

## ON THE LOOSE:

### ON WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR JAIDEEP DHANKAR

#### In West Bengal, the Governor must not stray from his constitutional mandate

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar remains in the spotlight, and there is every reason to believe that he wants it that way. On Monday, he met Home Minister Amit Shah with a litany of complaints against the Mamata Banerjee government, apprising him of the “alarming cliff-edge governance situation in the State”. Before the meeting, he had said it was “part of his duty to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution,” under Article 159. Indeed, the Governor has a constitutional role to perform, but Mr. Dhankhar appears enthusiastic to stretch his mandate all the time. During the meeting, he briefed the Home Minister on the State’s “rampant corruption and nepotism”, “alarming COVID-19 situation” and “worrisome and dangerously deteriorating law and order situation”. This is an overreach of authority, done without finesse. Besides his incessant war of nerves with Ms. Banerjee, Mr. Dhankhar has ended up in confrontations with vice chancellors, students and Trinamool Congress leaders, during his one-year tenure. He has also shown a proclivity to be unrestrained in media interactions, including his frequent Twitter posts. He must remember that he is not an Opposition politician in West Bengal. His opinions on the State government, and interactions with it, must be circumscribed by well-established precedents, and should draw strength from the Constitution he repeatedly calls to his defence.

No doubt, there are concerns regarding governance in the State. Ms. Banerjee is a combative politician but her administrative talents have not matched up to the crisis of the pandemic. West Bengal has been slow in its responses. Political violence, gruesome crimes, and allegations of police partisanship require the Chief Minister’s personal attention. But all this cannot be an excuse for the Governor to randomly offer his opinions publicly. His behaviour cannot be seen delinked from the BJP’s obsession of winning West Bengal, which goes to the polls in less than a year. The battle of 2021 will be fiercely fought, and if the past is anything to go by, potentially ugly too. The CBI and even the Election Commission, which is an autonomous constitutional body, have to remain above the political fray. Governors have come to assist the BJP in other States too — in upending the constitutional status of J&K and in swearing in a government of the party in Maharashtra, completely disregarding norms last year, for instance. It is possible that Mr. Dhankhar is trying to be more loyal than the king, but the pattern of interference by the Centre in the affairs of States raises other legitimate concerns. He must therefore roll back his rhetoric; and the Prime Minister and the Home Minister must nudge him to stay within his constitutionally circumscribed functions.

#### Meanings of the Difficult Words:

- ❖ **on the loose** (phrase) – unconfined, unrestrained, unrestricted.
- ❖ **stray** (verb) – digress, deviate, wander, drift, get sidetracked.
- ❖ **spotlight** (noun) – the public attention, the focus of public/media; the public eye.
- ❖ **litany** (noun) – recitation, repetition, repetitive series/account.
- ❖ **apprise** (verb) – inform, notify, tell, update, intimate, keep posted.
- ❖ **alarming** (adjective) – worrying, disturbing, shocking, distressing.
- ❖ **cliff-edge** (adjective) – relating to a difficult situation.
- ❖ **preserve** (adjective) – conserve, protect, maintain, keep.
- ❖ **indeed** (adverb) – in fact, actually.
- ❖ **enthusiastic** (adjective) – wholehearted, committed, passionate.
- ❖ **stretch** (verb) – extend (the scope beyond a reasonable limit); exaggerate, overstate, overdraw.
- ❖ **all the time** (phrase) – constantly, continuously, day and night, at all times.
- ❖ **brief** (verb) – update, inform, apprise.
- ❖ **rampant** (adjective) – widespread, present everywhere/pervasive, unrestrained/out of control.
- ❖ **nepotism** (noun) – favouritism, preferential treatment, patronage/partiality.
- ❖ **deteriorate** (verb) – decline, degenerate, degrade.

