

The Hindu Editorials & Words

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Misgiving

A feeling of doubt, worry or suspicion

संदेह, चिंता या शंका का भाव; अविश्वास

I had serious misgivings about leaving him on his own.

Similar: qualm, doubt, reservation, scruple, suspicion, distrust, mistrust, lack of faith, lack of confidence, diffidence, second thoughts, trepidation, scepticism, worry, unease, uneasiness, anxiety, apprehension, uncertainty, niggle, disquiet, disquietude, hesitation, hesitance, hesitancy.

Outmanoeuvre

evade (an opponent) by moving faster or with greater agility.

"the YF-22 can outmanoeuvre any fighter flying today"

Similar: outflank, circumvent, bypass, shake/throw off, get around.

Use skill and cunning to gain an advantage over.

"he hoped he would be able to outmanoeuvre his critics"

Similar: outwit, outsmart, out-think, outplay, be cleverer than, steal a march on

Incongruent

Incongruous; incompatible.

Similar: out of place, incompatible, inharmonious, not congruent, absurd, inappropriate, incongruous.

Provision

Noun: the action of providing or supplying something for use.

"new contracts for the provision of services"

Similar: supplying, supply, providing, purveying, delivery, furnishing, equipping, giving, donation, allocation, distribution, presentation

An amount or thing supplied or provided.

"changing levels of transport provision"

Similar: facilities, services, amenities, resource(s), equipment, arrangements, solutions, means, offering, funds, benefits, assistance, allowance(s), concession(s), opportunities.

Verb: supply with food, drink, or equipment, especially for a journey.

"civilian contractors were responsible for provisioning these armies"

Set aside an amount in an organization's accounts for a known liability.

"financial institutions have to provision against loan losses"

Proviso: प्र'वाइज़ो

A condition that must be accepted before an agreement can be made

समझौते या संधि के होने से पहले की शर्त जिसे मानना अनिवार्य हो, अनिवार्य पूर्व शर्त; प्रतिबंध

He agreed to the visit with the proviso that they should stay no longer than a week.

Similar: condition, stipulation, provision, clause, rider, qualification, restriction, reservation, , caveat, limitation, strings.

Deleterious

Causing harm or damage.

"divorce is assumed to have deleterious effects on children"

Similar: harmful, damaging, detrimental, injurious, inimical, hurtful.

Posit

put forward as fact or as a basis for argument.

"the Confucian view posits a perfectible human nature"

Similar: postulate, put forward, advance, propound, submit, predicate, hypothesize, take as a hypothesis, set forth, propose, pose, assert, presuppose, assume, presume.

Put in position; place.

"the Professor posits Cohen in his second category of poets"

Stark

Severe or bare in appearance or outline.

"the ridge formed a stark silhouette against the sky"

Similar: sharply delineated, sharp, sharply defined, well focused, crisp, distinct, obvious, evident, clear, clear-cut, graphic, striking, desolate, bare, barren, arid, vacant, empty, forsaken, godforsaken, bleak, dreary, gloomy, sombre, depressing, cheerless, joyless, uninviting, miserable, grim, harsh, oppressive, merciless, drear, austere, severe.

Opposite: fuzzy, indistinct, pleasant, comfortable, ornate.

Complete; sheer.

"he came running back in stark terror"

Similar: sheer, utter, complete, absolute, total, pure, perfect.

Exacerbate

Make (a problem, bad situation, or negative feeling) worse.

"the exorbitant cost of land in urban areas only exacerbated the problem"

Similar: aggravate, make worse, worsen, inflame, compound, intensify, increase.

Bear the brunt of

Put up with the worst of some bad circumstance, as in It was the secretary who had to **bear the brunt** of the doctor's anger. This idiom uses **brunt** in the sense of "the main force of an enemy's attack," which was sustained by the front lines of the defenders.

Disconcertingly

In a disturbing or embarrassing manner; "he drank some sherry, his eyes **disconcertingly** keen as he watched her"

To the hilt

As much as possible; to the utmost degree.

"the estate was mortgaged to the hilt"

Similar: completely, fully, wholly, totally, entirely, utterly, unreservedly.

Rising poverty: On pandemic-induced disparities

With the spurt in COVID-19 cases, the nascent economic recovery is under threat

A new study by the Pew Research Center estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately deleterious impact on living standards in India and China in 2020, with the sharp economic contraction in the former pushing as many as 7.5 crore people into the ranks of the poor (those who earn \$2 or less a day). In contrast, the figure is about 10 lakh in China, whose economy slowed but continued to post growth. In absolute terms, the **number of poor in India is posited to have swelled to 13.4 crore**, reversing the gains made in the preceding nine years when the country cut the number of poor by more than three-fourths to an estimated 7.8 crore in 2019. In China, the population of the poor likely inched up to 40 lakh, matching the 2019 level. Similarly, the numbers of India's middle class — those with a daily income of \$10.01–\$20 — are projected to have shrunk by 3.2 crore to about 6.6 crore, compared with the number this income cohort would have reached absent the pandemic. Here again, China likely experienced just one-third the level of contraction, with the population of those deemed as middle income set to have narrowed to 49.3 crore compared with the pre-pandemic projection of 50.4 crore.

