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Lambda Variant of Covid-19

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Why in News

After the cases of **Delta Variant** of **Covid-19** continuously rising, a new variant called **Lambda Variant (LV)** is emerging as a new threat.

Lambda Variant is **dominant in Peru**, India has not yet reported any case of LV.



Key Points

- **About:**

- The **strain was first identified in Peru** in December 2020. Lambda is the dominant variant in the South American country with 81% samples found to be carrying it.
- Until recently, it was **largely concentrated in a handful of South American countries**, including Ecuador and Argentina, but since April it has been detected in more than 25 Countries.
- Previously known by its **Formal Scientific Name C.37**, the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** designated this variant seventh and the newest **Variant of Interest (VOI)**.

Another four have been **designated as ‘variants of concern’**.

- **Variant of Interest:**

- This means that the **genetic changes involved are predicted or known to affect transmissibility**, disease severity, or immune escape.
- It is also **an acknowledgement of the fact that the variant has caused significant community transmission** in multiple countries and population groups.

- **Variant of Concern:**

- **A variant for which there is evidence** of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease (e.g., increased hospitalizations or deaths), significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.
- There are four – **Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta** – which have been designated as **“variants of concern”**, and are considered a bigger threat.

These were all recently **named** after letters of the Greek alphabet to avoid linkage with the country of their origin that had been happening until then.

- **Concerns:**

- LV has **at least seven significant mutations in the spike protein** (the **Delta variant** has three) which could have a range of implications, including the possibility of increased transmissibility or enhanced resistance to antibodies, created either through natural infection or vaccination.

It is the coronavirus spike protein that binds to a human protein to initiate the process of infection.

- The LV has **greater infectivity than the Alpha and Gamma variants** (known to have originated in the UK and Brazil respectively).
- A study also reported decreased effectiveness of the **Chinese Sinovac vaccine** (Coronavac) against the Lambda variant.

Way Forward

- India, which is still recovering from the debilitating second wave, would need to proactively watch out for, and prevent the spread of any new variant that could trigger a fresh wave.

- We need a foundation of broad-based research, in universities, medical colleges and biotechnology companies, all of which must be funded, encouraged, appreciated, and talent rewarded.

Source: IE