

Russia launches task force to combat coronavirus spread

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Russia announced new steps to prevent the spread of coronavirus on Monday, including closing its border with Belarus, but hopes to avoid taking "tougher measures".

Moscow has already shut its border with China and limited flights with Iran and South Korea. Russia announced last week it was limiting flights to the European Union.

"Proactive preventative measures we already took in February have reduced the spread of the new coronavirus in Russia," Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said.

Russia has recorded 63 cases of COVID-19 but no deaths, according to official figures.

"We should do all we can so that the situation does not develop like in other countries," Mishustin said.

The prime minister announced a [task force](#) was being created to lead Russia's response to the pandemic.

A new 24-hour online alert system will alert Russians with updates via [social media](#) and a dedicated hotline will be active soon, the [prime minister](#) said.

"We are deliberately introducing all the current restrictions in order to

avoid tougher measures in the future," he added.

Russians have been advised to avoid [public transport](#) during rush hour and shaking hands.

Last week Moscow said it was building a special medical centre inspired by a rapidly built Chinese facility to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

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