

# Social Security/Social Protection to Indians against the Coronavirus (Covid –19) Pandemic

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## I. MEANING OF SOCIAL SECURITY

“Social security means the security, as provided by the society to its members, against the contingencies, they cannot meet out of their small means effectively. Such contingencies imperil the ability of the working man to support himself and his dependents in health and decency. It has been realised after World War II that the state exists for the general well-being of the people, it must be the state responsibility to provide social security to its citizens.<sup>[1]</sup> "The Idea of social security has arisen out of the deep and eternal need of man for some measure of security for his immediate future. A man (or a woman) has to face a number of contingencies or risks right from his (or her) birth. These contingencies include employment injury, industrial disease, invalidity or disablement, ill-health or sickness, maternity or childbirth, old-age, burial, widowhood, orphan hood and unemployment. During these contingencies, it becomes difficult for the person concerned either to work (e.g. because of injury, sickness, invalidity or maternity) or to obtain work, (e.g. unemployment). This difficulty to work and earn is particularly felt, when the need for means of subsistence is more acute.<sup>[2]</sup> The International Labour Office points out : "The idea of social security springs from the deep desire of men to free themselves from the fear of want<sup>[3]</sup>. The realise this idea the cause of themselves from the fear of want. To realise this idea the causes of insecurity must be removed, wherever possible, and the individual must be assured of that protection against the common risks of life which his own effects do not avail to provide.<sup>[4]</sup> As defined by International LabourOffice : "Social Security is the security that society furnishes, through appropriate organisation, against certain risks to which its members are exposed. These risks are essentially contingencies against which the individual of small means cannot effectively provide by his own ability or foresight alone or even in private combination with his fellows<sup>[5]</sup>. "Social security is a programme of

protection provided by society against those contingencies of modern life- sickness, unemployment, old age dependency, industrial accidents, and invalidism against which the individual cannot be expected to protect himself and his family by his own ability or foresight<sup>[6][7]</sup>. Professor Hasan adds, “social security may be provided through three main forms, namely: (1) social insurance, (2) public assistance, and (3) public service<sup>[8]</sup>.”

Generally, **India's social security** schemes cover the following types of **social insurances: Pension, Health-Insurance, Medical Benefit- Disability Benefit.**

**Maternity Benefit.** Social Security not only provides benefits to many retirees but also to their children and survivors—and to workers who become disabled (and their children and survivors)<sup>[9]</sup>.

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered corona virus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Corona viruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

### The symptoms of COVID-19

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are **fever, tiredness, and dry cough**. Some patients may have **aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhea**. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease

without needing special treatment. **Around 1 out of every 6 people** who gets COVID-19 **becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.** People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### Origin of Covid-19

A cluster of pneumonia of unknown etiology was reported in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China on 31 December 2019. On 7 January Chinese authority identified a new type of coronavirus as a cause of pneumonia outbreak, which is different from any other human coronaviruses discovered so far. The new strain is named as severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) and disease as COVID-19. While communicating with public, World Health Organization (WHO) has begun referring to the virus as “the virus responsible for COVID-19” or “the COVID-19 virus”.

Preliminary investigations have identified environmental samples positive for nCoV in Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan City, however some laboratory-confirmed cases have not visited this market. According to WHO, additional investigations are needed to determine how the patients were infected, the extent of human-to-human transmission, the clinical spectrum of disease, and the geographic range of infection.

Globally total 75748 confirmed cases (548 new) were reported by WHO (on 20.02.2020)- from China 74675 confirmed cases (399 new) and 2121 deaths, and outside of China 1073 confirmed cases (149 new) and 8 deaths) from 26 countries.

To date, six known human coronavirus (HCoVs) have been identified. Out of these, four are globally circulated in the human population and contribute to approximately one-third of common cold infections in humans. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS- CoV) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS Coronavirus) are other two coronaviruses. They cause severe respiratory diseases.

(Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS- CoV) was first reported in 2002-2003 in Guangdong, China and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS Coronavirus) was first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012.)

Common symptoms of infection may be in the form of respiratory symptoms such as fever,

cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

**In view of the spurt of cases being reported from China and travel related cases appearing in many countries, the travelers to China are advised the following:**

#### INDIAN TRAVELERS ARE HEREBY ADVISED

**I. REFRAIN FROM TRAVELING TO CHINA:** Those planning a visit to India from China:

**1. Existing visas** (including eVisa already issued) are **no longer valid** for any foreign national travelling from China.

