Message from the Ambassador H. E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma

I am pleased to bring forth this edition of the newsletter of the Indian Embassy ‘The Indian Connection’.

This edition brings you stories of growing India as well as initiatives of the Indian Government and resulting success stories besides stories of India-Japan.

India’s COVID-19 Research Consortium recommends 70 proposals including for Vaccine / Therapeutics Development

In India’s fight against COVID19, Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has been designated the central coordination agency for the development of a vaccine for COVID19. DBT with its Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) launched “COVID-19 Research Consortium” with aim to “Developing Diagnostics, Vaccines, novel Therapeutics and repurposing of drugs for SARS-CoV-2”. On basis of call, Consortium receive applications from academia and Industry and on the basis of a multi-tiered review process is ongoing recommends proposals for financial support.

Till date 70 proposals, which includes Vaccines candidates, Diagnostics products or scale-up facilities, Therapeutics options, Drug Repurposing & Preventive interventions, have been recommended for receiving funding support. Some of the key recommended Projects are:

Vaccine Candidates & Therapeutics
- Cadila Healthcare Ltd (for developing a DNA Vaccine candidate),
- Bharat Biotech International Ltd (for developing a vaccine candidate utilising the inactivated rabies vector platform)
- Serum Institute of India Private Limited (for Phase III human clinical trials study of recombinant BCG vaccine).
- National Institute of Immunology (for developing of a novel vaccine evaluation platform).
- Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (for developing an Intranasal vaccine candidate).
- Gennova (for developing Next-generation mRNA vaccine candidate)
- CMC, Vellore (for developing a lipid encapsulated mRNA based vaccine).
- Virchow Biotech Pvt Ltd (for production of purified immunoglobulin G at commercial scale from COVID-19 convalescent sera and production of high titers of equine hyper immunoglobulin for the treatment of COVID infected patients on large scale).
- OncoSeek Bio Pvt Ltd (to create an in vitro Lung Organoid model).
- University of Delhi (for discovering neutralizing antibodies from an existing phage display based library).

Apart from that proposals for scale-up the production of molecular and Rapid diagnostic tests, screening of COVID-19 suspects, indigenous production of novel PPE, Masks, face shields, sanitizers, Ambu bags, remote patient monitoring systems, etc have been recommended.


Technology Development Board (TDB), a statutory body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) approves 06 technologies (incl include thermal scanners, medical devices, masks, and diagnostic kits) towards commercialisation to augment India's efforts to combat COVID 19 (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1624707)

Magnetic nanoparticle-based RNA extraction kit “Agappe Chitva Magna” developed by Kerala-based SCTIMST along with Agappe Diagnostics Ltd, an in vitro diagnostics manufacturing company, launched commercially for detection of COVID 19. The indigenous kit which is approved Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) for commercialization, is expected to reduce the cost of testing and the country's dependence on imported kits. (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1625870)

CSIR-IIIM & Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) to develop RT-LAMP based test for Coronavirus. RT-LAMP a rapid, accurate and cost-effective test can be done with indigenous components and set up with minimal expertise and instrumentation. (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1626931)

Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), Bangalore, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, have developed a cup-shaped design (patent filed) of the mask that helps to create enough space in front of the mouth while speaking. CeNS has transferred this technology to Camellia Clothing Ltd., a Bangalore based garment company. (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1626356)

Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) has established stable cultures of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) from patients’ samples. Virologists at CCMB have isolated infectious viruses from several isolates. The ability to culture the virus in lab enables CCMB to work towards vaccine development and testing of potential drugs to fight COVID-19. (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1627590)

Launch of 1000 Genome sequencing of SARS-Cov 2 Virus by DBT Autonomous Institutions consortia to understand viral and host genomics of COVID-19 outbreak. The findings of this study will also assist development of efficient diagnostic assays, vaccine and drug candidates and help formulate policies for containment of the outbreak. (http://dbtindia.gov.in/latest-announcement/lau…-sars-cov-2-virus )


DST initiates COVID-19 India National Supermodel for monitoring infection transmission & aid decision-making by policymakers. Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) and IISc, Bangalore will co-ordinate to connect and work with all COVID-19 modeling projects and programs in the country. This will help develop a set of benchmarks to assess various models and to finally deliver the COVID-19 India National Supermodel. (https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1627889)
COVID-19 & India's Efforts on Science and Technology (S&T) Front


