Centre reviews Public Health Preparedness with States/UTs in view of new COVID19 Variant (OMICRON) reported by WHO

States advised not to let their guards down- Test, Track, Treat strategy re-emphasized

The OMICRON Variant doesn't escape RTPCR and RAT; States advised to ramp up Testing for prompt and early identification of any cases

Strict vigil to be on emerging clusters and hotspots for timely and effective management

States advised to Ensure Strengthened infrastructure, Adequate availability and stock of Drugs, Supervised home isolation

All COVID19 positive samples to be promptly sent for genome sequencing to mapped INSACOG Labs

Effective and timely coordination between State admin, BOI, APHOs stressed upon

“Har Ghar Dastak” vaccination Campaign extended
Union Health Secretary, Shri Rajesh Bhushan chaired a high-level meeting with States/UTs to review COVID-19 public health response measures and preparedness amid reports of Omicron variant of COVID-19 across various countries, here today in the presence of Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog.

The meeting was attended by Shri Rajiv Bansal, Secretary, MoCA, Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary (Health Research) & DG ICMR, Dr. Sujeet K. Singh, Director, NCDC, State Health Secretaries, MDs (NHM), representative from Ministry of External Affairs, Bureau of Immigration (BOI), State Airport Public Health Officials (APHOs) and other officials from the states/UTs.

Reiterating that the revised Guidelines and advisories of the Union Health Ministry in view of the new variant of COVID19 have been shared with the states, Union Health Secretary advised States to not to let their guards down, and keep a strict vigil on the international passengers coming to the country through various airports, ports and land border crossings.

The states were specially advised to-

- **Undertake effective Surveillance of International Passengers:** Testing of samples of international travelers coming from "At Risk" Countries on 1st Day and retesting on 8th Day needs to be done. International passengers from “at risk” countries are being advised to prepare to wait at the airports till the report of the RT-PCR test has come, and not book connecting flights beforehand.

- **To send all positive samples for genome sequencing to INSACOG Labs (mapped with states) promptly.** States to undertake contact tracing of positive individuals and follow up for 14 days.

- **Enhance Testing:** Strengthen the testing infrastructure and strictly implement the testing guidelines. Stats to ensure ample testing in each district while maintaining RT-PCR ratio.

- **Effective Monitoring of Hotspots:** Continued monitoring of areas where recent cluster of positive cases have emerged. Sending of all positive samples for genome sequencing to designated INSACOG Lab in a prompt manner.

- **Effective and regular monitoring of home isolation cases,** with physical visits to homes of passengers from “at-risk” countries. The status of those who are negative after the test on the 8th day to also be physically monitored by the state administration.

- **Ensuring augmentation of Health Infrastructure:** Ensure preparedness of health infrastructure (availability of ICU, O2 beds, ventilators, etc.). To implement ECRP-II, with focus on rural areas and for paediatric cases. Early implementation of sanctioned PSA plants, along with ensuring seamless supply of logistics, drugs, O2 cylinders, etc.

- **Co-ordinate with APHOs** for list of positive travelers, including details of all international travelers, and strengthen support to them for effective surveillance.

- **Effective and timely coordination between State admin, BOI officials, APHOs, Port health officers (PHOs) and Land Border Crossing Officers (LBCOs) stressed upon.**

- **States advised for meetings today** with BOI, APHO, PHO and other relevant officials to ensure smooth implementation of the new Guidelines for International Travelers which come into effect from midnight today.

- **Daily monitoring** by the **State Surveillance Officer to track and contain the spread of transmission** of any VoCs in the country, especially from any recent clusters of positive cases.

- **Regular dissemination of evidence and science based information on the merging scenario to be shared with the masses through weekly media briefings reemphasized.**

Terming the reported emergence of the new COVID19 variant as a “pandemic within a pandemic”, Dr V K Paul stated that the country is richer in its knowledge of management of COVID19. He again underlined the continued importance of COVID Appropriate behavior, avoiding large gatherings and ramping up
vaccination. Noting the critical role of vaccination as a powerful defense against COVID19, the "Har Ghar Dastak" vaccination campaign has been extended till 31st Dec with focus on 100% first dose coverage, and completing backlog of second dose vaccination. States have been advised to ramp up the pace and coverage of COVID19 vaccination.

DG, ICMR informed that the OMICRON Variant doesn't escape RTPCR and RAT. Hence, States were advised to ramp up testing for prompt and early identification of any cases. States were advised for target/prioritized testing of passengers from countries not “at-risk”, as part of the ramped up testing by the states. Continued need for further vaccination coverage, adherence to COVID appropriate behavior and need to avoid mass gatherings was stressed upon.

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MV/AL

HFW/Omicron Review Meeting with States/30th November 2021/5

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