

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! COVID CONTAINMENT MEASURES...

smooth coordination in providing Covid kits and other assistance to people in need. He also directed the district administrations to gear up preparedness and provide all assistance to healthcare teams.

"We should be fully prepared to tackle the surge in cases. Existing decentralized system at the Panchayat level should be made functional for immediate medical attention", observed the Lt Governor.

Explicit directions were passed to the Divisional & District Administrations for optimum utilization of testing capacity, besides declaring micro-containment zones & hot spots in areas registering increase in cases, and to avoid crowding at public places. "Any laxity in enforcement of CAB will not be tolerated", said the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor further called for conducting IEC campaign at divisional and district level to highlight threats from highly transmissible variant and encourage people to follow Covid Appropriate Behaviour.

"From tomorrow, we will start administering the booster dose of the vaccine to the eligible population (healthcare and frontline workers, and those over 60 years of age with co-morbidities). All necessary arrangements should be made for walk-in and registered eligible population", the Lt Governor asked the officials.

The Lt Governor also urged the police personnel, health workers, government employees to take all precautionary measures while serving the people.

Vivek Bhardwaj, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department gave a detailed briefing on the district-wise analysis of Covid-19 situation & threat level, status of testing, contact tracing and vaccination across the UT.

He informed the chair that the vaccination drive for the 15-18 year age group is going on smoothly across the UT.

J&K is in a better position as compared to other States/UTs in terms of Vaccination, with 99% coverage of second dose for population above 18 years, it was informed.

The chair also took stock of the implementation of directions passed in previous meetings. Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lt Governor; Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary to the Government, Home department; Shailendra Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Government, Public Works (R&B) Department; Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Mukesh Singh, ADGP Jammu; Dr Raghav Langer, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Vijay Kumar, IGP Kashmir; Dr. Saleem-ur-Rehman, Director General, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization; Choudhary Mohammad Yasin; Mission Director NHM; Deputy Commissioners and SSPs, attended the meetings, in person and through virtual mode.

All Colleges, Schools...

vaccinated staff for administrative purposes only. The Head of the institution must ensure that guidelines related to social distancing and Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB) are strictly followed."

The State Executive Committee reiterated that a maximum number of people permitted to attend any indoor/ outdoor gathering shall be strictly restricted to 25 while Banquet Halls in all the Districts of J&K are permitted to allow gathering up to 25 vaccinated persons (with verifiable RT-PCR or RAT not older than 72 hours) or 25% of the authorised capacity (whichever is less), preferably in open spaces.

Night Curfew shall continue to remain in force in all Districts from 9 pm to 6 am with complete restriction on non-essential movement, the order stated.

"The State Executive Committee, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under section 24 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, hereby orders that the guidelines/ instructions on COVID containment in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, already notified vide Government Orders 35 and 36-JK (DMRRR) dated 29-05-2021 read with Government Orders 73-JK (DMRRR) dated 22-10-2021, 91-JK (DMRRR) dated 28.12.2021 and 02-JK (DMRRR) of 2022 dated 05.01.2022 shall continue to remain in force till further orders," it added.

"The Home Secretary, Government of Jammu & Kashmir shall monitor the enforcement of Covid Appropriate Behaviour closely and shall submit a Report to the Chairperson of the State Executive Committee (Chief Secretary) on daily basis," the order stated.

"All the Government Department(s)/Office(s) shall minimise conducting in-person meetings/ interactions etc and all Administrative Secretaries/ Head of the Departments/Institution) shall ensure optimal use of virtual mode for conducting official meetings etc," it stated.

Veer Baal Diwas...

"Today, on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, I am honoured to share that starting this year, 26th December shall be marked as 'Veer Baal Diwas'. This is a fitting tribute to the courage of the Sahibzades and their quest for justice."