- ICMR, Delhi & Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech to develop a fully indigenous vaccine for Corona Virus. The vaccine will be developed using the virus strain which has been isolated at ICMR’s National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. [http://www.newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=388187](http://www.newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=388187)


- Sree Chitra develops 2 types of swabs and viral transport medium for COVID-19 testing. Chitra EmBed and Chitra EnMesh, both proven efficiency in the adequacy of specimen collection and rapid elution of specimen into the liquid viral medium. Chitra Viral Transport Medium, is specifically designed to retain the virus in its active form during its transportation from the collection point to the laboratory. Technologies for both swabs and viral transport medium have been transferred to two industries for immediate manufacture and sales-- Mallelil Industries, Origin diagnostics, and Levram Life sciences. [https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1620451](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1620451)

- Robust Indigenous IgG ELISA test kit ("COVID KAVACH ELISA") for antibody detection developed & validated by ICMR-NIV, Pune. Robust antibody tests are critical for surveillance to understand the proportion of population exposed to infection. The Technology has been transferred for mass scale production to Zydus Cadila. [https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1622766](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1622766)


- Patenting of Innovative Low Cost PPE developed by Indian Navy Paves way for Rapid Mass Production. The PPE developed by the Navy is made of a special fabric which affords high level of protection along with high 'breathability' as against other PPEs available in the market and is therefore more suitable for use in hot and humid weather conditions as prevalent in India. The technology has also been tested and validated by ICMR approved Testing Lab. [https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1623776](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1623776)
COVID-19 & Indian Traditional Medicine (AYUSH)

Health and AYUSH Ministry formally launch the ‘AYUSH Sanjivani ‘ App and inter-disciplinary studies involving AYUSH interventions for COVID 19 situation.

The following studies were formally launched in the programme:

1. Clinical research studies on Ayurveda interventions as prophylaxis and as an add-on to standard care to COVID19: Collaborative clinical studies as a joint initiative of Ministry of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Ministry of Science & Technology through Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) with technical support of ICMR. The Interdisciplinary Ayush R&D Task Force has formulated and designed clinical research protocols for prophylactic studies and add-on interventions in COVID-19 positive cases through thorough review and consultative process of experts of high repute from different organisations across the country for studying four different interventions viz. Ashwagandha, Yashtimadhu, Guduchi +Pippali and a poly herbal formulation (AYUSH-64). Ashwagandha for the Prophylaxes Against SARS-COV-2 in subjects with increased risk during the COVID 19 Pandemic: A comparison with Hydroxychloroquine in the health care providers and Effectiveness of Ayurveda Formulation as an adjunct to ‘Standard of Care’ for the Treatment of Mild to Moderate COVID-19: A Randomized, Open Label, Parallel Efficacy, Active Control, Multi-Centre Exploratory Drug Trial.

2. Population based interventional studies on impact of AYUSH based prophylactic interventions: The ministry of AYUSH is initiating population based studies to study the impact of Ayurvedic Interventions in prevention of COVID-19 infection in high risk population. The core objectives comprise of, assessment of preventive potential of AYUSH interventions for COVID 19 and also to assess the improvement in Quality of Life in high risk population. The study will be carried out through four Research Councils under Ministry of AYUSH and National Institutes in 25 states across the country and several State Governments covering approximately 5 lakhs population. The outcome of the study would certainly pave a new horizon in understanding the preventive potential of AYUSH interventions during pandemics like COVID 19 through scientific evidence.

3. Ayush Sanjivani application based study for impact assessment of acceptance and usage of AYUSH advisories in its role in prevention of COVID 19: The Ministry of AYUSH has developed Ayush Sanjivani mobile app, for generating data of large population with a target of 5 million people. The core expected outcomes includes to generate data on acceptance and usage of AYUSH advocacies and measures among the population and its impact in prevention of COVID 19.

A collaborative research study by DAILAB at IIT Delhi and DAILAB at AIST (National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology), Japan has recently discovered that Ashwagandha and Propolis may hold an efficient anti-COVID-19 drug. The team has reported that natural compounds from Ashwagandha and propolis have the potential to be effective against the main SARS-CoV-2’s enzyme for splitting proteins, known as the Main protease or Mpro that plays a key role in mediating viral replication. They discovered that Withanone (Wi-N), a natural compound derived from Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) and Caffeic Acid Phenethyl Ester (CAPE), an active ingredient of New Zealand propolis, have the potential to interact with and block the activity of Mpro.

