

Dr. Harsh Vardhan engages with Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and UTs of Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh to review preparedness and containment measures taken for COVID-19 management

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Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare held a high level meeting here today with Sh. Girish Chandra Murmu, Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Sh. R. K. Mathur, Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Sh. Trivendra Singh Rawat, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, and Shri Jai Ram Thakur, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh in presence of Sh. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, MoS, Health and Family Welfare. This is as a part of series of personal interactions with various State Health Ministers and Collectors of Red Zone districts to take stock of preparedness and measures for management of COVID-19 in the States/UTs.

At the outset, Dr Harsh Vardhan informed the States/UTs that as on 12th May 2020, a total of 70,756 cases have been reported from the country in which 22,455 persons have been cured and 2,293 deaths had occurred. In the last 24 hours, 3,604 new confirmed cases have been added and 1538 patients were found cured. While the doubling time in the past 14 days was 10.9, it has improved to 12.2 in the last three days, he noted. He added that the fatality rate is 3.2% and recovery rate is pegged at 31.74%. He also added that (as of yesterday) there are 2.37% active COVID-19 patients in ICU, 0.41% on ventilators and 1.82% on oxygen support. Dr. Harsh Vardhan highlighted that the testing capacity has increased in the country and it is 1, 00,000 tests per day with 347 Government laboratories and 137 private laboratories. Cumulatively, 17, 62,840 tests have been done so far for COVID-19. Whereas, 86,191 samples were tested yesterday.

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

After a brief presentation on the status of COVID-19 cases in the States/UTs and its management, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated, "In view of the surge of returning migrant labourers, States/UTs need to focus on more effective surveillance, contact tracing, adequate testing and timely treatment of all the returnees. This also includes the ones that shall be returning from abroad". Various States/UTs outlined the preparations being made for their testing at the point of disembarking, quarantining them, testing and further treatment. He also suggested that the downloading of Aarogya Setu should be made compulsory for all returnees for better contact surveillance and suitable medical interventions.

Dr Harsh Vardhan also stressed upon ramping up the surveillance for Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) / Influenza Like Illness (ILI) in the affected and non-affected districts. States/UTs were suggested to take the help of the Medical Colleges, if they are present there. "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. He appreciated the work done for SARI/ILI surveillance, and the work undertaken by IDSP for contact tracing and monitoring in Uttarakhand. The UT of Ladakh

stated that they have started mobile medical vans to reach to far flung areas to provide non-COVID essential services. Shri R K Mathur stated that they are keeping some doctors and police personnel in reserve so that they can be deployed on rotational basis for full time management of COVID-19 in the UT. They are also working integrally with the Panchayats and community elders for awareness generation and confidence building. All the States/UTs expressed gratitude for the technical and other support being continuously provided by the Central Government. Sirmaur district in Himachal Pradesh is providing training with COVID-19 appropriate behaviour to barbers and salon operators to prepare them for the post-lockdown operations. Ayurvedic immunity boosters have also been provided to frontline health workers, police personnel and paramilitary forces, Shri Jai Ram Tahkur stated.

Dr Harsh Vardhan pointed out that as the usage tobacco is fairly high in Ladakh, spitting in public places needs to be banned as per the guidelines issued earlier.

It was reiterated to the States that attention needs to be accorded to provisioning of non-COVID essential health services regarding immunisation drives, TB case finding 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. He reminded States to provide them preventive medicines and immunity boosters along with testing as and when required. States/UTs 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 diseases also needs to be taken, they were advised. Pointing out that timely payment of salaries and incentives would boost the morale of the frontline health workers, States/UTs were requested to release these in time.

Dr Harsh Vardhan interacted at length with the DMs various districts like Una, Chamba, Hamirpur, Sirmaur, Solan and Kangra in Himachal Pradesh; Shopian, Srinagar, Bandipora and Anantnag in UT of Jammu and Kashmir; Haridwar in Uttarakhand; and Leh and Kargil in UT of Ladakh 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 Sanjeeva Kumar, Spl. Secretary (Health), Shri Rajesh Bhushan, OSD (HFW), Ms. Vandana Gurnani, AS & MD (NHM), Sh. Vikas Sheel, Joint Secretary (MoHFW), Dr. S.K. Singh, Director, NCDC along with Principal Secretary (Health) and other senior state health officials participated in the meeting.

MV/SG

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