The Pew assessment, which is based on an analysis of the World Bank's PovcalNet database, does, however, acknowledge the multiple assumptions that inform the study. These include varying base years for income/consumption figures — with India's from 2011 and 2016 for China. Still, the study serves as a stark reminder of the economic disparities, both within India and at a comparative level with its northern neighbour. The latest report once again spotlights the widening inequality in India, exacerbated by the

pandemic, as the lower income populations have disproportionately borne the brunt of job and income losses in the wake of the multiple lockdowns. The fiscal policy response to redress this massive increase in precarity has also been underwhelming, especially when viewed from the perspective of the pre-pandemic tax cuts that the government handed to corporates in an attempt to revive private investment and rekindle growth. That the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme has been seeing record levels of demand is testimony to the struggles those in the rural hinterland have been facing in finding gainful employment since the onset of the pandemic. With the number of COVID-19 cases once again rising disconcertingly across the country, there is a clear and present danger that not only could any nascent economic recovery be stymied even before it gains traction but that the number of those sliding into poverty could jump dramatically. The policy responses to the rising wave of infections could well test the government's 'lives versus livelihoods' playbook to the hilt.

Junk inefficiency: On vehicle scrappage policy

Scrappage policy can work if incentives are confined to fuel-efficient vehicle replacements

The much-awaited **vehicle scrappage policy announced by the Transport Ministry**, coming after the move for a green tax on ageing and polluting automobiles, promises economic benefits, a cleaner environment and thousands of jobs. Although it will take until April 1, 2022 for vehicles belonging to the government and the public sector to be scrapped, another year thereafter to identify junk heavy commercial vehicles through mandatory fitness checks, and finally other vehicles by 2024, it is a constructive road map. It will be no easy task, however, to put in place a credible system of automated fitness checking centres with help from States to assess whether commercial and private vehicles are roadworthy after 15 and 20 years, respectively, as the policy envisages. Equally important, enforcement will be key to get them scrapped once they are found unfit for use and to stop them from moving to smaller towns. States must also come on board to provide road tax and registration concessions, while the automobile industry is expected to sweeten the deal with genuine discounts on new vehicles. Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, who has had limited success with enforcement of the amended Motor Vehicles Act of 2019 because States are not entirely on board, has the difficult task of ensuring that the scrappage plan gets their support, and the backing of manufacturers who stand to benefit from a spurt in demand. Heavy commercial vehicles, which contribute disproportionately to pollution — 1.7 million lack fitness certificates — pose the biggest challenge. Many of these cannot be replaced quickly in the absence of financial arrangements for small operators, who have opposed the new measures.

Vehicle scrappage and replacement is seen internationally as a route to rejuvenate COVID-19-affected economies by privileging green technologies, notably electric vehicles (EVs), and also as an initiative to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century under Paris Agreement commitments. India's automobile ecosystem is complex, with dominant, legacy motors spanning fossil-fuel driven vehicles and a nascent EV segment. The industry's share pre-COVID-19 was about 7.5% of GDP with significant downstream employment, but it also imposes a fuel import burden. The Centre has to arrive at a balance and have incentives that reward manufacturers of vehicles that are the most fuel-efficient. Failure to prioritise fuel efficiency and mandate even higher standards and enhance taxes on fuel guzzlers will only repeat the mistakes of vehicle exchange programmes abroad, where full environmental benefits could not be realised, and taxpayers ended up subsidising inefficiency. Ecological scrapping, as a concept, must lead to high rates of materials recovery, reduce air pollution, mining and pressure on the environment.

Managing the second wave

Vaccinations, testing, isolation and treatment should pick up in the face of a resurgent Covid

The Covid daily caseload has crossed 40,000, the highest in nearly four months. The challenge before the Centre and States is threefold: to practise and enforce responsible behaviour; ramp up testing and contact tracing; and ensure that vaccinations cover large numbers over the next four months. Given the economic costs and impact on livelihoods, lockdowns should be enforced only as a last resort. On the behavioural front, politicians should set an example by wearing masks at public rallies. The cap on numbers at social functions should once again be strictly enforced and points of entry into States strictly monitored. Above all, the government needs to improve its messaging. While dispelling misgivings and myths about the vaccine, it should be made clear that immunity sets in after at least a month. The threat of a second wave calls for a renewed sense of resolve.

The Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has reiterated the herd immunity argument by stating that the whole population need not be vaccinated. This may hold true for a containment zone where outsiders cannot enter. Else, it is hard to identify the threshold level after which herd immunity will take effect. The Centre's approach of identifying target groups by priority and vaccinating them is basically the right one. However, it should at the least maintain its current speed of over three million vaccinations a day. At current pace, by the end of July, it would have covered a population of over 300 million — and a good number twice. However, vaccine delivery systems need a relook, in view of the problem of wastage. A national average of 6.5 per cent conceals higher levels of wastage in some States. Vaccine wastage takes place when an opened 5 ml vial containing 10 doses (or a 10 ml vial with 20 doses) is not used up within about four hours, a situation that seems to arise outside the metros where vaccine awareness is low. In the metros where demand is higher, surveys point to diversion of doses to ineligible populations in order to reduce wastage. In fact, it may be a good idea to expand the eligible population to include everyone above 45 years of age. The Centre should allow States to define their priorities in this respect based on their demographics and infection spread rather than enforce a uniform policy across the country.

About 40 million doses have been administered since January, while 76 million doses have been sent to the States. A stock of over 30 million amounts to an inventory of seven to ten days at the current rates of vaccination. This inventory is ideal; it should neither fall nor go up. India has so far shipped out 60 million doses, a number that is likely to increase with a rise in contractual obligations. Yet, that should not be a worry as new vaccines such as Sputnik V are about to begin production. India is well placed to produce for itself and the rest of the world. It needs to tone up its delivery systems.