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Handling of COVID19 in ASEAN & Southeast Asia

by



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SOUTH KOREA : A SUCCESS STORY IN PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT

Introduction

South Korea is an East Asian country located on the Korean peninsula. It shares a border with North Korea along the Demilitarized Zone and has a coastline of two thousand four hundred and thirteen kilometres. It is bordered by Japanese islands along the Korean strait to the south. South Korea has the 4th largest economy in Asia. It has a well-developed education system which has helped in technology boom and fuelled the development of an internal consumer economy. South Korea has an export based economy. It was even recognized by the International Monetary Fund for its resilience through the various national economic crises and the global financial crisis. Some of the major sectors of Korean economy include shipbuilding, technology, automobile industry and mining among others. South Korea is a member of the United Nations since 1991 and is also a member of ASEAN, Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and other such international bodies.

Early Developments

South Korea's first reported Coronavirus case was a 35 year old Chinese woman in January 2020. As Korean people living in Wuhan, China returned to South Korea, the first reported South Korean case was not too long after. By 27th January 2020, four known cases of coronavirus came to knowledge. The cases began to rise as a result of many foreigners and Korean residents entering the country. This was the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic in South Korea. It consisted mainly of infected South Korean nationals and Chinese citizens entering the country and spreading the virus. In the second phase, there was a coronavirus outbreak in Shincheonji as a result of a religious gathering and the state authorities responded with a lockdown in Daegu, where there were fears of outbreak. The State forces of Korea had raised the concern level and there was a limitation of travel to and from Daegu where there was a great apprehension regarding the Coronavirus outbreak while there was a lockdown in force. South Korea's coronavirus cases had multiplied by 180 times in a period of two weeks and thus at one point of time South Korea was the country with the second largest outbreak. The South Korean government promptly decided to take action to control the spread of the pandemic in the country and thus limit its impact on other spheres of citizens lives.

Impact on South Korea

The South Korean government initiated immediate measures to control the outbreak from spreading rapidly. It launched efforts to spread information about the virus on all public broadcasting platforms and providing citizens with free and convenient testing kits. Since there was a great deal of apprehension regarding the spread of the

virus, various campaigns for spreading awareness about the precautionary measures such as proper sanitation and avoiding public gatherings etc were initiated. The impact on the various sectors of the country, though visible, was minimal. The economic sector was most affected. The service sector businesses had closed down, thus the burden came upon the public to provide for themselves or rely on service deliveries. The Korean stock market suffered and the currency, the Korean Won, suffered depreciation. There have been supply chain disruptions in the country. The South Korean government planned to introduce a supplementary budget to inject life in the economy. In the initial stages, South Korea had kept the number of cases to a minimal while countries such as USA were facing a situation of increasing cases. The South Korean government had taken rapid steps to ensure that the virus spread was contained. The country had taken effective measures after their experience with MERS in 2015 and the SARS outbreak in 2003. South Korea also had the advantage of advanced medical infrastructure even better than the US and Spain in certain aspects. There have been adverse impacts economically and as of April 2020 the global markets have been affected as a result of which, South Korean exports had fallen by 24.3%. The South Korean government had also launched a stimulus package of US \$200 Billion to support the businesses and households where there was unemployment. ¹

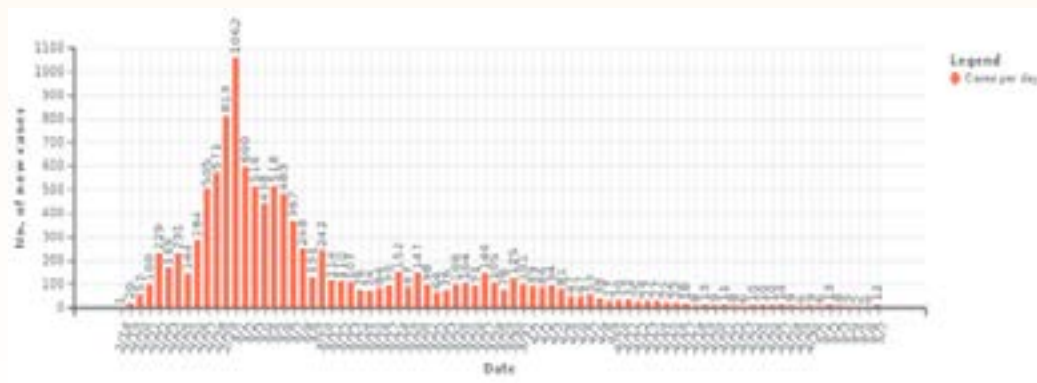
Governmental Measures

The South Korean government was successful in its efforts to control the pandemic due to transparency in governance, education and the efforts of civil society. The most effective measure taken by the government has been rapid testing of people. The civil society has also voluntarily supported the government in their measures. The citizens were advised to take precautions and major events were cancelled. Daegu, which was once the epicentre of the Coronavirus in South Korea was placed under lockdown. South Korea has also maintained a GPS track on the possible live cases in the country for people to exercise caution and surveillance drones are being used for spraying disinfectant and also monitoring hot-spots around the country. The country did not stop its citizens from working nor did it impose any harsh curfew-like situation. It followed a system of strict screening of all citizens. This was a three-step detection system. The government could take early measures because it was known to all that the main cause of the pandemic in the country was the Daegu Church congregation and the South Korean experience of MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome) in 2015 had better prepared the authorities. The South Korean Centre for Disease Control (CDC) had informed its citizens to treat the spread coronavirus as a national emergency. It ensured rapid testing, testing more than 300,000 people initially. The government had set-up 600 testing centres and testing was also conducted at 50 drive through stations. There were walk-in centres for testing where health workers could test people for the virus. There have also been private initiatives such as the usage of thermal image cameras for detection and temperature checks at restaurants and other places of public resort. In case a person tests positive for the virus, health workers can trace their

1. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/south-korea-covid19-structural-economic-reform-by-lee-jong-wha-2020-05>)

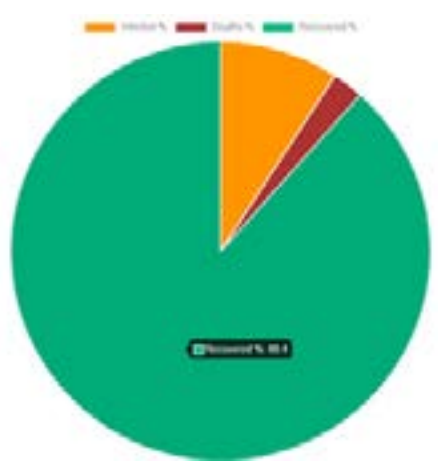
movements and their activities to determine the people with whom the infected person may have had contact and to use isolation measures to contain further spread of the virus. Technology has played a big role in preventing the spread of the virus. The South Korean government is sending alert messages on the cell phones of the citizens when new cases arise near them. Public trust has been a crucial element in the success of the “Korean model” in the fight against coronavirus.

Graphical representation of the number of cases in South Korea (Fig. 1.1)²



The number of coronavirus cases have declined in South Korea and the spread of the virus has been curbed through state and public efforts. The graph below shows a steady decline of the number of cases from the month of April onwards. The number of cases were highest during late February and during the first week of March after which a rapid decline is visible.

Pie-Chart interpretation of Coronavirus patients (Fig 1.2)³



The above pie-chart shows that 88.4% of the total coronavirus patients in the country have now recovered

2. *Wikipedia*
 3. *ibid*

from the virus. A total of 9.2% of the people are still infected and of all the cases of coronavirus, 2.4% of the infected people have died. This shows the effectiveness of the South Korean model in ensuring high percentage of recovery and minimal deaths.

Outcomes

The South Korean model has been widely acknowledged throughout the world for tackling the coronavirus effectively. The South Korean crisis had begun in a similar manner to that in Italy. The initial infected people count was just 31. The Shincheonji religious event was the trigger when around 9,300 people who had attended the event were put at a risk and 1,200 people had begun showing flu-like symptoms. Mr. Kee Park, lecturer of Global Health at Harvard Medical School, stated that South Korea had conducted more tests than the United States. He pointed out that the USA had a system of testing based on priority as a result of which many people who felt that they had developed symptoms were left out of the testing process. The important point to consider is that South Korea ensured the availability of testing centres which were modelled to be “drive-thru” centres and which greatly helped in early recognition of symptoms. It is pointed out by some experts that unlike in South Korea, the pandemic had a more serious impact in the U.S. and its economy due to the lack of testing kits, which would mean that there was an improper identification of citizens who were infected or displayed any symptoms. There have been criticisms of the testing strategy used by the South Korean Centre for Disease Control (CDC). It is believed that a narrow criterion was utilised for testing the individuals whereby only those people who showed strong symptoms associated with the virus or with a travel history to China were tested. There are other criticisms such as that the Centre of Disease Control had produced faulty testing kits in the initial phase of the coronavirus. However, a commendable factor in the country’s response to the virus is the development of geographically linked coronavirus testing kits which were given to the citizens who were migrating from one part of the country to another.

Impact on Economy Post Coronavirus pandemic

The South Korean government expects an economic contraction due to the decrease in exports and consumption. South Korea’s automobile industry had shut its plants due to the decline in exports and the manufacturing sector is under a threat of decline. The economies of South Korea’s major buyer, China, has declined along with that of its second largest foreign market, the US. The exports have declined from \$6.9 Billion which is nearly a 50% reduction in the exports. All aircrafts have been grounded completely and all people who enter the country must observe a two-week quarantine. The tourism industry has also suffered a massive blow. Tourist destinations such as the Island of Jeju have fallen almost completely. It has fallen down to 99.3% for foreign travellers. The president of South Korea even called this an economic emergency and a stimulus package for supporting the economy has been introduced which is worth \$356 million to offer loans to automobile industries, travel agencies etc. Mr. Park Chong-Hoon who is the Head of Research at Standard Chartered, Seoul has also expected a decrease in the South Korean GDP.

