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भारत सरकार
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय

Government of India
Department of Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
D.O. No. Z.28015/138/2021-DM Cell
27th August 2021

The State of Kerala has witnessed a sustained and significant transmission of COVID-19 since July 2021. The State reported an average of 13,500 cases per day in the month of July and almost 19,500 daily new cases in August so far. Kerala remains the one of the top contributors to daily new cases and is contributing more than half the active cases of COVID-19 in the country at present. Despite efforts by the State Government on increasing testing, the test confirmation percentage still remains very high (more than 15%), signaling high and widespread transmission.

All 14 districts in Kerala have been identified as districts of concern due to high test positivity rates and high case per million reported in the past 4 weeks. Further, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Ernakulam have reported more than 4,000 cases per million population in the week ending 25th August, 2021.

While the State has undertaken several measures to contain the transmission of COVID-19, the desired results are yet to materialize. Considering the recent sharp increase in the number of cases, deaths and the test positivity rate after the Onam festivities and the likelihood of this trend continuing for a few more days, this Ministry reiterates the following to assist the State :-

A. Containment measures:

- Containment zones need to be defined as per the GoI guidelines with a special focus on the high transmission clusters. Such zones need to be re-defined if the proportion of cases being reported outside of containment zones is showing an increase.
- Buffer zone around the containment zone needs to be identified clearly and passive surveillance needs to be enhanced to detect any spillover of cases from containment zone.
- Contact tracing effort to be further scaled up to ensure that at-least 20-25 contacts per positive cases are identified and all contacts thus identified are put under quarantine.
- The District Administration needs to ensure strict compliance to MoHFW's home isolation guidelines and ensure that there is intensive follow up of all such cases under home isolation.
- Enforcement of COVID-appropriate behavior needs to be further intensified.
- Avoidance of mass gatherings need to be enforced by the District Administration.

B. Testing strategy:

- The current positivity rate is high thus mandating a further increase in testing, as per ICMR guidelines.

- Targeted testing needs to be enhanced in containment zones and especially cover high-risk contacts.

C. Genomic surveillance:

- State should ensure enhanced genomic surveillance in areas of high and sustained transmission.
- Samples of all cases of vaccine breakthrough infections & re-infections need to be sent for genome sequencing positively. Clinico-epidemiological assessment of all such case needs to be done promptly. Results of such assessments needs to be shared with National Center for Disease Control.

D. Vaccination

- While expanding the coverage of COVID-19 vaccination is required, it is reiterated that a State specific strategy to complete the 2nd dose vaccination of due beneficiaries may be devised.

E. Other measures:

- A graded response action plan at the district level may be prepared and deployed in accordance with MoHFW's containment implementation framework for community containment /large containment areas dated 25th April 2021 and MoHFW's advisory on graded restrictions/relaxation measures for COVID-19 dated 28th June 2021.

I would like to reiterate that any laxity in ensuring strict adherence to the five-fold strategy of 'Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate and Ensuring COVID Appropriate Behaviour', may result in further surge in COVID-19 transmission in Kerala and its neighboring States.

I am hopeful that with your proactive support and leadership we will be able to halt the surge of cases and prevent any future resurgences.

Yours sincerely,
/Sd/
(Rajesh Bhushan)

Dr. V. P. Joy
Chief Secretary
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✓ Copy for information to Union Home Secretary.


(Rajesh Bhushan)