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Massive preparations made...

spread of COVID-19 pandemic. He informed that in all District Police Lines, isolation facilities are being created besides suitable places have been identified for providing quarantine facilities to the police personnel. He apprised that adequate funds have been made available to all the units for making different purchases and more funds will be allocated for the purpose.

The Chief Secretary directed that all Police Stations, Offices, Barracks must be sanitized, and fumigated. He also said all the precautions must be taken and there should not be any loop holes or gaps left in our fight against this pandemic.

Highlighting the need for maintaining social distancing, the Chief Secretary also directed all HoDs to ensure attendance of only minimal staff to carry all important works assigned to them. To facilitate the movement of staff of essential services and to those having medical exigency, the Chief Secretary directed DCs to issue movement passes to such people only after proper verification.

The Deputy Commissioners were further directed to fully activate the control rooms established in their respective districts and publicize contact numbers so that people can reach with their queries to these centres. The Deputy Commissioners were directed to ensure strict implementation of lockdown orders on ground. The Divisional Commissioners were directed to closely monitor and supervise all efforts related to control of coronavirus being undertaken by all DCs in their respective divisions.

Deputy Commissioners were directed to judiciously utilize funds provided to them under SDRF immediately.

Meanwhile, the Government has informed that 5124 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been put under surveillance and, so far, 11 cases tested positive (10 active positive and 01 recovered) in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the daily Media Bulletin on novel coronavirus (COVID-19) 3061 persons have been kept under home quarantine while as 80 are in hospital quarantine.

Persons who are under home surveillance stand at 1477 while as 506 persons have completed their 28-day surveillance period.

The Bulletin further said that 326 samples have been sent for testing of which 294 tested as negative while as 21 reports are awaited till March 25, 2020.

The advisory urged public to strictly follow directions of the Prime Minister who has called for complete lockdown in the entire nation for the next 21 days in an effort to contain the COVID-19 Pandemic as it is essential to break the chain of its transmission.

"People are therefore appealed to stay in their homes and take the lockdown imposed by Government with utmost sincerity as carelessness

of few can throw us into grave jeopardy, keeping in view the global experiences of countries which have been successful in containing the

spread of COVID-19 through implementation of social distancing measures unlike some other countries where thousands of people have died," reads the advisory.

People can call toll free national helpline number 1075 for support, guidance, and response to health related queries on Novel Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19). Similarly they can also call Jammu & Kashmir Covid-19 Helpline Numbers 0191-2549676 (UT level Cell), 0191- 2520982, 0191-2674444, 0191-2674115 (For Jammu Division), 0194- 2440283 & 0194-2430581(For Kashmir Division).

On the implementation of Social Distancing measures, the advisory said that it is the key to stop and prevent the spread of Covid-19 from those who are infected to those who are not infected. The intervention includes remaining out of crowded settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others.

However, there is no need to panic, take care of your health and protect others, says the advisory. Public in general is therefore advised to avoid un-necessary travel and use of public transport; avoid crowded places and large gathering and not to spit in public.

People must take basic precautions for personal hygiene; frequent hand washing with soap & water; and observing coughing & sneezing etiquettes.

Public is therefore advised to strictly follow the advisories issued by the Government from time to time. People are also urged to rely only on the information released by the government through the daily media bulletin to print & electronic media.

Furthermore, people are advised to refrain from spreading rumours and pay no heed to them at the same time.

Shat Chandi Maha...

situation due to coronavirus, the Yatra to Holy Cave Shrine has been suspended w.e.f., March 18, 2020. However, Pooja, Aarti and all other religious rituals are being performed at the Holy Cave Shrine as usual.

MHA issues fresh...

Those people handling cargo operations in airports and railway stations, coal mining activities, officers and staff of resident commissioners based in Delhi and customs clearance at ports, airports and land borders are also exempted.

Forest offices staff and workers required to operate and maintain zoo, nurseries, wildlife, fire fighting in forests, watering plantations, patrolling and their necessary transport movement, social welfare department staff for operations of homes for children, disabled, senior citizens, destitute women, widows, observation homes and pensions service are also exempted, the guidelines said.

LG approves series...

for all authorized works and approved procurements which could not be presented before March 31 due to the ongoing situation would be entertained in the next financial year as well.

