

Text of Prime Minister's address to the nation on combating COVID-19

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My dear fellow citizens,

The whole world is currently passing through a period of very serious crisis. Normally, when a natural crisis strikes, it is limited to a few countries or states. However, this time the calamity is such that it has put all of mankind in crisis. World Wars 1 and 2 did not impact as many countries, as have been affected by Corona today.

Over the last two months, we are continuously observing and hearing of grave Corona virus related news. In these two months, the 130 crore citizens of India have ably dealt with the global Corona pandemic and have exercised due caution.

However, in the past few days, it is appearing as if we have averted the crisis, and everything is okay. Complacency in respect of a global pandemic like Corona is not appropriate. Therefore, it is essential that each and every Indian remains alert and cautious.

Friends,

Whenever I asked you for something, you have never let me down. Our efforts succeed, only on the strength of your blessings.

Today, I am here to ask you, all my fellow citizens, for something. I want your coming few weeks from you, your time in the near future.

Friends,

Till now, science has not been able to find a definite solution to save us from the Corona pandemic, neither has a vaccine been developed. In such a situation, it is very natural to get worried.

Study of the countries most affected by Corona virus has revealed another aspect. In these countries, the spread of the disease has witnessed almost an explosion after the initial few days. The number of people infected by Corona has grown at a rapid pace. Government of India is constantly keeping a close watch on this situation, and this track record of the spread of Corona.

Although there are a few countries which have controlled the situation by taking swift decisions and isolating its people as much as possible.

This burgeoning crisis of Corona, is not an ordinary occurrence for a nation like India with a population of 130 crore, striving for development.

Therefore, as we witness the wide-spread impact of the Corona pandemic even in major, developed countries today, it is wrong to assume that India will not be impacted by it.

Hence, it is imperative to keep two key factors in mind in order to combat this global pandemic - Determination and Patience. Today, all 130 crore fellow citizens of Indians will have to further strengthen our resolve to overcome this global crisis, fulfilling all our duties as citizens, and abiding by the directions given by the Central and State governments. Today, we must all resolve to not get infected ourselves, and prevent others as well from getting infected.

Friends,

During such a pandemic, only one mantra can take us through – ‘Hum Swasth, toh Jag Swasth’, that is the world will be healthy, if we stay healthy. In a situation like this, where there is no known cure for the disease, it is imperative that we stay healthy. Patience is an essential virtue to avoid this disease, and keep oneself healthy. And how does one practice patience? By staying away from crowds and gatherings, avoiding leaving your homes. This is called ‘Social Distancing’ nowadays, and is critical in these times of the global corona pandemic.

Our determination and patience will play a crucial role in containing the impact of this global pandemic. It is wrong if you believe that you are okay and nothing can happen to you, and you can continue roaming around in markets and streets as usual and remain unaffected. By doing this, you will not only be unjust to yourself but also to your family.

Keeping this in mind, I appeal to you all that for the next few weeks, step-out of your homes only when absolutely necessary. As far as possible, try and do your work, whether related to business or job, from home.

While it is essential that those who are in government services, healthcare services, people’s representatives, media personnel remain active. Everybody else must however, isolate themselves from the rest of society.

I also appeal that the elderly, senior citizens and those above 65 years of age in our families, not leave homes for the next few weeks. Today’s generation may not be very familiar with this, but in the olden times, blackout was observed at night during wartime. This would at times go on for prolonged periods. Several times, there would also be blackout drills.

Friends,

Today, I request my fellow citizens for support on one more issue, that of people’s curfew. People’s curfew means a curfew imposed for the people, by the people, on the people themselves.

This Sunday, that is on 22nd March, all citizen must abide by this people’s curfew from 7 AM until 9 PM. During this curfew, we shall neither leave our homes, nor get onto the streets or roam about our localities. Only those associated with emergency and essential services will leave their homes.

Friends,

22nd March will be a symbol of our effort, of our self-restraint, and our resolve to fulfil our duty in service of the nation. The success of a people’s curfew on 22nd March, and the experience gained from it, will also prepare us for our upcoming challenges.

I urge all state governments to take leadership in ensuring compliance of this people’s curfew.

