

## Highest Covid infections reported since Oct 6

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ISLAMABAD: As infections by Covid-19 have continuously been on the rise since the emergence of Omicron variant, Pakistan on Saturday reported the highest number of cases since Oct 6. The national positivity rate has reached almost three per cent.

The representative body of the medical fraternity, Pakistan Medical Association (PMA), has claimed that the cases of Delta variant are also increasing. It suggested that the government should strictly ensure implementation of SOPs (standard operating procedures) and impose heavy fines on violators to avoid chances of a lockdown.

The data of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) showed that as many as 1,345 persons were infected and one death was reported in the past 24 hours.

Earlier, 1,453 cases were reported on Oct 6 and since then less than 1,345 cases have been reported. Moreover, the national positivity rate was 2.89pc and 629 patients were on critical care.

PMA Secretary General Dr Qaiser Sajjad, while talking to *Dawn*, said that unfortunately the government's focus was only on Omicron, but it seemed the Delta variant was also multiplying rapidly.

"As the country has been reporting over 1,000 cases daily, just a few hundreds of them are being confirmed as Omicron cases. It means Delta cases are rapidly increasing and we know that Delta is the most virulent variant of Covid-19. The positivity of cases was also less than 1pc in last week of December, but now it has reached 3pc at the national level and in double digit in Karachi," he said.

Dr Sajjad warned that Omicron, which is being considered mild, can further mutate in Pakistan and become virulent just like the Delta variant became lethal in India and then in Indonesia due to which the people had to wait in queues to get Oxygen, especially in India.

“Unfortunately majority of the people and businesses have stopped following SOPs. PMA suggests that legislation should be introduced to impose strict fines and punishment in case of violation of SOPs. Wedding halls and offices should be closed in cases of violation, otherwise the government will be left with no other option but to go for a lockdown. Vaccination certificates should be checked and vaccination should be declared mandatory,” he said.

He said new variants will continue to emerge unless 80pc of people, across the globe, would be vaccinated.

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