

CONTAINING VIRUS

'India's response pre-emptive, pro-active'

The government brushed aside the allegation that the 21-day lockdown was announced without any planning

isation (WHO) declared the Coronavirus as a public health emergency of international concern on January 30.

The government has come in for criticism that the lockdown was announced without planning and also for the fact that migrant labourers are stranded across the country without any resources.

The government said screening of incoming air passengers, followed by suspension of visas and a ban on international flights were done much ahead of any other country.

"Thermal screening of incoming international passengers from China and Hong Kong was started on 18th January, much before the first case of coronavirus was detected in India on 30th January.

"India's response to COVID-19 has been pre-emptive, pro-active and graded," the statement said.

Citing the examples of Italy and Spain, which started screening travellers 25 days and 39 days respectively after the



Police enforce the lockdown in Ludhiana

first reported cases, the statement said the government took a number of proactive measures and shared the chronology of the steps taken by it. It also refuted the allegation that "prosperous Indians" were allowed to return without screening, terming it "prepos-

PM announces new fund for people to donate to aid fight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi on Saturday announced the creation of an assistance and emergency situation relief fund where people can contribute and help in the government's fight against coronavirus.

The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund will go a long way in creat-

ing a healthier India, he said on Twitter.

"People from all walks of life expressed their desire to donate to India's war against COVID-19," he said, adding the fund has been constituted respecting that spirit.

"It is my appeal to my fellow Indians, kindly contribute to the PM-CARES Fund. This fund will also cater to similar distressing situations, if they occur in the times ahead," he said.

eller, Indians returning after business or tourism, students as well as foreigners," the statement said.

Passengers were screened at 30 airports, 12 major and 65 minor ports and at land borders, the government said, adding that over 36 lakh

passengers were subjected to screening.

It also said that the states were regularly requested to maintain and further improve upon the surveillance system so that the coverage was complete and there were no gaps.

Food, water for migrant workers on the road

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

UNION MINISTER NITIN GADKARI on Saturday asked the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) chairman and toll operators across national highways to provide food, water and other necessary support to migrant workers. "I have advised chairman NHAI and highway concessioners/toll operators to consider providing food, water or any kind of support to migrant workers/citizens who are trying to reach to their respective native places. At this time of crisis we have to be compassionate for our fellow citizens," road transport and highways minister Gadkari said. He expressed hope that toll operators will respond to his call positively.

Earlier, Gadkari had asked the National Highways



Nitin Gadkari

Authority of India to suspend toll on all national highways to ease transportation of essential goods and supplies. The suspension of toll collection on national highways will ease supplies of essential goods across the country while facilitating movement of patients and needy people who have obtained curfew passes, Gadkari had said. Urging people to adhere to the nationwide lockdown, the minister has said suspension of toll is for people who have to venture out for necessary travel.

Zoho slaps trade secret misappropriation case against Freshworks

SAJAN C KUMAR Chennai, March 28

SRIDHAR VEMBU-PROMOTED software as a service (SaaS) major Zoho has filed a case against Freshworks—a Unicorn helmed by Girish Mathrubootham and backed by fund houses such as Sequoia Capital and CapitalG—in a US court, alleging stealing of its trade secrets and willfully converting its confidential and proprietary information to gain advantage in software development and sales.

Zoho in the complaint filed before the United States District Court, Northern District of California, on March 17, 2020, alleges that from its inception by two former Zoho employees, Girish Mathrubootham and Shan Krishnasamy, Freshworks has built its business up on theft and misuse of Zoho's business information.

Zoho has slapped a complaint of trade secret misappropriation against Freshworks, seeking relief under

violation of defense of trade secrets Act and California uniform trade secrets Act, and for international interference with prospective economic relations, conversion and unjust enrichment. Though both Zoho and Freshworks have genesis from Chennai, the companies have global operations headquartered in the US.

According to the complaint, Freshworks secured initial funding through use of Zoho's non-public financial information and since engaged in a systematic practice of poaching Zoho's employees besides using Zoho's confidential and competitive marketing information, planning press releases to coincide with Zoho's undisclosed product launch dates and pressurising Zoho's business partners to divulge Zoho confidential customer information.

From 2001 to 2010, both Mathrubootham and Krishnasamy worked with Zoho. In October 2010, both departed Zoho to form Freshworks.

Telcos to opt for EMI moratorium; tariff to remain stable: COAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

DEBT-RIDDEN TELECOM operators are likely to opt for three-month moratorium to avoid cash crunch during the lockdown, industry body COAI said on Saturday. The telecom operators have spoken in favour of raising mobile call and internet rates at the earliest, however, they will keep the prices stable during the lockdown period, COAI DG Rajan S Mathews told PTI.

