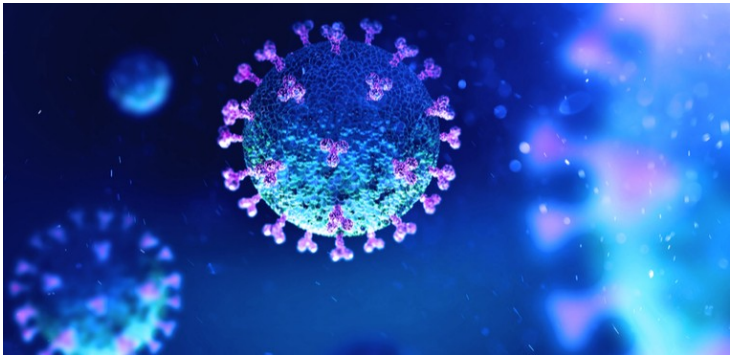


India proposes COVID-19 Emergency Fund for SAARC countries

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With India making an initial offer of US \$10 million for the fund



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with the leaders of the SAARC countries through video conference to chart out a common strategy in order to combat COVID-19 in the region.

In the spirit of collaboration, Prime Minister Modi proposed creation of a COVID-19 Emergency Fund based on voluntary contributions from all the countries, with India making an initial offer of US \$10 million for the fund. The fund can be used by any of the partner countries to meet the cost of immediate actions. He informed that India is assembling a Rapid Response Team of doctors and specialists, along with testing kits and other equipment, which will be on stand-by, to be placed at the disposal of the countries, if required.

Prime Minister also offered arranging for online training capsules for the emergency response teams of the neighbouring countries and sharing of software behind India's Integrated Disease Surveillance Portal to help trace possible virus carriers and the people they contacted. He suggested that existing mechanisms like SAARC Disaster Management Centre can be used to pool in best practises.

He also suggested creation of a common Research Platform to coordinate research on controlling epidemic diseases within the South Asian region. He suggested further brainstorming by experts on the long-term economic consequences of COVID-19, and how best to insulate internal trade and local value chains from its impact.