

## SOP for organizing sports competitions in context of COVID-19

An SOP for opening up of Stadia for Sports events was issued on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The revised SOP is now being issued in pursuant to guidelines of surveillance, containment and caution issued by Ministry of Home Affairs vide their Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I (A) dated 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

### 1. Promoting COVID appropriate behaviour

Simple public health measures are to be promoted to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 infection. These measures are to be observed by all athletes and Athlete Support Personnel (ASP) during conduct of sports competitions.

These include:

- i. Physical distancing of at least 6 feet to be strictly followed by athletes and ASPs always except by athletes in field of play necessitated by the type of sports, during the event.
- ii. Use of face covers/masks to be made mandatory at all times by all and as far as feasible when they are engaged in the field of play and in work out areas.
- iii. Athletes and ASPs, while not in field of play, shall practice frequent hand washing with soap (for at least 40-60 seconds) even when hands are not visibly dirty. Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (for at least 20 seconds) can be made wherever feasible.
- iv. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed by athletes and ASPs. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing off used tissues properly.
- v. Self-monitoring of health by athletes and ASPs and reporting any illness at the earliest to COVID-19 Response Team/Task Force constituted by event organizing committee.
- vi. Spitting shall be strictly prohibited in field of play, workout areas, during travel and in residential settings.
- vii. Installation & use of Aarogya Setu App shall be advised to all.

### 2. Protecting the vulnerable population

ASPs who are at higher risk i.e. older, pregnant and those who have underlying medical conditions must take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any front-line work requiring direct contact with other athletes/coaches/other employees.

### 3. Providing and maintaining healthy environment at sport competition venue and workout areas

- i. The organizing committee shall coordinate with local health authorities to ensure that the venue for sporting event or the identified hostels/hotels do not fall within containment zone.
- ii. The organizing committee will keep situational awareness of prevalent COVID situation at the event site that may influence the conduct of the sporting event. They will also coordinate with local health authorities to identify local (COVID and non-COVID) treatment facilities, ambulance service providers etc.
- iii. Prior to resumption of activities, all workout areas, field of play, medical centre, physiotherapy centres, gymnasium, showers, washrooms, other common areas, etc. shall be sanitized with 1% Sodium Hypochlorite solution. Thereafter this will be done on a regular basis. Detailed guidelines are available at:  
<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/Guidelinesondisinfectionofcommonpublicplacesincludingoffices.pdf>

- iv. Cleaning and regular disinfection (using 1% Sodium Hypochlorite solution) of frequently touched surfaces (door knobs/handles, elevator buttons, hand rails, slides, chairs, tabletops, benches, washroom fixtures, etc.) and floors, walls etc to be done before start of activities, at the end of the day and at other appropriate times at all locations. Additional frequent cleaning may be required at medical centre, gymnasium, etc.
- v. Deep cleaning of all drinking and hand washing stations, washrooms, showers and lavatories shall be ensured.
- vi. All sanitary staff shall use appropriate PPE (mask, heavy duty gloves, face shields, aprons).
- vii. The event schedule should be planned in such a way that enough time is given in between multiple events for sanitization of field of play and equipment after every use, which may vary from sport to sport.
- viii. For warm-ups, fixed duration needs to be intimated along with time slots to the athletes and ASPs.
- ix. Provisions would be made for multiple hand washing stations and hand sanitizers for the use of athletes and ASPs. Provision of soaps in toilets and hand sanitizers in other common areas in sufficient quantity must be ensured.
- x. Swimming pool (wherever applicable) shall ensure adequate and regular water filtration and chlorination as per laid down standards.
- xi. Field of play equipment shall be handed over to the athletes and support staff by the ground staff after thorough disinfection.
- xii. Sharing of personal articles such as soaps, towels, any other utility may be avoided by all.
- xiii. Athletes, coaches and employees should be advised to dispose of used face covers / masks, used towels in separate covered bins placed in common areas.
- xiv. Ensure availability of covered dustbins and trash cans in sufficient numbers to manage waste as per CPCB guidelines (available at: [https://cpcb.nic.in/uploads/Projects/Bio-Medical-Waste/BMWGUIDELINES-COVID\\_1.pdf](https://cpcb.nic.in/uploads/Projects/Bio-Medical-Waste/BMWGUIDELINES-COVID_1.pdf))

