Omicron: consider night lockdowns (Hindustan Times: 20211222)

Omicron: 'Activate war rooms, consider night lockdowns', Centre asks states

The advisory was sent by health secretary Rajesh Bhushan to all state chief secretaries and UT administrators in light of the threat posed by the Omicron variant, which has triggered a new wave of Covid-19 in South Africa, UK, Denmark and several other regions.

In all, India has detected 220 cases of Omicron as on Tuesday, with 51 of these confirmed in the last 24 hours, according to data shared by states with HT. (Representational image) (Reuters)

States and union territories need to step up scrutiny of Covid-19 infection trends and consider steps like night lockdowns and bans on large gatherings if more than 10% of all tests in a week turn positive or if the occupancy of hospital beds breaches 40% of capacity, the Union government said in an advisory on Tuesday.

The advisory was sent by health secretary Rajesh Bhushan to all state chief secretaries and UT administrators in light of the threat posed by the Omicron variant, which has triggered a new wave of Covid-19 in South Africa, UK, Denmark and several other regions.

“Based on current scientific evidence, the variant of concern (VOC), Omicron, is at least 3 times more transmissible than the Delta VOC. Besides, the Delta VOC is still present in different parts of the country. Hence, even greater foresight, data analysis, dynamic decision making and strict & prompt containment action is required at the local and district level,” said Bhushan’s letter, calling for “prompt and focused” decisions by all authorities.
Centre tells states to stay on Omicron alert

In all, India has detected 220 cases of Omicron as on Tuesday, with 51 of these confirmed in the last 24 hours, according to data shared by states with HT. Of the total, 77 people who had the new VOC have recovered.

States need to constantly review district-level data of “population affected by Covid-19, geographical spread, hospital infrastructure and its utilisation, manpower” and notify containment zones and enforce perimeter control so that “infection is contained at the local level itself before it spreads to other parts of the state”, the letter said.

The letter added that the two thresholds it mentions – 10% test positivity and 40% hospital bed occupancy – are normative templates, and local officials can take measures based on population characteristics even before these thresholds are breached.

The health secretary then specified “strategic areas of intervention” under five categories.

On containment, the official suggested “imposition of night curfew; strict regulation of large gatherings; curtailing numbers in marriages and funerals; restricting numbers in offices, industries, public transport etc”.

“In case of all new clusters of Covid positive cases, prompt notification of containment zones, buffer zones should be done; strict perimeter control of containment zone as per extant guidelines must be ensured; and all cluster samples must be sent to INSACOG labs for genome sequencing without delay,” the letter said.

On testing and surveillance, Bhushan recommended there be “door-to-door case search, testing of all severe acute respiratory infections-influenza like illness and of vulnerable and co-morbid people; ensuring right proportion of RT-PCR tests in total tests being conducted daily; contact-tracing of all Covid-positive persons and their timely testing; utilizing access to ‘air suvidha’ portal by state surveillance officers and district surveillance officers to monitor international passengers who have arrived in their states and districts”.

For clinical management, the secretary said bed capacity and ambulance availability must be increased, and “mechanism for seamless shifting of patients, availability and operational readiness of oxygen equipment, buffer stock of drugs” should be ensured by utilizing the Emergency Covid Response Package-II funds released by the Centre, and other available resources.

The existing National Clinical Management Protocol remains unchanged for Omicron.
The Centre also recommended “stringent enforcement” of home isolation as per guidelines. “This would include, among others: customised kit for persons undergoing home isolation, their regular monitoring through call centers as well as home visits etc. This will be a very critical activity in the days to come specially to ensure that persons under home isolation do not spread the virus to others in view of its higher transmissibility,” the letter said.

The fourth focus area was identified as vaccination. “Ensure 100% coverage of left-out first- and second-dose eligible beneficiaries in an accelerated manner; with special focus to be given to those districts where the first- and second-dose coverage is less than the national average. The door-to-door vaccination campaign needs to be strengthened,” the letter added.

The letter called for improved community engagement and Covid-appropriate behavior.

“Ensure advance engagement and information so that there is no misinformation or panic; transparent communication on hospital and testing infrastructure availability etc. Participation of community backed by strict enforcement is necessary for ensuring Covid-appropriate behavior,” the letter said.

Experts said that test, track, treat and vaccination strategy will be critical. “Apart from having a good strategy, it is an important thing is to implement it well. It is important for people to understand that adhering to Covid-appropriate behaviour is an absolute must, especially wearing a mask and avoiding crowded places and maintaining physical distancing and hand hygiene irrespective of the variant in circulation,” said Dr GC Khilnani, former head of pulmonary medicine department, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi.

**ODISHA REPORTS FIRST CASES OF OMICRON (Hindustan Times: 20211222)**


Odisha reports first cases of Omicron as new variant infects over 200 in India

The two Omicron-infected patients are aged 41 and 43, and belong to Jagatsingpur and Khordha districts. One of them is asymptomatic while the other has a mild cough

![Omicron SARS-CoV-2](image)

Ajay Parida, the director of Bhubaneswar’s Institute of Life Sciences, said during the genome sequencing of seven samples tested for Covid-19, two came positive for the Omicron variant. (REUTERS/File)

Odisha on Tuesday reported the first cases of the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus after two men, who recently returned from Nigeria and Qatar, tested positive for the new strain. The development came on a day when the total number of Omicron cases in India touched 200.
Ajay Parida, the director of Bhubaneswar’s Institute of Life Sciences, said during the genome sequencing of seven samples tested for Covid-19, two came positive for the Omicron variant. He added the reports of five other samples were awaited.

