WHO declares Ebola outbreak an emergency, India puts its safeguards in place

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WHO declares Ebola virus outbreak as emergency, India puts its safety guards in place

The World Health Organization on August 08, 2014, has declared the Ebola outbreak in West Africa to be an international public health emergency that requires an extraordinary response to stop its spread. The WHO chief, Dr Margaret Chan, stated that the announcement is "a clear call for international solidarity" but also acknowledged that many countries would probably not have any Ebola cases.

In India, the health ministry has ruled out any immediate threat. The number of Indians residing in the affected nations is said to be close to 45,000. The Indian government has been taking all precautions well in advance and keeping a close watch on the movement of people into India from countries affected by the virus.

The health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has stated that there is no reported case of the virus in the country and the government is taking all precautions. "As of today, this moment, there is no Ebola case reported in India. There is no need to panic," he told media persons in Delhi.

The outbreak of Ebola virus in west African countries had earlier made the government ensure screening and tracking of passengers originating or transiting from there, and asked Indians to defer non-essential travel to that region.

Speaking in the parliament, Dr Vardhan stated that if the situation worsens in these countries, there could be a possibility of Indians staying there travelling back to India. "Mandatory self reporting by the passengers coming from or transiting through the affected countries would be required at immigration. Also, in-flight announcements regarding thi,s would also be made by the airlines," stated the health minister.

The current Ebola outbreak is said to be largest and longest outbreak ever recorded, with a death rate of about 50 percent and has so far killed at least 932 people.

(With inputs from PTI report)