

Indian city bans gatherings over swine flu outbreak

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An Indian city has banned public gatherings to contain the spread of deadly swine flu after thousands were infected with the virus, officials said Tuesday.

Authorities in Ahmedabad, the largest city in western Gujarat state, said 219 people had died of [swine flu](#) since the start of the year, with more than 3,300 cases detected so far.

"We have issued a notification prohibiting any kind of public gathering in the district," said senior city administrator Rajkumar Beniwal, adding only weddings and funerals would be exempt.

"For any kind of public gathering the organisers will have to take prior permission from us. He will be required to provide masks to all those attending the event... (and) sanitisers and water," he added.

The decision came after Gujarat's junior health minister tested positive for swine flu Monday, just a day after the state assembly speaker was diagnosed with the virus.

The home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has registered the second-highest death toll from the outbreak after neighbouring Rajasthan, where the disease has claimed 225 lives.

India's health ministry said that 833 people had died of swine flu from the beginning of the year till Sunday, while some 14,484 people had

been infected.

Authorities in Gujarat have come under fire for failing to tackle the outbreak.

But the state health minister said that there was "no need for declaring the swine flu outbreak as (an) epidemic as the situation is under control".

The national government has reportedly offered help to states hit by the virus and has asked health officials to ensure necessary treatment and adequate medicines for swine flu patients.

The government said it was reviewing procedures to prevent the disease from spreading further, including vaccinating medical staff working with affected patients.

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