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UPDATE ON COVID-19 NEWS, ADVISORIES AND NOTIFICATIONS (AN 16, 2 April 2020)

News Updates

President of India to hold Discussions with Governors, LGs and Administrators of States and UTs on Covid-19 Response

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, along with the Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, will hold a video-conference from Rashtrapati Bhavan on 3 April 2020 with Governors, Lieutenant Governors and Administrators of all States and Union Territories to bolster the efforts at the Central and State level to contain and manage the crisis arising from the outbreak of COVID-19.

PM interacts with CMs to bolster efforts to tackle COVID-19

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today interacted with Chief Ministers of states via video conferencing to discuss measures to combat COVID-19. Prime Minister said that it is important to formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once Lockdown ends. He asked the States to brainstorm and send suggestions for the exit strategy. He reiterated the importance of social distancing in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 Fact Check Unit Comes into Operation

A COVID-19 Fact Check Unit (FCU) has been constituted in the Press Information Bureau (PIB) under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Response to the message received on email at pibfactcheck@gmail.com will be sent in defined timeframe. The official version of any news on COVID-19 can be obtained from the unit. The unit is headed by Shri Nitin Wakankar, DG, PIB.

AarogyaSetu: A multi-dimensional bridge

The Government of India today launched a mobile app developed in public-private partnership to bring the people of India together in a resolute fight against COVID-19. The App, called 'AarogyaSetu' joins Digital India for the health and well-being of every Indian. It will enable people to assess themselves the risk for their catching the Corona Virus infection. It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using cutting edge Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence

National Book Trust, India Releases On-Line Questionnaire to Assess Community Perception about the Psycho-Social Impact of COVID-19

In continuation of the multi-dimensional approach of the Government of India to address issues related to Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown, the National Book Trust which is the national body for book publishing and book promotion under the Ministry of HRD, is in the process of preparing seven booklets on the Psycho-Social Impact and How to Cope through a Study Group of psychologists and counsellors under its just launched Corona Studies Series to assess Community perception about the psycho-social impact of this pandemic.

Ministry of Home Affairs writes to States/UTs to ensure smooth Disbursal of Money to beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.

In pursuance of the guidelines issued by Ministry of Finance on disbursal of money to beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PM-GKY), Secretary, Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA), Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla has written to all States/UTs requesting them to take all necessary measures to ensure smooth disbursal of money, while observing norms of social distancing.

Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST) ties up with Wipro 3D to manufacture automated ventilators to meet COVID-19 related crisis.

SCTIMST, an institute of National Importance of the Department of Science and Technology, has tied up with Wipro 3D, Bengaluru to jointly build up on a prototype of an emergency ventilator system based on Artificial Manual Breathing Unit (AMBU), developed by SCTIMST followed by its clinical trial and manufacture.

Global Economy could shrink by 1% in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic: UN

The Global economy could shrink by up to 1 % in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic and may contract even further if restrictions on economic activities are extended without adequate fiscal responses, according to analysis released by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) will provide free water and electricity across the country for the next two months

The measure is taken in order to reduce household expenses during this COVID-19 period. The National Electricity Company (SNEL) and water supply company Regie de Distribution d'Eau (REGIDESO) have confirmed that they met with government officials and agreed to the suggestion of providing free water and electricity across the country for the next two months.

Updates from South Africa:

- **Rand shaken by rising South African growth fears**

The rand weakened on Wednesday, with confidence hit by further signs of South Africa's economic fragility. South Africa has imposed some of the toughest restrictions on the continent to try to contain the coronavirus outbreak, including deploying the army to support police during a 21-day lockdown.

- **South Africa needs 'hundreds of thousands of virus tests – Health Minister**

South Africa needs to conduct "hundreds of thousands" of coronavirus tests to understand the true number of infections and halt their spread. South Africa has the highest number of coronavirus cases in sub-Saharan Africa, and the government is worried that infection rates could get out of hand if the virus starts spreading rapidly in the country's poor and overcrowded townships.