- ❖ **overreach** (noun) – an act of trying to do too much.
- ❖ **finesse** (noun) – tactfulness, delicacy, diplomacy.
- ❖ **besides** (preposition) – apart from, in addition to.
- ❖ **incessant** (adjective) – continuous, non-stop, unending, relentless.
- ❖ **war of nerves** (phrase) – a situation in which two opposing parties are trying to weaken each other psychologically.
- ❖ **end up** (phrasal verb) – come/appear, find oneself (to a particular course of action in the end).
- ❖ **confrontation** (noun) – conflict, fight, clash.
- ❖ **tenure** (noun) – incumbency, term, term in office, period in office.
- ❖ **proclivity** (noun) – liking, inclination, tendency/ leaning.
- ❖ **circumscribe** (verb) – restrict, limit; regulate.
- ❖ **precedent** (noun) – model, exemplar, example, pattern; previous example/ instance, prior instance.
- ❖ **draw from** (phrasal verb) – obtain, get, acquire.
- ❖ **defence** (noun) – protection, support, justification.
- ❖ **combative** (adjective) – aggressive, argumentative, confrontational, pugnacious, fiery.
- ❖ **match up to** (phrasal verb) – be as good as.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **gruesome** (adjective) – horrible, grim, dreadful/ terrible.
- ❖ **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, complaint.
- ❖ **randomly** (adverb) – indiscriminately, unsystematically, aimlessly.
- ❖ **delink** (verb) – separate, isolate, cut off.
- ❖ **obsession** (noun) – fixation, preoccupation; the condition of thinking too much about something.
- ❖ **fiercely** (adverb) – aggressively, strongly, intensely.
- ❖ **is anything to go by** (phrase) – it means ‘in our experience’ or ‘in the experience of the person writing’ or ‘in the experience of the person speaking’.
- ❖ **fray** (noun) – competition, contest.
- ❖ **upend** (verb) – reverse, overturn, upset, topple over, overthrow.
- ❖ **swearing in** (noun) – an official ceremony in which a person is taking oath and admitted into a new official job.
- ❖ **disregard** (verb) – ignore, take no account of, pay no attention to; dismiss.
- ❖ **more loyal than the king** (phrase) – a person with integrity/honesty/law-abiding nature will be better than the foolish king with crown.
- ❖ **interference** (noun) – intervention, meddling, unwarranted involvement.
- ❖ **affairs** (noun) – concerns, matters, activities.
- ❖ **roll back** (phrasal verb) – reverse the progress of something.
- ❖ **rhetoric** (noun) – the art of speaking or writing effectively & persuasively or impressively (but, often lacking substance); bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
- ❖ **nudge** (verb) – prompt, encourage, stimulate, inspire.

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## CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM: ON RACE FOR VACCINES GATHER PACE

**As the race for vaccines gathers pace, the follow-up period should not be shortened**

With the novel coronavirus continuing to spread across continents, the race to find effective drugs and vaccines has been progressing at a blistering pace. Never before have candidate vaccines been developed from scratch, tested on animals and completed early stages of human clinical trials, all under six months. If normally, candidate vaccines take at least a few years to reach the stage of clinical evaluation, some experts are “cautiously optimistic” that by the end of the year or early 2021, the world might know if one or more vaccines are safe and effective, and vaccines might even become “available”. Even in the case of the Ebola vaccine tested during the 2014 outbreak in Guinea, research and animal studies had been conducted prior to the outbreak. In the H1N1 vaccine, the

well-developed influenza-based technology enabled quick development, but not before the pandemic peaked. But in the case of the novel coronavirus, 24 candidate vaccines are already in clinical evaluation and another 142 are in the preclinical evaluation stage. With most countries managing to only flatten the curve, the possibility of new surges cannot be dismissed. There is overwhelming evidence that protection and herd immunity can be achieved only through vaccination. One candidate vaccine developed by China using a recombinant common cold virus (adenovirus) as a vector to ferry the genetic material of the coronavirus was on June 25 approved for use exclusively by the military for one year. The approval was based on limited safety and efficacy results from phase-1 and phase-2 trials; the phase-3 trial for vaccine efficacy and safety is yet to begin. As per preliminary results, the Oxford University vaccine, which too uses an adenovirus, has been found to be safe and immunogenic in a phase 1-2 trial. A phase-3 trial is under way. A U.S.-based company along with NIAID has found its vaccine that uses messenger RNA platform to be safe and immunogenic in a phase-1 trial. A phase-3 trial is to begin later this month. Interim results show that another vaccine candidate using the messenger RNA platform is safe and immunogenic in a phase-1-2 trial. Two Indian companies too have begun human clinical trials. There is thus cause for cheer.

However, a note of caution is also in order. Past experiences with vaccine development for two coronaviruses — SARS and MERS — have shown that vaccines can “exacerbate lung disease, either directly or as a result of antibody-dependent enhancement”. Thus, the compulsion to rigorously monitor safety profiles of candidate vaccines cannot be overemphasised. Efforts to accelerate clinical trials should not rely on shortening the follow-up period or by-passing critical steps in testing but put in place protocols that allow the trials to seamlessly graduate from one phase to another. This is an acid test for vaccine science and development and the outcomes will have far-reaching consequences either way.

