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| Title: | Directorate of health department found to be Bhopal's biggest hot spot of the coronavirus, Madhya Pradesh | | | |
| Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC | Information communicated to SSU-Madhya Pradesh | | | |

The biggest hot spot of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in the capital of Madhya Pradesh has been found nowhere else but at the directorate of the state health department, which is tasked with controlling and containing the disease across the state.

Four more employees from the directorate tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday, said officials, adding to the 15 officials from the facility, including two IAS officers, who had tested positive over the past few days. Among those infected include principal secretary, health services, director, National Health Mission, two additional directors, a joint director, and four deputy directors.

The test reports of several other people at the centre are still awaited, amid allegations -- yet unsubstantiated -- at the centre that some of those infected hid their symptoms, leading to the spread.

As a result of the outbreak in state's anti-Covid headquarters, about 150 employees in the directorate are now in self-quarantine, said three officials aware of the matter who asked not to be named. The control room in the directorate is almost dysfunctional, one of the officials said.

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Disclaimer:- This is a media alert subject to verification.

**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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"At this time, certain Apps have been handy for us. We interact with each other through video conferencing with the help the apps and monitor the situation in the entire state. Those who have been found positive are also trying to contribute to managing the administrative affairs," said a second official from the facility.

A third official said that work was continuing.

"The only problem is the lack of effective communication. A new person who takes over will take some time to understand the situation. All the government of India advisory first comes to the directorate and then its is communicated to the district and block level," the third official added.

At the same time, however, allegations were flying through the state administration about whether the outbreak could have been contained. According to a leader of the Health department's employees' association, the sons of at least two senior officials had concealed that they recently travelled to the US, which is now the country worst affected by Covid-19. "The officials continued to visit the secretariat and the directorate and also attend meetings with other top and junior officials. They were seen suffering from cold and cough," he said, asking not to be named.

Another employee at the centre said that since some of the officials who went to Indore several times on procurement trips should have stayed in home quarantine rather than coming to the directorate building.

Indore is a certified Covid-19 hot spot that accounts for 151 of the 256 cases reported in the state till Monday evening.

In light of these charges, the state administration issued a statement on Sunday night, saying that all precautions were taken and there was no oversight.

"In none of the advisories issued by the central government there was any advisory against travel to the US. The principal secretary's son returned on March 16 and his medical examination was conducted at the international airport at New Delhi. He remained in self-quarantine till March 30, and doesn't have any symptoms. On the principal secretary testing positive on April 4, the samples of other family members were sent for a test and no one were found having symptom of coronavirus," the statement issued by the department of public relations of MP government said.

When contacted, additional director, health, Sapna Lovanshi said: "All the department officials and employees are discharging their duties with dedication while following the norms of social distancing."

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