



भारत सरकार
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय
Government of India
Department of Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

राजेश भूषण, आईएएस
सचिव

RAJESH BHUSHAN, IAS
SECRETARY



D.O. No.25/S(HFW)/CVariant/2021
25th November 2021

Dear Colleague,

This is regarding the Variants of Concern/Variants of Interest (VoCs/VoIs) of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the Whole Genome Sequencing activity being coordinated in the country through the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which is the Nodal Agency for INSACOG. The aim of this activity is tracking and monitoring emergence and transmission of COVID-19 VoCs/VoIs in the country.

2. In this regard, various letters issued by this Ministry dated 12th Nov. 2021, 3rd Nov. 2021, 26th Oct. 2021, 20th Oct. 2021, and 27th August 2021 may please be referred to. All these letters reiterated the criticality of scrupulous implementation and rigorous monitoring of the three-pronged surveillance strategy of screening and testing international travellers & their contacts, routine sentinel surveillance and surge surveillance, and timely sending of RT-PCR positive samples to designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs).

3. It has now been reported by NCDC that multiple cases of a **COVID-19 variant B.1.1529** have been reported in **Botswana (3 cases), South Africa (6 cases) and Honk Kong (1 case)**. This variant is reported to have a significantly high number of mutations, and thus, has serious public health implications for the country, in view of recently relaxed visa restrictions and opening up of international travel.

4. It is therefore imperative that ALL international travellers travelling from and transiting through these countries, (they are part of the "at risk" Country Category of international travellers coming to India) and also including all other 'at risk' countries indicated in the revised Guidelines for International Arrivals issued by this Ministry dated 11.11.2021, are subjected to **rigorous screening and testing**, as per MoHFW Guidelines. The contacts of these international travellers must also be closely tracked and tested as per MoHFW guidelines.

.....contd/-

5. You are also requested to ensure that samples of travellers turning positive are sent to the designated IGSLs promptly as per the INSACOG Guidance Document issued by this Ministry available at <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/INSACOGGuidanceDocumentdated15July2021final.pdf> State Surveillance Officers must also establish close coordination with their designated/tagged IGSLs for expediting results of genomic analysis, so that necessary public health measures may be undertaken by the States/UTs in case presence of VOCs/Vols is reported by the INSACOG network.

6. It is critical for the States/UTs to adhere to the overarching 'Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate' principle to ensure stringent implementation of containment measures as per MoHFW guidelines, and to prevent the spread of VoC/Vols and formation of clusters of cases.

Warm Regards.

Yours sincerely



(Rajesh Bhushan)

**Additional Chief Secretary /Principal Secretary /Secretary (Health)
All States/UTs**

Copy for information to: Director NCDC