"There is debt of around ₹1.6-2 lakh crore that telecom

operators owe to Indian banks. They will opt three-month moratorium in loan repayment to help them maintain cash flow. It is a relief for them," Mathews said.

The RBI on Friday allowed banks to put on hold EMI payments on all term loans for three months, slashed the cost of fresh borrowing by cutting policy interest rate by steepest in more than 11 years and infused a massive ₹3.74 lakh crore liquidity as it joined the efforts of the government to counter the economic fallout of coronavirus pandemic.

IEX assures 24x7 access to its power trading platform

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

THE INDIAN ENERGY Exchange (IEX), on Saturday, assured distribution utilities of 24x7 access to its platform during the lockdown period. According to a statement by IEX, there is adequate power supply available on its platform and it urged all the stakeholders to leverage the exchange cost to ensure 24x7 power supply to essential services, particularly the stressed healthcare sector. "IEX is confident that the con-

sumers need uninterrupted power supply now, especially in times of need when thousands of employees of corporate India are working from home," it added. Several stakeholders have also been concerned about the availability of 24x7 power at this point of time.

The average price for March is currently at ₹2.49 per unit and average price since March 22 is at ₹2.15 per unit, it said. The company estimates that the rates may continue to be on the lower side as the COVID situation unfolds.

Competition Comm revises guidance note for combination applications

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

COMPETITION COMMISSION has revised its guidance note for filing applications seeking approvals for combinations, a move that will help in having a more standardised review process. The guidance note for Form I has been revised with a view to incorporate the

changes made with respect to green channel, an official release said on Saturday.

Generally, Form I is used for applications seeking nod for combinations. In competition law parlance, mergers and acquisitions are termed as combinations. Green channel provides for automatic approval of combinations subject to certain conditions.

Working to ensure critical coal supplies: Joshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

THE GOVERNMENT ON Saturday said that it is working to ensure critical coal supplies during the lockdown on account of the coronavirus outbreak. The coal stocks at power plants stand at 41.8 million tonnes (MT) equivalent to 24 days consumption as of March 26, 2020. "Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs, Pralhad Joshi has ensured that the coal supplies are declared as an essential service and directed all the officials of Ministry of Coal to work harder to ensure that critical coal supplies are maintained during the lockdown period due to COVID-19 pandemic so that power and other critical sectors are unaffected due to the current

Western Coalfields sees highest single-day production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Nagpur, March 28

WESTERN COALFIELDS LTD (WCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd, has registered the highest ever single day coal production of 4.29 lakh tonnes on March 27 amid the countrywide lockdown to contain coronavirus.

The employees, currently 42,000, are working 24x7 in both the underground and

the opencast coal mines to produce and despatch enough coal to its linked power plants, so that there should be no disruption in the electricity supply in the country at present, necessary to combat the menace of COVID-19, WCL said in a press release. The coal mining activity and its transportation has been declared as essential service during the lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreak.

situation," Ministry of Coal said in a statement.

The daily meetings of all senior officers of the ministry are being held for monitoring

coal production, supplies and despatch, it said. The first such virtual meeting was taken on March 26, 2020 through video conferencing

PM urges AYUSH practitioners to pitch in to combat Coronavirus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday suggested that AYUSH medicine producers could utilise their resources to produce essential items such as sanitisers, keeping in mind the high demand for them. He also said there is a need to counter unsubstantiated claims that AYUSH has a cure for the disease.

Ayurved, Unani, Siddhi and Homeopathy come under the AYUSH system of medicines for which there is a separate Union ministry. Modi made these remarks while interacting with AYUSH practitioners via video. He praised the efforts of the AYUSH ministry in promoting "yoga at home" to de-stress the mind and strengthen the body during this difficult phase, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.



PM Narendra Modi

"The Prime Minister underlined the importance of counselling and fact-checking unsub-

stantiated claims of AYUSH having cure for the disease, adding that AYUSH scientists, ICMR, CSIR and other research organisations must come together for evidence-based research," it added. Modi said if need be, the government will seek help from private doctors practising the AYUSH system to counter the spread of the deadly virus.

He also urged the AYUSH practitioners to utilise the platform of telemedicine to reach

out to the public and generate constant awareness to fight the pandemic. The prime minister said it is important to create awareness on India's traditional medicines and medical practices all over the world.

He thanked the AYUSH practitioners for constantly striving to serve the people and highlighted the important role they have to play in India's fight against COVID-19, the statement said.

Maruti joins hands with AgVa Healthcare to scale up ventilator production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA (MSI), on Saturday, said that it will work with AgVa Healthcare to help it rapidly scale up production of ventilators in the country in wake of the coronavirus pandemic. "An arrangement has been entered into with AgVa Healthcare, an existing approved manufacturer of ventilators," MSI said in a statement. "The company would work with AgVa Healthcare to rapidly scale up production of ventilators with intention of reaching a volume of 10,000 units per month," it added.



all the ventilators produced and sold by them, MSI said.

