

ACROSS THE GULF: ON STRANDED INDIAN WORKERS**India Must Do All It Can To Help The Migrant Workers Stranded In West Asia**

Around eight million people in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries constitute a unique cohort among Indian diaspora communities around the world. Around 50% of them are unskilled and another 30% are semi-skilled. Only a small minority of 20% of them are skilled and lucratively employed, but all these migrant workers together form the backbone of India's ties with the region. Their contribution of nearly 40% of the total foreign exchange remittances to India is critical to its economy. Their labour is vital for the GCC economy. With no option of assimilation into their host countries, their link to the home country remains intact, unlike Indian immigrants to the West. The vast majority of them who are on subsistence wages are facing a tough situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the little information available, it appears that Indians are badly hit by the disease. Living and working conditions make it extremely difficult for them to practise social distancing or get treatment if infected. Many of them suffer from pre-existing medical conditions and are used to procuring medicines from India, which is now impossible. Vast sectors of the economy are shut, rendering many of them jobless. Thousands are without documentation. Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha being important transits for international travel, thousands of Indian travellers are also stuck in the region.

India cannot abandon them to their helpless fate. It must work closely with governments of the region to bring them succour. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has nurtured good relations with all rulers of the region but the ongoing crisis is testing the endurance of India's ties with some of the GCC countries. The UAE government has said it might revise current partnerships concerning labour relations with nations refusing to cooperate with measures to repatriate private sector expatriates who wish to return home. The country's ambassador to India Ahmed Al Banna has promised only those who are tested negative for the virus would be repatriated. Some of these migrants want to be evacuated, while many might want to remain where they are. Pinarayi Vijayan, the Chief Minister of Kerala which is home to more than two million Indian immigrants in the Gulf, has said the State is prepared to receive returnees and provide them care. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab have a significant number of people in the Gulf. The Centre must take the initiative to bring together State governments, and work out arrangements with national governments in the region in a manner acceptable to all. It will certainly take some effort to arrive at what is doable and desirable at this juncture, but there is no excuse for not doing that. That is the least India can do for these people whose search for a livelihood has done the country so much good.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **across the gulf** (phrase) – on the other/opposite side of the gulf; throughout the gulf region.
2. **stranded** (adjective) – stuck (in difficulties), helpless, abandoned, deserted.
3. **constitute** (verb) – account for, form, comprise, represent.
4. **cohort** (noun) – group, category, section (of people with common quality/attribute).
5. **diaspora** (noun) – the people who spread/scatter from their own country to places across the world.
6. **unskilled** (adjective) – unqualified, unschooled uneducated, untaught.
7. **semi-skilled** (adjective) – having some training and skills, but not enough to do specialized work.
8. **lucratively** (adverb) – in a way that is well paid; highly-paying, profitably.
9. **backbone** (noun) – foundation, cornerstone, pillar, mainstay, chief support.
10. **tie** (noun) – bond, association, union.
11. **foreign exchange remittance** (noun) – money transfers (called remittance) from a foreign worker employed outside the country to family, friends or relatives residing in home

countries. In many countries, remittance accounts for a significant portion of a nation's gross domestic product or GDP.

12. **assimilation** (noun) – adjustment, adaptation, integration/absorption (of different people, ideas, or culture).
13. **intact** (adjective) – undamaged, unimpaired, unspoiled.
14. **subsistence** (noun as modifier) – relating to sufficient only for one's own use; relating to one's maintenance, living, livelihood.
15. **in the wake of** (phrase) – as a result of, in the aftermath of, as a consequence of.
16. **COVID-19** (noun) – coronavirus disease 2019.
17. **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.
18. **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.
19. **preexisting** (adjective) – previous, earlier/prior, foregoing/preceding.
20. **procure** (verb) – obtain, acquire, get, pick up, buy/purchase.
21. **render** (verb) – make, cause to be, cause to become.
22. **transit (place)** (noun) – a place that people are passing through/across (with or without stopover) on their travel/journey to other places.
23. **succour** (noun) – aid/help/support, assistance, relief.
24. **nurture** (verb) – encourage, promote, foster.
25. **endurance** (noun) – staying power, lasting power, tenacity, determination, longevity/stability.
26. **concerning** (preposition) – about, regarding, with regard to, with reference to.
27. **repatriate** (verb) – send (a person) back to his/her own country or land of citizenship; banish, deport, expel.
28. **expatriate** (noun) – refugee, exile, non-native.
29. **ambassador** (noun) – envoy, diplomat, consul.
30. **returnee** (noun) – a person who returns to his native country after being in another country for sometime.
31. **work out** (phrasal verb) – develop, form, initiate/establish.
32. **certainly** (adverb) – surely, definitely, without question.
33. **arrive at** (verb) – achieve, reach, accomplish, work out, draw up (a decision).
34. **doable** (adjective) – effective, valid, usable, manageable.
35. **juncture** (noun) – point in time, time/moment, stage.
36. **the least** (pronoun) – the minimum, smallest, slightest amount.
37. **livelihood** (noun) – means of making a living with the basic necessities (food, water, shelter and clothing); means of support, subsistence, source of income.

VIRTUAL REALITY: ON TELEMEDICINE

Telemedicine Can Help Reach Patients Where Access To Medical Care Is Difficult.

