

## Covid 19 – pandemic in India

Covid 19 has certainly shaken the whole world. What started in Wuhan as yet another virus has managed to bring the world (or at least most of it) to its knees. It has stretched our healthcare systems to their extreme and challenged the policy makers to find a way out with minimal loss of human life. Like most of the world, India too has suffered. We are blessed to have a sensible set of policymakers, as a result of which we have managed to deal with the crisis relatively unscathed (thus far). India was put under total lockdown since March 25th. Since we were in the early days of the cycle, the number of cases (106886) and deaths (3303) have thus far been much below what one would expect from a nation of 1.35 billion people. The lockdown has been further extended to end of May. I sincerely hope that this streak of sensible decision making continues as the combination of large population and high population density make us uniquely vulnerable.

The ramifications of Covid 19 have been significant. Schools, colleges and universities are closed with most likely to open only in July. Restaurants, malls, movie theatres are closed. Places that would normally be crawling with people sport a deserted look. While the entire nation has come to a standstill, the worst hit are probably the dailywagers, a class of workers that hold temporary jobs and are paid based on the number of days of work. At about 450 million, this is a considerable portion of the country's population. Such is their plight that a considerable number of them are stuck in transit from their work places to their respective

homes. The lockdown restrictions prevent them from reaching home and with the industry shutdown there are no means to earn. The state and the central government have been proactive in ensuring that this class of workers survives this crisis.

The scientists of the country are heavily engaged in contributing to the most urgent needs of the day. Two of the domestic manufacturers are already supplying rapid diagnostic kits for Covid 19. There are six Indian pharmaceutical companies engaged in bringing vaccines to market. Numerous research institutes and the industry are engaged in making personal protection equipment. This is much needed since, as with India's large population it is not economically feasible to import everything.

There is a silver lining to every cloud, however dark the cloud is. The lockdown has forced us all to spend time (as in 'quality time') with our families, something refreshing in the modern world. Speaking from personal experience, this is the most time I have spent engaged in one on one conversations with my family and friends in a long time.

Perhaps Covid 19 has made us all rethink about our priorities in life. I am sure that when the dust settles, we will emerge wiser and appreciative of what we have.

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