



Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

## Union Health Minister reviews COVID clinical management efforts with all AIIMS, PGI at Chandigarh and Puducherry

“Thankful to the Prime Minister for leading the Country’s efforts with his Visionary and dynamic leadership”

You are leaders of the Country for Clinical Expertise and Quality Healthcare’ the Country looks up to you for Guidance and Inspiration: Dr Harsh Vardhan

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Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare today chaired a high-level meeting with the Directors of ten AIIMS, PGIMER Chandigarh and JIPMER Puducherry to discuss the Public Health Response to the COVID crisis in the presence of Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare.



Asserting that the recent COVID-19 surge is spreading fast and needs immediate attention, Dr. Harsh Vardhan detailed the fight with COVID so far, “In the shortest possible time, we ramped up testing from 1 lab to 2467 labs today with a capacity of more than 15 lakh tests per day, set up hospital infrastructure including COVID care Centres, COVID hospitals with oxygen beds and ventilator bed. More than 12,000 quarantine centres were established. We also overcame the need for PPE kits, N95 masks. This helped to tide over the pandemic last year.” He expressed the opinion that the vital characteristics were not known last year which has since been researched to provide a clearer understanding of it thus making containing the recent surge a comparatively easy affair.



Detailing the achievements, the Minister stated, “today, we have crossed 13 crore vaccinations, and we are the fastest globally to vaccinate. The fatality rate of 1.18% is one of the lowest in the world and is continuously dipping. The present indicators tell us about the significant control we have still have on the emerging situation”. He pointed out that 1.75% of all patients are in ICU (down from 1.93% just 2 days before), 0.40% are on ventilators (down from 0.43% just 2 days before) and that 4.03% are in need of Oxygen (down from 4.29% just 2 days before). He said that these figures do not diminish the fact that there is anxiety in the general population about availability of beds. It is also important for the Nation as a commune to access the best medical facilities at all places. He requested the directors to ensure that those who need hospital care are provided thus and those who are in need of oxygen/ventilators are also tended to. He also asked them to explore avenues to monitor patients who may need not need hospitalization through telephonic counseling to re-assure them out of their helplessness.



In this regard, he also said, “AIIMS have a special responsibility towards providing quality healthcare- you have to ensure that all the hospital facilities are functional. The present capacities can be augmented by repurposing non-COVID infrastructure to covid facilities, such that non-COVID healthcare is not unduly affected.” He reminded them that the Union Health Secretary had advised for the strengthening of the hospital infrastructure after careful review.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan observed that all the institutes combined have increased 879 general beds and 219 ICU beds. In this regard, he also spoke of the recent attempt by DRDO to open a 500-bed facility in Delhi and the Council Of Scientific And Industrial Research–Central Building Research Institute (CSIR–CBRI)’s attempts to make temporary but durable hospital blocks at the Safdarjung Hospital and Lady Hardinge Medical College to house more patients. He informed that the AIIMS National Institute of Cancer (NIC), Jhajjar had added 100 beds to its COVID Block while approximately 80 beds were added at JPNATC, AIIMS New Delhi at his request.

Regarding the shortage in hands at the hospitals, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, “We have to develop our manpower and human resources. Those who are in other departments and units can be used for COVID care with building their skills and capacities with training for a very short duration. Everyone is looking at AIIMs for inspiration and your guidance and support. People respect AIIMS for their professional expertise.”

