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Centre tells Union Territories to plan for crucial three weeks

Health, Home Department officials told of surge in cases

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NEW DELHI

The Centre has informed all the eight Union Territories that the next three weeks were crucial in the management of the second wave of the pandemic. The UT administrations, including the Delhi Government, "were advised to plan in advance for three weeks".

Delhi raised the issue of a shortage of beds at a meeting held by the Union Secretaries of Home and Health to review the status of COVID-19 management in all the UTs on Tuesday.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan chaired the meeting with Chief Secretaries of all the UTs. The meeting, held through video conference, was also attended by V.K. Paul, Member (Health),

NITI Aayog; Balram Bhargava, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research; and the Directors-General of Police of all the UTs.

Mr. Bhalla pointed out that India had reported almost 10 times more cases since January 1 and more than 2,00,000 cases were being reported daily since April 15. In the past 11 days, new cases have almost doubled from 1.31 lakh (on April 9) to 2.73 lakh cases on April 20.

"The UTs shared their present efforts for containment and management of the positive cases. Ladakh, J&K, and Lakshadweep pointed to the rise in cases due to a large number of inbound travellers. Lakshadweep has seen a sudden spike after April 14 primarily due to travel of large num-

ber of people to the mainland to shop for the recent festive occasions," the Health Ministry said in a statement.

"Chandigarh said that they are conducting door-to-door counselling for increasing vaccination. 90% of the patients are in home isolation being monitored by mobile teams," the statement said.

Delhi discussed a shortage of beds and the present efforts to augment this through Central Government infrastructure and support through the DRDO's recently operationalised COVID Hospital.

Dr. Paul pointed out the criticality of next three weeks for COVID response measures. "The UT administrators were advised to plan in advance for three weeks," the Ministry said.