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Cover Story

CHINESE CHECKERS

India must have a clear insight into the
Dragon's latest ploy on the border



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Globally cornered, China threatens neighbors to stay relevant

The Covid-19 has exposed Chinese design to capture the world by its sheer power of manufacturing and its control over the global supply chain. The world has realized that over dependence on China will have disastrous effect on the economies, and it is leading to empowering a totalitarian state that has no value system. The ruling CCP is threatening India, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan and off course Tibet is engulfed in dragon basket. President Xi Jinping desire to make China a super power has thrown the world in a strange paradox. China is on the verge of setting a cold war with USA and the various countries have to decide the way they want to be party to this ultimate divide. India is inching closure to USA in the last few decades and this is the reason why China has launched to military threat to mitigate this possibility.



On the military front, the three sectors where India and China have recurrence of disputes are in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh. The Arunachal sector is largely dormant despite China's claim to the entire State. The Sikkim sector is strategic as any Chinese road and infrastructure development in its proximity can threaten the narrow Siliguri Corridor which is the gateway from India to the seven States of North-East India. It is in the Ladakh sector that the geo-strategic implications of the face-off and incursions assume significance. The Chinese have made an immense investment of \$62 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. Recent assertions by India on its right to Gilgit- Baltistan through which the CPEC passes on its way to the Karakoram Pass in the Shaksгам valley (illegally conceded by Pakistan to China) have obviously rocked the boat. Unlike Doklam, where the Chinese movement was restricted to the single track which they were trying to develop along a narrow valley, in Ladakh the LAC is open and rugged. There are various "disputed areas" and "areas of differing perceptions" from the DBO in the north to Fukche in the south. Its centrality to the entire LAC in Ladakh and proximity to the Spanggur Gap and Chushul make the south bank of the lake a secure flank for large-scale moves by the Chinese. Hence, it holds operational importance to both armies. The western Ladakh region of DBO provides a buffer against Chinese direct access to Shaksгам valley and the Siachen heights. India therefore, must hold on to DBO.

The Modi government decision to broadcast weather reports of Gilgit-Baltistan on Indian news channels and the pre-conditions set for Foreign Direct Investment in segments of the Indian economy have definitely upped the ante for the Chinese. India is a huge market for the Chinese manufactured goods and India hardly exports to China. China would hate to lose the large lucrative Indian market when the USA is pushing for tariff and barriers for the Chinese imports. India must put the trade upfront in the negotiations with Chinese government rather than the military and diplomatic options, Chinese are smart business people to understand the cost of loosing Indian market. Finally, Narendra Modi must reshape the cabinet; the minister's lacks global experience and political authority to drive large country ahead. Narendra Modi has proved himself a decisive mass leader by winning two successive Lok Sabha elections, his deputy has proved himself an articulate political strategist and task master in home ministry but the rest? Either they are not given space to work or they are incompetent. PM is not getting required support from the cabinet to govern India effectively and the country is suffering. Recent events namely Delhi riots, Shaheenbagh drama, Tablighi Jamaat show, Covid-19 crisis, Chinese adventure has shown that team Modi-Shah is over burden with work and they need extra competent hands to handle the crisis driven country.

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—Prashant Tewari, Editor-in-Chief

JUNE 2020

COVER STORY

Shaping Chinese Ideology

An Insight From The Opium war



P 5-15



15 Big, tough decisions marked Modi 2.0 first year: Nadda

24 COVID-19 And Environmental Sustainability

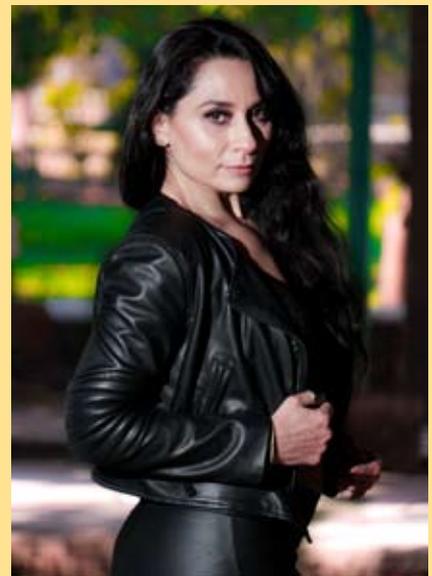
49

Physical fitness is vital for comprehensive success

32 Force majeure due to covid -19 in the context of shipping & commercial contracts

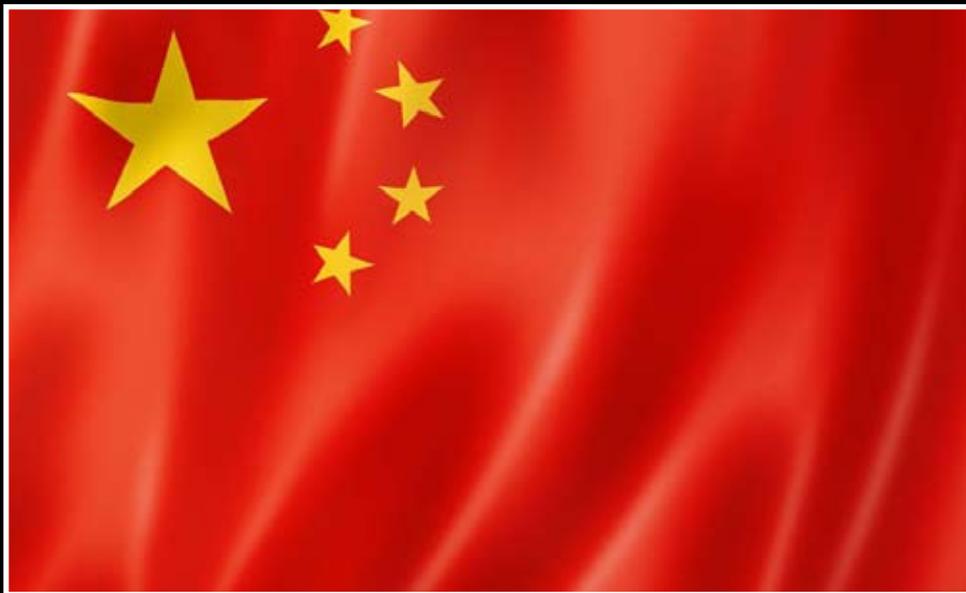
36 Operation Comeback

40 21st Century Challenges for Hindus



SHAPING CHINESE IDEOLOGY

An Insight From The Opium war



The entire world is witnessing a COVID19 pandemic due to the novel coronavirus the roots of which is believed to belong to the Chinese soil and therefore there are people who prefer to call the novel coronavirus as Chinese virus. Looking into the conduct of Chinese government it is quite clear that in the 21st century the Chinese have been involved in various kinds of treacherous activities be it an Anti-Satellite Test of 2007, aggressive outer space manoeuvres and stances, One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR, announced in 2013) or Chinese Debt Trap diplomacy. China is a big civilization like India and both the countries went through tough times of crisis due to foreign invasions.

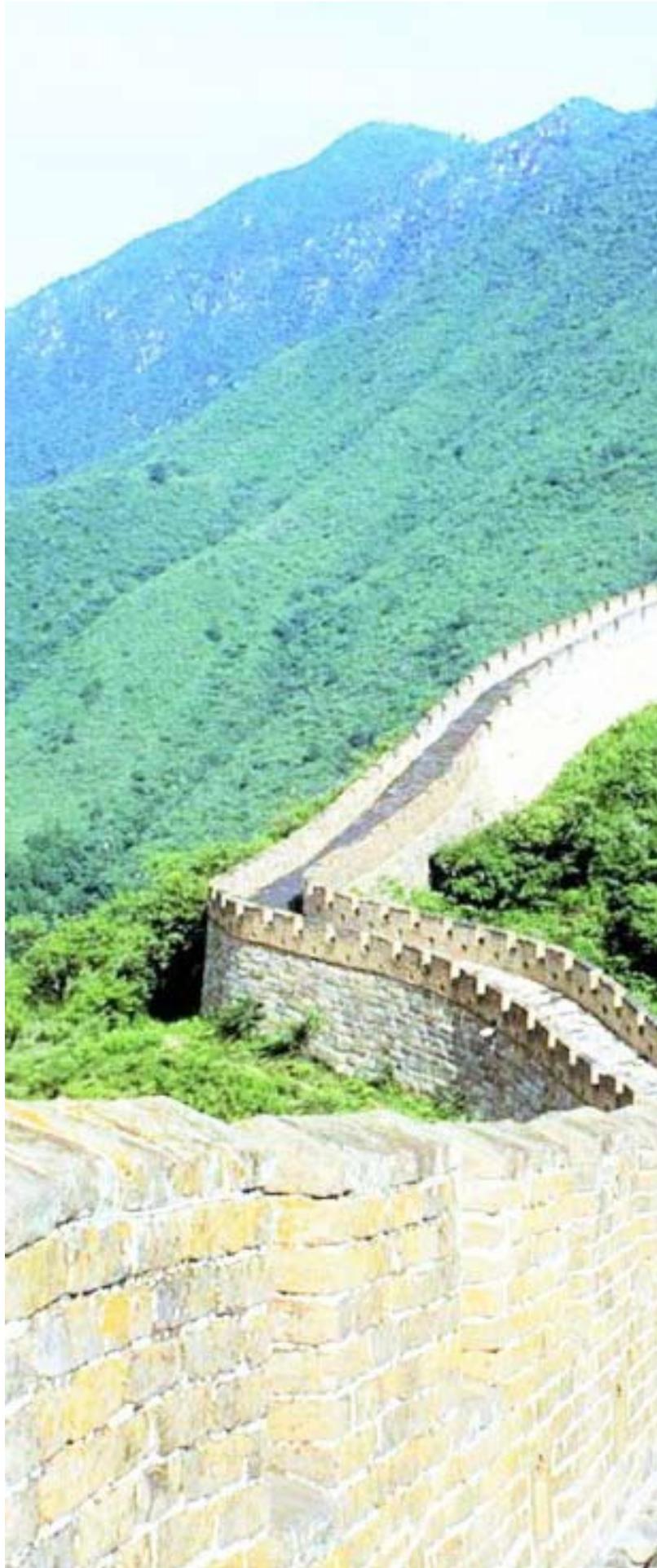
The present day China although appears to have a strong economy, it is still very much different from what it used to be. The ascent of China is considered as a serious threat because of its notorious activities, “Salami Slicing” tactics (strategies involving divide and conquer process of threats and alliances to overcome opposition and acquire new territories) and expansionist policies. Thus it becomes imperative to fathom the Chinese mindset.

The territorial claims of People Republic of China (hereafter PRC or China) have engaged Chinese into persistent disputes with its neighbours and other countries. The aggressive policies of China aiming at expansion of its territory have been a major part of Chinese policy and upon examining the early modern history of China we find that several events in the past have been responsible for shaping the national mindset. Historically, China has been the centre of global political power, having great influence in the present day Asia, as a result, the Sino centric perception in the history has been of Cultural, Religious, Social and Political dominance. The olden days Chinese considered them to be the ‘Centre of Universe’ surrounded by foreign countries and communities whereas the foreign countries were regarded as “inferior” as well as “barbarian”, especially “culturally barbarian”. Chinese, during those times, considered the Chinese Confucianism as something that was much more superior ideology than any other system. However, the changing paradigms in the early modern history posed new challenges for China which the Chinese refused to accept and this led to humiliation and misery for the Chinese.

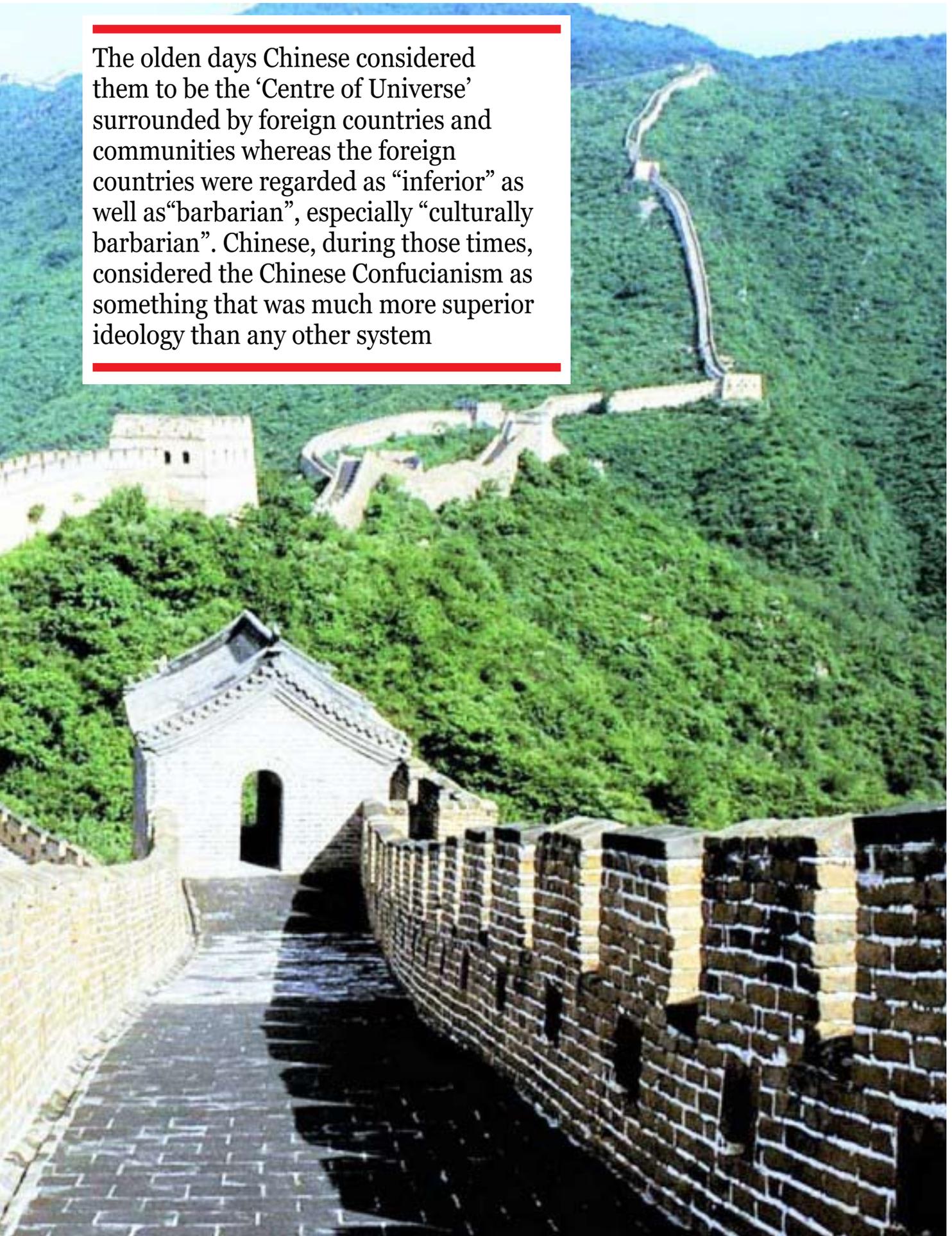
What gives China a sense of being China? What gives Chinese the sense of what it is to be Chinese? China, unlike the western state, is shaped by its sense of Civilization. China is a Civilization state rather than a Nation state and its history of years of conquest, occupation, absorption, and assimilation have nurtured the Civilization state of China. China is a new kind of paradigm.

Going back in the 18th century, the Chinese goods were in great demand in the West. As a result, the demand for products like Chinese tea, silk and porcelain grew in London. Chinese however needed little the West could provide. The Chinese Qing government mandated that goods can only be traded for Silver and this resulted in drain of wealth for the British in the form of Silver. The British became fearful of too much precious coin leaving the country and in order to rectify the trade deficit with China, the British introduced Opium to Chinese consumers in exchange for Silver, the strategy worked for London and Opium gave the western powers a chance to enter into the Chinese market which has long been impenetrable.

