

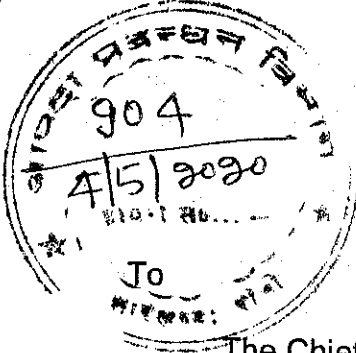
Addl. Chief Secy. Home, Jail

Disaster Management **IMPORTANT**
MOST IMMEDIATE

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

Chief Secretary
Jharkhand, Ranchi

Women Safety Division
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium
India Gate, New Delhi - 110002
May 2, 2020



The Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs
The DG/IG Police of all States and UTs
The DG/IG Prisons of all States and UTs

Sub: Management of COVID-19 in Indian Prisons – guidelines and protocols which may be followed while dealing with persons arrested, detained and those in Prisons and Correctional Homes.

Sir/Madam,

The novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a global health crisis which has affected a huge population the world over. The virus, which causes the disease, is highly infectious and even pre-symptomatic people can infect others. Any person who is in close contact with someone who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, breathing difficulty, etc.) is at risk of contracting the disease.

2. People in prisons and other places of detention, living in closed and crowded environment, are likely to be more vulnerable to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Moreover, experience shows that prisons, jails and similar settings where people gather in close proximity may act as a source of infection, amplification and spread of infectious diseases within and beyond prisons. Prison health is therefore widely considered as public health. Any control strategy for COVID-19 in the community which does not encompass the prison context will not be sustainable.

3. An instance was brought to the notice of this Ministry in which certain inmates in a prison tested COVID-19 positive. In view of this, it is considered expedient to issue these guidelines to reiterate the precautions and measures to be taken.

4. Prevention of import of COVID-19 into prisons and other places of detention is an essential element in avoiding or minimizing the occurrence of infection and serious outbreaks in these settings and beyond. It is therefore considered essential that Health-care teams of States and UTs should work with the Custodial/detention staff in prisons and other places of detention, following the National guidelines and protocols on the subject issued by the Government of India from time to time.

मुख्य सचिव कार्यालय
आरक्षण, राँची
नं.स.प्र.सं. 94/67
दि. 04/05/2020

5. In context of prisons and persons arrested by Police in present times, the **following broad guidelines/protocol, read with** the national 'Guidelines on disinfection of common public places' (**Annex-X**) and 'Guidelines on rational use of Personal Protective Equipment' (**Annex-Y**) issued by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Government of India, may be observed:

- a) Custodial/detention staff should work together with health-care teams in prisons and other places of detention to enable identification of suspected cases among prisoners/detainees,
- b) Isolation of such identified persons in single accommodation and a subsequent clinical assessment.
- c) Risk assessment/ risk management → Thermal Screening (handheld thermometer) at the point of arrest/taking custody by Police and also at entry to prison should be available.
- d) Information should be collected from arrested and convicted persons on any history of fever, cough and/or shortness of breath, recent travel history to affected areas and possible contact with confirmed cases in the last 14days.
- e) Decision to limit or restrict visits to Prisons as already communicated to be strictly implemented.
- f) A detailed daily registry of people moving in and out of the prison should be maintained.
- g) Prison/detention management should consider implementing measures of physical distancing, limit the mobility of people within the prison/detention system and/or to limit access of non-essential staff and visitors to prisons and other places of detention, depending on the level of risk in the specific area.

6. In order to strengthen efforts at the field level to tackle the situations arising out of COVID-19, it is considered necessary to follow the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), prepared in coordination with BPR&D and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, for the safe custody, medical care, transport, while avoiding transmission of COVID-19 and also ensuring safety of prison staff (healthcare, sanitary, and court staff etc.) as in **Annex-Z**.

