

Donations sought for COVID-19 crisis in India

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The coronavirus crisis in India has some Hawaii residents scrambling to help loved ones and others as the nation deals with a dire shortage of hospital beds, oxygen and other medical essentials.

Longtime Honolulu resident Raj Kumar said 13 of his family members in New Delhi have fallen ill to COVID-19, and three have died.

“My brother, his wife and my nephew were diagnosed with COVID,” said Kumar, a psychologist and human services specialist who served at the state Department of Health for nearly 30 years. “My brother’s oxygen level dropped from 95 down to 65. I was checking online, and no bed was available when I checked. I guided them to go home and quarantine and arranged to get an oxygen cylinder. That tip helped save a life.”

India last week counted more coronavirus deaths in



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A health worker tried to adjust the oxygen mask of a COVID-19 patient Thursday at the BKC field hospital in Mumbai, India.

a single day than any other country at any time during the pandemic, as infections continued to spread through vast rural areas with weak health systems. The Health Ministry reported a record 4,529 deaths Wednesday and 267,334 new infections.

With over 25 million cases and more than 283,000 fatalities since the

pandemic began, India’s confirmed infections are second only to the U.S.

Kumar is president of the Honolulu-based non-profit Gandhi International Institute for Peace, whose members have reached out to local residents and businesses and the state government to assist the people in India, and especially citing Hawaii’s sis-

HOW TO DONATE

Send monetary donations to:

>> Gandhi International Institute for Peace at gandhianpeace.org. All funds will be used to ship donated items and for financial aid to New Delhi and the states of Goa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

>> American Red Cross at redcross.org.

>> Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund at pmcares.gov.in. Funds will go to purchase oxygen tanks and concentrators from neighboring countries.

ter-state relationship with the Indian state of Goa.

Ace Medical Inc. is donating CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machines and oxygen concentrators, which are costly to ship, according to Kumar. And Laura Steelquist, owner of Hawaiian Islands

Medical Corp. in Kakaako, has donated 2,000 pairs of gloves, face shields, gowns and a case of hand sanitizer.

“Personally, I do what I can do because there’s such a profound need,” Steelquist said.

She spoke with a friend, Gary Barnes, co-owner with his wife, Jeri, of Tropical J’s, which has switched gears from manufacturing awnings and umbrellas to “functionable and comfortable masks.” The company had ordered 100,000 disposable masks and has already donated most of those masks to Kumar’s India relief efforts and is donating an additional 20,000.

Because of the high cost of air freight to India, Kumar is encouraging monetary donations to Gandhi International to pay for shipping or donations to the American Red Cross or the Indian government’s fund, the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund.

Kumar shared a teaching from his father: “Every drop of water fills the bucket.”

Diane Peters-Nguyen, the American Red Cross’s CEO of the Pacific Island Region, said in a written statement the agency is coordinating with the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network to scale up relief efforts to assist the Indian Red Cross.

“Due to the high costs of shipping and availability of regional sourcing, the American Red Cross is not involved in sending of supplies. However, we remain in coordination to mobilize additional resources such as trained specialists and financial support of the response operation,” the statement said.

“The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with the support of the global Red Cross network has been helping the Indian Red Cross to source specialty equipment such as oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and COVID-19 prevention kits.”