Conclusion: Observations

The South Korean economy is highly dependent on exports. In a growing environment of economic decline and recession faced by most of the world, the country may need to focus on self-reliance and concentrate on its South East Asian trade partners. Countries like China, a major trade partner, have become technology rivals of South Korea, hence the latter needs to invest in research and development. It may also need to give a significant boost to its services and manufacturing sectors, with particular focus on strengthening the small and medium enterprises. The country needs to boost household expenditure, reduce the number of low wage part time workers, control household debts which are higher than income earned, ensure greater participation of females in the labour market, lessen private school spending, etc which would help in generating demand and reducing income inequalities. The country will also need to draw up a long-term plan for economic revival, such as ensuring structural reforms, strengthening market competition, encourage private investment apart from providing education and skills appropriate for the future.

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VIETNAM – CASE STUDY

Introduction

Vietnam, located on the Indo-China peninsula, has a population of approximately 95.5 million people. It shares borders with China to the north, and also with Laos and Cambodia in the west. It shares its maritime borders with Thailand through the Gulf of Thailand, and the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia through the South China Sea. Vietnam gained its independence from France in 1945. However after the end of the war in 1954, the new states of North Vietnam and South Vietnam came into existence. The countries reunited under a Socialist government in 1976. With an estimated 95.5 million inhabitants as of 2018, it is the 16th most populous country in the world. Vietnam maintains good relations with all the countries as per the National Congress of the Communist party of Vietnam. The country has a socialist oriented market economy which is 44th largest as per nominal gross national product.¹ Following its accession to the WTO in January 2007, a notable trait of the Vietnamese economy over the past decade has been its substantial and increasing interconnection with other economies, via trade and investment. Two of the major drivers that have been essential for the previous growth and economic development are: (1) the level of foreign direct investment in the country, and (2) the country's capacity for export. >50% of Vietnam's exports are sent to the United States, China and the European Union and the United Kingdom.²

Early Developments

Vietnam reported its first case of coronavirus in January 2020. The affected individual was a Chinese national who had travelled to Hanoi, the capital city, to meet his son who had also contracted the disease. Vietnam's Emergency Epidemic Prevention Centre was also called into action and in the same month, three more cases of the Coronavirus were reported of individuals who had returned from Wuhan in China, the epicentre of the virus. In February, the first domestic transmission of coronavirus was reported and the number of affected cases increased. In the month of March, Hanoi reported a large number of cases of the virus. It began with a woman who had returned from abroad and had travelled across Europe and had also tested positive. Those who had tested positive also included the Cham minority people of Vietnam, who had attended a Tablighi Jamaat event in Malaysia. In April, few cases came to notice. There were some patients who contracted the disease again after being cured, thereby negating the myth of immunity.

1. *Wikipedia*

2. <https://www.pwc.com/vn/en/publications/vietnam-publications/economy-covid19.html>

Impact On Vietnam

It has been predicted that the greatest impact of the virus will be that on the economy of Vietnam. The country is facing a paucity of resources such as surgical N-95 masks which sold out very quickly after the outbreak. The government considered it safe to close its border with China. The Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam also closed down all flights, to and from Wuhan. While there will be economic losses, the Vietnamese government believes that the target economic growth level for 2020 will be met. Many businesses have suffered due to the adverse impacts of the reduction in imports from China. Tourism industry has been impacted as a total of one third of the tourists in Vietnam are Chinese. The Department of Tourism has warned about a loss of billions of dollars due to the decline in tourism. The Tourism sector accounts for fourteen percent of Vietnam's economy. It has been expected that tourism is going to decrease by a maximum ten percent, which could decrease the national GDP by one percent. For the textiles / garment industry in Vietnam, the COVID-19 crisis may accelerate (i) the recently observed trend of concentration, and (ii) a shift towards increased value-added activities by moving to FOB activities. Regarding consumer electronics / phones / computers and parts, the sector is largely driven by large international companies that have recently relocated elements of their production to Vietnam. For such companies, their exposure to the COVID-19 crisis is not likely to be as critical as for the Vietnamese textiles / garment sector. Even so, such companies can expect to face a contraction of 10 to 20% in their orders for 2020, as compared to 30 to 40% contraction for textiles firms.³ There is a ray of hope for the economy if manufacturing industries shift their factories from China to Vietnam. One expected key impact of the COVID-19 crisis is the slowdown of foreign direct investment in the consumer electronics manufacturing sector. Most expansion plans have been suspended or stopped since the COVID-19 outbreak. Although the outbreak is likely to result in a delay in investment, rather than threaten the overall attractiveness of the country in terms of foreign investment, the lower level of FDI that is expected for the rest of 2020 may place considerable short-term pressure on the Vietnamese economy.⁴

Government's Response

Vietnam has reported no fatalities and fewer than three hundred coronavirus cases. Its success can be attributed to the success of governmental measures and the proper coverage of the healthcare sector. Vietnam has eight thousand doctors per ten thousand people. Quarantine measures were effectively implemented which has made Vietnam's case a success story. The government of Vietnam has been able to make quick and successful decisions. It has also been successful due to a culture of interdependence and community surveillance, which means responsibility of the entire neighbourhood to keep a vigil on each other's activities. The government had prepared for the pandemic before the first cases were reported. Vietnam's Ministry of Health held a conference

3. <https://www.pwc.com/vn/en/publications/2020/pwc-vietnam-covid-19-vietnam-economy-and-export.pdf>

4. *ibid*

with the World Health Organization (WHO) and began to spread awareness about the virus. The country had 16 cases in January and due to preventive efforts of the state, all had recovered by February. When the second phase of the virus started, the government had launched a mobile app called NCOVI for people to report any symptoms which they felt were developing and it helped the concerned authorities to trace the people who were displaying the symptoms. During the third phase, the number of cases had rapidly increased and Vietnam stopped all foreigners from entering the country. The country then followed a strategy of limited lockdown till first of April. Thus, all public gatherings were banned, people were encouraged to observe self-isolation and implemented the national quarantine policy. The government's response was also conditioned by lessons learnt from the 2003 SARS outbreak and rapid action to control the spread of the virus. Schools were closed during the Lunar Year vacations break. The Vietnam model against coronavirus has being dubbed as a "low cost model". Vietnamese government had taken policy actions such as increasing the production of medical commodities, restricting the movement of people, lockdown of select villages and communes. Vietnam's success has been partially attributed to an aggressive form of nationalism, which views the virus as a "foreign enemy" which needed to be collectively defeated. The Vietnamese government was transparent in its handling of the pandemic which helped to win public trust. Vietnam had also taken the initiative of donating test kits to other countries such as Laos, U.S.A, U.K. etc.

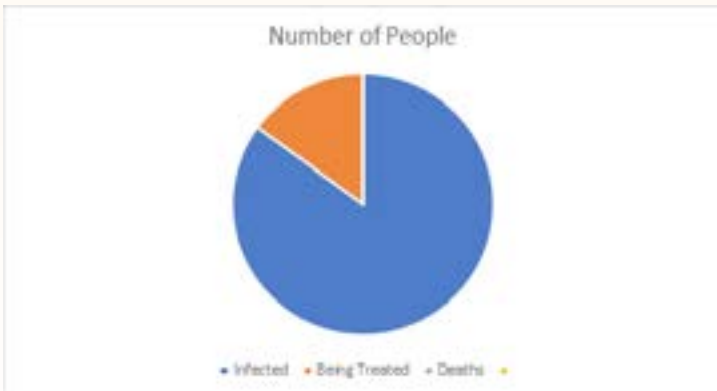
Vietnam versus the South Korean Model

The Vietnamese low-cost model had many similarities with the South Korean model in matters of rapid action. In Vietnam, rapid action was taken to prevent the contact of infected individuals with the normal population, and using tracking features such as the NCOVI app to isolate the infected persons. In South Korea, the emphasis was on mass testing, information dissemination, spreading media propaganda to spread awareness among the people etc. Vietnam did not have enough resources for mass testing like in South Korea, therefore its success can be attributed to stringent lockdown and isolation measures. There was strict tracing of the contacts of people who were infected with the virus. The country sealed off those areas and communes where at risk individuals or those who were infected were such as Vietnam imposed a 21-day quarantine in Vinh Phuc province after some people returning from Wuhan had contracted the virus. The similarity with the South Korean model was the spread of media propaganda as earlier stated. In South Korea, the civil society along with the government had taken active measures to control the spread of the virus. There have been various novel methods which have been implemented by the Vietnamese communist government such as the usage of the national network of informants to report any possible infected persons etc. In Vietnam people were forced to be in self-isolation and in quarantine if suspected. In South Korea the government had taken proper information dissemination measures and the app developed by the government would keep a track of the infected persons and people who had had contact with them. Those who were infected were placed under quarantine. The South Korean government implemented lockdown only in affected pockets and certain sensitive installations.

Coronavirus cases in Vietnam

The graph shows that the number of people treated is a very small proportion of the total number of infected individuals in Vietnam. There have been no reported deaths so far.

Fig 1.1 – Number of Cases in Vietnam



(source -: COVID-19 Emergency Strength Diseases Situation Site, Vietnam)

Fig. 1.2 – Source of Virus Transmission / Age Wise Distribution



(source -: COVID-19 Emergency Strength Diseases Situation Site, Vietnam)

The above graph shows the age wise distribution of the patients which transmitted the virus. Maximum cases were found in the age group of 20 to 29 years. While those in the age groups of 0 to 9 and those above 70 were least affected.