The two Omicron-infected patients are aged 41 and 43 and belong to Jagatsingpur and Khordha districts. One of them is asymptomatic while the other has a mild cough.

“Contact tracing of 21 persons, who were in touch with these two have been done and samples have been sent for testing,” said director, public health, Niranjan Mishra. Odisha has made it mandatory for anyone testing positive for Omicron to be hospitalised.

Around 8,800 passengers have arrived in Odisha this month. Of them, around 1,600 came from countries declared at-risk following the detection of the Omicron variant.

Do existing Covid-19 vaccines work on Omicron? (Hindustan Times: 20211222)


Do existing Covid-19 vaccines work on Omicron? Govt's reply

India’s tally of the Omicron variant rose to 200 as cases have been detected in 12 states and Union territories so far.

Mandaviya was responding to a question on whether the vaccines being administered in the country are effective to develop immunity against Omicron. (AFP Photo/Representative Image)

Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Tuesday there is no evidence to suggest existing Covid-19 vaccines being used in the government’s vaccination drive do not work on the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, though some of the mutations reported on spike gene may lower their efficacy.

"There are limited available data, and no peer-reviewed evidence, on vaccine efficacy or effectiveness to date for Omicron,” Mansukh Mandaviya said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

Mandaviya was responding to a question on whether the vaccines being administered in the country are effective to develop immunity against the Omicron variant, which has been spreading across the world and is fuelling Covid-19 cases.

"However, vaccine protection is also by antibodies as well as by cellular immunity, which is expected to be relatively better preserved. Hence vaccines are expected to still offer protection against severe disease and, vaccination with the available vaccines remains crucial,” the health minister added.

His comments came as the government said India’s tally of the Omicron variant rose to 200 as cases have been detected in 12 states and Union territories so far. Out of the 200 Omicron
patients, 77 patients have recovered or migrated. Maharashtra and Delhi have recorded 54 cases each of the Omicron variant, it said.

Mandaviya also said the Union health ministry has reviewed the existing travel guidelines and revised rules for international arrivals were issued on November 28, which were further amended two days later, on the basis of risk assessment. Under the guidelines, regions or countries have been re-classified as 'at-risk' based on the epidemiological situation of Covid-19 there and reporting of Omicron variant from these countries. List of such 'at-risk' regions or countries is dynamic in nature and has been updated from time to time, he said.

The health minister said all travellers coming from countries deemed 'at-risk' will also mandatorily undergo Covid-19 testing on arrival through RT-PCR, followed by mandatory home quarantine for a week.

A repeat RT-PCR testing will be conducted on such travellers on the eighth day of their arrival in India, which will be monitored by state health authorities. Two per cent of travellers from 'non-at-risk' countries will be tested at random for Covid-19. Those who test positive for Covid-19 will have to undergo Whole Genomic Sequencing at identified INSACOG network laboratories to determine the presence of SARS-CoV-2 variants, including Omicron.

Mandaviya said states and Union territories have been asked to undertake several activities, including strict monitoring of international travellers, contact tracing of those who test positive and follow up for 14 days, genome sequencing of positive samples through INSACOG labs.

3rd dose of Novavax vaccine (Hindustan Times: 20211222)

WHO experts recommend 3rd dose of Novavax vaccine for people with health issues: Report

- The WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization, known as SAGE, issued a series of recommendations, including the use of the vaccine in persons with comorbidities, breastfeeding women, and those living with HIV.

After reviewing Novavax data the independent experts said the vaccine could be used in pregnant women if the benefits of vaccination to the pregnant woman outweigh the potential risks.(Reuters)
Novavax said on Tuesday the World Health Organization's (WHO) panel of experts had recommended a third dose of its vaccine, NVX-CoV2373, for immunocompromised persons. The WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization, known as SAGE, issued a series of recommendations, including the use of the vaccine in persons with comorbidities, breastfeeding women, and those living with HIV.

After reviewing Novavax data the independent experts said the vaccine could be used in pregnant women if the benefits of vaccination to the pregnant woman outweigh the potential risks.

On Friday, the WHO issued an emergency use listing to Novavax's vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India, the world's biggest vaccine maker, paving the way for its use in low- and middle-income countries where rollout has been much slower than in Europe.

Novavax said on Monday it had received the WHO's emergency use listing for the company's own version of the vaccine, which it will distribute in Europe and other markets.

New cases as Omicron spreads (Hindustan Times: 20211222)

Delhi sees yet another Covid-19 death, logs 102 new cases as Omicron spreads

With 54 Omicron infections confirmed in Delhi so far, the national capital, along with Maharashtra, account for the most number of such cases in India.

India has reported 202 Omicron cases so far, with Odisha confirming the first two cases in the state on Tuesday.(PTI)

Delhi continued to maintain its spike in daily cases of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) after reporting 102 fresh infections on Tuesday, which have taken its cumulative tally to 14,42,390, according to the health bulletin data.