More details at [https://home.iitd.ac.in/news-covidaswagandha.php](https://home.iitd.ac.in/news-covidaswagandha.php)
Japan Gojo & Company, Inc. capital infusion in group companies including from India

Recently, Japan's Gojo & Company with approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to shore up its ownership in Satya MicroCapital has invested USD 5 million with a commitment to invest an additional USD 10 million on the closure of all approval formalities. Satya Microcapital is a microfinance institutions in India & since its inception in September 2016, Satya has disbursed microloans totaling over USD 250 million across 380,000 women borrowers as of February 2020.

For more details visit the link http://gojo.co/blog/2020/04/16/completion-of-usd-22-million-series-d-first-close-and-capital-infusion-in-group-companies/

Japan’s Kubota ties up with Indian peer to make tractors for Africa

Nikkei Asia Review (31st May 2020)

Kubota will be exploring emerging markets with their new line which may cost about a half of its conventional products. The new product brand, E-Kubota, will be manufacturing through a joint venture with Indian agri-machinery maker, Escorts Limited. They envisage introducing their tractors to East European markets and to South Africa within this year. Escorts Limited is the 3rd largest agri-machinery maker in India, having 12% market share domestically. Kubota will invest 16 billion yen to Escorts in June, increasing Kubota’s capital contribution ratio to Escorts to 10%. Kubota and Escorts plan to start production at a manufacturing site in Haryana soon. Initially, they intended the factory to manufacture products targeting the domestic market only, but they decided to utilize the facility to manufacture products which would be bound for South African market. Kubota factory in Poland will be manufacturing E-Kubota brand for East European markets.


India releases data on energy savings

On 6th May 2020, India released released E-book on "Impact of Energy Efficiency Measures for Year 2018-19" prepared by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) India . The findings & Achievements of the report are:

- Reduction in CO2 emissions of ~151.74 Million Tonnes,
- Total Energy Savings of 23.73 Mtoe,
- Energy savings worth Rs. 89,122 Cr.
- Energy intensity reduces by 20% compared to 2005

During release event of book, Mr R.K.Singh, the Union Minister of State, Power and New & Renewable Energy said, “we have pledged in COP-21 that we will bring down energy intensity of economy by 33 to 35% compared to 2005 levels by 2030. Now, with our energy efficiency initiatives we have already reduced the energy intensity of our economy by 20% compared to 2005 levels which is a very good performance indeed.”

Complete Report https://beeindia.gov.in/sites/default/files/BEE%20Final%20Report_1.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3pzH4Kx07Ft0K1d8hpl6Z8wkhrCDeIrXnF3oA5UITx3VxElgsjMH13gc
India - Japan Defence Minister telephonic talk on mitigating COVID-19

On 8th May 2020, India’s Minister of Defence Mr Rajnath Singh today held a telephone conversation with Minister of Defence, Japan Mr Taro Kono.

The two Defence Ministers had discussions on their respective responses against the COVID-19 pandemic. Shri Rajnath Singh informed Mr Kono Taro on India’s contribution to international efforts against COVID-19 and discussed areas of mutual cooperation in the global fight against the pandemic. They also agreed that India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership provides a good basis for both countries to work together alongside other countries in this regard to deal with the post COVID-19 related challenges.

Both ministers also conveyed their commitment to take forward the initiatives of bilateral security cooperation under the framework of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

India - Japan Foreign Minister telephonic talk

On 7th May 2020, Dr S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India had telephonic talk with Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. Both discussed about return of their stranded nationals in the COVID-19 situation to their respective countries. Both also dwelled on economic recovery challenges including supply chain resilience. Dr Jaishankar told that India-Japan Indo-Pacific partnership will be even more important in the coming days.

On 11 May 2020, A broad-based virtual meeting on responding to the COVID19 challenge was held among Foreign Ministers of United States, Australia, Brazil, Israel, India, Japan and Republic of Korea. During the meeting productive discussions were held on covered pandemic response, global health management, medical cooperation, economic recovery and travel norms.

