SpiceJet flies in the face of logic

India's second-largest airline has taken aggressive steps to survive the pandemic but it is an open question whether they are smart or rash

ANJULI BHARGAVA
New Delhi, 9 October

There's a thin line between bravery and bravado, aggressive and rash. It is this line that many in the aviation sector argue low-fare airline SpiceJet and its co-founder Ajay Singh appear to be treading during the pandemic. There are some who admire the way Singh has reacted when his back has been against the wall but with the airline announcing its plans last week to start direct flights to London in the winter of 2020, the list of naysayers is growing.

After the lockdown crippled the aviation sector and brought passenger traffic to a halt, airlines globally stared at a bleak future. As the weeks rolled on, the usual revenue streams for the carriers dried up as expenses continued to impinge on existing finances. All airlines were stuck with salaries, aircraft that needed maintenance, and the bills began to pile up. Even if the aircraft were not flying, staying afloat required funds.

Very soon after the shock, the industry — led by SpiceJet — honed in on cargo as a revenue stream, a step followed quickly by market leader IndiGo. This was true not just for Indian carriers; many foreign airlines filled aircraft with goods instead of passengers. Almost all the Indian airlines started flying Vande Bharat routes, which the government had started to ferry passenger stranded overseas owing to the suspension of international flights, and charter flights that helped bring in much-needed cash. In addition to this, in March, the airlines had some cash collected from passengers for flights that were to be taken in the weeks to follow but were in fact cancelled.

For the cargo flights, many airlines used their existing fleet but SpiceJet decided to wet-lease two aircraft and is now operating a fleet of 13 cargo aircraft (two wide-bodies on wet-lease) and is planning to add three more soon, a gambit that many felt was quite rash, since wet leasing is expensive — it includes the cost of hiring crew and maintenance staff — and is usually not considered an optimum option. The airline, however, said the cargo push has really paid off with revenues from cargo up 144 per cent in the first quarter of this year over the same period last year. SpiceXpress — its cargo wing — has been in operation since September 2018.

Last week, however, the airline went a step further and announced direct flights three times a week to London starting this winter — again with aircraft taken on wet-lease. Although Vistara, too, has started flights to London recently, market leader IndiGo — which is in the strongest position to go international — has not taken the plunge, opting for caution in the present environment.

SpiceJet's decision raised many eyebrows; industry experts felt it was both "rash", "unplanned", "at the wrong juncture". Said industry veteran Shakti Lumba: "Timing-wise this seems nothing short of suicidal. Instead of stabilising the airline during the crisis, he seems to be hurtling it headlong into more trouble."

JET-LAGGED Figures in ₹cr

Year end	Net worth	Total debt	Net sales	PBT	PAT
FY17	-613	1,155	6,191	427	427
FY18	-56	1,303	7,760	557	557
FY19	-350	1,110	9,121	-302	-302
FY20#	-1,580	9,833	12,375	-937	-937

As per results filing
Source: Capitaline Compiled by BS Research Bureau

Lumba argued that there will be "no first-mover advantage", hardly any load (Vistara's London flights have seen indifferent loads) as a result of the pandemic and that wet-lease is an expensive option in any situation.

Many others agreed with Lumba, saying it almost appeared as though the airline had stopped keeping accounts. "It's almost as if SpiceJet has lost touch with reality," said a former SpiceJet staffer, who has been closely associated with the airline.

The airline, however, contended that the move was neither rushed nor unplanned. In response to an email, the airline said it had been mulling the move to get into long haul for over two years and a dedicated team had been working on it.

The airline had applied for Heathrow slots in the past too as well as for designated carrier status "well before the lockdown". "London is a heavily competitive sector and Heathrow is a constrained airport so chances need to be taken as and when they present themselves," an airline insider said.

The airline added that wet-leasing costs are very low currently and the travel bubble meant competition was less and December was peak season.

Nevertheless, industry experts questioned Singh's solo approach of running the carrier, a charge made many times against the way he functions although the airline has always maintained that Singh has an efficient team backing him up. Recently, the airline's CFO Kiran Koteshwar put in his papers, though a replacement is expected soon, according to sources.

