



GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

NORKA Department - COVID-19 testing - Issuance of consent letter to operate chartered flights – conditions for returnees - Orders issued.

NORKA(B)DEPARTMENT

G.O.(Rt)No.380/2020/NORKA Dated,Thiruvananthapuram, 24/06/2020

- Read (1) Guidelines for international arrivals - Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India dated 24.05.2020.
- (2) D.O.No.Secy (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, dated 22.06.2020.
- (3) D.O.No.453/CS/2020/CSO dated 23.06.2020 from Chief Secretary to Cabinet Secretary and Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

ORDER

Government of Kerala, while issuing consent letters to operate private chartered flights to bring back stranded Keralites included a condition, to conduct COVID-19 tests on all the returnees and to bring COVID-19 positive and negative persons separately to avoid cross infection during the travel. All flights departing to Kerala from 25th June 2020 were required to adhere to this condition.

(2) The matter was taken up with the Government of India vide letters dated 17th and 19th June, 2020. the issue was brought to the attention of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala vide letter D.O.No.1056/2020/CM dated 18th June, 2020. The Government of India in the reply sent cited as reference (2) above has clarified that, consequent to the requests from Government of Kerala, Missions in the Gulf countries were consulted regarding the arrangements for prior Covid testing of travelers from their countries of accreditation. The responses of the Missions in United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have been brought to the attention of Government of Kerala. Vide reference 3rd cited above, Chief Secretary, Government of Kerala has requested Government of India to facilitate testing facilities in the host countries before the expatriates board the flights to Kerala.

(3) As regards UAE is concerned, passengers regardless of their destination in India are being subject to Rapid Antibody tests before departure

at the airports by the Health Authorities. Only those who clear the tests are given the sticker "Fit to Travel".

(4) In the case of Qatar, people can come to public places including airports, only if they do not have Covid symptoms as per the Mobile App 'Ehteraz', developed by the Qatar Government.

(5) In so far as Kuwait is concerned, it has been clarified that the country has facilities for Covid Antibody Rapid tests at two of its airport terminals. If the Airline companies concerned request, testing will be allowed by the authorities concerned at other terminals also. The test will cost around ₹1000/-.

(6) With regard to Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the Missions have expressed certain logistical difficulties for conducting prior Covid testing of passengers.

(7) Upon perusing the statistics of the number of infected persons from the countries mentioned above, it is seen that the rate of infected persons varies 0.33 to 4.65 percent, as shown below;

| Sl.No. | Name of Country | No. of NRKs registered with Norka Roots | No. of persons returned as on 21.06.2020 | % of positives |
|--------|-----------------|---|--|----------------|
| 1 | UAE | 2,34,309 | 26,219 | 1.85 |
| 2 | Saudi Arabia | 82,847 | 6,413 | 2.03 |
| 3 | Kuwait | 34,388 | 8,062 | 4.65 |
| 4 | Qatar | 53,961 | 5,181 | 0.87 |
| 5 | Oman | 33,752 | 6,421 | 0.62 |
| 6 | Bahrain | 17,174 | 3,609 | 0.33 |
| | Total | 4,56,431 | 55,905 | 1.73 |

(8) Considering the present limitation of testing infrastructure in Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and the intention of the Government of Kerala to bring back all the stranded Keralites safely into Kerala, it has been decided to lay down the following conditions, taking into consideration country-specific situations, as mentioned in the letter from Government of India cited as reference (2) above, for operating chartered flights/private airlines.

- i. These conditions will be effective for all flights including Vande Bharat Flights departing to **airports in Kerala from 25th June 2020 onwards.**
- ii. Wherever it is feasible to have any tests conducted, every returnee shall make sincere efforts to get tested and travel along with the certificate. These tests should have been conducted **within the latest 72** hours before undertaking the travel.
- iii. Every returnee shall enter their details into <https://covid19jagratha.kerala.nic.in> mandatorily before embarking the journey.
- iv. All the returnees **shall undergo screening at the arrival airport** as per the

protocol set out by Health Department, Government of Kerala. All symptomatic persons will be isolated and shifted to hospital for further investigation and management.

- v. **All returnees, including asymptomatic persons, who do not have proof of having undergone necessary tests will be subjected to Rapid Antibody (IgG, IgM) upon their arrival at Airport by authorised agencies of Government of Kerala.** All those turning positive for IgM antibodies shall undergo **mandatory confirmatory** tests such as RT-PCR / Gene X-press test / TruNat test. Health authorities will take further steps as per the existing protocols for all those confirmed COVID positive.
- vi. All returnees irrespective of the test results shall undergo the **mandatory quarantine** of 14 days as specified by the Government of Kerala.
- vii. All conditions vide the guidelines issued by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, shall be adhered to. An **undertaking in the prescribed format (enclosed) for adhering** to all health and quarantine conditions laid down by the Department of health and Family Welfare, Government of Kerala is enclosed.
- viii. All returnees from **Oman and Bahrain** need to wear N95 Mask, Face Shield, Hand Gloves and have Sanitizers for frequent disinfection of hands during the travel.
- ix. As regards the returnees from **Qatar**, only those having the green status in the mobile app named - EHTERAZ - and shall wear N95 Mask, face shield and hand gloves and have sanitizers for frequent disinfection of hands during the travel. They will undergo COVID test in the arrival airport.
- x. All returnees from **UAE** should undergo the COVID test and travel only with the test certificate. They shall wear N95 Mask, face shield and hand gloves and have sanitizers for frequent disinfection of hands during the travel.
- xi. All returnees from the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait** shall wear **N95 Mask, face shield and hand gloves and have sanitizers** for frequent disinfection of hands during the travel. In addition, **they shall wear required Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)** for safety of self and co-passengers. They shall undergo COVID test in the arrival airport (in case of Kuwait if they do not have certificate of having tested within the stipulated time of 72 hours before travel), and exit only after they are cleared by health authorities in Kerala.
- xii. Any violation of the undertaking provided or breach of health protocol guidelines, will lead to penal actions under The Disaster Management Act, 2005, The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 and other relevant Acts and Rules.
- xiii. The Air Transport Operator (ATO)/Holder of the Consent Letter shall **be responsible for ensuring all these safety precautions**. They shall be liable for penal actions under relevant Acts and Rules, in case any lapse is

committed from their side. The violations can also lead to cancellation all further unutilized Consent Letters. They shall also be not eligible for further Consent/Permit Letters.

- xiv. It is further directed that Health Department shall ensure adequate facilities for safe storage and disposal of the used PPE Kits, Masks, Hand gloves etc. at the destination airports.

These orders are issued in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 20(3) of The Disaster Management Act, 2005 in my capacity as Chairperson State Executive Committee of KSDMA and relevant provisions of The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020.

(By order of the Governor)

DR. VISHWAS MEHTA
CHIEF SECRETARY

- (1)The Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
- (2)The Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- (3)The Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India.
- (4)The Additional Chief Secretary, Home & Vigilance, Kerala.
- (5)The State Police Chief, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.
- (6)All District Collectors.
- (7)All District Police Chiefs.
- (8)All Head of Departments.
- (9)Information & Public Relations (Web & New Media) Department.
- (10)Stock File/Office Copy/Spare.

Forwarded /By order,

Section Officer.