

TRADE IN TATTERS: ON THE GLOBAL SLUMP**The WTO Expects Global Goods Trade Volume To Slump By As Much As 32% In 2020**

The only certainty right now in a pandemic-gripped world is the all-enveloping uncertainty. And the WTO acknowledged as much when it released its outlook for global trade last week. Projecting merchandise trade to plummet by anywhere between 13% and 32% in 2020, it added a categorical caveat: at the moment, it is only able to posit a wide range of possible trajectories for the predicted decline in trade given the unprecedented nature of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and the uncertainty around its precise economic impact. Economists at the WTO, however, appear more certain that the disruption and resultant blow to trade will in all likelihood be far worse than the slump brought on by the global financial crisis of 2008. As IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva observed on April 9, the global economy is set to contract sharply in 2020, with “the lockdown needed to fight” the pandemic affecting billions worldwide. The tight restrictions on movement and social distancing norms across geographies have led to severe curbs on labour supply, transport and travel and the shuttering of whole sectors from hotels and non-essential retail to tourism and significant parts of manufacturing. The WTO expects all regions, save Africa, West Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, to suffer double-digit declines in exports and imports this year even under its “optimistic scenario”, which postulates a recovery starting in the second half.

The WTO and the IMF chief have pointed to the fact that unlike the recession that accompanied the global financial crisis just over a decade ago, the current downturn is unique. Global supply chains have increased in complexity, especially in industries such as electronics and automotive products, making them particularly vulnerable to the current disruptions, with countries that are a part of these value linkages set to find trade more severely impacted. Also, services trade — in which India has a higher global share as an exporter (\$214 billion, or 3.5%, in 2019) than in merchandise exports — may be significantly affected by the transport and travel curbs. A small sliver of silver in this bleak outlook for services trade is the role that the WTO sees for information technology services as companies try to enable employees to work from home and people order essentials and drugs online and socialize remotely. India’s IT exporters have been busy supporting their overseas clients’ business continuity plans in the face of the pandemic and may find this hand-holding at a time of dire need earning them loyalty-linked business when economic activity revives. Still, as the WTO chief, Roberto Azevedo, crucially observes, a rebound in global economic activity will require trade to flow freely across borders as vitally as any fiscal or monetary stimulus. The world will be best served if nations do not turn insular and erect new barriers to the movement of goods, services and people in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **in tatters** (phrase) – shattered, destroyed; ruined, in disarray.
2. **slump** (noun) – recession, economic decline, depression, slowdown.
3. **slump** (verb) – decline, worsen, decrease.
4. **as much as** (phrase) – almost, nearly the same as.
5. **uncertainty is the only certainty...** (phrase) – “Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with insecurity is the only security” a famous quote by an American professor of mathematics John Allan Paulos. “Uncertainty is the only certainty” is the same as saying that the only certainty is that nothing is certain.
6. **certainty** (noun) – sure thing, reliability, truth/fact.
7. **pandemic-gripped** (adjective) – afflicted, affected, beset by a pandemic.
8. **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.
9. **all-enveloping** (adjective) – surrounding/covering completely.
10. **uncertainty** (noun) – unpredictability, unreliability, riskiness/precariousness.

