

LOOK BACK IN RELIEF: ON THE MIGRANT LABOUR CRISIS

Introspection on the lapses that led to the migrant labour crisis is in order

The worst may be over for the country's inter-State workers. Many have returned home. More may be accommodated in Shramik trains scheduled to run, and some, it appears, do not mind staying where they are for work, now that the 'unlock' phase has begun in many parts of the country. The Supreme Court has fixed a 15-day deadline for the completion of the process of transporting all of them back home, besides asking governments across the country to drop criminal cases against them for violating the lockdown since it was imposed at short notice on March 25. Pursuing the lockdown violation charge would have been an exercise in triviality in the face of the desperation and despair this section of the population faced. Notwithstanding lingering criticism that the Supreme Court's intervention, on its motion, may have come too late, there ought to be a sense of relief over the improvement in their situation. Going by official claims by the Centre, as many as 57.22 lakh migrant workers have returned to their home towns from the States in which they have been earning a living. Given the scale of the unprecedented misery millions of them found themselves in over the last two months, the idea that both authorities and the courts are making an effort to ameliorate their living conditions is an undoubted source of comfort and relief. What stands out in the response of the Union government to the crisis and to the myriad voices that raised concern over the tribulations of such a large section of citizens is the ferocity and bull-headedness with which it sought to deny the magnitude of their suffering.

Chastened by open criticism from former members of the higher judiciary, as well as many senior lawyers and jurists, the top court has sought to redeem its stature by a series of directions; as well as by indicating its willingness to go into all pending issues. As part of its efforts, it made all State governments file comprehensive affidavits on the action they had taken to facilitate the return of the workers, provide them with immediate relief and the arrangements made for food and water for them during train journeys. It has further asked the States to spell out their plans for registering all the workers, their skills, their areas of employment and the different welfare and employment schemes meant for them. Several problems remain, not the least of them being the lapses on the part of the authorities across the country in dealing with the crisis. The inadequacy of facilities for registering and identifying those who wished to travel and the paucity of timely information and effective communication relating to the movement of trains and their destinations were other issues. Overall, the Court's belated intervention has occasioned a moment of much-needed introspection for everyone concerned on their responses, attitudes and shortcomings.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- ❖ **look back** (phrasal verb) – to remember, recall, think about something that taken place in the past; suffer a difficulty/ misfortune/ setback.
- ❖ **introspection** (noun) – self-observation, self-examination, self-scrutiny, self-analysis.
- ❖ **lapse** (noun) – failure, mistake, blunder/ oversight.
- ❖ **in order** (phrase) – in position, in place; set up.
- ❖ **inter-** (prefix) – between.
- ❖ **accommodate** (verb) – board, take in, put up, make room for.
- ❖ **back home** (phrase) – in one's (own) country/hometown.
- ❖ **besides** (preposition) – apart from, in addition to.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **pursue** (verb) – engage in, conduct, follow, carry on.
- ❖ **triviality** (noun) – unimportance, insignificance, lack of seriousness.

