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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
6113	16.03.2021	16.03.2021	Delhi	The Times of India English Newspaper 16 th March, 2021/Page No. 03
Title:	First Patient with S Africa Variant confirmed in Delhi			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to SSU-Delhi			

A 33-year-old man admitted to Lok Nayak Hospital has become the first person to be confirmed positive in the city for Covid-19 caused by the South Africa variant of novel coronavirus. There are at least four more such cases in other parts of the country.

Dr Suresh Kumar, the medical director of the hospital, told TOI that the man was from Kerala. "He tested positive for Covid-19 on return from South Africa nine days ago and was immediately shifted to our hospital. Today, we received reports confirming that he is infected with the South Africa variant," Dr Kumar said.

According to him, the patient is asymptomatic. However, to ensure that the infection doesn't spread, he has been kept under strict isolation, the doctor said. "We have created a special ward to isolate him so that the other patients suffering from Covid-19 caused by the UK variant or the original strain don't get mixed."

Multiple variants of SARS-CoV-2, such as UK, South Africa and Brazil ones, are now circulating globally. According to Centre for Disease Control, US, in January 2021,

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**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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scientists from the UK reported evidence that suggests B.1.1.7 — the variant that originated there — may be associated with an increased risk of death compared with other variants. The South Africa variant shares some mutations with the UK strain, it suggests.

“In Brazil, a variant of SARS-CoV-2 (known as P.1) emerged that was first identified in four travellers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at Haneda airport outside Tokyo, Japan. This variant has 17 unique mutations,” the US body says. “Scientists are working to learn more about these variants to better understand how easily they may be transmitted and the effectiveness of currently authorised vaccines against them,” it adds.

The South Africa variant was first reported in Africa in December, but no case of Covid-19 caused by it had reached India till about a month ago. Four such cases were confirmed by the Union health ministry last month. “The spread of newer variants is concerning. While there are no studies to suggest the new variants are more fatal, some of them are more infective,” Dr Sumit Ray, vice-chairperson of critical care at Holy Family Hospital, said.

Dr Kumar said the newer variants might not necessarily be more fatal. “We have seen 28 cases caused by the UK variant at our hospital. Most of them were asymptomatic and they were discharged after testing negative,” he said.

Lok Nayak Hospital, run by Delhi government, has been designated for isolation of Covid-19 patients with a history of travel to other countries, especially those where mutated strains have been confirmed.

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