

PM holds video-conference with 130 Indian missions abroad on COVID-19

NEW DELHI, Mar 30:

Extraordinary times require extraordinary solutions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during a video conference on Monday with 130 Indian missions abroad while referring to the 21-day nationwide lockdown to fight coronavirus.

In a nearly 75-minute interaction, Modi said India had taken "unprecedented" and early steps from mid-January to reduce the risk of importing the coronavirus infection and prevent a large outbreak. He said it included the world's largest quarantine and lockdown, according to the ministry of external affairs. "The prime minister noted that extraordinary times require extraordinary solutions, which was why even in this globalised era, most of the world had quarantined itself," it

said.

Modi termed said the lockdown as an unavoidable step to fight the pandemic, adding it was hugely consequential as the closure of the globalised system has had an extensive and far-reaching impact upon the international transport system, financial markets and the global economy. The prime minister complimented the heads of mission for their efforts to evacuate Indians stranded in some of the epicentres of the crisis and exhorted them to take five specific steps including paying close attention to the evolving international political and economic situation and ensuring their own health and safety as well as of their teams and families. Modi also asked the heads of mission to attend to Indians stranded abroad due to international travel restrictions and address issues arising out of from their unplanned stay abroad with their host governments.

The prime minister also asked the missions to stay alert and identify best practices, innovations, scientific breakthroughs to deal with COVID 10 and help procurement of medical equipment for India's fight against the pandemic. "He also advised Heads of Mission to suitably publicize the newly-established PM-CARES Fund to mobilize donations from abroad," the MEA said. As the crisis also impacts the economy, Modi advised heads of mission to focus on ensuring that commerce in essential supplies, logistics chains and remittances are unaffected. Ten heads of mission including from Beijing, Washington, Tehran, Rome, Berlin, Kathmandu, Abu Dhabi, Kabul and Seoul offered their perspectives to the prime minister on the pandemic and overall situation in those countries. They shared feedback regarding appreciation in these countries of the resolute measures taken by India to combat this pandemic, the MEA said. (PTI)

Suspended DySP sent to jail till Apr 13

NEW DELHI, Mar 30:

Jammu and Kashmir Police officer Davinder Singh, who was arrested while ferrying two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen terrorists in a vehicle on the Srinagar-Jammu Highway earlier this year, has been sent to further custodial interrogation by a Delhi court till April 3.

Special Judge Ajay Kumar Jain extended Singh's custody after Delhi Police said that he was required to be confronted with other accused - Javed Iqbal, Syed Naveed Mushtaq and Imran Shafi Mir - arrested in the case.

"Hear the IO (investigating officer) and peruse the record. Police custody is granted for

further interrogation and identification of other accomplices and confrontation with other co-accused," the Judge said. The court also directed the police to conduct his medical examination after every 48 hours.

The police sought Singh's further custody, saying that the confrontation and further interrogation was required to unearth the larger conspiracy and role of the accused, to trace the details of financial transaction, to verify and trace other offenders.

It also told the court that the custody was required to establish the identity of main handler, defence advocate Prashant Prakash said. (PTI)

Suspects be segregated at Lower Munda: PRF

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: Peoples Revolutionary Forum (PRF) has urged the Government to provide proper medicare facilities in Vaskura and Butwani area of Ganderbal district which has been declared Red zone after the visit of a person to the area who was suffering with Corona Virus some days back.

In a statement issued here, today chairman of the Forum, Mir Ghulam Rasool Butwani also demanded that the suspects entering Valley be segregated at Lower Munda and taken to Quarantine centers from there to save the common masses and prevent the virus from spreading.

Mir also demanded proper medicare facilities be provided in the area with the deployment of doctors in all SDHs and PHCs. He also expressed concern over keeping people together

SSRB Teachers/Masters offer one-day salary

Excelsior Correspondent

UDHAMPUR, Mar 30: Jammu Kashmir SSRB Teachers/Masters Association has urged the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu Kashmir to deduct one day salary of Teachers as a part of small contribution to fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

A decision in this regard was taken after an urgent meeting of the Association members was convened through social media by Rakesh Singh, president of the Association.

Singh also said that because of complete lockdown, Teachers were not able to collect indent of MDM from office and hiring auto for lifting the MDM rice for distribution in schools. He urged to Director School Education Jammu and SPD Samagra Siksha to review the order of lifting rice and temporarily keep it on hold till there is a lockdown in J&K.