On 14th May 2020, Dr. Guruprasad Mohapatra, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India. & Mr. Shigehiro Tanaka, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), Government of Japan co-chaired a meeting to discuss the India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership. In the 2nd edition of the India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership meeting, METI Japan and Indian ministries & states discussed ways to achieve the vision of a globally competitive & vibrant Indian manufacturing sector.

On 28th April 2020, Air Chief Marshal RK Singh BHADAURIA, Chief of the Air Staff, Indian Air Force had telephone conference with General MARUMO Yoshinari, Chief of Staff, JASDF over the issues related to COVID-19 pandemic and agreed that they would work closely to combat the virus and to share lessons learned with each other. They also discussed the importance of Japan-India defense cooperation in the region. The telephone conference concluded with an agreement that firm cooperation between the two air forces would be carried on under the shared vision of “Free, Open, Inclusive and Rules-Based Indo-Pacific Region”.

On 15th May 2020, Japan Desk at Invest Punjab in collaboration with JETRO Japan’s India office held a brainstorming and after care session with Japanese Enterprises operating in Punjab. Yugo Hashimoto MD & CEO, SML ISUZU Ltd thanks Punjab Government for their support in resuming production in Punjab unit. He has also highlighted the need to use Artificial Intelligence to ensure production efficiency and safety amidst COVID19.
On 28th May 2020, NASSCOM Japan VC Connect e-pitching platform started with its first session. Opening remarks were delivered by HE Amb Sanjay K Verma highlighting technology and innovation as next frontier for India-Japan relations. EVP Mr. Kazuya Nakajo from partner organization, JETRO also delivered his remarks on how JETRO is supporting Open Innovation ecosystem in Japan and deepening partnership with India in that context. Ms. Kritika from NASSCOM gave an overview of India’s startup ecosystem. The vote of thanks was delivered by DCM Shri Raj K Srivastava highlighting how in the post COVID19 world some of the existing sectoral cooperation (healthcare, agriculture, digital & infrastructure) between India and Japan would be reinforced due to its strategic nature.

It saw participation of 6 start-ups from healthcare & personal hygiene, robotics, retail, and AgriTech domain and 50+ representatives of Japanese VCs and businesses. Based on the event, presenters secured in a total of 33 one-to-one meetings with over 5 meetings per startup.

On 29th April, Additional Secretary Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, GoI Mr AV Srinivas held an interactive video conference with Ambassador HE Shri Sanjay Verma on India-Japan cooperation in the field of personnel and governance reforms.

On 30th April, ASSOCHAM India (oldest apex industry body estd. 1920) organized a webinar on title "Business continuity between India and Japan during COVID19" and discussed topics ranging from future projections, stimulus package by the Japanese Govt, impact on supply chain diversification, India’s strength to attract investment and enhance trade with Japan.

On 30th April, HE Amb Sanjay Kumar Verma spoke on "India - Japan Business Promotion, Challenges and Opportunities - Post Covid19" organized by PHDCCI (PHD Chamber of Commerce India; established in 1905, is a proactive and dynamic multi-State apex organisation working at grass-root level with strong national & international linkages; website: https://www.phdcci.in/)

On 1st May, HE Amb Sanjay Kumar Verma spoke on India-Japan Business Promotion, Challenges and Opportunities - Post Covid-19 webinar organized by FIEO India (Federation of Indian Export Organisations) [est in 1965 under the aegis of MoCommerce, GoI.
On 22nd May 2020, a webinar on " was organised by Embassy of India, Tokyo in collaboration with JETRO Japan, Japan Pharmaceutical Traders Association (JAPTA); Japan Federation of Medical Devices Associations (JMFA); Department of Pharmaceuticals, GoI and State Governments of Telangana, Himachal Pradesh (HP), Gujarat and Goa.

During the webinar the opening remarks were made by H.E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan. He shared his valuable thoughts on the golden opportunity for India and Japan to further boost their relationship in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Dr P D Vaghela, Secretary, Pharmaceuticals presented the sectoral view and investment opportunities in the pharmaceutical and medical device industry in India. He also presented various initiatives taken by the Government of India to promote trade and business in the country.

The webinar highlighted the opportunities in India in the Medical Devices and API Sector. The topics of the presentation during the webinar included "Post Covid-19 challenges & opportunities for Pharma sector & impact on value chain"; "Sectoral overview, Incentive schemes and investment opportunities in India"; "Opportunities in India for MeD, Enhanced FDI ecosystem & facilitation"; "Future growth opportunities & way forward for Pharma sector"; "Future growth opportunities & way forward for MeD sector"; "Investment opportunities in the sectors in the state of Gujarat, HP, Goa and Telangana". Webinar was attended by around 200 participants from Japan and India.

