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New Delhi 25°C

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## Coronavirus: Delhi HC limits its functioning, few benches to take up only urgent matters

The high court, which had on March 13 issued various directions restricting its functioning, held an urgent meeting on Monday and passed fresh directives.

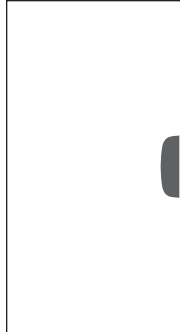
INDIA Updated: Mar 16, 2020 19:31 IST

ht Press Trust of India New Delhi



The high court said all the pending matters, listed from March 17 to 20, before the court as well as the registrars or joint registrars would be adjourned to April 14, 15, 16 and 17 respectively.(Mint)

The Delhi High Court decided on Monday to limit its functioning due to the novel coronavirus pandemic and hold hearing of only few benches till March 20.

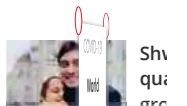


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Administrative and General Supervision Committee headed by Chief Justice D N Patil as president and honorary secretary of the Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCBA) "to contain the spread of pandemic coronavirus".

It decided that the functioning of the high court stands restricted till March 20, when the situation will be reviewed by the committee.

On March 17 and March 19, four division benches, four single judge benches for civil jurisdiction and three single judge benches each for criminal and original jurisdiction would hear "only urgent matters".

On March 18 and 20, three division benches, three single judge benches for civil jurisdiction and three single judge benches each for criminal and original jurisdiction would hear "only urgent matters".

In the normal course, a total of 26 benches sit for hearing all the matters.

With the coronavirus cases reaching 114 nationwide, several states have taken steps to restrict or close certain public places so as to check its spread. All the courts in the national capital have also curtailed the functioning and restricting the entry of people on their premises.

The high court said all the pending matters, listed from March 17 to 20, before the court as well as the registrars or joint registrars would be adjourned to April 14, 15, 16 and 17 respectively.

The urgent matters to be listed on the following day shall be determined by the designated joint registrars (JR) and it can be mentioned before the JR (judicial) from 10:30 AM to 12 PM everyday till March 20.

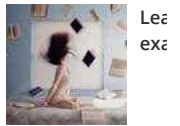
It was also decided in the meeting that the trial courts will only take up bail matters and cases which require urgent stay or injunction till March 31 and rest of the cases would be adjourned.

The high court, in its advisory, said no undertrial would be produced before the subordinate courts till March 31 and if production is indispensable, the facility of video conferencing be utilised.

The Delhi Judicial Academy would suspend all its institutional training programmes till March 31, it said, adding that the committee will review the situation on March 20.

On March 13, the high court had decided to hear only urgent matters from Monday in the wake of coronavirus scare in the country and not insist on personal appearance of parties unless it is indispensable.

It was decided that all possible preventive and remedial measures be taken to combat the impending threat of COVID-19 including making available sanitisers be made available in the



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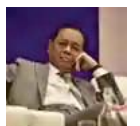


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functioning from March to shall be restricted to urgent matters and the court masters give dates in routine matters before the court assemblies”.

In the earlier meeting, it was also decided that members of the Bar may not issue visitors pass and the high court would not insist on the personal appearance of the parties unless it is indispensable.

The Supreme Court had also taken a similar decision a few hours before the high court’s.

The high court had issued a separate advisory for regulating entry of litigants in all the district courts in the national capital.

“Thermal scanners (non-touch) may be procured at the earliest, handlers be trained and they be put to use at the existing check points,” the advisory said.

“Till the present situation persists, no adverse/default orders be passed in matters where parties are found to be absent,” it had said.

It had said that in criminal matters, trial courts should consider “favourably” the request for exemption from personal appearance of the accused.

It had said that unnecessary crowding in the lock up in the court premises be curtailed and appropriate steps be taken in this regard in consultation with the jail authorities.

The advisory had said that judge in-charge of the trial courts shall ensure that medical dispensaries in the court complex are “well equipped to tackle the present emergent situation”.

It had said sanitisers be made available in the courts for visitors, staffs “particularly those manning windows where there is constant public dealing”.

“Housekeeping agency/staff be asked to ensure that highest level of hygiene is maintained in the court complex and disinfectants are sprayed on a regular basis,” it had said, adding a dedicated team comprising of senior judicial officers and others be constituted in each district court complexes for taking stock of the situation on a day-to-day basis.

“All the possible preventive and remedial measures be taken to combat the impending threat of COVID-19,” it had said, adding, “No function/election or any other event be permitted to be held/conducted till further orders”.

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