

Government issues fresh SOP: Flight passengers to be quarantined

IT News
Imphal, May 25:

Home department of the government of Manipur today issued fresh Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for flight passengers who landed here in Imphal with the resumption of air service today.

As per the fresh SOP, passengers who landed in Imphal airport have been kept at Institutional Quarantine Center (IQC) opened at HRD Academy and Little Flower School for 14 days. Some had chosen paid quarantine center open at private hotel. The passengers will be sent for home quarantine after tested negative of Coronavirus, however those tested positive have to undergo treatment as per the protocol.

Unlike the previous SOP issued by the government, the fresh SOP issued today stated that no passenger will be allowed to go home without testing negative or till the completion of 14 days quarantine.

A total of 95 passengers landed today at Indigo Flight and similar number is expected to arrive at Air Asia that will be landed in afternoon. Among these 95 passengers 92 boarded from new Delhi while 3 boarded from Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati.

The two quarantine cen-

ters at HRD Academy and Little Flower School were opened today as per the SOP of the government issued today by the Deputy Commissioner of Imphal West district.

Earlier, before the arrival of the flights at Bir Tikendrajit International Airport Imphal six students' body of the state AMSU, DESAM, MSF, KSA, SUK and AIMS had thronged inside the Imphal airport and protest the previous government SOP which stated that passengers which landed in Imphal will be sent for home quarantine. Representatives of the six students' bodies confronted with the state law enforcing agency however, the matter was settled after the government issued fresh SOP today.

Talking to media person, Peter Laisram stated pours slashing criticism to the government over the earlier SOP saying that when the state have no report of any positive coronavirus cases strict protocol was followed and when the state today have over 32 Coronavirus cases such protocol were exempted. Terming such attitude as unfortunate Peter said that the government's SOP will not only create burdens to the state but will also create chaotic situation in the locals where the passengers belong to.

Kuki Students'

Organisation had also strongly reacted to the previous government SOP. The students' body had stated that

they will not allow the flight passengers to return back to their home until they were tested and quarantined.

Criticism pours over the attitude of flight passengers



IT News
Imphal, May 25:

Lack of civics sense and non compliance of health advisory to contain the COVID-19 pandemic by passengers who arrived today at Bir Tikendrajit International Airport had irked various people present there arrange buses for transportation of the passengers to the Institutional Quarantine Center (IQC) by maintaining physical distancing. The first 95 passengers were transported to HRD Academy and paid quarantine centers opened at Imphal Hotel.

sory like maintaining physical distances. Moreover, some of the passengers simply throw the mask that they used inside the airport premises. Imphal Times reporter witness some used masks lying on the premises.

Authorities of the transport department who were present there arrange buses for transportation of the passengers to the Institutional Quarantine Center (IQC) by maintaining physical distancing. The first 95 passengers were transported to HRD Academy and paid quarantine centers opened at Imphal Hotel.

Where have the PDS rice allocated for non-voters or non-card holders gone at some assembly constituency?

IT News
Imphal, May 25:

Lack of transparency to the distribution of PDS rice and dal to the general public during the lockdown has drawn serious criticism from sections of people raising questions on where have all the PDS rice allocated for the non-voters or non-card holders gone at many of the assembly constituency.

Report from the DIPR said that lifting of rice for distribution under National Food Security Act (NFSA), Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), continues for different assembly constituencies in the state and two days back lifting of rice and dal under the said schemes for the constituencies in Imphal East district have been completed for the month of May and maximum rice for the remaining assembly constituencies have also been lifted. However, there is no report of proper distribution of the rice lifted for distribution to the general public till today for the month of May. There were complaints from some non-voters denying PDS rice at Sagolband Assembly constituency where PDS rice

have been distributed at some places.

Imphal Times when enquired about how the distribution of PDS items were done, it has been found that there are various discrepancy in the distribution of PDS items.

According to source, rice under National Food Security Act (NFSA) should be distributed to **Anvodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** and **Priority Households (PHH)** card holders. Allocation of rice under NFSA for AAY is 35 kg per card holder (house hold) and allocation under NFSA for PHH card holder is 5 kg for each member of the family by payment of Rs. 3 per kg.