**2. People traveling to China henceforth will be quarantined on return.**

**3. Intending visitors may contact Embassy in Beijing (visa.beijing@mea.gov.in) or the Consulates in Shanghai (ccons.shanghai@mea.gov.in) and Guangzhou (visa.guangzhou@mea.gov.in) to apply afresh for an Indian visa.**

**4. The Indian Embassy in China continues to remain contactable 24x7 on two hotline numbers +8618610952903 & +8618612083629 and the dedicated email helpdesk.beijing@mea.gov.in. Indian nationals in need of any assistance may get in touch with the Embassy on these hotlines and email.**

**5. For any queries related to health, may contact on Ministry of Health & Family Welfare 24\*7 helpline number +91-11-23978046 or email at ncov2019@gmail.com**

#### II. Travelers should follow simple public health measures as under:

**1. Observe good personal hygiene**

**2. Practice frequent hand washing with soap.**

**3. Follow respiratory etiquettes - cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.**

**4. Avoid close contact** with people who are unwell or showing symptoms of **illness, such as cough, runny nose** etc.

**5. Avoid contact with live animals** and consumption of **raw/undercooked meats**

**6. Avoid travel to farms, live animal markets** or where animals are slaughtered

**7. Wear a mask** if you have respiratory symptoms such as cough or runny nose

#### III. If you feel sick on flight, while traveling back to India:

1. **Inform the airlines** crew about illness
2. **Seek mask** from the airlines crew
3. **Avoid close contact** with family members or fellow travelers
4. Follow the **directions of airline** crew while disembarking
5. Immediately report facts to the **Airport Health Office/Immigration Office** and **Helpline number(011-23978046)** also.
6. Follow the **direction of the airport health officer** or as issued by the helpline

#### **IV. If you feel sick with in a span of one month after return from China:**

1. Immediately call the **Helpline number (011-23978046)** and follow the direction issued.
2. Maintain effective **self-isolation at home** and with others.
3. Observe **good personal hygiene**.
4. Practice frequent **hand washing with soap**.
5. Follow respiratory etiquettes - **cover your mouth** when coughing or sneezing.
6. Report the **illness to the nearest health facility** and also inform the treating doctor regarding your travel history

#### **V. Different guidelines/advisory related to nCoronavirus infection released by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.**

1. **The Helpline Number for corona-virus : +91-11-23978046**
2. **The Helpline Email ID for corona-virus : ncov2019[at]gmail[dot]com.**

#### **Global and regional instructions:-**

**I. The World Health Organization (WHO):-** WHO Recommends aircraft operators to hand out the Passenger Locator Card form (PLC) (pdf) to passengers in case of a suspicion of infection. See also WHO's guidance on operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases or outbreak in aviation (pdf).

#### **II. Europe:**

**A. European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA):** recommendations for aircraft operators & staff (pdf)

**B. European Aviation Crisis Coordination Cell (EAACC):** EAACC pandemics factsheet (pdf).

**C. European Commission: guidelines for EU Member States** (pdf) and full list of country restrictions.

**III. US Federal Aviation Administration: FAA** COVID-19 information.

**IV. Civil Aviation Administration China (CAAC)** for aircraft traveling to China: guidelines for airlines (pdf) and guidelines for airports (pdf)

**V. World Customs Organization:** Governments border management measures.

#### **PM Sisyphian Quest for Global Coronavirus Cooperation**

India's prime minister is pushing for a regional response while facing a growing crisis at home.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the G-20 summit in Osaka, Japan, on June 28, 2019. MIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

On March 13, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi **tweeted** an intriguing offer. "I would like to propose that the leadership of SAARC nations chalk out a strong strategy to fight Coronavirus," he said, using the acronym for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. "We could discuss, via video conferencing, ways to keep our citizens healthy. Together, we can set an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet."

It was a striking proposal. Most national leaders haven't made pitches for regional or more broadly global responses to the pandemic, mainly because they're too preoccupied with the complex emergency it poses at home. Yet here was Modi doing just that—even as his country confronts a coronavirus challenge that medical experts there **warn** could produce a "national disaster" in a matter of weeks.

