

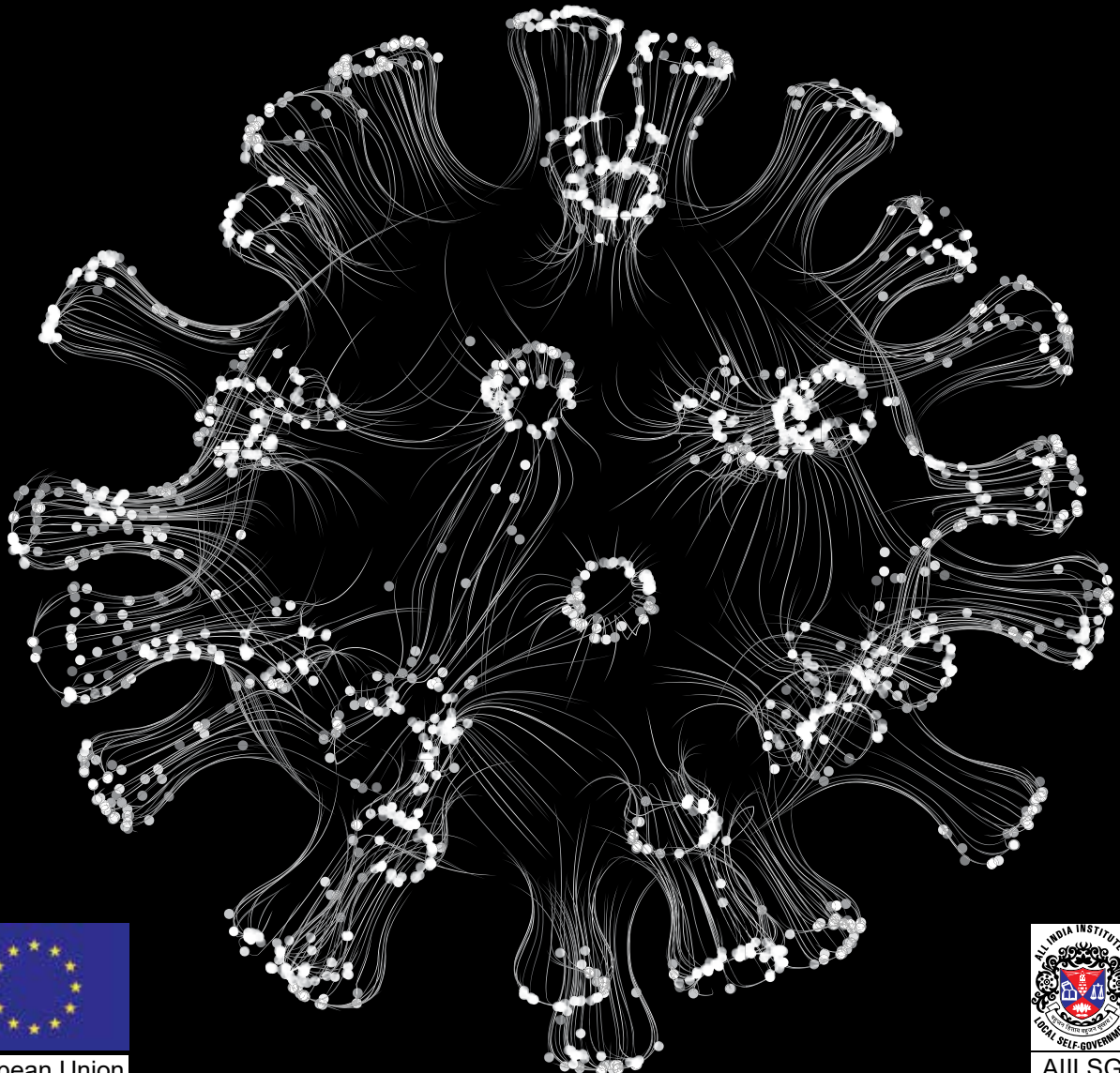
UrbanUpdate

Volume V, Issue XII

APRIL 2020

CITIES IN TIME OF CORONA

Cities have donned a novel appearance that none of us has ever seen. We wish we need not see it ever again. COVID-19 has claimed over 150,000 lives, infected over 2,200,000 people, and affected almost everyone on the planet in one way or the other. Cities may be the worst affected but our urban institutions are also giving a glimmer of hope to humanity in this fight against COVID-19



European Union



AILSG

KNOWLEDGE LAB FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE



ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

No. 6, F-Block, Bandra Kurla Complex, TPS Road-12, Bandra-East, Mumbai-400051, Maharashtra
Tel.No.: +91-22-26571713, 26571714, 61805600, Fax: +91-22-26572115, Email: contact@aiilsg.org



Quality is just one of our strengths

AIILSG has begun skill development programmes in Rajasthan and Jharkhand. The institute with its 90 years of experience in the field of capacity building would impart training to youth living in rural areas of these two states to make them employable in various emerging sectors-

Apparel, Beauty & Wellness, Electronics, Healthcare, IT-ITEs, and Renewable Energy.

As per Mou signed, AIILSG will train 16,000 youngsters.

AIILSG IS COMMITTED TO BUILD EMPOWERED INDIA WITH SKILLED HUMAN WORKFORCE

For Details, email at delhi@aiilsg.org

UrbanUpdate

A monthly magazine published by the AIILSG — a project funded by European Union's 'Equi-City' programme for India.

Ranjit Chavan
President-AIILSG

Rajiv Agarwal
Editor-In-Chief
Director General-AIILSG

Ashok Wankhade
Managing Editor

Abhishek Pandey
Editor

Ravi Ranjan Guru
Executive Editor

Kumar Dhananjay
Consulting Editor

Ashley Paul
Reporter

Akshit Pushkarna
Editorial Assistant

Prateek Singh
Digital Marketing Associate

Meenakshi Rajput
Rajesh Singh
Senior Graphic Designers

Volume V - Issue XI

Printed and published by Ranjit Chavan on behalf of All India Institute of Local Self-Government.
Printed at Artz & Printz, 208, DSIDC Shed, Okhla Industrial Area Phase-I New Delhi-110020
Published at Sardar Patel Bhavan, 22-23, Institutional Area D-Block Pankha Road, Janakpuri, Delhi-110058

Note: Subscriptions are only invited from municipal corporations, government bodies, academic & research institutions, etc. working in the domain of urban development. We only charge courier and handling charges. We may fully wave-off the charges for municipalities and academic institutions upon receiving such request and approval from our management.

Despite careful selection of sources, no responsibility can be taken for accuracy of the contents. The magazine assumes no liability or responsibility of any kind in connection with the information thereof. The views expressed in the articles are the personal opinions of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the All India Institute of Local Self-Government. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited without written permission from the publisher.



Mail Box

Readers' comments, criticism and suggestions are welcome. Letters to the Editor can be sent by e-mail, or regular mail. They should include name, address, phone number(s), and e-mail address, if available. The subject of the communication should be clearly mentioned, and we reserve the right to edit for sense, style, and space.

Address

Urban Update (All India Institute of Local Self-Government)
Sardar Patel Bhavan, 22-23, Institutional Area, D Block
Pankha Road, Janakpuri, Delhi-110058

FOR SUBSCRIPTION AND ADVERTISING RELATED ASSISTANCE, CONTACT

Phone: 011 - 2852 1783/ 5473 (Extn. 37)
E-mail: contacturbanupdate@gmail.com



Join Urban Update Community Online to read our previous issues, regular posts and news updates.



urbanupdate.in



[urbanupdate](https://www.facebook.com/urbanupdate)



[urbanupdate](https://twitter.com/urbanupdate)



European Union

The project is funded by the European Union.



AIILSG

The project is implemented by the AIILSG.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

THE HEROES IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES



Rajiv Agarwal
Editor-In-Chief
dg@aiilsg.org

P rime Minister Modi addressed the nation on several occasions during the last few weeks; weeks which have been very stressful for the entire nation on account of the Corona Virus pandemic which has affected almost every country in the world. On each occasion, the Prime Minister recalled and lauded the selfless service being provided by several sections of professionals and workers - the brave warriors at the forefront of the battle to control and overcome the dreaded virus.

Large sections of people are participating in this battle and working to protect citizens and to enable others discharge their duties in these troubled times. The role of health workers in this regard is an example of supreme devotion to duty. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, ward boys and other support staff are in the news almost every day for their dedicated service. These are dealing with affected persons and suspected cases of infection, nursing the former back to health and enabling isolation and care of the latter. In the process they face potential risks of infection themselves and are required to maintain strict protocols to protect themselves. Then there are members of the police force who now have a new set of duties. In television reports and social media clips, they are seen patrolling the streets tirelessly and urging citizens to follow all instructions with respect to social distancing and not to venture out of their homes. Medical and grocery shop owners, and vegetable vendors as well as truck drivers and labourers who haul essential goods into our cities and stores are key resources which enable sustain life.

The role of our municipal employees at all levels is to be surely lauded. They are undertaking crucial tasks including surveillance for new cases, creating and managing quarantine facilities, augmenting and setting up new health centres and test facilities, putting in place protocols for preventing spread of the disease, and so on. Most are also setting up shelters and providing food for the homeless. All these require round-the-clock work and high levels of commitment. In addition, the routine tasks of city management including water supply, street cleaning, garbage disposal and a host of other tasks have to happen each day without fail. It is indeed a challenging scenario and the municipal organizations of our cities deserve praise.

Then there are some categories of people which are not so visible and are working behind the scenes to make our lives near normal. Think of the employees of electricity transmission and distribution utilities across the country. In these times of great stress, the last thing we need is extended power outages due to systemic breakdowns. There are large numbers of employees of power companies who are travelling to work each day at all times (equipment is generally manned round the clock) in order to ensure proper working of the power infrastructure and thus uninterrupted supply to our homes and other institutions like hospitals. Mobile telecom networks are always crucial, especially today to enable digital payments, and to keep in touch with our near and dear ones as also with providers of essential services. Employees of telecom service providers are also unseen men and women who work to maintain mobile networks and ensure seamless voice and data connectivity. Employees of banks and financial institutions are among others. All these people face several difficulties in the discharge of their duties including travel to their place of work, food and refreshments during the day, and of course protecting themselves from infection.

Let us acknowledge, appreciate and applaud these and several others who go about their work each day, day after day, lockdown notwithstanding, in the service of the nation. ■

Inside

Volume 5, Issue 12

April 2020

6 Pin Point
10 Newscan

15 City Image
46 Urban Agenda



EVENT
38

Cities assure to accelerate efforts to achieve SDGs in 5th SAC Summit
'Gender equality should be the top priority of cities'

42

COVER STORY

22 Cities in time of Corona

Cities have donned a novel appearance that none of us has ever seen. We wish we need not see it ever again. COVID-19 has claimed over 150,000 lives, infected over 2,200,000 people, and affected almost everyone on the planet in one way or the other. Cities may be the worst affected but our urban institutions are also giving a glimmer of hope to humanity in this fight against COVID-19

LEADERSPEAK

26 **Scaling up innovation in sanitation to mitigate risks from pandemics like COVID-19**
AIILSG stands with the nation and urban local bodies in particular in the time of coronavirus pandemic. Our institute is committed to extending all kind of support to our municipalities in this fight. Sanitation has been the prime focus for our institute since its inception. This COVID 19 pandemic has compelled us to rethink our community sanitation standards and redesign our curriculum for sanitation workers

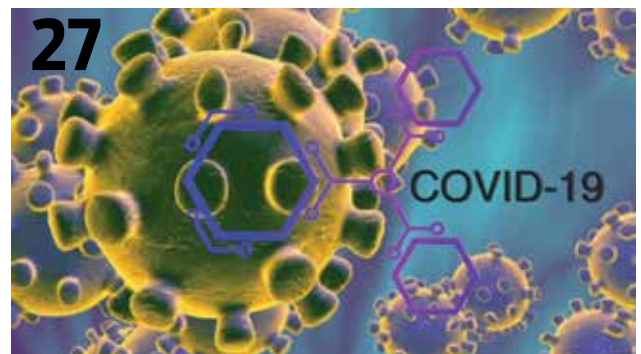
ARTICLES

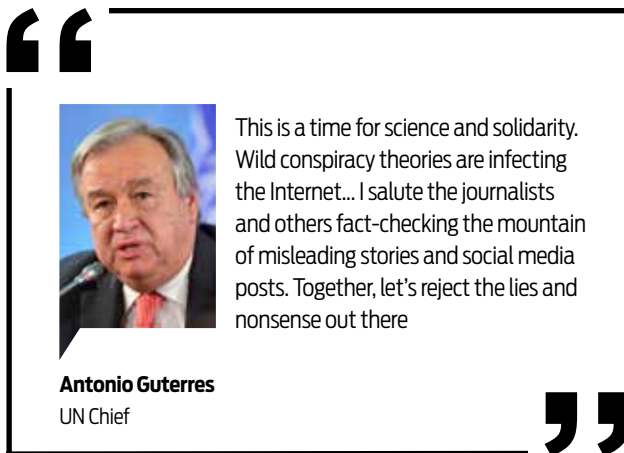
28 **A history of pandemics & shape of human history**

32 **Nature gets some breathing space, but for how long?**

34 **Economics of health; health of economies**

36 **Fake news: The Digital Pandemic**





This is a time for science and solidarity. Wild conspiracy theories are infecting the Internet... I salute the journalists and others fact-checking the mountain of misleading stories and social media posts. Together, let's reject the lies and nonsense out there

Antonio Guterres
UN Chief



The one thing we absolutely know for sure is that social distancing measures works. It leads to a situation where every case is infecting less than one other case, and that means if you keep the course, you'll get transmission essentially down to zero.

Dr Christopher Murray
Institute for Health Metrics & Evaluation, University of Washington

PIN POINT



The economic effect of this is really dramatic. Bringing the economy back ... that's more of a reversible thing than bringing people back to life. So we're going to take the pain in the economic dimension to minimize the pain in the diseases-and-death dimension

Bill Gates
Co-Founder, Microsoft Corporation



Were we ready for this crisis? Clearly not ready enough, but we have faced up to it. We had to adapt constantly because this virus was unknown and even today much about it remains mysterious. Let's be honest: Events revealed weaknesses, deficiencies

Emmanuel Macron
President of France

BUZZ



Ram Nath Kovind
President, India
@rashtrapatibhvn

The President emphasised the need to ensure that no one remains hungry during the lockdown. Taking note of the problems faced by the homeless, the unemployed and the weaker sections of society during this crisis, he said we will have to be extra sensitive towards their needs



Amnesty International
@amnesty

Health workers around the world are putting their lives at risk, to save ours. If health workers are not protected, neither are we. We ask: Protect health workers, protect everyone



Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Minister, Delhi
@ArvindKejriwal

PM has taken correct decision to extend lockdown. Today, India's position is better than many developed countries because we started lockdown early. If it is stopped now, all gains would be lost. To consolidate, it is imp to extend it



Ratan N Tata
Chairman Emeritus, Tata Sons
@RNTata2000

The COVID 19 crisis is one of the toughest challenges we will face as a race. The Tata Trusts and the Tata group companies have in the past risen to the needs of the nation. At this moment, the need of the hour is greater than any other time

CAPACITATING CSOs & EMPOWERING WOMEN & GIRLS THROUGH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

All India Institute of Local Self-Government along with its partners is awarded the Girl Power project by European Union to work on overall development and empowerment of CSOs working on women and girls support in the state of Jharkhand



gender empowerment by creating an ecosystem of growth using networks, capacity building, market access etc.

The project will be implemented with the development of Gender Network for Social Entrepreneurship Jharkhand, which will mostly comprise of CSOs. Another important aspect will be the creation of Jharkhand Mahila Social Entrepreneurship Market Connect (JMSEMC). This market connect will help the women social entrepreneurs to directly showcase their products and services. It will also help the women to monetize their products. The market connect will also be supported by a website which will help in promoting the entrepreneurs. Beyond these activities, skill-development for 5000 women and girls; course development; best practices forums will be regularly undertaken within the project scope.

This project will support the Government of India's Skill India Mission and its agencies, namely, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and affiliated skill sector councils (SSCs) in imparting skill-based training to women. It will also support the National Urban Livelihood Mission (Skill Training and Placement (EST&P) and the National Rural Livelihood Mission of Government of India. Further, the project will support the Government of Jharkhand's skill development initiatives especially the Skill Development Policy 2018 and vision plan which has undertaken a target to train 8.5 lakh youths in the next 3 years, that is till 2020-21, and 79,000 rural youth to be trained (over 30% women). Within this context, Jharkhand is supporting and heavily investing in Mega skill building centres – around 5 have been started in the state so far with specific focus on providing skill training to women and open employment avenues.

AIIILSG has set up Skill Building Centres at Ranchi and Madhupur which are both functional. ■

Jharkhand is one of the poorest states in India. Created in 2000, Jharkhand has 39.1% poverty headcount and a gross state domestic product of (GSDP) of US \$589 (2010-11). The state boasts a population of 33 million, of which 76% is rural and the share of vulnerable groups is high at 12% Scheduled Castes and 26% Scheduled Tribes. Within this context, the effective literacy rate for Jharkhand in Census 2011, works out to 67.63% with corresponding figures for males and females being 78.45 and 56.21 respectively, with at least 10 districts being below 50%. The population is also very young, adolescents and youth (ages 10-24) constitute 31% of the total population. It is an estimated 56% of young women (ages 15-24) are neither engaged in education, nor employment or training. This is further accentuated by lags in female education. It is estimated that beyond schooling, only 8% of young women age 18-24 ever participated in some form of training, and less than 0.1% had secured a vocational training diploma.

