

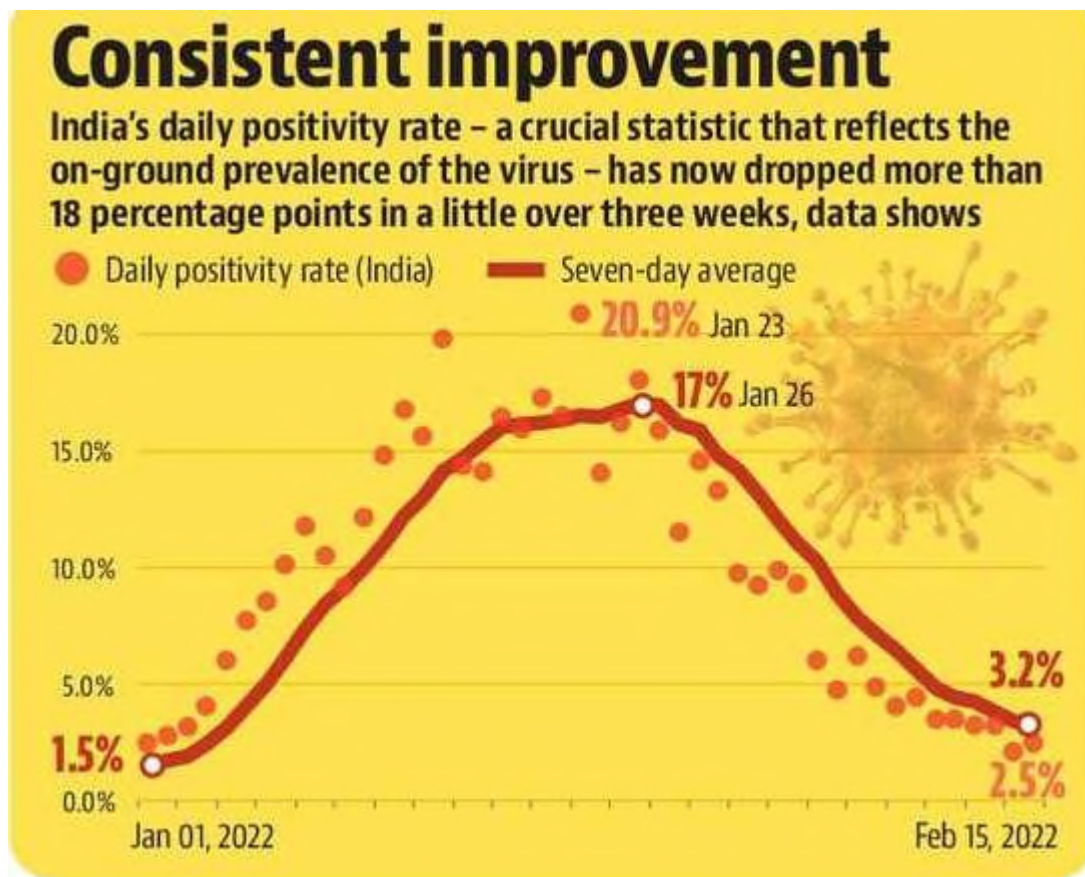


# DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

LEADING HEALTH, POPULATION AND FAMILY WELFARE STORIES OF THE DAY  
Tuesday 20220217

## India, s Daily Positivity Rate

Cases down, lift extra curbs: Centre to states (Hindustan Times: 20220217)



The Union government has made a push for normalcy and written to states and Union territories on Wednesday, asking them to “review, amend or end” Covid-19 restrictions currently placed on mobility, stressing that the movement of people and economic activities should no longer be hampered as the country has been seeing a sustained decline in infections.

Officials familiar with the development said that Wednesday's letter, written by Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, is the latest effort by the government to ease the last-remaining restrictions around mobility of people and businesses that have borne the economic brunt of the global pandemic for more than two years.

"The purpose of the letter is to ask states to remove any additional restrictions imposed at entry points that hamper the interstate movement of men and material. Such measures can be: demanding a negative Covid RT-PCR test or a vaccination certificate or other such requirements that many not be needed anymore," a senior government official aware of the matter, said on condition of anonymity.

The instructions from the Centre come at a time when India's third Covid wave has been showing a consistent decline in all key parameters for several weeks now.

"Presently, as the case trajectory across the nation is showing a sustained downward trend, it will be useful if states/UTs review and amend/do away with additional restrictions so imposed after considering the trend of new cases, active cases and positivity within the state/UT," wrote the health secretary.

The letter particularly raised the issue of restrictions still in place at airports and state borders in several regions, which were becoming an impediment on movement of people within the country.

"In earlier months in view of the high Covid trajectory, certain states had imposed additional restrictions at their borders and airports. While effectively managing the public health challenge of Covid-19, it is equally important that movement of people and economic activities should not be hampered by additional restrictions imposed at state level point of entries," the letter said.

Citing the example of West Bengal, where the state administration on January 2 placed restrictions on the movement of flights coming from sectors reporting higher number of new cases, the official cited above added, "the state of West Bengal, for example, had limited daily flights coming from Delhi and Mumbai to two. These kinds of additional restrictions, when the numbers are going down, go against the grain of risk-based assessment, and should be reviewed keeping in mind the current transmission situation."

As things stand, India appears to be well on the road to recovery from the pandemic, with daily cases reporting a consistent decline for more than three weeks now. There were a total of 31,035 new cases detected across India on Tuesday, according to HT's Covid-19 dashboard. For context on how much this number has dropped in recent days, just 26 days ago, there were more than 10 times as many cases – on January 20, there were 347,487 new infections of Covid-19 detected across India.

