



# Science REPORTER

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## #CoronavirusOutbreak

**NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**  
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare  
Government of India

**Protect yourself and others!**  
Follow these Do's and Don'ts

**Do's**

- Practice frequent hand washing. Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol based hand rub. Wash hands even if they are visibly clean
- Cover your nose and mouth with handkerchief/tissue while sneezing and coughing
- Throw used tissues into closed bins immediately
- See a doctor if you feel unwell (fever, difficult breathing and cough). While visiting doctor wear a mask/cloth to cover your mouth and nose
- If you have these signs/symptoms please call State helpline number or Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's 24X7 helpline at 011-23978046
- Avoid participating in large gatherings

**Don'ts**

- Have a close contact with anyone, if you're experiencing cough and fever
- Touch your eyes, nose and mouth
- Spit in public

**Together we can fight Coronavirus**  
For useful information click here

IT is rarely that an issue that has been dealt with earlier in this column remains significant enough through the month to warrant yet another mention. The coronavirus outbreak fits the bill.

From December 31 last year when China alerted the World Health Organisation (WHO) to several cases of an unknown virus causing unusual pneumonia in Wuhan city to the identification of the virus as the Novel Coronavirus-2019 on 7th January, and then from reports of the first death in China on 9th January to swiftly racing to 735,875 confirmed cases from 199 countries and 34,949 deaths by 30th March – the virus has been on a relentless march until now, with no signs of any abatement yet.

The Prime Minister has called for not lowering the guards without giving in to any undue panic. Indian authorities have so far diligently, responsibly and in copybook style taken much of the steps required to halt the deadly virus in its tracks, although the same cannot be said of some confirmed coronavirus cases who have run away from isolation wards to potentially infect many others they come into contact with.

With the authorities seized of the problem, much of the responsibility for staving off the crisis created by the virus also lies with the citizens. Several messages are being flashed about some very simple preventive actions that we can take to prevent the virus from expanding its reach – keeping the surroundings and surfaces clean, washing hands regularly, covering the mouth while sneezing and coughing, avoiding mass gatherings and promoting social distancing, isolating oneself at the first signs of sickness, avoiding unnecessary travel, and so on.

There are many uncertainties built into the entire episode. Will the virus outbreak wane as summer approaches? Until now there are no firm pointers that the virus would be affected by the heat of the summers although there are several conjectures in this regard. Another issue that has exercised experts is whether mass testing will be helpful in diagnosing cases of coronavirus infection. Indian medical authorities have clarified that at this stage mass testing could exhaust resources and leave us vulnerable if and when the disease enters the community transmission stage.

Since until now there is no effective treatment or vaccine available against the coronavirus disease, and since health authorities are already taking effective steps, responsible and preventive action on our part could delay the spread of the disease into local communities giving our health authorities a longer window to procure testing kits and prepare better equipped health facilities.

Hasan Jawaid Khan

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