

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
(MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS)
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 449
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 22.07.2021

TRIBALS AFFECTED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

449 SHRI K. SOMAPRASAD:

Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of proactive measures taken by the Union Government to lessen the adverse effects on tribal community during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- (b) the number and details of tribal persons who lost their lives after contracting COVID-19 in different States and UTs so far?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRIBAL AFFAIRS
(SMT. RENUKA SINGH SARUTA)

(a). The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has taken up the following proactive measures to lessen the adverse effects on tribal community during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- i. A team of Officers was constituted by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) who were in touch with the officers in State Tribal Welfare Department to assess the preventive and curative needs, to curb the spread of COVID-19 among tribal communities and extend helping hand in meeting the urgent requirement in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. During discussion with the State Authorities, no State Government has drawn attention of the Ministry towards any precarious situation in Districts with significant tribal population.
- ii. State Government was requested to constitute a team of officers in tribal department to assess the situation arising out of spread of COVID-19 in consultation with the District administration and attend to essential requirements on priority.
- iii. Guidelines on home isolation of mild /asymptomatic COVID-19 cases and SOP on preventive measures to be followed in Entertainment Parks and similar places to contain spread of COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare were circulated among States / UTs for adherence.
- iv. The Secretary, Tribal Affairs (TA) wrote to all Chief Secretaries of States to regularly assess the situation arising out of spread of COVID-19 in the tribal inhabited areas and ensure testing, availability of essential medicines, vaccination facilities. It was advised that for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), there should be a dedicated officer who can coordinate with the community leaders for any specific need as these communities are particularly vulnerable.
- v. News items appearing in newspapers, social media and other specific issues in tribal areas were shared with the concerned States for ensuring quick action.
- vi. A Video Conference was held with the NGOs and Centre of Excellence (CoEs) funded by MoTA for discussing COVID situation among tribal population in their working areas. Directions were issued to these NGOs and CoEs to remain in touch with the concerned District administration for provision of preventive, curative and other requirements among tribal communities to the best of their capacity.
- vii. States were asked to conduct / intensify awareness campaign in the areas with significant tribal population to counter prevailing misconceptions among tribal communities regarding Covid testing and vaccination. It was asked to engage tribal community leaders in such awareness campaign for easy dissemination of correct and scientifically researched information about Covid-19 among the tribal communities. Community radios, wherever available, may be used for the purpose.
- viii. The Union Minister of Tribal Affairs also provided Rs 10 lakh from MP LAD fund to Bundu Anumandal Hospital in Tamar for establishing 10 oxygen supported beds through District Collector.

- ix. Tribal Welfare Departments were asked to ensure that Livelihood activities of tribals do not hamper due to covid.
 - x. State Governments have been advised to include proposals for meeting health related urgent requirements in view of COVID-19 in the annual plan under Article 275(1) Grants within their share of allocation for consideration by the Project Appraisal Committee in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
 - xi. During 2020-21, on request of this Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs vide Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 16/04/20 issued guidelines aiming to relax the provisions of lockdown for Collection, harvesting and processing of Minor Forest Produce(MFP)/ Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) by STs and other forest dwellers in forest areas across the country.
 - xii. Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) was asked to coordinate with States to ascertain the problems being faced by tribals in disposal of MFPs, quantum of MFPs available with States, strategy for procurement along with plan for storage, value addition and sale of MFP.
 - xiii. State Governments took various steps to shut down 'haat bazars', where traders from urban areas visit during weekly markets and also ASHA workers are on the job to create awareness on sanitation and hygiene, social distancing practice among the PVTGs and other tribal areas.
Besides, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) took various interventions for better healthcare in areas with significant tribal population as indicated below:
 - i. States/UTs are being provided required technical and financial assistance for strengthening of their healthcare system, including management of the COVID-19 public health challenge, from time to time.
 - ii. All States/UTs are provided with necessary financial support under *India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package*. Under the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package (COVID Package), States/UTs have been provided financial support, besides the supply of essential materials such as PPEs, N95 masks, ventilators, etc from MoHFW. Details of funds allocation may be sought from NHM-Finance.
 - iii. A Scheme on "India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package - Phase-II" (ECRP-Phase-II) during 2021-22 has been approved by the Cabinet on 8.07.2021 for an amount of Rs.23,123 crores, to be implemented in 9 months from 1st July, 2021 to 31st March, 2022. The Scheme is aimed to prevent, detect and respond to the continuing threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen national health systems for preparedness in India. The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with some Central Sector (CS) components.
 - iv. Support is provided to the States for provision for establishing District Paediatric Units (42 or 32 bedded units including Oxygen Supported beds and ICU beds) in all the Districts of the Country including the Districts with predominantly tribal population.
 - v. Support is extended to create pre-fabricated structures for establishing 6 bedded units at Sub Health Centres and Primary Health Centres and 20 bedded units at Community Health Centres for meeting the requirement of hospital beds in rural, peri-urban and tribal areas.
 - vi. To fast-track the availability of Medical Oxygen in rural and peri-urban areas, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare envisages to provide 1 lakhs Oxygen Concentrators to the Community Health Centres (CHCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Sub-Health Centres (SHCs) including Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) in the country under PM-CARES Fund, so as to bring medical management closer to people and ensure the availability of critical resource of Oxygen closer to the public. States/UTs are requested to give preference to the rural, peri-urban and tribal areas. Accordingly, so far, more than 18,000 Oxygen Concentrators have been allocated to various States. MoHFW is coordinating with the MoPetrolium and Natural Gas / Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) for the effective implementation of this intervention.
- (b) As informed by MoHFW, such centralized data on COVID-19 mortality with Urban/Rural/Tribal breakup is not centrally maintained.