The seven-day average of daily cases has now dropped to 44,706 for the week ended Tuesday. This number, which is used to denote a region's case curve, has now dropped more than 85% from the peak level of 312,180 cases a day (on average) seen for the week ended January 25. In simpler terms, in exactly three weeks since it touched the peak, the Indian case curve has already shrunk to nearly a seventh of its volume. The last time India's case curve was at this level was for the week ended January 5, or 41 days ago, HT's data show.

The larger trend is visible in the drop in India's test positivity rate – a crucial statistical indicator that reflects the on-ground prevalence of the virus. On Tuesday, the daily positivity rate in India was 2.5%. This is not only significantly below the World Health Organization's threshold of 5%, but also marks a 18.4 percentage point drop from the figure recorded on January 23, when

more than a fifth (20.9%) of all samples tested in India returned positive. In fact, out of India's 32 states/UTs where positivity rate can be calculated, this number has been below the 5% mark in 22 regions, with a majority only being one or two percentage points above the threshold. This figure is only above 10% in just one state — Kerala, with average positivity rate of 20% in the last week.

This improvement has meant that a majority of movement-related restrictions have been done away with in most regions, with a handful of curbs enforced at the state-level such as night curfews, the demand for vaccination certificates at airports and state borders, remaining in place.

“States have been asked to review the Covid situation on a daily basis, and take a call on measures such as night or weekend curfew etc. based on that. That is separate though; this letter is meant mainly for easing interstate movement. People or economic activities should not suffer unnecessarily,” the official cited above added.

Experts said it is the right time to lift curbs that still remain. “If you don't remove these restrictions now, then you won't ever. There is no scientific basis to continuing with these kinds of restrictions at this stage of the pandemic. There should be an objective behind any intervention, but in the Covid situation that is there right now, such measures serve no purpose,” said Dr Sanjay Rai, professor, community medicine department, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi.

Based on the current Covid situation, the Union health ministry also revised its guidelines for international arrivals doing away with the concept of “at-risk” countries, and exempting fully vaccinated passengers from uploading the negative RT-PCR Covid test report online 72 hours prior to travel. The revised travel guidelines kicked in from Monday.

## **Stem Cell Treatment (Hindustan Times: 20220217)**

<https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ShareImage?Pictureid=1722774a10a>

# Stem cell treatment cures first woman of HIV

An American patient with leukemia has become the first woman in world and the third person ever to be cured of HIV, using a new transplant method involving umbilical cord blood, researchers have said.

## AIDS IN NUMBERS

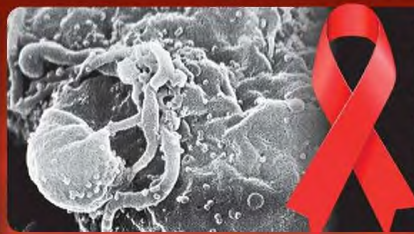
**38mn**  
people living with HIV worldwide

**50%**  
women (approx)

**73%**  
People with HIV receiving treatment

**680,000** people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2020

**67%** of people living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa



## THE PATIENT

The patient is a middle-aged woman of mixed race who was diagnosed with HIV in June 2013. Antiretroviral drugs kept her virus levels low. In March 2017, she was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia (a cancer that starts in blood-forming cells in the bone marrow).

**2.3mn**  
people living with HIV in India

## THE TREATMENT

In August 2017, the patient received umbilical cord blood from a donor with a mutation that blocks HIV's entry into cells. As it can take about six weeks for umbilical cord blood cells to engraft, she was also given partially matched blood stem cells from a relative.

The cells from her relative propped up her immune system until the umbilical cord blood cells became dominant, making the transplant much less dangerous, according to Dr. Marshall Glesby, an infectious diseases expert at Weill Cornell Medicine of New York and part of the research team.

The patient opted to discontinue antiretroviral therapy 37 months after the transplant. More than 14 months later, she now shows no signs of HIV in blood tests, and she does not seem to have detectable antibodies to the virus.

## HOW THIS CASE IS DIFFERENT

There have only been two known cases of an HIV cure so far. Timothy Ray Brown (who was white) stayed virus-free for 12 years, until he died in 2020 of cancer. In 2013, Adam Castillejo (who is Latino), was reported to be cured of HIV. Both men received bone marrow transplants.

After the transplants, both men suffered punishing side effects, including graft versus host disease — a condition in which the donor's cells attack the recipient's body. Brown nearly died after the transplant, while Castillejo lost over 30 kg in one year, developed hearing loss and has survived multiple infections.

By contrast, the woman left the hospital 17 days after her transplant and didn't develop graft versus host disease, said her physician at Weill Cornell Medicine.

## THE RESEARCH

The case, presented on Tuesday at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Denver, is part of a larger US-backed study led by Dr. Yvonne Bryson of the University of California Los Angeles, and Dr. Deborah Persaud of Johns Hopkins University, which aims to follow 25 people with HIV who undergo a transplant with stem cells taken from umbilical cord blood for the treatment of cancer and other conditions.

Patients in the trial first undergo chemotherapy to kill off the cancerous immune cells. Doctors then transplant stem cells from individuals with a specific genetic mutation in which they lack receptors used by the virus to infect cells. Scientists believe these patients develop an immune system resistant to HIV.



Source: Reuters, UN AIDS, National AIDS Control Organisation

Omicron wave

Omicron wave nears end as all metrics stay low: Officials (Hindustan Times: 20220217)

<https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ArticleView>

The national capital on Wednesday reported a marginal rise in the number of fresh Covid-19 cases -- it was 10 more than Tuesday's count -- even as the positivity rate continued to fall, data from the Delhi government's health bulletin showed.

