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Tibetan Friendship Group Australia (Inc.)

Patrons: His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Joan M Wilson OAM

COVID-19 NEWS UPDATE FROM INDIA

Dear Sponsors and friends of TFG,

As you will have seen, the news regarding the Covid-19 situation in India is terrifying. The Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala has appealed to Tibetans around the world to donate to COVID-19 relief campaigns in India. Two quarantine centres set up by the Tibetan administration have meanwhile been converted to treatment centres to deal with the rising numbers of cases. As of the 12th May, there are over 1,000 active cases of COVID-19 infections in Tibetan settlements in India. Two areas of concern include Dharamsala and the Tibetan settlement of Dekyiling in Dehradun.

According to RFA (Radio Free Asia) young Tibetans living in cities like Delhi and Bangalore are leading efforts to help Tibetans infected with the virus, with the Delhi-based Tibetan Cancer Society raising funds to buy oxygen cylinders and staffing call centres for volunteers.

TFG is concerned for all the population of India as well as the Tibetan diaspora and in particular the Tibetan Settlements we support. We have heard from some of those Tibetan Settlements and the situation is very worrying.



Elderly Tibetan receiving vaccination in Northern India

SCHOOLS

Below are extracts from messages from Tenzin Norphel, the Sponsorship Coordinator for STSS (Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society), which really bring home the extent of the problem in India.

“Schools are closed yet again and as earlier they are learning via online classes. Children are sent to their respective home to their parent. Sadly, the situation is not getting better and there is a sense of paranoia among the general masses as India health infrastructure already collapsed”.

“Less than 10 percent population are inoculated, hence, the situation is deteriorating. There is a shortage of vaccines and people are eagerly praying for their turn to get vaccinated. Sadly the situation turns from bad to worse and the pandemic wreaks havoc all around. Social media and news channels are showing the grim realities. Lack of medical oxygen, medicines and hospital beds are the main cause of huge loss of precious life.”

“It wreaks havoc everywhere and India is literally gasping for the oxygen and people are scurrying around every chemist/drug store to procure the medicine like remdesvir. Sadly, many people lost their precious life owing to the lack of life saving oxygen. As earlier, schools are closed, offices are allowed to open but with fifty percent staff. Everyday there is a surge in positive cases and thousands lost their life everyday to this virus. Indian health infrastructure is on the brink of collapsing and some already collapsed. There is an atmosphere of fear and paranoia everywhere. The situation is getting worse with every passing day, the news of death and destruction is everywhere.”



NUNNERIES

Fortunately, the Tibetan nunneries in India have been taking strong precautions against the coronavirus since the pandemic first broke out. Some nunneries closed their gates as early as February 2020, and began closely monitoring any visitors. As early as March 2020 a special Tibetan COVID-19 Task Force began working to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on Tibetan Settlements in particular and the general Tibetan population In India.

At the end of April, nuns began registering to receive a vaccination. The nuns had to register in groups of four as according to the guidelines four is the most who can register under one phone number.



DELEK HOSPITAL

In April TFG received this message from Tashi Dhondup of Delek Hospital in Dharamsala

“Dear Delek Donors and Supporters, Greetings from Dharamshala!

As always, Delek is deeply grateful to you all for your continued kindness towards us, enabling us to provide the best possible services to our community.

As you know the second surge of the Covid pandemic is severely affecting life in many countries and India is no exception. Delek continues to play a crucial role in preventing, tackling, testing and even providing medical equipment, where needed, for the safety of the community.

With approval from the Government of India, Delek is now carrying out the Covid-prevention vaccination program which is being well received by the community.

*We do hope that you are all safe and well during these difficult times.
Warmest wishes”*

However, according to a Radio Free Asia report on May 3rd 2021 the situation has worsened and there is a shortage of vaccines at Delek Hospital. Dr.Tenzin Tsundue told Radio Free Asia’s Tibetan Service.

“For now, we don’t have any vaccines in Delek Hospital, but we have a few options we are working on,”

“One idea is for us to collaborate with larger hospitals, as the amount of vaccines we would need would be too small for us to order directly from the supplier.

Since last week, almost 140 Tibetans living in Dharamsala have tested positive for COVID-19. The numbers of Tibetans infected are rapidly rising as the virus spreads through the community”

“I urge Tibetans to get vaccinated in government hospitals now if they get the chance,” Dr.Tsundue said, adding, “Don’t wait for the Delek Hospital to get more vaccines. This is a matter of necessity now, not of choice.”



TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF-HELP CENTRE (TRSHC)

Chimay Rinchen, the Secretary of the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre in Darjeeling has informed TFG that the Centre is currently in lockdown and the economic situation is very difficult. Fortunately, the elderly residents have all been

vaccinated. The younger people at the Centre are now eligible for the vaccine and it is hoped they will be vaccinated soon.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

All Tibetans and supporters of H.H. the Dalai Lama were relieved to hear that he received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccination at the local government hospital in Mach 2021. His Holiness has encouraged everyone to be vaccinated when they are able to.



HOW TO HELP

If you wish to make a one-off donation to TFG for Tibetans in India you can do so via the website or as per the details below. You can make a general donation or specify which Settlement you would like to help e.g. School, Nunnery, Elderly person etc. Any amount is appreciated and the full amount will be sent.

CONTACT DETAILS

MAIL: TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)
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PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR DONATIONS

CHEQUE: PAYABLE TO TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)
DIRECT DEPOSIT: CBA BSB: 062 173 ACCOUNT NO: 2802 0635
PAYPAL: VIA WEBSITE

FUNDRAISER FOR MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

TFG also supports the efforts of Kyinzom Dhongdue and others who have created a GoFundMe page to raise funds specifically for medical equipment for Tibetan communities in India. Here is the link: <https://gofund.me/eb461dbc>.