In a following tweet, PM Modi hailed the bravery of Mata Gujari, Guru Gobind Singh ji and his sons Sahibzades. Two of the four Sahibzades were torched and killed by Mughals in 1705. The PM said in his tweet, "The bravery and ideals of Mata Gujri, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the 4 Sahibzades give strength to millions of people. They never bowed to injustice. They envisioned a world that is inclusive and harmonious. It is the need of the hour for more people to know about them."

He further said, "'Veer Baal Diwas' will be on the same day Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji attained martyrdom after being sealed alive in a wall. These two greats preferred death instead of deviating from the noble principles of Dharma."

PM reviews COVID...

to the Prime Minister's Office. Most states and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, have already announced night curfew and other restrictions in the wake of the imminent third wave.

The Himachal Pradesh government on Sunday banned social and religious functions till January 24. It also prohibited any gathering of more than 100 people for

indoor and 300 people for outdoor academic, sport, cultural and political events, according to an order.

Attendance of staff at state government offices was capped at 50 percent. The restrictions, however, will not be applicable to emergency services.

The Rajasthan government announced the closure of schools in municipal areas till January 17, a Sunday curfew and restricted market timings and occupancy at restaurants and movie theatres.

A one-day complete lockdown was enforced across Tamil Nadu and most roads and other public places were a deserted look.

Suburban and other train operations, bus and other public transport services including the Metrorail in Chennai were suspended.

Chief Minister M K Stalin had earlier ordered fresh curbs which included state-wide night curfew between 10 PM and 5 AM with effect from January 6.

Puducherry government also announced that all schools conducting offline classes for students from classes 1 to 9 will remain shut from Monday.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said the state government will gradually bring curbs at places of worship and other sites, including liquor vends, that attract crowds to control the coronavirus pandemic.

He, however, said that even as cases are rising, hospital bed occupancy and oxygen demand remain low.

"When these start rising, we will enforce stricter restrictions," he added.

On Saturday, when Maharashtra reported over 41,000 new COVID-19 cases, the state government decided to prohibit movement in public in groups of five or more from 5 AM to 11 PM. Further, no movement will be allowed in public from 11 PM to 5 AM except for essential services, a government circular had said.

However, people continued to gather in large numbers at places like the Juhu beach.

On Sunday, the state government revised the COVID-19-related restrictions for gyms and beauty salons, allowing them to operate at 50 percent capacity from January 11.

The state government has announced closure of schools and colleges till February 15. The government had also decided to cap the attendance at marriages and social, religious, cultural or political gatherings at 50.

In the national capital, which was under weekend curfew, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said there is no plan to impose a lockdown as of now and that there will be no need for it if people wear masks.

Rising COVID-19 cases are a matter of concern but there is no need to panic. Very few people are getting hospitalised. Wearing mask is very important," he said.

The national capital has been seeing an uptick of daily cases in the last few days, mainly triggered by the Omicron variant of the infection.

"There will be no lockdown if you continue to wear a mask. There is no plan to impose lockdown as of now, Kejriwal, who was also infected but has now tested negative, said at a virtual press conference.

According to Union health ministry data updated at 8 AM on Sunday, a total of 1,59,632 new coronavirus infections were reported, the highest in 224 days, while the active cases increased to 5,90,611, the highest in around 197 days.

On May 29 last year, India had logged 1,65,553 infections in a day during the deadly second wave.

India logged 552 new cases of Omicron, taking the total tally of such infections to 3,623 across 27 states and UTs so far.

Out of the total Omicron cases, 1,409 people have migrated or recovered.

Maharashtra has recorded the maximum number of 1,009 Omicron cases so far followed by Delhi at 513, Karnataka 441, Rajasthan 373, Kerala 333 and Gujarat 204.

The death toll climbed to 4,83,790 with 327 fresh fatalities, the data stated.

The active cases comprise 1.66 percent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate decreased to 96.98 percent, the ministry said.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,44,53,603 while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.36 percent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive have exceeded 151.58 crore.

