

BUDGET EXPECTATIONS

BW BUSINESSWORLD

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ROLLOUT WRANGLES

India's Covid vaccination drive starts off on a tentative note with concerns over safety, equitable distribution, and speed of rollout

In association with



STATE WATCH:
BW Businessworld looks at the readiness of states to implement the Covid vaccination programme

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FEBRUARY 2021

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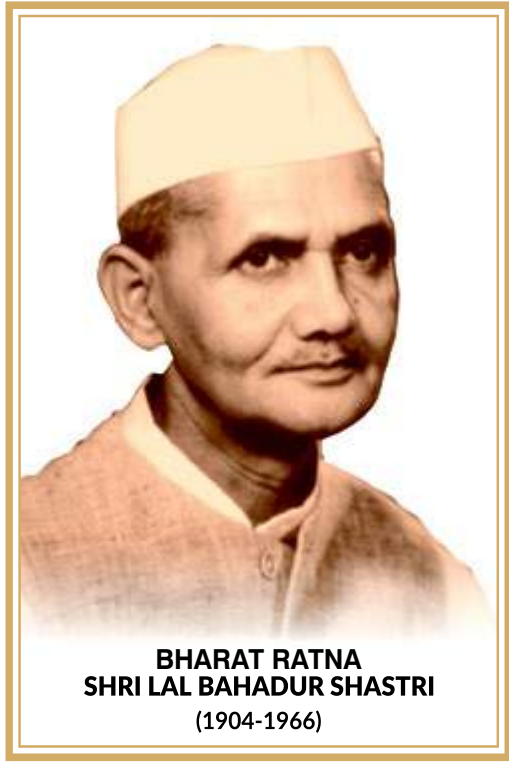


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HOPE

*“It is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good, both for oneself and others.” — **The Dalai Lama***



ANNURAG BATRA

✉ anurag.batra@businessworld.in

JANUARY HAS BEEN a month of momentous moments – what with the vaccination drive beginning in India and Joe Biden and Kamala Devi Harris taking office in the United States. India of course, views Biden’s ascent to the White House as an opportunity for better relations with the US in the future, but more on this later.

Here at home in India, the vaccination drive kicked off on 16 January. The goal was to vaccinate 3,00,000 people across the country on day one. One of the world’s largest, the drive was hailed as ‘the beginning of the end of Covid-19’ by the Union Health Minister. Despite the initial glitches expected when such a mammoth task is undertaken, close to two lakh people were vaccinated on day one – and that is no mean feat! The drive evoked sighs of relief, but seems to have slowed down since with growing hesitancy over the inoculation.

The hesitancy seems to be rooted in inadequate information about the newly developed vaccines. The whole process of developing these vaccines was hastened, leading to apprehensions about their efficacy. Over the next few weeks hopefully, no significant adverse effects will be reported, the apprehensions will fade and Indians will be more willing to get the jab. The vaccine does seem to be the answer to this dreadful virus.

The vaccination drive is the cover feature of this issue. We look at the distribution of the vaccine across the country and of course, it’s impact on the economy. We speak to Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute and Dr Krishna Ella, CMD, Bharat Biotech, about the efficacy of the vaccines these facilities have developed and map the successes and challenges of the entire process. Along with our research partners, Primus Partners, we study the preparedness of the states for the inoculation drive.

Apart from focussing on the topic of the moment, we also probe into and map Budget expectations from across sectors. Experts and industry leaders give their views on what they expect from Union Budget 2021-22. The new year has brought to the fore innovations and transformations in various areas that India Inc. has embraced. We bring to you opinions of specialists on trends that are expected to dominate in the year ahead.

The Last Word in this issue, is my conversation with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Aditya Nath. He talks of the road ahead for the state and the country. In addition, this issue offers all the regular columns that you look forward to. We hope you enjoy reading the magazine just as much as we did putting it together.

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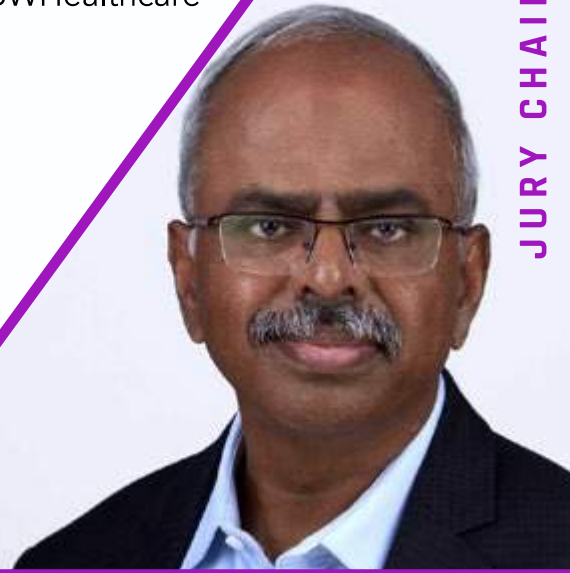
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MAILBOX

YOUR COMMENTS

TRANSFORMATIONS EN ROUTE

This refers to the editorial (**“Best Performer In Supporting Role”, BW, December 22**). In the fateful year of 2020, the e-commerce sector was looked up to keep the economy circulating even when most of the other sectors hardly saw any growth. Retrospectively, the e-commerce sector did a fair job given the fact that it still holds only has a minuscule percentage of market capture in the economy.

A vital point that has remained unstated in the story is e-commerce has not only, arguably, saved the economy, it is also transforming how the business is being done in the country. The rise of social commerce, large scale onboarding of sellers online, increased demand from Tier-2, Tier-3 cities, among others are some of the ways. Major developments await for the sector in the days ahead.

NIKHIL YADAV, EMAIL

REINVENT TO REVIVE

This refers to the editorial (**“Customer In Driving Seat”, BW, December 22**). The author has rightfully inferred that with the economic activity increasing as we move ahead with the new year, auto companies need to look at new ways to reinvent their business models and strategy with respect to their packages, design or customer experience to ascertain a complete revival from the dreary past.

A major recent development in the sector is that Tesla Inc. has set up a base and registered in India. This is going to bring huge traction to the electric vehicles segment, which suggests the Indian companies will have a lot to catch up to.

DEBASISH ROY, EMAIL

TALKBACK

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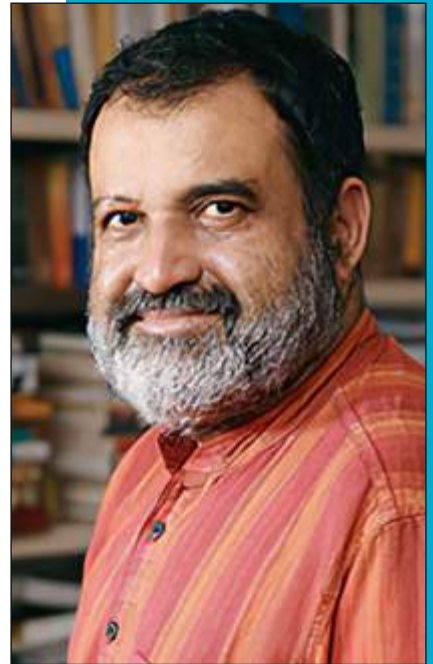
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BVR Mohan Reddy, Founder & Executive Chairman, Cyient & former NASSCOM Chairman discusses the need for incentivising local manufacturers www.businessworld.in

2020s CONSUMER TRENDS

Going forward, brands will need to have a finger on the consumer's pulse to stay relevant in their lives and adapt with agility to consumer needs

MAKING AGRICULTURE SELF-RELIANT

It is high time we seized the opportunity by working closely with our farmers so as to understand their needs and improve their farming methods

BW

OPINION

Indian Users' Right To Data Privacy

Whatsapp's decision to share commercial user data with parent Facebook once again brings to the fore the larger issues of who has ownership of India's data and what protection does the law offer, if at all, to users within the country, writes **Poornima Advani**



Consumer Protection Rules: A Blessing

These rules will put a stop to practices that harm the customers and make essential goods inaccessible to them. Further, the e-commerce rules restrict the sellers to post fake reviews of products on marketplaces. The rules are applicable to entities.

The Issue Of Inhibiting Investment Cycle

The current downturn in the investment cycle started years before the pandemic hit and has lasted more than a decade. The expectations of automatic bounce backs from investment slowdowns haven't materialised through these years. Such a long period of falling investment levels have passed under the radar largely because the slide has been gradual

Retailers' Business Continuity Management Programme

An innovative technology driven Business Continuity Management (BCM) programme is sorely needed to respond to the crisis, survive and move to the new normal. The retailers should adapt to changing conditions and recover rapidly from the situation as it is highly critical for maintaining customer loyalty, brand reputation and their competitive advantage





Low Point In Indian Handicraft Industry

A rich hub of art and handicrafts since ages, India even in modern times was known for quality manufacturing of distinct products famed across the world for their charm. But this came to an end once the Chinese product dumping disrupted the ecosystem of the Indian markets. And it has become quite difficult to bring the Indian handicrafts back on their feet without suffering losses

Lessons From Germany That India Can Learn

The rapid shift to localisation of administration can be a viable alternative to look into, as against centralisation. The power sector in Germany is thus citizen centric. A developing economy like India can take lessons from success as well as failures of other countries, while executing its own energy agenda

Sharp Decline Of Revenues in Hospitality Industry

The future of the hospitality industry is bleak. Far from that, the industry is seeing the return of leisure travel and socials. This may be seen by some as green shoots of recovery in the sector. The silver lining, however, is that most people are now learning to live and cope with the pandemic.



Predictions For The Manufacturing Industry

To transform supply chain, companies will look for seamless integration of end-to-end solutions for increasing traceability and transparency

SME Dreams Intact For 2021

SMEs have to attract talent or outsource some of the key activities which they think they can't manage. This will pluck the loopholes and increase the efficiency of the firms



ASUS ANNOUNCES AN ARRAY OF GAMING DEVICES AT CES2021

ASUS Republic of Gamers (ROG) has announced its first interactive experience at CES2021 event with the debut of the ROG Flow X13 gaming laptop with the XG Mobile external GPU, the dual-screen ROG Zephyrus Duo 15 SE gaming laptop, Strix SCAR 17 gaming laptop



'CONSUMERS HAVE TO TAKE CHARGE TO ENSURE PERSONAL DATA PRIVACY'

Cyberior puts consumers in control of their own digital identity. Cyberior is an offering developed by Europ Assistance with industry-leading technology for the platform, informs Ram Seethepalli, CEO, Cyberior by Europ Assistance India

CONTENTS

■ VOLUME 40, ISSUE 07 ■ 06-20 JANUARY 2021



14 Jottings

What's up with WhatsApp; Democracy put to test in Nepal; Hero MotoCorp rolls out 100 millionth bike; and Galaxy S21 in Indian stores

18 Columns

Vikas Singh (p. 18); Srinath Sridharan (p. 20); Sandeep Goyal (p. 22); Amit Kapoor (p. 24); Kaushik Prasad (p. 26); Ashutosh Garg (p. 28); Anurag Yadav (p. 30); Nitish Mukherjee (p. 32); Jeroninio Almeida (p. 79)

36 Jabs for One and All

India launches the world's biggest vaccination drive against the coronavirus with minor hiccups and amid concerns over safety and the immense logistical challenge of producing 400 million doses of vaccine and getting it to people across the country.

40 In Conversation

Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute of India, makers of the Covishield vaccine, on the challenges of producing the vaccine, as well as the lessons learnt from the pandemic

44 In Conversation

Krishna Ella, CMD, Bharat Biotech International speaks about the Covaxin vaccine and its efficacy as well as about other Covid-19 vaccines being developed by them

46 Crucial Shot for N-E

The drive to inoculate 2.9 lakh people in Assam in the first phase is crucial for the North East, as it can become a test-case for the rest of the six states in the region

34

The scramble to lead the fight against Covid

The timely and successful rollout of the Covid-19 vaccination programme will determine how fast India will traverse the road to economic recovery

Cover design by DINESH S. BANDUNI



58 Crack Team

Covid hotspot Maharashtra embarks on a massive inoculation drive with 17,749 trained vaccinators and 7.85 lakh healthcare workers

50 Ambitious Target

Bihar engaged around 15,000 trained healthcare workers in a massive vaccination drive at 300 centres across 38 districts. The state claims a recovery rate of 98 per cent

52 Impressive Start

India's fourth most populous state launches the vaccination drive by enrolling 90,000 frontline health workers at government and private hospitals

54 On a War Footing

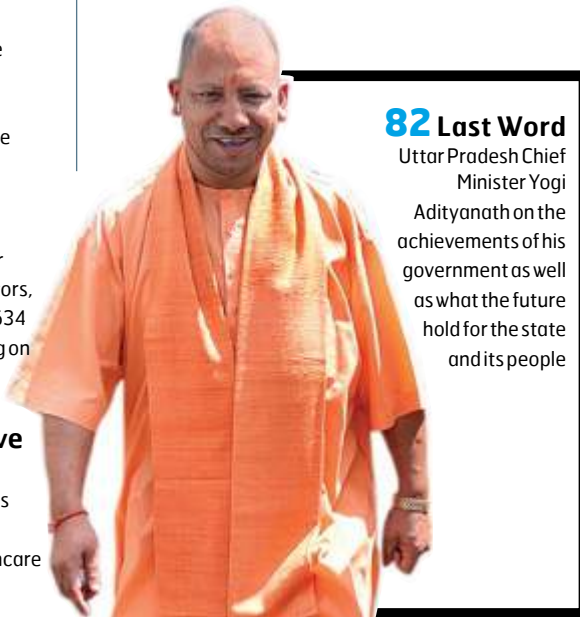
Haryana gets ready to wage a war against Covid with 5,044 vaccinators, 765 public health facilities and 3,634 private health facilities registering on the CoWin app

56 Set for a Mega Drive

Among the worst affected by the pandemic, Gujarat on day one sees Covishield being rolled out at 161 centres and around 12,000 healthcare workers getting the first jab

62 Organised State

In the first phase, Kerala intends to vaccinate around 3.75 lakh people, out of which 1.68 lakh will be government-employed health workers, and the rest private sector workers



82 Last Word

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath on the achievements of his government as well as what the future hold for the state and its people

68 The Big Challenge

As Uttar Pradesh goes about the task of inoculating its citizen against the coronavirus, it can become a test-case for the success of the nationwide vaccination programme

80 BW Dialogue

National award winning actor Ashish Vidyarthi talks about being open to possibilities, challenging labels and achieving the extraordinary

81 Book Review

A review of *Till We Win — India's Fight Against the Covid-19 Pandemic* by Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, Dr Gagandeep Kang and Dr Randeep Guleria

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What's Up with Whatsapp's New Terms and Conditions

EARLY IN JANUARY, the popular personal messaging tool, WhatsApp, updated its privacy policy and coerced users to give their consent to sharing their data on WhatsApp with its's parent company Facebook and its subsidiaries. This created a

furor among users around the world, who took to social media to lambast the forcible change in policy. Meanwhile, the world's richest man, Elon Musk tweeted "Use Signal". This tweet adding fuel to the social media fire and actually drove many WhatsApp users towards rivals like Telegram and Signal. WhatsApp's loss was to an extent Telegram's gain, as the messaging tool attracted 25 million 'new' users in just three days since WhatsApp changed its policy. Meanwhile Signal became one of the most downloaded apps on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. India is a country where WhatsApp has one of its largest user bases, with close to 400 million active users. When these users too began migrating to rival apps over privacy concerns, WhatsApp decided to postpone the time frame for accepting the new policy to May. The last we heard, the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had asked WhatsApp to withdraw the proposed change to its privacy policy. It goes without saying that the Facebook association has created a social media buzz for WhatsApp that most influencers would aspire for!— **Abhay Shukla**

Democracy Put to Test in Nepal

NEPALESE FOREIGN MINISTER Pradeep Gyawali's visit to India turned out to be a fiasco. He was tersely told by the Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that boundary discussions would not begin till Nepal rolled back its map, when he broached the subject.

The MEA had to remind him that the boundary dispute could not be discussed in keeping with the terms set at the meeting of the Joint Commission, but Gyawali persisted. The Nepal Foreign Minister was also denied an audience with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when he sought one.

These are trying times for the mountain nation that faces a constitutional crisis with the dissolution of its parliament by Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli. Oli's decision came in the midst of a tussle within various



factions of the ruling Nepal Communist Party. The Nepal Communist Party is now likely to split in the wake of the dissolution of the Lower House of parliament. It is pertinent to mention that a rival camp under Pushpa Kamal Dahal has severe differences with Oli. These are trying times for Nepal.

Obviously, too much water has flown down the Mahakali River (that flows along the Indo-Nepal border) now for Nepal to be able to gain India's trust. Even so India has magnanimously despatched novel coronavirus vaccines as grant in assistance to Nepal along

with six other countries. The other neighbours chosen for the grant in assistance were Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Myanmar and Mauritius.

—**Manish Kumar Jha**

HERO MOTOCORP ROLLS OUT ITS 100 MILLIONTH BIKE

AT THE END OF A YEAR when automotives sales had moved at a snail's pace, Hero MotoCorp, has surpassed a significant production milestone. The company has achieved a cumulative production figure of 100 million (ten crore) units. The 100 millionth bike, the Xtreme 160R, was rolled out of Hero MotoCorp's manufacturing facility in Haridwar, in the northern Indian hill state of Uttarakhand.

"This significant landmark is also an affirmation of the inherent capabilities in India and Hero's Brand appeal. We have been making in India, for the world – and this milestone is an acknowledgment of the customers' preference for Hero across geographies, demographics and generations," said Pawan Munjal, Chairman and CEO,



Hero MotoCorp.

This is also the 20th consecutive year that Hero MotoCorp has retained the coveted title of being the world's largest manufacturer of two-wheelers. "We are going to continue to ride our growth journey. In keeping with our vision to 'Be the Future of Mobility' we will be

launching a host of new motorcycles and scooters over the next five years, in addition to expanding our global footprint." Munjal said.

"We will also continue to invest in R&D and focus on new mobility solutions," he went on to say. Hero MotoCorp's achievement is probably a pointer to where consumer preferences are heading. Rolling out the 100 millionth motorbike is a cumulative production landmark for Hero MotoCorp. It is among the fastest global achievements of automotive makers, with the last 50 million units arriving in a span of just seven years. — **Siddharth Shankar**

THE NEW GALAXY S21 HITS INDIAN STORES FIRST

SAMSUNG INDIA, unveiled and opened pre-booking for Galaxy S21 Series in the country. The S21 Series comes in three variants – The S21, S21 Plus and the S21 Ultra. The Galaxy S21 Ultra delivers Samsung's most advanced and intelligent pro-grade camera system, along with a bright and sharp display with a variable refresh rate of 10Hz-120Hz in a WQHD+ panel. The S21 series in India will be available with Samsung's own Exynos 2100 octa core processor built on the 5nm process.

All the three devices are future proof with 5G capability and Wifi-6e. With the S21 Ultra, Samsung has incorporated a 108-megapixel camera sensor and two telephoto lens with 3X and 10X zoom capability,



With AI and software algorithms, the S21 Ultra is capable of a 100X zoom, which the company calls "Space zoom". The Galaxy S21 series will be available in six stunning colours, Phantom Black, Phantom Silver, Phantom Violet, Phantom White, Phantom Grey and Phantom Pink.

Pre-booking for the Galaxy S21 Series began on 15 January across Samsung's Exclusive Stores and retail stores and on Samsung,

com and leading online portals. All pre-booked consumers will get Galaxy Smart Tag free and Samsung E-Shop voucher of up to Rs 10,000. As a special offer, all pre-booked consumers can get Galaxy Watch Active 2, among other goodies. Pre-booked consumers will start getting deliveries from 25 January. The Galaxy S21 Series goes on sale in India from 29 January.

— **Siddharth Shankar**

GENERATING A NEW CYCLE OF INNOVATION IN INDIA



AJAY HARINATH SINGH

‘Given other things remaining the same’-as economists love to mention, the Indian retail sector would continue to witness over 10% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the period 2016-21. The sector plays a pivotal role in the growth story of the Indian economy through significant contribution towards the national GDP, attracting significant domestic as well as foreign investments and technologies, and generating vast employment opportunities. It is projected that by 2021, traditional retail will hold a major share of 75%, organized retail share will reach 18% and E-commerce retail share will reach 7% of the total retail market.

According to a FICCI-Deloitte Report on the Retail sector, Consumer retail is expected to reach a size of INR 85 trillion by 2021. Leveraging its strengths and potentials of the Indian consumer retail, Darwin Platform Group of Companies (DPGC), a leading global business conglomerate, has entered into the retail sector in India. With the announcement of the opening of six exclusive stores in different parts of Mumbai and ambitious all India

plans, DP Retail- the retail arm of the DPGC reveals that it is all set to generate a new cycle of innovations in the Indian retail sector. The company plans to open nearly 100 DP Retail showrooms across the country in the next six months.

The retail journey of DPGC begins from Mumbai and the first self-owned exclusive megastore of DP Retail is coming up Bhandup and would be spread over 2.500 square feet. Other five stores, spread over 500-600 square feet, would come up at Goregaon, Andheri, Jogeshwari, Sion, and Worli. All these self-owned stores will be fully operational soon.

DP Retail is yet another innovative initiative by the DPGC led by its Chairman and Managing Director Mr. Ajay Harinath Singh- The Prince of Sultanpur and the descendent of the Ikshvaku clan. He comes from Lava (The Son of Lord Rama) lineage. Lava belongs to the Ishkavaku clan or Suryavanshi Dynasty of Kshatriya in ancient India and Ajay Harinath Singh’s caste – Suryavanshi claims their descent from Lava. With a glorious lineage, Ajay Harinath Singh is passionate about nation-building through strong and innovative models. The ultimate aim of DPGC’s initiatives and innovations in India is to boost the economy.

