

## Easing of Lockdown Norms

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Physical/social distancing (along with respiratory and hand hygiene) is an established pharmaceutical intervention for managing communicable diseases, especially those which spread by respiratory route. Easing of lockdown by States/ Union Territories (UTs) combined with pandemic fatigue, lack of community adherence to COVID Appropriate Behaviour and evolution and circulation of more transmissible variants of SARS-CoV-2 viruses, all played part in second surge that India witnessed during April to May 2021. A number of Central teams deployed by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) to States/UTs during February to May pointed out lack of adherence to COVID Appropriate Behaviour and sub-optimal efforts at containment.

For effective containment of COVID-19 in the country, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been issuing Orders and Guidelines from time-to-time under the Disaster Management Act (DM Act), 2005. On 29th April, 2021, MHA issued Order directing all States and UTs to consider the containment measures, as had been conveyed in the advisory of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), dated 25th April, 2021, for immediate implementation based on the assessment of the situation. All the States and UTs were asked to implement the necessary containment measures, under the relevant provisions of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005. MoHFW, in their advisory dated 25.4.2021, had asked the States and UTs to identify districts where either the tests positivity had been more than 10 percent or more in the last one week; or, where bed occupancy was more than 60 percent; districts fulfilling any of the above two criteria should be considered for taking intensive and local containment measures. MHA, vide D.O. letters dated 26.04.2021 and 27.05.2021, requested all States/ UTs for taking effective containment measures. MHA issued order dated 29.06.2021 vide which MoHFW framework dated 28.06.2021 for the States/ UTs as guiding principle to implement graded restrictions/ relaxations measures for COVID-19 management, based on the burden of disease and strain on healthcare infrastructure was also endorsed. In addition, MHA vide the D.O. letters dated 19.06.2021, 29.06.2021 and 14.07.2021 have requested States/UTs for regulating the crowded places and for following the five-fold strategy for effective management of COVID-19 i.e. Test-Track-Treat-Vaccination and adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour.

Central Government has been providing required technical and financial assistance to all States/UTs for strengthening of their healthcare system. Central Government has approved 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness package' and Rs 15,000 Crore was provided under the package in April 2020 with an objective to prevent, detect and respond to the threat posed by COVID-19. Further, 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package: Phase-II' has also been approved by the Government for an amount of Rs 23,123 crore (with Rs. 15,000 Crore as Central share & Rs. 8,123 crore as State share) for the Financial Year 2021-22.

In addition, the Central Government, by way of a special one-time dispensation, has allowed use of State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) towards COVID-19 containment measures with the ceiling of upto 35% for the financial year 2019-20 and upto 50% for the financial year 2020-21 and financial year 2021-22, of the annual allocation of SDRF.

This was stated by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai in a written reply to question in the Lok Sabha today.

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