Rice and dal under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) are supposed to be distributed at free of cost to every persons irrespective of whether the person is enrolled in the voter list of the assembly constituency that they stayed or not during this lockdown period. These include students, migrant workers, government employees who are staying at rent. While PMGKAY rice are allocated by the center for the respective constituency rice under OMSS

are to be procured by the respective local MLA from the fund allocated to them for distribution to the people who are not enrolled in the voter lists.

There has been instruction from the government of India that PDS rice distribution by nominated PDS agents should be minimized.

For procurement of the rice under OMSS and maintenance of others to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the center has already sanctioned a sum of Rs. 25 lakhs each to all MLAs. In addition to this the state government too have sanctioned 10 lakhs from their local area development fund for utilization for the purpose.

Under the PMGKAY, each voters are entitled to get 5 kg of rice plus 1 kg of Musori dal. And for those who are not in the voter list are also entitled to get the similar amount of rice and dal under the OMSS.

When there are adequate allocations and had already sanction to ensure food for all under the various scheme many people of the state are deprived of rice.

Many have started questioning on the whereabouts of the rice which are meant for the non-voters or non card holders.

No. of positive cases reached 34 today

IT News
Imphal, May 25:

The number of positive cases in the state keeps rising with the number of stranded Manipuris return in the state rises. As per a report of the State Health Department, 2 more positive cases have been detected rising the number to 34. Among these four had been tested negative and sent home. Active positive Coronavirus cases recorded today is 30. The two positive cases were detected late yesterday evening at VRDL of RIMS and JNIMS.

'Lockdown has brought many in misery'

IT News
Imphal, May 25:

Young Minds Collection, Manipur had stated that the ongoing lockdown to contain COVID-19 has brought utmost misery onto the migrant workers, students and daily wagers. "We have heard many poor people dying due to this sudden lockdown, not by the coronavirus disease during the last two months," a statement issued by the organisation said.

It added that some died due to scarcity of food and some died while trying to get home by walking 100s of KM. Many

stranded students studying outside have been going through a lot of shortcomings due to the current situation.

Young Minds collection further expressed dissatisfaction on the May 23 incident where a special train for Jiribam Railway Station at around 10.50 in the morning by Shramik Special Train from Pune, departed on May 20, 2020 and start transporting the returnees to their respective district quarantine centers.

The organisation term the act as deliberate and discrimination against the poor and vulnerable groups. The organisation condemn the act.

Returnees of Pune Shramik special train starts to transport

IT News
Imphal, May 25:

As many as 973 including 20 children stranded natives of the State, arrived today at Jiribam Railway Station at around 10.50 in the morning by Shramik Special Train from Pune, departed on May 20, 2020 and start transporting the returnees to their respective district quarantine centers.

Under the supervision of Jiribam district administration including

SP Jiribam, and Health Department officials, Transport officials, foods were distributed to all the passengers without letting them get down to the railway platform. Returnees maintained social distancing, they used gloves and masks, undergone strictly thermal screening and other mandatory procedures. Passengers of far away districts like Ukhrul, Kamjong, Churachandpur, Pherzawl etc. were sent out first.

Buses ferrying the passengers will drop them at district common drop points- Ukhrul

Head quarter, Churachandpur Headquarter (Pherzawl/Churachandpur) Chandel Headquarter (Chandel/Tengnoupal), Imphal East Head Quarter/Khuman Lampak (Imphal East/Khuman Lampak), Kangpokpi Head Quarter, Senapati Head Quarter/Noney Head Quarter (Senapati/Noney), Kakching Head Quarter, Tamenglong Head Quarter, Bishnupur Head Quarter, Thoubal Head Quarter, Thoubal Head Quarter, Imphal West Head Quarter and Jiribam Head Quarter.

