

Roc.No.1363/2020/RG



MOST URGENT

CIRCULAR

Sub: COVID 19 – Effective prevention of Corona Virus disease in the High Court premises – Administrative directives issued – Regarding.

In view of announcement of pandemic of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, taking stock of the situation issued an advisory to combat and prevent the spread of the said virus. The Central Government as well as the State Governments throughout the country, including the Government of Tamil Nadu, have taken steps in this regard. Environmental impact direct or otherwise in the functioning of the Courts came to be discussed by the Hon'ble The Chief Justice of India with the Chief Justices of the High Courts throughout the country on 16th March, 2020, sharing the information and also the efforts that are required to be made for taking appropriate steps for containing the spread of any such disease and tackling with any infected persons in the Court premises including the High Courts and Subordinate Courts throughout the country.

The Hon'ble the Chief Justice of Madras High Court convened a meeting in the High Court in the afternoon of 16th March, 2020 with all Hon'ble Judges of the Administrative Committee, learned Advocate General, Presidents and office-bearers of all the recognised Bar Associations in the High Court of Madras, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu, the Health Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu and other Government officials, wherein it was resolved to undertake and implement effective measures to meet this emergent situation.

On the very same day (16th March, 2020) the Hon'ble The Chief Justice convened a meeting at Madurai Bench with the Hon'ble Administrative Judge and some Hon'ble Judges of the Madurai Bench as well as the District Collector, Madurai District, Police officials, Doctors and officials of the Health Department, Principal District Judge and staff of the Registry and all others concerned where effective steps already taken by the Hon'ble Administrative Judge of the Madurai Bench were acknowledged and further suggestions were made to tackle the situation.

The management of Court proceeding keeping in view the interest of the litigants was also discussed coupled with the participation and cooperation of the lawyers that was necessary to meet the situation.

The State administration and the representatives of the Bar came up with an overwhelming response to the suggestions made and affirmed their full co-operation by undertaking whatever measures are necessary to protect lives first and simultaneously to allow the minimum of compulsory functioning, which is required to sustain the judicial system to continue to discharge its duties.

After having received the suggestions and having regard to preserving the judicial functioning in the larger interests of litigants, a meeting was finally held today (17th March, 2020) at Chennai in the presence of all concerned.

After assessing the concerns and suggestions expressed by the respective stake-holders, appropriate administrative directions are required to be issued in this respect.

At the outset, the general impression gathered about why this needs to be tackled and in what manner, the following fundamentals should be kept in mind that have been extracted in the Advisory issued in the shape

of a media bulletin dated 15th March, 2020 issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, which reads as follows:

“c) Disinfection Procedure for Prevention of COVID-19 in Public Places

Corona virus spreads from person to person directly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People also become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with corona viruses by droplets generated while coughing or sneezing and then touching their mouth or nose or eyes.

Respiratory Hygiene, Hand Hygiene and cleaning and disinfection of surfaces frequently touched by hands are essential strategies for the prevention and transmission of COVID-19.

Disinfection of floors and surfaces frequently touched by hands such as seats, handrails, straps in trains and buses, door-handles, lifts, handrails, chairs, tables, ticket counters, in the shopping malls, hotels, cinema theatres, marriage halls, seats in trains and buses will certainly help in interruption of transmission to a larger extent.

a. Disinfections for surfaces frequently touched by hands:

- Disinfection of seats, chairs, door handles, ticket counters and hand railings in cinema theatres should be cleaned with Lysol spray after every show.

- In buses and trains, the door handles, straps, hand rails and seats should be cleaned with Lysol periodically after every trip.
- In hotels, lodging houses and marriage halls, Lysol should be sprayed on the surfaces frequently touched by hands should be done periodically, as many times as possible.”

The general advisory issued for the public broadly is as follows:

Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)-General Advisory for Public

The 2019 novel corona virus (2019-nCoV), Wuhan corona virus, is contagious virus that causes respiratory infection, can transfer from human to human.

Symptom

- Fever
- Difficulty in Breathing
- Coughing
- Tightness of Chest
- Running Nose
- Head Ache
- Feeling of being Unwell
- Pneumonia

Incubation Period : 2 to 14 days

Human Corona virus (2019-nCoV) most commonly spread from an infected person to other through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hand
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

How to reduce risk of Corona virus infection (2019-nCoV)

- Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand rub
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing & sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flue like symptoms
- Avoid frozen meat and use well cooked meat
- Isolation of symptomatic patients for at least 14 days (Home quarantine)

DO's and DONT's

<i>DO's</i>	<i>DONT's</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cover your nose and mouth with disposable tissue or handkerchief while coughing or sneezing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequently wash your hands with soap and water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hugging, kissing and shaking hands while greeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid crowded places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spitting in public places
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person suffering from influenza like illness must be confined at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking medicines without consulting doctor
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay more than one meter from	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disposal of used napkin or tissue

<i>DO's</i>	<i>DONT's</i>
persons sick with flu.	paper in open
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take adequate sleep and rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching surfaces usually used by public (Railway gates, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of water/ liquids and eat nutritious food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary testing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person suspected with Influenza like illness must consult doctor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary use of mask
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used Tissue paper has to be disposed in a closed waste bin 	

Having regard to the safety of litigants, lawyers, visitors, Court staff and Judges, the central idea for implementing the advisory given herein below is to avoid congestion and mass gathering, which is the most essential feature to be observed in order to avoid the spread of the infectious disease, which as of now does not have a readily available cure or medicine to treat the same. Therefore, it appears to be of a very serious nature.

