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Title: Statement regarding recent developments pertaining to Indians stranded in Iran as a result of Corona Virus.

**THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (DR. SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR):** Hon. Speaker, Sir, ...  
(Interruptions)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** माननीय मंत्री जी का महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर स्टेटमेंट हो रहा है । आप उसे सुनिए ।

...(व्यवधान)

**DR. SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR:** Sir, I rise to apprise this august House of some recent developments pertaining to Indians stranded in Iran as a result of the Corona virus situation. ...  
(Interruptions) Before I come to the Iran situation, kindly allow me to describe the larger global landscape with respect to Corona virus and our approach in responding to this challenge.

As all hon. Members are aware, the global spread of Corona virus is now real and serious. Yesterday, the WHO declared it as a pandemic. As a country whose citizens are spread across the world, this is a matter of utmost concern. At the same time, it is absolutely essential that we react responsibly and soberly. What we say and what we do should address problems, not spread panic. It is natural that there would be situations of different degrees of gravity in different parts of the world.

As a Government, we will assess these in terms of their urgency and seriousness, and respond accordingly.

As the House would have noted, where specific interventions are required -- as in the case of Wuhan in China, the Diamond Princess crew in Japan or now the pilgrims in Iran -- we will take necessary action. But these are exceptional situations that require exceptional response. At this time, travel in itself is not recommended as it only heightens risks. Where communities are understandably anxious, we should reassure them and encourage the observance of globally recognized precautions and procedures. An excessive sense of alarm would only be to the detriment of those who are really in need.

Let me now turn to the issue of Iran. As per available information, there are above 6,000 Indian nationals in various provinces of Iran. These include 1,100 pilgrims mainly from the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, and the State of Maharashtra; nearly 300 students primarily from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir; about 1,000 fishermen from the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat; and others who are on longer-term stay visas in Iran for pursuing their livelihood and religious studies.

As the Government started receiving information about the spike in Corona virus cases in Iran, as a precautionary measure, direct flights between India and Iran were temporarily suspended with effect from 27 February. Advisories were issued to avoid travel and returning passengers were started to be screened. This is an ongoing exercise.

Our Embassy in Tehran and Consulates in Bandar Abbas and Zahidan are naturally reaching out immediately to Indian nationals in Iran and ascertaining their welfare.

An advisory was issued asking our nationals to observe appropriate precautions. Emergency contact details of the Indian Mission were put out. Embassy and Consulate officials have been reassuring the Indian nationals and ensuring that they are in good health and had adequate provisions. I mention this as an overall approach but also with specific reference to the fishermen community whose welfare has been raised with me by a number of hon. Members.

Given the large number of Indians in Iran, it was natural that we should seek to sequence their return, taking into account their location and exposure. The initial focus is on visiting pilgrims. Many of them are in Qom, where Coronavirus incidence has been strong. The nature of residency also increases the risks of exposure. Age is also a factor to be taken into account. As their welfare is being currently addressed, we are now focusing on Indian students. Many of them are studying medicine and are fully aware of the precautions to be taken in this difficult situation. The Embassy is in regular contact with them as a group. Our understanding is that the region where most fishermen are located has not been affected so severely. These factors will guide our approach in the coming days.

Over the last few days, the Government has been making focused efforts for the safe return of the stranded Indians. Given the scale of COVID-19 and its pressure on Iran's own resources, a team of six Indian health officials has been deputed to Iran in order to set up testing and sampling facilities there. The first batch of 108 samples were received in India on 7 March. These were tested and 58 Indian pilgrims (25 men, 31 women and two children), who tested negative, were repatriated in IAF C-17 special flight on 10 March. We have also received samples of 529 more Indians on this flight which have been tested in National Institute

of  
Virology, Pune. So far, 299 of them have tested negative. Some more results are awaited. We continue to collect more samples in Tehran and our endeavor is to ensure the earliest possible return of our nationals after appropriate testing and screening. We are working with the Iranian authorities to operate some limited commercial flights to facilitate early return. Our Embassy, with cooperation of the Iranian authorities is making arrangements for medical care and monitoring of those who have tested positive.

Our Embassy staff and the medical team are working round-the-clock under difficult conditions to ensure the objective of earliest possible return. The House will appreciate their operational constraints, given that there have been restrictions that have been instituted for public health reasons in Iran. It is not easy to organize transport, accommodation and other logistics. The Iranian system is very stretched but we do appreciate their cooperation in these difficult circumstances.

Hon. Speaker, Sir, I visited Srinagar recently. I took the initiative to meet parents of some of the students who are in Iran. Their anxiety at this time is completely understandable. I shared with them in detail the ground situation and sought their understanding. I assured them that Government would facilitate the earliest possible return of their children. I would like to share with the House that the sampling of these students has begun today.

Our Consulate in Bandar Abbas are in touch with the Indian fishermen, who are in southern provinces of Iran, including in cities of Asaalouyeh, Chiruyeh and Kish. Some of them have been visited and

others would be soon. Provision of essential supplies to them is being ensured. As per available information, of them are all in good health. I assure the House that we will continuously track their welfare and respond to their needs.

The House will surely appreciate the few other Nations have done what we have with respect to the COVID-19. The global Coronavirus situation is being monitored on a continuous basis by a Group of Secretaries headed by the Cabinet Secretary and a Group of Ministers, headed by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare. My Ministerial colleague has already apprised the House of measures being taken to control and contain the spread of virus within the country. The Prime Minister himself has reviewed the situation from time to time. We have been regularly issuing travel advisories and visa guidelines that reflect the situation in countries of concern.

