

India's Covid Situation Hugely Concerning, Says WHO Chief

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United Nations: India's COVID-19 situation remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Friday, warning that the pandemic's second year will be "far more deadly" than the first for the world.

Ghebreyesus added that the WHO is responding to the COVID-19 surge in India and has shipped thousands of oxygen concentrators, tents for mobile field hospitals, masks and other medical supplies.

"India remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths," he said at the daily media briefing.

"And we thank all the stakeholders who are supporting India," the WHO Director-General said.

India is in the midst of a deadly wave of the coronavirus pandemic, with 3,43,144 people testing positive for the virus on Friday, taking the country's caseload to 2,40,46,809. The death count stands at 2,62,317.

India's COVID-19 tally crossed the 10 million mark on December 19 and in under six months it has doubled, surpassing the grim milestone of 20 million cases on May 4.

Ghebreyesus pointed out that the emergency-like situation was not restricted to India.

"Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Egypt are just some of the countries that are dealing with spikes in cases and hospitalisations," he said adding that some countries in the Americas still have high numbers of cases and as a region, the Americas accounted for 40 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths last week.

There are also spikes in some countries in Africa. "These countries are in heightened response mode and WHO will continue to provide support in all ways possible," he said.

Noting that COVID-19 has already cost more than 3.3 million lives across the world, Ghebreyesus said, "We're on track for the second year of this pandemic to be far more deadly than the first."

He lamented that vaccine supply remains a key challenge and that saving lives and livelihoods with a combination of public health measures and vaccination - not one or the other - is the only way out of the pandemic.

- NDTV