Exit Strategy for COVID-19
Lockdown Restrictions

April 2020
Contents

1 Executive Summary 3

2 Introduction 5
2.1 Task Force 7
2.2 India – current status 9
2.2.1 State Wise Distribution of cases 9
2.2.2 India: Daily Cases 10
2.2.3 India: Daily Trends 10
2.3 Punjab – current status 11
2.3.1 District-wise status in Punjab 11
2.3.2 Punjab: Daily Trends 12
2.3.3 District-wise Transmission History in Punjab 12
2.3.4 India vs. Punjab: Patient Status 13
2.3.5 India vs. Punjab: Date-wise Increase in Cases 13
2.3.6 Daily Doubling Rate 14

3 COVID–19: Socio-Economic Challenges 15

4 Likely Impact on the Punjab economy 17
4.1 Demand-side impact 18
4.2 Supply-side Impact 20

5 Objectives of the Lockdown Exit Strategy 21
5.1 Health related Objectives 22
5.2 Non-Health related Objectives 23

6 Lockdown Exit Strategy 24

7 Specific Interventions Recommended 29
7.1 State Finances 30
7.2 Health 32
7.3 Labour 36
7.4 Education 37
7.4.1 School Education 38
7.4.2 Higher Education 39
7.4.3 Teaching Pedagogy changes and New Opportunities in all Institutions 40
7.5 Industry 41
7.6 Agriculture 42
7.7 Judiciary 43
7.8 Issues to be taken up with Govt. of India by Govt. of Punjab 43
Executive Summary
Government of Punjab constituted a Task Force to suggest measures to address the public policy challenges for dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic, including the phased easing of restrictions imposed during the Lockdown. Accordingly, the Task Force has prepared an exit strategy for Punjab with a fine balance between normalizing socio-economic activities in the State and at the same time containing the sudden spread of the virus with an unexpected trajectory.

The Task Force noted that considerable easing of restrictions has already been ordered by Government of India in rural areas and areas outside the Municipal Corporations/Municipalities. The Task Force is in agreement with and commends adoption and implementation of consolidated revised guidelines issued by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India on 15.04.2020 in the current lockdown period till 03.05.2020.

The curfew in the State has brought the economic activity to a halt. Punjab lost about Rs. 1200 – 1700 crore of GDP per day during the first days of lockdown. Major contributors to GDP – manufacturing, agriculture, investment and trade are expected to get adversely affected not only during the period of lockdown, but also in the coming months. MSME sector, the largest employer in the State, is expected to be the worst hit.

Known as the ‘Granary of India’, Punjab is the highest contributor of wheat and rice to the central procurement pool. This period is very crucial as it is the opportune time for harvesting of the Rabi crop and sowing of the Kharif crop. If the curfew is not eased, it may give a big jolt to the food security of not just the State but the entire country.

Further, Punjab’s economy is staring at a possible contraction after a gap of about 40 years. State’s fiscal situation may suffer gravely as tax and non-tax revenue streams dry up due to shutting down of economic activity. Adequate provisioning of funds to meet requirement of health and social sectors cannot be avoided.

While the Task Force hopes for a greater autonomy to States in deciding future course of action, it recommends pertinent amendments in the consolidated revised guidelines issued by MHA, GoI to accelerate the revival of labour market and reboot the stagnant industrial economy for consideration from 15 May 2020, incase lockdown is extended beyond 3rd May by GoI.

The Task Force recommends that the lockdown exit strategy be classified into health and non-health related objectives. Health related objectives include measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 through ramping up healthcare procedures, systems and supplies. Whereas the non-health related objectives include measures to restore economic activities to near normal through easing up of the supply chains and logistics, especially for the seamless movement of essential goods and services, restoration of livelihood, manufacturing activities, solutions for migrant labour.

Sectoral sub-groups of the Task Force deliberated at length over various platforms and submitted suggestions, which were then considered by the larger group and specific interventions have been recommended by the Task Force across the gamut of State finances, health, labour, education, industry, agriculture and judiciary.

The Task Force has also identified issues that may be taken up by Government of Punjab with Government of India.
Introduction
The COVID-19 pandemic is a medical emergency. The pace at which it has spread across the world and the number of lives it continues to claim is unprecedented. It has exposed weaknesses in every nation public health infrastructure to prevent transmission or treat those infected. Tragically, no end is yet in sight, as anti-viral drugs for treatment or a vaccine to prevent the spread of the disease will take more than a year to develop, test, and mass produce. Therefore, deliberate, measured, and long-term strategies must be drawn up to combat the virus.

The impact of COVID-19 goes far beyond its basic nature as a virulent disease. The social, economic, and political life has been disrupted by state-mandated lockdowns. Social distancing has become a norm. These measures have been adopted in almost all the affected countries; in varying degree. By slowing the spread, countries have tried to lower the Basic Reproduction Number so that healthcare systems are not overburdened, and public health infrastructure is strengthened. This is particularly relevant to countries such as India, where existing infrastructure is lacking, in appropriate and trained manpower, medical equipment and medicines and falls short in reach and access.

While helping to control the spread, the lockdown has disrupted and devastated the lives and livelihoods of the citizens. Most businesses and industry have been shuttered and with it the capacity of the employers to retain and pay the labor. Demand for goods has vanished. Supply chains have collapsed. The worst hit are daily wage earners, who now find themselves without food, and in some cases, shelter or dignity.

The Government of Punjab has made every effort to overcome these challenges. The contribution of every frontline worker must be acknowledged and applauded. The purpose or the intention of this Task Force is not to find fault in the efforts made so far. Indeed, the effort is to make recommendations that sharpen the focus of interventions in the days ahead and help in stabilizing this dire situation.
2.1 Task Force

The containment of COVID-19 contagion requires changes in human behavior, including limiting mobility, maintaining physical distance and rigorous personal hygiene. The conduct of socio-economic activities according to new norms, necessitates policy interventions.

The Government of Punjab has constituted this Task Force to suggest measures, both in the short-term and medium-term, to address the public policy challenges for dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic, including the phased easing of restrictions imposed during the Lockdown. The members of the Task Force include:

1. Sh. K R Lakhanpal, IAS (Retd.)
2. Sh. N S Sandhu, IPS (Retd.)
3. Sh. D S Kalha, IAS (Retd.) - Convener
4. Dr. Swaraj Bir Singh, Chief Editor, Punjabi Tribune
5. Sh. Manmohan Lal Sarin, Senior Advocate
6. Dr. K K Talwar, former Director PGIMER, Chandigarh
7. Dr. Raj Bahadur, Vice Chancellor, BFUHS Faridkot
8. Dr. Rajesh Kumar, former Head, School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh
9. Sh. Ajay Vir Jakhar, Chairman, Punjab State Farmers & Farm Workers' Commission
10. Sh. Bhupinder Singh Mann, Bhartiya Kisan Union
11. Sh. S P Oswal, Chairman, Vardhman Industries
12. Sh. Rajinder Gupta, Chairman, Trident Industries
13. Sh. A S Mittal, Vice-Chairman, Sonalika Tractors
14. Sh. Gautam Kapoor, Radisson Hotel, Jalandhar
15. Sh. Bhavdeep Sardana, CEO, Sukhjeet Starch & Chemicals
16. Sh. Ashok Sethi, President, Punjab Rice Millers Association
17. Sh. B S Dhillon, Vice Chancellor, PAU Ludhiana
18. Sh. S K Das, Director, IIT Ropar
19. Dr. J S Sandhu, Vice Chancellor, GNDU Amritsar
20. Sh. Arunjit Singh Miglani, IAS (Retd.)
The Task Force shall address the following issues:

i. Strategy for restrictions outside COVID-19 hotspots and containment zones, and the phasing-out of restrictions after the lockdown for different sectors of the economy, viz. commerce, education, industries, transportation, health care, travel, tourism, etc.

