

# UrbanUpdate

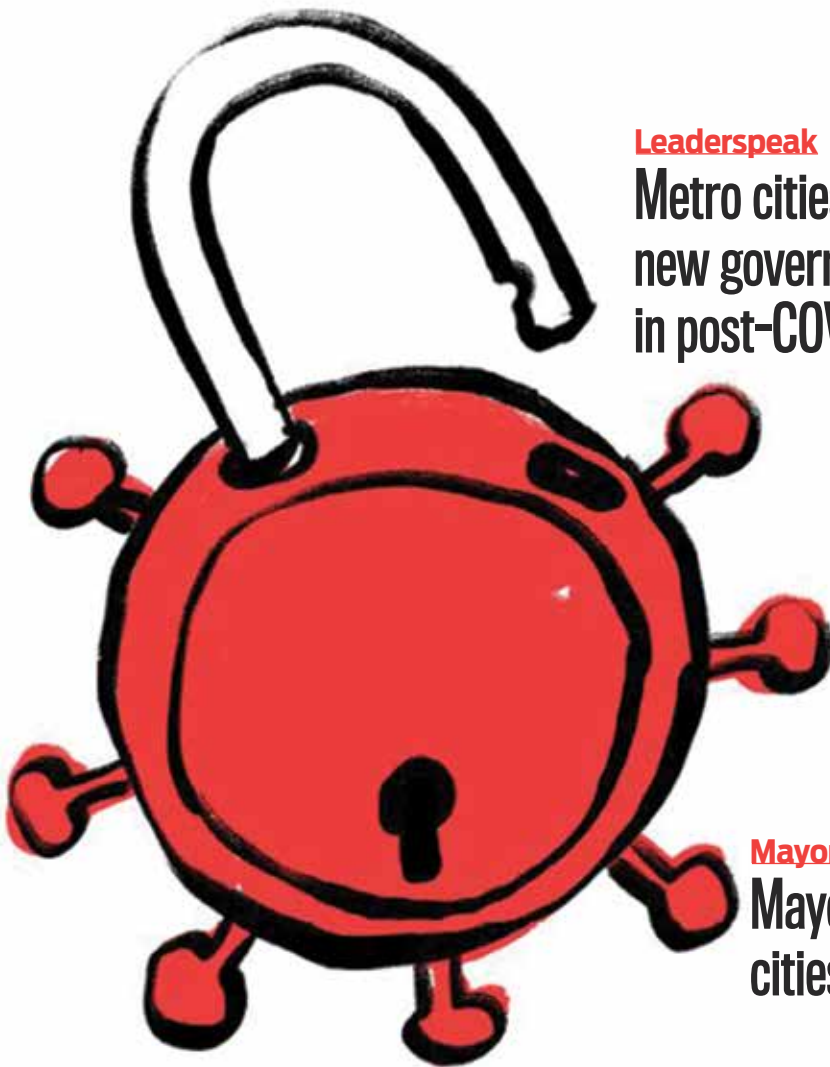
Volume VI, Issue II

JUNE 2020

## TURNAROUND IN GLOBAL ECONOMY

### Is it tied to finding a vaccine for coronavirus?

Economists across the globe are grappling with the question how to arrest any further slump in the economy and restore some degree of stability. The growing realisation is that the fate of the global economy rests more than ever on finding a vaccine for COVID-19



#### Leaderspeak

Metro cities would need new governance model in post-COVID world

#### Mayors' Dialogues

Mayors discuss how to make cities pandemic resilient



European Union



AIILSG

# 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](mailto:contact@aiilsg.org)



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# UrbanUpdate

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**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

**Kashish Dhawan**  
Reporter

**Meenakshi Rajput**  
**Rajesh Singh**  
Senior Graphic Designers

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## 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](mailto:contacturbanupdate@gmail.com)



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# INNOVATIONS TO BRING NORMALCY IN A POST-COVID WORLD



**Rajiv Agarwal**  
Editor-In-Chief  
dg@aailsg.org

Indian Railways commenced operations of Mumbai's suburban rail system on June 15 though in a very restricted and regulated manner. The service is currently catering only to essential services category workers, as identified by the State Government. The system runs with limited passengers per train (lower than the seating capacity) and by following social distancing and other safety protocols. The resumption of suburban transit services, considered the lifeline of the metropolis, is a landmark event in the efforts to get the nation's wheels moving once again after a series of lockdowns.

Urban mobility is among the dimensions likely to see major changes in the post-Covid world. Some of these may seem transformative or even at divergence with earlier thinking. Take for instance public transport. In spite of cities urging residents to adopt public transport modes in the past, are we likely to see people shun such modes and prefer personalised modes to prevent spread of the virus? Citizens may also avoid car-pooling and sharing, especially with strangers, out of similar concerns. Cycling and walking may be perceived as 'spending more time on the road' and thus more risky. Alongside, as in the example of restarted Mumbai suburban rail, public transport would carry fewer passengers per trip, causing capacity constraints. There will be need for innovative thinking in order to make public/shared transport safe and preferred - online ticketing and contactless passenger processes, for example. All these will call for large doses of innovation, and technology driven interventions.

On the plus side, with Work from Home (WfH), online meetings, virtual conferences, and webinars becoming the norm during the lockdown, these may become more formally ingrained in our work lives. This will surely mean reduced travel - both intra city and inter city - and thus take load off our streets. Alongside local authorities are advocating staggered office timings. Different groups of employees of the same organisation could attend office during different timings and different offices in a location could work to different timings. These measures will help maintain social distancing norms and result in less congestion on roads, in buses and trains, etc.

Several innovations are already appearing to meet the restrictions imposed by the Covid threat. Elevators with foot operated floor selection buttons, and those which enable contactless floor selection, just by waving one's hand near the button are some. Technology is also being used to make airports safer for passengers and airline staff. Bangalore International Airport Ltd. (BIAL), has for example, a parking to boarding contactless journey where all processes from entry to check-in, to baggage management, and boarding have been made contactless.

In addition to mobility, the world will search for solutions to safely conduct various businesses such as departmental stores, malls, restaurants and multiplexes. Citizens on their part will learn to adopt a safer, more guarded, and compliant lifestyle. Cities will see several transformative upgrades as the world responds to the challenges of safely restoring normalcy in a post-Covid world. The efforts will need to be sharpened till the time we have an effective vaccine and a proven cure. ■



Nation needed an intervention at such a massive scale. It tells us that there should be no question on the key sources of air pollution: emissions from vehicles and industry. We need to set an agenda for action which will help us retain this lockdown advantage

**Sunita Narain**

Director General, Centre for Science and Environment



Right now, there is no COVID-19 vaccine. As we work together to develop one, there is an important lesson we need to understand. A vaccine, by itself, is not enough. We need global solidarity to ensure that every person, everywhere, will have access

**Antonio Guterres**

Secretary-General, UN



## PIN POINT



We have put good targets on our own through our NDCs about reducing emission intensity, having renewable energy component in our installed capacity to the extent of 40%, sustainable lifestyle, climate change adaptation & technology & capacity building

**Prakash Javadekar**

Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, India



I believe the decision to impose nationwide lockdown was apposite for that moment. People were unaware of the coronavirus. If we hadn't imposed lockdown at that time, we would have seen a remarkable outburst of infections across the country

**Arvind Kejriwal**

Chief Minister, Delhi



## BUZZ



**Ranjana Kumari**

Director- Centre for Social Responsibility  
@ranjanakumari

The impact of COVID-19 economic crisis on women needs policy maker immediate attentions and action. Their capacity, skill sets and access must be enhanced to improve their situation or as @ilo report cautions "the legacy of the virus could be with us for decades"



**Council on Energy, Environment and Water**

@CEEWIndia

Post #lockdown, cities around the world have begun promoting non-motorised #transport with tactical interventions like creating temporary pop-up walking & cycling lanes to ensure safe travel. Can #Delhi & other Indian cities make the switch?



**Narendra Modi**

Prime Minister, India  
@narendramodi

One of the biggest benefits of Ayushman Bharat is portability. Beneficiaries can get top quality and affordable medical care not only where they registered but also in other parts of India. This helps those who work away from home or registered at a place where they don't belong



**Durga Shankar Mishra**

Secretary, MoHUA  
@Secretary\_MoHUA

We are committed to conserving all forms of life on earth. This can only happen when we take the mandate of Swachhata forward & truly unlock the potential of 3Rs, circular & blue economy with citizens' full involvement and commitment

# Inside

Volume 6, Issue 2

June 2020

6 Pin Point  
10 Newscan

15 City Image  
46 Urban Agenda

## COVER STORY

**22 Turnaround in global economy**  
**Is it tied to finding a vaccine for coronavirus?**  
Economists across the globe are grappling with the question how to arrest any further slump in the economy and restore some degree of stability. The growing realisation is that the fate of the global economy rests more than ever on finding a vaccine for COVID-19. Economic officials now say that full recovery relies on the scientists, medical experts say don't expect a miracle, vaccine is going to take time

## LEADERSPEAK

**26 Metro cities would need new governance model in post-COVID world**  
Metro cities of the world account for 22 per cent of the world population (1.6 billion) and 60 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). When we talk about the best of any facility in a nation, we look towards their metropolises but the pandemic has exposed their weaknesses. The pandemic has allowed us to fix the problem of our metropolises and make them enviable again

## ARTICLES

**28 Recover better with nature**  
**Personhood rights to rivers can help**  
**30 MSME sector is bleeding what is the cure?**  
**32 COVID-19 to change cities' urban governance**  
**34 An analysis: Pandemic response in US, NZ & India**  
**36 Indian scientists invent Corona fighting tools**



26



36

## e-DIALOGUES

**38 Mayors discuss how to make cities pandemic resilient**  
**40 Cities after Corona: A one-on-one discussion with Amogh K Gupta, Chairperson, SPA- Delhi**  
**42 Physical distancing, not social distancing, key to living with virus**

## BOOK REVIEW

**44 A city on the sea!**



# STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN ASIA PACIFIC

**T**he Climate Resilient and Inclusive Cities (CRIC) is a five-year long project funded by the European Union under their Grants for External Action. The project has been initiated by United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) and its partners All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG), Pilot4Dev, Université Gustave Eiffel (UGE), ACR+ and ECOLISE. The project is a collaborative approach through a unique and long-lasting triangular cooperation among cities and research centres in Europe, South Asia (India, Nepal, Bangladesh), and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand). It fully meets the global objective to promote sustainable green and inclusive urban development, and to promote climate resilient and inclusive cities. It intends to foster and strengthen partnerships among Local Authorities in accordance with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

The Project aims to 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.

The CRIC Project started on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 and the official kick-off meeting took place in Jakarta on 31<sup>st</sup> January. The CRIC Kick-off meeting in Jakarta was attended by delegation from AIILSG headed by Ravi Ranjan Guru, (DDG), Devarshi Pandya (CFO), Kamlesh Pathak (Senior Technical Expert and Coordinator) and K Vishnu Mohan Rao (Cross Sectoral Expert).

The scope of AIILSG within the CRIC project is to develop sectoral action plans for water, sanitation, air pollution, waste management and circular economy. This is being done through tools and methodology for urban analysis. Moreover, AIILSG is and will be helping with various outreach programs.

On February 10<sup>th</sup> 2020, at the 10th World Urban Forum, Abu Dhabi, AIILSG and UCLG ASPAC launched the United Network of Circular Cities globally. This is an initiative under the CRIC Project to create a circular

economy network among the urban local bodies in Asia. This was one of the first events that took place under the CRIC project. The main aim of the program is to create polycentric and multilevel governance at the national, sub-national and local level towards circular economy and sustainable development.

The program promotes to create multilevel partnerships with suitable enablers towards policy level action and financial mechanism through private sector cooperation. The event promoted the concept of resources management and circular economy through exchange of resources through a network of cities.

Similarly, on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 at the 5th South Asian Cities Summit held in Goa, a side track was arranged under the CRIC Project and United Network of Circular Cities to promote the idea of Circular Economy and Circular Cities with the local authorities and representatives of various Asian countries. The event was successful with various important topics discussed such as sustainable procurement and supply chain management for sustainable fashion industry in Asian countries. Another important topic was on anthropogenic activities and micro plastic pollution of oceans and seas. Both these topics are highly relevant since most of the Asian countries are highly dependent on sea trades and also major manufacturing units of fashion industries are located in these countries.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April, the first Focus Group Discussion (FGD) took place for the CRIC Project. Due to COVID-19, the FGD took place on an online platform, making it e-FGD. The project team took this as an opportunity to analyse the outreach of electronic medium conference for the stakeholders which at the same time helped in reducing Green House Gas emission due to the project.

The e-FGD was conducted with 10 pilot cities of CRIC Project in Indonesia. The discussion revealed a general support and commitment by





# The Climate Resilient & Inclusive Cities Project

This joint project aims to assist Indonesian and other Asian cities' efforts to protect their citizens and assets from the impacts of climate change. The project will collaborate with leading European institutions as well as partners across Asia and the Pacific region.

The Climate Resilience and Inclusive Cities (CRIC) Project is a long-term initiative that will enable cities with ambitious commitments to go beyond business-as-usual in responding to the severe and evolving climate-related events. The project is placing particular focus on the most vulnerable populations in disaster-prone areas. This is to ensure its inclusive impacts and help mitigate social and economic inequalities. The new Project is in line with the EU's continued efforts to promote prosperity, peace and sustainable development worldwide. More recently, the European Commission's European Green Deal highlighted the EU's priority for sustainable green transition that is just and socially fair, within the region and beyond.

The project will, for the next five years, seek to tackle the multi-dimensional challenges faced by cities and local governments in improving climate resilience. The

main activities of the CRIC project aim to improve the institutional, financial and administrative capacities of cities and local authorities (LAs) through peer-to-peer learning and exchange of knowledge, development of local action plans for climate resilient and inclusive cities, and organisation of communication and capacity building trainings. A wide range of tools will be used, including research, capacity building, advocacy campaigns, creation of knowledge hub, and triangular cooperation between Europe, Southeast Asia and South Asia.

During the launch, Suharti, Deputy Governor of Jakarta for Civil Registry and Settlements, stated that the project will support Jakarta's effort to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals, especially to "make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." Moreover, Jakarta city administration is trying to integrate sustainability and resilience into all elements of urban management – in managing water, waste, mobility as well as consumption and production processes that take place in the city. "We, Jakarta Capital City Government, highly value this kind of knowledge sharing and open dialogue to tailor a project and to

enrich our perspective on important climate resilience challenges that are faced by the cities in Indonesia, particularly Jakarta. And we commit to placing inclusivity at the centre of policy-making. Not only making sure that those most vulnerable to the impacts are benefiting from our collective actions, but to actually put them as the subjects from whom we could all learn about more sustainable ways of living," the Deputy Governor added. In her remarks during the opening ceremony, UCLG ASPAC Secretary-General Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi stressed that "as the impacts of climate change become more intense and frequent, we need to accelerate our work to help cities and local governments withstand the effects and protect citizens from future shocks and stresses.

The local political leadership, networks and expertise that we pool together under this project will play a critical role in achieving the project's aim to promote climate resilience and inclusive cities." She also added that the most affected ones in climate calamities were women and children. Therefore, cities must re-double their efforts by making good collaboration as climate change is real."

the city, which described by request to the Project to support them in development planning process in particular for cities which will carry out the election.

This is aligned with the CRIC Project objective that expected not as stand-alone activity but rather as an activity that can be integrated with programs that already exist and future plan. The discussions also concluded that the project will also try to link with SDGs goals - since all the activity should

be recorded as contribution to the goals - and facilitate financing with national and/or international finance institution due to the insufficient resources of the city to (potential) project financing and sustainability. The e-FGD was undertaken (1) to promote CRIC Project activities to pilot cities for implementation; (2) to understand CRIC Project framework and objectives; and (3) to map the modalities and availability of resources at pilot cities

Beside these activities, the CRIC Project is now gearing up for urban analysis through tools development. Several initial tools have been identified by the project team and a close evaluation and research is being conducted to develop localized and effective tools. An expert panel has been established now to advise the team and train the local authorities and stakeholders. For more information on the project please visit <https://www.resilient-cities.com/> ■

# Nation 'reopens'

NEW DELHI: As the fourth nationwide lockdown ended on May 31, the Central Government announced its extension till June 30, although easing curbs to a greater extent. This extension has been termed as 'Unlock 1' by the Narendra Modi government. This lockdown focuses on restarting economic activities. This 'unlock 1' began from June 8. Some of the most salient announcements from the order released by the Ministry of Home Affairs are:

- ◆ Night curfew to be implemented across the nation. The timings for the curfew now shifted from 7PM to 7AM, to 9PM to 5AM. Not adhering to this would invite penalties. "Local authorities shall issue orders in the entire area of their jurisdiction, under appropriate provisions of law, such as under Section 144 of CrPC, and ensure strict compliance," the Home Ministry said.
- ◆ Contrary to recent trends, the government has announced that there will be no restriction of movement between states. However, the final decision regarding this had been left to the state governments.
- ◆ All activities previously banned are set to resume in non-containment

zones. Hotels and restaurants are also permitted to operate. Places of worship, malls, etc. have reopened on June 8. To curtail the virus spread, authorities all over the country have ensured that all places of worship, malls, etc. are to follow a list of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on becoming operational. Entrances to have mandatory sanitisers and thermal screening, no entry without mask, posters of COVID-19 prevention to be displayed within the premises, along with mandatory social distancing are some of the norms that these institutions must follow.

