

# **ICMR to test for Community Transmission of COVID-19**

## Why in News

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has announced that it would start testing influenza patients without any travel history or contact with <u>novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)</u> for signs of community transmission.

# Four Stages of Transmission of COVID-19

- Stage 1-Imported Transmission
  - It is reported among the travellers entering the country via the borders and airports.
  - These can be controlled through thermal screening and quarantine.
  - To prevent imported transmissions, India has suspended visas to foreign nationals and the facility of visa-free travel to <u>Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card-holders</u>.
- Stage 2-Local Transmission
  - The <u>World Health Organisation (WHO)</u> defines it as the transmission through direct contact with an infected person within the country.
- Stage 3-Community Transmission
  - It signifies that a virus is circulating in the community and can affect people with no history
    of travel to affected areas or of contact with an infected person.
  - India's current emphasis on social distancing and discouragement of public gatherings is aimed at checking community transmission.
  - Once community transmission begins, it is more difficult to trace contacts. As one unknown source of infection can infect many people unknowingly.
  - Among the countries where community transmission seems to have begun are China, Italy and South Korea.
- Stage 4- Epidemic
  - An epidemic is a large outbreak, one that spreads among a population or region.
  - It is less severe than pandemic due to a limited area of spread.

### Level of Transmission in India

- So far, most of the cases in India have had a history of travel abroad or have contracted the disease from somebody around them.
- However, some of the cases in the country had neither any history of foreign travel nor had they come directly in contact with an infected person.
- Currently, India is at Stage 2 of Local Transmission and precautions are being taken to prevent it from entering Stage 3 of Community Transmission.

# India's Current Strategy to tackle COVID-19

Social Distancing and Cluster Containment:

- The cluster containment strategy intends to contain the disease within a defined geographic area by early detection, breaking the chain of transmission and thus preventing its spread to new areas.
- It includes geographic quarantine, social distancing measures, enhanced active surveillance, testing all suspected cases, isolation of cases, home quarantine of contacts, social mobilization to follow preventive public health measures.
- Possible Involvement of the Private Sector:
  - The government is working with private hospitals to develop standard operating procedures for treatment and isolation of patients.
  - The involvement of the private sector may face some issues like the possibility of profiteering, affordability issues, crowding of people at a large number of places, etc.

#### **Global Scenario**

- Italy followed a model of lockdown whereas South Korea has observed a model of free testing.
  - India has been following the Italian model of lockdown.
- China has adopted a graded approach, and the number of new cases are gradually declining.
  - It has locked down Hubei, the epicentre. Elsewhere, it enforced social distancing measures.

#### Indian Council of Medical Research

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research.
- Its mandate is to conduct, coordinate and implement medical research for the benefit of the Society; translating medical innovations into products/processes and introducing them into the public health system.
- It is funded by the Government of India through the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

**Source: IE** 

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