

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3233
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.12.2021**

OMICRON VARIANT

**3233. SHRIMATI RANJEETA KOLI:
SHRI ANUMULA REVANTH REDDY:
SHRI NAMA NAGESWARA RAO:
SHRI SAPTAGIRI SANKAR ULAKA:
SHRI RITESH PANDEY:
SHRI SANJAY SETH:
SHRI MANOJ KOTAK:
SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:
SHRI RAKESH SINGH:
PROF. SOUGATA RAY:
SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN:
SHRI ANTO ANTONY:
SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH:
SHRIMATI ANGADI MANGAL SURESH:
SHRI PRAJWAL REVANNA:
SHRI SUNIL KUMAR SINGH:
SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI:
SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH:
SHRI LALLU SINGH:
SHRI VIJAYAKUMAR (ALIAS) VIJAY VASANTH:
SHRI SANJAY SADASHIVRAO MANDLIK:
SHRI SUMEDHANAND SARASWATI:
SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV:
SHRI BIDYUT BARAN MAHATO:
SHRI THIRUNAVUKKARASAR SU:
SHRI M. BADRUDDIN AJMAL:
SHRI RANJEETSINGH HINDURAO NAIK NIMBALKAR:
SHRIMATI PRATIMA MONDAL:
SHRI RAVNEET SINGH BITTU:
MS. S. JOTHIMANI:
SHRI SUDHEER GUPTA:
SHRI BALAK NATH:**

Will the Minister of HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- a) whether cases of Omicron variant of Covid 19 has been detected in the country so far, if so, the details thereof and the deaths reported State/UT-wise;

- b) whether Omicron is highly transmissible and fatal than the Delta variant capable of infecting fully vaccinated persons;
- c) if so, the measures taken, preparations made to tackle Omicron and the extent of the effectiveness of the indigenously developed vaccines against Omicron;
- d) whether the Government proposes to ban international travel to India/ impose restrictions on passengers by testing and monitoring them to curb the new variant, if so, the details thereof;
- e) whether the Government propose to develop new vaccines and expand genome sequencing centres, if so, the details thereof along with the advisory issued to States/UTs for the new variant based on WHO reports to member nations; and
- f) whether the RT-PCR test can detect Omicron, if so, the details thereof, if not, the revised testing guidelines issued thereof and the details of the labs/ hospitals available for testing the new variant, State/UT/ location-wise?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (DR BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR)

(a) to (f): A total 81 cases with Omicron variant with no deaths have been reported in the country (data as on 16th December 2021). This includes Maharashtra (32 cases), Rajasthan (17 cases), Delhi (8 cases), Karnataka (8 cases), Gujarat (5 cases), Kerala (5 cases), Telangana (2 cases) and Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal (1 case each).

According to World Health Organization, based on current limited evidence Omicron variant is spreading faster than the Delta variant, also, there are still limited data on the clinical severity of Omicron and more data are needed to understand the severity profile. There are limited available data, and no peer-reviewed evidence, on vaccine efficacy or effectiveness to date for Omicron. The currently available RT-PCR tests for COVID-19 as validated and approved by Indian Council of Medical Research continue to detect Omicron variants.

Ministry of Health & FW on basis of risk assessment reviewed the existing travel guidelines and a revised 'Guidelines for International Arrivals' was issued on 28th November 2021 (revised on 30th November 2021).

As per the guidelines, regions/countries have been re-classified as 'at-risk' based on epidemiological situation of COVID-19 in these regions/countries and/or reporting of Omicron variant from these countries. List of such 'at-risk' regions/countries is dynamic in nature and has been updated from time to time.

All travelers coming from countries deemed 'at-risk' will also mandatorily undergo COVID-19 testing on arrival through RT-PCR, followed by mandatory home quarantine for 7 days. A repeat RT-PCR testing shall also be done on 8th day of arrival in India to be monitored by State Health Authorities. Two percent of travelers from 'non-at-risk' countries will be tested at random for COVID-19. Individuals tested positive shall be subjected to Whole Genomic Sequencing at

identified INSACOG network laboratories to determine the presence of SARS-CoV-2 variants (including Omicron).

Union Ministry of Health & FW is coordinating and collaborating with other stakeholder Ministries/departments including Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Ministry of Railways etc. Further Port/Airport Health Officers at International ports/airports have been instructed to ensure strict health screening, testing of incoming international passengers and referrals of suspect/confirmed cases.

Further, Union Ministry of Health & FW is in regular interaction with all States/UTs through formal communication as well as through video conferencing. States/UTs have been urged to undertake the following activities:

- Strict monitoring of International travelers in the community.
- Contact tracing of positive individuals & follow up for 14 days.
- Genome sequencing of positive samples through INSACOG Labs in a prompt manner.
- Continued monitoring of areas where cluster of positive cases emerge.
- Further strengthening of COVID-19 testing infrastructure and ensuring early identification of cases through adequate testing across the States.
- Ensure preparedness of health infrastructure (availability of ICU, Oxygen supported beds, ventilators, etc.) and upgrade health infrastructure under ECRP-II including in rural areas and for pediatric cases.
- Commissioning all PSA plants, ensuring sufficient logistics, drugs etc.
- Ensure rapid COVID-19 vaccine coverage.
- Ensuring adherence to COVID Appropriate Behaviour.