The Chinese allowed British to open trading station at Canton in 1737 after its arrival on Chinese land in 1637. The British through East India Company (EIC) established a trading scheme; partially legal and partially illegal for smuggling Opium into China. They opened a triangular trade of Opium-smuggling Opium from the British India into China. The British marketed Opium aggressively after they took control of the main producing areas in British India. The British exports of Opium to China grew manifold and its trade deficit with China turned into trade surplus. The Chinese started accepting Opium in lieu of precious coins. Americans also entered the Opium trade. The British, the Americans, the Portuguese and other European nations took to Opium trade with China because of their chronic imbalance with China. Despite several decrees by the Chinese gov-



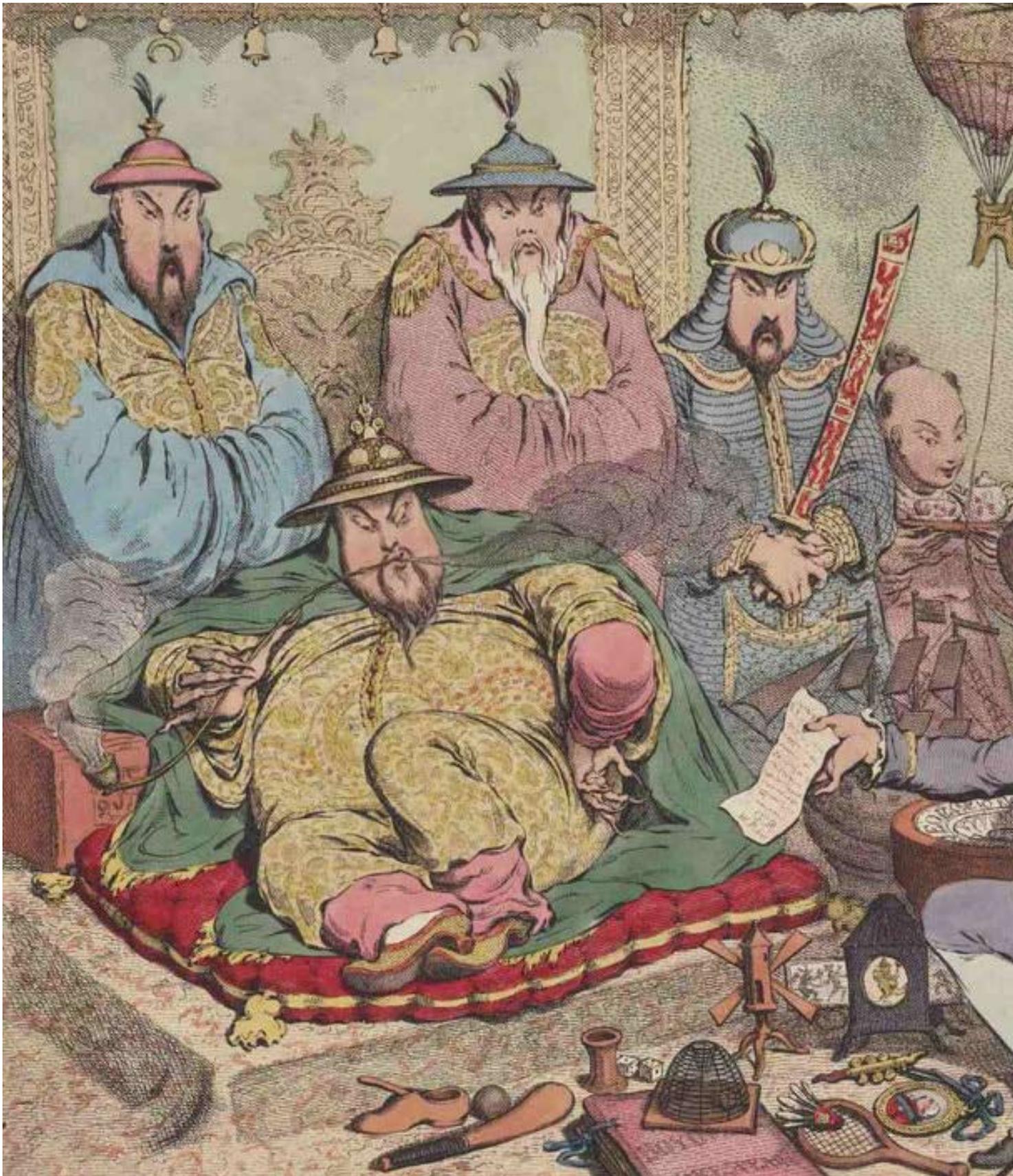
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ernment the smuggling of processed (at Benares & Patna) Opium in China by EIC continued. Though the Chinese imposed ban on Opium import, opium exports from India grew from 77 metric ton (by 1775 AD) to 300 metric ton

(by 1800 AD) and to 2500 metric ton (in 1839 AD). The Chinese delegation to International Opium Commission of Shanghai (in 1909 AD) reported a peak of 350000 metric ton of domestic production of Opium in 1906. The enor-

mous production of 35000 metric ton in 1906 can be understood by comparing it with Afghanistan which produces almost 95% of Opium today. In 2007, it produced 9000 metric ton of Opium. The Chinese reserves have declined,

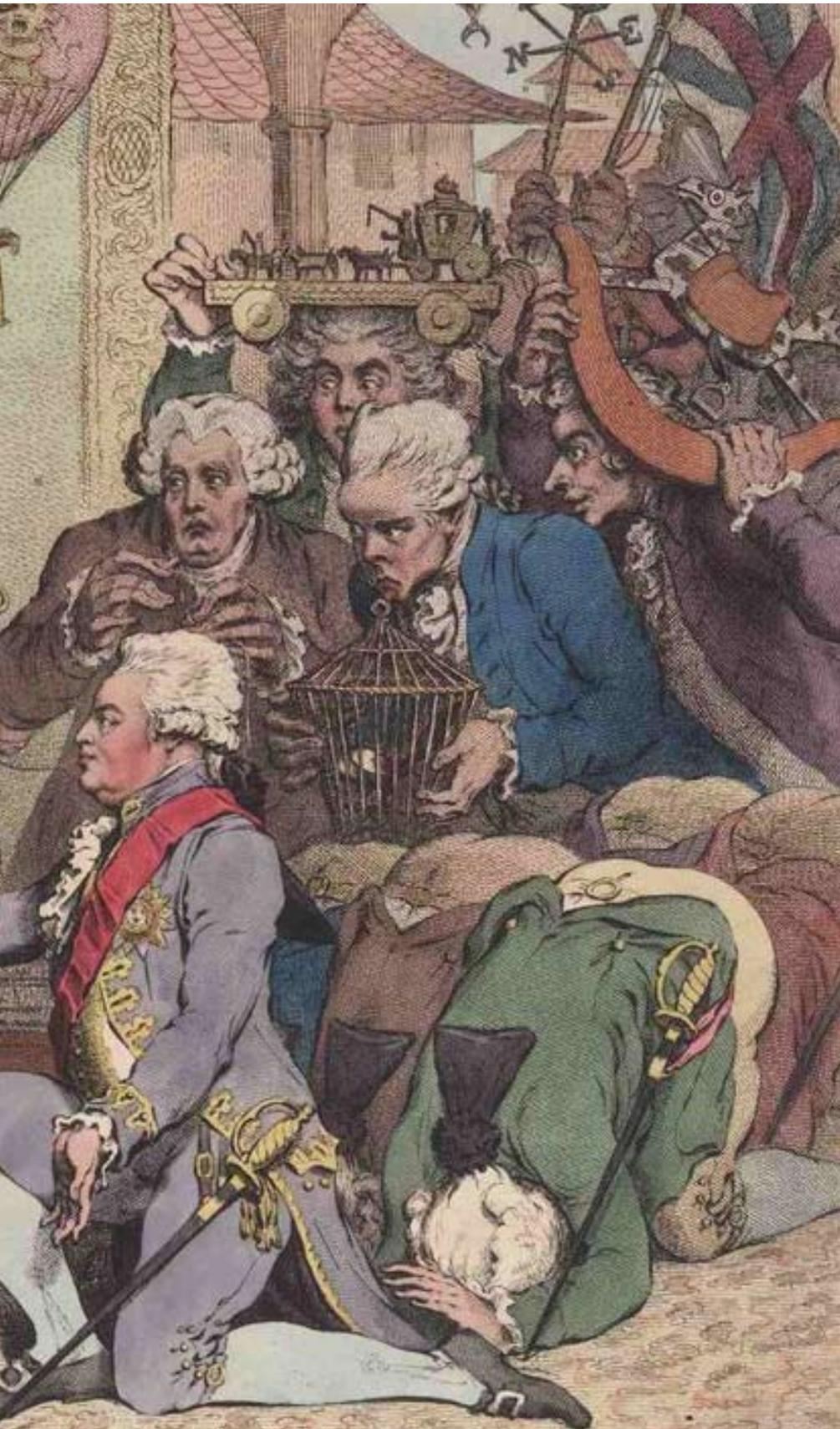


the number of Opium addicts in the country increased and too many people were loafing around leading to decline in the Industrial output. Opium trade has long term implications for the Chinese government and the society. The

Chinese emperor Daoguang imposed restrictions on Opium trade, the emperor's step backfired, eventually London became angry and responded by sending it's Navy to China demanding compensation. Conflict started and that

led to the First Opium War between China and British.

The British won the First Opium war which gave them more control over the Opium trade in China. The Chinese ports were opened for Opium trade and Hong Kong was given to Britain. The Chinese empire felt humiliated at the defeat by merely 44 British navy ships. The other world powers sought this as an opportunity to exploit the situation and enter the Opium market of China. The Second Opium war waged by British and French opened new ports for the British to trade Opium and ensured that the opium continues to generate wealth for the British Empire. It started when Chinese authorities seized a Chinese ship (for involvement in smuggling and piracy) bearing British flag. The British, the American and the French gained



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access to several trading ports allowing them expand through all of China. Chinese markets were flooded with Opium leading to rise in British India exports. The Chinese were forced to legalise Christianity and Opium. Furthermore, in 1887 the Chinese ceded the port city of Macau to the Portuguese.

The ruling emperor of China felt embarrassed at the unfavourable terms of surrender. European powers have formed a regional coalition in Asia threatening the Chinese historical superiority. The Chinese experienced a period of Social Unrest led by foreign encroachment and followed by Yellow river flood of 1887. In 1894-95 the Qing dynasty lost Korean peninsula and Taiwan to Japanese. The Japanese force of 240000 troops defeated strong Chinese



army of 630000 troops. In 1899, the Qing dynasty empress Cixi along with Boxer Rebellions (a peasant uprising aimed at driving foreigners out of Chinese soil) declared war against United Kingdom, Russia, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, Austria, Netherlands and United States of America. The nine nation coalition army defeated the Chinese imperial army and major cities were occupied and local people faced ruthless atrocities. The Russian-Japanese war of 1904-05 further weakened the Qing dynasty. The imperialist demand increased and the desire to see a unified China gave rise to revolutionary movements. The revolutionary groups intensified their activities in China. Qing dynasty witnessed frequent revolts demanding Constitutional Monarchy. In 1912 the Qing dynasty was overthrown in a revolution. China became a Democratic Republic. Sun Yat-Sen was declared the President of the new Republic. This was the first revolution for a complete change which China was to witness in 1949. Although the new government created the Republic of China it failed to create a unified China. The foreign countries remained neutral with the sole aim of protecting their interest gained through various treaties signed with the Qing dynasty. The United States was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the newly formed Republican government. It was soon followed by British, Japan and Russia. The absence of a central strong power led to the emergence of small provinces being

governed by warlords. China witnessed mass unrest for the next thirty years. The 1925 Civil war forced the Chinese to focus inwards. Japanese and Russian forces invaded the Manchurian region in the 1930's. In 1937 Japan again invaded China leading to continuous defeats for the Chinese. The Japanese killed lakhs of Chinese citizens and soldiers. The Japanese army committed mass murder and mass rape of the citizens of Nanjing (Nanjing Massacre), the then capital of China.

The 1940 witnessed an important event in the history of China. Widespread disparities existed between the wealthy coastal cities and eastern cities of China, and Mao Zedong, the then president of Communist Party took advantage of the disparity and raised an army. The poor peasants formed the majority of the army. They stood against the Japanese and it was after a long that Chinese were able to stand against a foreign aggressor. They drove Japan out of the mainland of China. Mao Zedong declared the People's Republic of China. In 1958, Mao introduced the Great Leap Forward policy aiming at industrialising the agrarian societies. All private firms were placed under the care of the government and millions of people were moved from rural areas to work in industries. The Great Leap Forward policy of Mao failed because of the overstated estimates of production, pressure on the Communist officials to perform and exchange of crops for heavy machineries with the Soviet Union.

This resulted in famine during 1959 to 1961. The economic decline caused by the Great Leap Forward has lasting effect for the next twenty years. Although the true power lied with Mao, he took a backseat in the government. In 1966, with the aim of comeback and gaining power he launched the Cultural Revolution. He motivated the students, frustrated peasants and soldiers to denounce and challenge the authorities. Mao Zedong consolidated the power under the guise of Cultural Revolution. For most of the 20th century the China is shaped and designed according to the will of the Communist government. The Communist ideology has its roots in the post-Opium era which is a period of humiliation and disgrace for China. The period from 1839 to 1939 shaped the current geo-political mindset of China. The Chinese consider majority of the treaties signed during 1839-1939 as unfair.

Undoubtedly, the Chinese bloodsheds and humiliation of past have shaped the modern Chinese mindset, therefore, Chinese hardly trust on the international agencies and foreign nationals. In fact for Chinese, the international agreements are aimed at keeping a check on its Chinese sovereignty. The present Chinese policy makers strongly believe that in the past they have been defeated because of their defensive strategies; therefore, the Chinese has sought the solution in the aggressive policies towards the outside world and have adopted the ideology of 'Developmental Nationalism' and modern day China has strong nationalistic system with the focus on becoming an economic power. As a result, the Chinese mindset and the growth cannot be simply understood with the conventional approach that is dominated by the western ideology. China is different, its past has been different and the future is going to be different and the modern Chinese mindset will mutate only when hell freezes over.

(Authors are experts on various Economic issues, Science & Technology, International Relations and Strategic Affairs. Dr. Siddharth Singh is working as Assistant Professor, Department of Economics in DAV, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India and Dr. Kunwar Alkendra Pratap Singh is an Assistant Professor, Department of Physics, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India)

LURKING DRAGON

Border Disputes Fueled By China in Recent Times



**Dr. Kunwar Pushendra
Pratap Singh**

China is increasing tensions with India at the border. In the Corona era, when the whole world is preparing to deal with the Corona crisis, what does China want to achieve through such provocative actions? The truth is that China is preparing to achieve several goals simultaneously by increasing tensions with India. China wants to divert the world's attention from Corona, and one of the reasons for increasing the dispute with India is the India's rise and increasing respect in world. Because of which all the big countries including United States of America are giving economic and strategic support to India.

Call it a craze to show the power of a dragonor expansionist policy. China's border dispute is going on with all its neighbors. China always shows eye to small countries, but showing eye to India will outweigh China. But even now, if China is increasing the dispute with India, there are many reasons for this. Why is China increasing tension with India? According to the defense experts, China's policy is to stake its claim at some place first. Then slowly strengthen yourself at that place, and then occupy yourself there. Under the pressure of China's communist government, the media there also acts like the government's horn. If the Chinese media is vigorously raising the issue of dispute with India, then it will be fueled by the Chinese government.

Why India is waging a campaign against every country whose boundaries are attached to it? Due to which his economic interests are threatened. In the South China Sea too, the impact of China's expansionist policy is seen again and again. But it is also a very big truth that the border of China and India is the longest disputed but "quiet border" in the world where no bullets have been fired since 1975. The two countries have always resolved the matter through mutual negotiations. But China has maintained enmity with the whole world during the Corona period. It is easy for China to deal with small countries, but showing India an eye can be so overwhelming to China, something which China would not have expected.

Recently China pushed and included Nepalese PM K.P. Sharma Oli in this mission, then Oli attacked India in his nasty speech given in the parliament. PM Oli said that Kalapani-Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura are in the trilateral Nepal-India-China and will be included in Nepal's map at any cost. On 8 May, India inaugurated the Kailash Mansarovar Road Link in script, which Nepal had objected to. The new map of Nepal has received approval of the cabinet on Monday i.e., 18 May 2020. On this occasion, Oli maintained, "Now we will try to get these areas through diplomacy, if anyone is offended by our move, then we are not worried about it. We will present his claim on his land at any cost."

India defended in response by asserting that the road construction has taken place in the Indian Territory itself, but given the close relationship with Nepal, it is in favour of resolving this issue through diplomatic means. India also said that both countries should now focus to successfully deal with the present pandemic of corona virus and later the border dispute will be negotiated. However, Nepal insists on talks at the earliest.

Nepal asserts its claim on areas such as Kalapani, Lipulekh on the basis of the Sugauli Treaty of 1816, although it has lost the original copy of this important document. Also, Nepal does not have the original copy of the 1950 Peace-Friendship Treaty. Both these treaties are an important part of Nepal's history and its foreign policy. This carelessness of Nepal will strengthen India's favor.

India has signed an agreement with China in 2015 to build a road from Uttarakhand to Mansarovar in Tibet. This road also passes through the script which Nepal claims. Nepal has opposed the agreement, asserting that building a road in scripture without Nepal's consent is completely unacceptable. Sugauli Treaty was signed between Nepal and East India Company in the year 1816. After losing in a war with the East India Company, Nepal lost a lot of its share. After the end of the war, the Sugauli

China pushed and included Nepalese PM K.P. Sharma Oli in this mission, then Oli attacked India in his nasty speech given in the parliament. PM Oli said that Kalapani-Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura are in the trilateral Nepal-India-China and will be included in Nepal's map at any cost







Treaty was signed by Parish Bradshaw on behalf of the company and Raj Guru Gajraj on behalf of Nepal and on the basis of this treaty the boundary line of British India and Nepal was fixed. In this treaty, the Mahakali river of Nepal was made the basis of the border between the two countries. However, in the last 200 years, the river changed its route many times, due to which the boundary dispute deepened. Due to the lack of original copies of old maps and documents, it has become even more difficult to resolve this border dispute.