“The retail industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic and fast-paced sectors with double-digit annual growth and it accounts for over 10 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) and around eight percent of the employment. India is the world’s fifth-largest global



destination in the retail space. With DP Retail, we would be leveraging our countrywide network to cater to the rising consumers' demand with quality products and best practices in terms of marketing, merchandising, sourcing and pricing," expounds Mr. Ajay Harinath Singh.

DP Retail's megastores will have nearly 2500 sq ft area whereas smaller ones will be spread over 500-600 square feet area. In a metro



like Mumbai, Malls are located at an average distance of four kilometers and there are thousands of small shops and Kirana stores from one Mall to another. DP Retail would come out with at least two stores in a one-kilometer radius and provide a new age super mall experience to its customers.

DPGC being a tech-enabled company would leverage its strengths in retail also and with

the support of IT tools such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine, DP Retail would ensure that its customers get quality products of their choice at a competitive price. Its operations will be an amalgamation of both offline and online operations.

"DP Retail would be investing over Rs 1,000 crore in the next financial year -2021-22 and would also bring in foreign direct investment in the country. Initially, the company will focus on offline sales, and being a tech-enabled company it would also strengthen its presence in the industry through digital disruptions," informs Mr. Ajay Harinath Singh.

DP Retail would leverage its PAN India presence with food, health, wellness, and other products (except fashion items). It would also focus on Indian traditional products and values. Hence, a customer in Mumbai can have ethnic food items from any part of the country. All brands of dry fruit, food items, and other localised products will be available at its stores.

Established in 1996, the DPGC's net worth is USD 1.6 billion and it has 21 associate companies. Over the years, the Group has made rapid progress in several sectors with its other associate companies which include Darwin Platform Capital, Darwin Platform Holding, and Darwin Platform Infrastructure. Apart from these the Group, through its subsidiaries and associate companies, also operates in Banking, Healthcare, Aviation, Realty, Energy, Mass Media, and IT Sectors. The Group has now entered into the Retail Sector with an innovative business model. Innovations would be inherent in its quality, pricing, accessibility, marketing, sourcing, merchandising, and other areas of operations. Overall, a new buying experience awaits customers at DP Retail stores.

- BY K. ASHWIN



HISTORY, INSIGHT, AND A LITTLE OBSERVATION is telling us that economic growth is the most powerful instrument for the advancement and scaling of the socio-economic pyramid. Growth coaxes more from a 'deprived' ecosystem than from a developed one.

Economic growth is a process, not an event. This is often missed by policymakers when they 'design' big bang policy reforms to usher in the 'animal spirit'. Growth unfolds as a series of events.

Growth is a Wonderful Thing, a True Multiplier

While the rate of growth is important, so is the trajectory and pattern. Depending on the circumstances, similar rates of growth can have a very different effect on key imperatives and broader indicators of human development.

A balanced, equitable growth is a catalyst and triggers a virtuous circle of social harmony, ecological balance, wellness, justice, and inclusion, manifesting in participatory democracy. It creates demand, increases employment opportunities, induces

economic milieu, the deprived do not necessarily get left out of the benefits. It is just that they benefit less than people with longer strides and a better start. Similarly, and contrary to a widespread belief, rapid growth does not necessarily lead to increased inequality.

However, there is no denying a causal relationship between growth and inequality (and vice versa), but no 'consistent' relationship between inequality and changes in income. While our policymakers debate why some nations fail, and others succeed, history has several lessons and a larger consensus.

Scaling the Socio-economic Pyramid



consumer hope, builds confidence in entrepreneurship, and incentivises investment, triggering and promoting sustainable growth, even prosperity.

A Double-edged Sword

The PM appreciates that despite rhetoric around 'aatmanirbhar' and 'Make in India', economic policies should factor in an increasingly globalised world, that offers opportunities and (but) even more complex challenges. We are witnessing the advent of the digital led, technology focussed ecosystem that has moved from the 'catch-up' potential, and offers 'leapfrogging' possibilities for the agile.

There is a correlation and even strong evidence that 'rapid and sustained' growth is the fuel for social mobility and provides the momentum to escape out of poverty. A Crux study highlights that a ten per cent increase in income reduces the rate of poverty by about 25 per cent. And that in mid developed states, particularly in northern India, a one per cent increase in income could result in a four per cent to five per cent decline in poverty with very low inequality.

Inequality is Treacherous; but...

Inequality may not be such a bad thing if caused by high growth and accompanied by a consistent growth rate. Our erudite readers will appreciate that in a high growing

An Asset the Poor can Encash

Why the two sides of the Indo-Pak or the US-Mexico border evolved so differently is in some ways similar to asking why the bordering states Odisha and Andhra, bestowed with similar natural advantages, and located in the same geography, 'inheriting' similar talent, evolved so differently. A similar question is why Telangana emerged as the software citadel.

The Crux study across 44,000 respondents, covering 14 states asked exactly these questions. The study used a combination of comparative analysis and case studies to analyse why states with identical federal policies, similar backgrounds had very different outcomes across several growth parameters, including export, job creation,



THERE IS A CORRELATION AND EVEN STRONG EVIDENCE THAT 'RAPID AND SUSTAINED' GROWTH IS THE FUEL FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY AND PROVIDES THE MOMENTUM TO ESCAPE OUT OF POVERTY. A CRUX STUDY HIGHLIGHTS THAT A 10% INCREASE IN INCOME REDUCES THE RATE OF POVERTY BY ABOUT 25%

formalisation of business, even HDI etc.

History Takes a Long Time in Making

While in almost every instance economic reform generated an initial spurt, the degree to which these were sustained was determined by the extent to which policymakers were able to significantly accelerate reforms. The Crux insight articulates that political-economy forces are a major antecedent of observed outcomes. Leadership, governance at large, and indeed envisioning capacity of institutions and implementational ability at the local level is key.

A key aspect of the study focussed on the formalisation of the economy, which in the short run seems anti-small, pro-large and loaded against the poor. However, over a period, formalisation enhances the pie, providing a larger share for everyone, and an overall significance for the economy as growth percolates and spreads the benefits of development. Starting with the better off, it encompasses the middle-income, providing pay checks to those who don't have, increasing the size of those who have, and eventually, eradication of poverty.

Growth is important. However, the rate of growth more so. While we 'talk' of doubling farmers' income, a two per cent vs four per cent (typical growth in the agri-sector) may mean a four-fold income increase vs thirty-fold since independence. Our low growth rate particularly of the pre-reform period has excluded two generations; pushed the inflection point at least another two generations into the future.

Economy is not an Individual

Students of development will understand 'weakness of growth'. The macroeconomic consequences of a weakening economy are experienced, but recognised much later. In year one it lives on hope, in the second on its capital.

What seems rational human behaviour, i.e. 'consume less, save more' during tough times has exactly the opposite effect on the economy. It decreases demand, spiralling a vicious cycle of low consumption, lower demand, and negligible investment. A prolonged down-phase plunges the economy, leads to an insidious decline that consumes years, sometimes decades to revive, leaving it far behind competitors.

People on both sides of the political aisle must realise that India just does not have

the resources to play Robin Hood, however romantic it may seem.

In contrast, economic growth enlarges the basket, affording a meaningful and sustainable portion for everyone, making most people self-reliant, independent of the ephemeral largesse of the state.

The PM must focus on intertwining and even combining economic reforms with social mobility policies, encouraging the deprived to holistically participate in the opportunities, and the endowed to grow the pie.

Labour reforms must not only aim at enhancing competitiveness but be focussed on creating growth opportunities. Higher education must enhance skill. Similarly, financial inclusion must also focus on gender equality, agri-reforms on rural development.

It is almost inevitable that in "developing" democracies, a government ultimately gives way to the pressure of individual interests (and their electorate). The first minister must not buckle down to the extent that "institutional sclerosis" develops and aggravates the rut that he has inherited. **BW**

*The author is an economist and columnist
The views expressed are personal and do not
reflect those of BW Businessworld*

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HE UPCOMING Union Budget already evokes high expectations from various stakeholders in the backdrop of a Covid-impacted economy. The Budget is being seen as a sinecure for the rising inflationary trend, the pending decision on loan-interest-on-interest moratorium, sentiments of banks to lend, mood of the borrowers to restructure their loans or even simply borrow, need for public sector banking recap, Covid vaccina-

for it.

To accommodate opportunities for the large youth demographics that we have, and to ensure sustained livelihood for all, we need to improve both the (geographic) as well as social infrastructure. This would require heavy capex that could well set in motion the process of infra-building. If they are out on fast-track development, it could also mean (front loading of) government-spending and getting the local economy back into circulation. With Covid learnings, the wish-list from the Budget also includes increased spending on building and upgrading the public healthcare value chain. To enable all of these, we need a robust and stable banking and finance sector. Some policy ideas:

Taxation

- Simplifying the Goods and Services Tax: The GST is work in progress, and has eight different GST rates along with 22 different rates of compensation cess. Simplification of the GST system will improve compliance.



Budget for the 'Decade of India'

tion and other expenses ahead, potential realisation of partial or full stake sale in specific public sector enterprises in the fiscal ahead and narrower fiscal space for the government to manoeuvre further.

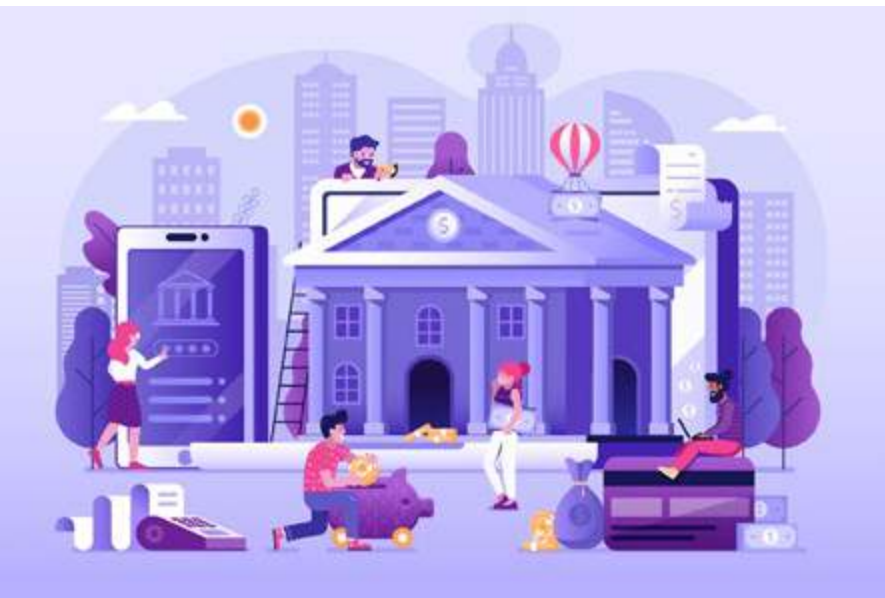
Any crisis is a wonderful opportunity to bring in big-bang reforms. It is also the apt time to relook at all current policies and shed those that don't have any more impact or influence on economic growth or social development. The theme of the upcoming Budget could very well be 'Repair & Reform, to rise again'. It would be ideal to have a India 2030 plan, with the upcoming fiscal laying the foundation

- Introduce GST credits in demat-form: This could be used as collateral by banks against such credits due. Since the credits are from the Government of India, banks will be comfortable using them as quasi-sovereign guarantee. They would help SMEs and MSMEs access working capital from banks.

- Tax holidays or incentives for investments into hospitals and diagnostics centres could spur an increase in density of healthcare facilities. The tax-break can be of higher percentage, if the infrastructure being created is in tier-2, tier-3 and tier-4 geographies. This could make up for the low level of current government spends in the healthcare space.

Banking & Financial Services

- Develop a revolving ten-year vision statement for each of the financial services regulators in terms of their approach and abil-



ity to develop their sector and add to the GDP growth.

- Encourage global corridor bilateral banking deals: For example, have a INDO-UK corridor where UK banks in India can tie up with Indian banks to offer special rates / co-shared credit deals to UK firms operating in India. This can open up pools of debt which otherwise would have been sucked up domestically. Similar tie-ups with such large markets including the EU, the US, Japan and Australia would help.

- Use the National Housing Bank (NHB) as a vehicle to raise debt in global markets – \$10 billion with a 20-year tenure bond for affordable housing refinance. The domestic debt market is weak and won't be able to solve the long-term financing needs for housing finance.

- Allow for FinTech's to grow with India-digital-stack framework: Their ability to bring patient capital and consumer-focus products has been higher than that of traditional BFSI. Their ability to value-add with consumer reach and simplicity should be leveraged. With adequate supervision and platforms which showcase compliance and patient capital, they can be converted into full-license bank / insurance company / asset management firms. Keep the ultimate beneficiary own-

Any crisis is a wonderful opportunity to bring in big-bang reforms. It is also the apt time to relook at all current policies and shed those that don't have any more impact or influence on economic growth

ership rules strict, to serve our nation's strategic objectives.

- Create a separate section of 'Ease of doing business' (EoDB) in the Department of Financial Services (DFS) as the finance sector helms most of the investments (both capital and debt). It would be useful to have a EoDB section as the fulcrum of all policies being simplified to make investments into India a smooth effort; and as the nodal section for all the relevant data on investments, related issues and coordination with other ministries for fast tracking resolutions needed for a proactive and progressive investment climate.

- Work on bringing land records on digital-demat-format with a Universal Land Information (ULI) format that GoI can put together. Since land is a state subject, we can have states use that ULI format. This can be linked not just for current data captured like address, pin code,

ownership etc., but more importantly with GPS coordinates. Over a point in time, this can reduce land-encroachment issues. If such information is also linked to PAN and Adhaar, it can reduce Benami holdings quickly. Banks and housing finance companies (HFCs) can reduce frauds if such digital information about realty ownership is available.

- To increase better insurance protection coverage and to improve the insurance penetration in the country, it needs more tax incentives as people see insurance as a last-resort product and don't spend on adequate and timely coverage. Increase income tax deduction amounts for those opting for insurance protection products (not for investment products of insurance firms). The average cost of insurance has increased over the years and as our population ages, we need to ensure affordability and incentives for citizens to continue with insurance coverage.

- India, as an economy, is under-banked; to address all consumer segments across India and Bharat, we would need specialised banking licences with their own business models For example, micro finance companies became small finance banks (SFBs). This idea lends itself to creating newer categories to ensure their affinity consumer groups (like SME, MSME, housing, Infrastructure) are served better.

- Just as the UIDAI brought in the Adhaar framework, constitute a financial-services integrated real-time supervision framework authority, that could assist all the regulators in the Financial Stability and Development Council. This framework could use contemporary digital tools like RegTech, supervise-tech and data sciences for proactive and preventive supervision and decision-making and cover all the financial entities that are supervised by multiple regulators under the FinMin. **BW**

The author is an independent markets commentator

YES, PLEASE DON'T THINK that I have written a catchy headline just to grab attention. I mean every word of what I have said: in the year ahead, I want to live life by 'doing nothing'.

It is possible to do. And Shoji Morimoto in Japan is doing just that. After living on Planet Earth for 35 years, Shoji Morimoto discovered that what he was best at was to "do nothing." A bit of a late realisation, but a self-discovery nevertheless arrived at after much introspection.

After graduating from Osaka University, Shoji san had worked as an editor in a publishing house and tried his hand at freelance work too, but he couldn't hold on to any job for long.

Like many people who are tired of going to work, he admitted to himself that he is not suitable for regular day-to-day work and cannot adapt to the workplace

10,000 Commissions

So far, Shoji Morimoto has received more than 10,000 commission requests, but only two to three thousand were actually accepted by him. "Intuitively, if the job is to 'do nothing', I will accept it, and refuse it if it doesn't work. I usually reject errand requests like 'Can you buy me something?' However, the criterion is still more wilful, it depends on my mood."

Now you know why I envy Shoji



In 2021, I Want to Live Life by 'Doing Nothing'

identity of "seeing the same group of people and doing the same thing day after day". So he asked himself, "Is a life possible doing nothing?". It seemed an esoteric idea, but it really wasn't.

The Inspiration

Shoji san looked for inspiration to Taiichi Nakajima, a Japanese blogger who makes a living by being a "professional guest". Morimoto asked himself: People can't live without working and making money, but if you don't stick to social common sense and do nothing, can you still live?

There is no harm checking it out, he told himself. In June 2018, he began to rent out his "self who does nothing" on Twitter, giving some explanation and

elaboration, and use, for "doing nothing". Today, Morimoto has 270,000 followers on Twitter. His business announcement reads: "You only need to pay 10,000 yen, the transportation expenses of Kokubunji Station, and all kinds of meals and miscellaneous expenses that may be incurred. But I don't do anything except drinking and simple responses."

After being interviewed by NHK's "72 Hours of Documentary" programme, Shoji Morimoto and his rental business instantly became a social topic, and within two years, it became books and comics. Last spring, TV TOKYO's short drama "Mr Rent-A-Nothing" adapted from his deeds was also broadcast, and became an instant hit.

san, and want to emulate him. Just get paid for 'doing nothing'. Sounds swell, doesn't it? Well, come 2021, I am certainly going to give it a shot too. What's to lose?!

Shoji san's most common commissions are of the type, "I can't tell anyone about this, I just want to tell you." Morimoto thus acts as a flood outlet for Tokyo people's secrets and emotions. I think I could do that too ... I am a pretty good listener. And I have much practice too: when the wife talks, I listen. Listen hard. So, I have the necessary credentials, you see. But Morimoto warns that there can be scary situations too where he thinks it wise to refuse commissions.

"A client wanted me to hear him talk



Shoji Morimoto has been nicknamed, “The Tree Hole” by Japanese media. And “The Air Man”. There, yet not there. His offering is simple and uncomplicated: “simple companionship service without any emotion”. Guess, I could do that without much effort too, no? Shoji san says his

best assignments are where he has to listen to “things that he doesn’t usually think of” and “things that are beyond the scope of his understanding.” Sounds simple enough

about the experience of killing a person, because he couldn’t tell others, he was really uncomfortable. Another client said that he was a certain religion before. A believer in the organisation, but this organisation is strongly criticized by society. He wants me to listen to his thoughts.” Oops!

The Tree-Hole

Shoji Morimoto has been nicknamed, “The Tree Hole” by Japanese media. And “The Air Man”. There, yet not

there. His offering is simple and uncomplicated: “simple companionship service without any emotion”. Guess, I could do that without much effort too, no? Shoji san says his best assignments are where he has to listen to “things that he doesn’t usually think of” and “things that are beyond the scope of his understanding.” Sounds simple enough.

As I am getting older, as it is, there is much (especially technology) that I don’t really understand anyway, and in any case ‘thinking’ has never really

been my strong point (my wife says so, so it must be correct). So, this is getting to be a better and better fit.

Just to be sure that I wasn’t plunging into this whole new career without adequate background and knowledge, I researched Mr Rental (as I have started calling him) a little more.

Truth and Fallacy

I found out that Mr Rental was asked to attend a wedding ceremony by a person who, for some reason, hadn’t invited any of his friends; he was asked by a woman to accompany her as she submitted a divorce report, because she was lonely and didn’t have anyone else to ask; and he was asked to sit behind a man who was on trial, a civil trial, just so they he could feel supported by someone.

“You don’t have to do anything,” one person once wrote to him. “I just want someone who isn’t a family member, friend, or lover, who doesn’t know me at all, to be with me.” I am feeling tears well up in my eyes.

I am no longer so sure now about doing what Shoji san does. Yes, he does get called many times by those who don’t want to view an NBA game alone. I am sure many in India would invite me to be a co-spectator to an IPL game ... loneliness is no fun.

Any case, what makes Shoji san such a success? Loneliness? Companionship? Fear? Sharing? I think, once a person takes a truth as his own, calls it his own truth, and tries his best to live according to it, he becomes an anomaly, and the truth he embraces becomes a fallacy. Morimoto may well be a “fallacy” in the eyes of others, but the “truth” is the truth because he believes in it.

Can I make his truth mine? Fifty-fifty, I would say. **BW**

The author is a self-confessed Nipponophile. His book, Japan Made Easy, was published by Harper Collins last year. The views expressed are personal and do not reflect those of BW Businessworld

THE ONSET of the fourth industrial revolution has brought with it the era of disruptive innovation, where technology continues to evolve at an exponential rate and disrupts industries faster than businesses can adapt. In this way, markets have been unpredictable for some time now. The Covid-19 pandemic gave a whole new meaning to “unpredictability” and “uncertainty” with the unprecedented level of changes it brought upon the world. With none being spared from this disruptive change, businesses either adapted to survive in this crisis or shut shop. On the brighter side, the calamity underscored the importance of agility in organisations.

Organisational agility is the ability of

consumer experience, whether in terms of accessing commodities or engaging with brands. The pandemic only increased our reliance on technology. Hence, it is safe to say that the new normal is here to stay, and organisations should look towards integrating agility into their business model for the long haul.

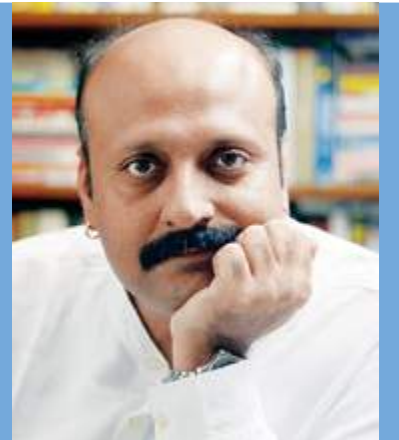
Some defining features of agile organisations are moving away from traditional styles of top-down management, greater employee participation in decision-making, and centring business operations around customer needs. The leading white goods manufacturer in the world, the China-based Haier Group is a leading example of an agile organisation, which leverages IoT to adapt to uncertainties expeditiously as well as respond to the

gap between them and their customers. The IoT creates new data sources, which Haier leverages to create “zero distance” with consumers, that is, understand consumer needs and choices more closely, and offer them personalised services.