'Bring back students stuck outside'

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: National Students Union of India (NSUI) has urged upon the Lieutenant Governors of J&K and Ladakh to bring back the students of the two Union Territories who are stuck outside due to the present lockdown in the country.

In a handout NSUI president, Neeraj Kundan also demanded a helpline number to contact the stranded students.

He said that NSUI has already contacted those students and have assured them all help. Kundan said that it is very important for us to try and bring the situations under control during the coronavirus pandemic.

Ensure essential supplies in Poonch: Hakla

Excelsior Correspondent

POONCH: Mar 30: Shamsher Hakla Poonchi a prominent Gujjar leader and an intellectual of J&K said that due to Coronavirus lockdown in Poonch district people are facing shortage medicines and food supplies.

In a statement issued here today he appealed to Government to make sure that there is no shortage of medicines & food supplies in all the medical shops & other essential commodities shops in the district so that people may not suffer because of the shortage of medicines and food supplies. He appealed to the Government to take concrete steps in order to implement these steps in Poonch district for the betterment of people.

He also appealed to the people to stay home & stay safe and cooperate with the Government to implement the main motto of lockdown and don't violate the Government order so that they can save themselves from this pandemic disease.

AJKYF urges Govt to restore 4G services

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: All J&K Youth Federation (AJKYF) today urged upon the J&K administration for restoring 4G internet service in J&K UT.

Provincial president, Ch Sanjay Singh Sandhu said that the J&K administration should restore 4G internet service in the UT for ensuring work from home slogan, better educational facilities to students and helping the people to stay indoor which will help the authorities to cope up with the unwarranted situation arising due to deadly virus.

He also appealed the public to feed the stray animals which will be a huge contribution towards the human value in this awful situation.

He appreciated the role of all frontline workers, medical professionals and belt forces to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and aspired that with the cooperation of general public and manic exercise of the administration, we would be protected from the coronavirus threat and the nation will emerge victorious over this dreaded epidemic.

tional travel restrictions and address issues arising out of from their unplanned stay abroad with their host governments.

The prime minister also asked the missions to stay alert and identify best practices, innovations, scientific breakthroughs to deal with COVID 10 and help procurement of medical equipment for India's fight against the pandemic. "He also advised Heads of Mission to suitably publicize the newly-established PM-CARES Fund to mobilize donations from abroad," the MEA said. As the crisis also impacts the economy, Modi advised heads of mission to focus on ensuring that commerce in essential supplies, logistics chains and remittances are unaffected. Ten heads of mission including from Beijing, Washington, Tehran, Rome, Berlin, Kathmandu, Abu Dhabi, Kabul and Seoul offered their perspectives to the prime minister on the pandemic and overall situation in those countries. They shared feedback regarding appreciation in these countries of the resolute measures taken by India to combat this pandemic, the MEA said. (PTI)

8 officers transferred, 14 others posted

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: Government has ordered transfer and posting of 8 officers viz deputation of 14 others in Police Construction Division (PCD) for further posting.

According to the order, Rafiq Ahmad Sheikh, AEE (Civil) (R&B) has been posted at PHC Sub Division Doda-Kishtwar-Ramban, while Fareed Ahmad, AEE (Civil) (R&B) has been posted at PHC Sub Division Anantnag-Kulgam-Awantipora and Aijazul-Rehman, AEE (PDD) has been posted at PHC for further posting by the MD.

Sudesh Sadgotra, JE (R&B) has been posted at PHC for further posting by the MD, while Gowhar Ayub, JE (Civil) (R&B) has been posted at PHC for further posting by the MD and Jamsheed Ahmad Darzi JE (PDD) and Sandeep Koul JE (PDD).

Poultry Association alleges Police harassment

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: Jammu Poultry Association has alleged that Police was not allowing transportation of poultry feed, chicken and eggs despite the Government order on including these items under essential category.

The Association said that only the vehicles of Army contractors were being allowed while other vehicles carrying poultry items were being stopped and their shops were also not being allowed to open. Police officials are asking for permission and we don't know from where we have to get the same, the Association President Baljeet Singh said.

Urging the Government to urgently look into the matter, the Association President said that if the needful is not done immediately, the poultry birds will die of starvation, which would trigger another major problem.

Cattle charred to death

Excelsior Correspondent

KISHTWAR, Mar 30: Six cattle were charred to death in a fire incident at Urighad area, falling under the jurisdiction of Chatroo Police Station.

