

India's prime minister decrees 21-day lockdown to curb virus

March 24 2020



Indians watch on television Prime Minister Narendra Modi address the nation amid concerns of coronavirus outbreak in New Delhi, India, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. Modi announced nationwide shutdown of the country of 1.3 billion people to contain the outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

India will begin the world's largest lockdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in a TV address Tuesday night, warning that anyone going outside risked inviting the coronavirus inside their homes, and pledging \$2 billion to bolster the country's beleaguered health care system.

"To save India and every Indian, there will be a total ban on venturing out of your homes," Modi said, adding that if the country failed to manage the next 21 days, it could be set back by 21 years.

India's stay-at-home order puts nearly one-fifth of the world's population under lockdown.

Indian health officials have reported 469 active cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, and 10 deaths. Officials have repeatedly insisted there is no evidence yet of communal spread but have conducted relatively scant testing for the disease.

In recent days, India has been gradually expanding stay-at-home orders and has banned international and domestic flights and suspended passenger service on its extensive rail system.

Essential service providers, including hospitals, police and media had been exempted from the stay-in-place orders, and many [grocery stores](#) and pharmacies remained open.

Modi called Tuesday's order a "total [lockdown](#)" and did not address whether any service providers would be exempt, but said that "all steps have been taken by central and [state government](#) to ensure supply of essential items."



Railway officials walk through a deserted railway station platform in Prayagraj, India, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday announced a total lockdown of the country of 1.3 billion people to contain the new coronavirus outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Rajesh Kumar Singh)



Civilians and paramilitary soldiers wear masks as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 in Jammu, India, Tuesday, March 24, 2020. Authorities have gradually started to shutdown much of the country of 1.3 billion people to contain the outbreak. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Channi Anand)

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