7. If a person, who has served his sentence, is an active COVID-19 case at the time of release, or is the contact of a COVID-19 case and still within the quarantine period, the prison authorities should ensure that the person discharged has a place to go where he can maintain isolation in a health facility/quarantine, and that the local authority is notified that the person has been discharged while making sure that transfer and follow-up has been tied up with local authorities.

8. Due to their close interaction with crime perpetrators and prisoners on a daily basis, Police officers, Prison officers and health-care professionals working in prisons are at enhanced risk. It is therefore recommended that the following general precautions may be observed by them:

- Hands should be washed often with soap and water and dried with single-use towels
- Alcohol hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol is also an option if available
- Physical distancing should be observed

- Disposable tissue should be used to cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, then thrown in a bin with a lid
- Touching of eyes, nose or mouth should be avoided if hands are not clean.
- All staff should be alert to the enhanced risk of COVID-19 infection in people in prisons and other places of detention.

9. In addition to the above, use of Personal Protective Gear may be regulated as per guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as indicated in **Annex-M** of this letter.

10. Cooperation of all State and UT authorities is solicited in making use of the attached guidelines, and other useful information provided therein, for effective containment of the pandemic and for the safety and security of persons under custody in prison premises, detention homes etc. and various security personnel and prison staff etc. The attached documents can be customized as per local requirement and be also translated into regional/local language of the State for wide propagation and dissemination to officials at all levels, particularly those at ground level and frontline workers.

Yours sincerely,



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Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Handling Arrested Persons, Detainees and Inmates during the Pandemic

1. The following principles are the guiding light of this SOP:
 - i. Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquettes
 - ii. Social Distancing
 - iii. Segregation
 - iv. Security of Inmates
 - v. Health Monitoring
 - vi. Minimum Movement
 - vii. Tracking and Tracing of contacts
 - viii. Remote Meetings

2. **New inmates/detainees/arrested persons**
 - a) Careful screening of all new inmates shall be conducted for COVID-19. Any suspected inmate, based on this screening, may be tested for COVID-19. If an inmate is found COVID-19 positive, his clinical status would be assessed and shall be put in appropriate isolation facility in the jail hospital or separate barrack earmarked for the purpose.
 - b) The detainees, who are asymptomatic but suspected to have been in contact with the COVID-19 positive patient, should be sent to quarantine facility and monitored. Detainees who are symptomatic should be sent to an isolation facility (as suspected cases) and tested for COVID-19. If confirmed positive, he will be transferred to the isolation facility for COVID positive cases. At no point of time, a suspect COVID case will be mixed with a confirmed case.
 - c) For such purpose, the Jail Hospital/Medical Ward should be sufficiently upgraded by increasing the number of beds, personal protective equipment (PPE) for the medical staff, COVID-19 testing kits, and other medical equipment.
 - d) All incoming detainees/new inmates should be lodged separately and should follow physical distancing and suitable hygiene measures. Such asymptomatic detainees should be lodged separately and should have separate dining space.
 - e) Only new or properly cleaned clothing and bedding articles should be provided to new inmates.
 - f) There may be some instances of the influx of detainees who might have had a history of foreign travel or exposure to COVID-19 patients. For such a scenario, a separate building with sufficient space may be earmarked to act as a holding area until their screening is completed. This holding area should be properly sanitized before use.

- g) In case, a separate building is not available for the holding area, a temporary structure may be erected for use as holding area and screening ward.

