

Philippines bars travellers from Bangladesh as Indian Covid variant found

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Dhaka: The Philippines has temporarily banned the entry of travelers from Bangladesh after the discovery of the first two cases of the Indian coronavirus variant in the country.

In a move to contain the spread of the variant, the Philippines has also barred travelers from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal following India from entering the country.

The announcement comes a day after the UAE, Thailand, and Kuwait also banned visitors from Bangladesh over the same concerns.

The Philippines health ministry on May 11 disclosed the detection of the two cases of the coronavirus variant, known as B.1.617 in the country.

The variant had been confirmed in two Filipino seafarers who returned in April from the United Arab Emirates and Oman, Alethea De Guzman, director of the ministry's epidemiology bureau, according to reports.

"We need to continually monitor what other variants we may be able to detect locally, as well as monitor the spread of the variants we have already detected," De Guzman said, adding that the seafarers were isolated on their return and had both recovered.

The World Health Organisation has classified the [Indian variant](#) of global concern with some preliminary studies showing that it spreads more easily.

Indonesia and Malaysia this month reported the first cases of the B.1.617 coronavirus variant.

The Philippines has also previously recorded cases of a variant first detected in Britain and another first discovered in South Africa, as well as a home-grown P.3 variant.

With 1.1 million infections and 18,562 deaths, the Philippines has the second-highest number of Covid-19 cases and casualties in Southeast Asia, next to Indonesia.

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