There is likelihood of considerable slowdown in the Vietnamese economy in view of the impact of the virus, even though the country has faced few infected cases. The slowdown is the result of its dependence on foreign markets. On April 21st, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided a re-adjusted – and less favourable outlook for Vietnam in 2020. The ILO is now projecting that 20 to 40% of Vietnamese workers in textiles and

electronics manufacturing becoming unemployed or suffering substantial salary cut as a result of the downturn, depending heavily on the pace of recovery in key export markets. In a scenario where the orders from Europe and the U.S. would recover by September 2020, the key questions would be (1) the capacity of local entities to sustain several months of low business activities, resulting in low income, and (2) their ability to quickly return to pre-COVID 19 production levels, following several months of, effectively, complete shutdown. Both of the answers are currently unknowns for Vietnam at the moment, as companies in both textiles and consumer electronics have historically been more accustomed to dealing with issues resulting from over demand than from excess capacity.⁵ Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc recently set an aggressive target of achieving over 5 percent GDP growth this year, a decline from around 7 percent growth over the last five years. The International Monetary Fund, meanwhile, has forecast growth of 2.7 percent for 2020, a figure that still beats projections for most of Southeast Asia and is far better than what is expected in the West.⁶

Conclusion: Observations

Vietnam's success can be attributed to the efforts made by the citizens and the stringent policy implementation by the government. Vietnam's Covid-19 battle might be a success story however alertness is the need of the hour. Vietnam had begun to lift some of the restrictions and social distancing requirements from its citizens by April 2020. Vietnam needs to increase its testing abilities as there have been reports of the initial cases of the virus being unaccounted for. Vietnam as a country should be prepared to brace for the economic impact which will be a consequence of the pandemic. The tourism sector in Vietnam, as mentioned earlier, is greatly dependant on Chinese tourists and it has witnessed a steep decline. The Vietnamese industries may also suffer a setback, given their dependence on Chinese imports, unless proper initiatives are taken.

The Government of Vietnam announced a \$2.6 billion relief package aimed at 20 million people in April 2020, which included cash transfers to those considered poor or near-poor and those who are especially vulnerable to losing income. State media recently reported that \$13.8 million worth of aid had been distributed to 278,700 Ho Chi Minh City residents, including the poor, those who have served the country and people who rely on social protection programs. The government is counting on a rebound in domestic demand, fuelled by a rapid economic reopening. Vietnam is dependent on foreign trade, investment and tourists and would not be able to restore many economic activities to full normalcy in view of its trade and business partners still suffering from the effects of the pandemic.⁷

There is a need to increase activities and applications of digital transformation and develop non-contact services, while minimising disruption during social distancing. IT with home-based working support, online learning and

5. <https://www.pwc.com/vn/en/publications/2020>

6. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28770>

7. *ibid*

home delivery are essential activities both during and after the pandemic. However, new thinking on proactive adaptation to COVID-19 needs to be formed and requires new adaptive capacity of each management apparatus, the business community, as well as every citizen. The new context requires technology to be applied quickly, thereby boosting e-commerce, e-payments and online work, as well as rearrangement of global supply chains and a greater focus on the domestic market. Vietnam needs to continue improving its business and investment environment, eliminating cumbersome administrative procedures, while accelerating the disbursement of VND 700 trillion worth of public investment in 2020, thereby attracting social investment capital, including both domestic and foreign capital. Monetary policy needs to be implemented in a more specific manner, with more clarified solutions and a spirit of the banking sector accompanying enterprises through the debt postponement/rescheduling, interest rate reduction and commercial banks' profit reduction partly offset with businesses' losses. In addition, it is important to grasp new opportunities from free trade agreements, while re-organising the domestic market to focus on strongly developing production areas, industrial parks and economic zones to be more active in domestic raw material supply, as well as encouraging the production of components and intermediaries to replace imported ones.⁸

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SINGAPORE

Introduction

Singapore is an island city-state in southeast Asia. It borders Malaysia to the north and Indonesia to the south. It has a parliamentary form of government with the president as the head of the government. Singapore has foreign relations with more than 180 countries. Singapore was the founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Singapore has also participated in meetings of G20 though it is not a formal member of the group. It is also a part of other important international associations and groups. There have been border disputes with neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia over access to freshwater, access to Malaysian airspace by the Singaporean Air Force and other territorial disputes. Singapore has a free market economy which greatly relies on exports and is dependant on foreign labour. Singapore in conjunction with other ASEAN countries has formed the ASEAN Economic Community.

Early Developments

The first reported case of coronavirus in Singapore was that of a Chinese tourist from Wuhan. Initially the other reported cases were also mainly Chinese tourists visiting the country. These patients were put in a 14-day quarantine to control the spread of the virus while efforts were made to trace all people with whom the patients may have had contact. In the months of February and March, there were various cases of local transmissions, most Singaporean people who got the virus were those who were travelling to China or it spread through Chinese tourists. The Singapore government had to initiate DORSCON, (Disease Outbreak Response Condition) to control the spread. In the month of March there were 509 cases of the virus but very limited efforts had been made to control the spread. There were some efforts to sensitize people to maintain hygiene and proper sanitation, but there were no lockdown measures. There have been certain claims that the Singaporean government had taken limited steps as they would take to monitor their citizens. Quarantine and isolations measures were taken, however there were no lockdown measures.¹

Impact on Singapore

Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs has said that the economic repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic will long lasting and far-fetched. In his words, the situation will be more serious than the financial crises which

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/magazine/singapore-coronavirus.html>

the country had to endure especially the 2007-2008 crisis. Many businesses have closed down and Singapore's parliament had now passed a bill to provide relief to citizens regarding contractual obligations. After the spread of the pandemic in the country intensified, Singapore has enforced strict lockdown measures upon its citizens. It was a default procedure whereby socializing was advised to be avoided, and many workplaces were shut-down apart from the non-essential ones such as medical services. The Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Hsien Loong has mentioned that there are possibilities of an economic recession and the Singaporean economy will definitely suffer due to the pandemic. He calls the current pandemic much worse than when SARS hit the country in 2003. The fact that the economies of the region are every closely interlinked will also affect Singapore. In February the country had raised the alert regarding coronavirus cases growth rate. The majority of the cases of the virus were that of migrant workers living in dormitories. The construction sector in the country relies majorly on foreign labour.

Governmental Measures

In its fights against the novel coronavirus, Singapore much like South Korea had used the approach of “whole of the government, whole of the country”. Singapore tackled the pandemic with joint operations of both the Ministry of Health and Police. The Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Communication also had a very vital role to play. The Ministry of Transportation supplied all the necessary medical equipment and the Ministry of Communication spread information regarding the coronavirus, proper sanitary measures to be taken. They had a centralized system of information dissemination which sensitized the people regarding precautions to be taken. The government had designated clinics to treat the milder cases of the virus. Those people who were displaying the symptoms of fever were advised to stay at home for 5 days. Those patients who had been confirmed cases of the virus were required to trace those individuals with whom they had come into contact. Singapore was successfully able to track the cases and had enforced quarantine norms.² The students who are returning from other countries are required to take 14 day leave which is similar to self-isolation. This applies to staff of the Ministry of education and also workers in essential sectors such as healthcare. It has also been mentioned that those citizens who are returning from China will be monitored twice every day for 2 weeks as per government rules. In late January, the Singaporean government had announced that industries such as hospitality industries, food and beverage industries, transport etc would suffer the most as a result of the pandemic. The government has ensured that factually correct information is provided to citizens to prevent any instances of rumour mongering, falsifications etc.³ The Singaporean government has also imposed restrictions on travel to Mainland China and if any visitors in the country have had a history of prior travel to China in the last 14 days

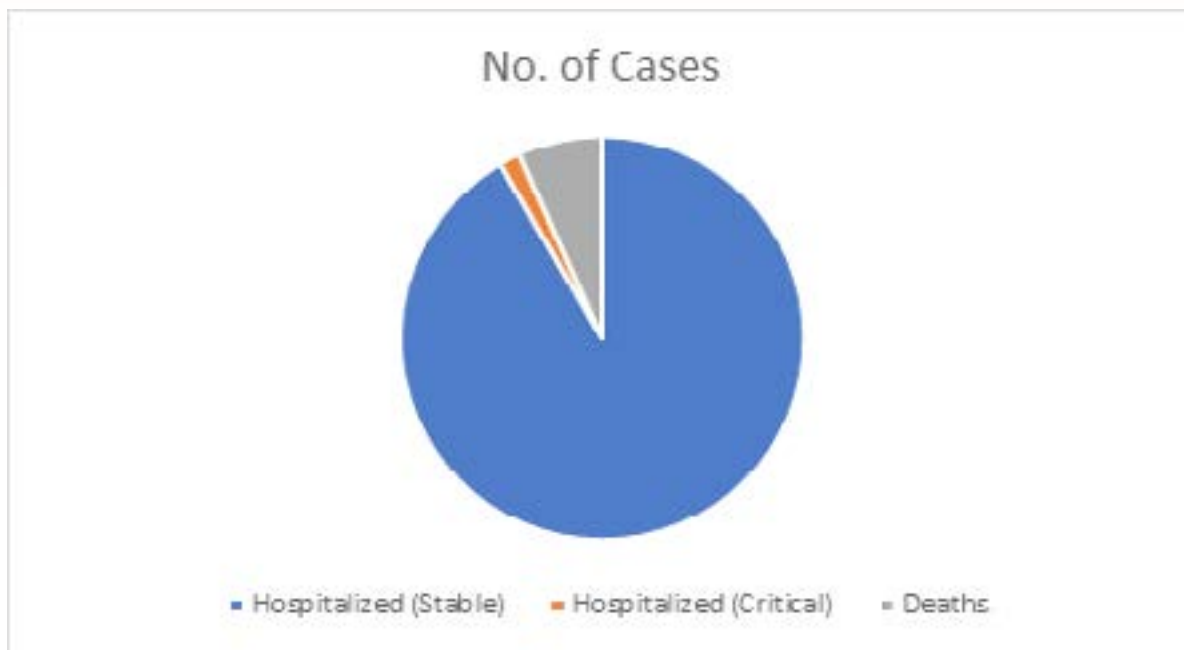
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of their visit, then entry will be denied to them. All citizens of China will be denied visas for Singapore and if granted, they will be suspended.⁴ The economic impacts of the pandemic are expected to be on the hospitality, retail and Financial and Banking sectors. The government had announced a stimulus economic package of 59.9 Billion Singaporean Dollars (USD 41.9 Billion) which is worth 12% of the country's GDP. The Ministry of Trade and Information has suggested that sectors such as manufacturing and trade will be affected due to weaker growth in markets such as China. As of March 26th 2020, Singapore had planned the launch of an additional \$33.2 Billion US dollars (48 Billion Singapore Dollars) stimulus package to support it's economy and to prevent possible recession. Singapore's deputy prime minister Heng Swee Keat has announced that the package will provide relief for select sectors such as aviation, tourism, land transport etc. The aviation sector will get \$350 million Singapore Dollars (USD 243,26 Million) ⁵.

