This epidemiological bulletin aims to provide the situation of key infectious diseases in the WHO South-East Asia region to inform risk assessments and responses. The bulletin uses information from publicly available sources and will be published every two weeks. For feedback or suggestions, please write to seoutbreak@who.int.

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Key events and updates

National consultative workshop on “national pandemic preparedness plan for respiratory viruses” in India

- The "National Consultative Workshop on Pandemic Preparedness Plan for Respiratory Viruses" was held on December 8-9, 2023, at Hotel Le Meridian in New Delhi.
- Organized by India’s Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), the workshop aimed to update India’s Pandemic Preparedness Plan for Respiratory Viruses.
- The event was a response to the lessons learned from previous Influenza pandemics and the ongoing COVID-19 situation, focusing on the development of a collaborative plan incorporating the latest WHO guidance.
- Around 21 stakeholders and 70 participants actively engaged in discussions during the two-day event.
- The workshop’s discussions centered on pandemic management and technical expertise, aiming to enhance the National Preparedness and Response Plan in alignment with WHO’s Preparedness and resilience for emerging threats (PRET) framework.
- It featured five focused teams working on Access to Countermeasures, Clinical Care, Collaborative Surveillance, Community Protection, and Emergency Coordination, employing a scenario-based methodology for a flexible pandemic response.
- The event concluded with a summary of expert recommendations and a decision to further refine and consolidate the proposed pandemic preparedness plan.

Participants of the National Consultative Workshop on Pandemic Preparedness Plan for Respiratory Viruses
New WHO Publication: ‘A checklist for respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness planning’

- On 8 December, WHO published a “A checklist for respiratory pathogen pandemic preparedness planning”.
- The checklist is an operational tool to help national authorities develop or revise national respiratory pathogen (inclusive of influenza and coronaviruses) pandemic preparedness plans.
- The checklist presents suggested priority actions that countries can take now to be better prepared for a pandemic and is in-line with the Preparedness and resilience for emerging threats (PRET) approach and in conjunction with PRET module 1: planning for respiratory pathogen pandemics.
- The checklist covers:
  - Emergency coordination
  - Collaborative surveillance
  - Community protection
  - Clinical care
  - Access to countermeasures
  - Monitoring, evaluating, testing, and revising plans

New WHO Publication: ‘Future surveillance for epidemic and pandemic diseases’

- To address the vulnerabilities of infectious hazards due to gaps in surveillance from the local to the global levels, the health emergency preparedness, response and resilience (HEPR) architecture calls for a new approach to future surveillance – collaborative surveillance – that aligns traditional tactics with new initiatives to safeguard health for all.
- The report which reflects the inputs and advice from leading experts and describes the global context and the result of horizon scanning of infectious diseases with pandemic and epidemic potential, including newly emerging and re-emerging zoonoses with a focus on surveillance.
- The report includes chapters on:
  - The evolving surveillance landscape including digitalization and genomics.
  - Needs and gaps including raising awareness in health systems and communities about unusual signs, laboratory capabilities to conduct molecular diagnostics, and understanding the human-animal-interface.
  - Challenges including privacy and ethical concerns and data sharing.
  - Opportunities including participatory and community-based surveillance and making use of open and freely available software including R and QGIS.
  - Shaping the future which includes the themes discussed in the previous chapters.
COVID-19

Status as of 10 December 2023

- In the WHO South-East Asia Region, from 27 November to 10 December 2023, 3,412 new COVID-19 cases and 18 new deaths have been reported,
  - Between 27 November and 10 December 2023, India (1,291 new cases, +319.2%), Thailand (1,126 new cases, +29.4%), Indonesia (887 new cases, +204.8%), Bangladesh (73 new cases, +7.4%) and Sri Lanka (25 new cases, +47.1%) reported an increase in the number of new cases, compared to previous two weeks.
  - In the same period, Myanmar reported 10 new cases which is similar to the number reported during the previous two weeks.
  - Data were not available from Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Timor-Leste for this period.
- The Region has recorded a cumulative total of 61,215,397 COVID-19 cases, including 808,092 deaths.
- Please refer to the [WHO SEARO COVID-19 dashboard](https://covid19.who.int/) for further information of COVID-19 in WHO South-East Asia Region.
- Globally, 772,138,818 COVID-19 cases, including 6,985,964 deaths have been cumulatively reported, as of 6 December 2023.

