

17 May 2021

To : All Overseas Sri Lankans and Friends of Sri Lanka in the USA

From: Ravinatha Aryasinha, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the USA

COVID Pandemic and the Provision of relief goods/donations to Sri Lanka

In view of the increasing number of COVID infected persons being detected in Sri Lanka over the last few weeks and the urgency of accommodating them and their close associates in hospitals and quarantine centers respectively, the healthcare workers and others on the front lines in Sri Lanka have done and continue to perform their duty by the motherland despite staff and resource constraints.

Taking into account the enormity of the tasks at hand and the numerous limitations on the ground, the Foreign Ministry is reaching out to Overseas Sri Lankans (OSLs) and to Friends of Sri Lanka, with a view to enlisting their support and contributions in kind and other forms toward their fellow Sri Lankans affected by the pandemic, on a voluntary basis.

Donation of relief items

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Washington DC, together with the Sri Lanka Permanent Mission in New York and the Consulate General Office in Los Angeles, is in the process of coordinating such voluntary donation of relief items, for the treatment of the COVID 19 infected persons in hospitals and augmenting facilities around the country. Already several groups in the US have channeled assistance in this regard, including in collaboration with the Consul General in Los Angeles, for which the Embassy is most grateful.

In this context, the Ministry of Health has indicated that the immediate need is for *ventilators, oxygen concentrators, high flow oxygen units, multi-parameter monitors, PPEs including N95 masks, telemedicine platforms* which could be used by medical professionals in Sri Lanka.

As time is of the essence, the Embassy will be grateful to Overseas Sri Lankans and Friends of Sri Lanka in the US for their commitment and generosity towards this timely and worthy cause. Those who are able to extend whatever help at this hour of need are kindly requested to reach out to the Embassy through email at accounts@slembassyusa.org or call the Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Sarath Dissanayake (202-816-9666) or Accounts Officer Ms. Nadeeshani Dias (301-275-6349) at the numbers indicated.

Monetary Contributions

Additionally, as you may already be aware, the 'COVID - 19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund' set up last year is open for monetary contributions extended by OSLs and Friends of Sri Lanka toward strengthening the mitigation activities in controlling the spread of pandemic and related welfare programs. They could directly remit their donations to the 'COVID - 19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund' or make an online transfer or cheque deposit to the Embassy of Sri Lanka bank account at the Bank of America as per details furnished at:

[https://slembassyusa.org/new/images/Financial Contributions to COVID - 17 May 2021.pdf](https://slembassyusa.org/new/images/Financial%20Contributions%20to%20COVID%20-%2017%20May%202021.pdf)

Securing of Vaccines

Meanwhile, I also wish to update you, that since the announcement was made on 26 April 2021 that the US Government planned to make available 60 Million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines to countries in need, the Foreign Minister through the US Ambassador in Colombo, and I through the relevant officials in the State Department and the National Security Council, have brought Sri Lanka's needs in this regard to the attention of the US Government. It has been emphasized that 600,000 doses of AstraZeneca in particular is urgently needed to be given to those who had their first shot almost 2 months ago. While a decision in this regard is awaited, the Embassy has been advised by the concerned authorities that the release of AstraZeneca vaccines by the US will have to be preceded by authorization for its use by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Additionally, following the announcement today (17 May) by the US Government that they will share an additional 20 Million doses of domestically authorized COVID vaccines – Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson, the Embassy has also requested that Sri Lanka be considered for the provision of Johnson & Johnson vaccines, under this scheme.

Earlier this month, the Embassy also facilitated a discussion between the Chairman of the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation (SPC) of Sri Lanka and the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) Regional Manager in India, with a view to enabling the purchase of these vaccines, which have the particular advantage of being a single dose, has high efficacy against death and hospitalization, and also has less stringent storage requirements. Several US based Sri Lankan medical professionals are also assisting the Embassy in Washington DC in the task of trying to secure these vaccines early.

Your continued support in this time of need would be deeply appreciated and would go a long way in saving lives and protecting those presently vulnerable and needy in Sri Lanka.

Thank You.