A former aviation secretary argued that instead of trying to recapitalise the airline, Singh seemed determined to burn more cash. Pointing towards a recent Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation estimate that put the fund requirements for the airline to stay afloat at nearly $300 million, he argued that introducing a new international sector at this juncture, even if not daily, was unlikely to help matters. "Keeping up with the Joneses will prove costly," he added, arguing that London was some kind of "psychological victory" for Indian airline owners. But he was of the view that no matter which long-haul route an airline introduces, it takes a few months for it to stabilise. Whether he proves right or Singh proves his critics wrong will be keenly watched in the next few months.

Three cheers for RBI's October policy

BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

Bond prices rallied, bank stocks rose and rupee appreciated on Friday, cheering the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) October monetary policy.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), Indian central bank's rate-setting body, with three new members on board, met between October 7 and 9, with one eye on the markets and the other on the economy.

The new MPC has not gone for a rate cut (none expected it to) but has done everything else to ensure that the massive market borrowing programme of the Centre and the states goes through without any disruption and to instill growth impulses in Asia's third-largest economy, which the RBI feels has left the worst behind it. It has also repaired the damage done by the minutes of the last MPC meeting, released in the third week of August, where one of its key members expressed serious concerns about persistently high inflation and spoke about remedial action to bring it down. That spooked the market and bond yields started rising.

The latest policy has taken a series of steps to ensure that the government is able to borrow from the market without paying too much and the banks continue to buy bonds. The combined market borrowing of the Centre and the states is pegged at around ₹21.6 trillion at this point, but it can rise if the government decides to go for more fiscal stimulus to prop up the economy, which sank 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

The RBI has doubled the size of the auction through which it buys bond from the market under the so-called open market operations (OMOs) to ₹20,000 crore. What's more, the central bank has announced such OMOs for the state development loans — the first in its 85-year history. Finally, the rise in the investment limit of banks in bonds classified as held to maturity (HTM), from 19.5 per cent to 22 per cent of their net demand, and time liability, a loose proxy for deposits, which was to end in March 2021, has been extended by a year. The higher limit is for bonds bought between September 2020 and March 2021. The bond in the HTM basket does not carry any market risks.

This is one of the rare instances of the RBI giving such a long forward guidance. This, coupled with its softer inflation projection in the coming months, keeps the door open for a rate cut in April 2021

Should the RBI have announced an OMO calendar to put on the table its bond buying programme? That's asking for too much. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das is explicit in his statement — the central bank stands ready to conduct market operations as required through a variety of instruments to ease pressures and maintain liquidity and order in financial markets.

This de facto monetisation is the Indian version of quantitative easing. Unlike, say, the Bank of Japan and the Reserve Bank of Australia, the RBI is not targeting yield of government bonds but what it is doing could be called a soft yield curve control. Probably 6 per cent is its tolerance level for the 10-year bond. On Friday, the 10-year yield closed at 5.925 per cent, falling 9 basis points, but at the shorter end, three-year bond yield dropped 33 bps to 4.541 per cent. (One bps is a hundredth of a percentage point.)

The accommodative stance of the monetary policy will continue "as long as necessary — at least during the current financial year and into the next year — to revive growth", Das said. This is one of the rare instances of the RBI giving such a long forward guidance. This, coupled with its softer inflation projection in the coming months, keeps the door open for a rate cut in April 2021. Even if it does not do so, the message is crystal clear: There is no rate hike till next financial year.

The headline retail inflation increased to 6.7 per cent during July-August 2020. It will rise further in September but the RBI estimates that it will ease to 5.4-4.5 per cent in the second half of 2021 and further to 4.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, with risks broadly balanced. The MPC blames the supply shocks for the rise in inflation and feels that these will dissipate in the coming months as the economy unlocks, supply chains are restored, and activity normalises.

For the first time this year, the October policy has given the RBI's estimate of the real GDP growth in 2021. It is expected to be negative at (-) 9.5 per cent, with "risks tilted to the downside". The RBI expects the Indian economy to contract 9.8 per cent in the second quarter, 5.6 per cent in the third, and finally to bounce back with 0.5 per cent growth in the last quarter of 2021.

