

INSIGHT

AFCONS

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Shapoorji Pallonji



JAB WE MET

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Afcons' nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive brings employees, families and workers one step closer to health, safety and wellbeing

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Need more positive shots

Dear Afconians,

I hope, by now, most of you and your family members have either received the first jab of Covid-19 vaccine, or many have even taken the second dose too. It is the only proven way to minimise the impact of the virus and keep ourselves and our near and dear ones safe.

The second wave of the pandemic inflicted far more pain than the first one. Even though statistics may suggest that the second wave is now receding, we must be cautious and careful in our approach. The caseloads are still high, and nobody knows what could trigger a third wave.

The past few months have been stressful due to the pandemic. While on one hand shortage of vaccines created panic, on the other, the national death toll reached alarming heights. There were few distressing moments in Afcons too. We lost some of our beloved colleagues, and some Afconians lost their family members because of the pandemic. We are deeply distraught by this loss and share in the grief of the bereaving colleagues and family members.

As the government is taking proactive steps to make vaccines available, we have launched a vaccination drive with a mission to make the jabs available not only for you but also for your family members, our workers, and wherever possible, for our subcontractors too. We have already completed the first phase of such vaccination drives at our Mumbai office and at most of our sites. Besides this a slew of other measures have been taken to insulate you from this unprecedented health crisis.

Anything we do will probably fall short against the fury of the pandemic. But, at least, we are committed to fight and overcome these troubled times together.

I want to appreciate and thank HO and site doctors, site medical staff, HR & admin teams for their commitment and resolve to take the pandemic head on and help Afconians.



K SUBRAMANIAN

The world economy has started looking up, and as India gradually reopens after regional lockdowns, I hope the government will take decisive steps to resuscitate the economy and accelerate growth.

Remember, the pandemic has not left us yet. So, wear your masks, maintain social distancing, and stay safe.

Breakthrough Moment

The Hindu Hruday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg Project Package-14 achieved a major milestone on May 29, 2021, with the first breakthrough of one of the twin tunnels. The moment came during the Covid-19 second wave, and amidst restrictions. So far, 95% of tunnelling has been achieved and a maximum excavation of 258.4m in one month for single face. The team has excavated over 200m for nine months in a row during the period.



Flyover Power



The final flyover in a series of four flyovers (Longacres Flyover) was commissioned in Zambia's capital city, Lusaka, by the country's president His Excellency Mr Edgar C Lungu, on April 30, 2021. The Lusaka City Roads Decongestion Project is a symbol of strong ties between the Zambian and Indian governments and their commitment towards fortifying the future of the African nation. Reiterating his government's sincere appreciation to the people and government of India, Mr Lungu emphasised that Zambia treasures the partnership that is committed towards transforming the lives of the people of the nation.

Rail Record

For the first time in the history of Bangladesh Railway, launching of four relocated bridge segments was done under running railway track by Cut & Cover method. Afcons-KPTL JV team achieved this record at Package-WD-1 for the Bangladesh Railway Project, which has been acknowledged by Bangladesh Railway with a certificate of appreciation.

EDITORIAL

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COMBAT

With oxygen in short supply and crippling shortage of hospital beds, India faced a deadly second wave of infections. Afcons' Chief Medical Officer along with HR & Admin teams rose to the challenge of saving lives amidst arguably the world's worst Covid-19 surge, writes Bivabasu Kumar

Gaurav Kumar (name changed), working in Afcons' project at Kandla, Gujarat, was desperately seeking care. He was Covid positive, and his oxygen level was quickly dipping. His lung involvement was high and high anxiety levels spiked his pulse rate. All hospitals, nearby, were full and there were no ICU, or general beds available. Attempts to arrange a hospital bed in nearby Ahmedabad also proved futile. A bold decision was made

to shift Gaurav to Mumbai by road in a cardiac ambulance. With high flow of oxygen, standby oxygen cylinders, and a paramedic attending to him with directions from Afcons' Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr Prafulla Thorat, Gaurav was safely brought to Mumbai after a 14-hour drive. An ICU bed could be arranged at a private hospital in Mumbai's Santacruz, and Gaurav was admitted and stabilised. After 14 days of treatment, Gaurav walked out on his feet.

