High level Group of Ministers reviews current status, and actions for prevention and management of COVID-19

Ministry of Health issues Comprehensive Advisory on Social Distancing

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A high level meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 was held at Nirman Bhawan today under the chairpersonship of Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health &Family Welfare. Sh. Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of Civil Aviation, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Sh. Nityananda Rai, Minister of State for Home and Sh. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, Health &Family Welfare were present. Sh. Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff, Ms. Preeti Sudan, Secretary, (HFW), Sh. Pradeep Singh Kharola, Secretary (Civil Aviation), Sh. P.D. Vaghela, Secretary (Pharmaceuticals), Dr. Rajiv Garg, DGHS, Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary DHR &Director General ICMR, Sh. Ravi Capoor, Secretary (Textiles), Sh. Sanjeeva Kumar, Spl. Secretary (Health), Sh. Sanjay Bandopadhyay, Addl. Secretary (Shipping), Shri Dammu Ravi, Additional Secretary Ministry of External Affairs, Sh. Anil Malik, Addl. Secy (MHA), Sh. Anand Swaroop, Inspector General (ITBP), and Sh.Lav Agarwal, JS (MoHFW) along with other officials from Army, ITBP, Pharma, and Textiles were also present.

The Group of Ministers (GoM) had detailed deliberation on prevention and management of COVID-19 in their 7th meeting today. After a detailed discussion, social distancing measures as a preventive strategy have been proposed for implementation. These measures are a preventive step to contain COVID-19 in the country and will be temporary measure in force till March 31st, 2020. The important measures include:

1. Closure of all educational establishments (schools, universities etc), gyms, museums, cultural and social centres, swimming pools and theatres. Students should be advised to stay at home. Online education to be promoted.
2. Non-essential travel should be avoided. Buses, Trains and aeroplanes to maximize social distancing in public transport besides ensuring regular and proper disinfection of surfaces.
3. Encourage private sector organizations/employers to allow employees to work from home wherever feasible.
4. Meetings, as far as feasible, shall be done through video conferences. Minimize or reschedule meetings involving large number of people unless necessary.
5. Restaurants to ensure hand washing protocol and proper cleanliness of frequently touched surfaces. Ensure physical distancing (minimum 1metre) between tables; encourage open air seating where practical with adequate distancing.
6. Local authorities to have a dialogue with organizers of sporting events and competitions involving large gatherings and they may be advised to postpone such events.
7. Local authorities to have a dialogue with opinion leaders and religious leaders to regulate mass gatherings and should ensure no overcrowding/at least one metre distance between

people.

8. Local authorities to have meeting with traders associations and other stakeholders to regulate hours, exhibit Do's and Don'ts, and take up a communication drive in market places like sabzi mandi, anaj mandi, bus depots, railway stations, post-offices etc., where essential services are provided.
9. Keep communities informed consistently and constantly.

Additional Travel Advisory: Travel restrictions have been further tightened to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from high-risk areas.

- Expanding compulsory quarantine for a minimum period of 14 days for passengers coming from/transiting through UAE, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on 18th March, 2020 at the port of first departure.
- Travel of passengers from member countries of the European Union, the European Free Trade Association, Turkey and United Kingdom to India is prohibited with effect from 18th March, 2020. No airline shall board a passenger from these nations to India with effect from 1200 GMT on 18th March, 2020. The airline shall enforce this at the port of initial departure.
- Both these instructions are temporary measures and shall be in force till 31st March, 2020 and will be reviewed subsequently.

The 4th batch of **53 evacuees from Iran** has arrived today and is being quarantined at the **Army facility in Jaisalmer**. All are reported to be asymptomatic at present and are in quarantine as per protocol.

4 new cases – 1 each from Odisha, Jammu &Kashmir, Ladakh and Kerala have been confirmed since the last update. There are now a total of **114 confirmed cases** in India as of today, including 13 cured and 2 reported deaths. Contact tracing activity of these positive cases has led to identification of more than 5,200 contacts, who are kept under surveillance.

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