Tuesday's figures are slightly higher than Monday's when the city logged 91 Covid-19 cases. On Sunday, Delhi recorded the biggest single-day jump in coronavirus infections in six months after 107 people tested positive, the health bulletin data showed.

Though Tuesday's single-day count of Covid-19 cases may have dropped marginally from Sunday, with yet another fatality due to the infection, the national capital's death toll rose to 25,102. This was the fourth death due to Covid-19 reported in December in the national capital.

Meanwhile, with as many as 75 fresh recoveries, the total number of patients who recovered from the virus in Delhi has gone up to 14,16,731, the health bulletin data also showed. On Monday, 100 new recoveries were logged, which was double the number recorded on Sunday.
As far as vaccination against coronavirus disease is concerned, the national capital has so far administered jabs to 2,49,91,475, of which, 1,31,180 were inoculated in the last 24 hours.

The consistent surge in daily Covid-19 cases in Delhi is concerning given the city, along with Maharashtra, accounts for the most number of Omicron infections in India. With 54 cases each detected in Delhi and Maharashtra, India's overall tally of the new variant of concern on Tuesday reached 202.

As many as 13 states and Union territories (UTs) have confirmed cases of the new variant of the coronavirus in India so far. Odisha became the latest entry in the list after two men, who recently returned from Nigeria and Qatar respectively, tested positive for the strain.

On Monday, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said all fresh Covid-19 cases in the city will be sent for genome sequencing. Kejriwal said his government would strengthen the home isolation system as in a majority of the new Covid-19 cases, patients may not “require hospitalisation.”

He also urged the Centre to allow the administration of Covid-19 vaccine booster jabs in Delhi.

**Revive Covid curbs, activate war rooms (The Times of India: 20211222)**


**Revive Covid curbs, activate war rooms: Centre to states**

NEW DELHI: Amid initial signs of a rise in Omicron infections and concerns over its high transmissibility, the Centre on Tuesday asked states to activate war rooms and bring back curbs, including night curfews, strict restrictions on large gatherings, curtailing numbers at weddings and funerals, restricting attendance in offices and public transport.

District administrations have been asked to keep a close watch on numbers and proactively analyse trends and surges. Highlighting that the Omicron variant is at least three times more transmissible than Delta, the Centre underlined the need for prompt and focused decisions at the local level as cases can spread rapidly in the absence of timely identification and containment. This is considered necessary even though cases of Omicron have been seen to be mostly mild so far.
Based on current scientific evidence, the VOC (variant of concern) Omicron is at least 3 times more transmissible than the Delta VOC. Besides, the Delta VOC is still present in different parts of the country. Hence, even greater foresight, data analysis, dynamic decision-making and strict & prompt containment action is required at the local and district level. The decision-making at the state/UT and district level must be very prompt and focused," health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter on Tuesday. While the infection might prove to be mild, a large number of cases can increase hospitalisation and deaths and also impact a nascent economic recovery.

Till Tuesday morning, 200 cases infected with the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV2 were detected through genome sequencing of Covid-19 positive samples from across 12 states and UTs. Of these 77 cases have recovered or migrated, health ministry said. The Centre has directed "all cluster samples must be sent to INSACOG Labs for genome sequencing without delay".

The Centre is worried over the rising detection of Omicron cases even as the overall numbers continue to be under control. Officials raised concerns as the detected Omicron cases are only a factor of the size of samples and the real numbers are likely to be much higher, particularly because of the transmissibility. Overall, a total of 5,326 new Covid-19 cases — which includes Delta and other variants — were recorded from across the country on Monday. The active caseload stood at 79,097. Maharashtra reported 65 cases of Omicron while Delhi recorded 54 cases, Telangana registered 20 cases, Karnataka 19, Rajasthan 18, Kerala 15 and Gujarat 14 cases.

Pressing districts to constantly review emerging data regarding the population affected by Covid-19, in terms of geographical spread and other parameters, Bhushan suggested test positivity of 10% or more in last one week, bed occupancy of 40% or more on oxygen support or ICU beds be the main elements to assess the needs at the district level.
Containment measures and restrictions can be implemented by states or district authorities even before these thresholds are reached if the local situation is such. However, evidence should be the basis for effective decision-making at the district level itself to ensure infection is contained before it spreads to other parts of the state, Bhushan added.

"In case of all new clusters of Covid-positive cases, prompt notification of 'containment zones', 'buffer zones' should be done, strict perimeter control of containment zone as per extant guidelines must be ensured," Bhushan wrote.

"Regular reviews with field officers and proactive action in this regard will definitely control the spread of infection and flatten the curve," it said.

The Centre also stressed the need for testing, door-to-door case search and testing of all severe acute respiratory illnesses (SARI) and influenza-like illnesses (ILI) cases. States were also asked to ensure that the right proportion of RT-PCR tests be ensured along with contact tracing of all Covid-positive persons and monitoring of international passengers.

Bhushan also highlighted the need for timely and effective clinical management, including monitoring of hospital infrastructure and trends, expansion of coverage of double-dose vaccination.