The Girl Power project aims to bring about overall development and empowerment of CSOs working on supporting women and girls in the

state of Jharkhand using a combination of training, skill building, network formation, policy dialogue, market access and entrepreneurial support. The project has been awarded by the European Union to AIIILSG and its project partners. AIIILSG's project partners are the renowned Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Rural Industrialization (MGIRI), Magan Sanghralaya Samiti (MSS: the only museum established by Mahatma Gandhi) and Saunta Gaunta Foundation (SG Foundation).

The CSOs in Jharkhand are ill-equipped and poorly represented to undertake this exercise due to lack of support and innovative models. This project will involve partners from within Jharkhand and outside with innovative models and best practices to build knowledge and capacities of CSOs by engaging meaningfully with social enterprises focusing on women and girls. At the same time, provide skills and competences for strengthening (Self Help Groups) and creating social enterprises for empowering women and girls & their entrepreneurship. On the other hand, social enterprises funding and support are largely focused around a start-up environment using scalable, replicable and financially sustainable projects and not on

Climate Resilient & Inclusive Cities

The CRIC project aims at building long lasting and unique cooperation between cities & research centres in Europe, Indonesia and other countries from South East Asia, and to contribute substantially to sustainable integrated urban development, good governance, climate adaptation, etc

With an urban growth averaging 4.4% annually, Indonesia experiences the highest rate of urbanisation in Asia (higher than in India and China). It is predicted that 68% of the population will live in cities in the next ten years. Urban population densities exceed 15,000 habitants/km² in cities like Jakarta and more than 30,000 habitants/km² in some inner-city areas. Cities are hardly hit by climate change, although they could be seeds for solutions. Cities like Jakarta are sinking below sea level and could be expected to sink by 2050. Countries like Vietnam (36% of urban population) and the Philippines (45%) concentrate large urban areas, with fast growing centres. Urban areas host most of the vulnerable populations, as well as vital and social

infrastructure, and local governments have increased pressure to develop services, infrastructure, employment (UN Habitat).

The overall objectives of the project is to propose a long lasting and unique cooperation between cities and research centres in Europe, Indonesia and other countries from South East Asia, and to contribute substantially to sustainable integrated urban development, good governance, and climate adaptation/mitigation through long lasting partnerships, and tools such as sustainable local action plans, early warning tools and experts panels.

The Specific objectives

- ◆ To strengthen good governance
- ◆ The sustainable use of resources by cities
- ◆ Social cohesiveness and inclusive cities
- ◆ Resilience and actions for the environment
- ◆ Prosperity and Innovation in cities, innovation,
- ◆ culture, design, and the identification of sustainable financing mechanisms.
- ◆ The promotion of triangular cooperation

Hundreds of millions of people in poorer urban areas are hit by pockets of deprivation, and lack of basic infrastructure (such as water and sanitation). Problems will worsen when the most fragile territories could be affected by rising sea levels, flooding, landslides, toxic peaks of air pollution, typhoons alerts, storms, or periods of more extreme heats and droughts related to climate change. Cities and local governments are increasingly recognized as key actors in addressing climate challenges and SDGs. United Cities and Local Government Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) as an association

TARGETED OUTCOMES

- Pillar 1: Knowledge production and exchange
- Pillar 2: Local action plans for climate resilient and inclusive cities
- Pillar 3: Communication & Capacity Building

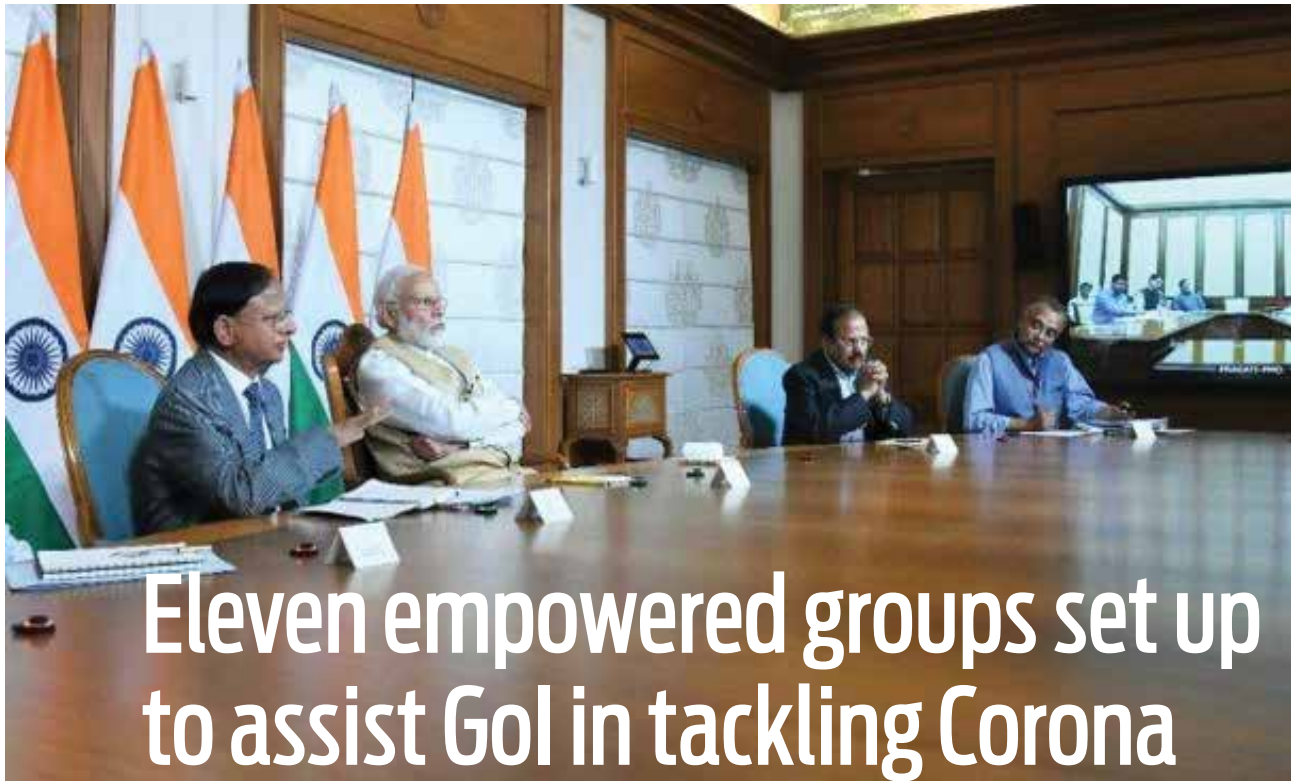
of the local governments is the key actor as knowledge management hub on LGs' issues in the Asia Pacific region. UCLG ASPAC has strong sources of leadership that require enabling frameworks and a combination of measures to achieve the changes that are needed.

Considering the urgency of the climate resilience issues, UCLG ASPAC initiated the Climate Resilience Inclusive Cities (CRIC) Project. It is a five (5) years project with overall objectives to propose a long lasting and unique cooperation through a triangular cooperation between cities and research centres in Europe, South Asia (India, Nepal, Bangladesh), and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand). The Project will also contribute to sustainable integrated urban development, good governance, and climate adaptation/mitigation through long lasting partnerships, and tools such as sustainable local action plans, early warning tools, air quality and waste management in consultation with experts' panels.

The target groups of the Project will be local governments, cities, urban stakeholders working on climate resilience, climate mitigation and adaptation, and good governance of inclusive cities. With final beneficiaries including but not limited to local community of the cities/provinces, including women, marginalised sector, civil society, and private sectors. ■



AllLSG team at the launching and kick off meeting of Climate Resilience Inclusive Cities Project



Eleven empowered groups set up to assist Govt in tackling Corona

NEW DELHI: In a bid to ensure a smooth transition back from the coronavirus shutdown, the Government of India, on March 29, has formed 11 empowered groups to develop plans and suggestions to put the economy, healthcare back on track in the shortest possible time. The groups would all work under the overall guidance of PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and out of the eleven, nine are led by the Secretaries of various ministries and the other two are headed by NITI Aayog members. The groups have been set up under the Disaster Management Act.

The groups were given the instruction to take all the necessary steps for a time bound implementation of their plans. A panel on 'Economy and Welfare' is headed by Atanu Chakraborty, Economic Affairs Secretary in the Finance Ministry, while two other working groups are led by VK Paul, Member, NITI Aayog and CK Mishra, Environment Secretary which will develop preparedness measures for medical emergencies, supply and hospitals. The suggestions of the group would

also be used to increase the capacity of ventilator manufacturing amongst other medical equipment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a joint meeting of the Empowered Groups constituted to review the performance of the eleven groups on April 10. The Principal Secretary reviewed the efforts undertaken by the Empowered Groups. The issues related to supply chain and logistics management for availability of necessary items, efforts undertaken for the benefit of stakeholders involved, steps to assist farmers harvest their produce while maintaining social distancing, further confidence building measures necessary and need to ensure percolation of guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs to the ground level were discussed. The gathering reviewed and expressed satisfaction on the detailed testing protocol and procedure, under which (as on date) 1,45,916 samples have been tested.

It was informed that all Chief Secretaries of States were issued instructions to arrange for shelter for the vulnerable groups like migrants

and homeless. Also, Centre is in constant touch with States and District level monitoring is being undertaken. The production of PPEs is being ramped up and capacity building for healthcare personnel is being ensured. NGOs and Civil Society groups are also being mobilised. Principal Secretary suggested that coordination with NGOs at district level be done to avoid overlaps and ensure efficacious utilisation of resources.

The progress of the roll out of welfare measures through the economic relief package under PM's Garib Kalyan Yojna was also reviewed. Principal Secretary underlined that data sanctity was important to ensure that the benefits reach out to all the intended beneficiaries.

Steps taken to ensure timely information dissemination throughout the country were discussed and ensuring last mile outreach through communication in regional languages was emphasised. On the technology and data management front, while expressing satisfaction on the roll out of Aarogya Setu app, it was felt that the user engagement with the app needs to be enhanced.

COVID 19 & Nations

How most affected countries are faring?

NEW DELHI: The pandemic caused by the Corona virus has been responsible for the death of more than 1 lakh people around the world. So far, developed nations have fared worse than the developing nations, which in turn has caused a global economic slowdown. During these times, here is a look at the most affected countries during this time:

USA

The United States is the most affected country by the novel corona virus with a total 587,173 cases and 23,644 deaths as of April 14. The US has been hit hard and President Trump has taken strict measures to curb the pandemic. Initially, the government decided to reopen its business by Easter but on March 29, the lockdown was extended till end of April. On March 15, the President asked to avoid gathering of more than 10 people and if possible, cancel all such gatherings for two months at least. After the increase in patients, the government, on April 2,

invoked the Defense Production Act, to ensure that those companies that were manufacturing ventilators receive uninterrupted supply of raw materials.

SPAIN

Spain, that is the second most affected country in the world, has reported a total 170,099., as of April 14. Around 25,000 health care professionals have been detected positive, which is 15 per cent of the total health care professionals operating in the country. Despite this, the government has eased down the lockdown in the country for people to return to their work. In Spain, construction and manufacturing industry have been given the green signal to restart their businesses, enabling thousands to work again. However, government has already issued orders, which mandates working people to always wear protective gear while dealing with public.

ITALY

The extensive spread of the disease

in the country, which can be partially owed to the flaws in its healthcare, has led to it being declared as the epicenter of the Novel Corona virus. The country has reported 159,516 cases with a total death count of 20,465 as of April 14. In Italy, nationwide restrictions on travel are in place and all shops - apart from food stores and pharmacies - are closed, as are schools, gyms, museums, cafes, restaurants and nightclubs. Lockdown has been extended until May 3 for the country.

The worst affected region in Italy has managed to slowdown the growth in the number of cases by experimenting with blanket testing, which is essentially bulk testing of people. Recent trends have shown that the country has managed to effectively slow down rate of increase in the number of new cases and death rate has now also been on the decline.

CHINA

Wuhan, the city that reported the very first case of corona virus and the most deaths in the early stages, is now recovering from the pandemic as normal life resumes. Though, the government has lifted many restrictions, it has still restricted the movement of people from leaving the city. According to official figures, more than 50,000 people had been infected in Wuhan, which alone resulted in around 80 per cent of total deaths in China. Although, the country was able to control the pandemic and gradually lift many bans to ease the lives of citizens, new cases are still being reported, which is a major cause of international concern. Since March 25, a total of 62 new cases have been reported in China.

The country is maintaining strict screening protocols and is concerned about any resurgence in the number of new infections by virus carriers who exhibit no symptoms and infected travellers arriving from abroad.



Visakhapatnam begins random testing in red zones of the city

As of April 13, the officials of Visakhapatnam have initiated random testing of people living in the identified red zones of the city to control the spread of virus. The officials will be collecting 60 to 100 new samples daily. Earlier, the tests were conducted on people who had returned from abroad but now it has been extended to random people in red zones. Those who are being tested are advised to remain in home isolation for 14 days or they are being shifted to nearest community health centers. Measures are being taken and every house in the red zones is being surveyed. Zonal Commissioner of Gajuwakasa said that 900 teams surveyed around 48,000 houses in red zones surrounding Kunchumamba colony, and remaining will be surveyed at the earliest.

Will adopt 5T approach to tackle COVID-19: Kejriwal

Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister, Delhi, has announced that the government is looking forward to tackle the spread of COVID-19 with a new strategy. With the '5-step plan, also termed as the '5 Ts plan', the state government will be prioritising 'Testing, tracing, treatment, teamwork, tracking and monitoring'. Delhi authority is also planning to conduct 1 lakh random tests at the city's various hotspots. Kejriwal also said that the government requires 400 ventilators, 1200 oxygen cylinder equipped beds for the treatment of critical patients. "In this manner, if there are 30,000 active cases in Delhi we will have arrangements for them. The hospitals have been identified. 12,000 rooms in hotels will also be taken over in phases if the needs arise, Kejriwal said.

Delhi Assembly passes budget amidst corona outbreak

NEW DELHI: Delhi Assembly, on March 23, passed the budget for the financial year 2020-21. The five-day session was cut short to a day, due to the corona outbreak. The ₹65,000-crore budget will be primarily used to further develop the education, health and transportation sectors of the city. Manish Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Delhi, presented the budget for the sixth consecutive time. The presentation lasted for around an hour and a half and the members of the assembly observed social distancing by leaving the seats between them empty.

A sum of ₹15,815 crores, which is 24 per cent of the total budget, has been set aside for the education sector for 2020-21. The government is planning to set up digital classrooms in each school and Rs 100 crores has been reserved for this purpose. ₹7,704 crores has been allocated for health sector. From this amount, ₹724 crores will be used to build new hospitals and ₹365

crore for Mohalla clinics and polyclinics. A total of ₹5,941 crores has been reserved for public transportation services, in a bid "to guarantee the largest and cheapest public transportation system in Delhi", according to the Deputy CM. Sisodia announced that the government is targeting to increase the fleet of Delhi Transportation Corporation (DTC) buses to 11,000 and lay 500 kms of metro lines. Another salient feature of the budget was the specific allocation of ₹30 crore to curb air pollution in the coming five years. The capital would be used to install smog towers across Delhi. The government will also be introducing "Green Citizen Awards", which will be awarded to citizens who have contributed significantly in environment preservation. The Budget allocated ₹1,700 crore for introducing basic amenities in the unauthorised colonies of Delhi. The Government has also set aside ₹50 crores to deal with the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

150 of Royal family members of Saudi Corona Positive

RIYADH: As many as 150 members of the Saudi Arabian royal family have reportedly tested positive for COVID-19. Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Governor, Riyadh, who is in his early 70s, had to be admitted in intensive care due to the virus. For the treatment of the members, King Faisal Specialist Hospital, which is in-charge of the treatment of the royals, is preparing to cater to more than 500 new patients due to the sudden increase in the number of cases. The hospital, in a high alert message, also said that only those cases that require immediate attention would be accepted further. The alert also mentioned that infected staff members will be treated at a less elite facility to make room for the royal family. The possible reason for the mass infection in the royal family has been speculated to be the frequent travels of the Saudi Princes, many of which frequently visited various parts of Europe.

New York Times reported that, as of April 9, the members of the lower branches of the royal family are infected. Hence, it is speculated that more cases from the royal family, which has over 15,000 members, will come out in the coming few weeks. King Salman, Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, who is 84 years old, has gone into self-isolation on an island palace in Jeddah. Most of the country's 2932 cases have been reported from slums around Mecca and Medina or migrant labor camps. However, the worst is yet to come, as studies are predicting that the number of cases will increase anywhere between 10,000 to 200,000 in the near future. Tawfiq al-Rabiah, Health Minister, Saudi Arabia, confirmed to Saudi Press Agency. As of April 13, the country in lock down as travel between cities, in and out of the country has been restricted.



SUBSCRIBE TO UrbanUpdate

A magazine dedicated to Urban
Infrastructure, Governance & Sustainability

For 3 Years
(36 Issues)
Rs 2520

For 2 Years
(24 Issues)
Rs 1920

For 1 Year
(12 Issues)
Rs 1080

Yes, I want to subscribe to Urban Update

Tick	Year	Cover price	Issue/Year	Cover price/Annum	You pay	Discount
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	100	12	1200	1080	10%
<input type="checkbox"/>	2		24	2400	1920	20%
<input type="checkbox"/>	3		36	3600	2520	30%

Please fill this form in CAPITAL LETTERS

Name

Organisation

Designation Mobile

Address

City Pin Code State

E-mail

Cheque/DD/MO No Drawn on (specify bank)

For Rupees Dated

In favour of 'ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT' is enclosed.

