

## AIR Spotlight - Discussion on Foreign Assistance to India in Covid-19 Management

AIR Spotlight is an insightful programme featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panelists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion is foreign assistance to India in COVID-19 management.

### Participants:

1. Shashank, Former Foreign Secretary.
2. Manash Pratim Bhuyan, Journalist.

### Context:

India is suffering from the [Covid-19](#) pandemic and many countries including the US and Russia have extended their support.

### Background:

- India is going through a devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Forty countries including the United States, Russia, Canada, France, and several other European countries are continuously providing medical assistance which includes the supply of crucial medicines, oxygen concentrators, and other medical equipment to India.
- Many countries said that they are in solidarity with India because India had come out as a shining democracy which helped these countries in dealing with the pandemic earlier.
- People in the West appreciated India for coming forward during the crisis and providing every possible assistance.
- Recently, India and South Africa have sent a proposal to the World Trade Organization regarding the [TRIPS](#) waiver for Covid-19 vaccines.

### Role of the European Union:

- Many of the European countries have strong relationships with India. When the Covid-19 crisis began in India, the international media was showing everywhere that India had mishandled the situation.
- As soon as the facts started coming up, these European countries realized that India was doing its best and the international media had portrayed the scenario in a wrong way.
- Therefore, these countries decided to provide their support to India and it is expected that countries such as the US, the UK, Russia with which India has been friends for a long time will also come forward for help.

### Assistance provided by European countries:

- The European Commission sent a shipment of urgently needed oxygen, medicine, and equipment to India. This is being done following India's request for support through the EU Civil Protection

Mechanism, which is coordinated by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre of the European Commission.

- The offers of support from the EU Member States via the Mechanism currently include:
  - **Ireland:** 700 oxygen concentrators; 1 oxygen generator; 365 ventilators;
  - **Belgium:** 9,000 doses of antiviral medicines Remdesivir;
  - **Romania:** 80 oxygen concentrators and 75 oxygen cylinders;
  - **Luxembourg:** 58 ventilators;
  - **Portugal:** 5,503 vials of Remdesivir; 20,000 litres of oxygen per week.
  - **Sweden:** 120 ventilators.

#### The United States of America:

- It was assumed that after the departure of Donald Trump, the new leadership will not maintain a good relationship with India. But being a member of the **QUAD**, they realized their commitment and that Covid is the primary issue here which needed to be taken care of.
- Hence, the USA decided to provide unprecedented financial assistance worth nearly USD half a billion to India to fight Covid-19. Apart from that, the USA sent PPE Kits, therapeutics, rapid diagnostic kits, and ventilators, etc.
- The US is also sending raw materials for Covishield. The US Development Finance Corporation will also help expand the capability of BioE, India's vaccine manufacturer, to help produce more of the life-saving vaccine.
- The US government is also contemplating the deployment of an expert team of public health advisors from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and USAID to work in close collaboration with the U.S. Embassy, India's health ministries, and India's Epidemic Intelligence Service staff.

#### France:

- France announced a solidarity mission for India under which Indians received ventilators, oxygen generation plants, and other medical supplies to support the country in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### Germany:

- German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her sympathy over the terrible suffering that the pandemic had brought to India and also said that Germany stands in solidarity with India and is urgently preparing a mission of support.
- India received medical supplies such as oxygen and medicines to tackle the situation.

#### Russia:

- Russia sent 22 tonnes of medical supplies to India to assist the country in its battle against the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Two planes operated by the Russian EMERCOM landed in India, carrying 20 oxygen production units, 75 ventilators, and 2,00,000 packs of medicines.
- Now, the vaccine Sputnik from Russia is also ready to roll out in India.

**The United Kingdom:**

- Britain sent more than 600 medical devices including oxygen concentrators and ventilators to India to help the country as it struggles to cope with a surge in coronavirus cases.
- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said vital medical equipment, including hundreds of oxygen concentrators and ventilators, is now on its way from the UK to India to support efforts to prevent the “tragic loss” of life from the “terrible virus”.

**Vaccine production in India and support from other countries:**

- India is ramping up the production of vaccines in India and many countries such as the US are supplying the raw materials for the production of Covishield vaccine.
- To manufacture certain vaccines, raw materials from other countries are needed. Here, the private sector comes into the picture. The government can either talk to the countries for materials or leave it to the corporate sector to deal directly with them.

**Way Forward:**

- India should increase the production of vaccines to build herd immunity in the country.
- The government should ramp up the production of Covaxin and Sputnik for which they are not dependent on any country for raw materials.
- Import of vaccines is also one of the options but it should be at a reasonable cost.
- The elderly, people with illnesses, etc. should be taken care of on priority.