

UK's PM defends its "balanced approach" to int'l travel

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 09 August, 2021



London: Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson said the government wants a "balanced approach" to travel while trying to stop new Covid variants coming in from abroad.

During a visit to Airbus in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, the UK's Prime Minister said, "On travel, we have had to balance it because of the anxiety that I think a lot of people have - I have - about importing new variants, bringing back the disease."

"We also have to recognise that people want, badly, to go on their summer holidays, we need to get the travel industry moving again, we need to get our city centres open again and so we want an approach that is as simple as we can possibly make it."

Tory MPs have raised concerns about the prospect of a so-called amber watch-list.

Under current rules people who were fully vaccinated in the UK, US, EU (except France) or Switzerland do not have to isolate for 10 days when arriving from amber list countries. But people coming to the UK from red list countries are required to isolate for 10 days in a government-approved hotel regardless of their vaccine status.

The government already has a green watch-list, which features more than half the countries on the green list and signals they are at risk of moving to amber.

Huw Merriman, Chairman of the Transport Select Committee said that the potential new travel category would "be viewed as a massive red flag" that would "likely" cause bookings to those countries to "collapse".

About the possibility of a new watch-list Labour Party Chairwoman Anneliese Dodds said the opposition did not want to see "additional confusion and chaos" and that the government needed to be "open and transparent".

But government minister Matt Warman defended the idea of travel watch-lists, saying that warnings over potential quarantine changes gave people "really important information when they're making significant financial decisions".

Airline bosses had welcomed the latest change in rules, Monday, but said the UK airline sector was not on the path to recovery "due to the continued restrictions that are being imposed on international travel".

In a letter to Transport Secretary Grant Shapps they called for more countries to be added to the green list, saying that countries should be green by default.

Heathrow Airport Chief Executive John Holland-Kaye said the UK's current travel rules were "still quite complicated" and needed to be simplified to make it easier for people to travel, as well as reducing some of the extra costs.

He said the requirement for everyone to have a PCR test could be reduced to a "cheaper lateral flow test as a first line of defense".