District wise returnees are Ukhrul district - 117 (1 baby), CCpur & Pherzawl districts - 157 (8 Babies), Chandel and Tengnoupal districts - 34, Imphal East and Kamjong districts - 125 (2 Babies), Kangpokpi district - 99 (1 Baby), Senapati & Noney districts - 121 (2 Babies), Kakching - 38, Tamenglong districts - 55 (1 Baby), Bishnupur district - 70 (1 Baby), Thoubal district - 48 (1 Baby) and Imphal West district - 109 (3 Babies). These passengers were stranded due to the nationwide lockdown of Covid19 pandemic.

Total 968 dedicated COVID hospitals with over 2,50,000 beds identified across country

Agency,
New Delhi, May 25:

Government has said that adequate healthcare infrastructure and facilities have been set-up across the country for COVID-19 management. These have been divided into three categories - Dedicated COVID Hospitals, Dedicated COVID Health Centres and COVID Care Centres with adequate number of isolation beds, ICU beds and other facilities.

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said, a total of 968 Dedicated COVID Hospitals have been identified across the country with over 2 lakh 50 thousand beds. He said, over 2,000 dedicated COVID Health Centres with over 1 lakh 76 thousand beds and over 7,000 COVID Care Centres with over 6 lakh 46 thousand beds have been identified.

Speaking about the protective equipment, Dr Harsh Vardhan said, the country is now making sufficient number of N95 masks and PPE through the ramped up domestic manufacturing sector. He further informed that States and Union territories as well as Central Institutions have been provided with around over one crore N-95 masks and around 72 lakh Personal Protective Equipment.

Parents enjoying more than Grade 3 pay should pay school fee

IT News
Imphal, May 25:

Kangleipak Students' Association (KSA) has appealed government employees whose pay is above Grade III to pay school fees for the lockdown period. However, the private schools should not take the school fee for the poor students. The KSA further said that Mission schools including Nirmalabas, Little Flower School, St. Joseph and Catholic School should not take fees for the students.

A statement by the KSA said that the announcement is being made to make sure that the private school teachers and staffs do not suffer the impact the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maharashtra Minister tests positive for COVID-19

IT Correspondent
Mumbai, May 25:

Maharashtra PWD minister and former chief minister Ashok Chavan has tested positive for coronavirus. Chavan has been admitted at a hospital in his home town in Nanded in Marathwada region.

He contracted the infection a few days back and was reportedly under home quarantine. Now his condition has been described as stable. He has been travelling between Mumbai and Nanded frequently. As of now 06 persons have died and 128 tested positive in Nanded, while overall Marathwada figures stand as

- 1744 positive with 61 deaths. Earlier, NCP leader and Housing Minister Jitendra Ahwad had tested positive for coronavirus. He recovered after remaining admitted in a hospital in Mumbai for more than two weeks.

On Sunday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had said the fight against the novel coronavirus is going to be tougher now as the state's case tally mounts and assured people that the government is prepared with extra health facilities to deal with any emerging situation out of this virus outbreak.

"We are adding to our healthcare capacity- field hospitals are being set up, ICU

beds are being added and together we have 7,000 beds," Uddhav Thackeray said. "We will have 14,000 beds by next month. We have learnt that more than ventilators, patients needed oxygen support. So we are increasing beds with oxygen facility in field hospitals," he added.

With a biggest-ever-hike of 3,041 new positive cases in the last 24 hours, the total number of infected persons in Maharashtra crossed 50,000-mark on Sunday. Of total 50,231 confirmed cases, 33,988 are active, according to the State Health Department.

The death toll has risen to 1,635 after 58 more people succumbed to the deadly disease,

while a total of 1,196 people were also discharged on Sunday, taking the number of cured and discharged patients to 14,600.

Overall in India, 6,767 new positive cases were detected in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of Covid-19 patients to 1,31,868, according to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

India is currently under the fourth phase nationwide lockdown that has been imposed as a precautionary measure to contain the virus spread in the last week of March. The lockdown has been further extended till May 31 with certain relaxations in the rules.