- ◆ People can, in essence, resume pre-lockdown activities to a

certain extent, provided that they follow social distancing norms and maintain personal hygiene. Covering your face in public is compulsory.

- ◆ Only essentials are allowed in containment zones, at least till June 30.
- ◆ The government has not yet reserved its decision to resume certain activities and businesses like reopening of schools, colleges, entertainment parks, bars, cinemas, international flights and more. A decision on this would be taken in July after consultation with state and UT authorities and the various stakeholders. The government has still emphasised that not more than five persons at shops, not more than 50 wedding guests and not more than 20 people at funerals will be allowed and urged that people work from home as much as possible.

The Central Government announced its extension till June 30, although easing curbs to a greater extent. This extension has been termed as 'Unlock 1' by the Narendra Modi government. This phase will focus on restarting economic activities

## Life resumes with the virus in Delhi

Buses, cars, autos are back on the road. Life appears to be normal in the city. The Central Government has eased the lockdown and the Government of Delhi has followed suit. As usual heavy traffic is back on road and congestions are being reported in areas like ITO, and Delhi-Noida highway, areas which were known for heavy traffic congestions in pre-covid times. The streets are bustling with cars, two-wheelers, taxis and auto-rickshaws that were filled with office goers as private offices are now allowed to operate at full strength. The Delhi Transport Corporation has resumed inter-city transportation. Police officials are enforcing the order, as regular rounds of policemen can be observed in residential areas as well as on the roads. Popular parks like Lodhi Garden, Talkatora Garden and Nehru Park have been reopened. The parks would be opened for limited time and certain guidelines to move in the park would be observed. People can now visit the park between 7-10 am and 3.30-6.30 pm. Wearing masks in public spaces is compulsory and strict social distancing needs to be maintained at all times. The public gyms built in the parks are still not to be used. The municipalities expect people to voluntarily follow the norms as they are reportedly understaffed with enforcement personnel. "Although we are permitted to open our shop on even days, routes to our shop are almost all closed. That has been a hindrance for us. We are also a little hesitant to recall our workers due to the virus," said Siddharth Rawat, owner of Siddhartha Fashion, a tailoring shop in Ranibagh. The interstate movement, which has been allowed by the Centre under lockdown 4.0, has also provided financial relief to people of Delhi.



# DGCI gives nod to Covifor, Fabiflu for COVID-19 treatment in India, experts worried of its viability

NEW DELHI: In India, despite strict lockdown measures and contact tracing, the number of COVID-19 cases continue to rise. According to data released by the Ministry of Health, Government of India, confirmed cases in India have crossed the 4-lakh mark and more than 13,000 people have succumbed to the disease. In order to reassure the public that the government is working tirelessly for controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) gave approval to two drugs for COVID-19 treatment in the country— Remdesivir and Favipiravir.

Three domestic generic pharma companies also got approval to manufacture and market these drugs in the country. The generic versions of these drugs would be available under different brand names. Hyderabad-based Hetero got approval to manufacture and sell its generic version of Gilead's Remdesivir under the brand name 'Covifor'. According to Hetero officials, Covifor will be available in 100 mg vial (injectable) form which may cost between ₹5,000 and ₹6,000. Imported remdesivir costs as much as ₹10,000 per dose. This means that once the drug is available in the market, COVID-19 treatment with it will cost not less than ₹30,000 per patient. According to Government of India's

guidelines, around 5 to 6 doses of Covifor are to be given to a COVID-19 patient.

As per DCGI's guidelines, Covifor is permitted under restricted emergency use so it will only be made available to hospitals treating COVID-19 patients. Also, it is not advisable for pregnant or lactating mother, children below age of 12 years and people with liver problems and renal complications.

The company officials stated Hetero is likely to start supply of the drug in a week. Another domestic pharma company Cipla has received the DCGI's nod to manufacture the antiviral drug for the treatment of COVID-19 patients in the country.

Drug firm Glenmark Pharmaceuticals recently launched an antiviral drug Favipiravir under the brand name 'FabiFlu'. According to the company, the drug will be used for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 cases at a price of about ₹103 per tablet. The company received 'restricted emergency' approval to manufacture and market the medicine by the DCGI. The drug will be available on the basis of prescription with recommended dose being 1,800 mg twice on day one, followed by 800 mg twice daily up to day 14.

It is certified in Japan since 2014 for the treatment of novel or re-emerging influenza virus infections and is now reused as a trial medicine for COVID-19. It can be utilized for patients with comorbid conditions such as diabetes and heart disease with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms. However, it is not advisable for patients with severe renal, hepatic impairment, and for pregnant and lactating women. Glenmark became the first drug company to get approval from DCGI to conduct phase-3 clinical trial of Favipiravir antiviral tablets on COVID-19 patients and has shown up to 88 per cent clinical improvement in mild to moderate COVID-19 cases with a rapid reduction in viral load in a time span of 4 days. The approval was on the basis of

clinical trial in India carried out on 150 COVID-19 positive patients and 18 global clinical trials involving 3,000 subjects in India, US, Canada, Italy, China, France, UK and other countries.

To verify the effectiveness of the drug, Glenmark referred to various studies including a Russian clinical trial that had a sample size of 390 patients which achieved a success rate of over 80 per cent. In addition to this, a Japanese study of over 2000 patients saw a success rate of 88 per cent. Two more studies of 80 Chinese patients compared it with antiretroviral drugs for the treatment of COVID-19 in which Favipiravir was found to be safer and faster in reducing relief time than antiviral umifenovir.

Meanwhile, Dr SP Kalantri, Professor of medicine and medical superintendent, MGIMS Sevagram, threw light over the lack of randomized controlled trials (RCT) and the insufficient data to establish any benefit of the drug for COVID-19 treatment. The only proof is a small, unrandomized Chinese study where Favipiravir was given to 35 people with mild symptoms which showed no objective improvement in clinically relevant parameters. Moreover, it was published in a journal titled 'Engineering', which is not even a standard medical journal. As of now, there is no workable evidence to prove the effectiveness of Favipiravir as the RCT led by Glenmark is still ongoing. Simultaneously, according to many experts, the drug does not benefit the fight against COVID-19 in a substantial way. This is because people with mild to moderate symptoms already have a high chance of recovering from the disease simply based on their strong immunity. Moreover, the drug has not been proven to work on patients with serious conditions. Thus, neither does it help in controlling the COVID-19 mortality rate, nor does it slow/stop the progression of the disease from mild/moderate symptoms to severe conditions that require life support systems.



## Mortality rate in children to shoot up due to the pandemic: UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has said that the COVID-19 pandemic is shadowed by another crisis as the mortality rate of children could go up by 6,000 daily. The child health body said, "[This is] quickly becoming a child rights crisis. And without urgent action, a further 6,000 under-fives could die each day." The estimate increase in child death rate is based on the research from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, published in the Lancet Global Health Journal.

## Delhi, Maharashtra to reach COVID-19 peak soon, Punjab, Haryana over it: Director, IIPH



The states of Kerala, Punjab and Haryana have crossed the peak in coronavirus cases, according to prominent health expert, GVS Murthy, Director, Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad. In an interview, Murthy said that the pandemic is reaching its peak in Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, while it has crossed its peak in Punjab, Haryana and Kerala. He also estimated that total deaths in India due to COVID-19 will be under 8,000 as the country has strongly enforced standard protocols and hospitals have operated on high alert. He has estimated that due to the stringent lockdown enforced in the population dense nation, around 80,000 to 1,00,000 deaths have been avoided.

## MP begins to check patients at district level

BHOPAL: In a bid to check the spread of COVID-19 in the state, Madhya Pradesh government has decided to conduct population-based district-level survey across the state starting this week.

Under this action plan, the population will be divided into two groups – low risk population and high risk population. Under the low risk population including patients with non-influenza like illness, outpatient attendees, and pregnant women are put, while second group comprises high risk population including healthcare workers.

According to a proposal from National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 10 health facilities, four private and six public, will be selected in each district for this action plan.

The advisory issued by the Ministry of Health (MoH) stresses on the need to establish systematic surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 infection in all districts of the country. About 400 samples or 100 samples per week of high-risk health workers would be collected from



each district. 50 Non-ILI OPD patients would be tested per week along with 50 pregnant women. In all 800 samples of COVID-19 would be collected for a month for the sampling.

The survey conducted under this plan is additional to the routine testing as per current guidelines. The survey is aimed to determine the prevailing coronavirus spread in each district for indicating the red, orange and green status of a district.

The samples taken via survey will be tested in a onetime pool of 25. In addition to throat/nasal swabs, blood samples would be collected for detecting IgG antibodies for ELISA testing data collection and analysis.

## Don't spray disinfectant on people, says WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation (WHO), in its latest statement, warned by stating that spraying disinfectants on the open areas/streets is not a feasible practice to eliminate risk of new coronavirus and it even poses a health risk.

In a document on cleaning and disinfecting surfaces as part of the response to the virus, the WHO says spraying can be ineffective.

"Spraying in the outdoor spaces, such as streets or marketplaces, is... not recommended to kill the SARS-CoV-2 virus or other pathogens because disinfectant is inactivated by dirt and debris," explains the WHO.

The chemical spraying is unlikely to cover all the surfaces for the duration of the required time needed for an inactive pathogen to come in contact with potential receiver. The WHO also stressed that spraying of disinfectants on any individual is not recommended under any circumstances.

"This could be physically and psychologically harmful and would not reduce an infected person's ability to spread the virus through droplets or contact," said the document. Spraying disinfectants which has chlorine or other toxic chemical can cause skin and eye irritation, gastrointestinal and bronchospasm effect, the document added. The organisation said that spraying disinfectants in indoor spaces is also not effective, and if indoor disinfection should be done the disinfectants need to be applied using cloth or a wipe that has been soaked into it.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, has killed thousands of people worldwide since its inception in late December in China, and it can attach itself to surfaces and objects. However currently, there is no precise information available for what periods the virus can remain active on different surfaces.

## Cyclones hits parts of both Indian coasts

PUNE/KOLKATA: Cyclone Nisarga hit parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat on June 3. Indian meteorological department predicted its arrival beforehand officials moved tens of thousands of people from the coast to higher grounds. As a result, loss of life was minimised as 2 were reportedly dead while three got injured from the cyclone that brought along gusty winds and heavy rainfall and moved at speeds north of 120 kmph from the Arabian Sea. Naval Kishore Ram, Collector of Pune, said that over 28,000 farmers in 371 were affected by it in Pune district alone. It also caused a landfall near Shrivardhan in coastal Raigad district, about 177 kms away from Pune. Cyclone Amphan made landfall on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 and hit the coastal state of West Bengal. Bangladesh, India's neighboring country in the East, was also hit by the cyclone that wreaked havoc. The Government of West Bengal shut down the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Dum Dum, West Bengal, in preparation for the cyclone. Train services were suspended in both the states and people had been warned of not roaming out in the open until absolutely necessary and to be careful for any flying objects due to the high winds. The state governments of Odisha and West Bengal evacuated nearly 350,000 people from the low-lying regions near the coast of Bay of Bengal. These people were sent to cyclone shelters where, according to officials,



social distancing and other anti-coronavirus measures were being strictly followed. Similar operations were carried out in Bangladesh too. As the cyclone approached, heavy winds and tides lashed the coastal states of West Bengal and Odisha throughout Tuesday night. The cyclone weakened after reaching land but has destroyed nearly 500 homes.

## Kerala government to send team of doctors, nurses to Maharashtra

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Frontline workers in Kerala have proved that coordinated working and a strict approach to tracing and treating Covid-19 works tremendously in stopping the spread of the coronavirus. After becoming the first state in India to flatten the Covid-19 graph in India, the Government of Kerala is planning on sending a team of doctors and nurses to Maharashtra in order to assist them in fighting the battle against the pandemic. The team will comprise of 50 doctors and 100 nurses. The doctors' team will include pulmonologists, anesthetists, physicians and junior doctors and will most likely be headed by Dr Santosh Kumar, Superintendent, Thiruvananthapuram Medical College. Dr Kumar was the same doctor who headed the team that the state

government sent to Kasargod district in Kerala, where the number of cases were once the highest in the country.

The Government of Maharashtra had sought the Kerala government's assistance in order to stop the spread of coronavirus.

The team of doctors and nurses will be deployed on a temporary basis in both private and government hospitals and will assist the pre-existing medical personnel in treating the large inflow of Covid-19 patients. The team from Kerala is likely to set out to Maharashtra by the end of this week. Reluctance has been noticed from the nurses as the pay decided for the team is quite less. The state government is currently undergoing the selection process for the team who will stay in Maharashtra for a month.

## Haryana first state to resume bus service



Becoming the first state to enable public transportation, Haryana government has allowed bus services to resume on select routes to facilitate the movement of people stranded in different districts of the state. Some basic guidelines that have been issued by the local authorities is to only allow booking for tickets online. The buses will only stop at a single destination. The state government initially marked 29 routes for commute, but 9 have been suspended as no tickets were booked for them. The buses that are running are non-air conditioned and are ferrying a maximum of 30 passengers.

## IIT-KGP to develop Centre of Excellence to foster medical advances

In order to promote innovation of affordable and indigenous medical devices and diagnostics in priority areas, the Indian Institute of Technology – Kharagpur (IIT-KGP) is planning to set up a 'Centre of Excellence on Medical Device and Diagnostics'. According to a statement released by the institution, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved the proposal sent by the Institute and has already earmarked ₹20 crore for it. While talking about the initiative, Prof V K Tewari, Director, IIT-KGP said that the Institute is thankful to ICMR for entrusting them with an important responsibility.



**DMRC reinforcing on-ground work as services are to resume shortly**



Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is gearing up to resume transit services within the city observing safety norms once the order from the authorities finalizes the date. Sources have confirmed that on-ground teams have been briefed about the safety norms, preparedness and precautions that are to be taken whenever the service resumes. Delhi Metro has prepared thermal screening and social distancing norms in anticipation of resumption of services. Stickers have been pasted on seats for social distancing; and arrangements for installing hand sanitiser dispensers, are a couple of measures that the Metro has adopted as of now.

**Wuhan tests over 7 million as fear of second wave of virus grows in China**

Fearing the resurgence of the virus after reopening the city, China has conducted over 7 million tests in the past 12 days. This concludes the government’s campaign to recheck the entire population after several new infections have arisen in the past few days. The Chinese Government has conducted nucleic acid tests of over 6.68 million people and over 206 new asymptomatic cases have been reported. The country, which has been successful in subduing the pandemic to a certain degree after it was first discovered there, has rapidly increased testing in its previous epicentre, Wuhan. The city has offered tests to over 1.1 million people on May 23 itself.

# Center identified four cities, Bengaluru, Chennai, Indore and Jaipur as role model

NEW DELHI: While the whole country is struggling to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre has identified four cities-Bengaluru, Chennai, Indore and Jaipur as ‘role models’ for other cities in the country to handle the coronavirus positive cases.

Recently, the Central government has organised meetings with various municipal bodies to share their experiences on two aspects of managing the COVID-19: effective practices to keep mortality rate low, and how to handle very high number of positive cases.

The two southern Indian cities of Bengaluru and Chennai were identified as example of large cities that are able to keep a control of mortality rate. Meanwhile, Indore and Jaipur were identified as role models due to their innovative ways of tackling high number of COVID-19 cases.

