

DRDO develops bio suit, sealant for safety gear

Mass manufacture of the glue to help PPE production

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a major breakthrough, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a special sealant as an alternative to seam sealing tape which is critical in personal protective equipment (PPE).

A bio suit was also developed to keep medical and other personnel engaged in combating COVID-19 safe from the deadly virus, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday.

"The DRDO has prepared a special sealant as an alternative to seam sealing tape based on the sealant used in submarine applications. Presently, bio suits prepared using this glue for seam sealing by an industry partner has cleared test at the Southern



The bio suit with seam sealing glue. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

India Textile Research Association (SITRA), Coimbatore," the Ministry said in a statement.

It said bio suit production in the country by DRDO industry partners and other industries was being hampered due to non-availability of seam sealing tapes. The DRDO can mass produce this glue through the industry to

support the seam sealing activity by suit manufacturers.

Technology transfer

At present, Kusumgarh Industries, with technology transfer from the DRDO, is producing the raw material, coating material, and the complete suit is being manufactured with the help of another vendor, the state-

Railways to make protective suits

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

After converting coaches into isolation/quarantine facilities, the Railways has now decided to manufacture Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) garment for medical professionals, service personnel and other care-givers involved in the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a note to all Principal Chief Mechanical Engineers

of the zonal railways and production units, the Railway Board said there was a huge requirement of PPE garments and the production/maintenance infrastructure could be used for their production.

The Jagadhari workshop in the Northern Railway had already developed a sample PPE garment which was in the process of approval by the appropriate authority.

The PPE should conform to the approved design for standardisation.

The board said absolute cleanliness should be maintained in the manufacture and the staff should wear the garment to prevent cross contamination.

The goal is to produce three sets per sewing machine in one hour for 15 days across the network.

ment said. "The current production capacity is 7,000 suits per day," the Ministry said.

Another vendor with experience in garment technology is being brought in and efforts are on to ramp up the capacity to 15,000 suits a day, the Ministry stated.

The bio suit has been subjected to rigorous testing for

textile parameters as well as protection against infection from synthetic blood. "The protection against synthetic blood exceeds the criteria defined for body suits by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare," the statement said.

Separately, Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, has designed and developed its own hand-

held Infra Red (IR) based temperature sensor for screening at its entry gates, which have an average influx of around 20,000 personnel every day. The instrument has been manufactured through in-house resources at a cost of under ₹1000, a fraction of the cost of the temperature guns in the market, the Navy said.

₹50 lakh meant for PPE diverted, allege doctors

'Money redirected to PM-CARES fund'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) has alleged that the administration and corporate social responsibility (CSR) section had redirected ₹50 lakh from Bharat Dynamics under the Ministry of Defence to PM-CARES fund rather than the originally assigned purpose of buying personal protection equipment (PPE).

The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund, a public charitable trust, was set up in response to the emerging requirement for resources to defeat the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"We met with the administration on Wednesday and told them about our

concerns and requested that all personal protection equipment will have to meet the safety standards prescribed by the Health Ministry and that neither doctors nor other patients should be put at risk of catching the infection. "Jugaad" PPE will not work," said AIIMS RDA general secretary T. Srinivas Rajkumar on Thursday. He said the funds being redirected was a serious issue.

Baseless, says AIIMS

Responding to the allegation, AIIMS has said that the statement is baseless. It said that no funds have been released by Bharat Dynamics to AIIMS. The AIIMS RDA had informed the administration that Bharat Dynamics was interested in helping to procure PPE. After talks with the firm, the funds were not released.

IN BRIEF



NCC cadets mobilised to augment relief efforts

NEW DELHI
The National Cadet Corps has issued guidelines for temporary employment of its cadets to augment relief efforts and functioning of various agencies involved in battling COVID-19, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday. The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare too will join the efforts.

Doctor who wanted to rope in quacks suspended

PATNA
Siwan civil surgeon Ashesh Kumar was suspended for issuing an official letter to rope in services of *Jhola Chhap* doctors (quacks) to combat COVID-19 pandemic in the district. The screenshot of his controversial letter had gone viral on social media. The State's Health department suspended him with immediate effect.

11 Bangladeshi nationals allowed to go home

GUWAHATI
Eleven Bangladeshi nationals, who had returned from New Delhi more than a week ago, have been sent to their country through a land customs station on the India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya. Officials of the Assistant High Commission of Bangladesh in Guwahati said the 11 were sent home after medical examination and ascertaining that they had not attended the congregation at the Tablighi Jamaat centre.

Decongest jails temporarily, say activists

NEW DELHI
The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) on Thursday asked the government to decongest jails temporarily in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In a statement, the PUDR said jails should be decongested to not more than 60% of their capacity to allow segregation of inmates and maintenance of hygiene.

