

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2849
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.03.2023**

SPREADING OF BF.7 VARIANT

2849 SHRI P.C. MOHAN:

Will the **MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) the measures taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to contain the spread of the BF.7 variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus presently dominant in China and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether any case of BF.7 variant have been detected in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to maintain the surveillance and testing for potential cases; and
- (d) whether the Government is planning to issue any guidelines to control the spread of BF.7 variant cases and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): In view of increasing trajectory of COVID-19 cases in China and certain other countries during December, 2022 and the possibility of association of this increase with newer variants of SARS-CoV-2 (including BF.7), an additional requirement of pre-departure testing and uploading of negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test reports and self-health declaration form on Air Suvidha portal was made mandatory in the past for travellers coming from/transiting via these countries. However, based on declining COVID-19 trajectory in these countries, an updated guideline issued on 10th February, 2023, wherein the additional requirements were dropped.

2% of the total passengers in all incoming international flights are required to undergo post arrival COVID-19 testing, irrespective of port of departure to monitor positive cases and their variants.

Given the emergence of variants of COVID-19 virus with variable transmissibility and their possible health implications, Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network laboratories conducts whole genome sequencing of samples for detection of mutant variants of the virus.

Union Ministry of Health has issued and widely circulated 'Operational Guidelines for Revised Surveillance Strategy in Context of COVID-19' which focusses on early detection, isolation, testing, and management of suspected and confirmed cases; detect and contain outbreaks of new SARS-CoV-2 variants and monitoring the trends of existing variants. As a part of this surveillance strategy, samples from international travellers to India testing positive for COVID-19 are referred

to INSACOG network laboratories for whole genome sequencing and detection of newer variants in addition to maintaining community/sentinel site based surveillance.

As on 13th March 2023, 23 cases of BF.7 and their sub-lineages have been reported by these INSACOG network laboratories. State-UT wise detail of number of cases tested positive for BF.7 variant and its sub-lineages is as below:

VOC State/UT	BF.7	BF.7.12	BF.7.14	BF.7.15	BF.7.4	BF.7.4.1	BF.7.5.1	BF.7.6	Total
Gujarat	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	5
Maharashtra	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
West Bengal	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Delhi	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
Haryana	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Karnataka	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Odisha	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
