

**AMID SPIKE IN COVID DEATHS**

# East MCD will run crematorium 24x7, North asks hospitals to stagger release of bodies



Amit Mehra

(left) At the Shehnai banquet hall Covid isolation facility; (top) Outside Lok Nayak hospital. The capital recorded 167 deaths on Saturday, the highest so far since the pandemic started. Praveen Khanna

**ANANYA TIWARI**  
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THE EAST MCD will run the Karkardooma crematorium for 24 hours from Monday onwards because of an increase in the number of Covid deaths, while the North Corporation has asked hospitals to send bodies in a staggered manner to reduce waiting time at the crematorium. "We were getting reports

about people having to wait the entire night to get bodies of Covid victims cremated, as the timings are 8 am to 9 pm. To make sure people do not have to wait, we will in all likelihood be running the crematorium 24x7," said Dr Ajay Handa, additional medical health officer of the EDMC.

The number of bodies arriving at the Karkardooma crematorium has increased since April 1. From January 1 till the end of March this year, nine bodies were

cremated here as per Covid protocol, while this month the number has already touched 20. At the Seemapuri burial ground under EDMC, the last rites of 134 people were performed as per Covid protocol since April 1, as compared to 35 from January 1 to March-end this year. Overall, since April 1, crematoriums at Karkardooma, Ghazipur, and the burial grounds of Seemapuri, Shastri Park and Mayur Vihar Phase 3 saw the last rites of 207 bodies as per Covid

protocol, as compared to 67 from January 1-March 31. Last year, from April 1 to December 12, this number stood at 1,891.

Various hospitals under the East and North MCDs have been directed to send bodies only to specified crematoriums/burial grounds, as per a directive issued on Saturday by the NDMC.

A senior official from the civic body said, "We have created a system wherein hospitals have been asked to send bodies of

Covid patients in a staggered manner to specified grounds. This is to reduce waiting time."

The number of bodies received at North MCD's grounds have also increased in comparison to the same period last year — April 1 to April 15. Last year, there were 12 bodies whose last rites were performed as per Covid protocol, while this year the number stands at 224.

At the eight grounds under the South body, there is no such

issue of crowding, said Leader of the House, SDMC, Narendra Chawla. "The only issue is that because these are Covid patients, only dedicated staff has to do various rituals, which was earlier being done by families. Otherwise, we have space," he said. South MCD has cremation grounds at Punjabi Bagh, Hastsal, Subhash Nagar, Lodhi Road, Sarai Kale Khan, Dwarka Sector 24, and Lal Kuan, and a burial ground at ITO.