

Ebola scare: Indian airports to screen flyers

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Singapore: In line with the WHO declaration urging individual countries to bolster Ebola surveillance measures, Indian airports have been put on guard to prevent the virus from entering its borders.

Chennai and Kolkata airport staff will screen flyers from African countries after authorities sounded alarm bells over the massive outbreak in Africa. Airport officials said that an Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) will be conducted on flyers to ensure that they are not infected by the virus.

Though there are no direct flights from the worst affected countries to Chennai or other Indian cities, there are flights from there to the Gulf, from where passengers from the US, UK and Europe board connecting flights to Chennai. A large number of Nigerians also visit India.

As there were no direct flights to the affected regions, India refrained from issuing a travel alert, said the Union Ministries cabinet following a risk assessment meeting recently.

India's Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said, "Despite low risk, the health ministry will have functioning testing and surveillance systems by next week."

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Dr P Ravindran, who heads emergency medical relief in the Ministry of Health said that both Delhi's National Center for Disease Control and Pune's National Institute of Virology are equipped to test for the Ebola virus.

He added that though strict surveillance would be in place, considering the long incubation period of the virus, few cases may also slip in without displaying symptoms, which beats the purpose of using scanners to detect fever.