

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1732
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.02.2022**

UNDERREPORTING OF COVID-19 DEATHS

**†1732. SHRI MANISH TEWARI:
SHRI HIBI EDEN:**

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

- (a) whether as per a report released in January 2022 the number of deaths by COVID-19 between June 1, 2020 and July 1, 2021 are around 3.2 million which is eight times the Government figure of 400,000;
- (b) whether another report by “Project: Jeevan Raksha” released in October 2021, indicated massive underreporting of deaths linked to pandemic with the maximum underreporting of 5722 percent in Gujarat;
- (c) whether India’s official COVID-19 death count does not include the “suspected COVID deaths” and only confirmed COVID deaths have been counted, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government is having any data on the number of COVID-19 deaths that took place inside homes due to non availability of beds in hospitals and also those happened without testing, if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether World Health Organisation (WHO) did not use COVID-19 death numbers reported by India in its first estimate of global deaths due to doubts of gross underreporting by Indian authorities and if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) whether the Government proposes to conduct a proper audit of COVID-19 deaths and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (f): An international magazine in January 2022, published a report titled ‘COVID mortality in India: National survey data and health facility deaths’ which speculated excess deaths than the official number of COVID-19 fatalities. The report was purely speculative that made use of non-validated methodology for calculating estimates of excess mortality and lacked any peer reviewed scientific data. The report by Project: Jeevan Raksha released in October 2021 suffered from a similar lack of scientific rigor.

India has a robust Civil Registration System (CRS) and Sample Registration System (SRS) which predates the COVID-19 pandemic and covers all States/UTs. The registration of deaths in the country is done under Registration of Births and Deaths Act (RBD Act, 1969) by functionaries appointed by the State Governments.

In the context of COVID-19 Pandemic, detailed guidelines for reporting of deaths have been issued by Union Health Ministry to all States/UTs. Accordingly, all States/UTs report cases and deaths to Union Health Ministry on a regular basis.

Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) on 10th May 2020 issued 'Guidance for appropriate recording of COVID-19 related deaths in India' (Available at: https://www.icmr.gov.in/pdf/covid/techdoc/Guidance_appropriate_recording_of_related_deaths_India.pdf).

Union Ministry of Health & FW, vide letter dated 9th October 2020 has conveyed to States/UTs, WHO and ICMR guidelines on correct recording of COVID-19 related deaths in accordance with globally accepted ICD-10 classification and also urged states to take up periodic death audits with the aim to improve quality of healthcare services by suitable corrective measures. States/UTs were also provided with a proforma for taking death audits in this regard.

States and UTs have been urged through formal communications, multiple video conferences and through deployment of Central teams for correct recording of deaths in accordance with laid down guidelines.