

SPECIAL  
ISSUE

# INDIA Forbes

SALUTE TO THE **ULTIMATE 120** WITH THE POWER OF CHANGE

in association with

oppo

## PERFORMANCE IN COVID TIMES

*In the third of four Special Issues, Forbes India shines a light on 30 go-getters who've helped bring lives and livelihoods back from the brink*

Mahita Nagaraj,  
founder,  
Caremongers  
India



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**Shashank ND**, CEO, Practo



**Ramesh Ramadurai**, MD, 3M India



**Jeenam Shah**, consultant pulmonologist

## PERFORMANCE IN COVID TIMES

*In the third of four Special Issues, Forbes India shines a light on 30 go-getters who've helped bring lives and livelihoods back from the brink*



**Dr Prashant Borade**, critical care consultant, Global Hospital



**Mini**, Head Nurse, KJ Somaiya Hospital



**Prabuddha Kundu**, co-founder & MD, Premas Biotech

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Letter From The Editor

# Saluting the Covid-19 Changemakers

In a crisis, be aware of the danger, but recognise the opportunity,” said John F Kennedy, the 35th US president. Kennedy was no stranger to crunch situations, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to standing up for African-Americans.

Covid-19, for its part, is a crisis that few imagined would blow up to be so big. That it is a global crisis, and a humanitarian one as millions lose their livelihoods and hundreds of thousands their lives, calls for action and leadership of the highest order. And therein lies the opportunity—for a few good people to ease the burden of the rest.

These are the health care providers who put their lives on the line to get those infected on the road to recovery; those who are making the protective equipment to keep these frontline workers safe; those supplying oxygen and making ventilators to offer patients a critical lifeline.

Then there are those who save lives by ensuring that people who have lost it all do not go hungry and homeless; there are those who provide us with those essential services from food, groceries, medicines, transport and banking services; then there are those who are ensuring that livelihoods go on as well, by developing technologies that enable work from home, and by making office and shop floor spaces safe and secure for workers. And let’s not forget those in the laboratories, who are working overtime to develop medicines that hasten the recovery process as well as a vaccine that will serve as a preventive to the pandemic.

That’s the opportunity to take the lead in doing good in a crisis; to do good via creative destruction and disruption. For many, it involves unlearning the past and starting afresh, and spotting opportunities that never existed pre-

Covid, even as they bid adieu to old ones.

Such disruption calls for innovation; for resilience; for performance against the odds, and for the well-known to use their fame to make a difference. We at *Forbes India*, in association with OPPO, have decided to honour the not-so-obvious heroes of Covid-19 on the basis of their contribution across these four pillars. This is *Forbes India*’s Salute to the Ultimate 120 with the Power of Change.

This Special Issue, the third of four, is focussed on performance during the pandemic: The doers, who are bringing people back from the brink—of death and destitution—and the executors of strategic blueprints, who are helping save livelihoods by bringing businesses back on track. Consider, for instance, Krishna Ella’s biotechnology company Bharat Biotech, which has entered human trials with a fully-indigenous Covid-

19 vaccine using an Indian strain of the virus; and Rakesh K Mishra, director of The Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology, who is collaborating with a clutch of companies developing a Covid-19 vaccine.

Elsewhere, Shashank ND, founder of Practo, has been burning the midnight oil helping patients connect with doctors, often in less than a minute. And, on the livelihoods front, a Chennai resident has helped grassroots workers retain their dignity by crowdsourcing funds to ensure a flow of income. Meanwhile, construction companies, which are dependent on migrants, are doing their bit; like Shapoorji Pallonji, whose executive director Subodh C Dixit is focussed on training locals and reimbursing the travel of migrants so that they can restart work. That’s just a flavour of the 30 performers you will find in this special tribute to the Heroes of Covid-19. ✨

## STORIES TO LOOK OUT FOR



▲ Krishna Ella (left) wants Bharat Biotech to be a go-to source for a world-class vaccine for developed and developing nations; Tech Mahindra’s CP Gurnani says the new way of working is ‘hybrid’



**Brian Carvalho**  
Editor, *Forbes India*

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Best,



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Forbes<sup>INDIA</sup>  
presents  
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## OPPO Find X2 Series Salute to the Ultimate 120 Warriors

Breaking through the shackles of the limitations of a smartphone, OPPO Find X2 Series makes exploration a way of life.

OPPO in collaboration with Forbes India salutes the COVID-19 change-makers. On behalf of everyone whose lives have been impacted by these warriors, OPPO acknowledges their altruistic work with an OPPO Find X2 Pro Premium Limited Box.

It is our endeavour to offer the ultimate experience to people, let them uncover endless possibilities with OPPO's Find X2 Pro and eventually Uncover the Ultimate.

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# FOR THE ULTIMATE EXPLORER IN YOU

Saluting the ultimate finder, the ultimate evolver—OPPO Find X2 Pro matches steps with the one who thrives to make persistent breakthroughs and pursues their ultimate objectives



—Eddie Redmayne

Eddie Redmayne made a maverick move to rid of his smartphone in 2016, wanting to live in the moment.

However, upon finding the OPPO Find X2, he has found a new role for his phone. From reciting lines and learning accents via voice notes to watching videos of character studies using the ultra performance of the 10-Bit graphics and crystal clear screen, Eddie's Find X2 has become a companion along his journey of self-transformation.

It is this dedication to his roles that sets Eddie apart. His parts often require him to play a character almost entirely unlike himself, striving to reach perfection rather than mere imitation.

The lights, cameras, screen and backgrounds of Eddie's phone provides him with a miniature film set to get into character.



—Alex Honnold

Professional Rock Climber Alex Honnold is at the top of his game. Risking everything by dropping out of the University of California - Berkeley, he's lived in his vans to pursue his bouldering dreams. His ascent to the top was rapid, the apex of his career being reached when he became the only person to free solo El Capitan in 2018, a 3000 feet rock formation. Most recently the star of Academy Award winning documentary Free Solo, his breathless pursuit for higher heights matches OPPO Find X2's quest for perfection.

Alex Honnold defies science and defines the impossible. Climbing since of the age of five, Alex has never believed that he is naturally gifted. Rather, it is his tireless work ethic that has propelled him to the top of the climbing world.



—Marques Brownlee

Technology reviewer Marques Brownlee is huge on the small screen. Starting in his dorm room while at Stevens Institute of Technology, he is now operating out of a fully kitted-out studio, creating content viewed by millions of viewers.

The OPPO Find X2 reflects his relentless search for cutting-edge technology. Marques is a true self-starter, showing the power of being left to your own devices.

Marques Brownlee has always been obsessed with phones. Ever since beginning his YouTube channel at the age of fifteen in 2008, smartphones have been at the centre of his content and interest in technology.

