



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

DO No. Z.28015/185/2021-DMCell  
30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

*Dear Sir,*

A highly mutated SARS-CoV-2 variant (B.1.1.529; named Omicron) has been reported from South Africa on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The number of cases of this variant appears to be increasing in almost all provinces in South Africa and several other countries. Preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of transmissibility, reinfection and immune escape with this variant, as compared to other Variants of Concern.

2. In this context, the travel advisory for International arrival was revised by this Ministry on 28.11.21 and accordingly certain countries have been placed in the category of 'at-risk' countries for additional follow up measures of international travelers coming from these countries. Given the public health implications of this mutant variant, in order to minimize the ingress of this variant into the country, it is essential that the surveillance at ports of entry in the country is geared up for rigorous follow up of all international travelers particularly from "At-Risk" countries.

3. In view of the above, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is requested to ensure strict implementation of MoHFW's travel advisory for International arrival (available at:

<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/GuidelinesforInternationalarrival28112021.pdf>)

4. Some of the crucial areas for consideration are:

- i) Facilitate coordination with and support to the Port Health Officers in carrying out the health screening of incoming international passengers.
- ii) It should be ensured by the Port Health Authorities including PHOs that the self-declaration form collecting travel history (**for last 14 days**) of all international travelers arriving in India, is filled completely. It is requested that details (name, contact details, address) of all such travelers who have originated or have transited through any "at risk" country (as per list available at <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/ListofCountriestobereferredtoincontextof>

Guidelinesforinternationalarrivalsdated11thNovember2021updatedon28112021ver4.pdf) reporting Omicron, details of such passengers may be shared with respective State governments, NCDC (Director, National Center for Disease Control (Email: [dirnicd@nic.in](mailto:dirnicd@nic.in) and [idsnp-npo@nic.in](mailto:idsnp-npo@nic.in)), and this ministry at DM Cell (Email: [ddgdmcell-mohfw@gov.in](mailto:ddgdmcell-mohfw@gov.in)) and Control Room (Email: [covidwarroom.mohfw@gmail.com](mailto:covidwarroom.mohfw@gmail.com) ) for further follow up.

- iii) Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways in coordination with the State Health Authorities and PHOs may facilitate proper randomization of people coming from “non-at-risk” countries, as indicated in MoHFW’s guidelines for international arrivals and 2% of their samples be also collected and tested for COVID-19.
- iv) Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is requested to coordinate with the State Health Authorities (State/District Surveillance Officers) where the ports are located for support in terms of sample testing for COVID-19, referral and strict isolation of passengers suspected/confirmed passengers detected.
- v) Availability of dedicated ambulances, waiting areas for suspect passengers, sample testing areas may be ensured besides tying up with health facilities.
- vi) Separate holding area should be demarcated for sample collection from the passengers coming from ‘at-risk’ countries in each port, with proper amenities for passengers, ensuring that COVID Appropriate Behavior are strictly followed including physical distancing protocols to avoid congestion.
- vii) Reiterate COVID appropriate behavior including physical distancing protocols the port premises including in buses, restaurants, waiting lounges etc. to prevent overcrowding.

5. Further it has to be ensured that, as per the norms already communicated, the samples from these passengers for genome sequencing shall also be collected and sent to the designated laboratories.

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6. We look forward to your continued support in this collective fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

*Warm regards .*

Yours sincerely



**(Rajesh Bhushan)**

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