

South Africa reports four cases of India virus variant

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South Africa's health ministry on Saturday said four cases of a coronavirus variant fuelling a devastating surge of COVID-19 in India had been recorded in the country.

"The four cases of B.1.617.2 have been detected in (the provinces of) Gauteng (2) and KwaZulu-Natal (2) and all have a history of recent arrival from India," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said in a statement late Saturday.

Eleven cases of another variant first detected in the United Kingdom and known as B.1.1.7 have also been found, the statement added, noting that community transmission of that variant had "already set in".

South Africa is at least the fourth country on the continent to pick up the B.1.617.2 variant, alongside Kenya, Uganda and Morocco.

India is grappling with an explosive [coronavirus](#) outbreak widely attributed to the variant, which has now been found in more than a dozen countries worldwide.

South Africa has not yet joined the growing number of countries worldwide that have banned flights from India to limit the spread of its variant.

Mkhize said [travel restrictions](#) would "need to be balanced against scientific realities" to protect the economy of Africa's most industrialised nation.

An announcement will be made once the cabinet has consulted on the matter, he added.

South Africa is the continent's worst virus-hit country, accounting for more than 34 percent of all cases in the region.

The country's second coronavirus wave, which peaked earlier this year, was driven by a local, more infectious coronavirus variant known as B.1.351.

Mkhize earlier this week raised the alarm over "a worrying trend of increasing numbers of detected cases" in certain provinces.

He warned of a looming third wave of infections likely to coincide with the upcoming southern hemisphere winter.

To date, the country has recorded more than 1.59 million coronavirus cases, of which more than 54,700 have been fatal.

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