

India steps up COVID genome sequencing as China cases soar

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India's federal health ministry instructed state authorities on Tuesday to step up genome sequencing of COVID cases in view of a "sudden spurt" in cases in China and elsewhere.

In a [letter](#) seen by AFP, the ministry said that it is "essential to gear up the [whole genome](#) sequencing of positive case samples" in order to track any new variants.

Genome sequencing can be used to identify and track COVID variants.

"In this context, all states are requested to ensure that as far as possible samples of all positive cases, on a daily basis, are sent" to nationally designated genome sequencing laboratories, the letter said.

It said there had been a "sudden spurt" in cases not just in China but also in Japan, the United States, South Korea and Brazil.

Cases are soaring across China, with crematoriums and hospitals struggling to cope in the wake of the government's sudden decision to lift years of lockdowns, quarantines and mass testing.

The United States has warned the outbreak is now of concern to the rest of the world, given the potential for further virus mutations and the size of China.

India, which suffered badly at the height of the pandemic, has not so far reported any significant rise in cases.

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