Marques is at the forefront of the future, a sponsor of responsibility. The Smartphone Awards takes him on a yearly quest to find the best technology, a mission that takes time.







# The Vaccine Crusader

*Krishna Ella's Bharat Biotech has developed India's first Covid-19 vaccine candidate*



By DIVYA J SHEKHAR

Performance



At the time of writing this piece, Krishna Ella's biotechnology company Bharat Biotech had entered human trials for Covaxin, which is a fully indigenous Covid-19 vaccine using an Indian strain of the virus, developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Virology in Pune.

A few weeks ago, the ICMR had set an ambitious target of August 15 for launching the vaccine, a timeline that is considered unprecedented in the field of vaccines. Before this development, Ella had told *Forbes India* that the focus will always be on quality and accessibility. "Our ongoing programmes' emphasis is to develop a world-class, highly effective, affordable respiratory illness prevention vaccine. Apart from being safe and highly efficacious, for a vaccine to have a greater impact, it has to be available

quickly and in large quantities."

Ella set up Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad in 1996, and over the last two decades has created vaccines and therapeutics for various contagious and infectious diseases, including for H1N1 (swine flu), rabies and polio. Its Rotovac is among the world's cheapest vaccines available for the rotavirus. Overall, Ella says the company has delivered "over 5 billion doses [of viral vaccines] in over 70 countries, holding over 108 global patents".

About 90 percent of these vaccines are sold in "lower-middle-income countries" with affordable pricing, says Ella, who is simultaneously working on two other vaccine candidate platforms to fight Covid-19. His company is developing an intranasal vaccine called CoroFlu in collaboration with virologists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and vaccine maker FluGen. The other is a candidate that uses the deactivated rabies vaccine as a vector, in an experimental vaccine against Covid-19 in collaboration with Thomas Jefferson University.

Bharat Biotech is also leading the flagship programme of the Council of Scientific Research, called New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative, to find an alternative therapeutic

regimen that generates monoclonal antibodies. The latter will block the spread of the Covid-19 infection in the body by binding to the virus and making it ineffective.

"We are fast-tracking the development process to make the antibodies available within the next six months, and thus improve the treatment efficacy," Ella says, adding that "this programme brings together academia, the National Centre for Cell Science, Pune, and Indian Institute of Technology, Indore, along with Bharat Biotech in a collaborative mode for a public health emergency".

Bharat Biotech has eight other vaccines in various stages of development, including vaccines for zika, chikungunya and the human papilloma virus.

"We aim to be a go-to source for a world-class vaccine for nations around the world, for developed and developing nations, with a focus on innovation and quality by putting effective vaccines in the hands of physicians," Ella says.

According to him, the path for developing a vaccine for Covid-19, much like other viruses, is not an easy one, but "science will go a long way in defeating pandemics that lead to high disease burden for the nation and its populace". 🌟

**"We aim to be a go-to source for a world-class vaccine for developed and developing nations."**

**KRISHNA ELLA**, CHAIRMAN & MD, BHARAT BIOTECH









# By the People

*Led by CP Gurnani, Tech Mahindra has kept the well-being of its employees at its core*



By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

Performance

# F

For Tech Mahindra, the pandemic has made it clear that the future of work will be agile and diverse. The Covid-19 crisis followed by the lockdown have taught the company that digital highways will now be the new mode of communication. “The new way of working is ‘hybrid’ and that means transforming to a new era of operating efficiently and effectively, leveraging collaboration and communication tools,” says CP Gurnani, MD & CEO of the company. Tech Mahindra’s top priority is to keep its people safe and, then, to assure business continuity. “Our cloud- and artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled, futuristic command and control enables 25-30 percent of our associates to continue working from home in the first phase of the new normal,” he adds.

Gurnani believes hybrid model is the way forward too. It could be limited visits to office for social distancing to start with and, as companies use more collaborative tools and get used to lone working, this model will be more viable for the tech industry. “Covid-19 has enabled us to create a proven model that can serve a larger workforce of women and persons with disabilities, and enable tech firms to tap into talent from rural India—a workforce from Bharat. Yes, the hybrid model is here to stay,” he adds.

Tech Mahindra has taken several initiatives for the well-being of its employees. Through the YourDost initiative, psychology experts provide counselling to employees and ensure their mental wellness. They’ve also launched something called PrimeTime @9, a daily one-hour dose of motivation, leadership and sales skills in collaboration with external thought leaders to keep their frontline sales teams engaged. “We are also a part of Covid-19: Staying a step ahead, where we are engaging with leaders across the world and exchanging observations and best practices to collaborate better in the

after-Covid world,” says Gurnani.

All the initiatives are in line with the company’s philosophy of keeping people’s well-being at the forefront. Whether it is helping young associates who are living alone, communicating with them and their families or skilling them through virtual leadership lessons, the company focussed on creating personalised and connected experiences for all their employees during the pandemic. For instance, through its initiative ‘Each One House One’, Tech Mahindra’s leadership opened the gates for associates who were living alone. “Our mantra is to communicate as much as we can. In order to extend this communication even to the families of our associates, we organised a week-long virtual summer camp that saw the participation of around 700 children,” says Gurnani.

According to Gurnani, it’s all about how the entrepreneurs manage the risk and the choices they make... that will determine how they successfully navigate their business in times of Covid-19. “If you are a people’s manager and keep people at the centre of your business, you shall never lose footing,” he says. ✨

**“If you are a people’s manager and keep people at the centre of your business, you shall never lose footing.”**

CP GURNANI, MD & CEO, TECH MAHINDRA





# Hotline To Docs

*As more people turned to telemedicine during the lockdown, Shashank ND's Practo helped patients connect with doctors in less than a minute*



By MANU BALACHANDRAN

Performance

I

It's been a rather tedious time for Shashank ND. For a few months now, his company, Practo has been at the forefront of helping patients connect with doctors, as movement became difficult after India enforced a lockdown. He reckons the ongoing shift towards telemedicine and online health consultancy is here to stay, signalling a watershed moment in the Indian health care industry.

"Unfortunately, it is coming against the backdrop of Covid-19," says the 33-year-old founder and CEO of Practo, a Bengaluru-based digital health care company. "For long, telemedicine remained a luxury and convenience for many. Today, it's a necessity. More so for two-thirds of the country's population that resides in villages, who walk many kilometres before they can consult someone with even a little knowledge of medicine."

Since the lockdown began, according to Practo, there has been

a 500 percent increase in online consultations, of which 80 percent of all telemedicine users experienced it for the first time while some 44 percent of the teleconsultations were from non-metros.

