

HAJ COMMITTEE OF INDIA

(Constituted under the Act of Parliament No.35 of 2002)

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CIRCULAR

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Sub: Health – Precautions for MERS-CoV to the Pilgrims of Haj – 2013.

Since 2012 MERS-CoV (formerly called “novel coronavirus”) has caused outbreaks of respiratory illness in a number of people in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia. Most people infected with MERS-CoV had severe illness and pneumonia, and about half of them have died. The disease has high mortality and there is no available vaccine or specific treatment for illness.

The virus can spread from person to person through close contact, so pilgrims living and travelling in close quarters may be at risk, even though the risk is considered very low.

The risk of infection can be minimized by general health precautions.

In this background Ministry of Health, Government of India has asked for issue of following advisories:-

(1) For State Haj Committees:-

All Haj Pilgrims should have a prior **HEALTH CHECK-UP** and be advised to comply with common public health guidelines to curb the spread of respiratory infectious disease during the pilgrimage.

The medical doctor should review the risk of all the pilgrims especially elderly (above 65 years of age) and those with chronic diseases (e.g. heart disease, kidney disease, respiratory disease like chronic Bronchitis, diabetes and immunodeficiency) and pilgrims with immune deficiency (congenital and acquired), Malignancy and terminal illnesses, pregnant women and children (under 12) coming for Hajj and Umrah this year, and assess whether making pilgrimage is medically advisable, considering safety of the pilgrims.

(2) For Haj Pilgrims:-

Haj pilgrims are advised on general health precautions.

- Wash hands with soap and water or disinfectant, especially after coughing and sneezing.
- Use disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing and dispose it in the waste basket.
- Try as much as possible to avoid hand contact with the eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid direct contact with the infected persons (people with symptoms such as cough, sneeze, expectoration, vomiting, and diarrhoea) and do not share their personal gadgets.
- Wear masks, especially when in crowded places.
- Maintain good personal hygiene.

Actions during Umra or Hajj:

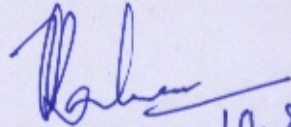
- General health precautions as mentioned above. In the event that the pilgrim suffers from fever, cough or shortness of breath, he / She should report to medical staff.

Actions to take after Umra or Hajj:

- Should seek medical advice if they develop any symptoms mentioned in the Health Advisory (suffering from fever and symptoms of lower respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath), up to within 14 days of their Arrival.
- Any person, including a healthcare worker or family member: - (i) who was in contact with or has provided care for or (ii) who stayed at the same place (e.g. lived with, visited), as the patient suffering from acute fever and respiratory symptoms, should seek medical advice.
- Should fill up the **HEALTH SCREENING FORM** on return and submit to Immigration staff on arrival.

It is requested that the above advisory may be got translated in the local languages and disseminated to the intending Haj Pilgrims so that precautionary measures are taken by the Pilgrims for their own safety.

Looking forward for your continued support to serve the noble cause of Haj Pilgrims.


(Ataur Rahman) 14.8.13
Chief Executive Officer.

- (i) The Executive Officer / Secretary / Chairmen, All State / Union Territory Haj Committees.

For information:-

- (ii) The Chairman, Vice Chairmen & all members of HCOI.
(iii) The Additional Secretary, OSD, (CPV & Haj), Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India, South Block, New Delhi – 110011.
(iv) Shri Anshul Prakesh, JS(PH), Rom No.158, Nirman Bhawan, (A Wing), New Delhi - with reference to the meeting held on 07.08.2013.
(v) The Incharge, Orientation & Public Grievances Cell / Computer Section / Stationery Section, HCOI.