COVID-19 Now Pandemic: WHO

Why in News

According to the latest assessment of the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, **COVID-19** can be characterised as a **pandemic** now.

- According to the WHO, a **pandemic** is declared when a new disease for which people do not have immunity spreads around the world beyond expectations.
- On the other hand, 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.

Key Points

WHO noted with concern that 1,18,000 positive cases have been reported globally in 114 countries and more than 90% of cases are in just four countries.
> 81 countries had not reported any cases and 57 countries had reported 10 cases or less.

Preventive Measures by India

- The Indian government has issued a **new travel advisory** stating that all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, U.N./International Organisations, employment, project visas, stand suspended till 15th April, beginning from 13th March.
- **Visa-free travel facility** granted to **OCI cardholders** is also **suspended** for the same duration.
- Any **foreign national** who intends to travel to India **for compelling reason** may **contact the nearest Indian Mission.**
- All incoming travellers, including Indian nationals, arriving from or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany after 15th Feb shall be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days.
- **International traffic** through land borders will be **restricted** as well.

- The **Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has issued an **advisory** to take all necessary steps in public transport vehicles to ensure sanitation of seats, handles and bars.
- India will **send a team of doctors to Italy** for testing its nationals for coronavirus to bring them back, while samples of 529 more people have been brought from Iran.
- The Union **Home Ministry** has **transferred some of its power to the Union Health Ministry** for tackling the COVID-19 if the outbreak turns out to be a disaster of national proportions.

Source: TH