

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1700
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 11.02.2022**

GENOME SEQUENCING OFOMICRON VARIANT OF COVID-19

**1700. DR. KALANIDHI VEERASWY:
SHRI FEROZE VARUN GANDHI:**

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

- a) The percentage of sample per state that undergoes genome sequence to detect the Omicron variant along with the total number of labs in the country that are equipped to conduct genome sequencing;
- b) Whether the Government is cognizant that the official data on Omicron cases is not truly representative of the actual number of such cases in the country;
- c) If so, whether the Government has initiated action towards assessment of the number of Omicron cases in the third wave;
- d) Whether the government has introduced booster doses, as the earlier doses are not sufficient to protect the people from the outbreak of new variants of this virus; and
- e) If so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (e) The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), jointly initiated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Department of Biotechnology (DBT) with Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), is a consortium of laboratories to monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2.

This consortium has been expanded to 52 laboratories. Through whole genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 the network aids to understand how the virus spreads and evolves, and provide information to aid public health response. For the sentinel surveillance nearly 300 sentinel sites are identified to send samples to the regional sequencing labs through the integrated disease surveillance programme network.

Sentinel site are expected to send at least 15 samples every 15 days to the identified IGSL as per standard specimen collection procure. Additionally, surge sampling of vaccine failures, atypical clinical presentations, super spreader events is also taken up. Besides this, in view of threat of new variants (including the recent Omicron variant) entering from abroad, a Point of Entry (PoEs) screening is also undertaken.

Detection and confirmation of every case of Omicron variant is not warranted from a public health standpoint but is intended to inform about the prevalent variant in circulation to take informed decision on public health measures that are required to be taken up. The total number of Omicron cases identified through whole genome sequencing is indicative of proportion of new cases of Omicron Variant in the country.

As per the recommendation of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), administration of precaution dose has started from 10th January 2022 to those Health Care Workers (HCWs), Front Line Workers (FLWs) and persons aged 60 years & above with co-morbidities who have received two doses of Covid-19 vaccines.