Manoj Sharma (name changed) from Kosi Bridge project, Bihar, was Covid positive, but stable. Suddenly, one day, he collapsed after his blood oxygen level dropped abruptly. His health took a sharp turn. The nearest government hospital refused admission as most of its doctors were Covid positive and it was running low on oxygen. Meanwhile, a CT scan revealed Manoj's lung was critical.

Five oxygen cylinders were immediately arranged to resuscitate

Manoj. Dr Thorat gave real-time instructions to a compounder on phone who administered the oxygen flow and life-saving injection. Manoj was subsequently moved to a private hospital, but the doctors gave up on him. "Follow the protocol and push Remdesivir" was a polite but stern message from the CMO. The message was taken, and after three days of high flow oxygen and a shot of Remdesivir, Manoj could be stabilised. After a month in hospital, he returned home with a second life.

The ferocity of India's second Covid outbreak far outpaced its first. While Gaurav and Manoj were among the luckier few who came back from the jaws of death, India recorded its worst death toll during the pandemic between April and May of 2021. Had there been no timely interventions from Afcons' site admin staff and proactive coordination from headquarters, many employee lives could have been lost far too soon.

High virulence

"The second wave was far more severe than the first. The infectivity rate was way higher, and the mutations made diagnosis and treatment both complex and difficult," said Dr Thorat.

In India, the healthcare system reached its limit and almost collapsed. There was dire shortage of hospital beds, medical oxygen, and medicines.

"If there's anything the medical fraternity had learnt from the first wave it was that as long as the treatment approach was right and on time lives could be saved. The first wave taught us how to follow the Covid treatment protocols. But the overwhelming number of infections in the second surge outnumbered everything else. The odds were never in our favour," Dr Thorat mentioned.

O2 shortage

Over 250 Covid positive cases were reported from various Afcons' projects during the second wave. Barring a few all could be treated and cured. It was not the volume of cases, but the alarming frequency at which they came and the stressed-out medical system that became causes of concern.

"The pandemic restricted our

movements and multiple cases were reported from sites at the peak of the second wave. Our Admin teams did everything - from arranging hospital bed, oxygen cylinders, sourcing Remdesivir injections to ferrying sick employees in cardiac ambulances from one place to another," he said, adding "the rejection level at hospitals in remote locations made the situation scarier."

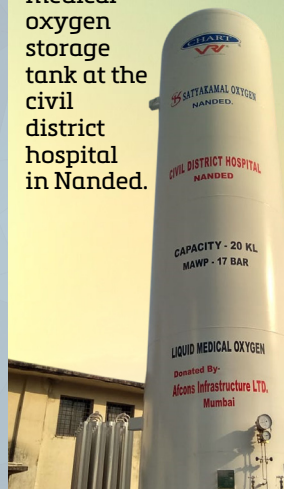
extraordinary circumstances. This level of commitment is unparalleled," said Ajit Kumar from HR and Admin, who was neck-deep in coordination of rescue missions from the headquarters.

"Almost every day, it was a struggle to find hospital beds to accommodate new patients. At some projects, even Covid medicine supplies were insufficient. Dr Thorat guided our first aiders intuitively and proactively to

COVID-RELIEF MEASURES

Donation of O2 storage tank

Afcons, through the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation Limited (MSRDC), contributed towards installing a 20,000-litre capacity liquid medical oxygen storage tank at the civil district hospital in Nanded.



Importing O2 concentrators

Given the scarcity of oxygen cylinders during the peak of the second wave, 50 five-litre oxygen concentrators were airlifted from the U.S. to address the exigency. The facility was extended on priority to those areas where oxygen and hospital beds were not available.