While the national average of mortality rate is 3 per cent, Bengaluru and Chennai

were able to keep it at 1 per cent. Indore and Jaipur has adapted an aggressive strategy of conducting house to house survey and contact tracing to control the number of cases. Indore has formed special teams for patrol in city by lanes; Jaipur has limited the number of vendors selling groceries or vegetables in different localities.

A senior official said that Bengaluru and Chennai have led by example in treating the patients of coronavirus by optimizing the use of ventilators and patient triage or assigning the degree of urgency in cases while handling a large number of patients.



# Uttarakhand burning!

NEW DELHI: Adding to the growing lists of tragedies that have hit us this year, a devastating forest fire has engulfed part of the Uttarakhand state forest for last few days now. As the state grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, the authorities are carefully deploying their firefighting missions in order to avoid casualties, from the forest fires as well as corona. Reports have suggested that nearly 46 forest fires have taken place in the state. 51.43 hectares of the forest has been burnt off. The Kumaon region is the worst hit area as almost 24 cases have been registered from there. The outbreak was first reported 3 kms away from Srinagar city, the forest department team confirmed on May 23, the day when the outbreak began. Although, the images of the devastation in Uttarakhand have spread on social media like wildfire, officials from the government and the chief minister himself have claimed that the images used are misleading and are hyping up the severity of the situation. ‘Some people have spread rumours on social media that massive fire has broken out in forests of Uttarakhand. It’s not true. Photos being shown that belong to 2016 when massive fire had broken out, some photos from foreign countries have also been used’, Ashok Kumar DG (law and order), Uttarakhand, told a news agency. Uttarakhand CM himself took to twitter to deny the reports. He said on twitter that the situation is pretty much under control and false information has been spread. “A



misleading propaganda, using old pics of forest fires of 2016 & 2019 & that of forest fires in Chilean & Chinese forests, is raging on SM (Social Media). I req[uest] everyone to not believe such motivated campaign. Fire incidents reported until yesterday is way less than PY,” he said.

# EDUCATING CITIZEN ABOUT COVID PRECAUTIONS

AS INDIAN CITIES move towards unlocking despite the growing rates of infections, it is highly essential that

awareness and education about the precautions, the do's and the don'ts be propagated amongst citizens. The

authorities of the small UP town of Hasanganj used this artwork to spread the message.





## EU proposes 750 bn Euro fund to recover economy



The European Union has proposed to develop a 750 billion euro or \$825 billion fund to help recover the bloc's economy through the deep recession which has been brought by the COVID-19 shutdown. Paolo Gentiloni, in-charge of economic affairs at the European Commission, said that the move would induce a turning point for Europe during this unprecedented crisis. The EU is, however, still deeply divided over the conditions at which the funds are to be attached and EU's executive arm is likely to determine this in the course of the coming weeks.

## India becomes the most COVID-19 infected Asian country



As per the data gathered from Worldometer website that tracks the number of coronavirus infected cases, India has now become the most affected country by the coronavirus in the Asian peninsula. In India, total number of cases has crossed 237,000 including more than 123,000 active cases. 114,000 have either been cured/discharged or migrated and 6,642 deaths have been reported.

## Swarms of locusts wreak havoc

NEW DELHI: As the country deals with the pandemic, a new environmental tragedy in form of locusts engulfs parts of it. According to the Maharashtra State Agricultural Department, the swarm of grasshoppers was at least 10 km long and two km wide. The department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has stepped up countermeasures to minimise the destruction caused by the locusts in various affected regions of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

The control operations against locust attack has been carried out in an area of 47,308 hectares in 303 worst hit districts in the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh. According to Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, control operations were conducted by Locust Circle Officers (LCOs), in coordination with State Agriculture Department and District Administration, till May 26.

In a bid to control the swarm, 120 survey vehicles; 47 control vehicles with sprat equipment; 89 fire brigades for spraying pesticides, and 810 tractors with mounted spray canons have been deployed as per the requirement in different affected areas, the ministry further said in a statement.



United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation has estimated that the locust threat will continue in India till July. The Government of India and the concerned state governments have the resources to control the locust attack, if acted upon timely, experts say.

In one such initiative, Rajasthan became the first state in the country to use drones to control the locust spread. These drones, that were designed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, were handed over to the Government of Rajasthan on Tuesday, May 26. They are designed to spray 10 litres of chemicals and are capable of creating a loud sound that would disperse the locusts into different areas, thereby reducing their concentration in a single place.

## COVID-19 virus can travel up to 20 feet: Study

LOS ANGELES: In a recent study on SAARS-CoV2, scientists have modelled the spread of virus in form of infectious droplets from sneezing, coughing and breathing under different conditions, and found out that the COVID-19 virus can spread up to three times further than previously said in cold and humid weather. According to the researchers involved in the study including scientists from the University of California, droplets that carry COVID-19 virus can travel up to 20 feet, which make the social distancing norm of maintaining a six feet distance insufficient to contain the spread of the virus. Based on earlier research, the scientists said that as many as 40,000 respiratory droplets can be generated by coughing, sneezing and even normally talking, with initial speeds ranging from a few metres per second to more than a hundred meters per second. Important is that the study which is yet to be peer reviewed, published as a preprint in medRxiv, scientists and researchers used a mathematical model to explore the heat transfer, evaporation and projectile motion of respiratory droplets under different conditions – humidity, temperature and ventilation conditions. The scientists found that the transmission of COVID-19 via respiratory droplets happens in two ways-short range droplets and long range aerosol exposure. Scientists mentioned in the study that, while large respiratory droplets settle onto a surface with a limited spread due to gravity, smaller droplets gets evaporated easily to form aerosol particles that can carry virus and float in the air. The researchers also mention in the study that different weather conditions promote different ways for transmission via droplets, in low temperature and high humidity weather virus can be spread via droplet contact transmission, while high temperature and low humidity conditions promotes small aerosol-particle formation.



## Recovered cases outnumber active COVID-19 cases in Odisha

The state of Odisha achieved an important benchmark in their fight against COVID-19 when the total number of people recovered from the disease surpassed the total number of active cases in the state as of today. Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister, Odisha said, "The death rates in Odisha are one of the lowest anywhere in the world. This is an extraordinary achievement for the Oriya people." According to Pradipta Kishore Mohapatra, Additional Chief Secretary (Health), Government of Odisha, the state's recovery rate is now 49 per cent, which is a lot higher than the national average of 41 per cent.

## UK introduces 'Test and Trace' model to prevent corona spread'



United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS) has initiated a new model to fight COVID-19 spread in the nation - The 'Test and Trace' service. The system will see the coronavirus positive patients being contacted by the NHS Test and Trace team and the person will have to share all their information about their recent interactions. This would include direct contact or contact within two metres for more than 15 minutes. The people who are identified would be then quarantined for 14 days, even if they don't have any symptoms of the virus to prevent further spread.

# Cabinet Secretary reviews the situation in the 13 worst affected cities

NEW DELHI: As the country wide lockdown is coming to an end, Rajiv Gauba, Cabinet Secretary, called a meeting on May 28 with district magistrates and municipal commissioners of 13 cities - Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Thane, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Indore, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chengalpattu and Thiruvallur. These cities account for 70 per cent of the total COVID-19 cases in country. The meeting with Cabinet Secretary stressed that containment zones in these 13 cities should be geographically defined based on factors such as mapping of contacts, cases and their geographical dispersion and demarcate a well-defined perimeter to enforce strict lockdown protocols.

"In the meeting measures taken by the officials of corporations for managing the COVID-19 cases were reviewed. The central government has already issued guidelines on COVID-19 management in urban settlements. These strategic

guidelines include work on high risk factors such as confirmed cases rate, death rate, doubling rate, test per million people etc," the statement said. The corporations can decide to designating areas such as residential colonies, municipal wards, police station areas, mohallas, municipal zones, towns as containment zones as per their requirement the statement added.

The Health Ministry also issued guidelines for reprocessing and reuse of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), on responding to queries raised by healthcare workers.

"Healthcare workers will be issued goggles, which they need to decontaminate after every use. Goggles to be disinfected by users and reused at least five times each, whereby one pair of goggles will suffice for 6 days. The goggles can be used by health workers till they get damaged or their transparency decreases. The ratio of issue of goggles to cover all is recommended at 1:6", said the advisory.

# Vadodara gets 1000 more hospital beds in reserve, sets treatment rates

VADODARA: In the battle against COVID-19, people from all walks of life are trying to do what they can in order to help one another and the community at large. Doing their bit, private hospitals in Vadodara have come together to provide a total of 1,000 beds for COVID-19 patients. Apart from this, the state government has also roped in insurance companies to provide quick clearance and cashless claims on health insurance policies. The cost for treatment of COVID-19 patients has also been set for all hospitals in Vadodara at ₹2 lakh. This was made possible after Vinod Rao, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) held multiple meetings with representatives from various private hospitals in Vadodara. The meetings included representatives from insurance companies as well and went on for five days before the association agreed to fulfill all requirements of the state government to fight COVID-19. With this, 1,000 COVID-19 Beds, including



200 beds in ICU and 76 ventilators, have been made available to the public at affordable rates. The rate ceiling set for the private hospitals is nearly 75 per cent less than what the hospitals are charging at present. All these efforts have been made so that the district administration and the state government are ready in the event of a sudden rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in the state.

# COVID-19 could push 68 million children deeper into poverty by 2020 end: Study

UNITED NATIONS: The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most widespread the world has ever faced. So much so, it has affected all spheres of public and private life. According to a new study by UNICEF and humanitarian organisation 'Save the Children', the total number of children living in poor households across low and middle-income countries could increase by 86 million to reach a total of 672 million by the end of 2020. The economic fallout due to the spread of the pandemic will be responsible for the increase.

The analysis pointed out that immediate action by governments across the globe could ensure that these children are saved from being pushed deeper into the pit of poverty. However, not all countries have the resources or the will to act on such an issue. Of the 672 million children estimated to be living in poor households by the end

of 2020, nearly two-thirds are in sub-Saharan Africa. South Asia and countries across Europe and Central Asia could, however, see the most drastic increase, up to 44 per cent across the region. A 22 per cent increase can be seen in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In a statement, Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF, said, "The coronavirus pandemic has triggered an unprecedented socio-economic crisis that is draining resources for families all over the world." This increase in the overall poverty of children across the world will roll back decades of progress made on reducing poverty and improving their overall condition. Not only this, it will also increase chances of children dying from hunger and malnutrition, along with other widespread communicable diseases, due to lack of access to healthcare triggered by their newfound poverty.



## Rajasthan tops COVID-19 management index

JAIPUR: Setting a milestone in times of COVID-19, Rajasthan has secured the first rank in the COVID-19 management index. The Index was compiled by the central government for 10 states and included parameters like active cases, recovered cases and mortality rate due to COVID-19. Talking about the success of the state, Raghu Sharma, Medical and Health Minister, Government of Rajasthan, said that the state has conducted 4.40 lakh diagnostic tests out of the total 35 lakh tests carried out across the country. Moreover, the doubling time of COVID-19 infection in the country is 12 days while that of Rajasthan is 18 days.

A team of the central government, led by Rajeev Singh Thakur, Joint Secretary, met Raghu Sharma to deliberate on the strategies to contain the pandemic in the state. Rajasthan was complimented by the central team for the measures undertaken by them to improve contact tracing, institutional quarantine and testing facilities for people showing symptoms of COVID-19 infection as well as mobile vans and telemedicine facilities for other patients.

## Series of earthquakes rattle Delhi



Delhi has recorded over 10 earthquakes since April, all of which were below 5 on the Richter scale. Out of the 10, 6 were reported in the past month. While seismic activity is not unusual for the national capital, such frequency of earthquakes has been not seen in recent times. However, no loss to property or life has been reported as of yet, but experts predict that an earthquake of greater seismic intensity could shake the city in the near future

## India to get 200 urban forests soon

Marking the occasion of World Environment Day, Prakash Javadekar, Union Environment Minister, announced the central government's new scheme to develop 200 urban forests across various cities in India. Under the 'Nagar Van' scheme, the Forest Department will be collaborating with municipal bodies, NGOs, corporates, etc. to ensure public participation in giving cities better lungs. These forests will be constructed on the vacant land, which would be offered to the government by the urban local bodies, or preexisting forests would be modified. Javadekar highlighted that the Warje Hill urban forest will serve as a pioneer to the new forests that are to be constructed on the rest of the country. Built on barren land under the Maharashtra Forest Department, the forest had depleted due to many encroachments by slums and builders and was reinstated by collaborative efforts of the local authorities.

**80 deaths reported from Shramik Trains**

Eighty people have died reportedly in the special shramik trains run by the Ministry of Railways from May 9 to May 27. Out of the 80, 1 was a coronavirus victim while 11 died of comorbid diseases. The list of the casualties is the initial one, while the RPF, in coordination with the state, would issue the final numbers soon. States, which had previously observed a low count of coronavirus infections, like Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal, have seen a surge in the number with the return of the migrants to their native land.

**Emergency use of Remdesivir for critical Corona patients approved in India**

Remdesivir has been approved by the Government of India for national use on June 2. The drug is the first to show positive results during clinical trials as visible signs of improvement were observed in COVID-19 patients during formal clinical trials. In an email statement, the Drugs Controller General of India has said that the drug could be administered under critical circumstances with a condition for five-dose administration. Gilead Sciences have reported that the COVID-19 patients have shown a 'modest benefit' when a five-day course of the drug was dispensed to the patients. Patients who were treated with the drug for 10 days did not fare as well, the company added further.

**Over 28% of Covid cases asymptomatic in India: IJMR**

NEW DELHI: Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR) has discovered that around 28 per cent of the total COVID-19 patients are asymptomatic of the virus. The study further has revealed that 25.3 per cent of these were direct contacts of the positive cases. Further, 2.8 per cent of these were healthcare workers who were in contact with corona patients without adequate protection. In totality, healthcare workers constitute of 5.2 per cent of the total infected in India. Manoj Murhekar, Director, National Institute of Epidemiology, has expressed concern over the situation as the proportion of asymptomatic corona-positive cases might be greater than the currently estimated 28.1 per cent. The ICMR study has taken the time frame of January 22 to April 30 and adds to the growing concerns of the spread of the virus from those people who show mild to no symptoms of the virus. In a bid to check this, the Indian



Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is currently conducting a sero-survey to get a better estimate of the prevalence of community transmission in India. The Council is randomly testing people from 70 districts to check for the virus. The study, which tested a total of 10,21,528 people for severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), has shown that the attack rate (per million) by age was the highest among people between 50-69 years (63.3) and lowest among kids under 10 years (6.1).

**DRDO develops 'Ultra Swachh' to disinfect PPEs**

NEW DELHI: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), on June 1, said it has developed another disinfection device named 'Ultra Swachh' which can disinfect a wide range of materials, including Personal Protective Equipment's (PPEs), fabrics, electronic items and others.

The new device is created by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), the laboratory of DRDO based in Delhi in partnership with Gel Craft Health Care Pvt Ltd. The disinfection system uses an advance oxidative process comprising multiple barrier disruption approaches using Ozonated Space Technology for disinfection. The disinfection device uses Ozone sealant technology which assures trapping of ozone for the necessary disinfection cycle. The device is double layered with a catalytic

converter to ensure environment-friendly exhaust. Ultra Swachh complies with International Standards of Industrial, Occupational, Personal and Environmental Safety. The device comes in two variants namely Trinetra Technology and Ozonated Space. Trinetra technology is a combination of a radical dispenser and Ozonated space. The disinfection device is optimised with the automation process for quick disinfection cycle.

The system operates on 15 Ampere, 220 Volts, 50 Hertz power supply. The system also includes various safety features such as dual door, emergency shutdown, delay cycle, door interlocks and leak monitors to ensure safety for long durations. Dimensions of the Industrial Cabinet are 7'x4'x3.25' to disinfect large quantity at a time. Cabinets of different sizes will be available for the industry.



# Delhi Govt rolls back decision of 17 days-long home quarantine for asymptomatic COVID patients

NEW DELHI: Delhi government had, on Wednesday, June 3, instructed that asymptomatic corona positive patients and patients with mild symptoms can home isolate themselves for 17 days. The government had also released a video detailing how can they treated and be in touch with health workers through phone calls and a mobile app.

Informing the people about the decision, the Delhi Government released a video on their YouTube channel. “More than 80 per cent of people suffering from Corona are either asymptomatic or suffer from mild symptoms. Such people do not need to get admitted to the hospital and can take care of themselves at home,” Kejriwal said. The 14-minute video highlights what precautions those who are quarantined should take.

