

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

**LOK SABHA  
STARRED QUESTION NO. 271  
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2024**

**NEW VIRUS STRAIN**

**\*271 SHRI MANICKAM TAGORE B:**

**SHRI VIJAYAKUMAR ALIAS VIJAY VASANTH:**

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

- (a) the details regarding the nature and characteristics of the new virus strain detected in the country along with the specific risks associated with this variant;
- (b) whether the Government has taken any measures to monitor and contain the spread of this new virus strain across different States and regions of the country, if so, the details thereof, State/UT-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has issued any advisories or guidelines to the public, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders regarding precautions and preventive measures against this new virus strain in the country, if so, the details thereof and the measures taken thereon;
- (d) whether the Government has taken any steps to ramp up testing and genomic surveillance capabilities to identify and track the spread of this new variant effectively in the country, if so, the details thereof alongwith the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard; and
- (e) the details of preparedness of healthcare facilities including hospitals and medical infrastructure, to handle potential surges in cases due to this new virus strain in the country?

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
(SHRI JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA)**

(a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA  
STARRED QUESTION NO. 271 FOR 9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2024**

(a) The COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed the emergence of various strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) have informed that two strains, namely KP.1 and KP.2, have been responsible for recent surges in COVID-19 cases. These strains have evolved from JN1 Omicron variant. It is highly transmissible that causes the symptoms such as fever, cold, cough, sore throat, body ache, and fatigue which were generally not severe. There is no associated increase in hospitalizations or severe cases reported thus far.

(b) Government has taken the measures to monitor the spread of new strain across the country. National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has informed that the Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP) is an important program under National Health Mission that does the disease surveillance in the country. IDSP is implemented in all 36 States/UTs. The program is responsible for the surveillance of 40 plus epidemic prone diseases. A continuous watch and monitoring is maintained for emerging and re-emerging diseases situation. The information pertaining to cases of KP mutant strain detected in different states and UTs is given at Annexure.

Further, the Department of Health Research (DHR) has sanctioned a total 163 Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDLs) across India to improve virus detection and research

(c) The Government has taken various actions to face the challenge in the regard of surge in fresh COVID-19 cases in the country. Various steps as listed below are taken to improve the healthcare infrastructure in States/UTs to meet the challenges:

- (i) Centre has issued advisories to States in view of the detection of COVID-19 variants in India like JN.1 etc.
- (ii) States were advised to ensure adequate testing in all district as per COVID-19 testing Guidelines.
- (iii) States urged to maintain a state of constant vigil over the COVID situation.
- (iv) States advised to ensure adequate testing including higher number of RT-PCR tests; and send positive samples for genome sequencing to INSACOG laboratories.
- (v) States also to promote community awareness to seek their continued support in managing COVID-19, including adherence to respiratory hygiene.

(d) Government has taken steps to ramp up testing and genomic surveillance capabilities to identify and track the spread of this new variant effectively. NCDC has informed that the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genome Sequencing (INSACOG) network conducts Whole Genomic Sequencing for timely detection of new SARS-CoV-2 variants. INSACOG is a consortium of 67 laboratories and 400+ sentinel sites to monitor the genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2.

The NCDC acts as the lead agency for Indian SARS CoV2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG). In this regard, IDSP is coordinating flow of samples from States to Regional Genome Sequencing Labs (RGSLs) and in providing feedback to the States. IDSP is also collating the Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) results and reporting it to respective States/UTs for necessary action along with key epidemiological inputs. Till 15th June 2024, India has sequenced 336,892 SARS-CoV-2 viral genomes out of which 301,451 have been sequenced by INSACOG.

(e) With the long-term goal to prepare the country against public health emergencies like new and emerging disease outbreaks, Pradhan Mantri - Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) has been launched to enhance the capacity of primary, secondary and tertiary health care facilities and institutes for identifying and managing any new and emerging diseases. Some of the key activities under this initiative directed towards preparedness against future pandemics include establishment of Critical Care hospital blocks, strengthening of National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), establishment of regional NCDCs, setting up of a network of Bio-Safety Level-3 (BSL-3) laboratories, strengthening of public health units at Points of Entry, establishment of Health Emergency Operation Centres, Bio-security preparedness and strengthening pandemic research for One Health etc.

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**ANNEXURE**

<b>State/UTs wise Covid-19 KP mutant strain Cases as on 5.8.2024</b>		
<b>S.no</b>	<b>State/UTs</b>	<b>Cases</b>
1	Maharashtra	417
2	West Bengal	157
3	Uttarakhand	64
4	Rajasthan	48
5	Gujarat	42
6	Goa	27
7	Chhattisgarh	24
8	Odisha	17
9	Karnataka	12
10	Uttar Pradesh	12
11	Tripura	3
12	Haryana	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>824</b>

(Data provided by NCDC)

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