ii. Policy measures for restarting the socio-economic activities and re-establishing livelihoods and limiting contagion

iii. Policy measure for new opportunities of livelihood, including the digital economy

iv. Policy measures to regulate public passenger transport travel between states & cities

vi. Any other issues pertinent to the State Government's response to COVID-19 epidemic

The participation and support and contribution of every member of the Task Force is gratefully acknowledged. The methodology adopted for compiling the report was to form sector specific sub-groups. The recommendations were then considered in a meeting of the Task Force. All the suggestions may not have found mention the report. This is not because they were without merit. As the report was expected to be submitted in the shortest time possible, only such suggestions that had broad consensus have been included.

The Task Force had the opportunity to discuss the issues with some Heads of Departments of the Government. Their inputs are also gratefully acknowledged.

It would not have been possible to put together the draft report without the unstinted support of Sh. Parminder Pal Singh Sandhu, PCS, Additional Secretary cum Director, Department of Governance Reforms, Government of Punjab, Sh. Ashveer Pal Singh, Senior Research Associate, IDFC Institute and Sh. Abhishek Puri, Manager, KPMG India Services LLP.
## 2.2 India – current status

According to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India, a total of 23,452 COVID-19 cases have been reported in 32 states/union territories till 24 April 2020. These include 4,814 who have been cured, discharged or migrated and 723 deaths.

### 2.2.1 State Wise Distribution of cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of State / UT</th>
<th>Total Confirmed cases</th>
<th>Cured/ Discharged/ Migrated</th>
<th>Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andaman and Nicobar Islands</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>2625</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>3071</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ladakh</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>2096</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>7628</td>
<td>1076</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Puducherry</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>2083</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Telangana</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1843</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26917</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>5914</strong></td>
<td><strong>826</strong></td>
<td><strong>656</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Including 111 foreign National, States wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, Source: [https://www.mohfw.gov.in/](https://www.mohfw.gov.in/) accessed at 23:00 hrs. on 26 April 2020
2.2.2 India: Daily Cases

As on 25 April 2020; Source: MOHFW, GoI

2.2.3 India: Daily Trends

As on 26 April 2020; Source: MOHFW, GoI
2.3 Punjab – current status

- Punjab reported its first positive case on 5 March 2020. As on 23 April 2020, there are 283 confirmed cases with estimated increase of 10%.

- The number of deaths in March 2020 was 4. As on 23 April 2020, the death toll has jumped to 17. The average age of deceased patients is 60 years.

- As per ICMR on 16 March 2020, Punjab was conducting 4 tests per million. This has increased to 296 tests per million on 23 April 2020. However, this growth in tests remains much behind other states like Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu etc.

- The testing capacity in government facilities has increased from 80 to 400 each for GMC Patiala and GMC Amritsar. Other testing facilities include GGSMCH Faridkot (capacity 150), PGI (capacity 60), Imtech (capacity 150) and DMC Ludhiana (capacity 40).

2.3.1 District-wise status in Punjab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S No</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Confirmed</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Cured</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Patiala</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>S.A.S. Nagar</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Pathankot</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mansa</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ludhiana</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Faridkot</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Sangrur</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Ferozepur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Sri Muktsar Sahib</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Moga</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Kapurthala</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Rupnagar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Barnala</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Sahib</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Gurdaspur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Bhatinda</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Fazilka</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Tarn Taran</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>283</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As on 26 April 2020; Source: Media Bulletin; Health Dept., GoP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotspots with Clusters</th>
<th>Non-Hotspots with cases</th>
<th>Green Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Active Cases&gt;=15 or District accounts for 80% of Punjab’s Active cases</td>
<td>Number of Active cases&lt;=15 and &gt;=8</td>
<td>Number of Active cases &lt;8 and &gt;=0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.2 Punjab: Daily Trends

Source: Media Bulletin; Health Dept., GoP

2.3.3 District-wise Transmission History in Punjab

As at 25.04.2020; Source: Health Dept. Government of Punjab
2.3.4 India vs. Punjab: Patient Status

As on 26.04.2020; Source: MOHFW, GoI; ICMR; Health Department, GoP

2.3.5 India vs. Punjab: Date-wise Increase in Cases

Source: MOHFW, GoI; Health Dept., GoP
2.3.6 Daily Doubling Rate

The number of days it would take for the cases to double based on the last day's logarithmic growth rate

Source: ICMR; Health Dept., GoP
COVID–19: Socio-Economic Challenges
The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), has brought human social and economic life to a standstill internationally. It is a human, economic and social crisis. It is very clear that, managing and mitigating the after-effects of COVID-19 pose major policy challenges over the next few years.

The International Monetary Fund has indicated that economic output and GDP per capita is shrinking across 170 nations due to COVID-19, plunging the global economy into a deep recession. The economic shock is likely be much more severe for India, for two reasons. First, by compounding existing problems of unemployment, low incomes, rural distress, malnutrition, and a stressed banking sector. Second, a bulk of India’s labor workforce happens to be in the informal sector. Out of a national workforce of 465 million, around 91% (422 million) were informal workers in 2017-18. Lacking regular income, health insurance, or employee benefits, these workers and their families stand to be the hardest hit. By virtue of their informality, these workers post a challenge for policymakers to come up with comprehensive state-sponsored interventions to provide them much deserved succour to soften the severity of the crisis.

The central and state governments have recognized the challenge and have responded accordingly. However, State resources alone may not suffice to adequately address a crisis of such unprecedent magnitude. It would, therefore, be necessary, to enlist the private sector industry, business and health care infrastructure along with the civil society institutions into this task for which suitable mechanisms need to be put in place.
 Likely Impact on the Punjab economy
Punjab’s real GSDP growth for the Year 2019 - 20 was expected to overtake the national average after a span of 5 Years. However, the lockdown clamped during past month have brought economic activity to a halt. Punjab lost about Rs. 1200 – 1700 crore of GDP per day during the first days of lockdown. All segments of the economy especially the industries and services sector are expected to incur heavy losses. The services sector especially trade, and hospitality which were expected to grow by 10+% are most significantly impacted. In sum, the major contributors to GDP – manufacturing, investment and trade may get adversely affected not only the period of lockdown, but during the entire current year. Punjab may see, contraction of its economy after a lapse of 40 years.