IAF airlifts 6.2 tonnes of essential drugs to Maldives

The Army assisted in moving the cargo to airports

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130J transport aircraft on Thursday delivered 6.2 tonne of essential medicines and hospital consumables to Maldives under Operation Sanjeevani. These medicines and consumables were procured from eight suppliers in India but couldn't be transported through any other means due to the 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19, an official statement said.

"At the request of the government of Maldives, the IAF aircraft activated Operation Sanjeevani and lifted these medicines from airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Madurai before flying to the Maldives," the statement said, adding the Army facilitated the transport of these medicines and consumables from warehouses across India to the respective airports.



Hand of friendship: Essential supplies ordered by Maldives were transported by the Indian Air Force on Thursday. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Among other things, these medicines include influenza vaccines, anti-viral drugs such as lopinavir and

COVID-19

ritonavir – which have been used to treat patients with COVID-19 in other countries – medicines for cardiac conditions, kidney ailments, hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, allergies and cancer treat-

ment, anticonvulsants, as well as catheters, nebulisers, urine bags and infant feeding tubes, the statement added. Last month, India had dispatched a 14-member Army medical team to Maldives to set up a viral testing lab there.

Cargo from China

Air India has received China's clearance to operate cargo flights to Shanghai and Hong Kong to help Indian pharmaceutical companies

import personal protective equipment for frontline health workers.

"We have secured requisite approvals from Shanghai for our flights on April 4 and 5 and await clearances for flights on April 6, 7 and 8. Permissions have also been obtained for operations to Hong Kong," said Air India Chairman and Managing Director Rajiv Bansal. The flights are being operated on a commercial basis following requests from pharma firms.

4 nations to use Air India to repatriate their citizens

But flights won't bring back Indians

JAGRITI CHANDRA
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Four countries – France, Germany, Ireland and Canada – have chartered Air India's services to repatriate their citizens from India.

However, none of the flights will bring any Indians or other passengers stranded in these places back with them due to the continuing travel restrictions, officials clarified.

Air India will be mounting 18 flights to Paris and Frankfurt and will fly Canadian and Irish citizens to London, Air India Chairman and Managing Director, Rajeev Bansal, said at a press conference on Thursday.

A flight to London Heathrow will depart daily from Delhi from April 4 to 7 and from Mumbai on April 5 and 7. Flights to Frankfurt have

commenced. "This is a commercial contract between different countries and Air India," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri said.

However, India has no plans to mount any special flights to bring back its citizens until the lockdown is over. "Resumption of flights from different countries will be decided on a case-by-case basis," Mr. Puri said.

It is reliably learnt that a few international airlines, including Gulf carriers, have written to Indian missions in different countries seeking permission to fly Indians stranded there back to their home country, but their requests have been turned down. "We have been approached by several Indians, including those from Kuwait," an executive of an international airline said.

₹500 in Jan Dhan accounts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has said that women beneficiaries of the Jan Dhan account can start withdrawing ₹500 from April 3, in the first of the three instalments of a sum of ₹1,500 relief announced by the Centre as part of the fight against COVID-19.

"Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan package, ₹500 per month is being deposited into the accounts of women Jan Dhan Yojana beneficiaries by all banks. This is first of the 3 monthly instalments," IBA said in a statement.

To maintain physical distancing and ensure efficient service, a schedule has been announced for the withdrawals.

Na Corona Karo song goes viral on social media

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A song to make people aware about taking precautions against COVID-19, composed by Pune-based classical khayal vocalist Sandeep Ranade, has mesmerised celebrities and social media users.

The song was shared by A.R. Rahman on his Instagram account.

Mr. Ranade said, "When I created *Na Corona Karo* in Raga Basant, we were yet to go into lockdown... I wanted to feel hope and optimism and the song was simply an expression of this sentiment. After I shared the song on social media and it



Sandeep Ranade

went viral, I got messages from people all over the world, saying they felt uplifted, optimistic, and motivated to fight the virus as a community."

Pandit Ajay Pohankar, Pandit Suresh Talwalkar, Daler Mehndi, Adnan Sami, Shubha Mudgal and Nana Patekar have hailed Mr. Ranade's effort.

Reveal post-lockdown plan, say scientists

In a statement, 800 signatories ask the Centre to go beyond a 'temporary solution'

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN
CHENNAI

Over 800 scientists, academicians and public health professionals issued a statement on April 1, urging the government to reveal a post-lockdown plan to fight COVID-19.

The signatories include scientists from TIFR, Mumbai; NCBS, Bengaluru; IISc, Bengaluru; the IITs and IIS-ERS, and doctors, including members of Indian Doctors for Peace and Development.

