

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

**RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3133  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH, 2021**

**NEW STRAIN OF VIRUS IN MAHARASHTRA, KERALA AND PUNJAB**

**3133 # SHRI BRIJLAL:**

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

(a) whether it is a fact that a new strain of COVID-19 virus has been detected in Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab and the number of COVID-19 patients are increasing every day in these places and

(b) if so, the status as of now and the precautionary steps that are planned to be taken in this regard and the details thereof?

**ANSWER  
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND  
FAMILY WELFARE  
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)**

(a) & (b): No new strain of COVID-19 virus has been detected in Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab. The surge in COVID-19 cases witnessed now in these States are due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus that is driving the pandemic since last year.

However, after the detection of variants of SARS-CoV-2 virus in United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil, Government of India put in a surveillance mechanism for international travelers and in the community to detect these known variants. So far among international travelers/their contacts and in the community, the number of samples testing positive for mutant virus variants is 400 cases (as on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021) across the country.

Government of India has taken a series of actions to prevent entry and spread of known mutant variants of SARS-CoV-2 in India. These include:

- i. Point of entry surveillance and pre-arrival and post arrival testing for all international travelers coming through flights originating from United Kingdom, Europe and Middle East.
- ii. Mandatory home quarantine for 14 days with an option of testing after 7 days of arrival in India.
- iii. For those travelers testing positive, separate isolation facilities and separate quarantine facilities for their contacts.
- iv. A consortium of 10 laboratories is testing the positive samples of such travelers arriving via flights originating from UK, Europe and Middle East and monitoring the variant virus. This apart 5% of the positive samples from community are also being tested and monitored for genomic changes in SARS-CoV-2.