Real GSDP growth, Punjab (per cent, constant 2011-12 prices)

Punjab’s growth rate may go down in line with the national GDP. However, because Punjab’s Industry and some allied sectors of Agri are going to be severely affected and fall further if MSME is not revived in Punjab.

4.1 Demand-side impact

The Gross State Value Added (GSVA) Breakup of the State of Punjab is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Share in GSVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural and allied sectors</td>
<td>24.28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and Quarrying</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>14.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water Supply &amp; other Utility Services</td>
<td>3.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, Repair, Hotels &amp; Restaurants</td>
<td>11.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Storage, Communication &amp; services related to broadcasting</td>
<td>5.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate, Ownership of dwellings &amp; professional services</td>
<td>10.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>5.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>11.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lock-down is likely to have a sizeable impact on the economy, most significantly on Consumer, Industrial, Agricultural and Services demand.

- Abrupt stop of Industrial, Commercial, Trade and Consumer activities could lead to a steep fall in discretionary consumption of non-essential goods and services.
- Infusion of liquidity in the state from purchase of agricultural produce at MSP (INR 35,000 crore for wheat*), cash transfer by GoI under various schemes and relaxation on transport/construction/agricultural activities may somewhat soften the blow.
Export disruption

Punjab is one of the leading exports of food, textiles and other such products. INR 42,267 crore worth of Goods were exported from Punjab during FY 2018 – 19. Disruption in Global supply chain and decreased Global demand (Global economy to shrink by 1% - UN) may impact overall industrial demand and output for the state. 40% of total export from Punjab is to countries which are badly impacted by COVID-19.

As mentioned in the Table below, Top 6 Export destinations of Punjab have around 44% of World’s COVID-19 cases and are under full/partial lockdown. There is also fear recession in these countries which can impact export demand from the State during FY 2020-21. As an example, around INR 4900 crore worth of products (terry towel, rice etc.) were exported to USA during FY 2018-19 which is under lockdown and is expecting degrowth of -5.9% in their economy. UAE and UK are also expected to observe negative growth in FY 2020-21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Export Percentage</th>
<th>COVID 19 Cases* (Total Reported)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>818744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>7755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>IRAN</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>84802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>82788</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As on 22 April 2020
### 4.2 Supply-side Impact

Shutdown of factories and the resultant delay in supply of goods could result in a shortage of raw materials in China for companies largely importing from there. Below mentioned analysis represents India's high dependency on import from other countries out of which many are impacted by COVID-19. Punjab can also feel the heat where many sectors are dependent upon materials from China for chemicals (pharma, fertilizers etc.), auto components and machinery (textile, agri-implements).

Below mentioned graphs mention import analysis of India which can get impacted by the COVID-19 situation.

![Among COVID-19 infected nations, China is the largest import source for India](image)

![Top imported commodities from China](image)

Infusion of liquidity in the State’s economy due to state procurement of agricultural produce under MSP, cash transfer by GoI under various schemes and relaxation for transport, construction and agricultural activities may somewhat soften the blow. However, if the economic activity does not resume and accelerate quickly, we might also face supply side constraints such as shortage of raw materials and essential goods with a positive feedback loop into inflation pressures.
Objectives of the Lockdown Exit Strategy
The lockdown exit strategy is aimed at striking a fine balance between normalizing socio-economic activities in the State and at the same time, to contain the COVID-19 so that it does not spin out of control.

It also sets the ground for guidelines for easing restriction all preparatory arrangements, with regard to social distancing in offices, workplaces, factories, and establishments, as also to put the other sectoral requirements in place including of the implementing recommendations/guidelines by Government of India from time to time in Punjab.

In view of the Task Force, the following objectives should be kept in mind as a Lockdown Exit Strategy, which have further been classified into health and non-health related objectives.

5.1 Health related Objectives

1. Shifting of containment from physical to medical i.e. Test, Trace and Quarantine.

2. Protection and minimizing loss of front-line workers including healthcare professionals, police staff, etc.

3. Development of infrastructure including capacity-enhancement of existing hospitals, development of new hospitals, and refurbishment of other relevant facilitates into make-shift treatment/quarantine facilities

4. Provision for procurement and distribution of necessary medications

5. Increase testing to eliminate community spread

6. Accessibility and availability of PPEs, including N-95 masks

7. Ensuring normalcy in the usual healthcare regime and capacity of healthcare facilities for non-COVID-19 related health matters

8. Continuity of public health-initiatives
5.2 Non-Health related Objectives

1. Normalcy in supply chain and logistics, especially for the seamless movement of essential goods and services

2. Availability and accessibility of food and essentials

3. Engagement in specific sectors of health and pharma in critical research

4. Flow of up-to-date information and containing spread of misinformation

5. Limiting the reduction in overall demand for goods and services

6. Maintaining law and order in the state

7. Re-establish livelihoods (opening of establishments etc.)

8. Solutions for catering to the needs of migrant Labour and destitute

9. Guideline for activation of public transport as well as inter-state travel restrictions

10. Maintaining normalcy for agriculture harvests as well as movement of agricultural equipment in/from the state

11. Coordination with key stakeholders from various sectors for phased lockdown exit
Recognizing the havoc that the COVID-19 Pandemic could create in the State resulting in the loss of normality, the Punjab Government took early action by imposing a Statewide curfew. While this resulted in minimizing the spread of the virus, it has posed a grave challenge to the economy of the state. 14.5 lakh Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) of the state that employ over 24.8 lakh people are bearing the brunt. Currently, there is a migrant population of over 12 lakhs in the state, which need urgent support to keep the State’s economic engine going.

Therefore, it is critical to methodically and gradually ease down the lockdown restrictions without while ensuring that there is no comprise with respect to any further spread of COVID-19. Understanding the impact, a long-drawn lockdown/curfew can have, central and state governments have issued guidelines.

There is near universal consensus that COVID-19 is an evolving phenomenon. There is no certainty on the behavior of the epidemiological curve and hence it is near impossible to predict the ideal time frame to ease the lockdown. What is certain, though, is that the lockdown as a strategy cannot be permanent as it has devastating effect on the livelihood of the citizens. Industrial activity is at a standstill. Businesses across all sectors have shut down. The unemployed, particularly in urban areas, face a grim future as they survive on meagre financial doles and food provided by governments and NGOs. There is perhaps no option, therefore, to ease the lockdown.

It is also agreed that the easing of restrictions cannot be sudden and complete. It has to be calibrated to ensure that the gains made in controlling the virus thus far are not frittered away. The policy makers will do well to periodically review the situation and rely on medical experts and advisors who are engaged in implementation of extant strategies and monitoring of the ground reality.

The Task Force considered the consolidated revised guidelines issued by MHA, GOI on 15 April 2020 (implementable from 20 April 2020). The Task Force is in agreement with these guidelines and commends it to the State government for adoption and implementation.

However, the Task Force recommends that in case Lockdown is extended beyond 3rd May by GoI the following amendments may be considered with effect from 15 May 2020 in the consolidated revised guidelines issued by MHA, GOI on 15 April 2020. These measures will hasten the revival of Labour market and reboot the stagnant industrial economy.