In many respects, India has been ahead of the curve in taking precautionary measures.

Sir, the House should also be aware that in view of the further spread of Coronavirus, the Government decided yesterday to take more stringent measures in regard to international travel. The reason for this is obvious. All the cases so far have come directly from those who have a travel history. In doing so, we are very clear that we will do whatever we must to ensure that the spread of Coronavirus is restricted and that the health security of India is ensured.

Let me spell out some of the measures that the Group of Ministers at a meeting yesterday approved. They will come into effect at 12:00 GMT on 13<sup>th</sup> March at the port of departure. These measures include: one, all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN and International

Organisations, employment, project visas, stand suspended till 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020; two, visa free travel facility granted to OCI card holders has also been kept in abeyance till 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020; and three, all incoming travellers, including Indian nationals, arriving from or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany after 15<sup>th</sup> February shall be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days. It was also decided that any foreign national who intends to travel to India for Germany after 15<sup>th</sup> February shall be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days. It was also decided that any foreign national who intends to travel to India for compelling reasons may contact the nearest Indian Mission. Indian nationals are strongly advised to avoid all non-essential travel abroad. On their return, they can be subjected to quarantine for a minimum of 14 days. International traffic through land borders will be restricted to designated checkpoints with robust screening facilities. These will be notified separately by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Sir, the situation in Italy is now emerging as a cause of great concern. I would like to share with the hon. Members that steps in this regard have already been initiated. It has been decided to make provision for testing primarily for students and compassionate cases in Italy and collect samples for testing. A medical team is being sent there from India. Those tested negative will be allowed to travel and will be quarantined on arrival in India for 14 days. The challenge is growing by the day in Europe and we will respond accordingly. We have appointed in the Ministry of External Affairs a senior official to coordinate our Coronavirus response internationally. A nodal office is being established to speedily process requests for assistance that are naturally expected to

increase from different parts of the world. There will be some pressing or some unusual situations and we recognise that and we will respond to that. The details of the nodal office will be made available very soon.

Hon. Speaker, Sir, I am confident that the hon. Members of this House will join me in commending the efforts of our medical teams, the officials of the Indian Embassy and Consulates, the Air Force crew, the Air India crew and all those who in India are working tirelessly and selflessly to ensure that our people in Iran and other countries are safe, and can return expeditiously. The Coronavirus challenge will require a focused and sustained effort on our part and we will keep the House apprised of developments.

Finally, I would like to strongly emphasise that the Government remains fully committed towards the welfare of our nationals in any part of the world as well as ensuring the security and safety of our homeland. This has been the hallmark of our foreign policy.

(Placed in Library See No. 2197/17/20)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** एक मिनट, विराजिये ।

...(व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** बालू जी, एक सेकेंड, मैं परमीशन दे रहा हूं ।

...(व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** माननीय सदस्यगण, मंत्री जी की स्टेटमेंट पर तो चर्चा हो नहीं सकती, लेकिन शून्य काल में आपका जो महत्वपूर्ण सुझाव हो, इसके लिए मैं आपको आमंत्रित करता हूँ ।

श्री बालू जी ।

12.35 hrs

**SUBMISSION BY MEMBERS**

**Re: Corona virus threat in the country**

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**SHRI T. R. BAALU (SRIPERUMBUDUR):** Sir, I appreciate fully the efforts made by the hon. External Affairs Minister of our country. Sometime back, a representation made by the parents of Kanyakumari fishermen had been forwarded to the hon. Minister of External Affairs as well as the hon. Prime Minister by my leader Dr. M.K. Stalin. I want to know the response of the hon. Minister to this. Are the fishermen from Kanyakumari in deep South and Thoothukudi safe? What are the arrangements that are being made by the Government to deport all these people? ...(*Interruptions*)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** माननीय मंत्री जी, ये शून्यकाल है, इसका एक साथ जवाब दे देना ।

...(व्यवधान)



**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** माननीय मंत्री जी सभी माननीय सदस्यों का नाम लिख रहे हैं, एक-एक करके जवाब देंगे। सिंगल-सिंगल इश्यू का आंसर देंगे। स्टालिन जी ने कहा है, लेकिन यहां पार्लियामेंट में आप कह रहे हैं। यहां स्टालिन जी नहीं कह रहे हैं, यहां आप कह रहे हैं। सभी का जवाब देंगे। सिंगल-सिंगल मेंबर का सिंगल-सिंगल जवाब देंगे।

...(व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** माननीय मंत्री जी जवाब देने के लिए रेडी हैं।

...(व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** श्री बी. मणिकम तैगोर को श्री टी.आर. बालू द्वारा उठाए गए विषय के साथ संबद्ध करने की अनुमति प्रदान की जाती है।

**SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMTHITTA):** Hon. Speaker, Sir, as we all know, the novel corona virus has affected over 100,000 victims around the globe as of today and has terrified the entire world, especially so, after Covid-19 has officially been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation last night. The Director General of WHO has said in his statement, 'Pandemic is not a word to use lightly or carelessly'. Currently in India there are 58 active cases out of which 14 are from Kerala. Out of those 14, 11 cases are reported from my Constituency Pathanamthitta. I strongly believe that these cases could have been avoided. The three passengers who came from Italy on 29<sup>th</sup> February were allowed to go without screening because there was not testing facility at Cochin airport. That has led to a wild chase for thousands of primary and secondary contacts. It was only after 3<sup>rd</sup> March that stringent screening measures were ordered. As of today in Kerala, over

250 people are hospitalised, 1,495 are under home observation. Naturally, after the news of the outbreak came out, the social life has not just halted but has ceased to exist in my Constituency. *(Interruptions)* Sir, there is a severe shortage of masks and sanitisers. Prices of these commodities have shot through the roof following an unforeseen demand. ...*(Interruptions)* I urge upon the Government to bring these products under Essential Commodities Act so as to control their prices. ...*(Interruptions)* I would urge upon the Central Government to provide the State of Kerala all possible assistance medically and financially to overcome this horrible reality and contain any further spread.

**SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN (KOLLAM):** Hon. Speaker, Sir, the House fully appreciates the steps taken by the Ministry as well as our Missions abroad in order to prevent to prevent the spread of novel corona virus. The hon. Minister has stated that stringent measures have already been taken so as to have screening tests at the airports. However, it is quite unfortunate, as rightly said by Shri Anto Antony, that three persons of a family had come to India and there was no screening or testing done. That is why the entire Kerala is now in a panic situation. The universities are closed and the colleges are closed. The Government has taken precautionary measures. However, there are many Overseas Citizens of Indian Origin stranded at the airports. What would be the fate of those passengers who are stranded at the airports? Every day, we are getting telephone calls from the passengers who have already obtained tickets and are at the airports. The only country which is imposing a total ban is India. What would be the fate of those passengers who are stranded at various airports? They are helpless. They are calling us for help. Would the Minister please clarify that point also?

**PROF. SOUGATA RAY (DUM DUM):** Sir, I appreciate the steps so far taken by the Government of India, the Health Ministry and the External Affairs Ministry.

Today's headline says, 'India quarantines itself'. That means no new visas will be allowed excepting for United Nations and other such designated officials. The Government has taken steps earlier to send a plane to Wuhan in China. Then, 58 Indians have been evacuated from Iran, 83 people have arrived at Delhi from Italy and our medical team is being sent to Italy.

My question is simply this. There are five countries which are designated. All incoming travellers including Indian nationals arriving for or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany shall be quarantined. We have got information about China, Iran, and Italy. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the position with regard to Republic of Korea. ...(*Interruptions*)

Sir, I would like to know the position with regard to Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany. How many Indians are there? Do they want to come back? What are the steps the Government is taking with regard to them?

**श्री हसनैन मसूदी (अनन्तनाग):** सर, जहां तक जम्मू-कश्मीर के तुलवाका और वहां के ज़ायरीन का मामला है, सरकार का रवैया लाताल्लुकी का रहा है । It has been an attitude of apathy and indifference. आज से तीन हफ्ते पहले मैं मंत्री जी के नोटिस में लाया कि लोगों की ऐसी पीड़ा है, बच्चे छोटे हैं, जो बीस साल से कम उम्र के हैं या 20 साल के एराउंड हैं, उनको यहां लाने का प्रयास किया जाए । तब से आज तक कुछ नहीं किया गया, सिर्फ एक जहाज आया है ।

मैं चाहता हूँ कि मंत्री जी कहें और टाइम फ्रेम दें । Let him step into the shoes of the parents of those students. ...(*Interruptions*)

**SHRI THOMAS CHAZHIKADAN (KOTTAYAM):** Sir, as was mentioned by Shri Anto Antony, 14 cases have been identified in Kerala out of which, three are from my constituency and they are just five kilometres away from my house.

I would request the Government to take immediate steps for their recovery and make necessary arrangements. ...(*Interruptions*)

**HON. SPEAKER:** No.

... (*Interruptions*)

**SHRI THOMAS CHAZHIKADAN :** Sir, there are hundreds of people stranded at the airports. ...(*Interruptions*)

**SHRI ASADUDDIN OWAISI (HYDERABAD):** Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister, through you that from my constituency, 11 people are stuck in Mashhad in Iran and the Indian Embassy is telling them to come to Tehran. They cannot come.

My request to the hon. Minister is to ensure that they come to Tehran and bring them back. They are all pilgrims. Will you also add United States to the list of affected countries because a large number of virus cases are coming up in US?

**SHRI HIBI EDEN (ERNAKULAM):** Sir, Kerala has been badly affected as everybody knows. My request to the Government of India is criminal cases should be registered against people who are not cooperating with the health authorities, who are spreading panic in the social media.

Also, there are lack of virology institutes in India, especially southern part of India. Kerala should be given testing centres and virology institutes. Biosafety cabinet and PCR machines should be provided by the ICMR.

**SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK):** Sir, I appreciate the steps the External Affairs Ministry and the Minister personally has taken. The whole House appreciates the steps that our Embassy have been taking throughout the world. My concern here is this. As I had said on the earlier occasion, it is an international crisis and I had also appreciated the steps the Health Minister has taken during this crisis.

The two things that actually crop up before us is, the number of virology centres where testing needs to be done needs to be enhanced. We have only two centres, one in Kolkata and one in Pune. Now, as for instance, we have one regional medical research centre in Bhubaneswar, which is also testing. But as we have large number of AIIMS institutes throughout the country, they should also try to have this type of testing.

As far as international flights are concerned, Air Asia has an international flight which flies from Bhubaneswar international airport to Malaysia. But adequate screening facilities has not been available in

these airports. There is one more concern which I would like to raise here. How are we going to trace those people who have travelled by international flights into India during last two weeks? Whom have they contacted? This is very much necessary. It is not that we quarantine the country today and stop at that. We need to take care of those people also who have already come back to our country.

**SHRI H. VASANTHAKUMAR (KANYAKUMARI):** Sir, nearly 700 fishermen from Tamil Nadu are stranded in Iran and three or four islands. So far, they have been provided food and other things, but since yesterday, they were told that they have to go mid-sea and stay there. They are no longer allowed to stay in their place. They are very much scared.