More details at the link [https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1626121](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1626121) & the presentations of webinar can be accessed at the link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j634plJej_c&list=PLW7rCij3F7z1ElFIjBM52DPy2MooYoQ1f&index=2&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j634plJej_c&list=PLW7rCij3F7z1ElFIjBM52DPy2MooYoQ1f&index=2&t=0s)

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On 13 May 2020, a webinar on “Electronics Sector: Challenges & Emerging opportunities” was organised by Embassy of India Tokyo, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (Meity), Government of India & Invest India to present investment opportunities in India with FDI facilitation & incentives. Minister E&C delivered opening remarks, JS Meity discussed three incentive schemes and MD Invest India talked about FDI facilitation.

70 executives from Japanese companies in sector participated. During the webinar, DDG Japan’s Ministry of Economic, Trade and Industry (METI) discussed challenges and need for Supply Chain diversification. Ex Vice President JETRO Japan JETRO Innovation shared Japanese Companies experiences in India in Electronics Sector. MD of TDK Electronics & CEO of Panasonic India shared experiences of Make In India. Also Principal Secretaries from Indian States of Telangana, Haryana and Tamilnadu presented opportunities in their respective states in Electronics Sector.

4000億ドル
2025年のインドの
エレクトロニクス市場規模

2倍
2014年-2019年
のインドのエレクトロ
ニクス製造業の伸び

288億ドル
2018-2019年の
インドのモバイル
市場規模

84億ドル
2018-2019年の
インドのハード
ウェア市場規模

最大2000億ドル
2025年のインドの
エレクトロニクス
部品市場の規模

第2位
2018-2019年の
インドのエレクトロ
ニクス市場でのモバイル
エレクトロニクスの
シェア
Hard and Soft - A two-way collaboration

The importance of healthcare has been re-emphasized following the COVID-19 pandemic and an innovation-lead approach is being called for.

According to Mr Raj Kumar Srivastava, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India Tokyo, in the last decade, the Indian healthcare has witnessed tremendous growth, partially due to innovative healthcare solutions which have not only enabled people in remote areas to access quality care but have also increasingly reduced the cost of delivery along with increased efficiency. Leveraging disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and internet of things (IOT), healthcare aggregators are delivering top class affordable medical facilities to people in terms of diagnostic equipment, imaging, and telemedicine.

India is already a leader in the pharmaceutical, vaccine manufacturing, and biotech sectors in the world. Apart from well-established companies like Cipla, Sun Pharma & Biocon etc, it is home to many Health-Tech start-ups.

According to Mr Gaurav Gupta, Second Secretary, EoI Tokyo, in India, many startups rose to the challenge of COVID-19 and came up with many innovative and technological solutions ranging from developing mobile Apps for contact tracing, development of low-cost ventilators and cutting-edge diagnostic kit for COVID-19 in a very short time frame, showing their nimbleness and capability to innovate. For example, through a program launched by the Ministry of Science & Technology, "SCITECH AIRON" has been developed, which can drastically reduce the amount of virus in a room within an hour. Mylab Discovery Solutions, a molecular diagnostics company, has developed a PCR test kit that reduces test time by 65% at a quarter of the cost of a conventional kit. The Indian government has also begun a separate program to provide grants for startups that are working to solve various issues.

With this in mind, what is the collaborative situation with Japan? As told by Mr Kiran Mysore, venture partner to University of Tokyo Edge Capital (UTEC), The models of a successful collaboration between Japanese companies and Indian Start ups are: (1) Facility investments by Corporate Venture Capital sectors (CVCs) (2) Sales and Logistics tie-ups (3) Smaller acquisitions that lead to M&As (mergers and acquisitions). Mr Mysore points out, “It is time, to not only to view India as one of the key markets in the global economy, but as an ‘innovation factory’ and collaborate.”