"Ensure 100% coverage of left-out first and second dose eligible beneficiaries in an accelerated manner. Special focus to be given to those districts where the first & second dose coverage is less than the national average. The door-to-door vaccination campaign need to be strengthened," he said.

Third wave inevitable (The Times of India: 20211222)

Third wave inevitable, but no cause for panic yet: Experts
MUMBAI: Even as the Centers for Diseases Control announced 73% of the new coronavirus cases in the US are caused by the Omicron variant as against 3% last week, the Covid statistics at home too are slowly rising and experts believe the third wave — even if less severe than the previous one — is inevitable.

The Rt value or the effective reproduction value of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has gone up in a few states, including Maharashtra. An Rt value of 1 means one patient can spread the disease to one other person.

In a tweet, epidemiologist Dr Giridhar Babu on Tuesday said states with an increase in Rt values on December 19 as compared to December 13 are Bihar, MP, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Odisha, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Manipur and Nagaland. India’s effective Rt is 0.89 as on December 19, he added.

In the week ending November 2, the Rt value in Maharashtra was 0.7 and kept steadily increasing — 0.82 (November 14), 0.96 (November 22) — before falling — 0.92 (November 29) and 0.85 (December 6). In the last two weeks, the Rt value in the state has again started rising: 1.08 (December 19).

The rising weekly caseload and Rt value are, as per doctors, an indicator of how the Covid graph will turn out in the next month. Rahul Pandit, a member of the state government’s task force on Covid-19, said there is no cause for panic yet.

“Any rise in R value is a cause for concern and means the public health machinery should strengthen its surveillance and contact tracing,” he further stated.

Shashank Joshi, also a task force member, said: “The third wave seemed remote a few months ago, but the emergence of the Omicron variant that spreads five times more rapidly than Delta has raised the possibility of cluster outbreak and the third wave.”
Internal medicine specialist Swapneil Parikh said a third wave is inevitable. “Based on developments in other countries, cases in India too will increase. What remains to be seen is what… sort of load the third wave would put on hospital infrastructure,” he said. However, most doctors said immunity due to vaccine, past infection will blunt the severity of the possible Omicron wave.

‘DELMICRON’ (The Times of India: 20211222)

‘Delmicron’, not just Omicron, behind surge in cases in UK, US

MUMBAI: The mega increase in Covid cases in Europe and the US is possibly a ‘Delmicron’ wave — a combination of Delta and Omicron variants — said a member of the Covid task force in Maharashtra.

“Delmicron, the twin spikes of Delta and Omicron, in Europe and US has led to a mini tsunami of cases,” said Shashank Joshi, member of state government’s task force on Covid. He said it remains to be seen how Omicron would behave in India, where there is widespread “exposure” to Delta variant. “At present, Delta derivatives, descendants of Delta, are main variants in circulation in India. Omicron is fast replacing Delta in other parts of the world, but there is no way to predict how Delta derivatives and Omicron would behave,” he said.

Moreover, there is hybrid immunity in India. “Sero surveys in Mumbai and Delhi showed that over 90% of the surveyed population had been exposed to Covid,” said Joshi.

Effective face mask practices (The IndianEXPRESS: 20211222)
Effective face mask practices to reduce spread of Covid-19, including new variants

Notably, even as vaccinations continue to be administered, the only way to fight the condition is through precautions and preventive measures. The best way to do that, apart from handwashing and hygiene, is wearing masks properly.

A new study notes some effective mask practices that can help reduce the spread of Covid-19 and its variants. Published in the American Journal of Infection Control, and the Journal of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), the study mentioned how the reduction in the spread of respiratory infectious pathogens can reduce Omicron cases too.

As per the paper’s lead author Francoise M Blachere, MSc., Research Biologist, of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the performance of face masks as devices that control infection spread depends upon both the ability of the mask material to filter aerosols, and on how well the mask fits the wearer.

Conducting a variety of experiments that simulated coughs and exhalations, researchers measured the efficiency of masks at blocking respiratory aerosols.

Notably, face masks help reduce the transmission of respiratory aerosols and droplets produced during activities such as talking, breathing and coughing. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended a mask that is multi-layered, covers the nose and mouth and forms a tight seal against the face.

The study concluded that a three-ply cloth mask over a medical mask (double masking), or securing a medical mask with an elastic brace provided the best protection against respiratory aerosols.

The results showed that while medical masks without modification blocked less than 56 per cent of cough aerosols and less than 42 per cent of exhaled aerosols, placing a cloth mask over a medical mask blocked more than 85 per cent of cough aerosols and more than 91 per cent of exhaled aerosols. Whereas, adding a brace over a medical mask blocked more than 95 per cent of cough aerosols and more than 99 per cent of exhaled aerosols.
“Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been considerable confusion about the most effective use of face masks, especially among the general public, to reduce the spread of infection,” said Ann Marie Pettis, BSN, RN, CIC, FAPIC, and APIC 2021 president. The study also noted how earloop strap, or knotting and tucking the mask, also increased effectiveness as compared to medical masks without modification.
Notably, even as vaccinations continue to be administered, the only way to fight the condition is through precautions and preventive measures. The best way to do that apart from handwashing and hygiene is wearing masks properly.
In an Instagram Reel, Dr Shriram Nene, cardiothoracic surgeon and healthcare innovator, demonstrated how to wear the different types of masks properly.
“Two cloth masks worn one over the other, or one N95 mask,” he said while stating that “do not put the masks under the nose, or just cover the mouth, and certainly not over your eyes.”
According to Dr Jyoti Mutta, senior consultant, Microbiology, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, while an N-95 mask with proper fitting can ensure adequate level of safety, a double-layered mask is considered a good option. “That is also because we have witnessed that the masks many people are wearing are either quality compromised or they are too loose and hanging down from their nose,” she said.

