

India yet to decide on flights to and from China amid fresh Covid fears

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With the Opposition demanding for a halt on international flights from China, media reports suggest that the Centre has not yet made a decision on the matter.

As China grapples with a fresh wave of the coronavirus, the country's hospitals and morgues have been overrun, with experts warning of global spread from the Asian nation that had only recently rescinded restrictions.

"We don't have any direct flights from China to India or from India to China but as of now, there is no such order issued to stop connecting flights to India which are arriving via China. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) is an executing ministry, the final decision will come from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)," government sources told ANI.

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosting a high-level meeting to review the COVID-19 situation on Thursday, the situation could change.

In the last six months, India reported four cases of the BF.7 Omicron sub-variant, which is driving China's current surge of infections.

"Given the grave COVID-19 situation in China, the government must immediately ban all flights to and from China. Given the increase in the US, Japan, and South Korea as well as the potential for the emergence of a new lethal variant, India should think about restoring COVID-19 guidelines," Congress leader Manish Tiwari tweeted.

Amid rising concerns of another wave, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya chaired a high-level meeting, on Wednesday, to review the situation in the country and the preparedness of the public health system for surveillance, containment, and management of the pandemic. He urged people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and get vaccinated against the virus.

Post the meeting chaired by Mandaviya, NITI Aayog's Dr VK Paul said that "there is no change with regard to aviation as of now."

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday called on China to share data requested by the world health body to better understand the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We continue to call on China to share the data and conduct the studies we have requested, and which we continue to request. As I have said many times before, all hypotheses about the origins of this pandemic remain on the table," Ghebreyesus said.

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