**श्री भगवंत मान (संगरूर):** अध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय विदेश मंत्री जी बैठे हैं । इटली के एयरपोर्ट पर, चूंकि कोरोना वायरस की वजह से पूरा कंट्री लॉकडाउन हो गया है, 30 भारतीय स्टूडेंट्स हैं, जिनमें ज्यादातर पंजाब के हैं । एयरपोर्ट टोटली बंद हो गए हैं, अब उनको खाने-पीने के लिए चिंता हो रही है । 30 भारतीय स्टूडेंट्स इटली के रोम एयरपोर्ट पर फंसे हुए हैं, उनको वापस लाने के लिए कदम उठाये जाएं ।

**SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI KARUNANIDHI (THOOTHUKKUDI):** Firstly, I would like to thank the hon. Minister for his statement. He has been responding to all our queries and he has been very helpful that way. He mentioned in his statement about a 14-day quarantine of people who have come to India. Where is the Government going to quarantine them?

We know that there are Indians working all over the world and students studying in different parts of the world who have not been affected by coronavirus. Will the Minister provide a helpline number which students and people working in different countries can contact for some kind of help if they need?

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** कांग्रेस के सभी माननीय सदस्यों की ओर से मैं अधीर रंजन जी को बुलाता हूँ। ये सदन के नेता हैं। आपके नेता बोल रहे हैं।

...(व्यवधान)

**SHRI ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY (BAHARAMPUR):** I must appreciate the endeavour taken by the hon. Minister in his own capacity and on behalf of the Government in order to stem the rot so far as coronavirus is concerned. The coronavirus has already assumed a pandemic proportion much to the consternation of all of us. So, now we have to think and act globally. हमारे बंगाल में, खासकर हमारे डिस्ट्रिक्ट के लाखों लोग सऊदी अरब, वेस्ट एशिया में रहते हैं। वे सारे गरीब लोग हैं। वे उतने पढ़े-लिखे नहीं होते हैं। सऊदी अरब से एक आदमी हमारे डिस्ट्रिक्ट में आया था। आने के बाद उसको बुखार हुआ और उसकी मौत हो गई। इससे सारे डिस्ट्रिक्ट में अफरा-तफरी पैदा हो गई। जो बाहर हैं, खासकर सऊदी अरब और अन्य जगह, जहां लेबर लोग ज्यादा जाते हैं, ये लोग पुअर और इलिटरेट होते हैं, उन लोगों की जानकारी के लिए आप एक हेल्पलाइन खोलिए और एक साथ स्वास्थ्य मंत्री और विदेश मंत्री there should be a concerted effort by the two concerned Ministries.

**श्री जयंत सिन्हा (हज़ारीबाग):** अध्यक्ष महोदय, सर्वप्रथम मैं माननीय विदेश मंत्री जी, माननीय प्रधान मंत्री जी और पूरी सरकार को धन्यवाद देना चाहता हूँ,

आभार व्यक्त करना चाहता हूं, क्योंकि उन्होंने जिस तरीके से और जितनी स्फूर्ति से इस महान संकट को संभाला है, उसके लिए वे धन्यवाद के पात्र हैं। यह एक अकल्पनीय संकट है। पूरी दुनिया में ऐसा पैडेमिक पहले कई दशकों से नहीं आया है। इसे हमें संभालने की जरूरत है। हमें बिल्कुल ठंडी सोच और ठोस कदम उठाकर इसका सामना करना पड़ेगा। आप देखें कि हर बिन्दु पर सरकार ने रिस्पांड किया है या नहीं किया है, आप सभी माननीय सदस्यों को इसमें संतोष होना चाहिए कि चाहे वह बार्डर सीलिंग का मामला हो, कैपेसिटी बिल्डिंग का मामला, प्रचार का मामला हो या सम्पर्क का मामला हो, हर विषय पर सरकार ने ठोस कदम उठाए हैं। ... (व्यवधान) हमें उन्हें पूरी तरीके से समर्थन और सहयोग देना चाहिए, जिससे हम लोग इस महान संकट से बाहर निकल सकें।

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** सभी माननीय सदस्यों ने सरकार के प्रयासों की सराहना की है। यहां पर जो भी माननीय सदस्य चर्चा पर बोलने के लिए खड़े हुए हैं, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से आग्रह करूंगा कि उन्हें व्यक्तिगत रूप से बुलाकर उनसे चर्चा कर लें, उनसे उनके अमूल्य सुझाव ले लें, क्योंकि आपको यहां पर देश की 130 करोड़ जनता के प्रतिनिधियों के सुझाव मिलेंगे तो इससे सरकार और अच्छे प्रयास कर पाएगी। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

**DR. SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR:** Sir, let me briefly respond to the observations made by various hon. Members.

Let me start with Shri T.R. Baalu's question about fishermen in Iran and the arrangements which are made for them. At this moment, I want to assure you, we have no coronavirus cases among any of the fishermen but they have difficulty in getting food and other things. Our Consulate is in touch with them and will continue to be in touch with them. We are monitoring the situation and we are setting up a nodal centre to check their welfare and the welfare of the other people.



Shri Antony raised the issue of no screening at Kochi. That is not my understanding. My understanding is that there was screening instituted at all international airports. We have tightened it since then and I can assure you on behalf of the Group of Ministers that this is something which is very much on our agenda.

