

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

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2655
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21ST DECEMBER, 2021**

EFFECTIVENESS OF VACCINE ONOMICRON VARIANT

2655 SHRI K.J. ALPHONS:

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

- (a) whether Government has a clear idea about the nature of Omicron; and
- (b) whether the vaccinations being administered in India are effective against the new variant?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b): The B.1.1.529 variant (formally named as Omicron by WHO) was first reported to World Health Organization (WHO) from South Africa on 24th November, 2021. WHO on 26th November, 2021 declared Omicron, as a Variant of Concern (VoC).

As on 20th December 2021, 96 countries have reported the Omicron variant. As on 20th December, 2021, 161 cases of Omicron variant have been reported in 12 States/UTs in India.

Owing to high number of mutations, the variant carries higher risk of transmission. The currently available RT-PCR tests for COVID-19 as validated and approved by Indian Council of Medical Research continue to detect Omicron variants. Confirmation of Omicron variants in the country is carried out by whole genome sequencing.

While there is no evidence to suggest that existing vaccines do not work on Omicron, some of the mutations reported on Spike gene may presumably decrease the efficacy of existing vaccines. Vaccines are expected to still offer protection against severe disease and, vaccination with the available vaccines is crucial.