Graphical representation of Data

Fig 1.1 – Representation of the Number of Cases in Singapore



As illustrated in the above pie-chart, the total number of patients who are hospitalized are 325 people, the total number of hospitalized people who are in a critical condition are 6 people and there have been 24 deaths.

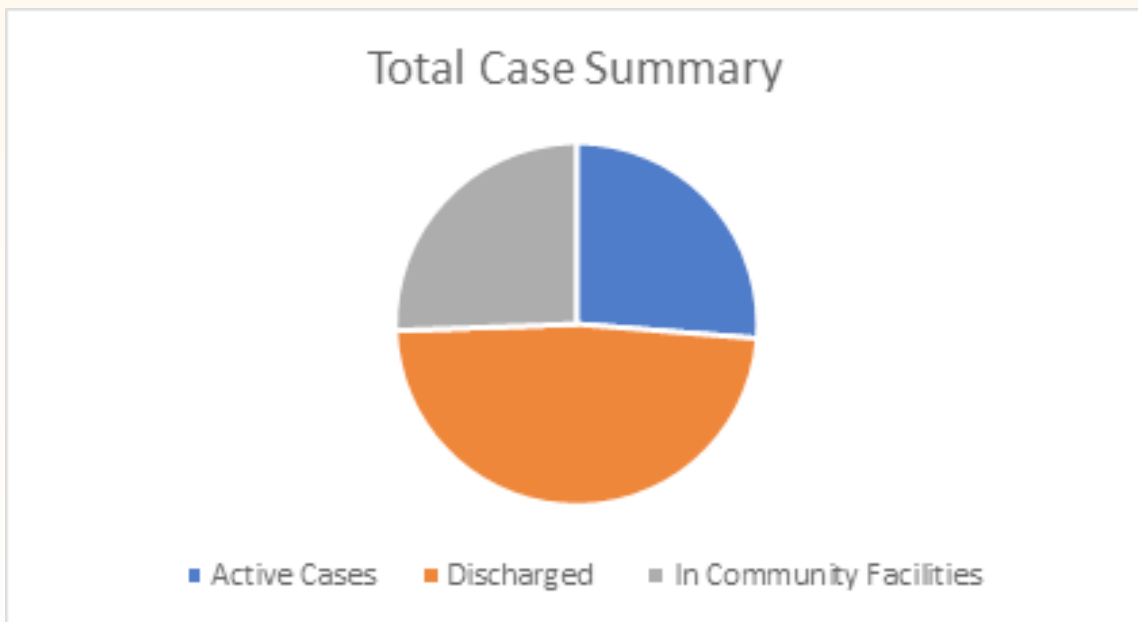
(Source – Ministry of Health Singapore⁶)

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6. <https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19>

Fig 1.2 – Representation of the Number of Cases in Singapore



As illustrated by the above pie-chart, the total number of active cases of Coronavirus in Singapore are 12,637 persons. The total number of discharged persons number 23,175 and the total number of patients still in community facilities number 12,306.

(Source – Ministry of Health, Singapore⁷)

Outcomes

Singapore had taken very bold steps to control the spread of the virus testing the people displaying any or no symptoms. The coronavirus related fatality rate in Singapore is very limited. Singapore had learnt from the 2003 SARS pandemic. Singapore did witness a sudden spike in the -virus-related cases due to its spread among the migrant workers.⁸ The government took apt measures and made facilities for screening as many workers in factories and other establishments as possible. This approach detected those people who would not have known about their underlying condition and would have been carriers of the disease. Though very sound efforts were made at curbing the spread of the virus among the people and especially the migrant workers. The important achievement of Singapore has been taking quick and aggressive action. Singapore had adopted a policy of strict quarantine measures similar to those in Vietnam. The close contacts of those who were infected or those who displayed pneumonia or influenza symptoms. The extensive efforts made by the government and its agencies culminated in a low fatality rate and a curb on the spread of the virus. Singapore had also achieved its success

7. *Ibid*

8. <https://www.vox.com/2020/5/20/21265194/coronavirus-deaths-us-singapore-case-fatality-rates>

in combating the pandemic through proper communication and information dissemination. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had warded off the possibility of a panic among the people and to ensure that people are vigilant of the developments around them.⁹

Comparison between South Korea and Singapore

Singapore had tackled the pandemic with proper planning and policy approaches. The Singaporean government had taken initiative to spread awareness about the virus on active social media platforms. The SARS pandemic of 2003 could not see this improvement due to the technological limitations however during this pandemic the Singaporean government had taken an active stance against the spread of fake news, taking onto platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to spread information. The South Korean government had used the system of surveillance to monitor and trace possible new cases of the virus. There have been other methods such as tracing mobile phone usage or bank transaction details, some measures which have been called out for privacy infringement but have worked well in tracing those people who should be tested. Both the countries have been able to keep their pandemic related fatality rate at less than 1% which is a positive development. The South Korean government's strategy was to test as many people as possible. South Korea has learnt from the impacts of the 2015 outbreak of Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and now they have a more improved system in place. Singapore and South Korea have both made an attempt to develop a vaccine for the virus. President of South Korea Mr. Moon Jae-in had talks with Bill Gates to cooperate in developing a vaccine for the virus through donations to the Gates foundation and to provide humanitarian aid. South Korea also aims to provide donations to GAVI (Global Vaccines and Immunization Alliance). South Korea is also contributing to pharmaceutical research.¹⁰ Singapore had taken more proactive measures. The Duke-NUS medical school in Singapore has teamed up with Norway's Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) for vaccine trials.¹¹

Conclusion

Singapore's success was a result of quick and effective state action which was backed by proper legislation. Singapore had also made an effort to contribute to the development of a vaccine for the Coronavirus and had spread information for making people aware about the risks, the precautions to be taken, the number of cases in the country and the symptoms associated with the virus. Singapore had implemented circuit breaker measures which were essentially partial lockdowns to curb the spread of the pandemic. However, Singapore needed to

9. <https://time.com/5802293/coronavirus-covid19-singapore-hong-kong-taiwan/>

10. https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2020/04/10/Bill-Gates-agrees-to-cooperate-with-South-Korea-on-COVID-19-vaccine/1211586531660/

11. <https://www.asianscientist.com/2020/02/topnews/singapore-covid19-pandemic-preparedness-playbook/>

be more vigilant regarding enforcing the obedience of the lockdown rules as there were many reports of people disobeying the measures.¹² The root cause of the major spike in Singapore's case post its successful grip on the virus was the migrant workforce which lives in dormitories in the city. The country had enforced severe measures contrary to the circuit-breaker measures which allowed movement of people. The measures taken by the Singapore government for containing the spread from these dormitories have come in for some criticism. Though the Singaporean government has lightened the restrictions upon the people living here, demands have been made for improving sanitation and living conditions in these dormitories.¹³

Singapore would also have to tackle the economic contraction that its economy will face post the coronavirus pandemic. The Singaporean economy contracted by 2.2% in the first quarter. This has hit the Singaporean economy much worse than the 2009 financial crisis and has even affected three key sectors in the country's economy i.e. manufacturing, services and construction. The President of Singapore Ms. Halimah Yacob has announced to provide support to the economy by drawing on the reserves to provide an assistance package. It is expected that the economic recession is inevitable and that the government's support will be necessary. The current economic recession is expected to hit harder than the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998 during which the economy of the country's economy contracted by 2.2% and now it is expected to contract by 2.5%.¹⁴

12. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/health-environment/article/3079451/cut-back-back-patting-singapores-coronavirus-response>

13. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/health-environment/article/3079451/cut-back-back-patting-singapores-coronavirus-response>

14. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/singapore-gdp-growth-slows-advance-estimate-covid-19-12577146>

A LIST OF COUNTRY-WISE BEST PRACTICES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Singapore

- **Classification of patients -**

Singapore has successfully handled the coronavirus pandemic and has kept the mortality rate below one percent. The government has now made efforts to classify the patients through the use of clinical criteria on basis of the severity of their symptoms. This would help to deal with the patients whose condition is likely to degrade or become more severe.¹ The government has additionally also made provisions for quarantine of infected patients.

- **Support to Medical Professionals –**

There is an ever-increasing pressure on medical professionals such as doctors, nurses etc who are now working hard diagnosing new patients, treating the patients and often working overtime with the risk of themselves contracting the virus. There is also a possibility that many of these workers are facing psychological issues due to the increment in their work schedules and burden. Worldwide, many doctors and other professionals have died as a result of treating the patients of the virus. The Singaporean government is providing support and care to its citizens.²

- **Raising Awareness –**

Singapore has successfully tackled the spread of false information by spreading information about the virus on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook etc. The main aim was to prevent a situation of panic through proper information dissemination. The more traditional methods of mass media communication such as TV broadcasts, radios, print media have now largely been replaced by smartphones and computers. Thus, an effort was made to stop rumours from spreading, preventing a panic among the people and sharing the right information.³ The government has also uploaded data of containment zones and vital statistics regarding number of cases, age-wise distribution of cases etc.

- **Stringent Measures –**

Singapore had faced two epidemiological crises. The first was in 2003 with the breakout of SARS. This enabled the country to develop its healthcare system and led to more revisions in the public healthcare system. In 2009, Singapore faced the H1N1 Influenza which according to authorities was more difficult to combat than the SARS breakout. Therefore, Singapore's success is a result of its previous experiences. When Coronavirus pandemic struck Singapore, it was more well prepared with lockdown measures and quarantine facilities to

1. <https://www.asianscientist.com/2020/02/topnews/singapore-covid19-pandemic-preparedness-playbook/>

2. *Ibid*

3. *Ibid*

initiate an emergency response. The country had immediately taken steps to initiate strict travel controls. The locations of people who had tested positive, the kind of social contacts they had and even initiating strict social distancing measures. ⁴

Vietnam

- **Quick and Efficient Testing Measures –**

Vietnam monitored its borders and quarantined whole areas where certain communities had tested positive for the virus. The government had set up facilities for health checks at airports where all the visitors were required to go through the mandatory testing procedures which included temperature checks and those who displayed any symptoms associated with Coronavirus were isolated and tested separately. In case any passengers had tested positive, all people who had come under any form of contact with the said person were mandatorily quarantined for a period of 14 days.