In this age of information, zero distance with customers can help businesses stay ahead in the competition, and keeping up with consumer needs at such a granular level can constantly challenge them to innovate and reorient their operations. Thus, a consumer-centric approach becomes central to creating an agile organisation. Employees are the next important component in the *Rendanheyi* model.

Instead of a top-down management system, *Rendanheyi* follows a management system based on self-employment,

Organisational Agility in a Post Covid Market



businesses to be more resilient, flexible and innovative through adoption of certain practices, behaviour and ideals. In the face of uncertainties, agile organisations lean into the uncertainties and reorient themselves to the situation instead of doubling down on their long-held beliefs and practices. It is not a new concept, but is becoming increasingly important in the post-pandemic world. The pandemic has accelerated the paradigm change that the fourth industrial revolution was steering us towards, in terms of the way we work and interact with our surroundings.

The Internet of Things (IoT) was already moulding our lives in a way that technology became central to the con-

changing customer needs.

Haier has cultivated an agile organisation culture through its *Rendanheyi* business model, where “*Ren*” stands for employees or people, “*Dan*” for user needs, and “*Heyi*” means integrating employees and user needs. In this model, employees are at the forefront engaging with users, creating user value, and realising their own shared value from the user value they create. The *Rendanheyi* model recognises that if IoT allows customers to make better buying decisions through access to greater market information, it also allows organisations to bridge the

self-motivation, and self-organisation. This system breaks down the pyramid model into a network of micro-enterprises (MEs) with employees as entrepreneurs, whose value is tied to the value they create for users. In other words, their salary is determined by user evaluation, and is paid by users. With bureaucratic delays out of the equation, small entrepreneurs are able to create zero distance with consumers and respond to uncertainties efficiently.

In the post-Covid world, organisations keen to become more resilient and agile, can take a leaf out of Haier’s book. **BW**

The author is Chair, Institute for Competitiveness, India and visiting scholar, Stanford University

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Are You Making New Presumptions?

DURING WORLD WAR I, a Colonel Patton was asked to establish a Light Tank Training School. He trained on French tanks and established a school in a small French village called Bourg.

One day, in 1917, the village mayor complained that he – a mayor – was not kept informed about the death of a soldier in his village. Colonel Patton was not aware of any such incident, hence, when the mayor insisted that they visit the ‘grave’, the curious colonel couldn’t refuse.

They walked through the village and came to a newly closed latrine pit, with the earth properly banked, a stick at one end to which was affixed a crosswise sign stating, “Abandoned Rear”. This, the army’s closed makeshift toilet, the poor French mayor had mistaken for a cross affixed on the grave of a martyred soldier. But Colonel Patton didn’t have the heart to tell the mayor the truth that day.

Abandoned Rear

The years rolled on and by World War II, that Colonel Patton came to be known as General George S. Patton – the commander of the Allied forces. In 1944, as the US Army and General Patton drove through the newly liberated Bourg, the villagers reminded him that he was there earlier as a young colonel. They organised a tour for the general, the procession wound through his old haunts including his old office, billets and finally ended at the “grave of the fallen American soldier” – Abandoned Rear.

Ever since the village mayor, back in 1917, had presumed that if it looks like a grave, it must be one, the locals continued paying their respects at the ‘grave’



As we discover new, more cost-efficient and effective ways of operating, we must also be wary of new presumptions setting in

for close to thirty years, since the end of WW1. What was in truth, full of s**t had turned into a shrine for an American soldier who died in service of France.

Lesson on Presumptions

This scatological tale, as funny as it is, holds valuable lessons about presumptions we make in doing our jobs.

For instance, we presume that a sales role means being a road-warrior; traveling 20 days a month, catching red-eye flights and having a travel bag permanently packed. In fact, in my early sales stint, after taking over from my predecessor, I even took on his punishing travel schedule – unthinkingly presuming that’s what it called for.

While the pandemic has reset and evolved new behaviours and expectations, one of its greatest fallouts has been exposing our presumptions across all aspects of business. As we discover new, more cost-efficient and effective ways of operating, we must also be wary of new presumptions setting in.

The Four Quadrants

Sometime last year, the Harvard Business Review published a very useful framework to think about changes on account of the pandemic. This four-box framework encourages one to think of changes in behaviour or practice in terms of a Boost (temporary acceleration or deceleration), Catalyst (lasting acceleration), Displacement (or temporary shift) and Innovation (new trend).

By applying critical thinking to develop and plot hypothesis about all aspects of your business into these four quadrants, you will evolve new processes and not end up replacing old presumptions with new.

And anyone telling you anything else is probably full of what lies inside the ‘graves’ at Bourg. **BW**

The author is General Manager, Consumer Marketing, Ford India. The views expressed are personal and may not reflect those of his employer.



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YOUR PERSONAL BRAND is composed of many attributes that help to define you. These attributes are partially how you see yourself and partially how you think others see you. Your thoughts and perceptions are ratified through the people you interact with or the consumers who come in contact with Brand You.

If you think of yourself as a brand, you are no different from anyone else who believes in leaving their name as a legacy in this world. A strong personal brand must have several attributes. The combination of physical form, your qualifications and your achievements are the skeleton, the flesh, blood and muscles of Brand You. These attributes coupled with your skills, intelligence and wisdom, is your persona.

Your persona, Brand You, will define how you will be perceived by your audience

It is important to remember that what is consistent for someone could be completely inconsistent for someone else.

Do you change dramatically between times when you are happy and stressed? Think about whether your behaviour is consistent in times of stress and whether you can be relied upon especially in times of stress?

The consistency of your persona is what others look for in you.



Attributes of Your Personal Brand

and in the rest of your world.

You need to consider the following eight attributes to understand and evaluate your personal brand and to understand how Brand You measures up against each. These attributes are as applicable to the brand of your company, your product, your service as they are to your personal brand.

Relevance

A strong brand must be relevant in the context of bridging customer expectations and supplier deliverables.

You need to be relevant for others if you expect them to give you a share of their already cluttered mind. How can you be relevant to someone?

Within a family or your circle of friends you could be relevant as the head of the family, the primary bread winner or a trusted member of the community. In an organisation, you could be a person who others can trust.

Consistency

Consistency in a brand is seen when you communicate your message in a way that does not deviate from the core brand proposition.

While our personal brand must always be seen to convey a consistent message, we are human beings and we will bring in our personal biases in our interactions.

Proper Positioning

A strong brand should be positioned so that it makes a place in the mind of the target audience.

Each one of us believes we understand how we are being seen or perceived by others. We are always looking for a reinforcement of these beliefs in our interactions with others. Think of all the times you have looked at your friends and family for a tacit or express approval of your actions. You need to understand why your consumers should prefer Brand You over others.

Understanding and accepting where our perceptions differ from what we see, hear and experience is necessary for us to work on making changes in the



perception of our brand.

Sustainable

A sustainable brand drives an organisation towards innovation and success. A sustainable personal brand will survive in the long run.

Your personal brand has to be sustainable and ensure the consumer remains attracted to it over time, resulting in repeat purchase or repeat contact.

You, knowingly or unknowingly, keep sending out signals and impressions about yourself to the people and the World around you. These signals are both positive and negative.

Credibility

A strong brand must be credible. It needs to deliver all the attributes that it has promised.

The way you communicate your brand to your audience and your customers should be realistic. It should not fail or appear to fail to deliver what it promises. Do not exaggerate the at-

tributes of Brand You or overstate the performance you can deliver. Your customers want to believe in the promises you make to them and do not want to be disappointed.

The combination of physical form, your qualifications and your achievements are the skeleton, the flesh, blood and muscles of Brand You. These attributes coupled with your skills, intelligence and wisdom, is your persona

It is better to under promise and over deliver rather than the other way around.

Inspirational

A strong inspirational brand should transcend the category it is famous for. When inspirational people speak, the audience listens with rapt attention. Their communication skills are outstanding. Many corporate leaders and political leaders are very inspirational

speakers and have a very large following not just among their employees or their political parties but across boundaries of companies, parties and possibly across several countries.

The challenge most of them face on a regular basis is how to keep saying inspirational things to keep their brand value consistently high.

Uniqueness.

A strong personal brand should be unique and different from competition. It should set you apart in a clear and unambiguous manner.

It is important for you to understand all the areas where you believe you are unique before you are able to leverage your uniqueness.

Appealing

A strong brand should be attractive and appealing.

Your appeal will have rational and emotional elements. There are people who talk down to you and make it known that they are superior to you. Do you find such people appealing to you in any way and would you make any effort to communicate with them?

How you choose to present your attributes will determine how your audience perceives you. Perception is what will drive the value of your brand

leading to your acceptance or rejection from the community you choose to live in or be a part of.

The appealing characteristics of Brand You will always attract your audience as you work towards leaving your legacy. **BW**

The author is an executive coach, an angel investor and Founder Chairman of Guardian Pharmacies. He has authored six best-selling books, including The Brand Called You. The views expressed are personal and do not reflect those of BW Businessworld

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YN RAND ONCE FAMOUSLY wrote about women thus, “The question isn’t who is going to let me; it’s who is going to stop me.” Rand may well have written these words for this pandemic. That too in a very unusual but critical vertical: C-19 vaccine research.

A number of studies in the mid-2000s revealed that almost 82 per cent of clinical trial principal investigators in the United States were men; while the coordinators, who do the

ment of Nawal Al Kaabi, the Chief Medical Officer for the health services in Abu Dhabi, and Chair of the country’s Clinical National Committee for Coronavirus, leading the Phase-3 trial in the United Arab Emirates for Chinese vaccine candidates CoronaVac and Sino-Vac, recruiting nearly 7,000 people a day. Similarly, Sinopharma’s Argentinian trial had the infectious disease specialist Florencia Cahn as the principal investigator for the Buenos Aires centre. The impressive Head of Surveillance and Clinical Trial Division in Indonesia, Novilla Sjafri Bachtiar, coordinated the CoronaVac trials in the country. In Canada, Joanne Langely, the co-chair of the Covid-19 Task Force was one of the principal investigators in CanSino Vaccine International’s Phase -3 trial. Behind every successful vaccine today, there is a woman!

Sarah Gilbert, the most prominent face for the Oxford/Astra-Zeneca vaccine; a biologist-vaccinologist, and the co-founder of the company developing the vaccine, is also a mother of triplets (all three were volunteers in the vaccine trials) has been the forerunner in the

Behind Every Successful Covid Vaccine is a Woman



really hard day-to-day slog to generate much of the knowledge and insights, were women! The situation is very different in the present scenario as there is at least one woman in a leading role for all the frontrunner Covid vaccines, the vaccine race seems to be largely driven by a powerhouse of women in their 50-60s. The woman most prominent and celebrated in her country: Major General Chen Wei, from the Chinese Academy of Military Medical Sciences, was awarded the People’s Hero title for her leadership roles in Phase-3 trial in the development of Sinopharma and CanSino vaccines to stem the Covid-19 outbreak. Then we see the extraordinary achieve-

development of the universal flu and Ebola vaccines. At the same time, Lisa Jackson has been heading the NIH/Moderna Phase-3 trial in the United States.

The BNT/Pfizer vaccine, which has leapfrogged over the other Euro-American vaccines in the pole position for its efficacy of nearly 97 per cent was headed by Kathrin Jansen, which included innumerable discussions of a 650-person team via Zoom meetings. Katherine is the Head of Vaccine Research and Development for Pfizer and after migrating from Germany to the US, has pursued her concept of a yeast-based HPV vaccine and developed a pneumococcal vaccine. She ably coordinated the research on mRNA approach for the vaccine by the Hungarian-born émigré, Katalin Kariko.

Hanneke Schuitmaker, the Global Head of Viral Vaccine Discovery and Translational Medicine at Johnson & Johnson in Amsterdam led the Covid-19 vaccine development trials, while continuing



Our very own Gagandeep Kang, a medical research scientist has been giving invaluable inputs in the development and deployment of Covid-19 vaccine in India. Soumya Swaminathan Yadav, Chief Scientist and Deputy Director General of Programmes at the WHO, has also been steering the policies for Indian vaccine candidates

her research on HIV vaccine. Not to be left behind are Cheryl Keech and Gita Patel, the molecular biologists working on Novavax Vaccine using the unusual moth cell system; and Elena Smolyarchuk, Director of the Centre of Clinical Research of Medicines at Sechenov University in Moscow was the study chair for the Russian vaccine, Sputnik V.

Our very own Gagandeep Kang, a medical research scientist has been giving invaluable inputs in the development and deployment of Covid-19 vaccine in India. Soumya Swaminathan Yadav, the Chief Scientist and Deputy Director General of Programmes at the World Health Organisation has also been steering the policies for Indian vaccine candidates. The swift development of these vaccines could be regarded as the biggest scientific achievement of the century.

History was created recently by Margaret Keenan 'Maggie' at 90 in UK, as the first person to receive the Covid-19 Pfizer vaccine outside of a clinical trial. She forged ahead of William Shakespeare, an 81-year-old man as the second person to receive the vaccine. Nurse May Parsons, who administered the

vaccine to both of them, had the 'honour' to be part of 'the historic day'. Sandra Lindsay, a critical care nurse at the Long Island Jewish Medical Centre and Anita Quidangen, a personal support worker at Reikai Elderly Care Centre in Toronto were the 'first persons' to receive the vaccine shots in the US and Canada.

The analysis of 194 countries published by the Centre for Economic Policy Research and the World Economic Forum suggests that countries led by women such as Germany's Angela Merkel, New Zealand's Jacinda Arden, Denmark's Mette Frederiksen, Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen and Finland's Sanna Marin have had 'systematically and significantly better' Covid-19 outcomes. The difference was perhaps 'explained by the proactive and coordinated policy responses'. This unprecedented impact of women in the 'Biological World War' that we are in today, means that these and other endeavours which our society cares for could greatly benefit from more involvement (and leadership) by women. So amid the zillions of Covid-19 tragic experiences, the emerging role of women in leadership roles has provided a ray of hope – of the dawn of a new era – that of gender inequality where

women actually are in the driving seat!

There is a counter narrative too. According to a research published in *The New York Times*, if women worldwide had to be compensated for the unpaid labour in terms of household tasks and child or elderly care, they would have earned \$10.9 trillion in 2019. Analysis of the Covid-19 situation suggests signals of a new gender gap has been prising its way into almost every sphere of life to such a notable extent that a new term 'she-cession' has been coined. The redundancies and furloughs caused by the pandemic have sharply affected women as they are disproportionately represented in professions affected most by lockdown and social distancing such as retail, air transport, food-and-beverages, and hospitality. The male dominance has been increasing, swamping out their limited influence and they face greater risk of being marginalised even further within different societies. Economic research is booming in the pandemic but only senior male economists are exploiting the myriad research questions arising from the Covid-19 shock, while mid-career female research economists have had to take a backseat. Similarly, a gender analysis research carried out in the University of Toronto found 'the number of male authors is growing faster than the number of female authors'.

At least in the field of vaccine development, women have shown that they are capable of delivering a safer world. More power to our new heroes! **BW**

The author is consultant radiologist at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, specialised in cardiac imaging. She is also adept at demystifying technology. The views expressed are personal

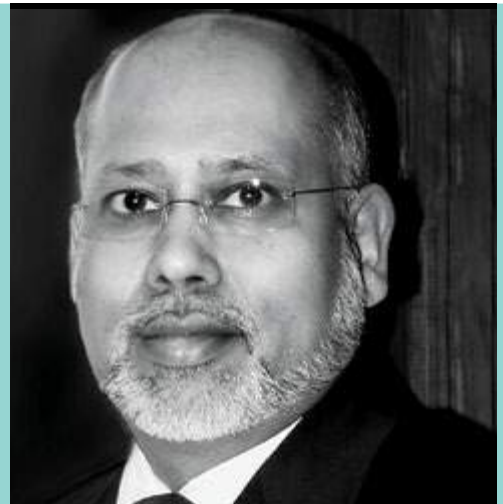
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FEW WEEKS AGO, an environment watchdog known to make significant disclosures, conducted laboratory tests on multiple brands of a food product and stirred the hornet's nest. The results indicated that along with many others one prominent local brand, which has a large portfolio of products and considerable trust amongst consumers, was adding sugar in its process to an other-

newspapers, online publications and television channels energetically addressed the likely shift in market shares or the probable fall from grace if the insinuations of the watchdog were to be believed. A well-known online business journalist posted a poser on a business networking platform querying and asking for views on which of the two brands was likely to emerge as the winner of this situation. Animated texting brought in detailed analysis and predictions. Another popular brand advisory founder and commentator on the platform wrote a piece suggesting that the free buzz generated was going to be a winning streak for the brand that had defaulted. He argued that the decibel level of the conversation was more important than the nature of its content.

Such incidents are not isolated and all these views and analyses are very legitimate. In fact, the obvious response for such an incident is a social discourse. However, there is something that such occurrences set in motion that has serious and far-reaching consequences. If you take the sum total of the issue highlighted

Should Brands Hide Behind Fig Leaf of Law?



wise claimed 'natural food'. To add to the misery, another powerful local brand and competitor had come through clean in the tests. The next few days saw public duelling between these two through advertisements. One claiming that they met all the standards stipulated by the national food regulator while the other publicly cocked a snook by claiming its superiority and claim to trust. The advertising self-regulator was pulled in to adjudicate on the claims being made by the brands in this messaging warfare.

Journalists, marketing commentators et al joined the joust. Business dailies,

by the watchdog, the response of the concerned companies on-ground and in the media, the critical views of the commentators and the consumers and the effect that this has on those who actually buy or use these products and services the long-term consequence is that there are no winners. There are only losers.

A company that has been conducting a survey to reflect a trust barometer over the last 20 years has found that despite fairly strong economic performance for many years (keeping aside the unfortunate last year) there is a growing trust paradox. The major societal institutions – government, business, NGOs and media especially in the developed world are no longer trusted. Earlier improved economic conditions were a precursor to increased levels of trust. That doesn't seem to be the case now.

Corruption in government, the hunger for power of profit at any cost, fake news, corporate misfeasance and greater disparity



of incomes has possibly left people at large with the feeling that they are not getting their fair share of the wealth that is being created. This is deliquescing the bond of trust between institutions and people. This erosion creates greater conflict in society and is antithetical to harmonised living and progress. The intent, actions and behaviour of institutions need to be under severe scrutiny, preferably by their own internal mechanisms to check for infractions that slacken the credence of the institutions as working in the interest of the people. And not for their own power and profiteering.

The world of business has much to lose with diminishing trust from customers. The clouds of controversy that surround business in terms of their governance, offerings and nexus with politicians leave very little room for inspiring confidence. Cut-throat competitiveness with public mudslinging doesn't pull down one to enhance the other's prospect. Two squabbling neighbours makes it a noisy neighbourhood and one not worth investing in.

They say patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel and when you see brands hiding behind the fig leaf of the law you wonder if there is a parallel. For brands adherence to law should be the lowest common denominator. Stepping on the wrong side of the line is not a matter of upsetting customer sentiment. It is a crime.

They say patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel and when you see brands hiding behind the fig leaf of the law you wonder if there is a parallel

So, being legally compliant is necessary but not adequate. Trust can only be built when you are honest and transparent about who and what you truly are.

A brand's promise to customers is not merely a contract, it is a sacrament. It is and should be, inviolate. Therein lies the secret of trust. The power of consumer centricity is no longer in doubt. It is well known that customers and employees are important stakeholders of any business and over five times more important to a company's long-term success than shareholders. Progressive business leadership know that the game has shifted from focusing on delivering to shareholders alone to delighting stakeholders and protecting their interests.

India today is the crucible of many successful brands that have indeed gained the trust of consumers. Many have started to spread their wings in building their presence overseas. The repository of trust that they build here will be the strongest foundation for a successful global architecture. To build the long-term possibilities for Indian business, our products and services must be exceptional hallmarks of excellence and trust. Brands that have already earned that trust have an onerous responsibility to ensure that their actions continue to build on it. An array of such brands alone will help India develop its global presence with speed and certainty.

It is often the nature of things that short-term benefit trumps long-term vision. Managers have specific goals and targets to achieve and some calculated risks seem fair game. It is here that wisdom must step in to play its part. The Board of Directors have a role to play and discharge their Duty of Care with diligence to ensure that risks that can erode trust are mitigated. It is an asset that can only be created over time, has to be nurtured every day and will yield rich dividends for a lifetime. **EW**

You can DM me on LinkedIn or write in to darkroastdoubleshot@gmail.com.

*The author is a board member, advisor, coach & mentor
The views expressed are personal*



A SHOT IN THE ARM

By Nilaya Varma



Like most countries in the world, India was severely hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. In late March, the essential lockdown to curb the coronavirus's spread brought economic activity in the country to a staggering halt, with the April-June quarter GDP contracting by a massive 23.9 per cent year on year (YoY). Since the gradual lifting of the lockdown, the Indian economy has been on the path of recovery with the July-September quarter GDP contracting by 7.5 per cent, an improvement over various predictions. With economic activity picking up, the country has witnessed various green shoots of recovery, which coupled with a consistent downward trend in number of cases since September, is leading to improvement in business and consumer confidence.