The period till 15 May 2020 would have:

1. Given time to government to review the COVID-19 situation following easing of restrictions after 3rd May.

2. Indicated the demand from industry and businesses for resumption of operations as per MHA guidelines of 15 April 2020. This will enable Government to reassess the future course of action.
Recommendations:

1. The restrictions contained in 15 (ii) of the consolidated revised guidelines issued by MHA, GOI on 15 April 2020 may be amended to additionally allow operation of industrial & Commercial units located in urban areas (outside of the Containment Zones) but not limiting to SEZs, EoUs, Industrial Estates & Industrial Townships. As the situation in respect of containment zones is not permanent but dynamic, the areas of operation can be either limited or opened up as the situation may warrant.

2. The Task Force also recommends that the operation of all categories of Industries be allowed and not restricted to those listed in Para 15 of the MHA Consolidated Revised Guidelines dated 15 April 2020 and GoP Order dated 18 April 2020. This is critical to ensure that the manufacturing chain, especially of MSMEs, is not broken. Equally, this sector is the largest employer of industrial labour. This policy intervention will thus address the urgent need of this hour to provide employment to lakhs of unemployed industrial and casual labour in the industrial towns.

   It is presumed that economic activity will revive to its full capacity over a period of time. Therefore, the engaging of Labour is expected to be staggered and will not have any sudden impact/potential of increase of the case load. Given the fact that most of the industry in Punjab is in the MSME sector, it is not possible for the employers to provide residential accommodation to the employees. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the guidelines issued by MHA in Para 15 (ii) dated 15 April 2020 be implemented and the additional stipulation included in Para 2 (v) of the GoP guidelines dated 18 April 2020 be withdrawn.

3. Section 58 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 lists offences by companies and makes the management of the company individually and severally liable for the commitment of the offences and punished accordingly.

   This provision has been interpreted by industry to mean that for instance if any employee contracts the virus, the management/employer shall be prima facie held responsible and proceeded against under provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

   The industry feels that despite the provisions of the section 58 (i) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 that the liability shall arise only in case due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence was not exercised, the onus to prove innocence shall lie with the management/employer. Industry is therefore reluctant to resume operations in light of these provisions.

   The Task Force, therefore, recommends that the concern of the industry in this regard needs to be allayed to state that if the management/employer has fully complied with the SOP he/she should not be prima facie held responsible for any offence committed under the provision of DMA, 2005 reproduced under Annexure-III of the MHA consolidated revised guidelines dated 15 April 2020. For compliance, a daily checklist with all the points mentioned in Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) for Social Distancing for Offices, Workplace, Factories and Establishments must be maintained by the company/unit and be readily available to any public authority to verify.
The Union Home Secretary has perhaps on 23 April 2020 sent a clarifications on this subject of misplaced apprehensions to the Chief Secretary.

The Task Force would further recommend that **proper protocol must be followed before registering any case under Section 188 of The Indian Penal Code (IPC) for violations by common citizens under the lockdown.**

4. As per provision 5 of Annexure-II of the consolidated revised guidelines issued by MHA, GoI dated 15 April 2020, obtaining **medical insurance** for employers has been made mandatory. The Task Force recommends that it **should be made mandatory only for workers who are not covered by the ESI Scheme or the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.**

5. **Ease of restarting business/industrial activity must be ensured.** The Government should provide an online platform where the management/employer of any industrial unit should be able to upload the information relating to his industry including the GST number, type and location of industry, number, name/ aadhar no of workers, etc. In addition, the owner/ management should also upload an undertaking that all arrangements are in place to comply with the SOPs and that he/she undertakes to do so at all times.

On the basis of above information, the industry/business may resume operations and generate movement passes for men and material. Such passes should be honored by all authorities including the Police.

The access to the above portal should be available to all regulatory authorities, who may carry out post facto verifications.

6. Government of India has issued an Order No 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 24 April 2020 amending the consolidated revised guidelines of 15 April 2020. By this order, "All shops registered under the Shops and Establishment Act of the respective State/UT, including shops in residential complexes and market complexes, except shops in multi-brand and single brand malls, outside the limits of municipal corporations and municipalities, with 50 per cent strength of workers with wearing of masks and social distancing being mandatory" will be allowed to function.

The Task Force recommends that the Order be implemented subject to SOPs and the provisions contained in The Punjab Shops & Commercial Establishments Act, 1958 being strictly enforced. The Administration will be required to facilitate movement of people by relaxing the curfew as per local requirements.

7. The Task force recommends that clarification be issued that the **scope of permissible construction activity permitted under Section 16 (iii) of the consolidated revised guidelines issued by MHA, GoI dated 15 April 2020 includes personal residential buildings.** This will also absorb a large number of unemployed construction and casual/daily wage labour.

To facilitate construction activity, the entire supply line such as stores/shops supplying hardware, paint, cement, electrical goods, wood, glass, iron & steel, cement etc. should be allowed to operate.
8. While lockdown is strictly enforced in the containment zones, it must be ensured that along with essential items such as dry rations, cooked meals, and personal hygiene products for women in particular, social net benefits including DBT, and old age pension are delivered to the eligible persons at doorstep. This is critical because of likely disruption in the normal banking services within the containment zones and consequent inability of beneficiaries to access their bank accounts.

9. There is a plethora of Orders, Guidelines, Instructions, and SOPs that are being issued by various authorities of the Government. The exact nature of the content or the intent is not filtering down to the implementing & enforcement authorities and much less to the citizens who have to follow them.

Government would be well advised to mandate Department of Governance Reforms & Public Grievances, Government of Punjab to consolidate sector wise guidelines in simple language (English and Punjabi) in the form of a Play Book/infographics / FAQs and give wide publicity through Information Education Communication (IEC) activities, print & social media.
Specific Interventions Recommended
7.1 State Finances

The Punjab's fiscal is uniquely stressed. Not only it is debt-stressed, most of its fiscal deficit is applied towards meeting non-discretionary expenditure such as salary of employees, pension of retirees, debt-servicing and providing succour to the disadvantaged sections of society like farmers, scheduled castes and backward classes, senior citizens, widows, handicapped and destitute.

Onset of COVID-19 and the painful lockdown that followed has not only seriously impaired the already limited revenue streams of the State Government but has significantly added to its expenditure responsibilities or due to its commitment to combat the virus. Even after the virus is contained, the State's economy and finances will continue to be strained for the current as well as next financial year. State Government's revenue receipts from its own sources and from central devolution will considerably fall short of the B.E. 2020-21, while there is a very limited scope for reducing the revenue expenditure in the short term.

It will, therefore, be advisable for the State Government to draw up a contingency plan for 2020-21 to address the acute fiscal stress that it is bound to face. Given the limited resources of the State Government, such a plan cannot be successfully implemented without substantial assistance from the Union Government. It is noted that, so far, the Union government has not provided any assistance to the State Government to cope with the serious fiscal crisis being faced by it. The contingency plan may spell out the magnitude of the fiscal stress and measures proposed by the State Government to face it, including the financial assistance it seeks from the Union Government. In fact, the budget for 2020-21 needs to be redrawn as COVID-19 BUDGET. Following are a few specific suggestions in this behalf.

