

Research Paper on Measures to control rapid escalation of COVID pandemic

In the wake of speedy escalation of COVID pandemic in different States of the Country, the citizens of the Country and in particular, the trading community, being the first point contact with the population of India, has a greater obligation to render all kinds of services required to combat the pandemic. Driven by such a thought, we stand in solidarity with both Central and State Governments to become an extended arm of the Government for performing well any assignment that will be given to us.

A closer analysis of the covid statistics over the last one week have made it ample clear that Night Curfew and Lockdown in different States have not brought the desired results of bringing down the cases. On the 5th of April, India reported 96,563 positive cases out of which high surge states reported respective numbers- Maharashtra (47,228), Delhi (3548) Gujarat (3160) Punjab (2692) Karnataka (5279) Chattisgarh (7302). Since then Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka and Chattisgarh have all imposed various restrictions like night curfew & lockdown beginning with 5th April in Maharashtra, followed by Delhi, Gujarat and Punjab on 6th April, followed by Karnataka & Chattisgarh. As on 9th April, India reported 1,45,384 positive cases which is a 50% increase from 5th April, the day restrictions were announced. Maharashtra reported 58993 cases on 9th April which is 25% higher than the day lockdown was announced by the state government. Similarly, Gujarat (4541) & Delhi (8521) a steep rise of 43% and a staggering 140% respectively. States like Punjab 3459 (28%) Chattisgarh 11447 (56%) Karnataka 7955 (50%) have also reported a significant spike despite the curbs.

The above statistics establish the fact that instead of night curfew or lockdown, other alternative available measures can be adopted so that chances of contraction among the people can be minimised. In this context, we have to make undernoted submissions:

a. Clamping lockdown is certainly not a solution since the trade and commerce is still struggling to recover from the losses of the previous lockdown of 2020. On the one side effective steps are needed to stop increase in COVID cases whereas on the other hand the economic and commercial activities should also continue by observing COVID safety protocols in a strict manner.

b. We would like to suggest that working hours of different verticals of trade and commerce should be revised and in this context we suggest that Government offices, Private Offices and other all kinds of offices may work from 8 am to 2pm whereas the markets and shops may be allowed to work from 11am to 5 pm, Banks and other financial Institutions may be allowed to work from 9 am to 3 pm. Likewise, clock timings can be set for other forms of businesses and other professional activities. Such staggered timings will reduce human traffic to a great extent .

c. The trade associations can play a vital role in checking the increase of COVID and helping the Government for encouraging the people to follow covid instructions sincerely and religiously. It is to be noted that shops of the traders are the first contact point of the total population of the

Country for obtaining their daily requirements. Therefore, it is suggested that Local administration in each city should be advised to formulate a joint strategy with local trade associations for keeping strict observance of COVID safety protocols in the markets and on the roads, like wearing masks and face shields, sanitising of hands repeatedly and maintaining social distance. The Associations may be advised to keep extra guards in their markets to check the visitors at each entry and exit point. No person without a mask should be allowed to enter any market. Even if a passerby or visitor is seen not wearing masks, the traders may immediately ask the said person to wear the mask. The CAIT has already advised the Trade Associations all over the Country to instruct their members to strictly observe COVID protocols in their shops.

d. We appreciate the current fast process of vaccination all over India. However, more efforts are required to carry vaccination drives in full swing and in this context, we suggest holding "special vaccination camps" at prominent places in each market where all eligible traders, their employees, customers and other people can be vaccinated by observing all vaccination protocols. The respective trade associations will be pleased to host such camps and the vaccination team as well.

e. It is also suggested that wearing a mask is made mandatory by force of a law as was done in the case of wearing helmets on two wheelers and fastened seat belts in four wheel drive. Such a law will help a lot in combating COVID from further escalation.

f. It is also suggested that to fight with COVID pandemic, a Districtwise strategy should be made and a District level COVID Task Group may be formed under the Chairmanship of District Collector and comprising of officials of all concerned Departments and representative of trade & commerce and Resident Welfare Associations. Such steps will prove to be more effective in combating Covid cases.