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- ❖ **Indo-Oman Economic Relations**
- ❖ **India-Bangladesh Trade Ties**
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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

## INSIDE

Editorial	
Goodwill Gesture!	5
<i>B.K.</i>	
Indo-Oman Trade and Economic Relations	7
<i>Dr. Abdul Vajid &amp; Prof. K.A. Goyal</i>	
India-Bangladesh Trade Ties: Beacon for Asian Peace	12
<i>Dr. Manoj Gupta</i>	
Chinese Presence in South Asia: Impact & Challenges	18
<i>Reetika Sharma</i>	
Rediscovery of Non-Alignment	23
<i>Dr. Anilkumar B. Halu</i>	
Labour Laws and IT Industry: A Critical Analysis	25
<i>Sidhya B. Dash &amp; Prof. (Dr.) M. S. Dash</i>	
CSR in Health Sector and Community ....	31
<i>Dhavaleshwar, C. U. &amp; Dr. S. R. Mane</i>	
Development of Women Education in India	34
<i>Dr. Dipak Pathak</i>	
Traditional Tribal Healing Practices in India in COVID-19 situation	37
<i>Ruth Nengneilhing</i>	
Feminine Psyche in the Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni	41
<i>R. Rajmohan &amp; Dr. L.D. E. R. Densingh</i>	
The Role of Women in Women's Movement in India	45
<i>Ashwini L Gaddad</i>	
Leadership Behaviour of College Principals	48
<i>Dr Dipankar Talukdar</i>	
Growth of Literacy and Gender Gap in India	51
<i>Dr. H. G. Jagodadiya &amp; Dr. Sanjay A. Pandya</i>	
Spiritual Intelligence and Mental Health .....	55
<i>Neha Perween</i>	

### Goodwill Gesture!

Undeniably, the spread of COVID-19 pandemic has thus far afflicted around 100 million people globally, with the toll crossing over two million; nevertheless, it is also equally acknowledged that strenuous efforts have been put in to deal with this pandemic responsibly, maturely and wisely in many parts of the globe, including India. Along with laying emphasis on observing precautionary measures like washing hands regularly, use of face-mask and maintaining social distancing, the scientific community worldwide has also been engaged in finding a vaccine to deal with the pandemic. With the efforts of the scientific community ripening into fruition in the wake of production of new vaccine to deal with the virus, prospects for containing the virus and then eliminating it have brightened. Undoubtedly, the scientists across the globe have tirelessly worked to develop the vaccine, the bulk of which is still at experimental stage in many parts and is not a guaranteed solution, the possibility of development of new strains of the virus emanating with the passage of time, as happened recently in the United Kingdom, have also not been ruled out.

With some countries like Russia, China along with some international pharmaceutical companies like Astra Zeneca and others having come out with the vaccine for the pandemic virus, there has been a mad race among the both developed and developing countries to get the vaccine for its populations. However, the dissemination of Russian and the Chinese vaccine is limited to a few countries, whereas the vaccine developed by Astra Zeneca company and Bharat Biotech along with Serum Institute of India has been in greater demand in the USA, Europe as well as in India. India has already embarked upon administering vaccine to its affected population and simultaneously has also launched the ambitious program of making available millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccine to its neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles as well. Astra Zeneca 's vaccine for COVID-19 is being manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, the world's largest producer of vaccines, and the Government of India has announced to provide free shipments of this vaccine to its neighbouring countries, with media reports indicating that some of these shipments have already begun to arrive in the Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. According to some experts, India's move to make available vaccine is drawing praise from the neighbouring recipient countries, it is also seen as a move pushing back against China's dominating presence in South Asia region.

Apart from currently providing free shipments of vaccine to the Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal, India has also committed to provide such free shipments of the vaccine to Myanmar and Seychelles, a move that is being hailed by some experts as India's use of its strength as one of the world's biggest makers of generic medicines to 'build friendship.' Nepal is reported to have hailed the goodwill shown by the Government of India by providing the vaccine in grant, which is at the people's level because it is the public who are suffering the most from COVID-19. India's goodwill gesture of providing vaccine, as pointed by some experts, comes at a time when India's ties with Nepal have been strained over a territorial dispute and serious concern over China's expanding political and economic clout in Nepal. While China is awaiting Nepal's clearance to provide its Sinopharm shots, whereas Nepal has asked Beijing to submit more documents and information before approval is to be accorded. As per media reports, India's initial exports of vaccine were scheduled for Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, India also embarked on making large supplies to its neighbours as well. India's move of providing vaccine to its friendly countries is seen by many experts as an opportunity for earning long-term goodwill. There is need to carry forward this exercise meticulously for strengthening India's relations with not only its immediate neighbours but also with its extended neighbourhood, across the Indian Ocean.

Washington has termed India as a "true friend" and has applauded New Delhi for gifting COVID-19 vaccine to several countries. The US media has also lavished praise on India's support to the global community in the prevailing health crisis. A report in Washington Post described it as a reflection of one of India's unique strengths.

— BK