At the same time, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 is very important for relations between Nepal and India. The treaty was signed between the then Rana regime of Nepal and the Government of India. Under this, both countries were asked to give equal status to Nepalese and Indians in most cases. However, some people in Nepal describe some terms of this treaty as unilateral and non-equal. On 22 July 2016, the investigation team that was formed to look into the matter told the Parliament of Nepal that the original copies of Sugauli Treaty and Nepal-India Friendship Treaty are missing from the country.

In 2016, when the talks between

At the same time, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 is very important for relations between Nepal and India. The treaty was signed between the then Rana regime of Nepal and the Government of India.

the two countries' special representatives (Eminent Persons Group) were held to renew the relations between Nepal and India and to change the 1950 Treaty of Friendship, the original documents were not presented by Nepal. The friendship treaty was signed by the then Prime Minister of Nepal Mohan Shmsher and the Indian Ambassador to Nepal Chandeshwar Prasad Narayan Singh.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs said, "The Government of Nepal

has today released a revised official map of Nepal, which includes parts of the Indian territory. This unilateral act is not based on historical facts and evidence. To resolve outstanding border issues through diplomatic negotiations is contrary to bilateral understanding."

China's influence in Nepal has increased in the last few years. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Nepal last year the time when he visited India. Jinping has offered huge amount of financial assistance to Nepal, and in due course, these funds will be utilized against India, so the border disputes between Nepal and India should not be seen in isolation.

Neither we did it earlier nor we consider it now, but in future, our soft power tag must be washed away and it must be made known to world, specially, our neighbours that we, the people of India are concerned for our reputation.

(Writer is the expert of India-Nepal relationships and International relations. He did his Ph.D. on 'Role of Mass Media in Development of Nepal Since 1947' from Centre for the Study of Nepal, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.)

Big, tough decisions marked Modi 2.0 first year: Nadda

The first year of the 2.0 Modi government's second term is full of historic achievements, party president J P Nadda asserting that it would be known for its tough and big decisions that have "changed" the country's face. BJP National President JP Nadda Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in its six years of tenure had corrected many "historic wrongs" and laid the foundation of a self-reliant India, which is on the road to development. Many historic firsts says PM Modi in letter to citizens PM Modi writes letter

VIEWPOINT

to the nation on 1st anniversary of his second tenure.

Nadda said Modi had given a new direction to the country's democracy with his far-sighted policies, dedication and the spirit of team India, and people's welfare and the country's interest were reflected in every decision of the government. "I congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other members of the government on the completion of the successful one year of its second term," the BJP president said. "This year of the Modi government is full of many achievements namely abrogation of Article 370, criminalizing triple talak practice to safeguard Muslim women rights, CAA is passed by the parliament, reducing wage corruption from the government." This first year of the Modi government's second term will be known for its tough and big decisions and converting challenges into opportunities," he said. "Modi implemented decisions which were awaited for decades. These decisions have changed





the country's face.”

BJP general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh described the government as “decisive, caring and visionary”. India marches on converting challenges into opportunities under a dynamic leader, a responsive government and a vibrant society, he said.

Jyotiraditya Scindia said that Donald Trump's India visit possible due to PM's vibrant leadership and astute foreign policy. JP Nadda speaks on fallout with Shiv Sena, dubs Uddhav govt as ‘unnatural Rahul Gandhi has limited understanding about COVID-19.

BJP chief JP Nadda PM leading from front, has announced world's largest relief package: India is one of the worst affected country in the world.

India is one of the worst affected country in the world. However, Nadda hailed the Centre's decision of imposing the nationwide lockdown, and said it helped in checking the spread of Covid-19.

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The BJP leader claimed that Modi's bold decisions helped in strengthening the country and made people realise the objective of ‘one nation, one constitution’. He referred to strengthening

of anti-terror laws and bank mergers as the key successes of the government.

Taking a dig at the Congress, he said that the party delayed the decision on the disputed land in Ayodhya. “Under the leadership of Modi, the Ram Temple will now be built as the government has already formed a trust for its construction.”

NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT BLUNDERS AND COUNTING ...

It has been a roller-coaster first year for NDA 2.0. While it has no dearths of supporters for its radical moves, here comes a counter view...

As we enter the completion of the first year of NDA 2.0 of Narendra Modi government's tenure, it is becoming increasingly apparent that a historic opportunity has been squandered. The Modi government – which was doubly blessed by a historic mandate from the people and three years of low oil prices, had an opportunity to enact widespread reform. Instead this became a government with questionable priorities and a lack of any legislative clarity.

The successes of the Modi government are debatable. However, there were ten critical missteps which will, without a doubt, define the Modi government.

1. Demonetisation & GST.

This would be at the top of any list for its sheer lack of success and the widespread havoc that it inflicted on the economy. While being taught now as a cautionary tale in business schools overseas, it enjoys the unique distinction of having failed on every one of its stated objectives (combating terror funding, fake notes and black money) while having wiped out jobs. Studies by noted economist Arun Kumar and the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy continue to illustrate that we are not out of the woods yet. Another stock was pushed in the economy by the faulty implementation of GST wherein the IT infrastructure was never ready to accommodate mammoth transactions trail to be generated in a large size economy like India. The cost of doing business was increased for the small vendors since the



CONTRARY VIEWPOINT

automation needed expert inputs hence the requirement of qualified accountant with respective business has increased the cost of operations. The brilliant idea was turned in a nightmare for millions of businesses in India.

2. The great farmer's unrest

Farmer suicides rose sharply dur-

ing the Modi government's tenure. In its final budget, the BJP on the demand of minimum support price plus 50%, gave a version that satisfied no one. In parallel, the Modi government imported wheat and pulses without thought – leading to the prices of domestic produce crashing. Add to this – the ill-advised venture to amend the land acquisition Act of 2013; to forcibly acquire the land of farmers.

They have marched and held large scale agitations thrice this year. They have brought the mortal remains of



their brethren, who committed suicide, to shock this government into action. The children of those farmers who took their own lives held peaceful protests barely a kilometre away from parliament. Not a single representative from the BJP Government deigned to meet with any of them or even acknowledge their presence.

3. Rewriting of the Rafale deal

The prime minister and his cohorts changed the terms of a deal to acquire fewer jets for three times the price without following the stipulated procurement procedure. When cornered with questions, the government chose to attack the opposition and cite rules of privacy which were contradicted by the French president in an interview to an Indian channel. The Rafale controversy attracts questions also because of the selection of a private party as an offset partner – one who lacked any qualifications in this regard, except for an obvious proximity to the Prime Minister. Although the government got breather from the supreme court but the selection of the private partner with sev-

In its final budget, the BJP on the demand of minimum support price plus 50%, gave a version that satisfied no one. In parallel, the Modi government imported wheat and pulses without thought – leading to the prices of domestic produce crashing. Add to this – the ill-advised venture to amend the land acquisition Act of 2013; to forcibly acquire the land of farmers.

eral controversies will be debated in the public domain for long.

4. Overpowering independence of Media

There has been an enslavement of certain sections of the media which simply choke on any criticism no matter how innocuous of the prime minister and the BJP president. If a channel is less than pliant, it is blacked out for 24 hours, its premises are raided, or the offending journalists are mysteriously made to go on sabbatical or removed

outright. Today the government has several mouth pieces shouting 24x7 for anything in the name of nationalism and ignoring their duty to criticize government, if they are wrong but the tread has reversed wherein the media is justifying the wrongs via media platform to change the narrative of every issue.

5. Weakening of institutions

The parliament is an inconvenience to this government which prefers to rule by fiat and ordinances. The prime minister rarely attends parliament, and

when he does it is more to give electoral speeches than to lay out a legislative agenda or answer questions raised on the floor of the House. The promised Lokpal is so artfully forgotten that an irate Supreme Court has to direct action. An audacious chief minister promptly upon assuming office withdraws all criminal cases against himself and no one blinks. Electoral transparency is promised while bringing in unaccounted funding through regressive and opaque electoral bonds. The CBI is in the throes of a battle for credibility. The list goes on.

6. Perhaps the biggest failure, the cultivation of hate

There has been a sharp increase in targeted attacks on Dalits and members of the minority community. What makes these attacks unique is the state endorsement to the attackers when ministers garland them or reverentially attend their funerals. The message of support is lost on no one. In fact, the only coherent thread running through

Abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, and converting state of J&K in two Union Territories can be seen as the agenda of BJP and implementation of muscular policy in internal security but the stakeholders of the state are left high and dry by this sudden move.

this government's term has been the other certain section of India. People who are blessed to be followed by the prime minister share only one other thing in common. They are defiantly communal and abusive. Almost as if they have official sanction.

7. The mishandling of Kashmir

Abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, and converting state of J&K in two Union Territories can be seen as the agenda of BJP and implementation of muscular policy in internal security but the stakeholders of the state are left high and dry by this sudden move. This government deserves the credit of having alienated the Kashmiri people from the rest of India through a poorly thought out engagement policy. For the first time, since the 1996, by-elections could not be held in the district of Anantnag and had to be delayed because of the tense situation. Eight month long curfews destroyed the local economy. Worse still, there was a marked increase (72%) in the number of our soldiers martyred in just the first three years of the BJP's term. The extremely inept handling of Kashmir deserves a study unto itself. India has isolated itself with the entire western democracies by pushing for aggressive plan in J&K.



8. A draconian Aadhaar and the failed attempt to deny citizens a fundamental right to privacy

For months this government argued in the Supreme Court against citizens having a fundamental right to privacy. It argued for surveillance and labelled privacy an 'elitist concern'. In parallel it struggled to explain why it ordered the mandatory linking of Aadhaar to all possible services from railway tickets to school admissions. The Supreme Court ultimately had to step in and severely curtail the domineering designs of the project.

9. Erosion of India's influence in Asia

A small island nation like Maldives feels confident in spurning India, Nepal has no compunctions about engaging with China as does Sri Lanka. Until five years ago, India enjoyed a pre-eminent position in the subcontinent with its voice sought on resolving matters within these countries. India has lost the faith of its time tested friends Russia and Malaysia while entire Middle East block is suspicious of India though the trade ties have balanced the bilateral relationships. It is clear that that influence has been eroded because of a foreign policy lacking any coherent objectives, except to promote the Prime Minister's cult of personality.

10. Jobs

When the government has to revise the methodology for calculating GDP to make its numbers appear artificially higher, when capital flight on an unprecedented scale takes place, when companies turn to external lenders to finance operations, you know the government has failed to create jobs. This is a dismal report card by any measure, but it is far from exhaustive. The sheer number of high-value defaulters who audaciously fled the country with public sector money, the almost cruel increases in oil and LPG prices, the lowering of the standard of political discourse etc.; these are just some of the several missteps this government will have to answer for.

The irony is that when the prime minister was campaigning in 2013, he promised to address these very issues. He has instead aggravated them to a point where it will take years to undo the damage. The prime minister likes to speak of legacy issues often. The truth is his legacy is going to be an issue of sizeable concern for himself.





Narendra Modi govt has failed India in its hour of need — both economy and people

Two months into this unprecedented health and economic crisis, it is time to assess the Narendra Modi government's lack of response to this disaster. Let us not be unfair to the government. India supported Prime Minister Modi when he first announced the lockdown, its preparation, timing and communication left much to be desired. The PM was decisive when a hard call had to be taken. Indecision or further delay could have landed us in a worse state than we are. In retrospect, we now know that our response was already delayed, but it would be unfair to indict the government on that basis. Global knowledge and awareness at that time did not warrant such a response. On balance, we reacted faster than most other countries.

It would also be unfair to blame the Modi government for all the mess that we face today. A largely unanticipated pandemic is bound to create havoc, even in the best of places. It is bound to be worse in a country like India, given the weak public health fundamentals and fragile response systems. An indictment of the Modi government must be careful about limiting itself to what could have been anticipated, what could have been achieved in our conditions. And it must leave room for genuine mistakes. Faced with a crisis of this kind, the best of leaders with the purest intentions will make erroneous calls. They must be criticised, but not indicted for bona fide errors of judgement.

Sadly, even after making all these allowances, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Narendra Modi government has failed India in its hour of need. The government has been clueless about controlling the health crisis, incompetent in handling its economic consequence and insensitive in dealing with the humanitarian crisis.

Let us focus on the health crisis. We

must not blame PM Modi for his early decisions in pandemic management. We cannot indict him for erring on the side of caution because he heard (as all global leaders did) conflicting forecast about the progress of the pandemic. But we must ask some questions nevertheless: why did the government not listen to alternative voices about more testing at an early stage? Why did the PM not

An indictment of the Modi government must be careful about limiting itself to what could have been anticipated, what could have been achieved in our conditions. And it must leave room for genuine mistakes. Faced with a crisis of this kind, the best of leaders with the purest intentions will make erroneous calls. They must be criticised, but not indicted for bona fide errors of judgement.

try to learn from and replicate the Kerala model? Did he allow political envy to trump national interest? Why did he not come down heavily against his supporters trying to communal the pandemic? Once it became clear that the lockdown was not breaking the chain or flattening the curve, why did he persist with the lockdown as the sole remedy? Did he



allow his ego and self-image to trump rational course correction? And finally, why is no senior functionary (not even a minister, let alone the head of the government, as is the norm in many countries) responding to the media's response on the pandemic? What is the future strategy? Is there something that the government wishes to hide? All these questions do not admit of easy answers and leave the country with the impression of a government that is lost but does not know how to admit it or ask for help.

On the economic front, let us allow for the fiscal constraints that the government faces at this moment, even though it is largely responsible for this situation due to untimely waiver to corporates and inflation of revenue projections. Still, we must ask why has the Modi government not done anything to stimulate demand (despite pleas from every economist who matters)? Why the continuous pumping of liquidity despite the fact that banks have failed to use the extra liquidity made available in March? Why has the government not addressed what the industrialists, businessmen, farmers and labourers were actually asking for? Why has the government made no attempt to raise additional revenue (despite many sensible suggestion) to meet this crisis? Why use this crisis to push through a number of policy changes on labour law, agriculture, environment and investment

that have nothing to do with the cause or solution to the current crisis? And, why not share the real economic situation with the country? Why dress up the "packages", that too in such amateurish ways, so as to somehow match the magical 20-lakh crore figure?

These questions lead us to a sad answer: the economic response of the fifth-largest economy facing its worst recession and joblessness is being shaped by a bunch of too-clever-by-half economists and packaged by an ignorant and arrogant political leadership. More than saving the economy, the leaders are focused on saving themselves and their wealthy friends.

Finally, let's turn to the Modi government's handling of the humanitarian crisis made visible by the migrant workers who have taken to the streets. Again, let us grant that given our size and deep inequalities, some degree of distress was inevitable. But we must ask: Did the government even try to anticipate this distress and plan to alleviate it when announcing the lockdown? Why was the government surprised by the scale of the problem of the migrants.

Why were there no special arrangements for food and income of the stranded workers for the first 50 days of the lockdown? What else did the government expect jobless, food-less and hopeless workers to do, except walk back? Why do we not get a report of this kind from any other country in the world, even

African countries much poorer than us? And once the government discovered, within the first week of the lockdown, the plight of the migrant workers, what did it do to address the crisis, except law and order advisories?

Why was the decision to start Shramik trains delayed so much and taken when it was actually riskier? The payment of the tickets was debated in national media everyday when jobless migrant labourers were struggling with zero money in the pocket to travel. Why the insistence on the fares for distress evacuation? Why did it take the Ministry of Home Affairs six weeks to issue a simple advisory about humanitarian support to the migrants on the road?

Insensitive would be too mild a word to characterise this shameful handling of the worst national-level humanitarian crisis. To call the Modi government heartless displays credulity. As India goes for a free fall, the top political functionaries are focused on political intrigue, blame-game and public relations. India's worst health, economic and humanitarian crisis is being handled by undoubtedly the most callous and perhaps the most incompetent government.

