

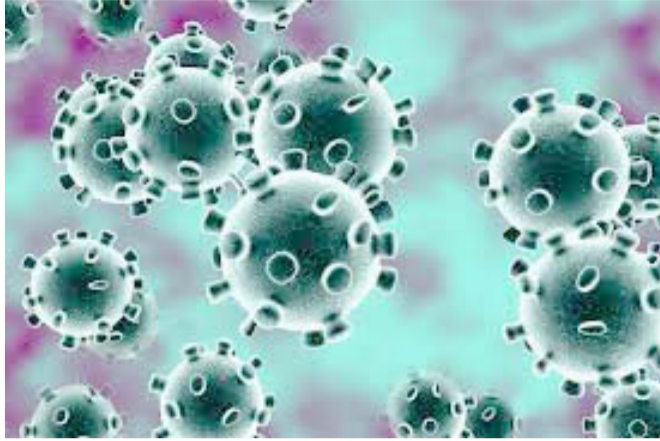
Coronavirus: J&K Under Threat With No Specialized Isolation Wards, Diagnostic Kits

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Threat is looming large in Jammu and Kashmir even as no specialized 'negative-pressure' isolation wards (airborne infection isolation wards) and medical kits have been made available in the valley despite World Health Organization (WHO) declaring China's Coronavirus outbreak as an international emergency.

"No specialized training has been given to doctors or paramedical staff to handle the patients or take samples if the virus manages to sneak into the newly created Union Territory (UT)," experts told UNI.

They said the initial symptoms in the patients are fever followed by cough, but running nose, sour throat was missing in them. "Upper respiratory symptoms were missing in them. In severe cases, they have difficulty in breathing and complication is pneumonia and Acute



Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS)... they die because of that," they said.

As many as 11 Kashmiris, mostly students, who have a travel history of China, have so far not shown any signs of Coronavirus infection though they have been placed under observation at their respective residences in the valley.

A UNI reporter, who visited hospitals were isolation wards have been designated by the authorities in the city, including SHMS and SKIMS, saw normal rooms (wards) for such patients. They are not 'negative-pressure' isolation wards or airborne infection isolation wards hence lack the capacity to curtail the virus if it sneaks into the UT.

Experts said that there were some cases, who were positive, but had no symptoms. "So, we might have asymptomatic people and they may come into community and give it to the vulnerable lot," they added.

The experts said that the administration needs to take measures to curtail it. "If there is a virus in the community, we have to contain it. The three isolation wards setup by administration in Srinagar are not equipped. The isolation wards have to be negative pressure isolation wards. Suppose you put an infected patient in the ward, if there is no negative pressure the air will go to the other wards," they said.

"The negative pressure of the room would prevent contaminated air from escaping the room. These rooms should have dedicated ventilators and they should be fitted with HEPA filters that would reduce the risk of transmission of the virus,"

they said. They said that the rooms should have separate entrance so that infected patients don't risk other patients and staff in the hospital. "They (isolation wards) have to be specially designed," they said.

Government Medical Colleges (GMC), Srinagar has set up 26 beds, S K Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) 25 in Srinagar district. Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) has kept 52 beds available across Kashmir Division with Isolation wards and ventilators in each hospital and Public Health Centres (PHCs).

Besides, VTM kits, personal protection gears and dedicated staff of Microbiologist have also been kept in ready mode. The GMC has stored 11,500 triple layer, 7000 N-95 masks while as SKIMS has stored 10,000 N-95. Moreover, 2 lakh triple layer masks will reach valley within a day. UNI

SDA conducts demolition drive in Bemina

SRINAGAR: In continuation to the special drive of Srinagar Development Authority (SDA) conducted demolitions in many areas under its jurisdiction on Wednesday.

Officials said that under the supervision of Vice Chairman Vikas Kundal SDA carried out demolitions against the encroachers and violators in Mansoor Colony Bemina and removed illegal constructions raised at different places, plots and strips.

Officials said that the demolition drive was successfully executed, despite huge resentment of people at these sites.

In addition to Bemina, the drive was also carried out against street vendors Radee Walas, who were operating their businesses illegally along the roadside within the limits and jurisdiction of SDA.

Authority has meanwhile appealed people to living in these areas to resist from indulging into illegal construction On SDA land. (CNS)

DEATH OF FOREST GUARD IN ROAD ACCIDENT:

Family demands action against erring driver

SRINAGAR: Family of an accident victim Wednesday appealed police to initiate legal action against a doctor who according to them was not touched even after committing an accident with his private car resulting in the death of a man.

Police however, said that the doctor in question has already been arrested.