#### Meanings of the Difficult Words:

- ❖ **optimism** (noun) – hopefulness, confidence, positiveness.
- ❖ **vaccine** (noun) – a biological preparation that improves immunity to a particular disease.
- ❖ gather pace (phrase) – to happen quickly.
- ❖ **blistering** (adjective) – very fast.
- ❖ **candidate vaccine or vaccine candidate** (noun) – a “potential” vaccine prepared in the research and development (R&D) centres and it can be used in human clinical trials.
- ❖ **from scratch** (phrase) – from the very beginning.
- ❖ **human clinical trial** (noun) – a type of research that studies new tests and treatments and evaluates their effects on human health outcomes.
- ❖ **Ebola** (noun) – Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, is a rare but severe, often fatal illness in humans. The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission. (Courtesy: **WHO**)
- ❖ **outbreak** (noun) – sudden appearance/ occurrence, outburst, flare-up.
- ❖ **swine flu** (noun) – H1N1 flu; Swine influenza/flu is a highly contagious disease caused by a strain (type) of the influenza type A virus called H1N1. Swine flu used to only affect pigs and rarely, be passed to humans.
- ❖ **influenza** (noun) – it is commonly known as “the flu”, is an infectious disease caused by an influenza virus.
- ❖ **dismiss** (verb) – disregard, forget, shrug off, pay no heed to.
- ❖ **overwhelming** (adjective) – very great/large, huge, formidable, very strong.
- ❖ **herd immunity** (noun) – it refers to a means (ways) of protecting a whole community from disease by immunizing a critical mass of its populace (population). It is also defined as a form of indirect protection from infectious disease that occurs when a large percentage of a population are immune to an infection, thereby providing a measure of protection for individuals who are not immune.

- ❖ **vaccination** (noun) – treatment with a vaccine to protect against a particular disease; immunization.
- ❖ **recombinant (technology)** (noun) – it is the laboratory method of genetic recombination (such as molecular cloning) that is used to recombine and produce organisms or genetic materials artificially.
- ❖ **adenovirus** (noun) – common cold virus; a group of common viruses that can cause infections of the lung, stomach, intestine, and eyes. symptoms resemble those of the common cold.
- ❖ **vector** (noun) – an organism that transmits a disease from one to another.
- ❖ **ferry** (verb) – transport.
- ❖ **efficacy** (noun) – In medicine, the ability of an intervention (for example, a drug or surgery) to produce the desired beneficial effect; effectiveness, efficiency, power.
- ❖ **immunogenic** (adjective) – relating to a foreign substance that provokes an immune response in the body.
- ❖ **under way** (phrase) – going on, continuing, in progress.
- ❖ **messenger RNA** (noun) – a single-stranded RNA molecule that corresponds to the genetic sequence of a gene and it serves as the intermediary between DNA and the synthesis of protein products during translation. (Translation is a process by which the genetic code contained within a messenger RNA (mRNA) molecule is decoded to produce a specific sequence of amino acids in a polypeptide chain).
- ❖ **interim** (adjective) – provisional, transitional, temporary.
- ❖ **cause for cheer** (phrase) – reason to be cheerful (happy and optimistic).
- ❖ **severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)** (noun) – SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV) is thought to be an animal virus from an as-yet-uncertain animal reservoir, perhaps bats, that spread to other animals (civet cats). It is a viral (human-to-human transmission) that can cause severe respiratory illness or death.
- ❖ **in order** (phrase) – appropriate, suitable, right.
- ❖ **Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)** (noun) – Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory disease caused by a novel coronavirus (MERS-CoV) that was first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012.
- ❖ **exacerbate** (verb) – aggravate, worsen, compound, intensify, heighten.
- ❖ **antibody** (noun) – it is also called 'immunoglobulin'; a protective protein produced mainly by plasma (blood) cells in the immune system in response to the presence of antigens (disease causing organisms (bacteria & viruses) and other harmful/toxic foreign substances like insect venom).
- ❖ **enhancement** (noun) – intensification, amplification, increase.
- ❖ **rigorously** (adverb) – carefully, thoroughly, diligently.
- ❖ **profile** (noun) – description, outline; summary of details.
- ❖ **overemphasise** (verb) – overstress, exaggerate, overdo, overplay.
- ❖ **accelerate** (verb) – expedite, speed up, make faster.
- ❖ **rely on** (phrasal verb) – depend on; resort to, have recourse to.
- ❖ **by-pass** (verb) – circumvent, avoid, dodge.
- ❖ **put in place** (phrase) – initiate, usher in, bring in.
- ❖ **protocol** (noun) – procedure, convention, rules of conduct.
- ❖ **seamlessly** (adverb) – smoothly and continuously.
- ❖ **graduate** (verb) – develop, progress, move up.
- ❖ **acid test** (noun) – a crucial test (of the quality or worth of something).
- ❖ **far-reaching** (adjective) – widespread, overarching, sweeping, important, major, significant.
- ❖ **consequence** (noun) – result, outcome, effect; ramification, repercussion.