

## **Kerala Police-** **A model policing paradigm in handling COVID19**

The Kerala Government has now been recognised and acclaimed globally, for its adept handling, in treating and in containing the spread of coronavirus in the State. The so called “Kerala Model” is now a matter of international research and study. The efficacy of the Health wing of the State, the capabilities of the Doctors, Medical infrastructure facilities, Educational and social consciousness are cited as reasons, in this success story. Similarly the timely lockdown is stated to be the main reason that helped the State in containment. Kerala Police made this possible; a successful lockdown. The role of Kerala Police, the law and order arm of the Government, has been tremendous, not only in maintaining order in the Society, but into a variety of unknown areas, to bolster the efforts of the State Government.

From Day One, the Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, understood and insisted, that the Police has to play a very active and frontline role in handling this Pandemic. He tasked the State Police Chief Loknath Behera, with a variety of tasks which were traditionally and conventionally outside the purview of the traditional policing. The Lockdown brought Police to the forefront of the efforts of the Government, to control the spread of the disease and the Kerala Police under the State Police Chief, Loknath Behera immediately rose up to the occasion and delivered on all fronts.

The Police response to a pandemic was not enlisted in the SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) which the Police falls back, in times of crisis. Faced with a totally new problem, with no past experience, the rank and file fell into the grind to ensure that the instructions of lockdown is implemented in letter and spirit. But what made Kerala Police different is the manner in which the lockdown was ensured. Through purely legal means, high voltage

awareness campaigns and seeking the cooperation of the citizens, the police implemented a near total lockdown ensuring the complete full stop to the spread of the virus in the State.



The implementation of the lockdown norms was the easy part. The police ventured into a variety of functions and roles traditionally done by the other wings of the Government. Building social awareness against the spread of the disease was one major task and negating false news was another. Understanding the impact of social media in a digital State like Kerala, the Cyber Wing of the Police had tightened vigil on social media, from day one. The Police were very quick to identify fake and misleading news and posts and more than 150 cases were registered all across the State in this regard. Arrests of more than 106 persons followed. This gave a deterrent effect on the spread of fake and unverified messages on the social media.

The social media Handles of [Kerala police](#) in the past few years have become one of the most popular pages in the world, for its witty content and tongue-in-cheek responses. One of the most decorated and awarded Police Force in the area of Digital Technology and Innovations, the Social Media Cell

of the Force functioning under the creative leadership of Sri. Manoj Abraham IPS, ADGP, HQ has played a major role in building up the general image of the Police, and in ensuring the community support for various Initiatives of the police department. With more than 1.3 million followers on Facebook and with a total of more than 2.5 million followers on TikTok, Share chat, Twitter, YouTube etc, the awareness campaigns/videos/trolls etc gained international recognition. They proved that Digital Technology can be used very effectively in containing not only the typical law and order problems, but also in effectively handling Pandemics also.

Apart from this, under the direct supervision – various senior officers of the State Police, the police ventured into the important task, of keeping the persons marked under house quarantine within the four walls of their houses, using a slew of digital technological solutions/ Apps, visits by Janamaitri officers, Video call Checking and arresting persons who violated the quarantine. The Police also came out with a plethora of Digital solutions including a Tele Medicine App in association with IMA for tele-medical consultation for police officers and public alike, a Shopping App- where the citizens can order essential goods online in the period of lockdown, a mobile sanitizer unit for the policemen in the field, a Digital platform for obtaining Curfew pass, Identification platform for Guest workers from other States etc. All the above, pushed the police forces to the forefront of the Government response, in handling the crisis.



The extensive use of drones for surveillance, not only to enforce the lockdown, but also in identifying the production of spurious liquor and sale of drugs, was another noteworthy feature of the police response, which was soon emulated by the other forces. The Police intervention in the colonies housing the migrant labours (Guest Workers) checking on the facilities given to them, tying up on their provisions, encouraging them and keeping them engaged without any violence, was another feather in the cap of Kerala Police in handling this crisis.

The State Police Chief, who was a part of the daily consultation and State level review meetings, gave correct and valuable inputs to the Crisis management Committee, in taking the right decisions on any emerging issue.

The war against the virus has not ended, but in the midst of this crisis also, Kerala Police has stood out with its unique blend of Community oriented policing, laced with Digital innovations and smooth, sober but firm law enforcement through free registration of thousands of cases against the violators of lockdown, which has ensured its position as one of the top forces in the country, if not in the world.....