**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 people's lives.**

#### **World Health Organisation Country Office for India support:**

WHO Country Office for India has been working closely with MoHFW on preparedness and response measures for COVID-19, including surveillance and contact tracing, laboratory diagnosis, risk communications and community engagement, hospital preparedness, infection prevention and control, and implementation of containment plan.

In a **video-conference** held on 15 April 2020, MoHFW and WHO deliberated on further strengthening the partnership and additional measures that can be taken to step up the response to COVID-19 in the country. In his address, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare said, "WHO is an important partner in our fight against the COVID-19. I really

value guidance and contributions made by the WHO in containing spread of COVID-19 across the country.”

"India is at a crucial juncture in its fight against COVID-19. The country has responded with urgency and determination as reflected in the Prime Minister's bold and decisive leadership. The government has also aggressively stepped up the response measures - find, isolate, test, treat and trace. WHO is supporting the government's endeavour to further strengthen and intensify surveillance and build capacity of the health system. WHO stands together in solidarity with the government in its firm resolve to overcome this unprecedented challenge," says Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative to India.

**WHO/International Social Security Association(ISSA)/America & other countries of World:-** WHO/International Social Security Association(ISSA)/America & other countries of World has appreciated/high- lighted various steps taken by Government of India for Prevention/Spread and cure against Coronavirus( Covid-19 ).

has appreciated steps taken by Government of India for Prevention of the spread of Covid-19.”<sup>10</sup>”

**World Bank approves \$1 bn for India as social security fund for urban poor, migrants for Social Security:-** The World Bank has approved US \$1 billion for India as social security technology fund for country's urban poor and migrant workers during the coronavirus crisis. This takes the total commitment from the World Bank towards emergency Covid-19 response in India to US \$2 billion. A US \$1 billion support was announced last month to support India's health sector. "The World Bank said the support in collaboration with the government is aimed at integrating platforms so that people should not have to run around from one place to another to access a myriad of social schemes," said Shrayana Bhattacharya, senior World Bank official. India was the largest beneficiary of the first wave of programmes with a facility for US \$1 billion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a Rs 20 lakh crore or \$266 billion support package for economy to help mitigate the damage caused by the coronavirus and the lockdown it has triggered. This package, is equivalent to around 10% of India's GDP.

#### **Coronavirus (Covid-19) in India**

The Government of India confirmed India's **first case of Coronavirus disease 2019 on**

**30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala**, when a university student from **Wuhan** travelled back to the state<sup>[11]</sup>. As the number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases closed 500, PM Modi on 19 March, asked all citizens to observe '**Janata Curfew**' (people's curfew) on **Sunday, 22 March**<sup>[12]</sup>. At the end of the curfew, Modi stated: "Janata Curfew is just the beginning of a long battle against COVID-19". Following this, while addressing the nation second time on **24 March, he announced the nationwide lockdown from midnight of that day, for a period of 21 days**<sup>[13]</sup>. He said that the only solution to control the spread of coronavirus was to break the cycle of transmission through **social distancing**<sup>[14]</sup>. He also added that the lockdown would be enforced more strictly than the Janata Curfew<sup>[15]</sup>.

#### **Pandemic lockdown in India:-**

**Phase 1 (25 March – 14 April):-** On 25 March, the first day of the lockdown, nearly all services and factories were suspended<sup>[16]</sup>.

**Phase 2 (15 April – 3 May):-** On 14 April, PM Modi extended the nationwide lockdown till 3 May, with a conditional relaxation promised after 20 April for the regions where the spread had been contained by then.<sup>[17]</sup>

**Phase 3 (4 May – 17 May):-** On 1 May, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Government of India (GoI) further extended the lockdown period to two weeks beyond 4 May, with some relaxations.<sup>[18][19]</sup>. The country has been split into 3 zones: red zones (130 districts), orange zones (284 districts) and green zones (319 districts).<sup>[20]</sup> Red zones are those with high coronavirus cases and a high doubling rate, orange zones are those with comparatively fewer cases and green zones are those without any cases in the past 21 days. Normal movement is permitted in green zones with buses limited to 50 percent capacity. Orange zones would allow only private and hired vehicles but no public transportation. The red zones would remain under lockdown.