11. **acknowledge** (verb) – admit, accept, realize, recognize.
12. **as much** (phrase) – the same.
13. **outlook** (noun) – prospects, expectations, hopes, viewpoint/opinion.
14. **merchandise** (noun) – goods, commodities, produce.
15. **plummet** (verb) – fall sharply/steeply, go down, drop/decrease rapidly,
16. **categoric** (adjective) – categorical, unconditional, unequivocal, explicit, unambiguous.
17. **caveat** (noun) – warning, caution, condition.
18. **posit** (verb) – put forward, set forth, propose.
19. **trajectory** (noun) – course, route, path.
20. **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
21. **outbreak** (noun) – sudden appearance/occurrence (of a disease); outburst, epidemic.
22. **disruption** (noun) – disturbance, disarrangement, interruption.
23. **blow** (noun) – shock, setback, misfortune, disturbance.
24. **in all likelihood** (phrase) – most likely, in all probably, no doubt.
25. **far** (adverb) – much, very much, noticeably, considerably.
26. **bring on** (phrasal verb) – cause, make happen, bring about, give rise to, result in.
27. **set to** (phrasal verb) – start doing something aggressively.
28. **contract** (verb) – decrease, decline, reduce.
29. **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.
30. **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.
31. **curb** (noun) – restraint, restriction, control.
32. **shutter** (verb) – close, shut down (a business).
33. **save** (preposition) – besides, except for, apart from.
34. **optimistic** (adjective) – positive, confident, hopeful.
35. **scenario** (noun) – course of events, situation.
36. **postulate** (verb) – put forward, suggest, advance, suppose.
37. **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
38. **accompany** (verb) – occur with, be present with, appear with, coincide with, coexist with.
39. **downturn** (noun) – decline, setback, blow/upset (in economic activity).
40. **global supply chain** (noun) – a dynamic worldwide network when a company purchases or uses goods or services from overseas. It involves people, information, processes and resources involved in the production, handling and distribution of materials and finished products or providing a service to the customer.
41. **vulnerable** (adjective) – at risk, endangered, unsafe, easily affected by.
42. **sliver** of something (noun) – a small/thin piece of something.
43. **silver** (noun) – hopeful thing/aspect.
44. **bleak** (adjective) – unpromising, unfavourable, disadvantageous.
45. **socialise** (verb) – interact, converse.
46. **business continuity plan** (noun) – the advance planning and preparation undertaken to ensure that an organization will have the capability to operate its critical business functions during emergency events.
47. **in the face of** (phrase) – despite, notwithstanding, regardless of; when confronted/faced with.
48. **hand-holding** (noun) – providing someone with caring support, attention, advice.
49. **dire** (adjective) – terrible, awful, distressing.
50. **loyalty** (noun) – allegiance, faithfulness; reliability, trustworthiness; dedication/commitment.
51. **revive** (verb) – recover, regain, restore, improve.
52. **rebound** (noun) – recovery.

53. **vitality** (adverb) – essentially, necessarily.
54. **monetary stimulus** (noun) – an attempt by a government to make the economy grow faster by increasing the money supply (the amount of money in the economy).
55. **be best served** (phrase) – be more successful.
56. **insular** (adjective) – isolated, separate, segregated.
57. **erect** (verb) – create, establish, form/set up.
58. **aftermath** (noun) – consequence, result/outcome, repercussion.

CEASE FIRE: ON INDIA-PAKISTAN BORDER TENSIONS

Ceasefire Violations On The Border Speak Poorly Of The Preventive Mechanisms In Place

The latest exchange of long-range artillery fire between the Indian and Pakistani armies in Poonch and Kupwara’s Rawthpora, Panzgam, Malikpora, Hafrada and Ferkiyan areas is yet another unhappy reminder that both countries have not been able to uphold a ceasefire along the border areas and the Line of Control. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh claimed just two months ago that “all violations of ceasefire are taken up with Pakistan authorities at the appropriate level through the established mechanism of hotlines, flag meetings as well as weekly talks between the Directorate Generals of Military Operations of the two countries”. But here are the figures revealed by him this February: 3,479 violations for 2019, which works out to almost 10 every day. Shripad Naik, Minister of State for Defence, provided the figures from January 1 to February 23; for 54 days, it was 646, which means an average of almost 12. If anything, there has been an upward tick since Article 370 was hollowed out on August 5 last year, and statehood taken away from Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan also has similar and competing figures for Indian ceasefire violations while prefacing explanations for its own firing with the stock phrases: “retaliatory, effective, befitting”. What utility do these mechanisms have if the violations continue unchecked?