Following were the important takeaways from the video:

- ◆ A separate well-ventilated room and a separate toilet must be used by the infected persons. If such a facility is not available, kindly contact authorities so that arrangements can be made in a Cover care centre

for the patient.

- ◆ A caregiver must be available for the patient. The age of caregiver should be less than 50 years.
- ◆ People over the age of 55, pregnant women and people with severe non-communicable diseases must be shifted from the house in which the infected is quarantined.
- ◆ Wear a triple-layered medical mask at all times and gloves. Replace the equipment after 8 hours of use. Disinfect it with 1 per cent Sodium Hydrochloride disinfectant. Mix 7 grams of bleach with 2.5 litres of water to make the solution at home. This solution can be used to clean any non-metallic surface. Clean metallic surfaces with alcohol-based sanitisers. Your room must be regularly sanitised.
- ◆ Wash hands for at least 40 seconds.
- ◆ Use separate personal items.
- ◆ Avoid alcohols and smoking and eat healthy low carbohydrate, high protein meals.

Since the detection of asymptomatic patients is an issue, the Delhi Government had made it mandatory

for all the people arriving in the city via trains and airports to home quarantine for at least a week.

The decision was taken to initiate aggressive COVID-19 management, according to Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister, Delhi Government. Earlier, the government had ‘advised’ people who had reach back to the city to self-quarantine, which has now been partially modified as the national capital has witnessed a spurt in the cases.

However, Anil Baijal, Lieutenant Governor, Delhi, had later opposed this decision of the state government and mandated that all patients who test positive for COVID-19 will have to visit COVID Care Centres (CCC) and stay under institutional quarantine for a period of five days, thereby scrapping the policy of ‘home quarantine’ for patients will mild or no symptoms of the disease. Eventually, the Delhi Government decided that the state would go back to its earlier policy of home quarantine after assessment of the severity of the disease by a medical team.





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# TURNAROUND IN GLOBAL ECONOMY

## Is it tied to finding a vaccine for coronavirus?

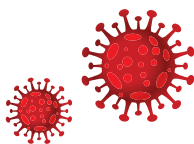
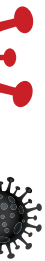
*Economists across the globe are grappling with the question how to arrest any further slump in the economy and restore some degree of stability. The growing realisation is that the fate of the global economy rests more than ever on finding a vaccine for COVID-19. Economic officials now say that full recovery relies on the scientists, medical experts say don't expect a miracle, vaccine is going to take time*



**KUMAR DHANANJAY**  
Consulting Editor







In my two previous columns ‘Economics of health; health of economies’ (Urban Update, April 2020) and ‘Where is the vaccine? The multi-billion dollar question’ (Urban Update, May 2020), I had argued two points. First, ‘a vaccine is currently the best bet to end the threat posed by the novel coronavirus, which has caused a pandemic across the world’. Secondly, ‘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’.

While economists across the globe have been grappling with the question of what governments should do to arrest any further slump in the economy and restore some degree of stability, the realisation is growing that the fate of the global economy rests more than ever on finding a vaccine for COVID-19. As more and more economies are opening up after a prolonged period of lock down, it’s becoming clearer by the day that any chance of full recovery from the worst slump since the great depression of 1929 is not possible until a vaccine or treatment is found for the deadly virus that has killed almost half a million people in the world. Economic officials now say that full recovery relies on the scientists, medical experts say don’t expect a miracle, vaccine is going to take time. From bankers to

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT ONLY FINDING A VACCINE TO ARREST THE BIGGEST SLUMP BUT ALSO TO MAKE SURE THERE IS A VERY LARGE CAPACITY AVAILABLE SO THAT THE QUANTITY CAN SUPPORT A LARGE PART OF THE WORLD. THERE HAS TO BE AN EQUITABLE ACCESS IN THE WORLD, SO THAT PEOPLE CAN GET ACCESS WHEREVER THEY NEED IT IN THE WORLD. IF THIS INFECTION IS NOT SOLVED IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD, IT WILL NOT BE SOLVED FOR THE WORLD AND CONSEQUENTLY ECONOMIC WOES WOULD CONTINUE TO HAUNT THE GLOBE

chief economist of the World Bank, all are echoing a similar viewpoint. Harvard University professor Carmen Reinhart and incoming chief economist of the World Bank, told the Harvard Gazette. “We’re not going to have something akin to full normalization unless we (a) have a vaccine and (b) -- and this is a big if -- that vaccine is accessible to the global population at large”. Australia’s central bank chief, Philip Lowe, said “If we don’t get breakthroughs on the medical front, then I think it’s going to be quite a slow recovery. We’ve got a lot resting on the shoulders of the scientists here.” Echoing his Australian counterpart, US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has warned that a full recovery will need to wait until the scientists deliver.

Consumers are still on the edge and companies are holding back as temperature check and social distancing norms are set to remain in place for a long time to come in

workplaces, restaurants, schools, airports, sports stadiums and more. The World Health Organisation, in the third week of June, issued a fresh warning that the COVID-19 pandemic is entering a new and dangerous phase. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO chief said that the cases are accelerating after the numbers of cases reported on June 19 hit the highest in a single day, at 150,000 new cases. He noted that people are fed up of being at home and countries want to reopen their economies, but this time calls for extreme caution as the virus is spreading fast and many are still vulnerable.

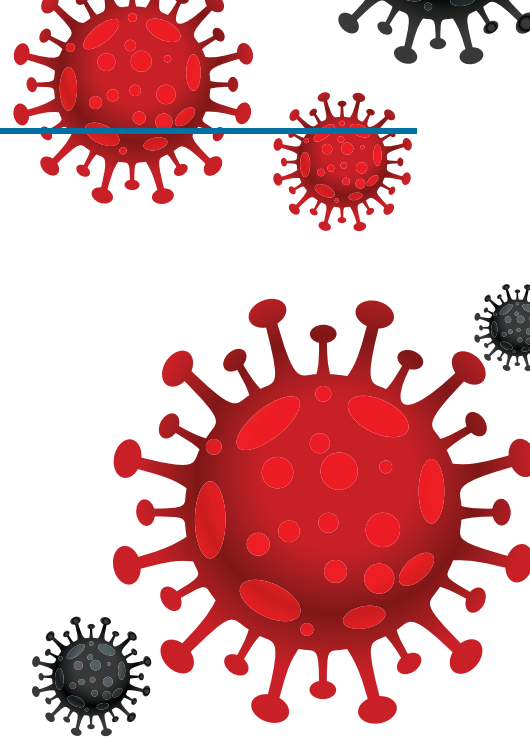
### ECONOMIC WOES

It simply means that global policy makers, who have already announced trillions of dollars of fiscal and monetary support, need to keep the stimulus flowing to avoid yet more company failures and job losses. Global infections have almost



## Let's look at some hard facts globally

- ◆ China -- the first major economy consumed by the virus and the first to emerge on the other side -- has been able to revive production but not demand.
- ◆ International Monetary Fund (IMF) now sees world GDP contracting 3 per cent in 2020, with more than a hundred countries having approached the IMF for aid. IMF has warned the 'Great Lockdown' recession would be the steepest in almost a century.
- ◆ In South Korea – where the virus was controlled without a hard lockdown – consumer spending remains weak as infections continue to pop up.
- ◆ Sweden did not go for any lockdown and kept much of the economy open, yet the country is headed for its worst recession since World War II.
- ◆ UK retail sales dropped by almost a fifth in April.
- ◆ In the United States, industrial production plunged a record 11.2 per cent in April, the largest drop in a century. 36.5 million Americans - more than 10 percent of the population - left unemployed by the coronavirus disaster.
- ◆ Germany meanwhile tipped into recession, suffering its steepest quarterly contraction since the global financial crisis in 2009.
- ◆ The Bank of Japan launched a lending programme worth 30 trillion yen (Dh1tn/\$279 billion) to support small businesses.
- ◆ The Reserve Bank of India cut interest rates in an unscheduled announcement, to their lowest level since 2000.
- ◆ More than 1 billion workers are at high risk of a pay cut or losing their job, the International Labour Organization has warned.
- ◆ World merchandise trade volume is likely to fall 'precipitously' in the first half of 2020, according to the World Trade Organization.
- ◆ Bloomberg Economics estimates the lockdowns triggered a drop in activity of around 30 per cent and their research found that the first steps to relax controls will have a more positive impact on activity than later ones.



touched nine million with half a million deaths. A survey of money managers by Bank of America Corp. found the biggest tail risk is a second wave of the virus that means restrictions will have to be imposed again. Only 10% expect a rapid rebound, the Bank said in a note titled “V is for Vaccine”. The fusion of when successful drugs can be found and when economies can get back to normal is dominating sentiment in financial markets. The race for a cure has a geopolitical edge too. U.S. President Donald Trump has vowed a Manhattan Project-style effort dubbed “Operation Warp Speed” to develop a cure, while China’s President Xi Jinping has pledged to make one universally available once it’s developed. Health experts caution that the process for developing an effective immunity will take time – possibly years. Even after an effective cure is found, it will need distribution on an unprecedented scale, according to Anita Zaidi, Director of Vaccine Development and Surveillance at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. She says “I am optimistic we can develop a vaccine by the end of 2020, I am not very hopeful that we can deploy a vaccine for mass use by the end of 2020 because of the unprecedented scale needed to immunize the whole world.”

### VACCINE HOPES AND ECONOMIC WOES AS VIRUS SPREADS

Covid 19 pandemic has disrupted all forms of economic activity across the world. The popular theory that is emerging is, till the successful development of a vaccine, these activities cannot resume to their normal ways. Will such a theory prove to be true? Deepankar Basu, professor of economics at University of Massachusetts says “My understanding is that the current crisis, although started in the health sector, has quickly spilled onto all other sectors, having particularly pronounced effects on the economic

sector. A correct response to the crisis can only be given when crisis in both the health and the economic sectors are addressed together because you cannot deal with the health crisis without dealing with the economic crisis. This is especially true for developing and poor countries like various countries in South Asia, including India, where if the economy tanks or is imbalanced, it will lead to a far greater number of non-Covid deaths. On the other hand, the economy cannot be revived till the time the health crisis is looked after as the people are wary and scared of stepping out of their houses and working. Therefore, till the time the public health sector does not intervene to the fullest and try its best to rectify the pandemic, the economy will not be able to function normally again. Moreover, we are looking at a situation where a vaccine will not be available for the people for a long time.” Prof Sudipta Sarangi, Head of Department, Economics, Virginia Tech University, USA echoes similar viewpoint and concurs with the view of Prof Basu. He says “I believe that in the short run we will see partial recovery driven by sectors of the economy where close proximity between people is not required. Full recovery will only be possible when we have a vaccine and it is widely available to everyone simply because this is the only thing that will reduce uncertainty with respect to both aggregate supply and aggregate demand. Only when firms are confident of their future will they make hiring, investment and expansion decisions. Only when consumers are not worried about future job losses will they truly start spending. And even then – it is not clear what will bring workers back to urban areas – it will need more than a vaccine – trust and empathy will be just as important as a vaccine”. But there are others who are more hopeful and are optimistic of recovery even without a vaccine. Dr Yves Montenay, an economist based in Paris says “In a

free market economy, the recovery is spontaneous and strong, as nothing – plants, machines, roads, vessels, etc. has been destroyed, and as a very few working age people died. The question is what will paralyse the free market? Growth is change, from agriculture to industry, from industry to services and so is recovery. That means that the workforce has to move to new sectors”. Prof Chetan Dave, Department of Economics, University of Alberta, Canada says “Well, it’s not about ‘beating’ the recession, it’s about managing the virus shock. Some opening up will have to be done as cost of total shutdown might be too high. I think that if we follow the guidelines properly like social distancing, wearing masks properly, handwashing, etc. then economies may muddle through a recession and see the other side sooner rather than later”.

The challenge is not only finding a vaccine to arrest the biggest slump but also to make sure there is a very large capacity available so that the quantity can support a large part of the world. There has to be an equitable access in the world, so that people can get access wherever they need it in the world. If this infection is not solved in every part of the world, it will not be solved for the world and consequently economic woes would continue to haunt the globe. ■

# METRO CITIES WOULD NEED NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL IN POST-COVID WORLD

*Metro cities of the world account for 22 per cent of the world population (1.6 billion) and 60 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). When we talk about the best of any facility in a nation, we look towards their metropolises but the pandemic has exposed their weaknesses. The pandemic has allowed us to fix the problem of our metropolises and make them enviable again*

**A** survey done in the United States of America shows that as many as 40 per cent urban dwellers are thinking of shifting to suburbs or less populated areas. However, this may be too early to assess the real situation in the USA or elsewhere. And, this seems to be farfetched for now in Indian scenario

because of the lack of basic services in villages and small towns. People living in cities cannot think of staying in villages and small towns for several reasons and lack of amenities for good living would top the list.

## CITIES-THE HOT SPOTS

The pandemic has been particularly devastating to cities everywhere as their density provided fertile ground to the virus to spread fast. But the pandemic

has also told us that everything is not fine in our cities and they require fundamental changes.

Urban planners love density because many urban systems thrive on it. Take the example of skyscrapers, shopping malls, metro systems in cities; they would falter if a large number of people do not use them. But density is also a good friend of contagious diseases. Our cities like Delhi and Mumbai, which are among the densest in the world, have been suffering the side effects of the pandemic.

To stop the contagion, all governments have suggested physical distancing. Is it possible in a city like Mumbai? It may be possible in high-income areas where the houses are big and people can choose to maintain distance. But what about slums like Dharavi in Mumbai or Seelampur in Delhi? In these slums, people live in close quarters and share public amenities including the toilets. It is increasingly challenging to avoid physical interaction and maintain total isolation and physical distancing in a high-density built environment and urban spaces. None of us knows the further ramifications of the pandemic on cities and urban living but the learning from it can pave a way for possible transformation that the existing built environment needs to undergo to make the cities truly livable, healthy and resilient. It will also impel policymakers to rethink the way cities are being planned, designed and inhabited. And, the role of city leaders will also change especially in the cities where they are just for ceremonial purposes. Local elected





**RANJIT S CHAVAN**  
President, AIILSG

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD INITIATE DIALOGUES WITH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND EMPOWER THEM IN A WAY THEY CAN LEAD FROM THE FRONT. EMPOWERING LOCAL LEADERS WILL BE ADVANTAGEOUS BECAUSE NO OFFICER CAN INITIATE A BETTER DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY AND NO OFFICER CAN KNOW THE CITY AND CITIZENS BETTER. INDIA HAS WITNESSED A SLEW OF REFORMS ALMOST 28 YEARS AGO WITH 73RD AND 74TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT BUT THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT IS DEBATABLE

leaders will have to assume more responsibility in dealing with the crisis with proactive citizen engagement and also in assisting the union and state governments in providing valuable inputs for a speedy recovery. For this, the governments need to rethink the role of city mayors and make the required legal amendments to provide them with more authority at the local level.

### NEW URBAN MODEL

With good news coming from various countries on work on the vaccine, it is expected that cities will come back to normalcy in a couple of months. The top priority of national leaders, mayors, and city governments will be to develop new policy solutions and enlarge financial resources at great speed to bring normalcy in people's lives. When the dust settles, all the tiers of governments and the leaders will have to assess the damage, the lack of preparedness and address their weaknesses in dealing with the health emergency. Since the cities have remained in focus, the role of municipalities and local leaders will also be reviewed by the citizenry, civil society and planners. All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG) and National Institute of Urban Affairs have jointly kick-started a series of webinars namely Mayors' Dialogues in which many of them have

raised their concerns and talked about their limitations to handle any crisis without having adequate resources, administrative and financial autonomy. Such dialogues should become the norm.

Governments should initiate dialogues with elected representatives and empower them in a way they can lead from the front. Empowering local leaders will be advantageous because no officer can initiate a better dialogue with the community and no officer can know the city and citizens better. India has witnessed a slew of reforms almost 28 years ago with 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act but their implementation in the right spirit is debatable.

The pandemic has also stressed on the significance of coordination between national, state, and municipal governments in planning the strategy and optimizing resources to deal with the crisis. Countries and cities which are coordinating well are showing promising trends of containing the spread and restarting their economies.

According to a website called Cities for Global Health, in metropolitan spaces, the collaboration of central cities and peripheries, and the incorporation of metropolitan governance, can make a huge difference to ensure that quality of life is not further threatened under scenarios of fragility and that

no one is left behind. Collaboration between administrations of different levels is key.