The global announcement of the vaccine being authorised brought a wave of relief across markets. In India, two vaccines were given emergency authorisation approval, with

the country beginning its vaccination drive across all states from 16 January.

The pandemic tested the public healthcare system's mettle to its limit, but frontline workers kept supporting the larger population through their tireless efforts. According to the health ministry, more than 16,700 personnel would be actively engaged in managing the immunisation sites, to cater to the priority group of 3 crore healthcare and frontline workers. It would then be administered to the elderly, before being made available to the general public.

The impact of Covid-19 on the health of the economy has been exceptionally strenuous. However, the government of India has been making consistent efforts to ease the burden on the vulnerable segment of the population and businesses.

The Nikkei Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index increased slightly from 56.3 in November to 56.4 in December. A growth above 50 shows expansion, suggesting the economy is on the path of recovery, as a supportive demand environment and firms' efforts to rebuild safety stocks bolstered another sharp rise in production.



The mass inoculation of the Indian population is expected to boost the growth momentum

Buoyancy in Tax Collection

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection for December came in at Rs 1.15 lakh crore -- the highest ever revenue collected since GST was introduced in 2017. GST collections came in above Rs 1 lakh crore over the past three months, with the collection in December being 12 per cent more than the previous year's same period. A further boost to tax collections came in the form of direct tax collections. More than 59 million people filed income tax returns before the deadline compared to 26 million last year. This increase in the number of people filing the returns has helped the government boost its revenues ahead of the Union Budget.

As India started the largest immunisation campaign globally, the economy

is expected to further improve business sentiment. The central government had to plan this drive keeping in mind the challenges in supply chain and availability of trained health workforce to administer the two-dose vaccine and monitor the adverse effects. To manage the vaccine logistics, 31 main hubs have been identified for distribution to 29,000 vaccination points across states. Crossing the 6-lakh mark on the fourth day of the vaccination drive, the government is looking to accelerate the coverage by better engaging states. While various efforts have been made to address the challenges related to the last-mile supply, the central and state governments are also having to manage vaccine hesitancy among people.

According to a National Council of

Applied Economic Research (NCAER) study, the Indian industry's business sentiment is improving, after declining for two consecutive quarters. The survey shows that while the Indian economy is recovering, additional investments will take some time to materialise.

Pick Up in Hiring Expected

With the rollout of the vaccines, companies across sectors and regions have reported an increase in expected hiring. Recent industry data reveals that companies across sectors are looking to hire employees in the first three months of 2021. At the same time, Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are becoming hotspots for white-collar jobs.

We have various indicators highlighting the country's improving economic sentiment, and the mass inoculation of the population will further drive economic growth. The successful deployment of vaccines across the country will most importantly provide a sense of stability to the public at large. It would also accelerate the return of many activities that are either not functioning as yet, or are functioning well below capacity.

Banking on the Vaccine

Sectors such as hotels, airlines, theatres, bars, malls have been the worst hit due to the pandemic. With the vaccines' rollout, footfalls across these sectors are expected to increase, easing their burden. Many large and medium-size industrial complexes have also been running below capacity, ever since the beginning of the pandemic with social distancing rules in place. Mass immunisation of the population could lead to these units functioning at full capacity again and help the manufacturing sector grow further.

The made-in-India vaccines ensure that India would gain a lead in the fight against Covid-19 and move further on the path to economic recovery and growth. **BW**

The author is Co-founder and CEO, Primus Partners



GETTING ON WITH THE



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By Jyotsna Sharma

The drive to inoculate India's billion-plus people against the deadly Covid-19 has brought to the fore concerns ranging from safety of the jabs to their equitable distribution as well as the manner and speed of the rollout

September 2020. There was hope and optimism as the Covid-stricken world waited for a vaccine that will shield it against the deadly SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. Indeed, research outfits and pharmaceutical companies across the world were inching closer to developing such a vaccine. And then came the news from the UK of a new variant of the virus that was more virulent in nature. By mid-December, about three months since it was first detected, the new strain accounted for two-thirds of cases in London.

Panic reigned once again. The UK went in for tighter curbs on movement and mixing of people. The advent of the new strain in the UK coincided with a more severe



second wave of infections in the United States. The fear and prospect of further mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus made countries and regulators give authorisations to a handful of vaccine candidates for emergency use in early January 2021 even though they were still in various stages of clinical trials. A worldwide drive to vaccinate people was just around the corner.

India, too, gave its go-ahead to two candidates, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India in Pune and named Covishield, and Bharat Biotech's vaccine developed in collaboration with the National Institute of Virology and called Covaxin. The approvals came barely two weeks before the launch of a nationwide drive on January 16 to inoculate Indian citizens.

Monica Vasudev, MD, Allergy & Immunology, Internal Medicine, Advocate Aurora Health, Wisconsin, United States says, "People question the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine given how fast it was produced. Its speed was not secondary to cutting corners, but because

of a united global effort with international collaborations among scientists, increased dedicated funding, rapid set up of trials and reduced delays in approval processes." Vasudev's argument applies to, among others, Covaxin vaccine as well, whose phase III clinical trials are still underway.

According to Vasudev, the speed of development is also because the mRNA vaccines are synthetic and could have been manufactured very quickly compared to the traditional influenza vaccines. "The fact is that high quality research shows a greater than 90 per cent efficacy rate. Immunity from previous infection with Covid-19 is variable. Immunity from immunisations is strong and consistent. These Covid-19 vaccines are a perfect example of using risk/benefit analyses to utilize our knowledge, training, and belief in the scientific processes used," she says.

Glitches Galore

India's vaccination drive started with 3,006 sites across the country on Janu-

ary 16 amid debate as well as fear in some quarters over the speed with which the regulators gave restricted emergency approval to Covaxin. It came as a dampener when a group of healthcare workers from the capital refused to take the shot. Glitches were reported from elsewhere in the country. In Assam, for instance, only a little over 2,000 health workers could be vaccinated on January 18 against the daily mandated target of 6,500 due to a snag in the Co-Win app server. Then, on January 16 itself, nearly a 1,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine were found in a partially frozen condition at the Silchar Medical College & Hospital.

The Co-Win app or the Covid-19 Vaccine Intelligence Network, created to help track the progress of the vaccination drive and help with registration of the subjects developed glitches on day one, resulting in some states halting the inoculation process. All in all, the first couple of days of this mammoth task proved to be eventful but the administration is confident that the next couple of weeks will see all such glitches ironed out.

Vaccine Rollout



Archana Chatterjee, Dean, Chicago Medical School & Vice President for Medical Affairs, Rosalind Franklin University, US says the success of a mass vaccination campaign depends on a lot of things. “Appropriate risk categorization for vaccine recipients and allocation of vaccines to highest risk groups first, safety and security of the vaccine and vaccinators, cold chain integrity, and mechanisms for follow-up for second doses (when needed) as well as reporting of vaccine adverse events are all essential, particularly in a resource-limited setting,” she explains.

Private Sector Involvement

The mammoth scale of the task – 300 million people including healthcare workers, frontline workers and the people most at risk are targeted for immunisation by July – has prompted a call for involving the private sector in the vaccination rollout. “Given the vast numbers that we are in India and for successfully inoculation of the entire population in an appropriate time frame, we have to involve the private sector. If hospitals, corporates, other organizations want to buy the vaccine, we should allow that to happen,” says Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute of India, the maker of the Covishield vaccine.

Corporates such as the Mahindra Group and RPG Enterprises etc. have expressed interest in securing the vaccine to vaccinate their employees. Their thinking is that they should take responsibility of inoculating their employees rather than have the government subsidise them.

While this would certainly help in inoculating a significant portion of India’s vast populace in a timely manner, and help the economic engine to start firing on all cylinders sooner than later, the more also runs the risk of putting the socially and economically weaker sections at a disadvantage. In other words, equitable distribution might not happen. In our country the disparity among classes is so vast that such a scenario would certainly prove detrimental to the primary goal of vaccinating the entire population. A set of stringent guidelines needs to be put in place to ensure equitable distribution.

WHO SHOULD AVOID VACCINATION (as per ICMR Delhi)

Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Can COVID-19 vaccine be co-administered with other vaccines?

Can COVID-19 vaccine be co-administered with other vaccines?

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Who should delay getting COVID-19 vaccine?

In the following cases, Covid-19 vaccination should be delayed by 4 - 8 weeks after recovery

- Persons having active symptoms of Novel Coronavirus infection
- Covid-19 cases who have been given anti-SARS-Cov-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma
- Acutely unwell and hospitalized (with or without intensive care) patients due to any illness.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Who should avoid getting the COVID-19 vaccine

For now, following groups of people should avoid COVID-19 vaccine

- Pregnant / Suspected Pregnant women
- Lactating mothers
- People who have an allergic reaction to the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- People with a history of reaction to vaccines, injectable therapies, pharmaceutical products & food items.

Arvind Sharma, Partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co believes the government at the moment should be preoccupying itself with more pressing issues before it. According to him, since India’s drug regulator has granted emergency approval for use of the Covid-19 vaccines before they completed phase III trials and adverse events (including deaths) are being reported worldwide due to use of vaccines, it is advisable that at this stage, the government tracks the number of vaccine doses manufactured

and administered, adverse events reported, and undertakes steps to vaccinate the population in a phased manner.

“Of course, if the vaccine is freely available in the market, the privileged class will seek and receive immediate access. However, efforts should be made by the government to ensure that necessary subsidies are given to ensure that the vaccine reaches the needy, in a fair and equitable manner,” he said in response to the issues of free availability of the vaccines and equitable distribution.

HARD DRIVE

A look at the first three days of the pan-India vaccination drive that was launched on January 16

- 3,81,305 beneficiaries have been vaccinated
- 1,48,266 beneficiaries were vaccinated till 5 pm on January 18
- 580 cases of AEFI (Adverse Event Following Immunisation) reported
- Two deaths reported: Male aged 52 years from Uttar Pradesh due to cardiopulmonary disease (not related to vaccination). Male aged 43 years from Karnataka due to anterior wall infarction with cardiopulmonary failure.

S.No	State/UT	Beneficiaries vaccinated (provisional)
1	Andhra Pradesh	9,758
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1,054
3	Assam	1,822
4	Bihar	8,656
5	Chandigarh	4,459
6	Delhi	3,111
7	Haryana	3,486
8	Himachal Pradesh	2,914
9	Jammu & Kashmir	1,139
10	Jharkhand	2,687
11	Karnataka	36,888
12	Kerala	7,070
13	Lakshdweep	180
14	Madhya Pradesh	6,665
15	Manipur	291
16	Mizoram	220
17	Nagaland	864
18	Odhisia	22,579
19	Puducherry	183

SOURCE: MIB

A Job for the Economy?

According to a report by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eurasia Group, ensuring equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines would benefit not just the global economy but would help the world's ten major economies significantly, giving them a boost of \$466 billion by 2025. The report found that by contributing to the ACT-Accelerator

(Access to Covid-19 Tools) -- launched by the World Health Organisation -- that supports the development and equitable distribution of Covid-19 treatments and vaccines, advanced economies would benefit significantly.

Back home, there is optimism about the economy getting a boost and hiring across sectors increasing once the vaccination drive gets underway. "We in RPG

have given go-ahead for capital expansion, possible acquisitions. Demand is looking robust. If vaccines (are) successful, economy may do record growth by Q3 of 2021," tweeted Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG Enterprises on Jan 15, a day before the launch of the vaccination drive.

Indian companies are seeing a gradual recovery from the devastation caused by Covid-19. Large as well as small and medium enterprises are showing intent to increase their workforce. As per the latest Employment Outlook report by TeamLease that looks at Q4 (Jan-Mar) of FY 2021, Indian employers are showing an intent of 27 per cent with regard to hiring, which is 6 per cent up from the previous quarter. Sectors such as healthcare, education, e-commerce and technology startups are showing maximum inclination to hire with sales and marketing as areas where the hiring focus will be higher.

The report has found that metros and Tier-1 cities are showing higher intent of hiring as compared to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, with Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai as some of the cities that are likely to see a higher increase. The study noted that small (19 per cent) and large (34 per cent) businesses would hire more employees during Q4 as compared to medium-sized enterprises.

All this is welcome news as jobs are directly linked to the health of the economy. More jobs would mean quicker recovery. However, quicker recovery would also be dependent on quicker inoculation of India's population. The task of producing nearly 400 million doses and getting them to people across the vast and varied landscape that is India will not just be challenging but, more importantly, also take time, everything else being normal.

If the past is anything to go by, then it's worth keeping this fact in mind: India's largest vaccination drive so far was aimed at immunisation of over 400 million children against measles and rubella, and took three full years to complete! **BW**

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“Getting Free, Affordable and Quality Healthcare is a Fundamental Right”



In an exclusive conversation with Jyotsna Sharma of Businessworld, **Adar Poonawalla**, CEO, Serum Institute of India, makers of Covishield, talks about the challenges of producing the vaccine, the lessons learnt from the pandemic, among other things. Excerpts:

Congratulations on creating the vaccine. With the vaccine drive now having begun, how many doses have been shipped out by the Serum Institute already?

Well, thank you. You know, it's been a big relief that finally the doses have actually left the factory — 11 million doses left on day one.

We could probably ship out that quantity on a daily basis if we needed to. But right now the capacity is pegged at around 50-60 million doses a month. The government is taking 11 million doses at the moment and is hoping to take another 40-50 million doses over the next two to three months.

Could you tell us a little bit about the efficacy of the vaccine, the dosage schedule and the side-effects, if any?

There was a lot of confusion, sometimes people don't quite understand what's going on. Let me explain: Firstly, as far as the reactions and side effects go, all vaccines have some side effects and reactions. With the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine only fever and mild headaches have been found in the clinical trials globally.

It is now very clear that if you wait two and a half to three months between the first and the second dose, the efficacy is more than 80 per cent for the Oxford-AstraZeneca product. Initially, when they vaccinated a few thousand people, the efficacy was around 65 to 70 per cent with a wait of one month. But if you get two full doses, which is what we are recommending with a two and a half to three-month gap, the efficacy is certainly more than 80 per cent. In fact, that was also publicly announced by Pascal Soriot, the CEO of AstraZeneca as well.

The process of creating the vaccine was hastened, in your opinion. Would that in any way hamper the efficacy at all?

A lot of the processes happened in parallel — the government gave permissions to do that and that is why we were able to get everything done so fast. Of course, the approvals and response time of regulators



also was significantly enhanced. I mean approvals, which would take months, came in a matter of four or five days. So, that is why we were able to make the vaccine within a year. Which would have ordinarily taken three to five years. Can I give you another example? Not only regulators, but let's say, for example, for these large Phase III studies, the recruitment, the ethics committee, the enrollment, all that normally takes long for a large study. We were able to do all this in a timely manner because in a pandemic all this moves up at a super speed.

What has been the cost of developing the vaccine for Serum Institute?

Well, if you attribute the capital expenditure of the equipment and buildings and the operating expense and other things, we have invested our own funds to the tune of about \$250-300 million.

It is now very clear that if you wait two and a half to three months between the first and the second dose, the efficacy is more than 80 per cent for the Oxford-AstraZeneca product

And we raised another \$450 million from the Gates foundation, Gavi and also other countries (that gave advance payments). So the whole project has been about \$800 million for four different vaccines, not just one vaccine.

What have been the challenges while developing the vaccine?

We went through so many challenges — I think the challenges were picking the right vaccines, tying up commercially with countries and companies for the rights to be able to make and sell those vaccines, and then came the science part.

The scientific challenges were to prove safety and efficacy in animals and in human beings. We had to do that at a very quick speed without cutting any corners. Of course, there was the challenge of building the manufacturing facility at the same time



“We have to involve the private sector in the sense that if hospitals, corporates want to buy the vaccine, we should allow that to happen”

and that too in record time, so that by October we could actually start manufacturing the product. A third challenge was getting all the permissions in place to start stockpiling the product, which we did, so that when we got the license, we would have millions of doses to give to the people. Otherwise, it would be August, September of 2021 to get the doses out.

This is the position that most other companies are in because they generally don't stockpile till Phase III clinical trials prove that a vaccine is successful. We bet early on, we took that risk.

That the vaccination drive is now beginning, what are the key factors we should keep in mind to be able to successfully inoculate the whole population?

We have to involve the private sector in the sense that if hospitals, corporates, other

We went through so many challenges — picking the right vaccines, tying up commercially with countries and companies for the rights to be able to make and sell those vaccines, and then came the science part

organisations want to buy the vaccine, we should allow that to happen. Today we are only dependent on government channels, which will take care of the vulnerable people but simultaneously in the next month or so we should focus on using private funds and private channels.

A lot of people are willing to pay for the vaccine themselves. A number of corporates are willing to buy it for their employees and their family members. They have CSR budgets that they are willing to use. We just need the permissions to get on with that and do it. So you know once we can enable that we will reach even more people in India.

What have been the lessons from this pandemic for the healthcare sector, what gaps have been highlighted?

When the pandemic hit — at its worst we realised we did not have enough beds, ventilators and other things. Nobody is ready for a pandemic or waiting for such things to happen. However, I have to say we managed well. In record time we addressed a lot of these gaps.

I think going ahead, perhaps what we could look at is better health insurance schemes. I've always believed that it's a human fundamental right to get free, affordable and quality healthcare. We could somehow address this between the government and private sector. It is not going to be easy, but I view it as addressing a basic human fundamental need. For instance, if I'm in the UK, I go to the NHS. No matter who you are, you could be rich, on an insurance scheme, or not on one, but regardless, the healthcare quality is assured. So that's what we need in India.

What would be the expectation for the healthcare sector from the Union budget?

I think they are doing the best they can with the budget that they have. I would just say that the budget should give more importance and impetus to healthcare compared to other areas. This pandemic has shown us that a country's healthcare system needs to be robust to be able to survive such adversities. **BW**

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“Several Nations would be Receiving Vaccines from India”

In an exclusive conversation with Jyotsna Sharma of BW Businessworld, Krishna Ella, Chairman & Managing Director, Bharat Biotech International speaks about Covaxin, its efficacy and other Covid-19 vaccines being developed by them. Excerpts

With the vaccine drive having begun across the country, how many doses has Bharat Biotech shipped out already and to which states?

After having received the government purchase order for 55 lakh doses, Bharat Biotech shipped the first batch of Covaxin to 11 cities including Ganavaram, Guwahati, Patna, Delhi, Kurukshetra, Bangalore, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Chennai and Lucknow. We have donated 16.5 lakh doses to the government of India. The doses required for this purchase are being shipped out on a rolling basis, based on the supply schedule provided by the Ministry of Health.

Would the vaccine be distributed internationally as well?

A team of 70 ambassadors and high commis-

sioners visited us last month to learn more about our work. The delegation led by the Ministry of External Affairs comprised of high commissioners and government representatives of 70 countries. We have also recently signed an agreement with Precisa Medicamentos for the supply of Covaxin to Brazil. In principle, it is understood that supplies of Covaxin will be prioritised for the public market, through a direct procurement by the government of Brazil. Supplies to the private market would be based upon receipt of market authorisation from ANVISA, the Brazilian regulatory authority.

Submissions for EUA are in process in several countries across the world. We are also preparing to ship Covaxin internationally to our neighbouring countries and other countries based on donations by the government of India. This is an important moment for India, where several countries would be receiving vaccines and healthcare solutions from India.

Please tell us about the efficacy of the vaccine, the dosage schedule and any side effects.

Covaxin is a highly purified and inactivated two dose SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, manufactured in a Vero cell manufacturing platform with an excellent safety track record of more than 300 million doses. This vaccine by Bharat Biotech is India's totally indigenous Covid-19 vaccine developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Virology (NIV).

The evaluation of Covaxin has resulted in several unique product characteristics including long-term persistence of immune responses to multiple viral proteins, as opposed to only the spike protein, and has demonstrated broad spectrum neutralising capability with heterologous SARS-CoV-2 strains, thus potentially reducing or eliminating escape mutants.

Covaxin has also proven efficacy in Hamsters and non-human primates, with excellent results from challenge studies.

This vaccine has also shown to generate memory T cell responses, for its multiple epitopes, indicating longevity and a rapid antibody response to future infections. Its most critical characteristic is the demonstrated safety profile, which is significantly lower than several other vaccines with published data.

The main reason behind the decision to develop Covaxin, a whole virion inactivated vaccine, using a well-established vero cell manufacturing platform is to ensure safety in the face of a pandemic



The dosage schedules are two intramuscular vaccines doses administered four weeks apart.

In addition to the development of Covaxin, what else has Bharat Biotech been doing?

Bharat Biotech has established an excellent track record of innovation with more than 145 global patents, a wide product portfolio of more than 16 vaccines, 4 bio-therapeutics with registrations in more than 123 countries and WHO pre-qualifications of its products.

Having delivered more than 4 billion doses of vaccines worldwide, Bharat Biotech continues to lead innovation.

The process of development of the Covid-19

Bharat Biotech has established an excellent track record of innovation with more than 145 global patents, a product portfolio of more than 16 vaccines, 4 bio-therapeutics with registrations in more than 123 countries

vaccine was hastened — would this in any way hamper efficacy?

Covaxin has been evaluated in approximately 1,000 subjects in Phase I and Phase II clinical trials, with promising safety and immunogenicity results. The main reason behind the decision to develop Covaxin, a whole virion inactivated vaccine, using a well-established vero cell manufacturing platform is to ensure safety in the face of a pandemic. A pandemic is not the time to experiment with new technologies, but rather fall back on well-established manufacturing platforms, with emphasis on safety and only safety. Once safety is established, the efficacy is being evaluated in Phase III human clinical trials of Covaxin which began in November, involving 26,000 volunteers across India. This is India's first and the largest Phase III efficacy trial conducted for any vaccine.