Mail this form along with your Cheque/DD to the following address
All India Institute of Local Self-Government
Sardar Patel Bhavan, 22-23, Institutional Area, D Block, Pankha Road, Janakpuri, Delhi-110058

You can pay Subscription charges through National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT). Details for NEFT transfer are:

Axis Bank Limited

A/C Name: All India Institute of Local Self-Government

A/C No: 207010100182768

IFSC: UTIB0000207

Please e-mail your details (Name, Address, duration of subscription, transaction no.) to contacturbanupdate@gmail.com for initiating subscription after the NEFT transfer.

For any query, please contact our Subscription Department
Phone No.: 011-2852 1783 / 5473 (Extn. 37)
Or e-mail at contacturbanupdate@gmail.com

Terms and Conditions

- Payments for mailed subscriptions are accepted only via cheque or demand draft
- Cash payments may be made in person
- Allow one week for processing of your subscription
- You will receive your copy of URBAN UPDATE by post/courier
- All disputes shall be subject to Delhi jurisdiction only

Maharashtra govt seals all hotspots in the state, including Dharavi



With the total number of cases rising exponentially in Maharashtra, the state government announced that it would seal all COVID-19 hotspots in the state, including Dharavi. With more than 14 people being tested positive for COVID-19 from Dharavi, authorities, on April 10, decided to shut down the urban slum fearing community transmission. Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has permitted the functioning of medical outlets in the sealed hotspots and has barred entry or exit of people from the containment zones. BMC also said that it would soon begin door-to-door delivery of essentials in these areas.

'Schools to not charge fees/dues for 3 months'

Ashok Gehlot, Chief Minister, Rajasthan, has instructed all private schools in the state to not charge any dues or advance fees for three months amid the nationwide lockdown imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The government also directed schools to begin mass-promotion of students of all classes, except class X and class XII, to the next grade on the basis of internal assessments and periodic tests conducted so far. The state government also assured that online lectures and e learning will be conducted for both school and college students in the state to ensure continuity of studies.

Israeli scientists claim coronavirus vaccine will be available in 90 days

JERUSALEM: Claiming to have achieved a breakthrough, Ofir Akunis, Israeli Minister of Science and Technology, announced that Israeli scientists are on the cusp of developing the world's first vaccine against the novel coronavirus. According to a press release, if all goes as planned, the vaccine could be ready within a few weeks and available in by July 9.

Akunis congratulated MIGAL (The Galilee Research Institute) on the breakthrough and said that there will be rapid progress that will enable the world in providing a much-needed response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the past four years, a team of MIGAL scientists has been developing a vaccine against Infectious Bronchitis Virus (IBV). The disease causes a bronchial disease affecting poultry. The effectiveness of the vaccine has been proven in preclinical trials carried out at the Veterinary Institute.

"Our basic concept was to develop the technology and not specifically a vaccine

for this kind or that kind of virus," said Dr. Chen Katz, MIGAL's biotechnology group leader. "The scientific framework for the vaccine is based on a new protein expression vector, which forms and secretes a chimeric soluble protein that delivers the viral antigen into mucosal tissues by self-activated endocytosis, causing the body to form antibodies against the virus."

Katz further said that in preclinical tests, the team demonstrated that the oral vaccination induces high levels of specific anti-IBV antibodies. But after scientists sequenced the DNA of the novel coronavirus causing the current worldwide outbreak, the MIGAL researchers examined it and found that the poultry coronavirus has high genetic similarity to the human one, and that it uses the same infection mechanism, which increases the likelihood of achieving an effective human vaccine in a very short period of time, Katz said. It will be an oral vaccine, making it more accessible to the general public.

Karnataka starts training healthcare professionals online in dealing with COVID-19

BENGALURU: In a bid to equip the medical staff better with measures and protocols to treat a coronavirus positive patient, the Karnataka government has decided to provide online training to 4.5 lakh nurses in the state.

K Sudhakar, Medical Education Minister, Karnataka, said that looking at the present pandemic it has become extremely important to train more healthcare professionals in the state on how to handle coronavirus affected patient, as we don't want medical staff to get infected by virus while treating the patients.

He also said that the state is facing a shortage of trained workers expert in dealing with this pandemic and if we don't address the issue at the earliest medical workers can get infected. "We need to keep nursing professionals ready to handle COVID-19 and that is why we have decided to impart skills to them all through online classes the standard operating procedures to be followed while treating the infected person", he added. The training module has been prepared by Rajiv Gandhi University of Health and Sciences. The nurses needed to attend a two-hour-class every day. The online class trains the healthcare professional in Psychological and Psychiatric aspects of dealing with COVID-19 positive patients. The university has directed the colleges to organise online classes by the use of technological tools. The university will also be collecting feedbacks from students regarding the arrangements that have been made. With this Karnataka has become the first state to implement such training module.

'THE SAINTS WEAR WHITE'

A TRIBUTE TO THE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

DUYI HAN, SHANGHAI born artist based in the United States, recently came out with his newest artwork titled- 'The Saints Wear White'. Duyi said that he has dedicated this piece

of art to the real warriors who are fighting on the frontlines in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic in its epicenter, Hubei province in China. Duyi wanted to make people

feel spiritually and emotionally connected with the hardships that medical professionals are facing at this time, even if they are unable to do so physically.



Water stock in Maharashtra's dams up two-fold since last year

Maharashtra has suffered the worst drought in the last five years as most dams in the Vidarbha and Marathwada district ran dry. However, this year, authorities announced that dams in Maharashtra are filled adequately and they will last the summer this year. The Nalgnaga Dam, which was at 10 per cent of storage capacity last year, is now running at 91 per cent of its total capacity. The Pentakali Dam shows the most pronounced changes as it went from 0 per cent last year to 82 per cent of its total capacity this year. The 3,267 dams in Maharashtra are said to be running at 53.65 per cent capacity this year showing a two-fold increase when compared to estimates from last year.

Rajasthan govt approves ₹6512 cr to ensure water supply during summer

In order to avoid any water shortages during summer, the Government of Rajasthan has approved ₹6512.93 crore for ensuring ample water supply in various parts of the state for four months till July. According to an official statement, of the total sanctioned amount, ₹4112.46 crore is for rural areas while ₹2400.47 crore is for urban areas. The amount will be used to transport water across Rajasthan. Field officials had been earlier asked to evaluate the areas that were most hard hit by water shortage during summers. Based on the recommendations of these officials, proposals were sent to the government for providing water in 134 cities and towns. A similar process was carried out for rural areas too after which, 229 habitats have been selected to be covered under the government scheme.

Maharashtra divided into red, orange and green zones

MUMBAI: The Government of Maharashtra is planning on dividing the state into red, orange and green zones, based on the number of COVID-19 positive cases in an area, as of April 13. Rajesh Tope, Minister of Health, Government of Maharashtra, said that the division, based on the number of COVID-19 cases, could be done to identify areas where economic activities can be resumed. He further said that this would also help the state government in imposing different rules in different areas based on the type of region they fall in. Green zones would be areas where no Covid-19 cases have been reported so far. Orange zones would be in areas where there have been less than 15 positive

COVID-19 cases and red zones would be areas where more than 15 cases have been reported. According to Tope, eight districts, including Nanded and Solapur could fall in the green zone while 13 districts including Amravati and Yavatmal can come under the orange zone. Mumbai city, Mumbai suburban and Thane apart from 8 other districts would be in the red zone. As of April 11, Mumbai, MMR, Pune have 91 per cent of the COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra.

The state government would start a limited number of industrial activities and minimal state transport facilities in the orange and green zones and extend the lockdown with stricter restrictions in the red zones. However, the state government has not taken any decisions on the division of the state into zones yet as it is still awaiting guidelines from the Centre as to what can and cannot be allowed in different zones.



Study by ICMR suggests one COVID positive can infect 406 people

NEW DELHI: A study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has shown that a Coronavirus infected person can infect 406 other people in 30 days if social distancing is not maintained. Lav Aggarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health, said that with the preventive measures implemented, the chances of community transmission have reduced to an average of just two and a half person per infected patient in period of 30 days. Referring to the ICMR study, Aggarwal said the current 'R0' or 'R-naught' (which indicates the contagiousness of a disease) for the coronavirus infection is somewhere between 1.5 and 4. "If we take the 'R0' to be 2.5 and if social exposure is reduced by 75 per cent, then that one sick person will be able to infect only 2.5 persons," Aggarwal said, highlighting the importance of the ongoing 21-day lockdown. In order to minimise the spread, the Joint Secretary appealed to all the citizens to strictly follow social distancing, highlighting that this is the most important counter measure against the pandemic. For appropriate management of the COVID-19 infected patients, the government has classified tending hospitals into three categories. Mild/ Suspected cases will be tended to in makeshift facilities like government schools, hostels etc. Serious patients will be treated in hospitals equipped with ICUs, ventilators and beds with oxygen support.

New study suggests Novel Coronavirus dies at 70°C

NEW DELHI: A study published in medical journal The Lancet Microbe, suggests that novel coronavirus can be killed in extreme heat. To eliminate the virus, it will take 14 days at room temperature. A team from Hong Kong University studied the characteristics of the virus and how long it takes for household disinfectants, bleach, and soap to kill the virus. According to the study, the novel coronavirus was stable at low temperature, but it exhibited sensitivity to heat. The virus showed only a minimal reduction in quantity when kept at 4°C for 14 days, but at room temperature of 22°C with 65 per cent humidity, the virus disappeared after 14 days. But when the virus was exposed to an extreme temperature like 70°C, it was eliminated in under five minutes. The research also discovered that the virus tended to disintegrate quicker on surfaces that had texture such as paper, wood or cloth. As per the study coronavirus can stay on treated wood and clothes for up to two days, but it was not detected on printed papers and tissue papers after three hours. The virus tends to last on smoother surfaces more. On surfaces like glass, the traces of the virus were detected for four days. But on plastic and stainless steel, it remained for up to seven days. The research paper claims that, “a detectable level of infectious virus could still be present on the outer layer of a surgical mask on day 7”. The suggestion about survival of virus on mask poses many risks as the number of COVID-19 positive cases are continuously on the rise.

Also, the virus was found stable in varied range of pH conditions. The study suggests that at normal room temperatures, bleach and common disinfectants can destroy the virus in five minutes. But hand soaps are not that effective.

Indian scientists share genome sequences to better understand Corona

NEW DELHI: In a bid to curb the spread of the Corona pandemic globally, Indian scientists have shared nine whole genome sequences of the virus. The sequences have been shared with the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID)-a public platform started by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2009 for countries to share genome sequences with the aim of better understanding spread of diseases. All sequences have been shared by the Pune-based National Institute of Virology. So far, the United States of America has shared the highest number of sequences of virus isolated from humans with 621 sequences contributed. The United Kingdom with 350, Belgium with 253 and China with 242 contributed sequences stand second, third and fourth respectively.

On April 2, all national laboratories, including those under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), were granted permission by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to begin testing people for the novel coronavirus. Since these labs will



now have access to the virus samples, they will be in a position to sequence the genome too. According to Dr Shekhar C Mande, Director-General CSIR, both the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) and the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), Delhi have already started sequencing the virus.

Along with this, Dr Mande also has elaborated on the initiatives of Core Strategy Group (CSG) and the five verticals, namely Digital Surveillance; Rapid and Economical Diagnostics; Developing new drugs and their associated processes, under which the COVID-19 related activities are being furthered.

Haryana govt allocates ₹288 crore to ULBs to fight corona

In a bid to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Haryana Government has allocated a consolidated fund of ₹288.92 crores to the 87 municipalities of the state. These funds are to be directed on preferential basis to the essential measures to fight the pandemic. Along with this, 18 Coordinating Supervisory Officers (CSOs) will be operating in each of the 87 municipal corporations. An official spokesperson of the Haryana Government's ULB department also confirmed that 22,517 sanitation workers are ensuring cleanliness in the state. Adequate sanitation measures of public places by using water tankers, fire hydrants and sprays have been undertaken by the municipalities till now, the spokesperson confirmed.

Odisha trains 500 MBBS students to fight Covid-19

The Government of Odisha, apart from setting up three special COVID-19 hospitals, has trained 500 MBBS students to deal with the pandemic and kept them as reserve, to be deployed if and when the need arises. The state government gave online training classes to the students. The classes were approved by the Government of India said Subroto Bagchi, Covid-19 spokesperson of Odisha Government. In addition to this, the government has also kept paramedic students, including nurses, in reserve to deal with the pandemic in case there is a sudden spike in the number of cases in the state. The state government also urged retired medical professionals and experts to volunteer to be deployed at various state-run hospitals.

West Bengal government to start virtual classes for students amid lockdown

Government of West Bengal recently announced that it would conduct weeklong virtual classes for students of classes 9 to 12. According to Partha Chatterjee, State Education Minister, students will tune in to DD Bangla channel on their TV sets every day during a fixed time where well-known teachers will give lectures on particular subjects. Students can also ask doubts by calling/ mailing their queries on the number/email id displayed on their TV sets during the lectures. This has been done in order to make the lectures interactive, said Chatterjee.

Solid waste reduced by 28 per cent in Chennai amid lockdown

According to the recent data reported by Greater Chennai Corporation, the recent lockdown has brought down the amount of solid waste generated in the city. The city that usually produces 5000 tonnes of solid waste has reduced it to less than 3,700 tonnes that explain the drop in 28 per cent waste generation during quarantine. According to the officials, they are collecting door-to-door household waste daily in all its 200 wards. But there is a significant reduction in garbage. One of the reason highlighted for reduction in solid waste is the migration of many residents to their native villages, hence, many households remain locked. Due to lockdown many commercial works have stopped and waste generated from such places have reduced significantly. "The waste generated in commercial areas such as T. Nagar, Purasawalkam and George Town has reduced considerably," said an official from the Corporation.

Lockdown will affect internal migration trends of labourers: Experts

NEW DELHI: In the wake of the lockdown imposed due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic across India, a number of activities of daily lives of people have been affected. Most affected amongst them are the people who are engaged in manual labor. The lockdown has forced migrant laborers to return to their hometowns or villages. However, according to Prof S Irudaya Rajan, one of India's foremost experts in population studies, this will have a profound effect on the return of the migrant workers whenever the lockdown is called-off.

He says that due to the lockdown, thousands of migrants have been stranded

on the streets all over India without jobs, income, food or a place to live. This has forced them to take to highways and walk hundreds of kilometers to reach their homes. This, in turn, says Prof Rajan, creates a panic among the workers and instills a sense of fear in these people who are travelling long distances in search of work. Chinmay Tumble, Professor of Economics at Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Ahmedabad, says that this causes a 'destination shift'. Workers, who earlier had no problems in travelling such long distances in search of work, are now expected to prefer to move only to neighboring towns and cities and eke out every opportunity they find there. Meanwhile, industrial centers like Gurugram, Surat and Tiruppur will face a shortage of migrant labor that will act as an obstruction for industries trying to ease out of the recession.

Tumble suggests that central and state governments must be ready with solutions to tackle the obvious shortage in availability of workers in the coming months.



World economy in crisis; likely to drop by 1%: UN

NEW YORK: A report published by the United Nations has estimated that the world economy is likely to drop by 1 per cent in 2020 because of large-scale shutdown caused by the corona virus. The report further stated that the economic decline could get even worse if the restrictions on economic activities continue till the third quarter of the year. "Urgent and bold policy measures are needed, not only to contain the pandemic and save lives, but also to protect the most vulnerable in our societies from economic ruin and to sustain economic growth and financial stability," said Liu Zhenmin, the UN Under Secretary General for economic and social affairs.

The report assumes that the current scenario of the global shutdown would continue with the wide ranging restrictions in the European Union and the United States till the middle of the second quarter of this year, that is, between April and May 2020.

Although the loss is expected to be recovered quickly, banks at Wall Street predict that the lockdown will cause a loss of \$5 trillion dollars of growth over the next couple of years. Even with an increased focus by various countries on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it is unlikely to achieve the same growth rate as that of the one noted before the global lockdown. The World Trade Organisation said that the pandemic could cause a deeper collapse of international trade flows than at any point in the postwar era.

‘Corona Warriors’ trying their best to minimize COVID-19 impacts

NEW DELHI: India, like every other prominent nation battling the ongoing pandemic, has been proactively taking steps to battle the COVID-19 virus at a national level. Several organisations, private and public, have engaged in supporting the citizens by ensuring adequate supplies of protective equipment, medicinal requirements and treatment facilities in the nation.

Medical Action

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has announced that it is framing a protocol for carrying out convalescent plasma therapy on patients suffering seriously from Covid-19. In the therapy, blood plasma from people who have recovered from Covid-19 is infused into patients who are battling the virus. The therapy is carried out in expectation that antibodies specific to the virus present in the body of the recovered patient will help generate immune response in the other patient. ICMR officials clarified that this will only be

done on a clinical trial basis on patients that are in a severe condition or on ventilator support due to the infection.

“We are in the final stages of making a protocol for convalescent plasma therapy and after that we will need approval from the Drug Controller General of India... It will be done on a trial basis. Abroad, it has been found successful in limited trials. Here we will do it only on patients on ventilator or severe patients,” said Dr Manoj Murhekar, Director, ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology. The doctor further said that these kits are not available in India and will have to be imported from Germany. However, the cancellation of international flights across the world would lead to delay in procuring the kits for testing. United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) recently allowed the therapy for investigational purposes.

“Convalescent Plasma is an experimental procedure for COVID-19 patients. Hospitals and Institutions

planning to provide this modality of treatment should do so in a clinical trial with protocols which are cleared by the Institutional Ethics Committee,” ICMR said in a release issued on April 12.

