

## **Coronavirus Fear Government Orders Thermal Screening, fewer visitors at offices**

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- **The central ministries and departments were also advised to install thermal scanners and place hand sanitisers at the entry points of government buildings**
- **Thermal screening of lawyers being conducted in the wake of deadly coronavirus, at the entrance gate of Calcutta High Court in Kolkata.**

With the possibility of coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading in the community, the central government on Tuesday issued preventive measures for its employees, offices and departments across the country.

Among them are suspension of visitor and temporary passes. Also, departments and ministries have been told to discourage the entry of visitors into its office complexes.

“Only those visitors who have proper permission of officers they want to meet should be allowed after being properly screened,” said an office memorandum from the ministry of personnel.

The central ministries and departments were also advised to install thermal scanners and place hand sanitisers at the entry points of government buildings.

They have been further instructed to schedule meetings through video conferencing and avoid parleys involving large number of people.

“Avoid non-essential official travel. Undertake essential correspondence on official email and avoid sending (physical) files and documents to other offices, to the extent possible,” said the memorandum.

It also ‘advised’ closing of gyms, creches, recreational centres in government buildings as well as ensuring regular cleaning of workplaces. Leaves should be granted to those wanting to self-quarantine.

According to an official briefing by the Centre on Tuesday, the number of cases in India rose to at least 137 (reports of more active cases were trickling in at the time of going to press) with three deaths.

On Wednesday, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is expected to come out with a report on random samples it has collected of people who displayed flu-like symptoms. This report will determine whether India is witnessing community transmission. Some departments and ministries immediately started implementing the guidelines of the Centre.

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## **Making Corporate India Comply**

The gate of Rail Bhawan saw a long queue on Tuesday as staff members and visitors had to get cleared by thermal scanners to gain entry. In fact, officials were asked to cut the number of visitors and suspend the routine issue of temporary passes with immediate effect.

On the other hand, no testing infrastructure or personnel are in place for two major government buildings hosting many major ministries. Multiple officials confirmed that till Tuesday evening, no screening has been done yet for the thousands of officials working in the sprawling complexes of Udyog Bhawan and Shastri Bhawan.

“We had expected some form of basic testing while entering the premises for the past 3-4 days, but there has been none so far,” said a joint secretary-level officer based out of Udyog Bhawan.

The building is home to major ministries, including commerce and industry, textiles and MSME. It also houses scores of associated offices such as the Directorate General of Foreign Trade and Handloom Development Commissioner.

Across Rajpath, the more chaotic Shastri Bhawan continues to be open to all valid visitors. The building houses the ministries of human resource development, law & justice, information & broadcasting, corporate affairs and chemicals and fertilisers, among others. Meanwhile, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has asked one of its officials to be quarantined at home in view of coronavirus pandemic.