(Inputs from the two most intelligent critics of the government namely Yogendra Yadav, Salmann Khurshid articles. The views express are personal opinion of the writers)



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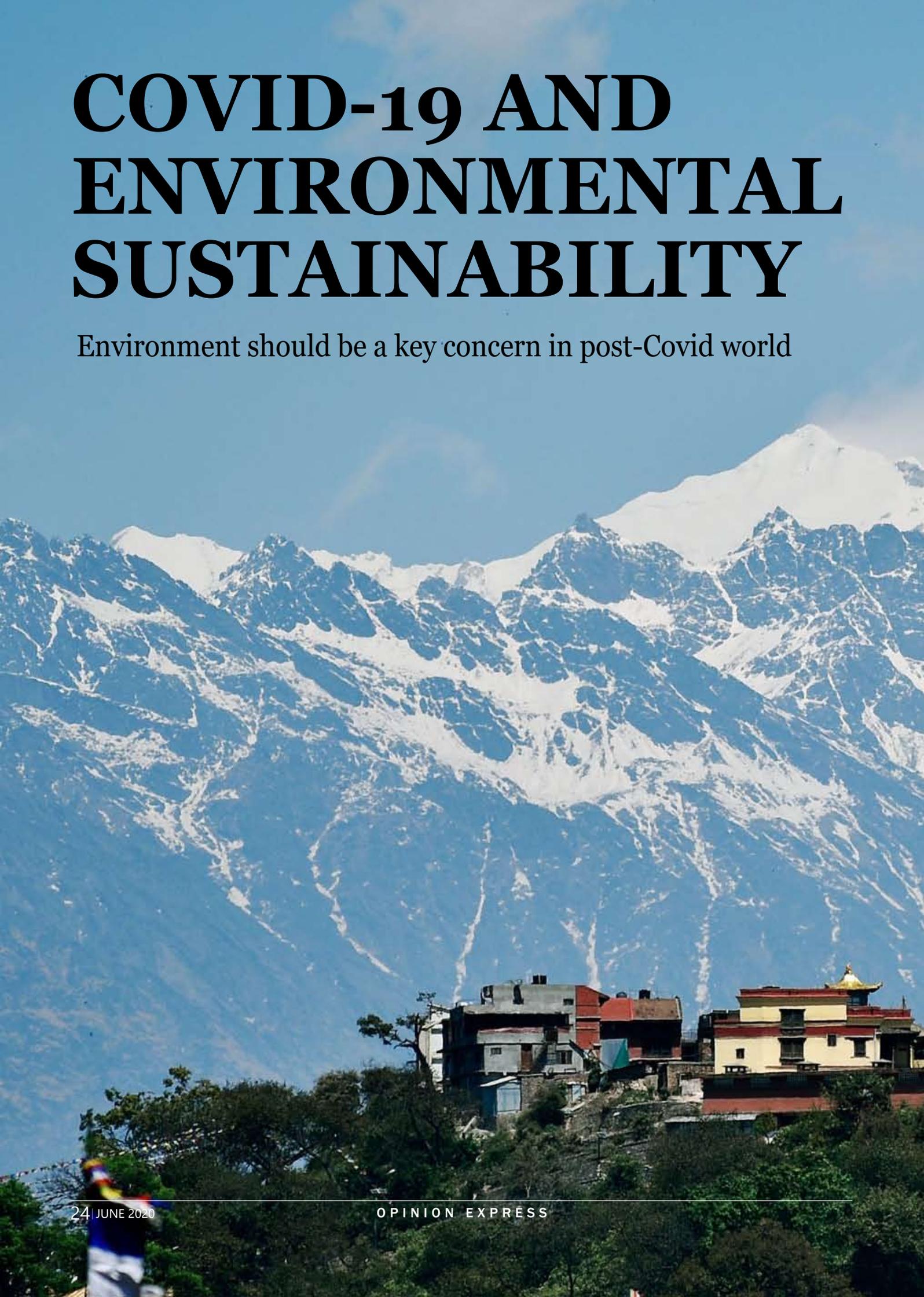


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COVID-19 AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environment should be a key concern in post-Covid world



Dina Nath Tewari



C OVID-19 pandemic and environment have a close relation. Throughout history pandemics/epidemics have caused large scale deaths, reducing human influence on the environment. Europe's Black Death, which killed about 20 million during 1347-51, led to drastic reduction in toxic lead pollution in the air for the first time in over a thousand years.

The UN environment Assembly in 2014, accorded environmental issues similar status to those of health, peace, security, finance and trade. A healthy and stable environment is vital for ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all. A clean and safe environment should be seen as a right not a privilege. But the environment on which we all depend is under threat from climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, natural resources at the tipping point and acidification of oceans. For our survival environmental sustainability is imperative, not a choice.

Climate change is a threat to life on Earth. Already, the

effects of climate change and the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans are starting to impact on water supplies, agriculture, forests, small islands, low-lying coastal areas, and the marine environment. Various human rights are potentially affected: life, health property, the right to water, and the right to food and an adequate standard of living.

Clean air for breathing is a fundamental human right but the world is facing air pollution alarm. Globally 9 out of 10 people breath polluted air. As per WHO record, more than 7 million people die every year. More than 570,000 children younger than 5 years die from respiratory disease linked to air pollution. According to World Bank, in 2016, air pollution cost the global economy, US\$5.7 Trillion - 4.8% of the total global GDP.

A scarce natural resource, water is fundamental to life, livelihood, food security and sustainable development. India has more than 18% of the world's population, but has only 4% of world's renewable water resources and 2.4% of world's land area. There are further limits on utilizable quantities of water owing to uneven distribution over time and space. In addition, there are challenges of frequent floods and droughts in one or the other parts of the country. With a growing population and rising needs of a fast-developing nation as well as the given indications of the impact of cli-





mate change, availability of utilizable water will be under further strain in future with the possibility of deepening water conflicts among different user groups. Low consciousness about the scarcity of water and its life sustaining and economic value results in its mismanagement, wastage, and inefficient use, as also pollution and reduction of flows below minimum ecological needs. In addition, there are inequities in distribution and lack of a unified perspective in planning, management and use of water resources. The objective of the National Water Policy is to take cognizance of the existing situation, to propose a framework for creation of system of laws and institutions and for a plan of action with a unified national perspective.

The global water supply, treatment, and distribution sector is a critical enabler of our society: it guarantees our food, sanitation, health and well-being. Without it, everything else in the €69.8 trillion global economy would fall. Global trends, however forecast 55% worldwide growth in water use by 2050, due to growing demands from agriculture and domestic use, all increasing the pressure of human activities on our freshwater sources. Furthermore,

water quality is declining due to urban, industrial, and agricultural pollution, impacting on the availability of water of sufficient quality for users.

Poor water quality, low availability

Globally 9 out of 10 people breath polluted air. As per WHO record, more than 7 million people die every year. More than 570,000 children younger than 5 years die from respiratory disease linked to air pollution.

and poor sanitation cause waterborne diseases. An estimated 1.8 million deaths occur annually in Asia and the Pacific due to water-related diseases including diarrhea and cholera (WHO 2008). Salt intrusion and higher turbidity from stronger, frequent storms and

erosion from deforestation provides favourable growth conditions in tropical estuaries for bacteria such as *Vibrio* that causes cholera. Other diseases related to water, sanitation and hygiene include intestinal nematode infections, protein-energy malnutrition, trachoma, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariases, malaria and dengue. Disability adjusted life years lost due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene in the region totals 24.78 million per year.

Water pollution affects mammals and birds using inland water sources: globally 24% of mammals and 12% of birds are estimated to be threatened by it (Pacific Institute, 2010). Freshwater fish and amphibians also face the risk of extinction. Changes in river flows due to infrastructure developments, which can reduce the transport of nutrients downstream, also impact ecosystems. Freshwater ecosystems provide more than USD 75 billion in goods and services that can be threatened by water quality problems.

The risk of floods has increased due to soil erosion, accumulation of solid wastes in rivers, and changes in land-use patterns affecting flood plains and water runoff. Because of frequent severe floods and droughts, India's water secu-

city is adversely affected by contamination of water and falling availability.

Rapid urbanization had led to increases in water demand and extraction of groundwater, particularly when surface waters are polluted. Extraction is one of the causes of land subsidence in coastal cities and increases the risk of flooding and damage to critical infrastructure and buildings.

Forests

A world without forests is unthinkable. Forests and trees make vital contribution both to the people and planet, bolstering health, livelihoods, providing clean air and water, conserving biodiversity and responding to climate change. Deforestation and catching or farming of wildlife species has brought deadly viruses they carry to humans. The global trade in wildlife species- in Wuhan, they reportedly ranged from wolf-pups to rats, civet and foxes, among others - and their sale in markets along with domestic animals. The recent exhortation by the acting executive secretary of the United Nations Conventions on Biological Diversity, Elizabeth Maruma

Mrema, to ban wildlife markets is testimony to this.

Biodiversity

Since ancient times, in the course of civilization, humans have employed resources from the natural environment, as a result, the environmental loads on natural resources have continued to grow, and disruption and fragmentation of the ecosystem and a decrease of biodiversity have been caused by human activities. It is now high time for use to take actions in ways to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity in order to share the blessings of the ecosystem and biodiversity and sustain our beautiful earth where diverse organisms harmoniously live together.

Adverse trends in biodiversity are likely to continue due to expansion of extensive agriculture, oil palm and rubber plantations, illegal trade of wildlife and plants, aquaculture and unsustainable resources uses as under:-

- Intact ecosystems and biodiversity are not equally distributed among the countries and sub-regions of Asia and the Pacific;

- Threatened native mammal and plant species increased by more than 10 and 18 per cent respectively, in the last decade;

- Three-quarters of all threatened birds on oceanic islands are in danger from invasive species;

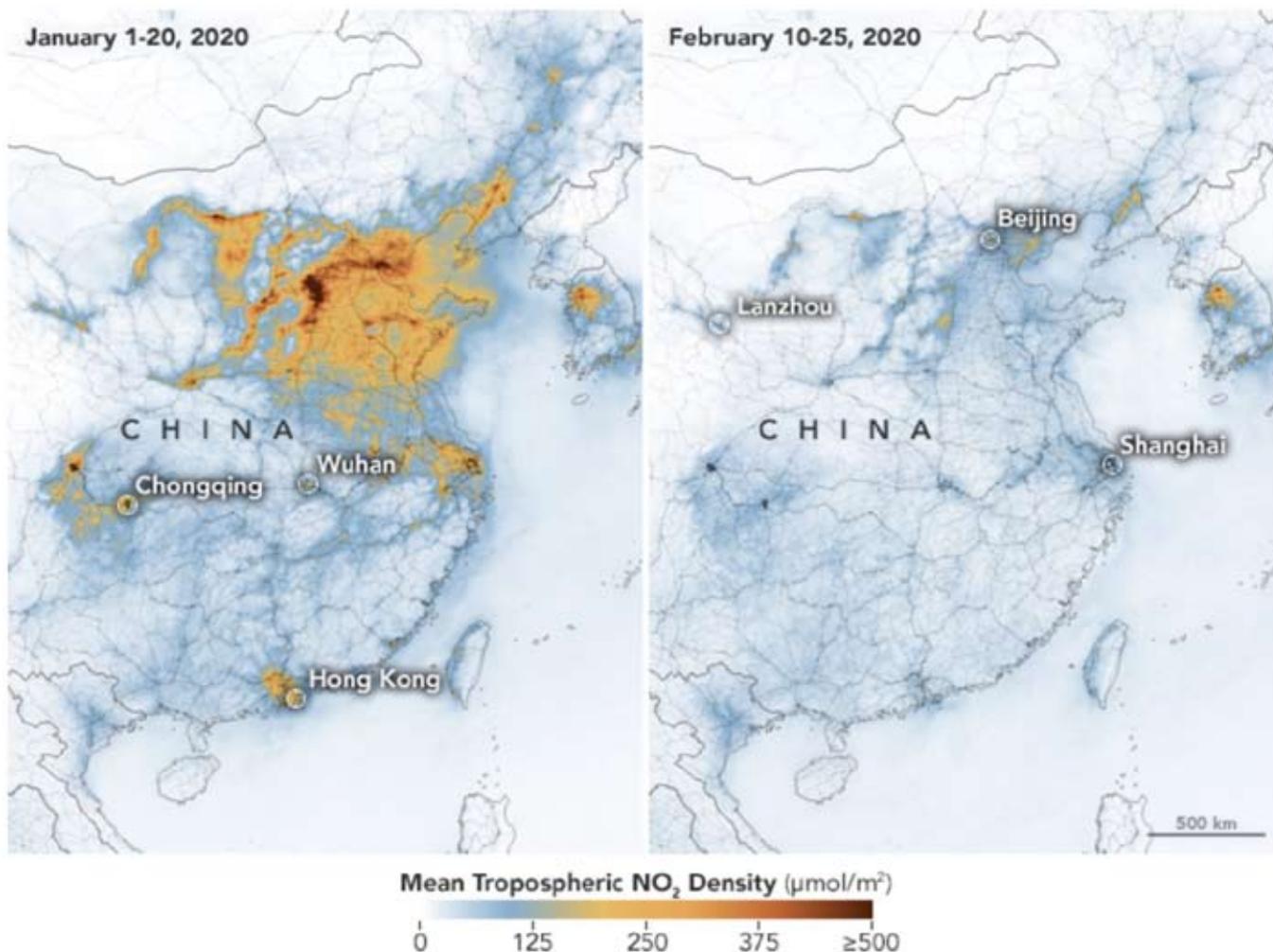
- Captured fisheries are shifting throughout the region in response to both overfishing and migratory stocks, especially in the Pacific Islands, and

- About a quarter of hard warm-water corals are threatened, mainly due to high thermal stress and dumping of plastic debris and micro-plastics hazardous waste in the oceans.

Degradation of biota and ecosystems affect the livelihoods of 50-80 percent of rural people in Asia and the Pacific countries dependent on forest products and fishery resources.

Energy

Universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy services require expanding access to electricity and clean cooking fuels and technologies, as well as improving energy efficiency and increasing the share of





renewable energy. However, progress in all these areas falls short of what is needed to achieve the goal by 2030. Increased financing and bold policies are required, along with the willingness of countries to embrace new technologies on a much more ambitious scale.

Faster uptake of modern forms of renewable energy is needed to meet an ambitious SDG target. The share of renewable in final energy consumption increased modestly, from 17.3 per cent in 2014 to 17.5 per cent in 2015. Only 55 per cent of the renewable share was derived from modern forms of renewable energy. The remainder represents traditional uses of biomass (such as fuelwood and charcoal), of which a significant proportion is used by the 3 billion people still using pollution cook-stoves. In absolute terms, renewable energy consumption grew by 18 per cent from 2000 to 2015. In 2015, electricity accounted for half of the increase (mostly from wind and solar energy); the other half was mostly bio-energy for heat and transport. Based on the current trend, the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption is projected to reach just 21 per cent by 2030, falling short of the substantial increase called for in the Sustainable Development Goals target.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the world to re-examine the interconnection between man and nature. Our planet is facing one of the greatest challenge to the health and well-being of

the people. And yet we are reminded of the value of compassion and mutual support. The current global pandemic threatens us all, and our response must be as one humanity, providing for the most basic needs of all. When we recognise so that all beings are equal, we automatically feel empathy and closeness towards all. Out of this all comes a genuine sense of universal responsibility: the wish to actively help all. Achieving Universal Health Coverage requires solutions beyond the health - including targeted efforts on food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, clean air for breathing, green energy, social protection - and environmental sustainability. We need to recognise that we share this planet with animals, birds, plants, and other living organisms. We need to understand the dynamics of this interaction and adopt what WHO has termed "One Health" concept, which adopts a multidisciplinary to attain optimal health outcomes. It seeks to bring together multiple sectors and combine the expertise of health professionals, biologist, veterinarians, virologists, ecologists among others in designing policies and programmes.

What we will need, however, is an outlook that seeks to harness our knowledge of science to work in harmony with nature to promote sustainability and resilience. The growing appeal of renewable power generation stems from the fact that it can harness nature without damaging it. And most doctors

treating COVID-19 patients vouch for the role of healthy living and robust immune systems as the best bet, to protect ourselves. Wellness advocates have a number of suggestions on how we may fortify our natural immunity even as we await the development and certification of vaccine.

A human society that is sympathetic and in harmony with our environment and where humans listen to and promote sustainability, may be an enduring recipe for a safer future. India has a long heritage of nurturing one's inner-self - Yoga and meditation have been adopted globally, due to efforts of PM Modi, as exercises for a more robust constitution. India also have tradition of dealing with frugality as a virtue and can easily relate to what ancient Greece revered as Gaia - dealing with earth as our mother. There can be timeless lessons as human society seeks closer harmony with nature, to take us on to safer trajectory in a post COVID-19 world.

Mahatma Gandhi had quite aptly said, "I bow my head in reverence to our ancestors for their sense of beautiful nature and for their foresight in investing in beautiful manifestation of nature with a religious significance."

Let us heed nature's warning for promoting environmental sustainability. It has required a pandemic to clean up the environment. It is now global community's duty to carry that task forward.

Collateral gains from COVID-19

A side effect of COVID-19 pandemic is that it has given us a glimpse of greener life where air is sweet to breathe, skies are blue, rivers are clean and birds sing louder than traffic. It could all prove as a passing blip. However, the pandemic has hammered in our collective vulnerability to Nature; if we do not respect certain boundaries, next time the destruction of an animal habitat may radiate a pathogen through humanity, it could be a worse nightmare. That is why experts are putting emphasis on flattening both the pandemic and climate change curves.

