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LUCKNOW | MONDAY | NOVEMBER 29, 2021

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Omicron threat: Preventive measures ramped up

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Scaling up preventive measures amidst the surge in Covid due to the new coronavirus variant 'Omicron' detected in countries like Botswana, South Africa and Hong Kong, the Uttar Pradesh government, as per the guidelines of the Centre, has intensified screening and strengthened surveillance at the airports.

To guard against the new variant of SARS CoV2 (B.1.1.529), which has been classified as a 'variant of concern' by the WHO, the state government has taken prompt action by putting the health teams in all the 75 districts on alert. "UP has been maintaining control over the Covid situation fairly well. While there is no situation at present which warrants panic or worry, our citizens should be more mindful about maintaining all universal precautions against Covid — masking up, physical distancing and avoiding crowds," a government official.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has already asked the officials to make special efforts to improve surveillance with a focus on airports to ensure that the situation remains normal, State Surveillance Officer Vikasendu Agarwal said that a meeting has been held with DSOs, CMOs,

Health dept to release guidelines for international travellers shortly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Health department will be releasing detailed guidelines for the international travellers shortly in view of the Omicron variant of coronavirus. Director General, Medical and Health Services, Ved Vrat Singh said the state government was in consultation with the Centre for the purpose.

He said the guidelines would be released on what would be the premises to enter the state for international travellers. Aspects like vaccination, RT-PCR tests and quarantine period etc will be taken up and the guidelines will be released either on Monday or Tuesday.

"Discussions are on with the Central government because the main guidelines have to be issued by them. We will release out guidelines in accordance with them," he

said. He added that all the details and addresses of the international travellers would be shared with CMOs and they would be in touch with the visitors.

Singh said they have scaled up testing in view of the Omicron variant. "Our target was 2 lakh tests per day but it was going down, so we gave instructions for the testing to be increased in all the districts. There is a fixed target for each district," he said.

Regarding the threat perception of the new variant, he said nothing could be said as of now. "As we have seen in the first and second waves, nothing is predictable about coronavirus. However, now things have changed and majority of people have taken at least one vaccine jab," he added.

"Nobody knows much about the new variant, how will it spread, what will be its

infectivity and immune response. International organisations and WHO are studying the variant," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, DM Abhishek Prakash called for an urgent meeting at the Lucknow airport. He said the infection through this variant started in South African countries and hence airports have to be the focus areas to prevent the spread of infection.

Nearly nine flights land at the Lucknow airport daily from Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, Oman, Riyadh, Jeddah, Kuwait and Jordan, bringing 1,800 international travellers.

The DM issued instructions for free-of-cost RT-PCR tests of all these passengers and told the officials to ensure that all the details are noted down. He also said that the 15-day travel history of these people must also be noted.

abroad in the last 14 days.

The state government has directed the officials to maintain a strict vigil on foreigners coming in large numbers to Agra, Prayagraj, Varanasi,

Lucknow and Kanpur. The officers are constantly in touch with the districts regarding this. Along with this, a list of people who have been fully vaccinated has also been

sought. Former head of KGMU's department of Pulmonary Medicine and chairman of the department of Pulmonary Medicine, ERA's Medical College, Prof Rajendra Prasad said the state government is geared up for the new challenges with special emphasis on improving health infrastructure. In a short span, the government has equipped the state with health facilities by setting up new oxygen plants, new medical colleges, increasing the number of beds, recruiting doctors and strengthening CHCs and PHCs in view of any future challenges.

Meanwhile, of the 1,46,396 samples tested in UP the last 24 hours, only nine tested positive for Covid-19, as a result of which the test positivity rate (TPR) slumped to 0.01 percent in the state. In the same period, nine patients recovered from the infection. The active cases have drastically reduced from a high of 3,10,783 in April to 83 now.

Besides, over 15.90 crore vaccine doses have been administered in the state so far. The pace of vaccination has made UP the top state with the largest population in the country. On the other hand, Maharashtra lags behind with only 11.18 crore doses given so far.