

# Cyclone Tauktae: 98 villages affected in Karnataka, 4 human lives lost so far

## ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BENGALURU: With Cyclone Tauktae wreaking havoc in the coastal and surrounding malnad districts of Karnataka, a total of four deaths have been reported in the state so far, officials said on Sunday.

According to a situation report by Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority officials, till this evening, 98 villages, 20 taluhs in seven districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan have been affected by the cyclone so far. Among the 98 villages affected, a maximum of 31 are from Uttara Kannada district.

Of the four deaths reported so far, one each from Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga, officials said.

While one fisherman who went to tie his boat died in Uttara Kannada as he got

hit by another boat, a person died in Udupi due to electric mishap, they said, adding that one death each were reported in Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga due house collapse and lightning respectively.

A total of 516 people have been evacuated so far, as per the situation report, and 253 people are currently taking shelter in the 10 relief camps that have been opened.

Damages to a total of 216 houses, 491 poles, 27 transformers, 3,000 meters of lines have been reported so far, it added.

Meanwhile Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa today asked in-charge Ministers of coastal districts and Deputy Commissioners (DCs) there to visit affected areas and carry out rescue and relief works.

Yediyurappa called Ministers incharge of coastal districts and DCs and took stock of the situation there, his office said in a statement.

He has directed the officials to call the Ministers concerned or him directly if in need of any emergency assistance from the government.

According to a tweet in the evening by the CMO, the Chief Minister once again spoke to three DCs and the Chief Secretary in the evening and directed the Dakshina Kannada DC to take necessary measures to rescue the crew of a tug boat that is caught in the sea.

He also directed the Chief Secretary to stay in touch with the Centre for the rescue of crew, and make all the necessary arrangements, including chopper if required. A tugboat named Coromandel has nine crew members, sources said.

According to Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, due to very severe cyclonic storm from 08:30 am to till 07:30 pm rainfall was observed over parts of the state.

Widespread moderate to heavy rains were observed over Uttara Kannada, Belagavi and Udupi districts.

The officials said as the system is moving further north, towards Maharashtra coast, the impact of cyclone will likely to come down from tomorrow over the State.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast that rain or thunder-showers are very likely to occur at most places over coastal and South Interior Karnataka and at many places over North Interior Karnataka.

Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai has said around 1,000 trained personnel from fire force, police, coastal police, home guards, SDRF have been deployed in the three coastal districts and they will work with coordination in rescue and relief operations, also NDRF teams have also been roped in.

# All hands on deck: Armed forces use veterinary corps personnel at COVID facilities

## ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: To augment medical care services to fight the brutal second COVID-19 wave, doctors and other staff from the Remount Veterinary Corps have been roped in by the armed forces, essentially to help run patient facilitation centres, officials said on Sunday.

Around 18 officers, over 120 junior commissioned officers (JCOs) and other ranks have been deployed in specially created COVID-19 facilities in the national capital, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Varanasi and Patna under operation 'CO-JEET', which was started by the combined armed forces in view of the pandemic.

'CO-JEET' stands for co-workers of all three services who will finally have 'Jeet' (victory) over COVID-19.

Operation 'Co-JEET' has engaged personnel of the three wings of the armed forces the Army, the Air Force and the Navy into services like helping restore oxygen supply chains, setting up COVID beds and

providing help to the civilian administration in their fight to prevent the spread of the infection.

The Department of Defence has also created a COVID Crisis Management Committee.

The staff of the Remount Veterinary Corps (RVC) will be used to help facilitation centres to provide information to the kins of patients admitted to the make-shift (COVID) hospitals, the officials said.

Officers, JCOs and other ranks would be deployed at the COVID-19 care centres to help the over-stretched medical staff and provide timely information to anxious relatives and attendants of patients.

Relatives and attendants have been making a beeline outside these makeshift facilities to get information about their patients, and have often engaged with the staff deployed there for providing medical care to the infected.

The fresh deployment will lessen the burden on medical personnel, the officials said.

COVID-19 is zoonotic, and the pharmacology and bio-chemistry of veterinary sciences and the human body is totally the same, they said.

The Remount Veterinary Corps, which has a history of more than two centuries, among other things and besides veterinary services also takes care of disease diagnosis and investigation, and research in emerging diseases.

The RVC also works round the clock for prevention of zoonotic diseases.

Zoonotic diseases or zoonoses are caused by germs that can spread between animals and people. They are caused viruses, bacteria, parasites, and fungi.

Coronaviruses are from a family of RNA (ribonucleic acid) viruses and its infection is common in animals and humans, according to the Federation of European Veterinarians (FEV).

