Omicron scare-2 air travellers, including a child, test Covid positive in Chennai

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Two international passengers, including a child, who had arrived in Chennai from Singapore and the United Kingdom have tested positive for coronavirus, Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma. Subramanian said on Friday. The state government has ruled out social media reports claiming they were cases of Omicron but said tests only would conclude if they are infected with the latest variant of the coronavirus.

According to Tamil Nadu's health minister, a passenger from Singapore arrived at Tiruchirappally at 3.30 AM (on Friday) and tested positive for Covid-19. He has been shifted to the local medical college where he has been quarantined. His sample will undergo genome sequencing. However, it will also be sent to a lab in Bengaluru, and only after that result would we come to know if he is infected with Omicron.

"A passenger from Singapore at the Tiruchirappalli International Airport was found Covid positive and got admitted to a private hospital; samples have been sent for genome sequencing to Chennai and Bengaluru," the health minister said.

Further, without divulging many details about the second case, he said the child along with his family has been admitted to the King's Institute here where the relevant tests are being conducted.

"Another passenger from the UK in Chennai was found Covid positive and is admitted to a special ward of the King Institute of Preventive Medicine, Chennai; samples have been sent for genome sequencing to Chennai and Bengaluru," he added.

The co-passengers seated in the front and rear rows of the flights in which these two travelled and the flight crew have also been tested, he said. India's first Covid Omicron cases were detected on Thursday when two fliers from South Africa to Bengaluru tested positive for the new variant.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu government has issued a new set of SoPs for passengers for air travel from 1 December as fears loom large around the Omicron Covid-19 variant.

Passengers from "high-risk" countries will have to stay at the airport until their RT-PCR reports come negative. Besides, random saplings will be done for travellers coming from countries other than the ones categorised as 'at risk' nations.