These decisions were in addition to the decisions already taken yesterday by the Administrative Council under the Chairmanship of the Lt Governor whereby a number of relief measures including two month ration under PDS, one month's advance ration under Mid-Day meal, ration packets for slum dwellers and destitutes and Rs 45 crores for management of COVID-19 under Disaster Response Fund had been approved.

Coronavirus: Over 400...

remaining number of the total number of complaints received are under process of tracking.

It should be noted that a well-equipped control room with a robust mechanism for coordination and tracing of suspected cases has been established in the district. It includes an elaborate mechanism of surveillance with over 50 teams constituted as part of it assisting it in tracing suspected cases.

In addition to a full-fledged infrastructural set-up which includes IT-enabled apparatus and mechanism the control room is manned with a dedicated team of IT and health-care professionals.

It should be noted that a total of around 1750 persons with recent travel histories to outside countries have been put under quarantine in 40 out of 90 facilities set up so far in the district.

Meanwhile, a suspected coronavirus patient, who had recently travelled to another country, this afternoon fled from a hospital here but was immediately tracked and re-admitted, officials said.

They said legal action would be taken against the patient for putting other people's health at risk.

"A suspected coronavirus patient, with travel history to Hungary, fled from Chest Disease Hospital at Dalgate," the officials said.

The patient, a resident of Batamalo area of the city here, was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday and his sample has been sent for the COVID-19 test, the officials said.

However, the patient was immediately tracked and re-admitted to a hospital.

"Tracked. Admitted again. Legal action to follow," District Magistrate Srinagar, Shahid Choudhary said on Twitter.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the surfacing of two more coronavirus positive cases, the District Magistrate Srinagar has ordered imposition of very strict restrictions in the district.

The order issued under Section 144 of CrPC states that there shall be complete restrictions on public movement including private transport and operation of businesses and activities across the district up to April 15.

It states that only officials of essential services departments as designated and certified by their heads will be allowed to move on the production of movement passes issued by the District Magistrate adding that the lowest minimum number of officials are being provided passes and allowed to move.

The order states that doctors, paramedical staff, ambulance operators and those officials assigned by the district disaster management authority on COVID-19 emergency response duty will be allowed to move on production of valid identify cards.

Concerned agencies have been asked to ensure strict implementation of the order and strict action against violators.

The order states that the decision to impose strict restrictions has been taken as a preventive measure in view of the increased number of coronavirus positive cases - now grown to three - surfacing in the district and are aimed at containing spread of the infection.

People with foreign...

of the virus. Srinagar Deputy Commissioner Shahid Iqbal Choudhary said authorities were flooded with messages about travellers concealing their travel history, and urged them to "act responsibly" to break the chain of transmission.

He said authorities were concerned as the travellers would have mingled with the local population.

The government appealed to students, particularly, who have not declared their travel history and asked family members, neighbours to report such cases through helpline numbers 0191-2549676 at UT level, 0191-2520982, 2674444, 2674115 (Jammu division) and 0194-2440283, 2430581.

"Trust me if I share a summary of daily events none in Kashmir will sleep. Let's keep our egos aside, work collectively and instead of raising panic and alarm help each other to improve. This 3rd World War. Nothing less. If it passes we will have a Lifetime for all that," the senior official warned.

He said surveillance teams were able to track 29 people coming from Bangkok, the UK, Dubai, Bangladesh and Kazakhstan, who skipped medical teams by changing routes or avoiding travel history.

In another tweet, Choudhary said, "Two brothers. Same Medical College in Bangladesh. One travels by air, declares travel history lands in Quarantine. Other takes road goes home, probably enjoyed Wazwan. Smart neighbour informs Control Room. Team got in touch. Symptomatic. WHO guidelines lecture please?"

"A girl coming from US posed as Student returning from Bangladesh. A 'thick skinned babu' (as we are called) insisted on passport while allotting room, got to know. USA 3rd highest COVID cases in the world. I need to attend another lecture on WHO guidelines now!!," he said.

He cited another case of a man trying to evade the coronavirus protocol, saying a gentleman coming from Italy reached New Delhi via another port. "Takes train to Jammu n Cab to home in #Srinagar. Just to hide travel history. Trauced. Need collective focus to handle it. Things are not that simple as they appear from homes & office rooms. WHO guidelines anyone?" he tweeted.