Recommendations:

1. The State Government was burdened with an additional debt burden of about Rs. 31000 crore to cover the accumulated gap between the value of the stock of food grains and the outstanding cash credit limit in March 2017, casting an onerous debt servicing burden of Rs 3240 crore per annum. As this gap is historical in nature, spanning over more than a decade and is not entirely attributable to the state Government, as a substantial part of it is systemic and due to the non-existence of a level playing field between the F.C.I. and the State procurement agencies. The State Government has been requesting the Union Government for a fair apportionment of this debt stock among different stake holders. The XV Central Finance Commission is already seized of this issue and we may request the Union Government for a fair and expeditious resolution.

2. While the CCL gap problem may be resolved in its stock aspect as suggested at (1) above, it will continue to persist in its flow aspect due to

i) Differential interest on CCL being charged by the banks to FCI and the State procurement agencies

ii) Interest cost of escrow amount for gunny bags, and

iii) Systemic loss beyond the control of the State procurement agencies.
As the State agencies are required to square up the gap in CCL of the previous crop before the CCL for the ensuing crop is sanctioned, it burdens the State's budget by at least Rs. 1500 crore per annum. As procurement is a no-profit-no-loss operation, the GoI may be requested to relieve the State of this undue burden. On its part, the State Government may direct its procurement agencies to strictly adhere to the prescribed principles of procurement incidentals.

3. A disproportionately large chunk of State's revenue is being spent on salaries of its employees. While the neighbouring State of Haryana pays its employees salaries equivalent to Central Government employees, Punjab pays about 25% more. There appears to be no justification for it. The Pay Commission may be requested to keep this aspect in view, while recommending pay revision. The Pay Commission may also be requested to factor in a hefty increase in pay scale of nearly 2 lakh employees ordered in 2011, as a result of which most of our employee's salaries are more than the present pay of common category employees of GoI, even after implementing the report of the Central Pay Commission. In the face of this fact, the Punjab Pay Commission may also consider the advisability of giving retrospective effect to its recommendations.

4. At the time of country wide switch over from VAT to GST, the States were assured of full compensation in lieu of consequent loss of revenue for a period of five years, which is going to expire at the end of June 2022. The revenue from GST is nowhere near what the State would have realised if it had continued with VAT. The position has worsened due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the loss of revenue is bound to significantly escalate. There is, therefore, a strong case for extending the deadline for compensation to the states beyond June 2022, till the time GST revenue stabilises. Failing this, the State Government will be staring at an annual loss of over Rs 10,000 crore. Even currently, the Union Government is not reimbursing the GST compensation to the States on time, thus, severely straining their cash position. We may request for immediate release of arrears and timely release in future to ease the cash crunch faced by the State Government.

5. In the immediate context, there appears to be no alternative, but to increase the borrowing limit of the State Government at least to 4% of its GDP for the current and next fiscal year. The additional borrowing so allowed should be through the TLTRO window with tenure of 5 years. If it calls for an amendment to the RBI Act, GoI may be requested for the same.

6. Considering the fiscal stress faced by the State Government, the XV Finance Commission has recommended a revenue deficit grant of over Rs. 7600 crores to the State for the current year. We may request GoI for front loading of this grant to enable the State Government to meet its immediate liabilities arising from the measures to contain the virus.

7. The State Government may also consider wage and DA freeze for the current year.

8. Fiscal position of PSPCL is precarious. Currently, it is carrying a debt of over Rs. 30000 crores on its books without substantial assistance from the State Government. It may totally lack wherewithal to ensure adequate power supply in the ensuing peak demand season. Government must provide means to do so.
9. The State Government is subsidising industrial power supply to improve the viability of industrial units. Punjab’s MSMEs are the ones to be hit the hardest by COVID-19. For them, it is a triple whammy after demonetisation and introduction of GST. However, due to the given industrial tariff structure, most of the subsidy goes to a few large power-guzzling units. This distortion needs to be corrected to provide relief to MSMEs.

10. To meet the credit requirements of MSMEs, RBI, through the GoI, may be requested to provide a TLTRO window to MSMEs through SIDBI.

11. Hospitality Industry - Hotels and restaurants - are one of the biggest employment generators. The lockdown has hit them the hardest. They should be charged industrial tariff rather than commercial tariff as at present.

12. Due to closure of liquor vends, State's Rs. 6000 crore annual revenue is in jeopardy. The irony is that, the liquor is being sold, but the State Government is not getting any revenue. This source of revenue needs to be safeguarded, before it is lost.

13. The State will be required to incur additional expenditure on controlling the spread of COVID-19. This was not expected while formulating the budget for FY 20-21. The budget will have to be revised to provide for this expenditure by reducing outlays for other sectors.

14. The fiscal deficit will go beyond the provisioned amount on account of additional social cost to fight COVID-19 but also due to serious adverse impact on its revenue stream such as GST and excise collections. Government of Punjab should project the additional expenditure on COVID-19 during FY 20-21 and 21-22 to the Government of India and insist that this be monetized and made available to the State by RBI through the Repo window.

15. At the end of it all, the State Government will have to follow a path of fiscal rectitude for the sake of its own sustainability and for the economic revival of the State. It is time for the Government to muster political will to do so, for no crisis should be allowed go waste.

7.2 Health

The Task Force is aware that the Government of Punjab is making all out efforts to effectively tackle this unprecedented crisis. The Government is effectively gearing up the crucial health sector and equipping it to tackle this deadly pandemic for which neither any vaccine nor any medicine is available so far. However, while making recommendations on relaxing the lockdown it is also necessary for the Task Force to ascertain the health sector’s preparedness and give its suggestions for dealing with the pandemic, especially if, after the relaxations are given, there is a rapid increase in the number of patients needing treatment. It is necessary to point out that any suggestions by the Task Force are not intended to criticize the Government or to imply any lack of effort on its part. Rather, these are being given by way of abundant caution to flag the areas on which special attention will be required while easing of the lockdown.

As on 23 April 2020, 277 cases have tested positive in Punjab. The gist of projections of Punjab Health department regarding spread of the pandemic is as under:
“…The best-case scenario is doubling in 10-12 days and in worst case scenario doubling in five days. Therefore, after considering the relevant factors into account, the likely scenario is four thousand cases by May end and in the worst-case scenario eight thousand…”

Accordingly, Punjab Health Department predicts that after the exit from the lockdown in a phased manner, virus is likely to remain suppressed in the months of May and June.

Understandably it is very difficult to predict the exact trajectory of the spread of the virus. The State Health Department projections and the projection calculated on the basis of MoHFW, GoI model have been looked into. These projections vary considerably from the projection of Niti Aayog according to which there may be 3680 new COVID-19 case per day from 31 May 2020. Niti Aayog projections appear to be worst case scenario projections. However, keeping in view the need of the times and unexpected trajectory of the virus and the fact that lockdown would be eased soon, it is better to err on the side of caution and to keep the Niti Aayog projections also in mind.

