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ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 23/12/20

## 20 flyers from U.K. test positive

RT-PCR tests mandatory; separate isolation unit for those found with new variant

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At least 20 passengers flying in to India from the United Kingdom tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday as the government issued stringent standard operating procedures (SoP), mandating RT-PCR tests at all airports for each traveller from the country and isolation at a separate institutional facility for positive cases in view of the new coronavirus strain.

Advising caution as the new strain in the U.K. had undergone 17 changes, increasing its transmissibility by 70%, NITI Aayog member V.K. Paul said the mutation had so far not affected the severity and the case fatality of the disease. Speaking a press conference, he said that as of now, the mutation



Workers waiting for U.K. passengers at the Mumbai airport on Tuesday. ■ EMMANUAL YOGINI

had not been detected in India, and it would have no impact on the potential of the emerging vaccines being de-

veloped in India or internationally.

All the 20 infected passengers were on direct Air

India flights from London.

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# 20 passengers from U.K. test positive

Six were on a flight that landed in Delhi at 11.30 p.m. on Monday and two on a flight that arrived at Kolkata on Sunday night. Four persons, who landed in Ahmedabad, and eight persons, including a crew member, who reached Amritsar on Tuesday tested positive. All flights were direct Air India flights from London.

"Five passengers were found positive at the Delhi airport. One passenger who took a connecting flight to Chennai was tested there and found positive," an official in Delhi said.

All incoming passengers from U.K. were being tested. said Dr Gauri Agarwal, of the Genestrings Diagnostic Center handling coronavirus testing at Delhi airport. The positive samples were sent to the National Centre for Disease Control for detecting the new strain, she said.

With the new guidelines, several hundred passengers were tested at various airports. The process took many hours, resulting in chaos and confusion at several airports, including Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

### Testing and tracing

Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan detailed the comprehensive guidelines not just for those arriving from the U.K. till the travel ban

comes into force at midnight, but also for passengers who came from, or through, the U.K. from November 25 to December 23.

Mr Bhushan said passenger lists will be shared with the States and Union Territories so that their samples are collected for testing. "Contact tracing will be done in positive cases," he said.

He added that all passengers coming from the U.K. between December 21-23 will be subjected to RT-PCR test on arrival and in case of a positive sample, it is recommended that spike gene-based RT-PCR test should also be performed by an appropriate laboratory.

### Separate isolation unit

The Ministry's guidelines mandate that if the genomic sequencing of a positive patient from UK indicates the presence of new variant of SARS-CoV-2, then the patient will remain in a separate isolation unit while necessary treatment as per the existing protocol will be given.

International travellers from the U.K. who arrived in India from November 25 to December 8, will be contacted by District Surveillance Officers and advised to self-monitor their health.

(With inputs from PTI)