In an unprecedented step, the Election Commission had on Saturday banned public meetings and rallies in poll-bound states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa in view of the COVID-19 situation.

According to the latest directions, 50 per cent of officials and staff below the rank of Under Secretary or executive officer are required to work from home till the end of this month.

The working hour of all employees who attend office on a particular day has been staggered between 10 am and 10:30 am with corresponding office exit timings to avoid rush in commuting as also in lifts and corridors.

Those with disabilities and pregnant women are exempt from attending offices. Starting and closing timings of the secretariat have been staggered to avoid crowding. All official meetings will be held virtually.

India will start administering the precaution dose of Covid vaccine to healthcare and frontline workers and comorbid people aged 60 and above from Monday in a bid to stymie the coronavirus spread driven by its Omicron variant.

Personnel deployed for election duty in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa have also been designated as frontline workers.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in a tweet on Sunday, said reminder SMSes have been sent to over one crore healthcare and frontline workers and senior citizens for their precaution dose.

An estimated 1.05 crore healthcare and 1.9 crore frontline workers, and 2.75 crore comorbid people in the 60 plus age group would be administered the precaution dose according to schedule, Health Ministry sources said.

There would be no mix-and-match of vaccines for the precaution dose. The beneficiaries would be given the same vaccine as their previous two jabs.

According to guidelines issued by the Union Health Ministry, the gap between the date of administering the second dose of vaccine and the precaution dose would be nine months (39 weeks).

CoWIN will send reminder messages to all those eligible for this dose and after administration of the shot, it will be noted in the digital vaccination certificate.

Online appointments for precaution dose began on the CoWin portal on Saturday evening. However, there is also the option of an onsite appointment and it will start

on January 10.

"The government is ensuring the security of the health army that keeps the country secure. Reminder SMS have been sent to more than one crore health and front-line workers and 60+ citizens for their precaution dose. Appointments on CoWIN are already open. Administering the doses will start tomorrow," Mandaviya said in a tweet in Hindi.

According to the Health Ministry, private hospitals that function as COVID-19 Vaccination Centres can inoculate their eligible staff members.

Those aged 60 years and above with comorbidities will not be required to produce or submit any certificate from a doctor at the time of administration of the precaution dose of vaccine.

The countrywide COVID-19 vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 last year with healthcare workers getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of frontline workers started from February 2.

The next phase of inoculation commenced from March 1 for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified co-morbid conditions. The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1.

The government then decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1. COVID-19 vaccination for adolescents in the age group of 15-18 years commenced from January 3.

Encounter breaks out...

terrorists opened firing on the security forces, he said. No casualties have been reported so far, the spokesman added.

Flight ops resume...

Devi atop Trikuta hills in Reasi district, while efforts are on to restart the battery car service, they said.

With improvement in weather after days of heavy rain and snowfall across Jammu and Kashmir, especially on Friday and Saturday, the road clearance operation was intensified to restore traffic on the 270-km-long strategic highway the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country.

The restoration is not possible today (Sunday) as loose debris from the hillocks overlooking the highway at various places is still flowing down and delaying the clearance operation, Senior Superintendent of Police, Traffic (National Highway), Shabir Ahmad Malik told PTI.

He said the highway is cleared from Jammu to Mehar in Ramban, though single-way at some places.

The clearance work is underway at Cafeteria Morh and Maroge where continuous loose debris is flowing down, hampering the restoration work. Work to restore the damaged steel tunnels at Panthiyal and Magerkote is underway.

"Clearance work at Khooni Nallah is yet to start as machinery has to be shifted after work at Magerkote, the officer said.

He said the highway from snow-covered Ramsu to Banihal is cleared but slippery and only a single carriageway can be currently used.

From Banihal to Railway Chowk, the road is single, while both tubes of Qazigund-Banihal tunnel are available for single carriageway with snow clearance work in progress, he said.

The highway was closed for vehicular traffic on Friday afternoon shortly after it was opened for fresh traffic after two days of closure.