The Foot Warriors

Delhi Government, on April 14, has brought forth an ambitious scheme to deploy 13,750 teams of “Corona Foot Warriors” to cover testing in all the households of the city. The booth level government officials have been briefed about their roles and responsibilities and senior officials confirm that the teams would be operational by April 16, confirmed Sanjay Goel, Coordinator, Corona Foot warriors Containment and Surveillance team.

The teams would be constituted with beat constables, anganwadi workers, sanitation staff from Municipal corporations and civil defence volunteers and be trained accordingly. Similar procedure to ensure 100 per cent testing is being conducted in the city of Mysore, where Angandwadi are conducting door to door visits to check on people’s health.

A total of 1,824 ASHA workers are serving in the district, including 92 in the city, and 280 in the Mysurataluk, 320 in Nanjangudtaluk, 209 in K.R. Nagar taluk, 253 in T. Narasipurataluk, 240 in H.D. Kotetaluk, 192 in Periyapatnataluk and 220 in Hunsurataluk. The officials collect information regarding the health conditions of the family members and if any person is found symptomatic, they alert the health department. They also check if any outsider is staying in the house.

They are also tasked with assisting the Police in ensuring that all home-quarantined persons do not come out of their homes for any reason.



IIT-Guwahati developing robots to help fight Coronavirus

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati researchers are now working on the development of robots that will be deployed in the isolation wards of COVID-19 positive cases. The robots will be delivering food, medicine and other essentials and would also dispose off waste. It will help minimise human contact and hence spread of the virus. The research team has said that the prototypes would be ready within two weeks and could be customised as per the requirements of the hospital. One robot would be used for delivering the essentials and the other would be used to dispose toxic wastes.

Delhi government to transfer ₹5000 into the accounts of poor

The Delhi Government has announced that it will be transferring ₹5000 each into the accounts of the poor people whose incomes have been adversely affected due to the lockdown. Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister, Delhi, announced that the money would be transferred into the accounts of auto rickshaw, e-rickshaw, RTVs and Gramin Sewa drivers. The transfer process has been initiated and it would take 7-10 days for implementation said Kejriwal. Talking about Coronavirus, he said that 2943 people have been quarantined in the city while 31,307 are self-quarantined. He also mentioned that the government has been providing lunch and dinner to around six lakh people at various centres across the city, a number that his government plans to increase to ten lakh.

States to use Disaster Management Fund in fight against Corona

JAIPUR: The coronavirus pandemic has caused a global economic slowdown. As a result of this, governments around the world, including the Government of India, are struggling to reallocate funds for containment and treatment of COVID-19. To mitigate this, Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance, Government of India, recently announced that state governments in India can use District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds for medical testing, screening and providing of health services. The DMF was set up in 2016 in order to help people residing in areas where heavy mining activities were underway. Rajasthan has the fourth largest DMF fund in the country at ₹3514 crore. The government has also set up strict norms for the state governments to use the funds, which instruct that the fund can only be used to address problems related to pollution, environment degradation and development in mining areas. Due to such strict demarcations around the scope of use of the funds, a majority of projects proposed by the state government under the DMF funds get cancelled because of improper planning and absence of manpower. However, with the decision of the central government to allow state governments to use the DMF fund for relief during the coronavirus pandemic, the Government of Rajasthan finally has the opportunity to announce initiatives to help those who are most affected by the lockdown, particularly the poor and the daily wage workers. The government has already announced relief to families Below Poverty Line (BPL)

Lockdown lifted in Corona epicenter Wuhan after 76 days

WUHAN: The Chinese city of Wuhan, which has been the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, has lifted the lockdown on April 7, as the number of new cases has declined sharply. The latest government figures reported on April 6 listed no new cases.

However, the decision of opening the city for mobility was taken after it was made mandatory for the citizens to use a smartphone application that will utilise data tracking and government surveillance to confirm that the user is healthy and has not been in recent contact with anyone confirmed to have the virus. But even as

Wuhan reopens its borders after 76 days, some restrictions within the city will remain in place, and officials warn that the threat of further infections remains far from over. The city celebrated the occasion with a light show around the Yangtze River. Bridges and other city infra radiated images of health workers, paying homage to those essential service people who contributed in saving the “heroic city”, a title that was given to Wuhan by Xi Jinping.

The city now faces a challenge of resuming business as usual after 76 days of inactivity. While there are questions about the veracity of China’s count, the unprecedented lockdown of Wuhan and its surrounding province of Hubei have been successful enough that countries around the world adopted similar measures.

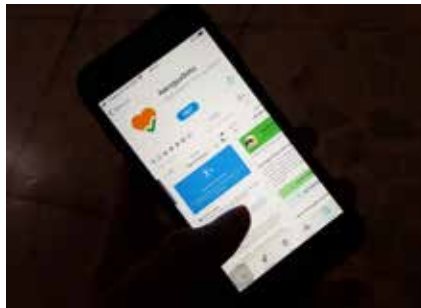
Amid streets now bustling with cars and pedestrians, citizens celebrated the lifting of a virus lockdown on her hometown of Wuhan on Wednesday with a dance outdoors after two-and-a-half months largely cooped up at home.



Track COVID more efficiently with Gol's Aarogya Setu

NEW DELHI: The Union Health Ministry, on April 2, has launched a coronavirus tracking app. The app has been developed by the National Informatics Centre and helps the user to identify and, thus, avoid those areas completely. The App is aimed at augmenting the initiatives of the Government of India, particularly the Department of Health, in proactively reaching out to and informing the users of the app regarding risks, best practices and relevant advisories pertaining to the containment of COVID-19.

The application will access the location and bluetooth sensors of the phone to detect the user's movements. People who have installed the app and come in close proximity and if one is at high risk of the coronavirus infection, the others will be immediately notified. The app also provides precautionary measures that people can use to stay safe amidst the pandemic. Aarogya Setu is available



in 11 languages, on both Android and iOS devices. The app has received generally positive reviews and has seen over 5 million downloads till now.

At the launch of the mobile app, Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, said, "Govt has developed an AarogyaSetu app. I request all of you to tell people about it, everyone should make sure that at least 40 others install it. They will get info through it about possibly infected cases around them."

Poverty, unemployment plague European countries as Corona peaks

MADRID: Being one of the worst hit countries from the pandemic, Spain has registered 302,265 cases of unemployment in the month of March itself. The Spanish Labor ministry is attributing this to the "extraordinary impact" of coronavirus, as the 4th largest European economy has been under lockdown since March 14. The trend before the lockdown was under control (in comparison), standing at only 2,857 jobless claims filed during March 1-12. The greatest number of job losses was recorded in the services sector, with 206,016 cases.

The restrictions in the country have been reinforced from March 30, as 47 million non-essential employees have been asked to work from home till April 12. This lockdown is likely to further

extend as positive cases continue to rise. Since it imposed the lockdown, Spain has tightened restrictions further, with non-essential workers in the nation of around 47 million people asked to stay at home from March 30. According to Spanish Labor ministry, unemployment in Spain has now hit 3.54 million. In another country severely hit by the pandemic, the number of people living in poverty has gone up in Britain due to the coronavirus and the subsequent lockdown. Official data from UK shows that over 14 million, or one-fifth of the population, is reeling under poverty.

Experts have warned that the risk of poverty is high particularly among the people employed in the hospitality and the retail industry.

VMC begins using drones to spray disinfectants

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation has started using drones to spray disinfectants in the red zone areas of the city following the pandemic. The corporation has declared four areas in Gayathri Nagar, Kothapeta, Krishnalanka, Moghalrajpuram as 'Red zones' after a few cases of corona positive were reported since March 17. The drones are also being used to disinfect areas around the New Government General Hospital where the corona positive patients are being treated. Prasanna Venkatesh, Commissioner, VMC, and other officials had inspected the drones prior to the release. To stop spreading of the virus, the areas declared as red zones have been completely barricaded and people living in there are not allowed to go out on vehicles, nor any vehicles is allowed to enter these areas.

Gujarat steps up sanitation drive for public places of Ahmedabad

Government of Gujarat has conducted a sanitation drive across various parts of Ahmedabad to prevent Corona spread. As part of the sanitation drive, sanitation workers along with various public spaces disinfected buses across the city. Apart from this, the municipal corporation also put up posters outside houses of those quarantined by the government in order to raise awareness about the pandemic. According to officials, this was done so that the public would be more careful around the houses of those quarantined, avoid visiting their houses and encourage those people who came in contact with suspected coronavirus patients to undergo testing for the same.



ABHISHEK PANDEY
Editor

A

s the mighty cities of the world attempt to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus, the most populated cities and their most buzzing and happening places are practically empty.

You hardly find anyone whether it is Connaught Place in New Delhi, Marine Drive in Mumbai, Times Square in New York, Champ De Mars in Paris or the Duomo in Milan. These are some of the most bustling sites which in normal days always remain filled with thousands of people and cars. Now,



CITIES IN TIME OF CORONA

Cities have donned a novel appearance that none of us has ever seen. We wish we need not see it ever again. COVID-19 has claimed over 150, 000 lives, infected over 2,200,000 people, and affected almost everyone on the planet in one way or the other. Cities may be the worst affected but our urban institutions are also giving a glimmer of hope to humanity in this fight against COVID-19

they wear a deserted look.

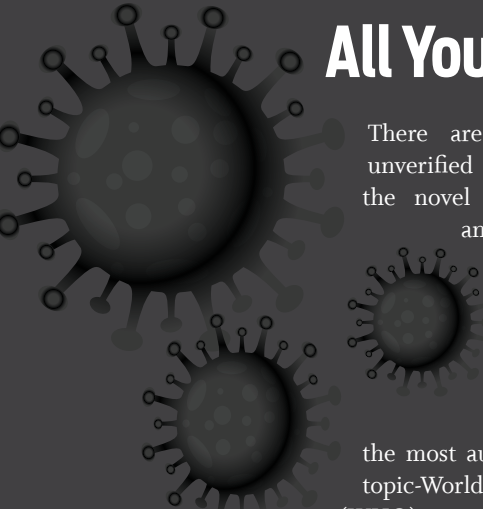
The situation is similar in other smaller cities and towns world over. Cities which were once filled with all kinds of noises from traffic and people have now fallen silent. Cities have become so desolate that you can just hear the distant wailing

of an ambulance or the siren of a police vehicle occasionally. There is hardly anyone in sight on once the busiest streets.

The governments in many countries have announced stringent measures such as lockdown and curfew. Schools, offices, shops, factories, restaurants

are shut. Exams have been postponed or cancelled. There is a strict ban on movement of people unless approved for providing essential services to citizens. The norms for social distancing have been announced. People are indoors, economic activities are at a halt. This situation is not the

All You Need to Know about the Pandemic



There are many verified and unverified reports available on the novel coronavirus, its type and treatment. Such information has created confusion and worries among people. So we have decided to seek details from the most authentic source on the topic—World Health Organisation (WHO).

tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who get COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness. People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

WHAT IS COVID-19?

The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever,

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person.

Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

Source: WHO

same for all. The daily wagers, migrant labourers are the worst affected. Those very people who built these cities' skyscrapers and signature landmarks are today struggling to find a roof over their head and to survive. They want to go back to their small villages because the economic machine that was supporting them has come to a halt.

Yet municipal corporations which provide essential services like sanitation are still running. Sanitation workers along with the medical staff are playing a significant role in the fight against coronavirus. Municipalities worldwide are disinfecting streets and potential hotspots of the virus spread. They are ensuring people do not face any difficulty in their day-to-day lives when they are at home in lockdown.

CITIES: EPICENTER OF HOPE AND DESPAIR

Cities in all the nations have concentrated populations and that is why the virus has the potential to spread rapidly in cities. Take the case of New York City (please mark not New York state), the city alone lost 8893 lives that is almost 26 per cent of total deaths in the United States of America (33,082). Back in India, Mumbai has reported 117 deaths out of 480 deaths in India. It is almost 25 per cent of the national figure. Pune and Indore follow with 52 and 50 unfortunate deaths. Delhi comes fourth with 42 reported deaths. (this data is taken till April 18, 2020). Other major affected cities which have reported deaths in double digits are Ahmedabad (35), Hyderabad

(12), Surat (10), and Thane (10).

The first four cities—Mumbai, Pune, Indore and Delhi—account for almost 55 per cent reported deaths in India. According to an analysis published in The Hindu newspaper, the share of COVID-19 cases in Mumbai is higher in more densely populated wards. Close to 54 per cent of cases are from wards which have a population density of more than 35,000 people per sq km.

It is also to be noted that Maharashtra that is the worst affected state has as many as 43 of the 100 most populated urban wards of India. Among the biggest slums of Asia, Dharavi in Mumbai is also badly affected. The slum that is built on 2.1 sq km of area in Greater Mumbai spanning 603 sq km

has reported 160 cases and 10 deaths so far. The figures are worrisome.

CITIES, INEQUALITIES AND DISASTERS

The pandemic has hit everyone, the rich and the poor. Its impact on citizens' lives is not the same. The poor are more vulnerable to the disease and its associated challenges. The 'balcony class' or the middle and upper-middle class in metro cities of India is far more protected than those living in slums. They are working from homes and getting salaries. They can get a daily supply of ration, vegetables and medicines home-delivered. They are following the norms of social distancing well and maintain the strict routine of washing hands regularly.

In slums, people are sharing public services like that of sanitation services including toilets, water supply and also housing facilities where five to ten people share a 100 sq feet room and go to sleep after stacking and pushing their stuff of daily-use to the walls. When there is need to wash hands regularly, they have a problem here too. The summer is on and the problem of limited water supply is staring them in the face. However, there is no such report of water scarcity but that is the routine problem for many and does not necessarily hit the headlines. If you get a chance to go to a congested slum, the challenges of maintaining social distancing and hygiene abound. Still, people are taking all measures to keep themselves and their dear ones safe.

Many of these people do not have the luxury of working from home. They earn their daily bread by driving an auto or working in a construction site and get paid at the end of the day. When the economic activity is halted, the daily wagers are in trouble. Hundreds of thousands of people are far from their homes stranded and without any daily earning to feed themselves. Perhaps that is why we have seen the sea of people in Mumbai's Bandra and Delhi's Anand Vihar. These were the people who wanted to go back to their villages and the places where they came from. Some managed to cross the city borders

while others were sent back. There is a need to relook at how we build cities equal for all.

GLIMMER OF HOPE

There are some cities like Agra (Uttar Pradesh), Bhilwara (Rajasthan), Pathanamthitta (Kerala) that came with successful models of containing the spread of coronavirus. Pathanamthitta prepared the list of people who came into the district and created a route map for contact tracing. They also asked the people to report themselves if they have come in contact with the suspected carriers. In Agra, when the first case was reported, it was observed that the virus had been transmitted to six people.

The district administration and Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme personnel sealed the area with a radius of 3 km in Lohamandi. The intensive operation of tracing 1,65,000 households was performed by 1248 teams. They also earmarked hotspots. According to the official sources, the areas within 3 km radius were termed as the epicentre, the area with 5 km of the radius was identified as a buffer zone. The contact tracing was thoroughly mapped and eventually 9.3 lakh people were screened. The model can be termed crucial because it dealt with high density areas and turned out to be effective to curb community transmission.

Bhilwara sealed its border and put a complete ban on the movement of people. The essentials were home delivered. All the public places were continuously disinfected. The administration also carried out household surveys for screening and finding symptomatic patients. According to news reports, approximately 200, 000 households were surveyed in which 4200 people were identified with influenza-like symptoms. Similarly, Odisha state government has also made some announcements and given special powers to head of local governments in rural areas. Chief Minister of the State Naveen Patnaik gave powers of a district collector to all the Sarpanch

(elected head of a village). They screened every one coming from outside and quarantined them. Odisha is among the few states which have contained the spread of the virus and have reported one unfortunate death until writing this article.

City leaders in global cities are also coming together and underlining their priorities with their learning from the pandemic. The mayors of Spain's seven largest cities--Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Valencia, Zaragoza, Málaga and Murcia--have issued a joint declaration saying, "We are in the front line of the pandemic and are taking an active part in the fight against the virus and its consequences." New York Mayor Bill De Blasio announced that the city will spend 3.5 Billion dollars this year on saving people's lives. Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan, the first big European city to be locked down to slow the spread of coronavirus, has rejected the proposal of the Governor of Lombardy, Attilio Fontana on lifting the lockdown and reopening economic activities. He has kept saving lives of people his priority. But in Indian cities, the role of city leaders is not prominent and is limited. This is saddening to see that they have not been actively engaged. This is one aspect that needs deliberations for strengthening local response with decisiveness in disastrous times.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said that it's likely large gatherings won't return until 2021. This seems true for all cities across the globe. People would like to remain isolated and would avoid going to shopping malls, cineplexes, concerts, conferences and any sports event. The question that everyone is asking is when can we go out again? We all hope; the epidemic will soon be on the wane. We will be back to work in our offices. Scientists will find the vaccine. Cities will be abuzz with activities. We will shake hands and embrace each other again. But the lessons from this pandemic shall not be ignored and forgotten. ■

Scaling up innovation in sanitation to mitigate risks from pandemics like COVID-19

AllSG stands with the nation and urban local bodies in particular in the time of coronavirus pandemic. Our institute is committed to extending all kind of support to our municipalities in this fight. Sanitation has been the prime focus for our institute since its inception. This COVID-19 pandemic has compelled us to rethink our community sanitation standards, redesign our curriculum for sanitation workers and overhaul our existing response system to handle such situation in a densely populated country like India; especially in low-income habitats of our cities where enforcement of social distancing, an essential measure in the wake of such health emergency, is challenging

National governments world over have not seen such a serious health emergency. COVID-19 has made its way to almost every corner and crevice of the planet. Health services are strained; economies are plummeting. Many urban local bodies have also been caught unaware how to deal with such a situation that is unprecedented and they are waiting for the instructions from the state and central governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) to control the situation on ground.

