

**5.00 P.M.**

[डा. अनिल अग्रवाल]

मल्टीनेशनल कंपनीज़ उसको बेच रही हैं। कई कंपनीज़ को आप देखेंगे कि जिस रेट पर वे सामान खरीद रहे हैं, उससे सस्ते दाम पर बेच रहे हैं।

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**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER**

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN): Hon. Members, discussion on the Bill will continue afterwards.

Now, we will take up Supplementary Business — Statement by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare on the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus in China.

Suo Moto Statement Re. Outbreak of Novel Corona Virus Disease in China and some other countries and the steps taken by the Government of India

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE; THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY; AND THE MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES (DR. HARSH VARDHAN): Sir, I would like to brief the hon. Members on the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus Disease in China and some other countries and the actions taken by the Government of India.

Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that cause illness in humans and animals. Rarely, animal corona viruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people such as has been seen with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2014.

China reported an outbreak of Novel Coronavirus on 31st December, 2019. The outbreak was initially noticed in a seafood market in Wuhan city in Hubei Province of China in early December, 2019 and, in a short span, has spread to all the provinces of China.

Sir, I have slightly updated the data till today because Statement, which has been circulated, may have the data till yesterday night. So, as on 6th February, a total of 31,161 confirmed cases and 636 deaths have been reported in China. A total of 275 confirmed cases have been reported outside China from 27 countries, including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. The number of cases and deaths reported from China is showing an upward trend.

The World Health Organization has declared this outbreak as a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern" (PHEIC) on 30th January, 2020.

Many of the epidemiological parameters, such as, incubation period, mode of transmission, subclinical infection, period of virus shedding, etc., are still being researched. Once a person is exposed to the infection, it may take about two weeks to develop the illness. The main symptoms of Novel Coronavirus are fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing. There will be radiological evidence, indicative of pneumonia. In 10 to 20 per cent of cases, disease may become severe enough to require ventilatory support. The case fatality is around two per cent. Human to human transmission has been noticed in the cases of Novel Coronavirus, called as 2019-nCoV, which is its abbreviated form. It spreads through droplets/aerosols in persons having close contact. Public health implications of the reports that the virus has been found in fecal samples of infected patients are being worked out. All suspected or probable cases of nCoV must be treated in isolation with barrier nursing and universal precautions to prevent the further spread of disease.

In our country, three positive cases have been reported so far from Kerala. All these cases have travel history from Wuhan, China. They have been isolated and are reported to be clinically stable.

The ever- increasing magnitude of this outbreak calls for a concerted effort by not only health but all sectors of the Government. The Government of India has initiated a series of actions to prevent entry of the disease and to contain it. I am daily reviewing the situation. A Group of Ministers consisting of the Minister of External Affairs, the Minister of Civil Aviation, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, the Minister of State for Shipping and the Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, chaired by me, has been constituted to monitor the situation. The Cabinet Secretary has taken daily reviews with all related Ministries of Health, Defence, External Affairs, Civil Aviation, Home, Textiles, Pharma, Commerce, and other officials including the State Chief Secretaries. My own Ministry is constantly reviewing the evolving scenario. Video Conferences are being held with States every other day.

The Government of India has also taken several other measures to control the risk of Novel Coronavirus infection spreading to India. First Advisory was issued on 17th January, 2020, and as the situation is evolving, the travel advisories are accordingly getting revised. Presently,

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(a) Existing visas (including eVisas already issued) are no longer valid for any foreign national travelling from China.

(b) People have already been advised to refrain from travelling to China through an earlier advisory. People travelling to China henceforth shall be quarantined on return.

(c) People having compelling reasons to visit India are asked to contact the Indian Embassy in Beijing or consulate in Shanghai or Guangzhou.

Screening of passengers was initiated from 18th January, 2020. Initially airports at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kochi were covered and subsequently expanded in a total of 21 airports. Universal thermal screening has been made mandatory for all flights from Singapore and Thailand besides Hong Kong and China and these flights will park at earmarked aero-bridges to facilitate screening. Signages have been displayed at prominent places in airports and ports. In-flight announcements are being made and self-declaration forms are being filled up by all the passengers. As of today, a total of 1,275 flights have been screened covering a total of 1,39,539 passengers, and 150 passengers identified with symptoms have been referred to isolation facilities. Teams of specialist doctors were sent to all the airports to ensure effective screening and arrangement for isolation in the attached hospitals.

(MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *in the Chair.* )

Screening of passengers has also been initiated in 12 major seaports and all minor ports in the country to identify passengers and crew coming from China and to isolate them in case they are found symptomatic.

In view of a confirmed case in Nepal, the Government of India has initiated screening in all integrated check posts from Nepal in collaboration with States of U.P., Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Sikkim and Bihar and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and Land Port Authorities. Gram Sabhas have been conducted in villages adjoining the borders with Nepal to create awareness amongst people about the disease and precautions to be taken in collaboration with the Panchayati Raj Ministry.