Climate Action

A recent European Commission Report highlights the links between the corona virus disease (COVID-19) and the climate crisis. It noted, "Experts suggest that degraded habitats coupled with warming climate may encourage higher risks of disease transmission, as pathogens spread more easily to livestock and humans. Therefore, it is important – now than ever before – to address the multiple and often interacting threats to ecosystems and wildlife to buffer against the risk of future pandemics, as well as preserve and enhance their role as carbon sinks and in climate adaptations.

During lockdown global greenhouse gas emissions have declined and air and water quality improved at multiple places. However, global GHGs emission declined only due to the current pandemic. In China as people stayed home and factories contracted outputs, emissions dropped reportedly by 25% which translates to around 200 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide, some forecasts similarly suggest that European emissions this year could also be nearly 900 million tonnes; less than last year.

However seemingly positive; though they are, these changes are in no way sustainable, as they have come not due to pandemic actions, but on the back of a global crisis, causing unprecedented economic disruption. This moment offers us a chance of thinking ways to save our planet from the impacts of climate change in the near future. A silver lining today is that many people around the world are turning to science and facts, rather than options or stands, for information on the coronavirus. This presents an opportunity to orient more people towards learning and trusting the science on climate change as well,

and thinking of innovation, solutions and preventive measures, based on such science.

This moment gives us all a chance to think of new and better methods, to reorganize our economies, in a way to combat climate change and unleash actions and investment towards a low carbon, resource efficient, resilient and sustainable future. People of today must inherit a planet where; forethought, planning and global cooperation can save us from yet another catastrophe.

Clean Air

The nationwide lockdown has brought about a significant improvement in air quality across the country, albeit in the short term. However, this phase of good air quality is lending itself as a real-life experiment to determine the lowest achievable pollution levels possible in a very short time. Attaining blue skies in a short period of one month has allowed us to take a long view of the problem, the multiple sources of air pollution and to imagine a future with clean air. It has allowed us to understand clearly which solutions will work, how and at what scale.

Due to stringent travel restrictions, shutting of most industries and halting commercial and construction activity, the impact of air quality improvements has become immediately visible across the world. Delhi across its 35 monitoring locations has recorded a drop of 49% in PM2.5 levels between March 29 and April 6. Significant drop in Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) ranged from 53-68%. Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) another polluting gas, has 44% lower level in comparison to past.

India, with about 18% of the world's population, has a disproportionately high 26% of the global premature deaths and disease burden due to air pollution. Moreover, one in eight deaths in India was attributable to air pollution in 2017, making it a leading risk factor for death.

The clean air that has replaced the smog in some of our most polluted regions is not just a glimpse of an experience that most Indians have almost forgotten. There is a more serious reason why this is worth paying attention to.

Initial research by Harvard's T H Chan School of Public Health has suggested that there could be a correlation between air pollution and the lethality of COVID-19. Through their findings, based on data from nearly 3,000 counties in the US, the researchers have

pointed out that a marginal increase in long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} could contribute to a higher fatality rate among those affected with coronavirus. The study showed that countries that registered on average as little as one microgram per cubic metre of PM_{2.5} more than their counterparts had a COVID fatality rate that was 15 per cent higher.

A similar study in Italy by scientists from Denmark's Aarhus University pointed out that regions in the northern part of that country, which faced high levels of air pollution also registered the highest number of coronavirus-related deaths (12 per cent versus 4.5 per cent in the southern part). This trajectory mirrors a 2003 study by the Univer-

In 2015, electricity accounted for half of the increase (mostly from wind and solar energy); the other half was mostly bio-energy for heat and transport. Based on the current trend, the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption is projected to reach just 21 per cent by 2030, falling short of the substantial increase called for in the Sustainable Development Goals target.

sity of California which found that the impact of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in China was more fatal in parts of the country that suffered from poor air quality.

This should be a matter of concern for all of us who live in regions where the air quality has perennially remained poor. Severe exposure to foul air inevitably means that most of us have gradually developed weaker respiratory systems and other conditions that would make us even more vulnerable to a virus like COVID-19.



India's situation is horrific in this regard. A study conducted by the Kolkata-based Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute (CNCI) found that the key indicators of respiratory health and lung function of school children in Delhi between four and 17 years of age were markedly worse than their counterparts elsewhere. Indeed, the figures were twice to four times as bad for children in Delhi than in other places, and were not reversible.

The National Clean Air Programme aims for an improvement of 20%-30% in the air quality by 2024, taking 2017 as the base year. It is necessary to address all major sources including transport, industry, residential, waste burning, road dust, agriculture residue burning, and construction, if air quality across large swathes of India has to be restored to moderate levels.

Initial findings based on real-time source apportionment of online PM_{2.5} composition measurements in Delhi, over the period of lockdown show that contribution from incinerators has dropped, indicating much less processing of hotel and food waste. The real time analysis also shows contribution from tyre wear on road dropping close to insignificant. This points to the ur-

gent need for guidelines on reuse of tyres.

Urgent retrofitting of flue gas desulphurization units in thermal power plants is necessary as thermal plants are likely to continue in the near future. Going forward, tackling the auto sector is crucial. In bringing the economy back to life, filling the gap with an electric vehicle-specific stimulus package could be an interim solution to improving air quality.

Waste disposal and crop residue

The link between waste disposal in cities and poor air quality is a conspicuous one, which deserves due attention and action. Solutions lie in efficient waste segregation at source followed by recycling – especially for industrial units.

It is evident that a large amount of crop residue after each harvest cycle cannot be managed through traditional means or mechanized harvesters alone. Focus on innovation in crop residue management to minimize stubble burning in a sustainable and effective way across different locations alone can control this issue.

As the government prepares the largest ever recovery package to place the economy back on track, undertak-

ing reforms such that it brings in less polluting industries, more clean transport and more resilient infrastructure will ensure that India is able to lock in a clean future and is better prepared for any shocks in the future.

Cleaning of Rivers

The way in which COVID-19 has quarantined most social and economic activity, is being called the world largest scale experiment ever. When the quarantine protocols are lifted, data collected during this experiment should help build better societies and economies. One notable area in which new baselines of what is possible have emerged is the environment. Specifically, consider the lockdown report cards of India's rivers. From Ganga to Cauvery parts of our major rivers have reported dramatic improvements in water quality, becoming 'fit for drinking' in stretches for the first time in decades.

No mining, no manufacturing, no commercial activity means no industrial discharge. This makes for swift and thrilling facelifts in cities like Kanpur that have several polluting enterprises along the river. Of course, the health of the nation needs such activities to resume, and grow even stronger than be-

fore. But that doesn't mean we have to pollute our rivers again. Several countries have been implementing industrial wastewater treatment strictly for half a century now and India needs to join their ranks at the soonest. It needs to protect rivers from untreated domestic sewage as well. The 34% reduction in faecal coliform reported from a Haridwar ghat in April may be on account of the paralysis of tourism, suggesting how appallingly human excreta are normally allowed to pollute the holy Ganga.

The CPCB, noted that there was notable improvement in water quality in the Yamuna. "Analysis results indicate there is considerable improvement in the water quality of river Yamuna with respect to DO, BOD and COD when compared with pre-lockdown and lockdown period," the CPCB notes. However, this was done on the basis of an assessment at only three locations in Delhi and the gains were significantly due to reduced industrial activity.

Knowing what needs to be done in one thing, doing it is another. But the current pandemic is a clarion call for walking the talk. Even before this, India's per person disease burden due to unsafe water and sanitation was 40 times higher than China and 12 times higher than Sri Lanka. Now the need to wash hands worsens the distress of not having enough clean water to do so. Don't waste a crisis, they sensibly say. It has shown that reviving the hydrology of our rivers is not just necessary but doable.

For ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, PM Modi launched the Jal Jeevan Mission in September, 2019. There is adequate water availability for drinking, hand-washing, sanitation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Adequate water is also available for food production, economic development, health care and boosting environmental sustainability.

Practices adopted and avoided while fighting COVID-19

Some of the beneficial effects of the lockdown and other measures may be long standing. Hopefully the culture of personal hygiene which includes taking showers, practicing hand washing, and avoiding spitting in public places, will stay even after the threat of SARS-CoV-2 has receded. Moreover, there may be a more widespread awareness of how infections spread and the differ-

ence between infectious and non-infectious diseases. Among the temporary benefits are fewer road traffic accidents and reduction of respiratory deaths due to cleaner air.

We can take heart in the remarkably decisive way in which our country has reacted. It is obvious that: our government can make quick and well-informed decisions; our administration can put in place effective steps despite the size and diversity of our country, and our scientists, NGOs, and doctors can lead the world in providing useful and timely solutions and information.

Then, Namaste has regained respect with world leaders endorsing it. A Namaste is characterized by humility and honour. To look modern, we dumped it and embraced the hand shake, fist bump and high five. When touch points are looked at askance, the "no-contact" Namaste caught on. U.S. President Donald Trump has rightly said that India is ahead of the curve in competing the novel coronavirus as they greet with Namaste.

Washing hands and feet before entering home is another healthy habit that is making a comeback. Again, it took an evil's knock for it to get back into our lives.

Across cities, parties are being rescheduled. Unavoidable ones, such as weddings, happen with restricted audience – say, 50 in some cities.

Grand weddings have become a norm with parents putting all their life savings into the ceremonies and even taking loans. The virus scare has set an example for how parties can be conducted in a reasonable and responsible manner.

The virus is an enemy of humanity, but if we can learn good things during the pandemic, it will be all to the good. Innovation is coming, and in areas we can't even imagine. The most innovative and those quickest to adopt change will reap benefits; those stuck in the past will become redundant. This sounds abstract but what could it mean in real life? The COVID-19 episode will hurt certain businesses and incentivize others (for example, eat-in restaurants versus cloud kitchens and takeaways; or Uber/Ola versus Zoom). It will both create and destroy jobs. Only the most nimble companies and individuals will survive.

There is a serious attempt to ramp up healthcare capacities, including hospital beds and isolation units. Manufacturing of equipment, from surgical

masks to PPEs, is being pushed. All this will serve us in the future, as part of the COVID-19 legacy.

Respond to environmental health risks areas

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and Tamil Nadu together account for about 65% of all COVID-19 cases (based on 8th May figure of 2020) and about 61% of all the H1N1 cases recorded in the last decade. At present also, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi have either led or being among the top three in India to face environmental health risks.

Widespread pollution and the impact of extreme environmental events are root causes of disease burden. In cities like Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi; absence of affordable housing is so acute that half of its citizen live in slums or on the footpaths. And it is in these slums the COVID-19 has struck most mercilessly. The migrant workers may not have fled to their rural homes if they had a decent roof over their heads and something to eat.

What is the point in telling these people who live in these shanties to wash their hand with soap when soap and water are luxury? For stimulating growth in these states we have to reduce pollution; ensure good shelter, clean energy, healthcare, educational facilities and jobs for all.

For rest of the states as desired by PM Modi they should boost their domestic capabilities for self-reliance in food, water, energy, improving health system, housing, building human capital, managing natural resources at the tipping point and combating climate change.

Priority has to be given for transforming food system for farmers, consumers, and the planet. Leveraging economic transformation to create more, better, and inclusive jobs to avoid distress migration.

If the coronavirus pandemic teaches us anything, it is that taking nature for granted has enormous costs. Let us remind ourselves of the massive environmental challenges that lie ahead and invest in building a resilient society, economy and ecosystem with environmental sustainability.

The author is President, Utthan: Centre for Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation (Winner of Global Sustainability Prize 2007), Prayagraj, India

Force majeure due to covid in the context of shipping & commercial contracts

India has 12 major ports -- Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Marmugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), V O Chidambarnar, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia) that handled nearly 705 million tonnes (MT) cargo in 2019-20. To ensure smooth cargo operations at India's ports amid the coronavirus pandemic, the shipping ministry has sought the commerce ministry's intervention for issuing advisory for recognition of electronic trading documents instead of "manual trade documentation" still required by many departments and financial institutions.

Citing bottlenecks caused in handling EXIM cargo on account of the current manual process, it sought the commerce ministry's intervention for issuing advisory to departments, including customs, and the Indian Banks

Association for accepting electronically generated trade documentation. Citing challenges faced in handling of EXIM cargo, Shipping Secretary Gopal Krishna in a letter to Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan said the inability of service providers such as courier agencies, general lockdown restrictions and the requirement of social distancing are causing severe impediment in issuance, delivery and dispatch of physical format based trade documentation, which is directly impacting the release of import containers and Cargo. Stating that the current manual process that requires surrender of original bill of lading (BL) at the shipping lines office, collection of paper invoice and payment by cash and collection of paper delivery order issued by then shipping line add up to 11.5 hours of person-to-person contact on an average, Krishna said it not only creates a high level of risk with the conta-

gious nature of COVID-19 but results in considerable delays in release of cargo.

Considering the present circumstances on account of COVID-19, the Indian Ports Association (IPA) under the aegis of the Ministry of Shipping has taken steps towards digitising some of trade related process through implementation of Port Community system (PCS).

1. Delay

(a) Quarantine: As operators, will be aware, 14-day quarantine restrictions for vessels calling at a port affected by COVID-19 are now widespread. The feared increase in the quarantine period has not materialised.

(b) Free pratique: Several port authorities are carrying out enhanced health inspections, which may lead to long delays in obtaining free pratique. Some ports also require advance re-





quests for free pratique. Vessel operators should work with their local agent to ensure that all necessary formalities are taken care of as early as possible.

(c) Congestion: The thorough checks carried out by local authorities, together with quarantine measures, can cause significant delays to various stages of the vessel's call at a port. This may cause knock-on congestion. In China, port congestion appears to have eased and terminals have resumed normal working conditions. However, the rapid escalation in Europe and the U.S. (with

Africa and South America yet to report serious numbers of incidents), will very likely mean similar problems arising worldwide.

(d) Pilots: Delays may be caused due to the unavailability of pilots or the unwillingness of pilots to board a vessel. There have been reported instances where local pilots have refused to board vessels arriving from places within a certain number of days (e.g., Samsun, Turkey) or requiring thorough disinfection of the pilot house before boarding (e.g., California). Vessel operators should liaise with their local agents to ensure that a pilot will be available on arrival.

2. Cargo operations

(a) Cargo availability: Restrictions may limit the access of trucks to the port. There were reported cases of unavailability of truck drivers to move cargo to ports in China. Equally, restrictions may apply to inland ports that affect transfer of cargo by river feeder vessels. So far, however, many border shutdowns exempt cross-border transportation of goods, although delays should be expected due to health checks performed on truck drivers.

(b) Lack of stevedores: A lack of available stevedores or restrictions on boarding the vessel may lead to slower cargo operations (and possible demurrage or other detention claims).

(c) By advisories issued in consultation with ministry of shipping, Directorate General of Shipping has advised that cargo interest should not be charged detention/demurrage till 3rd May 2020 and a free time should count after this date similarly in the ministry of shipping has directed the ports under it not to levy ground rent and demurrage charges and allow substantial concession to the shipping lines during the lockdown period.

3.. "COVID-19 proofing" your charter party contracts

As the impact of COVID-19 deepens, parties can start to use their experienc-

es to date when considering appropriate contractual provisions.

BIMCO's Infectious or Contagious Diseases Clause may apply if expressly agreed, assuming that (i) COVID-19 is "seriously harmful to humans" – a requirement that may cause various disputes as to the demographics that are relevant for the purposes of this clause; and (ii) it is COVID-19 rather than some other issue that gives rise to the risk of restrictions being imposed on the vessel. Intertanko's Coronavirus Clause has also been prepared specifically to deal with COVID-19. However, Owners are receiving serious pushback to both when negotiating charters.

So what common ground can the parties realistically hope to achieve?

- Ensure that COVID-19 is expressly referred to in the charter.

- Prepare also for a different strain of the virus causing COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) arising with a new name – i.e., extend the definition of "COVID-19" to cover this.

- Remember who generally bears the risk at different stages of a voyage charter – this is often a good starting point when negotiations become difficult.

- List the vessel's ports of call during the 30 days preceding delivery as part of pre-fixure negotiations.

- Think proactively: parties should



draft their contract with a focus on how the situation may develop before a dispute arises. The COVID-19 pandemic is still in its early stages with changes taking place on a daily basis. And what is likely to be more contentious?

(a) Safe port/berth: It bears repeating that, in most cases, charterers have an express or implied obligation to nominate a safe port. A safe port is one that is prospectively safe for the vessel to reach, use, and depart from. In the current circumstances, it may be difficult to argue that a port is unsafe because of COVID-19, so long as any risk of contagion is capable of being dealt with by taking reasonable precautions. But this may change.

It remains unlikely therefore that, save in exceptional circumstances, COVID-19 would render a port or berth unsafe, save perhaps where the steps being taken at the port to combat the spread (taking into account precautionary measures expected by an ordinarily prudent and skilful master) are inadequate, cause contamination on board, and lead to crew deficiency such as to render the vessel unseaworthy.