PDD amnesty scheme...

Other terms and conditions of the amnesty scheme will remain the same, an order issued today by M Raju, Secretary, Power Development Department, said.

PM warns against...



COVID-19 Pandemic Social Distancing is need of the hour; picture from today's cabinet meeting chaired by PM Narendra Modi.

be of more devotion to goddess Durga.

"Karuna" (compassion) is also a step toward defeating the coronavirus, he said to a question about difficulties being faced by the poor and daily-wagers during the lockdown across the country.

The Centre and states are taking measures to help them, he said.

"The difficulties being faced are only for 21 days. But if the coronavirus crisis is not over and its spread is not stopped, then we cannot imagine the harm it will cause," Modi said.

Asked about reports of misbehaviour with medical personnel and airline crew, he said he was pained by this and has asked the home ministry and state DGPs to take tough action against culprits.

If anybody targets doctors, nurses and all those rendering their service during this crisis, then it will cost them dearly, Modi said, adding people in white like doctors and nurses are like gods.

He also asked people to cooperate with the government and the administration, and not to pressure them, for better results during the lockdown period.

"There may be incidents of some shortcoming or negligence. But looking for such cases and focussing and publicising them, discouraging some sector will not benefit at this time. There can be a thousand reasons to spread pessimism. I am not saying they are all wrong but life runs on hope and trust," he said.

Doctors, police personnel and many others have been working very hard and should be encouraged, he said.

Modi also asked people to shun superstition, rumour and self-medication and emphasised his message of self-distancing if the battle against the deadly virus has to be won.

"The war of Mahabharata was won in 18 days and our effort is to win this war against the coronavirus in 21 days," he said, noting that over one lakh of COVID-19 patients have recovered the world over and many dozens have in India as well.

This disease does not discriminate between the rich and the poor, among regions and infects even those very conscious about their health, he said, adding that social distancing is the only way out and people should have patience and should follow guidelines.

The government has joined hands with WhatsApp to start a help desk, and people can get proper guidelines about the virus by contacting a number (9013151515), the prime minister said.

Kashi, another name for Varanasi, can show the way to the country with its patience, coordination, empathy, peace, tolerance, service and solution, he said, noting that the holy place is known for annihilating sins and crisis.

India: Coronavirus cases...

"People should focus on how deadly this virus is. This disease doesn't discriminate between rich and poor."

Authorities were augmenting the preparedness to deal with the pandemic at a time when an international team of scientists projected that India could face over one lakh confirmed cases of coronavirus by mid-May if the current trend in spike continues.

The report, compiled by COV-IND-19 Study Group, an interdisciplinary team of researchers, said while India seems to have done well in controlling the number of confirmed cases compared to other countries like the US and Italy in the early phase of the pandemic, the country is critically missing a key component in this assessment -- the number of truly affected cases.

According to the latest Union Health ministry data released in the evening, coronavirus cases crossed 100 in Maharashtra(116) and Kerala(109). Of the 612 confirmed cases, 562 were active while 40 had recovered.

The coronavirus death toll stood at 10 as per the data which included the first casualty reported in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday.

The all India tally did not take into account the third death in Maharashtra which was reported by a Mumbai civic body on Tuesday. It also showed that the second death in Delhi reported by the ministry yesterday was not from the viral infection.

In a heart warming gesture, a Pune-based couple, the first COVID-19 patients in Maharashtra, received an emotional welcome from the members of their housing society when they reached their homes on Wednesday afternoon after being discharged from a hospital following recovery.

Residents of the housing society, located on Simhgad Road in Pune, came out in their balconies and clapped and clanged their utensils to greet the 51-year-old man and his 43-year-old wife.

A chain of 32 paramilitary force hospitals across the country, with a total capacity of about 1,900 beds, has been taken over by the government for isolation and treatment of COVID-19 affected patients, officials said in Delhi.

The "urgent" decision to use the "composite hospitals" of these forces, also called as the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), was taken after a high-level meeting of the Union home ministry that was chaired by the secretary of border management.

An order issued by the medical establishment of these forces has been reviewed by PTI and it said these hospitals have been designated and earmarked for the "purpose of isolation cum treatment of COVID-19 patients as and when they arrive".

