

# Outbreak of Novel Coronavirus in China: Actions taken by the Health Ministry

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As per WHO update (as of 11th January, 2020) in all, 41 cases of Novel Coronavirus have been reported so far from China [including one death (further update is awaited)]. As per WHO risk assessment, the risk for global spread, as of now, remains low.

Various measures have been initiated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as a matter of abundant precaution.

1. Secretary (H) is constantly reviewing the evolving scenario, developments, and preparedness and response measures being undertaken by the Ministry.
2. Spl. Secretary (H) took a review meeting on 20th January, 2020 in the context of spurt in cases reported by China and the public health measures that need to be scaled up.
3. MoHFW has written to Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to facilitate thermal screening at the International airports of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Cochin for the airlines to follow International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidelines for managing and notifying anybody reporting illness on flights originating from China and disembarking in India. MoCA has instructed for in-flight announcements for India bound flights.
4. MoHFW has also written to Ministry of External Affairs to provide details of travelers from Wuhan city who have sought visa to travel to India, since 31st December, 2019 and to counsel the applicants while issuing visa. They have also been requested to provide daily details. As for E-visa issue Ministry of Home Affairs is being approached.
5. Ministry of External Affairs has also been requested to disseminate travel advisory (in local languages) to Indian Embassies in China and adjoining countries for wider circulation and passenger information.
6. Secretary (H) has also written to the States/UTs to review their preparedness, identify gaps and strengthen core capacities in the area of surveillance, laboratory support infection prevention & control, logistics, risk communication and in particular, hospital preparedness in terms of isolation and ventilator management of critically ill patients of severe acute respiratory illness (SARI).
7. The Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) under the Chairmanship of DGHS has met twice (on 8th and 15th January, 2020) to assess the risk and review the preparedness and response mechanisms to manage any case that might get imported to India. WHO, being represented in the JMG is providing Ministry with regular updates and technical information.
8. A travel advisory has been issued and put up on Ministry's website and also on the Twitter handle for wider circulation.
9. Port and Airport Health Organizations have been sensitized and thermal screening has been initiated at the international airports of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and will be initiated today at Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Cochin airports. The Airport Health Organizations at the airports of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata have put up signages at prominent locations informing the public about self-reporting of illness. The hospitals attached to these airports have been reviewed for provision of isolation and critical care facilities. Immigration officers manning the counters have been sensitized at these airports.

10. Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme has issued advisory to all States/UTs for SARI surveillance to pick up any travel related case reported in the community and follow up contacts of suspect/confirmed cases.
11. National Institute of Virology, Pune is fully geared up to test samples of nCoV. Ten other laboratories under Indian Council of Medical Research's Viral Research and Diagnostics Laboratories network are also equipped to test such samples, if a need arises.
12. Adequate stock of Personal Protection Equipment is being maintained by Medical Stores Organization.
13. Rapid response teams of the States/UTs have been trained in management of MERS-CoV outbreak (a similarly placed virus, reported from Middle East) in the year 2014. More recently these Rapid Response Teams of all States/UTs, APHO/PHOs and Regional Directors of this Ministry have also been trained (in Nov-Dec, 2019) on management of high risk pathogens in context of Ebola virus disease outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo.

As of today, there are no cases detected on community surveillance or contact tracing.

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