It seems to be a realistic estimate. In fact, if the economic activities in September are any indication and India is spared a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, there may not be any downside risks to the RBI estimate. It could end up confirming its position of a conservative central banker.

The writer, a consulting editor with Business Standard, *is an author and senior adviser to Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd*
Twitter: *TamalBandyo*
To read the writer's previous columns, please log onto www.bankerstrust.in

Proposed health data policy puts question mark on privacy concerns

DEVANGSHU DATTA
New Delhi, 9 October

In September, an Australian cybersecurity researcher, Sami Toivonen, discovered that Dr Lal Path Labs had left the data of over a million customers exposed and unencrypted on the Amazon Web Services cloud. The data was recorded in some 9,000 spreadsheets, containing name, address, gender, date of birth, contact number, details of booking, doctor details, payment details, patient's unique identification numbers, and details of when, where and in what lab that tests were done.

Earlier, in February, an even larger set of data breaches was revealed. German research outfit Greenbone Networks found patient records, scans and images from some 97-odd medical institutions across India exposed. Details included the name of over 120 million — yes, 120 million — patients, their dates of birth, Aadhaar numbers, names of the medical institutions, medical history, physician names and other details. To the credit of Dr Lal Path Labs, the pertinent records were secured within hours of the breach being notified. However, the German study indicates that carelessness about health data is endemic.

This is undoubtedly private personal data, and it could be deeply embarrassing for the patients. Consider the reluctance with which politicians and people in public life disclose details of their medical history.

There are social implications of such data being freely available, as well as deep concerns about privacy. That's quite apart from monetary value. Any health insurer would kill to have access to large datasets, with such granular details. So would the healthcare and pharmaceuticals industry.

As the above incidents indicate, there are already lots of digitised health data floating around. These will expand exponentially. There's been an increase in online consultations and telemedicine, as well as online ordering of drugs, digital prescriptions, et al. Mass vaccination of a billion-plus citizens may soon be necessary.

The sooner there is legal protection for that data, the better. But safeguarding it will be complex, given the intersection of sensitive personal data, healthcare services, insurance implications, and the need for medical research.

India doesn't have a law protecting personal data. There are no specific penalties for failing to keep such data secure. A proposed law on Personal Digital Privacy Protection has been pending since 2018, and drafts in the public domain raise concerns about widespread surveillance.

The recently released draft "Health Data Management Policy" of the National Digital Health Mission is supposed to specifically guard medical data. This is built on the foundations of legislation that doesn't exist (see above). It also seems to be more concerned about monetisation of such data, than with the protection of privacy.

The proposed health policy refers to citizens as "data principals"; hospitals and doctors are "health information providers"; government agencies are "health information users". The policy envisages an integrated data storage system.

Records held by different service providers will be in common formats and linked through a unique health ID (Aadhar or something new). The justification: An integrated system with common standards would allow easy access to medical history and make it possible for individuals to be treated anywhere.

"Data fiduciaries" will be allowed to collect and store "sensitive personal data". This could include information; physical, physiological and mental health data; sex life and sexual orientation; genetic data; caste or tribe data; and "religious or political belief or affiliation". It's impossible to understand why much of this is necessary. The draft also suggests that even the local pharmacy could be considered a fiduciary. This means higher probabilities of data leakage since it's very unrealistic to assume every fiduciary will be secure.

Importantly, this data will be shared with the government, and "agencies designated by government". Anonymised or de-identified data will be made available in aggregated form for facilitating health and clinical research, academic research, archiving, statistical analysis, policy formulation, the development and promotion of diagnostic solutions, etc.

That essentially means the government can grab any data, and share it for any purpose, under such wide-ranging clauses. In theory, the consent of the individual will be asked for, before data collection. That consent could also be withdrawn, in theory. In practice, consent is a joke, if data on so many parameters is collected by a wide range of fiduciaries, and disseminated for so many purposes.

If you fall ill, once this policy goes through, your health might not be your only concern.

