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Government of India  
Department of Health and Family Welfare  
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

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*Dear Colleague,*

While the trajectory of COVID-19 cases has declined significantly from levels that were observed in earlier part of this year, a few States/UTs across the Country are witnessing a sustained upswing in the cases currently.

Upcoming months are likely to witness mass gatherings in context of various festivities as well as yatras to be held in different parts of the Country. During many such events/yatras lakhs of individuals undertake intra and inter-state journey spanning hundreds of kilometres with halting points arranged by volunteers and community based social/religious organizations. Such congregations may potentially facilitate transmission of infectious diseases, including COVID-19.

In this context, it is essential that we do not lose the gains made so far by collaborative efforts of Central and State Governments and also take timely necessary public health steps to minimize the risk of increased COVID-19 transmission.

Accordingly, there is a need **to enhance focus on five-fold strategy of test-track-treat-vaccination and adherence to COVID-19 appropriate behaviour.**

In preparation of such mass gatherings and yatras, it is of utmost importance that the following issues and tasks are addressed by the concerned State Government/UT Administration on priority:

- All States/UTs, where such mass gatherings/yatras are proposed to be held should widely publicize that all individuals planning to participate in such gatherings/events are asymptomatic and preferably fully vaccinated against COVID-19. If need be a special drive for primary vaccination and precaution dose administration to all eligible people may be taken by the administration at least a fortnight in advance for those planning to join. Further adequate publicity and arrangement for testing (RTPCR & RAT) shall be done across multiple locations.
- Healthcare workers, other frontline workers, volunteers engaged during such events by State/district administration and organizers of such events should be asymptomatic and preferably fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Additional precautions need to be taken by elderly persons and those with co-morbidities (like diabetes, hypertension, chronic lung/liver/kidney disease etc.) while planning to participate in such events. They need to consult their treating doctor and continue taking their medications throughout the period while closely monitoring their health.

- d) In events like religious yatras, where en-route congregation points are expected, concerned State Governments shall identify major routes expected to be taken by individuals & organize requisite health facilities on these routes.
- e) Organizing agencies in coordination with concerned district health administration shall also make provision for health desks (with provision for COVID-19 testing) at main destination as well as at halting places throughout the route. Provision for referral and transport of serious cases to nearest identified health facilities shall also be made.
- f) State Governments shall identify and coordinate with volunteer organizations and community based organizations participating in the events at various halting points and in the destination city/district to promote adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour (sufficient physical distancing, use of mask/face covers, hand hygiene, and respiratory hygiene).
- g) Public meetings, prayers, seating and lodging arrangements on the route & halting points should be made in outdoor or well ventilated areas with provision of thermal screening & hand washing.
- h) Organizing agencies in collaboration with concerned district authorities shall make provision for regular cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces (handrails, queue barricades, seats, benches, washrooms etc.) at main destination as well as at halting places throughout the route.
- i) Every effort shall be required to be made by concerned district administration as well as event organizers to raise community awareness through appropriate IEC materials at prominent locations at main destination as well as at halting places throughout the route. Similar provisions for display of helpline numbers at prominent places shall also be made.
- j) State Government shall review and strengthen the disease surveillance system during the event/yatra as an extension of Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP) for epidemic prone diseases with focus on COVID-19.
- k) State/District health administration shall maintain a close watch over occurrence of isolated/cluster of new COVID-19 cases and take prompt public health measures accordingly.
- l) State Government shall review and strengthen existing hospital bed capacities, including human resource, drugs, oxygen, equipment etc. as well as ambulance and referral systems while keeping close watch over hospitalization rates.

5. These critical elements and interventions need to be disseminated and implemented right up to ground level, so that we are able to maintain the gains made in respect of COVID-19 prevention and management.

*Harm Legards.*

Yours sincerely,



**(Rajesh Bhushan)**