India's IT hub imposes night curfew over new virus strain fears

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A passenger arriving from Britain is hugged by a relative at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad before the ban on UK arrivals was imposed

India's Karnataka state, home to the nation's vibrant technology hub, on

Wednesday imposed a night curfew in a bid to stave off the new fast-spreading coronavirus strain sweeping Britain.

The ban by the southern state on gatherings and non-essential travel from 10 pm to 6 am until January 2 came as the national government said nine states reported positive cases of coronavirus among recent airline passengers from the UK.

The government did not reveal how many cases were detected. It was not yet known if those infected carried the new strain of the virus, officials added.

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa called on the public to respect the curfew to "prevent the spread of the new Covid strain".

India is the world's second most-infected nation behind the United States, with more than 10 million cases and over 146,000 deaths.

A new strain of coronavirus that emerged in Britain in the past week has prompted dozens of countries, including India, to ban travellers from the UK and step up local measures.

Travellers to Karnataka, whose capital is the IT hub of Bangalore, will be tested on arrival unless they have been cleared 72 hours before departure.

Some 2,500 travellers from the UK who arrived in the state over the past month will be subject to two weeks of institutional quarantine and a further two weeks of home quarantine, the state government said.

The western state of Maharashtra, home to the financial capital Mumbai, imposed a similar curfew on Tuesday.

All air passengers from Europe or the Middle East arriving at Mumbai airport will also have to go into institutional quarantine and then be tested.

The national government has yet to approve any vaccines but hopes to start immunisations early next year.

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