★ Editorial

Technology to the rescue

Our state, though nestled on the far fringe of the country with unfriendly hilly terrain to welcome visitors, does not lag much behind in terms of awareness and utilization of available technological developments, and one thing which the people of the state has taken to with gusto, more out of necessity rather than convenience is the information technology or, simply put- IT. The advent of this amazing technology has indeed changed the way the public view things. People can now understand a broader perspective of all issues and hence, can form their own informed judgement. The curiosity and inquisitiveness of the people has also been aroused, leading to a more scientific temper of mind that questions various beliefs. It has also undoubtedly brought the world closer, thereby easing the frustrations of having to deal with the difficulties of overcoming physical barriers regarding communication and transport, or that inextricable feeling of being sidelined.

While IT is not the panacea to the shortcomings of the society, it is indeed a game-changing aspect, and can be utilized to even effect in our state. Take for instance the protracted problem of distributing, and more importantly, that of collecting bills for various public facilities being provided by the Government. How many of us have really seen a water bill in the last decade or so? And who should we inquire about any matter relating to any Government Department in the state. The obvious solution in this time and age is to Google, which is possible only if and when the information and details are made available by the Government. And when online stores are successfully functioning despite the initial concerns regarding the safety of the payment methods, such fears has been proven unfounded. The whole concept of implementing IT in Governance, as envisaged in the NeGP (National eGovernance Project) Vision, of "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man" should be made functional, with additional services included as required to facilitate generation of revenue for the state.

A fully functional Common Service Centre (CSC) implemented under the NeGP formulated by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY- a full-fledged ministry since 19 July 2016, which henceforth is known as the Ministry of Electronics and Technology, bifurcating it from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology) are Information and Communication Technology enabled front end service delivery points at the village level for delivery of Government, Financial, Social and Private Sector services in the areas of Agriculture, health, education, entertainment, FMCG products, banking, insurance, pension, utility payments etc. The big question is: are these centers functioning as required, or are they just formalities to make up the numbers in the report sheet of the Government?

What steps have the Government taken up to create awareness amongst the public so as to educate them, and ultimately enable them to access the services provided at these centers? It is clearly evident that there need a lot to be done before such supposedly beneficial services reach the public and make their lives that little more convenient. A concerted proactive approach to create awareness and to educate the mass on the development activities and services should be carried out to ensure that such beneficial and positive steps are not wasted, especially in the present situation when the normal functioning and social interactions are greatly restricted- a situation which is more than likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

Domestic flights delayed, cancelled on day 1 after resuming operations

Our correspondent
Mumbai, May 25:

Over 80 flights were stated to be cancelled, at Delhi airport, including an Air India flight (AI-617- Mumbai-Hyderabad flight) were cancelled and other incoming and outgoing flights were delayed, even as domestic flight operations resumed at the Mumbai airport on Monday.

The Air India flight (AI-617), Mumbai-Hyderabad flight which was to depart from Mumbai at 2.10 PM was cancelled. The incoming Hyderabad-Mumbai (Vistara airlines) flight was the only flight to land before time (at 2.09 PM) as against scheduled time of 2.15 PM.

In Mumbai, the arrival list included the flights from Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Chandigarh, Bengaluru and Hyderabad, while the departure list included the flights to Hyderabad, Delhi, Thiruvananthapuram, Lucknow, Abu Dhabi, Delhi, Bengaluru and Kolkata. Vistara, Indigo, Air Asia, Go Air and Spice Jet, had scheduled to run these flights.

As domestic flights resumed at

several airports across India, after two months since the coronavirus lockdown was imposed, there was confusion and chaos at airports in Delhi, Mumbai and other cities as a large number of flights were cancelled and passengers complained that they did not get any notification from the airlines.

The angry passengers at Terminal III of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport claimed that they were not informed till the last minute. Airport officials said the cancellations were on account of many states telling the centre that they will not be able to operate flights agreed upon earlier. The Delhi airport was to handle a total of 125 departures and 118 arrivals on Monday. Similarly 9 flights were cancelled at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport.

The chaotic scenes were witnessed at the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai, with several passengers seen sitting outside the airport after their flights were cancelled.