Free Covid job for locals

Over 200 villagers from Kauri and Bakkal in the Reasi district of Jammu & Kashmir received their first jobs of Covid-19 vaccine. The immunisation drive organised by Afcons was conducted for the 18-45 age group.

We express our gratitude for all Afcons' doctors who have been at the forefront of the Covid war. Afcons has tie-ups with government and private hospitals at every work location. We have attending doctors and first-aiders at every site for medical requirement of employees. We thank them for their valiant efforts:

India Dr Sohail Goni	Mauritania Dr Ravi Savaliya
Ivory Coast Dr Manoj Jadhav	Mauritius Dr Hassan Dastagir Dr Ashok Trivedi
Mozambique Dr Lalji Patel	Bangladesh Dr Abdul Jaleel
Ghana Dr Nilesh Sawant	Gabon Dr Sanjay Bagade



A tall order

With oxygen in short supply and scrambling to find hospital beds, Afcons' admin teams faced a gargantuan challenge.

"Our site teams literally fought for oxygen cylinders to keep Covid patients alive. Our team members in Mumbai have slept overnight at hospitals for a vial of Remdesivir to save a fellow Afconian. We were prepared to go all out to save our employees. I am grateful to have wonderful colleagues who have responded fearlessly under

handle the crisis. His timely suggestions and advance warnings prepared us for the uphill task. Our pre-emptive efforts to scale up Covid treatment infrastructure at sites and maintaining a minimum stock of Covid medicines gave us decent response time," Kumar said.

According to him, their phones didn't stop ringing. And each call was the same: "Can you help arrange a hospital bed? Can you help with an ambulance? We're unable to arrange oxygen cylinders... Can you arrange Remdesivir?"

“At times, we were helpless, and it became unbearable. But we are trained to control our emotions,” Dr Thorat said.

Anxiety depression

There were multiple cases of anxiety depression where minor to moderate Covid positive patients turned critical and required hospitalisation.

“We have seen how mental state of patients can affect their recovery. So, we started advising project managers, first aiders and senior officials to interact with the

patients at sites. It was important to create a positive headspace for our employees. We organised town halls and online video interactions with sites to address concerns and motivate teams to stay positive, and continue doing the good work,” Dr Thorat said.

Relief measures

As the Covid situation slightly improved, Afcons immediately launched a massive vaccination drive. With a target to cover the 18-45 age group, employees, their

families, workers, sub-contractor workers were invited to get their jobs at Afcons headquarters and sites. “Over 90 per cent of all sites have successfully completed the immunisation so far,” the CMO said.

The devastating second surge saw India shatter global record for daily infections. Afcons and Afconians put up a collective fight to save as many lives as possible under the most challenging circumstances. We doff our hats to the CMO, first aiders and admin staff for their relentless and courageous response.

inCONVERSATION | Dr Prafulla Thorat

‘We were near, yet the hugs had to wait’

Doctors and healthcare workers at the forefront of the global war against Covid-19 have been the good Samaritans of the pandemic. They were subjected to mammoth workloads, exposed to the virus, and often left with scant resources. But they have never retreated or left the battlefield. With no end in sight, doctors battled the second wave with very little recovery time from the first outbreak a year-and-a-half back.

“March 2020 was when the first lockdown was announced in India. It was very difficult to understand the situation or the depth of the problem. I knew I had to act as the Chief Medical Officer for the company, but had very limited understanding of the Novel Coronavirus, its symptoms, treatment, and, most importantly, the prevention protocols. Like me, doctors, globally, faced similar challenge with no previous clinical evidence about the virus. Everything was in research phase, and no one had much clue,” recalled Dr Prafulla Thorat.

The discovery phase was filled with chaos and experiments as doctors and pharma companies scrambled for treatment and cure.

