

Cabinet Secretary Reviews the Surge in COVID cases in Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, J&K and West Bengal

States advised not to lower their guard, Enforce COVID Appropriate Behaviour and Deal firmly with Violations

States to follow Effective Surveillance and Tracking Strategies in respect of potential super spreading events

Need for Effective Testing, Comprehensive Tracking, Prompt Isolation of positive cases and Quick Quarantine of close contacts emphasised

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Cabinet Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba chaired a high level review meeting with Chief Secretaries of States/UTs of Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir. These States /UTs have been reporting a high active caseload or an increasing trend in new cases in the last week. The meeting to review and discuss the COVID management and response strategy, held through video conference, was attended by the Chief Secretaries and senior health professionals of the States/UTs along with the Union Health Secretary, DG ICMR, NITI Aayog Empowered Group members, and representatives from Home Ministry.

6 States – Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat- have shown a surge in new cases in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,333. It is followed by Kerala with 3,671 while Punjab reported 622 new cases in the last 24 hours. In the last two weeks, Maharashtra has shown the highest rise in active cases from 34,449 on 14th of February to 68,810 currently.

A detailed presentation was made on the current status of COVID-19 in these States with a focus on districts reporting increasing number of new cases, increasing trend in positivity and having a concerning testing trends. This was followed by a comprehensive review with all the States/UTs. The Chief Secretaries briefed about the current situation in the States and their preparedness to tackle the recent spike of COVID cases.

They informed about the enforcement of COVID Appropriate Behavior by levying heavy fines and challans, reviewing the surveillance and containment activities closely with the District Collectors, and other steps being taken in line with the guidelines provided by MoHFW and MHA.

Cabinet Secretary reiterated that States need to maintain a continued rigorous vigil in terms of containing the spread and not squander away the gains of the collective hard work of the last year. They were advised not to lower their guard, enforce COVID Appropriate Behaviour and deal firmly with violations. It was strongly underlined that they need to follow effective surveillance strategies in respect of potential super spreading events. Need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts were also strongly emphasized.

The States were advised to take the following steps:

1. Improve the overall testing in districts reporting reduction in testing
2. Increase RT- PCR tests in states & districts having high antigen testing
3. Refocus on surveillance and stringent containment in selected districts reporting reduced tests/high positivity & increased cases
4. Monitor mutant strain & clustering of cases for early hotspot identification & control
5. Focus on clinical management in districts reporting higher deaths
6. Undertake priority vaccination in districts reporting higher cases
7. Promote COVID-appropriate behavior ensure effective citizen communication to not let complacency set in, especially in light of vaccination drive entering the next phase; and enforcing stringent social distancing measures.

MV/SJ

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