The auto major on its part will use its suppliers to produce the required volume of components and use its experience and knowledge to upgrade systems for the production and quality control of the higher volumes, it added. MSI would also help, to the required extent to arrange financing, and obtain all permissions and approvals required to enable the higher production, the auto major said.

The company would provide these services free of cost to AgVa Healthcare. Besides, Krishna Maruti Limited, a joint venture of MSI with Ashok Kapur, will be manufacturing 3-ply masks for supply to Haryana and the central government. Production is expected to start as soon as all approvals are received, MSI said. Kapur will provide 2 million masks free of cost as his own contribution, it added. Similarly, Bharat Seats Limited, a joint venture of MSI with the Relan family, would be manufacturing protective clothing as soon as all approvals are in place. All manufacturing units will take maximum care to protect the safety and health of the workers in accordance with the government recommended practices, it added.

Sun Pharma commits ₹25 crore worth of drugs, sanitisers to fight COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

SUN PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRIES will donate ₹25 crore worth of Hydroxychloroquine (HCQS), Azithromycin, other related drugs and hand sanitisers to support India's fight against COVID-19, according to a company statement. The national task force for COVID-19 has recommended the prophylactic use of HCQS for high risk population. HCQS is being studied by the World Health Organization (WHO) for use in con-



Pharma said in a statement.

The company is constituting a task force to handle the distribution of these products in India, it added. Commending the efforts of the entire medical and support fraternity in fighting COVID-19, Sun Pharma said, "To help these front-line warriors, the company has repurposed its liquid manufacturing facility in India to produce high-quality hand sanitisers". These will be made available to healthcare professionals serving their communities and the nation, it added.

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All PSU bank merger schemes to come into force on April 1: RBI

FE BUREAU Kolkata, March 28

MEETING THE SCHEDULE for the amalgamation, the merger scheme for all the 10 public sector lenders into four bigger and stronger banks will come into force on April 1. The country's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India, on Saturday said all branches of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will function as branches of Punjab National Bank, the anchor bank, from April 1. Similarly, all branches of Allahabad Bank will function as branches of Indian Bank from that day, while all branches of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank will function as branches of Union Bank of India from April 1. And, all branches of Syndicate Bank will function as branches of Canara Bank from the next month.

Earlier, there had been some concerns that whether

the lenders could be able to meet the April 1 deadline due to the countrywide lockdown imposed to stop the spread of coronavirus. "The Amalgamation of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India into Punjab National Bank Scheme, 2020 dated March 4, 2020, issued by the Government of India was published under Extraordinary Part II-Section 3-Sub-section (i) in the Gazette of India sanctioning the Amalgamation of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India into Punjab National Bank in terms of section 9 of the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970 (5 of 1970) and section 9 of the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980 (40 of 1980). The scheme comes into force on the 1st day of April 2020," the RBI said in a release.

TVS Motor rolls out support services for its customers

FE BUREAU Chennai, March 28

THE TVS MOTOR Company on Saturday said that it has rolled out a slew of measures for its customers to overcome the disruptions due to COVID-19. As a part of this initiative, the customers can redeem the free service of their vehicles due

between March and April, 2020 till June 2020.

"For those vehicles where the warranty is expiring between March 1 and April 30, 2020, the company will be extending it to June 30, 2020. The AMC services due between March and April, 2020 will be redeemable till June, 2020," a press release said.

Planes flying to ensure ICMR kits to test COVID-19 reach on time: Puri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday, said that the aircrafts are crisscrossing the Indian airspace to ensure that the COVID-19 testing kits of the ICMR reach their destinations on time amidst a 21-day nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus. In a series of tweets, the minister gave the relevant details.

"The first flight on Friday morning has already delivered 1.4 tonnes of ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) kits from Delhi to Aizawl, Kolkata and Hyderabad while another such movement of ICMR kits is in progress from Mumbai to Pune, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram," he wrote on Twitter.

Another aircraft is delivering the ICMR kits from Delhi to Pune and Patna, from where it will possibly bring back the testing kits of a private firm to the national capital, which will then be flown to Ahmedabad, Puri said. "In the fourth flight an ATR aircraft is delivering ICMR kits from Kolkata to Dibrugarh," he stated.

NHPC earmarks ₹4.5 crore to fight COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, March 28

THE STATE-RUN HYDRO power giant NHPC has pledged ₹4.5 crore to fight COVID-19 amid the lockdown. According to a company statement, the decision was taken at a meeting chaired by CMD A K Singh with the other directors through a video conference. "NHPC stands in steadfast support of the nation and the Government of India in this moment of crisis. We will also help the local people near our power stations/projects by providing all the possible support," a statement said.