From arrest warnings to taking help of the clerics and village headmen, Assam tried all possible means to identify those who returned from Nizamuddin congregation and had suddenly thrown a challenge to health workers fighting to stem the spread of COVID-19.

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The Centre and Andhra Pradesh government shared a list of over 800 persons from the state who returned from Nizamuddin congregation but did not go to health centres for COVID-19 screening for quarantine. Some of them responded to the state government's appeals and visited hospitals but more than 200 went into hiding. This forced the state government to take help of the clerics, Masjids and the gaonburhas (village headmen) to identify and bring them to health centres. The state police also issued a warning to register FIR against those refusing to come to hospitals.

Representative image. (PTI Photo)
Till March 31, Assam reported no COVID-19 positive case but the number of cases suddenly rose to 14 in the next 72-hours and more than 200 people, who went into hiding despite repeated appeals emerged as a challenge. On Tuesday, another person, who came in touch with a person who visited Nizamuddin was tested positive in Western Assam's Goalpara district. This took the state's COVID-19 positive cases to 31 so far. Of these, 30 were related to Nizamuddin incident. A 65-year-old man in South Assam's Hailakandi district, who possibly got infected during his visit to Nizamuddin died on April 10.

“We hope to wrap up the Nizamuddin issue in a few days. As on today, out of the total 3,209 samples we collected for tests, 1421 are related to Nizamuddin incident. We have received all reports except 34 samples. Condition of all those who are in hospital or in quarantine are fine so far. Once we get the reports, we hope to wrap up the challenge posed by the Nizamuddin returnees soon,” health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters on Monday.