(b) Force majeure: By their essence, force majeure incidents are unexpected events. Given the global extent of COVID-19, it is now difficult to describe a COVID-19 related issue as unexpect-

ed, and so a general exceptions clause may be the better way forward. Parties should consider the following points when negotiating the contract:

In China, the authorities were issuing certificates to say that there was a “force majeure” event. That is less likely in European countries. It may therefore be advisable to agree that information from a mutually trusted source (e.g., the vessel’s flag state) certifying that a certain area has been affected by COVID-19 shall be conclusive proof. In that case, it is prudent to confirm with such source in advance that it can actually provide the necessary information in the form contemplated by the parties.

The party seeking to rely on the clause will bear the burden of proving that the force majeure event made performance impossible and also that “but for” the event, performance would have been possible. See, for example, *Classic Maritime Inc v. Limbungan Makmur SDN BHD* [2019] EWCA Civ 1102 – owners can put charterers to proof that cargo would have been available.

(iv) Alternatives

Unless clear and careful wording is used, there will be an obligation to consider alternative means of performance – do you want that?

(v) Notice requirements

Consider how quickly it will be ob-

vious that there is a COVID-19 event causing problems and negotiate any notice requirements accordingly.

(vi) What do you want as the outcome?

Do you want the parties to be able to walk away from the contract? And if so, when – immediately or after a certain number of days? How time sensitive is the performance? Would owners prefer to keep the vessel under the current charter at current rates, even with a period of non-payment of hire, or would they prefer to go back into the market to find a replacement fixture?

What options do you need if cargo has already been loaded? And, for owners, how much do you want charterers to assist in finding alternative ports for discharge?

(c) Costs: Or do you really just want a contractual provision to allocate additional costs which arise as a result of action needed to work through a COVID-19 situation? Charterers may be willing to share these costs, although their starting point, particularly in spot fixtures, may be that owners have entered into the charter with full knowledge of the risks involved and should therefore bear the risk. Even an apparently lucrative freight and demurrage rate may not truly compensate owners for the additional costs of performance in a fast-

changing environment.

(d) Frustration: With the possible exception of the cruise industry where countries are closing their ports to cruise vessels, the current issues arising from COVID-19 generally involve delays. Even in the case of quarantines, unless a vessel were to go from one port to another and be refused entry or suffer repeated delays, it is unlikely that these would meet the very high threshold set by English law to justify frustration of a contract. This may still change as the COVID-19 situation develops throughout Europe, the United States, and beyond.

But remember that just because it is more expensive to perform the contract than was anticipated when entering into the contract, does not mean the contract is frustrated.

(e) Off-hire: In a usual form of time charter party, the following off-hire events may be engaged:

The party seeking to rely on the clause will bear the burden of proving that the force majeure event made performance impossible and also that “but for” the event, performance would have been possible.

(i) “Deficiency of men”: COVID-19 is a particularly contagious disease. Under the current IMO guidance, a suspected COVID-19 case could easily lead to the isolation of a significant part of a team within the crew. If this happens, the off-hire clause may operate if this deficiency prevents the full working of the vessel.

(ii) “Should the Vessel deviate”: This provision (or similar alternatives) is used in owner-friendly charter parties (e.g., BPTIME 3, LINERTIME). If the vessel deviates to disembark or hospitalise a member who is suspected of contracting COVID-19, then the obligation to pay hire may be suspended. The same effect is achieved by off-hire clauses providing for

no hire to be paid when time is lost “for the purpose of obtaining medical advice or treatment for or landing any sick or injured person” (e.g., Shelltime 4).

(iii) Consider adding similar wording: Parties may wish to clarify that it will be justifiable to deviate in order to disembark and/or hospitalise a confirmed COVID-19 patient or even a person who is reasonably suspected by the master of having contracted COVID-19, even if such person turns out not to have done so.

(f) Laytime/demurrage:

Conclusion:

To sum up it can be said that Doctrine of Force Majeure is of strict application and provides an escape route in very limited and specific circumstances to advise on the applicability or otherwise of these doctrine and section 23 and 56 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 one must thoroughly study the contract, understand the respective obligation of the parties and master the facts of the particular case and ill-advised resort to the doctrine of Force Majeure can have serious Financial Consequences

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Corona Virus – Dos & Don'ts

How did the outbreak of CORONA VIRUS started?

The source of the corona virus is believed to be a “wet market” in Wuhan which sold both dead and live animals including fish and birds. Such markets pose a heightened risk of viruses jumping from animals to humans because hygiene standards are difficult to maintain if live animals are being kept and butchered on site. Typically, they are also densely packed allowing disease to spread from species to species.

The animal source of Covid-19 has not yet been identified, but the original host is thought to be bats. Bats were not sold at the Wuhan market but may have infected live chickens

or other animals sold there. Bats are host to a wide range of zoonotic viruses including Ebola, HIV and rabies.

What are the mild symptoms of the corona virus?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the main symptoms of the corona virus usually include:

- A dry cough
- A temperature
- Tiredness/lethargy
- Shortness of breath (in more severe cases)

Some patients may have “aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea”, the WHO adds. “These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell”.

PREVENTION

There's currently no vaccine to prevent corona virus disease (COVID-19). You can protect yourself and help prevent spreading the virus to others if you:

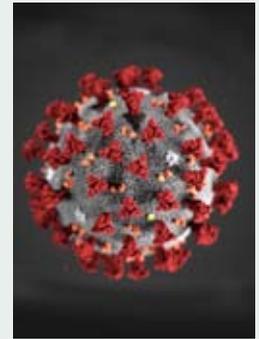
DO

- Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub
- Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze
- Avoid close contact (1 meter or 3 feet) with people who are unwell
- Stay home and self-isolate from others in the household if you feel unwell.
- Wear mask to cover nose and mouth.

Don't

- Touch your eyes, nose, or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- Do not gather in large numbers at public places.

The information is forwarded by Dr Vivek Dubey.



OPERATION COMEBACK

A feasible and innovative approach to reform, restructure jobs & alter economy after covid-19 lock down by mitigating the risks and challenges

Problem Statement and Background: As soon as LOCK-DOWN 2 was announced by the Prime Minister, restless work force of migrant workers started to panic. It served an alarm that it's beyond our tolerance limits to stay safe and cool at the same time by confining ourselves within four walls. Though PMO seems to be practical with relaxation norms for essential service sector and other sectors of importance: subject to the projected increase in positive cases and spread of

COVID-19 across India.

Intellectuals, CEO's of larger corporate organizations, economists, businessmen and experts have started discussing and debating on post world scenario after COVID-19 lock down on national economy with after effects on demand and supply cycle. As most of the economists project GDP growth for 2020-2021 between 1.8-2.7% for India, if this is assumed to be true then the lower and middle strata of society will be greatly affected. However, so

called experts have potentially failed to visualize the "structural reforms" with available resources in both government and private sectors for the purpose of improving productivity and utilization of workforce with prime focus on new-job creations with improved services to wider community who are the backbone for 5 trillion economy. Authors have put honest efforts to explain how to protect and save common man's "bread & butter" without significant losses to SME and MSME sectors. The approach dis-



cussed in this article covers the logical feasibility and approach to a faster economic recovery and bringing the economy back in track without hampering the interests of all strata and sectors of the pyramid economy.

Present Scenario

GOVERNMENT SECTORS Including all central, state, PSU's, banks, insurance, education, national research laboratories, railways and public transport. Under any catastrophic or epidemic event, public servants, bureaucrats, police personnel are empowered and mostly result in imbalance of power to serve "common people". There is another class of NGOs who also collect funds in the name of the poor to provide relief and preliminary measures to bring back their routine life on track. This situation normally affects the state and nation beyond any boundaries of caste, creed, class and economics. As a result collateral damage is in the form of loss of lives, livelihood and jobs for time being. This is a result of utilization of public services and their manpower

utilization.

PRIVATE SECTORS including manufacturing, organised, unorganized hospitality, retail, aviation, daily needs, essential services, supply chain, blue collar and daily wage workers. Most of the unorganized private sectors have the migrant and daily wage workers whose livelihood and earnings depends the productive days in a month, without any substantial savings leading to hardships that results in frustration and agitation. With a circular economy at halt and near to zero demand and supply, results are quite evident on people and economy. Nothing is above human life and the objective of lock down due to COVID-19 is to safeguard citizen of nation which supersedes the economy.

Major Issues Which Arise Out Of Catastrophic and Epidemic Events:

- Delayed Normalisation: It takes substantial amount of time to normalise with backlog and same workforce, which results in a nightmare for common man to get the benefits and get

things done on time [such as government scheme benefits, legal matters, documentation etc]

- Demand and Supply uncertainty: Fear of stock outs and non-availability of essential items due to cash flow, non availability of labour, lack of enough raw material and resources. It also impacts the household budget and creates a sense of fear among lower and middle class strata due to constrained budgets and cash flow. It also impacts the academics and education.

- Government budget gets totally haywire due to a jolt in economy and impaired export and deficit as priority is on severance and subsidies under various schemes to compensate the loss of livelihood. As priority changes, will disturb GDP performance and as a result the capital market sinks to the lowest level with longer recovery time.

- All possibilities exist about administrative irregularities in allocation and utilization of supportive resources made available under disaster management actions.

Major critical reason analysis on above referred issues for poor productivity

- There is no provision of stand by govt service platform availability under normal working days. During disaster periods such platforms are more or less out of function, so pending workload increases and govt fails to satisfy the common man's.

- Normal working hours of govt employees or private sectors as per norms is 8 hrs per day, inclusive of lunch and tea breaks (45 min to 1 hr/8 hrs work). It is extremely low to meet the expectation during any crisis.

- Productivity variation in efficacy of govt offices, due to prolong break period than prescribed, along with late opening and early closing windows directly offers great dissatisfaction to the common man. It is also a fact that about 75-80% class III/IV employees are engaged in additional activity to generate additional income [share market, Insurance/postal services agencies, etc]

- Efficiency variation during recession break period is varied however industries have to managed efficiency till end of the shift. As per factory act norms, minimum labour efficiency acceptable is 80%, means productivity will greatly vary.

- It is observed, both in government & private sectors, officer's cadre work more hours than class III/IV level cadre.





Innovative solutions to above issues and to improve better productivity:

20 to 25% time loss per shift per employee, just in lunch & tea breaks is the mindset to enjoy more time than permitted, particularly in government sectors and in private sectors permissible and acceptable minimum efficiency level [such norms missing in government] directly impacts on productivity per unit cost of a product / service offered. Deep thoughts are given to eliminate non-productive contributing factors, how unnecessary and indirect breaks can be eliminated through restructuring system norms, keeping in mind following objectives

- To offer job profiles, which have minimum potential to sustain a family of 4 [2+2] with salary/wages.
- To create additional jobs, to offer more hours working government service platforms for common man.
- To promote self employment culture by the way of limited fixed income under flexible hours job opportunities.

Following reforms are suggested to implement

- Restructuring the present system of time schedules from 8 hrs working to 6 hrs working without affecting present way of working in terms of methods & performance measurements.
- Only one tea break in 6-hrs working schedules.
- Government platforms in service sectors and involved in public dealing

to be run in TWO shifts working like schedules of secondary schooling. for e.g. Ist 7am to 1pm & IInd 1.30pm to 7.30 pm.

- Officer cadre to work 10-12 hours as usual and to monitor both shift.
- Salary/wages to be reduced as per revised framework of working i.e 20-25% in Basic Pay.
- For running two government funded shifts, all service platforms will create new jobs equivalent in the numbers of available employment in the sectors. [12-15 crores employment class III/IV].
- 50% post as per earlier point, recruitment to be done on central platform with financial burden and till the period of establishment. Later on burden can be transferred to respective state authority.
- 50% post to be filled up under the scheme of learning with earning for the students of higher education as an “Internship with stipend” by the respective state authority with financial support by central government for initial couple of years.
- For industries shift timings 4 shifts per 24 hrs running industries should be allowed. MSME assumed to be running two shifts between 7am to 30pm.
- Wages/salary to be re fixed as new schedule timings as per their policy matter. Government may extend financial support to sustain new recruits in similar way as referred above and as per organization policy. 50% vacancy to be filled up as per government apprentice

act [financial support by central government]

- With 60% industrial sickness rate on registered 6.5 crores registered MSME having average employment labour force 15 /MSME can create and offer 10 Crores+ of additional jobs.
- Amendments to Factory Act 1947 and Service rules applicable to govt employees to be made by the concern.

Hence 20-25% additions in jobs will create at least 20 CRORES JOBS [Present strength of government job is @ 10-12% of population & MSME jobs are 25-30% of population] in government and private sector.

COVID-19 epidemic has put global economy and every individual is suffering, so it is the perfect opportunity to reform existing old system of working and accountability.

CONCLUSIONS

- Innovative reform as suggested can improve performance efficiency of government offices and can offer more hours per day services to common man.
- Young minds will get opportunity to serve nation in different ways and means. It will educate private sectors on manpower utilization.
- Under elimination of non-productive timings industry costing will reduce and better products can be achieved.
- Employees [iii/iv class] doing side business will get now more time to increase the business so may create new employments and under freedom of willingness to choices of work content will lead to reduction in events of mis-administration.
- Hawkers/lariwala business dependents on such govt servicing platforms, now will get more business due to increased timings of government.
- There is no need to waste official leave for own need of govt service platforms for any employees either govt or private sectors due to two shift running govt service platforms. Minimum 3-4 leave wastage reduced per employee, how many hrs more working made available on total scale of employees in nos. An important boost towards achieving 5 trillion economy.

Inputs from the following experts Dhiren Shah / Dr Dhananjay Bhatt / Arvind Jani and contact email are in respective order sunsmidhi@gmail.com / drdvhbhatt@gmail.com / arvindjani69@yahoo.com

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The journey of passion continues with your blessings as we enter our 20s

21st Century Challenges for Hindus

Hindu must rise to the challenge in 21st century world

François Gautier

Every 6th person on this Planet is a Hindu and Hindus still constitute the overwhelming majority in India – nearly 80% of the population. Humanity needs thus to re-discover the wonder that is Hinduism, the oldest spirituality still in practice in the world. It is also true that Hindus must rise to the challenges of this second millennium. Here they are – in order of difficulty.

Break the Polytheist image. One of the most enduring clichés about Hinduism is that Hindus adore a multitude of gods and goddesses, which makes them heathens in the eyes of Christians, thus good to be converted to the ‘true’ God, often with unethical financial baits; & ‘kafirs’ for Muslims from all over the world, particularly from neighbouring countries, such as Pakistan, which encourages them to wage a jihad on India. Yet, Hinduism, whether you want to call it a religion or a spiritual system, is without doubt one of the most monotheist creeds in the world, because it always recognized that the One is Many and that He incarnates Himself or Herself in a multitude of forms – hence the million of gods & goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. Vedic Sages (from the Vedas, the oldest and most sacred Scriptures of Hinduism) had understood that man has to be given a multiplicity of different approaches to the Unfathomable. And truly, for the Hindus, the Divine cannot be “this” or “that” – neti,





neti. In its essence, He cannot be several – or even one – and thus can never be perfectly seized by the human mind. Indeed, Hindus, who were once upon a time the best dialecticians in the world (and this is maybe why they are today the top software programmers of this planet), were able to come-up with this kind of equation: a) God is in the world; b) the world is in God; c) the world is God; d) God and the world are distinct; e) God is distinct from the world, but the world is not distinct from God; f) it is impossible to discern if the world is distinct from God or not... Never has the unique nature of Hindu polytheism been better defined. Hindus in the world need to emphasize to their western brothers and sisters that they have also always recognized the divinity of other religions, as their concept of the avatar (the different forms that the Divine takes at different times to incarnate Himself or Herself in a human form) helped them to accept the reality of other prophets, masters or gurus. It is, for instance, perfectly acceptable for an ordinary Hindu to have on his wall the image of Krishna, alongside the one of Buddha, one of the Christ, with a few photos of the Mecca or even John Fitzgerald Kennedy ! And Hindus have always worshipped at non-Hindu places, such as Velangani, the Christian seat of pilgrimage of South India, or some Sufi shrine in Kashmir or Rajasthan. It should be said too that Hindus nev-

er tried to convert others to their own religion, not even by peaceful means, as the Buddhists did all over Asia; and their armies never but oh, never, set to

It is, for instance, perfectly acceptable for an ordinary Hindu to have on his wall the image of Krishna, alongside the one of Buddha, one of the Christ, with a few photos of the Mecca or even John Fitzgerald Kennedy ! And Hindus have always worshipped at non-Hindu places, such as Velangani, the Christian seat of pilgrimage of South India, or some Sufi shrine in Kashmir or Rajasthan.

conquer other nations to impose their own culture and religion, as Islam and Christianity did, often in a bloody manner. Thus, Hindus in the West, need to be able to counter in a knowledgeable manner, verbally or in writing (letters to editors, etc.) this wrong polytheist image which has harmed them.