Shri Premachandran again raised the issue of tests. He also referred to people who are stranded at airports. I want to assure you that we are today helping the people who are stranded at airports. We are preventing a sense of panic. I also want to clarify that India has not imposed a ban. India has said that if people from certain countries who are coming here, they have to go through quarantine – in certain cases compulsory quarantine and in some cases discretionary quarantine – and Indian citizens who are coming back will obviously come back to quarantine conditions if that is required.

Prof. Saugata Ray raised the issue again saying we are not issuing new visas. What we have done is this. We have kept in abeyance certain categories of visas for certain countries where there is prevalence of coronavirus. Ours is not the only country that has done that. There are a lot of other countries that have also done that. We were among the earliest to do it. He asked what was happening in Korea, France, Spain and Germany. We have not seen the kind of crisis situation that we have seen in Wuhan or we are seeing in Iran or we are seeing in Italy. So, we have to prioritise. We have to see where the problem is more severe and what kind of people are affected. For example, pilgrims are affected because they live in conditions where the spread of disease is very possible; students are affected because the dormitories are closed. We have to see where we should give the attention and where the resources

should be given. I think, they would understand it. I would urge all the hon. Members to understand it as well.

Shri Hasnain Masoodi raised an issue about our response time in Iran. I would like to share, through you, with the hon. Members that there has been a very difficult situation in Iran because their own system is under severe pressure, hospitals are under pressure, and testing facilities are not available. We first tried to get everybody help in Iran. When we realised that this was not happening, we were required to send our medical team. We had to actually establish a clinic at Qom. We had to shift even that to Tehran and ask the people to go from Qom to Tehran because that was the compulsion on us there. So, there has been no lack of sensitivity to the situation of people but please understand that it is a very difficult situation in Iran and we are working on it. Fifty-eight people have come back. I expect, maybe, another more than 200 would come back soon and the numbers will keep increasing.

Shri Thomas Chazhikadan again raised the issue of airports, to which I have replied.

Shri Asaduddin Owaisi raised the issue of people who are stuck at Mashal. At the moment, we have one medical team operating at Tehran.

We are asking people to come to Tehran for testing. If there is a problem, we will find a way of reaching people in Mashhad. We will not leave them out there. I can give you that assurance.

Shri Hibi Eden ji raised an issue of virology testing centres. Dr. Harsh Vardhan ji is here. In due course, he will reply to that. Let me finish my list. We are setting up more laboratories for testing. The

number of such laboratories has increased, but I would like my colleague to answer that question.

Shri Mehtab ji also asked the same question about the testing centres. He will answer that question.

The issue regarding tracking those who are coming in, is a very valid issue. I would like to assure the Members that there is a very very detailed tracking procedure. In fact, the Group of Ministers has seen every patient who was tested positive and has tracked hundreds of people who have been in contact with that patient. It is not that we are only quarantining. There is a very very detailed tracking procedure in place and it is because of that we have been able to keep it to the limit that we have.

Vasanthakumar ji raised an issue of fishermen who are in the island. I would like to assure him that we will make sure that they are looked after. We are regularly in touch with them. Therefore, the provisions will be made.

Bhagwant Mann ji raised the issue of 30 students of Punjab who got stuck at the Italy airport. I know that the hon. Member is concerned about students from his region. I would like to tell him that there are not 30 students but there are many more students from different parts of the country. For me, I need to find a way of helping or bringing all of them back. We are at it. Please understand, we can only bring them back if they are tested. They have to be tested and to test them, we have started the sampling today. We cannot bring back untested people in very severe epidemic situation because I have the security of this country to worry about as well.

Kanomozhi ji asked about setting up a helpline and where will we quarantine. We will be setting up a helpline. We have identified a large number of possible quarantine centres. Till now, most of the quarantine is taking place in Manesar and close by, but if the quarantine numbers mount, we have already initiated an exercise in cooperation with different Ministries and State Governments. We have a much bigger contingency plan for quarantining. I think, Dr. Harsh Vardhan ji would be in a better position to reply to it.

Finally, with regard to Adhir Ranjan ji's issue about Saudi Arabia, I would like to say that we are very very sensitive to what is happening, particularly with our people who are working in very difficult conditions in the Gulf. So far, in the Gulf the cases have been very limited but we are very much on the alert because we totally share Member's concern that if the situation becomes worse there, they will have to be a priority area. So, it is very much on our radar. I would request my colleague to reply on other issues.

**SHRI ANTO ANTONY:** A number of pregnant women are waiting at the airports....(*Interruptions*)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष:** श्री जसबीर सिंह (डिम्पा) गिल, आप एक मिनट बोल लें ।

**श्री जसबीर सिंह गिल (खडूर साहिब):** अध्यक्ष जी, पंजाब के काफी लोग इटली, जर्मनी और यूरोप के अन्य हिस्सों में रहते हैं और ज्यादातर फार्मों में काम करते हैं । उनमें से बहुत से लोग ऐसे हैं जो इल्लीगल माइग्रेट्स हैं । मैं यही बात बताना चाहता था । उस डर की वजह से वे सरकारी हॉस्पिटल में नहीं जा सकते हैं । अगर उनमें से किसी को प्राब्लम होती है, क्या मंत्री जी यह बताएंगे कि उनको क्या करना चाहिए, कहां जाना चाहिए, ताकि वे बच सकें?

**SHRI MANISH TEWARI (ANANDPUR SAHIB):** Speaker, Sir, thank you very much. We understand the seriousness of the situation. I would just like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister, through you, that the Government has advised the States to invoke the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897. This is a 120 years old Act, which is a four Section Act and which does not even define what an epidemic is.

