

Omicron variant- ICMR's new kit to detect COVID-19 in 2 hours. Details here

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The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in Dibrugarh, Assam, has designed a Covid-19 testing kit, which is capable of detecting new coronavirus variant Omicron in just two hours. The development is significant amid the rising cases of Omicron in many states.

The ICMR team, led by scientist Dr Biswajyoti Borkakoty, has developed this new Covid-19 testing kit. The scientists' team claims to detect the Omicron variant in 2 hours, news agency ANI reported.

A Kolkata-based company GCC Biotech will produce the testing kit in bulk now under the public-private partnership (PPP) model.

The country has so far reported 33 cases of Omicron, which is a new Covid-19 variant that was first detected in South Africa. However, as per the initial examination of the new variant, health experts say that it may not be as powerful as the delta variant of coronavirus, which had a huge infection rate and caused many deaths across the world.

Meanwhile, it takes around three to four days to detect the Omicron Covid-19 variant with the current testing kits available in the market. However, if the testing kit developed by the ICMR-Dibrugarh is able to detect the virus in real-time, it could immensely help stop the spread of the virus.

"ICMR-RMRC, Dibrugarh, has designed and developed a hydrolysis probe-based real-time RT-PCR assay for detection of the new Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) that can detect the new variant within 2 hours. This is important because as of now a minimum of 36 hours is required for targeted sequencing and 4 to 5 days for whole-genome sequencing to detect the variant," said Dr Borkakoty.

"The kit has been tested against specific synthetic gene fragments of Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 within two different highly specific unique regions of the spike protein and also reference wild type control synthetic gene fragments. Internal validation has shown that the tests are 100 per cent accurate," he said.

States including Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat have reported cases of the new COVID-19 variant with the total number of Omicron cases in the country going up to 33. On November 26, the WHO named the new COVID-19 variant B.1.1.529, which has been detected in South Africa, as 'Omicron'.

With ANI inputs.