The website offers a virtual space to showcase what cities are doing and be inspired by others regarding specific initiatives or plans to the COVID-19 outbreak and other health emergencies. It seeks to foster collective responses and facilitate the access of decision-makers to first-hand experiences about how urban areas across the globe can deal with situations alike. It is to be noted that Cities for Global Health is an initiative co-led by Metropolis and the Euro-Latin-American Alliance of Cooperation among Cities, AL-LAs, and is part of the Live Learning Experience: beyond the immediate response to the outbreak, developed by UCLG and supported by UN-Habitat and Metropolis.

Our institute is closely working with these organizations to bring global knowledge resources to our cities and provide municipal leaders and their workforce a sneak peek into the best practices of global cities.

I am quite sure that access to such information would be beneficial for city mayors and they would be asserting their opinions more strongly on subjects of public good and also enlarge the spectrum of their engagement in urban operations with support from the municipal workforce. ■





# RECOVER BETTER WITH NATURE

## Personhood Rights to Rivers can help



**RANJAN K PANDA**

Convenor, Combat Climate Change Network, India

**R**eduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and abatement of water & air pollution have been two of the major reliefs the Earth has got from the humans' Covid19 response programmes. As the humans slowed down, the Earth recovered. The challenge now, however, is to retain these gains. Under the current economic growth models that seems almost impossible. We

have enough excuses to continue with the same greed-driven development that necessarily happens at the cost of ecology.

One such big excuse is economic recession leading to huge job losses, never seen in our lifetime. Job losses for humans, right? The issue is, can we sustain these jobs unless we stop growing by destroying Mother Nature? To me, you can't be sustainable in your growth unless you grow in harmony with all other species on Earth. If Covid19 cannot teach us this lesson, then we can't learn it ever. That would mean, we have chosen the path to perish sooner than expected. "Time for Nature", the theme of this year's World Environment Day is a strong reminder in this regard.

In this space, a month before, I had written how global GHG emissions are estimated to drop by 5 percent this year and that would be historic. In the meanwhile further studies have confirmed that the reduction

in annual carbon emissions this year could actually be by 7 percent. A new analysis published in Nature Climate Change has claimed that lockdown measures have contributed to an estimated 17 percent decline in daily global carbon dioxide emissions compared to the daily global averages from last year. This is significant and historic. However, as I had written in my column here just a month ago, this gain is not going to last.

Countries have already started unlocking their economies and despite massive calls for a green recovery, things seem to be business usual. Well, Germany and other European countries have made some announcements for green recovery. The UK too is scheduled to announce some green measures in its recovery plan very soon. However, most of these stimuli seem to be aiding to the same kind of economic idea that has actually caused climate change and destruction of nature to an irreparable



extent. Green cars, green technology, etc. dominate the packages. That's good and will definitely heal the Earth but only if we respect the right of the other species as much as we respect our own rights.

If we continue to treat all other species as commodities that need to be eliminated for our progress, then no matter how many electric cars you run on the roads, the biodiversity loss may not be arrested at a pace we need to make our growth sustainable. We need to recognise and respect rights of the other species and resources for reversing this trend.

If that means a slow pace of growth, I would vote for that. After all, we have one planet. Humans can set their own benchmarks of growth, we are not running a competition with any other species or race or planet. I would say, for an example, let's look into our rivers to not only learn a lesson but also chart a path towards revival with nature.

## THE RIVER REVIVAL

The first phase of lockdown for three weeks was announced on 24th March. In less than just two weeks, reports of rivers getting clean started coming from across India. India's prime celebrity river Ganga came to limelight with a clean face in national media in the first week of April itself. Reduction of industrial waste discharge into the river caused improvement in its water quality at various places including Haridwar, Varanasi and Kanpur. Stoppage of pilgrimage to the ghats of Ganga such as the Har Ki Pauri also contributed to cleaner ghats and less pollution due to human activities. Just within 10 days of the lockdown, real-time water monitoring data at various monitoring stations of the river found that the water quality was suitable for bathing and fisheries. At least 27 of the 36 stations reported this improvement.

Data shows that a tenth of the river's pollution, in its Uttar Pradesh (UP) stretches, comes from industrial wastes. The shutdown of industries,

therefore, helped the river clean itself. In fact, as local experts opine, the pollution level reduced by 40 to 50 percent, perhaps also because the river at some stretches had received good rainfall in mid-March. The increased water inflow therefore diluted the pollution to a certain extent. At stations like Haridwar and Rishikesh, the river water was reported fit for drinking due to sharp drop in sewage and industrial effluents. A comprehensive analysis was still lacking as there was no study to cite whether or not domestic wastes also stopped draining into the river. It is estimated that almost 80 per cent of Ganga pollution comes from domestic sewage from the nearby cities and villages. However, the fact that people found the river clean at many places and even saw dolphins and fishes roaming around freely was a delight for most in their lifetimes.

By the mid of April, data from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) started indicating that the water quality of Cauvery river had improved substantially compared to pre-lockdown months. Reports of pollution monitoring conducted at the end of April in lakes and rivers of Rajasthan also showed results to be happy about. A report of the Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board (RSPCB), based on water samples collected from 45 locations including 14 from rivers found an improvement in water quality compared to pre-lockdown periods. The biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), chemical oxygen demand (COD) and dissolved oxygen (DO) levels were found to have improved in river Chambal and river Kali Sindh in some locations. There has been such good news from across the nation. Rivers have got back their lives to some extent.

## WAY FORWARD

It is now clear that when humans shut down, rivers flow healthy. The evidences that we have gathered during the Covid19 lockdown should be lesson enough for us to reimagine

our approach to save our rivers. While pollution control norms need to be further strengthened and rules strictly enforced, these are not enough. We need to respect our rivers as persons like us, the humans. They can't speak for themselves, but they have a right to healthy living. We need to ensure that and for that to happen in the true sense, they have to be given rights of personhood and have the right to sue us for the abuse we cause to them. Some countries are already doing that.

Ecuador started the process of transformation from the current 'property-based ownership type' approach to natural resources to an 'equal right to nature' approach as it gave legal rights to nature in its constitution in 2008. Three years later, in 2011, Bolivia adopted a similar approach and passed a law. New Zealand is the first country that granted legal rights to a specific river in 2017.

In the same year the Uttarakhand High Court (HC) in India declared Ganga and Yamuna 'living entities' and gave them legal rights as humans. This has been stayed by the Supreme Court. Last year, our neighbour Bangladesh became the only country in the world to grant all of its rivers the same legal status as humans.

Some may argue this is practically a difficult thing to do. Perhaps that's the reason the Indian apex court stayed the Uttarakhand HC decision. However, everyone wants to see clean and healthy rivers. That's the reason many people have been suggesting that we should have periodic lockdowns. I would say, it's time to admit that our conventional approaches have failed to save our rivers.

It would be good to try out this new approach. Rivers have equal rights on Earth, as all the other ecosystems and species have. In India, as our mythological scripts suggest, we have always been respecting rivers as persons. Let's make it real. ■

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



# MSME Sector is Bleeding WHAT IS THE CURE?

*The businesses in cities have taken a bad hit due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown. The COVID-19 has thrown unparalleled economic challenges. In India every sector of the economy is bleeding but one of the biggest sufferers is MSME sector*

**AKSHIT PUSHKARNA**  
Editorial Assistant

**T**he COVID-19 lockdown has effectively shutdown the small and medium scale businesses based in the cities of India. In a bid to curtail the spread of the novel coronavirus, the nation wide lockdown that got extended for three times saw business owners, outside of essential businesses, out of work for a time period that was initially expected to be end in 21 days. It appears that it would be a long haul for the sector to be back in business with its full potential. All India Manufacturers' Association (AIMO), recently did a survey to asses

the damages of the lockdown. The result of the survey is alarming. It covered 46,525 MSMEs, self-employed, corporate CEOs and employees. The report said that 33 per cent of small businesses and self-employed businessmen stands no chance of recovery. Now, as the Central Government has gone for unlocking and reopening of almost all the businesses even as the cases continue to mount, the big question is how long will it take to for the sector to recover completely. Crores of jobs have been lost because the owners were not able to pay their employees because of no warning while they themselves survived on their savings. Those who lost jobs went back to their villages and home towns and in short run likely to cause a shortage in work force.

## ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

Sensing the urgency to revive the economy, the Union Government announced an economic package of about ₹20 lakh crores, allocating a substantial amount to MSME sector. Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the importance of reviving the MSMEs and hence, the economy under their Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, took to the twitter. He tweeted "To give impetus to the self-reliant India campaign, we have not only changed the definition of MSMEs sector, but have also approved several proposals to revive it. This will benefit the small and medium scale industries, as well as create huge employment opportunities." The important thing is that out of the ₹20 lakh crores, only ₹3 lakh crores have been announced

for the MSMEs to tide over their financial issues post extended lockdown.. Moreover, Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of MSME, said after the package was announced that, “State governments, their ministries and public sector undertakings, Government of India, its ministries and undertakings, and major industries combined owe an estimated ₹5 lakh crore to MSMEs, money that is stuck and not cleared.”

The response of the sector towards the package has not been positive. Approximately 78 per cent of the MSMEs that were surveyed under AIMO’s study were not satisfied with the financial package. The general expectation was that the government would provide an alternative financial mechanism rather than just loans, and provide them a wage stimulus for their workers, AIMO said. It said financial package worth around ₹3.5 trillion announced by the union government in May was a good amount. Even though the amount is great, the general consensus is that it has not percolated down to beneficiaries faster and it may not benefit 85 per cent constituents of the sector. Further, the survey highlighted that 78 per cent of the small companies’ owners were just not satisfied with the package’s implementation, whereas 80 per cent of self employed traders in the sector were not happy either.

But some economists think that

things does not look as grim as it is being made out to be., Dr Anil Kumar, associate professor at Sri Ram College of Commerce believes that a V-shape recovery can be expected for the Indian economy, predicting that the demand may shoot up around the festive season. Dr Kumar says “, the businesses have been unlocked just recently after the prolonged inactivity. The major issue is that even though the businesses have reopened, people are a little hesitant to get back into the markets, as the pandemic is yet to subside. Moreover, people employed by the small businessmen won’t be coming soon. Even if they do, it has been made mandatory that businesses are to resume at 20 per cent, 30 per cent or 50 per cent staff in the near future. Along with this, they have to follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), which make sanitisation. So maybe that once we reopened, the people will gain confidence that, if they take precautions and all things that have been prescribed, they can work along with COVID-19. So maybe very soon, in around 2 months, people will discover and realise that they win over corona through community togetherness, action and mass precautions only. Government may not have much of a role to play.”

Crisil Research, a prominent survey and analysis group has suggested that Micro, small and medium enterprises in India are expected to see a 21%

decline in revenue. This is largely because of the sharp fall in demand as people are still hesitant to come out and go to market fearing a big crowd and physical distancing norms not being followed.

Another factor that is heavily weighing on the minds of the people is that unlocking has made the matter worse and the country is breaking its own record everyday so far as corona positive cases are concerned. Dr Kumar explains the phenomenon and says “Demand is still there and I am of the opinion that people have just postponed their requirements that are not necessary at the moment. For example, marriages are stopped. So, once the festival season comes in the month of October, marriages and other ceremonies are likely to resume and hence, demand of certain operations will be there. By the time of Diwali, I think we will be back on track and would be able to resume full-normalised operations”. He also underlines that migrant laborers will come back to the cities and short fall in workforce would be bridged. Dr Kumar adds, “Talking about the migrant laborers who have moved back on June 9, a landmark decision has been given by the Supreme Court that those who want to return to their work place, state governments would be providing proper arrangement for their safe travel . Thus, this will ensure the labor’s movement back to the cities because, ultimately, they need employment. In case, they fail to get that in their villages, small towns, etc., they will have no other alternative than to return provided that they are given some kind of assurance that how they will live with corona also. The time will come in about maximum 4-5 months when things may get normalised.”

Meanwhile, a vital sector like MSME, with the help of the government, needs to sort out its difficulties, be it financial or that of the workforce and start contributing to the economy which every credit rating agency and even government owned institutions have predicted is heading towards negative growth. ■

THE RESPONSE OF THE SECTOR TOWARDS THE PACKAGE HAS NOT BEEN POSITIVE. APPROXIMATELY 78 PER CENT OF THE MSMEs THAT WERE SURVEYED UNDER AIMO’S STUDY WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE ECONOMIC RELIEF PACKAGE



# COVID TO CHANGE CITIES' URBAN GOVERNANCE

*Pandemics have not been uncommon in the vast stretch of human history. Every time a pandemic hits the world, a different aspect of city life is modified to better protect and avoid the chances of recurrence of the disease. The COVID-19 pandemic is quite unique in the sense that it is likely to affect almost all aspects of urbanisation in one way or the other. Which aspects will be affected the most? How will they be modified to suit the 'new normal' in the post-Covid period?*

**ASHLEY PAUL**  
Reporter



The unprecedented onset of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world forced a majority of countries to go into a state of complete lockdown. Along with this, the pandemic also brought with itself a string of practices that must be followed in order to stay safe from the disease spread. Social distancing, personal hygiene, sanitation, sewage management, and disinfection of surroundings are some of the most popular practices around the world that have come in the limelight mainly due to COVID-19.

However, experts predict that the pandemic has brought with itself a sense of awareness amongst governments and policy makers of the need to reorient civic amenities – their organisation, implementation, distribution and effectiveness. To know more about the possible changes that might take place, in the form of opportunities or challenges, Urban Update contacted various professionals who are experts in their areas of work.

## TRANSPORT AND OPEN SPACES

The transport sector has undergone massive changes in the recent past. With the introduction of eco-friendly motorised vehicles in the public transport sector and innovative and faster methods of travelling, the world was moving fast towards sustainable mass transit systems. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, transportation was brought to a grinding halt across the world. Now, with the world gearing up to mould itself into the newnormal, a number of experts are predicting massive changes in the most basic characteristics of urban transportation. In order to get a more detailed sense of what is about to change in the time to come, Urban Update contacted DrSewa Ram, Professor, Transport Planning, School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi.

Dr Ram, while noting the opportunity presented to policy



makers to reinvent public and private transportation, said that the pandemic has instilled a sense of awareness in the general public as well. Following the new social norms such as social distancing, people will now prefer to avoid travelling by mass transit systems. Thus, a pronounced shift towards private modes of transport is predicted. Among those who are unable to afford private transport, cycling and walking are likely to gain more prominence. Moreover, people with resources are now more likely to travel even short distances using vehicles, instead of walking, thereby minimizing contact. These behavioral shifts will result in consequent challenges for the transport sector and create a problem for open spaces in cities.

- ◆ The shift towards private transport to minimize human contact will result in increased congestion on roads, especially during office hours.
- ◆ It will also mean that the load on pedestrian walkways will increase simultaneously.
- ◆ More vehicles will translate into higher levels of air and noise pollution.
- ◆ A higher use of private vehicles for shorter commutes will also mean a heavier load on parking spaces in commercial, business complexes, among other open spaces.

“It is high time for the government at the centre and state to revisit transport norms and policies in the country. We have the opportunity to reinvent travel for the public and we can only handle the crisis in the transport sector by utilizing this opportunity to the maximum extent,” said Dr Sewa Ram. He suggested the following measures:

- ◆ One of the most important issues is to reduce congestion. Dr Ram suggested that businesses and offices must follow ‘workplace staggering’ of office timings and activities. Nearby establishments can coordinate and set different office timings for its employees. This will ensure that roads

leading to a particular area are not overcrowded as the incoming traffic will be distributed throughout the day. Offices can also consider working in shifts.

- ◆ Civic authorities need to realize the urgency of modifying pedestrian spaces in India. They are already falling short of fulfilling pedestrian demands. With an increased load of people opting to walk or cycle to their destinations, civic authorities will have to increase their accessibility and expand their capacity to cater to the increased needs of the public.
- ◆ Governments, in order to make public travel safe for people and counteract the shift towards private transport, have set an occupancy limit in both buses and metros. However, this will mean that the overall capacity of the public transport systems will decrease. Therefore, government must work on increasing frequency of metros and buses so that people who are willing to travel by public transport are not forced to move away.
- ◆ Parking spaces in various public places will also be overburdened due to the increased use of vehicles for shorter journeys. Thus, it is the need of the hour for the government to come up with smart parking solutions to accommodate their increased demand.
- ◆ Dr Ram also suggested the integration of AarogyaSetu mobile application with travel. At metro stations, the government must allow entry only for those who are at a low risk of infection according to the AarogyaSetu app. Moreover, metro services must become contactless by decreasing the number of ticketing and grievance counters and increasing online ticketing services.

## ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

While discussing similar changes in

pollution and environment policy trends with Ms Prarthana Borah, India Director, Clean Air Asia, we came across multiple opportunities and challenges that the government is likely to face in the near future. While the load on roads and streets is predicted to increase manifold, if acted upon timely, this trend can be pushed towards use of cleaner fuels. In doing so, the authorities will not only have a chance to maintain the low levels of pollution in the city but to also promote use of public transport.

A similar approach must be adopted for industries and factories, companies and businesses across the country. The new ‘work-from-home’ culture, which is quickly gaining prominence, has shown the stakeholders that a number of economic activities can be carried out without having to spend millions on upkeep of infrastructure by simply allowing employees to work from home.

This will not only decrease their expenditure but will also reduce the number of daily commuters.

A number of factories and industries have been temporarily shut since the beginning of the nationwide lockdown.

Now that these production units are preparing to resume operations, if given appropriate incentives and the right push, they can be encouraged to switch to renewable sources of energy for operations and to introduce measures for treating any environmentally harmful byproducts. If implemented successfully, this will not only decrease air pollution and decrease misuse and waste of non-renewable sources of energy but will also help in stopping global warming.

Even though the pandemic has posed a serious threat to humanity and authorities and governments across the world are struggling to keep people safe, it must also be seen as an opportunity for change and betterment.

However, these decisions and policy changes must be drafted meticulously and executed promptly. ■

# AN ANALYSIS

## Pandemic Response in US, NZ & India

ASHLEY PAUL  
Reporter

*The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the overall working of almost every country in the world. However, some claim to perform better than other countries while some claim so based simply on statistics from their own country. But can we actually compare the performance of two or more countries in handling the COVID-19 pandemic?*

**T**he onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it a wave of experts and policy makers, eagerly working on comparisons between performance of governments and impact of the pandemic in different countries. However, often, the countries in question have almost nothing in common. Nonetheless, the comparisons are still carried out and conclusions are widely circulated.

The most recent example of such an extreme comparison is that of the world's first COVID-19-free country – New Zealand. The Oceanic island nation off the coast of Australia has successfully managed to control the spread of COVID-19 and is ready to reopen businesses and offices and allow its citizens to roam freely, once again. However, almost every developed and developing country has had comparisons being made between New Zealand and themselves, without considering the countless differences between them. While there are various factors that make comparison between many countries invalid, in many cases, different countries can learn from other countries how to

better handle a crisis. To explain this, we take the example of New Zealand, India and the United States of America.

The three countries have been affected by COVID-19 since January 2020. However, the performance of all three countries is widely different from each other. New Zealand became the world's first country to be free of COVID-19. On the other hand, the US, with a GDP that is 98.6 times that of New Zealand, is still struggling to bring the daily increase in active Covid-19 cases under control. Similar is the case with India. However, a number of reasons make the situation in the three countries very different.

### HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

The very first factor that makes them incomparable is the forms of government and distribution of decision-making powers amongst different levels of the government. In the USA, the government follows a federal, presidential form of government and the law of the constitution is supreme. Thus, the administrative and legislative powers are widely and clearly distributed between the President, the Congress and the state governments in the US. In New

Zealand, which is a unitary, constitutional monarchy, the state is ruled by a monarch (presently Queen Elizabeth II), whose role is carried out by the Governor General. In both these forms of government, despite having huge disparities, the effectiveness of the government in handling a crisis is enhanced as the roles of different government bodies is pre-defined. However, India, although largely federal, often has a conflict in implementing constitutional roles due to vast misunderstandings and simultaneous power politics played by different governments. This confusion and shortcoming becomes even more pronounced during a crisis when different government bodies keep passing the buck of responsibility, thereby delaying response time and effectiveness of a 'prompt response'.

Apart from this, the per capita incomes of the three countries portray huge variations. A higher per capita income, as is the case with New Zealand and the US, simply means that residents of the country have a higher capacity to spend on healthcare, personal hygiene and on maintaining their immunity. In the case of a pandemic, these capabilities can mean the difference between life and death. India's much lower per capita income restricts the ability of its people to spend on healthcare. Moreover, the population density in India is nearly 455 persons per square kilometer. This number reduces to 36 persons in the US and to just 18 persons in New Zealand. This would mean that the Indian government has a lot less space, particularly in its metropolises, to come up with impromptu emergency services. In the case of COVID-19, it would also mean that maintaining social distancing

### STATISTICAL COMPARISON: NEW ZEALAND, INDIA & THE US

	New Zealand	India	USA
Population (2020) in millions	4.821	1379.86	330.98
GDP (2019) Billion USD	215	2,800	21,200
Per Capita Income (2018) USD	38,000	2,104	54,579
Per capita public exp on health (2019) USD	3,937.20	21.91	10,739
Public exp on health (2017) % of GDP	9.17	1.28	17.061
Hospital Beds per thousand people (2018)	2.61	0.53	2.9
Population Density per square km (2018)	18	455	36

## THE TALE OF UNSUNG SUCCESS

In the list of countries that have managed to control the spread of COVID-19, Iceland and Cambodia deserve a special mention. Both countries have managed to virtually stop the spread of COVID-19 with no deaths reported in Cambodia and only 10 deaths in Iceland. But how did they manage to achieve spectacular success while their wealthy counterparts, the US, Britain and Germany are still struggling to flatten the COVID-19 curve?

The Icelandic government imposed a string of actions and measures in order to get a jump start in fighting the virus. As early as in January, Víðir Reynisson, Director, Emergency Management; Þórólfur Guðnason, the country's Chief Epidemiologist and Alma Möller, Director of Health, Government of Iceland, were alerted by news of the virus spreading in China. Although, no one could have anticipated the extent to which the virus would spread, the 'trio' of Iceland's COVID-19 response team sprang into action and started issuing guidelines and imposing strict rules. They also started analyzing the country's readiness,

in case the pandemic reached their country, and preparing their healthcare staff and infrastructure for the worst. Moreover, a dedicated team was set up in order to carry out intensive contact-tracing for those found to be Covid-19 positive. Reynisson, Guðnason and Möller also carried out daily briefings for the Icelandic people at 02:00 PM wherein they discussed what they know and didn't know about the virus. All these measures put together, along with one of the highest testing rates in the world, were responsible for the countries amazing success.

Similar is the case with Cambodia. The country's public health system started working in full force since the beginning of the pandemic in China. Noting that the spread of the disease multiplies enormously if left unchecked, the country's security and health professionals were immediately posted at border check points, sea ports and airports and all those arriving from other countries were instructed to strictly remain in quarantine for 14 days. This, coupled with a well implemented awareness program in the country, was able to save its people from COVID-19.

	New Zealand	India	USA	Iceland	Cambodia	World
<b>Total Covid-19 cases (as on June 10th, 2020)</b>	<b>1,504</b>	<b>2,76,583</b>	<b>20,47,147</b>	<b>1,807</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>73,57,160</b>
<b>Total Active cases</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,33,633</b>	<b>11,44,008</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33,12,462</b>
<b>Total Recovered Cases</b>	<b>1,482</b>	<b>1,35,205</b>	<b>7,88,916</b>	<b>1794</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>36,30,224</b>
<b>Total Deaths</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7,745</b>	<b>1,14,223</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,14,474</b>
<b>Recovery Rate</b>	<b>98.5</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>99.3</b>	<b>99.2</b>	<b>49.3</b>
<b>Fatality Rate</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5.6</b>

would be nearly impossible due to the high population density in India. On the other hand, it would be extremely easy for people in New Zealand and in the US to maintain social distancing.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN? India and New Zealand

Despite the numerous differences listed above, India can learn quite a lot from its counterpart. One of the major shortcomings in India is the percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that the government spends on developing the country's public health system. Government of India's public expenditure on health as percentage of GDP is only about 1.28 per cent. However, public health expenditure as percentage of GDP is nearly triple in the case of New Zealand at 9.17 per cent. This means that even though New Zealand's GDP is almost 1/13th of India, it dedicates a larger proportion towards development of healthcare systems. Moreover, the per

capita expenditure on health in the two countries also depicts a drastic difference. In India, per capita public expenditure on health is just USD 21.91 while that in New Zealand is USD 3937.2. It is high time for India to increase spending on development of public healthcare and immunity if it wishes to be ready to handle the next pandemic efficiently.

Secondly, components of the existing health infrastructure in the two countries also vary greatly. While India has just 0.53 hospitals beds per 1000 population, New Zealand has 2.61 beds per 1000 population. These characteristics, along with many others, are such that they cannot be changed in a short period of time. Moreover, they show the constant neglect of successive Indian governments in making public health services better in the country. Thus, one of the major lessons to be learnt by India is to improve its policies to better suit the promotion and development of healthcare infrastructure in the country.

## The US and New Zealand

Comparison between the US and New Zealand shows peculiar differences. Both the health expenditure (per cent of GDP and per capita) is a lot higher in the US than in New Zealand. Despite having a well-equipped public health infrastructure, the number of COVID-19 positive cases in the US is increasing. Here, the difference arises in strict implementation of policies. Even though the US government may have made all provisions to handle an emergency, without proper implementation of policies and a strong leadership, the country will fail to deal effectively with the crisis. Thus the US government needs to focus on stricter implementation of government policies and rules.

Although comparisons between two countries can often prove to be problematic due to various differences, there is a lot to be learnt from the experience of others, especially in times of an unprecedented crisis. ■



# INDIAN SCIENTISTS INVENT CORONA FIGHTING TOOLS

*Indian universities, research institutions and start-ups have come forward with innovative solutions to tackle the pandemic in many ways*

**KASHISH DHAWAN**

Reporter

**AKSHIT PUSHKARNA**

Editorial Assistant

**T**he coronavirus pandemic has taken the world by surprise. The effects of the pandemic have affected us all. Many countries underwent a stringent lockdown and the

economy went on a slippery slope. To bring back the economy on track, the Governments of many nations including India have decided to lift the sanctions and resume industrial and economic activities.

The opening up of economy requires caution and innovation both so the country can save the economy without worsening the virus spread. Scientists of various institutions in India have come up with several solutions that could offer us solutions to lead our day-to-day lives safely. In this article, Urban Update elaborates some of the more prominent indigenous scientific developments and innovations.

## IIT- MANDI'S UV-C DISINFECTION BOX

Researchers at the Indian Institute of

Technology-Mandi have developed an Ultraviolet-C (UV-C) light-based portable disinfection box which disinfects metallic, plastic and cardboard products like wallets, keys, spectacles, bags, courier packages and parcels, among others, to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spread through contact. Minimising the risk is the key because this virus can live on these surfaces for up to 3 days. Dr Himanshu Pathak, Assistant Professor, School of Engineering, IIT Mandi; Dr Sunny Zafar, Assistant Professor, School of Engineering, IIT Mandi; Dr Hitesh Shrimali, Associate Professor, School of Computing & Electrical Engineering, IIT Mandi; Dr Prosenjit Mondal, Associate Professor, School of Basic Sciences, IIT Mandi and Dr Amit Prasad, Assistant Professor, School of Basic Sciences, IIT Mandi, were the scientists behind the innovation.

Research has shown that UV-C light can achieve a high level of inactivation of a near relative of COVID-19's virus, thus, reducing the risks of contagion among healthy people. In the workplace, it can be an excellent tool for disinfecting transit of goods. The device uses 10 UV light bulbs contained in a cuboid made of a wooden board with aluminium foil through which the article that is to be disinfected is passed.

Highlighting the benefits of the Disinfection Box in the COVID-19 perspective, the researchers said, "The developed prototype can disinfect all kinds of metal, plastic and cardboard-based products from the bacteria and SARS-CoV-2 virus within one-minute exposure of UV-C light, by eliminating up to 99%."

The prototype has been tested in an in-house lab facility at IIT Mandi against the bacteria 'Escherichia coli' and 'Staphylococcus aureus'. The prototype shows 99% efficacy to kill both bacteria within 40 seconds of UV-C light exposure. Furthermore, on testing the researchers found that UV-C lamps did not heat the disinfected product.



## IISc'S ICU GRADE VENTILATORS

IISc's Project 'PRAANA' team completed the prototyping of an indigenously developed ICU-grade ventilator in about two months. The team took about 35 days to go from the drawing board to a proof-of-concept system, and then to build a working prototype in another two weeks. Project PRAANA was started by IISc faculty members Gaurab Banerjee, Duvvuri Subrahmanyam, TV Prabhakar and Pratikash Panda, Bangalore-based engineer Manas Pradhan, and retired IISc professor HS Jamadagni. Many volunteers helped including physicians Dr SupreetKhare, Dr Sriram Sampath, and Dr Krishna Prasad.

Prof Subrahmanyam, while talking to Urban Update, said that it was spurred by the escalating COVID-19 crisis towards the end of March 2020. "To overcome severe constraints on the international supply chains and costs, we decided to come up with an entirely new design for a ventilator which only involves components that are made (or easily available) in India, and yet meets the key functionality requirements of a full-fledged medical ventilator", he said.

"We have subjected our design to extensive bench-top experimental testing, and after the design performance was successfully verified (proof of concept), we translated the technology into a working laboratory-grade prototype. The prototype consists of a custom-designed pneumatic system controlled by a microprocessor and uses proprietary algorithms and techniques to blend air and oxygen in the desired ratio. It also offers fine-grained control of patient-side respiratory parameters such as respiration rate, inspiration to expiration ratio, FiO<sub>2</sub>, and PEEP. It supports both invasive and non-invasive ventilation", Prof Subrahmanyam further said.

"We are now actively exploring options to collaborate with an industry partner to further co-develop the

prototype into a field-ready product, he said. The project received internal support from IISc, external funding from the office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India, and a Corporate Social Responsibility contribution from the State Bank of India Foundation," the Professor said.

## DRDO'S DISINFECTING UNIT

The Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has developed a disinfection device named 'Ultra Swachh' which can disinfect a wide range of materials, including Personal Protective Equipment's (PPEs), fabrics, electronic items and others.

The new device is created by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), the laboratory of DRDO based in Delhi in partnership with Gel Craft Health Care Pvt Ltd. The disinfection system uses an advance oxidative process comprising of multiple barrier disruption approaches using Ozonated Space Technology for disinfection.

The disinfection device uses Ozone sealant technology which assures trapping of ozone for the necessary disinfection cycle. The device is double layered with a catalytic converter to ensure environment-friendly exhaust.

'Ultra Swachh' complies with International Standards of Industrial, Occupational, Personal and Environmental Safety. The device comes in two variants namely Trinetra Technology and Ozonated Space. Trinetra technology is a combination of a radical dispenser and Ozonated space. The disinfection device is optimised with the automation process for quick disinfection cycle.

## DESMANIA DESIGN'S ARMOR

ARMOR, a Full Face Mask, the most innovative catch of the hackathon was taken up to evolve into a prized product. A simple, affordable mask that has 3 times efficacy of the normal

mask as it covers the entire face and provides for increased protection from the virus.

Firstly, it covers the entire face so there is no risk of touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Secondly, it stands on the sustainability tenet of being re-usable and durable. It provides a clear vision to the wearer because of the low refractive index of acrylic. This is the most innovative mask for the common man as well as for the front line warriors like doctors, policemen and delivery boys.

"ARMOR is being tested with the doctors, workforce, delivery boys and has also been tried with the police force. They have all loved the product and are pushing for early deployment. The design evolution is continuous and so is the refinement to design. Desmania plans to ramp up the production by the end of June 2020 to meet the massive requirements from across the globe" said Anuj Prasad, Co-founder & CEO of Desmania.

The design philosophy behind this mask is a thoughtful integration of Goggles, Face Shield and N95 Mask. In a conversation with Urban Update, Saurabh Singh (Associate Director – Desmania Design, "It's a full face mask, it covers your eyes, nose, lips, everything and it involves no electronic item to pump air, the air circulation happens automatically, the design is such that when you breathe it automatically takes air from one end and gives it to another end, so there is a fresh flow of air circulation always happening inside." Singh said that idea for the innovation came when he travelled from Manesar to Delhi during the lockdown and saw the lack of Personal Protection the frontline workers had.