### **13.00 hrs**

My question is this. Is the legal architecture appropriate to deal with a pandemic of this kind? Is the Government contemplating to bring in some kind of an Ordinance in order to beef up the legal architecture because I do not think that the legal architecture is adequate to deal with the situation which is evolving?

**ADV. A.M. ARIFF (ALAPPUZHA):** I am raising a very serious issue facing NRIs beyond the health-related problem. One who stays in India for more than 120 days, will lose his NRI status. Earlier, it used to be 182 days for staying by an NRI. This decision was announced by the hon. Finance Minister in this Union Budget.

**श्री मलूक नागर (बिजनौर):** अध्यक्ष जी, जिन देशों में लोग इस बीमारी से बहुत ज्यादा बीमार हैं, उन देशों से जितने भी लोग देश में आ रहे हैं, क्या देश के इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट्स पर उन्हें चैक करने की व्यवस्था सरकार ने की है? जैसे

यूएस ने दुनिया के कुछ देशों को बैन किया है, पूरे यूरोप को बैन किया है और फ्राईडे से लोग वहां नहीं जा सकते हैं, क्या हमारे देश में भी ऐसे देशों को बैन करने की सोच रहे हैं? आज के माहौल में बिजनेस को जो नुकसान हो रहा है, क्या सरकार इस बिजनेस को बचाने के बारे में कुछ सोच रही है?

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** श्री हर्ष वर्धन जी ।

...(व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** आप बैठ जाएं, क्योंकि मैंने सभी को बोलने का मौका दिया है । आपका सवाल इससे संबंधित नहीं है ।

श्री हर्ष वर्धन जी ।

**स्वास्थ्य और परिवार कल्याण मंत्री; विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री तथा पृथ्वी विज्ञान मंत्री (डॉ. हर्ष वर्धन):** आदरणीय अध्यक्ष जी, अभी काफी सारे माननीय सदस्यों ने अपनी बात कही है और मेरे सहयोगी श्री जयशंकर जी द्वारा विदेशों के संबंध में कोरोना वायरस आउटब्रेक की परिस्थिति जो भारत में भी है, उसे कंट्रोल करने की दृष्टि से और विदेशों में फंसे हुए भारतीयों को वापस लाने की दृष्टि से विस्तृत जानकारी दी गई है । उनके सामने जो प्रश्न रखे गए हैं, मैं समझता हूं कि उनमें से कुछ प्रश्नों का यदि मैं उत्तर दूंगा तो आपकी अंडरस्टैंडिंग ऑफ़ दी प्राब्लम और ज्यादा स्ट्रांग होगी और आप सभी के लिए वह जानना भी आवश्यक है । यहां कई लोगों ने ऐसा एप्रिहेंशन व्यक्त किया कि अगर कोई केस कहीं पर पोजिटिव आया है, तो इसका मतलब यह है कि उसकी एयरपोर्ट पर स्क्रीनिंग नहीं हुई और विशेषकर यह कोच्चि के संदर्भ में बात कही गई है । मैं आपको जानकारी के लिए बताना चाहता हूं कि जब भी कोई पेशेंट, पेशेंट यानी पेसेंजर बाहर से आता है, तो वह एक काम करता है कि वह अपना सैल्फ़ डिक्लेयरेशन फार्म डुप्लीकेट में भरता है, चाहे वह हवाई जहाज के अंदर भरता

है या एयरपोर्ट पर भरता है । उसके बाद उसकी थर्मल स्क्रीनिंग होती है, डिपेंडिंग अपोन उसकी क्या हिस्ट्री है, क्या सिम्टम्स हैं या थर्मल स्क्रीनिंग का क्या रिजल्ट है । कुछ लोग ऐसे होते हैं, जिन्हें उसी समय आइसोलेट कर दिया जाता है चाहे अस्पताल में किया जाए या किसी दूसरे सिस्टम में किया जाए । कुछ लोगों की हिस्ट्री, थर्मल स्क्रीनिंग या किसी भी कारण से थोड़ा-सा भी सस्पीशियन होता है, तो उन लोगों की लिस्ट बनाई जाती है और दिल्ली में हमारा जो एनसीडीसी है, वहां देश के सारे पैसेंजर्स का कम्प्यूटराइज्ड डेटा आता है । इसमें समझने की बात यह है कि यदि आज मुझमें इस बीमारी के कोई भी सिम्टम्स नहीं हैं और थर्मल स्क्रीनिंग में भी नेगटिव हूं, तो भी संभावना है और मैं 14 दिन के इनक्यूबेशन पीरियड में हूं, तो कभी भी सिम्टम्स डेवलप हो सकते हैं, इसलिए जिसके संदर्भ में कोई भी डाउट होता है, उन सभी लोगों की डिटेल्ड जानकारी देश के सभी डिस्ट्रिक्ट्स में सर्विलेंस आफिसर्स और स्टेट गवर्नमेंट्स के हैल्थ डिपार्टमेंट्स को पहुंचाई जाती हैं । इस समय एनी प्वाइंट ऑफ टाइम हमारे हर समय तीस से पैंतीस हजार लोग कम्युनिटी सर्विलेंस में हैं, जिनके एक-एक मूवमेंट के ऊपर वॉच किया जा रहा है । मान लीजिए वह पॉजिटिव केस कोच्चि से निकल कर गया और चार दिन बाद पॉजिटिव आया, तो इसका यह मतलब नहीं कि वह बिना स्क्रीनिंग के आया है ।

