

Early Indications of COVID 19 Pandemic Outbreak in the country

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Ministry of Health & Family Welfare was following the evolving situation in China, when WHO India alerted our country on 6th January, 2020 about outbreak of pneumonia of unknown origin in Wuhan city of China. The Joint Monitoring Group under Director General of Health Services met on 8th January, 2020 to review the evolving situation in China and deliberated on public health preparedness and response strategies for the same.

Before the nationwide lockdown, a series of actions were undertaken in a pro-active, graded and pre-emptive manner based on the evolving scenario.

To prevent entry of disease, India started point of entry screening of passengers at ports, airports and land border crossings on 18th January, 2020 to identify symptomatic travellers from affected countries. Subsequently universal screening was done for all passengers. Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme followed up these international travellers in the community and contacts of suspects and confirmed cases. In all such States/Districts that reported cases, a containment strategy was followed to contain clusters and large outbreaks. Travel advisories and guidelines on surveillance, contact tracing, sample collection & transportation, clinical management, discharge policy, infection prevention & control and home quarantine were also issued.

India took adequate action for screening, surveillance, contact tracing of international travellers from 18th January, 2020. Travel advisories were issued restricting inflow of international travellers.

Points of entry screening was initiated for travellers coming from COVID affected countries and subsequently universal screening was done. Prior to the lockdown on 25th March, 2020, a total of 14,154 flights with 15,24,266 passengers have been screened at these airports. Screening was also done at 12 major and 65 minor ports and land border crossings. In addition to airports, about 16.31 lakh persons were screened at land border crossings and about 86,379 persons were screened at 12 major, 65 minor seaports. Multi-disciplinary Central teams were deployed for inspection of airports and hospitals attached to them to ensure proper screening and end to end management of suspect cases detected on screening.

The Minister of State (Health and Family Welfare), Sh Ashwini Kumar Choubey stated this in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha here today.

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