

India's response to "COVID-19" Pandemic

1. India, a country of 1.3 billion, has been battling the spread of 'COVID-19' epidemic robustly and with significant success. The number of deaths so far are just over 400. India has taken pro-active measures. Screening of passengers started on January 17 itself, around 2 weeks before the first case detected in India (on January 30, 2020). From March 22, in a phased manner, lockdown started which culminated into full-nationalwide since March 24. This lockdown was unprecedented, which included complete stoppage of Air/railway passenger service and most public transport. Even WHO acknowledged that India's public health responses were proactive, pre-emptive and graded. Yet, India maintained continuity of essential services- like power supply, water, energy, food products, banking etc.
2. India has now readied 520 dedicated COVID hospitals, with nearly 85000 isolation beds and 8500 ICU beds. India has also prepared 5570 additional health facilities which will bring another 197,400 isolation beds and a further 36,700 ICU beds. Upto 40,000 extra isolation beds have been prepared by converting 2500 railway carriages. Further production and procurement of essential PPE sets, ventilators and testing equipment and N95 masks have been ramped up. Around 2,75,000 samples have been tested till date in 223 labs nation wide. Data generated through testing has been used to take forward contact-tracing and surveillance.
3. Production of pharmaceutical supplies have been expanded to meet domestic needs and to start supplying the world. Nearly 28000 relief camps and shelters have been set up with relief provided by State Governments to benefit 1.25 million people, mainly migrant labour. Private Sector and NGOs have also supported in sheltering and providing food to these people.

4. The complete process is being monitored by Prime Minister personally with engagements with Chief Ministers. Group of Ministers and Committee of Secretaries is monitoring as well as coordinating the efforts. Cabinet Secretary and Health Secretary are coordinating on real time basis. The Union and State executives have been mobilized and are working as an integrated unit. PM consulted the entire political spectrum of the country. Regular press conferences and briefings held and information shared through print/electronic and social media. Prime Minister's Garib Kalyan(welfare of the poor) package has set out US\$ 22bn to alleviate the situation of the poor including farmers and labourers which also includes insurance for Health Care Workers. Food relief and free rations are provided for 3 months to 800 million people. Uninterrupted Food supplies, cooking gas, financial support is being maintained.

5. India is fighting the COVID-19 in partnership with the world. Prime Minister of India held video conference with SAARC leaders and committed to provide US\$ 10 mn towards health assistance. PM also had video conferences with G-20 leaders and telephonic talks with other world leaders, including the Prime Minister of Kuwait. India has been able to provide medical supplies and assistance to Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Kuwait. India provided commercial and aid supplies of key pharma products to several countries.

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