

Dr. Harsh Vardhan reviews preparedness and containment measures taken for COVID-19 management in Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka through Video Conferencing

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Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare in continuation of series of focussed meetings with the States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, held a high level meeting today with Dr. C. Vijayabaskar, Health Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri Etela Rajendra, Health Minister of Telangana and Dr. K. Sudhakar, Medical Education Minister of Karnataka in presence of Sh. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, MoS (HFW) and senior officials from both Centre and the States to review the situation, actions being taken and preparedness for management of COVID-19 in the three States.

At the outset, Dr. Harsh Vardhan appreciated the dedication of all the States in combating COVID-19 in the country. He informed the States about the present situation in the country and the steps taken by the Centre to combat COVID-19 so far. He further added that Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is continuously monitoring and guiding all the concerned Ministries/Departments to implement more effective containment plans, surveillance, contact tracing and screening for COVID-19.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated, "Appropriate measures are being taken to combat COVID-19 and with the cohesive efforts of both Centre and States, adequately growing numbers of dedicated COVID hospitals, Isolation & ICU beds and Quarantine being identified and developed so far, we are well-prepared to face any eventuality due to COVID-19". Centre is also supporting by providing sufficient number of masks & Personal Protective Equipments, Ventilators etc. to the States/ UTs / Central Institutions, he further added.

After a brief presentation on the status of COVID-19 cases in the States and its management in the States, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated, "States need to focus on more effective surveillance, contact tracing and early diagnosis to keep low fatality rate". He said, "Surveillance for Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) / Influenza Like Illness (ILI) should be intensified in unaffected districts and districts which have not reported cases from last 14 days and more through the IDSP network in collaboration with Medical Colleges and Hospitals. Such measures will help to indicate the presence of any possible hidden infection at an early stage thus helping in its timely containment", he added.

Dr Harsh Vardhan stressed, "States need to ensure adoption of Infection, Prevention & Control (IPC) practices in all healthcare settings to avoid/reduce chances of infections to health care workers. States were advised to ensure that all Central Guidelines/Advisories are implemented till the field level in earnest. The States informed about some of the best practices adopted at the District level such as deployment of mobile testing laboratories and distribution of medicines for non-communicable diseases for a period of 2 months in advance in containment zones, home delivery of bleaching powder in slum areas and use of Tele-medicine as an alternative to OPD. Union Health Minister appreciated the best practices shared by the District Magistrates/Commissioners and other officials of various districts like identification of community volunteers for distribution of necessary services, daily items as well as for creating awareness about Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) activities, deployment of mobile units in rural areas for ANC of pregnant women, screening and treatment of elderly patients suffering from non-communicable diseases etc.

Dr Harsh Vardhan appreciated the work done by the State Governments and the erdication shown by frontline health workers, Anganwadi workers, police and paramilitary personnel who are working beyond the call of

duty in the interest of nation. He reminded States to provide them preventive medicines and immunity boosters along with testing as and when required.

It was reiterated to the States that attention needs to be accorded to provisioning of non-COVID essential health services such as immunisation drives, TB case tracing and treatment, providing blood transfusion for dialysis patients, treatment of cancer patients, ANC of pregnant women, etc. It was also stated that the Ayushman Bharat-Health & Wellness Centres could be used for screening for hypertension, diabetes and three types of cancers. Telemedicine and tele-counselling could be used for a larger population in view of the lockdown. States have been advised to keep adequate stock of essential medicines. States were also informed that helpline number 104 in addition to 1075 can be used for Grievance Redressal for non-COVID essential services, and for informing regarding availability of these services etc. Adequate measures for prevention of vector borne diseases also need to be taken, they were advised.

Dr Harsh Vardhan also spoke to the DMs of various districts of Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Karnataka and discussed in detail the status and management of COVID-19 in the districts. He also added that such meetings will help in working more cohesively and also help in filling gaps, if any, and to understand and address the issues more closely and clearly.

Ms. Preeti Sudan, Secretary (HFW), Shri Rajesh Bhushan, OSD (HFW), Ms. Vandana Gurnani, AS & MD (NHM), Dr. Manohar Agnani, Joint Secretary (MoHFW), Dr. S.K. Singh, Director, NCDC along with Principal Secretary (Health) and other senior state health officials participated in the meeting.

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