The FEV in a paper had said that some, but not all strains of coronavirus diseases, can be transmitted between animals

and humans.

A wide range of animals is known to be the source of coronaviruses which include the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-COVID) that originated from camels and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that originated from civet cats.

The fresh COVID-19 wave is being treated like war by the armed forces and they have launched operation 'CO-JEET' which encompasses psychological measures to allay fears and panic among patients, and augmentation of medical facilities to combat the disease.

Engaging veterinarians to provide help to health care workers has been done in other parts of the world, including in Britain and other countries of Europe last year.

In the United States, some states had kept veterinarians on standby to assist if needed, either by offering their medical expertise in hospitals or in mortuary management.

## ISRO team at Sterlite Copper plant to help fixing snag affecting oxygen production

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

CHENNAI: Vedanta Ltd owned Sterlite Copper plant has roped in experts from ISRO to help rectify the technical glitch developed in the cold box of its oxygen plant, leading to a suspension in production of the life-saving gas. The company formally commenced production of medical oxygen on Thursday and the very next day, the facility in Tuticorin, about 600kms from here, suffered a jolt in operations after developing a 'technical snag'. In a statement shared on the micro-blogging site on Sunday, Sterlite Copper said, "efforts to resume production at our oxygen plant are progressing".

"Today, an expert team from the Indian Space Research Organisation arrived at the premises to support our ongoing efforts and collaborate with our technical team." The expert team has suggested some measures to fix the snag and resume production of oxygen. "This has helped fastrack the repair process for which we are thankful to the local administration, which was instrumental in facilitating this cooperative effort to recommence our oxygen production," Vedanta said. The facility, on May 13, began producing medical oxygen to meet the demand for the life-saving gas following a surge in COVID cases in the state. The first set of oxygen tankers have been dispatched to the beneficiaries. The Sterlite copper smelter plant was accorded approval by the then AIADMK government on April 26 at an all-party meeting to produce medical oxygen at its facility for a period of four months at the facility in Tuticorin. The unit was sealed by the state government in May 2018, days after 13 agitators who were part of a protest against the company over environmental concerns, were killed in police firing during a violent anti-Sterlite stir in the southern district.

## Over 9,440 MT of liquid medical oxygen delivered across India on Oxygen Express trains

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The railways has delivered more than 9,440 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) in nearly 590 tankers to various states across the country since April 19, the national transporter said on Sunday.

Around 150 Oxygen Express trains have completed their journey so far and brought relief to various states, it added. Twelve Oxygen Express trains were on the run with more than 970 tonnes of LMO in 55 tankers, it said.

The southern states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu got a big boost in

the supply of the life-saving gas with several Oxygen Express trains delivering their loads. Incidentally, the NCR region crossed the delivery of more than 5,000 tonnes of oxygen for further distribution. The Oxygen Express trains have been delivering nearly 800 tonnes of LMO across the nation each day for the last few days. Kerala received its first Oxygen Express at Ernakulam with 118 tonnes of LMO.

So far, 521 tonnes of oxygen have been offloaded in Maharashtra, nearly 2,525 tonnes in Uttar Pradesh, 430 tonnes in Madhya Pradesh, 1,228 tonnes in Haryana, 389 tonnes in Telangana, 40 tonnes in Rajasthan, 361 tonnes in Karnataka, 200 tonnes in Uttarakhand, 118 tonnes in Karnataka, 151 tonnes in Tamil Nadu, 116 tonnes in Andhra Pradesh and more than 3,320 tonnes in Delhi.

## PM Modi speaks to four CMs on COVID-19 situation

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday spoke to the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry on the COVID-19 situation in the states and the union territory, government sources said.

Modi has been regularly speaking to chief ministers to take stock of the pandemic's situation in states and union territories.

With 3.11 lakh fresh coronavirus infections, India saw the lowest rise in daily COVID-19 cases after a gap of 25 days, while the death toll rose to 2,70,284 with 4,077 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The active cases have reduced to 36,18,458 comprising 14.66 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 84.25 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,07,95,335, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.09 per cent, the data stated.

## Confusion, anger over changed Covishield-dose duration

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Ram Avtar Tyagi stood in a queue for an hour at a vaccination centre in north Delhi, only to be turned away and asked to return almost two months later.

"I was told that second dose cannot be given now as new guidelines have come into effect," the 55-year-old, who visited the Burari centre on Saturday, said.

While some like Tyagi were turned away from the vaccination centre, others were left confused after the Centre's directive came into effect to extend the gap between the two doses of Covishield to 12-16 weeks.

The Centre had on Thursday approved the extension following a recommendation from a government panel, saying it was a "science-based decision". The National Technical Advisory Group on

Immunisation, however, suggested no change for the dosage interval for Covaxin, the Health Ministry said.