A Chart showing requirement of beds as per different projections and their availability is being given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency making Projections</th>
<th>ICU Beds</th>
<th>Non-ICU Beds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Health Department Current Status</td>
<td>Phase 1-100</td>
<td>Phase 1-122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Health Department Worst Case Scenario</td>
<td>Phase 2-400</td>
<td>Phase 2-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(required up to 30.06.2020)</td>
<td>Phase 3-400</td>
<td>Phase 3-400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjab Health Department Total (required up to</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>922</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.06.2020)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Ministry of Health &amp; Family Welfare</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>required up to 24.05.2020</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niti Aayog required up to 31.05.2020</td>
<td>3612</td>
<td>922</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1**: In addition, in the Isolation Centres (COVID-19 Care Centres) 2900 beds have been identified for isolation of asymptomatic and very mild cases and identification of another 17,000 beds is under process by the Departments.

**Note 2**: The trigger for next phases will be 50% occupancy in the previous phase.

**Note 3**: As per the three medical experts in the STF, keeping worst case and best-case scenario in view, medical resources required for managing the cases have been arranged. The lockdown/curfew can be relaxed in a phased manner in all districts except in the Red Zone Districts. Even in the Red Zone districts curfew can be relaxed in area which are not in the containment zone. This would be subject to review from time to time.
Recommendations:

1. **Availability of hospital beds**
   
   i) If we go by projections of the Health Department and the projections of MoHFW, GoI the availability of beds appears to be satisfactory for now. However, compared to Niti Aayog projections there is significant shortfall.

   ii) Phase 2 and 3 are to be triggered when 50% of the beds in previous Phase have been occupied. However, this may be reviewed because if a major spike in cases occurs due to easing in lockdown, we may not have much time to make all arrangements.

   iii) Whether all medical facilities will have full equipment and trained medical personnel needs to be doubly checked.

   iv) The geographical distribution should also be rationalised as far as possible, so that the patients should not have to be transported over long distances.

   v) The Government also needs to have a fresh look at the projections of the department regarding trajectory of the pandemic as a matter of abundant caution.

2. **Testing**: The testing for COVID-19 even in big districts like Amritsar, and Patiala is quite low. Overall, probably because of various constraints and factors beyond control of the State, only 9000 tests have been done. Currently the State has only 25,000 RT-PCR test kits. The current daily testing capacity for RT-PCR tests is 1200 tests only and is being increased to 2000. One lakh Rapid Testing kits have been planned but ICMR has suspended their use. Pool testing has been introduced.

3. The Committee is of the view that testing is a crucial weapon in controlling the spread of infection by identifying suspected cases early and all efforts must be made to purchase more testing kits and actually do the testing as per existing protocol. Testing in Containment Zones must be given special attention. Testing of health personnel and others in the frontline must also be a priority. Ultimately, the Government should move to random testing to detect the prevalence of the virus in the community. The already operational public health response needs to be intensified all over the state to trace, track, test, and treat the cases.

   The committee also noted the mortality rate of Punjab is very high the recovery rate is quite low as compared to India average. The Government needs to look into this matter.

4. **Safeguarding the Corona Warriors**:

   i) The doctors, nurses, ward boys and other health personnel are the most precious and also the most vulnerable part of the system for tackling this deadly pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to their safety, security and mental health.
ii) The State government is stated to have 23578 PPE Kits, 68525 N-95 Masks, and 3164446 Triple layer masks. No estimates have been given of the actual requirement of these items in the coming weeks and months.

iii) The Task Force is of the firm view that ensuring availability of good quality PPE and all other items required for protecting all the health personnel (including for private sector, but on payment) from infection is the foremost duty of the Government as we cannot afford to lose any doctor, nurse or other health staff.

iv) Issues of fatigue due to long duty hours amongst infected patients and emotional trauma amongst health personnel should also be looked into.

v) Health personnel suffering from threatening co-morbidities or pregnant and lactating ladies should not be assigned frontline duties.

vi) Health personnel working amongst infected patients must be given the facility of staying on campus or nearby hotels/hostels, in case they do not want to go home for fear of infecting family members.

5. **Training**: The proper training of doctors and para medics also needs special attention as those who have worked in rural hospitals, PHCs and dispensaries may be out of touch with the clinical skills required to treat the patients.

6. Sanitation and cleanliness of hospitals and isolation centres must be given proper attention.

7. The citizens should be made aware of the nearest COVID-19 Hospitals and the tertiary care facility, so that they do not have to move from hospital to hospital in search of treatment. Similarly, awareness needs to be generated about when and where to get a test for COVID-19.

8. Private sector hospitals must also be involved in tackling this pandemic. However, this must be done in such a way that good hospitals remain available everywhere for non-corona medical needs.

9. Steps may be taken to build reserves in form of Volunteers who can assist in carrying out various tasks as per their capability to help tackle the Pandemic.

10. Active searches for suspected cases (Fever and Cough/Cold) must be conducted every week by house to house visits in both rural and urban communities, with prioritization of urban slums & labour camps and hotspot areas.

11. Administrators of government organisations and private establishments should identify & report cases from among their employees who have flu like symptoms and advise them for home isolation. A constant vigil by civil society groups, panchayat members, city counsellors, local administrators, and media must continue.

12. An inter-sectoral team of public health workers along with grass-root volunteers and political/social leaders should continue to raise awareness about COVID-19 modes of transmission and methods of prevention in the community while acknowledging multi-
cultural and multi-linguistic realities especially in urban slums where large number of migrants from other states live.

13. Universal mask usage by all from general public to health care providers should be ensured, with appropriate type of mask for each category of population depending on the risk. Cloth masks are enough for the public and disposable three-layered surgical mask and N95 mask should be for use by only health care workers.

14. Awareness must be generated regarding the precautions concerning last rites of those succumbing to Corona. The irrational fears regarding infection from dead bodies must be dispelled vigorously.

15. Measures should be taken to avoid social stigma against those suffering from COVID-19. They should be dealt with respect and empathy. Also, the fear of ‘quarantine’ of healthy persons with the sick must be addressed.

16. Government must make the people understand that it will take a long time for things to get back to normal. Hence, the populace must not become complacent and should continue to remain vigilant till the last patient recovers because nobody is safe until everybody is safe.

7.3 Labour

The COVID-19 induced lockdown has bought to halt all non-essential economic activity which has had an enormous impact on the livelihoods of labourers, thereby affecting their standard of living as well as their access to basic necessities. Large sections of society, from local daily-wage rural agricultural laborers and their families, to out-of-state migrant laborers have had their lives and livelihoods at risk because of the lockdown. Many of them are not even covered under central or state welfare schemes like MNREGA, NFSA, Jan Dhan program etc.

There is distress amongst (loss/ uncertainty of employment and wages, deficiencies of food and deep concerns about families back home) and immediate ameliorative measures are required to discourage the possibility of their desired return to their respective places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>% share of informal workers (non-agriculture)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Punjab ranks 2\textsuperscript{nd} in India in terms of % share of informal workers in India

As per current assessment about 20-25 lakhs eligible persons are not included in the beneficiary list under the PDS scheme. The State Govt. has to be particularly sensitive to provide basic necessities. Delay in doing so may result in social unrest and a more desperate desire to return to their home States.
Recommendations:

The Deputy Commissioners must ensure that there is complete coordination between Government & NGOs to provide food & dry rations to the vulnerable sections of the society.

