

The Hindu

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Analysis

2021

17
April

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By Prashant
Mavani



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



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NEWS

- Polling begins for 5th phase of Assembly elections in WB; Voting also underway for by-elections in 12 Assembly Constituencies & 2 Lok Sabha seats
- EC curtails campaign time for remaining 3 phases of West Bengal assembly elections in view of Pandemic
- PM Modi reviews **medical oxygen supply** in the country; Directs to increase production to meet growing demands

- Railways Ministry approves to transport **Liquid Medical Oxygen** container trucks on Roll-on roll-off basis
- CISCE defers Class 10th, 12th board examinations
- UK grants approval for extradition of fugitive diamond merchant **Nirav Modi**
- EC orders Candidates and political parties shall ensure absolute adherence to covid guidelines in letter and spirit

- Govt to double **Covaxin** production by May-June
- Record 101 COVID deaths, empty roads on day 3 of lock-down in Bangladesh
- China asks Japan to take back **Fukushima decision**
- **Biden** to meet **Suga** in his first in-person meeting at White House, China expresses concern
- EAM Jaishankar congratulates Foreign Minister of Vietnam **Bui Thanh Son** on his recent appointment

- **Indian Air Force Commanders' Conference 2021 concluded in New Delhi**
 - The Indian Air Force Commanders' Conference 2021, themed '**Reorienting for the Future**' concluded at Air headquarters in New Delhi on Friday.
 - The three day conference saw detailed deliberations on ways and means to enhance the operational capabilities of the IAF.

• Pandemic-hit Economy gets Monsoon Balm

- **Monsoon rainfall** this year will be normal, the weather office said on Friday, **offering welcome news** to the country at a time when a raging second wave of Covid-19 is threatening to disrupt economic activity.
- **IMD**: “Quantitatively, **the monsoon seasonal** (June to September) **rainfall** is likely to be 98% of the long-period average (LPA), with a model error of plus or minus 5%”
- **LPA** — currently the average for the **1961-2010** period — is 88 centimetres.
- The probability of normal or above-normal rainfall during this year’s monsoon is **61%**.

- In India, where **more than 60% of farmland** is rain-fed and **two-thirds of the people** are dependent on agriculture for livelihood, a normal southwest monsoon that brings about **70% of the annual rain** is crucial for both farm output and the economy in general.
- Last year, when economic activity came to a halt amid the **pandemic and lockdown**, agriculture was among the few sectors that **grew and kept the rural population partially insulated** from the impact of the economic disruption.

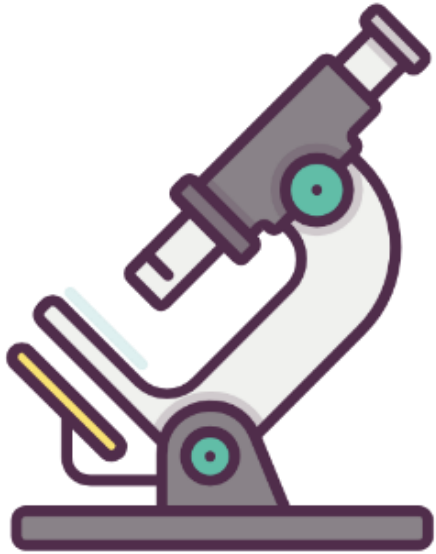
A background image showing a laptop keyboard on the left, a pair of glasses resting on an open notebook in the center, and a pen on the right. The scene is set on a desk.

OPINION EDITORIALS

Gol's Vaccine Dadagiri Must Stop



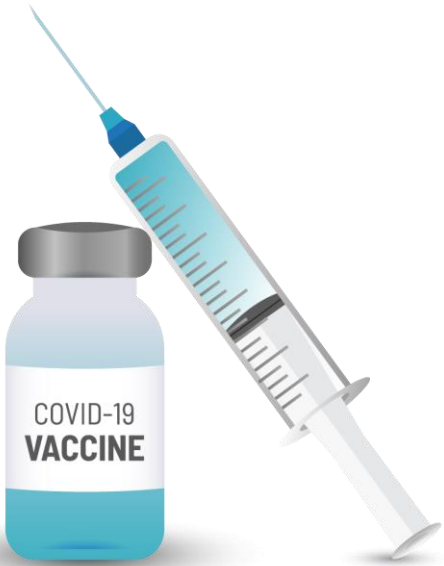
- On Tuesday, Union health secretary **Rajesh Bhushan** stated that on the vaccination front, the **problem is not of vaccine shortage, but of a lack of better planning.**
- At least **six states** — Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Odisha and Telangana — have apprised Gol about vaccine shortage.



- There have been reports of the government often informing hospitals of their vaccine allocations on the **very day of their administration**.
- **Jagdish Bhagwati** once wrote, 'It really makes all the difference how you see the control system, whether from the lens of the one who runs it or of the one whom it runs over.'