- **As mass testing is rolled out, South Africa launches Covid-19 treatment trial**

South African researchers are preparing to enroll patients from 14 hospitals across the country in a global clinical trial set up by the World Health Organisation. The trials, to start in two

weeks' time, will compare the safety and effectiveness of four different drugs or drug combinations against Covid-19.

Zambia's bonds drop on expected restructuring

Zambia's bonds have slumped after the country's Government called in advisers to help restructure its debt, as investors worry that the coronavirus crisis could trigger a wave of defaults in emerging markets.

Zimbabwe's universities are manufacturing masks, gloves and hand sanitizers to beat coronavirus

Zimbabwe's spiral into economic chaos and uncertainty over the last decade has left the country with few functioning industries and an over-reliance on imports of nearly everything from food and furniture to building materials and even toothpicks.

Europe's COVID-19 Crisis and the Fund's Response

COVID-19 has struck Europe with stunning ferocity. In Europe's major economies, non-essential services closed by government decree account for about one-third of output. A month's closure of these sectors would translate into a 3 percent drop in annual GDP and adding to that would be other disruptions and spillovers to the rest of the economy.

Ex-Servicemen mobilised to fight COVID-19 pandemic

As the nation continues to fight the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, Department of Ex-Servicemen welfare (ESW), Ministry of Defence (MoD) has taken the initiative to mobilise services of Ex-Servicemen (ESM) community as a part of augmentation of precious human resource to assist the State and District administration, wherever required.

Homemade masks to overcome shortage Designs are Ease of Access to Materials, Easy of Making at Home, Ease of Use and Reuse

Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India has come up with an innovative solution of homemade face mask. They can make these washable and reusable masks.

MHA writes to States/UTs to take measures to fight Fake News in order to prevent Panic among People and spread of COVID-19 in India

Honorable Supreme Court, while hearing to a writ petition, took serious note of the panic created by Fake News leading to mass movement of migrant labourers. Following up on the Court's observations, Secretary, Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA), Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla has written to all States/UTs to take effective measures to fight Fake News. It has been communicated that the Government of India is creating a web-portal for people to verify facts and unverified news promptly. States/UTs

Morocco's Central Bank to triple resupply of funds to local banks to counter the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Bank Al-Maghrib Governor Abdellatif Jouahri announced new measures that allows Morocco's central bank to triple resupply of funds to local banks to counter the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. The measures would allow banks to use all refinancing methods in local

and foreign currencies and for the central bank to expand the range of bonds and securities it would accept in exchange for refinancing and extend deadlines on refinancing.

Naval Dockyard Mumbai designs low cost Temperature Gun

Naval Dockyard, Mumbai has designed and developed its own handheld IR based temperature sensor for undertaking screening of large number of personnel at the entry gates of the yard reducing the load on the security sentries at the gate. The ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 has led to one of the biggest medical emergencies the world has witnessed in the recent times. With massive surge in the number of infected patients, the medical infrastructure of the nation is being put to its ultimate test.

NCC offers its volunteer cadets for national duty to fight COVID-19 under 'Ex NCC Yogdan' Issues guidelines for temporary employment of cadets

National Cadet Corps (NCC) has offered a helping hand to civilian authorities in the country's fight against COVID-19 by extending the services of cadets under 'Exercise NCC Yogdan'. It has issued guidelines for temporary employment of its cadets to augment relief efforts and functioning of various agencies involved in battling the pandemic.

Exemption to Specific Services related to Agri-produce Marketing, Anganwadi Workers and AYUSH from Lockdown Restrictions to fight COVID-19

In response to queries being raised with regard to exemption of specific services under the Consolidated Guidelines on lockdown measures to fight COVID-19 issued by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Union Home Secretary has written to States specifying the details of such services being exempted under the above restrictions. The specific services exempt under lockdown restrictions are direct marketing of agricultural produce; food & nutrition support to children, women, lactating mothers by Anganwadi workers; medical services & drug manufacturing under AYUSH category.