How many Covid-19 candidates is Bharat Biotech working on apart from Covaxin?

In addition to Covaxin, Bharat Biotech is working on three more vaccine candidates. It includes a licensing agreement with Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis for a novel chimp adenovirus, a single-dose intranasal vaccine for Covid-19. Bharat Biotech owns the rights to distribute the vaccine in all markets except the US, Japan, and Europe.

The second is a partnership with Thomas Jefferson University to pursue a promising vaccine candidate against Covid-19. The vector used in this new Covid-19 vaccine is a deactivated rabies vaccine that is known to produce a strong immune response and is approved for the whole population including children and pregnant women.

An international collaboration of virologists at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and vaccine companies FluGen and Bharat Biotech has begun the development and testing of a unique vaccine against Covid-19 called CoroFlu. CoroFlu will build on the backbone of FluGen's flu vaccine candidate known as M2SR, based on an invention by UW–Madison virologists and FluGen. ^{BW}

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Crucial Shot for N-E States



The drive to inoculate 2.9 lakh people in Assam in the first phase is crucial for the North East, as it can become a test-case for the rest of the six states in the region
By Team BW

B **EING THE LARGEST** economy in the North East and the largest tea growing region in the world, Assam is a significant state as far as the Indian economy is concerned. The state that accounts for nearly 54 per cent of India’s total tea production and around 14 per cent of the world’s tea production, will vaccinate nearly 3 lakh people in the first phase of the nationwide drive that is expected to last eight weeks.

According to Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a total of 2.9 lakh people —1.9 lakh health workers and 1 lakh frontline workers—will be vaccinated across 65 centres located in 33 districts in the first phase. The state has already received over 2.2 lakh doses of Covid vaccine as on January 23. “A total of 6,500 people in the state will receive Covid vaccine per day,” Sarma had said on the first day of the pan-India vaccination drive that began on January 16.

“It will take time for vaccination of the general public. Initially, we have targeted to vaccinate 2.90 lakh people including health workers and frontline workers in the first phase. In the next stage, we will identify people above 50 years of age. During this time, we will also be able to strengthen our cold chain system and our nurses will also have gained experienced in administering doses by then,” Sarma has said.

Trained Manpower

The state health department has trained 8,651 nurses for the vaccina-

tion drive. Around 1,300 supervisors will monitor these nurses during the inoculation drive.

“The first phase would be over by April. We have requested the Centre to give us additional vaccines so that officials on poll duty for the assembly election due in April are vaccinated,” said Sarma.

As on January 22, Assam and Tripura vaccinated the most number of healthcare workers compared to the other North-eastern states. Reportedly, 10,676 beneficiaries had been vaccinated in Assam followed by 9,272 in

Only a little over 2,000 healthcare workers in Assam could be vaccinated on January 18, which was much below the daily target of 6,500, due to a technical snag in the servers of the CoWin app



Vaccine Drive: N-E states can gain from Assam's experience

Tripura as on 22 January.

But the vaccination drive was not without its share of glitches. Only a little over 2,000 healthcare workers in Assam could be vaccinated on January 18, which was much below the daily target of 6,500, due to a technical snag in the servers of CoWin app. Then on the first day of the vaccination drive, around 1,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine were found in a partially frozen condition at the Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH) in Assam's Cachar district. According to state officials, there was a problem with the Ice-Lined Refrigerators (ILR) that are specially designed for storage of vaccines. The vaccines are meant to be stored in the ILR at a controlled temperature of 2-8 degrees Celsius. If, for any reason, there is a change in temperature the ILR machine should send a text message to the mobile phone app which did not happen in this case. A probe has been ordered, officials said.

As on January 23, Assam had re-

ported a total of more than 2.15 lakh 'confirmed cases'. While 2.10 lakh infected persons had recovered, the number of active cases stood at 3,525.

Dry Run

Before the actual pan-India vaccination drive began, a dry run was conducted across some key states including Assam to test their preparedness. In Assam, the dry run was carried out across all the 33 districts. Apart from the dry run, a three-day training programme was also conducted for 12,000 nurses.

Assam, like many other states, saw an increase in Covid cases following the reverse migration of labourers last year. Like other states, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) were the worst affected by the lockdown. In June 2020, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced that a sum of Rs 933 crore in assistance had been disbursed among 28,000 MSME units in Assam under

the Rs 3,00,000-crore package announced for the sector by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sarma in a written reply to the Assam assembly in end-December 2020 stated that the Assam government had spent Rs 1,032 crore towards the management of Covid-19. This included Rs 517 crore that was released to the districts for upgradation of the hospitals, maintenance of screening and quarantine centres, hotel accommodation and refreshments; Rs 172 crore for conducting Rapid Antigen Tests, RTPCR tests and outsourcing of testing facility; and another Rs 167 crore for purchasing life-saving drugs and essential medical equipment and towards transportation of the infected patients.

The vaccination drive in Assam is crucial for the North East, as it can become a test-case for the rest of the six states in the region that are always away from the radar of common man and the central authorities. **BW**



With Proper Ground Work

One of the fastest growing states starts its vaccination drive on January 16th aided by a solid ground level task force and response team
By Navneel Maji



ANDHRA PRADESH, a state with one of the highest GDP growth rates, certainly has a lot at stake to make the vaccination drive a successful one in order to ease the Covid situation and bring the state's economy back to full bloom. It is one of the states which is seeing a heavy volunteer participation for the vaccination process. Earlier, village volunteers were instructed to conduct a door-to-door survey for preparation of a database of co-morbid persons.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched the Covid-19 vaccination drive at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in the city on 16th January. The first phase to cover 3.6 lakh health care workers to be vaccinated across 1940 vaccine sites, each site vaccinate 100 health worker per day. Each site would be managed by a digital assistant, an ANM, an Anganwadi worker, and one Asha worker. In the presence of Chief Minister, the first shot of vaccination was given to a sanitation worker on Saturday 16th.

Department of Health, Andhra Pradesh had reported that on the day one of the vaccination drive a total of 19,108 frontline workers were vaccinated across 332 sessions. The drive was inaugurated in the state in Anantapur district by district authorities and people representatives.

Earlier, to curb the spread of the virus, Andhra Pradesh was one of the few states that conducted five rounds of the Covid-19 household surveys collecting data relating to travellers from overseas, high-risk areas, and then conducting surveillance and immunisation against other viral infections too. For the vaccination process, the state setup control rooms – at the state, district and mandal level - a dedicated call centre was setup to provide round-the-clock assistance.

The Task Force Committees have been constituted at the state level, district level and at the mandal level who will be in charge for monitoring and coordinating activities involved in the preparedness and implementation of Covid-19 vaccination. The Mandal development

officer (MDO), mandal education officer (MEO), Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Station House Officer (SHO), all medical officer within the mandal, an assistant engineer, one representative from transport department nominated by district collector, one NGO member nominated by the district collector.

With a geographical area of 160,205 sq km., Andhra Pradesh is a region of well-developed social, physical, and industrial infrastructure and virtual connectivity. It also has good power, airport, IT, and port infrastructure. As per the data from IBEF (Indian Brand Equity Foundation) Andhra Pradesh's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is estimated at Rs. 9,72,782 crore (US\$ 138 billion) for 2019-20 as opposed to Rs. 8,62,957 crore (US\$ 126 billion) for 2018-19. Undeniably, the state plays an important role in aiding the overall country's economy on track.

Countering Covid Impact

In fact, to counter the impact of Covid-19, the state brought in its new

Generic image from vaccination drive



Industrial Policy for 2020-23. At the same time, districts have been identified to promote growth of specific sectors. With manufacturing as high priority, ten thrust areas have been highlighted to be in chief focus. Post vaccination drive, executing the policies could be the state's main focus. Prominent industries in Andhra Pradesh being agro and food, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, IT, textile and leather, among others.

To cover the entire state in the vaccination process, 10 crore doses of the Covid-19 vaccine would be required to

administer to five-crore people in the state. The entire process is likely to take around eight months. Again, according to the health department, a total of 13 lakhs vials would be required.

Andhra Pradesh constitutes one state and four regional cold storage centres (one each at Kurnool, Kadapa, Guntur and Visakhapatnam), 13 district vaccine storage units and 1,659 cold chain points. Adding to that, the state has geared up a total of 40,410 session sites and 19 transport vehicles for vaccine distribution to districts even as it plans to hire another 26 such

vehicles.

Apparently, as per news reports, the vaccination process is going to be an hurdle for the Andhra Pradesh's Panchayat elections to be held. Earlier the Andhra Pradesh High Court had ordered the Panchayat elections to be held. Speculations are that the state is going challenge the order in the supreme court.

At the time of filing the story, the number of active coronavirus cases in the state were 1522 and the number of deaths were 7142. (The figures were sourced from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India)

Andhra Pradesh is indeed one of the most Covid-affected states in India. Like in the rest of the country, the lockdown implemented in the state had a huge impact on the lives of the rural and tribal people, whose main livelihood was either daily wage labour or selling of local produce. The present vaccination process is definitely a much-awaited moment for the residents of the state. **BW**

Andhra Pradesh constitutes one state and four regional cold storage centres (one each at Kurnool, Kadapa, Guntur and Visakhapatnam), 13 district vaccine storage units and 1,659 cold chain points



An Ambitious Target for Jab



Bihar engaged around 15,000 trained healthcare workers in a massive vaccination drive at 300 centres across 38 districts. The state claims a recovery rate of 98 per cent
By Avishek Banerjee

BIHAR, THE THIRD most populous state in the country and the twelfth largest in terms of area, is also home to more than two million migrant workers. The state's relief measures for those afflicted by the deadly novel coronavirus thus, extended beyond its territorial boundaries.

Bihar kicked off its vaccination drive on 16 January in the presence of senior government officials. State officials said around 30,000 healthcare workers were given the job on the first day of the vaccination drive that began at 300 centres spread across 38 districts of Bihar.

Rollout Kicks Off

State Health Minister Mangal Pandey said 16 January was an important day for the entire country, marking as it did, the commencement of the fight against the novel coronavirus. He said, "For a long time, we were in the dark and waiting for a vaccine to protect us from Covid-19. But now the time has come."

The minister went on to say that "It is a moment of pride for us that we will be immunised with vaccines produced in

our country. Dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to become *atmanirbhar* has come true."

An Ambitious Target

Bihar has set itself an ambitious target of inoculating 30 million residents of the state in the first phase. Health Minister Pandey went on record to say, "We have set the target to vaccinate 10 million health workers and 20 million frontline workers. Bihar's recovery rate or the percentage of people who had recovered out of those who had been infected, had touched 98 per cent now," he added.

The vaccination drive kicked off at 300 centres across the state where 4.68 lakh healthcare workers were reportedly vaccinated in the first phase. The first phase beneficiaries include 3,72,715 healthcare workers associated with the state government, 7,247 associated with the central government but working in Bihar and 84,198 engaged with the private healthcare sector.

The Bihar health department has constituted a five-member team, which will be deployed at each vaccination centre, where a hundred people will be vaccinat-

ed each day. Trained healthcare workers were deployed at identified sites in all districts and blocks, including those in urban areas, for the vaccination drive.

"Healthcare workers means all the employees giving their services in a health institute, like sanitation staff, technicians, ambulance drivers, nurses, paramedics and doctors. Even those working on contract or outsourced by an agency have been included," explained Pratyaya Amrit, Principal Secretary in the state's health department. He said the state had received 5,49,000 doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin, which were sufficient for the first phase.

The Priority Group

"Only those who are registered on CoWIN will be vaccinated," Pratyaya Amrit said, adding that the registration for the second phase will begin on 25 January. He went on to add, "In the second phase, frontline workers like police personnel, home guard jawans, municipal workers, prison staff and those associated with disaster management will be given the shots. In the third phase, the prioritised age group, which includes those above



Day one: 30,000 healthcare workers inoculated

The vaccination drive kicked off at 300 centres across the state where 4.68 lakh healthcare workers were reportedly vaccinated in the first phase. The first phase beneficiaries include 3,72,715 state healthcare workers

the age of 50 years and those below the age of 50 years, but with comorbidities like diabetes, hypertension and cancer, will register themselves. The dates for the registration will be announced later.”

“Around 15,000 trained health workers have been engaged in the massive vaccination drive that will continue for four days in a week — Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday,” said State Immunisation Officer N. K. Sinha.

In the second phase, frontline workers such as personnel working with the police, the fire and prison departments, civil defence and municipal staff will get

the vaccine. Sinha said those above 50 years of age will be given the vaccine in the third phase.

Vaccine Drug Stores

Vaccine drug stores have been set up at the state level to store the vaccine. Ten such drug stores have been set up at the regional level, 38 at the district level and 638 storage centres have been created at the block level. The Bihar health department has asked district magistrates to make arrangements for the webcast of the Covid-19 vaccination programme to monitor government session sites that

are also vaccination centres.

News reports emanating from the state suggest though, that most beneficiaries were reluctant to receive shots of Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin, which is still in phase 3 trials.

Relief Measures

The Bihar government provided financial assistance to workers stranded outside the state through the ‘Bihar Corona Sahaayta Mobile App’. An assistance of Rs 1,000 per person was provided to more than 21 lakh people, including stranded quarantined workers. The Bihar government also provided 1.64 crore ration card holding households rations for three months in advance, along with a financial assistance of Rs 1,000.

The state has completed skill mapping of workers who returned home during the pandemic. The Bihar government has sanctioned Rs 809 crore from the state contingency fund for expenses to tackle the spread of Covid-19 and other relief measures. **BW**



A Royal Bengal Roar

India's fourth most populous state launches the vaccination drive by enrolling 90,000 frontline health workers at government and private hospitals **By Avishek Banerjee**



WEST BENGAL, perhaps most famed for its Durga Puja carnival, also makes headlines at the moment as it prepares to go to polls this year. The vaccination drive to combat the novel coronavirus thus, rolled out on 16 January at a politically piquant juncture.

West Bengal is the fourteenth largest state in the country in terms of area, but the fourth most densely populated state in India. It is home to more than nine crore people, which makes stemming the spread of the virus a challenging task in the region.

Preparedness

The first consignment of the Covid-19 vaccine, 'Covishield' arrived in Kolkata on the afternoon of 12 January, 2021. West Bengal received a consignment of 9.5 lakh doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, which was apportioned between two locations.

The central vaccine depot at Hastings in Kolkata was earmarked for North Eastern states. The state depot at Baghbazar will store vaccines dedi-

cated for West Bengal. The state identified 44,000 vaccinators and over 4,000 vaccine administration session sites for the first phase of vaccination.

The latest reports trickling in from the state suggest that of the total consignment of doses sent to West Bengal, the state has been allocated 6,44,500 vaccines for the first phase of the drive. It was reported earlier that around 90,000 frontline health workers at government and private hospitals have been enrolled for the first phase of the vaccination process in West Bengal.

West Bengal's Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim informed media that Chief Minister Mamata Baner-

jee would personally monitor the vaccination drive across the state. Hakim said, "Today (16th January 2021) is a great day for all of us and I believe we may gradually emerge from the pandemic as the dreaded coronavirus has already claimed a huge number of lives across the world and also in India." The minister said the distress the people of the state had been subject to over the past year, would now hopefully be over.

Ferrying the Vaccine

West Bengal's state capital Kolkata alone has a huge population of 1.49 crores as of 2020. The metropolis has been allocated the highest number of

Around 1,800 frontline healthcare workers were selected on 16 January for the inoculation drive at 212 session sites, including medical colleges, private facilities and primary healthcare centres in the districts across the state



Day one: Over 4,000 vaccine administration session sites identified

Covid vaccines in the state at 93,500 for the first phase.

The district of North 24 Parganas has been allocated the second highest number of Covid vaccines at 47,000, followed by Murshidabad at 37,500. A leading national daily has reported that the vaccines arriving in Kolkata will be transported in freezer trucks to 941 cold chain points across the state.

A media report claimed that the health department has kept in readiness four GPS-enabled insulated vaccine vans to ferry the vials from the airport. Each van will carry around three lakh vaccine doses and these vans will later transport the vaccines to districts in north Bengal. Districts in south Bengal will send their vans to the central store to collect their vaccines.

Frontline Workers

In an open letter, the West Bengal Chief Minister has declared that Covid warriors or frontline workers such as police personnel, home guards, civil defence

volunteers, and correctional home and disaster management employees will be administered the vaccine on a priority basis.

It is worth mentioning that the first phase of the vaccination drive for the healthcare category includes 5.8 lakh government and private healthcare workers (doctors, nurses, and hospital staff), 2.5 lakh police personnel, and 1.3 lakh civic workers.

“I am happy to inform you that our government is making arrangements for reaching the vaccine to all people of the state free of any charge. The government is taking steps to ensure that every citizen of the state receives free doses of the Covid-19 vaccine,” Banerjee wrote in the letter addressed to frontline workers.

“We have seen how you dedicated yourself to your jobs despite the fear of the pandemic. Keeping that in mind, I want to assure you that your vaccine doses will be sent to you promptly,” she went on to say.

The Inoculation Drive

According to health officials in the state, around 1,800 frontline health workers were selected on 16 January for the inoculation drive at 212 session sites, including medical colleges, private facilities and primary healthcare centres in the districts across the state.

In Kolkata, SSKM Hospital, Kolkata Medical College and Hospital, Neel Ratan Sarkar Medical College and Hospital, R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, the School of Tropical Medicine and the B.C. Roy Child Hospital have been selected as vaccination hubs.

Covid Warriors’ Club

The government has also launched another initiative called the Covid Warriors’ Club to provide employment for migrant workers who have recovered from Covid, but have lost their jobs. These migrant workers will be employed by the state government on a salary of Rs 15,000, to provide emotional support to Covid-19 patients. **BW**



HARYANA IS A KEY STATE, bordering as it does, the National Capital Territory of Delhi on three sides. Haryana is also among the states where both the manufacturing industry and agriculture are significant contributors to both the state's and the national economy. The state is a key agricultural state and a manufacturing hub of the automotive industry, where some major corporate houses have set up their headquarters.

Haryana's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for FY 2020-21 (at current prices) is estimated to be Rs 9,39,720 crore. The State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) is the largest component of Haryana's tax revenue and accounts for 25 per cent of its revenue receipts. Haryana was expected to generate Rs 22,350 crore in SGST in 2020-21, 13.3 per cent higher than the revised estimate of the 2019-20 financial year. But that was before the onset of the pandemic.

The state budget presented on 28 February, 2020, estimated a revenue of Rs 10,702 crore from sales tax/ VAT during the 2020-21 financial year. In the wake of the pandemic and the lockdown it necessitated, these revenue estimates may not measure up to expectations when the state budget for the coming fiscal is presented in less than 40 days.

Strategic Importance

Since Haryana surrounds the national capital on the north, west and south of Delhi, a large part of the state's territory is included in the economically-important National Capital Region for purposes of planning and development. The 2011 census pegged Haryana's population at 25,350,000.

The state of Haryana has various medical colleges, including the Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Rohtak, Bhagat Phool Singh Medical College in Sonapat district, ESIC Medical College, Faridabad along with notable private medical institutes like Medanta, Max Hospital,

Fighting on a War Footing

At least 5,044 vaccinators, 765 public health facilities and 3,634 private health facilities have been registered across Haryana on the CoWin app for the first phase of the vaccination drive. By Team BW



Epidemic Disease, Covid-19 Regulations, 2020'. Soon after the state government designated 11 government laboratories and eight private laboratories for Covid testing, along with five other government laboratories for CB NAAT / True NAAT testing. All government/ government aided and private medical colleges in the state were asked to reserve at least 25 per cent of their beds for Covid patients.

As of 19 January, the total number of Covid cases in Haryana was 2,66,581, of whom 1,69,056 were male, 97,510 were female and 15 were transgenders. The tally includes 1,837 active cases and 26,1751 recovered patients. The pandemic led to 2,993 deaths in Haryana.

The Vaccination Drive

Haryana has embarked on the vaccination drive against the coronavirus on a war footing. At least 5,044 vaccinators, 765 public health facilities and 3,634 private health facilities have been registered across Haryana on the CoWin app.

As many as 1,005 supervisors and 18,921 social sites have also reportedly been registered on the app. Vaccine stores have already been set up at 22 districts in

Gurgaon, and Fortis Healthcare.

Prompt Measures

The first novel coronavirus case in Haryana was reported on 4 March 2020. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020. On the same day, the Haryana state government issued 'The Haryana



First Week:
Healthcare and
frontline workers
chosen for the job

In the first week beginning 16 January, around two lakh healthcare workers in Haryana were identified for the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, along with 4.5 lakh frontline workers, *safaikarmacharis*, and police personnel, among others

Haryana. At least 6.7 million recipients have been identified for the first phase of the programme.

Not counting some minor technical glitches in the CoWin app – an online platform for monitoring the delivery and administration of the Covid-19 vaccine – the vaccination drive is picking up pace in the state of Haryana, going by the claims of the state health department officials.

Overall, around 67 lakh people will get vaccinated in the state in the first phase. Three categories of recipients have been chosen for the first round, comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers,

people above 50 years of age and those below 50 years of age who have comorbidities.

The First Phase

In the first week beginning 16 January, around two lakh healthcare workers in Haryana were identified for the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. Those chosen for the first phase of inoculation also included around 4.5 lakh frontline workers, including employees of urban local bodies, *safaikarmacharis*, police personnel, civil defence personnel, jail staff and revenue department employees.

“Similarly, about 58 lakh people who are above 50 years of age and about 2.25 lakh people below 50 years, but suffering from other ailments, will be given vaccination shots,” said Haryana’s Health Minister Anil Vij.

