

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh holds second meeting to review efforts of MoD & Armed Forces to fight current COVID-19 crisis;

Directs them to extend all possible assistance to civil administration

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh reviewed the efforts of Ministry of Defence and the three Services to fight the current COVID-19 crisis through video conferencing on April 24, 2021. The meeting was attended by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Army Staff General M M Naravane, Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar, Secretary (Defence Production) Shri Raj Kumar, Secretary Department of Defence R&D and Chairman Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Dr G Sathish Reddy, Deputy Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Sandeep Singh and Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) Surg Vice Admiral Rajat Datta.

Shri Rajnath Singh directed the Armed Forces and various other establishments of Ministry of Defence to extend all possible assistance to the civilian administration to tide over the present situation. He said, people look up to the Armed Forces in times of crisis as they have great hope and trust in them.

Raksha Mantri reviewed and expressed satisfaction on the assistance being provided by Indian Air Force (IAF) in moving oxygen tankers and plants from abroad as well as within the country. He was briefed that one C-17 IAF transport plane left for Singapore in the morning of April 24, 2021 and will return in the evening with four containers of cryogenic oxygen tanks. He was also informed that one C-17 transported two empty container trucks for liquid oxygen from Pune to Jamnagar and another transported two empty oxygen containers from Jodhpur to Jamnagar. One Chinook airlifted medical equipment for testing COVID from Jammu to Leh. Indian Navy ships have been put on standby for any assistance in moving oxygen tankers, Raksha Mantri was informed.

DRDO Chairman briefed that another 250 beds would become functional at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel COVID hospital in New Delhi by the evening of April 24, 2021, taking the total number of beds to 500. In Gujarat, DRDO has completed setting up of a 1,000-bed hospital. He informed the Raksha Mantri that work is in full swing to establish a COVID facility in Lucknow that would become operational in the next 5-6 days. These hospitals would be run by AFMS in coordination and with assistance of local state governments.

Senior officials of MoD are in constant touch with the officials of state governments for necessary coordination in this regard. As AFMS has its resources stretched to the limit, services of local doctors and health professionals might be enlisted for the 750-bed hospital that is coming up at Varanasi. To augment the work force of health professionals, Raksha Mantri approved a suggestion to deploy those who have recently retired from AFMS.

Shri Rajnath Singh was also briefed that all health facilities of Defence PSUs and Ordnance Factory Board have been allowed to provide health services to local COVID-19 affected civilian population. He directed the officials of MoD and the three Services to closely monitor the progress of various initiatives.

This was the second meeting chaired by Raksha Mantri to review the preparedness of MoD and the Armed Forces to deal with the current surge in COVID-19 cases. The first meeting was held through video

conferencing on April 20, 2021.

ABB/KA/DK/Savvy/ADA

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