

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare



Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya reviews COVID-19 Situation and Preparedness of public health system for Surveillance, Containment and Management in view of rising COVID-19 Cases in some parts of the country

It is important to be on alert and be prepared against new and emerging strains of COVID-19 virus: Dr Mandaviya

Reiterates the need for joint efforts between Centre and States to ensure efficient management of COVID-19

“Let us undertake mock drills once every three months at both Central and State levels and share best practices”

States to monitor emerging evidences of COVID-19 cases, symptoms and case severity to plan appropriate public health response

States/UTs advised to send samples of all Covid-19 positive cases to INSACOG labs to facilitate tracking of new variants

States urged to create awareness, manage infodemic and ensure dissemination of factually correct information

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Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare today chaired a high-level meeting to review the COVID-19 situation in India and preparedness of public health system for surveillance, containment and management of COVID-19 in view of the recent spike in cases of

COVID-19 in some states. He was joined by Prof. S P Singh Baghel and Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare. Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog was also present.



State Ministers who joined the meeting include Shri Alo Libang, Chief Minister and Minister of Health (Aruachal Pradesh); Shri Brajesh Pathak, Deputy Chief Minister and Health Minister (Uttar Pradesh); Shri Dhan Singh Rawat, Health Minister (Uttarakhand) who was present physically; Shri Dinesh Gundu Rao, Health Minister (Karnataka); Shri Anil Vij, Health Minister (Haryana); Smt. Veena George, Health Minister (Kerala), Shri Vishwajit Pratapsingh Rane, Health Minister (Goa); Shri Keshab Mahanta, Health Minister (Assam), Shri Banna Gupta, Health Minister (Jharkhand); Dr Balbir Singh, Health Minister (Punjab); Shri Saurabh Bharadwaj, Health Minister (Delhi); Dr. (Col.) Dhani Ram Shandil, Health Minister (Himachal Pradesh); Prof. Dr. Tanajirao Sawant, Health Minister (Maharashtra); Shri Damodar Rajanarasimha, Health Minister (Telangana); Dr Sapam Ranjan, Health Minister (Manipur); Shri Niranjana Pujari, Health Minister (Odisha); Shri Rangaswamy, Administrator (Puducherry); among others.

Underlining the challenge posed by the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in some countries across the world such as China, Brazil, Germany and United States, Union Health Minister noted the importance of being prepared and remaining alert against new and emerging strains of COVID-19, especially in view of the upcoming festive season. Underlying and reiterating that COVID is not over yet, he requested states to monitor emerging evidences of COVID-19 cases, symptoms and case severity to plan appropriate public health response.

Dr Mandaviya stressed the need for collective efforts between the Centre and the States to deal with the emerging situation in the spirit of “Whole of Government” approach. He directed for strengthening the surveillance system for whole genome sequencing of positive case samples to track the variants through Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network to ensure timely detection of newer variants, circulating in the country. This would facilitate undertaking of appropriate public health

measures in a timely manner, he noted. States/UTs have been requested to ramp up testing and refer large number of samples of COVID-19 positive cases and pneumonia-like illness to INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) on a daily basis, for sequencing, to track new variants, if any.



The Union Health Minister urged all the states to remain alert, increase surveillance and ensure adequate stock of medicines, oxygen cylinders and concentrators, ventilators and vaccines. He asked officials to undertake mock drills every three months at both the Central and State levels to assess functionality of PSA plants, Oxygen concentrators and cylinders, ventilators, etc., and encouraged the sharing of best practices. He also urged states to create awareness on respiratory hygiene and ensure dissemination of factually correct information and counter fake news to manage infodemic and mitigate any panic. The Union Health Minister urged States/UTs to share information on cases, tests, positivity etc., in real time on the COVID portal to enable timely monitoring and prompt public health measures. He assured the states of all support from the Centre.

Through a presentation, Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary, Union Health Ministry briefed the Union Health Minister on the global COVID19 situation and the domestic scenario. It was informed that while active COVID cases in India are significantly less compared to the global scenario, in the last two weeks there has been a steep rise in active cases from 115 on 6th Dec 2023 to 614 on date. It was also noted that 92.8% of the cases are home isolated, indicating mild illness. No increase in hospitalization rates have been witnessed due to COVID-19, the cases that are hospitalized are due to other medical conditions – COVID-19 is an incidental finding. A rise in daily positivity rate has been observed in a few states like Kerala, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Karnataka.

On the new JN.1 variant of SARS-CoV-2, it was informed that the variant is currently under intense scientific scrutiny, but not a cause of immediate concern. No clustering of cases has been observed in India due to JN.1 and all the cases were found to be mild and all of them have recovered without any complications.

Dr V K Paul reiterated the need for a whole-of-government approach to tackle with the challenge posed by the surge in COVID cases and the emergence of a new variant. He informed that the scientific community in India is closely investigating the new variant but stressed on the need for states to ramp up

testing and strengthen their surveillance systems.

Dr Rajiv Bahl, Secretary, Department of Health Research and DG, ICMR informed that ICMR is currently working on genome sequencing of the new JN.1 variant. He urged states to monitor the COVID-19 scenario and increase RT-PCR tests but noted that there is no cause for panic.

State Health Ministers appreciated the support and guidance received from the Centre. They assured to increase testing and surveillance measures in view of the rising cases in some states.



Smt. L S Changsan, Addl. Secretary, Union Health Ministry; senior officials from the Health Ministry, ICMR, and NCDC were present in the meeting.

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HFW/ HFM COVID Review Meeting/20December2023/1

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