These 32 hospitals are operated by forces like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and are located at places like Greater Noida, Hyderabad, Guwahati, Jammu, Tekanpur (Gwalior), Dimapur, Imphal, Nagpur, Silchar, Bhopal, Avadi, Jodhpur, Kolkata, Pune and Bengaluru, among others.

The total capacity of these 32 earmarked hospitals is 1,890 beds, a senior official said.

It has also been directed that arrangements should be made so that people already admitted here, troops of these forces or their family members, could be shifted to another location in case of an increase in the number of coronavirus-affected people.

Border guarding force ITBP is already running the largest such CAPF quarantine centre, which can accommodate 1,000 people, in Delhi's Chhawla area.

The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has designated a total of 285 beds for isolation wards to handle the coronavirus cases, the Defence Ministry said.

The ministry said in a statement that 40 beds have been earmarked in hospitals at Vehicle Factory at Jabalpur, thirty beds each at Metal and Steel Factory in Ishapore, Gun and Shell Factory in Cossipore, Ammunition Factory in Khadki, Ordnance Factory in Kanpur, Ordnance Factory in Khambaria and Ordnance Factory in Ambajhari.

Twenty-five beds at Ordnance Factory at Ambernath and twenty beds each at Heavy Vehicle Factory in Avadi and Ordnance Factory at Medak have been earmarked for isolation wards to handle such cases, it said.

The West Bengal government has started discharging patients from a state-run hospital and stopped admitting new ones to the institute to convert the entire facility into an isolation and treatment centre for people suspected to be infected with coronavirus, a senior health official said in Kolkata.

Full fledged operations at Medical College Hospital, Kolkata as a dedicated facility for isolation and treatment of suspected coronavirus patients will begin from Saturday, he said.

"From Tuesday, we have started discharging patients who are in better condition and also stopped admitting new patients, especially those who are pregnant and are referring them to other hospitals.

"This is as per the state government's plan to convert the entire hospital, which has 2,200 beds, into an isolation and treatment centre for persons suspected to be infected with the coronavirus," the official said.

As coronavirus cases showed a rise, authorities in Kashmir said they are worried that it might be more than the 11 reported so far in the Valley as a significant number of people have reportedly concealed their travel history.

As hospitals are expected to face pressure to handle coronavirus cases, Biocon chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said she would like to see more hotels brought into the quarantine cum-hospital zone.

Before they go to hospitals, there are many people who will have mild symptoms who can recover also, they need not go to hospitals and crowd the hospitals," she told PTI in Bengaluru.

CBSE extends application...

switch-over from other board or extension of affiliation for session 2021-22 for all applicant schools is up to March 31 with requisite fee," CBSE Secretary Anurag Tripathi said.

"The board is in receipt of various representations from schools mentioning problems faced by schools for submission of application for affiliation in a stipulated time period in view of the current COVID-19 situation.

"Therefore, to ensure fulfilment of various government advisories and directive on the current situation and a

measure of abundant precautions, the last date for submission of application without any late fee has been extended till April 30," Tripathi added.

Coronavirus cases in the country crossed 600 on Wednesday as authorities beefed up preparedness to fight the pandemic with a chain of hospitals of the army ordnance factories and central paramilitary forces earmarking over 2,000 beds for isolation and treatment of people affected by the disease.

Restrictions tightened in...

to enforce the lockdown, they said. Police vehicles fitted with public address systems went around the residential areas late on Tuesday as well as on Wednesday morning, announcing the imposition of restrictions under section 144 of CrPC and advising people to stay indoors, the officials said. Police also used drones in some parts of the city to announce the restrictions, they added.

While the prime minister announced the country-wide lock down on Tuesday evening, the Union territory administration here had on Sunday imposed a similar restriction till March 31 as part of its efforts to combat coronavirus.

The administration said essential services, including healthcare, were exempted from the purview of the restrictions.

It asked people to cooperate with it and warned of action against any violation of the prohibitory orders.

Forty-nine people were arrested in Srinagar, Sopore, Handwara and Anantnag areas of the Valley for violating the prohibitory orders on Monday, while 45 were arrested in Ganderbal and Kupwara districts on Tuesday.

