

## A HOLE IN THE WHOLE: ON HEALTH SECTOR WOES

### Health Care Services Cannot Be Allowed To Be Overwhelmed By The Pandemic

Mathematically, the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, neither more nor less. But the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the parts and overwhelmed the whole. The lockdown, as it was conceived originally, was meant to be, at best, a stopgap arrangement that would help nations tide over the crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. But as the days rolled on, and the lockdown moved on from phase to phase, it has caused a paralysis in general health care. As sparse health care resources in most parts of the country have been channelled towards the COVID-19 effort, the numbers have risen, but normal health care services have been in suspended animation for just under two months now. Staff running several national health programmes, and State health missions, besides health care workers from tertiary hospitals down to the primary health centres, have been diverted to buttress public health efforts in the COVID-19 battle. And the epidemic still rages on, with thousands of people testing positive every day and the number of cases coursing past the 1 lakh mark. Lockdowns have been partially lifted in some areas and in others, a mere semblance of normalcy has returned. As conditional movement has been allowed, people travelling across States bring positive cases to States or districts that have remained case-free for a while now.

But the time has now come for the country to attempt an equipoise of sorts, balance the different requirements of health care, along with efforts to continue to fight COVID-19. While health-care services themselves have been on the backfoot for non-COVID-19 conditions, except in emergencies, access too, for the bulk of the population, has been hampered by the non-availability of public transportation. Recent data culled from the National Health Mission pointed to less than normal coverage in key areas such as immunisation, institutional deliveries; further, delay, or failure, in delivering life-saving drugs to persons with HIV, tuberculosis, or inability to offer support for other chronic conditions have been documented. The usually robust private health system, which caters to various segments of the population, also took a back seat, or played a supportive role. While the Finance Minister's announcement on increase in health allocations as part of the ₹20-lakh crore relief package is welcome, more than money is required to set this right. If life after COVID-19 is not to be worse than life before the pandemic, the governments need to ensure that the country's multi-layered health system is not sacrificed at the altar of one virus; they need to give it their whole attention, now.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **hole** (noun) – predicament, difficult situation, dilemma/crisis.
2. **woes** (noun) – trouble, difficulty, problem.
3. **overwhelm** (verb) – overload, engulf, swamp/flood; overburden, beset.
4. **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.
5. **conceive** (verb) – form, originate, create.
6. **at best** (phrase) – simply, merely, only.
7. **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.
8. **stopgap** (adjective) – temporary, provisional, short-term, makeshift.
9. **tide over** (phrasal verb) – sustain, keep someone going, help/assist (someone in difficulty).

10. **novel coronavirus (nCoV) (SARS-CoV-2)** (noun) – a new strain (type/variety) coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. (Courtesy: WHO)
11. **roll (on)** (phrasal verb) – go, move, pass by very quickly.
12. **move on** (phrasal verb) – progress, develop, advance.
13. **paralysis** (noun) – shutdown, immobilization, stoppage.
14. **sparse** (adjective) – infrequent, scattered, sporadic, slight/limited.
15. **channel** (verb) – direct, pass on, transfer.
16. **suspended animation** (noun) – temporary cessation.
17. **tertiary** (adjective) – higher-level, higher, specialized.
18. **tertiary care/hospital** (noun) – highly specialized medical care.
19. **primary health centre** (noun) – it is a port of call (first place to visit) to a qualified doctor in the public health sector in rural areas providing a range of curative, promotive and preventive health care. There are about 25,650 primary health centres (PHCs) in India, 15,700 (61.2%) function with one doctor each. As many as 1,974 (7.69%) PHCs do not have even a single doctor.
20. **buttress** (verb) – support, strengthen, reinforce, fortify.
21. **rage** (verb) – be at its height, be uncontrollable; reach a high degree of intensity.
22. **course** (verb) – surge, move, race, rush, roll.
23. **semblance** (noun) – appearance, approximation; likeness, similarity.
24. **normalcy** (noun) – a normal condition; normality, regularity.
25. **equipoise** (noun) – counterweight, counterbalance.
26. **of sorts** (phrase) – of a somewhat unusual method.
27. **on the backfoot** (phrase) – at a disadvantage; outplayed by a competitor.
28. **bulk** (noun) – most, larger part, larger number.
29. **hamper** (verb) – hinder, obstruct, impede.
30. **cull** (verb) – select, choose, pick (from a variety of sources or from large quantity).
31. **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
32. **immunisation** (noun) – the process whereby a person is made immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine. Vaccines stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the person against subsequent infection or disease.
33. **chronic** (adjective) – persistent, long-term, incurable.
34. **robust** (adjective) – strong, powerful.
35. **cater to** (verb) – accommodate, serve, provide for, satisfy.
36. **take a back seat** (phrase) – take a less important role.
37. **play a part/role** (phrase) – contribute to, be instrumental in, be a factor in.
38. **sacrifice something at the altar of something else** (phrase) – make something suffer for the benefit of something else.

