

Forum : Prime Minister's Cabinet

Issue : Combating the spread of COVID 19 in India by strategizing a quarantine after understanding its significance and impacts.

Prime Minister : Arjun Pandey

Secretary to Prime Minister : Malika Singh

Letter from the PMO

Dear Delegates,

I would say it is a pleasure to invite you all to this conference but the situation doesn't allow me to do so. I am collecting you all in times of peril and struggle. I am collecting you all to decide the fate of our country. The fate of 1.3 billion people standing on the subtle edge of humanity and chaos. As I write to you, I write as a well wisher, I write as a helper calling all of you to empower this country and defeat these perilous times together.

As I am writing this letter, India is crossing 5000 Covid-19 cases and in the current situation I don't think it is getting any better. People are getting restless in this

lockdown, intolerance is on the spurt and chaos is in the lead. This meeting won't only tackle the containment of the coronavirus but the overall upheaval of our country. From agriculture to finance, we have to guarantee a solution for everything because even a single loophole can spiral us into the doom of this pandemic. Unemployment rates are on the rise, a concrete economic strategy should be at the forefront of our focus. Economists are forecasting that a recession is inevitable, but we can't afford it. The country would be shattered. A financial plan and economic overview will be one of the central agendas at this committee.

Next, the lockdown is approaching termination and we have seen many ministers already extending the lockdown but here we will discuss the future of an entire nation. I have the following options in front of me but I am counting on you to develop more for the betterment of our nation:

1. Extend the lockdown by 2 weeks. A total lockdown like the one in place be enforced nationally.
2. Extend lockdown in only hard hit states. This is a risky option but to account for the economic downturn of the virus, a viable one.

3. Open up the economic sector but enforce rigid rules of curfew so as to avoid mass gatherings.

These are the prospects I find in front of me. However, with the intellect you will be bringing to this conference I wish to go above and beyond.

The last and the most important aspect that I wish to incorporate within our conference is the safety and mental health of our people. Motivation drives action and I have tried multiple times to enlighten our patriotic spirits but the spirits won't last longer. The only way we can succeed is through a collective population effort. I want every corner of the country fighting for one sole purpose: Recovery. So the conference must breed solutions to unite the country in every step taken forward.

I hope this message finds you in good health and we put together efforts that remain ingrained in the history of medical overturn forever. Remember delegates I didn't choose you, the country did. The country chose you. The country entrusted you with these situations because they deemed you capable of being the best in the worst. Now is your chance to prove it!

Prime Minister of India Secretary to the PM

Arjun Pandey

Malika Singh

Introduction to the Cabinet

The Prime Minister's Cabinet (often referred to as the Cabinet of Ministers as well) exercises executive authority in India. It, as the name suggests, is led by the Prime Minister. Only the prime minister and ministers of the rank of cabinet minister are members of the Union Cabinet in accordance with Article 75 of the Indian Constitution.

Pursuant to the same, the Council of Ministers is responsible collectively to the Lok Sabha (House of the People and the lower house of the parliament). It is imperative to know that the council of ministers, upon losing confidence of Lok Sabha, shall resign to facilitate new government formation.

Additionally, a minister shall not take any decision without being considered by the council of ministers according to Article 78(c). Most importantly, a Cabinet minister's role includes directing government policy and making decisions about ¹

¹"National Portal of India." *National Portal of India*, 2017, www.india.gov.in/my-government/whos-who/council-ministers

national issues that need acknowledgement which involves how an identified issue of concern can reach an amicable solution.

Introduction to the agenda

Every Indian citizen has been subject to the harshness of COVID 19 in several ways, the most significant being a nationwide lockdown. The impacts of this quarantine are multi faceted - ranging from personal to social to economical. But to what extent can India bear the cost of these multidisciplinary aspects being negatively impacted due to the global pandemic? While instances of domestic violence across the country are increasing at an alarming rate, mental illnesses such as anxiety disorders, depression and loneliness are becoming more frequent than ever and amidst all of this, the global economy has spiralled downwards almost irrevocably. It is because of today's expandingly interdependent and multilateral world that India, too, gets tangled in this cruel cobweb of a globally toppling economy and faces strong cross-border spillover effects through inefficiency in trade, tourism and the presence of financial linkages.

