

## Omicron- Lockdown in Delhi again? What health minister says

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As Delhi reports its first case of Omicron COVID-19 variant, Health Minister Satyendar Jain ruled out the possibility of lockdown any time soon but asserted that the city government is closely monitoring the situation.

Jain on Monday said, the Delhi government has already put in place a "graded response action plan", and it will be implemented accordingly, as and when the cases and positivity rate rise.

But, "there is no possibility of lockdown at the moment," he was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the Delhi health department.

Last time, the 'red level' response was implemented in the city when the positivity rate reached 14-15%, he pointed out adding, "at present the cases of coronavirus in Delhi are much below 0.5%, so no lockdown will be imposed right now."

Here is how the graded response works in the city:

When the positivity rate will reach to 0.50%, that is, out of 1,000 people tested, five are positive, then the first level of this system will be implemented.

The second level will be implemented when we will reach to a positivity rate of 1%.

The third level will be implemented at a positivity rate of 2%.

The last stage or the 'red level' will be initiated when the positivity rate reaches 5%.

In the last five months, positivity rate has hovered much below 0.50% and daily cases have stood in the range of 30-60 or so, he told reporters.

Delhi government is closely monitoring

As Omicron variant is spreading out of a few countries, Delhi government is putting focus on testing, tracing and isolation of passengers coming from foreign countries

He said the Delhi government authorities are "testing all people coming from the countries affected by the Omicron variant", and cautioned that this variant is far more transmissible than the Delta variant, adding the situation is being "closely monitored".

So far, a total of 27 people have been sent to LNJP Hospital, out of which 17 were found Covid-positive, and only one person has been confirmed to have been infected with Omicron variant, and investigation is on to trace others, if any. All these patients have been admitted at the hospital, and many of them are asymptomatic, he told reporters.

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The rest 10 people, who tested negative are those who came into close contact of people found Covid positive.

The genome sequencing of samples taken from 12 patients has been done, out of which only one was found positive with Omicron variant, and results of samples of rest five infected patients are expected in 2-3 days, he added.

Health minister bats for banning international flight

After the reports of Omicron outbreak, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, late last month, wrote to the Centre appealing to stop the flights coming from the countries affected by the Omicron variant for some time.

Regarding the same, Jain said, "Last time, we appealed to the central government to stop the flights coming from abroad as soon as possible, but the central government delayed a lot in banning the flights coming from abroad, the result of which we have seen."

Therefore, the "central government must consider our words and stop the flights coming from the countries affected by the Omicron variant for a few days," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

"This is the easiest and most efficient way to avoid Omicron variants. Delhi receives the maximum number of flights from abroad, so Delhi is most at risk from this," he said.