अंतर नियमांचे पालन होत नसल्याने लोकल प्रवासावर निर्बंध

मुंबई : सर्वसामान्य प्रवासी मुखपट्टी आणि अंतर नियमाचे काटेकोर पालन करत नाहीत, तोपर्यंत लोकल प्रवासाची मुभा देणे धोक्याचे ठरेल, असे नमूद करत उपनगरीय लोकल प्रवासास सर्वसामान्यांना परवानगी देण्याबाबत राज्य सरकारने शुक्रवारी मुंबई उच्च न्यायालयासमोर नन्नाचा पाढा वाचला.

आतापासूनच नियोजनाला सुरुवात करा, कार्यालयांच्या वेळा बदलण्याबाबत सर्वसहमतीने प्रयत्न करा, त्यासाठी केवळ अधिकाऱ्यांनी नव्हे तर मंत्र्यांनीही हस्तक्षेप करून प्रयत्न करायला हवेत, अशी सूचनाही न्यायालयाने केली.

टाळेबंदी अंशतः उठवली जात आहे. रेस्टॉरंट, मॉल सुरू झाले आहेत. सरकारी कार्यालयांसह अन्य क्षेत्रातील कामेही पूर्ण क्षमतेने सुरू झाली आहेत. अशा वेळी लोकलच्या फेऱ्या मर्यादित किंबहुना अगदीच कमी ठेवण्याबाबत न्यायालयाने मागील सुनावणीच्या वेळी प्रश्न उपस्थित केला होता.

मुख्य न्यायमूर्ती दीपांकर दत्ता आणि न्यायमूर्ती गिरीश कुलकर्णी यांच्या खंडपीठासमोर शुक्रवारी या प्रकरणी सुनावणी झाली. त्या वेळी राज्य सरकारने भूमिका स्पष्ट केली. अत्यावश्यक सेवेतील कर्मचाऱ्यांप्रमाणे अन्य क्षेत्रांतील कर्मचाऱ्यांना लोकल प्रवास उपलब्ध करण्यासाठी काहीही आक्षेप नसल्याचे सरकारतर्फे स्पष्ट केले. मात्र ७५ टक्के लोक जबाबदारीने वागून सुरक्षेच्या नियमांचे पालन करत नाहीत. तोपर्यंत सगळे सरसकट सुरू करणे शक्य नाही, असेही कुंभकोणी यांनी न्यायालयाला सांगितले.

दहशतवादविरोधी पथकाच्या प्रमुखपदी जयजित सिंग

मुंबई: राज्य दहशतवाद विरोधी पथकाच्या प्रमुखपदी लाचलुचपत प्रतिबंधक विभागाचे अप्पर महासंचालक जयजित सिंग यांची नियुक्ती करण्यात आली आहे. तर देवेन भारती यांची कामगार सुरक्षा महामंडळात बदली केली आहे.

मुख्यमंत्री उद्धव ठाकरे यांनी शुक्रवारी रात्री उशिरा पोलिस दलात फेरबदलाचे आदेश दिले. देवेन भारती यांच्यावर महाविकास आघाडी सरकार नाराज होते. काही दिवसांपूर्वी त्यांची तडकाफडकी उचलबांगडी करण्यात आली होती. शुक्रवारी त्यांची दुय्यम पदावर बदली करण्यात आली. याशिवाय प्रभात कुमार यांची लाचलुचपत प्रतिबंधक विभागाच्या अप्पर महासंचालकपदी, तर नवल बजाज यांची आर्थिक गुन्हे शाखेच्या अप्पर महासंचालकपदी नियुक्ती केली आहे. नितेश कौशिक यांची आर्थिक गुन्हे शाखेच्या सह आयुक्तपदी, संजय मोहीते यांची कोकण परिक्षेत्राचे महानिरीक्षक म्हणून, राजवर्धन यांची महिला अत्याचार प्रतिबंधक विभागाचे विशेष महानिरीक्षकपदी नियुक्ती करण्यात आली आहे.