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## **KEEPING THE PEACE: ON INDIA-CHINA BORDER TENSION**

### **India And China Must End Tensions On The Border By Clarifying The LAC**

With four incidents along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in recent weeks, the India-China border is witnessing the highest tensions since the Doklam stand-off in 2017. In the three years since, both sides have done remarkably well to keep the peace. Prime Minister Modi and President Xi both agreed differences should not be allowed to escalate into disputes. Also, a clear message was

sent to the two militaries to abide by the detailed protocols already in place, such as those agreed to in 2005 and 2013. These regulate the activities of troops in the contested zones that lie in between both sides' overlapping claim lines of the undefined LAC. If Army Chief General Manoj Naravane wisely sought to cool the temperatures with his May 14 statement, China has unhelpfully raised them. On May 19, its Foreign Ministry accused the Indian Army of "attempting to unilaterally change the status" of the LAC. The stand-off in Ladakh appears to have been triggered by China moving in troops to obstruct road construction activity by India. Last year, India completed the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldi (DBO) road which connects Leh to the Karakoram Pass. India also maintains a key landing strip at DBO at 16,000 feet. The broader context for the tensions is the changing dynamic along the LAC. India has been upgrading its roads as it plays catch-up, with China already enjoying an advantage in both terrain and infrastructure. China now seems to be telling India it has no right to carry out the kind of activity that Beijing has already done. India is well within its right to carry out construction work. Delhi needs to remind Beijing that a fundamental principle that underpins all previous agreements is recognising the right to mutual and equal security of the two sides.

The immediate priority is for both sides to use existing channels and step back. Flag meetings between brigade commanders have so far been unable to break the stalemate. The incidents have underlined how the new LAC situation is placing existing mechanisms under renewed stress. India and China should grasp the current situation as an opportunity to revive the stalled process of clarifying the LAC. China has resisted this as a distraction to the boundary negotiations. But rather than agree on a line, both can instead simply seek to better understand the claims of the other and reach a common understanding to regulate activity in these areas. Clarifying the LAC may even provide a fresh impetus to the stalled boundary talks between the Special Representatives. Beyond the posturing, both sides know a final settlement will ultimately have to use the LAC as a basis, with only minor adjustments. Only a settlement will end the shadow boxing on the LAC. With both countries in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic, the time to push for a settlement to a distracting, protracted dispute is now.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

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| 1. <b>keep the peace</b> (phrase) – to avoid or stop arguing/disputing/fighting.  | 6. <b>difference</b> (noun) – disagreement, difference of opinion, misunderstanding, dispute. |
| 2. <b>Line of Actual Control (LAC)</b> (noun) – the de-facto (effective) border between India and China. The LAC is a 4,057-km border running through three areas-Western (Ladakh, Ladakh (Kashmir)), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal). | 7. <b>escalate</b> (verb) – increase, rise, intensify, accelerate.                            |
| 3. <b>witness</b> (verb) – see, observe, notice.  | 8. <b>abide by</b> (verb) – conform to, adhere to, comply with.                               |
| 4. <b>stand-off</b> (noun) – deadlock, stalemate, impasse, standstill.  | 9. <b>protocol</b> (noun) – procedure, convention, policy, rules of conduct.                  |
| 5. <b>remarkably</b> (adverb) – strikingly, exceptionally, incredibly.  | 10. <b>in place</b> (phrase) – established, set up.   |
|   | 11. <b>regulate</b> (verb) – supervise, oversee, administer, keep an eye on.                  |
|   | 12. <b>lie (in)</b> (phrasal verb) – be situated, be located, be placed, be positioned.       |
|   | 13. <b>overlap</b> (verb) – cover part of other thing (area).                                 |

14. **wisely** (adverb) – sensibly, cleverly, astutely, prudently.
15. **seek** (verb) – try, attempt, strive/work towards.
16. **temperature** (phrase) – the extent of tension in a conflict.
17. **unhelpfully** (adverb) – awkwardly, contrarily, unreasonably.
18. **unilaterally** (adverb) – used to indicate something done by a person/country without approval/agreement from other people/countries involved in the situation.
19. **trigger** (verb) – give rise to, cause, invoke, bring about.
20. **Daulet Beg Oldi (DBO)** (noun) – it is a historic campsite and current military base in Ladakh, India. Located at an elevation (height) of 16,614 feet above sea level, DBO is the highest airfield/strip in the world.
21. **pass** (noun) – a navigable (passable) route (road/passage) through a mountain range.
22. **landing strip** (noun) – airstrip, airfield (a runway for aircraft, especially one used only by private or military aircraft).
23. **context** (noun) – circumstances, conditions, situation.
24. **dynamic** (noun) – basic/fundamental cause or force which triggers change within a system.
25. **play catch-up** (phrase) – try to match a rival/competitor in terms of the position, level, quality, etc.
26. **terrain** (noun) – area, territory.
27. **carry out** (phrasal verb) – conduct, perform, execute.
28. **underpin** (verb) – support, strengthen, fortify, buttress.
29. **channel** (noun) – mechanism, method, procedure.
30. **step back** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, disengage, pull out/pull back.
31. **line** (noun) – policy.
32. **impetus** (noun) – motivation, encouragement; stimulus, boost.
33. **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).
34. **brigade** (noun) – (army/military) unit, contingent, battalion.
35. **underline** (verb) – emphasize, underscore, highlight.
36. **stress** (noun) – tension, pressure, trouble, difficulty.
37. **grasp** (verb) – understand, comprehend, realize.
38. **revive** (verb) – recover, regain, restore, improve.
39. **stalled** (adjective) – stopped, impeded, obstructed, interrupted, delayed.
40. **posturing** (noun) – behaviour, attitude, position/stand.
41. **settlement** (noun) – agreement, understanding, resolution, reconciliation.
42. **shadow-boxing** (noun) – taking action against each other or disputing/disagreeing with other (country) instead of engaging in a real fight/war.
43. **in the midst of** (phrase) – in the middle of.
44. **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
45. **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.
46. **protracted** (adjective) – very long, lengthy, prolonged/extensive.