Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare chaired the 27th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 by a video-conference, here today. He was joined by Shri Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of Civil Aviation and Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways (I/C), & Chemical and Fertilizers. Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare was present virtually.

Dr. Vinod K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog joined digitally.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan gave a snapshot of India’s efforts to contain COVID-19 at the outset: “Today is the 11th day in succession where our number of recoveries is more than the number of new cases. This is also the 8th day in succession where we are having less than 3 lakh daily new cases. This is a positive sign. Right now, our active cases in the country are 27 lakhs. A couple of weeks back, we had over 37 lakh active cases.” Expressing his grief that each death is tragic, he cautioned on the high number of fatalities being reported.
Speaking on vaccines and clinical intervention, Dr. Harsh Vardhan observed, “We have already given 19.6 crore doses to our countrymen. Over 60 lakh doses are still with the states and further 21 lakh doses are in the pipeline.” He noted that the Union Government has already sent over 70 lakh Remdesivir vials and 45,735 ventilators to states/UTs. On Genome Sequencing, the Union Health Minister informed that 25,739 samples have been sequenced and variant B.1.617 has been found in 5,261 samples, making it the most common mutation detected till now. He also informed that states have been requested to send samples regularly for better analysis.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan appreciated the coordination between Centre and the States in flagging emerging cases of Mucormycosis, popularly called ‘Black Fungus’. 5424 cases have been reported from 18 states with the most number of cases being reported from Gujarat and Maharashtra. Out of these, 4556 cases have a history of Covid-19 infection while the rest are non-COVID cases. 55% of the affected had diabetes. “9 lakh vials of Amphotericin-B are being imported by the Central government for treatment of Black Fungus. Of this, 50,000 vials have been received and around 3 lakh vials will be available in next 7 days”, he added.

The Union Health Minister also highlighted implementation of the SoPs of Union Govt. on COVID management in peri-urban/urban/tribal areas. These are being actively pursued and monitored regularly by Health Ministry in the State review meetings.

Shri. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, MoS, MoHFW stressed on streamlining availability of 2-DG drug by DRDO, increasing the affordability and availability of home testing kits. He espoused the need that a protocol should be made to streamline supply of mobile/home testing kits in the Country.

Dr. Sujeeet K Singh, Director (NCDC) presented a detailed report on the trajectory of COVID in the States and UTs. He cautioned that at 7.86%, India's growth rate is a matter of concern. He showed figures related to the number of cases, number of deaths, their growth rate and how they compared to the rest of the world. He presented a granular analysis of the trajectory of the pandemic in each state pointing out critical parameters like positivity, RAT & RT-PCR percent breakup, concentration of cases in particular districts and other trends like fatality and hospitalization status of affected states.

Till May 23rd, India has conducted 32,86,07,937 tests with 2,38,121 Tests Per Million (TPM) and overall positivity rate of 8.07%. More than half (53.74%) of total tests conducted are RT-PCR.

Ms. S. Aparna, Secretary (Pharma) informed on the achievements of the dedicated cell that has been created to coordinate production and allocation of drugs in demand to treat COVID-19. The cell has monitored the augmentation of production, domestic procurement and allocation of drugs like Remdesivir, Tocilizumab and Amphotericin-B.

Speaking on the increased demand of drugs to treat Mucormycosis, Dr Aparna informed that five more manufacturers have been given the license to manufacture Amphotericin B within the country. She also stated that lateral manufacturers have also been urged to ramp up the production of APIs so that production of the drug is not stuck in any bottlenecks and can be augmented smoothly. She also suggested IEC campaigns for judicious use of these drugs.

She informed that her department is engaged with DGHS and ICMR on requirements of COVID drugs for pediatric patients.
Shri Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary (Health), Ms. S. Aparna, Secretary (Pharma), Shri Anup Wadhawan, Secretary (Commerce), Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary (Health Research) & DG (ICMR), Dr G Satheesh Reddy, Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman, Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Shri Pradeep Singh Kharola, Secretary (Civil Aviation), Ms. Vandana Gurnani, Addl. Secretary and Mission Director, NHM (Health), Dr. Sunil Kumar, DGHS (MoHFW), Shri Amit Yadav, DG, Foreign Trade (DGFT), Lt. Gen. Rajat Dutta, DG, Armed Forces Medical Service, Dr. Sujeet K. Singh, Director, NCDC, representatives of Armed Forces and ITBP and other senior government officials participated through video conference.

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HFW/HFM 27th GoM/ 24th May 2021/4

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