मुख्य आणि हार्बर मार्गावर २२ नवीन फेऱ्यांची भर

मध्य रेल्वेवर आजपासून धीम्या लोकल

लोकसत्ता प्रतिनिधी

मुंबई : मध्य रेल्वेच्या मुख्य आणि हार्बरवर सध्या मोजक्याच स्थानकांत लोकल गाड्यांना थांबा देत जलद लोकल चालवल्याने मधल्या स्थानकांतील प्रवाशांची गैरसोय होत होती. ही गैरसोय टाळण्यासाठी धीम्या लोकलही चालवण्याचा निर्णय रेल्वेने घेतला आहे.

या निर्णयानुसार १० ऑक्टोबरपासून २२ नवीन धीम्या लोकल फेऱ्यांची भर पडणार असून सीएसएमटी ते कसारा, कर्जत मार्गावर १८ आणि सीएसएमटी ते पनवेल मार्गावर चार फेऱ्या असतील. सीएसएमटी ते पनवेल मार्गावर धीम्या लोकल चालवताना मात्र चार स्थानकांत थांबे देण्यात आलेले नाहीत. त्यामुळे धीम्या लोकलला अर्थ काय, असा प्रश्न उपस्थित होतो.

२२ धीम्या लोकल फेऱ्यांची भर पडणार असल्याने मध्य रेल्वेच्या एकूण फेऱ्यांची संख्या ४३१ वरुन ४५३ होणार आहे. आधीच्या ४३१ लोकल फेऱ्यांच्या वेळा आणि थांब्यांमध्ये काहीही बदल होणार नसल्याचे स्पष्ट करण्यात आले. धीम्या लोकल फेऱ्या सीएसएमटी ते कसारा मार्गावर चालवताना थानशेत आणि उंबरमाळी स्थानकात थांबा देण्यात आलेला नाही. तर सीएसएमटी ते कर्जत मार्गावरही शेलू स्थानकात थांबणार नाहीत. हार्बर मार्गावर सीएसएमटी ते पनवेल चार धीम्या लोकल फेऱ्यांनाही रे रोड, कॉटन ग्रीन, चुनाभट्टी, मानसरोवर स्थानकांत थांबा नसेल, अशी माहिती मध्य रेल्वेकडून देण्यात आली. त्यामुळे या स्थानकांतून प्रवास करणाऱ्या अत्यावश्यक सेवा कर्मचाऱ्यांची गैरसोयच होणार आहे. ठाणे ते पनवेल ट्रान्स हार्बर मार्गावर सध्या सहा लोकल फेऱ्या होत असून त्यांना काही मोजक्याच स्थानकांत थांबे आहेत. या मार्गावर मात्र धीम्या लोकल चालवण्याविषयी निर्णय झालेला नाही.

एका वरीष्ठ अधिकाऱ्याने सांगितले की, क्यूआर कोड ई पास यासह अन्य कामांमुळे रेल्वे सुरक्षा दल, तिकीट तपासनीसांवर मोठा ताण आहे. त्यामुळे मनुष्यबळाचा अभाव आणि सुरक्षेच्या कारणास्तवही हार्बरवर सुरु होणाऱ्या धीम्या लोकल फेऱ्यांना मोजक्याच स्थानकात थांबा दिलेला आहे. याशिवाय स्थानकातील थांब्यांबाबत सध्या राज्य सरकारकडून सूचना येत असतात. सूचनांनुसार त्या स्थानकातून प्रवास करणारे अत्यावश्यक सेवा कर्मचारीही नसल्याचे कारण सांगण्यात आले.

प्रशासनाचे अज्ञान

मध्य रेल्वेने काढलेल्या प्रसिद्धीपत्रकात सीएसएमटी ते पनवेल मार्गावर धीम्या लोकल फेऱ्यांना किंग्ज सर्कल स्थानक थांबा वगळण्यात आल्याचे सांगण्यात आले. मुळातच या मार्गावर किंग्ज सर्कल स्थानक नाही. याबाबत राज्य सरकारकडूनच सूचना असल्याचे मध्य रेल्वेकडून उत्तर देण्यात आले.