Impacts of the lockdown

Over a course of 2 days, the Prime Minister's Cabinet will explore the social, medical and most importantly, the economic repercussions of the lockdown in India. Furthermore, all cabinet ministers are expected to come up with civil and feasible resolutions to regain stability in each of these facets in our nation. The immediate economic and market impacts of the coronavirus have been on India's financial markets as well as the rupee, which hit a new low vis-à-vis the US dollar in March. For firms laden with dollar-denominated debts, a continuous weakening of the rupee is likely to intensify their struggles to repay their obligations. Beyond the financial shocks, India has to urgently find a way to cushion the demand-side shocks induced by potential lockdowns and other ongoing containment measures. Although the recent drop in oil prices offers some reprieve, it is inevitable that India will have to undertake more aggressive counter-cyclical fiscal measures at some stage to buffer against acute negative shocks arising from the spread of Covid-19. All in all, such a prolonged lockdown in the near future is likely to be economically costly, with the brunt of the pain falling disproportionately on those from socially backward classes or from an informal sector.²

² ET Bureau. "Highest Single-Day Rise in Covid-19 Cases: 773." *The Economic Times*, Economic Times, 9 Apr. 2020, economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/highest-single-day-rise-in-covid-19-cases-773/articleshow/75057215.cms.

5,865 cases. 169 deaths (figures subject to change). On April 10, 2020, India recorded its highest single day rise in COVID 19 cases within 24 hours - 773. Needless to say, the rampant increase in the cases of coronavirus is dangerously concerning. So, what this may imply is an extension of the nationwide lockdown and continue social distancing so as to flatten the curve. However, imposing such a restriction on movement and forcing people to stay at home gives birth to worrisome social issues on the grassroot level. One of the most prominent matter of concern has become the rise in cases of domestic violence. Since the lockdown was imposed, a total of 257 complaints related to various offences against women were received, out of which 69 complaints are related to domestic violence, the data released by the NCW showed. In actuality, the number of cases of domestic violence must be much higher but the women are scared to complain due to constant presence of their abuser at home. From March 24 till April 1, the NCW has received 69 domestic violence complaints and it is increasing by the day. Given that women can't reach out to police stations because of the lockdown, the Prime Minister's cabinet is urged to come up with viable solutions to address

abuse and in-house assault so as to put a halt to victims feeling unsafe and threatened in their own homes.³

Moreover, stress and anxiety have emerged as a new challenge in the time of Covid-19. Key triggers include escalating virus fears, complete isolation, the so-called social stigma and daily news of gruesome death & infection. Many feel worried about their relatives stuck abroad where the impact has been worse, thus causing them to be stuck in a spiral of insecurities and fears. Too much outburst of information about Covid-19 is creating widespread panic. Everything being fed is negative that is further increasing anxiety. Mass hysteria is creating panic. In excruciatingly tense times like these, it is imperative that this cabinet takes concrete steps towards the holistic wellbeing of Indian citizens and come together in times of life altering

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³ Chayyanika Nigam Ajay Kumar. "Covid-19 Pandemic: Depression, Anxiety Go Viral as Nation Observes Lockdown." *India Today*, 26 Mar. 2020, www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/covid-19-pandemic-depression-anxiety-viral-nations-observes-lockdown-1659774-2020-03-26.

⁴ Press Trust of India. "Coronavirus: NCW Says Domestic Violence Cases on Rise since Lockdown, 69 Complaints so Far." *India Today*, 2 Apr. 2020, www.indiatoday.in/india/story/coronavirus-ncw-says-domestic-violence-cases-on-rise-since-lockdown-69-complaints-so-far-1662533-2020-04-02.

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