- **Information Dissemination Measures –**

The government had taken proper measures to spread information about the virus and its spread. The government had even created an online portal for showing the number of cases and areas where the concentration of cases was higher. The government had also projected the virus as a foreign element and tried to induce an attitude of hostility against the virus by mobilizing patriotic support. The government's measures were also aided by community surveillance in the country and reporting of any suspicious cases especially in regions where Vietnamese people from foreign countries such as China or Europe had come.

- **Travel Restrictions –**

Vietnam had restricted the entry of foreigners and even closed their borders to prevent the further spread of the virus. The government has decided to grant e-visas to citizens of 80 countries from 1st July this year. The government had also made provisions for tourists by providing them with a tourist helpline number, accommodation, access to hospitals etc. The country has temporarily banned any travel to mainland China except for diplomatic reasons. The earlier visa-free travel for certain countries was also withdrawn temporarily as well as for ethnic Vietnamese citizens.⁵

- **Mass Mobilization –**

Vietnam did not have the ability to tackle coronavirus like South Korea did and lacked medical infrastructure. Thus, the government implemented a stringent quarantine policy and traced all the people who had come in contact with infected persons. Vietnam has followed very stringent quarantine measures. The government even quarantined a town near Hanoi because of spread of Coronavirus there. The quarantine measures will be enforced for 14 days once implemented for suspected individuals. Vietnam monitored the contacts of all people who had tested positive even including the 3rd and 4th levels of contact.⁶

4. <https://www.wired.com/story/singapore-was-ready-for-covid-19-other-countries-take-note/>

5. <https://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/covid-19-vietnam-travel-updates-restrictions.html/>

6. <https://www.dw.com/en/how-vietnam-is-winning-its-war-on-coronavirus/a-52929967>

South Korea

- **Standard Operating Procedure –**

South Korea has a standard operating procedure for combating the pandemic. The steps included in it are – information dissemination, large scale testing of citizens and others, quarantine measures for infected persons and their contacts, providing treatment and disinfecting the areas and communities where infected persons were or which were the major outbreak zones. This procedure is the result of South Korea’s experience with the SARS outbreak of 2003 and the MERS outbreak of 2015. The government had designated 220 healthcare facilities as hospitals as of March 2020. The government and the Korean Centre for Disease Control (KCDC) was working to develop testing kits for the virus.⁷

- **Information Dissemination –**

The country’s government took to social media platforms to explain the standard operating procedure steps. The government even uses text messaging to give updates about the recent developments and the increment in the number of cases. The government also provides a list of public places and the number of times they have been visited to enable people to decide whether or not it would be safe for them to travel and also provides information about an infected person’s travel history. The government has even taken to popular modes of mass communication such as televisions, newspapers etc to remind people to avoid crowded places, to spread information about the symptoms of the virus. South Korea has taken steps to stop rumours from spreading to prevent a situation of panic from arising.⁸

- **Containment Strategies –**

The South Korean government has initiated “Bongsewi” containment strategies which differed from a regional lockdown. The government as of March 2020 was successful in screening 1,00,000 people. People can visit the designated clinics to test for the virus and the diagnostic results would be available to them within 12 hours. The government followed a system of screening as many individuals as they could through the 600 testing centres that were established solely for this purpose along with 50 drive-thru testing centres. After the MERS outbreak in 2015, the government had developed a protocol for response in case of any outbreak of respiratory diseases. This protocol includes various responses of the government including defining the functions of the government, creation of a Korean Centre for Disease Control (KCDC) hotline, decision making protocols etc.

- **Fast Response –**

South Korea’s success is attributable to their already advanced systems of information collection and dissemination. The government was successful in information dissemination because of the success of the Epidemic Investigation Support System (EISS). Mr. Yoon Duk-hee who is the Director of Infectious Disease Management (IDM) Gyeonggi province of South Korea has said that the EISS was used to trace the movements of people who were infected with the virus. Legislative measures such as passing of the Infectious Disease

7. <https://croakey.org/covid-19-lessons-from-south-koreas-quick-response/>

8. <https://croakey.org/covid-19-lessons-from-south-koreas-quick-respon/>

Prevention and Control Act (2015) was developed in reaction to the MERS outbreak and has been a guiding factor in the success of the EISS. The people were required to update their movements and activities on the EISS portal and it allows investigators to gather information about certain confirmed cases. The police also aid the EISS system in tandem with the information provided by the Credit Finance Association which handles data regarding credit cards and their usage. Though this is sensitive data, it has proven to be extremely beneficial in tracking probable cases and other people who may have had contact with the infected person. The EISS system records the data of every person who had developed the virus and analyse the hotspot zones in the country. Thus, this process has helped to enable storage of information on the cloud and thus easy management of the data regarding the confirmed cases and developments which follow.⁹

9. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-southkorea-tracing-idUSKBN22Y03I>

TAIWAN – THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Introduction

Taiwan is an island nation in eastern Asia. It is also known as the Republic of China. Its neighbouring countries include Japan, Philippines and the People’s Republic of China. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Its capital is Taipei and it also has other major cities. The country is ruled by the ROC (Republic of China) government which lost its control over mainland China which is ruled by a communist regime now. The country is a multi-party democracy. The country’s foreign relations were initially determined by the policy considerations of the Republic of China. In the initial stages after the removal of the ROC government in China, some countries maintained international relations with the ROC government in Taiwan. The ROC government in Taiwan maintains informal relations with countries through embassies and “Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative offices” or (TECRO). The United States is one of the major allies of Taiwan and has also provided military hardware to Taiwan. The country is majorly export oriented and has been ranked as 15th in terms of GDP. Taiwan is a part of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). Taiwan has participated as an observer in the World Health Assembly. Taiwan is expected to use the name “Chinese Taipei” in international organizations and events.

Early Developments

Taiwan reported its first coronavirus case in January when a 50-year-old woman returning from Wuhan had tested positive. Other cases in January also traced their travel history to Wuhan or contact with a relative from Wuhan. Even before the outbreak of the virus, the Taiwanese authorities began to examine the flights which had arrived from Wuhan on reports of a suspected outbreak of a disease with pneumonia like symptoms. Taiwan reported it’s first death on 16th February. On 19th February 2020, Taiwanese nationals aboard the Diamond express which boarded in Japan had also tested positive for the virus. Some patients had started to recover however certain cluster cases were reported in the country. In March, the health minister had advised people to not travel and stay within the country. Taiwan reported 3 additional cases of death associated with the virus in March. Many of the Republic of China Armed Forces (Taiwan) soldiers contracted the virus in April. In May, the country reported 28 consecutive days of no cases. However some more cases were reported. In the month of June, Taiwan had not reported a local case for 56 days. The government decided to ease certain restrictions.

Impact on Taiwan –

Taiwan has an export oriented economy just like Japan. The current global recession is going to have a negative impact whose impacts are uncertain. The country's private consumption was lesser than before due to the pandemic and the private consumption therefore fell by 0.97%. This has been the first decline since the global financial crisis. There have been certain predictions which point to the fact that Taiwan's economy might not be severely hit. In the second quarter of this financial year, Taiwan's electronics sector seems to be stable and compared to other export-oriented economies, it is at a better level. There have been reports by economists that thought the economy appears to be largely stable as of now, by the end of end of the 2nd quarter and decline by 2.1%. Taiwan's electronics sector is now seen as a major source for economic growth during this economic crisis. The demand for artificial intelligence, 5G network development etc will ensure that this sector remains a major driver for the country's economy. The Taiwanese company Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. has assured that it will make US \$16 Billion in capital investments in 2020.¹ There have been other assessments which point to the important factor that the Taiwanese economy is related to the Chinese economy. Taiwanese trade depends a lot on China. Approximately 26% of Taiwanese trade (US \$654 Billion) moreover, 48% of Taiwanese exports are to China. Thus, the Taiwanese economy and its performance is influenced by any major changes in the Chinese economy.² The Taiwanese government has also decided to launch a \$60 Billion (US \$ 2 Billion) which would give an additional support by 0.23% to the economy. There are many large technology firms of Taiwan which are operating and have their means of production based in China have suffered immensely. It is expected that there will a drop of 15% in the revenue in the areas of electronics and associated products.³

Governmental Measures –

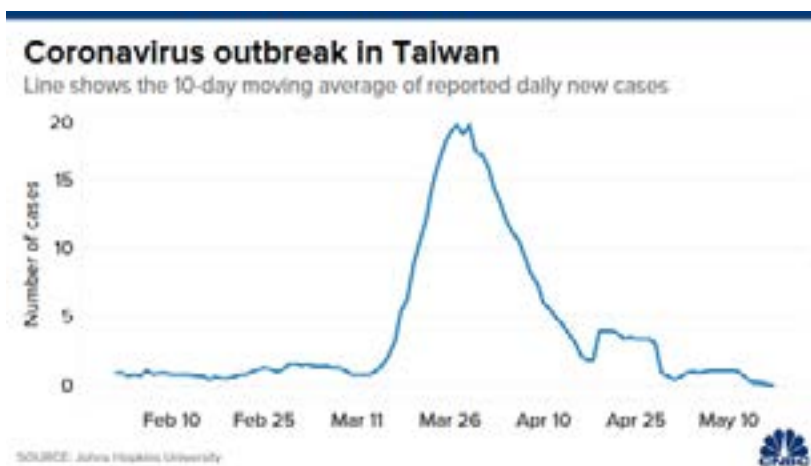
Taiwan's proximity to China warranted alertness and initiatives to curb the growth of the virus in the country. Taiwan had immediately started to inspect passengers on flights from mainland China. Taiwan had requested Mainland China for finding information about this new strain of virus. Taiwan through its Central Epidemic Command Centre had set up epidemic control measures. This included a list of 124 essential items on a target of 5 weeks. When the first case was reported, all flights to Wuhan were banned and the temperature monitors and other technology for testing patients at the airports were also implements. Through the usage of QR code technology the patients were able to report their symptoms and travel history online. Those people who evaded reporting their travel history or associated relevant information were fined and those who were travelling from