As the cities across the world are locked down to slow the spread of the virus, our health and sanitation workers, and law enforcement agencies have thrown themselves into the fray as first responders. Since our focus has been on improving the capacity of sanitation workforce with present-day requirements, the institute will intensify its efforts.

SANITIZING SANITATION INFRA

Our sanitation workforce needs to be capacitated to deal with similar situations. The infrastructure and gadgets with the sanitation department need to be upgraded and augmented to ensure that they can execute their duties and responsibilities with utmost care and efficiency. This is a time of crisis and our focus is to mitigate the risks with adequate measures but it has also impelled us to rethink about

the need of stringent implementation of sanitation guidelines and manuals, and also update them from time to time. The pandemic has also exposed the issues in our weak health infrastructure including the scarcity of ventilators, lack of Personal Protective Equipments (PPE) for health workers, masks, etc. This pandemic or health disaster has made us think about shifting our focus on right health priorities and to strengthen it. The institute will also ponder over how we can help improve the capacity and infrastructure of health services in such times of disasters.

The focus on improving our sanitation facilities and infrastructure will go a long way as these facilities and work culture will have longer-term benefits for municipal ecosystem once the current pandemic is over. I am sure that this shall pass soon. Sanitation workforce can play a significant role in preventing the spread of infections through various measures. However, it is the responsibility of local governments to understand their risks too and issue proper guidelines for their own safety, if not done already. There is need for safeguarding them too because of their exposure to daily waste coming from people's homes. Their safety is essential to ensure curbing the spread of disease.

According to the guidelines of the World Health Organisation, Infection prevention and control (IPC) practices in communities and health facilities should be reviewed and enhanced to prepare for treatment of patients with COVID-19, and prevent transmission to staff, all patients/

visitors and in the community. This task comes under the purview of the Health Department of urban local bodies and we need to reassess the preparedness of the municipalities, their requirements and their capacity building for the same. Waste management guidelines need to be implemented adequately for the safety of sanitation workers who are assisting health workers and medical professionals in executing their duties well. The management of hospital waste in such times also becomes essential to prevent further spread. These workers deserve accolades and appreciation as they have thrown themselves into the fray as warriors and are safeguarding the general public from any potential harm.

INITIATIVES OF ULBs TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS

The role of urban local bodies also becomes imperative in ensuring proper communication with local communities and guaranteeing equitable delivery of basic services to all the citizens. Like, Thane Municipal Corporation has formed a team of doctors to do a door-to-door survey to check if any person shows any symptoms of coronavirus and geo-tag them for ease of identification. A number of corporations are conducting sanitization and disinfection exercises in key public places. Such activities have not been part of ULBs' operations in the past. The crisis can enable corporations to do a need-based assessment of their capacity-skill and resources.



RANJIT S CHAVAN
President, AIILSG

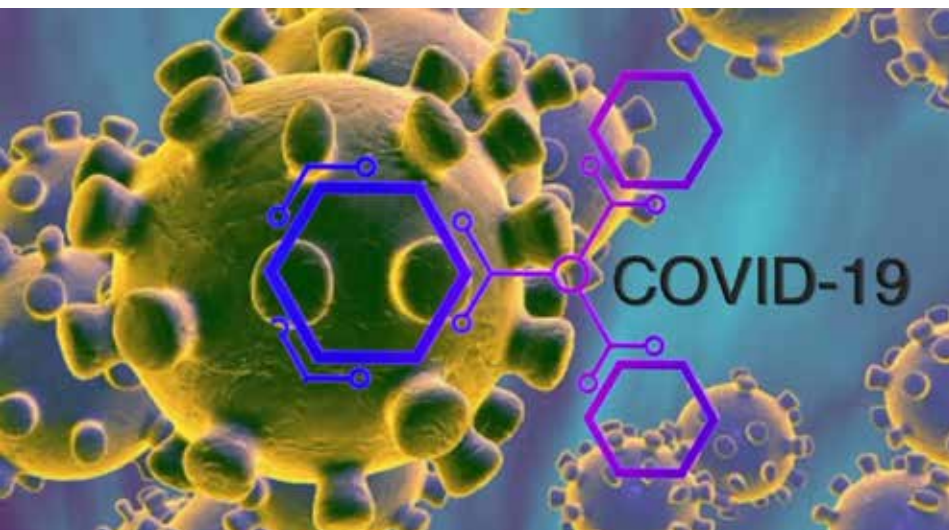
OUR CORPORATIONS CAN ALSO LEARN FROM THE EXPERIMENTS OF VARIOUS OTHER MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS IN THE WORLD. IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES AND BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES HAVE TEAMED UP TO COLLECT AND SHARE ACTIONS TAKEN BY LOCAL LEADERS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. LOCAL LEADERS AND CITY NETWORKING ORGANIZATIONS HAVE REALIZED THAT THE SCALE OF THIS GLOBAL CRISIS IS UNPRECEDENTED, AND SO IS THE SCOPE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE. THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THIS TRACKER IS ASSISTING MAYORS, CITY LEADERS, AND OTHER LOCAL DECISION MAKERS TO LEAD THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGH THIS CRISIS

Our corporations can also learn from the experiments of various other municipal corporations in the world. In the United States of America, the National League of Cities and Bloomberg Philanthropies have teamed up to collect and share actions taken by local leaders in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Local leaders and city networking organizations have realized that the scale of this global crisis is unprecedented, and so is the scope of the local government response. The information available on this tracker is assisting mayors, city leaders, and other local decision-makers to lead their communities through this crisis.

South Korea has set a good example by controlling the spread of disease. According to the information received from one of our partner organizations that work with ULBs in South Korea, the city of Seoul has been taking exhaustive containment measures in the fight against COVID-19. Once a confirmed case is reported, the possible contaminated areas are being disinfected, the patient's movement is publicly disclosed to minimize further contact, and those who came into close contact with the carrier are being tested and advised to self-quarantine. Moreover, the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) continues to closely monitor

developments related to the virus in the city under the Virus Prevention Task Force operating around the clock. The SMG has also set up several drive-through test facilities and recently launched a 'social distancing' campaign to encourage citizens to avoid physical contact with others. Their initiative has borne results and ensured the prevention of mass spread. The role of local communities and local governments become most important in responding to such a crisis. Many corporations in India and abroad have devised new ways to work hand-in-hand with communities to build trust, spread authentic information on the disease, precautions and support resilience and mental health.

This is indeed a tough time for all of us but I am sure that our unified efforts will help us come out of this crisis. We may be physically apart but we are together in this fight and we shall win sooner than later. The emphasis on social distancing is for delaying the communication of the virus: from patient to patient, the curve of new cases will certainly flatten and it will not strain our health system that is making all possible efforts to serve those who need care. I urge everyone to adhere to the governments' guidelines and extend all possible support to the needy in this difficult time. ■





A HISTORY OF PANDEMICS & SHAPE OF HUMAN HISTORY

Humanity has confronted as many as 21 pandemics in history. Every time, humans have come out victorious from the health crisis. In this article, we try to trace the history of pandemics, their impact on people and the learning



KUMAR DHANANJAY
Consulting Editor

The current outbreak of coronavirus is testing the ingenuity of the modern world in its efforts to contain the spread and find a cure for it. Pandemics are not new to human civilisation and date back a long way into history right upto modern times. If we look at the history of pandemics, humanity has been ravaged by outbreak of diseases with regularity. Some of these changed the course of history and at times threatened the very existence of entire civilisations. There appears to be a direct link between human civilisation as it flourished and outbreak of infectious disease. The reason attributed to it is large number of people living in close proximity to each other and to animals. Poor sanitation and nutrition too provided fertile ground for the spread of the disease. Alongside, opening up of new trade routes led to spread of novel infections far and wide that created the first global pandemics.

From pre-historic days till today, if we include novel coronavirus, this is the twenty first pandemic that human civilisation is confronting. The

first pandemic happened some five thousand years ago. Some virologists and archaeologists discovered that an epidemic wiped out an entire pre historic village in, what we know today as China. They came to this conclusion after discovery of a house that was filled with skeletons. These were skeletons of juveniles, adults and middle aged people. The archaeological site is now known as 'Hamin Mangha'. Archaeological and anthropological studies indicate that the disease spread so quickly that there was no time for burial and the place was never inhabited again. In this article I will be looking at the six biggest pandemics in recorded history of modern times.

MODERN TIMES PANDEMICS

The first big pandemic to hit the world in recorded history was the Plague of Justinian in the year 541-542 CE. It was preceded by two pandemics but the scale was not that large. They were 'Antonine plague' in the year 165-180 CE that is estimated to have killed five million people in the Roman Empire and 'Plague of Cyprian' during the year 250-271 CE that killed about five thousand people every day in

Rome alone. How many exactly died is still unknown.

Plague of Justinian No One Left to Die (541-42 CE)

The bacteria that caused the plague is known as *Yersinia Pestis*. This single bacteria caused three of the deadliest pandemics in recorded history, a fatal infection also known as the Plague. The outbreak happened in the year 541 in Constantinople (modern day Istanbul), the capital of Byzantine Empire. It is said that the bacteria was carried from Egypt, a land that was recently conquered and it came with the grains sent to pay tribute to Emperor Justinian. Plague-ridden fleas hitched a ride on the black rats that snacked on the grain. It destroyed Constantinople and spread across continents, Europe, Asia, North Africa and Arabia killing an estimated 30 to 50 million people, perhaps half of the world's population at that time. There was no understanding and knowledge on how to fight the pandemic apart from avoiding people affected by it. So how did the plague end? According to historians, only plausible guess is during pandemics majority of the people survive and those who survive have immunity.

Black Death and the Invention of Quarantine (1347)

The fact is that the disease never went away and it returned with vengeance after 800 years. It killed with reckless abandon. The 'Black Death' as it is called hit Europe in 1347 and claimed an astonishing 200 million lives over the next four years.

People still had no scientific understanding of contagion and did not know how to stop the disease. They, somehow, figured it out that it had something to do with close proximity. So, forward-thinking officials in Venetian-controlled port city of Ragusa decided to keep newly arrived sailors in isolation until they could prove they weren't sick. At first sailors were confined to their ships for thirty days which was later increased

to forty days. In Venetian law it came to be known as 'trentino'. The forced isolation 'quarantino' was the origin of the word quarantine and its practice in the Western world. Historians say this definitely had an effect on the spread of the pandemic.

The Great Plague of London—Sealing Up the Sick (1348-1665)

London never really caught a break after the Black Death. Every time it was assumed that it's over, the plague would resurface roughly every 20 years from 1348 to 1665. There were forty outbreaks in 300 years. Every new plague epidemic killed 20 per cent of the men, women and children living in the British capital. Early 16th century Britain first imposed the law to segregate and isolate the sick. Anybody who had an infected person in the family had to carry a white pole when out in public. Cats and dogs were believed to carry the disease, so there was a wholesale massacre of hundreds of thousands of animals.

More than one hundred thousand Londoners were killed in just seven months in The Great Plague of 1665. It was the last and one of the worst of the centuries-long outbreaks. The victims were forcibly shut in their homes and all public entertainment was banned to arrest the spread of the disease. It could have been probably the only way to bring the last great plague outbreak to an end.

Smallpox—A European Disease Ravages the New World (15th-18th century)

Smallpox was endemic to Europe, Asia and Arabia for centuries. It killed three out of ten people it infected and left the rest with pockmarked scars. The number of deaths and devastation it caused in the New World was much greater than the pandemics of the Old World. The smallpox virus arrived in the 15th Century with the first European explorers.

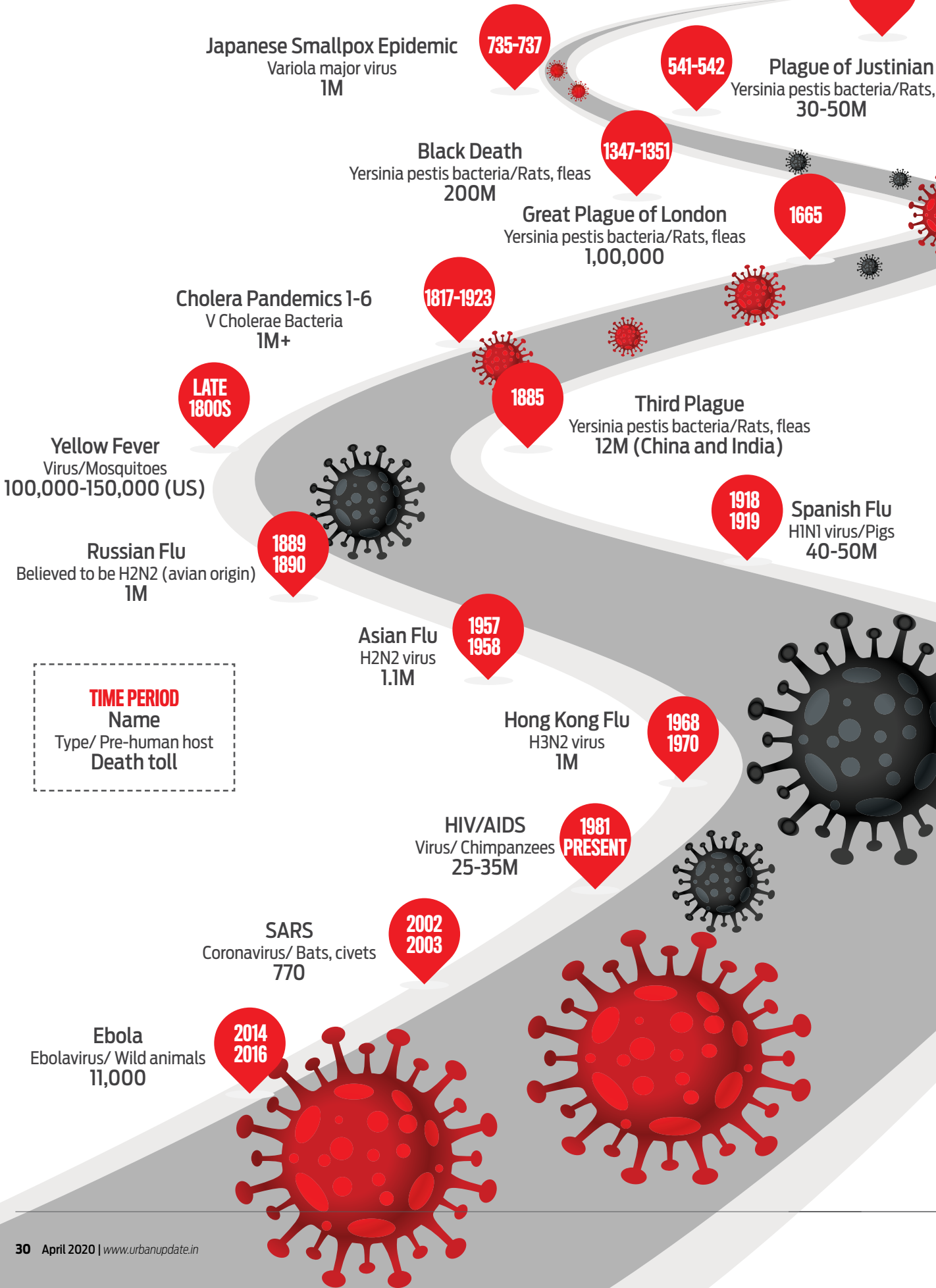
The indigenous peoples of modern-day Mexico and the United States had zero natural immunity to smallpox

and the virus killed them by the tens of millions. In fact it wiped out 90-95 per cent of the indigenous population; over a century Mexico's indigenous population came down to one million from eleven million. It took almost three centuries before a vaccine was discovered that started the process of ending the epidemic. It was in late 18th century, a British doctor Edward Jenner discovered that milkmaids infected with a milder virus called cowpox seemed immune to smallpox. Jenner inoculated his gardener's 9-year-old son with cowpox and then exposed him to the smallpox virus with no ill effect.

"The annihilation of the smallpox, the most dreadful scourge of the human species, must be the final result of this practice," wrote Jenner in 1801. His words turned out to be prophetic. Though it took almost two more centuries, in 1980 the World Health Organisation announced that smallpox had been completely eradicated from the face of the earth.

Cholera—A Victory for Public Health Research (1831-60)

In the first half of the 19th century, Cholera tore through Britain, killing tens of thousands. The prevailing scientific theory at the time was that the disease is spread by foul air known as 'miasma'. But a British doctor named John Snow suspected that the mysterious disease that killed its victims within days of the first symptoms, had some connection with London's drinking water. He began investigating hospital records and morgue reports to find out the exact locations of the outbreak of this killer disease. He created a geographical chart of Cholera deaths over a ten day period and to his surprise he found a cluster of five hundred fatalities surrounding the Broad Street pump. He later wrote, "As soon as I became acquainted with the situation and extent of this eruption (sic) of cholera, I suspected some contamination of the water of the much-frequented street-pump in Broad Street." With great effort,



Antonine Plague

Believed to be either smallpox or measles
5M

fleas

1520
ONWARDS

New World Smallpox Outbreak

Variola major virus
56M

1629
1631

Italian Plague

Yersinia pestis bacteria/Rats, fleas
1M

THE 1918 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC, SPANISH FLU WAS THE MOST SEVERE PANDEMIC IN RECENT HISTORY. IT WAS CAUSED BY AN H1N1 VIRUS. TILL TODAY A CONSENSUS IS ELUDING US SO FAR AS THE ORIGIN OF THE VIRUS IS CONCERNED. IT SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD IN 1918-20. THE VIRUS INFECTED FIVE HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE OR ONE THIRD OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION. THE NUMBER OF DEATHS WAS ESTIMATED TO BE AT LEAST FIFTY MILLION WORLDWIDE

2009
2010

Swine Flu

H1N1 virus/ Pigs
2,00,000

2015
PRESENT

MERS

Coronavirus/ Bats, camels
850

2019
PRESENT

COVID-19

Coronavirus-Unknown (possibly pangolins)
170,634 (as of 20/04/20)

Snow convinced local officials to remove the pump handle on the Broad Street drinking well.

