

## Kerala- CM Pinarayi Vijayan issues orders after first Omicron case. Read here

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, on Monday, urged authorities in the state to identify Covid-19 clusters and increase genetic sequencing tests there.

Orders comes following the first confirmed case of the new coronavirus variant Omicron in Kerala.

The direction to the health department was given by the CM during the Covid review meeting held during the day, a press release said.

The CM also said that all the 36 persons who had come in close contact with the Omicron confirmed patient from Ernakulam were in isolation.

The patient had arrived in Kochi with his wife on 6 December via Abu Dhabi on an Etihad flight.

In the meeting, Vijayan also directed the District Collectors and the Health Department to pay special attention to districts with low vaccination rates, the release said.

He directed that the vaccination rate in Palakkad, Malappuram and Kozhikode districts be increased.

He also said that, in Kerala, 97% have received the first dose and 70% the second dose and around 70 lakh people are yet to receive the second jab. The Chief Minister directed the Health Department to complete it as soon as possible, the release said.

With regard to the Covid appropriate behaviour to be followed, the CM said it was mandatory to wear a mask -- either a three-layer version or an N 95.

Regarding attendances at festivals and events, the CM said that a maximum of 300 people will be allowed in open spaces and a maximum of 150 people will be allowed in closed spaces -- such as rooms and halls.

For weddings and funerals, the status quo of 200 people in open spaces and 100 for closed spaces will continue, the release said and added that the number of people allowed should be proportional to the space available.

Vijayan also said that some concessions were allowed in Sabarimala recently and therefore, there should be no lack of vigilance.

Steps should be taken to ensure immediate health care is provided to children arriving at schools if they show symptoms of Covid-19.

There should be a general understanding among teachers about post-Covid diseases, he said and added that the issue of fully opening schools was not under consideration presently.

The CM also directed the District Collectors to provide the Covid financial assistance in a time bound manner, it said.