According to the bulletin on Wednesday, Delhi added 766 new Covid cases as against 756 cases reported the previous day. This, however, was on account of the higher number of tests conducted over the last 24 hours. Data showed that of the 56,112 Covid tests conducted, only 1.37% samples returned positive.

On Tuesday, the city conducted 49,792 Covid tests, with a positivity rate of 1.52%. Government data also highlighted that as on Wednesday, five people succumbed to the Covid infection in Delhi, the same number of fatalities as on Tuesday.



Senior officials of Delhi government's health department said Delhi was at the end of the Omicron wave of Covid, and the infection count has settled. The death count has also declined, which is also indicative of the end of the current wave, they said.

"We have reached the position that the city was in after the second wave subsided (last May-June). Back then, too, we were reporting a few hundred cases. The situation is now under control but we need to continue following Covid appropriate behaviour," said a senior health official, asking not to be named.

## **Home Remedies**

### **From turmeric to mushrooms: Five superfoods that show cancer-fighting properties**

**A diet that has a good mix of vegetables and fruits, including plant-based items like broccoli, berries, and garlic, have shown some of the most vital links to cancer prevention, says an (The Indian Express: 20220217)**

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/turmeric-mushrooms-five-superfoods-cancer-fighting-properties-7762199/>

cancer-fighting properties, foods that can fight cancer, anti-cancer diet, anti-cancer food, healthy foods, healthy diet for cancer, indian express newsTurmeric contains a compound known as curcumin that can inhibit cancer cells, such as breast, gastrointestinal, lung and skin cancer. (Photo: Getty/Thinkstock)

A clean diet promises to take care of a host of health issues, by strengthening immunity. Did you know that there are certain foods that possess cancer-fighting properties? Shweta Mahadik, a clinical dietitian at Fortis Hospital, Kalyan, says that though there is no conclusive proof that a particular type of food can prevent or stop cancer, a healthy diet of vegetables and fruits are critical agents in preventing significant illnesses, including those of the heart, diabetes, and possibly cancer.

ALSO READ |10 healthy food swaps that will help manage blood sugar, diabetes

According to Mahadik, a diet that has a good mix of vegetables and fruits, including plant-based items like broccoli, berries, and garlic, have shown some of the most vital links to cancer prevention. "They are low in calories and fat, and are also packed with phytochemicals and antioxidants that may help reduce cancer risk," she says.

Ahead, she shares the five superfoods that one should add to their diet to be able to prevent cancer; read on.

**Flaxseed:** Flaxseed contains high lignans that protect against estrogen-dependent cancers like breast cancer. Flaxseed and flaxseed oil are among the few essential omega-3 fatty acid ALA sources, which shield against cancer cells responsible for breast cancer.

**Turmeric:** Turmeric contains a compound known as curcumin that can inhibit cancer cells, such as breast, gastrointestinal, lung and skin cancer. Studies have found that it can help significantly fight and slow the spread of breast cancer due to its potent cell protectant, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

cancer-fighting properties, foods that can fight cancer, anti-cancer diet, anti-cancer food, healthy foods, healthy diet for cancer, indian express news Flaxseed contains high lignans that protect against estrogen-dependent cancers like breast cancer. (Photo: Getty/Thinkstock)

**Blueberries:** Blueberries are packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that can aid in breast cancer prevention. The phytochemicals in blueberries work together to prevent the growth and spread of various forms of breast cancer. They are also rich in antioxidants like ellagic acid, which have anti-cancer properties.

**Broccoli:** It contains cancer-fighting compounds known as Indole-3-Carbinol that help alter estrogen metabolism and suppress breast tumor cell growth. They also protect against hormone-dependent cancers such as breast, cervix, and prostate.

**Mushrooms:** They have shown anti-inflammatory, antiviral, cholesterol-reducing, and immune-enhancing properties, helping to reduce blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Generally, mushrooms are a good source of dietary niacin (vitamin B3) and riboflavin (vitamin B2).

ALSO READ |Five simple tips to control blood sugar level in winters

“A study of Korean breast cancer patients also found consumption of mushrooms to be associated with a significantly decreased risk of breast cancer. Shiitake mushrooms are widely available fresh or dried in grocery stores. They have been found to inhibit increases in tumor volume of human breast cancer cells implanted in mice,” the expert explains.

She adds that “good nutrition” is essential, “especially for cancer patients”.

“That means a balanced, minimally processed plant-heavy diet, which can benefit your overall health and energy levels, support your immune system, help you manage symptoms during treatment and promote survivorship.”

## **vaccines**

**Coachella to return with no masks or vaccines required**

**Before the pandemic, Coachella, which is widely seen as a bellwether for the multibillion-dollar touring business, had put on a show every year since 1999 at the Empire Polo Club in Indio. (The Indian Express: 20220217)**

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/life-style/coachella-return-no-masks-covid-vaccines-required-7776301/>

Coachella (1) Coachella did not run in 2020 or 2021, and was canceled three times over the pandemic. (Representative image/Pexels)

By Alyssa Lukpat

When the Coachella outdoor music festival returns for the first time in two years this April, performers will be greeted by a sea of unmasked — and potentially unvaccinated — fans, as the struggling concert industry stirs back to life.

On Tuesday, organizers said that attendees will not be required to wear masks or be vaccinated or tested for the coronavirus at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, which drew up to 125,000 fans a day to Southern California and was one of the biggest music festivals of the pre-pandemic era.

ALSO READ | Ye and Julia Fox, the new power couple in fashion?

“There is no guarantee, express or implied, that those attending the festival will not be exposed to COVID-19,” Goldenvoice, a division of the global concert giant AEG Live, said on the Coachella website.

Goldenvoice noted, however, that the festival’s COVID policies may change “in accordance with applicable public health conditions.”