"While the sector had been growing steadily, the lockdown has led to an exponential rise in teleconsultations and telemedicine. It has also helped that the government has, for the first time, laid down guidelines on telemedicine," says Shashank. "The last few months have been an eyeopener and we have come to realise that we have been ill-prepared on the health management front."

Shashank had founded Practo in 2007, at a time when India's digital health care platforms were nascent. Since then, the company has expanded to offer everything from online consultation with doctors, medicine delivery, and pre-booked appointments to the test centres. In late 2018, the startup also ventured into providing medical insurance services. "Today, we can ensure that within 60 seconds, a patient will be able to access a doctor, whether it is in the morning or midnight," adds Shashank.

Across the platform, the company has over 25,000 doctors, who provide teleconsultation services. In addition, it has 600 doctors who are contracted to the firm to look after

specialised consultations. The doctors are onboarded and then provided training on the platform. Practo then charges a platform fee and a small share of the consultation fee.

Over the past few months, the uptake in teleconsulting has also given Shashank and his team an insight into how millions of Indians were using telemedicine during the lockdown. Among others, gynaecology, general physicians and dermatology emerged as the topmost specialities with over 51 percent of consultations while tele-ENT witnessed 600 percent growth. Tele-orthopaedics was among the top speciality by millennials, primarily due to their bad work postures. Mental health concerns rose notably due to uncertainty, loss of income and job-related pressure, besides Covid-19 fears. "A lot of doctors are today preferring to do video consultations," he says. "Our job is to make sure they are trained well in technology and, in the process, ensure no Indian goes without access to health."

Since the lockdown began, Practo also reckons that in-person doctor visits dropped by 67 percent. "What we are seeing is that the government and the private sector have come together to launch new initiatives such as the National Digital Health Mission which will be beneficial for the country," says Shashank. 📌

**"For long, telemedicine has remained a luxury and convenience for many. Today it has become a necessity."**

**SHASHANK ND**, FOUNDER AND CEO, PRACTO



BY NISHANT RATNAKAR SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO

# Friend In Need

*Through Caremongers India, Mahita Nagaraj has been able to reach help to those who needed it the most*



By KATHAKALI CHANDA

In mid-March, when India was waking up to the realities of social distancing, freelance digital marketer Mahita Nagaraj had put out a Facebook post, asking friends living abroad if they would like her to check on their elderly parents and relatives. Within 24 hours, the overwhelming response transformed the post into a Facebook group that now boasts of more than 47,000 members

across 14 countries, connecting volunteers with those who need help.

Caremongers India, as the community is christened, is a hub where citizens come together to run errands: Delivering medicines to an HIV+ person in Noida, essentials for the elderly in Kolkata, resolving problems, helping flyers navigate quarantine rules, connecting patients with available medical care, or pitching in to do



everything in between. By mid-June, they've dealt with at least 17,000 requests for help.

"Caremongers is not an idea I intended to turn into a movement. Its growth has been entirely organic," says Nagaraj, 38. The response forced her to expand from social media to a helpline, where she

answered 800 to 900 calls a day in the early, unsettling weeks of the lockdown. This apart, Nagaraj was also out on the streets delivering medical supplies or groceries, sometimes clocking in 20-hour days and then isolating herself at a friend's house, away from her mother and 12-year-old son. ✨

If Mayukh Choudhary has learnt something from his years of working in the online crowdfunding industry, it is that whenever there is a calamity that impacts livelihoods, lives and infrastructure, people collectively step in to extend help. This learning proved to be correct yet again, when the CEO and co-founder of Milaap opened up the channels of the online crowdfunding platform for Covid-19-focussed fundraisers. Since March to date, over 168,494 donors from the globe have pooled in about ₹100 crore for various causes to help the vulnerable during the pandemic.

"The first time I saw this [collective spirit] was

# Help is a Click Away

*Mayukh Choudhary's crowdfunding platform helped people raise crores of rupees to support various Covid-19 causes*



By DIVYA J SHEKHAR



during the Chennai floods in 2015, and it has been the same subsequently. Bigger the disaster, bigger the public response. We have built our capabilities based on this phenomenon," Choudhary says. During the lockdown, a new Covid-19-related fundraiser was launched every 20 minutes on Milaap by either individuals, local communities, non-profit organisations or corporates. About ₹17,000 was raised every minute.

Choudhary and his team processed requests by conducting verifications, and told donors how the money is being used. "We also waived off our standard platform fee, which is 5 percent of whatever is raised," he says. ✨

BHAVESH SOLANKI



# Service to Humanity

*Dr Tushar Patel works with the Gujarat government to combat Covid-19*

By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

The state government in Gujarat approached Dr Tushar Patel with an offer to treat Covid-19 patients at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital for any fee he quotes. Patel agreed on one condition: He will treat patients free of cost, as he considered it to be a service for his country. “We have trained 9,000

medical and paramedical staff, taught them how to operate ventilator machines, use PPE kit and oxygen system,” the pulmonologist adds.

The Gujarat government has prepared a task force to combat Covid-19 and Patel’s suggestions on Outpatient Department treatment and home isolation to reduce burden on hospitals

were considered.

Being a frontline worker, Patel fears catching the virus and passing it on to his family members. “We’ve made new protocols at home now. Our lifestyles have changed. We have to be careful all the time. I’ve also stopped sharing a room with my wife and isolate myself every day after returning

home,” says Patel, 47.

According to him, India’s health care infrastructure is not ready to deal with the Covid-19 outbreak. “We’re constantly in touch with doctors from around the globe to get better medical consultation and change our treatment strategy constantly to fight the unpredictability of this virus.” 🌟

# Change of Heart

*After Dr Prashant Borade fell severely ill with Covid-19, his approach towards his Covid patients changed significantly*



By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

**D**r Prashant Borade, who has been treating Covid-19 patients at Mumbai's

Global Hospital from the beginning of the outbreak, tested positive and was admitted to the ICU of

the same hospital where he was treating other patients. "From care giver, I became care seeker,"



says Borade, who is a critical care consultant. "All my colleagues were really supportive and helped me get back to the battleground. This was a new experience for me because I've never fallen so sick that I had to be hospitalised," he says.

After stepping into the shoes of a Covid patient, Borade felt the pain of each patient he had treated and was devastated with the experience he had after testing positive. "I could feel the mental stress and loneliness each patient has to go through. It was an unpleasant experience," he says.

Earlier, Covid-19 patients were not allowed to use mobile phones in Global Hospital so that they get proper rest, but after recovering Borade urged that the patients should be allowed to use their phones because that is the only way they can communicate with their loved ones from the isolation wards. Covid-19 patients have to fight their infections alone, which terribly affects their mental health. "I realised that if the patient is mentally well, they will recover faster. Also, now I'm more compassionate towards my patients and I ask all my staff members to be more generous towards them. It really helps," says Borade.