The second issue is with regard to the medical facilities and other Help Centres and related information being made available.

The third is relating to Court functions in a manner that allows the Court work to continue at the required minimum and essential level and at the same time, postpone and adjourn the matter that can be avoided for the time being.

The fourth focus is on scheduling the time period keeping in view this impending threat, which on a rough estimate is likely to persist between two to three weeks.

The last but not the least is to spread awareness amongst all stakeholders, lawyers and litigants in particular to extend a cooperative hand by exercising restraint in organising any gatherings or the flow of lawyers and litigants in Court premises.

With this overall view, the Hon'ble the Chief Justice has issued **the following administrative directives for the High Court at the Principal Seat at Madras and at the Madurai Bench:**

- (1) Taking up of fresh matters, urgent matters on mention and suspension of the final hearing cause list for three weeks to be notified separately in the cause list.
- (2) In order to reduce footfalls inside the Court premises and in order to prevent non-essential visits as well as restricting casual visitors, it is hereby directed as a temporary measure that no gate pass will be issued to litigants and visitors, unless there is a judicial direction by a Court compelling a litigant or anybody authorised on his behalf to be personally

present or file an affidavit before the Court. For this, all lawyers and their clerks are requested to inform the litigants that they need not visit the High Court unless their presence is directed by the Court or is unavoidable for a period of three weeks from today and subject to any further advisories.

- (3) Only those lawyers who have their cases listed or who want to make an urgent mention may visit the High Court premises and may kindly leave as soon as their work is over, which will help in the decongesting footfalls. They may also instruct their clerks and other staff accordingly.
- (4) All the respective Bar Associations are requested to close their Bar rooms and suspend all activities relating to mass gatherings or functions for at least three weeks, subject to further review of situation.
- (5) All canteens and food stalls are advised to close down completely for a period of three weeks, subject to further review. Stationery stalls/Photostat facilities/book vending may operate for only two hours from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. to facilitate urgent requirements of litigants and lawyers. The entry of outside vendors shall completely remain banned till further orders.

- (6) All lawyers, litigants, clerks and other visitors are requested to leave finally by 5.00 p.m. to facilitate the sanitisation and cleaning of the High Court premises.
- (7) The Mediation and Arbitration Centres shall stand closed and all activities will remain suspended for the period of three weeks, subject to further review.
- (8) The Registrar-General in co-ordination with the State Government authorities shall make arrangements for the presence of para-medical staff and medical staff that may be necessary for checking the temperature of entrants in the Court premises with the help of Temperature Guns/Thermal Imaging Devices to ensure that no person having any symptoms of the virus enters the Court. The para-medical staff may be deputed at all vantage entry points of the High Court, who shall also be equipped with sanitising material and any other equipment that may be required for disinfecting persons entering the High Court. All lawyers and their clerks as well as litigants as also staff members may cooperate in this operation in order to ensure public safety as well as their own lives.

- (9) The Registrar General shall also ensure that the personal staff of Judges including drivers, jamadars and PSOs are scanned on daily basis and are extended all facilities of sanitisation. Appropriate measures be also taken to provide such facilities at the residence of the Judges.
- (10) The respective staff of the Registry in all Sections and Departments shall be provided with sanitising material commensurate to their consumption.
- (11) The Registrar General along with the other Registrars shall formulate a working schedule for the entire staff of the High Court and the same pattern, if necessary, may be adopted at Madurai, by dividing the Office staff (other than the essential staff attached to Judges) to work in two shifts, subject to the timings that may be convenient to meet the work requirement of the High Court.
- (12) The Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority (TNSLSA) and Puducherry Legal Services Authority (PLSA) will also similarly keep its regular activities suspended for a period of three weeks and shall not hold Lok Adalat or Permanent Lok Adalat in this period. The legal services in the cases requiring urgent legal help may be provided subject to observing the Code of working specified elsewhere in this general advisory.

- (13) The Arbitration Centre and the Mediation Centre shall not function for a period of three weeks. The staff attached to it may, however, get their attendance recorded and take appropriate steps for securing the place.
- (14) Visitors shall not be allowed in the Museum for a period of three weeks. The same shall be notified accordingly.
- (15) The Members of the Registry and every employee of all cadres working in the High Court will immediately inform the concerned Head of the Section or the Registrar General about any symptoms of the Virus being present either in the employee himself or in any other employee in order to take appropriate steps in that regard.
- (16) All employees who have either visited abroad within the past two months or are planning to visit abroad in future during this period may also intimate the Registrar General about the same.
- (17) The Director, State Judicial Academy, shall take appropriate instructions from the Executive Chairman to avoid any gatherings or activities in the Academy, keeping in view the aforesaid concerns and if not unavoidable, may postpone such activities for a period of three weeks, with further instructions in the matter to be taken thereof.

- (18) The Law Interns and Law Clerks may, with the permission of the Hon'ble Judges to whom they are attached, seek exemption from attendance in Courts for three weeks.
- (19) It shall be notified by the Registrar General that the facilities in the Guest House of the High Court, if not already extended to any guest, shall remain suspended for a period of three weeks.
- (20) The Registrar General shall obtain appropriate orders for postponing and adjourning any such programme that may have been organised within this period with due information to all concerned by postponing it subject to any further directions.

The above instructions, subject to any modification as required, may be followed at Madurai Bench, under the directions of the Hon'ble Administrative Judge.

HIGH COURT, MADRAS

DATED : 17-03-2020

Sd/- C.KUMARAPPAN

REGISTRAR GENERAL