

2 Astra doses over 80% effective against B1.617.2 variant: UK study

London:

Two doses from either the Oxford-AstraZeneca or the Pfizer vaccine are over 80% effective in preventing infection from the B1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first discovered in India, a new UK government study has reportedly found. The Oxford-AstraZeneca two-dose vaccine is also being produced by the Serum Institute of India as Covishield and being administered among the adult population in India.

The UK findings are said to be based on data from Public Health England (PHE) and have also revealed that the two doses provide 87% protection from the B.117 variant, first discovered in the Kent region of England and also considered highly transmissible.

According to a report in Telegraph newspaper, the latest study's findings were presented to a meeting of the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group this week.

The latest PHE statistics released earlier this week show that case numbers of the B1.617.2 variant had risen by 2,111 over the past week to hit 3,424 cases across the country. "I think it's clearly growing, which anyone can see from the numbers as they are reported week by week," Dr Jeffrey Barrett, director of Covid-19 genomics at the Sanger Institute, told BBC. "If I had to put a guess today it would be 20% or 30% rather than 50% (more infectious than the Kent variant). But there is still uncertainty, 50% might be a reasonable worst case scenario," he said, in reference to the rate of transmissibility of the variant first detected in India. PTI

Reuters/Photo for representation



Latin America and the Caribbean passed 1 million Covid deaths on Friday as the IMF proposed a \$50 billion plan to end the pandemic, aiming to expand immunisation drives. Nearly 90% of those deaths have been recorded in just five nations: Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Peru

At least 100 virus cases on Everest: Climbing guide

An expert climbing guide said on Saturday that a coronavirus outbreak on Mount Everest has infected at least 100 climbers and support staff, giving the first comprehensive estimate amid official Nepalese denials of a Covid-19 cluster on the world's highest peak. Lukas Furtenbach of Austria, who last week became the only prominent outfitter to halt his Everest expedition, said one of his foreign guides and six Nepali Sherpa guides have tested positive. "We have at least 100 people minimum positive for Covid in base camp, and then the numbers might be something like 150 or 200," he said in Kathmandu, adding, it was obvious there were many cases at the Everest base camp because he could visibly see people were sick. About 408 foreign climbers were issued permits to climb Everest this season. AP

Germany puts travel curbs on UK over its rising B1.617.2 cases

Germany will impose fresh curbs on travellers from the UK starting on Sunday due to the rapid spread in Britain of the coronavirus strain first identified in India. Travellers from the UK will have to spend two weeks in quarantine upon arrival in Germany even if they test negative for the virus, according to the foreign ministry. In addition, transport companies will only be allowed to bring German citizens back into the country. Germany now classifies Britain as a "virus variant area," the country's highest risk category, following a recommendation from the Robert Koch Institute, according to the foreign ministry. German

Chancellor Angela Merkel said she is concerned about the spread of the B1.617.2 variant. “This variant seems to be more aggressive than the British mutation,” she said. “That means we will have to be careful.”

BLOOMBERG