"We are channel partners for railways, police forces, doctors, we made this, we are giving them and they are taking the masks and they are trying to give to different authorities in government," he said. The mask is in the production phase and Singh assured that it will be in the market soon. ■

# Mayors discuss how to make cities pandemic resilient

**M**ajority of corona cases are reported from cities. Mumbai has reported over 45,000 cases and almost 1500 deaths. The role of mayors in dealing with crises of such a devastating magnitude is crucial, they being the first representatives of their cities. Understanding the importance of giving mayors of various cities a platform to share their insights and difficulties in dealing with the crisis at hand, All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG), in association with National Institute of Urban Affairs, organised the first instalment of "Mayors' Dialogues".

'Making Cities Pandemic Resilient' saw participation from Asok Bhattacharya, Mayor Siliguri; Asha Sharma, Mayor, Ghaziabad; Chandra Mohan Gupta, Mayor, Jammu; Sanjeev Bittu, Mayor, Patiala; Junaid Mattu, Mayor, Srinagar; Sandeep Joshi, Mayor, Nagpur; Dilip Kumar Agasty, Mayor, Durgapur and a video message from Uday Madkaikar, Mayor, Panaji. Hitesh Vaidya, Director, NIUA and Abhishek Pandey, Editor, Urban Update, moderated the dialogue.

"No doubt cities have been the worst affected from the virus. This is why the role of mayors is very important in dealing with the crisis," Abhishek Pandey said in his opening remarks. Talking about the role of elected representatives in making a city pandemic resilient, Pandey highlighted the importance of having a strong and decisive leadership which is necessary to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on a city. He further noted that there is a need to strengthen relationship between logistic administration and urban local bodies.

Given the sudden escalation of the

situation, Vaidya noted that every city of the world was caught unprepared. However, there are lessons to be learnt from this. "City representative must be asked what challenges they faced and what could be learnt for better future governance and institutional structure," Vaidya said. After the welcome remarks delivered by Pandey and Vaidya, the mayors individually presented their takeaways, grievances and operations during the pandemic, which could or has made their city more pandemic resilient for the future. Here are the major takeaways from their addresses:

## ASHA SHARMA, MAYOR, GHAZIABAD

The news of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 alerted us beforehand and we prepared ourselves and developed an action plan for our city accordingly. Ghaziabad is a huge urban area. We fogged and sanitised the area thoroughly and regularly. The municipal sanitation officers were on call 24/7, for which I salute them. Another priority was to make sure that everyone was adequately fed. A total of 11 well-sanitised kitchens, 9 run by the government and 2 by the local body, have delivered over 1 crore food packages till date. We opened isolation wards in medical colleges of the city for quarantining corona positive individuals.

## CHANDER MOHAN GUPTA, MAYOR, JAMMU

In terms of municipal governance, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has been a little stagnant when compared to the rest of the country. Municipal elections in other cities have been held 14 times whereas for us it was only 4. Our municipal services have lagged behind due to this. As it became evident that we will be facing the pandemic, we pressured

the higher ups to provide us with adequate sanitisation devices and machinery. We managed to arrange the required machinery, whether it be procuring pumps from the fire department or the horticulture department, in a matter of 15 days and thenceforth ensured appropriate sanitation throughout Jammu. The red zones were regularly sanitised and checked for adherence to the lockdown. I would like to raise the point that the mayor's office isn't strengthened enough and this becomes more than apparent during such testing times.

## DILIP KUMAR AGASTY, MAYOR, DURGAPUR

The main thing that we dealt with is to arrange for the essential ration for the citizens of Durgapur while they observed appropriate social distancing. People were educated about the appropriate precautions that must be undertaken and we made sure that the word got out by ensuring communication between the city authorities and the citizens. Durgapur is a cluster of townships and not like other cities. People need an access to day to day ration and with the help of community kitchens, which we installed with the help of NGOs, we supplied food to people living in each locality of the city on a daily basis. Sanitisation was ensured. Our city observed no deaths while only seven were infected with the virus.

## SANJEEV BITTU, MAYOR, PATIALA

One of the biggest challenges was to deliver food and sanitise areas where infected were quarantined. We call the workers who maintained this sanitation as 'Safai Sainiks'. It was difficult to arrange for adequate PPE kits initially and these sainiks braved the virus for the betterment of the city. Our councillors

also directly engaged in sanitisation and on ground implementation of various other municipal roles during these testing times. Social workers and NGOs have really been helpful in assisting those who are less fortunate and hard hit by the lockdown. I would like to express my dissatisfaction on our city administration and we need change. The entire response in India was based on the Epidemic Act which was constituted in 1897 and is badly outdated as of now. It has been notified multiple times, I don't understand why it can not be reformed completely. We don't have an appropriate response system and have been caught off guard. We need change. The entire bureaucracy of the country needs a change. Local governments have no power while they are answerable for everything. This needs to be mitigated.

**ASOK BHATTACHARYA,  
MAYOR, SILIGURI**

I believe that worst affected from the pandemic are the urban areas of the developed countries as majority of the cases have been encountered from these areas only. This, in my opinion, is the case because the continued expansion of the cities is being done in a haphazard fashion. I believe that COVID-19 is a logical outcome of the increasing damage dealt to the nature.

In my experience, the unprecedented escalation of the pandemic is related

with the unplanned and unsustainable urbanisation. We cannot blame the process of urbanisation, but it must be balanced with nature and with the ecology itself. The harmony between man and nature is continuously deteriorating. We have to utilise urbanisation for the betterment of the society but as of now the process of urbanisation has become focused on capitalisation and optimisation of consumerism. This approach must change.

Sustainable development clearly needs to take the front seat now so that better pandemic resilient cities are developed in the future. It has to be a united fight. Urban local bodies are the grass root level of government but their operation can only be optimised with the participation of people. If we empower the local bodies, then only an appropriate response to such a crisis can be ensured in the future. State governments and the centre must encourage local governments to develop plans for their cities.

**JUNAID MATTU, MAYOR,  
SRINAGAR**

City councils and mayors are leading the fight against coronavirus. This is not the case for India. The local governments are disempowered so much that the question about their existence comes to mind. Is the institution of mayor just for cosmetic appeal? How much value is the local governance to the city? Our primary

responsibility must be to formulate laws and make policies. Mayors are supposed to be leaders and the reality is that the institution of mayor has been disrespected in India to a great extent. It is a fact that the bureaucracy is far more empowered than the mayors, who have actually been elected by the people of the city and thus, directly answerable to them. There is no political will to make new laws in this country. Power must be decentralised in order to achieve better grass root level changes. We need structural reforms and debate on the implementation of 74th amendment to take place.

As of Srinagar's response on the COVID-19 front, the city has been working for three months on this and it has been declared as one of the best performing cities of the country. Srinagar was the first country to lockdown and much of the success can be attributed to the corporation's swift action.

**UDAY MADAIKAR,  
MAYOR, PANAJI**

Our city was in green zone but that changed once inter state movement was permitted in India. We have installed systems to check for the virus at the railway stations check post itself. Once a person is detected positive, we transport them to quarantine facilities and hence, have prevented community spread till now. We have run awareness programs in the city to educate people ever since the city is under lockdown. We assisted the people of Panaji to get all the essential commodities. We have been working on the sanitisation of the city for a month. We are fogging the whole area to keep in check other diseases like Dengue and Malaria even as we fight the virus. Further, we have reopened markets in the city in a phased and controlled manner. Proper precautions have been made compulsory as the city reopens and we move back to normalcy.

Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIILSG concluded the session by lauding the efforts of the city officials and administration. "We have been supporting local bodies during this time," he said, and further elaborated on the Institute's efforts to assist local bodies in their operation. ■

**Organisers**  
AIU National Institute of Urban Affairs  
Urban Update

**Webinar**  
**Making Cities Pandemic Resilient**  
**THE ROLE OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES**  
June 6, 2020 | Saturday  
11:00 hrs to 12:30 hrs (Indian Standard Time)

**Mayors' Dialogues**

**SPEAKERS**  
Asok Bhattacharya, Mayor, Siliguri  
Asha Sharma, Mayor, Chandigarh  
Uday Madaiakar, Mayor, Goa  
Junaid Arif Mattu, Mayor, Srinagar  
Hrushikesh Vaidya, Director, AIU  
Ravi Ranjan Guru, DDC, AIILSG

**MODERATOR**  
Chandramohan Gupta, Mayor, Jaipur  
Sanjey Bhatta, Mayor, Patna  
Bilal Kumar Agastya, Mayor, Durgam

**Mr. Ranjit S Chavan, President, AIILSG**  
**Mr. Rajiv Agarwal, IAS (Retd.), Director General, AIILSG**

All are most welcome to attend the webinar. For registration, please visit <https://bit.ly/3Zw7f1w> or scan QR code.

For any technical queries by attending the webinar, please write to us at [contact@urbanupdate.in](mailto:contact@urbanupdate.in) or call Ashish Paul at +91 98201 1212

# CITIES AFTER CORONA: A one on one discussion with Amogh K Gupta, Chairperson, SPA- Delhi

*Senior Journalist Abhilash Khandekar sits down with Amogh K Gupta, Chairperson, School of Planning and Architecture-Delhi, to get the urban planning expert's insights into how the pandemic is going to reshape the cities and the direction of urban development in the future*

state governments putting efforts and arranging basic amenities for them. We must think about why they are still opting to move back. I believe that despite getting free accommodation, food, etc., these people have still opted to move back to their rural homes as they don't feel safe in the cities that they help build.

Now, once the lockdown is lifted, industries would only operate at reduced capacity. When these businesses will operate at full capacity is uncertain as a big chunk of the laborers who have gone back to their rural homes are of the mindset of not returning to the city.

Looking at it objectively, we have four months. The district authorities need to survey the population that has returned to their native lands and categorise them as 'skilled' or 'unskilled' labor, as they were in the cities. Based on this data, stable employment opportunities must

be generated. I say 'stable' because I believe MNREGA is not a stable option for them.

Government must look into ways to develop entrepreneurial skills in these people who have migrated back.

## **IF THE CASE IS THAT THE LABOR DOESN'T RETURN TO CITIES, WON'T IT EFFECT THE ECONOMIC CYCLE?**

It will affect the economics of the city, and thus the country, no doubt. However, if we look at it objectively, these laborers routinely migrate back to their native lands every year around this time for harvesting. However, this unexpected migration has dented the economy due to the circumstances.

Now with this forced migration, people will be hesitant to move back to the major cities, cities they helped build. Why don't we develop ways so that these rural areas retain a certain part of the population?

## **INDIA HAS BEEN UNDER LOCKDOWN FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS NOW. IT NEEDS TO REOPEN ITS ECONOMY AND DE-ESCALATE FURTHER LOAD ON ITS POOR CITIZENS. WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?**

We need to address the fact that India has never focused on rural centric development at par with urban development. This has become more than apparent with the massive exodus of migrant workers from cities back to their homes in rural areas. These people had moved to cities for more employment opportunities and since now those opportunities have been taken away, they are going back. They are moving back to their native homes despite

The poster is for an event titled "THE ROAD TO RECOVERY FOR CITIES" which is a "ONE ON ONE" discussion about "COVID-19 AND CITIES". It features two speakers: Sr. Journalist Abhilash Khandekar and Dr. Amogh K Gupta, Chairperson, Board of Governors, SPA Delhi. The event is scheduled for May 20, 2020, from 12:00 to 12:30 Noon. Logos for UCLG ASPAC and Urban Update are present. Contact information for inquiries is provided at the bottom.



That should be the focus as of now, in my opinion.

**GOVERNMENT IS NOW FOCUSING ON MAKING INDIA SELF-RELIANT. THIS NEEDS BETTERING OF INFRASTRUCTURE, MAKING CITIES 'SMART' AND MAINTAINING A BALANCE WITH NATURE. FOR THIS, ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD STATES MUST BE UPLIFTED TOO. WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THIS?**

We are looking too much into the statistics of migration to urban areas. This has led us to develop more city centric approach for development as we have pre-determined that such a large population will, without a doubt, move to cities.

Hence, rural areas lag as cities continue to expand. So when cities expand, people from backward areas prefer to move to these areas for opportunities. Hence, we are struck in this loop that would not lead us to any sustainable, logical, long-term policy.

**HOW ARE CITIES AND THEIR OPERATIONS GOING TO CHANGE IN THE POST COVID WORLD?**

These are truly unprecedented times as the world hasn't been effected by any epidemic like this before.

CITY PLANNERS MUST DEVOTE PLANNING SESSIONS SPECIFIC TO ASCERTAIN THE LIMIT OF CITY EXPANSION. IF CITIES CONTINUE TO GROW AT SUCH RATES, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING. WE MUST FOCUS ON DEVELOPING SATELLITE CITIES IN NEIGHBORING AREAS OF BIG CITIES

We have faced plagues, Spanish flu, etc., but though these created lesser impact than coronavirus, could have served as lessons for better management. If we were able to develop better practices, we would have been able to deal with the issue with more success. Hence, we should take lessons from this period,

**HAS THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF INDIA BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL? NOW, SINCE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT REVERSE MIGRATION, WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST BE THE WAY FORWARD FOR URBAN PLANNERS, AUTHORITIES FOR THE FUTURE?**

The most successful adoption of India's rural development policies, in my opinion, has been done by the state of Kerala. If we talk about the biggest city of the state, Kochi, it ranks 75<sup>th</sup> across India in terms of city population. This can be attributed to the success of the rural planning and management that the state has done in recent times. In my experience, every panchayat in the state was well equipped so much so that it was hard to even tell the difference between what was urban and what was rural.

There is also an underlying issue that India sees when we talk about development. When I talk with bureaucrats, authorities or even the common people, I find that most of them are more content in seeing growth in urban areas as opposed to development in existing rural areas.

**WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT?**

I've gone through the RPF and proposals of the project, and I think since the existing infrastructure does not meet our requirements, it is necessary to upgrade. Now, given the heritage of the region, the new project would only reconstruct and not redesign.

Moreover, I believe we should first see the full extent of any project before worrying about it. See the full picture first, only then react is what I believe.

**WAS SPA-DELHI INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT?**

Not in my knowledge, no. But, architects from the Institute were part of the committee that Delhi Government constituted to discuss the criticism on the project and seek suggestions.

**COMING BACK TO CITIES AND COVID-19, AS CITIES CONTINUE TO EXPAND, SHALL WE PREDETERMINE RULES TO RESTRICT THEIR EXPANSION?**

Definitely. City planners must devote planning sessions specific to ascertain the limit of city expansion. If cities continue to grow at such rates, it is difficult for management and planning. We must focus on developing satellite cities in neighboring areas of big cities. These areas, which some call peri-urban areas, must be designated for specific uses.

**INDIA IS BATTLING WITH CORONAVIRUS WELL BUT IF WE SEE AND COMPARE WITH MANY OTHER COUNTRIES, IS LESS URBANISATION A REASON FOR THIS? DO YOU THINK TREND OF URBANISATION IN INDIA COULD REVERSE FROM HERE ONWARDS OR WILL IT BE BUSINESS AS USUAL?**

Yes, less urbanisation is the primary reason why this issue is only restricted to cities with high population density till now. I gave the example of Kerala to elaborate about its settlement pattern. If we incorporate similar settlement pattern in other states, I believe other urban areas would get de-stressed to a certain extent. Another thing that is worth noting when we talk about battling coronavirus, the immunity system of Indians is much higher when we compare to western countries.

We can only invite reverse migration when we start working on the rearrangement of our village economies and focus on rural development. This, in my opinion, is a permanent fix to the problem. ■

# Physical distancing, not social distancing, key to living with virus

**T**he third instalment in Urban Update's webinar series of e-Dialogues focused on deliberating a suitable path forward for cities. After an extensive period of the lockdown, which effectively shutdown movement of people as well as many businesses, now the government is moving forth with relaxing norms. These relaxations will ultimately lead to a complete lift and resumption of life as we knew it before Corona. As we reopen cities, positive cases, and casualties, continue to rise. Given this extremely difficult situation, Urban Update invited Dr Rakesh Yadav, Professor, AIIMS-Delhi; Umamaheshwaran Rajasekar, Chair, Urban Resilience at National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), to discuss the path forward with Ashok Wankhede, Managing Editor, Urban Update and Abhishek Pandey, Editor, Urban Update. Kumar Dhananjay, Consulting Editor, Urban Update, moderated the session.