**Phase 4 (18 May – 31 May):-** On 17 May, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) extended the lockdown for a period for two weeks beyond 18 May, with additional relaxations.<sup>[21][22][23]</sup>

#### **Government Measures Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**India Government taking various necessary action for Social Security/Social Protections to all Indian citizens.** Government of India is taking all necessary steps to ensure that we are prepared well to face the challenge and threat



posed by the growing pandemic of COVID-19 the Corona Virus. With active support of the people of India, we have been able to contain the spread of the Virus in our country. The most important factor in preventing the spread of the Virus locally is to empower the citizens with the right information and taking precautions as per

**Security Code (SS Code) for workers:-**

The coronavirus pandemic has brought to the fore the fact that more than 90% of workers in India have no social security. They have to work every day unfailingly if they want to survive to see the next day. Millions of them are migrants living in cramped shanties in cities, lacking identity/address proof at the destination of migration. This, as well as the absence of central databases and portability of benefits, deprives them of subsidised food, healthcare and social protection even in normal times, and more so during disasters. Efforts to frame a Social Security Code (SS Code) to provide universal social security have been hanging fire for several years, with multiple versions being rolled out. The government is planning to bring in an ordinance to give effect to the Code. Including the unorganised, all the nine benefits of ILO Convention No. 102, without leaving it to the whims of executive orders. These should necessarily comprise healthcare, sickness, maternity, disability/ accident, unemployment and survivors' benefits, old-age pensions.

**The advisories being issued by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. Some important steps are:-**

**1. India Has Released Rs 1.7 Lakh Crore Relief Package For The Poor:-**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26 announced a Rs 1.7 lakh crore package to be released in the April-June period. Besides cash transfers, it includes free food and withdrawals from provident fund.

**Announcement of facilities under Social Security Scheme by Government of India:-**

**I.** Rs 1,500 in three equal instalments to the **Jan Dhan** accounts of 20.40 crore women.

**II.** Rs 1,000 in two equal instalments to 2.8 crore senior citizens, **widows and disabled.**

**III.** Cash handouts to farmers under the **PM-KISAN** scheme were to be front-loaded.

**IV.** State-run New India Assurance Company Ltd. will provide 22.12 lakh **frontline healthcare workers** a cover of Rs 50 lakh for 90 days starting March 2020. It covers death in line of duty during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**V.** Free **gas cylinders to PM Ujjwala Yojana** beneficiaries for next three months.

**VI.** About 80 crore poor will get **5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses** free every month from April to June. Each household to be given 1 kg preferred pulse for three months.

**VII.** **Loans To Women Self-Help Groups:** Limit of collateral free loans for women self-help groups to be increased to Rs 20 lakh from Rs 10 lakh. Advisories have been issued to banks.

**VIII MNREGA Wages:** Daily wages under the scheme increased to Rs 202 a day from Rs 182. Announcement: Advance of 75 percent of the PF amount or three months of wages, whichever is lower, from accounts.

**IX.** The central government was to pay 12 percent each as employer and employee's share of **EPF** for those earning a monthly wage of less than Rs 15,000.

**India Government taking various necessary action for Social Security/Social Protections to all Indian citizens.** Government of India is taking all necessary steps to ensure that we are prepared well to face the challenge and threat posed by the growing pandemic of COVID-19 the Corona Virus. With active support of the people of India, we have been able to contain the spread of the Virus in our country. The most important factor in preventing the spread of the Virus locally is to empower the citizens with the right information and taking precautions as per

**2. Informal economy workers excluded from most govt. measures, be it cash transfers or tax benefits:-** COVID-19 has already exposed the health vulnerabilities facing India, especially its rural poor, and urban slum dwellers. The pandemic is far more than health crises. The economic crisis a severe fallout of the virus is grim and much grimmer for developing countries like India.

**3. Deposits are deferred, withdrawals rise for EPFO income dips:-** A million workers have withdrawn their EPF savings in last five weeks to tide over income loss caused by the ongoing lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to face an income crisis, which will have a direct bearing on millions of its subscribers' PF earnings in 2020-21. EPFO has settled over 3000 crores of claims by now; this could double by internal estimates.

**4. India Government to launch online portal for standard migrant workers:-** The portal, which has been tentatively named by the labour and employment ministry as the National Portal for COVID-19 Affected Unorganised Migrant Workers, will gather the details of all the unorganized sector workers who are stranded in

relief camps, residential or industrial clusters. "Portal will allow the government to pass on relief benefits to the migrant workers – be it in the form of cash transfers or through other means," a top labour ministry official said, requesting anonymity.