Last week, the private vehicle of a doctor hit a forest guard near railway station Nowgam. The forest guard identified as Ghulam Muhammad Bhat son of

Abdul Gaffar Bhat, a resident of Kawhara Baramulla succumbed to his injuries in the hospital. The family members told Kashmir News Trust that the deceased was called by his own department to submit some documents related to tax, when the mishap occurred.

The appealed police to initiate legal action against the doctor involved in the accident. "We have registered a formal FIR in this regard," said police official. (KNT)

Unhygienic washrooms pose threat to patients at SKIMS

SRINAGAR: Despite tall claims of the government to improve the health sector in the Kashmir valley, patients visiting, Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), here in Soura Srinagar is complaining of poor hygienic conditions in the institute.

Scores of patients at the premiere healthcare institute SKIMS here in summer capital Srinagar, said the hygienic condition of the institute especially the washrooms are really poor. They said they were at high risk of infection due to poor hygiene in the institute.

Managing huge rush of patients accompanied by attendants, the institute lacks proper public toilet facility, resulting in inconvenience for attendants and patients as well. The problem is severe of patients in Out-Patient department.

Many attendants complained that, there are fewer washrooms inside wards. The situations often force attendants to attend the call of nature in open air outside or within the institute. "Male attendants manage to attend nature's call somehow but where would a female attendant go?" asked an elderly woman. She also complained about the poor sanitation of toilets present inside the emergency wards.

Shamshad Ahmad, a patient at the institute said: "There is poor sanitation in the institute and foul smell emanates from the washrooms. The administration should

look into the issue as soon as possible." An attendant Mohammad Yaseen said: "There is a huge rush of patients and attendants in surgical ward. Just 3-4 washrooms for around hundred people present in the ward are very little and that too during these chilling winters," said Yaseen, who was accompanying his ailing brother in the institute for last three days.

Another attendant Bashir Ahmad Bukhari of Budgam, said: "There is lack of sanitation in the

to the patients and their attendants.

A sanitation worker at the institute wishing not to be named said: "We clean the washrooms frequently but due to huge rush of patients, their attendants and visitors to the institute it becomes difficult to maintain it all the time."

Another patient Abdul Rehman of Tral said the toilets in the post-operative wards are so dirty that it is impossible to enter it.



institute especially the wards and foul smell comes out of the washrooms. We have to use masks inside the institute and authorities have failed to look into the issue."

He alleged that the toilets are littered and are not cleaned for days. There is bad smell emanating from every nook and corner of the washrooms.

"Such situation can cause serious infection to the patients with open wounds," Bukhari said adding that in Post Operative Wards, the toilets are blocked with filth causing immense inconvenience

"The commodes here are broken. What's left of it is so filthy that one cannot venture near. The walls are dirty with people spitting on it. The place does not seem to have been cleaned in days," he added.

An official while speaking to KNT agreed that the matter is of serious concern. "We are looking forward to construct more public toilets very soon."

Despite repeated attempts medical superintendent SKIMS remained unavailable for the comments. (KNT)

Govt setting standards of excellence in school education: Com Secy School Edu

SRINAGAR: Commissioner Secretary, School Education and Social Welfare, Hirdesh Kumar today said that Government is setting standards of excellence in school education across Jammu and Kashmir.

While convening public grievance camp at Srinagar today, Kumar said that Government was taking all possible measures to ensure that quality education is imparted to the students at the government-run schools.

"It is heartwarming to notice that examinations were held in cordial atmosphere across Jammu and Kashmir and timely results were also declared," Kumar said. "Parents and civil society members should also come forward and help us maintain the quality in the School campuses," he added.

He said that the best gift that one can give to their children is a gift of education. "Some of the best moments of childhood are spent on the school campus and we all must ensure that we provide all services to the students under one roof," he said. He urged people to come forward and register their grievances during the camps convened by the Administrative Secretaries.

Kumar said that Government was taking all possible measures for setting benchmark of excel-



lence in school education.

"With high expectations from parents and the teaching fraternity, schools today are going extra mile to strive for that coveted accreditation for providing quality education," he said urging teaching fraternity to work for the betterment of the school education. He said that educational institutions are considered the cornerstone of knowledge and learning.

Kumar said that apart from maximizing academic potential, these award-winning institutions also inculcate values, help develop social skills, play a key role in character building, influence the emotional stability of students and shape their career paths going forward.

"All we need to focus is to make schools vibrant spaces for students," he said.

Speaking to various deputa-

tions during the day-long public outreach programme, Kumar said that Government was aiming to address all the grievances of people and also providing them with better service delivery. During the camp various service-related matters were also taken up.

Several deputations from Kulgam, Baramulla, Ganderbal, Pulwama, Budgam and Srinagar districts appraised him about their

issues and demands. The Commissioner Secretary gave patient hearing to the deputations and assured them that all their genuine issues would be looked into and addressed accordingly.

