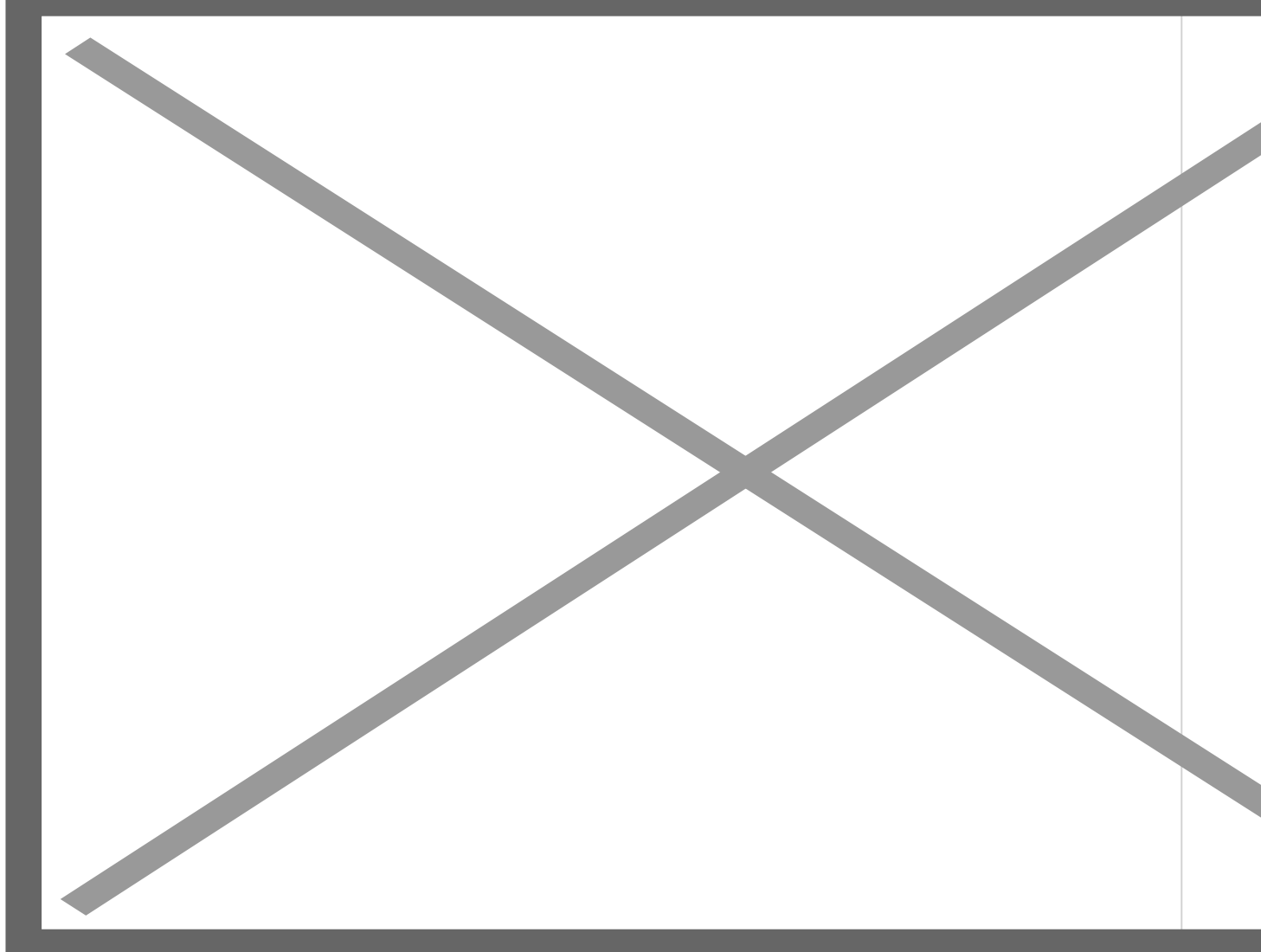


49 passengers on India-Hong Kong flight test positive for COVID

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Residents line up against Hong Kong's business district to get tested for coronavirus at a testing centre for COVID-19 in Hong Kong. [File: Vincent Yu/ AP]

New Delhi, April 20 (RHC)-- At least 49 passengers on a flight from New Delhi to Hong Kong have tested positive for COVID-19, authorities said on Tuesday, as a two-week ban on all flights from India, as well as Pakistan and the Philippines took effect.

All of the passengers who tested positive flew into Hong Kong on a flight run by Indian operator Vistara on April 4th. The positive tests are significant as Hong Kong has been recording fewer daily cases than the total detected on the flight since it brought a fourth wave under control in January.

India meanwhile is battling skyrocketing infections, with hospitals running out of beds and the government reimposing painful restrictions, including a seven-day lockdown that began on Monday in the capital, New Delhi.

As many as 188 passengers could have travelled on the Vistara flight, but Hong Kong authorities did not say how many people were on board the aircraft. The positive COVID-19 results surfaced during Hong Kong's mandatory three-week quarantine period, one of the strictest entry regimes in the world.

A spokesman for Vistara, responding to the cluster on its flight, said the company "ensures strict compliance with all guidelines issued by the Indian as well as the destination countries' authorities for all flights, including all charter flights to and from Hong Kong."

Densely populated Hong Kong was one of the first places to be hit by the coronavirus but the tough entry conditions, strict social-distancing measures and universal mask wearing have helped keep infections to just over 11,000 with 209 deaths. Approximately 9.8 percent of the 7.5 million people who live in the city have been vaccinated so far.

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