As per police sources, fire broke out in the cattle shed owned by Farooq Ahmed, son of Mohammad Shafi of Urighad Chatroo resulting into death of 2 horses and 6 sheep during the intervening night of 29th and 30th March.

Chatroo police has taken cognizance in this regard.

3 shops sealed

Excelsior Correspondent

UDHAMPUR, Mar 30: Three grocery shops have been sealed in the main market at Ramnagar.

As per reports, a team from district administration led by SDM Ramnagar Naresh Kumar along with SDPO Ramnagar and Tehsildar during market checking found three grocery shops opened and sealed them for violating probationary orders issued by DM Udhampur.

SDM also warned of action against the violators.

Leverage postal network for delivery of medicines, masks, PPE: Prasad

NEW DELHI, Mar 30:

Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Monday asked the Department of Posts to leverage its pan-India network for delivery of essential items like medicines, masks and personal protection equipment (PPE) during the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

The communications minister also asked the Department of Telecom to resolve issues being faced by telecom operators in managing networks and services in coordination with corresponding state governments as well as extend full assistance to the governments in maintaining helplines, control rooms, hospitals and ambulance services on priority basis.

"Minister also observed that post offices have large network across the country and this network should be leveraged upon for delivery of essentials like medicine, masks, personal protection equipment, etc. With the coordination of state governments," the communications ministry said in a statement.

Prasad, who held a review meeting with telecom and postal department heads in each state via video conferencing,

suggested that retired employees of the postal department should also be consulted and involved in planning and finding innovative solutions to help people during the lockdown.

During the meeting, it was underlined that posts and telecom are essential services and must be maintained without any interruption.

The officials were asked to coordinate with corresponding state governments for resolving issues with telecom operators like Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone.

"It was also instructed that full cooperation and assistance should be extended to all State Governments for maintaining their communication network," the statement said.

It was informed during the meeting that cash-strapped BSNL and MTNL are working diligently to make payments to their employees who recently opted for VRS.

"BSNL has released Rs 4100 crore exgratia payment on Friday and Rs 4900 crore for leave encashment on Monday. Similarly, MTNL has also released Rs 1050 crore towards payment of leave encashment, EPF, CPF and gratuity," the statement said.

At the meeting, it was decided to extend validity of all pre-paid mobile phones of BSNL and MTNL till April 20 which will enable incoming calls and Rs 10 worth of outgoing calls will also be allowed to all these pre-paid customers. (PTI)

JKADCSA appeals employees' to contribute 1-day salary to Relief Fund

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: Jammu and Kashmir All Departments Clerical staff Association (JKADCSA)/Ministerial Federation has appealed Clerical/Ministerial Staff of all Departments (Outside Secretariat) to contribute one-day salary voluntarily to J&K Government Relief Fund.

According to a handout issued here, the amount is to be deposited in Account Number: 0110010100000016 (IFC Code JAKA0MOVING. Micr Code 190051062) Branch JK Bank Moving Secretariat, designed to fight the emergencies caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The JKADCSA (Ministerial Federation) has also appealed the Lieutenant Governor of J&K to issue compulsory orders

BSNL offers free validity extension, talk time during lockdown

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: In view of hardships faced by the mobile subscribers whose validity has expired during the lock down period from March 22 and are not able to recharge for extension of validity, BSNL as a support to its mobile subscribers is extending the validity of all such subscribers up to April 20, 2020, free of cost, so that the subscribers continue to receive incoming calls.

In addition to this, BSNL is also giving free talk time of Rs10 to all such subscribers who reach zero balance during the lockdown period.

These facilities are extended to facilitate communication by BSNL mobile subscribers in emergency.

Praveen Kumar Purwar, CMD, BSNL said, "BSNL firmly stands with its subscribers during this crisis period and we request the sub-

JKPDC Board of Directors re-constituted

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 30: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir today reconstituted the Board of Directors of J&K Power Development Corporation.

Headed by Advisor Baseer Khan as the Chairman, the Board shall be comprising ten Directors, who include Financial Commissioner, Finance Department; Principal Secretary, Planning Development & Monitoring Department; Administrative Secretary PDD, representative of Science & Technology; Managing Director, JKPDC; Director Finance, JKPDC; Executive Director (Electric), JKPDC; Executive Director (Civil), JKPDC; representative of Ministry of Power, GoI and representative of Central Electricity Authority.

