



States to be Asked to Invoke Epidemic Diseases Act

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Why in News

In a cabinet secretary meeting, it has been decided that states and Union Territories should invoke provisions of **Section 2 of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897**.

- **Health is a State subject**, but by invoking Section 2 of the Epidemic Diseases Act, advisories and directions of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare will be enforceable.
- At present, at least 60 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in India.

Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897

- The Epidemic Diseases Act was **introduced by the British** to tackle the epidemic of bubonic plague that broke out in the then state of Bombay.
- This law aims to provide for the better prevention of the spread of dangerous epidemic diseases. Under the act, temporary provisions or regulations can be made to be observed by the public to tackle or prevent the outbreak of a disease.
- **Section 2A of the Act** empowers the central government to take steps to prevent the spread of an epidemic. It allows the government to inspect any ship arriving or leaving any port and the power to detain any person intending to sail or arriving in the country.
- **Section 3** provides penalties for disobeying any regulation or order made under the Act. These are according to section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).
- **Section 4** gives legal protection to the implementing officers acting under the Act.
- The Epidemics Diseases Act is routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as Swine Flu, Dengue.

For Example in 2009, to tackle the swine flu outbreak in Pune, Section 2 powers were used to open screening centres in civic hospitals across the city, and swine flu was declared a notifiable disease.

Source : TH