3. **Procedure to be followed for existing inmates:**

- i. Any inmates returning from parole or furlough should be lodged in separate barracks/cells for a fixed number of days as decided by the health experts.
- ii. Sufficient number of teams may be formed for carrying out the screening for COVID-19.
- iii. The existing inmates, who are asymptomatic but suspected to have been in contact with the COVID 19 positive patient, should be sent to quarantine facility and monitored. Existing inmates who are symptomatic should be sent to an isolation facility (as suspected cases) and tested for COVID-19 as per the guidelines issued by ICMR. If confirmed positive, he will be transferred to the isolation facility for COVID positive cases. At no point of time a suspect COVID case will be mixed with a confirmed case.
- iv. Proper caution may be exercised while shifting the COVID-19 positive inmates for isolation. The staff must wear appropriate personal protective Gears, while dealing with the COVID-19 positive inmates. The vehicles carrying the COVID-19 inmates must be properly sanitized. The COVID-19 inmates must also be made to wear triple layer medical masks.
- v. Meal timings for inmates should be staggered to ensure physical distancing. Rearrange sitting arrangement for inmates at the dining space.
- vi. Inmates under quarantine should have separate dining space maintaining physical distancing.
- vii. The inmates should be encouraged to ensure personal hygiene (Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquettes).

4. **Procedure to be followed for temporary prisons:**

- i. If there is a large outbreak of COVID-19 in a prison, a temporary prison may have to be created.
- ii. Depending on the circumstances and availability of resources, when a new building, like a stadium, guest house, school building, community hall, etc., is notified as a temporary jail, all precautions, as applicable to a regular prison, should be adopted.
- iii. Special consideration may be given to sanitization of such building, strict access control, social distancing and disposal of medical and other waste, etc.
- iv. The potentially exposed inmates/detainees will be segregated and kept in a separate quarantine and monitored on a daily basis.

5. **Other precautions to be followed by the Prison authorities:**

- a. Only one point of entry/exit should be used as far as possible.
- b. The staff at the entrance should use masks, face-shields, gloves, thermal scanning equipment and sanitizers while screening the inmates and performing other duties.
- c. The prisons need to be frequently disinfected at least once a day.
- d. All the toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, and other common areas must be cleaned and sanitized daily.
- e. Prison staff interacting with the inmates, who are in quarantine, should wear face masks, face-shields, and gloves.

- f. All inmates should be made aware of COVID-19 symptoms and the importance of maintaining personal hygiene and social distancing.
- g. Signage at essential points should be placed to make the Prison staff and inmates informed of the precautions to be taken to prevent the spread of COVID -19.
- h. All inmates must be provided with personal soaps and face covers.
- i. All clothing and bedding of the inmates should be cleaned by detergent, bleaching powder in hot water. The clothing and bedding of the inmates under quarantine should be cleaned separately.
- j. The facility of Mulaqats, i.e., meeting between the prisoners and their family members, should be stopped till the pandemic is controlled. Video Conference and phone calls between inmates and his family members should be allowed.
- k. Group activities that are not of essential nature be stopped and only crucial group activities should be carried out duly following the guidelines for distance of at least six feet between two individuals.
- l. Anybody (Prison staff or inmates) having any symptoms of fever, cough, breathlessness, sore throat, should be sent immediately for thorough medical checkup and follow up.

6. **Miscellaneous General Guidance Points**

General

- 1) Prisons should review their continuity and contingency plans and update them to ensure that they can perform critical functions with reduced numbers of personnel, in a manner that does not have a negative impact on the security of the prison.
- 2) Staff and prisoners should be reminded to wash their hands for 40 seconds frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and dispose it appropriately in bins with closed lids.
- 3) Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly. Also disinfect objects / surfaces not ordinarily cleaned (e.g. cell doors / bars, doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, toilets, toilet handles, recreation equipment, kiosks and telephones, blankets, and clothing).
- 4) Develop a process and space to screen all persons entering prison.
- 5) Screening stations should be outside the entrance to the prison.
- 6) Confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) should be notified by prison to local State Health authorities.
- 7) Disinfect the cell of the person who is suspected or confirmed of having contracted COVID-19 thoroughly.
- 8) Keep the individual's movement outside the COVID-19 isolation space to an absolute minimum
- 9) Ensure that the individual is always wearing a face protection when outside of the medical isolation space, and whenever another individual enters.

- 10) Masks should be changed at least 8 hourly or earlier, if visibly soiled or wet.