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1. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-30/taiwan-dodges-worst-economic-impacts-of-virus-and-keeps-growing>
 2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphjennings/2020/03/10/taiwan-faces-outsized-risk-to-economy-from-the-coronavirus-outbreak/#61a8d52449cb>
 3. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-taiwan-economy-idUSKBN20R0DE>

worse hit regions were to observe a 14-day quarantine. The government also undertook information dissemination measures through media such as television, radio stations on information such as the symptoms associated with the virus, preventive measures⁴. The 124 action steps which are developed by the government include important government measures such as travel bans, surveillance of people etc. Taiwan's success also lies in its ability to track all the cases of the virus and proper numbering of the total cases thus preventing community spread. Taiwan's big data and technology industry was an aid in the quantification of the number of cases and tracking of their activities. On 18th February all these vital records about travel history were shared with the country's hospitals and pharmacies. The government has now decided to shift their economic strategy from being an export-oriented nation to one focused primarily on indigenous production and has made plans to allocate funds to their military to increase their production capacity. The government also took an active role in countering disinformation which was spread by Chinese media and other sources. This was being spread on various social media platforms. These were easily traceable due to the fact that civil society non profit organizations such as Fact Check Centre took an active role in preventing the spread of any false information. Taiwan has also been successful due to their advanced medical research capabilities. Academia Sinica in Taiwan is a research organization which had successfully developed protein antibodies to control the symptoms of Coronavirus. The organization also aimed to develop testing abilities to diagnose a person in 20 minutes. Thus, the cooperation of civil society efforts along with governmental measures have proven to be successful in Taiwan's case.

Graphical Representation of Data –

(1.1) Graphical representation of the Rate of Increase in cases⁵

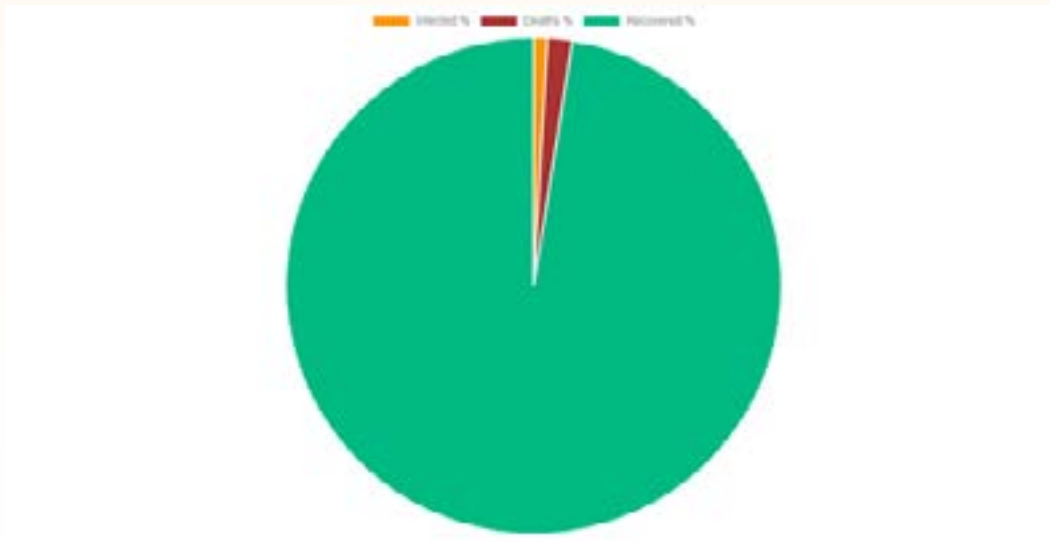


4. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/what-taiwan-can-teach-world-fighting-coronavirus-n1153826>

5. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/19/how-taiwan-hong-kong-vietnam-contain-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

The above graph indicates the rate of increase in the cases in Taiwan. The graph shows a stable increment in the cases until it peaked Around March 26th and somewhere around April 25th, the growth rate of the cases lost its momentum and as of May 10th 2020, there has been a steady decline in the number of cases.

(1.2) Graphical representation of the No. of infected, number of deaths and No. of recoveries⁶



The above pie-chart represents the information about the cases of the patients. The total percentage of recovered patients constitute 97.5% of the people. Approximately 0.9% of the people in the country are infected with the virus as of now and 1.6% of the patients have died from the virus.

Conclusion and Recommendations –

Taiwan has proven to be a model for combating a pandemic situation. The country’s success is the culmination of the efforts of the civil society and the government. The Taiwanese authorities had started to explore the outcomes of the new “pneumonia like” infection in December 2019 and had taken stringent steps from that moment to ensure that the Coronavirus does not spread to their country. The country and its civil society had taken active measures in curbing the spread of misinformation and Chinese propaganda in their country. The transparency of the government’s operations has proven successful. Countries such as Taiwan provide a pattern of disease control and prevention which is the model for emulation. Taiwanese authorities should continue their efforts for testing their citizens and maintaining a strict vigil on the activities of their citizens and ensure that they do not face another wave of the pandemic. The government should remain prepared for another wave in the backdrop of current global crisis. There must be regulations and if necessary, bans effected on people who come from certain places and the government should be prepared to enforce quarantine or lockdown if necessary.

6. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/taiwan/>

JAPAN – CASE STUDY

Introduction –

Japan is located in eastern Asia. It is an archipelago of more than 6000 islands. The country is divided into 47 prefectures administratively. Japan is a member of reputed international organizations such as the United Nations, G7 etc. It has the 3rd largest economy. The country's key industries include electronics and automotive. The country has very strong relations with United States and an improving relationship with South Korea. Japan is the main exporter to the United States. The US also has military bases in Japan for the purpose of defending the country from external aggression. Japan also has good cultural relations with South Korea and the earlier disputes between the two countries regarding the Japanese colonial rule have been mutually dealt with. Japan maintains a self-defence force which is bound by Article 9 of the country's constitution and restricts the country's right to declare war on other countries. Japan has very modernized industrial capacities and is reputed for production of vehicles, processed foods, metals etc.

Early Developments –

Japan had recorded its first wave of the virus in January when a man who had travelled to Wuhan had tested positive for the virus. The government soon had to declare that it would provide for the safe return of its citizens to Japan and had an agreement with China to send 5 special flights for the transportation of Japanese citizens who were stuck in Wuhan. In January, the Hokkaido prefecture of Japan also reported its first case. The government then set up a task force for dealing with the virus. In February, a cruise ship carrying many Japanese citizens from Hong Kong had a positive patient aboard. Upon its arrival in Japan, all the passengers were placed under quarantine. February also reported the first coronavirus related death in the country. On 27th February, the government declared the closure of the Junior High and other High schools in the country. This was followed by a mandatory quarantine imposed upon all people travelling from South Korea and China. The government also imposed restrictions on travellers from certain regions of Spain, Italy, Switzerland and Iceland. The second wave hit the country in March. In April Shinzo Abe, the prime minister of Japan assured that there would not be a lockdown like situation in the country and essential features such as public transport would be maintained as far as possible. A state of emergency was declared in the country on 7th April 2020. On 16th April 2020, the Japanese government extended the state of emergency to apply to all 47 prefectures in the country. On 9th May, Yasutoshi Nishimura, the Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy said that the government may remove the state of emergency for certain prefectures of the country which were lightly affected. On 14th May, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared that the state of emergency would be lifted from 39 prefectures nationwide apart from 7 prefectures where the outbreak was severe.

Impact on Japan –

The Japanese economy has been hit from the coronavirus pandemic. Its main industries such as private consumption and investment have been downgraded. The initial hit was on the demand for goods but it has now affected the supply as there has been a halt to production and other such activities. It is expected that the economy will face a regression similar to that of the 2008 global financial crisis. There have been some predictions that the economic activities are likely to improve in the second half of the financial year. The Japanese government has promoted work from home schedules and this will slowly accelerate economic growth. The recovery is expected to be faster because the relevant figures for sectors such as household, corporate etc show very limited negative trends.¹ The Bank of Japan has also assured that the economy will improve in the latter half of the year and the bank has increased lending packages for the firms to \$1 Trillion. The bank has also pledged additional support to the firms by buying additional assets and creating means to channel capital towards the firms. The main aim of the country's fiscal policy will now be to reduce the borrowing costs for firms. It is expected that the country's economy had contracted by 20% as per estimates.² The Japanese economy has been fragile and may face further degradation due to the current reduction in the supply of manufacturing parts from China. There are certain reports which show that consumer spending has started to slowly grow. The retail industry has shown a growth rate of 0.5% in the latter half of May. This has been an improvement as compared to the last 3 months. The Japanese government had also announced an additional budget of 117 trillion Yen (USD 298 Billion). This would focus on financial aid for medical staff, small businesses etc. The government aims to provide 200,000 Yen to doctors who are treating patients and 100,000 Yen to other medical staff. Financial aid to small firms will be up to an upper limit of 6 million Yen. This will be financed by the government debt.³ The situation of the country's economy was in a dire condition even before the pandemic as there was an increase in the tax rate and the output had regressed by 7.1 in the last quarter of 2019. The pandemic has brought all economic activities and economy essential imports to a complete standstill. There have been widespread cases of bankruptcies being reported and the expected economic boost as a result of the Tokyo Olympics 2020 will be postponed to 2021 thus involving more expenditure and utilisation of resources.