1. The PDS system be made universal and extended to non-ration card holders, initially for a period of six months.

2. The per capita allocation through PDS may be enhanced by 50%. Additional food products may be provided to meet specific nutritional needs of pregnant women and children, as per provisions contained in the National Food Security Act.

3. Mid-day meal provisions be provided to children at their residences.

4. Free LPG may be distributed to BPL as well as labour families for cooking purposes for three months.

5. As a long-term measure there should also be a scientific mapping of the urban & rural poor. This will improve the State’s understanding of its workforce/poor and allow it to prepare for any future disasters. These would result in better coverage under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme and provide a platform for assessing labour availability in the State.

6. Department of Labour has released 2nd installment of interim relief of INR 90 Cr. to registered construction workers. INR 6000 in total has been released in the saving bank accounts of 2,82,576 registered construction workers has been transferred through DBT. There is no reason why remaining eligible workers should not receive interim relief especially as funds are available to the extent of approx. INR 1200 Crore in the Worker’s Welfare Fund

7. Hygiene kits may be distributed to those in high-risk areas especially to women.

8. Normal healthcare facilities be reactivated near the labour colonies. Surveillance activities & rapid testing for COVID-19 disease should be enhanced.

9. Massive and intense cleaning/sanitation drive to cover all Labour colonies be launched by Municipal Committees and Corporations.

10. Free and liberal distribution of face masks be ensured, as social distancing is often not possible in densely populated areas.

7.4 Education

The disruption of formal teaching and conduct of examinations has wide implication on the future of the students. The most affected are those in government schools and colleges who have no access to Open Online Courses. The chasm that exists within the educational system is bound to get accentuated. The urgency to repair the broken system must receive the highest consideration.
Recommendations:

7.4.1 School Education

1 Declaration of results

i) Results of 5th class and 8th class: Results may be declared based on the examinations already conducted and the students be promoted in next class.

ii) Declaration of result of 10th class: Punjab School Education Board may be considered to allow the schools to declare the results of the 10th class students based on the pre board examinations. As it is understood that the evaluation of answer sheets for pre board examinations is done strictly and therefore the board may also allow to give some credit so that these students no longer get bored sitting in their houses. With the declaration of the results, the students will start preparing themselves for the next class and at the same time the schools will also be able to enroll students in the 11th class.

iii) Declaration of result of 12th class: It is understood that almost 70% of the papers have already been completed. It is recommended that the 12th class students may wait for a while or in the alternative the Board may consider to hold examination of the remaining papers by creating more centres so that the social distance is maintained. Necessary permission may be given to the Board for this purpose.

2 Delivery of Books

Due to lockdown, the printing presses have been closed. The printing presses need to be allowed to be opened as a special case. The books should be got printed as early as possible (within 15 days at the most) and then the books be delivered to the schools. The relaxation in lockdown may be given by the respective DCs with the limited purpose that the books are handed over to the students while taking all precautions.

At the same time the Department may collect the books from the old students and the book bank already created in the schools may distribute the old books to the students by keeping liaison with the local community

3 Broadcasting of lecturers through TV

This is the most important intervention which the department need to take keeping in view the uncertainty about the lockdown period. It is understood that the Doordarshan may not have adequate channels to cater to the needs of all classes and all students and therefore the State Government may direct the private TV channels including Cable operators and also the news channels to at least provide 2 hours daily to meet the requirement of the Department of School Education. The Department has already got prepared the lecturers and with the small intervention, the loss of study of the students can be minimized.
4 Online Education

The Department may continue to provide online education to students wherever possible through various Apps and use the Edusat lecturers and other media to the extent possible.

7.4.2 Higher Education

1 To resolve the issues for the current semester/year
   i) 70 to 80% of the syllabus for most of the classes has been completed.
   ii) MHRD portals like SWAYAM, ICAR e-learning portals and NCERT/ Punjab School Education Board online learning systems helped cover majority of courses. These can be continued to complete the syllabus.
   iii) Extra online classes can be conducted or the semester can be extended (except for exit students) by merging the summer break to complete the syllabus and internships

2 Practical/ Projects
   i) Can be changed to theory-based and evaluation be done online as a one time measure.

3 The most critical classes
   i) The current semester/year for the final year (Graduation/Post-Graduation) and Class X/XII Exit students is the most critical as they have to explore further educational/ job opportunities in July/August, 2020.
   ii) Completion of said students’ syllabus as well as their examinations should be the utmost priority.
   iii) Each institution must prepare the plans for online completion of their syllabus and conduct of their examination observing all the prescribed safety norms

4 Examination of students
   i) All the educational institutions must complete their preparatory work to conduct the examinations on any date after 15th of May 2020. The exact date will depend on the situation as it unfolds.
   ii) Papers be structured with more choice for students in attempting the questions.
   iii) Duration of examination be reduced to two hours with the possibility of merging two papers together (wherever feasible) to reduce potential for exposure.
   iv) Examination for the even semester be conducted along with odd semester in December, 2020 (for non-exit students) to reduce the students for May-June session by almost two third.
v) Two-hour examinations be conducted with three to four, instead of two shifts in a day.

vi) In case of dire circumstances, result may be declared by taking an average of the previous semesters.

vii) Online examinations should not be conducted given the very high potential for cheating.

5 Re-opening of the Educational Institutions

i) Educational Institutions be opened sans students, with the faculty attending office, to facilitate research, administrative tasks, and preparations for upcoming terms

ii) Research labs may be operationalized immediately

iii) The non-teaching staff be rotated with 50% of the staff attending and in case of non-essential services, 33% of them attending in rotation.

iv) In higher footfall buildings, like Library and administrative office, procedure of having IR Temperature monitors and sanitizers be started.

6 New Admissions for the academic session 2020-2021

i) The admissions should be online with digital payments.

ii) University should gear themselves up to cater to enhanced admissions as the number of students immigrating abroad will decrease.

iii) Advertise in print, digital and online mode, the important dates regarding admission.

iv) All safety protocols should be ensured for entrance tests

7.4.3 Teaching Pedagogy changes and New Opportunities in all Institutions

1 All the educational institutions (Universities/ Colleges/ Schools) should start using the existing available Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

i) SWAYAM, the programme initiated by Government of India to achieve access, equity and quality has very good learning resources.

ii) Similarly, MIT’s Open Courseware has plenty of Courses available.

iii) In addition, the educational institutions must start creating their own resources by establishing their recording studios.

2 Such MOOCs be shared amongst all the educational institutions conducting similar programs.
3. To allay the fears of impersonation, institutions should explore online viva/ interview of the students, even using external teachers, to judge/moderate the marks achieved in online MOOC.

4. Psychological Counselling Centres be created in large institutions

5. Institutions, with the help of government, should explore collaboration with local television channels to telecast lessons where internet access is poor.