Generating Awareness and special initiatives

- 11) Any person (staff /visitors/vendors/service providers) showing symptoms of COVID-19 or who has been in contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID19 MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER the prison.
- 12) Communicate with prisoners the temporary impact of COVID-19 on ordinary prison routines (including visits and other services).
- 13) Stress the importance of protecting the health of staff, prisoners, and the community.
- 14) Show the prisoners the information posters and explain the information and verify that the prisoner understands the content.
- 15) Encourage prisoners to report any symptoms of COVID-19 to a staff member for the health and well-being of everyone.
- 16) Consider reducing the number of prisoners gathering in groups; attempt to reduce movement of prisoners and avoid mixing individuals from different prisoner groups (particularly at-risk prisoners)
- 17) Provide access to virtual / telephone visit options. If moving to virtual / telephone visits, disinfect electronic equipment regularly.
- 18) Increase supplies of food, water and medication.
- 19) Consider using the prison industry to produce masks and other useful equipment.
- 20) If possible, consider making hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol (where permissible based on security restrictions).
- 21) Communicate with staff and prisoners, using verbal commands / providing verbal direction from a distance instead of using physical contact.
- 22) Explain by showing / demonstrating.

Staff – personal protection and handling of inmates

- 23) Staff should minimize any non-essential contact with suspected corona virus (COVID-19) cases.
- 24) Ensure prison staff has all the necessary information / fully understand the COVID-19 prevention and response procedures. Prison staff should be made aware of all relevant procedures and protocols and should be regularly briefed/ trained and updated on the procedure. This is very essential and adequate attention may be paid by senior officers.
- 25) Communicate with prison staff that COVID-19 prevention and response procedures will temporarily impact the ordinary prison routine.

- 26) Screen all staff before they enter the prison.
- 27) DO NOT ALLOW ENTRY if a staff member shows or has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19.
- 28) If a staff member has been in contact with an individual infected by COVID-19 or with symptoms related thereto, consider assigning them duties with no or limited contact with prisoners and other staff for a period of 14 days (i.e. external patrol or towers).
- 29) Encourage staff to be extra observant and communicate with prisoners. Look for prisoners with COVID-19 symptoms and be aware of unusual suspicious prisoner behavior as a result of restricted movement and activities.
- 30) Inform staff why it is important that they do not come to work if they show any symptoms of COVID-19, and put into place procedures so they can be paid and are not penalized in other ways for being absent;
- 31) Determine the least amount of staff you need to operate your prison,
- 32) Have a contingency plan to call on other uniformed personnel to temporarily support a massive staff shortage (police, military, other uniformed personnel);
- 33) Increase vigilance and interact with prisoners to get more information about possible symptoms of disease and signs of unrest among prisoners.
- 34) Register all possible symptoms of disease in prisoners and other staff.
- 35) Limit direct contact with prisoners if possible, conduct visual searches on low-risk prisoners.
- 36) Don't approach or stand directly in-front of prisoners, reduce the risk of prisoners coughing or breathing directly on you.
- 37) Do prisoner counts from a distance if possible.
- 38) If you need to physically handle/direct prisoners, wear gloves, eye protections and a face-mask if possible or wash your hands before and immediately after if no gloves are available.
- 39) Do not conduct area searches without gloves.
- 40) If no gloves are available, limit touching areas and ensure you wash your hands before and immediately after searching.
- 41) Ensure at least 2 meters distance between you and the prisoner when interviewing, counseling, admitting, or discharging prisoners.
- 42) If in an office, use the desk and chairs to create distance. Clean your equipment several times a day with disinfectant - if available (including radio, phone, handcuff, handcuff keys, etc.).

- 43) If possible, change clothes and shoes before going home.
 - 44) Remind staff on the special vulnerability of prisoners and their duty of care as well as operations in accordance with human rights standards
 - 45) As soon as an individual develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should wear triple layer medical mask and should be immediately placed in isolation in a separate space from other individuals, preferably in a separate building inside the prison.
 - 46) Minimize the number of staff in contact with infected prisoners, particularly staff belonging to at risk groups.
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