

# US reports nearly 9.5 mn child COVID cases

China suspects COVID-19 might arrive in overseas mail

COVID-19 health emergency could be over this year: WHO

Hong Kong orders Hamster cull

**SWITZERLAND, CHINA, US, HONG KONG:** Nearly 9.5 million children in the United States have tested positive for COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic, and child COVID-19 cases have “spiked dramatically” across the country, according to the latest report of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children’s Hospital Association.

A total of 9,452,491 child COVID-19 cases had been reported across the country as of January 13, and children represented 17.8 per cent of all confirmed cases, according to the report published Tuesday. The overall rate was 12,559 cases per 100,000 children in the population.

Nearly one million child cases were reported in the past week ending January 13, four times the rate of the peak of last winters’ surge, according to the AAP.

Meanwhile, China is urging people to wear masks and gloves when opening mail, especially from abroad, after authorities suggested the first case of the Omicron coronavirus virus variant found in Beijing could have arrived via a package from Canada.

Authorities vowed to step up disinfection of overseas mail and are insisting

postal staff handling it are fully vaccinated. The precautions come less than three weeks before the capital opens the Winter Olympic Games and as several cities work to stamp out new outbreaks of coronavirus infections.

“Minimize purchases of overseas goods or receiving mail from abroad,” state broadcaster CCTV said late on Monday in a social media post.

“Be sure to protect yourself during face-to-face handovers and wear masks and gloves; try to open the package outdoors.”

Meanwhile, the worst of the coronavirus pandemic — deaths, hospitalizations and lockdowns — could be over this year if huge inequities in vaccinations and medicines are addressed quickly, the head of emergencies at the World Health Organization said Tuesday.

Dr. Michael Ryan, speaking during a panel discussion on vaccine inequity hosted by the World Economic Forum, said “we may never end the virus” because such pandemic viruses “end up becoming part of the ecosystem.”

But “we have a chance to end the public health emergency this year if we do the things that we’ve been talking about,” he said.



WHO has slammed the imbalance in COVID-19 vaccinations between rich and poor countries as a catastrophic moral failure. Fewer than 10% of people in lower-income countries have received even one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Ryan told the virtual gathering of world and business leaders that if vaccines and other tools aren’t shared fairly, the tragedy of the virus, which has so far killed more than 5.5 million people worldwide, would continue.

“What we need to do is get to low levels of disease incidence with maximum vaccination of our populations, so nobody has to die,” Ryan said. “The issue is: It’s the death. It’s the hospitalizations. It’s the disruption of our social, economic, politi-

cal systems that’s caused the tragedy — not the virus.”

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, some hamsters tested positive for COVID-19 at a pet store and authorities will now cull as many as 2,000 rodents “as a precautionary measure”. Officials will also stop the sale and import of rodents in the city. The move came after one of the employees of the pet shop contracted the disease.

According to the reports, authorities are also working to track customers who purchased hamsters from the affected store after January 7 and are asking the owners to quarantine as per the mandate. They will also undergo a mandatory COVID test. - THE HINDU, THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, ANI