

World Bank approves \$1.98 billion for 25 countries

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The World Bank has approved its first funds to help some of the globe's poorer countries combat the coronavirus outbreak.

It approved a total aid of USD 1.9 billion for 25 countries on Thursday. The largest amount of assistance was USD 1 billion for India followed by USD 200 million for Pakistan, USD 129 million for Sri Lanka, USD 100 million for Afghanistan and USD 83 million for Ethiopia. World Bank President David Malpass predicted the bank could provide up to USD 160 billion in assistance over the next 15 months.

Key Highlights

- World Bank officials said the emergency resources would include money to purchase critical medical supplies such as masks and ventilators, with the World Bank lending its procurement expertise to help obtain these supplies on global markets.
- The approval of the first round of support for 25 countries will be followed quickly with aid to another 40 countries, officials said.
- Malpass said that it would free up about USD 14 billion over the next year that the countries would be able to use to fight the coronavirus.
- He said the proposal was discussed at last week's conference call with President Donald Trump and other G-20 leaders. Malpass said he hoped it would receive approval when the World Bank's policy panel, the Development Committee, holds a virtual meeting on April 17.
- The first group of projects, amounting to \$1.9 billion, will assist 25 countries, and new operations are moving forward in over 40 countries. Efforts are being made to redeploy resources in existing World Bank financed projects worth \$1.7 billion.

- The World Bank said it is ready to infuse \$160 billion over the next 15 months that will help address immediate health consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and bolster economic recovery.
- Out of the 25 countries, India has received the biggest grant at \$1 billion. “In India, \$1 billion emergency financing will support better screening, contact tracing, and laboratory diagnostics; procure personal protective equipment; and set up new isolation wards,” World Bank said.

SOURCE: *The Hindu, Business Standard*