“I started discussing with doctor friends in India and abroad. We shared experiences and I also attended online seminars conducted by renowned experts dealing with Covid patients. That helped me to gather information and assisted in formulating SOPs. Meanwhile, a fully equipped quarantine facility was set up at head office since Mumbai became a Covid hotspot,” Dr Thorat reminisced.

For frontline workers like Dr Thorat life was all about sacrifices — at work and at home.

“On personal front, it was a very difficult time for me and my wife. Both of us were working on the frontline against Covid.

My wife is a medical officer in Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). We had to keep our two-and-a-half-year-old son at my mother’s place for safety. We were near, yet the hugs had to wait,” he recalled.

Dr Thorat was directly dealing with all Afcons’ work sites as well as with patients in Mumbai.

“I received tremendous support from all site doctors who used to regularly update me. We observed that vaccines were helping in reducing the severity of illness and aided in faster recovery. So, with management’s support, we launched a vaccination drive for employees, their families, and workers at sites.”

But this is not the end. “Because the virus is still mutating, a third wave is expected. Besides vaccination, we are ensuring strong implementation of SOPs at sites and HO, followed by strict Covid-appropriate behaviour.”

Besides treating Covid patients in Afcons, Dr Thorat has helped numerous others at his residential society and families of employees scattered across India.

“I would like to thank the Afcons’ management for extending full support in dealing with this pandemic. I would like to thank my wife for helping me whenever her counsel was necessary. I am also thankful to everyone who thought I could help them with the treatment. Finally, I am fortunate to be associated with an organisation that considers the health and safety of employees next to none,” Dr Thorat said.

For India, the second wave was a descent into Covid hell. Let’s hope we’re better prepared individually and as a nation for the next wave, whenever it comes.



DR PRAFULLA THORAT IS THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AT AFCONS

AWARDS & APPRECIATION

Safety Award for Kanpur Metro

Kanpur Metro Rail project has won the Best Safe Working Contractor Award 2020-21 from Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (UPMRCL). The award was received by Project Manager Mr Sanjay Kumar Singh from Managing Director, UPMRCL, Mr Kumar Keshav.



International Safety Award for Pandoh Project

The Pandoh Takoli Bypass Project has won the International Safety Award 2021 from the British Safety Council. This prestigious award recognises companies' commitment towards good health and safety management.

Bangladesh rail project completes 1mn Safe Man Hours

Bangladesh Railway has awarded an appreciation certificate to Afcons-KPTL JV for successfully completing One Million Safe Man Hours without any LTI at Dhaka-Tongi-Joydevpur Railway Project.



NEWS

UP CM video meet in Kanpur

The workmen at Kanpur Metro project were offered an opportunity to listen to and interact with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on June 9, 2021. The event, organised via video conferencing, aimed at addressing questions the labourers had for the administration as well as encourage them to carry on their efforts towards nation building. Workmen from projects across



the state were part of this interaction. Afcons worker Mr Parveen Mishra represented the Kanpur Metro team to speak to the Chief Minister. The event was streamed at Afcons casting yard and ministers and officials from state government attended the event.

An education in Kuwait

As part of practical training, 75 Kuwait University students visited Afcons' road project site earlier this month. The project team gave them insights into constructing one of Kuwait's most challenging projects as well as explained how this project will add value to logistics and ease traffic in the region.



new PROJECTS

Metro project in Bengaluru

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRL) has awarded Afcons the job of constructing 9.8km of Metro viaduct and six elevated stations as part of Bengaluru Metro Rail Phase 2. Afcons will also be carrying out road widening and allied works for approx. 2.8km at Central Board Junction in Reach-5 line of the project.

