

POLICE PREPAREDNESS IN A PANDEMIC

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** In alphabetical order*

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The ongoing public health crisis, coupled with the nationwide lockdown and the impending economic hardships, has created a unique law and order challenge. Frontline police personnel are playing a crucial role in managing the pandemic, enforcing social distancing and quarantine orders, ensuring smooth operations of supply chains, and supporting vulnerable populations. The police have been playing a key role in ensuring recovery and continuity of operations across sectors, and their sustained engagement will be required as the lockdown eases. In this context, ensuring the safety of frontline police officers and planning for business continuity is imperative. This note aims to provide the police and the prison administration with a consolidated list of possible measures to be considered during and post the lockdown. The list is based on measures being implemented by the police in different Indian states and around the world with a view to outline the role of police—to support, facilitate, oversee and monitor the situation—during this crisis.

Sr. No.	Key Areas	Objectives and Measures
I.	Public Health	<p>1. Maintain order and security at hospitals</p> <p>a. Prevent overcrowding and maintain public order in and around hospitals</p> <p>2. Protect healthcare workers</p> <p>a. Issue curfew passes to doctors, nurses, paramedics and other healthcare workers and support staff</p> <p>b. Accompany healthcare workers who are conducting tests in clustered areas for their safety and take action against persons assaulting healthcare workers</p> <p>c. Penal action against landlords asking healthcare professionals to vacate their place of stay</p>

<p>II.</p>	<p>Monitoring and Enforcement</p>	<p>1. Enforce quarantine</p> <p>a. Check-in on those under mandatory quarantine using a suitable medium: door to door, GIS-based, telephonic</p> <p>2. Facilitate the prevention of outbreak in clusters</p> <p>a. Conduct contact tracing using designated applications</p> <p>b. Facilitate the process of random community testing by accompanying healthcare workers and ensuring order and safety</p> <p>c. Assist authorities with the lockdown of containment areas, buildings, etc.</p> <p>d. Provide security for temporary quarantine facilities</p> <p>3. Ensure social distancing practices are being followed</p> <p>a. Monitor markets and public places using drones</p> <p>b. Clamp down on all gatherings: religious, political, social</p> <p>c. Monitor slums and dense housing areas</p> <p>4. Enforce widespread use of masks</p> <p>a. Spread awareness through announcements and videos on social media channels and through speakers attached to drones/motor vehicles, etc.</p> <p>b. Facilitate distribution of masks</p> <p>c. Impose punitive action against violators and repeat offenders, ensuring certainty of punishment</p>
<p>III.</p>	<p>Public Awareness</p>	<p>1. Communicate with the public on a timely basis</p> <p>a. Broadcast critical information and dispel misinformation using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Social media platforms ii. Microphone attached to motor vehicles or drones iii. Public address system <p>b. Brief media personnel on a daily or regular basis</p>

		<p>2. Provide recorded/reassuring messages to the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Generate informative and assuring content b. Crowdsource positive stories c. Use infographics to convey information succinctly d. Publish recorded messages from leadership to inform and maintain trust
IV.	Supply chain	<p>1. Ensure smooth operations of supply chains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adopt tech-based infrastructure to help identify essential suppliers, their employees and vehicles b. Issue e-passes to allow smooth movement of supplies c. Ensure clear information and instruction flow through police WhatsApp groups/broadcast SMS alerts to the frontline officers (E.g. what is essential/non-essential, raw materials for essential goods, etc.) d. Set up/use existing emergency helpline number to report issues e. Facilitate last-mile delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Using police control room (PCR) vans ii. Ensure safety and facilitate the movement of delivery persons f. Ensure the safety of personnel involved in all aspects of supply chain operations, viz. transporters, distributors, warehouse operators, port operators g. Liaise and coordinate with transport authorities to prevent unnecessary delays/stoppages h. Aid in the resolution of logistic bottlenecks at ports, warehouses, factories (E.g. ensure smooth movement of buses used for inter-terminal transport of port employees)
V.	Migrants	<p>1. Facilitate safe movement of migrants</p>

		<p>a. Enlist support from Army Service Corps, Reserve Forces, Home Guards, National Cadet Corps for managing migration movement</p> <p>b. Liaise with public transport authorities and ensure transport vehicles are disinfected</p> <p>c. Conduct temperature checks and ensure social distancing at stations</p> <p>d. Support local authorities in transport of stranded migrant workers to community spaces, government schools set up as temporary shelters</p> <p>2. Ensure the safety and well-being of migrants</p> <p>a. Coordinate with representative groups, community associations, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation kitchens, NGOs, etc. to procure food and essential supplies</p> <p>b. Facilitate the distribution of food and other essentials using helpline and PCR vans. Enlist the support of Reserve Forces, Home Guards, National Cadet Corps for distribution</p> <p>c. Inform and assure migrant workers of the steps being taken for their well-being, relay messages from political leadership</p> <p>d. Prevent use of unscientific methods for disinfection, viz. spraying water and chemicals on migrant workers</p>
VI.	Mobility	<p>1. Enforce mobility restrictions</p> <p>a. Promote announcements by political and police leadership on TV/Social Media regarding restriction of movement of people</p> <p>b. Use drones to monitor movement</p> <p>c. Ensure visible deployment of personnel at strategic locations</p> <p>d. Impose border controls while ensuring the movement of essentials</p>