UTEC is investing in startups by managing the deep-tech accelerator (BUDHA) for Blume Ventures, an Indian VC funder for mainly early-stage startups. One startup, namely Tricog, succeeded in the remote diagnostics for AI analysis of electrocardiograms. Tricog is headquartered in Singapore and provides services in India and other countries, including Malaysia, the Philippines, and Kenya, and uses electrocardiographs from Fukuda Denshi (Japan). This is a wonderful example of collaboration with Indian Software and Japanese Hardware.

Mumbai-based pharma company Cogent Life Sciences is looking for a strategic partner in Japan to build an FDA approved API (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients) plant. Director Tarang Shah said, “In the wake of Corona shock, global pharma companies that were dependent on Chinese factories are looking for production in new countries.”

Original Japanese article can be read at [https://www.nikkan.co.jp/articles/view/00559148](https://www.nikkan.co.jp/articles/view/00559148)
English Translation of Interview with Asahi Shimbun (Newspaper)

While the development of therapeutic drugs for COVID-19 is making progress in the world, pharmaceutical giant India, which is sometimes called “Pharmacy for Developing Countries,” is increasing its global presence. On the other hand, India relies on China for the procurement of drug ingredients. Therefore, there is an urgent need for India to review its pharmaceutical supply chain. The Indian government took an urgent measure to prevent acquisitions of Indian companies. It seems the measure is targeted at China. What will happen to the world and the Japan-India relationship? The Asahi Shimbun conducted an interview with H.E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan.

Q) India is the world’s biggest supplier of generics. US President Trump praised Hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug used for the treatment of COVID-19 infection, calling it a “game changer,” and urged India to export it. India is currently supplying it to many countries of the world.

A) "We are supplying five million tablets of Hydroxychloroquine to our neighboring countries, littoral countries in the Indian Ocean region, as well developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia, for free-of-charge. These countries have difficulty in procuring drugs. We are also assisting the Maldives and Kuwait by supplying painkillers and sending emergency medical teams, and contributing to the improvement of the quality of healthcare services."

Q) Could you describe the latest situation of the development of new drugs effective for COVID-19?

A) "India is a pharmaceutical giant, as well as a major vaccine producer. Serum Institute, the world’s biggest vaccine manufacturer, is collaborating with Oxford University in the development of corona virus vaccine. The vaccine is expected to be approved within two to three weeks. If clinical trials succeed, they should be able to supply the vaccine by October, 2020. The company does not intend to obtain a patent for the vaccine, so that the technology can be shared with any countries or companies. This is truly international cooperation."

Q) Approximately eighty countries have requested Japan to supply “Avigan,” which is drawing attention as having the potential for being a therapeutic drug for COVID-19. It is still in the clinical trial stage, and there is concern for its side effects. Does India need the drug?

A) "Avigan may be effective, but it is still in the clinical trial stage and its efficacy has not been proven. Also, India is already producing Avigan's generics. At the moment, there is no demand for it in India."

Q) The corona pandemic highlighted the fact that we are relying on China for the procurement of not only pharmaceutical ingredients but also automotive and many other raw materials. China may take advantage of the situation and begin to act high-handedly.

A) "As the proverb goes, we should not put all our eggs in one basket. If we rely on supply chains in one particular region, in case natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes occur, the supply chains will be totally damaged and the industry as a whole will be heavily impacted. We need to diversify our sourcing, and boost our immunity by strengthening domestic networks. This is where the relationship with Japan plays an important role. Also, we need to stop moves to monopolize sources and goods."

Q) In mid-April, the Indian government tightened regulations on FDI from "neighboring countries." Now investments from neighboring countries require the Indian government’s approval. The measure is believed to be targeted at China. China is criticizing it as being “discriminatory.”

A) "This is a policy for preventing acquisitions of Indian companies with declining stock prices, which are impacted by COVID-19. However, it does not mean that all FDIs are prohibited. India is an open market for everyone. Chinese companies can apply for the government’s approval. If the government judges that the investment is suitable, they can invest. The criticism for the policy, that it is "discriminatory," is incorrect."
Q) India has been countering the Xi Jinping Administration’s “One Road, One Belt.”
A) “OBOR includes an infrastructure project in the Indian territory, which is the site of territorial conflict with Pakistan, and therefore India does not approve of it. We are not objecting to humanitarian projects. Due to this corona virus pandemic, OBOR will face difficulty both in the demand and supply sides. The speed of China’s funding will not be as fast as before. This may cause difficulty in some projects. Economic activities will stagnate, and demand will be weakened.”