Coachella (2) Coachella is set to be headlined by Billie Eilish, Harry Styles and Kanye West. (Representative Image/Pexels)

Goldenvoice also said Tuesday that Stagecoach, a country music festival in Southern California, would have no requirements for guests to be masked, vaccinated or tested. The festival is set to run for three days at the end of April and the beginning of May.

It has been a turbulent two years for the concert and touring industries, as a number of events were canceled because of the virus. In the past year, since the COVID vaccine became widely available, organizers have grappled with decisions over whether to hold the events at all and whether to require masks, vaccines and testing.

Over four days last summer, the Lollapalooza music festival in Chicago ran at full capacity, with its 400,000 attendees being required to show either proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test. According to data released by the city after the festival, infection rates among the concertgoers were very low.

Coachella did not run in 2020 or 2021, and was canceled three times over the pandemic, including a rescheduled date in the fall of 2020.

ALSO READ | Covid-19: Which masks are most effective against Omicron?

Before the pandemic, Coachella, which is widely seen as a bellwether for the multibillion-dollar touring business, had put on a show every year since 1999 at the Empire Polo Club in Indio. It typically runs over two weekends in April.

The organizers of Coachella announced in January, after weeks of speculation, that the festival would be back this year. It is set to be headlined by Billie Eilish, Harry Styles and Kanye West.

DELHI NEWS

1Delhi Police arrest duo from Jharkhand over 'cheating people online'  
2National policy needed for synthetic biology, says DBT paper  
3Delhi: Swami Dayanand Hospital to start CT scans at subsidised rates  
More from Delhi

## Depression

### Depression remains a neglected global health crisis: report (The Hindu:20220217)

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/depression-remains-a-neglected-global-health-crisis-report/article65056889.ece>

Lancet and World Psychiatric Association Commission on depression released its document on Tuesday

The world is failing to tackle the persisting and increasingly serious global crisis of depression it is facing, a Lancet and World Psychiatric Association Commission on depression has stated. The document was released Tuesday night.

It has estimated that 5% of adults worldwide suffer from depression each year, and yet it remains a neglected global health crisis. Poor understanding of this condition and lack of psychosocial and financial resources are already impacting on prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and the economic prosperity of nations.

There is abundant evidence that much can be done to prevent depression and aid recovery even in resource-limited settings, and yet the burden of people living with depression, many of them not diagnosed and consequently not treated. While in high income countries, about half of people suffering from depression come under this category, this rises to 80-90% in low- and middle-income countries. As expected, the COVID-19 pandemic has created additional challenges, with the hardship, bereavement, isolation, and uncertainties, besides limited access to health care exacerbating mental health conditions, and bringing more people to the brink.

The document was authored by 25 experts from 11 countries spanning disciplines from neuroscience to global health and advised by people with experience of depression. Commission Chair Professor Helen Herrman said: "Depression is a global health crisis that demands responses at multiple levels. This Commission offers an important opportunity for united action to transform approaches to mental health care and prevention globally. Investing in reducing the burden of depression will give millions of people the chance to become healthier, happier and more productive members of society, help to strengthen national economies, and advance the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

The Lancet- WPA Commission 'Time for united action on depression' has called for a whole-society approach to preventing depression, on the lines of what has been done for conditions such as heart disease or cancer.



Co-author Charles Reynolds adds: “We know that most individuals with depression at all stages of life will recover if they obtain adequate support and treatment. With sound science, political will, and shared responsibility, depression can be prevented and treated and potentially disabling consequences avoided. We must empower people with experience of depression together with families, practitioners, policymakers and civil society to address the tsunami of unmet needs.”

## **HIV/ AIDS**

### **First woman reported cured of HIV after stem cell transplant (The Hindu:20220217)**

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/first-woman-reported-cured-of-hiv-after-stem-cell-transplant/article65057101.ece>

A U.S. patient with leukemia has become the first woman and the third person to date to be cured of HIV after receiving a stem cell transplant from a donor who was naturally resistant to the virus that causes AIDS, researchers reported on February 15.

The case of a middle-aged woman of mixed race, presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Denver, is also the first involving umbilical cord blood, a newer approach that may make the treatment available to more people.

Since receiving the cord blood to treat her acute myeloid leukemia — a cancer that starts in blood-forming cells in the bone marrow — the woman has been in remission and free of the virus for 14 months, without the need for potent HIV treatments known as antiretroviral therapy.

The two prior cases occurred in males — one white and one Latino — who had received adult stem cells, which are more frequently used in bone marrow transplants.

"This is now the third report of a cure in this setting, and the first in a woman living with HIV," Sharon Lewin, president-elect of the International AIDS Society, said in a statement.

The case is part of a larger U.S.-backed study led by Dr. Yvonne Bryson of the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), and Dr. Deborah Persaud of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. It aims to follow 25 people with HIV who undergo a transplant with stem cells taken from umbilical cord blood for the treatment of cancer and other serious conditions.

Patients in the trial first undergo chemotherapy to kill off the cancerous immune cells. Doctors then transplant stem cells from individuals with a specific genetic mutation in which they lack receptors used by the virus to infect cells.

Scientists believe these individuals then develop an immune system resistant to HIV.

Prof. Lewin said bone marrow transplants are not a viable strategy to cure most people living with HIV. But the report "confirms that a cure for HIV is possible and further strengthens using gene therapy as a viable strategy for an HIV cure", she said.

The study suggests that an important element to the success is the transplantation of HIV-resistant cells. Previously, scientists believed that a common stem cell transplant side effect called graft-versus-host disease, in which the donor immune system attacks the recipient's immune system, played a role in a possible cure.

"Taken together, these three cases of a cure post stem cell transplant all help in teasing out the various components of the transplant that were absolutely key to a cure," Prof. Lewin said.

