

**3 districts have reported no new cases during last 28 days; 59 other districts have reported no fresh cases during last 14 days: Health Ministry**

**Central teams formed with members from six ministries to visit affected districts and augment state efforts in containing COVID-19**

**Request journalists to follow all precautions such as use of face masks, sanitizers and following social distancing norms while on duty: Health Ministry, on incident of journalists in Mumbai testing positive for COVID-19**

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**New Delhi / Mumbai, April 20, 2020**

The number of COVID-19 positive cases stands at 17,265 as on date, while 2,546 people or 14.75% of total cases have recovered. In the last 24 hours, 1,553 new cases and 36 deaths have been reported. This was informed by the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Shri Luv Aggarwal, at the daily media briefing on the actions taken, preparedness and updates on COVID-19, held at National Media Centre, PIB New Delhi today.

The Joint Secretary further informed that India's doubling rate of cases before lockdown was 3.4 days, it has now improved to 7.5 days as on April 19, 2020, as per the data for the last seven days. As per data on April 19, 2020, the rate in 18 states is better than the national average. These states are: Delhi at 8.5 days, Karnataka at 9.2 days, Telengana at 9.4 days, Andhra Pradesh at 10.6 days, Jammu & Kashmir at 11.5 days, Punjab at 13.1 days, Chhattisgarh at 13.3 days, Tamil Nadu at 14 days and Bihar at 16.4 days. The rate is less than 20 days in nine states/UTs, between 20 and 30 days in 7 states/ UTs and more than 30 days in Odisha and Kerala. The doubling rate of cases means the number of days in which total case count is doubling, calculated using growth over the past 7 days. While commending the efforts of our frontline warriors, the Joint Secretary called for continued vigilance. Failure during a single day or by a single person can negate our results so far and hence we need to ensure uniform implementation of containment measures, he said.

Shri Aggarwal shared some other positive developments from the field. He said that all patients in Goa were discharged from hospital after recovery. There is no active case in Goa now. In addition to Mahe (Puducherry) and Kodaggu / Coorg (Karnataka), Pauri Garhwal (Uttarakhand) too now has not reported any fresh cases during the last 28 days. Further, 6 new districts have been added to the list of districts where no new case has been reported during the last 14 days. The six new districts added in this list are Dungarpur and Pali in Rajasthan, Jamnagar and Morbi in Gujarat, North Goa in Goa and Gomati in Tripura. With this, 59 districts (apart from the 3 districts above where no case has been reported for last 28 days) have not reported any fresh case during the last 14 days.

He informed that the main reason why India is able to manage relatively better than other countries is that every

citizen is fighting with the government in this battle. Calling for strict implementation of lockdown in containment zones, he requested everyone to cooperate with health workers in contact tracing and surveillance and avoid deaths by focusing on patient management in every way. He noted that relaxation to lockdown measures has been provided in some states since today. In this context, he said it is important that people follow the norms of social distancing, so that cases come down further in areas where they are decreasing, and green zone areas continue to maintain the status of 'zero case'.

The Joint Secretary informed that

- [The Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan attended the G-20 Health Ministers' meeting yesterday](#). The Minister called for cooperation and mutually respectful and useful collaborations to deal with the pandemic, and said that India will like to work with G-20 countries in vaccine development and drug development for COVID-19.
- [Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan visited Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital yesterday to review status of COVID-19 management](#). He has said that observing discipline in life during Lockdown 2.0 would give us rich dividends in winning the fight against COVID-19.
- The Health Ministry has issued [guidelines on preventive measures to be taken by officials of Government departments](#), in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. It has been asked to use re-usable face cover, follow disinfection protocol, frequently wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol based sanitizer and maintain adequate distance between one another. Gathering of more than 5 persons at any place is to be avoided.

The representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs informed that states and UTs are actively implementing lockdown measures and that suitable measures are being taken in coordination with states, where violations have been observed. The representative further informed:

- [Central Government has constituted 6 Inter-Ministerial Teams to make assessment of COVID-19 situation and augment state efforts to fight and effectively contain spread of the infection](#). Two teams each for West Bengal and Maharashtra and one each for Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have been constituted to make on-spot assessment of situation and issue necessary directions to state authorities and submit their report to Central Government in larger interest of general public. The teams, led by an Additional Secretary level officer, have reached their respective destinations. These teams also have an NDMA officer and health specialist amongst them. Home Ministry is striving to share expertise as much as possible with states for public welfare. These teams will assist the state governments in matters of hotspot areas, health and medical infrastructure management and disaster management. The teams will also give their report on status of lockdown implementation, social distancing, supply of essential items, security of health workers, rehabilitation of poor and labourers in the affected districts.
- The Home Ministry has urged states/UTs to ensure strict compliance and implementation of revised consolidated guidelines on lockdown measures, without any dilution. States and UTs have also been advised that while they can impose stricter measures than contemplated in these Guidelines, they shall not dilute the Guidelines issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- Centre has observed certain States/UTs are allowing activities not permitted under MHA guidelines.
- Government of Kerala has allowed opening of activities, prohibited under Consolidated Revised Guidelines on lockdown measures, issued by MHA on 15.04.2020. This amounts to dilution of guidelines issued by MHA and violation of MHA Order dated 15th April 2020 issued under the Disaster Management Act 2005. The state government has been urged to revise guidelines in line with MHA guidelines, and to implement them without any dilution and ensure strict compliance of lockdown measures.

The representative of the Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development, Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, Additional Director General, PIB, Ms. Alpana Pant Sharma gave [a presentation](#), whereby she informed:

- Overcoming lockdown restrictions, sown area of summer crops has increased significantly, registering an increase of 36% over the previous year, pushed up mainly by rice cultivation.
- Farming operations have been exempted from lockdown, but social distancing measures have to be

maintained.

- To help farmers sustain production, money has been disbursed under PM Kisan Yojana. Pulses have been despatched to states under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. Insurance claims under PM Kisan Fasal Bima Yojana have been settled.
- All India Agri Transport Call Centre 18001804200/14488 and Kisan Rath Mobile App have been launched to facilitate transportation of food grains and perishables during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Face Masks and hand sanitizers have been brought under Essential Commodities Act. NGOs have been permitted to buy food grains directly from FCI for relief operations.
- FCI has moved double the average quantity of food grains during the lockdown.
- Government has hiked MNREGA wages in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. The average increase is 20 rupees.
- Direct Cash Transfer to PM Jan Dhan Yojana account holders has been done under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package.

Responding to a query on 30 journalists in Mumbai having tested positive for COVID-19, the Joint Secretary stated that this is indeed a very unfortunate piece of news that journalists are getting infected. He requested the media to follow all precautions including use of face masks and sanitizers and adhering to social distancing norms, while being on line of duty. As to a question on whether all journalists would be tested, he said that whoever needs to be tested as per sampling criteria will be tested.

Replying to a media query on a complaint regarding testing in West Bengal, Dr. Gangakhedkar, the representative of ICMR informed that RT-PCR testing kits need to be kept below 20°C; if temperature is higher, proper test results may not be obtained. He said that the complaint may have arisen since the lab technician may have kept samples at room temperature, in between the process of switching between two tests.

Responding to another query on concerns regarding rapid tests, Dr. Gangakhedkar reiterated that Rapid Antibody Test is not used for individual diagnosis, as we don't know how powerful the antibody developed will be against the virus. Stating that it can be used for surveillance, the doctor informed that consistent errors in measurement will not affect assessment of infection trends in epidemiological surveys.

LIVE tweets by [@PIB\\_India](#) from the media briefing can be found on [this thread](#).

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