Q) Maybe the same thing can be said about the Shinkansen Project?
A) “Not necessarily. It is a gigantic project and therefore technical planning is difficult. We are now in the final stage of adjustment. If decisions are reached, the project will move forward.”

Q) India is an important strategic partner for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region (FOIP), which is advocated by Japan and the United States. On the other hand, Prime Minister Modi said that he does not exclude any particular countries, and is continuing his multi-directional diplomacy.
A) “During the Cold War Era, there were two blocs, and countries used to establish alliance with a certain group of countries. However, in the modern world, it is difficult for any country to do the same. When India establishes cooperation with other countries, India chooses partners on an issue-by-issue basis, because there is never a case where your national interests completely correspond with those of other countries.”
A) “Maritime security is an important theme of cooperation. However, when it comes to the Indian Ocean concept, Japan, the United States, and ASEAN countries, have different definitions and expectations. For instance, landlocked countries like Laos would give much higher priority on land connectivity than maritime security. It is natural for the countries to have different priorities.”

Q) Is this why India came up with the unique Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative (IPOI)? What is the difference between this initiative and FOIP?
A) “At first, Japan and the United States used the term “strategy.” But we do not think that the Indo-Pacific is something to be treated as “strategy.” We prefer to use the term “vision,” as it is a public space, and we do not hope to exclude any particular countries. This is an idea for co-existence that includes all countries. There are some elements that can be shared between IPOI and FOIP. We regard it as a concept for creating mutual links and not dividing the region by grouping.”

Q) As for China’s OBOR, specific projects have already started. On the other hand, the Indo-Pacific concept have not achieved any concrete results.
A) “It takes time in the initial stage. If countries with common objectives get together, projects can move ahead. It can be loose-knit connections between countries with shared objectives. In addition to physical projects, capacity building has an important role. Whichever way it goes, we can expect to see progress within several years.”

On 5 May 2020, His Excellency Ambassador Mr Sanjay Kumar Verma addressed through Video Conferencing members of Indian community in Japan on Rabindra Jayanti (159th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore) organised by Bengali Association of Tokyo (BATJ) & emphasized on Tagore’s relevance on COVID affected world. He briefed about GOI’s efforts for evacuation of stranded Indians too.

On 16 May 2020, H.E. Shri Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan, appeared as a guest of honour in a live webcast titled "Lockdown Ia Oru Live" organized by Tokyo Tamil Sangam as a tribute to those fighting the coronavirus. Ambassador in his remarks mentioned about the initiatives taken by the Embassy for welfare of Indian community in Japan during COVID19 Pandemic. The 3 hour programme included music by Veena Maestro Sh Rajhesh Vaidhya, songs by MJ Shriram & Srilekha Parthasarathy, Humorology by Bosskey, melodies by Janani Madan, and interactions with various celebrities such as Actor Nasser, Director K.V.Anand, Comedian Madhan Bob and Maadhu Balaji.

On 23rd May 2020, H.E. Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan, gave his message at a special online 02 days event organised by Nihon Kairali Association Tokyo, with support of Embassy of India, Tokyo, titled "NK Showtime". Ambassador in his message congratulated community for organizing the positivity and happiness spreading engaging event during COVID19 Pandemic using digital platform. The event recorded video can be seen at Youtube links https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_gfOJH381c & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYkgZqntgLm

On 17th May 2020, H.E. Shri Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan and Smt. Gunjan Verma, spouse of the Ambassador appeared as a guest of honour in "Madhur Milap", a virtual event organized by Bengali Association of Tokyo, Japan (BATJ). Ambassador in his remarks mentioned about the initiatives taken by the Embassy for welfare of Indian community in Japan during COVID19 Pandemic. The 2 hour programme included various cultural performances by different Indian dignitaries of Japan including Embassy officials.
On 31st May 2020, Dr Reeta Sharma, Teacher of Indian Culture at Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India Tokyo, conducted an online *Yoga and Ayurveda workshop*.

The topic was on nature's three fundamental properties and Satvik, Rajasik and Tamsik food. The session had close to 100 online participants.

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**Celebration of “World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development”**

On 21st May 2020, on the occasion of “World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development” Vivekananda Cultural Centre (VCC), Embassy of India, Tokyo, joined friends across the globe by releasing a series of videos on its official Youtube Channel with aim to spread message of harmony and solidarity amid the current COVID19 pandemic situation.

