

Research with a refreshing button...

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The year 2020 kick started with a lot of determination, hopes and resolutions for the whole year. Just like every other Ph.D. student, it was going to be the most crucial year overwhelmed with data analysis, work, conferences and some of the most awaited trips of the lifetime. I was busy learning new techniques at Technical University of Munich as an exchange student and planning to get most out of this opportunity. It all came to a halt just in two weeks of my arrival in Munich. COVID 19 outbreak had spread over Germany and complete lockdown was announced for the next two months and that's how the first phase of isolation began for me.

After spending one and a half month in a flat on my own, I was allowed to work two days per week in the lab. Two weeks of unsatisfying lab work with highly restricted use of facilities led to the decision of returning from Germany. I was shortlisted by the Indian embassy in Berlin, Germany on a repatriation flight to Bangalore. The first part of the write up is to highlight the essential information while taking a repatriation flight back to India. Some things might differ for the domestic travelers coming to the institute.

Things to keep in mind:

- Please carry your air ticket, undertaking cum indemnity bond (in duplicates) and any other document mentioned by the embassy in the respective country in printed form.
- The 'Re-entry form' has to be filled and submitted online.
- Carry a bottle of sanitizer, alcohol wipes (optional), a few masks (one time use would also work) and gloves which can be changed every 5-6 hours depending on your flight duration.
- Carry some homemade food/ snacks/ fruits with you to be consumed while waiting at the airport.
- The check-in for the flight will be done after the thermal scanning. It might take 2-3 hours of standing in a line (depends on where you are in the line). Be prepared!
- Due to corona crisis, only one cabin bag (7 kg) will be allowed. Ladies, your purse/ handbag counts.
- Food packets, two masks, sanitizer sachets, a face shield, pen and water bottles will be on your seat. You are supposed to wear mask and face shield during the entire flight. A health check-up form will be provided by the crew member on board.
- After landing on Bangalore airport, body temperature and oxygen saturation level will be measured followed by a GoK institutional quarantine stamp.
- After immigration and baggage claim, you have to proceed towards exit where you can opt for the quarantine facility. You can opt for a 3 star or 5 star hotel as per your convenience. The hotel charges have been decided by the GoK and you will receive the details by email or a hard copy at the airport.
- As per government of India guidelines, it is mandatory for all international passengers to undergo 7 days institutional quarantine arranged by government of Karnataka. Each individual has to bear the whole cost of institutional quarantine.
- I opted for a 3 star hotel (The Den, Whitefield). You have to select a hotel of your choice where you would be taken in a BMTC bus arranged by the govt. The bus ticket

has to be purchased at the airport. Hotel staff would be there to assist you with anything at the airport.

- After check-in at the hotel and successful payment, the passport was collected and after luggage disinfection, it was sent to my room. The room was nice with a fully equipped washroom, television, AC, tea, coffee and everything you need. Food, water and anything that you need will be delivered at your doorstep. The room charges (Rs. 2000/day in my case) include three meals and lodging. Any surplus item comes with an extra charge. Room service will be available 24*7 and you cannot step out of your room.
- You will be tested for COVID 19 (swab test) at the hotel. On airport, it was informed that testing will be done the same day at the hotel and a doctor will be monitoring everyday situation. However, our samples were taken on the 3rd day after repetitive calls from the dwellers and no doctor paid a visit. In case you have some medical issues, please request your hotel to provide a doctor.
- On the day of check-out, you would receive a call from the reception for the same. You have to complete some formalities with a declaration of 7 days strict home quarantine.
- Pay your extra bills, collect receipts and passport, book a cab and move to our campus. The declaration to be home quarantined has to be shown to the security with institute Id for entering the campus. Proceed to the quarantine facility and relax.
- Follow all the guidelines issued by the institute during the quarantine period. Food and water will be delivered at your doorstep in the quarantine facility.

This was all about the procedures, important information and my experience as the first international passenger from the institute. By the time you arrive at the Bangalore airport, somethings might change and there may be a lot of commotion due to the loosening of lockdown. Please be patient and calm. The institute administration is very active and supportive in bringing you back safely to the institute. My mentor (Prof. Jagirdar), Prof. Dipshikha, and the registrar (Prof. K.V.S. Hari) were always in touch with me during the whole journey. They are always available for your help during your whole quarantine period. Please wear mask, use sanitizer and gloves and travel safely.

If you are not bored yet, let's go ahead with my quarantine experience which could be termed as the second phase of isolation for me. Obviously, you would have a proper plan for your next fourteen days and you might find something here that can make to your bucket list.

The hotel room on the 12th floor with glass walls offered a beautiful panoramic view of the surroundings. Enjoying the sunset with a mug of coffee was the most peaceful moment of the day (couldn't manage to watch sunrise, Jet lag sucks!). If you have never taken break from your work, this is your long awaited break. If you are a book lover or an avid fan of web-series and never got time to finish all that you wanted, this is a blessing in disguise. I enjoyed reading some novels, finished some web-series, and tried some comics in this duration. Video games and puzzles were my everyday companion and a sound sleep without worrying to get up early morning was an added dessert. In the first phase of isolation in Germany, I learnt some new culinary skills and tried baking different types of cake. I spent a lot of time (more than double of the average) on video calls with my family and friends. It was a long awaited break for me after passing class 12th. I also took this opportunity to look back and

realize what I have been doing for the past few years and where am I heading with this path. In the second phase of isolation, I coupled some indoor leisure activities with some physical work outs and scientific journals. I have planned to meet few goals in the upcoming days and hopefully I will do it up to some extent. The student guest house in our campus has a cozy feeling. I had spent first two months of my Ph.D. in the guest house, so it is familiar to me. The balcony offers the view to the soothing greenery of IISc and it's great to be back in the place where you belong.

This is a time to get refreshed, gain more energy and restart with more focus. You can choose to be all lazy without a single worry in the world engaged in your latent hobbies or you could do it partially. Ohh! Do I mean partially lazy or partially worried? It's up to you to decide. If you want to utilize this phase in a scientific manner, attend some webinars, plan your work or find solutions to the problems. Apparently you know it better than me and you will use it judiciously. Meanwhile, drink plenty of water, take walks in your room, catch up with your loved ones in a video conference, try some karaoke and dance to the beats of music (even if you are a wallflower). Dig up your hidden talent and explore yourself. Wear mask, use sanitizers and protect everyone. Be healthy, this too shall pass. Wish you all the very best!