In view of the continuing lockdown of the Hubei Province in China, the Government of India decided to evacuate the Indian students and other professionals working in Wuhan and neighbouring cities in the Hubei Province. In a coordinated operation with

the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Air India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, two special Air India flights were operated between Delhi and Wuhan on 31st January and 1st February, 2020, that brought back a total of 654 passengers that included 647 Indian citizens (including two Indian Embassy officials who were on the ground in Wuhan to coordinate the evacuation operation) and seven Maldivian nationals. I take this opportunity to thank Air India, its crew and our team of doctors and para medical staff who executed this challenging operation and place on record the appreciation on behalf of this august House for their contribution.

After evacuation, the people are presently undergoing quarantine at special facilities created by the Indian Army in Manesar and by Indo-Tibetan Border Police in Chawla Camp. Ten of the evacuees who were symptomatic have been shifted to isolation. All of them have tested negative for this disease and are stable. All other evacuees are being medically examined on daily basis and are healthy.

The Indian Embassy and Consulates are also in regular contact with the Indian community in other parts of China and is keeping a constant track of their well-being.

Regular surveillance has been initiated across the country for all cases having travel history from China and for people having contact with such persons and having fever, cough or breathlessness. Through Integrated Disease Surveillance network, all such persons are tracked, and presently we are following 6,599 passengers across 29 States and Union Territories in the community. The State surveillance officers, district surveillance officers and rapid response teams of health professionals under the leadership of State Health Secretaries are monitoring all such people on a daily basis. Sufficient isolation beds have been made available in the tertiary facilities across the country to manage any outbreak. 305 symptomatic travelers have been referred to isolation facility and are being monitored.

The Ministry has issued guidelines to support States on Surveillance and contact tracing, Surveillance at Points of Entry, Laboratory samples collection, packaging and transport, Clinical management protocol and Infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities. To ensure availability of critical items like Personal Protective Equipments and N95 masks, the exports of the same were also prohibited by Director General of Foreign Trade. A buffer stock of Personal Protective Equipments and N95 masks is maintained by States as well as by the Union Government.

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National Institute of Virology, Pune is the nodal laboratory. As part of ICMR's preparedness for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, NIV, Pune has established capacity for molecular diagnosis of novel Corona virus. Next generation sequencing is also established. Testing of clinical samples has also been initiated in 11 more laboratories in the country. As of now, 1,305 samples have been tested and 1,282 samples were found negative, 20 samples are under process and 3 samples have tested positive.

Risk communication material has been prepared and is widely disseminated even in regional languages through States. Required awareness in community is ensured through technical briefings by experts in radio and television. Daily Press briefing is being held by the Ministry of Health, and information is being shared through social media. A 24x7 Control Room is operational where the number is 011-23978046.

The Government of India is in regular touch with the World Health Organization's headquarters in Geneva, Regional Office in New Delhi and also the country office to get updates on the evolving scenario outside India.

The Government of India has also provided support to other countries in tackling the challenge posed by the 2019 nCoV disease. ICMR has offered to do testing of samples for other South East Asian Region countries.

Testing of samples from Maldives has already been undertaken. Request from Afghanistan for sample testing has been agreed to. We have agreed to provide technical assistance to Bhutan in managing this infectious disease and screening of passengers also.

The Government of India is constantly monitoring the situation and is taking all necessary steps to avoid the spread of the novel Corona disease. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, your Statement has given a lot of details, but what is the word of caution that you would like to give to Indian citizens who are not travelling abroad, how they should behave, etc.? That has not been spelt out here. Could you spell that out?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Rangarajan. I would suggest that let us take just one more question. Mr. Vaiko, please.

SHRI VAIKO (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I wholeheartedly applaud all the steps taken by this Government, particularly, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and all the committees that the hon. Minister mentioned. I salute and congratulate the pilots of Air India, the crew and the doctors who risked their lives despite the fear psychosis that was spread throughout India that anybody could die anytime. But things are not so.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The entire House joins you in applauding them.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, I have made a study about this. Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans, the viruses cause respiratory infections, including the common cold. There are no vaccines or antiviral drugs that are approved for prevention or treatment.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vaiko, you have to put just questions.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, coronaviruses were discovered in the 1960s. The most recent common ancestor of the coronavirus has been placed at 8000 BCE. The final name for the virus is Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now.

SHRI VAIKO: In May, 2015, an outbreak of MERS-CoV occurred in the Republic of Korea, when a man who had travelled to the Middle East visited four hospitals in the Seoul area to treat his illness.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You are supposed to ask questions, not make a speech.

SHRI VAIKO: This caused one of the largest outbreaks of MERS-CoV outside the Middle East.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please put your question, Mr. Vaiko.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, I am coming to the point.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vaiko, there is no need for a speech.

SHRI VAIKO: As of December, 2019, 2,468 cases of MERS-CoV infection had been confirmed by laboratory tests, 851 of which were fatal, a mortality rate of approximately 34.5 per cent.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vaiko, I would be forced to move on. Then your speech would not be recorded. Please conclude.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, I am coming to very relevant points.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vaiko, all your points are relevant, but there is paucity of time.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, why are we sitting here on Friday?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is not the occasion for making a speech.

SHRI VAIKO: Why do you want us here; only for this?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please put your questions.