Later, the Commissioner Secretary chaired a meeting with the officials of the School Education Department and officials of the Department of Social Welfare to review the functioning of the respective departments.

DIAL-EMMA

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈️

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - ()
- Mughal Road - (Closed)
- Srinagar-Leh - (Closed)

This Day in History

- 1861 - 1st meeting of Provisional Congress of Confederate States of America (US Civil War)
- 1861 - British Vice-Admiral Robert Fitzroy issues first storm warnings for ships
- 1862 - American Civil War: Naval engagement on Tennessee River, USS Conestago vs CSS Appleton Belle
- 1904 - Japan notifies Russia that in view of Russia's delaying tactics and provocative military action, Japan is ending negotiations and recalling its members from Moscow
- 1911 - Great fire destroys downtown Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey)
- 1918 - Great Britain grants women (30 & over) the vote
- 1920 - Saarland administrated by League of Nations
- 1933 - German President Paul von Hindenburg and Franz von Papen end the Prussian parliament
- 1939 - Spanish government flees to France
- 1941 - British troops conquer Bengazi, Libya
- 1967 - Cultural Revolution in Albania
- 1979 - Supreme court affirms death sentence against Pakistan Premier Bhutto
- 1988 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Sempalinsk USSR
- 2014 - The Taliban and Pakistani government begin peace negotiations.
- 2017 - Qatar Airways achieves the longest-ever commercial flight in service when its B777 aircraft lands in Auckland after a 16 hour and 23 minutes flight from Doha
- 2018 - UN calls for ceasefire in rebel-held Eastern Ghouta area by Syrian government troops after 40 people reportedly killed

HIJRI CALENDAR
11
JUMADA AL-SANI
1441

PRAYERS

- FAJR 5: 59
- ZUHR 12: 45
- ASR 4: 25
- MAGRIB 6: 09
- ISHA 7: 29

From KO Archives

US team to assess peace process in J&K

WASHINGTON: A four-member US congressional team led by Edward Royce, Republican member of the House of Representatives from California and co-chairman of the congressional caucus on India, will visit India and Pakistan for 10 days from February 16 to assess the progress of the peace process in Jammu & Kashmir.

The proposal for the visit came from David Bonior, member from Michigan, which has a large Pakistani community, besides Syrians and Iraqis. Indian American sources said Bonior espouses Pakistan's cause in the Kashmir dispute.

Talking to the United News of India, Democratic Representative Jim McDermott, co-chairman of the India caucus, said the team would try to figure out if they could play any role in resolving the longstanding dispute.

He, however, made it clear that the congressmen have no plan to be interlocutors for the peace process.

Besides Royce and Bonior, the other members of the delegation are McDermott and Joseph Pitts, a Republican from Pennsylvania.

"We want to look at the Kashmir situation, get a feel from both sides and try to figure out if there is any role for us," McDermott said, adding that the team would visit the Kashmir valley as well.

The congressmen are scheduled to meet both Indian and Pakistani leaders during their

visits to New Delhi and Islamabad, though no schedule has been worked out. They will also visit Lahore and the earthquake-affected areas of Gujarat.

McDermott said the proposal was mooted during a chat he had with Bonior a few days back. "We both came to a decision to contribute to the peace process in Kashmir and approached the House speaker to provide us a military plane to transport the delegation to India," he added.

He admitted the Bush administration had not moved as quickly as it should have in the Gujarat tragedy. "There is no need to wait for protocol as you see the human tragedy unfolding before you in a friendly country," he said, referring to the argument that New Delhi had not approached Washington for assistance.

The India caucus is also handicapped by the fact that President George W Bush is just putting his administration together and there is no assistant secretary in the South Asia division in the state department who can debate proposals.

But the near unanimous resolution adopted by the House of Representatives expressing solidarity with the quake victims was intended to send a message to the White House that Congress is keen to see the executive branch act. "If only the tragedy had occurred five days earlier, things would have been different as the Clinton government was still there," McDermott added.

US assistance to the earthquake victims should be a generous contribution reflective of the wealth of the country, he said.

The congressman said a decision to fill up the vacancy caused by the resignation of Assistant Secretary Karl F Inderfurth would be taken by the end of February. But the post of ambassador to India would need longer to be filled once the incumbent, Richard Celeste, demits office in a month's time.

Celeste has been asked to continue until alternative arrangements are made. But "we may end up having a long gap before the next ambassador is posted to India," McDermott said, referring to the long Senate confirmation process that will have to be gone through

He said Senator Sam. Brownback, Republican from Kansas, is currently spearheading a move to have the remaining sanctions against India lifted. The 100-member congressional caucus will extend full support to the move. The desire to lift the remaining sanctions is widespread and pressure will build up on the new administration soon. "Everything in politics has a timing," McDermott remarked.