

Empty roads, markets as Capital is locked down for weekend to stem Covid surge

ANANYA TIWARI
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ROADS, MARKETS and buses across Delhi were largely empty from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the national capital's residents appeared to have stayed at home.

There were few passengers onboard public transport vehicles, including buses, in most parts of the city. The only exception was near major hospitals like AIIMS and Safdarjung, where more people were seen

taking public transport.

All major markets — Sarojini Nagar, Connaught Place, Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Chandni Chowk — closed their shutters.

Many daily wagers, such as rickshaw pullers, who were on the road, expressed their discontent over losing their livelihood. Near Jangpura, Mohammad Sultan (40), a rickshaw puller from Bihar, said, "Everyone is dying of the illness but the poor are dying more — we have no form of stable sustenance during the Covid-19 period, our local food outlets have closed, and we will have no work this weekend. It is very difficult for us, as we come to the city only to earn; no one wants to leave their families but we must."

At various points in central and south Delhi, the Delhi Police set up checkpoints, often stopping vehicles and asking them for proof to show that their movement qualifies as 'essential'.

One police officer at Jangpura said, "We are stopping those without a pass, and asking people to show proof of where they are going. There are many people who are roaming around aimlessly and are not able to provide any proof, and we are taking action against them. But we have not been able to stop everyone."

Major parks such as Nehru Park and Lodhi Garden remain open to public at the normal timings. S Chellaiah, director of the horticulture department of

the New Delhi Municipal Council, said, "We are not stopping anyone from entering the parks, nor putting any time restrictions, as these are nature parks and not amusement-entertainment parks. But fewer people were there at these parks today."

Municipal services, such as the collection of garbage, watering of plants, and sweeping of roads, continued as well. Even food delivery service agents were spotted on the roads as restaurants have been given permission for continuing home delivery services.

In some areas, some vegetable vendors were also present, as some people flocked to them for essential supplies.