FCI ensures uninterrupted food grain supplies across the country during the lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreak

Food Corporation of India (FCI) is ensuring uninterrupted supply of wheat and rice throughout the country during the lockdown period. FCI is fully prepared to meet the food grain requirement under National Food Security Act (NFSA) and any additional demand

Union Agriculture Minister launches new features of e-NAM platform

The Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar here launched new features of National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Platform to strengthen agriculture marketing by farmers which will reduce their need to physically come to wholesale mandis for selling their harvested produce, at a time when there is critical need to decongest mandis to effectively fight against COVID-19.

Shri Piyush Goyal holds videoconference with stakeholders of Start-up ecosystem

Minister of Railways and Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Piyush Goyal today held a meeting through Video Conference with the stakeholders of Start-up ecosystem, including developers, leading startups, Angel investors and others, to assess the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown in the country.

DRDO develops bio suit with seam sealing glue to keep health professionals fighting COVID-19 safe

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a bio suit to keep the medical, paramedical and other personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 safe from the deadly virus. Scientists at various DRDO laboratories have applied their technical know-how and expertise in textile, coating and nanotechnology to develop the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) having specific type of fabric with coating.

Dr. Jitendra Singh releases National Corona Survey conducted in 410 Districts of the Country.

Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions today released the National Preparedness Survey on COVID 19 – Responses of District Collectors and IAS Officers. The COVID 19 National Preparedness Survey 2020 was conducted in 410 Districts in the Country within 3 working days to attain a bird's eye view of the governance challenges of the Nation while coping with the greatest health crisis India faced since Independence.

Moody's cuts outlook for Singapore banks on coronavirus fallout

Moody's downgraded the outlook for Singapore banking sector to "negative" from "stable" citing risks of rising bad loans and deteriorating profitability due to economic slowdown and a decline in the interest rate amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Central Advisories and Notifications

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare: Guidelines for Dialysis of COVID-19 patients

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has issued guidelines for Dialysis of COVID-19 patients and advised that medical supplies such as dialysate, dialyzers and tubing, catheters, fistula needles, disinfectant and medicines etc. must be ensured in adequate quantity and patients on regular dialysis should adhere to prescribed schedule and not miss their dialysis sessions to avoid any emergency dialysis.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) issues office memorandum on reimbursement of OPD medicines to beneficiaries.

MoHFW in its office memorandum stated that CS (MA) beneficiaries getting medicines for chronic diseases may purchase medicines from the local pharmacy till 30 April 2020, based on prescription of Authorized Medical Attendant. The claim for reimbursement shall be submitted by the beneficiary to the concerned Ministry/ Department for further processing.

Ministry of Railways: Parcel Trains providing big boost to transportation of essential commodities and other goods in times of lock down due to COVID -19

During the lockdown in the wake of COVID19, Indian Railways is offering its unhindered services of Parcel Trains for nationwide transportation of essential commodities and other goods required to meet the needs of citizens of the nation. While these freight operations of Railways are

meeting the needs of bulk transportation of essential goods, parcel trains are transporting various items that need to be delivered in comparatively smaller quantities.

Ministry of Finance: Government provides relief for third party Motor Insurance & Health policy holders in the light of COVID-19 lockdown.

The Government has provided relief for third party Motor Insurance & Health policy holders in the light of COVID-19 lockdown. Existing policies which are falling due for renewal from March 25, 2020, to April 14, 2020, can be renewed up till April 21, 2020.

Indian Railways maintains its freight corridors fully functional for essential commodities and vital goods for energy & infrastructure in spite challenges due to COVID 19 lock down

In order to ensure the timely delivery of essential commodities for citizens and goods vital for energy & infrastructure sector, Indian Railways has maintained its freight corridors fully functional in spite of the COVID 19 lockdown and has been successful in meeting the needs of both the household sector and industry. During last 3 days Railways delivered 7195 wagons of Food grains, 64567 wagons of coal, 3314 wagons of steel and 3838 wagons of petroleum. Total 143458 wagons of freight were loaded in the last three days.

