

Sindh entering second phase of lockdown with 'some extra restrictions', says Murad

KARACHI: Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday said that the Sindh government had implemented almost all decisions the federal government had taken regarding its nationwide lockdown imposed to slow down the spread of coronavirus in the county.

Speaking at a press conference at the Sindh Assembly Building and in a statement issued from the CM House later in the evening, he brushed aside the impression of imposing lockdown in the province just to show a difference of opinion with the federal government and categorically said that Sindh was not ending the lockdown on Monday.

"We are entering the second phase of the lockdown with some extra restrictions, particularly at hotspots," he said.

In a statement issued from the CM House, the chief minister said that some media channels were giving the impression that the lockdown was ending on Monday, which was totally wrong.

At the press conference, he said: "The Sindh government has implemented 99.9 per cent decisions the federal government has taken in consultation with the provinces."

Claims his govt implemented 99.9pc decisions of centre; forms body to remove traders' concerns; meets MQM-P delegation

Accompanied by ministers Azra Pechuho, Saeed Ghani, Nasir Shah, Imtiaz Sheikh, Adviser Murtaza Wahab and MNA Qadir Patel, he said that the federal government indeed gave flexibility to the provinces to take decisions regarding further tightening the lockdown keeping in view their ground realities.

He asked why his detractors were blaming his government for imposing lockdown and "misguiding" different communities and traders.

No business at night

The chief minister said a day before the meeting of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) draft recommendations for post-May 9 measures were shared with all the provinces so that a meaningful discussion could be held.

Narrating the recommendations, the CM said that it include opening of phase-II of construction industries and community markets/retail outlets, shops in rural areas, neighbourhood shops situated in residential localities/stand-alone shops, excluding malls, large marketplaces, mega departmental stores.

Shops/markets, other than pharmacies' opening time to be limited till 5pm, Saturday and Sunday to be declared as a 'safe day' with all sectors/retail closed other than essential sectors or those with a continuous process.

Selective OPDs would also be allowed to operate. However, timing of shops opening was recommended after Fajr till 5pm as per discretion of the provinces and there would be a total closure at night.

Mr Shah said that all the provinces were 90pc in agreement with the recommendations.

He deplored that despite doing his best he was being criticised without any solid reason and rationale.

He said that the Sindh government had already opened 676 industrial units.

Govt offices, many sectors to remain shut

The chief minister said that the sectors that would continue to remain closed include all industries/business not cleared for opening till May 9, shopping malls, plazas, educational institutions, offices not cleared for opening till May 9, restaurants, hotels, marquees, marriage halls, cinemas, etc.

He said all places of large gatherings, public processions, gatherings, congregations of all nature and organised sports events and concerts would also be not allowed after Saturday.

He said that the government offices would remain closed as usual.

Mr Shah said that on April 14 the government decided to open some shops and then witnessed a spike in cases.

“The priority is to avoid death stemming from coronavirus rather than allowing other activities,” he said.

Majalis

To a question about Yaum-i-Ali processions, the CM said that under the SOPs as announced by the federal government in consultation with the provinces, all kinds of majalis, processions and congregations were banned.

Body to meet traders

The CM conceded that city traders were in a serious crisis.

“I would request the federal govt to give them loans on easy instalments so that they could revive their businesses,” he said, adding that his government was in close contact with traders’ community and the decision about closure was a collective decision taken at the national level.

He said he had constituted a committee comprising ministers Saeed Ghani, Imtiaz Sheikh, Murtaza Wahab and Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar and it would meet with small traders and listen to them and compile their recommendations for revival of their business.

To a question, he said that the provincial and federal governments would have jointly supported the daily wage earners instead of allowing them to start their work and put their and their family members’ lives at risk.

598 new cases in Sindh

The chief minister said that for the first time 5,532 samples were tested against which 598 cases had been detected.

“This constitutes 10.8 per cent of the cases diagnosed against 5,532 tests,” he said and added: “This is the highest ratio since ... first case was detected.”

Mr Shah said that the testing capacity had been increased to 5,600 per day.

He added that so far 81,610 tests had been conducted against which 9,691 were diagnosed as positive.

He said that five more patients died due the infection, taking the death toll to 176, which was 1.8pc of the total patients.

Giving details of the 7,575 patients under treatment, the chief minister said that 6,421 were in home isolation, 627 at isolation centres and 527 at different hospitals.

“I am sorry to say that 164 were in critical condition, of them 18, or 17.2pc, are on ventilators,” he said.

Talking about the death of Dr Furqan, the chief minister expressed his deep sorrow and grief and said that such incidents should not happen.

Meets MQM-P delegation

In the evening, the CM met a delegation of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan.

According to an MQM-P statement, the CM assured the delegation that he would solve the traders’ problems as soon as possible.

The MQM delegation comprised senior leaders Kanwar Naveed Jameel, Khwaja Izharul Hasan and Karachi Mayor Akhtar while the CM was assisted by Saeed Ghani, Nasir Shah, Murtaza Wahab and Sohail Siyal.

The MQM-P asked the CM to hold a meeting with traders to address their grievances and to take a final decision with regard to resumption of business activities.

It also demanded that strict action be taken against police for humiliating the people of Karachi and traders. It was also demanded that the government “activate” the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board to solve people’s complaints.

“The CM accepted the MQM demands and decided to meet with traders and representatives today [Saturday],” said the MQM-P statement.

Mr Shah also assured the MQM delegation that the issue of payment of salaries to employees of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and Karachi Development Authority would also be solved soon.