Coronavirus cases in India: What is happening? Here's everything you should know

ET Online | Updated: Mar 19, 2020, 10.11 AM IST

After a spike in **coronavirus** cases, **India** has put in place strict restrictions on inbound travel. The WHO has also declared it a pandemic after more than 200,000 confirmed cases and over 8,900 deaths in 114 countries.

India has confirmed three coronavirus deaths so far.

India has suspended "all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/international organisations, employment, project visas" until April 15.

The coronavirus or Covid-19 is a large family of viruses that causes illnesses ranging from the common cold to acute respiratory syndromes, but the current virus is a novel strain not seen before. Common symptoms of the novel coronavirus strain include respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, according to the WHO. The WHO has declared the coronavirus epidemic as a global health emergency.

Here's the latest on coronavirus in India

- As per Union Health Ministry, there are total 166 confirmed coronavirus cases in India which includes 141 Indians and 25 foreign nationals. Fifteen have been discharged, while three have died.

- In an advisory, issued on March 10, the govt has advised citizens to avoid non-essential travel abroad in view of the fact that the coronavirus has spread to over 100 countries now

- Govt has strongly advised against travelling to China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, Japan, France, Spain and Germany.

- India has suspended e-visas issued to nationals of France, Germany and Spain

- Even regular visas issued to foreign nationals who have travelled to coronavirus affected countries have been suspended

- On March 10, 58 Indians were brought back home from coronavirus-hit Iran in a military transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF)

- In Kerala, at least 1,116 people are under observation -- 149 in isolation wards of various hospitals and 967 under home quarantine.

- In Karnataka, a software engineer who returned from the US on March 1 tested positive on Monday, becoming the first COVID-19 patient in the state. According to health department officials, his wife and daughter too tested positive for the virus on Tuesday.

- Mizoram, Manipur has shut its border with Myanmar indefinitely amid the novel coronavirus scare.

- Mizoram had on Monday also sealed its borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, and banned the entry of foreigners to prevent the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

- In Kerala, schools and colleges and cinemas will remain closed in the state till March 31. Classes 1 to 7 of all schools -- state, CBSE and ICSE boards -- will remain shut and examinations which have begun for them will be put on hold. Examinations for class 10, class 12 and vocational higher secondary will, however, continue. Final examinations of class 8 and 9 also will proceed as usual. Temple and church festivals, which witnesses mass gatherings should be avoided, but rituals can be held in a low key manner.

- The coronavirus threat also cast a shadow on Holi celebrations which were subdued across the country.

- Passengers from 12 countries are being screened, including those from Kathmandu, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia.India has imposed "some restrictions" on export of certain medical equipment to China in view of their shortage of supply in the country, and the precautions taken are in accordance with World Health Organisation's (WHO) advisory for the coronavirus outbreak.

- India also restricted export of about 26 Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients and formulations including antibiotics, vitamins and hormones like Paracetamol, Tinidazole, Metronidaxole, Vitamins B1, B6, B12, hormone progesterone, with immediate effect.

- Telangana has allocated Rs 100 crore for preventing and containing a possible outbreak.Private hospitals have been given a directive not to delay reporting cases. Three designated hospitals for isolating patients have been set up.

- Sixteen Indians have tested positive for coronavirus test aboard the cruise liner Diamond Princess. The last batch of healthy passengers disembarked and returned to India after the quarantine period ended. A total of 138 Indians, including 132 crew and 6 passengers, were among the 3,711 people on board the ship.

5 questions answered:
How many under surveillance?
Over 25,738 passengers have been brought under community surveillance. In addition, 11,14,025 passengers have been screened at airports and 12,431 people screened at major and minor seaports.

What is the Centre doing?
The govt has suspended all regular visas/e-visas granted on or before March 3 to nationals of Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan who have not yet entered India.

Those requiring to travel to India due to compelling reasons, may seek fresh visa from nearest Indian Embassy/Consulate, according to a release.

The advisory also suspended visa on arrival (VoA) issued by March 3 to Japan and South Korea nationals who have not yet entered India.

India has also issued a fresh travel advisory to avoid non-essential travel to Korea, Iran and Italy, in addition to China.

People coming from Republic of Korea, Iran and Italy or having such travel history since 10 February may be quarantined for 14 days on arrival to India, along with anyone with a history of travel to China since January 15, 2020.

India has also advised citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to Singapore.

Any Indians left in Wuhan?
India has operated three flights to Wuhan, bringing back 723 Indians and 43 foreign nationals.

A total of 650 people were brought back from Wuhan in China on February 1 and 2 in two 747 Boeing Air India aircraft after the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus in China.

Since then there's been an evacuation on February 27, when Air India brought back 119 Indians and five foreign nationals who were on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship, docked off Yokohama, in Japan.

And another, when the Indian government flew an Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft to Wuhan (on February 26) carrying 15 tonnes of medical assistance comprising masks, gloves and other medical equipment. On its return, this IAF aircraft also brought back 76 Indians and 36 foreign nationals.

Are airlines still flying to China?
Air India, other Indian airlines have suspended flights to China and Iran, while airlines have restricted flights to Hong Kong.

At present only Iran Air and Mahan Air operates several weekly flights to Indian cities of Mumbai and New Delhi. IndiGo and Air India have suspended flights to China and Hong Kong. Meanwhile, SpiceJet have cancelled their flights to Hong Kong.

Vistara has canceled some flights to Bangkok and Singapore.

Where are the screening wards in India?
The virus can be tested in a laboratory through a Real Time-PCR, followed by gene fingerprinting. In India, 15 labs are functional to test the novel coronavirus so far. "Nineteen will be made operational soon," said Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan.

In Delhi: Manesar camp is already monitoring those who have come from China. Ram Manohar Lohia, AIIMS and Safdarjung hospitals in the capital have also readied isolation facilities.

In Mumbai: Two Mumbai hospitals namely, Kasturba hospital and Pune's Naidu hospital- have been dedicated for suspected patients in the state.

In Karnataka: The state government has placed border districts of Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu, Chamarajnagar and Mysuru under novel coronavirus surveillance. At Mangaluru International Airport, a health unit comprising doctors and assistants have been formed to screen passengers. An isolation ward with ten beds has been set up at the Government Wenlock Hospital to treat patients with the symptoms.

In Manipur: Five centres have been opened in different border towns of the state and at the Imphal International Airport to screen people for coronavirus.

In Mizoram: Facility opened in Mizoram where people entering through India-Myanmar border are being tested at Zokhawthar.

The test being done in India is the same one that is used for testing HIV, H1N1, dengue, polio.

So far, specimens of suspected novel coronavirus patients are tested at the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) in Delhi, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s laboratories at Alappuzha, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai, besides the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. All these labs are work under the guidance of NIV.