Those who bear the brunt — the loss of lives, livelihood, infrastructure, and the displacement — unfortunately live along the LoC on both sides, some 740 km, and the 221 km of the IB in J&K. In the latest instance, scores scrambled out of the range of the heavy artillery guns to seek refuge, not in government quarantine shelters, but with relatives in the district headquarters and elsewhere. Thrown to the wind in the process were protocols to protect against COVID-19. In this instance, the Army blames Pakistan for initiating the shelling in Kupwara’s Keran sector to facilitate infiltration which seems to have picked up pace as have operations against terrorists. Indeed, last week saw a chase through heavy snow drifts, leading to a macabre hand-to-hand combat with terrorists who had infiltrated through the remote, nearly unpopulated, snowed-in mountainous region. That as many as five highly trained para commandos should have lost their lives in exchange for the lives of five infiltrators is unfortunate and unacceptable. Infiltrations at this time and in such remote areas are regular enough to be predictable. Wherever possible, exercising the option of precise, surgical, preventive action against such infiltration, to minimise collateral damage, through better use of technology, such as drones, might be preferable.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **ceasefire** (noun) – a temporary stoppage of a war, truce, armistice.
2. **speak** (verb) – indicate, show, suggest, reveal, manifest.
3. **speak ill of** (phrase) – speak badly of, criticize, disparage.
4. **mechanism** (noun) – procedure, process, method/technique.
5. **in place** (phrase) – established, set up, in order.
6. **artillery** (noun) – big guns, heavy weapons, cannons.
7. **uphold** (verb) – maintain, preserve, protect; confirm or support.

8. **take up with** (phrasal verb) – to start discussing with, get involved with.
9. **hotline** (noun) – a direct telephone line between two head quarters of government for emergency & or communication.
10. **flag meeting** (noun) – a meeting held at the border or on the Line of Control by commanders of both sides to resolve a host of issues, including ceasefire violations, return of civilians who cross the border inadvertently (unintentionally), air space violations (and also agree to exercise restraint and keep the communication channels alive that were established through reconciliation mechanism).
11. **work out** (phrasal verb) – end up, turn out, come out.
12. **upward tick** (noun) – uptick, (small) increase, upward trend.
13. **hollow out** (verb) – remove, undermine, weaken, erode, make meaningless/useless.
14. **statehood** (noun) – the condition of being an independent state.
15. **take away from** (phrasal verb) – lower, reduce/lessen, devalue.
16. **preface** (verb) – start, begin, introduce.
17. **stock** (adjective) – regular, usual, routine, clichéd.
18. **retaliatory** (adjective) – revenging, vengeful, avenging.
19. **befitting** (adjective) – appropriate, suitable, apt, proper/right (to the situation).
20. **utility** (noun) – use, usefulness, advantage, benefit.
21. **unchecked** (adjective) – uncontrolled, unconstrained, unrestricted.
22. **bear the brunt** (phrase) – to suffer or endure the worst part of something (force/burden/pressure) when a very bad or unpleasant thing happens.
23. **livelihood** (noun) – means of making a living with the basic necessities (food, water, shelter and clothing); means of support, subsistence, source of income.
24. **displacement** (noun) – a forced removal/departure of people from their homes, mainly due to war/natural disaster/persecution.
25. **scores of** (noun) – a great many, a lot, a large number (of people).
26. **scramble** (verb) – struggle, hurry/hasten, rush (to do something to achieve a goal/result).
27. **seek** (verb) – try to find, try to obtain.
28. **refuge** (noun) – protection, shelter, place of safety, place of security.
29. **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.
30. **throw to the wind** (phrase) – discard, abandon, dispense with (in a careless way without worrying about the risk).
31. **shell** (verb) – bomb, fire on, open fire on, shoot at, attack.
32. **facilitate** (verb) – make easier, make possible; assist/help.
33. **infiltration** (noun) – intrusion, incursion, trespassing, penetration.
34. **pick up the pace** (phrase) – to increase the rate at which something is done/happening.
35. **indeed** (adverb) – in fact, actually, undeniably.
36. **snowdrift** (noun) – a deposit/pile of snow formed by wind into a mound during a snowstorm.
37. **macabre** (adjective) – gruesome, horrible, shocking.
38. **hand-to-hand** (adjective) – (of fighting/combat) at very short range.
39. **infiltrate** (verb) – penetrate, invade, intrude on, trespass on.
40. **surgical** (adjective) – relating to the precise military attack aimed to cause damage on a particular target with small/no collateral damage to surroundings.
41. **collateral damage** (noun) – any death, injury, or other damage inflicted that is an unintended result of military operations.
42. **drone** (noun) – unmanned aircraft/missile.