

Cyprus reports first cases of Indian COVID-19 variant

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Cyprus confirmed its first cases Wednesday of the COVID-19 variant behind the acceleration of India's explosive outbreak, detected among four people quarantined upon arrival, the health ministry said.

Four samples tested positive for the Indian variant, while two others were positive for the South African variant.

The World Health Organization said last week that the B.1.617 variant of COVID-19, first found in India in October, had been detected in 44 countries.

"These people were quarantined in hotels based on protocols and taken to a centre when their PCR (test) results came back positive," the [health ministry](#) on the Mediterranean island said.

"They did not come into contact with other people," it added.

The cases were detected in people arriving from India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines, countries under Cypriot rules where quarantine for 14-days is required on arrival.

Variants are viewed as more dangerous because they are potentially more transmissible, deadly or able to get past some vaccine protections.

"The only way to curb the aggressive transmission they cause is high vaccination coverage of the population," the ministry added.

Cyprus is speeding up its vaccination rollout, with 45 percent of adults having had at least one jab, with hopes to reach 65 percent by July.

Daily reported cases soared in April to a record 941, fuelled by the more contagious British variant, but has since dropped significantly following two weeks of tightened restrictions.

Government-controlled southern Cyprus has registered over 71,000 cases of COVID-19 and 348 deaths since the pandemic began.

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