## **Advanced robotic surgery**

### **Advanced robotic surgery centre ready (The Hindu:20220217)**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/advanced-robotic-surgery-centre-ready/article65056246.ece>

The Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital at Omandurar Estate in Chennai is the only State government hospital to get the advanced robotic surgery centre for treating cancer patients.

The Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital at Omandurar Estate in Chennai is the only State government hospital to get the advanced robotic surgery centre for treating cancer patients. | Photo Credit: K. PICHUMANI

The ₹35-crore facility to be commissioned at Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital

An advanced robotic surgery centre has been set up at the Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital (TNGMSSH), Omandurar. A ₹35-crore worth equipment for robotic surgery was installed and a fully modular operation theatre has been readied at a cost of ₹50 lakh, Health Minister Ma. Subramanian said.

Shortly after inspecting the centre on Wednesday, he said the Chief Minister would inaugurate the centre after the model code of conduct ceases to be in force.

"Such facilities have been set up at 74 centres across the country. In Tamil Nadu, six private hospitals have similar facilities. Except for Central government institutions such as Jipmer, no State government hospital has such a centre," he said. Six doctors of the hospital were sent for training in robotic surgery, the Minister said. Patients would be covered under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, he added.

Noting that the State government was taking several steps for early detection of cancer and its treatment, he said the government, along with Cancer Institute, was involved in the cancer registry project. "In six to seven years, continuous check-up for detection of patients with stage I and II cancers would be done across the State. Through this, at least 66% of people would be

covered by 2030 with a full medical check-up. The State government is expediting the work for early detection of cancer,” he said.

He said that such advanced centres would help in the treatment of cancers. Dedicated cancer treatment centres are coming up at Karapettai in Kancheepuram as well as in Madurai, Kanniyakumari and Salem districts. “We are taking several steps to reduce the deaths due to cancer,” the Minister said.

#### Door delivery of medicines

A total of 49,79,565 persons were so far covered under “Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam”, a scheme that was launched on August 5, 2021. Every day, nearly 15,000 to 20,000 persons benefited under the scheme.

He said that this Sunday, the Chief Minister would hand over medicines at the house of the person, who would be the 50,00,000th beneficiary in Sithalapakkam panchayat. Another 188 new ambulances with advanced life-saving equipment would be rolled out. This would take the total number of ambulances in the State to 1,491.

So far, 18,580 persons injured in road accidents were treated under the State government’s Innuyir Kappom-Nammai Kakkum. So far, the government had spent nearly ₹16.97 crore towards their treatment, he said.

From 609 hospitals, the total number of hospitals empanelled under the scheme had increased to 640 — 218 government hospitals and 422 private hospitals.

Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan and Director of TNGMSSH R. Vimala was present.

## WHO

### **WHO: New COVID cases drop by 19% globally, deaths stable (The Hindu:20220217)**

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/who-new-covid-cases-drop-by-19-globally-deaths-stable/article65055646.ece>

A teenager receives a dose of Sputnik M (Gam-COVID-Vac-M) vaccine against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at a clinic in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

A teenager receives a dose of Sputnik M (Gam-COVID-Vac-M) vaccine against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at a clinic in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia | Photo Credit: Reuters

WHO said that all other coronavirus variants, including alpha, beta and delta, continue to decline globally as omicron crowds them out

The number of new coronavirus cases globally fell by 19% in the last week while the number of deaths remained stable, according to the World Health Organization.

The U.N. health agency said late Tuesday in its weekly report on the pandemic that just over 16 million new COVID-19 infections and about 75,000 deaths were reported worldwide last week.

The Western Pacific was the only region to report a rise in new weekly cases, an increase of about 19%, Southeast Asia reported a decrease of about 37%, the biggest drop globally. The number of deaths rose by 38% in the Middle East and by about one-third in the Western Pacific.

The biggest number of new COVID-19 cases was seen in Russia. Cases there and elsewhere in Eastern Europe doubled in recent weeks, driven by a surge of the hugely infectious omicron variant.

WHO said that all other coronavirus variants, including alpha, beta and delta, continue to decline globally as omicron crowds them out. Among the more than 400,000 COVID-19 virus sequences uploaded to the world's biggest virus database in the last week, more than 98% were omicron.

WHO said the BA.2 version of omicron appears to be “steadily increasing” and its prevalence has risen in South Africa, Denmark, the U.K. and other countries.

Health officials have noted, however, that omicron causes milder disease than previous COVID-19 variants and in countries with high vaccination rates, hospitalization and death rates have not increased substantially, even with omicron's spread.

WHO's Africa director, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, said last week there was “light at the end of the tunnel” for the continent and that even despite low vaccination rates, Africa was transitioning from the acute pandemic phase of COVID-19.

That optimism contrasts sharply with warnings from WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who has said repeatedly the pandemic is not over and is premature for countries to think that the end might be imminent.