Vegetable flood at Wabagai; whereas Vegetable drought at Imphal during lock down due to pandemic COVID-19

By Dr Mayengbam Lalit Singh
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It is duty of economists to bring equilibrium between economic forces such as demand and supply. Maxim of Classical Economics "Supply creates its own demand" which was applicable during those decades when there was no hectic official procedure against free flows of goods and services. However, modern day governance brings obstacles against free flows of goods and services if the latter does not comply with official procedures framed by governance. Economic history taught us lessons how disequilibrium between demand and supply evolved in many countries. The distinguished example is The Great Economic Depression in 1930s in the USA where there were records of overproduction of goods without matching demands from consumers. Despite the overproduction in the USA, several countries in the world experienced in the lack of those goods. Similar situation was witnessed in 2014 when Crimea (part of Ukraine) was integrated with Russia due to political unrest in the country. Several countries of European Union along the USA imposed sanction against import to and export from Russia. Many farmers of European countries exported fruits, dairy products and agro based product to Russia. However, due to sanction, they could neither export nor find market elsewhere.

It was pathetic situation to watch those distressed farmers destroying their produces and hence their annual incomes were crippled. However, in Russia consumers face scarcity of those imported products since local producer could not produce the amount demanded by local consumers which resulted in inflation in Russia.

Recent trade war between the USA and China affects availability of consumers' goods in both countries. The USA levies high tariffs on those manufactured goods imported from China which result in scarcity of the manufactured goods. In similar fashion, China also levies high tariffs on those agricultural items imported from the USA. Among agricultural commodities, soybean is reported the most consumed item in China. Owing to the high tariff rate, USA farmers find it very hard to find the market for their products. Chinese consumers face shortages of soybean along with inflated prices. Hence, such impediments in the free flow of goods lead to artificial inflation of goods across many countries.

The most debatable scarcity of goods at present is due to ongoing pandemic COVID-19 in many countries. When referred to Indian cases, it is reported that all the states have been facing shortages of basic goods along with inflated prices of these consumers' goods.

In the case for India, there are reports that ongoing lock down disturbs distribution of foods across the country. It has been witnessed that farmers are

unable to sell their products to the consumers. The great vegetable malls in the cities can't be supplied due to lock down. As a result scarcity of vegetables takes place in the vegetable sector which results in inflation of these goods. On the other hand, the plight of vegetables from the growers has been dwindling and prices for vegetables are grounded. Farmers who borrowed loans for their crops are facing a harsh situation of being in between a rock and hard place. If these perishable vegetables are not plighted in time, they will be spoiled within a short period of time.

During the first phase of lock down in Manipur, there was fear among the farmers of Wabagai that standing vegetables (cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, peas, Wabagai potato, etc.) would perish and incurred a huge loss. However, many CSOs and social workers in Imphal gathered vegetables at the price prevailing in the market and distributed it to each household. Later on, private businessmen join the supply of vegetables through a pass system introduced by related government officials. Since then, such businessmen have become player of discriminating prices towards farmers and consumers. Such businessmen usually collect relatively valuable vegetables to their weights at the lowest rate and sell it at the highest rate to the consumers so that they can earn huge profit in every trip. At present, according to farmers, these businessmen buy cabbage (two kilogram or more than that) at rupees 10 and

reportedly sell rupees 10 per kg to the consumers which earn at least rupees 30 or 40. Farmers feel that the price they get is just the cost price. So, they are reluctant to sell cabbage at that rate instead they feel that it is better to make cabbage perished to become organic manure. So the government should initiate such policies where members of rural governmental bodies should be employed in collecting vegetables at a price rate prevailing in the rural market. Members of urban governmental bodies should be instructed to cooperate with those rural bodies and sell it to respective localities at fair price. This would solve the scarcity of vegetables in urban areas and reduce variability between prices prevailed in rural and urban areas. At present, private small businessmen are the ones who plight such vegetables from Wabagai to urban areas and other parts of Manipur. According to them, hectic procedures in pursuing vehicle pass, scarcity of vehicle fuel and infrastructural bottlenecks (pathetic roads) in Wabagai are major constraints in the regular plight of vegetables from Wabagai. In regard to infrastructural constraints, roads originating from where vegetables are grown to main Mayai Lambi Road (Irabot Road) are so pathetic with huge potholes which reduce capacity of plight. Government needs to convert these roads to blacktop ones as a part of "Go to Village" programme so that the village can feed the people of Manipur and contribute more to state GDP.

