



## HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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A Video Conference (VC) was chaired by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, HE Narendra Modi with the participation of Heads of State/Government/Representatives of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Member Countries, on Sunday, 15 March 2020 to discuss the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The SAARC Member Countries include India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Afghanistan. The VC was organised at the initiative of Hon'ble PM Modi with the intent to establish regional cooperation among SAARC Member Countries, who represent 1/5th of humanity, to decide on a united response to the crisis by sharing information and best practices.

During the VC, Hon'ble PM Modi offered to create a COVID-19 Emergency Fund, based on voluntary contributions, with India pledging US\$ 10 million as a start. India also offered, *inter alia*, rapid response medical teams, online training capsules for medical staff, VC of medical professions to consider specific measures and best practices, VC of trade officials to consider travel and intra-regional trade during the crisis, create a website with information on the COVID-19 in all SAARC languages, etc.

Hon'ble PM Modi also highlighted the various preemptive measures taken by India to deal with the COVID-19 crisis including setting-up a joint monitoring mechanism, heightened surveillance of acute respiratory illness, thermal screening at entry points at air ports and land border crossings, increased restrictions on travel, suspension of visas to foreign nationals till 15 April 2020, public awareness campaigns on all media platforms, expanding training of medical staff across the country, increased diagnostic capabilities to over 60 labs currently, protocols for screening, contact tracing, quarantine and management of isolation facilities and evacuating over 1450 Indians and citizens of several neighbouring countries from major outbreak areas among other measures.

The initiative of Hon'ble PM Modi in organising the VC was welcomed and appreciated by leaders of all the SAARC Member Countries who participated in it. The full proceedings of the VC can be accessed on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh9BO1bB0k8>.

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*Brunei Darussalam, 16 March 2020*