

Website : www.statetimes.in. Email: statetimes1@gmail.com J&K COVID- situation challenging, but no need to panic: UT Admn Record daily jump of 2,204 cases, 13 deaths in 24 hrs

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu and administration Kashmir Wednesday said the COVID-19 situation in the Union Territory is "challenging" with cases rising steadily, but there is no need to panic as there is no dearth of facilities including oxygen beds and required medicines.

It also advised eligible people to go for vaccination and adopt COVID-appropriate behaviour to help the government defeat the virus. "We have a steady increase

in COVID cases that reached a peak in September last year touching 22,000 active cases which later went down to 600 active cases. We are again seeing a sharp increase and the peaks of September last year have been breached, Government spokesperson Rohit Kansal told reporters here.

He said the government is trying its best to control the situation without going into a complete lockdown.

He said the government is monitoring the situation and has taken various steps like placing certain restrictions while ensuring that economic

Migrant labourers tested in Bhadarwah, 6 found positive

BHADARWAH: Over 240 migrant labourers were screened for COVID-19 on Wednesday in a special drive as they gathered in search of work here in Doda district, officials said. Of the labourers, six were found to be positive for the infection and were shifted to hospital, they said.

Doda had recorded 64 COVID-related deaths among total 3,553 infected cases since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, while the active cases in the district stands at 60 till Tuesday evening.

In a surprise move, a team of paramedics from sub-district hospital Bhadarwah, along with police, cordoned off the historic Chowgam market early in the morning, where a large number of migrant labourers, mostly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, had gathered to be hired by local residents, the officials said

They said the labourers were subjected to Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) during the drive, which was welcomed by both migrant labourers as well as local residents, who were apprehensive of engaging the labourers in view of a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases across the union territory.

"Despite heavy downpour we carried on with our first major exercise after the outbreak of the second wave of the infection and tested 240 labourers, out of which six were tested positive and were immediately CONTD ON PAGE 9

activity is not impacted. Reconstruction Department, Kansal was joined by Simrandeep Singh, Dulloo said the situation in Financial Commissioner, Jammu and Kashmir is chalhealth and medical educalenging because the COVIDtion, Atal Dulloo and Disaster 19 cases and deaths are ris-Secretary, Management Relief. ing.

and

"We have 13,400 active



Government Spokesperson Rohit Kansal briefing media in Jammu on Wednesday.

cases till date. Last year, the maximum of 22,000 active cases were in September," he said, adding the recovery rate in Jammu and Kashmir stands at 89.6 percent, while the mortality rate has been 1.38 percent since the outbreak of the pandemic.

In April this year, 77 deaths have taken place while the positivity has reached 2.5 percent which is more than the cumulative positivity of last year, he said.

The positivity on Tuesday was 5.2 percent, Dulloo said. "We are following the five pillar strategy to deal with the situation -- testing, containment and surveillance, isolation and treatment, covid-appropriate behavior and vaccination," he said. He said Jammu and Kashmir is conducting 40,000 tests daily -- 10,000 RT-PCR ones and 30,000 RAT (Rapid-Antigen Test) ones -- and its average stands at 2,500 tests per million per day

"The RT-PCR testing facility is available in all government medical colleges (GMC) hospitals. We are further augmenting the facilities and have installed a newly acquired machine at Soura medical institutions, while another one is on its way and will be installed at GMC Jammu and another requisitioned for GMC Srinagar," he

He said so far, 68.33 lakh

tests have been conducted, while 1.64 lakh contacts of positive cases were traced this month. As many as 120 locations were declared containment zones, where 32,000 tests were conducted, leading to the detection of 1,680 positive cases, he said.

"We have earmarked 6000 beds for the COVID patients in dedicated hospitals and our rate of occupancy at present stands at 13 percent.

"There is no dearth of oxygen-supported beds and in the next few weeks, we will be adding 2,000 more oxygensupported beds after commissioning of oxygen plants in 23 hospitals, out of total 36 hospitals where the facility is being installed," he said.