(The IndianEXPRESS: 20211222)


Omicron Coronavirus India Live: India’s Omicron tally rises to 213; most cases in Delhi, Maharashtra

Covid-19 Active Cases India Dec 22 updates, New Omicron Variant Cases in India, Coronavirus 3rd Wave, Covid-19 Vaccine Statistics: India has so far reported over 200 cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus.

Covid live updates: A health worker collects swab sample of an outstation passenger for Covid test as cases of 'Omicron' variant rise in India, at Bandra Terminus railway station in Mumbai, Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. (PTI)

Coronavirus Live News: The country has so far reported 213 cases of the Omicron variant of coronavirus, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Maharashtra on Tuesday recorded 11 new infections of the Omicron variant which took the tally of such
cases in the state to 54. Omicron cases in the capital have increased to 57. Delhi and Maharashtra continue to contribute the highest number of new Omicron cases to the country’s total caseload.

Meanwhile, India recorded 6,317 new cases of Covid-19 and 318 deaths in the last 24 hours. The country’s active caseload presently stands at 78,190, the lowest in 575 days.

Warning that the Omicron variant of Covid-19 is “at least three times more transmissible” than the Delta variant, the Centre on Tuesday directed states to impose strict restrictions in districts reporting high positivity rate, including imposition of night curfew, strict regulation of large gatherings and containment measures.

India reports 6,317 new cases, 318 deaths

India reported 6,317 new coronavirus cases and 318 deaths in the last 24 hours. The total number of Omicron cases has risen to 213, the Union Ministry of Health and Welfare said on Wednesday.

A BMC health worker collects swab sample of an outstation passenger for COVID-19 test, at Dadar railway station. (PTI)

Explained: What are Centre’s guidelines to states for Omicron containment

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan Tuesday issued specific guidelines to the states in the backdrop of “initial signs of surge” in cases of Covid-19 as well as increased detection of the Variant of Concern (VoC), Omicron, in different parts of the country. These recommendations relate to strategies for containment and restrictions in districts reporting high positivity rates, including the imposition of night curfew, strict regulation of large gatherings, curtailing numbers in marriages.
1.1 What are these guidelines?
First, the health ministry has said that if test positivity rate of 10% more is reported in the last one week, or, if the district reports bed occupancy of 40% or more on oxygen supported or ICU beds — district-level containment measures and restrictions may be put in place.

Can restrictions be imposed by districts, even if the districts report less than 10% positivity?
Yes. The health ministry has said that based on the local situation and population characteristics such as density, and keeping in mind the higher transmissibility of Omicron — states can take containment measures and restrictions even before these thresholds are reached.

Omicron Coronavirus India Live: (The IndianEXPRESS: 20211222)

Omicron Coronavirus India Live: India’s Omicron tally rises to 213; most cases in Delhi, Maharashtra
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Maharashtra continue to contribute the highest number of new Omicron cases to the country’s total caseload. Meanwhile, India recorded 6,317 new cases of Covid-19 and 318 deaths in the last 24 hours. The country’s active caseload presently stands at 78,190, the lowest in 575 days. Warning that the Omicron variant of Covid-19 is “at least three times more transmissible” than the Delta variant, the Centre on Tuesday directed states to impose strict restrictions in districts reporting high positivity rate, including imposition of night curfew, strict regulation of large gatherings and containment measures.

Coronavirus live updates (The Hindu: 20211222)

Coronavirus live updates | WHO experts recommend third dose of Novavax COVID vaccine for people with health issues

Israel set to offer fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine to people over 60

Single day rise of 6,317 new COVID-19 infections, 318 fatalities push India's tally of cases to 3,47,58,481, death toll to 4,78,325. According to Union Health Ministry active COVID-19 cases in country declined to 78,190.

You can track coronavirus cases, deaths and testing rates at the national and State levels here. A list of State Helpline numbers is available as well.

Here are the updates:

Revert to night curfews, containment zones to combat Omicron: Centre tells States

The Union Health Ministry has written to States to impose restrictions such as night curfews and declare containment zones if districts either have a 10% positivity rate or occupancy in oxygen-supported or Intensive Care Units rises to 40%.

The Health Secretary’s letter said Omicron was at least “three times more transmissible” than the Delta variant and therefore, “greater foresight, data analysis, dynamic decision making and strict & prompt containment action” was required at the local and district level.
So far about **200 cases of COVID’s** fast-spreading strain Omicron have been confirmed in India, 77 of whom had recovered or migrated, according to the Ministry on Tuesday.