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## **Pandemic**

### **Pandemic fuelling dry eye condition: How to avoid it? (The Hindu:20220217)**

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/pandemic-fuelling-dry-eye-condition-how-to-avoid-it/article65001580.ece>

Chronic dry eye is a “potentially serious” condition, warn Chronic dry eye is a “potentially serious” condition

Unusual lifestyle and prolonged working hours in the Work From Home (WFH) format necessitated by the pandemic has given rise to chronic dry eyes among a large number of people in the country, ophthalmologists said. Chronic dry eye is a “potentially serious” condition that can result in eye discomfort and vision issues, they said. “Dry eye problem has become rampant during the Covid-19 pandemic due to changes in lifestyle. Increase in screen time, disruption in nutritious eating habits, and irregular sleep patterns are causing a rise in dry eye cases,” said Dr. Nitin Deshpande, Director, Shree Ramkrishna Netralaya. He said staying indoors or at home has contributed to the rise in cases of dry eyes as well as aggravating the symptoms. “Indoor air quality causes dry eyes. Air conditioning increases airflow over the eyes. This combined with work in front of screens,- causes increased evaporation of tears leading to dryness of eyes,” he said. According to eye specialists, improper diet due to changes in cooking and dining routine has led to the lack of essential fatty acids, Vitamin A, Vitamin D in the body which are important to maintaining eye health. Besides, improper sleep is contributing to dry eyes by reducing eye fluid quantity. “With the increased use of electronic devices, the screen time has gone up tremendously. Increased screen time is the major factor for dry eyes. The normal blink rate is 15 blinks per minute. Screen time has reduced the blink rate to 5 to 7 blinks per minute,” he said. “Fewer blinks and incomplete blinks reduce moisture on the surface of the eyes. Blue light from the screen as per evidence does not damage eyes but it can affect sleep patterns. Improper sleep may cause dryness of the eyes, he added. Also, the improper fitting of the Covid-19 protocol mask contributes to the dryness of the eyes. “Breathing with a mask causes air to flow upwards and results in evaporation of tears. Taping the mask over the nose can prevent upward airflow and help in addressing dry eyes problem,” Dr Deshpande added.

20:20:20 pattern

Ophthalmologists have recommended people to follow the 20:20:20 pattern. People are advised to take breaks from the screen every 20 minute and look at an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds. One needs to blink frequently, wear a mask fitting properly to prevent upward flow of air. The smartphone or laptop screen should be off 2-3 hours before bedtime. “Use lubricating eye drops and see a doctor if there is any trouble,” said Dr Prerana Shah, Consulting Ophthalmologist & Vitreoretinal Surgeon. “Regular eye tests can prevent problems at a stage where they can be treated with the best results. Therefore, the timely detection is a vital part of eye care,” she said.

**India records 30,757 new Covid cases, 541 more deaths  
The daily Covid cases have been recorded at less than one lakh for the past  
11 days (The Tribune:20220217)**

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/india-records-30-757-new-covid-cases-541-more-deaths-370683>



With 30,757 people testing positive for the coronavirus infection in a day, India's total tally of cases rose to 4,27,54,315, while the recovery rate crossed the 98 per cent-mark again, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll has climbed to 5,10,413 with 541 daily fatalities, the data updated at 8 am said.

The daily Covid cases have been recorded at less than one lakh for the past 11 days.

The active cases had declined to 3,32,918, comprising 0.78 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid recovery rate had improved to 98.03 per cent, the health ministry said.

The recovery rate had last crossed the 98 per cent-mark on January 5, when it was 98.01 per cent.

There had been a reduction of 37,322 cases in the active caseload in a span of 24 hours, it said.

The daily positivity rate has been recorded at 2.61 per cent while the weekly positivity rate has been recorded at 3.04 per cent, according to the health ministry.

The number of people who had recuperated from the disease had increased to 4,19,10,984, while the case fatality rate had been recorded at 1.19 per cent, it said.

The cumulative doses administered so far under the nationwide Covid vaccination drive has exceeded 174.24 crore.

The 541 new fatalities include 338 from Kerala and 41 from Maharashtra.

The data stated that 5,10,413 deaths had been reported so far in the country including 1,43,492 from Maharashtra, 63,019 from Kerala, 39,715 from Karnataka, 37,956 from Tamil Nadu, 26,086 from Delhi, 23,414 from Uttar Pradesh and 21,079 from West Bengal.

## **Covid vaccine**

### **500 cr doses of Covid vaccine by yr-end: Harsh Vardhan Shringla at US meet (The Tribune:20220217)**

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/500-cr-doses-by-yr-end-harsh-wardhan-shringla-at-us-meet-370252>

500 cr doses of Covid vaccine by yr-end: Harsh Vardhan Shringla at US meet  
Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla. File photo

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla has said India now has the capacity to produce 500 crore (five billion) doses of Covid vaccine this year.

“India is poised to play a major role in the US-led global action plan to respond to acute pandemic needs in several parts of the world,” at a US-hosted meeting on the Covid pandemic.

Shringla noted that four WHO-approved vaccines (Covaxin, Covishield, Covovax and Janssen) were being produced in India and three others (Corbevax, ZyCov-D and Gennova) were due for approval. “India can assist in two ways,” he said.

The first is strengthening and securing global supply chains, for which an essential ingredient would be TRIPS waiver for patents on vaccines to diversify local manufacturing in regional markets.

“We will rally with like-minded partners and the WHO to improve sub-optimal approval and regulatory processes which are an impediment to stable and predictable supplies,” said the Foreign Secretary in the meeting convened by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The second is customised and tailor-made capacity building and technical training programmes for frontline and healthcare workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America. India has so far conducted 17 training modules for more than 60 countries focused on the entire spectrum of Covid management.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers, and senior representatives from several countries and international organisations.

With External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on tour to Australia and the Philippines, Foreign Secretary Shringla represented India at the meeting. —

## **Pollution**

**Pollution causing more deaths than Covid, action needed, says UN expert  
(The Tribune:20220217)**

**Document urges a ban on polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl**

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/health/pollution-causing-more-deaths-than-covid-action-needed-says-un-expert-370139>

Pollution causing more deaths than Covid, action needed, says UN expert  
Photo for representational purpose only.

Pollution by states and companies is contributing to more deaths globally than Covid-19, a UN environmental report published on Tuesday said, calling for “immediate and ambitious action” to ban some toxic chemicals.

