



I extend a warm welcome to all the eminent religious and spiritual leaders and other dignitaries for participating in this Webinar on creating awareness among people about covid appropriate behavior to strengthen the resolve of the government to fight strong against the invisible enemy who is threatening the entire humanity.

As you all are very much aware, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge before the entire world. Religious and spiritual leaders and faith based organizations play an important role in the times of crisis. They provide solace to the sufferer and give hope to the hopeless. Faith has a unique place in our lives, in the times of anxiety, faith can be a significant source of comfort and community resilience. With the unprecedented threat of the COVID 19 pandemic and its devastating impacts on communities across the world, leaders like you will play a large role in saving lives and mitigating the spread of the disease. Religious and spiritual leaders are equipped with knowledge, courage and vision and can play a unique role in bringing people together around the universal values of our common humanity

To deal with such an enormous challenge apart from the efforts by the government, as influential leaders of the society and community, responsibility lies on all of us to create awareness among people in our respective communities to adhere to the Covid-appropriate behavior such as wearing mask, maintaining social distance, washing hands frequently, keeping the surroundings clean. You have a deep and trusted relationship with your congregants and connection with disadvantaged and vulnerable members who might not be reached by health services in a routine manner. People's attitude towards public health messages are shaped by their religious beliefs and how their leaders respond to it. You are in a good position to instill desirable practices, rationality and confidence among the followers of faith.

The situation calls for a concerted effort on the part of all sections of the society to come together and address the issue on hand as the Covid-19 pandemic is taking a serious turn by every passing day.

All esteemed dignitaries present today are well known in their skill of communication. You are endowed with the capacity to influence thinking and shape social values and social responsibility. I would urge you all to make a special appeal to followers of your respective religious organizations for strict adherence to the Covid guidelines and taking all necessary precautions by protecting themselves, their family members and the communities around them.

I earnestly appeal to you all to effectively communicate the message to all your followers that in this crisis situation there is no scope to remain complacent. There is a need to emphasize in no uncertain terms that it is incumbent on each and every one to follow the health protocols and they should also be made aware about the dangers of contracting the Covid-19 virus through a slightest oversight in not taking the necessary precautions.

I would be grateful to you, if you could educate your followers, as part of your regular discourses on the mandatory precautions to be taken to prevent spread of the corona virus and the need to stay at home, avoid unnecessary travel, celebration of festivals with limited number at home.

The country today is witnessing a new high in the number of Covid cases on daily basis with new strains of virus circulating, which appear to be more contagious.

As we all know, the present pandemic situation is putting an enormous pressure on the medical resources and health infrastructure. Almost all hospitals are operating with full capacity and the doctors and health care workers are working round the clock to save lives. Hence, preventing the virus

from spreading further is an important factor to bring the pandemic situation under control.

I also request you to encourage all eligible persons to come forward and take the vaccine immediately by clearing any apprehensions they have about taking the vaccine as it is safe to take the vaccine. Adherence to Covid appropriate behavior at all times and vaccination are the only weapons available to us to succeed in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

While wearing mask, maintaining social distance and frequent hand wash are important elements of Covid appropriate behavior, it may also be advised to the followers to either postpone functions for the time being or it may be held with very limited number of members duly following Covid guidelines as per advise of authorities.

I would also like to urge you to create awareness among your followers to seek immediate help by calling 104 Call Centre for any mild Covid-related symptoms. Expert doctors are available at the call centre round the clock. Those affected by the coronavirus can recover from the disease and lead normal life, provided they go for testing followed by treatment, without any delay. The fact that nearly 9.70 lakh patients have recovered from the disease in our State out of 11 lakh patients bears a testimony to this. 1.22 lakh patients are still undergoing treatment in hospitals or under home isolation. Fatalities can be prevented and lives can be saved if there is no delay in testing followed by treatment.

In this regard, I would also like to draw your attention to the five-fold strategy laid out by our Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi i.e. testing, tracing, treatment, Covid-appropriate behavior and vaccination as the only solution to effectively fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Laxity among the people inappropriate behavior such as not wearing mask, visiting crowded areas, not cleaning hands frequently, not seeking

immediate medical help in case of mild Covid symptoms appears to be the main contributing factor behind the surge in the new number of cases being reported in the country, during the second wave.

The surge in cases being reported on daily basis in the second wave is a matter of grave concern and I solicit your support to create awareness among the people and prevail over them on the urgent need to prevent further spread of the virus which is possible only with the active cooperation of everyone in the society.

Protecting lives and ensuring welfare of all citizens is a top priority for the government and all entities of the government are working very hard with utmost devotion to deal with the situation. Active cooperation of everyone in the society is a key factor to accomplish the gigantic task at hand and to defeat the virus.

The situation is evolving very rapidly hence our response also has to meet the pace of the challenge. The current pandemic situation demands that we need to stand united and face this menace in a responsible and effective manner by supplementing the efforts of our government.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate my appeal to you all to take an active role in this humanitarian cause and advise the people to strictly follow the Covid-appropriate behavior and take all necessary precautions as advised by authorities to prevent further spread of the corona virus.

I am confident that by coming together and standing united, it is possible to build a resilient society to combat the impacts and succeed in the fight against the Covid-19 and put an end to the pandemic.

I once again thank you all for taking the time out and participating in this webinar.

Jai Hind