**Order of Priority** for the students to return to educational institutions will be as such:

- Research Scholars
- Final year PG & UG students
- Class XII students
- Other UG & PG students
- Class VIII to XI students
- Class IV to VII students
- All primary class students

7.5 **Industry**

Revival of economy would be a long-term exercise. Issues like labour, supply side constraints, and the seamless transport of products must be ensured, with the health of laborers and the containment of COVID-19 being vigilantly monitored by the State.

**Recommendations:**

1. To facilitate resumption of industrial units and businesses, specific modifications in the MHA consolidated guidelines have been proposed in earlier section of the report.

2. The ease of resuming operations and clarification in respect of certain penal provisions under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 have also been suggested.

3. The Government should direct all its agencies and public sector units to immediately release dues such as GST, market fee, vendor payments.

4. In situation where lockdown is extended, relief may be provided on the charges and payments for commercial facilities like water, electricity, and other utilities for six months without penalty. Enterprises could be offered suspension or mandated to make partial payment of rent, property taxes and other utilities so as to enable the payment of worker salaries.

5. Whosoever has paid the wages during the lockdown, should be compensated through enhanced Working Capital limits.

6. In sectors, where lockdown is likely to persist for a longer duration such as tourism and hospitality, additional relief may be considered.

7. E-commerce operations may be permitted without any restriction on nature of goods.

8. Government schemes like Amnesty Scheme, payment of PSIEC plots fee should be extended by at least three months.

9. In the long run, targeted interventions may be undertaken to encourage investments from companies that are exiting out of China.
7.6 Agriculture

The smooth procurement Rabi crop is in progress. The rural economy will see revival with infusion of almost Rs. 30,000 cr. Rural Labour is also meaningfully employed.

The focus will now shift to planting of Kharif crops and the availability of all the input; seed, fertilizer and Labour.

Many relaxations relating to the agriculture sector and food processing have been allowed after 20 April 2020. Most of the agriculture and related activities have been included in these relaxations/exemptions (under Item #6) and MNREGA works (under item #10) of the MHA Guidelines. These relaxations/exemptions do not necessarily provide mechanisms to facilitate the economic activities in agriculture and other sectors which will have to be provided by the States.

The following need to be facilitated/ensured by the participation/intervention of the State Government so that the revival of the economic activity after relaxation is put on an effective and fast track while at that same time the further spread of COVID-19 is kept in check:

Recommendations:

1. The State Government should vigorously pursue the proposal for payment of bonus to farmers, to facilitate staggered procurement, with the Union Government.

2. The State Government should clear pending charges of labour working in mandis pending since previous procurement season.

3. The movement of Combine-harvesters and trucks required for agriculture stranded in the State or outside has been facilitated. The Combine-harvester operators, travelling from quarantined areas/ hotspots be tested & allowed to work, if negative instead of putting them in isolation for 14 days.

4. The availability of cotton, paddy and maize seed (coming from other states) and other farming inputs like fertilizers and pesticides should be ensured, at stipulated price, at the farmers’ doorsteps by coordinating with private seed companies and the seed bags must be disinfected.

5. Cleaning and dredging of the canals and channels should be avoided from Mid-April to Mid-May in cotton growing districts to facilitate cotton sowing and during Mid-June to Mid-July all over Punjab for rice transplanting.

6. The repair as well as manufacture of trans-planters be facilitated. Further, farmers are to be trained for raising mat type nursery.

7. Rice transplanting is going to be a challenge. The State should promote staggered transplanting (puddled & ridge transplanting in non-puddled field) & direct seeded rice (DSR). The sequence should be: DSR, full and medium duration varieties like PR 121, short duration varieties like PR 126 and full seasons Pusa Basmati 1121 & short duration Pusa Basmati 1509. The State should promote DSR as it needs less labour than transplanting.
8. Organizing markets for vegetables, fruits & dairy products in cities and towns should be facilitated. Apni Mandi spots and other open areas with sufficient space may be used for this purpose so that social distancing norms can be maintained.

9. Fish seed needs to be imported from other states which needs to be facilitated for the breeding season, which is from June to August.

10. Export of live pigs to North East States via railways should be facilitated.

11. The state must make arrangements for the marketing of surplus milk.

12. The supply-side problems for the meat processing units must be addressed.

13. Power supply must be ensured during the paddy sowing season.

7.7 Judiciary

The High Court of Punjab and Haryana and all the Civil Courts have been closed since the Lockdown. Urgent cases need to be heard at every level. The Supreme Court in Re: guidelines for court functioning through video conferencing during COVID-19 pandemic, Suo Motu Writ (Civil) No. 5/2020 dated April 06, 2020, has issued certain directions to hear cases through video conferencing. In accordance with direction no vii. In para 6 of the order, till the High Court frames appropriate rules, arguments shall be heard through video conferencing.

Recommendations:

1. Once the Courts open, it will be necessary to take all precautions by maintaining social distancing, and proper hygiene by using hand sanitizers and wearing masks.

2. One case should be taken up for hearing at a time and only the lawyers representing the parties be allowed inside the Court with one clerk.

3. The congregation of lawyers in the Bar room be avoided and only limited number of cases, preferably of urgent nature be listed, till normalcy is restored.

7.8 Issues to be taken up with Govt. of India by Govt. of Punjab

1. There should be a relief on bank Interest for a minimum six months.

2. The Government of India should consider a one time, one-month GST refund to all GST paying units in May 2020, to restore their working capital cycle. The amount may be fixed as per average of 11 months payment of the unit i.e.1/11 of GST payment from April 2019 to February 2020. This will cost a maximum one lakh Cr.to the Govt initially and the government will recover the bulk of those funds with higher IT/GST collections during FY 20-21.

3. Export-oriented units will be crucial for Balance of Trade benefits post COVID-19 worldwide. They may be considered for additional benefits over and above the interest subventions, GST refunds as mentioned in 2 and 3. This facility should be given for at least 24 months post lockdown period.
4. Agricultural Processing and Food Processing industries should get an interest subvention on their working capital requirement of at least 3%, for a period of 24 months. With Rabi and Kharif crops in danger from suffering from industrial demand destruction, erosion of buying power across the population, and possible food inflation, it critical that these sectors be brought up to pre-lockdown levels and their liquidity restored immediately.

5. The contributions to the CM’s Relief Fund should also qualify as valid CSR expenditure as in the case of “PM CARES” fund.

6. The government should provide a wage subsidy to employers, including input tax credit for salaries paid beyond 15 days to employees who cannot work from home

7. To enable MSMEs to defer their tax payments, the closure date of financial year 2019-20 for all forms of MSME enterprises should be extended by at least 3 months

8. MSMEs shall be given an option to defer tax payments by six months, permission for delayed GST payments, without levy of interest, or late fees or penalties

9. The RBI, through a working capital interest subvention, may authorize banks to fund working capital requirement at reduced rate of lending for sectors such as Agricultural processing, MSMEs, and exporters for a period of at least 12 months post lockdown.

10. The Government of India should consider a state-wise TLTRO window for Micro and Small Enterprises.

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