The report said pollution from pesticides, plastics and electronic waste is causing widespread human rights violations as well as at least 9 million premature deaths a year, and that the issue is largely being overlooked.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused close to 5.9 million deaths, according to data aggregator Worldometer.

“Current approaches to managing the risks posed by pollution and toxic substances are clearly failing, resulting in widespread violations of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment,” the report’s author, U.N. Special Rapporteur David Boyd, concluded.

Due to be presented next month to the U.N. Human Rights Council, which has declared a clean environment a human right, the document was posted on the Council’s website on Tuesday.

It urges a ban on polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl, man-made substances used in household products such as non-stick cookware that have been linked to cancer and dubbed “forever chemicals” because they don’t break down easily.

It also recommends the clean-up of polluted sites and, in extreme cases, the possible relocations of affected communities - many of them poor, marginalised and indigenous - from so-called “sacrifice zones”.

That term, originally used to describe nuclear test zones, was expanded in the report to include any heavily contaminated site or place rendered uninhabitable by climate change.

U.N. rights chief Michelle Bachelet has called environmental threats the biggest global rights challenge, and a growing number of climate and environmental justice cases are invoking human rights with success.

## **mRNA COVID-19 vaccine**

### **India’s first mRNA COVID-19 vaccine likely to be rolled out by April (The Hindu: 20220217)**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-first-mrna-covid-19-vaccine-likely-to-be-rolled-out-by-april/article38403287.ece>

Data from human trials likely to be presented for evaluation by end February.

Data from human trials of India’s first homegrown mRNA COVID-19 vaccine are likely to be presented to authorities for evaluation by the end of the month, and company officials are

aiming to roll out the product before April, two senior scientists connected to the Department of Biotechnology told The Hindu .

The mRNA vaccine being developed by Pune-based Gennova Biopharmaceuticals is currently in phase 2/3 trials to evaluate the safety, tolerability and immunogenicity of the candidate vaccine in healthy subjects. Around 4,000 volunteers have been recruited for the trial.

India has so far approved at least six vaccines that can be manufactured locally but only two — Covishield and Covaxin — have been administered to over 99% Indians. Globally, mRNA vaccines have been at the vanguard of inoculation programmes in the United States and Europe because they exploit recent advances in molecular biotechnology and are said to be quicker to manufacture than older, well-established vaccine design principles.

A limitation of the mRNA vaccines, or those made by Pfizer and Moderna, was that they were required to be stored in sub-zero conditions — a tough proposition in a country where such a degree of refrigeration is limited in availability. However, the prospective Gennova vaccine can be stored in ordinary refrigerators, the makers of Gennova have claimed earlier. The mRNA vaccine, can also purportedly be tweaked to be effective against newer variants, but so far, all the vaccines developed — including the prospective Gennova vaccine — have been customised to the original SARS-CoV-2.

Gennova has been funded with ₹125 crore from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

One official said that the company had faced challenges in recruiting volunteers because, to evaluate the vaccine's efficacy, it would be necessary to find volunteers who had neither been vaccinated nor exposed to the virus. Several serology surveys have shown 70%-90% of adults and children have been exposed to the virus, and hence express antibodies on being tested since March 2020.

“From what I know, the company is ready to roll-out the vaccine by March or April and will be approaching the Drug Controller General of India soon,” said Govindraj Padmanabhan, who chairs a vaccine committee of the DBT and has closely followed developments in the vaccine space.

Sanjay Singh, CEO, Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, did not respond to text messages for comment.

As of Wednesday, India has administered over 171 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

Health Ministry figures suggest that while 77% of the eligible adult population in India are fully vaccinated, 95% have received at least one COVID-19 jab. Over 65% of adolescents in the 15-18 years category have also received their first dose. In those vaccinated, close to 86% have received Covishield while nearly 14% have availed Covaxin.

एमआरएन वैक्सीन

कोविड-19: चीन बना रहा खुद की एमआरएन वैक्सीन, फाइजर व माडर्ना को देगा टक्कर, अब तक नहीं किया कोई टीका आयात  
वर्ल्ड डेस्क, अमर उजाला, बीजिंग Published by: सुरेंद्र जोशी Updated Thu, 17 Feb 2022 11:19 AM IST  
सार

चीन अब इस असाधारण प्रभाव वाले टीके को खुद बनाएगा। उसके इस कदम से अमेरिकी कंपनी फाइजर व माडर्ना को टक्कर मिल सकती है।  
कोरोना वैक्सीन (Amar ujala: 20220217)

<https://www.amarujala.com/business/business-diary/covid-19-china-is-making-its-own-mrn-vaccine-will-compete-with-pfizer-and-moderna-has-not-imported-any-vaccine-yet?src=tlh&position=3>

चीन अपनी खुद की एमआरएन वैक्सीन (mRNA vaccine) बनाने जा रहा है। दुनिया में सबसे पहले कोरोना वायरस का पता लगाने वाले चीन ने अब तक किसी वैक्सीन का आयात नहीं किया है। चीन अब इस असाधारण प्रभाव वाले टीके को बनाएगा। उसके इस कदम से अमेरिकी कंपनी फाइजर व माडर्ना को टक्कर मिल सकती है।

चीन अब तक अपनी दो कंपनियों- सिनोवैक और सिनोफार्म द्वारा विकसित कोरोना रोधी टीकों पर ही निर्भर है। इसे बदलने के लिए वह खुद की एमआरएनए वैक्सीन विकसित कर रहा है। सिनोवैक व सिनोफार्म के टीके परंपरागत तरीकों से विकसित किए जाते हैं। इनमें कोरोना वायरस के पूरे रूप होते हैं। इन्हें निष्क्रिय करने के लिए आजमाए गए तरीके से ये टीके बनाए गए हैं।

