

Heathrow to set up dedicated facility for red list arrivals

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Dhaka: Heathrow Airport has announced to set up a dedicated facility for travellers arriving on direct flights from red list countries, after it was revealed that they were mixing with other passengers from green and amber nations.

Initially, this facility will be set up in Terminal Three on June 1 and later will be shifted to Terminal 4 as soon as possible.

Currently, all flights at Heathrow are operating from Terminals Two and Five following the temporary relocation of airlines from Terminals Three and Four, amid the travel plunge following the pandemic.

Passengers coming from red list countries have to do hotel quarantine for 10 days, pre-departure test, and PCR test on days two and eight.

Travellers from an amber list must-do home quarantine for 10 days, pre-departure test, and PCR test on days two and eight. "Test to release" option available on day five.

Arrivals from a green list must do a Pre-departure test and PCR test on or before day two.

Passengers do not need to take a Covid-19 test or quarantine on arrival in England if they are travelling within the Common Travel Area.

In this regard, a Heathrow spokesperson, said, "Red list routes will likely be a feature of UK travel for the foreseeable future as countries vaccinate their populations at different rates."

"While opening this facility will be logistically very challenging, our hope is that it will enable Border Force to carry out its duties more efficiently as passenger volumes increase in line with the green list," the spokesperson added.

"Until then, the current red list system will remain in place."

"This system has been designed by the government and has several layers of protection to keep passengers and colleagues safe - including mandatory negative Covid-19 tests for all international arrivals, mandatory use of face coverings, social distancing, segregation and enhanced cleaning regimes and ventilation in immigration halls," the spokesperson further mentioned.

The move follows fears raised by airport staff for their safety due to overcrowding at the immigration, amid concerns that travellers arriving from red list countries are mixing with those from green and amber. Travellers from different lists are stuck in a bottleneck before immigration, said the GMB union.

Heathrow said it is currently in negotiations with the government over the cost of the new facility. Airport officials claim they need to recover some of the cost of it following government policy.

Heathrow said it has lost GBP 2.4 billion due to the pandemic and is suffering losses of GBP 5 million every day.

Airport officials claim they have received limited financial support from the government and, unlike retail businesses, the airport have had to continue to pay business rates in line with when they had 80 per cent more passengers.

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