

Dr. Harsh Vardhan reviews the preparedness regarding nCoV

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7 Central Teams to visit states&designated airports for reviewing preparedness

NCDC Call Centre number (+91-11-23978046) made operational

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Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare held a high level review meeting with senior officers of the Health Ministry, ICMR and NCDC, here today, to analyse the current situation, preparedness and steps being taken for prevention and management of Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) in India. “The situation is being closely monitored at the highest level for adequate preparedness. All the officials of my Ministry, concerned departments and States/UTs have been put on high alert for Novel Coronavirus. We are taking all required possible precautions to manage all possible scenarios”, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated.

The Union Health Minister is personally reviewing and monitoring the preparedness on a daily basis. He is also in regular contact with Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO SEARO for technical support and guidance in the matter.

Dr Harsh Vardhan has spoken to Chief Minister of Uttarakhand today and assured all support for screening at the border with Nepal, where a confirmed nCoV case has been reported. He is also writing to the Chief Ministers of States requesting for their personal intervention to review the State preparedness for control and management of nCoV.

The Union Health Minister has directed for multidisciplinary central teams to be formed and sent to the seven states where thermal screening is being done at the seven designated airports (New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kochi). The central team shall consist of a public health expert, a clinician and a microbiologist. The teams shall reach the respective states tomorrow. They shall review the end-to-end preparedness for management and control of nCoV in the states including that at the airports, for thermal screening and transferring of patients to hospitals for isolation, and shall also visit the tertiary hospitals attached to the airports for reviewing the isolation wards and availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and masks etc. They shall also review whether the infection control, surveillance and other guidelines are being followed. The teams shall coordinate with the State Health Secretaries to explore all avenues for further supporting and strengthening the states' preparedness.

Under directions by Dr Harsh Vardhan, a 24x7 NCDC Call Centre ([+91-11-23978046](tel:+91-11-23978046)) has been made operational. The said Call Centre will monitor the list of contacts furnished by MEA; provide details of district and state surveillance officers to those who seek them; and in case of any clinical query, direct the concerned to the relevant Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) officer. The Union Health Minister has urged the passengers who have a travel history to China since 1st January 2020 to come forward for self-reporting to the nearest health facility if they experience any symptoms such as fever, cough, respiratory distress etc., and also inform their treating doctor.

Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that no nCoV case has been detected in the country so far. However, eleven (11) persons have been put under observation; out of samples taken from these 11 individuals, samples of four passengers have been confirmed to be negative for nCoV by the ICMR-NIV Pune lab. He added that timely measures and promptness of the officials of Union Health Ministry has resulted into vigilant actions. He also commended the media for creating awareness among the people.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that various steps have been taken up and continual efforts are being made by Health Ministry in close coordination with Ministry of Civil Aviation, MEA, State Governments and WHO. Close monitoring is being undertaken for all the passengers who are arriving from China and Hong Kong across 7 International Airports in India. All the passengers are undergoing thermal screening. Travel advisory/signages has been extended to 12 more airports in addition to the current seven. Advisory has also been issued to all States/UTs for Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) surveillance to pick up any travel related case reported in the community and follow up contacts of suspect/confirmed cases. He added that the Ministry has issued guidelines for Surveillance and Contact Tracing; Infection Control; Lab Sample Testing and Clinical Care.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan added that National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune is fully geared up to test samples of nCoV. Ten other laboratories under Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s Viral Research and Diagnostics Laboratories (VRDL) network are also equipped to test such samples, if a need arises. Adequate stock of PPE is being maintained by Medical Stores Organization for airports, hospitals and laboratory use.

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