He adds that today the country is a battlefield, and the only warriors are the health workers. "People have started giving us more respect for what we are doing and that gives us the motivation and energy to carry on," he says. ✨

BY AALOK SONI SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO



# The Compassionate Caregiver

*Nursing superintendent Mini ensures a seamless flow of work despite attrition*

By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

Mini was upset she could not hug her 15-year-old daughter after returning from work—since March-end, the nursing superintendent has been on Covid duty at a Mumbai hospital and used to go into complete isolation thereafter. Now, the mother-daughter duo has found a way out. “My daughter has introduced this waist-to-waist and leg-to-leg hug,” says Mini with a grin.

At the hospital, her responsibilities include delegating nurses to Covid-19 patients and

making sure that her 90-member team takes the necessary precautions. Apart from dealing with the challenges that the pandemic has brought along, Mini also has to fight attrition at the hospital. Many families are forc-

ing young nurses to quit the profession out of infection fear.

“Attrition is really disturbing... everything goes for a toss. But there are some nurses who are wise enough to stay back. They have sent their families to their hometown so that they can concentrate on their work,” says the 48-year-old.

There are some positives as well. “This lockdown has taught my husband to cook. He was a typical man who had not entered the kitchen ever before. But, looking at my current state, he has taken care of the kitchen.” ✨

BY AALOK SONI SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO



Dr Aastha Khurana, ex-resident doctor, department of anesthesia at Saifee Hospital, had been working tirelessly during the pandemic. It was a demanding task, both physically and emotionally, given that they had to skip their meals and work long hours in personal protection equipment. However, the thought of serving the society kept her motivated. “That feeling of saving someone makes everything better,” says Khurana. “It’s a joy to know that, as medical workers, we have made a difference in people’s lives.”

As cases rise across the country, the responsibilities of those at the front line, such as Khurana, have

## Making a Difference

*Dr Aastha Khurana was on her toes as Covid cases kept going up, but the joy of serving society kept her going*

By ANJAN DAS



increased manifold in the last four months. She says they have to be on their toes all the time, with patients complaining of breathlessness and anxiety.

Many of her senior consultants and colleagues have tested positive for the coronavirus. However, they resumed duty immediately after recovery and that gave health care workers like Khurana the strength to carry on.

Khurana had to go back to her hometown in Panipat, Haryana, for her higher studies in anaesthesia from the Diplomate National Board. “Studying from the medical textbooks again, for practical exams, is something I will remember for the rest of my life,” she says. ✨

BY AALOK SONI SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO



**F**or Dr Jeenam Shah, each day during the Covid-19 pandemic is a new challenge, filled with fear and anxiety. However, the hope of curing a patient keeps him going.

Shah is a consultant pulmonologist and practices at Saifee, Wockhardt and Bhatia hospitals in Mumbai. He doesn't see his family for weeks at times, but it is their support that is his pillar of strength in these troubled times. "It's been more than three-and-a-half months to my Covid-19 duty now. The fact is that even after reading thousands of books and treating lakhs

# Call of Duty

*Dr Jeenam Shah battles fear and anxiety as he treats coronavirus patients while being away from family*

By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

of patients, we are still not able to grasp the disease. Mother nature has her own way of showing her fury and power," he says.

The doctor explains the tribulations of those at the frontline of this dreaded virus. "There is a shortage of PPE (personal

protection equipment), so we have to use it judiciously. Working with the suit on and ensuring that you don't touch your face is a task in itself," he says. What's more, it becomes uncomfortable to move one's face in the head mask that they have

to wear. Those wearing spectacles have a bigger challenge as the glasses get foggy. "And, after wearing PPE, one cannot go to the washroom or eat; if you have to use the washroom, you have to discard everything," adds Shah.

Despite such challenges Shah feels humbled by the numerous phone calls and texts that he receives from his patients who have recovered from the coronavirus. "The smiling face of a patient after he gets cured is gratifying. I feel privileged to be able to serve my country during this crisis," he says. 🌟





# Testing Times

*By conducting over 100,000 tests, SRL Diagnostics and CEO Arindam Halder have played a key role in the fight against Covid*



By SALIL PANCHAL

**S**RL Diagnostics was one of the first private labs chosen by the Indian Council of Medical Research to carry out Covid-19 testing since March 26. Four labs within the network are conducting these tests.

Between April and June, SRL has worked with the states of Haryana, Maharashtra (Mumbai) and Karnataka (Bengaluru)



to test samples collected from government labs. It also does drive-through testing in Gurugram, Mumbai, Chandigarh and Jammu. As of today, SRL has conducted about 100,000 tests by working with the state governments.

“As a nation, and as an industry, we were not

ready to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. It has only reiterated that we must strengthen our health care system, says Arindam Halder, CEO of SRL Diagnostics.

Halder has taken steps to make SRL stronger to deal with the crisis. This includes re-training of staff related to the use of protective gear, disposal, sample collection and accurate testing. Additional medical cover was provided to all employees handling infectious samples. The company also created designated backup units and mobilised input supplies.

SRL now plans to review and renew its business continuity plan. ✎

# On Ground Zero

*Dr Anup Warriar led the Aster DM Healthcare group's response against Covid-19 in a state that recorded India's first case*



By SALIL PANCHAL



ANTONY JOSEPH T

**W**hen Kerala became the first state in India to report the Sars-CoV-2 case in January, it didn't take matters lightly. Dr Anup Warriar, the lead consultant for infectious diseases and infection control for the Aster DM Healthcare in Kochi, was put in charge to develop and review the hospital infection control activities for the 13 hospitals of the group in different districts.

In the past four months, Dr Warriar has interacted with colleagues from the department in the state advisory board and the chief minister to provide inputs for the state policy on testing, infection control and its treatment. Interactions

with the district medical authorities and the chief of medical services in Kochi also took place.

The pandemic revealed the country's structural and operational vulnerabilities, he says. “We always had an airborne infection on concern—tuberculosis. Had we designed our hospitals accordingly, Covid-19 management could have been much simpler.” However, as always, a calamity brings the best in a team. “I learnt the importance of communication in change management, the power of knowledge in gaining peer acceptance and the success of an interdisciplinary team that can assimilate varied inputs towards a common goal,” says Warriar. ✎



# Doc on Call

*With Mfine, Prasad Kompalli wants to redefine how health care is delivered in modern times*

By HARICHANDAN ARAKALI

**P**rasad Kompalli, co-founder and CEO of Mfine, an online doctor consultation app, is a big believer in tech-led transformation of societies and strives to



create a positive impact for consumers with technology. He sees an unprecedented opportunity with mobile tech and artificial intelligence to create a high-quality health care experience that is personal and accessible. With Mfine, he wants to shape the new-age health

care delivery in India.