States struggle to sustain oxygen supply as daily COVID count nears 3 lakh Death toll increases to 24 in Nashik hospital tragedy

NEW DELHI: As India saw another record high of 2,95,041 new COVID cases and 2023 deaths, the oxygen crisis precipitated by the second wave which has left tens of thousands hospitalised appeared to intensify with complaints of shortage from several states, including Maharashtra where tragedy struck when 24 patients on ventilator support suffocated to death due to leakage in an oxygen storage tank.

On the vaccination front, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh were the latest to announce free COVID vaccination for all aged above 18 years, after Uttar Pradesh and Assam made a similar decision, and officials presented data to assert that the vaccines reduce the risk of infection and prevent death and severe infection.

At a press conference, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul appealed to the states, hospitals and nursing homes to ensure rational use of oxygen as it was "life-saving" drug for the coronavirus infected patients.

Noting that 7,500 MT of oxygen was being produced in the country per day and 6,600 MT is being allocated to states for medical purposes, the Centre said the Union government and state governments need to work together and respond promptly to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The Centre's response came as Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra CONTD ON PAGE 9

Dulloo said more hospitals would be converted into COVID hospitals to deal with any emergency.

were administered to the people of eligible categories. "We have covered 74 percent healthcare workers, 77.5 percent frontline workers

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Serum Institute prices Covishield at Rs 400/dose for Govts; Rs 600/dose for Pvt hospitals

Rehabilitation

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Serum Institute India's \mathbf{of} Covishield vaccine will cost private hospitals Rs 600 per dose and state governments Rs 400, a rate which will also apply to central government procurement once the existing contract for Rs 150 a dose ends, its chief executive

said on Wednesday. The world's largest vaccine maker announced pricing of AstraZeneca shots it manufactures at its Pune facility, following the government decision to open up inoculation to all citizens above 18 years of age.

"Going ahead, 50 per cent of our capacities will be served to the Government of India's vaccination program, and the remaining 50 per cent of the capacity will be for the state governments and private hospitals," the Serum Institute of India (SII) said in a statement. With government giving

manufacturers and importers pricing freedom, SII said Covishield vaccines will be priced at Rs 400 per dose for state governments and Rs 600 for private hospi-

Transporters on strike as fresh curbs come into effect in J&K

said.

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Private transporters in Jammu went on an indefinite strike on Wednesday to protest a government order capping the seating capacity to 50 per cent in public transport vehicles in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new guidelines, which also include restrictions on opening of shops at market places and malls as part of steps to prevent the spread of the coronavirus infection



Buses parked at the Bus Stand during a transport strike in Jammu Protesting against the mini-buses and cab operators suspended wor

ers were seen playing normally, bringing some relief to commuters.

The government has taken a decision without consulting us. It is not feasible for transporters to ply their vehicles with 50 per cent passengers on board. The fuel prices are skyrocketing and the transporters were the hardest hit since the outbreak of the pandemic,' TWF president T S Wazir

said. Sec Management Relief, Rehabilitation

CEO, SMVD Shrine Board Ramesh Kumar participating in Purna Ahuti on the conclusion of Shat Chandi Maha Yagya at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine.

STATE TIMES NEWS during Navratras for peace, KATRA: Shat Chandi Maha prosperity and health of Yagya organised by Shri humanity concluded today Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board at the Holy Shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji

He also said the vaccination drive progressing smoothly and 36.76 percent of the and so far 17.50 lakh doses Shat Chandi Maha Yagya concludes at

Vaishno Devi Shrine with Purna Ahuti

Court rejects bail in NDPS case

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Additional Sessions Judge Kathua Kamlesh Pandit rejected bail application of one Parvez Mushraf Ali, from whose possession 250 grams Charas was recovered by a team of officials from Police Station Billawar.

While rejecting bail application, Additional Sessions Judge Kathua Kamlesh Pandit observed that

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Ladakh reports 250 COVID cases, 1 death **STATE TIMES NEWS**

JAMMU: Ladakh on Wednesday reported 250 new COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 12,556, while one death pushed the toll to 134. According to the media bulletin released by the Directorate of Health Services of Ladakh, of

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tals. The pricing, however, came in for sharp

morning CONTD ON PAGE 9

amid a recent spike, came launched a strike to press for into effect on Wednesday hiking of fares.