**5. Government fast tracks plan to provide social security for gig workers:-** The government has fast-tracked its plan to provide social security for gig economy workers and those in the unorganized sectors, anticipating a significant increase in their numbers as unemployment soars due to the COVID-19 crisis.

**6. Prevention & social security for India-Activities of IGFP on Migrant Workers / Construction Workers:-** The Thinktank of the Govt. of India (Niti Aayog) has apprised the activities of IGFP on the Prevention of the spreading of COVID-19. During this unprecedented time the world and India are facing due to the Corona virus outbreak, it has been the endeavour of Indo-German Focal Point (IGFP) to rise to the occasion in supporting the important role of the State in investing in prevention, by addressing issues such as the vulnerability of migrant construction workers, the promotion of awareness programmes on prevention and the rescue of stranded workers.

**8. More time for social security (ESI) contributions:-** The India government has given employees and employers more time to submit their monthly insurance contribution by relaxing provisions of the Employees' State Insurance Act in view of the Covid-19 outbreak. It has given 45 days, instead of 15 days as mandated under the Act, for submission of insurance contribution for February and March. The average monthly contribution to ESI Corporation (ESIC) by its subscribers is ₹1,300 crore. "Keeping in view the pandemic in the form of Corona virus (Covid-19) in the country, the director general has relaxed the provisions as entered in regulation 26 and 31 of the Employees' State Insurance (General) Regulations, 1950,"

**9. Allows Provident Fund Withdrawals As Emergency Measure:-** The Indian government will make amendments to the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act to allow members to withdraw up to 75 percent of their balance in the fund or three months' wages, whichever is lower, as an emergency measure to tide over any difficulties arising from the corona virus pandemic.

#### **10. Govt to provide Rs 4 lakh to families of COVID-19 victims:**

The government has decided to treat coronavirus in India as a notified disaster for the purpose of providing assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF). The government will provide monetary assistance of Rs 4 lakh to the families of the victims, "including those involved in relief operations or associated in response activities, subject to certification regarding the cause of death from the appropriate authority".

Government decides to treat #CoronavirusinIndia as a notified disaster for the purpose of providing assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund

(SDRF).#Coronavirus Pandemic# COVID19 pic.twitter.com/ A0x0BnlQ12 " PIB India (@PIB\_India) March 14, 2020

#### **OTHERS IMPORTANT GUIDENILE TO ALL INDIANS**

##### **1. PM Modi shares preventive measures against Coronavirus:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, there is no need to panic and we need to work together, take small yet important measures to ensure self-protection against the Coronavirus outbreak in India. PM Modi also tweeted, "Had an extensive review regarding preparedness on the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus. Different ministries & states are working together, from screening people arriving in India to providing prompt medical attention." PM Modi also shared the basic protective measures for all. The six measures state:-**1. Wash your hands frequently 2. Maintain social distancing, 3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, 4. Practice respiratory hygiene by covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, 5. If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care at the earliest, 6. Stay informed and follow the advice given by your healthcare provider.**

##### **2. Stop panic over epidemic – IMA:**

Indian Medical Association has appealed to stop panic over coronavirus epidemic. "This epidemic by no means is a situation which has not been faced earlier. SARS 1, Swine flu, Nipah, etc, were on the same scale and considerable experience tells us that awareness, self-precautions, contact tracing and self-isolation are the public health measures required. Hand washing has emerged as the simple tool to fight the community spread. Masks for symptomless common people is not warranted. Healthcare workers and people with symptoms and possibility of droplet infection need to wear masks," says the body.

**3. Health Minister Satyendar Jain on N95 masks:** Jain says N95 masks should only be used by healthcare workers or those who are displaying symptoms, not healthy people. "We have also constituted teams to take action against hoarding & over charging (for masks and sanitisers)," he adds.

**4. N95 masks, hand sanitizers declared essential commodities:** A government notification by Consumer, Food and Public Distribution Ministry declared N95 masks and hand sanitizers as essential commodities under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. The order is valid till June 30, 2020.

