

Union Health Minister reviews Preparedness Measures as Winter Influenza Season Approaches

Union Health Ministry is closely monitoring the situation of respiratory illnesses in the Country including Seasonal Influenza

India well-prepared to handle Respiratory Illnesses, Surveillance shows no unusual surge

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 02 DEC 2025 6:30PM by PIB Delhi

In view of the upcoming influenza season coinciding with the winters, a high-level review meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Health & family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers Shri JP Nadda. Union Health & Family Welfare Secretary Smt. Punya Salila Srivastava, Director General of Health Services (DGHS) Union Health Ministry Dr. Sunita Sharma, Joint Secretary (Public Health) Smt. Vandana Jain, Director National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Prof. (Dr.) Ranjan Das and experts from Disaster Management (DM) Cell and Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), participated in the meeting.



During the meeting at kartavya bhawan 1, Secretary (Health) briefed Union Health Minister that India typically experiences two seasonal peaks of influenza—during August–October (Monsoon Peak) and January–March (Winter Peak).

Recalling the significant rise in seasonal influenza cases during 2014–15, Shri Nadda sought an update on the present situation and enquired whether the currently circulating strains showed any variations from historical trends.



Officials from National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) informed the Minister that influenza activity remains low, both globally and within India. Surveillance indicates that the circulating strains continue to be the usual seasonal variants—H3N2 and Influenza B (Victoria)—with a small proportion of H1N1. The Minister was also apprised of the near real-time surveillance mechanisms, including: IDSP’s Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) monitoring network, AI-driven event-based surveillance through media scanning and ICMR’s sentinel surveillance for respiratory pathogens. All systems currently show no signs of an unusual surge in influenza cases.

Director, NCDC, Prof (Dr.) Ranjan Das also informed that NCDC will convene a two-day national ‘Chintan Shivir on Influenza’ later this month, involving key ministries, departments and state governments to comprehensively review influenza preparedness and plan the way forward.

Shri Nadda appreciated the preparedness measures underway and asked to review the influenza preparedness with all state nodal officers and ensure readiness of all Central Government Hospitals. He directed that review of preparedness in all district hospitals and Medical Colleges to be completed within the next fortnight. The Minister also advised to issue an advisory to all States and Union Territories in this regard and asked regular mock-drills to be conducted at the health facilities.

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