Tyagi did not receive any message informing him about the new date.

"Authorities should send message to those who are scheduled to get their second jab this month so that people don't have to face unnecessary problem," he added.

The Health Ministry has conveyed it to the chief secretaries of all states and Union territories to instruct officials "to undertake necessary steps to widely disseminate the message of revised dosing interval amongst programme managers, vaccinators and recipients of COVISHIELD vaccine and ensure adherence of 'revised dosing interval'".

Gurgaon-based media professional Nikitha Phyllis, who is a patient of an autoimmune condition, expressed shock

when she found out about the revised date.

"My doctor had put off my medication till I have taken both the Covishield vaccines. But with the increased gap, I simply cannot do without my medication for so long," Phyllis told PTI.

Earlier, the date for her second jab was on June 23, now she has to wait till August.

Delhi-based lawyer Mishika Singh was also in for a surprise when she logged in to the CoWIN portal to find slots for vaccination.

"My Covishield vaccination booking date has been revised (automatically) on the site itself. From 5th June to 27th July," Singh said.

Some also took to Twitter to vent their anger over the revised timeline.

Kumud Ranjan Choubey wondered if there were new guidelines, then why had the CoWIN portal allowed people

## UP gearing up to tackle COVID's possible 3rd wave, black fungus infection: CM

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NOIDA (UP): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said the state government is alive to the possibility of a third wave of Covid-19 and the spread of black fungus infection among cured patients and is readying itself to tackle them.

He said the state government is focusing on ensuring awareness and treatment of the black fungus infection, which has emerged as a challenge for the people who have recovered from Covid-19.

Apprehensions have been expressed about a possible third wave of the coronavirus in the state, Adityanath said, adding the government is already preparing an action plan to effectively check the third wave.

The chief minister made these remarks while

addressing reporters during his visit to Noida to review the Covid-19 situation.

Mentioning the new challenge of black fungus infection among cured Covid patients, the chief minister said the state government has issued an advisory regarding it besides conducting virtual meetings with health officials and medical colleges in every district.

The chief minister talked of the black fungus infection or mucormycosis a day after AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria attributed the new malady to the misuse of steroids in the treatment of Covid-19 patients and asked hospitals to follow the infection control protocols.

"It has been seen that secondary infections -- whether fungal or bacterial -- are causing more mortality. This disease, mucormycosis, can affect the face, infecting

the nose, the orbit of the eye or the brain which can even cause vision loss. It can also spread to the lung," Guleria had said on Saturday.

Talking of his government preparedness to tackle the possible third wave of Covid-19, which, he said, is feared to be affecting children more, the chief minister said, Every district administration has been asked to prepare a dedicated hospital for women and children.

He have 2,220 ambulances of 102 service which are dedicated for women and children and for their emergency services besides providing them telephonic consultation from these hospitals, he said.

The chief minister said arrangements are also being made to set up paediatric intensive care units (ICU) in every district and every medical college amid the apprehensions of an

impending third wave.

In the case of Covid-19, we have been able to keep the CFR (case fatality rate) lower than one per cent. Similarly, for black fungus, there should not be any problem if its timely treatment is ensured, the chief minister said.

The government's advisory also calls for a comprehensive awareness campaign to inform people about the cause, symptoms and treatment of black fungus, Adityanath said.

The government is quickly working on ensuring treatment of black fungus in all districts of the state, he added.

Uttar Pradesh has fought encephalitis and reduced mortality rate by 95 per cent from 2017 to 2020, hence the state has over these years improved medical resources in districts of its eastern region, he said.

## UK defends delay in adding India to red list travel ban as COVID-19's B1.617.2 variant spreads rapidly

### ■ AGENCY

LONDON: The UK government came under strong criticism on Sunday for not adding India to the red list travel ban at the same time as Pakistan and Bangladesh in early April, which is feared as a major factor behind a rapid spike in cases of COVID-19's B1.617.2 variant first identified in India.

Downing Street said it had taken a precautionary action to ban travel from India on April 23, six days before the B1.617 variant was put under investigation and two weeks before its highly transmissible subtype, B1.617.2, was labelled a Variant of Concern (VOC).

According to latest Public Health England (PHE) data, around 20,000 people travelled between India and the UK before the red list ban and around 122 of them arriving from Delhi and

Mumbai between late March and April 26 were detected with the VOC.

Prior to India being placed on the red list in April, anyone coming to the UK had to test negative and quarantine for 10 days," a UK government spokesperson said.

However, the Opposition Labour Party attacked the government for a delay in acting when the variant first emerged at the end of March.

