

Passengers on Emirates flight appear to have the flu

Page NO.13 Col NO.06

NEW YORK: A large commercial jet from Dubai caused a scare on Wednesday after a pilot radioed that it would be landing at New York's Kennedy Airport carrying several passengers and crew members who fell ill with flu-like symptoms.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention immediately quarantined the double-decker Emirates aircraft holding 520 passengers so it could evaluate about 100 of them.

Some had complained about coughs, headaches, sore throats and fevers.

Officials said 10 people — three passengers and seven crew members — ended up hospitalised in what Emirates called a “precaution”. The rest were cleared to continue their travels while the CDC sought to determine what caused the sickness.

“Given the symptoms that we are seeing in the patients and given the history that they present, it looks like this is probably influenza,” Acting New York City Health Commissioner Dr Oxiris Barbot said. “But again, until we have our final results late tonight we won’t be able to give a final determination on what the underlying cause is of this illness.”

Passenger Erin Sykes posted a video on social media of officers in masks and gloves taking the temperature of passengers on the tarmac.

In an interview, Sykes said she saw a few passengers being taken off the plane first for medical attention, but she added that “many, many” others were showing signs of illness.

“Very intense coughing. Violently sick. Going into the bathroom a lot,” she said when asked to describe the scene. She added: “These people should know not to travel in a confined space with other healthy people.”

Said another flyer, Zeph Shamba, said he saw at least one man on the 14-hour flight coughing and vomiting.

“People were worried because we don’t know what it is. And we get down there and guys with masks on their noses and stuff like that,” Shamba said. “It’s like the plane from hell.”

Published in Dawn, September 7th, 2018