

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2257
TO BE ANSWERED ON 15.12.2023**

PREPAREDNESS AGAINST RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

**2257. SHRI N. REDDEPPA:
SHRI THIRUNAVUKKARASAR SU:
ADV. ADOOR PRAKASH:
DR. PON GAUTHAM SIGAMANI:
SHRIMATI ANGADI MANGAL SURESH:
SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SINGH:
SHRI P.V. MIDHUN REDDY:
SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH:**

Will the **Minister of HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- a) whether the Government is aware of the reports of increasing respiratory illnesses such as walking pneumonia in China being attributed to Influenza, Mycoplasma pneumonia, SARS-CoV-2, and other pathogens, as indicated by WHO reports and if so, the details thereof;
- b) the details of the advisory issued to the States/UTs regarding preparedness to contain the said diseases including periodical review, monitoring while ensuring the availability of healthcare resources, hospital beds, drugs, vaccines, medical oxygen, personal protective equipment, testing kits, and reagents;
- c) the details and progress regarding the readiness of the Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDLs) across States for testing respiratory pathogens and related services;
- d) whether the States/UTs have been asked by the Union Government to send nasal and throat samples of the patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) particularly of children and adolescents for testing in laboratory and if so, the details thereof;
- e) the details of the district and state surveillance units of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project instituted/to be instituted to keep a watch on the cases; and
- f) the details of other preventive measures including restrictions on Travel and review of the implementation of the advisory issued to the States/UTs taken/to be taken to contain the said diseases?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
(PROF. S. P. SINGH BAGHEL)**

(a): WHO in statements issued on 22nd and 23rd November, 2023 reported about (i) increase in incidence of Influenza-like Illness (ILI) from northern China being witnessed since October,

2023, which has been attributed to rise to circulation of known pathogens (including Influenza, Mycoplasma pneumoniae, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and SARS-CoV-2) by Chinese authorities; and (ii) clusters of un-diagnosed pneumonia among children from Northern China. As reported by WHO, Chinese authorities have not reported detection of any unusual or novel pathogens or unusual clinical presentations, but a general increase in respiratory illnesses due to multiple known pathogens.

(b): Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in its advisory issued on 25th November, 2023 has requested all States/UTs to review their public health and hospital preparedness and response capacities, including review of requisite human resource, hospital beds, testing capacities, availability of medical counter measures and adequate provisioning of infection control practices in health facilities. Reiterating this Ministry's guidance on 'Operational Guidelines for Revised Surveillance Strategy in context of COVID-19', States have been requested to strengthen ILI/SARI surveillance for respiratory diseases and its regular reporting on IDSP-IHIP platform.

(c) and (d): In terms of enhancing laboratory capacities for timely laboratory based confirmation of etiologies, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has established a network of more than 150 Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDLs) for strengthening of nation-wide network of laboratories to allow for timely detection and laboratory based confirmation of pathogens. In response to reports of surge in respiratory illness from China, as a measure of abundant precaution, VRDL network has been instructed to undertake testing of all samples of SARI cases, with particular focus on samples from children. Further, VRDL network has also been shared a list of priority viral and bacterial agents (including M. pneumoniae) for which the samples need to be tested.

(e): To allow for timely detection of disease outbreaks, disease surveillance activities have been strengthened under Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) which allows for a decentralized system of trained Rapid Response Team (RRTs) at Central, State and District levels to monitor disease trends and institute requisite public health control and containment measures in early rising phase of outbreaks.

(f): While WHO, in context of surge in respiratory illness in China has not recommended any trade/travel restrictions, Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare continues to maintain a close watch over the evolving situation in China, as well as globally. Further, in accordance with Ministry of Health & FW's 'Guidelines for International Arrivals' issued on 19th July, 2023, thermal screening of international travellers to India is conducted at the points of entry.