**5. AarogyaSetu App:** The 'AarogyaSetu' tracking app will help track the coronavirus infection by using the smartphone's GPS system and Bluetooth. The AarogyaSetu app supports 11 languages. AarogyaSetu App for staying informed and alert against COVID-19. Government initiative to develop a digital Bridge to fight against COVID-19. Download by Play Store APPIOS APP:



011-23978046 or 1075  
ncov2019[at]gov[dot]in  
Helpline Number & Email Id

**6. Coronavirus in India Updates: UPDATES & NOTIFICATIONS BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA THROUGH VARIOUS MYGOV SOCIALHUB /MESSAGE /VIDEO/ POSTER ETC IN ENGLISH & HINDI.**

**7. MYTH BUSTERS:-** In India, the central government has taken several measures to deal with the epidemic, including setting up of quarantine facilities and rescuing Indian citizens stranded abroad. Both the centre and state governments are empowered to regulate health-related matters<sup>[24]</sup>.

**Punishment Related to Covid-19**

Laws exist in India to deal with violation of Quarantine and Isolation norms but it does not appear as if anyone has been punished for non-compliance:

**The Epidemic Diseases Act**

The Epidemic Diseases Act is the main legislative framework at the central level for the prevention and spread of dangerous epidemic

diseases. The Act empowers the central government to take necessary measures to deal with dangerous epidemic disease at ports of entry and exit. The Act also empowers the states to take special measures or promulgate regulations to deal with epidemics within their state jurisdictions.

Powers executed by the Union home secretary under the disaster management Act were "delegated" to the health ministry to enhance preparedness against the coronavirus outbreak. The Union home ministry order said the powers are exercised by the Union home secretary under Section 10 of the Act and he being the Chairman of the National Executive Committee (NEC), the powers are vested with him.

Under the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, thus, any state government, when satisfied that any part of its territory is threatened with an outbreak of a dangerous disease, may adopt or authorise all measures, including quarantine, to prevent the outbreak of the disease.

Similarly, the central government, when satisfied that there is an imminent threat of an outbreak of an epidemic disease and that the provisions of the law at that time are insufficient to prevent such an outbreak, may take measures and prescribe regulations allowing for the inspection of any ship or vessel leaving or arriving at any port and for the detention of any person arriving or intending to sail. Any person who disobeys any regulation or order made under the 1897 Act may be charged with an offence under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code.

It is not necessary that the offender should intend to produce harm or contemplate his disobedience as likely to produce harm. It is enough that he knows of the order which he disobeys, and that his disobedience produces, or is likely to produce, harm. Such offence, at the discretion of the trial magistrate, may be tried summarily. No suit or legal proceeding lies against any person or authority for anything done, or in good faith intended to be done, under this Act.

Under Section 270 of the Indian Penal Code, whoever maliciously commits any act which is, and which he knows or has reason to believe to be, likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both. So far, testing in India has been done mostly on visitors coming in from abroad. The process involves a health officer who is appointed by the central government posted and empowered at the port of entry. The health officer may demand to see the aircraft journey logbook, which shows the

places the aircraft visited. He may also inspect the aircraft, its passengers, and its crew, and subject them to medical examinations after their arrival.

The officer must follow specific precautions about communicable diseases that require a period of quarantine (such as yellow fever, plague, cholera, smallpox, typhus, and relapsing fever) and other infectious diseases that do not require a period of quarantine. He may prohibit the embarkation on any aircraft of any person showing symptoms of any quarantinable disease and any person whom the health officer considers likely to transmit infection. Regulations require that airline staff report any suspected cases or passengers who in their opinion, from observations made in-flight, may be suffering from symptoms of a quarantinable disease.

It is argued that quarantine affects the fundamental right “to move freely throughout the territory of India.” However, this right is subject to reasonable restrictions that the state may impose in the interest of public health.

#### **PRECAUTION, NOT PANIC**

With an abundance of global examples that show the severe spread of Covid-19, it can be deduced that most infections spread through lack of individual restrictions at an initial stage. And as the situation aggravated with rising cases in a country or one particular area, the excessive panic was witnessed.

This panic, if substituted by precautions at early stages, could help India avoid the health crisis of a much larger magnitude. However, the government alone would not be able to help limit the virus; all citizens must also act responsibly and take the outbreak seriously.

Social media chatter over the past few months since the outbreak has often misled people, as some took it lightly and others panicked to insanity. However, doctors advised none of the above. Instead, they asked people to be prepared with some basic but necessary precautions. Social distancing, however, is the most important one.