Governmental Measures –

In the month of March, the government had given approval to state of emergency measures which would enable them to control the spread of the pandemic. This Bill was to facilitate a 2012 law for deciding the government's power in case of the spread of a new virus or flu etc. This Bill will enable the Prime Minister of Japan to declare a state of emergency in all prefectures of the country if necessary. The government of the

1. <https://www.gam.com/en/our-thinking/investment-opinions/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-japan>

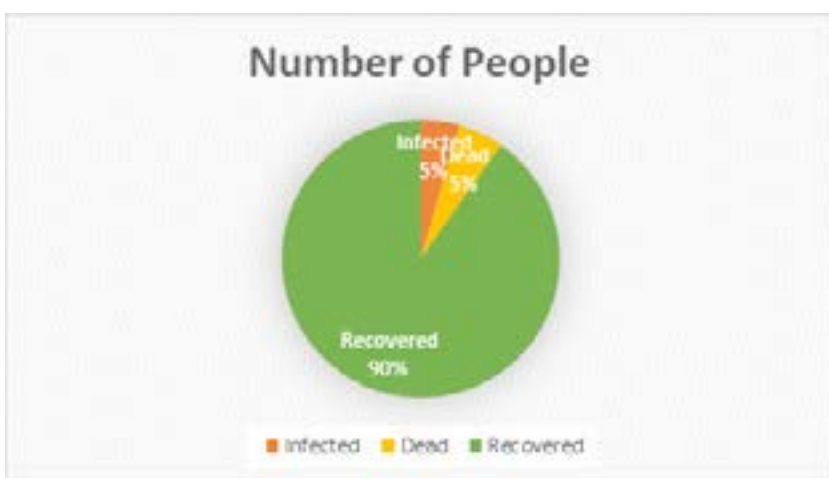
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/06/16/world/asia/16reuters-japan-economy-boj.html>

3. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/12/national/extra-budget-coronavirus/#.XunFxEUzZPY>

prefectures will be enabled to close all educational institutions, enforce lockdown if necessary, among other powers. Japan was the first country after China to report cases of coronavirus. The government had initially taken slow measures to close its borders. However, despite the fears that there would a rapid increment in the number of cases, the country’s mortality rate has remained stable. The government has adopted three pillars for tackling the pandemic – To detect clusters of patients as early as possible, providing intensive care to patients whose condition is critical, provision of medical equipment etc. The government has asked people to refrain from attending any mass gatherings, maintain social distancing norms etc. The government seeks to increase testing capacities and as of end of March, the projections were expected to have exceeded 8,000 cases per day. The government has clearly outlined that those prefectures who will fall under the emergency provisions which were declared on 7th April will implement the concerned measures on the basis of the vital statistics in the prefecture, the number of cases and other relevant data. The government has taken measures to ensure that the people from prefectures which have been placed under a state of emergency do not travel to other prefectures and to prevent any form of panic or rumour mongering etc.

The Ministry of Health is required to ensure the implementation of policies of the government during the state of emergency and will cooperate with the local governments to prevent a spread of the virus. The ministry has been empowered to execute measures to prevent the people from accessing facilities such as travel, usage of day-care etc. The government will accordingly continue to function and also take measures to prevent the virus from spreading to the officers in governmental organizations. These measures will in turn also ensure that the country has a healthy economy and recovers out of the recession that it is presently facing.⁴ The country’s ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party has also held meetings with the economic growth task force along with the representatives of different sectors which were worst hit.

Graphical representation of the number of cases in Japan (Fig. 1.1)⁵

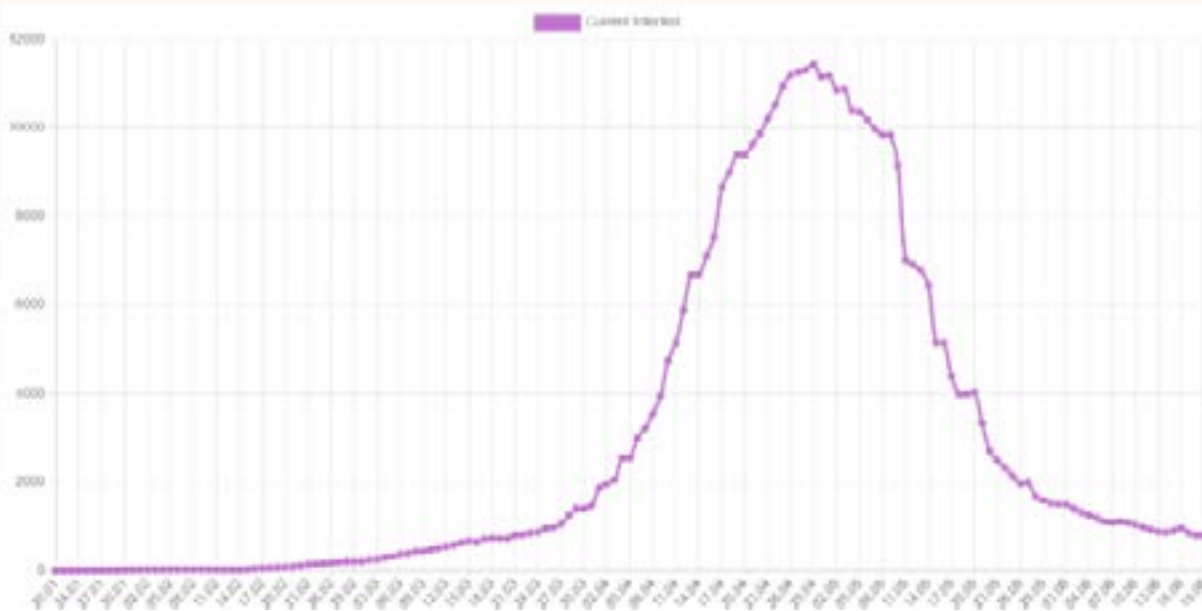


4. http://japan.kantei.go.jp/ongoingtopics/_00013.html

5. <https://epidemic-stats.com/coronavirus/japan>

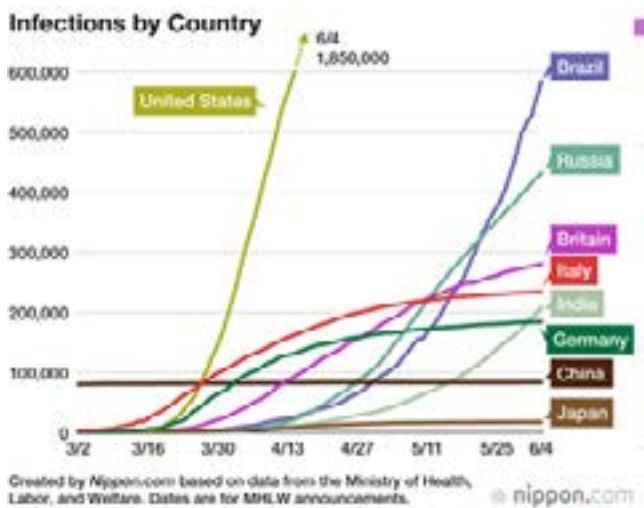
The above pie-chart represents that of all the cases in the country, 90.2% of the cases have recovered, 5.3% of the patients have succumbed to the virus and 4.5% of the people are still infected.

Graphical representation of the range of infected persons in Japan (Fig. 1.2)⁶



The above graph shows that on 20th January the first infections started in Japan. The graph initially increased at a controlled rate and then the number of cases increased phenomenally after 5th April until reaching a peak on 29th April after when the number of cases per day began to decrease slowly until 19th June when the newly reported cases are 797.

Graphical representation of the range of infected persons in Japan (Fig. 1.3)⁷



6. <https://epidemic-stats.com/coronavirus/japan>

7. <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00673/coronavirus-cases-by-country.html>

The above graph shows a country-wise representation of the number of cases in different countries as of 4th June. The graph shows that the number of cases in Japan had begun to increase however are now relatively stable. Countries like US and Brazil are witnessing an upward trajectory in the number of cases.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Japan has dealt with the coronavirus in a successful manner and through the efforts of the Japanese government, the recovery rate has increased substantially. The Japanese economy also has an immense potential for recovery given that the government has introduced large stimulus packages for the recovery of the Japanese economy from the recession it currently faces. The government has recently passed a bill which will empower them more to take swift action in case of another pandemic like situation and the three pillars adopted by the Japanese government have also aided them in their approach in dealing with cases of coronavirus. There have been claims that the government's decisions to close schools led to a feeling of discontent among many teachers and working families with no opportunities for day-care facilities.⁸ There have been instances of many countries facing another wave of the virus hence Japan would have to ensure that they are prepared to tackle a another wave and they need to have centralized systems in place for a successful response. Japan's approach has clearly yielded positive results as among the G7 nations, it is the only country with the lowest death rates. The curve for the number of cases has clearly flattened and it shows that to some extent the country's fight against the virus has been successful.

8. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2020/03/03/japa-m03.html>

THE GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC : INDIA'S AID TO OTHER COUNTRIES

Introduction –

In times of global distress and crisis, the global forum needs to cooperate and come together to develop strategies for tackling common problems, Through the medium of international organizations, aid must be channelled to worst hit regions of the world and it should be collective initiative of the countries in the world. On 30th January India had reported its first case of the coronavirus in Kerala. The government realising that a now epidemic outbreak had occurred, invoked the provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act (1897) which led to closure of schools, colleges, commercial institutions and other initiatives. The government imposed a complete lockdown from 22nd March 2020 which has continued in changing intensities. The lockdown was extended a few times however the restrictions were reduced in certain areas where the doubling rate of the virus and the number of cases had reduced.

Measures Taken by Government of India for Neighbours –

The Modi Government has made provision for a 10 million dollar relief package to the SAARC countries. India has provided medical supplies like testing kits and precautionary supplies like sanitisers to countries such as Afghanistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka etc. India has provided emergency supplies such as surgical masks, thermometers, forehead sensors etc to Bhutan. Pakistan is the only neighbour which had not requested for any aid from India. India will provide testing equipment and will aid in Nepal's coronavirus problems through the provision of a rapid response team for it. India also provided relief to Afghanistan by supplying disinfectant solution and masks for protection. These initiatives promote a sense of collective global response by all people. India has provided aid worth 17 crore rupees in its neighbourhood of the Indian subcontinent.

