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## Minister cautions against second wave

### Rules out possibility of lockdown for now

BENGALURU, 20 FEB

Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar has warned of a possible second wave of Covid-19 in the State and asked people to stay vigilant and take necessary precautions, especially until the end of March 2021.

The minister, however, ruled out any COVID curbs like lockdown or curfew measures in the State for now, and said that the State has not come to "that situation", and all necessary precautions are being taken so that things don't reach such a stage.

The minister also said that the health department is seeking co-operation from Home and Revenue departments besides the district administrations to control the spread of COVID in districts bordering Kerala and Maharashtra, the two states that have seen a spike in cases in recent days.

Karnataka has also issued new guidelines mandating all those coming from Kerala and Maharashtra to carry a negative RT-PCR test report not older than 72 hours, he said, adding that there are laws in place, "but



COVID-19 IN K'TAKA

some civic sense is also required among the citizens to protect their own health." The people of the State have to understand and make necessary changes in their conduct by taking necessary precautions. The end of March is an important stage according to the technical advisory committee report," Sudhakar said.

Speaking to reporters here, Sudhakar also said necessary precautions have to be taken by compulsorily

following guidelines like wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and making use of the opportunity to get vaccinated. "The Union Health Ministry has said vaccinations are likely to be given to common citizens from March, but now frontline warriors and health workers should voluntarily get vaccinated," he said.

Further stating that there is no spike in the number of cases in Karnataka and the mortality rate is 1.3 per

cent, the minister said, "we will have to stop the possible second wave in the same way." "There is a sense about the second wave coming in Maharashtra and Kerala. It should not come to our State, we have to control it," he said.

"We have been able to control the spread of UK variant in the State through returnees from there, by taking adequate precautions including genomic study," Sudhakar added. —PTI



## 25k CAPF earmarked for polls

NEW DELHI, 20 FEB

"At least 25,000 Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel have been earmarked for the forthcoming assembly polls in four states and the Union Territory of Puducherry," officials said on Saturday.

They said, "The Union Home Ministry has directed that a total of 250 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) will be utilised for conduct of the upcoming elections."

A CAPF company has an operational strength of about 100 personnel. These forces work under the command of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Assembly polls in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry are due in April-May this year. —PTI

## 10th round of India-China talks begin

NEW DELHI, 20 FEB

"India and China on Saturday held another round of military talks with a focus on taking forward the disengagement process in Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh and bring down the tensions in the region," official sources said.

The 10th round of Corps Commander-level talks are taking place two days after the Chinese and Indian militaries completed the withdrawal of troops, weapons and other military hardware from the North and South banks of Pangong lake areas as part of an agreement.

They said, "India will insist on a faster disengagement process in remaining areas like Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang to bring down tension in the region that has witnessed a tense standoff between the two militaries for over nine months."

"The focus of the talks is on carrying forward the disengagement process," said a source.

On February 11, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced in Parliament

● The 10th round of Corps Commander-level talks are taking place two days after the Chinese and Indian militaries completed the withdrawal of troops, weapons and other military hardware from the North and South banks of Pangong lake areas as part of an agreement

that India and China reached an agreement on disengagement in the North and South banks of Pangong lake that mandates both sides to "cease" forward deployment of troops in a "phased, coordinated and verifiable" manner.

"Under the agreement, he said China will pull back its troops to east of Finger 8 areas in the northern bank of Pangong lake while the Indian personnel will be based at their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3 in the region. Similar action would take place on the south bank of the lake as well," he said. —PTI

## KARNATAKA CET ON 7 AND 8 JULY

Bengaluru, 20 Feb: "The Common Entrance Test (CET) for professional courses by Karnataka Examination Authority will be conducted on 7 and 8 July," Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan said on Saturday. The dates have been finalised considering the schedule of CET conducted by other states, time table of the second year PUC Examinations in Karnataka and the CBSE time table, Narayan, who is also the minister of higher education, was quoted as saying by his office in a release.