“Being a health care delivery platform, Mfine experienced massive business growth in Covid-19. People moved fast to adopt telemedicine,” says Kompalli. “Thus, for us to continue operations, we needed to make all employees

safe and fully equipped to work from home.”

Mfine moved to work-from-home swiftly, gave safety kits for all last-mile delivery executives and people who did jobs at hospitals, and, on an ongoing basis, has in-house doctors issuing health advice and monitoring all employees.

Kompalli was previously chief business officer at Myntra, India’s largest online fashion retailer. Prior to that, he had a stint at SAP where he was leading an international team of 600 engineers developing important technology products in areas, including mobility and business process management. ✎

# Covid Shield

*At 3M, Ramesh Ramadurai has overcome logistical challenges to manufacture products that fortify the frontline workers*

By PRANIT SARDA

**F**or 3M India, the pandemic created an opportunity to provide what was needed the most—sanitisers, personal protection equipment and respirators, among other things that it manufactures and sources from 3M subsidiaries globally.

Due to the surge in demand, 3M India ran its plants on an overtime. Ramesh Ramadurai, managing director, says: “In India, the plant where we produce masks has

been running every day since the March shutdown, and is turning out about 40 percent products over and above the normal capacity. Most of that is prioritised to supply health care, governments, emergency response and first responders.”

The output of the alcohol-based sanitiser was about 50 percent higher. 3M India utilised its global network of subsidiaries to fulfil orders, especially the ones from the health care industry.



BY NISHANT RATNAKAR SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO

The lockdown also posed specific challenges to 3M India. Says Ramadurai: “When it was announced, we had material stranded in various parts of the country. We also had challenges in accessing certain raw materials from suppliers who were unable to work.” Additionally, they saw

delays in clearing imports and difficulties in arranging transportation employees.

Despite the difficult times, the company stuck to its humanitarian principles. “3M has not increased the prices for respirators and we will not increase our current prices,” Ramadurai says. ✎

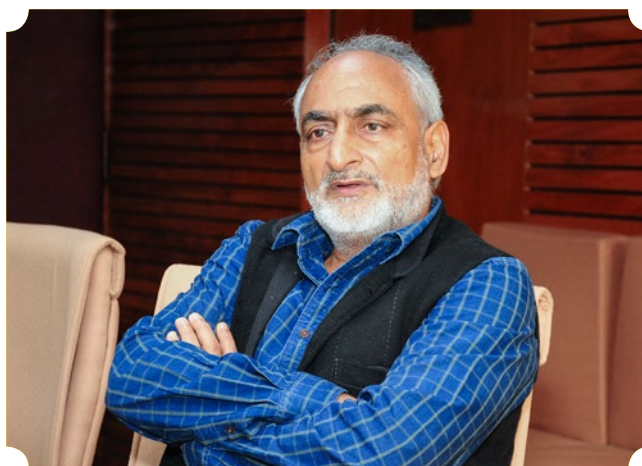
**R**akesh K Mishra is the scientist who ensures that companies rushing to develop the Covid-19 vaccine have their materials and processes in place. He is the director of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, or CCMB, in Hyderabad, which is one of the government laboratories that is helping the fight against Covid-19 by testing samples, acting as a validating agency for test kits developed by companies for sale, and also coming up with strategies to flatten the curve by increasing testing capacity and throughput.

“We are also the national repository for Covid-19 samples, including patient samples that can be shared

# The Facilitator

*Rakesh K Mishra, director of CCMB, collaborates with companies developing the Covid-19 vaccine*

By DIVYA J SHEKHAR



with private or public organisations for R&D purposes with proper safety and ethical processes in place,” he says, explaining that the laboratories grow the virus in large quantities so that they can be “used by companies to develop vaccines, therapeutic antibodies or undertake tests”.

The CCMB also provides companies with almost all the key proteins of the coronavirus that will enable them to make antibody kits. Mishra believes that testing needs to be ramped up in India. “We need to test at least 10 lakh people every day for better strategies of tracing and isolating in order to restrict the spread of the virus.”

# Putting Money In People's Pockets

*By ensuring an inflow of income, Chennai resident Archana Hari helped grassroots workers retain their dignity*

By KATHAKALI CHANDA

**W**hile PM Narendra Modi urged the country to applaud frontline workers by clapping or clanging utensils on March 22, Archana Hari and seven other residents of Chennai's Zone 13 went a step further to raise money for the locality's conservancy workers. “They are paid by their service providers, but most of them are slum-

dwellers and, as the sole breadwinners of the family, struggle to make ends meet,” says Archana, a resident of Besant Nagar. She posted a fundraising appeal on crowdfunding platform Milaap that yielded ₹22 lakh from 618 donors; the corpus was disbursed among 1,034 workers through direct benefit transfer on April 14, the Tamil New Year's day.

While working for con-



Archana Hari (middle) crowdfunded ₹22 lakh for conservancy workers in Chennai's Zone 13

servancy workers, Archana observed low-income families were most affected by the pandemic. Prodding her neighbours, she and her husband started an initiative where they would continue to pay their local workers—the car cleaner, the maid, the electrician etc—even if they weren't availing of their services. “This way, we could ensure their dig-

nity is retained while we helped them,” she says.

The idea scaled up as the zone deputy commissioner suggested including street vendors. NGO Bhumi came up as the lead for the project and launching a helpline for poor families, and Archana has worked closely with them. Till July 9, Bhumi has helped over 14,000 daily wagers under the two initiatives.

# Alert and Aware

*Lijin James says Covid-19 sets up many challenges for doctors but gives them the satisfaction of saving lives*



By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

BY AALOK SONI SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO

In March end, when Lijin James, 32, discovered that he will be in-charge of the Covid-19 intensive care unit (ICU) at Global Hospital in Mumbai, he was happy to be entrusted a role that required multi-tasking and good managerial skills.

The pandemic saw hospitals set up new standard operating procedures. From coordinating with Covid-19 patients and their families to getting their blood samples and making sure the inventory is stocked



up, James has the situation in control so far. "Initially everyone was confused and things were all over the place. But you cannot afford to lose patience. With teamwork, we streamlined everything," says James who lives alone in a hostel. "My family is in Kerala. My two children have been asking me to come back home... but everyone keeps motivating me."