- Aid to Other Countries – India has also targeted 90 countries to whom aid will be provided. The total aggregate of foreign support will be worth 1.1-1.2 billion Rupees. India is also providing other essential items on commercial terms to coronavirus affected countries. India has already dispatched its aid to countries in south east Asian region, Gulf countries and certain central Asian countries. The government claims to have provided aid worth Rupees 28 crores in 29 countries out of the selected countries. India will also provide medical assistance to Latin American countries and select countries in Africa. With the extension of ITEC courses by India aimed at healthcare professionals, India can also provide aid to African countries through the provision of the Aarogya Setu app, through the Vidyabharati project which can be used to establish an India-Africa virtual university etc. India had also provided Hydro chloroquine tablets to countries such as those in the Indian subcontinent.¹

1. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-amps-up-covid-19-medical-assistance-plan-targets-to-reach-90-countries/story-0X1H8z1Zqi9piw6n4FDu8J.html>

Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had addressed the SAARC leaders in March in which India had pledged a support of 10 million US Dollars and also ensured support to any countries in need of a rapid response team of doctors and testing kits and equipment. Prime Minister Modi also talked about the creation of a Common Research Platform through the aid of the Indian Council for Medical Research.² Prime Minister Modi highlighted the utilisation of SAARC Disaster Management Centre to utilize best practices of all countries combined.

- International Recognition of India's Efforts – India has been praised by international organizations such as UN for its efforts in helping other countries combat the coronavirus pandemic. India has provided medicines to more than 100 countries to control the symptoms of the coronavirus. The General secretary of the UN Mr. Antonio Guterres had also commended India for its initiatives in supplying medicines and other essential items like face masks to other countries.³ In February 2020, India had also provided medical aid to China along with providing masks, emergency equipment etc. India undertook a swift response during the beginning of the epidemic. India has always prioritized the countries in the neighbourhood and provided help to them. India had quickly provided support to Bangladesh first by providing 30,000 masks and 15,000 head covers. India had also provided Hydro chloroquine to Bangladesh and had also provided assistance to the Bangladeshi citizens who were stranded in Indian cities by providing transport facilities to airports.⁴ These measures will ensure that Bangladesh and India maintain friendly relations as they have in the past too. India's aid to the SAARC countries and the African countries would ensure that the poor people have security during the pandemic, that the infected people have access to hospitals, proper medical treatment and will boost their recovery rates. The ability of the poorer countries to fight the pandemic are weaker due to a lack of resources, widespread poverty and other issues like low literacy rate, malnourishment etc. Places in the world with poor sanitation, clusters of people living like in slums will make the poorer countries "breeding grounds" for the virus.

There will be severe economic impacts which will follow such as large scale unemployment, collapse of the economy etc. India's foreign aid efforts were recognised by Maldives. The Maldives Foreign Minister Mr. Abdullah Shahid had released an official tweet expressing gratitude. The president of Maldives, Mr. Ibrahim Solih had also thanked prime minister Modi during his address to a SAARC conference. India's efforts were also commended by Israeli Prime Minister Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu who had expressed his gratitude to PM Modi for sending hydro chloroquine to Israel, Brazilian President Mr. Jair Bolsonaro had also expressed his gratitude for India's aid to Brazil and US President Mr. Donald Trump had also thanked India for provision of the hydro chloroquine drug.⁵ India's efforts to aid Bhutan were also commended by the Bhutanese Prime Minister Dr.

2. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/32538/>

3. <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/we-commend-its-generous-efforts-us-praises-india-for-helping-other-nations-in-fight-against-covid/579898>

4. <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/neighbourhood-first-india-rushed-help-to-bangladesh-to-fight-covid-19/1937353/>

5. <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/covid-19-maldives-thanks-india-for-exporting-hydroxychloroquine.html>

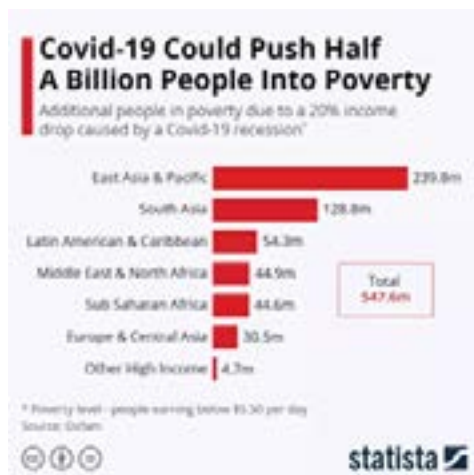
Lotay Tshering. The President of Seychelles, Mr. Danny Faure thanked PM Modi for the provision of four tonnes of medical supplies. These supplies included medical items like essential medication.⁶ In the Indian ocean countries, apart from Maldives and Seychelles, India has also sent foreign aid to Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius etc. The Indian Naval Ship Kesari had played a pivotal role in providing the services of medical teams, essential food items etc. India’s efforts to provide aid were commended by the President of Zimbabwe Mr Emmerson Dambudzo for sending medicines to the country.

India’s Cooperation with the GCC Countries –

India has always maintained good relations and strong economic ties with the Gulf countries. India has strong bilateral trade ties with many GCC countries including Saudi Arabia with which it has annual trade ties worth US \$ 60 Billion. In the situation of the global pandemic, the GCC countries have seen a serious halt to all economic activities and countries like Saudi Arabia have reported a serious drop in their Oil revenues. India also receives a very large amount of remittances which are estimated at US \$ 79 Billion, half of which accounts from the GCC countries. India had provided support to various gulf countries such as Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates etc. India had not only provided Hydro chloroquine medicine to these countries but had also assisted through the provision of 15-member medical teams to the countries which had requested. These efforts have projected India as an ally to the GCC countries in the time of such a global crisis.⁷

Graphical Representation of the Global Coronavirus Pandemic and its Impacts –

1.1) Impact of the Pandemic on Global Poverty Trends -



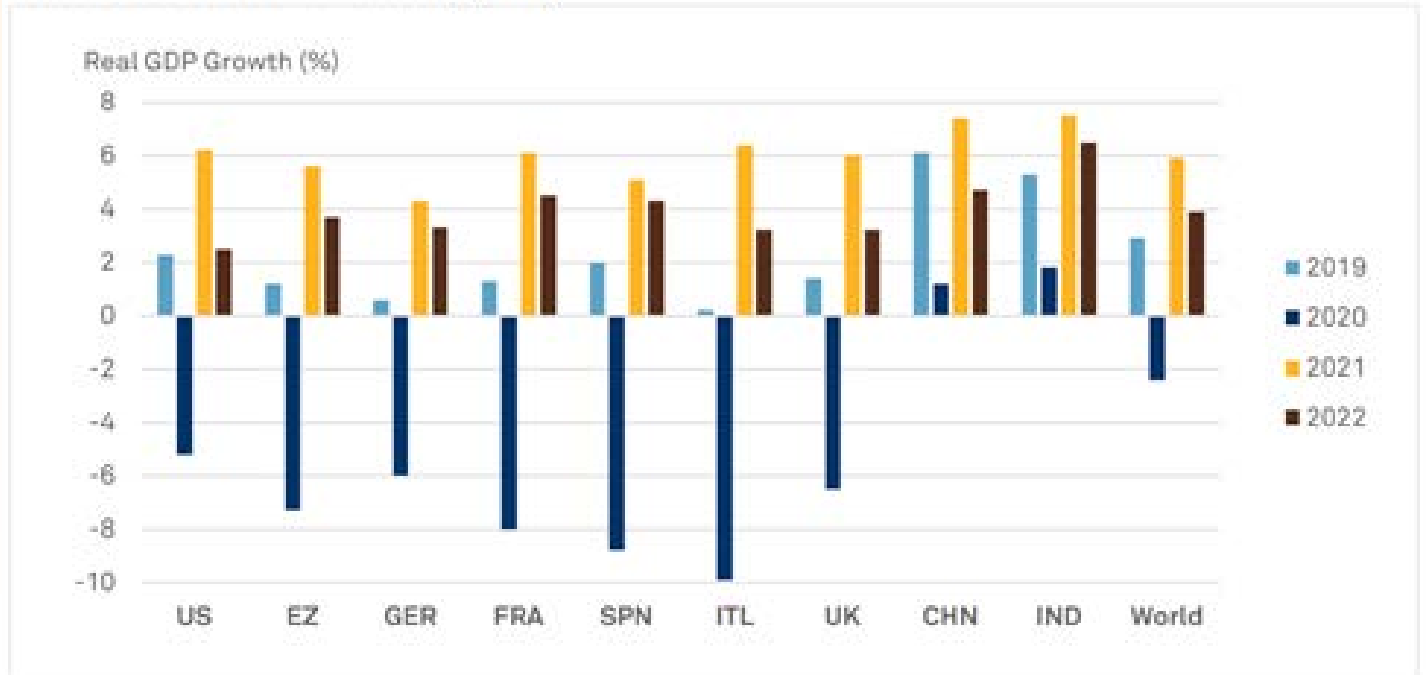
6. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/covid-19-india-gets-5-9-mn-us-aid-assures-bhutan-seychelles-of-help-120041700163_1.html

7. <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/india-and-gcc-covid-19-pandemic-ppradhan>

The above graph shows that due to the Coronavirus economic recession, there has been a 20% income drop. Thus, it shows the number of people who are earning US \$5.50 per day due to the current recession. The total number of such people number 547.6 million worldwide.

1.2) The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Global GDP –

Revised Global GDP Growth Forecasts (April 16)



Source: S&P Global Ratings

The above graphical representation shows the GDP growth estimates for the major countries of the world who possess economic prowess for the year 2020, 2021 and 2022. The countries have been worst hit in 2020 as a result of the economic recession. Countries like Italy, Spain and France have projected the most adverse GDP growth rates when compared to their economic performance in the year 2019. The GDP of countries like Italy have witnessed a GDP recession of 10% followed by Spain with an economic recession of more than 8% and a recession in France by 8%.

Conclusion -

India's international efforts will set an example for international cooperation and will gain India the recognition from the European Union, G7 nations and other powerful international alliances. The Indian initiative sought to earn the goodwill of its neighbouring countries apart from creating an area of regional influence. Thus, these efforts will not only provide humanitarian aid to the poor countries and close allies of India, but will also set an international model for tackling international problems through a system of collective efforts and international solidarity.





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