RPF

CAT lacks jurisdiction to entertain plea regarding RPF

STATE TIMES NEWS

Administrative

Jain

Central

Sagar

Mustaq Ahmad Sofi, the JAMMU: A Bench applicants sought quashment of Administrative of impugned order No. 940-E/2-RPF/Trf-CT/KV/2018-Tribunal (CAT) comprising Judicial Member Rakesh 21 (C) dated 15.03.2021 passed by respondent No. 2 and (Principal Chief Security Tribunal Anand Mathur in a petition Commissioner. Northern Railways, Baroda filed by an employee of Railway Protection force House, New Delhi) whereby (RFP), held that Tribunal applicants have been transhas no jurisdiction to enterferred from Kashmir Vallev Lucknow Division. tain plea regarding Railway toProtection Force (RPF). Applicants were appointed as In the petition filed by Constables in Railway Abdul Majeed Bhat and Protection Special Force in

While most private buses.

1995 and subsequently promoted as Head Constables. CAT, after hearing both sides, observed that as per the settled law, it is clear that mere membership of Armed Forces of the Union is not enough to oust the jurisdiction of Tribunal under Section 2 (a) of the Act and what is necessary to oust the jurisdiction is whether the dispute relates to service of the Armed Forces of the Union. As already stated,

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Zojila pass connecting Kashmir with Ladakh opens **STATE TIMES NEWS** NEW DELHI: The BRO on

Wednesday opened the Zojila pass that provides vital road link between the Kashmir valley and Ladakh, officials said.

to the strike call given by the

J&K Transporters Welfare

Forum (TWF), three-wheel-

The pass normally closes by mid-November every year, with the onset of winters when the temperatures dip to subzero degrees and opens only by end April the next year, the BRO officials noted.

Zojila is a strategic pass at 11,650 feet that helps

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with Purna Ahuti, on the auspicious occasion

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56 DySPs transferred

Wani,

CID

Rafiq

DySP

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Director General of Police, J&K, Jammu, Dilbag Singh on Wednesday transferred 56 Deputy Superintendents of Police (DySPs).

According to an order, Kamaljit Singh, awaiting posting PHQ has been posted as DySP PCR Jammu; Shabir Ahmad, DySP CID CI Pul/Awantipora as SDPO DH Pora; Mushtaq Ahmad, DySP GRP Kashmir as DySP SDRF 1st Bn;

Syed Fayaz Ahmad, SDPO Charar-i-Sharief as DySP Udhampur Reasi as DvSF

DAR Awantipora; Fahad PC Sangam; Peerzada Aijaz Ahmad, SDPO Gurez as Tak, DySP CID CIK (JIC) as SDPO Pahalgam; Shukat DySP DAR/PC Baramulla; Aumer lqbal, DySP IR-14th SDPO Pahalgam as DvSP CID CIK Bn as DySP PC Kunzer; (JIC); Syed Majeed Mosavi, Syed Sajad Hussain, DySP SBSSG as DySP Hqrs Awt/PuI/Shopian as DySP Baramulla; Wajahat PC Kellar; Musadiq Majid Hussain, DvSP Hgrs Shopian as SO to DIG Basu, SDPO Zakura as DYSP Traffic City Srinagar; Udhampur Reasi; Mohd Salim Jahangir Lone, DySP Shafiq, SDPO Qazigund as DySP JKAP 6th Bn; Nisar Hqrs Srinagar as SDPO Charar-i-Sharief: Showkat Ahmad Khan, SDPO Ahmad Dar, SDPO Magam Sumbal as DySP CID SB as SDPO Zakura; Imtiaz Poonch; Govind Rattan, Ahmed, SO to DIG DySP PC Samba as

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EC rules out change in Bengal poll schedule

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission on Wednesday ruled out any change in the schedule of the West Bengal assembly polls and told the Trinamool Congress that its suggestion to club the last three of the eight phases is "not feasible"

