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Laws Active during Lockdown

- During lockdown, Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code has been widely invoked against those not following it.
- In a communication to the states on March 24, the Home Ministry said persons violating the containment measures will be liable to be punished under provisions of the Disaster Management Act 2005, besides Section 188 IPC.
- **The related provisions of IPC and Disaster Management are as follows**

1. **For disobedience**

- **Section 188 IPC** deals with those disobeying an order passed by a public servant, and provides for imprisonment ranging from one to six months. For those violating orders passed under the Epidemic Diseases Act, Section 188 IPC is the provision under which punishment is awarded.
- **Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005** provides for punishment for two kinds of offences: obstructing any officer or employee of the government or person authorized by any disaster management authority for discharge of a function; and refusing to comply with any direction given by the authorities under the Act.
- Punishment can extend to one year on conviction, or two years if the refusal leads to loss of lives or any imminent danger.

2. **For spreading fear**

- Section 505 IPC provides for imprisonment of three years or fine, or both, for those who publish or circulate anything which is likely to cause fear or alarm.
- **Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act** provides for imprisonment, extending to one year, of those who make or circulate a false alarm or warning regarding a disaster or its severity or magnitude.

3. **For false claim to aid**

- **Under Section 52, Disaster Management Act**, whoever makes a false claim for obtaining “any relief, assistance, repair, reconstruction or other

benefits" from any official authority can be sentenced to a maximum of two years imprisonment and a fine will be imposed on the person.

4. **For refusing to do duties**

- In case of refusal or withdrawal of any officer who has been tasked with any duty under the Act, the officer can be sentenced to imprisonment extending to one year.
- However, those who have written permission of the superior or any lawful ground are exempt from such punishment.
- A case cannot be initiated without the explicit sanction from the state or central government.

5. **For refusing to help**

- Any authorized authority under the Act can requisite resources like persons and material resources, premises like land or building, or sheds and vehicles for rescue operations.
- Though there is a provision for compensation under the Act, any person who disobeys such an order can be sentenced to imprisonment up to one year.

Legal shield of the Acts

- For any offence under the Disaster Management Act, a court will take cognizance only if the complaint is filed by the national or state or district authority, or the central or state government.
- However, there is another provision: if a person has given notice of 30 days or more about an alleged offence, and about his intention to file a complaint, he or she can approach the court which can then take cognizance.
- The Act protects government officers and employees from any legal process for actions they took "in good faith".
- Under the Epidemic Diseases Act too, no suit or other legal proceedings can lie against any person for anything done or intended to be done under good faith.

Operation Sanjeevani

- Under Operation Sanjeevani an Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130J transport aircraft delivered 6.2 tons of essential medicines and hospital consumables to Maldives.
- 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.
- 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.
- Among other things, these medicines include influenza vaccines, anti-viral drugs such as lopinavir and ritonavir which have been used to treat patients with COVID-19 in other countries.

Lifeline UDAN flights

- Under Lifeline UDAN, 97 flights have been operated by Air India, Alliance Air, IAF, Pawan Hans and private carriers.
- Aerial distance covered by Lifeline Udan flights till date is over 1 lakh km.
- The cargo includes COVID-19 related reagents, enzymes, medical equipment, testing kits, Personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, gloves, other materials of HLL and ICMR. Cargo requisitioned by State/UT Governments and also postal packets
- Lifeline Udan flights operate in a hub and spoke model.
- Cargo hubs have been established at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bangalore.
- Lifeline Udan flights connect these hubs to locations like Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Agartala, Aizwal, Dimapur, Imphal, Coimbatore, Trivandrum, Bhubaneswar, Raipur, Ranchi, Port Blair and Goa. Special focus has been on the North East Region (NER), island territories and the hill states.
- Ministry of Civil Aviation , Air India and IAF have collaborated closely for last mile deliveries to Ladakh, Dimapur, Imphal, Guwahati and Port Blair.

Geo-Fencing

- Geo-fencing is a location-based service in which an app or other software uses GPS, RFID, Wi-Fi or cellular data to trigger a pre-programmed action when a mobile device or RFID tag enters or exits a virtual boundary set up around a geographical location, known as a geo-fence.
- The “geo-fencing” is accurate by up to 300 m.
- Depending on how a geo-fence is configured it can prompt mobile push notifications, trigger text messages or alerts, send targeted advertisements on social media, allow tracking on vehicle fleets, disable certain technology or deliver location-based marketing data.
- To make use of geo-fencing, an administrator or developer must first establish a virtual boundary around a specified location in GPS- or RFID-

enabled software.

- This virtual defence will then trigger a response when an authorized device enters or exits that area, as specified by the administrator or developer.
- Other applications of geo-fence:

1. Social networking.
2. Marketing
3. Audience engagement.
4. Smart appliances.
5. Human Resource management.
6. Telematics.
7. Security

- Based on Geo-Fencing union government has tested an application that triggers e-mails and SMS alerts to an authorized government agency if a person has jumped quarantine or escaped from isolation, based on the person's mobile phone's cell tower location.
- The States have been asked to seek the approval of their Home Secretaries under the provisions of Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, for the specified mobile phone numbers to request the DoT to provide information by email or SMS in case of violation of "geo-fencing".

Centre for Augmenting WAR with COVID-19 Health Crisis (CAWACH)

- Department of Science & Technology, in a rapid response to combat COVID-19 global pandemic approved setting up of a Centre for Augmenting WAR with COVID-19 Health Crisis (CAWACH).
- CAWACH will scout, evaluate and support the innovations and start-ups that address COVID-19 challenges.
- The Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE), a technology business incubator at IIT Bombay supported by DST has been identified as the Implementing Agency of the CAWACH.
- The CAWACH's mandate will be to extend timely support to potential startups by way of the requisite financial assistance and fund deployment targeting innovations that are deployable in the market within next 6 months.

- CAWACH will identify upto 50 innovations and startups that are in the area of novel, low cost, safe and effective ventilators, respiratory aids, protective gears, novel solutions for sanitizers, disinfectants, diagnostics, therapeutics, informatics and any effective interventions to control COVID-19.
- It will provide access to pan India networks for testing, trial and market deployment of these products and solutions in the identified areas of priority COVID-19 solutions.
- This will help to address various challenges faced by country due to severe impact of Covid-19.

Source: PIB, Indian Express, the Hindu

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