- ❖ **in the face of** (phrase) – when confronted/ faced with.
- ❖ **desperation** (noun) – hopelessness, despair/distress, worry, discouragement.
- ❖ **despair** (noun) – hopelessness, depression, distress.
- ❖ **notwithstanding** (adverb) – nevertheless, nonetheless; in spite of, despite, regardless of.
- ❖ **lingering** (adjective) – protracted, persistent/prolonged, long-lasting.
- ❖ **intervention** (noun) – involvement, interference.
- ❖ **motion** (noun) – a written request or proposal to the court to obtain an asked-for order, ruling, or direction; proposal, recommendation, suggestion.
- ❖ **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
- ❖ **go by** (phrasal verb) – to follow, to accept, to obey something.
- ❖ **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
- ❖ **misery** (noun) – pain, grief, anguish, agony, distress, torment, suffering.
- ❖ **ameliorate** (verb) – make something better, improve, enhance.
- ❖ **stand out** (phrasal verb) – be noticeable, be visible, be obvious.
- ❖ **myriad** (adjective) – a great number, countless, infinite, various.
- ❖ **tribulations** (noun) – problems, troubles, difficulties.
- ❖ **ferocity** (noun) – intensity, severity, strength.
- ❖ **bull-headedness** (noun) – stubbornness, adamance, steadfastness, relentlessness.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try, attempt, aim.
- ❖ **magnitude** (noun) – size, extent, measure; capacity, strength.
- ❖ **chasten** (verb) – subdue, humble, humiliate, flatten; degrade, lower, bring down.
- ❖ **jurist** (noun) – an expert in law.
- ❖ **redeem** (verb) – atone for, make amends for.
- ❖ **stature** (noun) – reputation, status/ position, influence.
- ❖ **willingness** (noun) – readiness, preparedness, inclination, desire.
- ❖ **comprehensive** (adjective) – all-inclusive, complete, thorough & detailed.
- ❖ **affidavit** (noun) – sworn statement, self attestation, self declaration (of a person).
- ❖ **facilitate** (verb) – make easier, make possible; assist, help, aid.
- ❖ **spell out** (phrasal verb) – explain, make clear, elucidate/clarify.
- ❖ **the least** (noun) – the smallest amount/extent of something.
- ❖ **on the part of** (phrase) – made by, caused by, from, by.
- ❖ **inadequacy** (noun) – insufficiency, deficiency, shortage.
- ❖ **paucity** (noun) – insufficiency, deficiency, shortage.
- ❖ **belated** (adjective) – late, behind time, not on time/delayed.
- ❖ **occasion** (verb) – cause, give rise to, bring about, result in.
- ❖ **attitude** (noun) – viewpoint, thinking, perspective, outlook.
- ❖ **shortcoming** (noun) – fault, flaw, imperfection/defect.

BACK FROM THE BRINK: ON INDIA-CHINA BORDER ROW

The mistrust on both sides of the LAC can be overcome with better communication

An agreement reached between India and China on June 6 for a partial disengagement of troops from some of the points of stand-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a step in the right direction. It is, however, just the first step. Both sides face what is likely to be a long road ahead to restore the status quo ante prior to China's multiple incursions that began one month ago. On June 9, Indian Army sources presented a measured appraisal of what had been agreed to at the Corps Commander-level talks, as well as of the challenges that remain. Both sides identified five locations of conflict in the western sector in Ladakh — a separate ongoing stand-off in Naku La in Sikkim was not on the agenda. The five spots include Patrolling Points 14, 15 and 17, Chushul, and

the north bank of Pangong Lake. A broad plan has been agreed to hold a series of talks at lower ranks of Colonel, Brigadier, and Major General at four of those points in the coming week to take forward the disengagement process. There, however, appear to be serious differences on Pangong Lake, which may require another round of higher level talks at the Corps Commander level. Chinese troops have dug in at the Finger 4 area on the lake's northern bank, and still remain present on India's side of the LAC, which runs at Finger 8. The Fingers 1 to 8, running from west to east, refer to mountain spurs on the north bank. By erecting tents, China has unilaterally changed the status quo.

India has made clear it will accept nothing less than restoring the status quo ante, and will not dilute its build-up in the area until and unless China draws down the artillery, bombers, rocket forces, air defence radars and jammers that it has amassed behind the frontlines on its side of the LAC. The demands made at ground-level talks suggest China's moves may, in part, be motivated by its insecurities at India's recent improvements in infrastructure on the Indian side of the LAC, which have helped reduce the enormous asymmetry that China has enjoyed, and now wants to preserve. India has correctly made clear it will not stop construction activity on its side of the LAC, which it is entirely entitled to. One important takeaway from the June 6 talks that could have a long-lasting impact is a proposal that the Corps Commanders have formal meetings once or twice a year for better interaction between the two armies at a higher level. If there is one thing that the recent tensions have made clear, it is the urgent need for better communication to address the strategic mistrust that prevails on both sides of the LAC. China's actions over the past month, have, unfortunately, only deepened it. Ill-advised posturing at the top political levels of the Indian leadership with threats last year to reclaim Aksai Chin didn't help either. Both sides must now look ahead at what can be done, with lessons from the mistakes of the recent past.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- ❖ **brink** (noun) – edge/verge/end (of something).
- ❖ **row** (noun) – dispute, fight, argument, quarrel, squabble, disagreement.
- ❖ **mistrust** (noun) – distrust, doubt, misgivings, suspicion.
- ❖ **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** (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).
- ❖ **overcome** (verb) – get control of, deal with, succeed in dealing with (a problem/difficulty).
- ❖ **disengagement** (noun) – withdrawal, departure, retreat (of military troops).
- ❖ **stand-off** (noun) – deadlock, stalemate, impasse (in a dispute/conflict).
- ❖ **status quo ante** (phrase) – a Latin phrase meaning “the state of affairs existing before” (or) “the way things were before”.
- ❖ **incursion** (noun) – invasion/attack; it is the act of entering another's territory;
- And it is the sudden arrival of someone into an area where they do not belong.
- ❖ **measured** (adjective) – carefully planned, carefully considered, well thought out; unflinching, unhurried.
- ❖ **appraisal** (noun) – assessment, evaluation, summing-up, consideration.
- ❖ **Corps** (noun) – it literally means “army body”; The corps is treated as an operational unit of employment by the Army and can be comprised of 20,000-45,000 soldiers. It is sometimes known as a field corps, which consists of two or more divisions. It is commanded by the Corps Commander, who holds the rank of Lieutenant General. “Corps” was first introduced in France about 1805 by Napoleon as a more flexible tactical grouping of two or more divisions.
- ❖ **take forward** (phrasal verb) – manage, sort out, deal with, take responsibility for.
- ❖ **difference** (noun) – disagreement, difference of opinion, misunderstanding.
- ❖ **dug in** past and past participle of **dig in** (phrasal verb) – to protect oneself by digging trenches (trench is a hole/

