

DELTA PLUS IS A VARIANT OF CONCERN: GOVT.

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Biotechnology, Genetics & Health related developments

The Centre on Tuesday termed the emerging delta- plus variant a 'variant of concern' just hours after Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and Chairman, National Empowered Group on Vaccination V.K. Paul said it was only a 'variant of interest (Vol).'

A variant of concern (VoC) carries the highest threat perception of a coronavirus variant, which is characterised by increased infectivity, transmissibility or resistance to vaccines and treatment. A Vol is a degree lower.

The World Health Organisation, as of June 14, had classified the variant 'delta' (B.1.617.2) as well as offshoots — AY.1 and AY.2 — as VoC.

Delta plus, as the variant is sometimes referred to, is an informal name.

So far there are only four international VoC (alpha, beta, gamma and delta) with the off-shoots, AY.1 and AY.2 classified as off-shoots of Delta.

"Delta variant is a Variant of Concern and has been found in 80 countries. Delta plus is in 9 countries and as of now is in the category of variant of interest and is not yet in the variant of concern categor," said Bhushan at the weekly press briefing on Tuesday.

However in a press statement, the Ministry first referred to it as a 'variant of concern' then issued a correction calling it a 'variant of interest' and then again reverted to calling it a 'variant of concern'.

A scientist connected with the consortium, INSACOG, (Indian SarsCov2 Genomic Consortia) told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that AY.1 was "always" a variant of concern but was wrongly classified by the Health Ministry as a Vol.

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