रुग्ण बरे होण्याचे प्रमाण ८४ टक्क्यांवर

मुंबईत २,२८७ नवे बाधित, ४७ जणांचा मृत्यू

लोकसत्ता प्रतिनिधी

मुंबई : मुंबईतील करोनाबाधित रुग्ण करोनामुक्त होण्याचे प्रमाण वाढले असून शुक्रवारी २,३४७ रुग्ण करोनामुक्त झाले. तर दिवसभरात २,२८७ जणांना करोनाची बाधा झाली असून ४७ रुग्णांचा मृत्यू झाला.

मुंबईत एकीकडे करोनाबाधित रुग्णांची संख्या वाढत आहे. तर दुसरीकडे बाधित रुग्ण करोनामुक्त होण्याचे प्रमाणही त्याच वेगाने वाढत आहे. रुग्ण करोनामुक्त होण्याचे प्रमाणा ८४ टक्क्यांवर पोहोचले असून आतापर्यंत मुंबईतील एक लाख ८९ हजार २२ रुग्ण करोनामुक्त झाले आहेत. करोना चाचणीअंती आज २,२८७ जणांना करोनाची बाधा झाली असून बाधितांची संख्या दोन लाख २५ हजार ४८ वर पोहोचली आहे. शुक्रवारी मृत्युमुखी पडलेल्या ४७ रुग्णांमध्ये ३७ पुरुष, तर १० महिलांचा समावेश होता. त्यापैकी ३६ जणांना दीर्घकालीन आजार होता. करोनामुळे मृत्यू झालेल्या रुग्णांची संख्या ९,३४० वर पोहोचली आहे.

मुंबईमधील विविध रुग्णालयांमध्ये उपचार घेत असलेल्या १,७५० करोनाबाधित रुग्णांची दुहेरी नोंदणी झाली होती. तसेच त्यात मुंबई बाहेरील काही रुग्णांचा समावेश होता. त्यामुळे उपचाराधीन रुग्णांच्या संख्येतून ही संख्या वगळण्यात आली आहे. आजघडीला विविध रुग्णालयांमध्ये २३ हजार ८६ उपचाराधीन रुग्ण आहेत. मुंबईत करोनाबाधितांचा शोध घेण्यासाठी आतापर्यंत १२ लाख ३२ हजार ८३८ करोना चाचण्या करण्यात आल्या आहेत. करोनाबाधित रुग्ण सापडल्यामुळे ९,८६३ इमारती टाळेबंद करण्यात आल्या असून ६४५ ठिकाणे प्रतिबंधित क्षेत्रांच्या यादीत समाविष्ट करण्यात आली आहेत. गेल्या २४ तासांमध्ये करोनाबाधितांच्या संपर्कात आलेल्या अतिजोखमीच्या गटातील २० हजार २७६ शोध घेण्यात आल्याची माहिती पालिका अधिकाऱ्यांनी दिली.

ठाणे जिल्ह्यात १,७४७ जणांना संसर्ग

ठाणे : जिल्ह्यात शुक्रवारी १ हजार ७४७ नवे करोनाबाधित आढळून आले आहेत. त्यामुळे जिल्ह्यात करोनाची लागण झालेल्या रुग्णांची संख्या १ लाख ८९ हजार ६१ वर पोहोचली आहे. तर, दिवसभरात ४४ जणांचा करोनामुळे मृत्यू झाल्याने जिल्ह्यातील मृतांचा आकडा ४ हजार ७७७ इतका झाला आहे. जिल्ह्यात शुक्रवारी आढळलेल्या नव्या रुग्णांमध्ये ठाणे शहरातील ४००, कल्याण-डोंबिवली शहरातील ३६७, नवी मुंबईतील ३५६, ठाणे ग्रामीणमधील २४९, मीरा-भाईंदरमधील १९५, बदलापूरमधील ५२, अंबरनाथमधील ४४, भिवंडी शहरातील ४३ आणि उल्हासनगरमधील ४१ रुग्णांचा समावेश आहे. तर, शुक्रवारी जिल्ह्यात ४४ जणांचा करोनामुळे मृत्यू झाला आहे. त्यामध्ये ठाणे ग्रामीणमधील १४, कल्याण-डोंबिवलीतील ९, मीरा-भाईंदरमधील ७, ठाणे शहरातील ६, नवी मुंबईतील ४, भिवंडीतील ३ आणि उल्हासनगरमधील एका रुग्णाचा समावेश आहे.

