



## ***Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi***

***Health for All - Now!***

***Health is a Basic Human Right!***

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To  
Dr Harsh Vardhan,  
Union Minister  
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare  
Government of India  
New Delhi

5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**Sub: Urgently expediting distribution of oxygen generators, oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other Covid relief materials**

Sir,

We write on behalf of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), a national network of civil society organizations health networks and social movements working for health rights across the country. We are extremely concerned about the current surge in Covid 19 cases across the Country, particularly in the National Capital Delhi. Delhi is facing a crippling shortage of oxygen particularly with the non-availability of Oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders and the availability of oxygen beds. Families of patients are running from pillar to post for oxygen cylinders and to refill the oxygen for many hours standing in the queue. Desperate families are also buying equipment such as oxygen concentrators in the black market by paying 3-4 times more than the original price. At the same time, large consignments of such equipment are reportedly lying at the Customs waiting for clearance. Although the Centre has issued a clarification that there is no hold up at the Customs, but still there are reports that the facilities are struggling for supplies and the situation continues to be dreadful.

More specifically, Air India has reported delivering more than 8000 pieces of equipment into the country since April 24 2021, which includes oxygen generators, oxygen concentrators, BiPAPs, and ventilators, and many other covid-19 relief material. According to news reports in these consignments there were oxygen generators specifically for hospitals in Delhi and Haryana.

On May 1<sup>st</sup> the Delhi High Court had ordered the government to provide 700 metric tonnes of medical oxygen to Delhi; on May 2<sup>nd</sup> the Supreme Court directed the Centre to rectify the issue of shortage of medical oxygen in the capital, on or before the midnight of May 3<sup>rd</sup>, which had not been complied with till May 4<sup>th</sup>.



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It is a matter of extreme anguish and despair that in spite of so much life-saving equipment available since the past ten days, yet some of it could not be handed over to hospitals even in the capital city of Delhi, where hundreds of people continue to die each day due to lack of oxygen. In fact, it is a case of criminal mis-governance.

We the members of the JSA are extremely distressed with this situation and appeal to you to expedite, without any further delay, the distribution of the large number of oxygen generators, oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other Covid relief materials that have been arriving in the country in the past ten days.

It is a matter of great concern that the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for allocations of these materials to the states were drawn up only on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and the distribution commenced only on May 4<sup>th</sup>, as per news reports. Oxygen concentrators – a lifeline in the current health emergency – are to be distributed only from today – May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Recently the Supreme Court has directed that "the protection of the lives of citizens is paramount in times of a national crisis and the responsibility falls on both the Central Government and Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) to cooperate with each other to ensure that all possible measures are taken to resolve the situation". The Court also provided a detailed list of suggestions to the Central Government for increasing availability of oxygen and ensuring transparency in demand-supply management, and to provide a clarification to the Court on the same.

Further, in its advisory, dated May 04, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has stated that "The Centre and the State Governments/ UTs must coordinate for providing continuous, rapid and seamless logistics to meet the demand of oxygen, essential medicines and devices in all healthcare establishments in the country."

We once again urge and appeal to the government authorities to treat this as a humanitarian calamity and immediately press into action all resources at the disposal of the government, to work round the clock and ensure immediate dispatch of the materials to the hospitals in Delhi and every other state as required.

In this, the government appointed committee should take the support of the respective state health department officials and also civil society organisations working at the ground level. We urge you to convene a meeting immediately with all these stakeholders and the various state level citizen committees formed for community action under National Health Mission (NHM) , to work with the



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central committee for speedy, smooth and efficient implementation of the SOPs, and ensure transparency and monitoring of this task.

JSA reiterates that Health and Healthcare are basic human rights which must be treated as top most political priority by the government, immediately expediting the distribution of oxygen generators, oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other Covid relief materials, so that no time is lost in saving precious lives.

Indira Chakravarthy, Sarojini Nadimpally, Indranil, Richa Chintan

On behalf of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi

**Copy to:**

Secretary General, NHRC

Additional Secretary, NHRC

Lieutenant Governor, GNCT DELHI

Principal Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department, GNCT Delhi

Secretary, Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India

Chief Minister, GNCT Delhi

Deputy Chief Minister, GNCT Delhi