इसका मतलब यह है कि कम्युनिटी सर्विलेंस इतना स्ट्रॉंग था कि चार दिन के बाद भी उसको पॉजीटिव करके आइसोलेट कर दिया गया । इस संदर्भ में मैं रिकॉर्ड पर कहना चाहता हूं कि जब केरल में पहले तीन केसेज आए तो उसमें हमने हर विषय के ऊपर सारी गाइडलाइन्स दीं । we are sharing detailed guidelines with all the States daily. We are talking with all the Health Secretaries daily. We are in touch with all the Ministers either on telephone or through all possible means. रोज शाम को हमको हर राज्य से विस्तृत दिन भर की हैल्थ रिपोर्ट आती है जिसमें इतने सारे पैरामीटर्स होते हैं जिनके ऊपर वे हम लोगों को डिस्क्रिप्शन देते हैं । ये जो पॉजीटिव केसेज होते हैं, इन एक-एक पॉजीटिव केस के फर्दर डिटेल्ड कांटेक्ट्स की ट्रेसिंग की जाती है । एक-एक केस के 162, 200, 150 और 250 कांटेक्ट्स तक को ट्रेस करके

उनके भी फर्दर टैस्ट करके, उसमें से भी उसके अनुसार स्ट्रेटेजी बनाई जाती है । इसलिए आपमें से किसी को भी यह गलतफहमी नहीं रहनी चाहिए कि स्क्रीनिंग में कोई लैप्स है ।

मैंने स्वयं दिल्ली के एयरपोर्ट पर जाकर, तीन घंटे लगाकर और चाहे चार फ्लाइट भी एक साथ आ जाएं, तब भी क्या कोई मिस होने की संभावना है, उसको हमने पूरे डिटेल में असेस किया है और केवल स्क्रीनिंग में अगर वे नैगेटिव हैं तो इसका मतलब यह नहीं है कि वे दो दिन के बाद पॉजीटिव नहीं हो सकते । जो पहले सात एयरपोर्ट, 17 जनवरी को जिनके ऊपर हमने स्क्रीनिंग शुरू की थी, उनमें दिल्ली, मुम्बई, कोलकाता, बैंगलुरु, हैदराबाद, चेन्नई और कोच्चि है । Kochi is amongst the first seven. Today, we are doing it at 30 airports. तीस एयरपोर्ट्स पर हम सारी दुनिया की फ्लाइट्स के बारे में स्क्रीनिंग कर रहे हैं । इसलिए स्क्रीनिंग के संदर्भ में आपको कोई डाउट नहीं रहना चाहिए ।

दूसरे, अभी लैब्स के बारे में कहा गया है, हमारी जो सेन्ट्रल रेफरेंस लैब है, central Reference Lab, *i.e.*, the National Institute of Virology in Pune. After that, we had started with 15 labs क्योंकि यह एक रूटीन टैस्ट नहीं है । यह सातवां कोरोना वायरस आया, उसका भी एक पार्टिकुलर स्ट्रेन है, जिसको कोविड-19 नाम दिया है । हरेक लैबोरेट्री में यह टैस्ट नहीं हो सकता । इसका जो कंट्रोल है, that has to be given at the related regions. मैं उसकी टैक्नीकल डिटेल्स में नहीं जाना चाहता । In spite of this being such a big task, हमारे देश में इस समय 51 लैबोरेट्रीज और 56 जगहों पर कलैक्शन सेंटर्स हैं । यानी 100 जगहों से भी ज्यादा जगह पर हमारी यह एक्टिविटी कोआर्डिनेट हो रही है । We went up to the extent, कि जब ईरान सरकार ने कहा कि वहां पर जो लोग हैं, उनके टैस्ट वगैरह करने का उनके पास कोई मैकेनिज्म नहीं है, they cannot help us on account of that issue, हमने यहां से अपने वैज्ञानिक भेजे । हमने यहां से अपनी पूरी लैब, which is not a simple thing. The weight of the whole lab is in tonnes. वह सारा वहां भेजा और यह कोशिश की कि कस्टम से क्लियरेंस करके, हम लैब को वहां पर स्टैबिलिज कर दें और बाद में



उस लैब को ईरान को ही डोनेट कर दें । अभी कस्टम से क्लिअरेंस वगैरह के प्रोसेस का काम एक्सटर्नल अफेयर्स मिनिस्ट्री का है, But when we saw that there was a delay in that, we devised an alternative mechanism, जिसमें वहां से हमारे वैज्ञानिक, वहां के लोगों का सैम्पल जो है, कोल्ड चेन को मेनटेन करके, जो उनके थोट का स्वैब है, उसको यहां लेकर आते हैं । यहां से हम उसको टैस्ट करते हैं और जिनकी नैगेटिव रिपोर्ट आ रही है, उन पैसेंजर्स को हम वापस यहां पर ला रहे हैं और उनको क्वारेन्टाइन कर रहे हैं । I can appreciate the concern of every MP, जिसको कोई भी सम्पर्क कर रहा है, you also have to appreciate कि भारत में बिना साइंटिफिक प्रोटोकॉल और फॉर्मेलिटीज को पूरा किए किसी को ऐसे हवाईजहाज में बिठाकर वहां से नहीं लाया जा सकता । वुहान से, चाइना से, जो हब है, जहां से सारी दुनिया में यह इंफेक्शन शुरू हुआ है, वहां से भी हम 645 भारतीयों को और 7 मॉलडीवियन्स को पूरी दुनिया के अंदर सबसे पहले लेकर आए और दोबारा से हम वुहान से 112 लोगों को लेकर आए और उसके बाद जापान की जो शिप थी, उसमें स्ट्रैन्डेड लोग थे, उनको जापान से लेकर आए । फिर ईरान के अंदर यह समस्या शुरू हुई तो ईरान में हमने यह स्ट्रेटेजी बनाकर ईरान से लोगों को लाना शुरू किया जिसके बारे में अभी मेरे साथी ने इतने विस्तार से बताया है । अभी इटली के अंदर भी यह समस्या शुरू हुई है ।