- depression/ excavation/ditch in the ground).
- ❖ **Finger area** (noun) – The 134 km of Pangong lake’s northern bank juts/extends out like a palm, and the various protrusions/projections are identified as “fingers” to demarcate territory. While India asserts that the LAC (Line of Actual Control) starts at Finger 8, China claims it starts at Finger 2, which India dominates. (Courtesy: **The Print**).
 - ❖ **bank** (noun) – edge/border, embankment (of a river/lake).
 - ❖ **mountain spur** (noun) – a lateral ridge/projection from a hill or mountain. It can also be defined as another hill or mountain range which projects in a lateral (sideways) direction from a main hill or mountain range.
 - ❖ **erect** (verb) – create, establish, form/set up.
 - ❖ **unilaterally** (adverb) – used to indicate something done by a person/country without approval/agreement from other people/countries involved in the situation.
 - ❖ **status quo** (noun) – the present situation, the current state, the existing state of affairs.
 - ❖ **make clear** (phrase) – explain, clarify, elucidate.
 - ❖ **dilute** (verb) – diminish, reduce, decrease, weaken, make weaker.
 - ❖ **build-up** (noun) – development, growth, expansion.
 - ❖ **draw down** (phrasal verb) – reduce, decrease, lessen (the magnitude/size of a military force in a particular area).
 - ❖ **artillery** (noun) – big guns, heavy weapons, cannons.
 - ❖ **amass** (verb) – gather, accumulate, pile up, collect.
 - ❖ **the frontline** (noun) – the front and most important position.
 - ❖ **insecurity** (noun) – lack of confidence/protection, self-doubt, nervousness, hesitancy.
 - ❖ **enormous** (adjective) – huge, vast, very large, massive.
 - ❖ **asymmetry** (noun) – lack of equality, non-uniformity, unevenness, lack of symmetry.
 - ❖ **preserve** (verb) – protect, safeguard, maintain.
 - ❖ **entitle** (verb) – authorize, empower, allow, permit.
 - ❖ **takeaway** (noun) – a key point/idea/fact.
 - ❖ **long-lasting** (adjective) – enduring, lasting, long-standing.
 - ❖ **address** (verb) – tackle, deal with, attend to, try to sort out.
 - ❖ **tension** (noun) – tightness, tautness, tenseness, rigidity.
 - ❖ **prevail** (verb) – exist, be in existence, be present, be prevalent.
 - ❖ **deepen** (verb) – increase, intensify, heighten, exacerbate, aggravate, worsen.
 - ❖ **ill-advised** (adjective) – ill-considered, ill-judged, misguided, badly planned.
 - ❖ **posturing** (noun) – behaviour, attitude, position/stand.
 - ❖ **reclaim** (verb) – take back, get back, recover, retrieve.
 - ❖ **Aksai Chin** (noun) – a territory in Ladakh, is under illegal Chinese occupation.
 - ❖ **look ahead** (phrasal verb) – to think about what will happen in the future.