

# Congress Parliamentary Party

Sonia Gandhi  
Chairperson

April 7, 2020

*Dear Prime Minister,*

In your call yesterday you very kindly asked me to convey to you any suggestions our party has to meet the grave challenge of Covid-19. It is in this spirit that I write to you.

I hope this letter finds you safe and well.

I am writing to convey our support for the decision taken by the Union Cabinet to reduce salaries for Members of Parliament by 30 percent. Austerity measures which can be used to divert much needed funds to the fight against Covid-19 are the need of the hour. I am writing to offer five concrete suggestions. I am certain you will find value in them.

*First,* Impose a complete ban on media advertisements - television, print and online - by the Government and Public Sectors Undertakings (PSUs) for a period of two years. The only exceptions should be advisories for Covid-19 or for issues relating to public health. Given that the Central Government currently spends an average of Rs.1250 crores per year on media advertisements (not including an equal or greater amount spent by PSUs and Government companies), this will free up a substantial amount to alleviate the economic and social impacts of Covid-19.

*Second,* Suspend the Rs.20,000 crore 'Central Vista' beautification and construction project forthwith. At a time like this, such an outlay seems self-indulgent to say the least. I am certain that Parliament can function comfortably within the existing historical buildings. There is no urgent or pressing requirement that cannot be postponed until this crisis is contained. This sum could instead be allocated towards constructing new hospital infrastructure and diagnostics along with equipping our frontline workers with Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) and better facilities.

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*Third,* It makes sense to order a proportionate reduction of 30 percent in the expenditure budget (other than Salaries, Pensions and Central Sector Schemes) for the Government of India as well. This 30 percent (i.e. Rs. 2.5 lakh crores per year approximately) can then be allocated towards establishing an economic safety net for migrant workers, labourers, farmers, MSMEs and those in the unorganised sector.

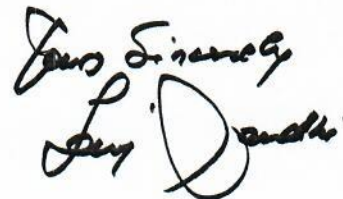
*Fourth,* All foreign visits including that of the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, State Ministers and bureaucrats must be put on hold in a similar fashion. Exceptions can be made in case of special emergency or exigencies in national interest to be cleared by the PM. This amount can be utilised extensively in measures to combat Covid-19.

*Fifth,* Transfer all money under 'PM Cares' fund to the 'Prime Minister's National Relief Fund' (PMNRF). This will ensure efficiency, transparency, accountability and audit in the manner in which these funds are allocated and spent. It seems like a waste of effort and resources to have and create two separate entities for the distribution of funds. I understand that Rs.3800 crores approximately are lying unutilised in the PMNRF (at the end of FY-2019). These funds, plus the amount in 'PM Cares' fund, can be utilised to ensure an immediate food security net for those at the very margins of society.

Every single Indian has made great personal sacrifices to fight this disease. They have complied with every suggestion, instruction and decision taken by your office and the Central Government. It is time that the Legislature and the Executive reciprocate this trust and good faith.

Please be assured that you have our unwavering support in meeting the grave challenge of Covid-19 facing the country.

With kind Regards,



**Shri Narendra Modi**  
Hon'ble Prime Minister  
7, Lok Kalyan Marg  
New Delhi - 110 001