#### 4. Planning for operations, scheduling and monitoring of activities

##### 4.1 Institutional arrangements

- i. A COVID Task Force shall be constituted for each sporting competition event by the organizing committee to guide and monitor all athletes and ASPs. The Task Force shall be responsible for overall implementation of protocols outlined in this SOP as well as other direction issued by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare from time to time.
- ii. The Task Force shall work closely with the athletes, ASPs to define guidelines and protocols to conduct the sporting event.
- iii. Travel of athletes and ASPs shall be closely regulated and monitored by the Task Force.

##### 4.2 Facility arrangements

- i. The medical unit at the sporting venue shall have an isolation facility commensurate with the guidelines on COVID care centre (available at: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/FinalGuidanceonManagementofCovidcasesversion2.pdf>)
- ii. Suitable referral linkage shall be established with nearest COVID treatment facility.
- iii. Advance coordination with ambulance service providers for shifting of suspect/confirmed COVID cases shall be arranged.

##### 4.3. Physical distancing

- i. For ensuring physical distancing in the premises, specific markings on the floor with a gap of 6 feet may be made. Similarly, physical distancing shall also be maintained at all places except during the sporting event, by the athletes.
- ii. Locker rooms for athletes etc. can be used, provided there is adequate ventilation; physical distancing and regular disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is maintained.
- iii. To minimize participation by athletes and ASPs, the organizing committee shall ensure (i) enforcing strict qualification criteria to reduce the number of participants, (ii) reducing number of support staff and officials for the competition.
- iv. Support staff whose physical presence is not required can work from home through tele-work/video conferencing.

#### 4.4. Spectator management

- i. For outdoor sports events, spectators will be allowed upto full seating capacity.
- ii. CCTV monitoring may be planned for larger events to detect over-crowding at entry & exit gates and seating arena.

#### 4.5. Ensuring ventilation

- i. As far as feasible, natural ventilation must be ensured and use of small enclosed spaces must be discouraged.
- ii. Circulation of outdoor air needs to be increased, as much as possible, by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods.
- iii. For air-conditioning/ventilation, of closed enclosures, the guidelines of CPWD shall be followed which emphasizes that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30° C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate. Air handling unit needs to be cleaned prior to switching on.

#### 4.6. Making available COVID related supplies

- i. Appropriate arrangements for personal protection devices like face covers/masks, face shields, PPEs, heavy duty gloves and other logistics like hand sanitizers, soap, Sodium Hypochlorite solution (1%) etc. shall be made available by organizing committee.
- ii. Ensure adequate supply of calibrated thermal guns for thermal screening.
- iii. Ensure availability of covered dustbins and trash cans in sufficient numbers to manage waste.

#### 4.7. Creating awareness

- i. Organizing committee should ensure educational and training sessions for athletes and ASPs, sensitizing them on COVID appropriate behaviour and do's and don'ts'.
- ii. Provisions must be made for display of Posters/standees/AV media on preventive measures against COVID-19 at prominent places in the sporting venue.
- iii. Display State helpline numbers and also numbers of local health authorities at prominent places.

### 5. Maintaining Healthy operations

#### 5.1 Risk assessment

- i. Thermal screening of all athletes and ASPs shall be undertaken prior to allowing access to common field of play.
- ii. Depending on the risk perception and the scale of events, organizing committee may consider making RT-PCR Testing of athletes and ASPs carried out within 72 hours prior to the event and its

uploading on the website of organizing committee mandatory. In such cases, only those having a negative RT-PCR report shall be allowed to participate in the event. For this, organizing committee may also make suitable linkages with ICMR approved laboratories for COVID-19 testing of athletes and ASPs who report without a COVID test report.