#### **Three ways that you can help against Covid-19**

- 1) Doctors have asked people to **stay home** if they absolutely do not have to go out.
- 2) Medical experts have also asked people to **avoid any kind of large gatherings.**
- 3) Take care of hygiene, **wash your hands at least 20 seconds & avoid touching your face.**

These are a few simple steps you can take to support the government in limiting the spread of Covid-19. While not much is known about this virus, doctors, have asked people to follow these

important steps at the moment to delay the spread of the virus. But even if you test positive, there is no need to suppress your travel history or run away.

**The quarantine process is not only for the recovery of an infected person but it is also for the safety of other people in the country.** Going by the rate of spread in Italy, Iran, and China, any person with symptoms coming in contact with other people could prove deadly as the virus would keep multiplying. Even if it does not affect an individual carrying it, doctors have clearly mentioned that its spread could be fatal for older people with a weak immune system.

#### **India Is the World's Second-Most Populous Country. Can It Handle the Coronavirus Outbreak?**

As the world grapples with the **COVID-19 pandemic**, some experts say India — a country of more than 1.3 billion people — likely has many more cases than the conservative numbers currently being reported. The outbreak of the new coronavirus, which causes COVID-19, began in China and infected around the world. While worldwide uncounted persons have died after being infected with COVID-19.

Analysts also say that enacting strict social distancing measures, like the widespread lockdowns and quarantines used in Italy and China, would be almost impossible in India’s many rural and overcrowded regions. Those living in poverty would likely be among the hardest hit in a potential widespread outbreak as much of India’s privatized health care system is expensive and public hospitals are overwhelmed and often sub-par. But India is in very better position comparison to world as per data.

#### **IMPORTANT QUESTION & ANSWER RELATED TO COVID-19:**

##### **1.How does COVID-19 spread ?**

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from **person to person** through **small droplets from the nose or mouth** which are spread when a person **with COVID-19 coughs or exhales**. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to **stay more**



than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

### **2.Can the virus that causes COVID-19 be transmitted through the air?**

Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. But latest research showing, COVID-19 may be transmitted through polluted air. But there is a virus in the air, it has not been fully proofed yet

### **3.Can CoVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?**

The main way the disease spreads is through **respiratory droplets** expelled by someone who is coughing. **The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low.** However, many people with COVID-19 experience **only mild symptoms.** This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, **just a mild cough and does not feel ill.**

### **4.Can I catch COVID-19 from the feces of someone with the disease?**

The risk of catching COVID-19 from the feces of an infected person appears to be low. While initial investigations suggest the virus may be present in feces in some cases, spread through this route is not a main feature of the outbreak. The ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share new findings. Because this is a risk, however, it is another reason to clean hands regularly, after using the bathroom and before eating.

### **5.What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease:**

**Protection measures for everyone-**Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the national, state and local public health authority. Many countries around the world have seen cases of COVID-19 and several have seen outbreaks. Authorities in China and some other countries have succeeded in slowing or stopping their outbreaks. However, the situation is unpredictable so check regularly for the latest news. **You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:**

**A.Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands** with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

**B.Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance** between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

**C.When someone coughs, sneezes they spray small liquid droplets** from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

**D.Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth** Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

**E.Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene.** This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately. Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

**F.Stay home** if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority. National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

**G.Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots** (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease. You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas:

**6.Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading: Follow the guidance outlined above (Protection measures for everyone)- Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell,** even with mild symptoms such as **headache, low grade fever (37.3 C or above) and slight runny nose,** until you recover. If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.

**7.Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities:** will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses. If you develop fever, cough and difficulty

breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travelers. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

#### **8.How likely am I to catch COVID-19?**

The risk depends on where you are - and more specifically, whether there is a COVID-19 outbreak unfolding there. For most people in most locations the risk of catching COVID-19 is still low. However, there are now places around the world (cities or areas) where the disease is spreading. For people living in, or visiting, these areas the risk of catching COVID-19 is higher. Governments and health authorities are taking vigorous action every time a new case of COVID-19 is identified. Be sure to comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings. Cooperating with disease control efforts will reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19. COVID-19 outbreaks can be contained and transmission stopped, as has been shown in China and some other countries. Unfortunately, new outbreaks can emerge rapidly. It's important to be aware of the situation where you are or intend to go.

