

Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya reviews COVID-19 Situation and Preparedness of public health system for Surveillance, Containment and Management in view of Rising COVID-19 Cases worldwide

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- **COVID is not over yet. I have directed all concerned to be on the alert, and strengthen surveillance. I also urge people to take COVID vaccination: Dr Mandaviya**
- **States/UTs advised to send samples of all Covid-19 positive cases to INSACOG labs to facilitate tracking of new variants**

Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare today chaired a high-level meeting to review the COVID-19 situation in India and preparedness of public health system for surveillance, containment and management of COVID-19 in view of the recent spike in cases of COVID-19 in some countries along with Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare. Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, senior officials and public health experts were present.

The Union Health Minister was briefed on the global COVID19 situation and the domestic scenario. Underlining the challenge posed by the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in some countries across the world such as China, Japan, South Korea, France and United States, Union Health Minister noted the importance of being prepared and remaining alert against new and emerging strains of COVID-19, especially in view of the upcoming festive season. Underlying and reiterating that COVID is not over yet, he directed the officials to be fully geared up and strengthen surveillance. He urged people to follow COVID Appropriate Behaviour and get vaccinated against COVID.

Dr Mansukh Mandaviya directed for strengthening the surveillance system for whole genome sequencing of positive case samples to track the variants through Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network to ensure timely detection of newer variants, if any, circulating in the country. This would facilitate undertaking of appropriate public health measures. States/UTs have been requested to send samples of all COVID-19 positive cases to INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) on a daily basis, for sequencing, to track new variants, if any.

In a presentation, the Union Health Minister was briefed that India has been witnessing a steady decline in cases with average daily cases falling to 158 in the week ending 19th Dec, 2022. However, a consistent rise in global daily average cases has been reported since last 6 weeks, with 5.9 lakh daily average cases reported in week ending 19th Dec, 2022. A new and highly transmissible BF.7 strain of the Omicron variant has been found to be behind a wider surge of COVID infections in China.

Union Health Ministry has already issued "Operational Guidelines for Revised Surveillance Strategy in context of COVID-19" in June 2022 which calls for early detection, isolation, testing and timely management of suspected and confirmed cases to detect and contain outbreaks of new SARS-CoV-2 variants. Union Health Minister directed officials for ensuring effective implementation of the same.

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Shri Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Union Health Ministry, Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Advisor, Dr. R S Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Shri Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, AYUSH, Dr Rajiv Bahl, Secretary, Department of Health Research, Dr Atul Goel, DGHS, Sh. Lav Agarwal, Additional Secretary, MoHFW and Dr N K Arora, Chairman of the COVID Working Group, National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) were present in the meeting.