The world has very few devices left to fight COVID-19 with, but technology remains one of them. Whether it is the employ of state-of-the-art technology in the discovery of cures or vaccines, or traditional technology services to enhance health care and consultations, or even tools that keep

people at home occupied/productive, it is clear that technology will serve humanity at one of its darkest moments. The pandemic has contributed, in no small measure, to the understanding of the myriad ways in which available technologies have not been put to better use, and presented people with multiple opportunities to harness these devices, techniques and methods to get on with life in the time of lockdown. Among the primary uses is telemedicine, rendered inexorable now, by the temporary paralysis brought on by a freeze on movement.

The Centre's recent guidelines allowing for widespread use of telemedicine services came as a shot in the arm for telehealth crusaders in the country, among them the Telemedicine Society of India that has long been battling to use the technology in its complete arc to reach remote areas in India. This move finds consonance with the rest of the world where several nations, also deeply impacted by the pandemic, have deployed telemedicine to reach people who have been unable to come to hospital, to reduce footfalls in hospitals, and to even provide medical and mental health counselling to countless people. It was way back in 2000 that telemedicine was first employed in India, but the progress has been excruciatingly slow, until the pandemic. However, it does seem as if the medical community was only held back by the lack of legislation to enable tele consultations. For no sooner was the policy announced, than hospitals and clinicians hurried to jump onto the bandwagon, advertising contact information for patients. The advantages are peculiar in the current context, when putting distance between people is paramount, as tele consultations are not barred even when health care professionals and patients may have to be quarantined. The advancement of telecommunication capabilities over the years has made the transmission of images and sound files (heart and lung sounds, coughs) faster and simpler. Pilot telemedicine experiments in ophthalmology and psychiatry have proven to be of immense benefit to the communities. Telemedicine's time is here, finally. While unleashing the full potential of telemedicine to help people, experts and government agencies must be mindful of the possible inadequacies of the medium, and securing sensitive medical information; such cognisance should guide the use of the technology.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **virtual reality (VR)** (noun) – the use of computer technology to create a simulated/artificial environment. An artificial environment that is created with software and presented to the user in such a way that the user suspends belief and accepts it as a real environment. Virtual Reality creates an artificial environment to inhabit (live in/occupy).
2. **virtual** (adjective) – performing a task with the use of computer, especially over a network.
3. **telemedicine** (noun) – a method of medicine that allows health care professionals to evaluate, diagnose and treat patients in remote locations using telecommunications technology.
4. **COVID-19** (noun) – coronavirus disease 2019.
5. **state-of-the-art** (adjective) – modern, advanced/highly developed, sophisticated.
6. **vaccine** (noun) – a biological preparation that improves immunity to a particular disease.
7. **humanity** (noun) – humankind, the human race, people.
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. **in no small measure** (phrase) – to a very great extent.
10. **myriad** (adjective) – a great number, countless, infinite, various.
11. **put to use** (phrase) – to use; to utilize; to apply.
12. **harness** (verb) – put to use, utilize/exploit, make use of.
13. **get on with** (phrasal verb) – continue, proceed, carry on.
14. **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.
15. **render** (verb) – make, cause to be, cause to become.

16. **inexorable** (adjective) – relentless, unstoppable, unavoidable/inevitable.
17. **paralysis** (noun) – shutdown, immobilization, stoppage.
18. **bring on** (phrasal verb) – cause, make happen, bring about, result in, effect.
19. **freeze** (noun) – suspension; hold, fixed (at a specific level).
20. **widespread** (adjective) – extensive, general, universal, across the board.
21. **a shot in the arm** (phrase) – boost, fillip, stimulus.
22. **crusader** (noun) – campaigner, champion, advocate, promoter.
23. **arc** (noun) – path, trajectory (a curved one).
24. **consonance** (noun) – agreement, concord, accordance.
25. **deploy** (verb) – employ (resources into effective action).
26. **footfall** (noun) – the number of people entering an area in a given time.
27. **way back** (phrase) – long ago.
28. **excruciatingly** (adverb) – in a way something is extremely painful; agonizingly, unbearably distressing, embarrassingly.
29. **hold back** (phrasal verb) – desist, discontinue, refrain from doing something.
30. **lack of** (noun) – absence, want/need, deficiency/inadequacy.
31. **enable** (verb) – allow, permit, validate, authorize.
32. **no sooner** (phrase) – used to indicate that one thing occurs immediately after another thing.
33. **hurry** (verb) – scramble, hasten, rush, be quick.
34. **bandwagon** (noun) – a popular activity/event that is currently become fashion.
35. **peculiar** (adjective) – strange, unusual/odd, unexpected.
36. **paramount** (adjective) – most important; foremost, primary.
37. **bar** (verb) – block, ban, forbid/prohibit.
38. **quarantine** (verb) – separate, set apart, segregate, detach (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). Separate and restrict the movement of persons, who may have been exposed to infectious disease, but not yet known to be ill.
39. **ophthalmology** (noun) – a branch of medicine and surgery that deals with the treatment & diseases of the eye.
40. **psychiatry** (noun) – a branch of medicine that is concerned with the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of mental disorders.
41. **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
42. **mindful** (adjective) – aware of, conscious of, careful of.
43. **medium** (noun) – method, approach, channel, mechanism.