

Centre asks states to keep hospital infra ready for any surge in omicron cases

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NEW DELHI : Central government on Thursday asked states to keep hospital infrastructure ready for any possible surge in cases of highly mutant omicron variant and review their readiness for providing quality medical care. The national highways authority of India has made provisions for ambulances at all toll plazas on the completed corridor of the National Highways.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan who reviewed the public health preparedness to the Omicron variant of covid-19 and progress of vaccination with Health Secretaries and national health mission, mission director of States and UTs emphasised on five-fold strategy of Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate-adherence to COVID Appropriate Behaviour (CAB).

States and UTs were urged to enhance testing and focus on surveillance to ensure early identification of the suspected cases for their prompt isolation and further clinical management.

In view of the forthcoming winter season, the centre advised states that prevalence of influenza-like illness (ILI) / severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) and respiratory distress symptoms needs to be closely monitored. Review of monitoring mechanism for effective home isolation was stressed.

They were advised to ensure availability of PT-PCR testing in all districts. Districts reporting higher case positivity were alerted to monitor the case trajectory on a regular basis, and to promptly dispatch positive samples to the mapped Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) labs for whole genome sequencing.

Close monitoring of new emerging hotspots/clusters, breakthrough and re-infection cases, and prompt investigation of such events by the Rapid Response Teams was discussed. It was re-emphasised that all contacts for positive patients are to be traced and tested as per protocol as quickly as possible. Based on the information of international travelers from 'at risk' countries from Air Suvidha portal, district-wise monitoring of international passengers who have tested negative on arrival with focus on symptomatic cases, was highlighted, the union health ministry said in a statement.

They need to ensure that funds released by Government of India under Emergency covid-19 Response Package (ECRP)-II are being utilised for creating and strengthening health infrastructure, and 100% matching funds are promptly released by States to the State Health Societies.

As the progress of the funds utilisation at the field level is being reviewed by the Health Ministry, information on progress of funds utilisation needs to be filled in the portal created for the purpose, the centre said. It needs to be ensured that all health facilities at the field level have functional ventilators, PSA plants, oxygen concentrators etc. States were informed that many ventilators supplied by the Centre are still lying unpacked and unused at some field hospitals, with consumables

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not being procured & made available by the States. This needs to be reviewed immediately to ensure that all PSA Oxygen plants, Oxygen concentrators and ventilators are installed and functioning.

“States should ensure to maintain adequate buffer stock for the eight critical drugs identified in clinical treatment of covid-19; the Guidelines for these were shared with States in July 2021,” said Bhushan.

Underscoring the critical importance of vaccination drive, States were advised to continue increasing the pace and coverage of covid-19 nationwide vaccination drive with focus on the ongoing ‘Har GharDastak’ campaign for ensuring full vaccination of all eligible population, with regular monitoring at the village and district levels. In order to keep rumours at bay and address issues of vaccine hesitancy, States/UTs suggested to organise evidence-informed awareness campaigns with regular media briefings. India reported over 9,419 new coronavirus cases reported in the last 24 hours. The cumulative covid-19 cases breached 130 crores doses on Thursday.