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Startups, tech giants pitch in to help India

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Chennai: Founders of India's internet companies, marquee investors, and tech giants like Amazon have extended their support to tackling the ongoing healthcare crisis. From using their social influence to crowdfund essentials, to amplifying call for donations, to throwing open innovation challenges to scale oxygen availability — they are doing it all.

Silicon Valley-based Indian investor Vinod Khosla tweeted on Sunday, offering to fund hospitals at this time of crisis. "I'm willing to fund hospitals in India that need funding to import bulk planeloads of oxygen or supplies into India to increase supply. Public hospitals/NGOs also pls reach out." He tagged the PMO and health ministry. In a separate tweet, Khosla also called upon US president Biden to release the AstraZeneca vaccines stocked in the US for use in India.

Food delivery major Zomato said its not-for-profit arm Feeding India is joining hands with logistics unicorn Delhivery to set in motion the 'Help Save My India' plan. The company is raising funds to procure and distribute oxygen concentrators to hospitals and patients. "We have already kickstarted the effort, and now need your help to raise Rs 50 crore for Feeding India in the next few days (hours?) to save hundreds of thousands of lives. If we raise more, we will get more oxygen," Zomato founder Deepinder Goyal said on Twitter.

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Paytm's Paytm Foundation is also focusing on oxygen shortage and raising Rs 2 crore on its app to donate oxygen concentrators, and is matching contributions received from users. "We have sourced supplies for oxygen concentrators of different sizes while we place the order using our own money..." Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma tweeted.

Kunal Shah, founder of recently minted unicorn Cred, tweeted, believes that the real challenge lies in availability of cryogenic containers to get oxygen to hospitals. He took to Twitter on Sunday looking for leads. “We are looking to fund innovative ideas to solve 1) building self-sufficient oxygen plants within hospitals 2) finding creative ways to convert other containers to move oxygen,” Shah posted on Twitter.

ACT Grants, the brainchild of around 40 marquee investors like Accel, Kalaari Capital, Lightspeed and others, is raising over Rs 75 crore for home health management, oxygen solutions and other tools to support the country’s healthcare sector. Sequoia India’s Tejeshwi Sharma made a call on Twitter on Saturday for contributions from the ecosystem. “We have already raised Rs 50 crore to commit to oxygen solutions, vaccinations and home healthcare,” he said after a day. Amazon India on Sunday said it has joined hands with ACT Grants, Temasek Foundation, Pune Platform for Covid -19 Response (PPCR) and other partners to urgently airlift over 8,000 oxygen concentrators and 500 BiPAP machines from Singapore.

Payments platform Razorpay is making it easier for NGOs and others to transact for relief work on their platform, while bike rental startup Bounce has enabled donations on its app. The cryptocurrency community too is raising capital for the cause. Responding to a crowdfunding drive launched on Twitter by entrepreneur Sandeep Nailwal, Vitalik Buterin, co-founder of cryptocurrency Ethereum, donated around \$600,000 (about Rs 4.5 crore) for India’s Covid relief. Indian American investor and entrepreneur Balaji Srinivasan also donated \$50,000 worth in cryptocurrency.