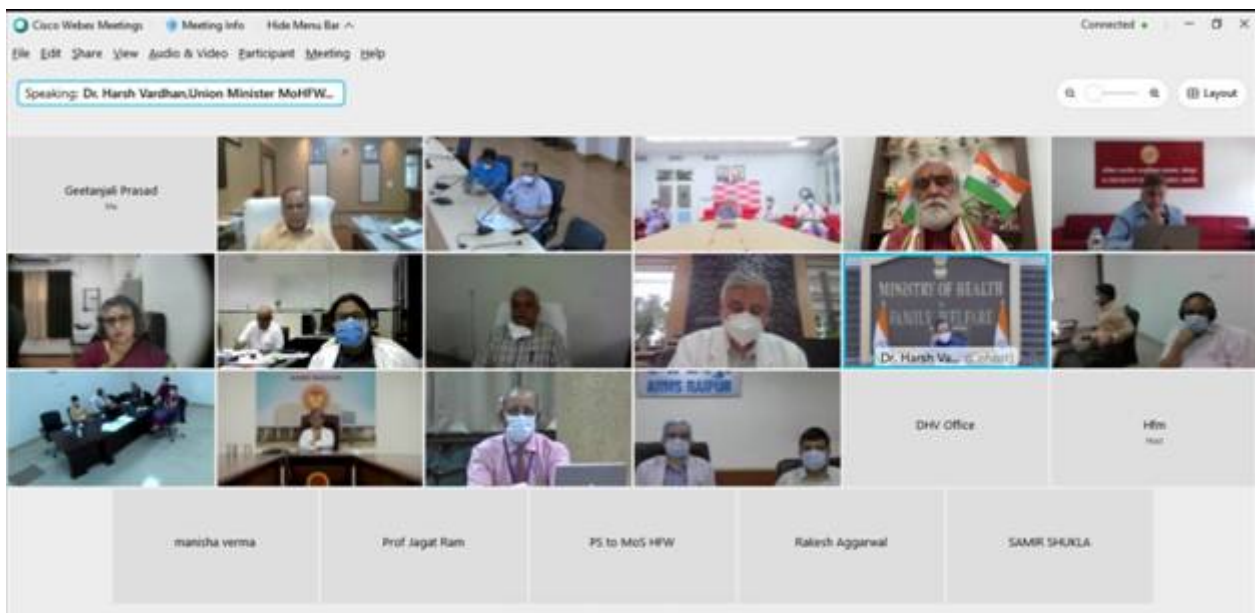
Assuring them of continued support from the political leadership of the country, Dr. Harsh Vardhan highlighted Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s personal contribution to the entire ‘maha-yagna’ to drive home his point: “The Prime Minister is continuously reviewing the COVID response. He is leading from the front. He has already had fruitful meetings with doctors and representatives of the pharma industry yesterday and is meeting the vaccine manufactures today.”



Unanimously agreeing to the issues raised, Shri Choubey also pointed out that the Union Health Ministry will also pro-actively listen to any discontent of the healthcare workers on the ground and shall try to resolve all such issues according to its capacity.

Union Health Secretary Shri Rajesh Bhushan laid out his suggestions to the directors of the different institutes. He requested the AIIMS that are Central Institutions of Excellence should ramp up vaccination of the healthcare workers. Many institutions have lower than the national average which does not arouse inspiration in the country-wide exercise. The institutes need to scale up the process. In view of the need to increase oxygen beds and ICU beds in the possibility of a surge, the Union Government has already written to the states for supporting the AIIMS in their jurisdiction. He suggested that the unutilized hostel blocks, AUYSH block, hostel beds can be used for additional bed capacity to tide over the crisis.

He also pointed out that the situation might demand more doctors and paramedics in the foreseeable future and suggested starting the process of contractual hiring for next 6 months. He also expressed the view that Presidents of AIIMS be requested to use their resources and their networks for requesting retired nurses and doctors to come on voluntary or payment basis to manage this crisis.



Dr. Sunil Kumar, Director General of Health Services, Dr. Manohar Agnani, Additional Secretary (Health) and other senior officials were present in at the event.

The Directors of AIIMS New Delhi, AIIMS Bhubaneshwar, AIIMS Bhopal, AIIMS Jodhpur, AIIMS Patna, AIIMS Raipur, AIIMS Rishikesh, AIIMS Mangalagiri, AIIMS Nagpur, AIIMS Raebareilly, PGIMER Chandigarh and JIPMER Puducherry attended the event digitally.

**MV**

HFW/HFM AIIMS meet/20thApril2021/3

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