

## Covid-19 crisis: Defence ministry ropes in DRDO, OFB to manufacture essential medical equipments

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*By Manu Pubby*

New Delhi: The defence ministry is stepping up efforts to combat the Covid-19 crisis, with its public sector units and the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) being roped in to manufacture essential medical equipment on a war footing.

While the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has commenced manufacturing of sanitisers at its laboratories throughout the nation, the OFB, which makes guns, ammunition and clothing for the armed forces, has started a pilot project to produce personal protection equipment.

Sources said the facilities to produce the protective clothing can be scaled up to meet requirements once the first batch meets medical standards. The organisation is also setting up isolation wards at its various hospitals in places like Jabalpur, Khadki, Avadi and Ambernath.

DRDO is also in touch with private sector manufacturers to scale up production of much needed ventilators on a war footing. A self developed formula to produce sanitisers and disinfectants on a large scale has been shared across DRDO labs. Several sensitive institutions— agencies, law enforcement and important government offices—have been supplied with the disinfectants that are being used on a daily basis.

“We have supplied almost 15,000 bottles of the sanitiser formulation for distribution to other organisations. Efforts are on to produce it on a large scale,” a DRDO official said.

Given the scale of the problem, even the army followed the lockdown protocol at the headquarter level, with office goers instructed to work from home. Officials said almost 40% of the Army HQ staff is continuing to work from home but emergency staff including medical personnel is still functional.

The quarantine centres set up by the military are however operational at capacity, with additional areas being earmarked if the need arises.

On Wednesday, India’s biggest military quarantine facility at Jodhpur received 277 evacuees from Iran, including six children.

The citizens have been screened and will stay in Jodhpur for two weeks. Significantly, while the military has quarantined about 1,200 evacuees till now, only two positive cases have been reported, with the first set of people already released. The positive tests pertained to persons who had returned from Italy and Iran.

Evacuees from Wuhan and Japan that came earlier have been sent home after the quarantine period. “More army medical facilities at Jhansi, Binnaguri and Gaya are kept at standby with an additional collective capacity of 1,600 persons,” an army spokesperson said.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/covid-19-crisis-defence-ministry-ropes-in-drdo-ofb-to-manufacture-essential-medical-equipments/articleshow/74818663.cms>



## Fight against Coronavirus: After sanitizers and testing kits, DRDO and OFB to make masks

*“We are working on N-99 masks and not on the N-95 masks which are meant just for specialized usage. The N-99 masks will not be for the general public usage yet,” explained a senior officer on condition of anonymity*

*By Huma Siddiqui*

After successfully creating formulation for sanitizers and testing and detecting kits, Defence Research and Development Establishment, (DRDE) Gwalior, is now working on N-99 masks.

“We are working on N-99 masks and not on the N-95 masks which are meant just for specialized usage. The N-99 masks will not be for the general public usage yet,” explained a senior officer on condition of anonymity.

“The work is going on for making these specialized masks and the special material has been sourced from Atira, Ahmedabad,” he added.

“The DRDO life science laboratories have developed many remarkable technologies for the soldiers and have spin-off benefits. And these include Chemical Agent Detectors and Protective Suit Mk-V to provide protection to soldiers,” said a senior officer.

In other labs of DRDO, a universal type mask has been developed to offer protection against the accidental mine blasts where the soldiers may lose their eyes and suffer face injuries.

### **If the DRDO has been approached to make Hazmat Suits?**

The answer is no.

“We are not making Hazmat suits, however, we are supporting other agencies with our expertise to make these special suits for those who are handling the coronavirus cases here in India. These are meant for the hospitals, the quarantine camps that have been set up by the Indian armed forces across the country,” the officer explained.

These are being made according to the standardized protocols specified by the National Center of Disease Control’s (NCDC).

### **So what is Special protective clothing?**

These are for soldiers deployed in extreme cold weather and glacier regions, where temperature goes up to – 400 C has already been developed by Kanpur based Defence Materials and Stores Research & Development Establishment (DMSRDE).

According to the response given by the late defence minister Manohar Parrikar in the Parliament, DRDO lab has also created protective items for dealing with Nuclear, Biological & Chemical Warfare.

The expertise DRDO can be shared with other agencies including the Ordnance Factories to produce them when needed.

### **Sanitizer**

The formulation created for the sanitizer is for limited production and has been sent to various government agencies including the Prime Minister’s Office, armed forces, Ministry of Defence, Ordnance Factory Board (all factories) as well as others.

“This sanitizer is not going to be commercialized any time soon”, explained a senior DRDO officer.

However, if required the formulation can be shared with making large quantities.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/fight-against-coronavirus-after-sanitizers-and-testing-kits-drdo-and-ofb-to-make-masks/1909177/>