That rendered it unusable, and like magic the infections dried up. His work didn't cure cholera overnight, but it eventually led to a global effort to improve urban sanitation and protect drinking water from contamination. The developed world has largely eradicated Cholera but it still kills a lot of people in developing and third world countries with inadequate sewage treatment and insufficient access to clean drinking water.

Spanish Flu: 1918-1920

The 1918 influenza pandemic, Spanish Flu was the most severe pandemic in recent history. It was caused by an H1N1 virus. Till today a consensus is eluding us so far as the origin of the virus is concerned. It spread across the world in 1918-20. The virus infected five hundred million people or one third of the world's population. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least fifty million worldwide. The unique feature of this pandemic was the high mortality rate in healthy people in the 20-40 years age bracket. Mortality was higher in the age group below 5 and people above 65. While the H1N1 virus has been synthesised and evaluated, yet there is no vaccine to protect against it. So to control it, worldwide measures were limited to isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants, and restricting of public gatherings, which were applied unevenly.

The name given to H1N1 virus 'Spanish Flu' is quite interesting. The disease in all probability did not break in Spain. Spain was a neutral nation during World War 1. As it did not enforce strict censorship on press, early accounts of the disease were freely published. As a result, people falsely believed the illness was specific to Spain, and the name Spanish Flu stuck. Apart from these there have been many pandemics like AIDS, Ebola, Zika, and SARS in modern times among others. Influenza infections are dangerous and even after science and medicine have made great progress, even in 21st Century humanity is struggling to find an answer to these deadly outbreaks which are more frequent now. ■

NATURE GETS SOME BREATHING SPACE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

China enforced the first lockdown in response to the Covid-19, on January 23 this year, in Wuhan city, the centre of the outbreak. In fact, in December 2019, the coronavirus was first identified in this city. The lockdown then was extended to other cities of China. Now the entire world is under the grip of this pandemic with about 2.5 million people having been identified as affected persons as of April 21. Lockdown has been adopted as one of the major measures to stop its spread. This lockdown has opened up opportunities for other species to get some free space to roam around without much fear.

As humans, the fastest moving species on Earth, who have basically been growing at the cost of Mother Earth, were put behind four walls of their homes or temporary shelters, the roads got empty, the factories stopped production, the rivers and water bodies got less crowded; the wildlife started to check out on the roads, the cities, rivers, and even swimming pools. Reduced noise pollution, air pollution and water pollution has been a treat offered to these species by the pandemic which has become a horror story for the humans. The plight of humans has definitely been a matter of concern but the happiness of the other species is one of the positive outcomes of this pandemic for sure. The great inequality that exists between humans and other species, in a world which is supposed to see a harmonious co-existence between the two at least ideally, has been undone to some extent. Environmentalists are delighted, nature lovers are so happy to share pictures of freely roaming wildlife

on streets and even inside national parks. But, let me warn you, this is a temporary glory, a short term treat. Still, a welcome one!

LOCKDOWN HEALS THE EARTH

The first signs of nature's healing came from China just in about a month after the lockdown. Pollution maps of China released by NASA between February 10 and 25 saw a dramatic drop when compared to first three weeks of January. This drastic reduction of pollution over China, according to NASA scientists, was at least partially due to the economic slowdown caused due to the Covid-19 response actions by the country. The mass quarantine halted vehicular movements, production in factories, power plants, air transport and almost everything; dropping thereby pollution levels. Scientists further found that sharp drop in burning of fossil fuel wiped out almost a quarter of the greenhouse gases by mid-February. This is a huge benefit for Mother Earth, especially as it's coming from a country that contributes about 27 percent to the global Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

As other countries went into the same kind of actions, such news of reduced pollution and emission started coming from all over the world. A latest analysis of satellite data by the scientists from Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute finds that air pollution level of some of the European cities such as Paris, Madrid, Milan, and Rome has seen a drop of nearly 50 percent compared to the previous year. Most of this is attributed to the Covid-19 actions that have put a big brake on the economies. Studies have shown that many cities of the US have also

observed sharp drop in air pollution. In fact, many cities experienced the lowest monthly atmospheric nitrogen dioxide levels for March on record. Cities like Washington DC, Boston, Philadelphia and New York have seen significant improvement in air quality compared to pre-Corona lockdown periods, as observed by satellites.

Studies of air quality for Indian cities have also found drastic improvement in quality of the air due to the halt of economic activities, vehicular movements and lockdown of people. Over 90 cities of the country have come into news for reporting such improvements. The nationwide lockdown has led to drastic drop in PM2.5 (fine particulate pollutant) in many cities including Delhi, Ahmedabad and Pune that have experienced a drop by 30, 15 and 15 percent respectively, according to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR). Measurements by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) have also shown significant improvements in air quality of cities across the nation.

Overall, actions by world governments to manage Covid-19 have brought in an unintended yet much needed respite for Mother Earth. Scientists and others concerned about climate change kept on urging human race to shift to greener paths of development and reduce GHG emissions, but this pandemic sent out a strong message and has forced the economic growth to slow down reducing GHG emissions drastically. Rob Jackson, a professor at the Stanford University and chair of Global Carbon Project, has been quoted by the *grist.org* saying, "We could see emissions declines of 5 percent or more in 2020." "We haven't seen that in my lifetime. We really haven't seen anything



RANJAN K PANDA

Convenor, Combat Climate Change Network, India

comparable to that until you go back to World War-II.”

CLEANER GANGA

Corona has done to Ganga what even Namami Gange could not do. Water in many stretches of the river is

now fit even for drinking, something that has been beyond imagination for decades. Monitoring reports of the CBCB have found that many stretches of the river which did not only violate drinking water standards but also hardly recorded any dissolved oxygen in January this year have now shown tremendous improvements in mid-March and are fit for drinking.

Similar stories are being heard about many other rivers and people are jubilant finding less pollution and increased movement of fishes and other species. Pollution associated with industries and agriculture has certainly reduced and the capacity of rivers to clean the remaining pollutants has increased because of increased flow due to reduced extraction of water. However, it is difficult to say that all the rivers have actually been cleaned as long as the domestic wastes from cities flow untreated.

SCENES WE MAY NOT SEE IN OUR LIFETIME AGAIN

On 31st March, the Guardian posted a video showing that a herd of goats has taken over the deserted streets of Llandudno, north Wales, where the residents are in lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic. On April 6, the Esquiremag posted over the weekend, that the world was treated to an exceedingly rare sight that has not been seen since World War II: the

Himalayan mountaintops in very clear view. “Residents from Indian cities as far away as Punjab saw a bright white expanse over the horizon, realizing it was the snow-capped tops of the Himalayas. That is like seeing the mountains of Benguet from Manila, more than 230 kilometres away,” the magazine reported. Social media users are truly elated and many have posted photos and videos of animals and birds taking over the streets of India and elsewhere.

LET IT BE OUR FIRST REAL FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Corona has given the much needed break to Mother Earth for sure. However, I have no reasons to believe that things will be any different for the natural resources and other species once we are out of the lockdown, once our factories start producing again, once the flights start operating again, once the power plants run in their full might. Deforestation, decimation of wildlife, and destruction of natural resources have been the main cause of not only increased occurrences of epidemics but also in reducing our abilities to cope with those. We can certainly not run our business as usual anymore.

We should not aspire to return to the normal we were in. Rather, a new normal needs to be set, a new world order has to be established. Growth has to go in harmony with Mother Earth and not at her cost. Actually, the fight against Corona should be seen as the real first step towards our fight against Climate Change. They are the same. The one against Corona has made us unintentionally slow down growth that destroys nature, the one against Climate Change should do this intentionally.

As humans die in hundreds of thousands, let Corona remind us of what the Danish author Karen Blixen had said: “If only I could so live and so serve the world that after me there should never again be birds in cages.” ■

[The views expressed are the author’s own. They do not purport to reflect the views of Urban Update.]



ECONOMICS OF HEALTH

HEALTH OF ECONOMIES

KUMAR DHANANJAY
Consulting Editor

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis is a reminder of the importance of investing in the healthcare sector for any country. There is a strong relationship between health and economy. Healthcare performance of any country is directly dependent on its economy. This link between the two must be understood. On the face of it even the strong economies of the developed world appear to be faltering while dealing with an aggressive coronavirus. It is desirable that there is sufficiently large investment in health sector and it must be seen as an essential priority for any society even in normal times. By investing in health, a country not only keeps its population healthy but also makes people more productive to contribute towards the economy. It also helps in creating the health infrastructure gradually and thus prepare to deal with an unexpected health crisis such as Covid-19.

IS INDIA VULNERABLE?

India ranks 156th globally when it comes to investment in health sector. Obviously that makes it one among the lowest rates in the world (see graphics). This has not happened in last few years but rather over the decades since independence. If one looks at history, successive governments prioritised industrial growth and agriculture, which are important, but healthcare remained on the backburner. And that set the course for the history of neglect and its outcomes we see today. The government's total outlay on health is little more than one per cent of Gross Domestic Product which is far below the global average.

It is well said that epidemics are a product of ignorance as well as disease. Adding fuel to the fire is a broken public education system. And the tendency to look away is allied to ignorance, that is, from the state of Indian healthcare, from the apathy of government after

government, from the sicknesses already ravaging the population—even among those who should know better. Nothing brings this out better than our existing epidemic of tuberculosis.

Vidya Krishnan, senior journalist covering the health sector says, "India is the epicentre of the global tuberculosis crisis. As far as infectious diseases go, tuberculosis is the world's biggest killer. In India, it claims nearly 1,400 lives every day. For the large majority of cases, tuberculosis has a cure—a course of medication delivered under close observation over several months. But the country's healthcare system consistently fails to diagnose and fully treat tuberculosis patients. The more stubborn, drug-resistant strains of the disease are the products of uncoordinated and interrupted treatment, and in India they exist on a shocking scale. For decades, the country has done nothing to fix the systemic problems behind these symptoms.

Rank	Country Name	Total Health Expenditure per Capita- 2015 (US\$)
1	Switzerland	9,818
2	United States of America	9,536
3	Norway	7,646
4	Luxemborg	6,236
5	Sweden	5,600
6	Denmark	5,497
7	Australia	4,934
8	Ireland	4,757
9	Netherlands	4,746
10	Germany	4,592
156	India	63

Source: World Health Organisation Global Health Expenditure Database

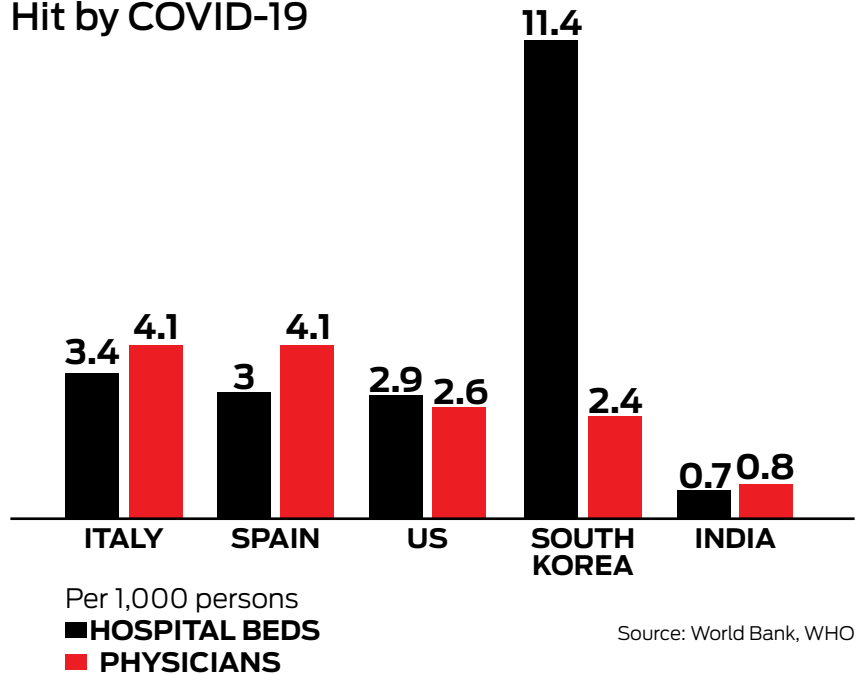
Through modern Indian history, the government's outlook on public health has largely been limited to damage control—containing outbreaks of leprosy, for instance. As the example of tuberculosis makes clear, even at that the government has very often failed”.

The failure to invest adequately on health sector effectively meant handing over the responsibility of healthcare to the private sector. The private sector now controls seventy four per cent of health care market and forty per cent of the country's bed capacity. A regulation free private sector with a free hand to charge as much as they wish, it has become more of a profit making industry where profit takes precedence over patients. Overdiagnosing, overtreating and overcharging those with insurance have become an established norm. Now two third population of the country which is part of informal sector of economy, which is roughly eighty crore people of this country, are left at the mercy of underfunded government hospitals where doctors tend to underdiagnose and offer meagre treatment.

INDIA'S PREPAREDNESS TO FACE A HEALTH CRISIS

WHO recommends one doctor per 1000 people. India has less than one doctor per 1000 people and has just 2.3 ICU beds per 100,000 people in normal times. In rural areas the situation is more grim with one doctor per 10,000 population. This figure does not include the ad hoc arrangements being made at the moment. Ventilators are awfully short in supply. Imagine just 40,000 active ventilators for a population of 1.3 billion people. If we compare the beds and physicians per 1000 people of various countries India falls woefully short. As of 2016, the Indian Medical Association was showing a shortage of tens of thousands of critical-care specialists. The dominant share of doctors and beds is in the private healthcare sector, which has enormous leeway to set its own prices and make its own rules—and to exploit both to put profits before patients. Domain experts

Hit by COVID-19



points out that even if ventilators are procured now there are not enough trained staff to handle them. Training medical staff to use ventilators and ensuring there are enough skilled operators to run them 24x7 is a bigger challenge than procuring machines, they say.

“It's a more complex issue than simply buying a machine. You need to train nurses and ensure continuity of care. If you factor in shifts, one unit of ventilator needs at least four nurses and five units need four resident doctors for round-the-clock care. Most government hospitals work at half the strength at any given time. A sudden increase will lead to Gorakhpur-like situation, where scores of children die because they can't get adequate care,” said Dr Chaudhry, head of the department of pulmonary & critical care medicine, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS), Rohtak.

HEALTH OF ECONOMIES

Predictions on the economic front are painting a grim picture with every country expected to be experiencing a negative growth in 2020-21 barring a few. Trillions of dollars are being injected to bail out the economy from a slump but the world is in deeper

trouble. IMF has already reported that over a hundred countries have approached it for funds to deal with the economic crisis. One pandemic has brought the entire world to its knees. Healthcare performance is strongly dependent on the economy.

As we are approaching the end of lockdown 2.0 with some economic activities being allowed, the fact remains that the already struggling economy of the country with growth tending downwards quarter after quarter, is facing a huge challenge of revival. The big gamble here is that GoI while prepared to deal with a little surge in the number of cases, if it manages to control the situation on health front then it can turn to look towards the economy. The question is can it script a comeback, however modest the gains may be. Given the fact that all big commercial cities of the country are struggling with COVID-19, the government will have to look towards boosting rural consumption and related infrastructure.

The task is not easy. It's a fact that the virus has been slowed down if we go by the official numbers and it is a measure of success; but from here on the delivery on the economic front will be the barometer of success. ■



COVID-19 FAKE NEWS

THE DIGITAL PANDEMIC

The spread of misinformation in varied forms has always been a problematic situation in political and non-political scenarios for a long time, affecting businesses and societies. The spread of fake news is not a modern problem but the social media age has added to the problem given that the spread of misinformation often takes just a few seconds and quickly affects the mindset of society

PRATEEK SINGH

Digital Marketing Associate

Fake news spread on social media these days has a huge impact on the opinions of people around the world. One case of fake news spread which shook the world in recent times was the 2016 US Presidential election, where it was believed that millions of twitter and Facebook users were politically influenced to support certain agendas under the influence of tweets and Facebook posts they read. According to some news agencies, Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm illegally used the data of 87 million users' Facebook profiles to influence voters in the states. Some claim that the news spread on social media was not that influential as compared to what the average American user digests via news channels. But this brings into limelight the influence of social media on a regular person's life and how easy it is to influence a group of people by spreading misinformation. Over the

years, social media has emerged as a platform where anyone from any place can post absolutely anything at any given point in time. It primarily works on the number of clicks that works as a catalyst in spreading personalized ads that can manipulate and shape public discourse. This model allows a platform to launder one's propaganda in a very subtle way which the audience hardly realises. The leverage over the audience has enabled false information to spread much more rapidly than accurate information.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

With the growing number of smartphone users in India as the cost of mobile phones is decreasing day by day, the number of people to whom the falsified information can be spread has grown exponentially. According to the reports released in July 2019, India has around 400 million WhatsApp users and Facebook the parent company of WhatsApp has around 241 million active users, which makes India the biggest market for digital promoters to sell information. This also means that India has potentially a large group of people to be influenced by the false information in distressing times like

COVID-19.