### Table 1. COVID-19 cases, deaths, and the weekly change in countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region in the week from 27 November to 10 December 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cumulative cases</th>
<th>New cases (last 14 days)</th>
<th>% change in new cases</th>
<th>New cases per 1M pop</th>
<th>Cumulative deaths</th>
<th>New deaths (last 14 days)</th>
<th>% change in new deaths</th>
<th>New deaths per 1M pop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>6,815,186</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>204.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>161,923</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>45,003,055</td>
<td>1,291</td>
<td>319.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>533,306</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>166.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4,792,712</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>34,500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>166.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2,048,133</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>29,477</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>672,654</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>16,866</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>641,386</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>19,494</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>82,697</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>185,694</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1,003,450</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>12,031</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>23,460</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAR total</td>
<td>61,215,397</td>
<td>3,412</td>
<td>118.2</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>804,892</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent change in the number of newly confirmed cases/deaths in past 14 days, compared to two weeks.
NA = data not available.
DPR Korea has not reported confirmed COVID-19 cases.
Thailand data were for the period from 26 November to 9 December 2023 in comparison to the preceding two weeks.
As for cumulative numbers, Maldives data are as of 5 August, Timor-Leste data as of 11 August, Bhutan data as of 8 October and Nepal data as of 20 October 2023.

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1 Data as of 6:59 pm CET, 6 December 2023 link: [https://covid19.who.int/](https://covid19.who.int/)
Figure 1. Weekly number of new COVID-19 cases reported during the previous eight weeks (27 November to 10 December 2023) in the WHO South-East Asia Region *

* Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal and Timor-Leste data are not available. Thailand data are for the period from 3 to 9 December 2023 in comparison to the preceding week.

Figure 2. Weekly number of SARS-CoV-2 positive samples and test positivity from integrated influenza-SARS-CoV-2 sentinel surveillance systems in the previous seven weeks (1 October to 26 November 2023) in selected countries* (as of 26 November 2023)

* Countries routinely conducting SARS-COV-2 testing of the samples collected through influenza sentinel surveillance sites (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Nepal and Timor-Leste).
SARS-CoV-2 variants in the South-East Asia Region

- As of 9 December 2023, the sequence data submitted to GISAID by countries in the South-East Asia region in the last 60 days by date of collection are shown in the Table 2. Only a small number of sequences has been submitted from the Region and therefore the data should be interpreted with caution.
  - In **India**, 33 sequences were submitted, with BA.2 and its sub-lineages (categorized as ‘other’ and excluding BA.2.86*) accounted for the highest percentage (51.5%, n=17) followed by XBB.2.3* (21.2%, n=7).
  - In **Indonesia**, only one sequence was submitted (XBB.2.3*).
  - In **Thailand**, 198 sequences were submitted. HK.3* and EG.5* accounted for the majority of sequences (23.7% (n=47) and 20.7% (n=41) respectively). These were followed by XBB.1.16* (16.7%, n=33) and XBB.1.9.1* (8.6%, n=17).
  - Other countries have not submitted sequences recently to GISAID.

Table 2. Percentage and number of variants of interest (VOIs) and variants under monitoring (VUMs) submitted to GISAID within the past 30 and 31-60 days as of 9 December 2023 (by date of sample collection)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lineage</th>
<th>India (n=33)</th>
<th>Indonesia (n=1)</th>
<th>Thailand (n=198)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;31 days</td>
<td>31-60 days</td>
<td>&lt;31 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=0)</td>
<td>(n=33)</td>
<td>(n=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOIs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBB.1.5*</td>
<td>2 (6.1%)</td>
<td>2 (7.1%)</td>
<td>10 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBB.1.16*</td>
<td>1 (3.0%)</td>
<td>5 (17.9%)</td>
<td>28 (16.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG.5*</td>
<td>2 (6.1%)</td>
<td>5 (17.9%)</td>
<td>36 (21.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK.3*</td>
<td>6 (21.4%)</td>
<td>41 (24.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HV.1*</td>
<td>1 (3.6%)</td>
<td>4 (2.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA.2.86*</td>
<td>4 (14.3%)</td>
<td>7 (4.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VUMs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV.7*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBB*</td>
<td>1 (3.0%)</td>
<td>5 (2.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBB.1.9.1*</td>
<td>2 (7.1%)</td>
<td>15 (8.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBB.1.9.2*</td>
<td>1 (3.6%)</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBB.2.3*</td>
<td>7 (21.2%)</td>
<td>1 (100.0%)</td>
<td>2 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20 (60.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*indicates the sub-lineage of each variant.
XBB* excludes XBB.1.16*, XBB.1.5*, XBB.1.9.1, XBB.1.9.2 and XBB.2.3*
XBB.1.9.2* excludes the sub-lineage EG.5*
EG.5* excludes the sub-lineages HK.3* and HV.1* but includes JG.3*
BA.2.86* includes JN.1*

For information on the global circulation of SARS-CoV-2 variants please refer to the WHO Tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants webpage.
**mpox**

Status as of 10 December 2023

- In epidemiological weeks 48 and 49 (from 27 November to 10 December 2023), 21 new mpox cases were reported from Thailand and 6 new mpox cases from Indonesia.
- In the WHO South-East Asia Region, a total of 768 laboratory-confirmed mpox cases (including two deaths) have been reported since 14 July 2022 (Figure 3).
- Table 3 summarizes the basic epidemiological profile of the 719 mpox cases in the Region for which case-based information is available.
- For more information on the global situation of mpox outbreak, please visit the global dashboard.