#### 5.2. At the entry and exit points to the sporting event arena-

- i. Athletes/ASPs living in containment zones shall not be allowed entry in the main competition arena/field of play, warm-up area.
- ii. All entrance main competition arena/field of play, warm-up area to have mandatory hand hygiene (sanitizer dispenser) and thermal screening provisions. Only asymptomatic persons (athletes and ASPs) to be allowed in the premises.
- iii. All athletes and ASPs to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks.
- iv. Separate gates, if feasible, should be used for entry and exit.
- v. Visual markers such as arrows or lanes of travel to be marked to streamline movement of athletes and ASPs.

#### 5.3. Within the premises of sporting arena (except field of play)

- i. Reduce or close the number of breakout rooms, lounges in which individuals gather.
- ii. Gathering of spectators shall be governed by the instructions issued by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare from time to time.
- iii. Seating arrangement in parks, offices, hostel mess, other common utility areas to ensure a distance of 6 feet between chairs, benches, etc.

#### 5.4. During exercise, physiotherapy and training sessions

- i. Disinfect the common touched surfaces of the exercise equipment, before commencing the exercise.
- ii. Physiotherapy/massage shall be avoided unless absolutely necessary. If physiotherapy or massage is deemed necessary, the athlete as well as the physiotherapist/masseurs will follow all precautions including hand sanitization, use of mask, sanitization of equipment, etc.
- iii. Athletes and coaches shall sanitize their hands before and after exercises, physiotherapy and training sessions, workouts and sporting event. For such purpose hand sanitizer should be provided at the entry and exit of these locations including field of play.
- iv. Ensure physical distancing during training sessions.
- v. Physical contact in any form shall be avoided during training and sporting event, for e.g. handshakes, high-fives, etc.
- vi. Special precaution shall be taken for training engagements of para-athletes as advised by qualified medical personnel.

#### 5.5. Precautions to be observed at the field of play

- i. Staggering of athletes for different events/training sessions to be done, to allow for adequate physical distancing.
- ii. In case of multiple events, the next lot of athletes and ASPs should be outside the venue and shall enter the warmup area and field of play once the athletes and ASPs from previous event have left the venue, alternatively, organizing committee may explore multiple venues so that events may be conducted simultaneously.
- iii. Athletes and coaches shall be screened by properly calibrated thermal guns at the entry to field of play.
- iv. Wash hands with soap and water/ use hand sanitizer at the time of entry to the field of play.
- v. Athletes will shower before entering and after exiting the field of play.

- vi. Ensure physical distancing between coaches and athletes.
- vii. Athletes and coaches shall not be allowed to share equipment.
- viii. Wash hands/use hand sanitizers after leaving the field of play.

#### 5.6. Activities of athletes in other common areas – changing rooms, showers, mess, etc.

- i. Ensure physical distancing norms in changing rooms and shower areas.
- ii. In mess / cafeteria, seating arrangement should ensure adequate physical distancing.
- iii. Cafeteria and mess staff should wear mask and hand gloves and take other required precautionary measures.
- iv. Tables, chairs in common areas to be sanitized once the athletes/coaches leave these locations.

#### 5.7. Arrangements at Medical Centre

- i. Organizing committee shall designate a COVID response team that athletes/ASPs should contact if they experience symptoms suggestive of COVID.
- ii. At the entrance, there will be provision of triaging (to be done by trained nurse/medical attendant)
- iii. Patient suspected to be suffering from COVID-19 (i.e. those reporting with fever, cough, breathlessness etc.) shall be isolated in the designated isolation room.
- iv. In case of referral, transportation of such cases shall be arranged in consultation with local health authorities.
- v. Doctors, nurses, paramedics will use full complement of PPE (coverall, N-95 mask, protective goggles, gloves) if sample collection or aerosol generating procedure is contemplated.
- vi. In the event of detection of a case, further management (including contact tracing, quarantine, testing, disinfection of premises etc. shall be done in consultation with the district/local health authorities.

#### 5.8. Ensure Safe Stay at Hostels/Hotels/guest houses

To ensure safe stay, all athletes and ASPs should be accommodated in single rooms, as far as feasible. Further, the guidance issued by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on preventive measures in Hotels and Other Hospitality Units to contain spread of COVID-19 may be referred to (available at: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/5SoPstobefollowedinHotelsandotherunits.pdf>).