

## PREPARING FOR EXIT: ON LIFTING THE LOCKDOWN

### Overall Relaxation Of Lockdown Needs Massive Testing And Support For Infection Clusters

As the world watches, India must plan its strategy for a calibrated exit, possibly in a week, from the most aggressive lockdown anywhere to contain the novel coronavirus. The government faces the challenge of normalising some level of daily life and oiling the wheels of the economy, without causing a surge in cases that could follow wrong steps. It is wholly welcome that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought the views of the States on the way forward beyond the 21-day lockdown, and mandated his Ministers to come up with a set of priority actions under a business continuity plan. The strategy will have to take into account the exodus of migrant labour from cities to their home towns or to camps set up along inter-State corridors. Given that this is harvest season, cessation of activity due to labour issues can trigger food deficits and high prices. On the medical front, States are monitoring those under isolation or in quarantine and straining to trace the contacts of those who attended the Nizamuddin congregation, many of whom are now found in distinct clusters in some districts. The States must also scale up testing, as part of the latest ICMR advisory for clusters and migration centres, and going forward, as part of the exit strategy. Against this complex background, the States are cautious, and Telangana and Chhattisgarh have voiced doubts about an exit without a clear plan.

Reducing the risk of withdrawal from lockdown will depend on prioritised actions. The experience of China, South Korea and Singapore, who are ahead of the curve thus far, provides pointers to opening up of activity after a phase of movement curbs. These countries opted for enhanced testing, isolation of the infected, tracing of patient contacts and strict quarantine. After three weeks or more of lockdown, India, where 284 districts have so far been affected, should institute a system of testing that includes not just indicative cases but surveillance samples to determine the extent of spread. This will enable targeting and containment to specific areas. With high emphasis on social distancing, universal mask use and hand washing, it should be possible to open up some activity and release the pressures building up under the lockdown. Needless to say, free and widely available testing, and support systems for those infected, will encourage universal adoption. The identification of hotspots, where a virtual lockdown could be in force even if the nationwide curbs are relaxed, would require planned, humane measures to ensure availability of food, other essentials and medicines. Mass gatherings, long-distance travel and leisure activity would have to wait. Urban mobility for workers in the absence of public transport could be made possible by encouraging bicycle use where feasible, avoiding congestion.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **lockdown** (noun) – an emergency protocol implemented by the authorities that prevents people from leaving from a place; An extended state of confinement/encirclement/isolation of a person by the authority.
2. **cluster** (noun) – a group (of people considered as a unit).
3. **calibrated** (adjective) – carefully assessed/analysed.
4. **contain** (verb) – control, limit, restrain.
5. **novel coronavirus (nCoV) (SARS-CoV-2)** (noun) – a new strain (type/variety) coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.
6. **oil the wheels** (phrase) - to make things happen smoothly.
7. **surge** (noun) – sudden increase, rise, growth.

8. **sought** past and past participle of **seek** (verb) – ask for, request, appeal for.
  9. **the way forward** (phrase) – something (a plan/action) that leads to success in the future.
  10. **come up with** (phrasal verb) – present, produce, devise, propose.
  11. **take into account** (phrase) – consider, bear in mind, take account of.
  12. **exodus** (noun) – mass departure, evacuation, leaving/exit.
  13. **harvest** (noun) – gathering a ripe crop from the fields.
  14. **inter-** (prefix) – between.
  15. **cessation** (noun) – suspension, stopping, halting/ceasing.
  16. **trigger** (verb) – give rise to, bring about, prompt.
  17. **food deficit** (noun) - shortage of required food; depth of hunger; Food deficit is measured by comparing the average amount of dietary energy that undernourished people get from the foods they eat with the minimum amount of dietary energy they need to maintain body weight and undertake light activity.
  18. **isolation** (noun) – a complete separation from others of a person known or reasonably believed to be infected with communicable diseases.
  19. **quarantine** (noun) – a process of separating out people, animals and things (such as plants) from others for a period of time in order to control/restrict the spread of a contagious disease; Quarantine is imposed to separate and restrict the movement of persons, who may have been exposed to infectious disease, but not yet known to be ill.
  20. **strain** (verb) - make every effort, try very hard, do one's best, struggle, labour, toil.
  21. **congregation** (noun) – gathering, assembly, meeting, conference.
  22. **scale up** (phrasal verb) – increase.
  23. **advisory** (noun) – official communication, announcement, notification, press release, bulletin.
  24. **going forward** (phrase) - in the future.
  25. **voice** (verb) - express, make public, announce, mention, raise.
  26. **prioritise** (verb) – make a point of, highlight, call attention to (something as very important).
  27. **ahead of the curve** (phrase) – above average; performing well, be better than (of its kind).
  28. **thus far** (phrase) – until now.
  29. **pointer** (noun) – indication, hint, signal.
  30. **open up** (phrasal verb) – make available (to create/start something).
  31. **curb** (noun) – restraint, restriction, control.
  32. **contact tracing** (noun) – it is defined as the identification and followup of persons who may have come into contact with a person infected with the virus.
  33. **so far** (phrase) – until now, up to the present, up to this point.
  34. **institute** (verb) – set/put in, establish, begin/start.
  35. **surveillance** (noun) – observation, scrutiny, inspection/examination.
  36. **containment** (noun) – an act of keeping something (harmful) under control.
  37. **social distancing** (noun) – a term means actively avoiding crowded public places, is a key element in decreasing the rapid spread of COVID-19. This is an effort intended to limit exposure by reducing face-to-face contact and preventing spread among people in community settings.
  38. **build up** (phrasal verb) – increase, intensify, multiply, develop.
  39. **hotspot** (noun) – a place of significant activity.
  40. **virtual** (adjective) – effective, essential, practical.
  41. **in force** (phrase) - in effect, in action, operational, effective.
  42. **humane** (adjective) – compassionate, considerate, sympathetic, kindhearted.
  43. **mobility** (noun) – transportability.
  44. **feasible** (adjective) – practicable, viable, realistic.
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## SANCTIONS AND PANDEMIC: ON AMERICA'S IRAN POLICY