On 7 July, the CET will be held for Biology and Mathematics and for Physics and Chemistry, the next day. The Kannada language test for Horanadu (other states) and Gadinadu (border regions of the state) Kannadiga candidates will be conducted on 9 July, Narayana added. —PTI

## R-DAY: POLICE RELEASE PHOTOS OF 20 SUSPECTS

New Delhi, 20 Feb: "The Delhi Police on Saturday released the photographs of 20 people who were allegedly involved in the violence that broke out at the Red Fort on Republic Day during the farmers' tractor parade," officials said. Police said they are scanning the videos and releasing the pictures of people from them. "We have released the pictures and the process of identification (of the people) has been started," a senior police officer said. Earlier, police had released 200 photographs of people in connection with the Red Fort violence.

Thousands of protesters had clashed with the police during the tractor parade called by farmer unions on 26 January to highlight their demand for repeal of the Centre's three farm laws. Many of the protesters, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument. —PTI

## 'Centre, states need to work closely to boost economy'

NEW DELHI, 20 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday made a strong case for repealing archaic laws and making it easier to do business in India, stating that the Centre and states need to work closely to boost economic growth.

Addressing the sixth Governing Council meeting of Niti Aayog, the Prime Minister said that the private sector should be given full opportunity to become a part of Government's Aatmanirbhar Bharat programme.

"Centre and states should work together for the nation's progress. The Government has to respect and give due representation to the private sector for economic progress," Modi said. He said that the positive response to the Union Budget 2021-22 indicates that the country wants to move forward on the path of development at greater



speed. Modi said that the initiatives taken by the Government would allow everyone to participate in nation building to its full potential.

Referring to the farm sector, the Prime Minister said that efforts should be made to produce agriculture items like edible oil and reduce their imports. "This can be done by guiding farmers," he said, adding the money being spent on imports can go to the accounts of farmers. —PTI

The Prime Minister said Government policies will help farmers raise productivity and cut imports, adding that reforms are needed to provide funds and technology for the farm sector.

The Prime Minister also underlined the need for reducing the compliance burden and repealing obsolete laws.

He asked the states to form committees to reduce regulations that are no longer relevant in the wake of technology growth. Modi said states should attract investment using a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

He said the Government is spending on infrastructure to boost demand and create jobs. Further, the Prime Minister noted that bank accounts, free electricity and gas connection and proper vaccinations have brought changes in the lives of the poor. —PTI

## Disha Ravi's bail plea: Court to pronounce order on Tuesday

NEW DELHI, 20 FEB

There is no evidence to show that the toolkit on farmers' protest is responsible for the violence on 26 January, activist Disha Ravi's counsel told a Delhi court which reserved for Tuesday its order on her bail plea.

"If highlighting farmers' protest globally is sedition, I'm better in jail," Ravi said through her counsel on Saturday. Ravi's counsel was submitting arguments after the Delhi Police opposed her bail plea, alleging she was preparing the toolkit with those advocating Khalistan and was part of a global conspiracy to defame India and create unrest in the country in the garb of farmers' protest. "This was not just a toolkit. The real plan was to defame India and create unrest here," the police said before Additional Sessions Judge



Dharmender Rana. It alleged that Ravi deleted WhatsApp chats, emails and other evidence and was aware of legal actions she could face. "Why did Disha Ravi cover her track and delete evidence if she did not commit wrong," the police said, alleging that this shows her guilty mind and sinister design. "Ravi was part of the Indian chapter of the global

conspiracy to defame India and create unrest in the garb of farmers' protest," it alleged. However, Ravi's lawyer rejected the allegations.

"There is no evidence to link me with Sikhs For Justice, a banned organisation. And even if I (Ravi) meet someone, there is no symbol on him that he is a secessionist," the defence counsel said. —PTI

"The Delhi police gave permission for the farmers' march, which they're claiming that I (Ravi) asked people to join, so how did I become seditious," the lawyer said in court.

"There's nobody arrested in connection with violence at Red Fort who says he was inspired for same because of the toolkit, Ravi's counsel claimed, adding there is no evidence to show that the toolkit is responsible for violence during farmers' march.

The counsel also questioned the contents of the FIR and asserted that people can have a different point of view on a subject. "There is an allegation in FIR that Yoga and Chai are being targeted. Is it an offence? We are now reducing the bar that somebody can't have a point of view different," Ravi's lawyer said. —PTI



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