PUNJAB CM PROHIBITS ALL GATHERINGS IN STATE, ALSO ORDERS AGGRESSIVE TRACKING, TESTING & 21 DAYS QUARANTINE FOR NIZAMUDDIN RETURNEES

- AT REVIEW VIDEO CONFERENCE WITH CIVIC & POLICE OFFICIALS, CM ORDERS QUARANTINE FOR PAKISTANI NATIONALS WHO HAD COME TO AMRITSAR FROM DELHI

- CALLS FOR TOTAL PREPAREDNESS TO DEAL WITH ANY CONTINGENCY IN THE `LONG-DRAWN BATTLE’ AGAINST COVID-19

Chandigarh, April 2:
Taking a tough stand on the issue in the light of the Nizamuddin incident, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Thursday completely prohibited all gatherings, including religious, in the state, and said the state government will impose a total ban on all congregations, irrespective of the religion involved.

He would personally talk to the Acting Jathedar of the Akal Takht, said the Chief Minister, while directing the Chief Secretary to discuss the matter with the SGPC, in view of the upcoming Baisakhi festival.

The Chief Minister also ordered 21 days of quarantine for all those who had returned to the state from Nizamuddin (Delhi) since January this year, and asked the police and administrative officials to move aggressively to track, trace and isolate all such people. He directed the police and health department to constitute special teams to track and follow up on those who had returned to Punjab from Nizamuddin.

Captain Amarinder was discussing and reviewing the current situation through a video conference with DCs and other senior officials of the civil administration and police department.

According to DGP Dinkar Gupta, some 200 persons from Punjab had visited Nizamuddin and returned here, at different times, with 12 districts believed to be affected. They were being tracked, along with some from others states who had arrived in Punjab for Tabligh Jamaat work. The Health Department was debriefing and contact
tracing them, though, so far, no Corona confirmed cases had come to light.

Principal Secretary Health & Family Welfare Anurag Aggarwal informed the Chief Minister that the department had so far received a list of 125 of these persons, of whom 73 had been tracked and samples collected in 25 cases some of whom had come to Mansa as late as March 19. As a precautionary measure, all of them had been placed in quarantine, he added.

DC Kapurthala told the Chief Minister that 31 people who had returned from Nizamuddin had been quarantined though they had been found to be asymptomatic so far. In Patiala, too, 29 of them had been quarantined but there were no symptoms shown by them. SSP Sangrur said they had tracked and collected samples of all the attendees whose names they had received, and the incubation period had ended in most cases already.

On a suggestion from DGP Dinkar Gupta, Captain Amarinder ordered quarantining of the Pakistani nationals who were in Amritsar, saying the state could not afford to take any chances at this critical juncture. Amritsar DC said Pakistan had given permission to allow entry of four of its citizens who had come from Delhi, of whom three had tested positive. The BSF and immigration staff who handled them had been quarantined, he said, but added that there were a few more Pakistanis still stuck in Amritsar.

Some medical students from Jammu and Kashmir were also stranded due to the lockdown even though they had completed their quarantine period, according to the DC. The meeting was further informed that the families of Hazuri Ragi Padma Shri Bhai Nirmal Singh ji, who passed away today, had been quarantined. Those who had come in contact with him at a wedding he attended in Moga have also quarantined though they were found to be asymptomatic.

The Chief Minister, who is personally monitoring the “fast-moving situation” closely, stressed the need to minimise the impact of the unprecedent crisis and asked the top officials to intensify their efforts and hard work even more. Even as he appreciated the work being done by each one of them in this critical time, Captain Amarinder said “we need to be prepared for what looks like a long-drawn battle.” He asked the officials to identify lodgings and suitable places for treating patients, adding that he did not want to be pessimist but it was important to be realistic in the given circumstances.

Captain Amarinder warned the officials against any complacency in terms of curfew enforcement and law & order, as well as relief measures and management of
essential supplies.

The DGP informed the Chief Minister that the law and order situation was in control across the state but suggested continuation of the curfew restrictions for some more time. He further disclosed that the Thikri Pheras (volunteers in villagers) were contributing significantly to the enforcement and relief operations. At present, around 2000 such volunteers had been appointed to assist the police and civil administration.

To prevent rush at the banks, they were being asked to give appointments on phone, and to ensure that ATMs have distance markers for queue, Chief Secretary Karan Avtar Singh told the meeting. He suggested quarantine for those found travelling between districts too, as a precautionary measure, but made it clear that movement of harvest combines and trucks carrying essentials was allowed.

The Chief Minister inquired about the steps being taken to protect and provide for the migrants who are stranded in Punjab due to the sealing of the borders and other restrictions.

The Amritsar DC informed the meeting that the migrant labourer issue in the district was not significant as most of them had been engaged to work in Transport, Railways and other departments. Those who had no jobs were being fed, he said. DC Pathankot said some 111 migrant labourers from J&K were stuck and had been accommodated in marriage palaces and other places, with strict social distancing norms being maintained. Three had been quarantined as they had fever and cough.

Ludhiana, with 5.25 lakh migrant labourers, had built 60 camps though only two were occupied, said the DC, adding that food was being supplied there regularly.

DC Gurdaspur said while Radha Saami bhawans were available, the migrant labourers were currently being housed by the owners of the brick kilns where they were working. In Tarn Taran, four centres had been opened to house the migrants. SSP Gurdaspur said flag marches were being conducted in urban areas to keep the morale high among the people, who had been cooperating fully with the police.

In the worst affected Mohali (SAS Nagar) district, the Jagatpura area had been totally sealed off after confirmation of Covid outbreak, with mass sampling being done in this and Nayagaon area, according to the Civil Surgeon. The district administration was in the process of securing exclusive rights for use of some beds and about 140 ventilators available in private hospitals, the Chief Minister was informed.
In Kapurthala, two quarantine centres had been set up with a total of 150 beds, and the district administration had taken university hostels to set up isolation ward, according to the DC.

The Ludhiana DC said the administration was in the process of acquiring the wings of some private hospitals for Covid patients. Sampling had been increased in Ludhiana after three positive cases came up in the urban areas.

In response to a concern expressed by the Civil Surgeon Pathankot regarding availability of PPE kits, Health Minister Balbir Sidhu assured of a stock of 100 kits to be supplied by tomorrow.