

Locust control operations continue, no crop loss reported: Centre

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) Locust Control Offices (LCOs) on Friday conducted control operations at 15 locations in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Union Agriculture Ministry said, adding that no crop loss was reported.

Locust control operations were conducted at 10 locations in districts of Jaipur, Dausa, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Barmer, Chittorgarh, Sri Ganganagar (Rajasthan) and Niwari and Shivpuri (Madhya Pradesh).

Besides, the Madhya Pradesh Agriculture Department also undertook control operations at 5 locations, one each in the Satna, Balaghat, Niwari, Raisen and Shivpuri districts. As on May 28, a total of 377 spots covering 53,997 hectares have been covered since locust control operations started from April 11, the



Ministry said in a statement. Locust operations have been conducted in 11 districts of Rajasthan, 24 of Madhya Pradesh, three in Maharashtra, two each in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and one in Punjab.

Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare Secretary, Sanjay Agarwal on Friday organised a meeting, via video conference, with the Principal Secretary,

Agriculture, of all the states and UTs, said the statement. All the states and UTs were informed about the latest status and control of locust attack and an advisory was issued in respect of locusts to all the states/UTs. A letter was issued on Wednesday by the Union Home Secretary to the Chief Secretaries of all the states/UTs giving necessary instructions to streamline the

inter-state movement facility for the personnel engaged in locust control works.

The MHA has included hiring of vehicles/tractors with spray equipment for spraying of plant protection chemicals for pest control, hiring of water tankers, and purchase of plant protection chemicals for locust control in this and the norms related to the quantum of assistance will be limited to the actual expenditure incurred on these items. However, expenditure should not exceed 25 per cent of SDRF allocation for the year, said the statement. As per FAOs Locust Status Bulletin of May 27, several successive waves of invasions can be expected until July in Rajasthan with eastward surges across northern India as far as Bihar and Odisha.

Some train passengers died, gathering details: Rail Board Chairman

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) Facing public anger over the death of a few passengers travelling in Shramik Special trains, Railway Board Chairman V.K. Yadav on Friday said that "some people have died during the train journeys and Railways is gathering details". Addressing a press conference here, Yadav however said that doctors can tell the exact whether the deaths were due to hunger or any disease.

"It would be insensitive to say, without any investigation, that these deaths were on account of starvation," Yadav said.

The railways has faced criticism after a video of a toddler trying to wake up his dead mother at Bihar's Muzaffarpur railway station on May 25 went viral on social media. Yadav said that states have been provided with as many trains as they de-



manded. "On Thursday only, we ran 137 trains for migrant workers across the country," he said. "Slowly, it seems like the demand (for Shramik trains) from originating states is coming down," Yadav said, adding that as of last week, originating states had indicated a demand for 923 such trains, which had come down to 449 trains as of Thursday. "These trains, however, will

continue to operate as long as all migrants are not sent back to their home states," he said. As for passengers snatching packets of snacks at railway stations, Yadav said: "The incidents of migrants getting into scuffles for food on these trains have happened only in two to three per cent of these trains. We are monitoring each and every train for water and food supply."

Grains under PMGKAY for May not yet given in Delhi, Bengal: Paswan

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Ram Vilas Paswan, said on Friday that several states and UTs have already distributed 100 per cent quota of food grains for May under the PMGKAY but Delhi and West Bengal were yet to start the distribution.

However, Delhi has distributed 96 per cent of its quota of food grains for April under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to the Public Distribution System (PDS) beneficiaries as against West Bengal's 93 per cent.

Paswan held a video-conference here to brief the media about the initiatives and reforms undertaken by his Ministry in the last one year.

In order to help the poor amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the central government brought about a scheme to distribute 5 kg foodgrain- rice or wheat to every beneficiary under the PDS and one kg dal to



every ration card holder family under the PMGKAY. Paswan said that his Ministry's main focus amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown is to provide food grains and pulses to all PDS and non-PDS card holders, migrant labourers and even those not covered under any food grain scheme of the central or the state governments.

He said that sufficient quantity of food grains is available in the country's buffer stock.

The Minister said that the distribution of food grains by states and Union Territories under the PMGKAY, Atmanirbhar Bharat Package, National Food Security Act and other schemes

is satisfactory, barring a few states.