"It feels good to save lives," he adds. But fighting this virus is not easy. "At times I get frustrated because wearing the PPE equipment for seven hours and staying inside the ICU is difficult... we cannot even use the washroom. But we take it positively and keep working because it is for our safety." 🌟

# Fighting Your Fears

*Dr Om Shrivastava believes in keeping an open mind while treating Covid-19 patients*



By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

BY AALOK SONI SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO

For about five months now, Dr Om Shrivastava has been treating Covid-19 patients at Mumbai's Jaslok Hospital. Apart from long and erratic working hours, not much has changed for the infectious disease specialist. "Life is pretty much the same, of course I take far more precautions at home now," he says.

Shrivastava says Covid-19 has required doctors to learn and adapt according



to the evolving nature of the virus since it could lead to various symptoms and

different complications in people. "Unless you've got an open mind you're

probably likely to miss the diagnosis of Covid-19," he says, adding that mental health issues also have to be factored in. "The amount of strain that it mentally causes the patients is humongous and incalculable... that is something to be taken into account as well," says Shrivastava.

He uses an old phrase to describe how he deals with the fear that frontline workers like him face in the Covid-19 battle: "Courage is not the absence of fear, courage is doing the right thing despite that fear... so you believe in the process, look after yourself but you do what you do the best and that is the practice of clinical medicine." 🌟





# Leading a Concerted Effort

*HPE's Som Satsangi and his team have been mitigating disruptions and enabling payment deferrals for customers*



By HARICHANDAN ARAKALI

meeting partner and customer demands, and protecting team members," says Satsangi, managing director, HPE India.

"We have been working with over 200 suppliers to minimise any supply-chain impact on partners and customers," he adds.

Satsangi, a Harvard University alumnus, has over three decades of experience in the IT sector. He is also involved in HPE

Pathfinder, the company's venture investment and partnership programme.

HPE's Financial Services arm—a captive IT finance company, managing \$13 billion in portfolio assets in more than 50 countries—is helping alleviate some of the financial strain. This includes releasing capital from existing infrastructures to providing pre-owned tech to relieve capacity strain or new

equipment delivery delays.

HPE is deferring or reducing expenses through payment deferrals, enabling customers to delay payments for 90 days, or through the 2020 Payment Relief Program where they can acquire the technology they need today and pay only 1 percent of the contract value each month for the first eight months, deferring over 90 percent of the cost until 2021. ✎

**S**om Satsangi leads Hewlett Packard Enterprises' (HPE) second-largest employee base globally. And the vast majority of Indian employees are geared to work remotely. "The crisis management team is mitigating disruptions,

# Meeting the Challenge Head-on

*Karan Bajwa has been spearheading Google India's effort to help all stakeholders—from office employees to health care providers*



By HARICHANDAN ARAKALI

**K**aran Bajwa took over as managing director of Google Cloud India in March when the lockdown came into effect. "We are having daily conversations with customers on how we can help them serve their employees and their customers during this phase," says Bajwa. "We have also accelerated our work to help people stay safe, informed and connected."

Some of the initiatives include enabling premium Google Meet features



for customers at no cost till September, helping governments build rapid response apps and virtual agents to ensure citizen preparedness and ensuring health care providers have the collaboration tools

and infrastructure support to provide enhanced health care services.

Google Meet has helped millions of people stay connected, whether it's colleagues working at home, companies

live-streaming to global employees, doctors caring for patients, banks providing loans, retailers and restaurants helping the elderly place orders for home delivery or curb-side pickup, social services conducting welfare checks, governments serving citizens, or schools staying in session.

"We have also been helping the health care industry by building critical tools and solutions which will help in identifying new therapies and treatments and assist hospitals in tracking the pandemic," adds Bajwa. "We have been helping retailers, manufacturers and other businesses handle demand." ✎

**A**s a provider of crucial services such as data centres, cloud, and network, NTT has always provisioned its capacities in such a way that it can maintain ample additional bandwidth to meet any surge in demand. During the current scenario, NTT India has seen bandwidth demand from its clients rise by over 20 percent.

“We have helped our clients in running their businesses seamlessly by providing them services such as secured remote working, digital events and meetings, remote client experience, business continuity and data security solutions,” says Sharad

## Geared Up For Demand

*NTT's Sharad Sanghi and his team have helped clients run their businesses seamlessly and securely*



By HARICHANDAN ARAKALI



Sanghi, CEO, Global Data Centres and Cloud Infrastructure (India), NTT Ltd. “Security becomes even more important since there is risk of data theft when employees login remotely.”

An electrical engineer from IIT-Bombay, Sanghi, who also holds a master's degree from Columbia University, is considered a pioneer in the Indian cloud computing space. His vision has helped the company become a leader in the public cloud services market in India. As the crisis continues, “we are well-positioned to fulfil the needs of our customers even if the demand keeps rising in the weeks ahead”, he says. ✨

## Rebuilding A Workforce

*Shapoorji Pallonji's Subodh C Dixit has focussed on training locals and reimbursing the travel of migrant workers to restart work*



By POOJA SARKAR

**B**efore the lockdown, Shapoorji Pallonji E&C had nearly 150,000 construction workers across projects in India. After the lockdown was announced, construction activities came to a grinding halt.

Now, as work resumes, the company is trying to bring in local work force to its sites wherever possible in addition to their migrant labour. “Our labour mobilisation teams are engaging with our regular subcontractors and trying to convince



workers to return to the cities from their villages. We are reimbursing the travel expenses of those subcontractors and workers who want to return and resume work at our projects,” says Subodh C Dixit, executive director, Shapoorji Pallonji E&C.

One of the challenges with local labour is the workers lack the skills. “We are expanding our labour training infrastructure to include local labour. We will also explore increasing the percentage of local labour vis-a-vis migrant

labour,” says Dixit. The construction firm is also looking at mechanisation of certain activities to reduce its dependence on manual labour for its ongoing jobs.

The company is incentivising its workers by offering higher wages and releasing timely payments. While this will increase the labour cost of each project, the company believes it is crucial to maintain work progress.

“Our in-house medical and safety personnel monitor the vital health parameters of all workers on a daily basis. These efforts are bearing fruit and the worker strength is slowly improving. It is expected that the worker strength will be back to its normal level in the next three to four months,” Dixit adds. ✨



# Mapping Hope

*Reap Benefit, co-founded by Kuldeep Dantewadia, has built a hyperlocal dashboard to help citizens navigate their daily needs*

By KATHAKALI CHANDA



In 2019, Bengaluru-based Reap Benefit was building a hyperlocal dashboard to let citizens reach out to local representatives over pressing civic needs. By March 2020, they had prototyped it, but when Covid-19 struck, the not-for-profit co-founded by Kuldeep Dantewadia repurposed the tool to

transform it into a database where people could crowdsource information about infection hotspots, availability of groceries, medical help etc.