**BORIS JOHNSON RULES OUT NEW COVID-19 CURBS BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Tuesday that he would not be introducing new COVID-19 restrictions in England before Christmas, but the situation remained extremely difficult and the government might need to act afterwards.

"We don't think today that there is enough evidence to justify any tougher measures before Christmas," he said in a video posted on social media.

"We can't rule out any further measures after Christmas," he added. "We continue to monitor Omicron very closely and if the situation deteriorates we will be ready to take action if needed." - Reuters

**INDIA’S OMICRON COVID COUNT CROSSES 200; "ACTIVATE" WAR ROOMS, SAYS CENTRE**

Jammu and Kashmir and Odisha on Tuesday recorded their first cases of the Omicron variant of COVID as the count of the new strain in 14 states and union territories crossed 200 even as the Centre said there is a need to "activate" war rooms, take "pro-active" action and consider night curfews.

According to the latest data from the Centre and the states on Tuesday night, India recorded 220 cases of the Omicron variant, 19 days after the first two cases in the country were detected in Karnataka on December 2.

While health authorities in J and K said three persons in the union territory tested positive for the Omicron variant in Jammu, the tally in Maharashtra and Telengana rose to 65 and 24 respectively with the addition of 11 and four cases of the potentially contagious strain. - PTI
IRELAND RETURNEE TESTS COVID POSITIVE IN BENGAL; GENOME SEQUENCING REPORT AWAITED

A man, who had returned to Kolkata from Ireland last week, tested positive for Covid-19 following which he was hospitalised on Tuesday, a health department official said.

The department is waiting for the genome sequencing report of the 27-year-old man to check if he was afflicted with the Omicron variant of coronavirus, he added.

"The man who has been working in Dublin, Ireland, for the last five years, arrived in the city flying from Manchester via Abu Dhabi and New Delhi. He was admitted to a hospital on Tuesday morning," the official said. - PTI

VEDANTA RESOURCES CONTINUES ITS SUPPORT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ZAMBIA

The Zambian subsidiary of resources giant Vedanta Resources Ltd has further committed to assisting the fight against the increasing number of Covid-19 infections in the southern African nation.

On Monday, Vedanta distributed 4,000 masks to commuters, adding to the 10,000 masks already distributed to the communities living around its operations in Zambia.

“Vedanta remains committed to helping Zambians in their battle against the Covid-19 pandemic. With the new variant posing a significant threat to public health, Vedanta re-affirms its commitment to help support the communities in as best way they can,” Vedanta said in a statement. - PTI

ISRAEL SET TO OFFER FOURTH DOSE OF COVID-19 VACCINE TO PEOPLE OVER 60

Israel announced on Tuesday that it will offer a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to people older than 60, amid concern over the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

A Health Ministry expert panel recommended the fourth shot, a decision that was swiftly welcomed by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as "great news that will help us overcome the Omicron wave that is spreading around the world."
Although the decision is pending formal approval by senior health officials, Bennett urged Israelis to get the dose as soon as possible, saying: "My message is - don’t waste time, go get vaccinated." - Reuters

WHO experts recommend third dose of Novavax COVID vaccine for people with health issues

Novavax said on Tuesday the World Health Organization's (WHO) panel of experts had recommended a third dose of its vaccine, NVX-CoV2373, for immunocompromised persons.

The WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization, known as SAGE, issued a series of recommendations, including the use of the vaccine in persons with comorbidities, breastfeeding women, and those living with HIV.

After reviewing Novavax data the independent experts said the vaccine could be used in pregnant women if the benefits of vaccination to the pregnant woman outweigh the potential risks. - Reuters

UK reduces COVID-19 self-isolation to 7 days for most in England

The British government said that from Wednesday it was reducing the COVID-19 self-isolation period to seven days from 10 days for people in England who get a negative result on a lateral flow test two days in a row.

With the Omicron variant spreading rapidly in Britain and record levels of cases over the past week many industries are struggling with staff shortages, including hospitals who have warned of the risk of an impact on patient safety.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said its analysis suggested a seven-day isolation period alongside two negative lateral flow test results had nearly the same protective effect as a 10-day isolation period without testing. - Reuters

Chinese city orders residents to stay at home, cuts public transport, due to one COVID-19 case

One local COVID-19 case has forced a Chinese border city next to Vietnam to ordered its residents to stay at home, halted public transport
and some school classes and postponed the clearing of travellers and cargo to pass through its port of entry.

China has increased COVID-19 vigilance along its borders and at ports to prevent the virus from being brought in from sources overseas, after several small border towns, which have fewer health resources than major cities, suffered outbreaks over the past three months.

Dongxing city in the autonomous Chinese region of Guangxi, which has a population of more than 200,000, demanded all its residents remain at home from Wednesday and avoid going out unnecessarily, state broadcaster CCTV reported. - Reuters

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**Biden to deliver free tests, military doctors to battle surging Omicron**

The Biden administration will open federal COVID-19 testing sites in New York City this week and buy 500 million at-home rapid tests that Americans can order online for free starting in January as it tries to tackle the Omicron variant of the coronavirus sweeping the country.

Striking a more dire tone about the risks to the one-in-four American adults who are not fully vaccinated, President Joe Biden will lay out the initiatives in a speech on Tuesday warning of the risks from the fast-spreading variant, a senior administration official said.

