

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.280  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2021**

**SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES DURING APRIL-MAY**

**280 SHRI M. SHANMUGAM:**

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether number of COVID-19 cases have shot up in April-May 2021 throughout the country and the reasons therefor;
- (b) whether shortages of medical oxygen cylinders and essential medicines were felt in various States and the number of patients who died due to non-availability of oxygen, State-wise and month-wise;
- (c) the reasons for why the situation was not anticipated by Government and the officers/agencies responsible for lackadaisical approach; and
- (d) whether the Supreme Court and High Courts have passed strictures on the mishandling of the COVID situation by the Centre and, if so, remedial action taken by them for meeting the future challenge?

**ANSWER  
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND  
FAMILY WELFARE  
(DR. BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR)**

(a): Easing of lockdown combined with pandemic fatigue, lack of community adherence to COVID appropriate behavior 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 to States/UTs during February to May pointed out lack of adherence to COVID appropriate behavior and sub-optimal efforts at containment in certain geographies.

In view of non-availability of any definitive anti-viral treatment adherence to COVID appropriate behavior, the test-track-treat approach and boosting vaccinations are the best public health intervention available to minimize the risk of infection, preventing strains of health systems and avoiding excessive mortality.

(b): The health infrastructure in the country was strained due to steep rise in COVID-19 cases during the months of April-May 2021. Government of India has supported the States and undertook a series of action including further strengthening of existing health infrastructure to ensure provisioning of sufficient hospital beds, drugs, medical oxygen and other consumables to aid proper clinical care of COVID-19 patients. Some of the ongoing initiatives include:

- With the intent to reduce the risk of cross infection to non-COVID patients as well as to maintain continuity of non-COVID essential health services in the country, a three-tier arrangement of dedicated COVID-19 health facilities [(i) COVID Care Center (CCC); (ii) Dedicated COVID Health Centre (DCHC) and (iii) Dedicated COVID Hospital (DCH)] has been implemented in the country.

- Government of India in addition to providing services through hospitals/facilities available under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare also roped in tertiary care hospitals under ESIC, Defence, Railways, paramilitary forces, Steel Ministry etc. for management of COVID-19 cases. Further, many large temporary treatment facilities were established by DRDO to manage surge in COVID-19 cases in the country.
- Due to concerted actions of Central and State Governments, the isolation bed capacity and ICU bed capacity which was merely 10,180 and 2,168 before the first lockdown (as on 23rd March 2020) could be increased to 18,21,420 isolation beds and 1,21,671 ICU beds (as on 16th July 2021).
- Additionally, the reliance on imports with respect to ventilators was mitigated with concerted efforts of Governments and industry under the 'Make in India' vision. Till now State/UTs and Central Governments institutions have been allocated 56,218 ventilators of which 48,060 have been already supplied (as on 13th July 2021).
- Taking note of spread of the disease to peri-urban and rural areas in many districts, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on 16th May 2021 has issued an "SoP on Covid19 Containment and Management in Peri-Urban, Rural and Tribal Areas".
- With the intent to protect pediatric age group in current and any future surges of cases, Guidelines for management of COVID-19 in children were also issued on 18th June 2021. The guideline provides guidance on the management of acute presentation of COVID-19 as well as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) in children and adolescents found temporally related to COVID-19.
- Oxygen cylinders and concentrators are being procured and being supplied to States. Further PSA plants have been sanctioned across the country to augment oxygen supplies.
- In addition, 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package: Phase-II' has also been approved by the Cabinet with Rs 23,123 crores (with Rs. 15,000 Cr as Central Component & Rs 8,123 as State component) and is to be implemented from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022. It includes support to State/UT level for ramping up Health Infrastructure including those in rural, tribal and peri-urban areas closer to the community, providing support for procurement of Drugs and Diagnostics to enhance service delivery at district and sub district levels for management of COVID-19 cases (including pediatric care) and for maintaining a buffer of drugs, support for IT Interventions such as implementation of Hospital Management Information System and expanding Access to Tele-Consultations in all districts, and support for Capacity Building and Training for all aspects of management of COVID-19.

Health is a State subject. Detailed guidelines for reporting of deaths have been issued by Union Health Ministry to all states/UTs. Accordingly, all states/UTs report cases and deaths to Union Health Ministry on a regular basis. However, no deaths due to lack of oxygen has been specifically reported by states/UTs.

(c): Health is a State subject. However, in view of ongoing pandemic, Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare continued to maintain constant vigil over evolving COVID-19 situation in the country. Even when the trajectory of COVID-19 cases in the country registered a decline since mid-September 2020, Government of India continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation in the country up to district level and had been cautioning States to maintain the vigil and plan for any exigencies that may arise due to resurgence of COVID-19 in their respective States.

While Government of India launched COVID-19 Vaccination in January, states were regularly reviewed and requested to never to lower the guard and on importance of stringent containment and surveillance measures, enhancing testing, planning for essential infrastructure and logistics and ensuring community adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour as the mainstay for COVID-19 management.

Formal communications were regularly sent out to States on current trajectory of cases, need for adherence to Test-Track-Treat approach for containment of outbreaks, need for adherence to COVID appropriate behavior & vaccination.

These communications were in addition to the detailed reviews conducted at the level of Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Cabinet Secretary, Secretary (Health & Family Welfare) wherein various challenges related to COVID-19 management were discussed and deliberated with the States.

All States and Districts were also provided with detailed Toolkit on Containment besides template for preparation of District Action Plan to monitor and prepare for any surge in cases.

High level and multi-disciplinary teams were deployed to 22 States/UTs to review current situation of COVID-19, assess reason/s for surge, review preparedness and response activities undertaken by the States and provide supportive supervision to State and District administration to institute requisite public health measures.

(d): Directions issued by Supreme Court and High Courts from time to time are being implemented.