**Figure 3. Number of mpox cases reported in WHO South-East Asia Region by date of notification* (14 July 2022 – 10 December 2023)**

*Cases are plotted as per the week of notification (according to the date on which the case is notified to the public health authority). Where the date of notification is missing for 59 cases in Indonesia, this has been replaced with the date of diagnosis.
Table 3. Profile of the 719 confirmed mpox cases reported in WHO South-East Asia Region for which case-based information is available since July 2022 and since July 2023 (as of 10 December 2023)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Since July 2022 (n = 719)</th>
<th>Since July 2023 (n = 586)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>27 (3.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>60 (8.3%)</td>
<td>59 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1 (0.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>4 (0.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>627 (87.2%)</td>
<td>527 (89.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31 (4.3%)</td>
<td>9 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>687 (95.5%)</td>
<td>577 (98.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1 (0.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age group (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 18</td>
<td>4 (0.6%)</td>
<td>3 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>243 (33.8%)</td>
<td>204 (34.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>309 (43.0%)</td>
<td>252 (43.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>136 (18.9%)</td>
<td>110 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and over</td>
<td>27 (3.8%)</td>
<td>17 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>55 (7.6%)</td>
<td>31 (5.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men who have sex with men (MSM)</td>
<td>580 (80.7%)</td>
<td>494 (84.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>10 (1.4%)</td>
<td>9 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19 (2.6%)</td>
<td>17 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>55 (7.6%)</td>
<td>35 (6.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent travel</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43 (6.0%)</td>
<td>12 (2.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>668 (92.9%)</td>
<td>572 (97.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>8 (1.1%)</td>
<td>2 (0.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Dates are by date of reporting to MOH with the exception of Indonesia where the date of notification was not available and therefore the date of diagnosis was used.
Dengue

**Bangladesh**

- A total of 3,526 new dengue cases were reported in Bangladesh during week 49 (4 to 10 December 2023), a 36.3% decrease compared to week 48 (27 November to 3 December 2023) (n=5,539). The number of new deaths also decreased by 14.7% from 34 in week 48 to 29 in week 49.
- During November 2023, a total of 40,716 cases including 274 deaths were reported, a 39.9% decrease compared to 67,769 cases reported during October 2023. The highest monthly numbers of cases and deaths based available historical data from 2019 to 2023 were reported in September 2023 (79,598 and 396, respectively). Between 1 and 10 December a total of 5,341 cases including 39 deaths have been reported (Figure 4).
- A total of 317,232 dengue cases including 1,661 deaths have been cumulatively reported between 1 January and 30 November 2023 with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 0.52%.

**Figure 4. Number of new cases of, and deaths from dengue by month in Bangladesh from January 2019 to 30 November 2023**

**Maldives**

- No new data have been uploaded since the Monthly Communicable Disease report for May 2023 in Maldives. Please refer to previous versions of the [South-East Asia Epidemiological Bulletin](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/south-east-asia-epidemiological-bulletin) for prior epidemiological information.

**Nepal**

- A total of 287 cases of dengue were reported in Nepal during week 48 (27 November to 3 December 2023) via the Early Warning and Reporting System (EWARS), an 18.9% decrease compared to week 47 (20 to 26 November, n= 354) (Figure 5).
- Between 1 January and 17 November 2023, 49 761 dengue cases, including 20 confirmed deaths (CFR=0.04%), have been reported from 77 districts in Nepal. Of these 49 761 cases:
  - The highest number of monthly cases in 2023 has been reported in September (n=13 472).
  - The highest cumulative number of cases reported from Sunsari district, Koshi province (16 165 cases, 1 819 cases per 100 000 population), while the highest cumulative case incidence has been reported from Tanahu district, Gandaki province (6 924 cases, 2 019 cases per 100 000 population).
  - Over time, the spatial distribution of cases has changed: In August 2023, incidence was highest in districts in Koshi province (Sunsari, Sankhuwasabha and Morang) as well as Dhading in Bagmati province; in October 2023, incidence was highest in districts in Gandaki province (Tanahun, Gorkha and Kaski).