This was not inevitable. They should have put India on the red list. We've had this three-week period in which thousands of people have returned from India, including probably hundreds of cases of the variant, said Yvette Cooper, senior Labour MP and Chair of the Commons Home Affairs Committee.

When they did finally add India to the red list two weeks after they'd added Pakistan on April 9 they

gave travellers four days' notice to rush back. Why didn't they introduce additional testing for those travellers before they were able to get on public transport home, she questioned.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's planned visit to Delhi at the end of April, which was cancelled as the second wave of the pandemic surged in the country, is being cited by many as among the reasons for the delay in adding India on the red list despite higher infection rates per million than its neighbouring countries.

It comes as PHE revealed that cases of the B1.617.2 variant being tracked and traced in the community had more than doubled in a week to hit 1,313 cases this week.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock admitted the VOC identified in India spread much more rapidly and may soon become the

dominant variant in the country but also highlighted that based on the cases in the hotspot region of Bolton in north-west England, the indications are that those who are unvaccinated are more susceptible to hospitalisation.

He revealed that 18 people currently in hospital due to the B1.617.2 VOC have not had any dose of the COVID-19 vaccine even though they are eligible and urged all eligible over-38s to come forward for their jabs.

Because of the speed of transmission of this one, it can really spread like wildfire amongst the unvaccinated groups hence we need to get as many people vaccinated as possible, particularly among those who are most vulnerable to ending up in hospital," he said.

The minister reiterated that the government feels it is the right thing for the lockdown easing roadmap to

go ahead as planned for now, with Monday's further easing of rules set to go ahead.

However, a decision on the June 21 complete lockdown easing timeline will be taken on June 14, based on data over the coming weeks to see if the B1.617.2 variant knocks us off course.

"We need to be cautious, we need to be careful, we need to be vigilant and we've said at each step we will look at the four tests that we have," Hancock told Sky News.

"We've always said we want this to be cautious, we really want it to be irreversible. New variants are one of the biggest risks to this opening, he said.

The government, meanwhile, is deploying thousands of extra tests as part of a surge testing programme in parts of England to try to get a hold on the spread of the new variant.

reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to Armed Forces," the ministry said.

It said 50,95,640 vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be received by states and UTs within the next three days.

Vaccination forms an integral component of the comprehensive strategy of Government of India of containment and management of the pandemic (including Test, Track, Treat and COVID Appropriate Behaviour).

The Centre has been supporting the nationwide vaccination drive by providing COVID vaccines free of cost to states and UTs, in addition

to several efforts to ramp up its production and supply, the ministry stated.

Implementation of the Liberalized and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination has started from May 1 as part of which the government has opened up inoculation for all aged above 18.

Under the Strategy, every month 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Centre. It would continue to make these doses available to state governments free of cost as was being done earlier.

## Nadda flags off medical, other supplies to Himachal Pradesh to fight COVID

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: BJP president J P Nadda on Sunday flagged off vehicles carrying a large quantity of masks, drugs and other materials to Himachal Pradesh to help people in the fight against COVID-19 as part of his party's "Seva hi Sangathan" campaign.

Describing the pandemic as the biggest medical and health crisis in the history of humankind, he said Indians have unitedly fought this under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and will come out victorious in this war against the infectious disease, according to a BJP statement.

He said BJP workers have provided medical aid and relief material to hospitals, social organisations and administration, and this includes medical beds, medicines, blood and plasma, oxygen cylinders as well as food and shelter.

They have organised over 1,200 blood donation camps across the country, and also conducted plasma donation camps in large numbers, he said. To help COVID-19 patients and their families, they have set up over 200 dedicated helplines at district level across the country, he added.

BJP workers have so far distributed over 65 lakh face masks, over 14 lakh food packets, seven lakh relief material packets and immunity kits across all states, Nadda said.

The BJP president also spoke about the boost in health infrastructure under Modi, listing out the increase in medical institutions, hospitals and setting up of oxygen plants.

The materials sent to Himachal Pradesh included around three lakh three-ply face masks, 50,000 N-95 face masks, 25,000 gloves, 10,000 face shields, 7,000 PPE kits, 6,000 oxygen mask, 1,500 oxygen regulators, 250 nasal cannula and other medical items, the party statement said.

Nadda also flagged off a consignment of medical equipments, including 17 mobile medical units, and lauded Union Minister Anurag Thakur, a MP from the state, for his efforts towards this.

The 17 mobile medical units are part of Sansad Mobile Swasthya Seva, an initiative launched by Thakur three years ago to provide accessible rural healthcare services to people in his constituency Hamirpur.

The initiative will cater to all 12 districts of the hill state.