More than 1,800 residents of Kashmir, who have arrived from various countries, have been placed under quarantine at makeshift facilities. The authorities have appealed to people coming from outside to approach health officials and not conceal their travel history.

Gunmen attack Gurdwara...

in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the attack on the gurdwara in Shor Bazar area at about 07:45 (local time) as 150 worshippers were inside the building.

"At least 25 people were killed and 8 others were wounded in the attack at Dharamshala, a Sikh worship place in Kabul," TOLONews quoted the Ministry of Interior as saying on the attack that lasted nearly six hours.

"All four suicide bombers who attacked Dharamshala, a Sikh worship area in PD1 of Kabul, were killed after nearly six hours of fighting. Afghan special forces confirmed," it said in a tweet.

The ministry said in a statement that 80 people, including women and children, were rescued from the gurdwara.

The ISIS terrorist group, which has targeted Sikhs before in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

The group issued a statement confirming that its members carried out the attack on Sikhs in Kabul city, Khaama Press News Agency reported.

Photos from the blast scene showed security forces carrying wounded people away on stretchers. Some Afghan media outlets shared videos of the family members of victims waiting outside a city hospital in tears.

Police in Kabul said that at least 11 children were rescued from the gurdwara.

Sikh lawmaker Nardendar Singh Khalsa told reporters that up to 150 people were praying inside the gurdwara when it came under attack.

Khalsa, the only representative of the Sikh community in Afghanistan said he received a call from a worshipper inside the gurdwara, informing him about the attack.

"I rushed over to help. There were about 150 worshippers inside the gurdwara at the time of the attack," he was quoted as saying by the official Bakhtar News Agency.

"Afghan forces have cleared the first floor of a Sikh worship area in PD1 of Kabul. A number of people have been rescued who were trapped inside the building," said Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian.

President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attack on the gurdwara, TOLONews reported.

"The attack on the religious sites shows the extreme weakness of the enemy, religious sites should not be vulnerable to attacks and violence, it quoted Ghani as saying.

The president's spokesperson described the attack as "yet another heartless, cowardly terrorist attack on a worshipping place in Kabul. The Afghan government strongly condemns today's senseless attack on Dharamsala Sikh temple.

"Our hearts go out to the families of the victims of this heinous act," the spokesperson said.

Former president of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai strongly condemned the attack on the gurdwara and expressed his condolences to the victims' families.

Earlier, the country's main militant group, the Taliban, denied involvement in the attack.

Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement that the militant group had no link with the attack in Shor Bazar area of Kabul.

In New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was saddened by the attack on the gurdwara.

The Ministry of External Affairs also strongly condemned the terror attack and said the targeting of a religious place in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak reflects the "diabolical mindset" of the perpetrators and their backers.

"India stands ready to extend all possible assistance to the affected families of the Hindu and Sikh community of Afghanistan," it said while expressing condolence to the families of the victims.

"Such cowardly attacks on the places of religious worship of the minority community, especially at this time of COVID-19 pandemic, is reflective of the diabolical mindset of the perpetrators and their backers," the MEA said.

It said India stood in solidarity with the people, the government and the security forces of Afghanistan in their efforts for bringing peace and security to the country.

"We commend the brave Afghan security forces for their valorous response to the attack and their exemplary courage and dedication to protect the Afghan people and secure the country," the MEA said.

War-torn Afghanistan is currently mired in a political stalemate with two politicians- Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah - both claiming victory in the presidential election.

The US, keen to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, has been trying to break the deadlock and also save a historic deal it signed with the Taliban militant group that is supposed to pave the way for peace in the country.

The attack comes a day after the US said it would cut its aid to the government by USD 1 billion over frustrations that the political leaders could not reach an agreement and form a team to negotiate with the Taliban.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Kabul on Tuesday in a bid to resolve a standoff between President Ghani and his rival Abdullah, who also proclaims himself president following a contested election.

Sikhs have been target of attacks by Islamist militants before in Afghanistan.

In July 2018, ISIS terrorists bombed a gathering of Sikhs and Hindus in the eastern city of Jalalabad, killing 19 people and injuring 20.

Awtar Singh Khalsa, one of the country's best-known Sikh politicians then, was among those killed in the attack.