

Curfew in Maharashtra for 15 days from today

MUMBAI, Apr 13:

As Maharashtra reels under a severe COVID-19 wave, the MVA Government today announced over a 15-day-long statewide curfew from April 14, entailing stricter curbs on public activities, to stem the infection spread and flagged a "shortage" of medical oxygen and beds.

Stopping short of announcing a full-scale lockdown, as was being speculated, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, in his address to the state via social media, said the curfew, which excludes essential services, will come into effect at 8 pm on April 14 and remain in force till 7 am on May 1.

Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), dealing with gatherings and assembly of people, will be in force till the "lockdown-like" restrictions are in place, he said.

The fresh curbs build on the existing weekend and night curfews in the state.

He refrained from terming the new curbs, announced on a day when Maharashtra recorded 60,212 fresh coronavirus cases and 281 fatalities, as a lockdown.

There is a shortage of medical oxygen and beds and the demand for Remdesivir, a key COVID-19 drug, has increased in Maharashtra, he said, adding the Centre should help supply oxygen for coronavirus patients in the state by using Air Force planes.

"The war against coronavirus has begun once again," he said.

There is a severe strain on

Maharashtra's health infrastructure due to a spike in COVID-19 cases, he added.

Seeking to minimise the adverse impact of the curbs on a large population, the CM announced a sort of relief package.

The State Government will provide three kg wheat and two kg rice free for the next one month to every poor and needy person, Thackeray said.

The CM announced a complete ban on movement of people for non-essential works during the restriction period.

All essential services, including medical stores hospitals, supply of medicines,

among others will remain operational. The local transport will also function for those involved in essential services, he said.

The CM made an emotional appeal, seeking people's support for successful implementation of the curbs.

I appeal to people to help the state. I want to know whether people are on the side of coronavirus or the state that wants to break the chain of its spread, he said.

A range of other essential services will also remain out of the purview of the curfew.

Services such as vaccination, oxygen production, home delivery of food, operation of e-commerce firms, work at construction sites with residential facility and industrial activities, where accommodation or transportation of personnel is available, will remain unaffected, he said.

All banking and financial services, the RBI and its affiliated offices, insurance offices and

pre-monsoon works will remain operational, he said.

However, there will be a complete ban on religious, social, cultural and political functions in the state till May 1, the CM said.

For political rallies ahead of elections, not more than 200 people can attend an event or 50 per cent of the seating capacity of the hall, Thackeray said. (PTI)

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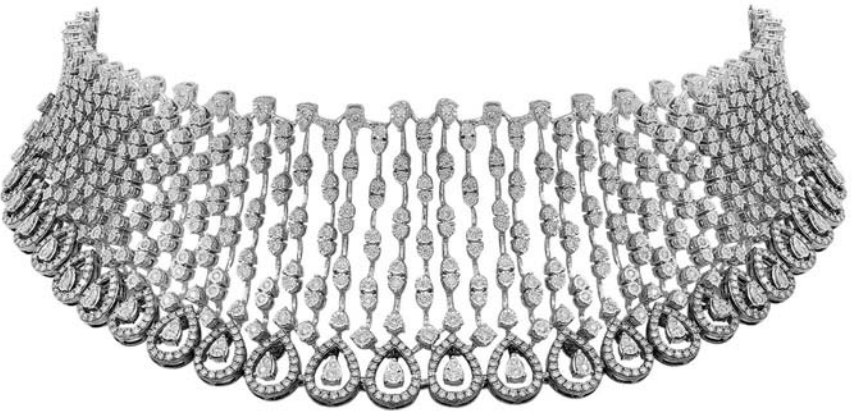
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