		<p>e. Allow movement of identified persons having e-passes, citizens in need of medical services / essential goods or services</p> <p>2. Assist vulnerable population stranded due to mobility restrictions</p> <p>a. Tourists and travellers needing to catch trains/flights, if operating</p> <p>b. Missing persons/children to be reunited with families</p> <p>c. Students/paying guests dependent on tiffin services/dabbawalas</p>
VII.	Utilities	<p>1. Ensure the safety of employees and material involved in the provisioning of:</p> <p>i. Electricity</p> <p>ii. Water supply</p> <p>iii. Telecom services</p> <p>iv. Petrol pumps</p>
VIII.	Reopening Industries	<p>1. Facilitate resumption of work</p> <p>i. Construction and raw materials</p> <p>ii. Agriculture and farming</p> <p>iii. Manufacturing</p> <p>iv. Natural resources</p> <p>a. Support local authorities in conducting spot checks at work sites to ensure compliance with hand-hygiene, mask use and physical distancing norms</p> <p>b. Enlist the support of Reserve Forces, Home Guards, National Cadet Corps, and other defence or policing forces to manage social distancing and hygiene when work resumes at sites</p>
IX.	Police Health	<p>1. Ensure safety and wellbeing of officers and staff</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Procure and maintain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in adequate quantities, including masks, gloves, hand sanitiser b. Make available mobile vans for hygiene support c. Continuously monitor the health of police personnel and keep a watch on infections within the force d. Keep older personnel away from frontline e. Plan for rotational shifts f. Ensure regular and proper cleaning of police vehicles, police stations, offices, and frequently used equipment, including, firearms, wireless sets, etc. g. Maintain quarantine facilities for sick personnel h. Plan for police officers being affected by COVID-19 (E.g. Singapore implemented workforce segregation)
X.	<p>Organisation Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nodal Authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Set up a war room with adequate infrastructure b. Have adequate teams in 24x7 shifts c. Coordinate with other departments d. Designate nodal helpline number and inform the public about it e. Keep PCR vans available to tackle any kind of emergency f. Use geographic information system for better visualisation 2. Internal Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Regularly inform frontline officers about the latest orders and implementation thereof b. Conduct briefing and debriefing sessions at the beginning and end of each shift c. Use recorded video messages from police leadership to inform and motivate teams

		<p>3. Business Continuity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deploy staff to continue with core policing duties b. Ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities c. Maintenance of equipment d. Prepare for staff absences e. Identify persons in command and ensure succession plan to avoid key man risk
XI.	Community Policing	<p>1. Undertake proactive community policing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maintain a database of housing societies and their representatives/officials b. Provide information and convey expectations c. Coordinate with resident welfare associations and panchayats d. Protect senior citizens by providing information and enabling services and groceries to the doorstep e. Relay important feedback from communities to police and state leadership
XII.	Finance	<p>1. Financial aid and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Centralise procurement of PPE for personnel b. Seek medical and life insurance cover for police c. Seek funds via corporate social responsibility route through a special purpose vehicle with independent oversight to cover for any shortfalls in funding
XIII.	Crimes	<p>1. Respond to changing nature and intensity of crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Keep some personnel available for regular crime prevention and investigation duties <p>2. Increase in domestic violence, child abuse and sexual offences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure active response on helpline number

		<p>b. Coordinate with NGOs, medical and rehabilitation centres</p> <p>c. Liaise with social health workers, such as ASHA workers, Anganwadi centres, primary healthcare centres to alert police about cases and provide medical and counselling support</p> <p>d. Build local intelligence network to get alerts on such cases</p> <p>3. Cybercrimes</p> <p>a. Active monitoring of social media through Cyber Crime Cell</p> <p>b. Launch citizen-based campaign to report and deter cyber-crimes, including rumour mongering, cyberbullying, hate speech and fake news</p> <p>4. Discrimination</p> <p>a. Ensure patient data is not leaked by monitoring for cyber hacks or breaches</p> <p>b. Communicate with the public to refrain from discrimination and stigmatisation</p> <p>c. Action against stigma propagators</p>
XIV.	Prisons and juvenile homes	<p>1. Monitor and prevent outbreaks among the detained population</p> <p>a. Procure protective materials for prisoners and staff</p> <p>b. Inculcate hygiene and social distancing practices</p> <p>c. Disinfect prisons daily</p> <p>d. Create a quarantine/isolation facility within prisons or in a vacant and secured public premises</p> <p>e. Make arrangement for video calls with lawyers or make sure social distancing is followed during meetings with outsiders</p> <p>f. Release select prisoners/undertrials on parole or bail. Be mindful not to release persons convicted of domestic violence/rape/child sex abuse</p>

		h. Reduce detention for minor crimes
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References:

[Policing the Pandemic \(Nandkumar Saravade\)](#)

[Pandemic Preparedness Plan \(Indian Police Foundation\)](#)