Our priority is clearance of over a few dozen stranded passenger vehicles, the SSP said, adding a fresh review on traffic will be taken later in the day.

The officials said the helicopter service to Mata Vaishno Devi shrine atop Trikuta hills resumed early on Sunday with winter Sun making its appearance after five days, much to the relief of the people who were reeling under intense cold.

However, the battery car service remained suspended and efforts are on to restore it, the officials said, adding the yatra is being carried out smoothly.

Meanwhile, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Rajouri, has postponed the Ph.D entrance test, scheduled for January 12, by three days.

In view of the inclement weather conditions and repeated requests of the candidates from the valley, the Ph.D entrance test has been postponed and will now be held on January 15 at the same time and venue as notified earlier, Dean, Academic Affairs of the university, Prof Iqbal Parwez said.

A spokesperson of the meteorological department asked people not to venture out in avalanche-prone areas and remain cautious, especially during the next two days.

The weather improved significantly in Jammu and Kashmir and is likely to remain dry till January 16. Although the snowfall has ceased, the threat of avalanches still exists in snow-bound areas, he said.

J&K sees 3...

maximum of 292 new cases, followed by 131 cases in Srinagar district.

There are 3,531 active cases in the Union Territory, while the number of recoveries stands at 3,36,581, the officials said.

The new fatalities raised the death toll from the pandemic to 4,540 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Ladakh's COVID-19 caseload increased to 22,472 as 59 more people tested positive for the virus during the past 24 hours, officials said.

All the new cases were reported from Leh district, while no fresh death was reported in the Union Territory, the officials said.

According to the officials, the death toll stands at 221 with 163 fatalities in Leh and 58 in Kargil.

The number of active COVID-19 cases in Ladakh has gone up to 281 244 in Leh and 37 in Kargil from 241 a day earlier, the officials said.

Nineteen patients were discharged from hospitals in Leh during the past 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries in Ladakh to 21,970, they said.

The officials said the total positivity rate of Ladakh stands at 3.7 per cent.

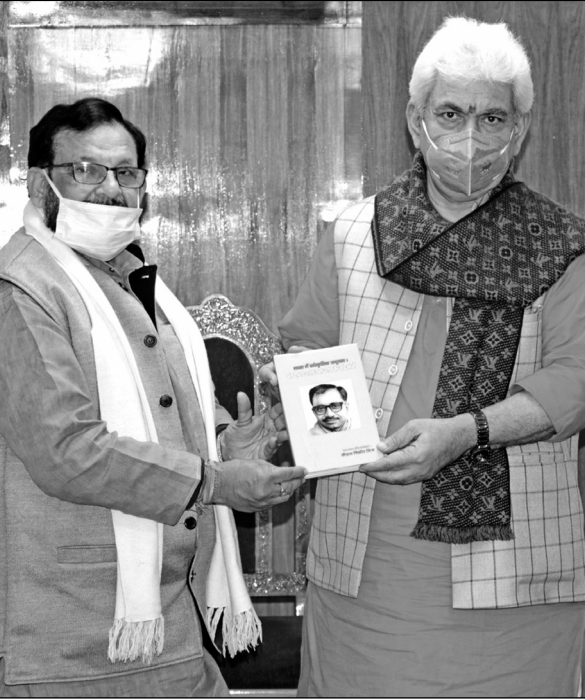
Man held from...

arrested by the Worli unit of the Anti Narcotics Cell.

Four members of a family, identified as Bandu Udanshive (52), his wife Clera, daughter Cynthia (23) and son-in-law Jasar Jahangir Shaikh (24), were arrested in October after charas was found in their car in Dahisar.

A probe had found the family was sourcing the contraband from J-K, police said.

LG releases 17 books on Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay



LG Manoj Sinha releasing books on Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay in Jammu on Sunday.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday released 17 books on the life and philosophy of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay.

These books have been authored by Prof. Kaushal Kishor Mishra and published by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Chair, Banaras Hindu University.