Students and all are finding themselves helpless. इटली में भी ज्यादा जोर-शोर से इंफेक्शन स्प्रेड हो रहा है । इटली में भी हम उसी प्रॉसेस से उनके सैम्पल्स को यहां ला रहे हैं, उनकी टेस्टिंग करने वाले हैं । हम ने यहां से वहां पर लैब का सामान भेजा है । हम आप सबका कोआपरेशन चाहते हैं । ... (व्यवधान) सरकार इस प्रकार को कोई रिस्क नहीं लेना चाहती है । ... (व्यवधान)

**श्री अधीर रंजन चौधरी (बहरामपुर):** क्या इटली में लैब भेजते हैं?... (व्यवधान)

**DR. HARSH VARDHAN:** Let me complete. I did not interfere when you made your submission. मैं इस बारे में आप सभी को आश्वासन देना

चाहता हूँ कि जो भी वैज्ञानिक और मेडिकल प्रोटोकॉल की दृष्टि से आवश्यक है, वे सब कुछ पूरा करके भारत में रहने वाले लोगों को किसी भी प्रकार का रिस्क न देते हुए, उन सब भारतीयों को सुरक्षित वापस लाना हमारी पूरी तरह से जिम्मेदारी है। देश के सारे स्टेट गवर्नमेंट्स के साथ हम लोग डे टू डे बेसिस पर, अवरली बेसिस पर, we are in touch. एक-दूसरे के साथ व्हाट्सप्प ग्रुप में हर चीज शेयर हो रही है। अभी दो दिन पहले मैंने सारे हेल्थ मिनिस्टर्स से वन टू वन बात की है। विडियो कॉल करके कई रोगियों से बातचीत की है, जो अस्पतालों में भर्ती हैं।

Hon. Members, I have to tell you that things are under control but we need your cooperation. हम यह भी चाहते हैं कि आप सभी की मदद से, आपके क्षेत्रों में जहां कहीं भी गैदरिंग वगैरह हो रही है, अगर आप उनको डिसकैरेज करेंगे, आप एक लाउड एंड क्लियर मैसेज देंगे, अभी हेल्प लाइन के बारे में कहा गया है। हमारी हेल्प लाइन पर बहुत सारे इंटरनेशनल्स कॉल्स आ रही हैं। हम आपको जो टेलीफोन पर मैसेज दे रहे हैं, उसमें हेल्प लाइन का भी नम्बर है। उसके साथ बहुत सारी डेडीकेटेड लाइन्स हैं। ऐसे ही स्टेट्स ने भी अपने-अपने हेल्प लाइन्स नम्बर बना रखे हैं।...(व्यवधान) आप सभी हमें कोआपरेट करेंगे तो...(व्यवधान)

**श्री अधीर रंजन चौधरी :** आप हमें शामिल कीजिए। हम तैयार हैं। ...  
(व्यवधान)

**डॉ. हर्ष वर्धन:** शामिल करने के लिए। ...(व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** आपको मंत्री जी की बात दो घंटे सुननी पड़ेगी।

...(व्यवधान)

**डॉ. हर्ष वर्धन:** आपको अपने-अपने क्षेत्रों में लोगों को अच्छी तरह से एजुकेट करने के लिए मूवमेंट क्रिएट करना है, क्योंकि आपको जबरदस्ती कोरोना वायरस नुकसान नहीं पहुंचा सकता है। अगर आपने अपने-आप को सेल्फ

प्रोटेक्ट करने का मेकैनिज्म समझ लिया और लोगों को एजुकेट कर दिया तो आप निश्चित रहें । ... (व्यवधान)

**श्री पिनाकी मिश्रा (पुरी):** थर्मल इमेजर का प्राइस क्या है? अगर थर्मल इमेजर बहुत महंगा नहीं है तो एक थर्मल इमेजर पार्लियामेंट में लगवा दीजिए । ईरान में 23 एमपीज कोरोना वायरस से सुप्त हो गए हैं, तो कम से कम यहां थर्मल इमेजर लगवाएं । ... (व्यवधान)

**श्री रितेश पाण्डेय (अम्बेडकर नगर):** अध्यक्ष महोदय, एक लखनऊ एयरपोर्ट पर लग जाए । ... (व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** धन्यवाद ।

... (व्यवधान)

**डॉ. हर्ष वर्धन:** जितने संबंधित स्थान हैं, वहां एजुकेशन के जितने टूल्स हैं, अखबार से लेकर रेडियो, टेलीविजन, सोशल मीडिया, टेलीफोन, ... (व्यवधान) सबसे बड़ा मेकैनिज्म आप हैं । ... (व्यवधान) आप लोग भी इस मैसेज को डिसेमिनेट करिए । ... (व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** माननीय मंत्री जी, आपको धन्यवाद ।

... (व्यवधान)

**श्री अधीर रंजन चौधरी :** हम चाहते हैं कि आप हमें शामिल कीजिए । ... (व्यवधान)

**माननीय अध्यक्ष :** अधीर रंजन जी, क्या आपको दो घंटे और डिबेट सुननी है, नहीं सुननी है, न ।

...(व्यवधान)

**13.13 hrs**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**