Distribution

According to Haryana’s Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Rajeev Arora, the state received the vaccine phials at Chandigarh airport, which were then transported to the state’s warehouse in Kurukshetra by road. Now, a process is on to distribute the vaccines from Kurukshetra to four regional vaccination centres set up in Hissar, Gurgaon, Rohtak and Kurukshetra.

“Subsequently, it will be distributed to the cold chains that have been set up across all 22 districts,” Arora informed media. “In the first batch, approximately two lakh people will be administered the first dose. It will take about three to four days to complete the process,” Arora added. **BW**



All Set for the Mega Drive



Gujarat has been among the worst affected by the pandemic. On day one Covishield rolled out at 161 centres in the state and around 12,000 healthcare workers got the first jab. By Team BW

GUJARAT IS WIDELY perceived as the petroleum hub of India, being home to large oil refineries of both private and public sector companies. In terms of 'Ease of Doing Business', Gujarat ranks very high compared to other states in the country. The state's Industrial Policy has been drafted to offer incentives and concessions for investors.

Gujarat is among the top six states in terms of revenue. The 2020-21 budget of the state, presented at the state assembly on 26 February, 2020 – a month before the pan-India lockdown – was of a whopping Rs 2,17,287 crore, an increase of Rs 12,472 crore over 2019-20. The pandemic therefore, impacts not just the lives of the people of the state, but the economy and business prospects of a foremost industrialised state in India.

Among Worst Hit

By 23 July 2020 Gujarat had reported a record of 1078 new cases of the novel coronavirus, taking the tally of cases to 52,563. Ahmedabad had emerged as the hotspot for coronavirus in the state with

25,173 reported cases. The total death toll in the state was 2,252.

Quick Turnaround

Meanwhile, in its bulletin, the state reported that as many as 38,059 people had recovered. By mid-November 2020, the tally of Covid cases stood at 1,87,240, with as many as 45,124 at Ahmedabad.

As on 19 January, there were 5,967 active Covid cases in the state with 485 new cases. The numbers indicated a quick turnaround in the recovery rate, which was virtually a third compared to November 22, 2020, when the state had reported 1,515 coronavirus cases in a single day – the largest since the spread of the pandemic.

The Dry Run

Gujarat was among four states chosen by the Central government to conduct the dry run of the Covid-19 vaccination drive. A couple of days before the New Year, two districts of Gujarat, Rajkot and Gandhinagar, were put through the Covid-19 vaccination dry run to assess the preparedness for the drive.

“Apart from four lakh health and six

lakh frontline workers, we have identified and registered around a crore people over 50 years of age who will be covered on a priority basis in the real drive in the state,” said State Immunisation Officer (SIO) Nayan Jani.

Preparedness

On 16 January, 2021, the Covid-19 vaccination drive was launched in the state by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani and Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel at the Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad. The Gujarat chief minister called the Covid-19 vaccination drive a “success” and said no serious case of adverse reaction had emerged from anywhere in the state.

Some 12,000 people in priority groups were vaccinated in Gujarat on 16 January, the first day of a nationwide inoculation drive. Day one of the Covid-19 vaccination drive saw Covishield rollout at 161 centres in the state with around 12,000 healthcare workers receiving the first dose.

Talking to media SIO Jani said, “About 15,000 vaccinators are trained to deliver the vaccines by the Health



Day one: The vaccination drive rolled out at 161 centres

The State Health Department has identified 4.31 lakh health workers, such as doctors and nurses, for the first phase of the vaccine drive. The second phase will cover 6.93 lakh frontline workers and 2.75 lakh people with comorbidities

Department and a dedicated 24x7 call centre - 1075 - was also established to address the queries related to the Covid-19 pandemic, vaccine rollout and the COWIN software.”

The First Phase

The State Health Department has identified 4.31 lakh health workers, such as doctors and nurses, for the first phase of the vaccine drive. In the second phase 6.93 lakh frontline workers, such as police personnel, 1.05 crore citizens above the age of 50 and 2.75 lakh people under 50 with comorbidities will be covered

under the vaccination drive.

Storage

The vials of Covishield vaccine received is being stored in 2,169 cold storage points which include 33 district vaccine stores, eight corporation vaccine stores and six regional vaccine stores. The vaccine is also being stored at primary health centres, community health centres, and urban primary health centres. In addition, 41 vans have been deployed to transport the vaccines from the storage points to the 161 vaccination/session sites across the state.

Testing

According to the State Health Department, altogether 1,01,01,064 samples were tested in Gujarat by 9 January. Currently, the state has had as many as 2,53,161 positive cases and 7,439 active Covid-19 cases with 2,41,372 recoveries. The recovery rate in the state is as high as 95.23 per cent, while the death toll in the state is 4,350.

In keeping with national guidelines, Gujarat is carrying out the Covid-19 vaccination four days a week. Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday every week are reserved for regular vaccination for other diseases.

Gujarat, the fifth-largest Indian state in terms of area and the ninth-largest in terms of population, was initially among the worst impacted by the novel coronavirus. The vaccination drive in mid January was rolled out at a juncture when the recovery rate in the state had already improved. It revealed the immense preparedness of the state machinery to combat the deadly virus. **BW**



All Eyes on Maharashtra



India's most industrialised state was also a hot spot of Covid-19 cases. The state has now embarked on a massive inoculation drive with 17,749 trained vaccinators and 7.85 lakh healthcare workers **By Team BW**

MAHARASHTRA IS THE most industrialised and consequently among the most developed and most prosperous states in India. Maharashtra is the single largest contributor to the national economy with a share of 15 per cent of India's GDP.

Maharashtra's gross state domestic product (GSDP) is Rs 28.78 trillion, even though it ranks fifth among Indian states on the Human Development Index. According to the 2011 national census, Maharashtra is home to around 9.3 per cent of India's total population.

Cynosure of All Eyes

Maharashtra is also among the most urbanised states in India and its economy is driven by manufacturing, international trade, aerospace, technology, petroleum, fashion, apparel and tourism. More than 41 per cent of the S&P CNX 500 conglomerates have corporate offices in Maharashtra.

The state capital Mumbai, is India's financial and commercial hub and known as the financial capital of In-

dia. Headquarters of almost all major banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and mutual funds are based in the metropolis. India's largest stock exchange and the oldest in Asia, the Bombay Stock Exchange, is also located in Mumbai.

Populous Potpourri

Maharashtra is the second-most populous state in India as well as the third-largest state in terms of area. Being an industrialised state, it attracts a considerable crowd of migrant workers from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Kerala.

Predictably, it quickly became a hot spot of the novel coronavirus. Maharashtra saw its first confirmed coronavirus case on 9 March 2020.

The state's first death linked to the novel coronavirus was reported on 17 March, after a 64-year-old man died at the Kasturba Hospital in Mumbai. By end April 2020, the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra had risen to 9,915, with 597 new cases. The state also reported 32 deaths during one day, of which 26 were from the

city of Mumbai.

The Pandemic

As on 17 January 2021 Maharashtra had 19,90,759 Covid-19 cases of whom 18,86,469 had recovered, but there were 3,081 new cases as well. Currently 2,25,308 Covid patients are in home quarantine and another 2,045 are in institutional quarantine.

A successful vaccination drive therefore, will not only save lives, but also send happy signals to the Indian economy at large. It goes without saying that it will also facilitate the state's economy to bounce back faster.

Preparedness

Maharashtra has identified 285 centres for the vaccine delivery. The state government has already received 9.63 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine and 20,000 doses of the Covaxin vaccine, which have been distributed to all the districts.

On 16 January vaccination sessions began in 34 districts and 27 municipal areas in the state with 17,762 vaccinators and 7.85 lakh healthcare workers



Day one: Vaccination sessions across 34 districts

registered on the CoWin portal. However, the vaccination drive was put on hold for the following two days reportedly because of some technical glitches in the CoWin app.

A dedicated 24x7 call centre - 1075 - has been established to address queries related to the Covid-19 pandemic, vaccine rollout and the CoWIN software. CoWin (Covid Vaccine Intelligence Work) is an online digital platform developed by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, to facilitate real-time information on vaccine stocks, storage temperature and indi-

vidualised tracking of beneficiaries for the Covid-19 vaccine. The CoWIN platform aims to assist programme managers across all levels in conducting the vaccination sessions.

The Vaccination Drive

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray described the inoculation drive as a “revolutionary step” and recalled efforts of health and frontline workers during the pandemic. Launching the vaccination drive at the Covid care centre at the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC), Thackeray said, “Those

days still give me the shivers. The situation was really adverse and grim then. Hospitals were flooded with Covid-19 patients. How to proceed was a big question before everyone and no solution was in sight. Everyone was under pressure because of the situation.”

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said, “In the first phase, we have decided to keep 80 to 100 centres. If we have to immunise 8,00,000 people, it’ll take about 80-90 days. We will carry out the process scientifically.”

Battle Ready

The state government has trained 17,749 vaccinators who will administer the dose. The state will set up as many as 3,135 cold storage chains, including one central facility at the state level. “The vaccination centres will be at district hospitals, sub-district hospitals, medical college hospitals and civic hospitals, where tertiary care is available,” Tope said. Giving credence to rhetoric, Maharashtra is all set for the battle. **BW**

Maharashtra has identified 285 centres for the vaccine delivery. The state has received 9.63 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine and 20,000 doses of the Covaxin vaccine, which have been distributed to the districts



Going Ahead Stronger

The state which possess ten per cent of country's cold chain infrastructure starts its vaccination drive on January 16th
By Navneel Maji

A TOTAL OF 7,93,710 healthcare workers in the state including the staff of Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) planned to receive the vaccine in the first phase in Karnataka. The state which boasts one of the largest cold chain infrastructure, received a total of 6.48 lakh doses of the Covid 19 vaccine on January 12 from the Serum Institute of India.

Karnataka State Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar has said, "We have two vaccine storages each in Bengaluru and Belagavi. Apart from this we have five regional storage centres at Chitradurga, Kalburgi, Dakshina Kannada, Mysuru and Bagalokote. We also have a Corporation storage facility in every district, BBMP has 50 blocks and totally we have 2,767 cold chain points. So all these will be utilised to distribute vaccines."

As a part of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), Karnataka possesses a total of 2,870 cold chain points across 30 districts for the vaccination

drive. The points are located in medical colleges, district and taluk hospitals, primary health centres (PHC) and community health centres (CHC). Reportedly, ten per cent of the country's cold chain points are located in the state.

With a geographical area of (sq km)192,000, Karnataka has the lowest unemployment rate in India. The state is an information technology (IT) hub of India. Reportedly, the state is India's largest software exporter with software and service export totalling \$77.80 billion (for 2018-19). The state's capital Bengaluru is one of the most developed cities and centre of India's high tech industry. Recently, the state government has launched "Mission Bengaluru 2022" with the target to revitalise Bengaluru into a sustainable, connected city enhancing the quality of life of its citizens by 2022.

Pandemic Impact

At the peak of the lockdown in April 2020, the joblessness rate in Karnataka was 29.8 per cent – way above the nation-

al average at the time, 23.5 per cent. This suggests the scale at which the workforce had been impacted because of the corona virus pandemic. As the lockdown was eased and the digital and IT services sectors picked up pace quicker than the manufacturing sector, the state saw a drop in unemployment. (In August it touched a low of 0.5 per cent as per CMIE stats). The vaccination drive is only going to complement the already stable working atmosphere present in the state.

The state government has played a significant role in easing the working environment. During the beginning of the lockdown, the Karnataka government announced measures like the payment of two months of social security pension in advance, the release of Rs 1,000 per person to about 21 lakh construction workers and waiving of Rs 13.20 crore loan under "Badavara Bandhu" scheme, among others. Moreover, a fully equipped control room was set up in 24 hours in Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) in early March which helped in contact trac-



Generic image from vaccination drive

ing, among many other measures. Such control rooms were then established for crisis management throughout the state after their success in Bengaluru.

B.S. Yediyurappa, Chief Minister of Karnataka, says, “Several reforms were undertaken in Karnataka and the state topped in FDI receiving over INR 1.54 lakh crore proposals. We mitigated the pandemic & ensured that development works do not halt.”

Vaccination Preparation

For the vaccination drive, in fact, Ben-


galuru, state’s capital, was among the 11 cities that received the first consignment of Covishield. The Bangalore Medical College was where the vaccination drive kicked off in the state. The campus has 11 vaccination centres where more than 6,000 people will be vaccinated within ten days.

Each centre has been geared with a specialist to tackle any kind of anaphylactic reaction. During the entire process, the vaccination team at each centre will have five members, two security personnel to validate the identity

of the beneficiary and three nurses to vaccinate and observe the healthcare professional after the process is complete.

Sudhakar said, “In the entire country, maximum number of people have taken the vaccine yesterday in our state. The vaccines are safe and the vaccination drive in the state has been going on successfully.”

As per the stats shared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Government of India, at the time of filing the story, the number of active Covid-19 cases 7004 while the number of fatalities is 12190.

Yediyurappa said in a recent tweet, “We are grateful to all our doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, frontline workers, and all corona warriors for their unparalleled selfless service during this pandemic. I wish each one of you a very happy, healthy, and prosperous 2021 ahead.” 

The Bangalore Medical College was where the vaccination drive kicked off in the state. The campus has 11 vaccination centres where more than 6,000 people will be vaccinated within 10 days



KERALA, WITHOUT DOUBT, has one of the finest healthcare infrastructures in the country. With a network of 3,300 government and private medical institutions and around 300 beds per 1 lakh population, the state is systematically going about the vaccination drive despite some criticism from the central government and its own set of challenges.

The state not only has an aging population, but it also has the largest number of active cases in the country — of the five states that account for over 70 per cent of the total active cases in India as of January 18, Kerala is right at the top. As of January 19, Kerala reported 70,259 active Covid-19 cases.

However, the state government is leaving no stones unturned in its vaccination drive. The state has put to work 7,891 health workers in its Covid-19 vaccination drive, according to the state's Health Minister K.K. Shailaja Teacher. Of the 3,59,549 people that have registered for the vaccine, 1,68,685 are health workers from the government sector and 1,89,889 are from the private sector.

As per local reports, a total of 133 vaccine centres have been set up across the state's 14 districts. Ernakulam has the highest number of vaccination booths, followed by Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode. The other districts have nine centres each.

As part of its initial response to the pandemic, the Kerala government

Organised & Systematic

In the first phase, Kerala intends to vaccinate around 3.75 lakh healthcare workers, out of which 1.68 lakh will be government-employed and the rest from the private sector
By Team BW

had set up at least two dedicated hospitals in each district to treat the Covid-19 positive cases with well-trained staff and a team from all specialties.

As more and more people got infected the state government established Covid Care Centres in all districts to accommodate non-residents such as tourists, people in transit, etc. along with designated isolation facilities for accommodating residents returning from other states. Besides, it used telemedicine portals across the state for providing psychosocial support to people.



The state government has decided to administer the vaccine for free to everyone and has deputed four vaccination officers and one vaccinator to be part of a vaccine team with one supervisor per four vaccination teams. The team will be responsible for checking the registration status of a beneficiary at the entry point and ensure the regulated entry to the vaccination session.

“It’s a proud moment here in Kannur that the director of Malabar Cancer Centre, Satheeshan Balasubramanyam became the first person in the district to receive the vaccine,” Shailaja said. The first consignment of 4,33,500 doses of Covishield vaccine was received in the state from the Pune-based Serum Institute of India on January 14.

The impact of Covid-19 could be clearly seen in the revised budget estimates of 2020-21. The budget documents revealed an 18.7 per cent dip in revenue income compared to the budget estimates



Worst hit: Kerala has the largest number of active cases

The first case of the Covid-19 pandemic in India was reported from Kerala in Thrissur on 30 January 2020. The state saw success initially in containing Covid-19 and was widely praised both nationally and internationally

Kerala had implemented the universal healthcare programme in 2013, while in 2014 it became the first state in India to offer free cancer treatment to the poor, via a programme called Sukrutham.

The first case of the Covid-19 pandemic in India was found in Kerala in Thrissur on 30 January 2020. The state saw success initially in containing Covid-19 and was widely praised both nationally and internationally,

However, by mid-May, the state saw a “second wave” of new cases, following the return of Keralites

from other countries and other Indian states. The state, however, has the lowest Covid fatality rate in the country (0.35 per cent), compared to the national average of 1.44 per cent.

Importance for the Economy

Finance minister Shailaja recently presented the state's budget presented the state budget in which revenue receipts for 2021-22 were estimated at Rs 1,28,376 crore against an expenditure of Rs 1,45,286 crore, leaving a revenue deficit Rs 16,910 crore. State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) is the largest

component of the state's tax revenue.

The impact of Covid-19 could be clearly seen in the revised budget estimates of 2020-21. The budget documents revealed an 18.7 per cent dip in revenue income compared to the budget estimates.

The tourism sector, one of the main contributors to the state's exchequer, has been dented due to the coronavirus pandemic. “Due to Covid-19, the sector incurred a loss of Rs 40,000 crore. The government is committed to bringing about growth in the tourism sector without harming the environment,” said Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan recently.

In 2019, the state attracted around 1.96 crore domestic and foreign visitors. The total earnings from tourism stood at around Rs 45,000 crore, a massive 24 per cent increase over 2018 numbers. Even the total foreign exchange earnings from tourism had crossed Rs 10,000 crore for the first time before the pandemic hit. **BW**



A Sign of Hope

Punjab has initiated the plan to vaccinate 1.74 lakh government and private healthcare workers in the first phase, as the state and its people struggle through various challenges
By Navneel Maji



THE PUNJAB GOVERNMENT ON Saturday 16th initiated the plan of vaccinating 1.74 lakh government and private healthcare workers in the first phase. Five vaccination sites per district have been selected for the launch where 100 beneficiaries will be allocated at each site.

The vaccine was stored at the State Vaccine Store in the state capital Chandigarh and is made available to the Regional, District, and Block vaccine stores as per SOPs set by the Centre.

The Punjab government received a total of 20,450 vials of the Covid-19 vaccine on January 12 from the Serum Institute of India, with each vial containing 10 doses amounting to a total of 2.04 lakh doses. Reportedly, two session sites will be live-streamed-webcast with the central government at district hospitals.

Amarinder Singh, Chief minister of Punjab says on the first day of the vaccination drive, "It is a historic day today, we launched long and much-awaited vaccination drive for Covid-19. I thank Punjabis for their patience and support

during pandemic - in the curfew and thereafter - which was aimed at reducing the peak of pandemic till such time a vaccine could be rolled out."

As the state goes ahead with its vaccination process, several challenges persists for the people of the state. Punjab farmers have been protesting since August 2020 and mounting pressure on the central government to repeal the central farm laws or guarantee the minimum support price (MSP). So far the central government has not been able to convince the farmers otherwise. The increase in bird flu cases have also troubled the state administration lately. They have to suspend Covid-19 testing at laboratories in order to maximise

bird flu testing.

Punjab, also known as the 'Bread Basket of India' which led to the first Green Revolution in the country, has a highly rich and productive agricultural land. As per the state's economic survey 2019-20, total food grain production during the year 2018-19 amounted to 31.53 million metric tonnes.

Before the pandemic hit, the state was expected to be among the leading producers of non-food grains as well as the various agri-products. Other leading industries in the state are textiles, tractor and auto components, pharmaceuticals, bicycle and bicycle parts, light engineering goods, among others.

Punjab has easy procedures to set up

Punjab government received a total of 20,450 vials of the Covid 19 vaccine on January 12 from the Serum Institute of India, with each vial containing 10 doses amounting to a total of 2.04 lakh doses.



Generic image from vaccination drive

a business according to a study by the World Bank and KPMG. Punjab had set up a Bureau of Investment Promotion (BIP) in December 2013 for one-stop clearance of investment proposals. BIP has powers to give approvals related to pollution control, excise and taxation, labour issues, factory licences, boiler registrations, town and country planning, land and power-related issues.

Pandemic Impact

Undeniably, the pandemic has been a major speed breaker in the growth trajectory of the state. Punjab, with a total of 171,000 Covid-19 cases so far, has been one of the worst affected states in the country. On September 5, Ludhiana, the state's industrial and financial capital, ranked among the top 15 cities in the country with a high Covid-19 fatality rate. By the time December rolled around, the district had reported 24,000 infections and 958 deaths. This suggests

the scale at which the industries likely to have been impacted in the state. By the end of the last year and the beginning of this, people are more than hopeful the vaccination is going to bring a much-needed turnaround for the state.

Singh had announced on the first day of the vaccination drive in a tweet, "Happy to also share that along with launch of Covid-19 vaccination drive today, we have launched state-wide scheme for allotment of 7219 fair price shops in the State which will provide direct and indirect employment to over 30,000 people."

Vaccination Preparation

Further, to make sure a seamless roll-out of the vaccination in the state which has a geographical area of 50,362 sq km, the State Steering Committee is coordinating closely with the National Steering Committee, while the State Task Force will work in tandem with

the district and block level task force committees for the same. Moreover, considering the need to spread awareness about the Covid-19, the Punjab government launched a one-month awareness campaign as part of 'Mission Fateh', involving the people of Punjab in a fight against Covid-19 and set up three committees for the implementation of its mass awareness campaign.

The state had earlier requested the centre, post analysis of the available stock, for certain additional cold chain equipment, including vaccine vans, deep freezers, ice-lined refrigerators, cold boxes, vaccine carriers, ice packs, thermometers and stabilisers.

