

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Jamaica Bans UK Flights for Two Weeks as New, More Contagious Covid-19 Strain is Discovered in Country

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British Airways. By. GETTY IMAGES

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC — The Government of Jamaica on Monday announced that effective immediately, all flights coming into the island from the United Kingdom will be banned for a period of two weeks.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Health, the ban will end on January 4.

The announcement follows confirmation of a new Covid-19 strain in Britain that U.K. scientists say is 70 percent more contagious than the dominant variant. Britain was also

facing a food shortage as France closed its borders, halting the movement of some 10,000 trucks that carry products to and from the European countries daily.

U.K. scientists say the mutation changes the spike protein found on the surface of the virus by increasing its ability to latch onto human cells — allowing the virus to spread 70 percent faster than the dominant strain.

The new Covid-19 variant has at least 23 new genetic changes, which is an unusually high number, according to the scientists (via [the Wall Street Journal](#)). The spike protein contains amino acids that use furin, a body enzyme that breaks down cell coatings and allows Covid-19 to penetrate.

Flights coming into Jamaica over the next 24 hours and outbound flights to the UK will be allowed put to midnight on Tuesday, the ministry said.

The release said that the country is expecting three flights from the U.K. over the next 24 hours, one of which is ready en route. However, passengers who board those flights will be subjected to a minimum of 48 hour state quarantine and PCR testing .

“Passengers who test negative will be fitted with armbands for monitoring and released to complete their 14-day quarantine at home, while those found to be positive will be isolated in state facilities until recovered,” the ministry said.

According to the Health Ministry, family members of persons who arrive on these flights will be able to pick up their relatives after the minimum 48-hour quarantine.

“Family members are reminded that they must strictly adhere to the infection prevention and control measures when picking up their relatives as well as during the mandatory quarantine period as persons may develop symptoms during the 14 day quarantine period and therefore transmit the virus to others,” the ministry said.

The ministry added that persons who arrive in the country from other ports of entry via the U.K., will also be required to adhere to all restrictions in line with provisions under Jamaica's Quarantine Act.

“At this time, Jamaicans are strongly advised not to travel to the UK. Those who travel overseas, including to the UK, will be subject to the established quarantine or established procedures, on their return to Jamaica,” the ministry stated.