Water pipeline project in Rwanda

Afcons has entered Rwanda with a water pipeline project for Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board, HUYE-Rwanda. The project activities include water pipeline and electro-mechanical works.

community DEVELOPMENT

Food distribution in Zanzibar



Afcons donated groceries to the needy in Zanzibar during the holy month of Ramadan. Thanking Afcons for its support, Prof Mbarawa, the honourable Member of Parliament and former water minister, Govt of Tanzania, said, "With the help of good friends like you (Afcons) and other supporters, we have been able to feed 350 poor families and have positive impact on those families. It is an incredible opportunity, and we are so thankful that we had the resources to help."

artist's CORNER

Afconian Sougata Datta creates a futuristic impression of India's longest double-decker Metro corridor being constructed at Nagpur

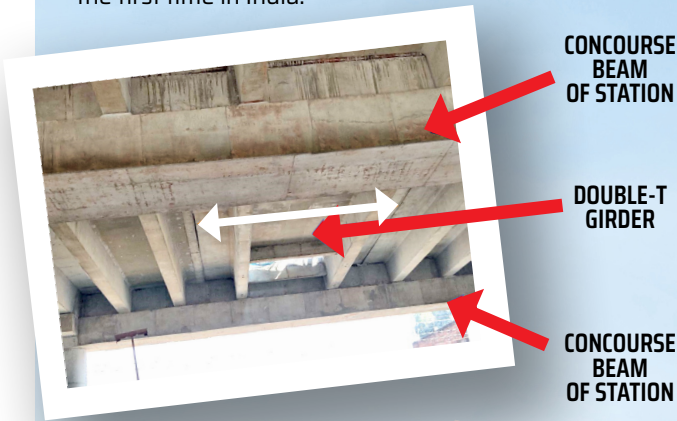


KANPUR METRO PROJECT

Thinking out-of-the-box has been Kanpur Metro team's forte. Afconians engaged in the Priority Corridor between IIT and Motijheel have made a mark in Metro

construction with their noteworthy innovations, some of which are India's firsts.

- An automatic Metro coach washing plant is to be installed at the Depot Line viaduct between Piers 14 to 16. The engineers discovered that since the width of the plant was more than the viaduct, the plant needed a wider base. A single pier with non-standard pier diameter (against 1.7m standard) was proposed initially, and to execute this, a new steel shutter would have had to be fabricated at an additional cost. However, the Afcons team suggested the use of Twin Pier Caps wherein each pier would be of the standard diameter. The proposal was accepted, and the team managed to save time, cost as well as enhance the aesthetics of the project. This has been attempted for a Metro project for the first time in India.



- The concept of **Double-T Girders** was introduced in Kanpur Metro to construct the concourse level of stations at a rapid pace. Due to the use of these girders on longitudinal beams, the need for constructing slab between the beams at concourse level was eliminated.

- Instead of regular cast-in situ portal beams by erecting GSS Staging on ground, precast **Double-I Portal Girders** with precast diaphragm walls were constructed at the casting yard and erected in position at once. This saved time, while ensuring smooth movement of traffic along the congested GT Road.



life@AFCONS

World Environment Day



International Day of Yoga

Yoga remains a ray of hope to improve physical and mental wellbeing as the world fights Covid-19. Afconians are therefore encouraged to practice yoga, especially during the ongoing pandemic. On the occasion of International Day of Yoga on June 21, 2021, Afconians at sites across the world organised special yoga sessions to mark the day.

HRcorner

Civil Trainings

Equipment Management for Civil Engineers: This training programme, conducted in two batches in May, aimed at enhancing the understanding of advanced technologies of equipment and their optimal usage.

Soft Skills Trainings

Personal Effectiveness Training: This session was conducted for Kanpur Metro with the objective to make participants aware of the importance of personal effectiveness and enhance their interpersonal competence.

Creativity & Innovation Training

This session was conducted for Mozambique site to sensitise participants on the need for creativity and innovation and means to take their ideas from the thought stage to implementation through innovation cycle.

Verbal Communication Skills: This training was aimed at participants presenting their ideas assertively and clearly as well as demonstrating poise and building rapport while communicating.

Mechanical Training

Preventive & Predictive Maintenance: Through this session, participants were trained on procedures for equipment maintenance and the benefits of preventive and predictive maintenance.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME



ALERTS

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