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ஊடக வெளியீடு
PRESS RELEASE



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President's Media Division, President's Office, Colombo 01

STATEMENT BY H.E. GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA,

PRESIDENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

AT THE ONLINE SUMMIT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

UNDER THE THEME 'UNITED AGAINST COVID-19',

4TH MAY 2020

Your Excellencies,

Ayubowan!

Good Evening!

At the outset, I congratulate His Excellency Ilam Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, the Chair of the Non Aligned Movement, for the timely initiative to hold this Summit, to address one of the most critical challenges the world has faced in modern times.

I am pleased to be participating at this Summit, in support of global solidarity, unity and renewed multi-lateral cooperation in overcoming COVID -19. Sri Lanka firmly believes that this Summit will serve as an important platform for the NAM Member States to support collective global action in combating this deadly virus and sharing best practices and lessons learnt.

I extend my deepest condolences to all those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic and express deep appreciation to the frontline healthcare and essential workers, both in Sri Lanka and globally, for their dedication and selfless commitment.

Sri Lanka remains deeply concerned by the unprecedented consequences arising from this pandemic to all our countries and peoples, including its catastrophic health impacts, accompanying humanitarian crisis, devastation of economies and social and psychological tensions, among others.

Sri Lanka, therefore, is pleased to endorse the declaration of this Summit.

Sri Lanka recognizes the timely initiative to establish a NAM Task Force to compile a database of basic humanitarian and medical needs of the member states to sensitize donors on urgent requirements.

We commend the “COVID 19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan” and the establishment of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund.

Sri Lanka also supports the endeavours of the WHO which has been playing a vital role in shaping the global response to the pandemic.

Sri Lanka has been successfully containing and controlling the COVID-19 threat. Out of the total PCR tests conducted so far only 3% has been confirmed as infected. The death rate is at a very low level of 0.97%.

In early February, my government established a Task Force comprising key health personnel, high-ranking military personnel and administrators to monitor the spread of the pandemic and also to take required measures to combat the spread of the virus.

The first Covid-19 Sri Lankan patient was identified on March 11th. Initially patients were Sri Lankans who came from several countries. Since then, 717 infected persons have been detected, 183 persons have been cured and discharged while 527 persons are being treated as active cases. Most of these persons were asymptomatic.

We adopted a few special and unique measures: establishment of quarantine centres managed by the Armed Forces and the deployment of the State Intelligence Services, the police and Public Health Inspectors to do contact tracing. Both these measures have helped Sri Lanka cope with this pandemic quite successfully enabling the health authorities to function at the optimum level.

Whenever a person afflicted with the virus was detected the contact tracing method was used to find out details of persons with whom the afflicted person had come into contact. Once identified, all such persons were taken to a specially designated quarantine centre or arrangements were put in place to self-quarantine such persons. If an entire area was found to have been contaminated, such areas were isolated and quarantined. Of the 31 clusters identified so far, 27 have been completely neutralized while the other 4 are being kept under strict control eliminating any spill over to the general population.

There have also been extensive PCR testing and health authorities are continuing to conduct more PCR tests.

Given an excellent free healthcare system which includes a well-established preventive mechanism placed throughout the country, Sri Lanka has been able to contain the spread of this deadly virus utilizing the public health processes.

In order to assist the health authorities and other services deployed to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus, my government declared a curfew from March 18th throughout the island and restricted movement of people.

With work coming to a standstill, Sri Lanka has taken a series of measures to mitigate the challenge. They include,

- Financially supporting low income families, pensioners and differently-abled, day-income earners and farmers

- Managing the repatriation of Sri Lankans in a coordinated manner.
- Exploring avenues of business to create new economic trends while supporting existing industries.
- Moving forward to the use of the digital technology including to connect the farmer, consumer and supplier, delivery of essential items and services, and distant education.

It is essential to ensure that all countries have unrestricted access to vital medical resources required to respond to this virus and do not face impediments in their procurement.

As Sri Lanka notes with deep concern that developing countries are facing an unprecedented economic and debt crisis due to the pandemic, need for debt relief and financial stimulus for these countries must be duly recognized.

In this regard, Sri Lanka re-iterates its call and joins global appeals for international financial institutions and donors to provide debt relief and greater financial assistance to vulnerable countries.

It is important to emphasize that Middle Income Countries too face critical and diverse economic and social challenges that have been augmented by this pandemic. Therefore, it is important to also focus on their needs at this particular juncture and accord the necessary financial support to avert negative economic consequences.

Sri Lanka believes that national and regional level initiatives complement and strengthen the global response to the crisis. Sri Lanka contributed USD 5 million to the SAARC COVID - 19 Emergency Fund to assist the South Asian region in its efforts to deal with the challenge.

Sri Lanka wishes to share its experiences and successes in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic with fellow members.

May I re-iterate Sri Lanka's appreciation of the Chair of the NAM for organizing this Summit and pledge our support for the NAM's initiatives in combating and overcoming this pandemic.

Thank you.

President's Media Division

04.05. 2020