



Department of Tourism

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PRESS RELEASE

Lockdown: First flight from Kerala to UK leaves with 268 passengers

Thiruvananthapuram, Apr 15: The first flight from locked-down Kerala to UK took off on Wednesday evening, facilitating the return of 268 tourists who had been stranded in south India since the corona pandemic put a check on public transportation.

The chartered British Airways plane left the state capital at 7.30 pm, with London as the destination and Kochi as a stopover to pick 158 passengers. As many as 110 tourists boarded from here.

The passengers include seven who had tested positive for Covid-19 and were treated successfully in Kochi. They were part of a group of 19 Britons.

Mr Jeremy Pilmore-Bedford, Deputy High Commissioner, British Deputy High Commission, Bengaluru, was at the Kochi airport, supervising the repatriation operations.

Out of the 268 tourists, there are a few from Austria, Canada, Portugal, Ireland, Lithuania etc.,

The spread of Covid-19 had led Kerala to impose a state-wide shutdown on March 23. The next day, the Union government announced a similar exigency across the country for three weeks and subsequently till May 3.

Kerala's Tourism Minister Mr Kadakampally Surendran expressed happiness over facilitating the air travel. "Upholding our spirit of treating guests like gods, we bore the expenses of those who had tested positive for the coronavirus."

He said the guests from UK were treated to recovery at the Government Medical College Hospital in Kochi.

Ms Rani George, Secretary, Kerala Tourism, pointed out that the department had facilitated accommodation and food for those stranded in the state owing to the shutdown. "Right from setting up a corona-time helpdesk for foreign tourists a month ago, our hospitality has been exemplary as usual," she added.

Mr P Bala Kiran, Director, Kerala Tourism, noted that British nationals continue to top the list of foreigner tourists in the state by totalling one-fourth of the visitors from abroad.



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This is the third aircraft to repatriate stranded passengers in Kerala from Europe since the lockdown. An Air India aircraft with 232 passengers left for Germany on March 31. Four days later, second aircraft flew 112 people to France.

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