ओमिक्रॉन से नहीं बचा पा रहे चीनी टीके

चीन की इन दोनों कंपनियों के टीके शुरू में लोगों को संक्रमित होने से बचाने में कारगर थे, लेकिन समय के साथ यह सुरक्षा कमजोर हो गई। ओमिक्रॉन के मामले में तो ये एक तरह से निष्प्रभावी रहे। इसी कारण चीन ज्यादा प्रभावी टीके बनाने के दबाव में आया। वायरस का संक्रमण रोकने के लिए चीन अब एमआरएनए वैक्सीन बनाएगा। एमआरएनए वैक्सीन बिलकुल अलग तरीके से काम करती है।

सबसे विश्वसनीय Hindi News वेबसाइट अमर उजाला पर पढ़ें कारोबार समाचार और Budget 2022 से जुड़ी ब्रेकिंग अपडेट। कारोबार जगत की अन्य खबरें जैसे पर्सनल फाइनेंस, लाइव प्रॉपर्टी न्यूज़, लेटेस्ट बैंकिंग बीमा इन हिंदी, ऑनलाइन मार्केट न्यूज़, लेटेस्ट कॉर्पोरेट समाचार और बाजार आदि से संबंधित ब्रेकिंग न्यूज़।

## New Infection

**कोविड-19: दुनियाभर में 19 फीसदी घटे नए संक्रमित, दो साल बाद अमेरिकी कंपनियों का कामकाज पटरी पर (Amar ujala: 20220217)**

<https://www.amarujala.com/world/covid-19-new-coronavirus-cases-decreased-by-19-percent-worldwide-after-two-years-the-work-of-american-companies-on-track?src=tlh&position=6>



विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के मुताबिक पिछले सप्ताह विश्व स्तर पर कोरोना संक्रमितों के नए केस 19 फीसदी घटे हैं, वहीं मौतों की संख्या स्थिर है।  
**Students in USA**

**Students in USA - फोटो : pixabay**

विस्तार

पूरी दुनिया में कोरोना महामारी से फिलहाल राहत मिलने की खबर है। कई देशों में कोरोना संक्रमित घट गए हैं। इसके चलते वहां की सरकारों ने कोविड पाबंदियां हटा दी हैं। अमेरिका में दो साल बाद कंपनियों का कामकाज सामान्य हो रहा है।

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (WHO) के मुताबिक पिछले सप्ताह विश्व स्तर पर कोरोना संक्रमितों के नए केस 19 फीसदी घटे हैं, वहीं मौतों की संख्या स्थिर है। मंगलवार को जारी साप्ताहिक कोरोना रिपोर्ट में डब्ल्यूएचओ ने यह बात कही है। संगठन ने कहा कि बीते सप्ताह विश्व में 1.60 करोड़ नए संक्रमित मिले जबकि इसी दौरान 75 हजार मौतें हुईं। डब्ल्यूएचओ ने कहा है कि ओमिक्रॉन के मुकाबले कोरोना के अन्य सभी वैरिएंट के संक्रमित तेजी से घट रहे हैं। इनमें अल्फा, बीटा, डेल्टा वैरिएंट शामिल हैं।

उधर, अमेरिकी स्वास्थ्य अधिकारियों का कहना है कि वे कोविड-19 महामारी के अगले चरण से निपटने की तैयारियां कर रहे हैं, क्योंकि ओमिक्रॉन से संबंधित केस घट रहे हैं। मास्क पहनने और टेस्टिंग क्षमता को लेकर नई गाइडलाइंस तैयार की जा रही हैं।

अमेरिका के कई राज्यों ने केस घटने के कारण कोविड पाबंदियों को हटाना शुरू कर दिया है। अमेरिकी सेंटर फॉर डिजिज कंट्रोल एंड प्रिवेंशन (CDC) के आंकड़ों के अनुसार पिछले सप्ताह के मुकाबले समीक्षाधीन सप्ताह में साप्ताहिक औसत संक्रमण दर 40 फीसदी घटी है। वहीं अस्पतालों में संक्रमित होने वालों की दैनिक संख्या 28 फीसदी कम हुई है। कोरोना से दैनिक मौतों की संख्या भी नौ फीसदी घटी है। सीडीसी के निदेशक रोशेल वैलेन्सकी का कहना है कि नई कोरोना गाइडलाइंस जल्द जारी की जाएगी। इसमें मास्क को लेकर भी नए नियम जारी हो सकते हैं।

इन कंपनियों ने मास्क से दी राहत, दफ्तर पहुंचना अनिवार्य

अमेरिकी कंपनी टॉयसन फूड्स ने कोविड टीके लगवा चुके अपने कर्मचारियों के लिए कुछ इकाइयों में मास्क की अनिवार्यता खत्म कर दी है। देश की पहले व दूसरे नंबर की कंपनी वॉलमार्ट व अमेजन टीके लगवा चुके कर्मचारियों को पहले ही मास्क से मुक्ति दे चुकी हैं। टेक कंपनियों माइक्रोसॉफ्ट व फेसबुक ने कर्मचारियों को दफ्तर पहुंचना अनिवार्य कर दिया है।

माइक्रोसॉफ्ट ने वॉशिंगटन का रेडमंड दफ्तर 28 फरवरी से खोलने का एलान किया है। वह कुछ कर्मचारियों को घर से कुछ को दफ्तर से काम करने की हाइब्रिड वर्किंग पर काम कर रही है। फेसबुक की पैरेंट कंपनी मेटा प्लेटफॉर्म ने 31 जनवरी को दफ्तर खोलने का फैसला किया। कर्मचारियों को 28 मार्च तक दोनों टीकों व बूस्टर के प्रमाण पत्र के साथ ज्वाइन करने को कहा गया है।