

No. 17013/17/2020-PR
Government of India
Ministry of Home Affairs

**
Women Safety Division, Hall No. 2,
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,
India Gate, New Delhi – 110002
April 20, 2021

To

The Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs
The Advisors to Administrators of UTs of Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep and Ladakh
The DG/IG Prisons of all States and UTs
The DG/IG Police of all States and UTs

Sub: Prevention and Control of Covid-19 in Prisons and Correctional Homes – in continuation of Advisories dated March 12, 2020 and May 2, 2020.

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Sir/Madam,

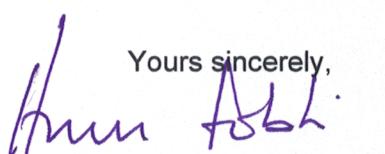
Recently, an upward trajectory has been observed in daily new Covid-19 cases. This is a cause for concern. In view of the rising number of cases, there is an urgent need to check the spread of infection in prisons both amongst the inmates as well as the staff.

2. It is, therefore, necessary that State and UT Prison authorities should take all necessary measures to follow and promote Covid-19 appropriate behaviour in prisons and strictly enforce wearing of masks, hand hygiene and social distancing to the extent possible. The Ministry of Home Affairs had issued an advisory on March 12, 2020. This was followed by another detailed advisory issued in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on May 2, 2020 providing guidelines and protocols on disinfection of common public places, steps for hand hygiene, guidelines for use of masks, rational use of personal protection equipment and its specifications, SOP for handling arrested persons, detainees and inmates, precautions to be taken by prison authorities, generating awareness and special initiatives, guidelines for disposal of protective gears, masks and instructions for jail staff etc., which may be followed while dealing with persons arrested, detained and those in Prisons and Correctional Homes. States/UTs are requested to follow the said guidelines. In particular, their attention is drawn to Annex-Z of advisory dated May 2, 2020 relating to 'Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Handling Arrested Persons, Detainees and Inmates during the Pandemic', available at MHA's website at the following link: https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/ManagementofCovid_07072020.pdf, as well as the following measures:

- a) It is of utmost importance to follow test-track-treat protocol, which includes aggressive testing for early detection of Covid-19 positive cases, timely isolation and treatment. The prison authorities, in consultation and coordination with state health authorities, may ramp up testing in jails – both at the point of entry as well as regular testing of inmates as well as jail staff.
- b) Each person entering a corrections facility should be screened by taking their temperature and checking for any symptoms. Mechanism for screening and risk assessment for both inmates as well as jail staff should be set up. Special team of jail staff and paramedics may be assigned this task.

- c) All newly admitted individuals should be thoroughly screened for fever and respiratory tract symptoms with particular attention to those with co-morbidities. Appropriate quarantine arrangements may be devised. If the inmates exhibit any symptoms, they should be put into medical isolation at appropriate facility set up for the purpose.
- d) Regular and periodic health screening of prisoners aged over 60 and those with co-morbidities to be ensured, including checking of temperature and oxygen level on a regular basis, wherever necessary. Separate wards for senior citizens to be provided to the extent possible.
- e) All inmates should be made aware of Covid-19 symptoms and the importance of maintaining personal hygiene and social distancing.
- f) The state health authorities in consultation with prison authorities need to devise a protocol on 'Managing Covid-19 positive prison inmates'. The protocol should clearly lay down as to up to what stage the patient should be kept in prison, when to shift to a Government Covid-19 facility etc., where adequate facility may not be available within the prisons itself. In such cases, the State Governments/UT Administrations should earmark appropriate health facility to shift Covid-19 positive inmates in case of large numbers getting detected in prisons and requiring treatment.
- g) Ensure social distancing at places of gatherings in prison complex.
- h) Vaccination drive is in progress all over the country. All eligible prison inmates may be provided vaccination on priority basis in consultation with state health authorities by setting up special vaccination camps in prison complexes. Prison staff may be encouraged to receive vaccination on priority basis.
- i) Regular sanitization, cleaning and disinfection of wards and common places in jails to be ensured.
- j) Movement of jail inmates outside the jail to be restricted and video conferencing facility to be used for production in Courts to the extent possible. States and UTs may engage with appropriate authorities of Courts, State Legal Services Authority and Legal Service Clinics for various measures to reduce movement of prisoners.
- k) Encourage telephonic calls or meeting of prisoners with their visitors through video conferencing facility available as e-mulakat, a module under e-prisons project, to avoid physical contact.

3. States and UTs are requested to ensure implementation of the above guidelines for the safety and security of prison inmates and jail staff and also take necessary steps to disseminate these guidelines at all levels in the Prisons.


Yours sincerely,

(Arun Sobti)

Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India

Tele: 2307 5297

Email: dspr.atc@mha.gov.in