- Video on yoga for World Culture Day by Dr Reeta Sharma, Teacher of Indian Culture at VCC. [https://youtu.be/QMh8fT9zplRE](https://youtu.be/QMh8fT9zplRE)
- Video on Ayurveda for World Culture Day by Dr Reeta Sharma, Teacher of Indian Culture [https://youtu.be/2rOIZMGWQWM](https://youtu.be/2rOIZMGWQWM)
- Introduction to Hindi Language for World Culture Day by Dr Reeta Sharma, Teacher of Indian Culture [https://youtu.be/qiNedE-3c98](https://youtu.be/qiNedE-3c98)
- Message and Performance Marking World Culture Day by Ms Kazuko Yasunobu, VCC Odissi Teacher [https://youtu.be/5gHDwW6lsIY](https://youtu.be/5gHDwW6lsIY)
- Message and Performance Marking World Culture Day by Mr Shigeru Moriyama, VCC Tabla Teacher [https://youtu.be/3_PMlqj-UAr](https://youtu.be/3_PMlqj-UAr)

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**First Repatriation Flight (Narita - Mumbai) under Vande Bharat Mission**

On 28th May 2020, under the Government of India's Vande Bharat Mission, first repatriation flight (Narita to Mumbai) took 223 stranded Indian nationals in Japan to India. Under the guidance of Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma Embassy made the first flight under the mission successful. On the day of flight, Ambassador & other Embassy officials interacted with passengers, wished them the best as well as advised them to follow do's and dont's for safety of themselves as well as of others from COVID19. On this occasion, Ambassador gave a message conveying Embassy of India Tokyo heartfelt gratitude to Government of India, State Governments, Air India, other involved stakeholders of GoI as well as Govt of Japan for making the first air-repatration flight possible. On this occasion, many passengers too conveyed their happiness to go back home as well as expressed gratitude and praise about the way Embassy of India Tokyo & Consulate General of India Osaka conducted the whole exercise. To sum up the occasion, Embassy of India presents a video. Please enjoy it. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpkL11twERQ&list=PLW7rCij3F7z1I864Ju0gf9NmI83FlgC9&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpkL11twERQ&list=PLW7rCij3F7z1I864Ju0gf9NmI83FlgC9&index=4)
With aim to carry message of hope, joy, resilience, fighting spirit and never say die attitude of all in our collective fight against COVID 19, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) & Ministry of External Affairs, India brings together composers, musicians and singers from across India, contributing recordings from their homes, in a beautiful musical creation “United we Fight”. The song is a rendition weaving English lyrics into the notes and beats of Indian classical music, spreading the essence of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – the world is one family. Written and composed by Joe Alvares, vocals by Usha Uthup, Salim Merchant, Shefali Alvares Rashid, Benny Dayal, Sonam Kalra, Chandan Bala Kalyan, Joe Alvares, Salome and Samira, and music by Tubby, Pandit Ravi Char, Pandit Rakesh Chaurasiya and Ustad Faisal Qureshi.

This virus has had a huge impact on humanity cutting across all boundaries, physical and social, of nations, caste, class, colour, religion and belief systems bringing the world to its knees. But united we stand, steadfastly helping, assisting, sharing knowledge, cooperating and coordinating with each other, cutting across boundaries fighting as ONE force against the Corona virus.

This composition is an expression of our deep appreciation and gratitude to all brave COVID warriors world over risking their lives to protect ours. It is a homage to all the artists and performers who represent the cultural legacy of our countries and who contribute to keep our cultural heritage vibrant and alive, especially in these difficult times. It is a tribute to and recognition of the countless individuals who are silently helping neighbours, strangers and people around them in these times of distress. A message to the world that TOGETHER we shall surely win the fight against the Corona virus and many such challenges that humanity and the human race faces.

Light a candle, cheer the frontline workers, donate for the needy, spare time for the elderly, be available to volunteer; whichever way, we hope you enjoy this rendition and be inspired enough to continue this "united fight".

This song is dedicated to the world by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India. ICCR is MEA’s autonomous organization mandated to build international understanding, develop closer cultural relations between India and other countries and project India’s soft power abroad.

The song can be enjoyed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPzHPsJ5Ye&feature=youtu.be
国際ヨガの日2020
6月21日