Under the PMGKAY, for the next 3 months, 104.4 LMT rice and 15.6 LMT wheat is required, of which 83.38 LMT rice and 12.42 LMT wheat have been lifted by various states/UTs. A total of 95.80 LMT has been lifted. As regards pulses, the total requirement for the next three months is 5.87 LMT. So far, 4.62 LMT pulses have been dispatched while 3.64 LMT pulses have reached states/UTs and 71,738 MT delivered. As of May 20, 1.64 LMT pulses have been distributed by the states/UTs.

Paswan said that states/UTs have already lifted 2.06 LMT food

grains under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package. The distribution has been started and will be completed on schedule.

He said that the identification of migrants/stranded migrants under Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme may be done by the states/UTs through their own mechanisms and Aadhaar Cards of persons, if available, may also be leveraged to ascertain that person is not covered under NFSA or state PDS schemes.

States/UTs may provide the benefit of this scheme to any poor/ needy migrant/stranded migrant who does not have access to food and is not covered under NFSA/state PDS schemes, he added.

The Minister said that as of May 28, the Food Corporation of India has 272.29 LMT rice and 479.40 LMT wheat. Hence, a total of 751.69 LMT food grain stock is available (excluding on-going purchase of wheat and paddy, which have not yet reached the godowns).

India is the Most Preferred Destination for Protective Gear manufacturing

Delhi, 29 May, There is one simple way to minimize the risk of getting COVID-19 infection - wear a mask when you are with people. The critical phrase is "risk minimization". One careless exposure can lead to hundreds of deaths, and one less exposure can save hundreds of lives. The need for such protection is not limited to Doctors, Caregivers, and other service providers. Each and every citizen needs protection. There is an urgent need for the easy availability of affordable quality masks to the general public. This is where many Indian manufacturers have risen to the occasion and they have quickly ramped up their production facilities to produce personal protective gear like masks, full-body suit, bouffant cap, gloves, shoe covers, and few other items.

Deepak Aggarwal of PD Group says, "As a group having diverse manufacturing expertise since the last 40 years, it was our moral and national obligation to organize our



resources and facilities to produce protective masks and the complete Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)." Even in the lockdown, this entrepreneurial energy has led to employment opportunities for hundreds of workers including migrants. Speaking on behalf of All India Technical Textile Manufacturers and Processors Association, Mr. Deepak Aggarwal adds, "In the next few months, this industry is likely to give a big boost to employment, thereby not only saving lives but building India as well."

Amid Covid-19 rise, Delhi HC suspends functioning till June 14

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) The Delhi High Court has extended the suspension of its functioning, along with that of its subordinate courts, till June 14, keeping in view the prevailing situation regarding the outbreak of the deadly Covid-19. All the benches of the high court would, however, take up urgent matters through video conferencing as per the roster. "The Hon'ble Administrative and General Supervision Committee of this Court while considering further extension of suspended functioning of this Court and taking note of the prevalent situation, in continuation of this Court's Office orders, has been pleased to order that the functioning of the High Court of Delhi shall continue to remain suspended till 14.06.2020," the order read. The high court has also ordered for the suspension of the functioning of its subordinate courts till the same date i.e. June 14. "It is further ordered that the matters listed in the subordinate courts from 01.06.2020 to 12.06.2020 be adjourned en bloc and information in this regard be uploaded on District Court website. The other directions contained in this Court's Office Order No.R-235/RGIDHC/2020 dated 16.05.2020 be duly complied with," the court said.

Delhi increases covid testing, sample pendency goes down

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) In the past three weeks, the Delhi government has scaled up testing for Covid-19 by collecting almost double the amount of samples, while the pendency of the reports have reduced to half, data from the Health Department said.

The data accessed by IANS from the Delhi Health De-

partment said that on May 26, 5,359 samples were collected -- highest in a day so far in this month -- and the pendency was 2,650.

On May 6, only 1,815 samples were collected, and the pendency stood at 6,153 -- highest in the last three weeks. Between then and now, while the sample collec-

tion increased, the pendency started decreasing. On May 7 and 8, 1,608 and 1,360 samples were collected, respectively, while the pendency was over 4,000.

At least 1,279 samples were collected on May 9, when the pendency was 3,842. On average, more than 1,900 samples were collected between May

10 and May 14 and the pendency each day stood at over 4,000. On May 15, the pendency went up to 5,080 even as the samples collected were only 1,722 during the day.