Continuing woes of people in the Green Zone of Manipur

By- Chinglen Khumukcham,
Thokhom Yaiphalembi Chanu
and Priyadarshini Laishram

The lockdown has been eased across the country. The districts have been categorized in red, orange and green zones. Though there has been easing of restrictions in the so-called orange and green zones, these relaxations are not evenly spread. In many places which fall in green and orange zones, the restrictions which came into force due to the lockdown are still prevailing. The state governments in many parts, content with the easing of their work including that of law and order during lockdown, are viewing it as a respite from their overburdened routinized work, and as such have allowed the restrictions to remain in place.

The case of such states is exemplified by Manipur. The Covid-19 cases which have seen an upward graph in various parts of India, have abated in North-east, and some states no longer have patients diagnosed with Covid-19. The partial lifting of lockdown across the country, with Manipur categorized in green zone on May 1, had brought hopes of resumption of daily activities for a vast section of the people in the state. But, such hopes lie dashed as the state government continues to hold the state in curfew, which came in effect on March 24, 2020.

It should be known that due to the ill-effects of lockdown, there has been widespread misery across the country. The brunt of such misery has been borne by the most vulnerable and marginalized sections, and the poorest of the poor. Contrary to the claims of both the central and state governments, the aid and essential rationes have not reached the vulnerable sections and those most affected by the lockdown. The unprecedented misery imposed on the people could have been offset by the state government providing them Basic Minimum Income, so as to help them tide over the present crisis, and by allowing resumption of economic activities with adequate precautions, after Manipur was categorized in the green zone. But, no relief has been provided to the people on this front so far.

The order of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) dated May 1, 2020 specifically states "In the Green Zone, all activities are permitted except the limited number of activities which are prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of the Zone." But, unfortunately the state remains in curfew. While the easing of lockdown has brought no relief for the people in the state, the insensitivity of state and district administrations along with the apathy of police has further left people in a state of despair. A vast majority of the

people in the state have lost their livelihood due to the lockdown. Most of the people are daily wagers who belong to the poorest of the poor sections of the society. While there is no relief in sight for them, the curfew makes their plight even worse. Selected markets have been allowed to open, but curfew has marred normal functioning of these markets. The curfew passes which allow one to step out are allotted to selective people, as a large majority is forced to remain inside home. Moreover, the orders of various departments concerning restrictions on movement are contradictory, leading to further problems for the people.

There are daily reports of police detaining and imposing fines on people who violate the curfew. The daily amounts collected as fines indicate that the exercise is more for boosting the purportedly depleted revenues of the state than for any serious regard for maintaining law and order. The people being detained include even those who are venturing out for purchasing essentials. In such a situation, the possibility of citizen-police conflict increases manifold, which would further worsen the condition of the common people, especially that of the most vulnerable sections of society.

The ostensible reason for such a policy of continuing with

the restrictions is to contain the spread of Covid-19. This is a questionable reason since Manipur was declared a green zone as there were no active Covid-19 cases in the state till very recent days when Covid-19 has once again shown a rise in the state. Imposing curfew on the whole population is a misdirected measure as it bars the people from carrying out their work related to their very livelihood. It should also be noted that the recent increase in Covid-19 cases is confined to people who have recently returned to Manipur. These people are already in quarantine centres and the possibility of their spreading the infection is tied with the state government's alacrity in monitoring their movement.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to lift the curfew, and allowing economic activities to resume with necessary precautions in place, so as to enable the people to rebuild their lives, as much has been lost for them due to the lockdown. The provision of Basic Minimum Income by the state government to all the workers and those from socio-economically marginalized sections, most of whom are the worst affected, would go a long way in helping them tide over the present crisis.

The writers are associated with North-East Forum for International Solidarity (NEFIS)

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