Introducing the relevance of the issue to the audience, Dhananjay said that at present we are confronted with multiple questions as we move forth: how many more renditions of the lockdown can we further bear? How do we deal with the severe economic consequences that we are likely to face? "Is it time to face the fact that life will go on with the virus, as no hope for a solution to this issue is apparently visible. When can we resume normal activities?" Dhananjay enquired and invited Ashok Wankhede to give his opening remarks. Wankhede asserted that Corona is here to stay. "After the two month lockdown, cases continue to increase. Now, as we look forward to reopening, we must take adequate

precautions. Obama said I am lucky to have a great office in my home. "We share the same luxury as the President of the USA for an extended period of time as of now," he said. Along with working from home, Wankhede said we are set to adopt multiple changes in our lives moving forward.

Dr Rakesh Yadav, like the speakers before him, was of the thought that the virus is not going to go away soon, it'll persist and hence we'll have to live with it. "Nobody knows much about the virus. Everyday you get a new guideline. Everyday a new estimation is made. Somewhere it is very dangerous, somewhere it is just a flu virus", Dr Yadav said, describing the uncertainty of the pandemic. He urged people not to panic. "Anxiety has taken over and people are getting more and more scared.

This fear is not substantiated by medical research and only propagated by mainstream media." Further, Dr Yadav expressed that vaccine is the only solution, and the development

of this vaccine at this stage is uncertain. Hence, reopening is a wise step. "Reopen but with caution. A percentage lives in slum, they use common toilet. Educate them about physical distancing, not social distancing," he said.

"As we reopen, we face the challenge of accurately ascertaining corona positive people, as a large percentage of people suffering from the disease are asymptomatic. Thus, reopening will obviously increase cases, but till now the previous two months spent in the lockdown have allowed us to develop infrastructure," he added. Further, the doctor said that the policy is to live with the virus, and that a complete lockdown was never a solution. Moving forward, medical professional like Dr Yadav recommend using mask, regularly washing hands and avoiding gatherings and large crowds. If you have any symptom, report it to relevant authorities.

Umamaheshwaran Rajasekar, in his address, urged people to look at short

"AS WE REOPEN, WE FACE THE CHALLENGE OF ACCURATELY ASCERTAINING CORONA POSITIVE PEOPLE, AS A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM THE DISEASE ARE ASYMPTOMATIC. THUS, REOPENING WILL OBVIOUSLY INCREASE CASES, BUT TILL NOW THE PREVIOUS TWO MONTHS SPENT IN THE LOCKDOWN HAVE ALLOWED US TO DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE,"

term requirements post COVID-19 and long term amends that could be made. “It is important to keep on living, albeit differently. Pandemic can not be contained unless a cure is developed. Hence, we should take a step back and address preparedness issues that have been apparent,” he said. Highlighting long term lessons from the pandemic, he further highlighted how the medical systems have been caught off guard during the crisis and how cities need to take lesson from this and take it as a wake up call to look at how we can better integrate health departments within urban planning and municipal corporation. Outside of a few examples, no city corporation has power over the health systems. “Rethink the approach towards urban planning and include healthcare infrastructure for the future,” Rajasekar concluded.

Given the conditions, Rajasekar said that we must accept that cases will sharply increase once the lockdown is lifted even partially. “It is essential to maintain physical distancing. Urge to resume life overpowers the minimum protocols and hence the virus spreads. We must keep this in check at an individual level,” he added.

Abhishek Pandey quoted Winston Churchill, “Lets not waste a good crisis”. Further, he added, “It is a crisis which has forced to think how to better

plan our cities.” He went on to describe various approaches that countries have taken in dealing with the virus. “Sweden didn’t lockdown. The public health emergency head is more empowered than the prime minister at the time of a pandemic. The country’s pandemic related decisions are thus being taken directly by an expert,” Pandey said. With this approach, Sweden is working on developing herd immunity, Pandey informed.

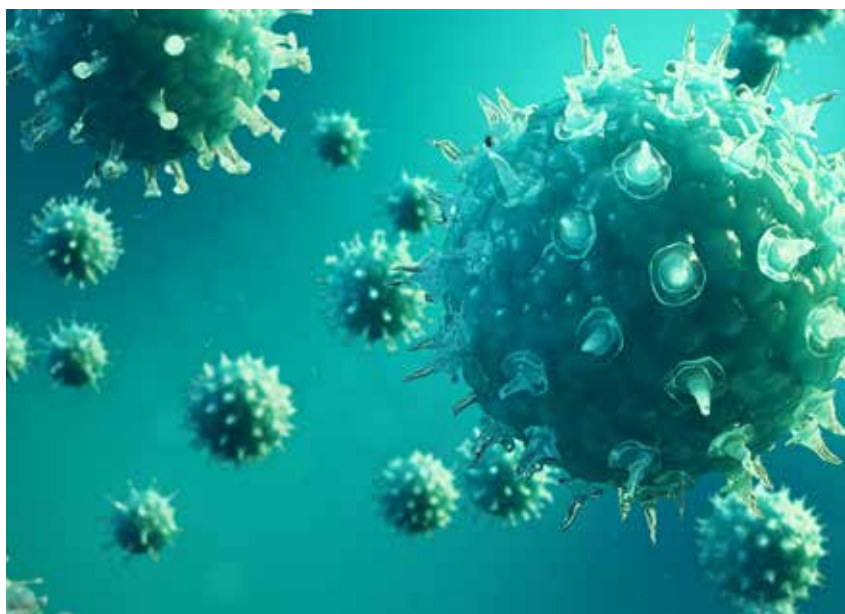
Given the outcome, Pandey expressed that India had responded well, but not done something exemplary. With the help of figures, Pandey correlated the number of deaths per million with the urbanisation percentage. India, where

a large population is rural based, has fared much better when it comes to casualties when compared with US or Spain or any other country.

In conclusion, he stressed that it is essential to reopen the economy. “We have to focus on supply chain. India needs to become self reliant for essentials like medical equipment and other essential commodities in order to truly move in the vision of the Prime minister,” he said.

Ashok Wankhede agreed with Abhishek Pandey’s observation. “India doing better because of villages. That doesn’t mean no urbanisation but planned urbanisation. Major cities face issues because of haphazard development as influx of migrants to the city increases,” he said. The senior journalist then compared the sedentary lifestyles of the urban, who are the most affected by the virus, to the rural population. “It is all about immunity. Due to their more active lifestyles, villagers are more physical and hence have better immunity. I believe that this disaster has given us opportunity to rethink our behaviour and lifestyle choices,” he said.

Finally, he stressed upon the importance of educating people about the disease and appropriate precautions that must be taken. For this, the authorities must work actively to equip people with the latest knowledge about the virus as they move on to resume their pre-pandemic lives. ■





# A CITY ON THE SEA!



**ABHILASH KHANDEKAR**

Senior Journalist

**M**umbai has been recently in the news due to the dreadful cyclonic attack of ‘Nisarga’ which eventually did not much damage the iconic city. But the Maharashtra capital keeps making news round the year. In 2020, it has become the Corona capital of India.

In most top countries, two important cities stand out, despite their basic differences on parameters like size, shape and population etc. They include, for example, New York City and Washington (US) or Beijing and Shanghai (China) or Melbourne and Sydney (Australia), to name just a few. In India, they are Mumbai and Delhi—both having their own specialities, strong and weak points, besides their beautiful historic backgrounds and special geographic features.

In the series of my city-centric book reviews, I have perhaps done more ‘justice’ to Delhi than Mumbai, incidentally, my birth place. I may have introduced about 10 or more

books written on various facets of the national capital but comparatively much fewer on Mumbai’s life and history. In the meanwhile, I also took the readers of Urban Update to Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai. The last time I wrote about Mumbai was two years ago (Zero Point Bombay—a collection of knowledgeable essays) but surely that does not indicate there is any dearth of books on this lovely city which patronises sports and cinema, theatre and crime, politics and trade...all simultaneously and in a big way.

In the interesting book under review, I would like to write something about the urban perspective which the author has provided through a well written chapter—Planning and Dreaming. That takes us back into times of the last century when urban planning was in its infancy in independent India.

“The elevation of the planners authority, ironically, came close on the heels of independence in 1947. Cities had started receiving flocks of men and women in search of economic opportunities. Bombay’s population grew from 1.49 million in 1941 to 2.3

million in 1951 “ says the author. The surging urban population sharpened the sense of an urban crisis. JF Bulsara, a commentator on urban affairs, bemoaned “two hundred and eighty seven years of unplanned building”. His text catalogs Bombay’s problems—its haphazard growth, the “cheerless chawls and bleak block houses,” the amorphous architectural map and a preponderant illiterate population that lacks of art of living together in the city and whose primitive mental condition aggravates the problems of filth, the book talks about Bombay in the forties.

Besides Bulsara, local newspapers were hinting at the mounting disorder in the city. Bombay which went through a building boom in the thirties and the forties, had a sizeable number of engineers and architects who also expressed concern about the city’s future.

Author Gyan Prakash who spent 10 years in writing this book after



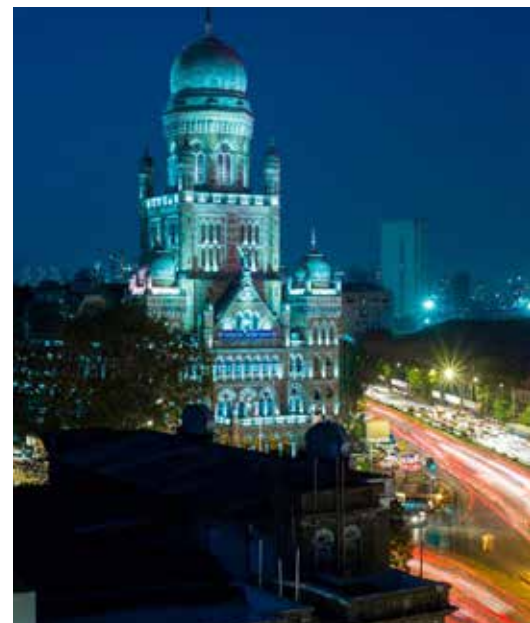
**Book**  
Mumbai Fables

**Author**  
Gyan Prakash

**Publisher**  
HarperCollins

**Pages**  
396

**Price**  
₹425/





quality research, credits two journals in triggering meaningful debate on the city's unplanned growth. One was JIA (Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects) and other was MARG (Modern Architectural Research Group). Famous writer, political activist and a responsible citizen, MulkRaj Anand was behind Marg and published in his magazine by the same name, issues about Mumbai. In the editorial of the inaugural issue in 1946, entitled "Planning and Dreaming", Anand wrote in soaring rhetoric about dreaming a future. Planning is like dreaming--dreaming of a new world. Architects and urban planners were to dream of ways to usher in the good life, to produce the blue prints of a new social order" he wrote, adding "The future lay with architects because they could plan India's cities on scientific basis".

He just did not leave it at that. Since he had modelled MARG as the journal of art and architecture, in 1965, he published plans for a twin city as seen by Charles Correa, Pravin Mehta and Shirish Patel, three young professionals from different branches. They, for the first time, proposed the issue of having a twin city concept to deburden growing Bombay.

An early master plan (for Greater Bombay) outline had already been prepared in 1948 by NV Modak, a

BMC engineer and Albert Mayer, an American urban planner. Both imagined Bombay as a city in motion and recommended the expansion of the East-West transportation links to foster an orderly westward settlement and development of satellite towns. They however, modestly stated that their plan was not a "final, detailed blue-print" but an 'envelop' to be filled with details. The idea was to reengineer an organic urban space to meet the needs of capitalist industrialisation, the author tells us.

But 17 years later Correa (architect), Patel (civil engineer) and Mehta (a planner) rejected the BMC plan and created an image of a city on the water and offered their own plan for 'New Bombay' as an alternative that would overcome the sense of lack expressed by images of congestion, crowding and sprawl.

The trio rejected the 1948 proposal by Modak & Mayer to build satellite towns encircling the Island City as a practical and effective measure to develop Bombay as a metropolitan region. MulkRaj Anand, through MARG pushed the idea of twin city connected by ocean. Eventually, with the help of a dynamic IAS officer V Srinivasan, a new body was created called CIDCO which began work on the new urban plan in 1973. Shirish Patel was made the chief planner there

and things moved a bit in the right direction of making a countermagnet city.

Those who see today's Mumbai may not have an idea what the planners had dreamt and how a city on the sea was envisioned several decades ago. Many people still feel that like in the case of Delhi where two large satellite townships of Gurgaon and NOIDA had been planned to decongest Delhi but that did not happen, Mumbai also remained crowded and New Bombay did not prove to be the viable alternative for many years. Now both the cities are overcrowded. But what is remarkable is that in making Mumbai a modern city, a journalist-writer (MulkRaj Anand) played a vital role.

The book also talks about cultural life, role of Parsees in developing Bombay city, little history of Taj Mahal Hotel built by Sir Jamsetji Tata in 1903, about the high end Taj Mahal Orchestra and about the film industry, the crime world and so on. The author vividly provides the reader a peep into how politics changed the topography of the state and how protests succeeded in blocking Prime Minister Nehru's plan to make Mumbai a union territory while creating two other states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The Marathi versus Gujarati controversy resulted in creation of Gujarat and Maharashtra in 1960 but Mumbai remained with Maharashtra thanks to leaders like SM Joshi, SA Dange, PK Atre, and Bal Thackeray who fought for a Samyukta Maharashtra and won the long fought battle partly.

The author has not tried to go into deeper historical references but has given enough material for a new reader to get a complete picture of the glorious city's past. Certainly, the commercial capital of India has now become difficult to manage, given its ever growing population and monstrous slums. ■

*(The reviewer is a veteran journalist who writes about urban affairs, politics, and the environment. He can be contacted at kabhilash59@gmail.com and on Twitter @Abhikhandekar)*



# COVID-19 recovery phase is an opportunity to rethink climate change



**ASHOK WANKHADE**  
Managing Editor

The pandemic has proven to be deadly in many ways but there is a silver lining. It has allowed all of us to rethink our approach towards development as the lockdown period reaffirmed that our nature, eco-system and bio-diversity can be healed

**T**he virus has not only affected the health and well-being of people around the world but also has dented the economy pretty badly. The International Monetary Fund has predicted that the global economy will take \$12 trillion hit from the virus. Now, in order to rebound from the massive losses, countries have already started investing trillions of dollars back into their economies.

Although the situation is unfortunate, it also gives countries a chance to undo the mistakes that they have made in dealing with climate change and associated issues. Global warming continues to grow at an alarming rate. The month of May has been the hottest in recorded history. The lockdown, which was enforced to stop the spread of the virus, had also been successful in minimising carbon emissions by 17 per cent in early April, but surged back up to about 5 per cent below the previous average as of June, as normalcy resumed. The lockdown had allowed the environment to take a much-needed breather, but it is important to think about how such improvements can be made in ways that are sustainable. The call of the hour is to decarbonise our emissions, whether it is vehicular or industrial emissions. Governments across the world need to decide upon how they are to make decarbonisation a sustainable practice for the future.

We need breakthroughs to avert the situation. For this, we only have about 6 months, top energy experts warn. In an interview with the Guardian, Fatih Birol, Executive Director, International Energy Agency (IEA), said that the implications of the financial relief packages, that the governments plan to spend on reviving the economy and which amount to about \$9 trillion as of now, may make or break the fight

to meet the climate target. “The next three years will determine the course of the next 30 years and beyond. If we do not take action we will surely see a rebound in emissions. If emissions rebound, it is very difficult to see how they will be brought down in future. This is why we are urging governments to have sustainable recovery packages.”

The IEA’s sustainable recovery roadmap presents a plan that could be used to bring the economy and jobs back while simultaneously reinforcing the focus on greener fuel alternatives. It sets out over 30 policy measures that can be implemented in the course of the coming three years and primarily advocates modernising renewable energy generation projects. This would aim to generate skilled jobs and also cause a steep decline in carbon emissions.

Another important observation can be made through this whole pandemic is that people generally tend to respond to emotions, not science or reports. Even though official guidelines which urged countries to up their pandemic preparedness and response were released by the World Health Organisation beforehand, the situation after 6 months of the warning shows how lightly the threat had been perceived. Many world leaders have refused to believe that climate change is a threat to humanity.

The misconceptions around climate change need to change. We have witnessed many environmental tragedies in the recent past, like the Australian bush fires and the European heat waves. Experts have attributed most of them to the phenomenon of climate change. It has the potential to be the disaster of our times, and radical changes from the norm are to be made and sustained to avoid a large-scale calamity. And, the bottom line, is everyone on the planet has to adopt sustainable practices and embrace environmentally benign living. ■

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# 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.

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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



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