“The dashboard helps in two ways,” says Dantewadia. “Reap Benefit is part of a larger civic initiative called Within Bengaluru, which provides meals to people. Second is a

hyperlocal network of our volunteers, called Ninjas, who pitch in to help in the community s/he lives in.”

Till June, Reap Benefit had facilitated relief for 1.1 million citizens, mapping 129,000 supply spots across 70 cities.

Over the long term, Dantewadia wants the dashboard to turn into a physical tool that will act

like an assisted marketplace to the government and citizens. It has already mapped 40 government schemes to enable citizens monitor its efficacy. “We want to get civil society and citizens together in helping the government deliver these schemes to the people who really need it,” says Dantewadia. 🌟



PHANI RAO



Mynvax co-founders Raghavan Varadarajan (left) and Gautham Nadig at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

# A Dose of Optimism

*Mynvax's Raghavan Varadarajan and Gautham Nadig are developing a protein-based Covid-19 vaccine*

By DIVYA J SHEKHAR

When Covid-19 was declared a pandemic, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation asked Raghavan Varadarajan, a professor in the molecular biophysics unit of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, to use his experience and capabilities

in protein design to see if vaccine candidates could be developed for the virus. In mid-February, Varadarajan started working along with a couple of PhD students from IISc. The pharma startup Mynvax, which he co-founded in 2017 with Gautham Nadig and which is incubated at

IISc, also came forward to lend expertise and scale to the process.

"Our work is in early stages. There is some promising data from the animal [trial] work that Mynvax has been doing. Hopefully, in about 3 to 4 months, we will identify a [vaccine] candidate that

we can take forward for pre-clinical trials and development," says Nadig.

Mynvax has applied for funding from the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council. Nadig explains that the funding amount depends on how far they will take the vaccine forward on their own. "For going all the way up to phase I of clinical trials, we will require about ₹15 crore, but if we just do process development and let a manufacturer take up clinical trials and production, we would need half the amount," he says. ✨



# Research in Progress

*Dr E Sreekumar undertakes studies that aid the country's efforts to develop a Covid-19 vaccine*

By DIVYA J SHEKHAR

As the chief scientific officer of Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology (RGCB) in Thiruvananthapuram, Dr E Sreekumar undertakes research that bolsters the country's efforts to develop a coronavirus vaccine.

In May, for example, he co-authored a study that identified five distinct strains of the Covid-19 virus circulating in India, adding perspective on its mutation. About 30 Indian genomes were used to understand the various subtypes of the virus in India. "From an



evolutionary perspective, the new strains are more diverse compared to the original strains in Wuhan, China," he says.

Sreekumar believes that indigenous research and development needs further strengthening in India. There are multiple

approaches being adopted during the pandemic, he says. "Scientific institutions and the department of biotechnology have formed consortiums, where some are developing vaccine candidates, some are creating animal models for testing labs, and others are finding partners to scale up whatever is being developed."

According to him, as vaccine candidates are developed and tested, India can explore alternative solutions. "Meanwhile we can have good anti-virals, maybe by revalidating and repurposing pre-approved drugs that have already been tested for safety profiles. The latter could be used immediately with supportive care." ❧

# Chain Reaction

*Safety practices and training helped ensure a continuous supply of Parle-G biscuits, says Krishnarao Buddha of Parle Products*

By MONICA BATHIJA



As the lockdown came into force, one of the food products that saw a huge increase

in demand was Parle-G biscuits. Retailers started rushing to distributors as soon as fresh stocks arrived.

As part of essential services, Parle Products had kept up production right from the beginning of the outbreak, and put in place safety and hygiene measures that covered their factories and vendors, depots, distributors and even retailers. When the company saw retailers crowding at the distributor centres, it advised distributors to give appointments to the retailers instead.

"From day one, one of our directors clearly told us, you have to behave as if you already have the infection, so you behave accordingly. Neither do you want to acquire it from someone nor do you want to give it to someone," says Krishnarao Buddha, senior category head-marketing, Parle

Products, which has 130 factories across the country.

There were initial labour challenges, and at times villagers would not allow company vehicles into villages to pick up staff. "We had to convince them that if they didn't come, we would not be able to make our products," says Buddha.

At the factories, workers used alternate seats and arrangements were made to accommodate them on the premises. With the pandemic expected to stay for a while, learning and educating has become a continuous process. "Whenever there is a new co-worker joining the team, educating and training them is a continuous process, which is being addressed at all our locations." ❧



# New Normal

*R Kailasnath of CPC Diagnostics says the last three months have brought about a huge change in the way they operate*

By SAMAR SRIVASTAVA



For a company that supplies testing kits, a large part of the business would come from meeting people and demonstrating the efficacy of these kits. That stopped in April and May, and all prospective customers were pitched products over the phone. It is only now that customers are once again agreeing to meet company representatives, but as long as they wear masks and come with prior appointments.

The pandemic has also provided CPC Diagnostics with a long runway for its products. R Kailasnath, managing director at CPC Diagnostics, sees three distinct strands of

demand emerging for rapid antibody tests that can tell if a person has been infected with the virus in the past. Demand will come from companies wanting to test staff, patients being hospitalised for surgeries and women being hospitalised for childbirth, and international travellers. “Antibody tests are really taking off now and they are bound to be there for a while,” he says. These tests look for the IGG antibody that has the potential to fight the Sars Cov2 virus if it reoccurs.

In June the company also launched an RT-PCR machine for Covid-19 tests that has seen good traction. ❧

# Call of the Hour

*Dr Satish Tandale, a resident doctor in Mumbai, has been on Covid-19 duty continuously despite falling back in his studies*

By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI

Dr Satish Tandale is one of the resident doctors whose responsibilities include pulling trolleys, shifting patients, drawing blood, taking rounds of wards, presenting patient reports and status checks to senior doctors, counselling panicking patients and also informing patients’ relatives about their current status. For 30-year-old Satish Tandale, a third-year post-graduate resident doctor at Mumbai’s Nair Hospital, and president of Maharashtra Association of

Resident Doctors, being left behind in his specialisation subject of pathology is a matter of concern, and at times, one of the reasons

for anxiety. “For almost three months now we’ve stopped working in our specialisation department, unlike at other hospitals

where residents are rotating between Covid-19 and non-Covid19 duties. It’s a monumental academic loss for us,” says Tandale.

He adds that he loses almost 2 litres of body water every time he wears PPE gear for six to eight hours at a stretch, which leads to dehydration, muscle pain, cramps and weakness.

“I really miss my family, but obviously can’t go home,” sighs Tandale, who is from Beed in Maharashtra and lives alone in a Mumbai hostel.

