER THEY had spent five days quarantined on a mango tree, seven youths in West Bengal's Purulia district have been moved to an Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) centre for isolation. The seven youths, who work in Chennai and returned to Bhangdi village on March 24, had been living on the branches of the tree after doctors asked them to stay in

home quarantine.

The villagers had tied cots to the branches and also arranged for mosquito nets and plug points to charge phones. The villagers had asked the youths to not enter the village as proper isolation may not be possible at their homes.

"Last night authorities came to us and saw us on the tree. They spoke to us and got all details. Since villagers did not want us in the village, they made arrangements at a nearby ICDS centre. This room has a toilet and

claims is the "fastest available molecular point-of-care test" for the detection of COVID-19, is its second test to receive emergency use authorization by the FDA. Last week, the company launched the m2000 RealTime SARS-CoV-2 EUA test which identifies the virus by targeting small amounts and amplifying it until there's enough for detection. Between the two platforms, Abbott expects to produce about 5 million tests per month.

In the US, Abbott will make the ID NOW COVID-19 tests available next week to healthcare providers — where the ID platform instruments are already in use. In a statement, the company said that it "expects to ramp up manufacturing to deliver 50,000 tests per day".

"The COVID-19 pandemic will be fought on multiple fronts, and a portable molecular test that offers results in minutes adds to the broad range of diagnostic solutions needed to combat this virus," Robert B Ford, president and chief operating officer, Abbott, said. "With rapid testing on ID NOW, healthcare providers can perform molecular point-of-care testing outside the traditional four walls of a hospital in outbreak hotspots," he said.

fans. We are fine now," said Bijoy Singh Laya, one of the seven youths. "We are also getting proper food from the village and we are maintaining hygiene and distance from others," said Laya, adding that they are yet to get a cot and are sleeping on the floor.

"After the news broke, the authorities identified the room and now the youths are placed there. None of them have any symptoms," said Nitai Mondol, president of Balarampur Panchayat Samiti.

OFFICE OF THE EXCISE COMMISSIONER CHHATTISGARH Re-TENDER-NOTICE

No./EX./Distillery/2020/ 1541 Raipur, Dated: 27 March, 2020 TENDER NOTICE FOR THE MANUFACTURE AND SUPPLY OF COUNTRY LIQUOR, LIQUOR IN SEALED & PACKED BOTTLES BY DISTILLERS OF CHHATTISGARH FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPLY IN THE AREA OF RAIPUR, DURG, BEMETARA, BASTAR, BILASPUR, KORBA, JANJGIR-CHAMPA AND RAIGARH IN THE STATE OF CHHATTISGARH.

- 1. Sealed Tenders for each area to be mentioned in the Tender) are invited from distillers of Chhattisgarh for the grant of licence (s) under the provisions of the Chhattisgarh Country Spirit Rules, 1995, framed under Chhattisgarh Excise Act, 1915 (No. II of 1915) for supply of Country Liquor to storage warehouses situated in the supply areas of the State and for supply of Country Liquor to retail sale licensee of country liquor in sealed bottles after bottling and packaging in the distillery of the Tenderer in Master cartons for a period commencing from 15th April 2020 and ending with 31st March 2021.
2. Tender form with detailed terms and conditions may be obtained from the Office of the Excise Commissioner, Chhattisgarh, GST Building, North Block Sector-19, Atal Nagar Nava Raipur-492002 on payment of Rs. 20,000/- (Rupees Twenty thousand) Only, by demand draft payable to the Excise Commissioner, Chhattisgarh, Raipur payable at Raipur. The Tender forms can also be made available by post to the Tenderer, if so desired by him. The documents will be dispatched through post office of the Department of Post, Government of India, after receipt of Rs. 20,100/- (Rupees Twenty thousand, One hundred) only, for each area to be paid in the form of bank draft of any Nationalized bank or Scheduled Commercial bank or Regional Rural bank drawn in favour of Excise Commissioner, Chhattisgarh payable at Raipur. The department however takes no responsibility for delay in the receipt of the tender form by post by the intending Tenderer.
3. Tender form will be issued till the date 01-04-2020 (During working hours) i.e. one day before of Tender opening.
4. Sealed Tenders may be dropped in Tender box in two part as prescribed in Tender document at Office of the Excise Commissioner, Chhattisgarh, Raipur before 1:00 p.m. on date 02-04-2020 (Incase tender receiving/opening date is declared holiday, tender will be received/opened on next working day at same time). The Excise Commissioner or an Officer nominated by him will open the sealed envelope at 2:00 P.M. on the same day.

Sd/- (Niranjan Das) Excise Commissioner, Chhattisgarh

Ajmer Smart City Ltd., Ajmer. NOTICE INVITING TENDER. Ajmer Smart City Limited (ASCL), Ajmer invites online bids for the following works under Smart City Mission, from reputed firms who have experience in civil construction works.

UJVN Limited. H.O. "UJJWAL" Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun, -248006. Telephone-0135-2763508, 2763808 Fax 0135-2763507. CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866. Website: www.ujvn.com

"IMPORTANT" Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. The Indian Express (P) Limited cannot be held responsible for such contents, nor for any loss or damage incurred as a result of transactions with companies, associations or individuals advertising in its newspapers or Publications. We therefore recommend that readers make necessary inquiries before sending any monies or entering into any agreements with advertisers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.