

Dated the 1st January, 2021

**Government of India
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**

Standard Operating Procedure for Epidemiological Surveillance & Response for the new variant of SARS-CoV-2 in the context of regulated resumption of limited flights originating from United Kingdom (UK) to India from 8th January, 2021

Introduction

A new variant of SARS- CoV 2 virus [Variant Under Investigation (VUI)-20212/01] has been reported by the Government of United Kingdom (UK) to World Health Organization (WHO). Between 22 and 29 December 2020, a total of 23 countries (including the United Kingdom) have officially reported the UK variant (SARS-CoV-2 VOC 202012/01) with 151 cases.

This variant is estimated by European Center for Disease Control (ECDC) to be more transmissible and affecting younger population. This variant is defined by a set of 17 changes or mutations. One of the most significant is an N501Y mutation in the spike protein that the virus uses to bind to the human ACE2 receptor. Changes in this part of the spike protein may result in the virus becoming more infectious and spreading more easily between people.

Scope

A Standard Operating Procedure for Epidemiological Surveillance and Response in the context of new variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus detected in United Kingdom was issued on 22nd December 2020, describing the activities to be undertaken at the point of entry and in the community for all International passengers who have travelled from or transited through UK from 25th November to 23rd December 2020.

Ministry Health of Family & Welfare in consultation with Ministry of Civil Aviation has reviewed the situation with regard to resumption of international flight services to/from UK and it has been decided to allow limited flight connectivity to/from UK with effect from 8th January, 2021 (00.01 Hrs. IST)

The resumption of flight services is to be done in a calibrated manner by initially allowing flight movement to/from UK to four international airports i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai only.

This Standard Operating Procedure shall be valid till 30th January 2021 (23:59 Hrs IST) or further orders whichever is earlier.

Actions to be taken at International Airports

1. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will issue necessary permission for limited number of flight operations between India and UK (as per the directions from the Ministry of Civil Aviation), to the eligible airlines. DGCA would ensure adequate spacing between flights scheduled to arrive at Indian airports to avoid any crowding during testing protocol. DGCA will also strictly monitor that the airlines do not allow any passengers to travel from UK to India through a transit airport of third country, to ensure there are no omissions in monitoring of those passengers.

2. All international travellers as described in the scope above will be required to declare as per existing procedure, their travel history (of past 14 days) and fill up the Self Declaration Form to be screened for COVID-19.
3. All the passengers coming from UK during the intervening period from 8th January to 30th January 2021 shall be subjected to the following:
 - i. All passengers should submit self-declaration form on the online portal (www.newdelhairport.in) at least 72 hours before the scheduled travel.
 - ii. All the passengers arriving from U.K. should be carrying Negative RT-PCR Test Report for which test should have been conducted within 72 hours prior to undertaking the journey. The same also shall be uploaded on the online portal (www.newdelhairport.in)
 - iii. Airlines to ensure the availability of negative test report before allowing the passenger to board the flight.
 - iv. The concerned airlines shall ensure that prior to check-in, the traveller is explained about this SOP particularly Section 3, sub-section (vi) of this SOP, besides displaying the same prominently in the waiting areas of the airports.
 - v. In-flight announcements must also be made explaining the relevant information to the passengers. Relevant information in this regard shall be prominently displayed in arrival area and waiting area of the airports of arrival.
 - vi. All the passengers arriving from UK in all international flights would be mandatorily subjected to self-paid RT-PCR tests on arrival at the Indian airports concerned (port of entry).
 - vii. Adequate arrangements for passengers waiting for their RT-PCR test as well as test results duly following effective isolation may also be made at the airports in conjunction with the airport authorities.
 - viii. The States/UTs Government concerned are requested to set up Help Desks at airports concerned to facilitate implementation of the SOP.
 - ix. Passengers testing positive shall be isolated in an institutional isolation facility in a separate (isolation) unit coordinated by the respective State Health Authorities. They would earmark specific facilities for such isolation and treatment and take necessary action to send the positive samples to Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) Labs.
 - a. If the report of the sequencing is consistent with the current SARS-CoV-2 virus genome circulating in the country; the ongoing treatment protocol including home isolation/treatment at facility level as per case severity may be followed.
 - b. If the genomic sequencing indicates the presence of new variant of SARS-CoV-2 then the patient will continue to remain in a separate isolation unit. While necessary treatment as per the existing protocol will be given, the patient shall be tested on 14th day, after having tested positive in the initial test. The patient will be kept in the isolation facility till his sample is tested negative.

- x. Those who are found negative on testing with RT-PCR at the airport would be advised quarantine at home for 14 days and regularly followed up by the concerned State/District IDSP.
- xi. The State-wise passenger manifest of the flights from UK landing at Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai airports in India for the said period shall be conveyed by the Bureau of Immigration to State Government/Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) [idsp-npo@nic.in and designated e-mails provided by the respective State Governments] so that this data would be provided to the surveillance teams. This data of manifests provided by Bureau of Immigration will be supplemented by the online Self-Declaration Forms available on 'AIR SUVIDHA' portal.
- xii. All the contacts of those travellers who arrived at various airports between 8th and 30th January 2021 and tested positive on arrival during the air travel would be subjected to institutional quarantine in separate quarantine centers and would be tested as per ICMR guidelines (or earlier if the passenger develops any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19). Contacts testing positive shall be accordingly further followed as mentioned in Clause (ix).
(* Contacts of the suspect case are the co-passengers seated in the same row, 3 rows in front and 3 rows behind along with identified Cabin Crew)
- xiii. All the community contacts of those travellers who have tested positive (during home quarantine period) would be subjected to institutional quarantine in separate Quarantine Centers for 14 days and tested as per ICMR protocol.
- xiv. Information regarding any passenger covered within the scope of this SOP, who has moved to another State will be immediately notified to the concerned State Health Authority. If any passenger is not traceable initially or during any duration while being followed up should be immediately notified to Central Surveillance Unit of IDSP by the District Surveillance Officer.