

Opening after 7 months, ISBTs wear deserted look

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THE THREE Inter-State Bus Terminals (ISBTs) at Anand Vihar, Kashmere Gate and Sarai Kale Khan wore an empty look as they reopened to the public on Tuesday for the first time since the lockdown was imposed in March. Till 6 pm, only 543 buses arrived across the three terminals as opposed to the usual pre-lockdown figure of around 3,100.

On Monday, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot had said inter-state buses will be permitted to ply keeping in mind various standard operating procedures. The ISBTs will allow only 50% of average daily traffic till November 15. An official from the Delhi Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (DTIDC) said, "The respective state roadways will take a decision on limiting the number of buses arriving here."

Passenger traffic was low at all terminals. The Maharana Pratap ISBT in North Delhi's Kashmere Gate usually gets an average of 1,800 buses daily – around 1,000 from Haryana, and others from UP, Himachal

Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan. On Tuesday, till 6 pm, only 243 buses had arrived.

Passengers on their way to visit families, attend exams or on work-related business were screened and made to apply sanitiser before entering the terminal. Swapnil Joshi (20), a student of hotel management, was on his way to Chandigarh for an exam while Pinky Mandal (23) was heading to Dehradun to buy merchandise for her garments shop in Uttam Nagar.

BS Shishodia, DTIDC assistant general manager (works), who was at the terminal, said, "There are four testing camps at the ISBT in case anyone has any symptoms." Such camps will be set up at the other ISBTs as well.

At Swami Vivekanand ISBT in East Delhi's Anand Vihar, thermal screening of incoming bus crew was carried out and drivers were asked to deposit sanitisation certificates of their buses. Hardeep Singh (35), a bus driver from UP, said, "At Rampur depot, they disinfected the bus and gave the certificate. I use sanitisers and ask passengers to wear masks."

At the Veer Hakikat Rai ISBT at Sarai Kale Khan too – which used to get 300-400 buses mainly from

UP, Haryana and Rajasthan a day – incoming buses remained low on Tuesday, with 43 buses till 6 pm, around 2% of normal traffic. Estate manager Ashok Mudgal said, "Today is just the first day. State roadway corporations will send their buses with time."

At Anand Vihar terminal, 257 buses had arrived; the average used to be 1,000-1,100 per day.

Buses were disinfected on entry at the terminal. While passengers queued up, bus conductors and drivers were advised by staff to wear masks and maintain social distancing.

Buses to and from UP have been arriving at UP's Kaushambi bus station, opposite Anand Vihar, since June, with steadily increasing passenger traffic after the lockdown.

In June, 29.86 lakh passengers had used the UPSRTC buses to arrive at Kaushambi, opposite the Anand Vihar terminal. In August and September this year, in over 2,100 buses, 61.34 lakh and 69.12 lakh passengers respectively arrived at the ISBT.

Shishodia said, "Since these buses were running, we used to tell passengers heading for UP to take the buses from Kaushambi itself."



At ISBT Kashmere Gate on Tuesday. Praveen Khanna