As per the stats shared by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, the number of Covid-19 active cases in the state at the time of filing the story were 2343 with total fatalities over 5535. **BW**

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With Social Awareness



With strong social backing of activists, NGOs and ex-public officials, Rajasthan goes ahead with the vaccination drive with the target of vaccinating 4.5 lakh health workers in the first phase **By Navneel Maji**

THE LARGEST STATE in India, Rajasthan sees a strong participation from various social groups along with ex-ministers and ex-public officials extending their support towards making the vaccination program a success in the state. Believing in the need to make citizens aware of the vaccination process, the state held an orientation programme for elected representatives to equip them to generate awareness among people.

Earlier, in fact, Rajasthan is the first state to complete a social audit of Covid-19 welfare programmes with the help of non-government organisations to bring transparency in public spending. Reportedly, for the drive more than 18,000 people have been trained, which includes social health activists, school teachers and anganwadi workers.

A total of 2,444 cold chain points had been identified at district hospitals and community health centres for administering the vaccine to prevent infectious disease. The state has the target to cover 4.5 lakh health workers in the first phase of vaccination.

“Everyone was eagerly waiting for this day. Finally, the vaccine is out. Vaccination would take place at 167 booths. It would take one to one-and-a-half-a-year to vaccinate everyone. Until then, we need to continue to follow Covid related protocols,” says Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

The first phase of the vaccination in Rajasthan is taking place at 282 session sites. The storage of Covid-19 vaccine is located in three districts viz. Jaipur, Udaipur and Jodhpur – all three have air connectivity. Moreover, according to the Rajasthan government, of the session sites, two sites including Jaipur and Ajmer will be interactive with facilities of two-way audio-video facility.

Pandemic Impact

Rajasthan, with its historic palaces and desert locations, is one of the leading tourist destinations in the country. Travel and tourism, is one of the worst affected sectors because of Covid-19 and since it plays a critical role in the state’s economy, needs steady recovery from the Covid-19 impact in order to be back on track. As per a report, in

the year 2014-2015, for tourism based programmes the allocation was 61.12 crores which has increased to 114.45 crores in the year 2019-20 - shows the scope for growth in the sector and the government commitment towards it.

Some of the other key industries that the state excels in are Cement, IT and ITes, ceramics, handicrafts, chemicals, textile, marble and steel. Before the pandemic hit, as per a report, the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Rajasthan was estimated to expand at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.63 per cent (in Rupee terms) between 2015-16 and 2020-21.

Among several measures taken by the state government for Covid-19 relief, it had declared reimbursement of the State GST share to hotels and restaurants, and relaxations in vehicles tax

Rajasthan government had announced a one-time compensation amount of Rs 1,000 to 25 lakh for construction workers and BPL beneficiaries, registered street vendors under social security schemes, and a fresh relief amount of Rs 1,000 to 35 lakh for needy families affected by the Covid-19



Generic image from vaccination drive

lockdown. The vaccination is likely to further ease the hurdles the sector has been facing because of the pandemic.

Global organisations are also playing a role in order to make the drive successful. UNICEF, WHO and UNDP are going to extend technical assistance to the state government.

Vaccination Preparation

The state conducted a dry run at 18 places in seven districts in the first phase on January 2nd and at 102 places in all districts across the state on January 8.

Health Minister Dr. Raghu Sharma had stated earlier: “3,689 medical institutions in the government sector and 2,969 medical institutions in the private sector have been identified for the vaccination programme in the first phase and 5,626 vaccination parties have been trained.” This is to ensure smoother implementation of vaccine rollout. As per the latest information the orientation of 1,66,188 people in 10

3,689 medical institutions in the government sector and 2,969 medical institutions in the private sector have been identified for the vaccination programme in the first phase and 5,626 vaccination parties have been trained

categories including public representatives has been done so far.

Gehlot has recently said in a tweet, “We have reasons to be optimistic in Rajasthan with low infection and lowest mortality rates but my appeal to all is, please keep following health protocols and taking precautions as the threat of corona is still there. Seek your cooperation to win this battle with Covid-19.”

Reportedly, at the time of filing the story, the number of active Covid-19 cases in the state stood at 3934 while the number of people who died from

Covid-19 in Rajasthan were 2756.

“We as a nation have suffered a lot on all fronts due to the outbreak of Covid-19. I am thrilled that now we have developed vaccines in India, says Gehlot. He also congratulated researchers who were behind the development of the vaccine: “Congratulations and appreciate the efforts of our scientists, researchers and experts of Bharat Biotech & Serum Institute of India for producing the Covid vaccine.”^{BW}

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The Big Challenge

As Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state and one of its largest, goes about the task of inoculating its citizens against the coronavirus, it can become a test-case for the success of the nationwide vaccination programme **By Team BW**



UTTAR PRADESH IS ONE of the largest, most populous, and diverse states in the country sharing its borders with as many as nine fellow Indian states as well as an international border with Nepal. It is also the largest producer of foodgrains and vegetables in the country. In terms of foodgrain production, Uttar Pradesh accounted for about 18 per cent of the total foodgrain output in India in 2016-17.

UP achieved the feat of vaccinating more than one lakh health workers in a single day on January 22. So far, no other state has vaccinated one lakh persons in a single day, state health ministry officials said. The total number of doses available in Uttar Pradesh as of January 23 is 20 lakh, perhaps the largest number of doses housed in any state of India.

As of January 17, the second day

of the pan-India vaccination drive, more than 21,000 people, the highest for any state on a single day, were administered the first dose of the vaccine. On that day, 1.91 lakh beneficiaries were administered the vaccine shots across the country.

No Particular Vaccine Sought

The UP government is aiming to vaccinate a total of 1.50 lakh healthcare workers across the state in the first phase. Jai Pratap Singh, the state's health and family welfare minister said

the Uttar Pradesh government had not demanded a particular vaccine and it was the central government's mandate to supply vaccines to the states.

According to Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary in the Department of Health and Family Welfare, the health department had completed all the preparations for the second round of the vaccination drive. "The vaccine has been stored at 1,298 cold chain stores across the state. The state has planned to vaccinate a total of 9 lakh healthcare workers and

UP achieved the feat of vaccinating more than one lakh health workers in a single day on January 22. So far, no other state has vaccinated one lakh persons in a single day, as per state health ministry officials



Test case: The state can offer key lessons in vaccination drive

we have adequate vaccines to give the second dose to the beneficiaries after 28 days,” said Kumar.

The UP government has decided to hold the vaccination drive twice a week on Thursday and Friday, while the third and fourth vaccination round will be organised on January 28 and 29.

Fund Allocation to Districts

As per reports, the Uttar Pradesh government has allocated around Rs 300 crore to enable each district to fight the coronavirus pandemic. These allocations were announced in August 2020 and were made as per the population matrix. Districts with population of over 25 lakh were allocated Rs 5 crore while those with a population of less than 25 lakh received Rs 3 crore each.

Meanwhile, during the pandemic, Uttar Pradesh is said to have outpaced many states on the exports front despite the pandemic and the

restrictions. As per the data released by the central government, Uttar Pradesh exported Rs 72,500 crore worth of goods, including milk, sugar, rice, silk, flour and Rs 1,000 crore-plus worth of foodgrains.

As a testimony to the success of the state’s ‘One District–One Product’ (ODOP) scheme, it has been reported that during the pandemic months — April 2020–November 2020 (the period for which data has been made available) — Nepal, Bangladesh and some other South Asian countries received a large number of ODOP products from Uttar Pradesh.

‘Make in UP’ Brand

Since the Yogi Adityanath government took charge, the state of Uttar Pradesh has recorded impressive export numbers. For example, for FY18, the state is said to have exported goods worth Rs 89,000 crore. In the fiscal that followed, this amount

jumped to Rs 1.14 lakh crore and in FY19, it stood at Rs 84,000 crore.

Now, Uttar Pradesh is developing the ‘Make in UP’ brand which entails developing each district as an export hub.

The state tax collection numbers have also been clocking an impressive growth. News reports suggest that for the fifth month in a row, Uttar Pradesh’s tax revenue collection increased with the state collecting Rs 2,522 crore more in December 2020 compared to December 2019.

For December 2020, against the set target of Rs 14,536.47 crore, the actual collection was reported at Rs 12,530.70 crore, which was higher than the Rs 10,008 crore collected in the corresponding period of the last fiscal, reports from Lucknow said.

Now, all eyes are on the success of the vaccination drive in this large and the diversified state that is home to more than 21 crore people. **BW**

THE UNION CABINET approved the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in July 2020 which proposes transformational changes for the Indian education system to become aligned to global practices. A key focus of NEP is to improve learning outcomes through the use of modern pedagogical measures from early stages of a child's education.

In school education, NEP seeks to improve quality of school education by bringing in a structural change from the current 10 + 2 system to a 15-year cycle with the formal inclusion of early childhood care and education. The focus at pre-school and preparatory levels would be to build foundation

EXPECTATIONS OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR

level literacy and numeracy skills through age-appropriate conceptual learning methodologies.

Formalising school education at the early childhood stage will require adequate pre-school infrastructure and facilities to be built across the country. Given that anganwadi workers are already involved in initiatives related to early childhood care, the policy envisages they be appropriately trained to provide early childhood education, and anganwadi centres be upgraded accordingly.

The National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) has been given the mandate of developing a national curricular and pedagogical framework for early childhood care and education for pre-school and a new national curricular framework for school education. Significant investments will be required in upgrading and creating facilities as well as training anganwadi workers and teachers in modern teaching methodologies, which needs to be addressed in the budget.

In higher education, the policy aims to improve the gross enrolment ratio (GER) to 50 per cent by 2030 from current levels of around 26 per cent. This is expected to be achieved by increasing seats in higher education institutes as well as leveraging technology to provide options for students to enroll for online courses. A key feature in the policy



is to make undergraduate education broad based through multi-disciplinary offerings with flexible curricula, integration of vocational education and students having the option of choosing a creative combination of subjects as per their area of interest.

Increasing GER in higher education envisages an increase in both seat capacity at higher educational institutions as well as enrolling more students through online platforms. While earlier years' budgets have taken cognisance of this, continued investments will be required on expanding the digital infrastructure and content creation to achieve the GER target by 2030.

The budget allocation needs to be increased from the current level of around 3 per cent of GDP to the levels of 5-6 per cent, which is the allocation for many developed countries.

The ongoing pandemic has caused significant disruptions for students as most of the education institutions have remained closed since the lockdown announced in March 2020. Many education institutes have resumed classes using online platforms.

However, the digital divide in terms of many students not having access to devices like laptops, tablets or smartphones along with insufficient or absence of internet connectivity at their homes have resulted in they not being able to attend online classes. The budget should address the challenge of this digital divide through a scheme of funding digital devices for use of students from economically weaker section of society.

Given the significant investments required to bring transformative changes as stated in NEP, the budget allocation needs to be increased from the current level of around 3 per cent of GDP to the levels of 5-6 per cent of GDP, which is the allocation for many developed countries.

With the policy in place, Budget 2021 should give greater focus on transforming the Indian education system for India to be recognised as the talent capital of the world. **BW**

The author is Partner at Deloitte India

MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM Enterprises (MSME) sector is the backbone of the Indian economy and it contributes significantly (approx. 30 per cent) to the national Gross Domestic Product. Products manufactured by MSMEs accounted for approximately 50 per cent of the total exports made during the financial year 2019-20, and the MSME sector has employed close to 110 million people. According to the data released by the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, India has close to 63 million MSMEs. These statistics reflect the importance of MSMEs and their contribution to the national economy.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE MSME SECTOR

In recent times, MSMEs have gone through many adversities due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and they are facing the adversities due to inadequate liquidity, supply mismatches, shortage of labour and non-payment of dues. Cash starved MSMEs are expecting incentives and relief measures from the Government of India to improve their production capabilities, increase exports and generate employment opportunities. Certain key aspects concerning the MSME sector need immediate attention.

Frequent amendments to the GST regime and extensive compliance requirements under the GST laws increase time and expenses for MSMEs, and therefore, a simplified form for tax compliances, fine-tuned for MSMEs is expected. Industry experts are of the view that in order to enable MSMEs to benefit from professional services for their business growth, the government should reduce the GST rate on most of the professional services (to the extent provided to the MSME sector) from existing 18 per cent to 5 per cent.

Measures should be announced to reduce income tax rates for MSMEs on the lines of the manufacturing sector. In fact, most MSMEs carry on their businesses as proprietorship entities, partnerships and limited liability partnership struc-



The government must focus on providing technological solutions that enable MSMEs to develop affordable products and address real issues.

to the banks to support the cash-starved MSMEs. It may be noted that the Basel norms are international norms prescribed by the Switzerland-based Basel Committee on Banking Supervision to set common standards for banks across its member countries.

The government should take measures to make Trade Receivable Discounting System mechanism ("TReDS") popular, and to enable more MSMEs to utilize this facility. TReDS refers to an online electronic institutional mechanism for facilitating financing of trade receivables of MSMEs through multiple financiers.

Acknowledging the upfront costs associated in adopting IT along with stiff competition faced from their established peers, in its budget and economic reforms, the government must focus on providing technological solutions that enable MSMEs to develop affordable products and address real issues.

If effective measures are taken to develop the MSME sector, the larger economic system will be automatically taken care of, as the MSME sector is reflective of the economic health of India. **BW**

The author is Partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co

THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR has played a transformational role in the growth ambitions of developing economies, given its high multiplier effect on employment and growth. With a vision to increase the contribution of the manufacturing sector in India to 25 per cent of the GDP by 2025, there has been an attempt to position manufacturing as the focal point of initiatives such as the Make in India program. However, in contrast to the dominance of the manufacturing sector in the growth trajectory of other emerging economies, manufacturing in India has not yet reached its



Shridhar Kamath: Partner, Deloitte India

EXPECTATIONS OF THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

true potential. Limited access to low cost project finance, complicated regulatory paperwork, dearth of skilled human resources and dependence on imported technology are some of the causes of stifling manufacturing growth. Manufacturing as a percentage of GDP has dropped from 15.5 per cent in 2015 to 13.6 per cent in 2019. Annual growth in the sector since 2015 has not met the 12-14 per cent expectation of the Make in India program.

In the backdrop of a new Atmanirbhar Bharat aspiration, manufacturing may be a centrepiece for discussion in the upcoming budget. The sector pins its hopes on various announcements from the budget to pave the way for a transition to a self-reliant India.

The Covid-19 pandemic ravaged the economy and brought its manufacturing engines to a temporary halt. There have been significant disruptions to supply chains, increased uncertainty in the supply of raw material and volatility in customer demand. Industries in India have shown resilience in the face of adversity and led the economic recovery for the country.

In the backdrop of a new Atmanirbhar Bharat aspiration, manufacturing may be a centrepiece for discussion in the upcoming budget.

Amidst other stimuli announced by the government, a focused stimulus in the form of production-linked incentives (PLIs) worth nearly INR 1.45 trillion was announced for 10 sectors. This stimulus can prove to be a result-oriented step in the right direction for domestic manufacturing. The identified sectors under this scheme are poised to benefit at a time when companies are realigning their supply chains and reconfiguring their manufacturing footprint.

Addressing short term challenges and sector-specific issues

As the manufacturing sector stages its recovery from the lockdown, certain sectors are looking forward to the budget to meet their expectations. The automobile industry, which witnessed an increase in demand for certain segments in September-December 2020, has faced lacklustre growth due to the pandemic, shrinking liquidity of NBFCs and weak consumer sentiments. A reduction from the current 18 per cent GST levels to offset the price increase on BS-6 vehicles is expected to increase traction.



(L) AVINASH SINGH,
Director, Deloitte India;
(R) MOHIT BINDAL,
Associate Director,
Deloitte India

The energy sector, which is seeing an increasing emphasis on renewable energy (RE) in the overall energy mix, expects announcements on support for building transmission infrastructure, long-term capital availability for RE projects and privatisation of stressed Discoms during the budget.

The industry is also expecting announcements around the scrappage policy which will ensure that older polluting vehicles are replaced by new compliant vehicles, resulting in cleaner air and demand for new vehicles. The metals industry, in a bid to become more cost-competitive, awaits a reduction in the customs duty on the purchase of integral raw materials such as metallurgical coal, graphite electrodes and coking coal, most of which the steel industry is dependent on imports.

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structure, long-term capital availability for RE projects and privatisation of stressed Discoms during the budget.

Ensuring long term competitiveness of the manufacturing sector

There is an opportunity to achieve long-term growth and competitiveness of the manufacturing sector with this budget. Some of the key areas which could be incentivised through the budget include:

a) **Indigenous R&D capabilities:** Offering capital subsidies to set up indigenous R&D facilities and providing tax incentives on capital expenditure utilised for R&D purposes could be a step in the right direction to reduce dependence on imported technology.

b) **Ease of doing business:** Improving ease of doing business for corporations through simplified land and labour laws and expansion of commercial dispute resolution institutions.

c) **Manpower skilling:** Growth in manufacturing necessitates an increase in demand for skilled labour and productivity-enhancing reforms. To meet the needs of up-skilling and re-skilling of our workforce, sustained increase in allocation toward various schemes under the Skill India Campaign such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) could be expected from the budget. Such reforms will increase productivity and provide technically qualified workforce.

d) **Digitisation of manufacturing:** Provide an incentive to manufacturing companies adopting digital interventions like IoT to increase their competitiveness by improving productivity and product quality.

In fulfilling India's quest to become a global manufacturing powerhouse and propel the next engine of growth, the sector optimistically awaits the announcements in what is deemed to be a once in a lifetime budgetary exercise. **BW**

WITH THE BUDGET SESSION of the Parliament due to commence in less than a fortnight, the Finance Minister has an unenviable task of presenting a plan to revive the Covid-battered Indian economy. A key area of her plan is likely to focus on strengthening India's restructuring and insolvency framework, since corporate and financial distress is at an all-time high, along with an intense global competition to attract investment in distressed assets in the wake of Covid-19.

To effectively revitalise the restructuring and insolvency landscape, we believe that the government should follow a four-pronged approach.

First, the government should try to reduce reliance on formal procedures under the IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code). One way to do this would be to encourage recourse to 'out-of-court

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S RESTRUCTURING AND INSOLVENCY FRAMEWORK

restructuring' mechanisms. For that, the government should consider making legislative amendments to extend similar benefits and to distressed asset investments as those extended to in-IBC investments, as has been done recently by the Securities Exchange Board of India.

Another way to achieve this would be to introduce hybrid procedures such as 'pre-packs'. The government is already considering a proposal for the same. The government should consider granting 'flexibility' to stakeholders, not 'overscripting' what procedures need to be followed for pre-packs and allowing non-malevolent promoters to present plans for the insolvency resolution of companies. We believe this pre-pack should also serve as a blueprint for the long-awaited specialised MSME insolvency framework.

Secondly, the government should take steps to resolve the perennial issue of delays in insolvency (both in and outside IBC). While adherence to timelines in IBC presents a remarkable improvement over previous insolvency resolution mechanisms, long delays, particularly on account of litigation and government actions, have eroded confidence in the IBC. To reduce



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Shreya Prakash: (Below) Associate, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co

unnecessary applications before the tribunals and save judicial time, legislative amendments should be made to provide for issues such as those arising in group insolvency and cross-border insolvency, which are currently not dealt with comprehensively in the Code.

On the other hand, to reduce the time taken for disposal of litigation, the government should make budgetary allocations to improve the e-tools, infrastructure and research support and make changes to increase bench strength for

The government should try to reduce reliance on formal procedures under the IBC. One way to do this would be to encourage recourse to 'out-of-court restructuring' mechanisms

the relevant tribunals.

Thirdly, the government should consider extending tax incentives for distressed asset deals. For instance, it may be beneficial to exempt transferees of assets by distressed companies (both within and outside the IBC) from the levy of capital gains tax. This would be especially beneficial where assets transferred consist of shares and immovable property, given that sections 50CA and 50C of the Income Tax Act 1961 ("IT Act") deem the fair market value of such assets to be the full value of the consideration (irrespective of the actual consideration received) for purposes of computing capital gains tax.

Finally, a modern insolvency resolution mechanism for financial service providers such as banks (such as that proposed in the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017) should be expedited so that distress in the financial sector, which has been rising, can be dealt more consistently and in a manner that minimises depositor hardship and systemic risk. **BW**

With inputs from Amit Singhania, Gouri Puri and Nimish Malpani

C OVID-19 HAS fundamentally changed the way we live and work, including the way we access financial products. FinTech in India was well-positioned to deliver financial products and services in a contactless and non-face-to-face format, thus solved one of the key risks of Covid-19.

Digital payments saw a big growth in 2020 when consumers were trying to minimise the handling of cash. The switch that many consumers have made to digital payments will to a large extent be a permanent one given the ease and convenience of transacting digitally.

Digital lending products have focussed primar-

EXPECTATIONS OF THE FINTECH SECTOR

ily on the retail, SME and MSME sectors giving credit and liquidity to many of these borrowers facing stress on account of disruptions in businesses and income. Digital loan platforms use technology and tools including artificial intelligence and big data analytics to understand and price credit risk. Budget 2021 is expected to stress on the importance of technology for delivery of financial services. FinTech is ready for its next phase of growth and is looking towards the Budget for the incentives and support that is needed to power this growth.

Key budget expectations are:

a) Investment in digital infrastructure: consumers only need a smartphone and good mobile connectivity to be able to transact and access digital financial products. Continued government investments in internet infrastructure and mobile connectivity particularly in Tier-II and Tier-III cities will increase the reach of FinTech products.

b) Financial and digital literacy: as digital products become more accessible, FinTech platforms will need to invest in financial and digital literacy programs to be able to on-board customers in more remote locations. The government should consider public-private partnership models for such schemes and also look at giving tax breaks



and other incentives to FinTech platforms that invest in financial and digital literacy initiatives.

c) GST on financial Services: there is an expectation for lower GST rates on financial services.

c) NBFC liquidity: the digital lending sector comprising largely of NBFCs has faced a severe liquidity crisis and will be looking for continued credit support from the government to be able to access capital at affordable rates. These NBFCs then onward lend to retail and MSME borrowers, many of whom are not able to access bank credit.

