India's first case of Omicron mutant variant XE has been confirmed by Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomics Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG), as per reports. Earlier, two suspected cases of the recombinant were reported from Maharashtra and Gujarat, but both were unconfirmed.

Assuaging fear of increasing cases of recombinant variants of Covid-19 cases surging in the country, last month, in its official bulletin, the INSACOG said, "very few recombinant variants have been discovered in India."

It further stressed that so far, none showed either increased transmission (locally or otherwise) or associated with severe disease or hospitalization. Incidences of suspected recombinants and the possible public health relevance are being closely monitored, confirmed INSACOG.

The INSACOG conducts genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 across the country through sequencing of samples from Sentinel sites and International passengers arriving in India.

The XE variant is a "recombinant" virus that contains the mutations found in BA.1 as well as BA.2 variants of Omicron, and was first discovered in the UK in January. Experts have suggested that there is no evidence that its severity and symptoms are different from other Omicron subvariants.

However, it shows a slightly higher transmission rate. XE also shows a higher growth rate above that of BA.2

Apart from XE, another recombinant XD is also under scanner currently. XD has an Omicron S gene incorporated into a Delta genome, which is found primarily in France.

Meanwhile, India's daily COVID-19 count fell below 3000-mark, by logging in fresh 2,568 new COVID-19 infections on Tuesday. With today's fresh cases, the total number of COVID-19 infections recorded is 4,30,84,913. India's active caseload currently stands at 19,137 which accounts for 0.04 per cent of the total cases.

The Union Health Ministry also informed that today's single-day rise of 20 fresh fatalities pushed India's COVID-19 death toll to 5,23,889.

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