Dispel the image of poverty attached to India. One of the reasons Hindus are not taken too seriously abroad, is that their country, India, is always associated with poverty. True, there is still poverty in India, social inequality, but since 1947, thanks to the Green Revolution, there has been no famine. Hindus in the West can always counter this pervading untruth in the mind of the English, by stating that according to British records, one million Indians died of famine between 1800 and 1825; 4 million between 1825 and 1850; 5 million between 1850 and 1875; and 15 million between 1875 and 1900. Thus, 25 million Indians died in one hundred years under the benevolent rule of the British Raj! Poverty in India is also commercially exploited by Hollywood and writers. A book such as 'The City of Joy', by Frenchman Dominique Lapierre, which was a huge success worldwide, gives the impression that India is a vast slum, which is absolutely untrue – and the author, who often comes to India, had to know that he was inducing his readers in error. As for the film "Slumdog Millionaire", which raked-up so many



Oscars, it is even more perverse: it says things which are false, portrays situations that are untrue, such as the young boy throwing himself in excrements, to get an autograph of India's film star Amitabh Bacchan & should have been boycotted by Hindus. Yet, India is a wealthy country. It is said, even today, because of the socialist policies of previous governments and the heavy taxation, that half of India's money is in the black. The poverty is only there because of the mismanagement, the dishonesty, and the inheritance of wrong structures. For Indians must be with some of the best savers in the world. And they don't hoard in abstract concepts: they go in for solid gold, land, cash – and that from the little shopkeeper to the business magnate. As economic liberalisation is happening in India at this very moment, the rise of India as a superpower will herald the rise of the status of Hindus in the West and all over the world, for today the assessment that every industrial nation in the world casts on another country, is primarily economical. Thus China is respected so much today in the world, not for its political power, which is overshadowed by immense Human Rights abuses (Mao

Caste is still a curse that hangs around India's neck. While it is true that 75% marriages are still arranged in India, Hindus in the US, UK and elsewhere, need to whisper in the ears of their western friends that the Indian Government has made tremendous efforts since 1947 to uplift the lower castes.

Tse Tung killed 3 million of his own people during the Cultural revolution and it has been calculated that one million Tibetans have been murdered by the Chinese), but by its economic clout. In the same way, India's image, whose

PIB has now overtaken China's, will shed many of the prejudices attached to her, when the world takes notice of the huge investment possibilities there.

Explain the caste system to westerners. Caste is still a curse that hangs around India's neck. While it is true that 75% marriages are still arranged in India, Hindus in the US, UK and elsewhere, need to whisper in the ears of their western friends that the Indian Government has made tremendous efforts since 1947 to uplift the lower castes. And it has succeeded in great measure. Tell them that your present Prime Minister comes from one of the lowest castes and was a tea seller, that some of today's Indian Chief Ministers are untouchables, or that one of India's best known saints, Amrita Anandamayi, who has hundreds of thousands of disciples in the US, UK, & millions all over the world, and has built hospitals, universities, housings for the poor, comes from the lowest caste possible in Kerala.

You can also ask your British friends if the caste system is really that worse than the huge class differences you can see nowadays in Europe or the USA!

Dispel the notion that Hindus can be fundamentalists and violent. Hindus

need to repeat again and again to their British brothers and sisters that the only country in the world where Jews were never persecuted is India. Tell them that the genius of this country lies in its Hindu ethos, or rather in the true spirituality behind Hinduism. Explain that the average Hindu that you meet in a million villages, possesses this simple, innate spirituality in his or her genes and accepts your diversity, whether you are Christian, Muslim, or Jain, Arab, French or Chinese. It is this 'Hindu-ness' (which cannot be experienced if you sit in Delhi most of the time) that makes most Indian Christians different, from say a French Christian, or an Indian Muslim unlike a Saudi Muslim. Also that Hindus have given refuge to all persecuted minorities of the world, whether the Syrian Christians, the Parsis (Iranian worshippers of Zarathustra), the Jews, the Armenians, or today the Tibetans (the real Tibet is in India now, as the one in the hands of the Chinese has lost much of its Tibetan character). Thus you cannot find less fundamentalist than a Hindu in this world and Hindus in the US, UK & Europe, should immediately react when they read articles in the British Press (often unfortunately from New Delhi-based correspondents) trying to equate Islamic terrorism, which blow-up innocent civilians, to angry ordinary Hindus who burn churches without killing anybody. Tell them that however reprehensible was the destruction of the Babri Masjid (a Mosque built in the 15th century by Muslim invader Babar on a very ancient and holy Hindu temple dedicated to the God Ram), no Muslim was killed in the process; compare this with the 'vengeance' bombings of 1993 in Mumbai, which wiped-out hundreds of innocent, mostly Hindus. Yet, the Babri Masjid destruction is often described by journalists as the most horrible act of the two. Today, you can argue with your British friends, Hindus are one of the most successful, law abiding and integrated communities in the world. Can you call them terrorists?

Tell Westerners about the greatness of Hindu philosophy & Literature. Indian education is a leftover from the British Raj and Maulana Azad madarsa model. There is nothing wrong with that except that as a result, Indian students know all about Shakespeare, Napoleon, the Bible, but very little about their great warriors. And there were many : Shivaji Maharaj from Maharashtra, as great as a warrior as Napoleon, who started the first Indian navy, made laws, protected

Tell you British friends that some of the greatest poets who walked on this earth were Hindus: Kalidasa, whose Sanskrit was so pure, than even translated in English it still shines; Vyasa, who composed the Mahabharata, which has been considered by many western authors, of the same epic quality of the Iliad and Odyssey, etc.

women and children from all religions; Maharana Pratap from Rajasthan, the only Rajput (maharaja, if you wish) who stood up to the Moghol invaders in the 17th century); and even great women warriors, the equals of Jeanne d'Arc: the Rani of Jhansi, who fought the British; Ahilyabai of Indore, who had the first women battalion in India, or Chennama in the South. Tell you British

friends that some of the greatest poets who walked on this earth were Hindus: Kalidasa, whose Sanskrit was so pure, than even translated in English it still shines; Vyasa, who composed the Mahabharata, which has been considered by many western authors, of the same epic quality of the Iliad and Odyssey, etc.

Western philosophy and culture trace its sources to ancient Greece... But many famous writers and Indologists have pointed out that Greece was greatly influenced by Hinduism. Famous Indianist Jean Herbert reminds us that "many many centuries before us, India had devised most of the philosophical systems which Europe experienced with later. They contained, at least in its essence, the philosophy of the Greeks, the Alexandrine mystique, the religious speculation of the Middle Ages, the rationalism of the XIXth century and even the most recent incarnations of modern pantheism". In 1782, already, French philosopher Pierre Sonnerat had written: "Ancient India gave to the world its religions and philosophies : Egypt and Greece owe India their wisdom and it is known that Pythagoras went to India to study under Brahmins, who were the most enlightened of human beings". But it is in XIXth century Europe that an open admiration for ancient India's culture flourished best, particularly in



Germany, where philosophers, such as Frederick Schlegel, said that “there is no language in the world, even Greek, which has the clarity and the philosophical precision of Sanskrit”, adding “that India is not only at the origin of everything, she is superior in everything, intellectually, religiously or politically – and even the Greek heritage seems pale in comparison”... The great Schopenhauer agrees with him and writes in the preface of his “The World as a Will and as a Representation”: “According to me, the influence of Sanskrit literature on our time will not be lesser than what was in the XVIth century Greece’s influence on Renaissance. One day, India’s wisdom will flow again on Europe and will totally transform our knowledge and thought”. And Nietzsche himself had read the Vedas, which he admired profoundly, could quote from the Law of Manu and thought that “Buddhism and Brahmanism are a hundred times deeper and more objective than Christianity”.

Hindus in the West should preserve their Indian-ness. Hindus in US, Britain & Europe have to ask themselves that question: what is it to be an Indian abroad today? What is meant by Indian-ness? How much of yourself do you give to your British identity – and how much space do you preserve for your Indian-ness? For we see many of the children of Indians who settled in the USA, Great Britain, or France, twenty or thirty years ago, merge themselves totally in the British way of life, speak with an English accent, eat fish fry, support Chelsea football club... and in the process forget all about their wonderful Indian culture... What are those special qualities that confer an Indian-ness? Firstly and foremost: “I accept you; I accept that you may be White or Black, Red or Yellow, Christian, Buddhist, or Muslim”. Not only that, “but I am even ready to go and worship in a church or a mosque, besides my temple.” “I accept that my Gods are avatars, incarnations of the Divine, but so is Jesus Christ, and also Buddha and even Mohamed”. This is an extraordinary statement and a marvellous instrument towards world peace, at a time when the two great monotheist religions of the world, Islam and Christianity still say: “there is only one true God in the world – mine – and if you worship any other god, you are an Infidel and a Pagan and it is my right to convert you by any means, or even to kill you”. The July 2005 London bombings are nothing but a result



of that dangerous theorem. As a result, Indians adapt easily wherever they go, particularly in the West, as they are very open to western culture. Of course, Indians also go to the other extreme: “not only I accept you, but I am going to become exactly like you – no even Whiter than the White: I am going to denigrate my own culture, spit on my religion, be little my countrymen”. This is why you come across so often in the UK & US on negative articles on India written by Indians – nay by Hindus. What second, third or even fourth generations Hindus in America, or the UK should also ask themselves today is “How can I repay my debt to India”? After all not only they got a nearly free education in India which was good enough for them to obtain well paid jobs in the US, UK, or Europe, and elsewhere in the West, but did they not also inherit that certain Indian-ness, which has been a great help to adapt to the western way of life. Or: “In what way can I contribute to this great nation which is India, which is often maligned and side-lined in the UK and Europe”? It would be a loss to both Britain (or the US or Canada, or France) if Hindus would totally blend in their countries of adoption and lose their values of tolerance, gentleness, hospitality and the ability to see the One in the Many, it would be not only a loss to themselves, but also to their countries of adoption, to which they would not bring anything special.

Take political power & Unite. You

know by now that wherever Hindus exiled themselves, they did well, whether as labourers in Mauritius or doctors in the UK or IT engineers in the USA! They pay their taxes, integrate themselves, do not riot, their children top in colleges and universities and generally blend in the culture of the country they adopted. Everybody also knows that some of the biggest multinationals, such as Adobe, Microsoft, Diageo, Mastercard, Google, Pepsi, or others are today headed by Indians – read Hindus.

Yet, Hindus are individualistic people and they tend to look down on politics, as something ‘dirty’. This is why they did not always get the politicians they deserve in their home country. We see today that a lot of Muslims are elected in local boroughs or even towns in the US and UK. That is good and should be praised. But it is also true that often these Muslim leaders tend to think only of their community and sometimes use their offices to enforce the vision of their particular communities, such as segregated swimming pools, or even try to modify British textbooks. Hindus, with their universal outlook will not do such things. But they need to come out of their shells and stand for elections at all levels of the British political system. Another drawback of Hindus in the UK and the USA, is that they are terribly disunited and are splintered in many groups, along states of origins, profession, or even castes, sometimes even are at odds with each other. Hin-

dus in the USA & UK should therefore unite under one umbrella organization & the united Hindu diaspora leadership should meet at least once a year with a rotating president.

Explain @NarendraModi. There is a lot of disinformation floating around India. We saw how poverty, caste and polytheism still hang around Hindus' necks, but what about political misconceptions? For instance, Hindus in the West should offer some counter arguments on the disinformation about Mr Narendra Modi, India's present prime Minister. They should first remind their friends, that Mr Modi had made of his state, Gujarat, the most efficient, most prosperous and least corrupt of all the states of India. Of course, he is labelled "anti-Muslim and accused him of having engineered the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim riots. But remind them that these riots were triggered by the horrifying murder of 57 Hindus, 36 of them innocent women and children, burnt like animals in the Sabarmati Express. Riots of that intensity like in Gujarat, do not happen in a day, they are a result of long term pent-up angers and a spark like the killing of Hindu brothers and sisters, whose only crime was that they believed that the God Ram was born in Ayodhya, is enough to ignite the smouldering fire.

Ask your British friends if it is logical that only Mr Modi is targeted? But who went down in the streets in fury in 2002? Hundreds, if not thousands of Gujaratis, not only from the lower strata of society, not only Dalits, but also middle class, and sometimes even upper middle class! Should they also not be judged and condemned? But then it would be the whole of Gujarat who should be hauled to court, an ancient and noble race, who gave so much to India, including Mahatma Gandhi, and today is still exporting all over the world its upright and successful businessmen, to the UK or the US, for instance, where they own most of the motels. Finally, tell them that it was never proved that Mr Modi waited 24 hours before calling the army to quell the riots.

Help India become the alternative to China. Emphasize again and again in western forums that India is the natural economic and geopolitical partner of the USA and the rest of the civilized world. For contrary to China, it is democratic, pro-western, liberal, with a middle class as important as China's. Tell them that the West has banked all their investments on China, neglecting India, the

other giant of Asia, which is a grave mistake because some social upheaval is bound to happen in China sooner or later, as soon as the authoritarian hold is removed one way or another. Highlight the fact that India is a much safer bet in the long run for western investments. Already India's PIB has overtaken the Chinese, who are facing a lot of economic difficulties. Tell them that at the very least, the US, UK and Europe should balance their chips by investing half of them in India – the Prime Minister, Mr Modi is in the process of liberalizing the economy and making it easier

Hindus in the West should offer some counter arguments on the disinformation about Mr Narendra Modi, India's present prime Minister. They should first remind their friends, that Mr Modi had made of his state, Gujarat, the most efficient, most prosperous and least corrupt of all the states of India.

for foreign investors. Tell them that India is the next economic superpower and that it has a much better human rights record than China. It is also very important that you point out that India is the natural geopolitical buffer of the West in an Asia racked by Islamic fundamentalism and the Chinese thirst for hegemony (explain to the British that Beijing is claiming for instance an Indian state as big as England – Arunachal Pradesh). The UK and the US also keep making the mistake of funding and arming Pakistan, even when they fully know that the Pakistanis have unleashed Islamic terrorism not only towards Kashmir, but unto the whole world.

Spread Happiness in the West. "India will become the spiritual leader of the world", Swami Vivekananda had predicted. Thus share with your British

friends the fact that hatha yoga, today practiced by hundreds of millions in the world, is a Hindu invention. Tell them too that Ayurveda, also taking the West by storm, is the oldest medical system still in practice in the world; that much before the West knew it used plants and minerals to cure people, knew that many illnesses have psychosomatic sources, and that Indian doctors practiced plastic surgery 1000 years before Christ. Talk about Pranayama, the most exacting, precise, mathematical, powerful breathing discipline one can dream of. Its effects and results have been observed and categorised by Indian yogis for millenniums. This extraordinary knowledge, brings in very quickly wonderful results in both the well being of the body and the quietude of the mind. Pushed to its extreme, it gives to the disciple deep spiritual experiences and a true inner perception of the world. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has revitalized this science and packaged it in modern terms. Help them to practice meditation, queen of all the yogic sciences, that which is above everything, that without which any yogic discipline is impossible. That, which interiorizes us, carries us within ourselves, to the discovery of our true soul and nature. There are hundreds of different mediation techniques, simple, cartesian, easy to experience, which have been devised by Indian sages since the dawn of Bharat. Each one has its own characteristics, each one gives particular results, which has been experienced by the billions of aspirants who have practised them since the dawn of Vedic times. This is the Wonder that IS Hinduism, tell them.

In conclusion, when the Hindus help shed these prejudices which have been harming their image, they can not only continue to contribute to the world's economic growth, as they have done for several decades, but also, once they participate more intensely in the political power, be recognized as a distinguished community, with a separate and honored identity.

Writer is a journalist based in India who served as the "South Asian" correspondent for multiple reputed French-language dailies. It is a must read to understand the fear psychosis build around the present government and society in India specially in the international press and to clear the perception about a peaceful religion.

Law will take its own course – Vadhan brilliant version

Vadhan is a prolific reader who turned to writing a few years ago. His first published book is *Shatru*, a prequel to his yet unpublished fantasy Series. *Shatru* sets the stage for a tale based on Indian mythology in which the universe is at risk from a primordial evil leaping through time continuums.

His second book, *Agniputr: When Agni First Spoke*, is hailed as one of the best multi-genre thrillers by some of India's leading national newspapers, literary platforms, critics and top-end bloggers. *Agniputr* threads through fantasy, science, law, politics and philosophy to deliver an edge-of-the-seat entertainer. Vadhan is a lawyer by qualification and Director responsible for regulatory risk practice in the world's largest professional services firm.

Here is the Q&A's for Vadhan's interview.