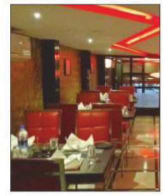
देशातील रुग्ण ६९ लाख

नवी दिल्ली : देशात गेल्या २४ तासांत करोनाच्या ७० हजार ४९४ रुग्णांची नोंद झाल्याने एकूण रुग्णांची संख्या ६९ लाख सहा हजार १५१ झाली आहे. महिनाभरात देशातील उपचाराधीन रुग्णांची संख्या नऊ लाखांच्या खाली गेली आहे, असे केंद्रीय आरोग्य विभागाकडून सांगण्यात आले. दिवसभरात करोनाच्या ९६४ रुग्णांचा मृत्यू झाल्याने देशातील एकूण करोनाबळींची संख्या एक लाख सहा हजार ४९० वर गेली आहे. रुग्ण करोनामुक्त होण्याचे प्रमाण ८५.५२ टक्के असून आतापर्यंत ५९ लाख सहा हजार ६९ जण बरे झाले आहेत.

ठाणे– नवी मुंबईत हॉटेल, मद्यालयांच्या वेळेत वाढ

आजपासून सकाळी ७ ते रात्री ११.३०पर्यंत खुली

लोकसत्ता खास प्रतिनिधी



ठाणे : ठाणे आणि नवी मुंबई महापालिका क्षेत्रातील हॉटेल, फूड कोर्ट, रेस्टॉरन्ट आणि मद्यालये यांची वेळ वाढवण्यास परवानगी देण्यात आली आहे.

आधीची वेळ सकाळी ९ ते सायंकाळी ७ अशी होती. मात्र आज शनिवारपासून सकाळी ७ ते रात्री ११.३० वाजेपर्यंत सुरू ठेवण्यास परवानगी देण्याचा निर्णय ठाणे महापालिका आयुक्त डॉ. विपीन शर्मा यांनी घेतला आहे.

करोना विषाणूच्या पार्श्वभूमीवर लागू केलेल्या टाळेबंदी शिथिलीकरणानंतर ठाणे महापालिका प्रशासनाने राज्य शासनाच्या आदेशानुसार दुकाने, बाजारपेठा तसेच भाजीमंडई सुरू केल्या होत्या. त्यापाठोपाठ ५ ऑक्टोबरपासून शहरातील हॉटेल, फूड कोर्ट, रेस्टॉरन्ट आणि मद्यालये ५० टक्के क्षमतेच्या मर्यादेत सुरु ठेवण्यास परवानगी दिली होती. त्यासाठी सकाळी ९ ते सायंकाळी ७ अशी वेळ ठरवून दिली होती. यासंबंधीचे आदेश महापालिका आयुक्त डॉ. विपीन शर्मा यांनी काही दिवसांपूर्वी काढले होते. परंतु या वेळेच्या मर्यादेबाबत हॉटेल, फूड कोर्ट, रेस्टॉरन्ट आणि मद्यालये या आस्थापनांच्या मालकांकडून नाराजी व्यक्त होत होती. तर, ग्राहकांचाही हिरमोड झाला होता. तसेच आस्थापना सुरू ठेवण्याची वेळ वाढवून देण्याची मागणी होत होती. याबाबत संबंधित आस्थापना मालकांनी महापालिकेकडे मागणी केली होती. त्यानुसार ही मागणी रास्त असल्याची धारणा झाल्याचे स्पष्ट करत आयुक्त डॉ. शर्मा यांनी या सर्व आस्थापना सकाळी ७ ते रात्री ११.३० यावेळेत सुरू ठेवण्यास परवानगी दिली आहे. यासंबंधीचे आदेश त्यांनी शुक्रवारी काढले आहेत. तसेच शहरातील प्रतिबंधित क्षेत्रामध्ये यापूर्वी जाहीर केलेले सर्व निर्बंध लागू राहतील, असेही त्यांनी आदेशात म्हटले आहे.