### Iran Needs All The Help It Can Get; The U.S. Must Review Its Hostile Policy

America's refusal to ease sanctions on Iran even when the West Asian country is struggling hard to contain the novel coronavirus spread with limited resources shows its total disregard for the humanitarian situation in the Islamic Republic. Iran, the hardest hit by the pandemic in West Asia, has already seen 3,739 deaths and 62,589 infections. To be sure, Iran failed on multiple fronts in the battle. The government was initially reluctant to enforce drastic restrictions on businesses, religious establishments and people. As infections began spreading at an exponential pace, it was more than what Iran's health-care system could handle. And during the crisis, the cash-strapped, isolated regime struggled to meet people's needs. But what accentuated these failures are the American sanctions. Last year, the sanctions, reimposed by President Trump after he unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, shrank the country's economy by 8.7%. The fall in oil prices and the pandemic have multiplied Iran's woes. The sanctions have also debilitated its ability to import even humanitarian goods. The U.S. rejected calls for easing sanctions, saying exports of these goods to Iran are already exempted. But it is not that easy. Most global banks, fearing U.S. retaliation and legal consequences, stay away from doing business with Iran, which makes it difficult for the Islamic Republic to find a functional payment mechanism. With the economy in dire straits, it also lacks the resources to make purchases.

The U.S., which has the most number of COVID-19 infections, should be in a better position to understand Iran's woes than any other country. America has already seen about 11,000 deaths from 368,533 infections. Despite the U.S. being the world's largest economy, and home to a gigantic health-care industry, authorities there appear clueless on quick containment. Learning from its own tragedy, Washington should have suspended or at least eased the sanctions on Iran, allowing the country to import food, medicines and other humanitarian goods without restrictions. Such a decision would also have provided an opportunity to both countries — on the brink of a military conflict early this year — to resume diplomatic engagement. It is still not too late for Mr. Trump to take a humanitarian decision and turn it into a diplomatic opening. The Iranian leadership should realise that this is not the time for America-bashing. This is an hour of crisis, globally. Tehran's focus should be on getting maximum help from abroad and beefing up its fight at home to save lives. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's recent comment that Iran "has the capability to overcome any kind of crisis and challenges" is far removed from reality. Iranians need help and the U.S. should reconsider its policy of punishing them, at least in this time of a pandemic.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **sanctions** (noun) – action taken, or an order given to force a country to obey international laws by limiting or stopping trade with that country, by not allowing economic aid for that country, etc.
2. **pandemic** (noun) - The worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
3. **hostile** (adjective) – aggressive, confrontational, belligerent; opposed, inimical, averse, unsympathetic.
4. **ease** (verb) - mitigate, soften, tone down, lessen, reduce.

5. **contain** (verb) – control, limit, restrain.
6. **novel coronavirus (nCoV) (SARS-CoV-2)** (noun) – a new strain (type/variety) coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.
7. **disregard** (noun) - indifference, inattention, heedlessness, carelessness, neglect.
8. **humanitarian** (adjective) – compassionate, humane, socially concerned.
9. **to be sure** (phrase) - used to highlight something.
10. **front** (noun) - area of operation.
11. **reluctant** (adjective) – unwilling, disinclined, unenthusiastic.
12. **drastic** (adjective) – extreme, severe, forceful.
13. **exponential** (adjective) – rapid, quick, fast.
14. **cash-strapped** (adjective) – relating to someone who has no sufficient money.
15. **accentuate** (verb) – highlight, underline, focus attention on.
16. **unilaterally** (adverb) – used to indicate something done by a person/country without approval/agreement from other people/countries involved in the situation.
17. **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, leave, get out.
18. **shrank past of shrink** (verb) – lessen, reduce, decrease.
19. **woes** (noun) – trouble, difficulty, problem.
20. **debilitate** (verb) - weaken, make weak, disable, paralyse, undermine, impair.
21. **humanitarian goods** (noun) - goods (including food, water, medical supplies & etc.) given to meet the immediate needs of victims of disasters.
22. **call** (noun) - appeal, request, plea, demand.
23. **exempt** (verb) – free from, not liable to, not subject to.
24. **retaliation** (noun) – revenge, vengeance, counter-attack.
25. **consequence** (noun) – outcome, ramification, repercussion.
26. **stay away from** (phrasal verb) – evade, avoid, dodge.
27. **mechanism** (noun) – procedure, process, method/technique.
28. **dire** (adjective) – terrible/awful, appalling, distressing.
29. **strait** (noun) – a bad/difficult situation; trouble, crisis.
30. **lack** (verb) - be in need of, need, require, be short of.
31. **COVID-19** (noun) – coronavirus disease 2019.
32. **gigantic** (adjective) – huge, wide, extensive.
33. **containment** (noun) – an act of keeping something (harmful) under control.
34. **on the brink of** (phrase) – on the edge/verge of difficult/dangerous situation; at a crucial or critical point.
35. **resume** (verb) – restart, return to, come back to.
36. **diplomatic** (adjective) – (delicate & sensitive) consular, foreign policy.
37. **turn into** (phrasal verb) – transform into; cause to become (a particular kind of thing).
38. **diplomatic opening** (noun) - a matter of agreement between the governments concerned.
39. **bashing** (noun) – fierce criticism, opposition, censure.
40. **beef up** (phrasal verb) - improve, build up, strengthen, reinforce, consolidate.
41. **far removed from** (phrase) – to be very different from something.