

Centre issues advisory to States in view of a recent upsurge in COVID-19 cases and detection of first case of JN.1 variant in India

States urged to maintain a state of constant vigil over the COVID situation

States to report & monitor district-wise SARI and ILI cases on a regular basis

States advised to ensure adequate testing including higher number of RT-PCR tests; and send positive samples for genome sequencing to INSACOG laboratories

Posted On: 18 DEC 2023 6:09PM by PIB Delhi

In view of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in some States/UTs in India and the detection of the first case of the new JN.1 variant of COVID-19 in the country, Shri Sudhansh Pant, Union Health Secretary sent a letter to States/UTs, highlighting the need for maintaining a state of constant vigil over the COVID situation in the country.

He underlined that “due to consistent and collaborative actions between Centre and State Governments, we have been able to sustain the trajectory at sustainable low rates”. However, as the COVID-19 virus continues to circulate and its epidemiology behaviour gets settled with Indian weather conditions and circulation of other usual pathogens, it is important to keep the momentum going to effectively deal with the challenges in public health.

Union Health Secretary underlined the critical COVID control and management strategies as below:

1. Considering the upcoming festive season, States were advised to put in place requisite public health measures and other arrangements to minimize risk of increase in transmission of the disease by adherence to maintenance of respiratory hygiene.
2. States were urged to ensure effective compliance of the detailed operational guidelines for revised surveillance strategy for COVID-19 as has been shared by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (a v a i l a b l e a t :

<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/OperationalGuidelinesforRevisedSurveillanceStrategyincontextofCOVID-19.pdf>).

3. States asked to monitor and report District-wise Influenza-like Illness (ILI) & Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) cases in all health facilities on a regular basis including in the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) portal, for detecting the early rising trend of cases.
4. States were advised to ensure adequate testing in all the districts as per Covid-19 testing guidelines and maintain the recommended share of RT-PCR and Antigen tests.
5. States were encouraged to increase number of RT-PCR tests and send positive samples for genome sequencing to Indian SARS COV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) laboratories so as to enable timely detection of new variants, if any, in the country.
6. States to ensure active participation of all public and private health facilities in the drill being conducted by the Union Health Ministry, to take stock of their preparedness and response capacities.
7. States also to promote community awareness to seek their continued support in managing COVID-19, including adherence to respiratory hygiene.

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HFW/Centre Issues Advisory to States on Covid-19/18thDec2023/1

(Release ID: 1987840)