In India, around 84 per cent of WhatsApp users fall in the age group of 18-35, and the people who digest news from messaging platforms are now being called the students of 'WhatsApp University'. Everyday hundreds of fake news messages, images and videos are shared on this platform with people believing it to be true, spreading it both digitally and verbally.

In these difficult times when everyone is concerned about their health and the medical researchers are working hard to find a cure for containing the novel coronavirus, the WhatsApp University has already taught people how to get cured, with fake news disguised as 'Medical Advice' claiming that taking home remedies such as in digesting hot lemon water will increase the Vitamin C in the body will destroy the virus. A medical claim on WhatsApp claiming that drinking Gaumutra or Cow Urine is a cure for virus was so widely spread in the country that a few political parties organised events where hundreds of people gathered to drink cow urine as suggested by WhatsApp University to protect themselves from the pandemic.

Another such fake news which has had a devastating effect on Industry and Indian economy was claiming that eating chicken can cause coronavirus.

This news had a major effect on the life of many poultry farmers and businesses run around the industry. The falsified information spread through social media led to a staggering loss to the industry with the price falling from ₹180 per kg to ₹60-70 per kg in days and around an estimated loss of ₹1.6 billion per day according to All India Poultry Breeders' Association. Not only this news affected the poultry farmers who due to the spread of misinformation were forced to sell their chicken at low prices or in giving them free, but lots of chickens old and newly born were also horrifically killed. This loss of poultry industry also affected the maize and soya industry of India as the major consumer of these industries were the poultry farmers.

Not only WhatsApp but the video

streaming platform YouTube is also accountable for the spread of misinformation. In India, YouTube has a monthly viewership of 265 million active users, which means people go search for facts and news on YouTube. With the current algorithm of YouTube where the videos and channels only get blocked after a certain number of users report it for falsified or misleading information, the spread of false information is on par with any other social media channel. Thanks to the cheap data plans and click baits that attract new users to digest false information YouTube has become a growing platform to spread fake information. On YouTube, a growing number of videos surfaced online which suggests how you can cure COVID-19 with home remedies or a falsified conspiracy theory to influence political opinions. While there is no fact check in place to remove these videos from any online platform other than reporting them, most people believe them to be true. One such channel which got immensely popular at the beginning of the outbreak was Prajapati News, a self-claimed news source on YouTube with over 6.21 million subscribers, which had put videos like, “This is where Coronavirus came from” and “From this Chinese lab the virus was leaked” both videos were viewed around 4 million times. The YouTube algorithm works based on your view history which recommends you new videos/channels/ads based on what you saw earlier. It is easy to see more falsified news if you click on one such news.

HOW INDIA CAN STOP FAKE NEWS: POLICY, ACT OR TECHNOLOGY

Though India does not have any specific law to deal with the fake news published or spread online, there are a few legal provisions under the Indian Penal Code to deal with online menace. The existing legal provisions are: Section 505(1) of Indian Penal Code, 1860: The punishment for making, publishing or circulating any statement,

rumour or report which may cause fear or alarm to the public, or any section of the public.

Punishment: Fine or imprisonment of upto three years or both.

Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005: Whoever makes or circulates a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic.

Punishment: Fine or imprisonment of upto one year or both.

Section 66D of the Information Technology Act: Whoever, by means for any communication device or computer resource, cheats by personating.

Punishment: Imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to one lakh rupees.

At the time when the growing number of atrocities around the country due to the spread of misleading messages on digital platforms, India has taken a slew of measures under various acts to put a stop at fake news. During the 21 days lockdown, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) which is chaired by the Prime Minister of India, referred to the Section 54 of Disaster Management Act.

It says, “Whoever makes or circulates a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic, shall on conviction, be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine.”

In a bid to tackle the spread of fake news over the most used messaging platform in the country, the government has rolled out the WhatsApp chatbot, “MyGov Corona Helpdesk” which can be accessed by texting on +91-9013151515. The chatbot is equipped to address various FAQs of COVID-19, such as helpline number, symptoms of diseases, protective measures and government advisory.

HOW TECH GIANTS FIGHT AGAINST FAKE NEWS?

The biggest problem behind fighting the fake news on a digital platform is that it

is not a piece of code or data that can be detected by automated tools available online. It is a piece of information that gets posted and surfaced online which can only be declared true or false by human intervention. Nevertheless, our technology can help improve transparency around fake claims and misinformation. There is a need to teach people how we can detect fake news or how to segregate fake news from original ones using online tools.

The technology giants, Google, Facebook, YouTube, and Microsoft all have joined hands in fighting against the spread of fake news. Facebook has started banning advertisements which are selling fake products or fake information. Google has announced Google News Initiative (GNI) similar to what it uses in Europe through Digital News Initiative.

There are three specific goals of the Google News Initiative:

- ◆ Highlight accurate journalism while fighting misinformation, particularly during breaking news events.
- ◆ Help news sites continue to grow from a business perspective.
- ◆ Create new tools to help journalists do their jobs.

Through the India training network of GNI, Google will teach journalists, academicians, fact-checkers, and NGOs about how to detect fake news online, how to do a fact check and how to stop its spread in the Indian scenario.

Moreover one must state that fake news can not only be curbed by the initiatives of tech giants or government but it should be taught to people how to spot it.

In a country where every day new users are being exposed to the digital world, and they are being taught how to use these digital platforms, it has become easy for anyone to spread locally drafted fake news to masses creating a situation of terror. While government and technology are working to stop the spread we need to fact check the truth behind every WhatsApp forward before forwarding it to our groups of hundreds of people. ■



Dr Pramod Sawant lit the lamp and inaugurated the 5th South Asian Cities Summit. (L-R) Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIILSG; Hitesh Vaidya, Director, NIUA; Rajiv Agarwal, Director General, AIILSG; Uday V. Madkaikar, Mayor, Panaji; Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General, UCLG-ASPAC; Hansa Patel, Executive Advisor, AIILSG; Jerome Pons, Head of Cooperation Bhutan, China, India, Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand, Delegation of the European Union to Thailand; Ranjit S Chavan, president, AIILSG, were present during the ceremony

CITIES ASSURE TO ACCELERATE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SDGs IN 5TH SOUTH ASIAN CITIES SUMMIT

TEAM URBAN UPDATE

The 5th South Asian Cities Summit was inaugurated by Dr Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister, Goa on March 5 at Cidade de Goa, Goa, India. The Summit was divided into 6 technical sessions along with 6 parallel sessions focused on various topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals and city development in the context of South Asian countries.

SAC INAUGURAL SESSION

The inaugural session saw participation from dignitaries like Dr Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister, Goa; Uday Madkaikar, Mayor, Panaji; Hitesh Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA); Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi,

Secretary General, UCLG- ASPAC, Indonesia; Ranjit S Chavan, President, All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG); Rajiv Agarwal, Director General, AIILSG; Jerome Pons, Head of Cooperation, European Union; and Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIILSG. The Welcome Address for the inaugural session of the 5th South Asian Cities Summit was delivered by Ranjit S Chavan, President, AIILSG. He hoped that the 2-day conference brought forth positive results for the participating cities. “I am sure that the participating cities of South Asia must have come with new ideas and strategies to achieve SDGs as per their local needs and conditions. The discussion on different topics including the exchange of information and technology, updated systems and procedures, follow-up and removal of bottlenecks to achieve the target with the speedy process would definitely help each other to attain the final goals by 2030”, Chavan added. Following the welcome address, the conference began with the dignitaries present on

the stage lighting the lamp and hoping for a constructive dialogue to follow.

Delivering the theme address, Rajiv Agarwal highlighted the importance of the SDGs. “SDGs were adopted by members of UN in a bid to work in unison to achieve global peace and prosperity. Better health and education, eradicate inequality and ensure prosperity. That is what is at the centre of the SDGs. The question today is where do we stand now, given that only 10 years left in achieving these SDGs. We require sustainable, strong commitment by the stakeholders while authorities need to ensure that we achieve the goals before the set deadline,” he said.

Dr Bernadia, in her special address, talked about the importance of city development, especially for South Asia. “We should discuss not only the challenges but also the solutions when it comes to city development,” she noted. Further, she emphasised that the countries need to work towards the acceleration of the SDGs as only 10 years are left for the set deadline of 2030, dubbing the coming decade as the decade of action. She also highlighted the need for collective action for the betterment of the coming generations.

In his address, Hitesh Vaidya appreciated the efforts that South Asian countries have made towards the achievement of SDGs, especially towards the alleviation of poverty. “The time has come to show the Western world what we have achieved given the complexity of the circumstances that we are dealing with,” Vaidya said. Jerome Pons delivered the keynote address. In his address, he detailed how the European Union was helping countries around the world with their initiatives to achieve the SDGs. “Over 200 local authorities from around the world have received support from the European Union towards their initiatives to achieve the SDGs ever since 2015. He also mentioned that the EU has moulded their policies around the SDGs in order to prioritise them.

Pons also used the platform of the 5th SAC Summit to announce EU’s plans to discuss the green deal and its digitisation in the first part of next year.

Delivering the special guest address, Uday Madkaikar expressed pleasure in welcoming the international delegates and city representatives to Panaji. “The path of sustainability is the only way forward and we have no choice but to embrace it,” the Mayor of Panaji said. He believes that poverty is the biggest challenge that India and other South Asian cities face today and thus, poverty alleviation should be the primary focus as many still don’t even have basic amenities. Addressing the session, the Chief Minister welcomed the delegation and hoped that the Summit would contribute in the development of the cities. Talking about the SAC Summit, Sawant said, “Such platforms bring together various stakeholders associated with urban development under one roof to deliberate sustainable practices for city development. Not only the government, but every citizen is responsible for complete implementation of sustainable practices in cities.”

The theme of the conference is ‘10 Years to SDGs’. The CM briefed everyone present about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. “The whole idea is to positively enhance all the aspects of the SDGs in the country for the future and, in this direction, various policies have been devised and implemented by PM Modi in India,” he added.

SESSION 1 SUSTAINABLE CITIES

The first session saw an eminent panel of speakers discuss the measures that can be implemented in order to make cities more sustainable and, hence, more liveable for the coming generations. The session was chaired by Dr M Ramachandran (IAS Retd) Former UD Secretary, Government of India. He emphasised on the development of rural parts at the periphery of the cities to accommodate the growth of the city. He also highlighted that the biggest challenges that the city governments of South Asia face is developing cities that embrace change. Best practice models implemented across various cities were shared and important issues

which affect sustainable development like climate change, capacity building and disaster management were shared during the session. The speakers also concluded that South Asian countries face similar challenges when it comes to city development and hence it was essential to hold dialogues like the SAC Summit between stakeholders for better solutions and knowledge exchange. The panelists also deliberated on ways to ensure citizen partnership, with Albert Graves highlighting, “Citizen centricity is the baseline for the development of any smart city. Smart cities can be reflected as happy cities and hence should be developed keeping the citizens at the centre of the development plans. Feedback system is essential for this.” Gino Van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, highlighted the urgent attention that is required by city administrations to tackle the growing issue of climate change.

Cities cannot continue their current negligence of the ecological damages they end up causing. Further, Begin gave ICLEI’s five pathways to ensure sustainability. “Sustainable development is the only way out to save not only our growing communities but the general world”, he said.

SESSION 2: MOBILITY

Although not addressed directly by any of the Sustainable Development Goal directly, mobility is an issue that is central to the achievement of nearly all of them. The discussion between panelists, who ranged from holding public transportation offices to prominent urban planners, saw them analyse recent developments in the transportation systems of cities. The recurring point in the deliberation was the need to revive and revitalise the public transportation systems of cities. “Public transportation should be at the heart of the transportation infrastructure development of a city. Provisions for the transportation system must be included in the master plan of a city”, A Ravindra, General Committee Member, AIILSG, said. The panelists advocated the shift

back to public transportation as it may be a means to boost the economy and, naturally, cut down the emission levels in major cities. Kulwant Singh, Former Asia Advisor, UN-Habitat, pressed the idea of going back to NMT and to minimise the number of private vehicles plying the road. “There is a need to revisit the approach of transport planning of a city,” he said. Jairaj Pathak, Former Commissioner, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, commented that direct municipal operation in handling of the public transportation is the most satisfactory city transport measure that can be adopted. He further identified several issues that cities face when it comes to transportation. Illegal hawkers, no separate bus lanes and the steep rise in the number of private vehicles that has now led to it being the favoured mode of transportation in densely populated areas, were put forth by the speakers.

Prarthana Borah, India Director, Clean Air Asia, said that 99 per cent of cities in Asia don't adhere to the safe air quality levels and have poor air quality, riddled with PM 2.5. “Simple changes in behaviour patterns will make big changes when it comes to curbing the key pollutants emitted from the vehicles,” she added. The panelists also discussed the future of e-Vehicles in India and how they alone are not enough to curb the dent on the environment.

SESSION 3 WATER AND CITIES

Maintaining adequate water supply has forever been one of the chief concerns of the city planners. However, with the

rapidly expanding cities, the burden on the already depleting water bodies has grown exponentially.

The session saw the experts discuss the importance to find a balance between urban development and preservation of water resources. TG Sitharaman, Professor, IIT- Guwahati, pointed out that it was essential for cities to develop special plans for water conservation and management in an integrated manner taking into account the current and future demand scenarios. He also felt that farmers, who use a large portion of water resources for agricultural purposes, must be sensitised about the judicious use of fresh water.

Dr Bhakti Devi, PhD (Urban Water Management), said, “The future of water in the cities lies in small circular systems which are operated and planned by local water users and local municipalities.” She further added that city planners need to regularly speak with water management and supply authorities of the city. Integrated urban water management at small scale system levels can be a possible solution to manage urban expansion and water resources. Ranjan Panda, Convener, Combat Climate Change Network India, suggested that cities must factor in ecological conservation and climate change impacts in their water security designs. The panelists also agreed that a better alternative to the usage of dams must be sought. “Dams end up disrupting the health of water bodies upon which they are constructed. They restrict the flow of rivers, which directly degrades the ecosystem”, Panda said.

SESSION 4 DIGITAL INNOVATIONS: DATA DRIVEN FUTURE SOLUTIONS

South Asian cities, with their rich heritage, often hesitate in adopting newer technologies. It is imperative that dialogues between stakeholders of various cities about the incorporation of such technologies with city management happen in order to move them towards the SDGs. Such a discussion ensued in the 4th session of the SAC summit, where panelists put forth examples of digital innovations' incorporation. Vikas Kanango, Senior Consultant Digital Development, The World Bank, briefed about the various data driven city management solutions that the World Bank is executing in India. “Our main focus is on climate change mitigation, smart energy development and reducing gender gap in India. With our 120 ongoing projects worth 27 billion dollars, I believe we will harness technology in such a way that Indian cities make the utmost use of it”, he said. One such project the World Bank has implemented is ‘Urban Tree’, whose founders Tharmarajan and Ganesh Kanan addressed the conference. They described how they developed an e-governance platform for the entire state of Tamil Nadu. They elaborated the need for their project, which was responsible for end to end turnkey implementation of Urban e-Governance for 135 Urban Local Bodies of Tamil Nadu. “People are not confident in the ULBs operation. Delay, wrong investments, no inclusive governance, mishandling of funds, etc, were some of

PARALLEL SESSIONS

South Asian Mayor's Forum

The South Asian Mayor's Mayors Forum gave a platform to mayors and deputy mayors of various South Asian cities to put forth their achievements and issues that they have been facing in their respective municipalities. The primary objective behind the Mayors' Forum was to enable a healthy dialogue between various city representatives.

Parallel Session 1 Paving the Enabling Environment towards Urban Sanitation Solutions: the Journey of MAB in Bangladesh

The session highlighted Municipal Association of Bangladesh's efforts in curbing the problem of lack of sanitation and the way forward to better the conditions for the future. Bangladesh has been successful in reducing open defecation from 34 per cent in 1990 to less than 1 per cent today.

Parallel Session 2 Circular Cities Dialogues Series: Creating Circular Economy towards Shaping Resource Efficient, Sustainable & Circular Cities

The second parallel session saw a panel of eminent speakers deliberating on how the introduction of the concept of circular cities & economies in South Asia can serve as a key to a more sustainable future. Recycling, cleaner energy resources, cleaner transportation were some of the subjects that were discussed during the session.

the motivators behind the development of this project,” Tharmarajan said. There are several challenges for the municipal corporations to make services conveniently available for the citizens. With the help of the online platform, basic municipality functions like tax registration and birth and death certification are more conveniently available to the people. People can register their complaints/ enquiries online with this which would be directly received by the concerned person of the municipality who can cater to the problem.

Elaborating on the miscommunication between ULBs and citizens, Pashim Tewari, Technical Director, AIILSG, said that handling of citizen feedback and grievances, and data management are two issues that city authorities in India must look into. Only then a better accord between the authorities and the citizens can be ensured. Albert Graves said that urban innovation can be brought forward with corporate involvement and in order to gain corporate interest and thus, investment in city management, city authorities must ensure profits for them.

SESSION 5 **URBAN SANITATION**

With the successful implementation of ODF across India with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, the question of sustaining the achievement now arises. Inappropriate sanitation is one of the most basic issues that South Asian Cities continue to face to this day and is directly addressed by SDG 6.