The Commission also told West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury that his demand to hold the remaining phases of polls in West Bengal after the Muslim fasting month of Ramzan is over and the present pandemic is diluted, is not acceptable as the term of the state assembly ends on May 30 and a new assembly has to be constituted before that. "Any postponement of scheduled elections

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BSF demands FIR Kashmir becoming hub of heroin coming in from Pakistan, Afghanistan against Pakistani pigeon Police have also seized 2,000 kgs of 1,37,91,738 has been recovered in AHMED ALI FAYYAZ lation in North is smuggled in from

JAMMU: The valley of Kashmir-particularly the northern Kupwara district-is rapidly turning into a major hub of narcotics being smuggled in from Afganistan and Pakistan. According to the official figures, heroin worth over Rs 300 crore has been seized in the valley in the last 16 months, even as the volume of the drugs smuggled in, produced and traded in the same period is estimated to be of the order of Rs 600 crore.

"59 kilos of heroin, 51 kilos of brown sugar and 355 kilos of charas (marijuana) has been seized in Kashmir from 1 January, 2020 to 20 April, 2021. This is in addition to fukky and processed drugs in the form of capsules, tablets and injections recovered from different individuals and gangs during the same period", Inspector General of Police Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, revealed to STATE TIMES.

According to the official statistics.

Bhukki, 73,800 tablets and capsules containing drugs and 245 vials of injections besides cash worth Rs 1,48,20,248 from the persons dealing with drugs and psychotropic substances

As many as 1,498 persons have been booked and arrested in 946 NDPS related FIRs. Total number of the cases chargesheeted is 530.

The revenue district of Kupwara. comprising Kupwara and Handwara Police districts, is emerging as the epicentre of the drug smuggling with the advantage of being contiguous to the border areas of Pakistan-occunied Kashmir (PoK).19 kg of heroin has been seized in Kupwara and 22 kg in Handwara in addition to 10.3 kg of charas in Kupwara and 7.4 kg in Handwara. Police have also recovered 48.5 kg of brown sugar in Kupwara and 0.27 kg in Handwara. Of the cash recovered from the drug smugglers, as much as Rs

Handwara alone

Seventy NDPS related FIRs have been registered in Kupwara and 44 in Handwara, even as 25 cases have been challaned in Kupwara and 18 in Handwara and 86 persons have been arrested in Kupwara and 69 in Handwara.

One of the high profile cases in Handwara has been assigned to National Investigation Agency (NIA) which has completed a part of the investigation, taken custody of the detainees and arrested some of the accused and filed challan for chargesheet and prosecution in a designated court in Jammu

Senior Army and Police officers maintained that entire Kashmir was now affected by the drugs and narcotics being produced, traded and consumed. "However, there is one marked difference between North Kashmir and South Kashmir. Almost the entire quantity of drugs in circu-

Afghanistan and Pakistan, mainly to convert it into terror funding. Contrarily, the drugs in circulation in South Kashmir are procured out of the poppy grown on large chunks of land in Pulwama, Kulgam and Anantnag districts", said a Senior Superintendent of Police.

"Terrorists, growers and traders of drugs are not by and large linked in South Kashmir but they do not disturb one another. This is different from North Kashmir where terror funds are generated out of the large scale smuggling of heroin", said the SSP

Afghanistan is the source of more than 90 per cent of world's opium supply and more than 95 per cent of the European opium supply since 2001.

Since the United States military occupation of Afghanistan in 2001, followed by the NATO occupation in 2003CONTD ON PAGE 9

Police Dhruv Dahiya CONTD ON PAGE 9

STATE TIMES NEWS AMRITSAR: The BSF has sought registration of an FIR against an intruder from Pakistan that happens to be a pigeon.

The Punjab Police are seeking legal opinion on this.

The pigeon perched itself on the shoulder of a Border Security Force jawan at the Rorawala post here last Saturday, apparently after flving across the border, an official said.

A small piece of paper with a contact number was wrapped around its leg, the official said.

The BSF personnel hand-

ed over the bird to the police

with a demand in writing for

Senior Superintendent of

taking legal action.