He also admits to having emotional breakdowns at times, due to several reasons. “We console ourselves with the fact that we are needed in this pandemic, and this is a small sacrifice to make. As they say, all’s fair in love and war.” ❧



BY AALOK SONI SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO



# Mutations on His Mind

*Prabuddha Kundu of Premas Biotech is developing a yeast-based protein Covid-19 vaccine*

By DIVYA J SHEKHAR

BY AMIT VERMA SHOT ON OPPO FIND X2 PRO

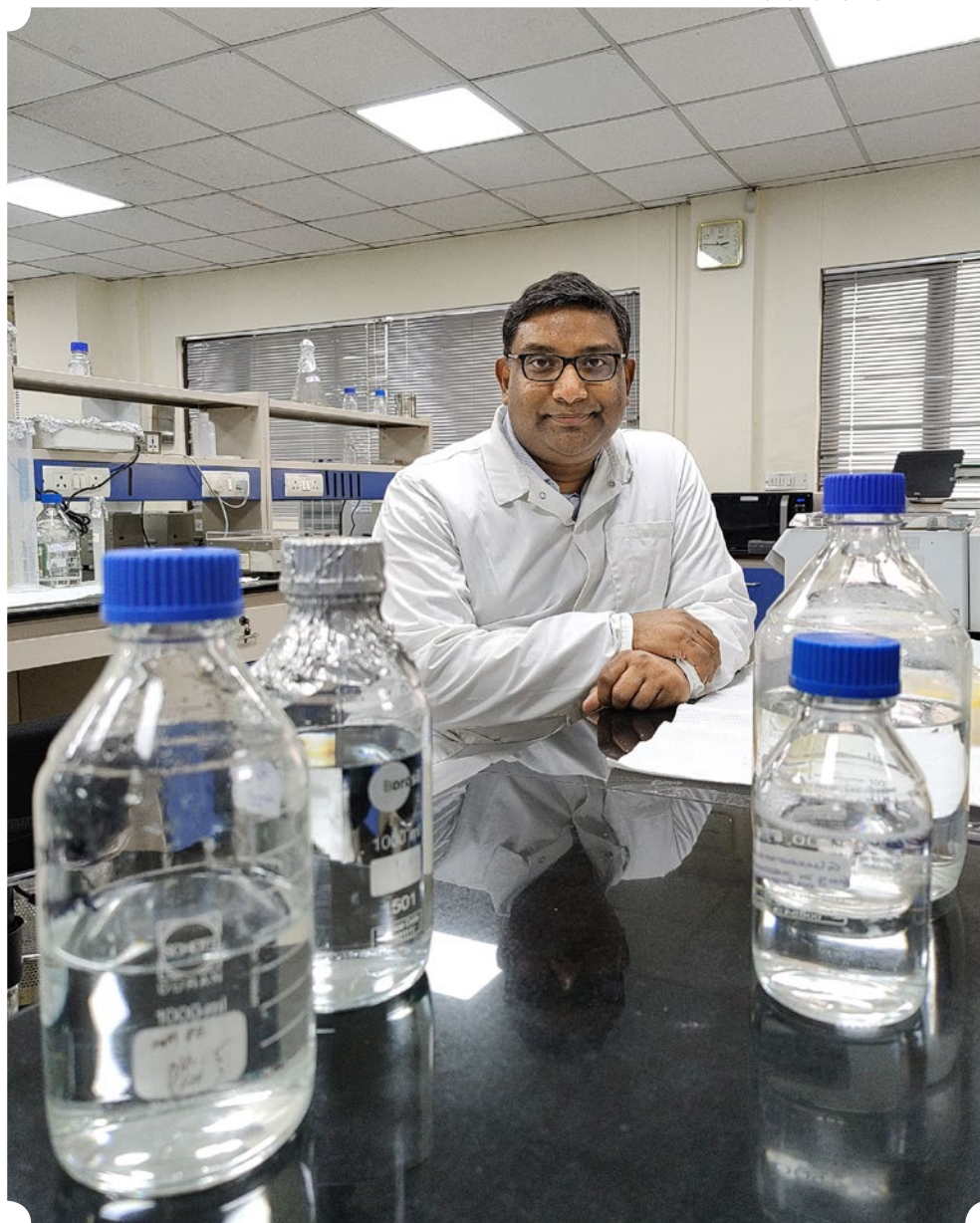
Performance

**T**he quicker a vaccine for the coronavirus is developed, the more beneficial it will be, says Prabuddha Kundu, co-founder of Gurugram-based Premas Biotech, which is developing a yeast-based protein vaccine for Covid-19.

Most vaccine candidates under trial across the world are single-protein vaccines. Kundu has adopted a three-pronged approach, working with multiple antigens of coronavirus to try and overcome the possible mutation of the virus. "We have applied for animal trials and are waiting for a discussion with the government and other regulatory bodies," Kundu says.

Developing a vaccine is a multi-million dollar effort, Kundu says, explaining that at the moment the entire spend is being undertaken internally by the company "We have licensed it to an American company and have undertaken joint development. We are using yeast as a platform because it divides faster, and it has been a useful host to make [other] vaccines and proteins [in the past]."

According to Kundu, while it is important to be price-conscious in India, the cost of the vaccine is



Prabuddha Kundu (right), co-founder of Premas Biotech, in his Gurugram laboratory

likely to be determined by a number of factors. "This will include components

used to create the vaccine, its easy adaptability and transfer to other

countries, and finally, the method and quantity of dosage," he says. 🌟

# Holding Fort

*Senior intensivist Dr Amit Dhekane is back on Covid-19 duty after being hospitalised for 18 days due to the virus*

By NAANDIKA TRIPATHI



**D**r Amit Dhekane has been at the frontline of the Covid-19 battle for the past four months. The senior intensivist at Bhatia Hospital, Mumbai, deals with critical patients battling the coronavirus. “We have two teams working in rotation—work seven days, with seven days off. On our off days also, we help our

other colleagues who are suffering from Covid-19,” says the 34-year-old.

His exposure to the patients resulted in him testing positive for the virus, despite taking all precautions. He had to be hospitalised for 18 days. But he was back on duty as soon as he recovered.

The stress and erratic hours, however, took a toll on his preparation

for the Indian Diploma in Critical Care Medicine final exams. But even then he managed to sail through.

“The hospital pays well in terms of incentives, but we are here at the cost of family life,” says Dhekane, who has been away from his family for more than three months. “We go through mental and physical stress every day... we also face problems like

carbon dioxide retention, dehydration, bruises on faces due to the personal protection equipment, and issues because of lack of adequate nursing staff and doctors.”

Senior doctors agree that resident doctors are the most vital cog in the organised machine of a hospital and without them, the entire system will crumble. 🪄

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