FinTech is ready for its next phase of growth and is looking towards the Budget 2021 for the incentives and support that is needed to power this growth.

d) KYC: high customer on-boarding costs has been one of the biggest challenges facing FinTech over the last few years. There is a big expectation from the sector that digital payment platforms and FinTech NBFCs be allowed to utilise Aadhaar based e-KYC to on-board customers. The government should also push to operationalise the centralised KYC database that will allow financial institutions to access customer KYC records from a common database which will significantly lower costs of operation.

e) Data Privacy: The Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 is pending its final government approval, and once passed, it will form the foundation for a data protection framework within which FinTech can operate. While preventing unauthorised use of personal data is critical, it is equally important to allow the FinTech sector to analyse data to be able to innovate and customise delivery of financial products.

Looking forward, a favourable Budget 2021 can be a game-changer for the sector and help push FinTech into its next phase of growth. **BW**

The author is Partner and Head of FinTech Group at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co

BUDGET 2021 HAS a task ahead to revive the economy from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and the focus of the government should be to generate local demand and provide a much needed stimulus package. In India's fight against this unprecedented health crisis, immense contributions have been made by the healthcare sector, despite facing challenges like allocating CapEx, research and development (R&D) and manufacturing for Covid-related drugs, and managing raw material supply chain, particularly the imports.

The pandemic has re-emphasised the need for collaboration of the private sector players with

EXPECTATIONS OF THE FINTECH SECTOR

academia, scientific experts and governments to undertake drug discovery, and thus, R&D growth in India would be very crucial in the times to come. Equally important is to provide affordable healthcare facilities, which warrants an immediate focus on the development of healthcare infrastructure and measures to cut the cost of providing healthcare services. Considering this, the government should meet both transitional and strategic needs of the healthcare sector in the upcoming budget.

In order to achieve the objective of providing affordable healthcare services to every corner of the country, the government should focus on infrastructure creation in healthcare by providing subsidised loans and land for setting up healthcare facilities and hospitals especially in rural areas. The sector should be accorded priority sector status to enable better funding access with setting up specialised funds for infrastructure development for hospitals in Tier-II, Tier-III cities and rural areas.

It is recommended that special tax holidays and incentives should also be provided to healthcare facilities, which could aid more infrastructure creation by lowering their operational cost. For instance, section 35AD of the Income-tax Act 1961 (ITA) currently provides an option to claim 100 per cent deduction of capital expenditure incurred



towards building and operating a new hospital with at least 100 beds for patients. In this regard, the government is recommended to enhance the weighted deduction to 150 per cent or higher of the capital expenditure and extending such benefit to all hospitals instead of hospitals having a minimum capacity of 100 beds. With an increase in healthcare infrastructure, corresponding increase will also be required in the number of healthcare workers and hence the need to incentivise skill development to bridge the huge skill gap and provide a weighted deduction of 150 per cent of expenses incurred on skill development in the sector (hospitals and diagnostic centres).

Government should focus on infrastructure creation in healthcare by providing subsidised loans and land for setting up healthcare facilities and hospitals especially in rural areas.

(Top): Shuchi Ray;
(L&R): Namrata Arora and Indu Amar

From an indirect tax perspective, the government is recommended to (a) bring some critical / life-saving drugs (which currently attract 12 per cent GST) within the ambit of goods that attract 5 per cent GST rate (b) accord the status of zero-rated services to healthcare services (which are currently exempt) so that the procurement taxes in the hands of healthcare establishments do not form part of their operating cost. This will have a direct impact on the pricing of healthcare services and healthcare establishments will be able to provide services at lower prices while ensuring their margins and (c) rationalise GST rate for health insurance services (currently taxed at a high rate of 18 per cent GST), considering it is a need of the hour.

While it is encouraging to see the government has already started taking steps in the right direction by introducing production-linked incentive scheme and the scheme on promotion of bulk drug parks, there is still the need to address industry issues by following an inclusive approach and rewarding the healthcare sector for all its vital contribution in safeguarding the country from an invisible enemy. **BW**

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RAPID DIGITALISATION, agile manufacturing and supply chain resilience will be critical to address limitations of the industry and strengthen the industry's growth across all development indicators. As we start a new decade, it is time to learn and unlearn to prepare for the growth in the next normal.

The pandemic highlighted critical issues for the manufacturing sector such as material shortage, drop in demand, disruption in supply chains, worker scarcity, and cash-flow and planning concerns. While many businesses reconfigured their production, supply chains and services, the shift toward digitally enabled

Reimagining the Manufacturing Sector

manufacturing is only going to ramp up.

Intelligent and Agile Factories

Businesses who embrace agile manufacturing will achieve new levels of productivity by strengthening operational technology with IT innovations using IoT, cloud, AI and mixed reality. Manufacturers will be able to monitor equipment and predict anomalies for pre-emptive upkeep which will enable them to significantly reduce downtime.

Zeiss Group, an internationally leading technology enterprise in optics and optoelectronics, has embraced a cloud-first approach and deployed Microsoft Azure compute, AI and IoT. They are helping OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturer) to improve quality management, build more powerful, energy-efficient microchips and deliver new digital solutions and device maintenance.

Resilient Supply chains

Supply chains efficiency will increase by reducing complexity with AI and machine learning to deliver the right product to the right customer at the right time and drive profitability. Technology will enable manufacturers to maintain optimal inventory levels, manage costs, avoid disruption, and increase agility and responsiveness. Data and



analytics will play a critical role in analysing and mitigating supply chain risk. They will enable real time visibility and deeper insights into identifying the best approach to allocate and reallocate inventories. Manufacturers can streamline supply chain with Microsoft Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management and Azure IoT Central by rapidly building and deploying solutions.

Unlocking innovation

All the data coming in from IoT sensors, field service, sales, factories, and the supply chain can be used to speed innovation, realise a faster speed-to-market and improve the quality of products and

Supply chains efficiency will increase by reducing complexity with AI and machine learning to deliver right product to right customer at right time and drive profitability

services or product-as-a-service. With connected product innovation solutions, insights into which products and features customers are using without waiting for customer survey results are available.

Workforce Transformation

Equipping workforce with the skills and manufacturing technology they need to keep up, as the industry shifts gears, will be vital. Advancing modern roles, re-skilling to accelerate a data-driven culture, and empowering the first-line worker will be as important as embracing technology to leapfrog into the next phase. Larsen & Toubro is empowering their global workforce and making it future-ready by adopting Microsoft Teams. They have streamlined employee communications across geographies to make faster, data-driven decisions.

The business impact of the new normal is here to stay but by embracing digital transformation, manufacturers can achieve more. Microsoft is constantly engaging with partners, customers, and industry associations to empower new, innovative ideas and enable businesses to deal with what lies ahead in the coming year. **BW**

The author is Director – Cloud Solutions, Microsoft India

WORLD OVER, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused huge economic disruption and hence prompted businesses to evolve in the wake of new realities of social distancing and prioritising safety. This disruption has led millions of people to turn to e-commerce to shop for essentials while staying at home. The transition had a quick and wide-scale uptake, among both consumers and sellers owing to convenience, expanded access and last-mile connectivity.

India was no exception. In India, MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and other small businesses were the most adversely impacted in this pandemic. While ordering a nationwide lockdown to safeguard lives, the Government of India exempted several services including the delivery of essential goods by e-commerce, bearing in mind the needs and safety of the citizens. While e-commerce could operate, there were obviously many on-ground challenges, including disruption in supply chains, movements of delivery executives, availability of supply lines, etc.

As the country adapted to the 'new normal', scenarios of demand and supply were extremely dynamic. On the demand side, categories of products such as office stationery, school supplies, routers, mobiles, etc. that did not form part of essentials at the beginning of the lockdown, emerged as 'essentials'. On the supply side, MSMEs faced limited liquidity, production challenges, piled-up inventory and closed warehouses.

In this evolving situation, e-commerce emerged as the point of convergence for both consumers and sellers by reviving demand and effectively meeting the gap between demand and supply. MSMEs were quick to realise the potential and make the shift to digital commerce towards operational revival. These businesses found support on onboarding, cataloguing, marketing, account management, working capital support, business insights and warehousing.

They also found like-minded partners in e-commerce who enabled them to pivot their business models. In return, capability and infrastructure for local manufacturing- generating employment saw a boost, keeping the economic growth engine active.

Looking ahead

There is no doubt that 2020 accelerated e-com-



Vision 2021: Enabling e-commerce for holistic & inclusive growth

In 2021, we take forward learnings from the past year, which taught us that technology adoption and digitisation of retail are the way forward

huge growth opportunity.

The time is ripe for MSMEs to utilise e-commerce for business growth. It is also in line with the government's vision for a technologically advanced and innovative retail ecosystem rooted with the backbone of indigenous production and manufacturing. Sectors enabling government policies to promote indigenous manufacturing and external factors such as the advent of 5G connectivity will provide further impetus to this growth.

The government and industry should continue to work collaboratively to create a robust ecosystem that can propel economic activity and build an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. This will also give a fillip to trade inclusion opportunities for small businesses and handicraftsmen. Efforts should also be intensified to enable MSMEs to get online by reducing their compliance burden and supporting their financing needs by making growth and working capital available for the small businesses. **BW**

*The author is Chief Corporate Affairs Officer,
Flipkart Group*

IT IS THE PADMASHRI-AWARDS season! For the past three years we at the REX-Karmaveer-Global-Fellowship and Karmaveer-Puraskaar-Awards-Mission are overwhelmed with the deluge of messages/emails we get from friends, associates, volunteers, supporters and award-recipients on how the Padmashri awards now recognise Karmaveers (our awards that felicitate unsung, unheard, uncommon heroes who are champions-of-change). This year I got many messages saying “Jerry, all Karmaveers are chosen for Padmashri-2021”.

We have come a full circle and the journey is gratifying, now that everyone from

one to right every wrong and experience “The Joy of Giving” without bias.

Today we at REX-Karmaveer-Global-Fellowship and iCONGO-International-Confederation-of-NGOs – can proudly say that we have achieved what we set out to do 18 years ago and have achieved a small but significant step towards creating an egalitarian, just, humane and, fair responsible society through the REX-Karmaveer community. This would reflect best in the words of M.C Raj of REDs – a Dalit leader, author, scholar, Karmaveer-Noble Laureate and Change-Champion for the Dalit cause globally.

I quote from his blog: “The Karmaveer Award is not any ordinary one. People

It was after knowing very well that we are Dalits. A world is in embryonic stage. We can come together and live together, Dalits and Brahmins. The Karmaveer-Award Trophy is a huge responsibility.”

Over the years many TV channels/newspapers adopted the Karmaveer model and created Real Heroes and Social Impact awards with huge corporate sponsorship. However, 18 years later the REX-Karmaveer awards are still held every year without sponsorships, while other awards by TV/print media are not around anymore. The REX-Karmaveer Mission sustains because our intent is purely to felicitate Real Heroes and it is supported by the community of award re-

Be The Karmaveer, Who is a Champion of Change!



the citizenry to government to journalists, media and TV shows like *Kaun-Banega-Crorepati* and *Satyameva-Jayate* not only celebrate/showcase our Karmaveer unsung heroes, but many have also adopted our Karmaveer moniker for their shows and branding.

In 2003 some people raised their eyebrows at our advisory board meeting, when I first presented the ideas about creating the first and only egalitarian platform with ‘Karmaveer Awards’ where everyone from captains-of-industry, people in government, media moguls, journalists, activists, youth, children, students, slum dwellers, Brahmins, Dalits and sex workers would come “Together as

come all the way from New York, South Africa, Japan, London, France, Canada, China and we from Bangalore. This award is a serious business. It is not glamour. It is a commitment. The atmosphere of responsibility to the nation and to the world so overwhelmed the participants that the award to individuals paled into insignificance. However, no one could deprive anyone of the pride in receiving the award. We could see it on the face of many. Brahmins came and touched our feet and addressed us as their Ammaji and Appaji. It was not out of ignorance.

recipients, who donate to the cause. Former award recipients like P. Sridhar Reddy of CtrlS and Cloud4C and Karan Paul of Apeejay Group came forward to generously underwrite the REX Karmaveer awards event.

Ideas for Action: Einstein said, “Great spirits with different ideas will always encounter opposition from mediocre minds.” Never feel limited by the inertia, limiting-beliefs and apathy of people, who fear to attempt the impossible. Stick your head out, think differently and attempt the untried. **BW**

*The author is the moJOsh inspirator, a management & OD consultant & business leadership & life coach
The views expressed are personal and do not reflect those of BW Businessworld*

“LIFE IS ALL ABOUT IMPROVISATION - AN ANTI-THESIS OF SCRIPTED”

In a recent edition of BW Dialogue, Ashish Vidyarthi talks about being open to possibilities, challenging labels and achieving the extraordinary

WELLNESS – both physical and mental – has been the buzzword since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020. People indulged in various self-care routines like cooking, taking courses and learning new art forms. People have realised the importance of choosing one’s happiness over other things as the guiding factor to take on any new project.

The latest edition of BW Dialogue saw Ashish Vidyarthi, renowned actor, public speaker and Co-founder of Avid Miner, sharing his diverse experiences with Annurag Batra, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, BW Businessworld, while stressing the need to strive for excellence and constant aim higher.

The award-winning actor extolled the role technology in our lives, saying it is another medium we use to attain the greater goal of happiness. “How we use the gadgets is completely up to us. If we can look at ourselves as people who seek happiness, we can accomplish things clearly.”

Vidyarthi picks his career choices based on what he is drawn to. “If each human being is not limited by the probability set out by others, that is the kind of work where each one of us has the capability,” he said, adding, “If we are free of labels and have an unfettered mind, there are endless possibilities.”

Speaking about his idea of boundary-less aspirations, Vidyarthi pushed for the idea of narrating candid stories where there is nothing to hide. “From our childhood, we are taught to say ‘the right thing’, due to which we end up portraying people in a

certain way,” Vidyarthi said. As an actor, he has travelled extensively only to realise that people had a certain image of him and wanted him to play according to that image. He believes these labels should be dropped.

Symbiotic Work Culture

Vidyarthi spoke about leadership and how one can work in symbiosis with the team. According to him, a leader should have the capacity to say “I don’t know, but I am willing to work with you.” In his opinion, one of the most powerful things available to a human being is the ability to say ‘I don’t know’. “The childlike curiosity should always stay. This quotient is needed to believe in extraordinariness, backed by the willingness to collaborate and learn,” Vidyarthi said. “There is someone out there who has something we need. All we have to do is reach out.”

Talking about life, Vidyarthi said: “Life is all about improvisation — ‘the anti-thesis of scripted’”. He added, “Life is to be manoeuvred without the fear of what will people say or will do.”

Speaking about his venture Avid Miner, Vidyarthi said that its motto is “extraordinariness experienced”. The company is focusing on doing consulting with people over a period of time and not just having a single session on development. This implies constant learning at all ages by reading, asking, etc.

Under the venture, curated workshops and conversations are provided which are led personally by Vidyarthi. **BW**

(With inputs from Urvi Shrivastav)



TILL WE WIN

India's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic

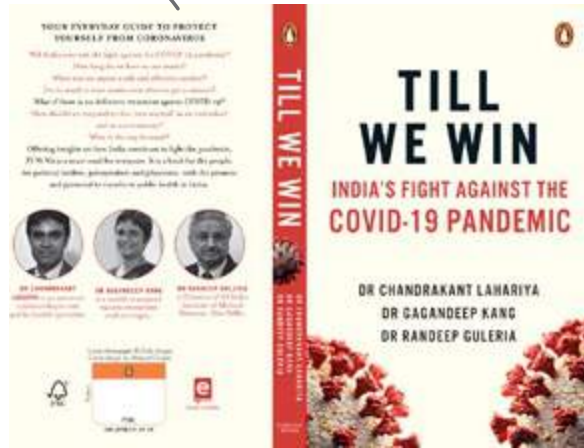
By Dr Chandrakant Lahariya,

Dr Gagandeep Kang,

Dr Randeep Guleria

PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE INDIA,

Pages 352, Rs 299/-



A VIRUS SURREPTITIOUSLY

brought the world to its knees. It took lives and wreaked havoc on systems and structures and the world economy at large. It caused some sectors of the economy such as hospitality and tourism to fade away for a while, compelling them to reinvent themselves.

And as the world and India grapples with the coronavirus pandemic, many questions continue to haunt us all. When will India ever win the fight against Covid-19? How long do we have to use masks? Do we need to wear masks even after we get a vaccine?

What if there is no definitive treatment against Covid-19? How can we protect our family from this disease? How should we respond to this 'new normal' as individuals and as a community?

Three doctors of eminence have now come forward to answer these questions. *Till we Win:*

LIVING WITH CORONAVIRUS

Three doctors of eminence attempt to demystify the novel coronavirus and suggest remedies for both victims and the prevailing healthcare system that battles it **By Kavi Bhandari**

India's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic is a 352-pages treatise penned by Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, Dr Gagandeep Kang and Dr Randeep Guleria. Dr Lahariya is a leading public policy and health systems expert with advanced trainings in epidemiology, vaccinology, immunology and public health. His work is focused on universal health coverage, primary healthcare and strengthening health systems.

Dr Kang is an infectious disease researcher, who links community-based research to high quality

laboratory investigation. With thirty years of research at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, she has built collaborative programmes focused on enteric diseases, nutrition and the environment.

Dr Guleria is the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. He is an MD in Medicine and the first DM in Pulmonary Medicine in the country. He has been chairperson and member of various policy and health forums.

Together these three luminaries of the world of medicine explain the genesis and nuances of the

virus and how to be future ready as the world battles against it. The trio have very meticulously explored every conceivable aspect of the pandemic. The book is divided into four sections that cover almost everything one needs to know about the novel coronavirus.

The book reflects on very important topics and the chapters flow in a structured manner. There are chapters on everything that has happened from the very beginning of the pandemic till recent times.

The authors shed light on the harsh realities and the lapses in the prevailing healthcare infrastructure and prevention processes. They emphasise the need to strengthen public and private health systems, preventive health measures and infrastructure in the healthcare sector. They also offer key tips for those who have recovered from Covid-19.

All in all, the book is a repository of information that everyone on the planet is pining to glean. It goes without saying that the publishers have a winner on their hands.

Till we Win: India's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic is a book of the moment that everyone will want to read. **BW**

‘Let us do our work with positive sentiments’

In an exclusive interaction with Annurag Batra, Editor-in-Chief, *BW Businessworld*, **YOGI ADITYANATH**, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, talks about the achievements of his government as well as what the future hold for the state and its people

Tell us about the achievements of your government.

During nearly 45 months of our government, and particularly in the last 9 months, we have been busy looking after the lives and livelihoods of citizens of UP.

Let me start with education in the state: More than one lakh basic schools have been made resourceful under operation ‘Kayakalp’. Schools and schoolchildren have been getting the benefits of digital learning. Then there are innovative efforts such as providing smart classes and best-in-class e-content through the URISE (Unified Re-imagined Innovation for Students Empowerment) portal of the government.

The enrollment of children as well as the quality of education in schools has improved. Kids are given free uniforms, bags, sweaters, shoes, and socks.

Around 4 lakh posts in various government departments have been filled. More than 1.5 lakh teachers have been appointed in schools. Vacancies in all departments including police, basic education, secondary education, group care are also being filled on the basis of merit alone. Besides, lives and livelihoods of the people have been protected during the pandemic and jobs created on a large scale in the state.

How did you support the industry at large?

We have revived the industry by reopening closed mills and establishing new ones. We have made all the payments without any delay. Innovative schemes such as ODOP (One District One Product) has revived local crafts.



I believe in doing my work. Let us do our work with positive sentiments. The public is aware of the reality of those who spread negativity

Loans were disbursed on a large scale wherein at least 25 lakh additional jobs will be created in the next 4 to 5 years.

Uttar Pradesh has also secured the second rank in the Ease of Doing Business Index. Moreover, we have modified our investment policies and created a single-window clearance system for investors. Invest UP has been made a dedicated point of contact for all the investments.

New roads have been constructed linking Purvanchal, Bundelkhand and Gorakhpur with each other. Further, Ganga Expressway will accelerate the pace of development in Uttar Pradesh. There is full emphasis on infrastructure development and making Uttar Pradesh the most preferred investment destination.

We have also received approval for a Defence Corridor in Bundelkhand. Further, the first data centre of Uttar Pradesh is likely to be built in Noida.

Uttar Pradesh is also coming up with Asia’s largest airport to be built in Jewar under Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL).

While successfully managing the Covid situation, people of the state also benefitted from the Direct Benefit Transfer programme.

How do you see the role of media in telling the UP government story?

The role of media is very important. I believe in doing my work. Let us do our work with positive sentiments. The public is aware of the reality of those who spread negativity. “Jaki rahi bhavana jaisi, prabhu moorat dekhi tin taisi (You see things exactly the way you are at heart).” **BW**

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OF DESIGN
AWARDS 2020**

This year we focus on design for a sustainable world. After facing the disruption caused by the pandemic, using design to create solutions for problems that plague mankind is the need of the hour.

The awards recognize and felicitate the best prototype and finished designs by designers, architects, innovators and businesses. This exclusive event curated by us will cater to products from across industries that are focused on touching human lives and making them Future Ready.

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