The measures include activating some 1,000 military medical personnel to support hospitals already being overwhelmed by COVID patients in some areas. - Reuters

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**Air pollution (Hindustan: 20211222)**

राजधानी दिल्ली और गाजियाबाद के लोग ने इस वर्ष सबसे ज्यादा दिन खराब हवा में सांस ली है।

विज्ञान एवं पर्यावरण केंद्र (सीएसई) के विश्लेषण के मुताबिक इस साल नवंबर महीने तक गाजियाबाद के लोगों ने कुल 108 दिन बेहद खराब या गंभीर श्रेणी की हवा में सांस ली। वहीं दिल्ली के लोगों के लिए ऐसे दिनों की संख्या 94 रही।

तमाम प्रयासों के बाद भी दिल्ली-एनसीआर के लोगों को प्रदूषण से राहत नहीं मिल रही है। इस वर्ष खास तौर पर दीपावली के बाद से पूरे इलाके को भारी प्रदूषण का सामना करना पड़ा है। केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड की ओर से जारी प्रदूषण के आंकड़ों के आधार पर सीएसई ने अलग-अलग शहरों के प्रदूषण स्तर का विश्लेषण किया है।

इसके मुताबिक गाजियाबाद के लोगों ने सबसे अधिक दिनों तक प्रदूषण भरी खराब हवा में सांस ली।

नवंबर तक गाजियाबाद में 108 दिन ऐसे रहे, जब वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक 300 अंक के ऊपर रहा। वहीं दिल्ली में ऐसे दिन 94 रहे हैं। एनसीआर के अन्य शहरों का हाल भी इससे अलग नहीं है। फरीदाबाद में इस तरह के जुड़े 75 और गुरुग्राम में 73 दिन रहे हैं।

विश्लेषण से यह भी पता चला कि एनसीआर के बाहर मौजूद उत्तर प्रदेश और हरियाणा के शहरों की हवा भी खास अच्छी नहीं है। कानपुर में 73, लखनऊ 68 और आगरा में 57 दिन ऐसे रहे, जब लोगों ने बेहद खराब या गंभीर श्रेणी की हवा में सांस ली। यहां तक कि हिसार जैसे शहरों की हवा भी खास सफ-सुथरी नहीं रही। यहां नवंबर तक 74 दिन ऐसे रहे, जब लोगों ने खराब हवा में सांस ली है।

### 1.2 वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक 300 से अधिक वाले दिन

| गाजियाबाद | 108 |
| दिल्ली   | 94  |
| फरीदाबाद | 75  |
| गुरुग्राम  | 73  |
| कानपुर   | 73  |
| लखनऊ   | 68  |
| आगरा    | 57  |
| हिसार    | 74  |

(आंकड़े जनवरी 21 से नवंबर 21 तक के हैं। स्रोत: सीएसई)

### 1.3 क्या है इसके मायने?

वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक के मानकों के मुताबिक वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक 200 अंक तक हो तो हवा को फिर भी सांस लेने लायक माना जाता है। लेकिन सूचकांक इससे ऊपर होते ही हवा खराब स्तर यानी स्वास्थ्य के लिए हानिकारक वाली श्रेणी में पहुंच जाती है। 301 से लेकर 400 अंक तक के वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक को बेहद खराब और 400 से 500 तक के सूचकांक को गंभीर श्रेणी में रखा जाता है।

### 1.4 स्वास्थ्य के लिए गंभीर खतरा पैदा करती है ऐसी हवा

केंद्र सरकार की संस्था सफर की ओर से हवा का स्तर बेहद खराब होने पर विशेष स्वास्थ्य परामर्श जारी किया जाता है। इसके मुताबिक लोगों को घर के रहने और खुले में ज्यादा मेहनत वाली
गतिविधियों से बचने की सलाह दी जाती है। सांस और हड़प की बीमारियों से पहले से पीड़ित लोगों को दवा साथ लेकर चलने को कहा जाता है। जितने ज्यादा दिन लोग खराब हवा में सांस लेते हैं, उनके स्वास्थ्य को उतना ही ज्यादा नुकसान पहुँचता है।

1.5 छह राज्यों के 56 शहरों की वायु गुणवत्ता का विश्लेषण
सीएसई में वायु गुणवत्ता विशेषज्ञ अविकल सोमवंशी के मुताबिक इस रिपोर्ट में देश के छह राज्यों के कुल 56 शहरों की वायु गुणवत्ता सूचकांक का विश्लेषण किया गया है। हालांकि, बहुत सारी जगहों पर वायु गुणवत्ता का डाटा पूरी तरह से उपलब्ध नहीं है। इसके बावजूद इस विश्लेषण से पता चलता है कि प्रदूषण की समस्या एक बड़े क्षेत्र में बढ़ी हुई है।

Corona third wave might hit Delhi as containment zone (Hindustan: 20211222)

कोरोना: दिल्ली में तीसरी लहर की दस्तक! लगातार बढ़ रहे हैं कंटेनमेंट जोन, दक्षिणी दिल्ली में हैं आधे