SHRI VAIKO: Sir, kindly allow me to seek clarifications.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have started reading out a long speech. There is no time for that.

SHRI VAIKO: I am not reading all of it; I have got many pages here. So, as on 7th February, 2020, there have been 638 confirmed deaths and more than 31,480 confirmed cases in the coronavirus pneumonia outbreak. The Wuhan strain has been identified as a new strain with a 70 per cent genetic similarity to the SARS-CoV. The major related diseases have mainly an intestinal location.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI VAIKO: Corona viruses cause colds with major symptoms like fever, swollen throat, etc. My point is, how many students are still stranded there? How many Indians are still there in Wuhan? You have already taken steps. I read in the newspapers that again Air India planes are ready to go there. So, there is no need for panic. This is very important. And this Government has taken commendable steps. At least, on this day, please allow me to commend this Government.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Dr. Amar Patnaik; last question.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I refer to paragraph 13 of the Statement. We read in the newspapers about seven Maldivian nationals who have also been transported, but there was a report that there was a request from the Government of Pakistan that

there were some people who were probably holed up there. There was a request made from the Government of Pakistan. I don't know what has happened to the request. Secondly, there are various reports which say that eating of bat meat is probably responsible for this. There was another case of virus which was there in Kerala earlier. It was also said to have emanated from eating bat meat. Has it been identified as to what is the exact cause of it?

SHRI VAIKO: \*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is not going on record.

**श्रीमती रूपा गांगुली** (नाम निर्देशित): ऑनरेबल डिप्टी चेयरमैन सर, मैं मंत्री जी से एक चीज कहना चाहूँगी कि मैंने ऐसा न्यूज में देखा था कि पाकिस्तान ने कहा कि हमारे पास ऐसी हालत नहीं है कि हम उनका treatment कराएँ। उसके पास इतना infrastrucural system नहीं है। इंडिया हमेशा इस बारे में बहुत बड़े दिल का रहा है कि यह बहुत सारे लोगों को विश्व की बहुत सारी जगहों से बचा कर लाया है। क्या हम ऐसी कोई कोशिश करेंगे या कर रहे हैं कि हम पाकिस्तान के बच्चों के लिए भी कुछ बंदोबस्त करने के बारे में सोच रहे हैं?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, the hon. Minister.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE; THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY; AND THE MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES (DR. HARSH VARDHAN): Sir, some of the queries pertaining to the number of students still in China, etc., and the issues related to Pakistan will all be answered by my colleague, the Minister of External Affairs. One hon. Member asked about the exact cause. China reported that it was because of sea food towards the beginning of December. Detailed causes are still being researched. We can't say about it for sure unless there is a research outcome about that. Regarding the precaution, we have referred all the passengers who have come from China — as I mentioned earlier over one lakh passengers have been screened — to different surveillance offices in the country at the State and district levels. Even if these passengers did not have symptoms, they are all being monitored there. We have advised them to have self-isolation at homes also even if they do not have symptoms and even if their temperature is not high so that there can be home quarantine. We have also advised them to have quarantined for, at least, about four weeks. Those who have a history of getting into contact with somebody who has a history of travel to China and have these symptoms must report to a health facility and get themselves examined. Through all the possible means like social media, radio, television, etc., we are giving adequate information.

\* Not recorded.



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Besides this, there are basic things like personal hygiene and etiquettes when you have cold and cough so that you don't give the infection to others. These are the routine precautions that you should have. Basically, the whole society has to be cautious about having a contact. If you know somebody who has a recent history of travel to China in the last one month, say, in January, we should help the Government by informing about him. This is like helping us to help you. This is what we are trying to propagate through all possible means. Whatever is technically feasible and possible, we have taken extreme precautions like advising people not to travel to China and cancelling visas, etc. Now, my colleague can give us a detailed input about what is happening outside the country.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S. JAISHANKAR): Sir, to a question which the hon. Member asked, by our estimate, there are about eighty Indian students who are still in Wuhan. This includes ten students who had come to the airport when the flights were sent. But they were running fever. So, the Chinese authorities, after screening, did not allow them to board the flight. About seventy odd people also chose voluntarily to stay in Wuhan and not get evacuated in the two flights. Sir, through you, I would also like to assure the House and the families of the students that the Embassy is in touch with all the students. We regularly monitor their welfare. Many hon. Members have come to me with specific cases about which their constituents are worried about and contacted them. So, we continue to remain in touch with all the students and monitor their welfare. While the House did rightly express about the tremendous effort which the Air India has made, I would also like to place on record, the understanding and appreciation of the House, two Embassy officials also went from Beijing to Wuhan at a considerable risk.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, they also deserve and the entire house joins in applauding their efforts.

SHRI S. JAISHANKAR: And, finally, the question regarding Pakistan. At the time when our two flights were going, we had told all the students and the larger community in Wuhan that we were prepared not only to bring back our own people but also bring back all the people of our neighbouring countries who would like to come back. So, this was an offer which was made to all our neighbours. And, of these, the seven nationals of Maldives chose to avail of the offer. But, I would like the hon. Members to know that the offer was made to everybody.

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