State Advisories and Notifications

Government of Karnataka exempts industries supplying to Defence and Aerospace manufacturing from the purview of lockdown.

Further to the existing list of essential industries, the State Government has exempted industries supplying to Defence and Aerospace manufacturing from the purview of the lockdown and relaxed the restrictions imposed on the movement of workers and staff working in these industrial units.

Government of Andhra Pradesh: Guidelines for Home Isolation

The State Government has issued guidelines for home isolation, to be followed by all foreign returnees or their contact or any symptomatic person showing COVID-19 symptoms.

Government of Andhra Pradesh transfers RS 186.9 Crores to CM's Relief Fund.

The State Government has decided to transfer an amount of Rs.186.936 crores, which forms 30% of District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds presently available with the districts to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF-COVID-19) for utilizing the same in connection with COVID-19.

Principal Commissioner, Customs, Ahmedabad issue public notice on Amendments and Waiver of Late Fee Charges in the Bills of Entry and regularization of Prior & Advance Bills of Entry through e-mail procedure

Keeping in view the exigency due to outbreak of Corona Virus pandemic and, in order to facilitate the trade for clearance of the import consignments, Principal Commissioner, Customs, Ahmedabad has issued notice in public interest that those bills of entries for clearance of import consignment which has arrived at the respective Custom Port/ICDs on or after 21.03.2020 but on or before 14.04.2020, will not attract any late fee charges, if filed late for clearance of such import consignments, for the time being and till further orders.

Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) issues office orders on Allotment of Environment Auditors to Industries for 2020-21.

In view of COVID- 19 Pandemic, GPCB has issued office orders that Environment Audit for year starting from 1 April 2020 will commence from 1 June 2020 and allotment of the Environment Auditor will be done accordingly through randomization before 1 June 2020. However, audit period shall remain unchanged i.e. 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Government of Goa's press note on "Free" distribution of additional quota to Ration card holders for next three months.

Department of Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Goa, in its press release stated that all Ration Card Holders under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana scheme will be given additional quota @5 kgs per person per month for period of April-June 2020.

Government of Goa launches temporary pass facility

In order to cater to the requirement of people who need immediate pass for purpose of buying grocery, medicines, withdrawal of money, etc Government is launching the Temporary Pass facility in Goa online.

Government of Tamil Nadu: Sanction of Special Incentive Package to promote manufacturing of COVID-19 related medical equipment and drugs.

As one of the measures to combat COVID-19 pandemic, The State Government has sanctioned Special Incentive Package to promote manufacturing of COVID-19 related medical equipment and drugs such as ventilators, PPE kits, N-95 masks, multi para monitors and anti-malarial and anti-viral drugs in Tamil Nadu.

International Advisories and Notifications

Egypt bans export of masks & protective supplies and opens hotline numbers for public.

- The Ministry of Industry and Trade decided to exclude soap bars, shampoo, and tissue paper in the form of jumbo rolls "production requirements" from Resolution 187 of 2020 to stop the export of masks and protective supplies.
- The Ministry of Health allocated two hotlines to provide psychological support for citizens staying at home as part of the precautionary measures taken by the State to counter the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

Jordan Prime Minister establishes funds to support the efforts to combat COVID-19.

Prime Minister Dr. Omar Al-Razzaz issued Defense Order establishing a fund to support the national effort to combat the Corona virus epidemic and counter its effects, called "Himat Homeland".

European Union EU approves close to €240 million to strengthen resilience in neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees in light of the coronavirus pandemic

The European Union is strengthening its support for refugees from Syria and vulnerable persons in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon through a new package of almost €240 million, raising the total assistance via the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis to more than €2 billion.

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