![Figure 5. Number of new cases of dengue by week reported by the Early Warning and Reporting System (EWARS) in Nepal from January 2018 to 3 December 2023](https://edcd.gov.np/resources/newsletter)


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Sri Lanka

- A total of 2,472 dengue cases were reported in Sri Lanka in week 48 (27 November to 3 December), a 24.5% increase compared to 1,986 cases reported in week 47 (20 to 26 November 2023) (Figure 6).
- As of 3 December (end of week 48), a total of 77,347 cases of dengue have been reported in Sri Lanka in 2023. This compares to 69,374 cases reported between weeks one and 48 in 2022.

Figure 6. Number of new cases of dengue by week in Sri Lanka from January 2018 to 3 December 2023

Sources: Epidemiology Unit and National Dengue Control Unit, Ministry of Health.
https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/95b978f1-5c1a-44fb-a436-e19819e939c0/page/XRtTB (2021 to 2023)
Thailand

- As of 6 December, a total of 142,680 dengue cases (inclusive of dengue (n=107,890, 75.6%), dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) (n=33,619, 23.6%) and dengue shock syndrome (DSS) (n=1,171, 0.8%)) and 154 dengue deaths (inclusive of dengue (n=15, 9.7%), DHF (n=42, 27.3%) and DSS (n=97, 63.0%)) (CFR=0.1%) were reported in Thailand in 2023.
- In 2023, the number of cumulative cases and deaths between January and November (n=142,603 and n=154, respectively) is higher than that reported for the same period in previous years (2018 to 2022).
- Of the 142,680 cases reported until 6 December 2023, there were equal proportions of males and females (50.9% (n=72,679) and 49.1% (n=70,001), respectively). Those aged five to 14 years comprised 34.3% of cases (n=48,917) and those aged 15 to 24 years accounted for 22.9% (n=32,656).

Figure 7. Number of new dengue cases and deaths by month in Thailand from January 2018 to November 2023

Influenza

Status as of 10 December 2023

- From the week starting 26 June 2023, in the WHO South-East Asia Region, an increase in transmission of seasonal influenza has been observed. The percentage of specimens positive for influenza has remained between 18% and 25% from the week beginning on 24 July to the week beginning on 27 November 2023. During this period, a decline in transmission was observed from 11 September to 23 October (13.7%) and then it started rising again. On 27 November, the test positivity was 15.8%. During this period, the most frequently circulating strains were Influenza A/H3, A/H1N1pdm09 and B Victoria (Figure 8).

- The increases were primarily driven by Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand and Bhutan.

- In Bangladesh, in spite of the observed increased transmission, since the week starting on 21 August, there has been a steady decline. The percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza virus was decreasing from 39% (n=167) in the week beginning on 21 August 2023 to 2.52% (n=3) in the week beginning on 20 November 2023. The transmission in Bangladesh was primarily driven by influenza subtype B Victoria followed by Influenza A/H3 and influenza A/H1N1 pdm09.

- In Nepal, the percentage of specimens testing positive started to increase from the week beginning on 7 August and until 13 November 2023, remained between 5% and 28% (Figure 9). From week beginning on 2 October (28%) , it has shown a steep declining trend till the week of 23 October (1.4%). Since then, the influenza positivity was fluctuating between 1.4% (23 October) and 11.5% (on 6 November). The proportion positive specimens for influenza on 5.6% in the week beginning on 27 November.

- In Thailand, the percentage of specimens positive for influenza increased from 29% in the week starting on 14 August to 38% in the week starting on 25 September. However, in weeks starting from 23 October and 30 October, the positivity has fallen to below 25% but again increased from the week starting from 23 October (23,4%) to 27 November reaching a 31%. In the last month, the most frequently circulating strains have been the subtype influenza A/H3 followed by influenza A/H1N1 pdm09 and a significant proportion of subtype influenza B Victoria (Figure 10).

- In Bhutan, the percentage of specimens testing positive started to increase from week starting on 17 July and reached the highest (48%) on week starting 25 September. Since then, until week starting from 27 November 2023, the positivity proportion has remained between 12% and 43%. It has now decreased to 27% on the week starting from 27 November. The transmission in Bhutan was primarily driven by Influenza A/H3 followed by influenza subtype B Victoria and influenza A/H1N1 pdm09 and (Figure 11).

- From the week starting on 2 October to the week starting on 27 November, the proportion of respiratory samples collected at influenza sentinel surveillance sites in these countries that tested positive for COVID-19 varied from 0.90% to 2.0% (Figure 2).

- Data sources and information on influenza, including updates of integrated surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 using influenza sentinel surveillance systems, are available at WHO SEARO Influenza dashboard.
Figure 8. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in WHO South-East Asia Region (as of 4 December 2023)

Figure 9. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in Nepal 2023 (as of 27 November 2023)
Figure 10. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in Thailand 2023 (as of 26 November 2023)

Figure 11. Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtypes and the influenza test positivity in Bhutan 2023 (as of 27 November 2023)