दिल्ली में कंटेनमेंट जोन की संख्या तेजी से बढ़ने लगी है। यह संख्या 20 दिसम्बर को बढ़कर 176 हो गई है। जबकि 19 दिसम्बर को यह 162 थी। यह एक दिन में 14 कंटेनमेंट जोन बढ़ गए। इसमें सबसे अधिक कंटेनमेंट जोन दक्षिणी दिल्ली में हैं, जिनकी संख्या 81 है। वहीं, मध्य जिला और उत्तरी पूर्वी जिले में एक भी कंटेनमेंट जोन नहीं है।

बता दे कि कोरोना की दूसरी लहर के दौरान दक्षिणी दिल्ली जिला अधिक संवेदनशील रहा था। उस दौरान दिल्ली में 54 हज़ार कंटेनमेंट जोन में से 27 हज़ार अकेले इसी जिले में थे। वर्तमान हालात का आंकलन करने के तौर पर दिल्ली स्वास्थ्य विभाग की रिपोर्ट में एक नवनर को कंटेनमेंट जोन की संख्या 86 पर आ गई थी। लेकिन दो नवनर को यह बढ़कर 98 हो गई थी। 3 नवनर को कंटेनमेंट जोन 100 हो थी।

चार नवनर को जारी रिपोर्ट में कंटेनमेंट जोन की संख्या 109 थी। उसके बाद से कंटेनमेंट जोन की संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है। चार दिन की स्थिति का आंकलन करने के तौर पर इस दौरान यह संख्या 78 तक बढ़ गई है। इसे देखते हुए दिल्ली में मास्क न लगाने वाले और सामाजिक दूरी का पालन न करने वालों पर सख्ती बढ़ाई जा रही है।

दिल्ली सरकार ने कहा कि कंटेनमेंट जोन बदना तीसरी लहर का संकेत हो यह जरूरी नहीं है, मगर कोरोना नियमों का पालन करने की जरूरत है। दिल्ली आपदा प्रबंधन प्राधिकरण (डीडीएमए) के स्पष्ट आदेश हैं कि कोरोना संक्रमण के मामले में कंटेनमेंट जोन बनाने को लेकर किसी तरह की दीवार नहीं दी जाए। अगर कहीं भी दीवार कोरोना के मामले आते हैं तो उसे गंभीरता से लिया जाए, उसे देखते हुए ही काम किया जा रहा है।
संख्या | जन
--- | ---
मध्य | 0
पूर्व | 7
नई | 7
dिल्ली | ---
उत्तरी | 23
उत्तर-पूर्व | 0
उत्तर-पश्चिमी | 9
शाहदरा | 3
dक्षिणी | 81
dक्षिण-पूर्वी | 18
dक्षिण-पश्चिमी | 14
पश्चिमी | 14
कुल | 176

**Project of Affordable Medicine (Hindustan: 20211222)**


पीडी:::पीजीआई के सस्ती दवा के प्रोजेक्ट को नोएडा में जीआईएमएस ने अपनाया
- तीन माह में मरीजों को 63 हजार से दो लाख का फायदा व 14 हजार तक आमदनी अस्पताल को हुई

- एक्डमी आफ हॉस्पिटल एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन के अधिवेशन ने पीजीआई को मिला समर्थन

पीजीआई द्वारा तेजस्तति पर मरीजों को दवा उपलब्ध कराने वाले प्रोजेक्ट को नोएडा के
गवर्नमेंट इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ मेडिकल साइंस (जीआईएमएस) ने लागू किया है। मरीजों को महज तीन माह
में 63 हजार रुपये से लेकर दो लाख रुपये की बचत हुई है। वहीं अस्पताल की फार्मैसी को आठ से 14 हजार
रुपये का फायदा हुआ है। पीजीआई ने इस शोध प्रोजेक्ट को कोचिच विभाग अम्स के एक्डमी आफ हॉस्पिटल
एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन के वार्षिक अधिवेशन में प्रस्तुत किया है। समारोह में तीन महीने के शोध पत्र को सर्वश्रेष्ठ
सेकेंड रिसर्च पेपर अवार्ड से सम्मानित किया गया। यह शोध पत्र पीजीआई के अस्पताल प्रशासन स्वरूप
के प्रमुख डॉ. राजेश हर्षवर्धन के नेतृत्व में डॉ. रुचि कुशवाहा, डॉ. राकेश गुप्ता, डॉ. शिखा सेठ व डॉ. अनुराग
श्रीवास्तव ने तैयार किया है।

डॉ. राजेश हर्षवर्धन बताते हैं कि इस सिस्टम के तहत अस्पताल सीधे तौरे दवाएं व सर्जिकल उपकरण व
अन्य जरूरी उत्पाद सीधे निर्माता कम्पनियों से खरीदते हैं। मात्र ज्यादातर होने की वजह से यह सभी सस्ती
पहली हैं। इसमें विचारियों की भूमिका महत्व हो जाती है। भारी मात्रा में आपूर्ति होती है। कई कम्पनियों
सहभागी भी देते हैं। देश के बहुत से सरकारी अस्पतालों में हॉस्पिटल चेन सप्लाई सिस्टम अभी तक लागू
जा नहीं हुआ है।