The Lt Governor observed that the books published by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Chair, BHU will enrich readers' lives and expand their horizons.

The Lt Governor also threw light on the ideals, values and vision conceived by the pioneer of Integral Humanism Philosophy, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. He said that the

teachings of Pandit Deendayal are more relevant today than ever.

The Lt Governor applauded the efforts of Prof. Kaushal Kishore Mishra and congratulated him for the voluminous work.

Prof. Koushal Kishor Mishra, Professor In-charge, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Chair, BHU and Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU presented the context of publication of the books during the COVID period, besides mentioning various works of Banaras Hindu University and Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Peeth.

The books which were released included- Integral Humanism: Revisited in Contemporary India; Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay ka Rashtara Gaurav Ke Prati Drishtikon (Hindi); Saanskrtik Chintan (Hindi); Sanatan Hindu Dharma & Ethics; Vichar Vidhi-Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Parichay (Hindi); Samaj Prabandhan- Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Parichay (Hindi)- besides other books.

Dr. Sunita Singh, Assistant Professor, BHU; Dr. Yogendra Dixit, Assistant Professor, Sanskrit University Jammu, besides research students of Pandit Deendayal Peeth, BHU were present on the occasion.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

UDHAMPUR: Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Dr Raghav Langer, on Sunday conducted visit to Udhampur district and reviewed the progress of power restoration works & road clearance works of R&B/PMGSY; being executed in the wake of heavy rain and snowfall, at mini conference hall, DC Office.

District Development Council Chairperson Udhampur, Lal Chand, Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur, Indu Kanwal Chib, Senior Superintendent of Police, Vinod Kumar, President MC, Dr Jogeshwar Gupta, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mohammad Syed Khan, Chief Planning Officer, Mudassir Yaqoob Zargar, ACR, Vqir Giri and other officers of various departments attended the meeting.

While assessing pace of progress on restoration works, SE PWD briefed the Divisional Commissioner about the status of works being done to restore various roads across the district.

Dr Langer directed the SE to ensure all major and link roads should be cleared and restored at the earliest and thrown open for the general public.

The Div Com was informed



Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Dr Raghav Langer chairing a meeting at Udhampur.

that the restoration work on Dudu Basantgarh road is in full swing.

The Div Com asked the concerned departments to ensure early restoration of road connectivity, sufficient stock of ration in vulnerable/ designated winter dumping areas, restoration of healthcare services, drinking water and electricity in their respective areas.

He directed all the concerned officers to monitor the situation and ensure all essential services are made available in all areas especially rural and hilly areas.

President MC Udhampur, Dr Jogeshwar Gupta, projected several demands including establishment of bus stand and an auditorium,

car parking, creation of a matador stand and related issues.

Divisional Commissioner took stock of scheme wise financial status under District Capex Budget 2021-

22 in respect of Udhampur district.

Dr Langer directed the concerned officers to expedite progress on ongoing developmental works for timely completion.

NEET-PG counselling to begin on Jan 12, says Mandaviya

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The NEET-PG counselling will commence from January 12, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Sunday.

The Supreme Court on January 7, in an interim order, allowed resumption of medical counselling for NEET-PG admissions for the year 2021-22.

It also upheld the validity of 27 per cent OBC and 10 per cent EWS quotas.

"As assured by the Ministry of Health to the resident doctors, following the order of the Honourable Supreme Court, the NEET-PG counselling is being started by the Medical Counselling Committee from January 12, 2022. "This will give more strength to the country in the fight against Corona. My best wishes to all the candidates," Mandaviya said in a tweet in Hindi. The NEET-PG exam was held on September 11, 2021, after being rescheduled twice in January and April. Its results were declared in the last week of September following which students for nearly 45,000 postgraduate seats had been waiting for the counselling to begin.

Resident doctors of various medical colleges across the entire country last month held protests and boycotted work demanding expedition of the counselling.