- **Gol's absolute control** over the complete **vaccination drive** is problematic.
- Visuals of **vaccination centres closing down** for the day is a grim reminder of problems being faced by state governments.
- Any **political blame game** cannot overlook the fact that we are in the middle of a public health crisis that has gone out of hand because of mismanagement.

- It is grimly ironic that India, a global vaccine manufacturing hub, should even be facing a 'dose shortage vs bad planning' debate.
- The best way to piece together India's vaccine strategy is to go back to 2020, when it became apparent that lockdowns, masks and social distancing were temporary measures, and that there was only one way to end the pandemic: a vaccine.



- Earlier **we** were saying that we will cover the **whole world**.
- Now Gol is singing a **different tune**: that vaccines were not being given to those who want them, but to those who need them.
- Compare it with the **US government**, which placed an order worth **\$2 billion with Pfizer for 100 million doses of its vaccine** —even before knowing whether the vaccine was going to work or not, then going on to sign deals with Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Novavax and AstraZeneca for more than 500 million vaccine doses.

- The US vaccine strategy was **bi-directional** — pumping in money to fund research, and acting as first-buyer of vaccines.
- **Britain, Canada** and the **EU** procured bulk contracts from companies at competitive rates.
- At the same time, **political rallies** and **religious congregations** must be stopped.

Not at Kumbh, Make Covid Dip

- **Manushya sankat mein hai** — humanity is in danger.
- This is a message the **Panchayati Niranjani Akhada**, one of the **three oldest and major sects of Hindu sants and sadhus**, has recognised loud and clear, leading to the announcement that its sadhus will be withdrawing from this year's **Kumbh Mela** on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- But with the death of **Nirwani Akhada** head **Mahamandaleshwar Kapil Dev** of Covid-19 on Thursday, the **second largest akhada** has done the right thing by exiting a super-spreader event.
- Religious faith is **not necessarily always in opposition to reason** — it simply operates on a different belief system.
- True faith will also provide the **courage** to do the **right thing**.

- At a time when every effort should be made to **batter down** the risk of **Covid-spread**, such congregations — **religious or secular** — need to be shut down.
- Over the last five days, **Haridwar** has reported 2,167 new cases of Covid.
- One of the prime characteristics of religion is **providing its faithful the sense of protection.**

Vaccine diplomacy that needs specific clarifications

- On March 18, V. Muraleedharan, Minister of state in the Ministry of External Affairs, while responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha on the “Distribution of Covid-19 Vaccine in Foreign Countries”, noted, “External supplies are done factoring in domestic production, requirements of national vaccination programme and requests for the ‘Made in India’ vaccines. These supplies will continue in the weeks and months ahead, in a phased manner, depending on production and needs of the national vaccination programme”.

- **Mr. Muraleedharan** also stated that India was sending these vaccines abroad in the “form of grant, commercial sales of manufacturers GAVI’s COVAX facility.
- **Eight days later**, Mr. Muraleedharan made the same points while answering a question in the Lok Sabha but he also, significantly, added, “The supply to GAVI’s COVAX facility is an obligation since **India is a member** of this multilateral body and also a **recipient of vaccines from this body**.”

- As on **April 13**, India had supplied over **65 million vaccines to 90 countries**.
- Of these more than 10 million were sent as grants, almost 36 million on a commercial basis and about 19 million under the COVAX programme.
- Taken together, these **supplies come to around a month** of India's current COVID-19 vaccines production.

- Clearly, India wishes to signal that it is a responsible **global power** which does not self-obsessively think of itself alone.
- Last month, **Mr. Jaishankar asked**, “Tell me, how many vaccines have internationalist countries given? Which one of these countries have said while I do (vaccinate) my people, I will do (inoculate) other people who need it as much as we do”?

- These approaches are the **idealistic side** of the foreign policy coin whose other face is fashioned by cold and ruthless realism and exclusive self-interest.
- In such a scenario, the onus for answering questions on the making of the **national vaccine programme** would lie squarely with the health authorities.

MCQ

1. The International Tennis Federation has renamed the Fed Cup as
 - a. Billie Jean King Cup
 - b. Michael Jackson King Cup
 - c. Martin Luther King Jr.Cup
 - d. Desmond Tutu

MCQ

1. Flipkart to acquire 100% stake in which leading Indian online travel portal?
 - a. Cleartrip
 - b. Yatra
 - c. MakebyTrip
 - d. Golbibo

MCQ

1. On a technology transfer basis, GoI has allowed which Mumbai based company to manufacture Covaxin?
 - a. Glaxo Smithkline
 - b. Haffkine Biopharma Corporation
 - c. Biological E
 - d. Sun Pharmaceuticals

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Do you know?

Nalanda = Na+alam+Daa, meaning “*no stopping of the gift of knowledge*”

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