Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has constituted a team of officers to prepare the roadmap and take necessary measures for implementation/realization of initiatives to restore growth in the economy after the Covid-19 Pandemic. On request of MoTA, the Ministry of Home Affairs has vide Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 16/04/20 issued guidelines aiming to relax the provisions of lockdown for Collection, harvesting and processing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP)/ Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) by STs and other forest dwellers in forest areas across the country.

MoTA also revised the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP), offering much-needed support to tribal gatherers in view of the exceptional and very difficult circumstances prevailing in the country due to the Corona Virus Pandemic. To provide a fillip to the income generating activities of tribals through MFP Procurements, revised MSP for MFP guidelines were issued on May 1 2020, which increased the MSP prices of the MFPs and helped in providing higher incomes for the tribal gatherers. Moreover, on May 26, 2020, the MoTA also added 23 new items under the MSP for MFP list taking the total number of MFPs under the scheme to 73. These items include agricultural and horticultural produce collected by tribal gatherers.

The COVID response team of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs formulated a COVID-19 Pandemic response plan for Scheduled Tribe livelihood and Health. The same has been approved by the Secretary, Tribal Affairs and is already circulated among various stakeholders for necessary action. States/UTs have been asked to utilize the funds from State TSP as well as submit a comprehensive proposal on these lines under various schemes of this Ministry. The steps included in the response plan are as under:

I. Provision of Community Kitchen in ST areas (PVTG dominated Gram Panchayat)
II. Ensuring supply of ration
III. Basic financial support through DBT
IV. Operationalization of already sanctioned VDVKs on mission mode (1126 VDVKs in 21 States and 1 UT)
V. Assessment of stock of MFPs and Non-MFPs available with SHGs and finding markets for these products through TRIFED.
VI. Development of Online Platform for procurement, sale and supply chain management of tribal produce at remunerative prices for the tribal producers, tribal farmers and MFP gatherers.
VII. Improving village level water availability.
VIII. Cultivation of early and late varieties of vegetables
IX. Small goat rearing unit, mini-layer unit, fishery kits for fisherman, mushroom cultivation and bee-keeping, etc
X. Self employment training and Bank linkage
XI. Skill development of youth
XII. Infrastructure creation and employment generation through construction work of EMRS
XIII. Support towards Creation of Isolation/Quarantine Facilities in scheduled tribe areas (Gap filling).

Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with Ministry of Rural Development has done mapping of sectoral gaps down to the level of Gram Panchayat & village. The data has been shared with all States who have been asked to work out strategies for mitigating sectoral gaps at village level including in the field of healthcare. This
Ministry has also prepared a Tribal Health Action Plan which was shared with NITI Aayog, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, AYUSH and States in November 2019. There have been few rounds of discussion on this plan with NITI and MoHF&W and a joint VC was also called of State Tribal Secretaries and Health Secretaries with Secy Health and Secy Tribal Affairs with their officers.

In order to have updated data on the Health Infrastructure and manpower gaps in 177 tribal districts, MoTA has developed Swasthya Portal (swasthya.tribal.gov.in), wherein data from MoHF&W and MoWCD and from districts is being captured.

This information was given by Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Smt. Renuka Singh Saruta in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

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