



Expert Panel Against Full Repeal of lockdown

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Why in News

An **expert committee's report** to the government has suggested that **14th April, 2020** is **not the right time to fully withdraw the 21-days nationwide lockdown**.

The committee was asked to look into the strategy to ease the lockdown restrictions.

21 Days Lockdown

- The period of 21 days was chosen due to **public health/epidemiological significance** and it is **supported by scientific data**.
 - The calculations are based on the **estimated incubation period of the virus** in a human host.
 - The 21-day quarantine value is derived from interpretations of outbreak data from past and present epidemics and pandemics. For example, the cases of **Spanish Flu** and **Ebola**.
- **Explanation:**
 - In epidemiological terms, **14 days** are of the **initial incubation period** and adding another week, i.e. 21 days is to ensure that residual infection dies out.
 - It is estimated that being a **new strain of coronavirus**, its **median incubation period** (the time between the entry of virus to the onset of symptoms/ disease) falls within the period of 14 days.
 - According to a recent study the median incubation period for COVID-19 is **just over five days** and 97.5% of people who develop symptoms will do so **within 11.5 days** of infection.
 - So, the current period of active monitoring (14 days) recommended by the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** is well supported by the evidence.

Key Points

- **Restrictions on large-scale movement of people** across International and State boundaries is critical and should be kept there unless and until the situation gets under control in every State.
- The major concern is that a **prolonged and stringent lockdown** will lead to **economic hardships, famine** and **law and order issues**, which may undermine the objectives of both the lockdown and health management.
- The committee suggested a **withdrawal strategy** which should be **gradual, phased and calibrated** so that it is ensured that the caseload is kept below the capacity of the health-care systems.
- Such a phased approach should be **operationalized at the revenue district level**.

Suggestions

- All states should fasten up **preparatory work for the predicted and rapid rise of Covid-19 cases** as they are expected to exceed the local capacity in some cities.
- **No relaxation in speedy production and procurement** of test kits, ventilators, PPEs for health-care personnel and masks.
- Centre should **release funds and create a national coordination mechanism** to distribute them on a need basis.
- Centre should ensure effective **coordination between the States and logistics operators**.
- **Supporting the agricultural sector** in production, marketing, storage, and transport.
- **Ensuring continuation of modern technological leaps**, like rapid innovations and practices which are being introduced in education, judiciary, local business, telemedicine, among others, **even after the lockdown ends**.

Source: TH