

Fighting Corona Effectively in the Cold Desert of Ladakh

Rigzin Yangdol

Leh, Ladakh

Ladakh – the newly announced Union territory, has been under the lockdown for the last one month – just like the rest of the nation. What makes the lockdown different here is its tough geography and extreme weather conditions. When the pandemic entered India, this Union Territory and its people were preparing to come out of its hibernation with the harsh winter season coming to an end. In a normal scenario, the preparation would have focused on tourism, agriculture and education but due to the Corona virus, the entire focus has shifted towards the safety of the inhabitants of this cold desert. Rigzin Yangdol, one of Charkha’s writers from Leh shares the efforts the Union Territory administration has invested towards supporting people in the times of Corona.

“The efforts of the administration are focused to support not just the locals residing here but to ensure that non-locals receive the required assistance in these tough times. The current strategy is in line with the guidelines provided by the Central Government. While people are not allowed to come out of their houses, the administration is working to provide essentials at the doorstep. Basic commodities, education and health are at the centre of the lockdown strategy.

The villages are scattered along this vast expanse. They are located far from each other, tucked away in the mountains. To reach out to every village is a difficult task but the efforts are going on in the right direction. To cater to the basic needs of the villagers, vegetables are being supplied with the help of the Sarpanch and Nambardar who then distribute it in their respective areas. Basic food ration and LPG bottles are also being provided by the administration at the door step.

The lockdown has not just stirred the daily survival of people but has affected the regular system of students – who are forced to sit at home instead of attending schools and colleges. When the schools in the rest of the country are providing online lessons to their students, the Education Council in Leh has taken the initiative of teaching students through radio broadcasting. This is beneficial especially for Class X and XII students who are receiving regular inputs from their teachers from Monday to Saturday through this platform.



Trained NSS and NYK Volunteers spreading awareness about Covid-19

In this health crisis, the UT admin has been taking extra care towards sensitizing people about the precautions they need to follow to guarantee the safety of their loved one. The medium of television is used here to create awareness among villagers residing in remote and hard to reach areas. Health specialist share their knowledge on prevention of spread of COVID-19 through these episodes broadcasted on Television.

In addition, 10 Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) and 10 National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers attended 'Training for Trainers' organized by Central Rapid Response Team with the objective of educating the volunteers on how to prevent the spread of Covid-19. These volunteers were given the task of going door to door and share their knowledge with people encouraging them to stay inside. They also distributed face masks and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

To complement the efforts of the government, various non-government and private institutes are also coming together to help each other in these testing times. One of the examples of such initiative is the collaboration between All Ladakh Tours Operator Association (ALTOA) and People's Action Group For Inclusion And Rights (PAGIR).



PAGIR team making masks

PAGIR is a Leh-based non-government organization that works for the rights of persons with disabilities. Their team, with support from ALTOA stitched home-made masks and distributed it to the Health and Police department who are working tirelessly to fight COVID-19.”

The times are certainly difficult but it’s the effort of each one of us that will pull us out of this pandemic. Let’s support our government in this fight against corona by staying safe inside our houses!