"The lockdown is only a temporary solution. Unless this period of time is used to prepare the healthcare system, the country may end up paying the lockdown's social

costs without even seeing any long-term epidemiological benefits," says Suvrat Raju from ICTS, Bengaluru, who is one of the persons coordinating this effort.

While emphasising that the lockdown itself is not a cure, the statement says: "... models [of disease progression] consistently suggest that, in the absence of other factors, the epidemic could bounce back once the lockdown is lifted. If this were to happen at the end of India's lockdown, the epidemic would hit a society already under severe economic distress, with potentially devastating consequences."



The scientists have asked the government to boost its testing regimen.

The scientists urged the government to ensure that the rate of new infections is kept low in a sustainable manner when the lockdown ends. "While social distancing and better hygiene can

help, these measures are insufficient by themselves. We are deeply concerned that the government of India has not released a roadmap, detailing how it plans to deal with the epidemic, once the lockdown is eased," reads the statement.

Expressing concern that the government is not using this precious interval of time to actually identify as many cases of COVID-19 as possible, the statement draws attention to a possible bounce-back effect: "In particular, the current restricted testing-policy creates the risk that a large number of mildly symptomatic or asympto-

matic cases – which constitute the majority of infections – will remain undetected even at the end of the lockdown period. So, we urge the ICMR and the Government of India to take immediate steps to expand India's testing regimen."

The statement also addresses the problem of reverse migration. The statement said, "Rather than attempting to prevent the reverse migration, we urge the government to use its stocks of food-grains and use urgent cash transfers to ensure the food-security and welfare of workers" so that they do not have to travel.

India to raise Sheikh Saeed case at FATF if he walks free

The accused in the murder of a U.S. journalist had been released by India in 1999 in exchange for 155 hostages

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The decision by a Pakistani court in Sindh to acquit Ahmed Omar Sheikh Saeed of murdering journalist Daniel Pearl will be raised by India at the next meeting of the Financial Action Task Force, where Pakistan's greylist status will come up for discussion, officials said. The British-born Saeed has been in a Pakistani prison since he was arrested for the kidnapping and killing of the *Wall Street Journal's* correspondent in Pakistan in 2002, but was in Indian prisons from 1994-1999. In December 1999, Saeed was released along with Masood Azhar and another alleged terrorist Mush-taq Zargar by the Indian govern-

ment in exchange for 155 hostages aboard the hijacked IC-814.

The next FATF meeting is expected in June, but may be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, it wasn't just Saeed's history with terrorism in India that would be raised, but his links with Al-Qaeda and, more specifically, his role in the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. Saeed has not yet been tried in that case and the Pakistani government's actions in the next few days would be closely watched.

If Pakistan's federal government doesn't file a strong appeal against the acquittal and Saeed walks free, as some Pakis-



Daniel Pearl

tani reports suggest, it would also show how transnational norms against "terror financing" were being flouted by Islamabad, the officials indicated.

Saeed is reported to have spent time in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya, after he was recruited by the Hizbut Tahrir

from the London School of Economics, where he studied. He is then believed to have trained with the Harkat ul Mujahideen, and was allegedly sent to India in 1994 as part of a plan to have Masood Azhar released.

While in Delhi he is alleged to have befriended, and then kidnapped four British tourists and held them at a hideout in Ghaziabad. The police arrested him after he delivered a ransom message calling for Azhar's release to the BBC office in Delhi, when he returned to the hideout.

Once he was released along with Azhar at Kandahar, Saeed is believed to have become a key aide to Osama Bin Laden and was allegedly a part of Bin

Laden's plans for the Al-Qaeda's attacks in the U.S.

Another twist in the Saeed tale came in 2008 on the night of the November 26 attacks in Mumbai.

Pakistani investigators claimed Saeed used a cellphone from prison to call then Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and allegedly impersonated then India's Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, threatening a major Indian attack. The call had led to considerable panic in the Pakistani establishment, and President Zardari had sent a special plane to order back the Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who happened to be in Delhi for a bilateral meeting at the time.

Today, the narrative is moving from the hands of the marketers to the consumers

What makes customer experiences the differentiator of the future?

Again, this goes back to the audience. What used to work well for marketers earlier, which was a push strategy, no longer works. When you are talking about predominantly pull strategies, customer services are at the heart of that. The kind of word-of-mouth that goes around, the kind of experiences that they have got from your brands, whether they are willing to talk about it, whether they are willing to become advocates for your brand, all these factors become super-critical to achieving success with this audience.

Aparna Mahesh
Chief Marketing Officer at BankBazaar

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This article is part of a brand initiative by The Hindu BusinessLine to profile marketing professionals from across India.