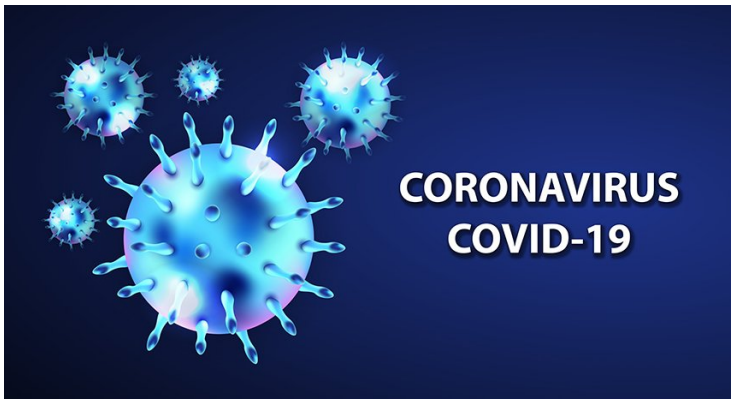
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# India ramps up efforts to contain the spread of novel coronavirus

22 March 2020 | News | By Ankit Kankar

**On 11 March 2020, WHO declared Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic and reiterated the call for countries to take immediate actions and scale up response to treat, detect and reduce transmission to save peopleâ??s lives.**



**Situation update**

As of 21 March 2020 (4:45 PM), a total of 283 COVID-19 cases (244 Indians and 39 foreign nationals) have been reported in 22 states/union territories. These include 22 who have been cured/discharged, 1 who has migrated and 4 reported deaths. Hospital isolation of all confirmed cases, tracing and home quarantine of the contacts is ongoing.

**Government response**

The Prime Minister's Office, Group of Ministers, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Cabinet Secretary are closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation. The government has invoked powers under The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 to enhance preparedness and containment of the virus. With COVID-19 being declared a notified disaster, the State Disaster Response Fund, constituted under Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, is now available with state governments for response measures.

Central ministries along with states/UTs have taken urgent steps to strengthen community surveillance, quarantine facilities, isolation wards, and ensure availability of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), trained manpower and rapid response teams for management of COVID-19.

Addressing the nation, the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi has urged for resolve and restraint and adopting social distancing. He has also asked fellow citizens to follow 'Janta curfew' (voluntary self-isolation) on Sunday, 22 March 2020 from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

In a new advisory, apart from other prevention measures, the government has banned all international flights from entering India for a week starting 22 March 2020.

Travel of passengers from Afghanistan, Philippines, Malaysia to India has been prohibited. All passengers coming from European Union (27 countries), European Free Trade Association (4 countries), Turkey and United Kingdom have also been prohibited from entering India. These are temporary measures and shall remain in force till 31 March 2020. The earlier visa restrictions also remain in force. Universal Health Screening continues at all points of entry.

**WHO Country Office for India support**

WHO Country Office for India (WCO) has been working closely with MoHFW, on preparedness and response measures for COVID-19, including disease surveillance, laboratory and research protocols, risk communications, training on infection prevention and control (IPC) and cluster containment plan, surveillance and tracking of travellers.

"We welcome Prime Minister's call for a Janta curfew and adopting social distancing. Effective implementation of the strategy will go a long way in controlling the spread of the virus. Along with hand-hygiene, coughing and sneezing in one's sleeves prevents transmission. These measures, together with social distancing can be effective in containing transmission. Even as we maintain social distancing, it is equally vital to stand together in solidarity to overcome this challenge," says Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative to India.