

Kudumbashree whets state's fight against coronavirus with masks, sanitisers

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Thiruvananthapuram: The Kudumbashree units in Kerala have stepped up efforts to manufacture masks and sanitisers in wake of the recent surge in the number of COVID-19 cases reported in the state.

With 306 stitching units committed to the task, over 13.57 lakh masks were manufactured in just two weeks. The recent spike in demand had had them increase the manufacturing capacity to 1.75 lakh masks per day.

Twenty-one sanitiser manufacturing units were also started. Set up to manufacture just 114.9 litres of hand sanitiser every day, they were later scaled up to make 562 litres a day in order to meet the growing demand for these products.

The revenue from these alone was pegged at Rs 2 crore. Kudumbashree's over 8-lakh members spread across three-tiers coordinate their efforts out of 1.6 lakh WhatsApp groups.

Jails and churches too join the fight

Earlier, the Kerala government redeployed tailoring units in state prisons to mitigate the rising shortage of masks as coronavirus-fear gripped the land.

The Kerala State Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd, a public sector undertaking, had also undertook the production of sanitisers on the directive of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The incessant rate at which the virus is reported to spread had even churches cancelling their services for fear that it may lead to more infections, but one stayed open in Kochi abuzz with the sounds of industry.

Little Flower Church, in collaboration with the Kerala Latin Catholic Association (KLCA) had been manufacturing over 500 masks in a day to aid the state in the big fight against coronavirus.

"It starts with the vision of how we can help the government and the people. Knowing about the scarcity of masks, the church has taken this initiative," said Father Sebastian Karukappally, vicar of the church.

The Central government had on March 13 declared masks and hand sanitizers as essential commodities under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, deeming them vital to curb the spread of coronavirus in the country.

The move empowered states to regulate production, distribution and prices of these items and also to crackdown on hoarding and blackmarketing.

(With inputs from PTI)