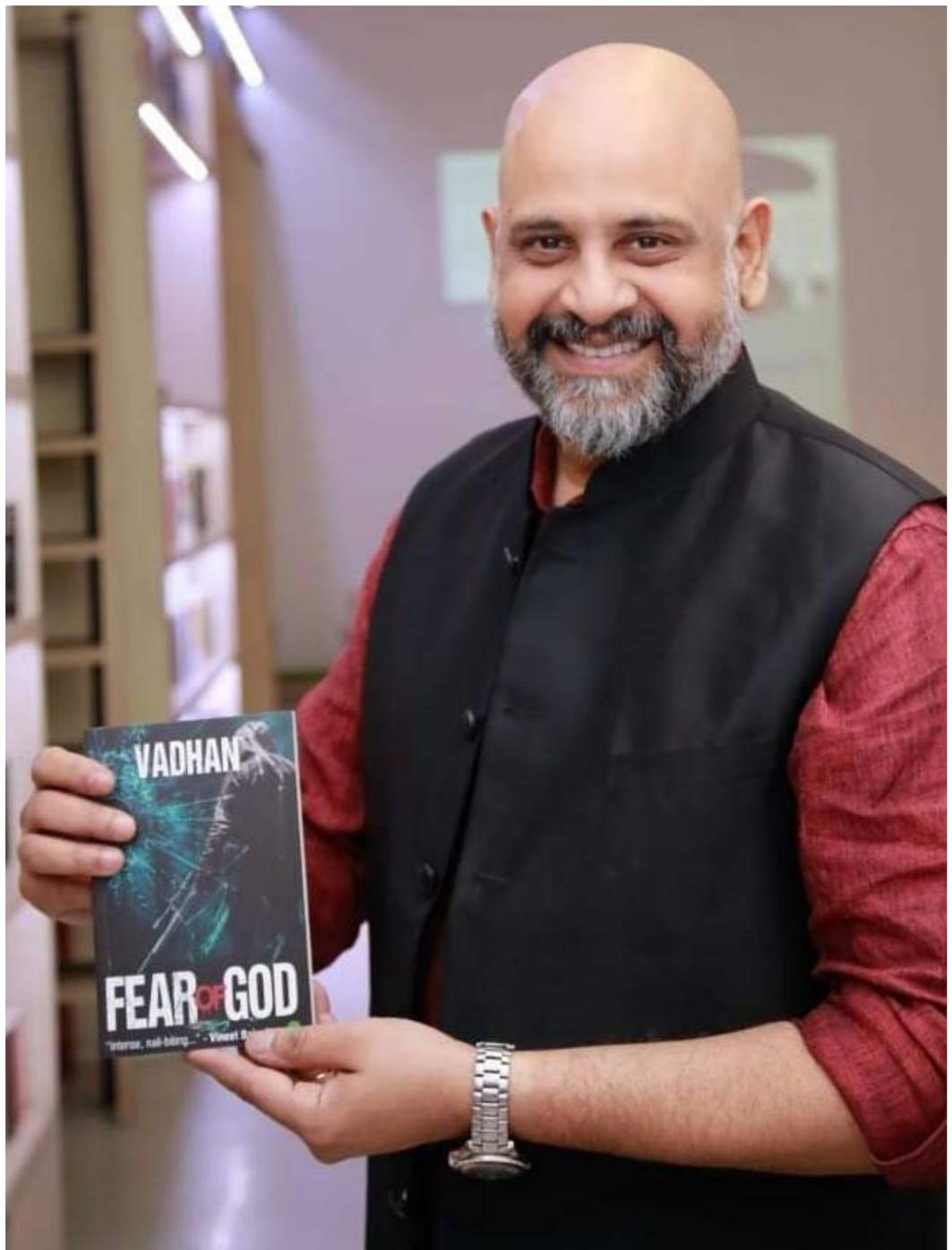
Why do you think there is an increasing lack of faith in law? Even the highest court faces a lack of trust.

Firstly, thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice my views. In my opinion this is a very sensitive question. There is no substance to establish that we have lost faith in law. In fact, there is a lot of cleaning up that has happened in the last 5 years. There is a lot of transparency introduced into the public systems that was lacking earlier.

What is law? It is best described as societal guidelines to ensure common good. There are two sides to it, implementation of law and compliance with the law. A citizen's minimum guarantee to a democratic society is compliance with the law. When there is defiance to the law of the land it will cause unrest. Every country in the world is only as good as its laws and compliance with it. In fact, in

the recent past, the highest court of the land has been proactive and has stepped in several times in interpreting as well as providing clarity on compliance with the law. The root cause really is the attitude of certain sections, be it the effluent or the politically motivated, which intends to misinterpret the law to give it a wrong color coding to suit their own ends and to mislead the gullible common man.

Secondly, it is important for people not to think they are above the law. No one is really above the law. A democratic society functions are based on strong fundamentals enforced by



institutions. For instance, the last word in investigation is the CBI. The quality of work of the NHAI is another example. ISRO and the tremendous work it has done till now instills faith in it. That is known as institutionalizing the principles of democracy. It is important to restore faith in public institutions. If we don't, the alternative is harnessing and unleashing power. While institutions follow processes, power is unfettered and functions based on the impact of backlash if it is questioned. As a democratic country, we must work towards building our institutions and running the country based on the fundamental pillars of those institutions.

Does fear of God have to play a positive or a negative role in the ability to establish order of law?

In a country that believes in a divine largesse and the positive nature of divinity, Fear of God is a deterrent against misuse of power. Is it really effective? I leave the question open. There are God men and people of influence who have used the divine largesse to profit and control the mind of people to do their bidding. In our own culture as also that of others, people who sinned are known to face the wrath of God. Hence, logically such sinners must have fear of God. The surmise of my book, 'Fear of God' is to reinstate faith in law.

Your book fear of God highlights this aspect of growing vigilantism. Does it in some way justify it with someone taking law in their own hands to bring justice?

Let me make it clear. Fear of God does not encourage vigilantism. Vigilantism can be defined a violent reaction to societal injustice and dysfunctional law. Our's is a country abiding by the rule of law. We have a justice delivery system. Is it the best? No. Not yet. But we are getting there faster than we can imagine.

The protagonist of my book insists that one has to be obey the law to be protected by it. If one breaks the law, one must be answerable to it. If you consider yourself to be above the law then there is only fear of God. Therefore, there is attack on corruption and the corrupted. The book only encourages obedience to the law. Do we need Fear of God to ensure that obedience? Defiance to the law will destroy civil society. Cheating the public exchequer, abusing public funds for private gains, using public institutions for personal

purposes, not delivering public services, corrupting democratic institutions, these are signs of defiance to the law. The purpose of 'Fear of God' in the book is to remove the decay. The book doesn't set out to propagate vigilantism. In fact it implores to obey the law. First and foremost it is a book of fiction; it is a thriller and an entertainer. If there is a lesson to be learnt (which is entirely up to the reader), it is that above everything else is law and obedience to it is the bedrock on which democratic society rests. If you think you are above the law, then there is only Fear of God!

There is a general sense of mistrust among people, lack of trust in authority, the government, each other. What do you think is the reason behind it?

I would peg the general sense of mistrust, if at all, that the people may

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have on the lost years of independent India when a despotic few controlled the way in which people felt or thought. I would blame it on manipulative coalition politics that forgot its mandate (if it had any at all) and lived for itself rather than the people who delivered a fractured and confused vote. I would blame it on those square kegs that tried to plug round holes. Gaining back the trust of the people inflicted with the injury by such manipulative few is a task. In the last few years, I have only seen a growing respect for the country, a growing sense of unity and dignity for everything Indian and for India.

Last many months have continued to see people taking law in their own hands. More recently with lockdown situation, there have been such episodes. What do

you think is the reason?

Firstly, the average Indian, whether educated or otherwise, is a person who wants to grow in life. I believe that is the mental makeup of an Indian today. Therefore, those who are 'taking law into their own hands' are those few who think they are entitled to more than the average Indian. That is my honest opinion. What gives them the right to such entitlement is not something altogether clear. When a policeman stopped a crowd from entering a marketplace without proper passes during COVID-19 lock down in Patiala, they chopped of his hand! People attack doctors who are the front line soldiers in the battle against a global pandemic. These are signs of entitlement. 'How dare you work on a COVID patient and step into my locality?' These are signs of people who think they are above the law. To generalise it would not only be unfair to the average Indian, it would be criminal. When successive governments in the past have given in to influential lobbyists to secure the rights of the few to the detriment of many, for such 'entitled' individuals to come to terms with the fact that they are not 'entitled' anymore is a difficult task. We can only offer them pity. Not even sympathy.

Your book is going to be made into a movie. How do you perceive this new rush or need for books to be made into series or movies?

Well, look at it this way. There is a ready made script right there, already in the public domain and appreciated by people who would love to see it adapted into a movie or a web series. There is already an established connect with the viewers that the film maker can use. So, why not? Movies were always made from adaptations of the books. As the number of readers have gone up, an author's name and adaptation from a book renders a greater leverage to the film maker and more acceptance from the viewing public. It is a step in the right direction. Changing a book to a movie involves a lot of creative work of script writers, novelists and film makers. I see good times ahead.

In conclusion, I request all of my readers out there to be safe, stay home and stay healthy. Relaxation of lock down conditions is not a ticket to roam around freely. Use it judiciously, for your own safety and for the safety of those who love you.

‘KARMA WILL INSPIRE YOUR FATE’

Life lessons from a person, who wears many a hat at the same time

Vidhya Tiwari, Pageant Ambassador for SAVVY Mrs India, Director & Editor-In-Chief of TROFII, India's only dedicated Food & Nightlife Magazine, and Co-founder of ORO BLANCO (a makeover studio), is a self-proclaimed workaholic.

Her inclination was towards Law but on her father's insistence she enrolled into Fashion Design and has never looked back since. From being a novice fashionista to becoming a professional she continued working in the fashion industry as a freelance Designer and Stylist for Femina. Working with Femina opened up avenues for her, with numerous shows and pageants, including the Citadel Extravaganza and another one that she calls as one of her favourite moments in her career, which was the show she organised for international Fashion Designer, Eva Danielle, in Pune (2013).

The year 2014 sprinkled some stardust on her when she received a call from the Czar of the glamour world, Mr Nari Hira appointing her as the Editor of CITADEL magazine (from the stables of MAGNA Publishing)! Being her first ever job on the pay roll, as she had never worked in a corporate environment ever before, her apprehension were put to rest with the warmth and understanding bestowed upon her, especially by her publisher Proneeta Hira! Sharing a great rapport with the MAGNA Mumbai team she learnt the ropes of marketing under the guidance of Mr Ashok Dhamankar (Marketing Director, Magna Publishing).

Being the Editor of CITADEL a lifestyle magazine, she learnt a lot on the job, especially the shift from Fashion to Food. As along with fashion articles she also had to do articles on decor and food! It was an easy jump for her, as in her own words she says, "I am from the live to eat category of people." Known for her passionate food blogging, she has a loyal following on Instagram & Facebook. A gourmet herself, she's known to be a great judge of good food and good taste.

The fine point in food for her was when the International Chain HYATT recognised her talent and invited her as



a Judge for the Hyatt Culinary Challenge 2015, at the Hyatt Regency in Mumbai! And her position as a connoisseur was cemented with a second invitation from the HYATT group when she was invited second year in a row as a judge for the Hyatt Culinary Challenge 2016, this time at the HYATT, Pune. A foodie at heart this Vegetarian workaholic, says she's still trying to reach her potential, juggling different work profiles and trying to create a unique place for herself. That's what led her to spearhead TROFII (Food & Nightlife Magazine) as an Editor and Director.

She also is a partner with a consulting firm, from food, to fashion, to beauty to branding and publicity, you name it and they have a solution! Being a people's person, she feels Branding & PR are an extension of her creative side. When taking up a brand or person for brand building and PR, the only vision they carry is of their client being in a happy space, that's our ultimate reward. She says, "if we give our best, and our clients are happy they will bring us more clients in return, which is exactly what happens with us, our recommendations are so strong, that first timers always turn to retainers!"

Having worked on numerous fashion shows as a Fashion Designer and stylist, she has also, helped groom the contestants of Radio Mirchi Queen Bee, RSI May Queen, Pune Club May Queen and

the CITADEL Mr & Miss Pune. Her judging skills too have often been put to test, being invited to as jury member for numerous shows, from, Miss Pune to Mrs Maharashtra to Mrs India, to Mrs India Globe! Vidhya takes her duty as a judge very seriously and encourages Men and Women from all walks of life achieve their goals, "whether it be a Fashion Show, a Beauty Pageant or a Cookery Show or the show of life! Each one needs to reach their true potential but for that you must first believe you have it," she says!

Driven by a strong belief that "style is our most engaging narrative to the world", style is an art and art is everywhere and in everything. There is an artist locked-up in each one of us, but some never find the key, and some never find the door." Every venture she steps in is an essential one for her and she believes in offering her best. She looks at life and feels lucky, saying, "I think I've always been at the right place at the right time. Also, being brutally honest, that's always worked for me. When I talk business I talk business, there's no beating around the bush. Your time is the most important. Respect yourself. No one is as important as you are. If you put yourself first, if you are happy with everything around you, only then will you be able to make other people happy. So choose yourself respect, honour and happiness above all else.

In her words, "I also feel we should never complicate your life, whether personal or professional. Keep it simple and straight. Speaking your heart and being honest is the key". A devout believer in the Almighty, she feels, and keeps the positivity alive. Be true to yourself in all that you do. The best way to live life is to be true to yourself. Never give up, never lose faith. Faith can move mountains, faith can work wonders. Have faith in yourself and above all have faith in God. God's love is Endless, and He never fails you, NEVER. Like Hellen Keller very truly said, "A bend in the road is not the end of the road...Unless you fail to make the turn." So surrender to Him and all else will follow.

Physical fitness is vital for comprehensive success

An expert's view on fitness during lockdown era

Sapna Khanna, 49 years, a fitness coach, athlete, model and winner of the title Ms Fitness India 2018 at the age of 48. She is a fitness enthusiast since school time. Being a sportsperson, Sports Captain in school and being an Army kid, fitness and discipline has been an intrinsic part of her life. Although she was professionally a media person for most part of her life, she moved out to start her own venture six years back. Sapna was always an influencer amongst my friends and in the gym, so at some point and with a lot of thrust from her friends and acquaintances at the gym, she went on to do my fitness trainer certification with Reebok and plunged into professional fitness coaching. Sapna also do corporate talks and workshops. Off course, winning the title at that age hit the newspapers pretty big.

In Covid-19 times, our team headed by Nithya Ramesh has interacted with Sapna online for the Q&A to offer a fresh perspective to our readers on health during the lockdown era.

Q How the physical fitness level can influence the mental state of an individual?

A Physical activity is proven to bring down levels of stress hormones, the primary stress hormone being cortisol. Over exposure to cortisol and other stress joined can wreck havoc on all your body processes. They put you at an increased risk to many mental health problems including anxiety, depression, headaches, digestive issues, heart diseases, sleep problems, weight gain, memory and concentration impairment. Working out also releases what are called happy hormones such as dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins into the blood stream. Dopamine is associated with pleasurable sensations, along with learning, memory, motor system function, and more. Serotonin helps regulate mood as well as sleep, appetite, digestion, learning ability, and memory. Oxytocin, also called the "love hormone," is essential for childbirth, breastfeeding, and strong parent-child bonding. This



hormone also contributes in boosting emotions such as trust, empathy, and bonding in relationships, and oxytocin levels generally increase with physical affection like kissing, cuddling, and sex. Endorphins are your body's natural pain reliever, which your body produces in response to stress or discomfort. Need we say more?

Q The west has adopted a focused fitness lifestyle since long but in india the awareness is limited, why?

A There are a number of factors that explain that. Although we have had everything right here but the west has literally taken from us our knowledge and repackaged it to sell it right back to

us. The Indian mindset wherein we are always in awe of the west and simply follow their trends and wait for it to become cool before we adopt it. Pilates is an extraction from Yoga, so our power yoga, hot yoga and the likes. But the Indian mentality of excesses in “khao piyo aish karo” over the years is still a reality in most parts. Gyms have been in India for almost two decades now but a mere 28 percent are gym goers. Indian mindset values study scores over sports and physical activity. It's always about

achieving in academics so study more, achieving in career so work harder and overtime, entertainment is about eating and drinking and excesses. Working out just isn't part of the natural Indian lifestyle.

Q Which according to you is the best fitness regime for Indians – outdoors & gym or yoga?

A If one wants to achieve total fitness, a comprehensive approach is mandatory. All genres help acquire dif-



ferent skills, which are essential in the long run for absolute fitness.

Q According to you, who is a fittest celebrity in India?

A It is difficult to say because many celebrities now work really hard in the gym and are very fit. But I really admire Vidyut Jamwal for his fitness levels, skills and if course body.

Q The kids in schools have limited access to fitness facilities, can you suggest affordable alternatives for them?

A Kids in school have no interest in fitness regimes and structured workouts. And they don't need to be pushed into it too early. In fact it can be detrimental to their physical as well as emotional health. But schools need to incorporate more focus on sports, games periods, sports activities and competitions. It's these that will keep these kids addicted to staying fit. I was a sports person as well as sports captain in school. I got that honour early while I was in class 10. Sports and extracurricular got me all my batches including house captain, school captain, Guides and NCC commander. But I was above average in studies too. It's doable. Schools need to go back to the earlier approach. Studies are important but sports and physical activities are equally important if not more. And if you ask me, they are more important these days. To boost immunity, to strengthen your body, mind and soul, to develop body, personality and confidence. You need these things to survive in today's world.



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