

Amid Omicron threat, Karnataka CM announces establishing a genome sequencing lab

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Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai announced that a Genome sequencing lab that conducts test for the 'Omicron' variant will be established in Karnataka, amid rising cases of the new Covid-19 variant 'Omicron'.

Bommai said that the government has already initiated action to establish a Genome Sequencing Lab in the state. Health Secretary has been instructed to look into the needs of procuring the necessary equipment and experts for the purpose.

He said, "all the districts have Covid-19 testing labs. Genome Sequencing needs expert systems and modern equipment. The spread of the new variant 'Omicron' has necessitated sending test samples in suspect cases for Omicron, to Genome Sequence testing in NCBS. Arrangements would be made to get the test reports quickly."

Earlier on Monday, Karnataka health minister Dr K Sudhakar informed that only two cases of Omicron were found in the state and the genomic sequencing analysis report of the rest are awaited.

"The genomic sequence report of those in contact with the infected has not yet arrived. New infections have been discovered in other states. The primary and secondary contacts of the infected too, are found to have no problems or symptoms. The infected are being treated at the Bowring Hospital and that he is in regular contact with the hospital director. Those who came in contact with the Omicron infected have received both vaccine doses," Sudhakar said.

A new variant of Covid-19 was first reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) from South Africa on November 25. As per the WHO, the first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on November 9 this year.

On November 26, the WHO named the new Covid-19 variant B.1.1.529, which has been detected in South Africa, as 'Omicron'. The WHO has classified Omicron as a 'variant of concern'.

Dozens of countries have imposed travel restrictions on the southern African nations since the mutation was discovered.

The new Omicron coronavirus variant has been confirmed in 23 countries and their number is expected to rise, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus had said.

India has also added several countries to the list from where travellers would need to follow additional measures on arrival in the country, including post-arrival testing for infection.