

'STATES TO BE ASKED TO INVOKE EPIDEMIC DISEASE ACT'

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Precautionary steps: Medical personnel checking tourists at the Junagarh fort in Bikaner on Wednesday. PTI

"It has been decided that all States/Union Territories should be advised to invoke provisions of Section 2 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 so that all advisories being issued from time to time by the Ministry/State/UTs are enforceable," Health Secretary Preeti Sudan said on Wednesday, after a meeting of a high-level Group of Ministers here.

The GoM was constituted to review the measures taken for the management of COVID-19 in India.

Ms. Sudan added that as a measure of prevention, it is reiterated that as per the travel advisory, passengers with travel history to China, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Japan, Italy, Thailand, Singapore, Iran, Malaysia, France, Spain and Germany should undergo self-imposed quarantine for 14 days from the date of their arrival, and their employers should facilitate work-from-home for such employees during this period.

The meeting was also attended by Secretaries and other senior officials of the relevant Ministries and Departments.

IMA's appeal

Meanwhile, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said that sharing data of infected people on a daily basis with the public has created panic across the country.

It appealed to the government to "classify the data" of the pandemic and take appropriate action with "clinical precision."

In a release, the association noted that doctors and hospitals remain a silver lining in otherwise clueless situations for the common man, and every doctor should function as a source of credible information in their locality and instil confidence and trust in the public.

The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) also issued new guidance to help protect children and schools from transmission of the COVID-19.

Practical checklists

"The guidance provides critical considerations and practical checklists to keep schools safe. It also advises national and local authorities on how to adapt and implement emergency plans for educational facilities," the release said. The release noted that in the event of school closures, the guidance includes recommendations to mitigate against the possible negative impacts on children's learning and well being. "This means having solid plans in place to ensure the continuity of learning, including remote learning options such as online education strategies and radio broadcasts of academic content, and access to essential services for all children. These plans should also include necessary steps for the eventual safe reopening of schools," it said.

The group added that the guidance, while specific to countries that have already confirmed the transmission of COVID-19, is still relevant in all other contexts.

“Education can encourage students to become advocates for disease prevention and control at home, in school, and in their community,” the guidance said.

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