Automobile manufacturers asked to make ventilators: Health Ministry

NEW DELHI, Mar 30:

The Centre has asked automobile manufacturers to use their facilities to make ventilators in order to increase the availability of such machines in view of rise in COVID-19 cases, officials said on Monday.

It also said the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will start manufacturing 20,000 N-95 masks daily from next week.

According to the health ministry, over 14,000 existing ventilators are earmarked for COVID-19 patients in various hospitals of the country, while there are 11.95 lakh N-95 masks in stock.

An additional 5 lakh masks have been distributed in the past two days. As many as 1.40 lakh masks were distributed on Monday, it said.

The ministry also said 3.34 lakh personal protection equipment (PPE) coveralls are available with hospitals in the country and another 3 lakh, which have been donated, will be received from abroad by April 4.

"Automobile manufacturers have been asked to manufacture ventilators and they are working towards this end," the health ministry said in a tweet.

Besides, the ministry has asked the Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Defence, to manufacture 30,000 ventilators in the next two months in collaboration with local manufacturers.

Among the private players, Agva Healthcare in Noida has

been given an order to manufacture 10,000 ventilators within a month. Their supplies are expected to commence in the second week of April, the ministry said.

In the meantime, orders have been placed with international companies such as Hamilton, Mindray and Draeger to supply ventilators, it said.

The Ministry of External Affairs is also approaching suppliers in China for sourcing 10,000 ventilators from them, it said in a statement.

Ventilators are required for COVID-19 patients, as they tend to develop acute respiratory disease syndrome (ARDS).

Two domestic manufacturers are producing 50,000 N-95 masks per day. This is expected to go up to 1 lakh daily within the next week as they are ramping up their production capacities, the health ministry said.

The DRDO is collaborating with local manufacturers to produce around 20,000 such masks daily. These are also expected to become available in a week's time, it said in a statement.

The health ministry also said that 11 domestic producers of PPE coveralls have qualified so far and orders for 21 lakh coveralls have been placed. These are supplying 6,000-7,000 pieces per day and are expected to go up to 15,000 pieces daily by mid-April.

It further said that 10,000 PPE coveralls donated by Red Cross have been received and distributed on Monday.

"Less than 20 COVID-19 patients are on ventilator support at this moment. As against this, over 14,000 ventilators have been identified in various hospitals across the country for treatment of such patients," the ministry said.

"The first challenge before us is to increase the number of ventilators... We need to be equipped and have manpower which can use these machines," a senior health ministry official said, adding several doctors and healthcare professionals even at district levels are being provided training by AIMS doctors on ventilator management for COVID-19 patients.

The Association has also appealed the general public to stay at home and follow the advisories issued by the Government to fight COVID-19 pandemic.

It has also advised the people to cooperate with Government Machinery including Police, Doctors, Paramedical Staff, Nurses and officials from Jammu Municipal Corporation in the present crisis situation.

Foreign sources of PPE kits are also faced with a huge increase in the worldwide demand. They are being approached through the Ministry of External Affairs, according to the health ministry statement.

A Singapore-based online platform has been identified which can supply 10 lakh PPE kits and an order has been placed through the MEA to procure them. Ten lakh masks would be part of the PPE kits being sourced from Singapore.

Another supplier based in South Korea, which has tie ups with production companies in Vietnam and Turkey has been identified with daily production capacity of over 1 lakh PPE kits. Orders are being placed with this company for supplying 20 lakh PPE kits, the health ministry said. "Personal protection equipment (PPE) kits are used by medical personnel working in isolation areas and intensive care units to protect them from getting infected. They were not being manufactured in the country.

"With the prospect of huge requirement of PPEs arising in the near future, the Government of India made proactive efforts to promote their manufacturing in the country," the health ministry said. (PTI)

Woman dies due to fall

Excelsior Correspondent

REASI, Mar 30: A woman died due to fall in Baransal area, a police official said.

The deceased has been identified as Taba Begum, wife of Mohammad Iqbal Malik, a resident of Baransal. She was cutting the grass when her foot slipped and she fell into Paghialla nallah in Baransal.

After completing medical and legal formalities, the body of the deceased woman has been handed over to legal heirs for last rites.

Gulabgarh police has taken cognizance in this regard.



Mahore town in Reasi district observed complete shutdown on Monday. — Excelsior/Romesh Mengi



A view of complete bandh in Samba town on Monday. — Excelsior/Abhishek Badyal



CRPF personnel providing food to needy people in Udhampur on Monday. — Excelsior/ K Kumar