

Important Vocab for the Editorial

1. **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.
2. **livelihood** (noun) – means of making a living with the basic necessities (food, water, shelter and clothing); means of support, subsistence, source of income.
3. **instrument** (noun) – medium, mechanism, factor, channel, means (to achieve/attain something).
4. **hover** (verb) – remain at a level.
5. **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.
6. **hit** (verb) – reach, get to, rise to (a particular level).
7. **fragment** (noun) – part, section; bit, piece.
8. **misery** (noun) – pain, grief, anguish, agony, distress, torment, suffering.
9. **envelop** (verb) – surround, cover up, enclose.
10. **infrastructure** (noun) – the basic physical or organisational structure for something (to function properly).
11. **stretch** (verb) – put a strain on, put great demands on, overtax.
12. **breaking point** (noun) – extremity, greatest extent, ultimate point, end point, utmost point.
13. **given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
14. **week-long** (adjective) – lasting for a week.
15. **come under** (phrasal verb) – be subjected to.
16. **shutdown** (noun) – closure of a (complete) system; closing down, winding up.
17. **sledgehammer** (noun as modifier) – powerful; forceful; ruthless, insensitive (tool).
18. **haunt** (verb) – torment, oppress, disturb, trouble, worry, burden, beset.
19. **once bitten, twice shy** (phrase) – used to say that a bad experience (endured by doing something for the first time) makes a person to be very careful while doing it a second time.

20. conveniently (adverb) – suitably, favourably, advantageously.
21. hot potato (noun) – a controversial issue.
22. pass around (phrasal verb) – circulate, pass on, spread around, pass from person to person.
23. serve (verb) – act as, function as, do the work of.
24. combat (verb) – fight, tackle, confront, defy/resist.
25. outbreak (noun) – outburst, flaring up, breakout, sudden appearance/occurrence of something.
26. attributable to (adjective) – considered as an outcome/result caused by.
27. positivity rate (noun) – the proportion of positives to total tests done for disease; the percentage of tests that are turning out to be positive for disease; the rate at which people getting tested for disease receive positive results.
28. reportedly (adverb) – supposedly, seemingly, apparently, allegedly.
29. come down (phrasal verb) – decline, reduce, lessen.
30. beside the point (phrase) – irrelevant, immaterial, unimportant, not to the point.
31. the least (determiner) – minimum.
32. disruption (noun) – disturbance, interruption, obstruction.
33. put (something) on (someone) (phrasal verb) – cause someone to be subject to something.
34. design (noun) – plan, intent, objective, goal.
35. at the heart of (phrase) – at the most important part of.
36. deficient (adjective) – lacking, inadequate, insufficient, poor.
37. unhesitatingly (adverb) – purposefully, single-mindedly, decidedly, firmly; immediately.
38. stream (noun) – a continuous flow of something (data, information, etc; series, string, chain).
39. deflect (verb) – divert, turn aside, turn away, avert.
40. engagement (noun) – participation, taking part, involvement.
41. suspicion (noun) – misgiving, doubt/qualm, distrust, scepticism.
42. inept (adjective) – incompetent, unskilled; awkward, bungling; unsuccessful, ineffectual.
43. breathing space (noun) – a time to relax; intermission, interval, break, respite.
44. ramp up (phrasal verb) – increase (in amount or number).
45. take up on (phrasal verb) – to accept something (e.g. a challenge).
46. war footing (noun) – a state of preparedness (for war).

47. **go in for** (phrasal verb) – undertake, engage in, get involved in, join in, enter into.
48. **shock and awe** (phrase) – a shocking and intimidating strategy/tactics used to achieve something.
49. **abdication** (noun) – disowning, rejection, refusal/avoidance, abandonment.
50. **design** (verb) – plan, devise, formulate.
51. **phased** (adjective) – gradual, incremental, step-by-step, staggered.
52. **take into account** (phrase) – consider, take into consideration, have regard to, reckon with.

Viral load: On lockdowns, lives and livelihoods

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Lockdowns can be used as a smart instrument that saves lives without killing livelihoods

Hovering **around 3.5 lakh daily infections**, India's current wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is still some distance from the peak. Some experts fear that it could hit **a million daily infections in May**, with daily deaths nearing 5,000. It is a different matter that the story these numbers tell is itself only a tiny fragment of the misery enveloping the country. The health-care infrastructure is stretched to breaking point in most parts of the country. Given this situation, more restrictions cannot be avoided. At the end of a week-long lockdown, **Delhi extended it by another week** on Sunday. After months, **Chennai came under a complete Sunday lockdown** with increased restrictions during the week; **Kerala had the whole weekend in shutdown**. A **national lockdown was a sledgehammer approach last year** and its memories still haunt. The Centre, once bitten and twice shy, has **conveniently left any decision on lockdowns to the States**. The learning from the first lockdown should not be that it is a political hot potato that is to be passed around; but that it could serve as a smart instrument in combating the outbreak.

It is meaningless to calculate the reduction in the spread of the virus attributable to lockdowns. In Delhi, the test positivity rate has reportedly come down from 36%-37% at the start of the lockdown to around 30% in a

week, but that is besides the point. The challenge is in managing the pandemic with the least required and unavoidable disruption in economic activity. The lesson from the first lockdown that put the burden almost entirely on the poorest is that a better design for restrictions is essential. At the heart of managing any disaster is reliable information and trust in the government. Both seem to be deficient currently. The Centre appears to be eagerly watching and unhesitatingly intervening in some streams of information to deflect public attention from its own performance. However, there is little engagement with the States, the Opposition parties and the media. The Centre has viewed them with suspicion while the Opposition views the government as inept. All this is a replay of the responses last year, suggesting little learning. Lockdowns themselves cannot erase the pandemic, but they could give the government the breathing space to prepare. Ramping up of the health infrastructure must be taken up on a war footing. Going in for a shock and awe lockdown would cause more harm than good; but equally bad is the abdication of responsibility by the government. The Centre must work together with the States and the Opposition to design a flexible and phased scheme of restrictions that takes into account specific requirements and concerns of various places, and sectors of the economy.