

Why is coronavirus spreading so fast

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NEW DELHI : Novel [coronavirus](#) (nCov2019), which first appeared in Wuhan in December and is now a WHO-declared global health emergency, has claimed 813 lives so far, leaving more than 37,555 people affected in 27 countries including India in just 40 days.

Public health experts are still finding out the reason as to how this deadly virus emerged and is spreading so fast across the world.

“The reason for this situation of emerging and re-emerging microbial diseases may be multi-factorial changes in human behaviour and conduct, demographic changes in societal behaviour, ecology and environmental factor, zoonosis due to closer work with animals," said K. Madan Gopal, Senior Consultant (Health), NITI Aayog, government's policy think tank. So far, 1510 samples have been tested in India and no new case has been reported except for 3 samples which had tested positive already from Kerala. 9452 people have been kept under community surveillance in 32 States/UTs.

“This is compounded with behaviour associates with treatment modalities and industrial use of anti-infective agents and the inability to deliver minimal health care and the neglect of well-established public health priorities. Apart from vibrant

surveillance and response system, efforts are needed to find a holistic solution to such problems," Gopal added.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).

A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. The outbreak is that of a new, unknown form of pneumonia that has gradually become an epidemic. With more and more trade involving animals is also putting humans at risk of the such disease-causing agents.

“Population pressures mean that we are increasingly coming in contact with live animals, mostly for food. 72 billion animals (chicken, poultry, cattle and goats) are killed each year but they all have the potential to transmit new viruses to us," said Ramanan Laxminarayan, director, the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP).

“Also, in countries like China, consumption of wild animals is common, both for food and traditional medicine. All of these put new viruses in close proximity to us. Once they are transmitted to humans, population density ensures that they are passed on efficiently from one person to the other, and quickly, around the world," he said.

India has so far evacuated over 650 Indians from China. Civil aviation regulator on Wednesday said that any person who will travel to the China will be quarantined on return. "People have already been advised to refrain from travel to China through an

earlier advisory. People travelling to China henceforth will be quarantined on return." Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a circular.

Among Indian airlines, IndiGo and Air India have suspended all of their flights between the two nations.

“Human to human transmission has been noticed in the cases of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and it spreads through droplets/aerosols in persons having close contact. Public health implications of the reports that the virus has been found in faecal samples of infected patients are being worked out. All suspected or probable cases of nCoV must be treated in isolation with barrier nursing and universal precautions to prevent the further spread of disease," Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, said in a suo moto statement in Rajya Sabha on Friday.