Similarly, the pendency was more than 2,000 each day between May 16 and May 23, except on May 19 when it was 1,841.

Will distribute 25 lakh sanitary napkins: Mahila Congress

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) The Mahila Congress on Friday said it will distribute 25 lakh personal hygiene kits in Shramik Special trains ferrying migrants labourers to their native states as well as railway stations across the country. Each hygiene kit with a sanitary napkin and a soap in a disposable bag will be distributed by the women's wing of the opposition Congress under its 'Garima' campaign to empower women to manage menstruation safely, hygienically, with confidence and without shame.

"The migrant crisis is worsening by each passing day. The disturbing visuals of the migrant workers on the roads on way to their native places are a chilling testimony to our insensitivity towards their plight. At the centre of this huge crisis are women and the apathy towards their needs is shocking," Mahila Congress President Sushmita Dev said in a statement here. When the nationwide lockdown was imposed across the country from March 24

midnight, a list of essential items was released by the government of India, which did not mention sanitary napkins explicitly. The opposition party alleged that it was only after criticism from various quarters that the Women and Child Development Ministry presented an updated list of essential items that included sanitary products.

"This delay in decision is a reflection of the government apathy towards women's health. Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani mentioned that sanitary napkins are now available at Jan Aushadhi Kendras at reduced prices, but the point is when women are standing in queues for 12-18 hours for medical screening before rail travels, at quarantine centres, or on roads, how can they access sanitary napkins at the Jan Aushadhi Kendras," the Mahila Congress asked.

It said so far 4-5 lakh sanitary napkins have been distributed to women who did not have access to the personal hygiene product.

ISI plots attack on Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin

New Delhi, May 29 (IANS) Unable to carry out Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) diktat of creating unrest in Jammu and Kashmir lately, terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin reportedly faced the ire of his masters when he was attacked by unknown assailants in Islamabad on May 25, sources said on Friday. Sources in the intelligence agencies said that Mohammad Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin, who also heads the alliance of pro-Pakistan terrorist groups called the United Jihad Council, was "grievously injured in the attack and is undergoing treatment".

Salahuddin has been declared a global terrorist by the US State Department. "He was targeted near the Hizbul Mujahideen compound in Islamabad on May 25," said a top intelligence agency officer. The attack was reportedly

planned and executed by the ISI. It was not meant to kill Salahuddin, but to send a message to him and the members of his terror outfit that they were gradually becoming redundant.

The difference between Salahuddin and his ISI handler started ever since the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August last year.

Intelligence sources said that since Salahuddin or his outfit were clueless about the Indian government's move to abrogate Article 370, which granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, the ISI had gradually started withdrawing its support to the Hizbul Mujahideen. Further, sources said that ISI had also directed Salahuddin to carry out a massive attack in the Valley against the Indian government's move, but he failed to deliver on

that ground.

The sources said that when ISI started sending him messages of withdrawing its support, Salahuddin approached Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) leader Raja Farooq Haider and others.

He promised the ISI of carrying out attacks in the Valley, source said. In the meantime, ISI stoned providing adequate training, weapons and ammunition to the Hizbul cadres. In addition, the lack of support to Hizbul in Kashmir weakened him further. But after the elimination of top Hizbul commander Riyaz Naikoo by the Indian security forces in an encounter in Kashmir earlier this month, Salahuddin went on the back foot, sources said. He openly criticised the ISI during an interaction with the Hizbul cadres in PoK. Earlier in May, after Naikoo was killed, Salahuddin had said that Indian security

forces' position in the Kashmir Valley was strong. A video of the him saying so had surfaced. Salahuddin was heard saying in a gathering in Rawalpindi to mourn the killing of Naikoo that even after the killing of five security personnel, Indian security forces continued to be in a position of strength.

He was speaking in Urdu with a Kashmiri accent and could be heard saying, "It's a shock for all of us (killing of Riyaz Naikoo) but these sacrifices are going on in Kashmir since long." He was heard saying that since January this year, 80 Mujahideens (terrorists) were eliminated by the security forces and all of them were highly educated and trained. The intelligence agencies had stumbled upon the video recording of the gathering where Salahuddin could be seen ranting about the Indian security forces and singing praises.