The disposal of faecal sludge and septage management were the major highlights of the session where prominent speakers from National Institute of Urban Affairs, best practice experts and mayors addressed the gathering. Depinder Singh Kapur, Senior Development and WASH Expert, National Institute of Urban Affairs stressed upon the need to prioritise septic management as the number of toilets have significantly increased since SBM. He further pointed out that septic tanks were not working, Sewage Treatment Plants and improper disposal of waste are two challenges that South Asian cities need to address in the future. Only 32 septage treatment plants are operational in India, a number which is highly unsuitable for such a large population. Kavita Wankhede, Senior Lead-Practice, Indian Institute of Human Settlements (IIHS) presented the example of Tamil Nadu, who have established an advisory committee at state level for fecal sludge management and how it has effectively brought down the woes of the state. Pratibha Shinde, President, Via Municipal Council, advocated that women safety in public toilet facilities must be our next focus. “With the increase in public facilities, India still needs to focus on making them safer for women, especially in rural areas, to reinforce the idea of Open Defecation Free India. More participation of women in the health and sanitation profession could be a way of ensuring this”, she said.

SESSION 6 **INCLUSIVE CITIES**

Cities, with their rapid rate of expansion,

are a hotbed for migration from various regions. Given the disparity in communities, economic conditions, or area, the demands of the citizen also vary. Hence, the panelists discussed and presented various ways via which city planners could better develop cities for its inhabitants in the future. Ashish Rao Golpade, Deputy Director, ICLEI suggested that cities must promise their citizens projects that ensure adequate waste management, open spaces and recreational activities in order to make them more citizen centric.

The panelists concurred that a city’s heritage and uniqueness must be addressed in its design. To make the city more inclusive, citizens need to be proactively engaged in the planning of the city. For this, the city planners must proactively engage the citizens at every stage of planning. Smart City as a concept helps the local governments to strengthen their institutional and technical composition and hence better their operations, Debjani Ghosh, Associate Professor, NIUA said in her address.

Tikender Panwar, Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla; said that the irregularity in the terms of mayors for Indian cities must be rectified in order to allow them to make appropriate use of their time in office. Dr Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay, Director, PRIA; raised the issue of the lack of incorporation of the public facilities for the urban poor. The role of private organisations in bridging the communication gaps between citizens and city authorities was also explored during the session. ■

Parallel Session 3 **WomennoVator**

The third parallel session of South Asian Cities Summit centered on the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship amongst women of today. Uplifting women by promoting the concept of gender equality in cities of today in order to develop a better community for the future.

Parallel Session 4 **Global Launch of Regional & Urban Business Incubation Centre**

India has witnessed tremendous growth in the number of startups operational in recent times. With this recent spurt, challenges also arise in building a suitable ecosystem for their growth across all parts of the nation, not only the metropolises. Startups need a space to grow, and the session focused on what can be the possible ways to enhance the startup culture of the nation.

Parallel Session 5 **Electric Mobility: State’s role in accelerating electric mobility in India**

Governments around the world are striving towards creating a suitable environment for faster adoption of electric vehicles. During such a time, concerned authorities must take appropriate steps and realise the areas that require their attention the most. The session saw the panel of experts deliberating over what could be the measures that could be implemented to promote e-mobility in India and other South Asian countries.

Glimpses



1. (Centre) Dr Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister of Goa, along with (L to R) Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIIILSG; Hitesh Vaidya, Director of NIUA; Rajiv Agarwal, Director General, AIIILSG; Ranjit S Chavan, President, AIIILSG; Uday Madkaikar, Mayor of Panaji, Jerome Pons, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Thailand; Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General, UCLG-ASPAC; and Hansa Patel, Executive Director, AIIILSG releasing the March edition of Urban Update magazine and AIIILSG's newsletter Project Update
2. Dr Pramod Sawant elaborated on the importance of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in cities in his address
3. Mayors of Indian and South Asian Cities along with city officials, representatives of Local Government Association, and other national and international organisations participated in the Summit
4. Ranjit S Chavan, President, AIIILSG and Hansa Patel, Executive Advisor, AIIILSG, welcoming Chief Minister of Goa Pramod Sawant



5. Albert Graves, Program Director, WeGo, addressing the fourth technical session of SAC Summit. He highlighted smart technological practices incorporated by
- 6.7.8. Rajiv Agarwal, Director General, AIIILSG; Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General, UCLG-ASPAC; and Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIIILSG addressing the audience during the Summit
9. Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General, UCLG-ASPAC giving a token of appreciation to Rajiv Agarwal, Director General, AIIILSG for the institute's work with cities in India
- 10.14. National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) released a Declaration for Elected Representatives- Call to action for scale-up of non-sewered sanitation. It was signed and agreed upon by hundreds of participants
- 11.12. A partnership agreement was signed between International Urban Cooperation (IUC) and Gangtok Municipal Corporation during the event
13. Albert Graves of WeGo (South Korea), Rajiv Agarwal, DG, AIIILSG, and Ravi Ranjan Guru, DDG, AIIILSG signing a partnership agreement between WeGo and AIIILSG for strengthening the partnership for building better cities
15. A group photo of organizing team with some of the speakers and delegates





5



11



6



10



12



7



13



8



14



9



15

'GENDER EQUALITY SHOULD BE THE TOP PRIORITY OF CITIES'

All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIIILSG) in partnership with UCLG-ASPAC organized the 2nd Women Leadership Workshop on March 4, 2020 at the Cidade de Goa, Goa. Eminent personalities working in the field of women empowerment in India and abroad took part in the one-day conference that deliberated on the measures governments across the world need to consider to broaden the opportunities presented to women and thus, promote gender equality

Rekha Sharma, Chairperson, National Commission for Women, was the chief guest of the workshop. Sharma inaugurated the Workshop along with other dignitaries including Vijaya Rahatkar, Former Chairperson, Maharashtra State Commission for Women; Lakshmi Puri, Former Assistant Secretary General, United Nations. Bernadia Irawati Tjendradewi, Secretary General, UCLG-ASPAC; Sudeema Chandani, President, FSLGA, Sri Lanka; Deepali Naik, Director, Women and Child Development, Panaji, Goa; Sulakashana Pramod Sawant, Expert, Girl Education and Sejal Brahmhatt, Governing Council Member, AIIILSG. Ranjit S Chavan, President, All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIIILSG) and Hansa Patel, Executive Director, AIIILSG, welcomed the dignitaries and attendees of the workshop. In his welcome address, Chavan emphasised the increasing awareness amongst women of South Asian countries regarding their social and economic backwardness. His addresses set the tone for the workshop. Patel highlighted the historical role women like Sheikh Hasina, Mother Teresa, etc. and their role in shaping the civilization.

Bernadia Irawati Tjendradewi delivered the Keynote address for the workshop. She interacted with the women present in the session to gauge the most glaring issues that women face in various walks of life. To this, a majority of women present at the conference concurred that the top three challenges that require immediate attention were job opportunities, education,



(L-R) Sneha Palnitkar, CEO, WMRC, AIIILSG; Vijaya Rahatkar, Former Chairperson Maharashtra State Commission for Women & Former Mayor Aurangabad; Sudeema Chandani, President, FSLGA; Hansa Patel, Executive Advisor, AIIILSG; Sejal Brahmhatt, GC Member, AIIILSG; Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of the National Commission of Women; Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjendradewi, Secretary General, UCLG-ASPAC; Lakshmi Puri, Former Assistant Secretary General, UN; Ranjit S Chavan, President, AIIILSG; Rajiv Agarwal, Director General, AIIILSG; Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIIILSG, lit the lamp and inaugurated the 2nd Women Leadership Workshop

income disparity for similar work, and political participation. It was also felt by the participants that lack of community participation, gender stereotyping and cultural difference were the top three reasons for limited breakthroughs being faced by women across the world in promoting gender equality.

Vijaya Rahatkar pointed out that times have now changed and women development will soon be replaced by women-led development. Sulakashana Sawant highlighted the advancements that Goa has made in their campaign to promote gender equality in the state government at all levels.

SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING LINKAGES BETWEEN SDGS AND LOCAL PLANNING

The session sought to understand the commonalities between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5: 'Gender Equality and Women

Empowerment' and local planning for gender equality. Maizura Ismail, Strategic and Capacity Development Manager, UCLG-ASPAC chaired the session. Priya Lee Lalwani, Senior Policy Advisor, New Taipei City Government; Maria Enderwati, Lecturer, National Institute of Technology Malang East Java Indonesia and Yasmin Sultana, Councillor, Narsingdi Municipality were the speakers for the session.

Maria Enderwati emphasised on how the localisation of SDG 5 for uplifting of women across the world is essential at this stage. She said, "We must take strategic action towards the achievement of SDG 5. Issues like gender discrimination, violence against women need to be eradicated in order to achieve, not only SDG 5, but also all of the SDGs by 2030.

Priya highlighted how New Taipei City is working towards the implementation of SDGs, particularly SDG 5. Lee told that the city authorities have published a voluntary local review to track the

measures implemented in the past which will enable the authorities to work smoothly in the future towards the implementation of SDGs. The moves have increased transparency in the operation of governance and enable sustainability in all walks of life, irrespective of gender and age. In order to effectively tackle gender inequality, Lee highlighted that educating children at a young age is essential as it will sensitize them to women issues and make them better citizens for the future.

Yasmin Sultana highlighted issues that are inherently discriminatory towards women and even hamper their participation at governing levels of cities. She said that less power does she experience being given to women in municipalities as in her home country Bangladesh. "Equal pay must be accorded in law," Sultana said.

SESSION 2: SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF GENDER EQUALITY

The second session of the workshop explored the various challenges faced by South Asian women and how local governments of the region can address these challenges with better urban planning and provisions. Lakshmi Puri chaired the session. Rekha Sharma; Hemanthi Goonasekara, CEO, Federation of Sri Lanka Local Government Authorities; Nazira Akter Shopna, Councilor, Thakurgaon Municipality and Yagya Kumari, Deputy Mayor, Chaubise Municipality, Nepal were the speakers for the session. Puri emphasised that South Asian countries, in particular, are plagued by traditional practices, which are inherently discriminatory towards women. "Eradicating such practices at a national level must be prioritised and effective strategies must be developed," she said. Rekha Sharma said that by promoting women's equality across the board, we do not only progress on SDG 5, but a holistic growth is ensured. "Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world," Sharma said.

Hemanthi Goonasekara said that women representation in politics is a big challenge for Sri Lanka. She said that quantity matters, but quality is key when it comes to women participation in governance.

Nazira Akter Shopna provided an insight into the challenges and opportunities for gender equality and women's empowerment in Bangladesh. The Councilor highlighted how women in her country do not get equal opportunity even in the local government's as many times their male counterparts bound them to their decision because of the majority.

Yagya Kumari, in her address, told the audience that Nepal has ensured over 40 per cent women representation in local government and 33 per cent in political parties.

SESSION 3: METHODOLOGIES AND STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The third session of the conference discussed methodologies and strategies to promote "Gender Mainstreaming" for the current times. The session was chaired by Ravi Ranjan Guru and the speakers were Agnes Bickart, Senior Manager, Metropolis; Iti Rawat, Founder and Managing Director, Think Hall Academy; Dr. Sneha Palnitkar, CEO, WMRC, AILSG and Dr. Nikhil Raj, Program Head, Girl Power and Incubation centre, AILSG.

"Data can be the oil for the women empowerment engine," Agnes said in her address. She also emphasised that gender equality cannot be achieved without adequate stakeholder association; best practice exchange and setting global benchmarks in urban gender policy. Women security should be prioritised as it is the greatest challenge in metropolises.

Rawa elaborated that she faced various issues in setting up her business and based on her experiences deduced that support is essential. She said that innovative ideologies could help shape a better and a more sustainable future for women.

Sneha Palnitkar highlighted AILSG's role in promoting good, transparent local governance in India while promoting women workmanship across the nation. She also presented the case of Maharashtra where women took charge in local government's in Maharashtra. Dr Nikhil Raj highlighted the salient features of Girl Power, a recent project undertaken by AILSG for empowering women in

Jharkhand. "The Girl Power Project is all about its building and harnessing interlinkages, bringing the top-down and bottom-up approaches in harmony with each other & ensuring that women realize the inherent value or "stickiness" of the skills and sustain the changes in their lives," Raj said.

SESSION 4: GENDER BUDGETING

The fourth session of the conference was dedicated to the deliberation on gender budgeting. The session was chaired by Abhishek Pandey, Editor, Urban Update and Dr. Ashok Kumar Lahiri, Economist and Member of the 15th Finance Commissioner, Govt. of India; Haziqah Nazirah ZolBahari, Penang Women's Development Corporation, Malaysia and Amita Pitre, Lead Specialist, Gender Justice, OXFAM India, participated as speakers. The key outcome that arose during the discussion was that budgeting is an essential part of lessening the gender disparity in any developing country. All the speakers agreed that it is essential to involve as many as possible private public stakeholders when allocating the gender budget to ensure optimal utilisation of funds. Dr Lahiri, presented the gender budgeting statement of the Union Government. "In recent times, the gender budgeting has increased 10-folds, but the question still arises: Has it brought any change?" the economist contemplated. He urged everyone not to only look at the numbers, but also check how the money has been spent. Further, he called for developing 100 per cent women specific budget allocation for the future to actually see the targeted benefit and grow from the investment.

Haziqah Nazirah Zol Bahari, presented a case study of Penang, Malaysia, and gave examples of how Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting (GRP) helped the city in developing gender inclusive budget. Amita Pitre advocated the concept of progressive taxation in her speech. "Social evils like alcohol end up in various crimes against women and hence more taxes should be applied on them," she said. She also said public spaces should be planned in such a way that they are safer for women. ■

Kerala shows the way to controlling COVID-19



ASHOK WANKHADE

Managing Editor

During these testing times, local governments and citizens must work together to avoid any escalation and potential damage that the Coronavirus may present. Kerala has been one of the few states that have undertaken exemplary work in containing the spread of the virus as of now. Others need to follow suit

One of the first states to have detected a case of the novel coronavirus in India in late January, Kerala had the highest number of cases for quite some time throughout February and early March 2020. However, with its proactive approach for containing the disease, Kerala became the first state in the country to flatten the curve of the coronavirus graph.

The steps taken by the Government of Kerala have proven to be instructive for the central government, which had imposed the nationwide lockdown almost 4 weeks ago but continues to see an upward trend in the number of coronavirus cases across the country. A high population density and low literacy rates across the country are two factors that are contributing the most towards the continued growth of the disease. Kerala, being the state with the highest literacy rates and having the best-performing healthcare system in the country, had invested hugely and consistently in strengthening the public health services in the state, enabling its swift response to the disease

REASONS FOR SUCCESS

Having invested largely in education and public health, the Government of Kerala already had an upper hand in dealing with the pandemic. However, the quick actions taken by the government greatly controlled the effect of the disease. Following the World Health Organisation's guidelines of aggressive testing, tracing, containment and treatment right from the start helped Kerala stay ahead of other Indian states.

Despite having an overwhelming influx of people from overseas destinations in the state throughout the year, the government's decision to strictly impose screening at airports from February 10, and containment and treatment of those found coronavirus

positive helped contain the spread of the disease from such travellers to the general public. Moreover, the state government also established temporary housing facilities and quarantine shelters to accommodate tourists and other non-residents.

In order to provide for the migrant workers left stranded in the state due to the lockdown imposed by the centre, the state government also built community kitchens, ensured that these migrant workers had a place to stay throughout the lockdown and even guaranteed a monthly pay to those left without an income.

Another factor contributing to the state's success is its management and deployment of more than 30,000 primary and secondary healthcare workers across the state to carry out door-to-door testing and surveys to ensure that they are not experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19. The state government also deployed thousands of rapid testing kits and still continues to use them to test people residing in Covid-19 hotspots, despite the centre's stand that mass testing for the disease is not a possibility in India.

Kerala's announcement of an economic package worth \$2.6 billion was aimed at stabilizing the falling economy of the state and to ensure that the state government is easily able to revive it in the post-lockdown period. The state government also liaised with internet service providers to increase internet speed at homes and has promised an advance pension of two months to the elderly.

Whether it is a migrant worker or a tourist, a common man or an industrialist, the steps taken by the Government of Kerala cover each and every one. This clearly indicates that apart from successfully controlling the pandemic by taking strict measures, the government made sure that these measures were humane and took care of the needs of everyone present in the state. ■

UrbanUpdate

Setting The Agenda For Tomorrow's Cities



Urban Update Weekly Digest
NEWSLETTER

Top News



Delhi aims to take its metro trains soon by up to 30 per cent



No threshold for general annual deposits, Bombay HC



E-waste's safe back system for western India's railways



1,000 E-waste units not sufficient, experts warn to increase the



WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER

Urban Update is a leading magazine on sustainable development of cities brought out by All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG). Bringing together the experience of the multilateral sector with that of the private sector and the local governments themselves, the magazine focuses on the challenges and solutions for city leaders and local governments.

Urban Update plays a special role – that of a primary, indispensable link among stakeholders that nurtures community. A wellspring of writing and imagery reinforces our vision of evangelizing Urban Infrastructure, Governance, Culture and Sustainability.

To get the weekly dose of Urban News

[SUBSCRIBE NOW
www.urbanupdate.in](http://www.urbanupdate.in)



urbanupdatemag



urbanupdatemgzn



urbanupdatemag

For any query, please contact our Subscription Department
e-mail at contacturbanupdate@gmail.com



Supported By



HE CLEANS OUR WORLD. LET'S SALUTE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEARTS.

Sanitation workers deserve more than what we give in return. They deserve our respect. Because they do our job with sheer dedication. We spread dirt. They spread cleanliness.

All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG) whole heartedly supports Swachh Bharat Mission and is committed to play a proactive role to realise its objectives. The institute is organising regular orientation workshops on SBM to augment the capacity of ULBs and also generating public awareness on cleanliness



Ministry of Urban Development
Government of India