Karnataka: ‘Nanjangud cluster remains a mystery’

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BENGALURU: The Covid-19 cluster case of Nanjangud pharmaceutical company that has led to more than 40 cases of infection among its employees and their primary contacts, is still a mystery, said health commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey.

During a Facebook-live interaction with TOI on Tuesday, he said there are several missing links in the cluster. “It’s a mystery to us and also to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, that conducted the tests. The virus can’t come from nowhere and affect the entire area,” he said.
He said the investigation is subject to the veracity of the statements made by multiple patients from the cluster. House-to-house surveys will be done in the area to identify fever cases, he said.

**Two labs to come up in each district**

To broadbase testing across the state, the government has asked the district authorities to start procurement of required equipment to set up a minimum of two biosafety level-3 labs in each district. The government is awaiting arrival of one lakh rapid testing kits which will also enhance the testing capability.

Participating in the discussion, Dr Asish Kumar Satapathy, regional team leader (south), World Health Organisation country office for India, said the replication number of Covid-19 is 2.5 to 3. "An affected person can potentially spread the infection to three persons in 4-5 days, if there are no measures taken to contain it. Going by the mathematical models, this translates to 400 persons affected within 3-4 weeks. Hence, measures like lockdown are a must," he said.

"With the lockdown, we can achieve two things: By segregating people from not combining so that physical distance is maintained and hence, flattening the curve. During this time, preparations can be made to get the hospitals equipped," he added.

However, the lockdown alone will not help; increasing the number of tests and containment measures must be followed, Satapathy added.

"This virus is going to change many aspects of our lives. It's a long haul. Respiratory etiquette, hand-washing measures and use of masks are to be inculcated," he said.