#### **9.Should I worry about COVID-19?**

Illness due to COVID-19 infection is generally mild, especially for children and young adults. **However, it can cause serious illness:** About 1 in every 5 people who catch it need hospital care. It is therefore quite normal for people to worry about how the COVID-19 outbreak will affect them and their loved ones. We can channel our concerns into actions to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. First and foremost among these actions is regular and thorough hand-washing and good respiratory hygiene. Secondly, keep informed and follow the advice of the local health authorities including any restrictions put in place on travel, movement and gatherings.

#### **10. Who is at risk of developing severe illness:**

While we are still learning about how COVID-2019 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

#### **11. Are antibiotics effective in preventing or treating the COVID-19?**

No. Antibiotics do not work against viruses, they only work on bacterial infections. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work. Antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of COVID-19. They should only be used as directed by a physician to treat a bacterial infection.

#### **12. Are there any medicine/therapie that can prevent or cure COVID-19?**

While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of COVID-19, there is no evidence that current medicine can prevent or cure the disease. We does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials that include both western and traditional medicines. We will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings are available.

#### **13. Is there a vaccine drug or treatment for COVID-19 ?**

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-2019. However, those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms. People with serious illness should be hospitalized. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care. Possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under investigation. They are being tested through clinical trials. The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue, and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing

#### **14. Is COVID-19 the same as SARS?**

No. The virus that causes COVID-19 and the one that caused the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 are related to each other genetically, but the diseases they cause are quite different. SARS was more deadly but much less infectious than COVID-19. There have been no outbreaks of SARS anywhere in the world since 2003.

#### **15. Should I wear mask to protect myself ?**

Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19. Disposable face mask can only be used once. If

you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so We urge people to use masks wisely. We advise rational use of medical masks to avoid unnecessary wastage of precious resources and mis-use of masks. The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to frequently clean your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3 feet) from people who are coughing or sneezing.

#### **16. How to put on use take off and dispose of a mask?**

- A.** Remember, a mask should only be used by health workers, care takers, and individuals with respiratory symptoms, such as fever and cough.
- B.** Before touching the mask, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- C.** Take the mask and inspect it for tears or holes.
- D.** Orient which side is the top side (where the metal strip is).
- E.** Ensure the proper side of the mask faces outwards (the coloured side).
- F.** Place the mask to your face. Pinch the metal strip or stiff edge of the mask so it moulds to the shape of your nose.
- G.** Pull down the mask's bottom so it covers your mouth and your chin.
- H.** After use, take off the mask; remove the elastic loops from behind the ears while keeping the mask away from your face and clothes, to avoid touching potentially contaminated surfaces of the mask.
- I.** Discard the mask in a closed bin immediately after use.
- J.** Perform hand hygiene after touching or discarding the mask – Use alcohol-based hand rub or, if visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.

#### **17. How long is the incubation period for COVID-19?**

The “incubation period” means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for COVID-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days. These estimates will be updated as more data become available.

#### **18. Can humans become infected with the COVID-19 from an animal ?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in animals. Occasionally, people get infected with these viruses which may

then spread to other people. For example, SARS-CoV was associated with civet cats and MERS-CoV is transmitted by dromedary camels. Possible animal sources of COVID-19 have not yet been confirmed. To protect yourself, such as when visiting live animal markets, avoid direct contact with animals and surfaces in contact with animals. Ensure good food safety practices at all times. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid contamination of uncooked foods and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

#### **19. Can I catch COVID-19 from my pet?**

While there has been one instance of a dog being infected in Hong Kong, to date, there is no evidence that a dog, cat or any pet can transmit COVID-19. COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. To protect yourself, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly. We continue to monitor the latest research on this and other COVID-19 topics and will update as new findings are available.

#### **20. How long does the virus survive on surfaces?**

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other corona viruses. Studies suggest that corona viruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment). If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

#### **21. Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?**

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

#### **22. Is there anything I should not do?**

The following measures ARE NOT effective against COVID-2019 and can be harmful:

- A. Smoking**
- B. Wearing multiple masks**

### C. Taking antibiotics .

#### 23. In any case, if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing

**seek medical care early:** To reduce the risk of developing a more severe infection and be sure to share your recent travel history with your health care provider.<sup>[25]</sup>

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