I also request the youth of our nation, organizations like NCC, NSS, civil society, as well as other organizations of all types to spread awareness about this people's curfew over the next 2 days.

I would appeal to every individual to if possible, call at least 10 people on the phone every day, explaining to them how to protect themselves from the virus as well as the idea of people's curfew.

This people's curfew will in a way be a litmus test for us, for our nation. This is also the time to see and test how prepared India is for fighting off a Corona like global pandemic.

Friends,

In the midst of all these efforts of the people's curfew on 22nd March, I would also like to seek your support on one more matter on that day. For the past 2 months, lakhs of our people have been working day and night in our Hospitals and Airports. From doctors to nurses, hospital staff, sanitation workers, airlines employees, government staff, police personnel, media people, people associated with train-bus-auto rickshaw services, and home delivery agents; all have been selflessly serving others, without caring about themselves.

In the current circumstances, these services cannot be considered to be ordinary. Today, these people run the risk of getting infected themselves. Yet, they continue to fulfil their duties, serving others. As defenders of the nation, they stand firmly between us and the Corona pandemic. The nation is grateful to them all.

I wish that on Sunday, 22nd March, we express our gratitude to all such people. On Sunday at exactly 5 pm, we all stand at the doors, balconies, windows of our homes, and give them all a 5-minute standing ovation. We clap our hands, beat our plates, ring our bells to boost their morale, salute their service.

To inform people about this, I request local authorities across the country to ring a siren at 5 pm on 22nd March.

We must with full sincerity, express our feelings towards all such fellow citizens who have lived by our value-system of 'Seva Parmo Dharma', that is Service being the highest Duty.

Friends,

In such times of crisis, we also need to be aware that the burden on our essential services, our hospitals, is continuously increasing.

I thus, urge you to as much as possible, avoid going to the hospital for routine check-ups. When necessary, you could get the required guidance over phone from your known local doctor, family doctor, or some relative who is a doctor. In case you have a non-essential, elective surgery scheduled, I would urge you to postpone it by a month.

Friends,

This global pandemic is also going to have a wide-ranging impact on the economy. Keeping in mind the economic challenges arising from the Corona virus, the government has decided to set up a COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force under the leadership of the Finance Minister. This Task Force will take decisions in the near future, based on regular interactions and feedback from all stakeholders, and analysis of all situations and dimensions. This Task Force will also ensure that all steps taken to reduce the economic difficulties are effectively implemented.

It is clear that this pandemic is deeply hurting the economic interests and well-being of our nation's middle class, lower-middle class, and poor segments. In such a time of crisis, I request the business world and high income segments of society to as much as possible, look after the economic interests of all the people who provide them services. In the coming few days it is possible these people may not be able to come to office or your homes. In such a case, do treat them with empathy and humanity and not deduct their salaries. Always keep in mind that they too need to run their homes, protect their families from illness.

I would like to reassure all Indians that all steps necessary are being taken to ensure there is no shortage of essential items like milk, groceries and medicines. I thus urge all my fellow citizens to make purchases as normal, and not hoard essential items in Panic Buying.

Friends,

Over the past 2 months, 130 crore Indians, each and every citizen, has taken on this national crisis as one's own and done whatever possible for society and the nation. I have full faith that you will in a similar manner, continue to carry out your responsibilities and duties in the time to come.

Yes, I acknowledge that many difficulties arise in such times, and there is an environment of apprehensions and rumours. Many a times, our expectations as citizens is also not fulfilled. However, this crisis is so grave, that all fellow citizens must face these challenges with firm resolve and determination, amidst all these difficulties.

Friends,

We need to put in all our capacity and capability in protecting ourselves from the Corona virus. Whether it be the Central government, State governments, local authorities, panchayats, people's representatives or civil societies; everyone is contributing in their own way in the fight against this global pandemic. You too, must give your full contribution!

It is critical that in this environment of a global pandemic, humanity emerges victorious, India emerges victorious!

The festival of Navratri is coming up in a few days. This is a festival of worshipping 'Shakti'. That India moves ahead with full Shakti, full Strength and Energy, is my heartfelt wish to one and all.

Many, many Thanks!

VRRK/AK

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