A large number of historical sites across the length and breadth of the country lies in worn-down condition.

Attitude of ordinary people who are destroying historical monuments, who are ignorant of their significance and what they represent in terms of India’s cultural heritage.

Many of the monuments have either degraded or have been brutally encroached upon by people living in the vicinity.

Protecting such a vast number of historical monuments and sites would be a challenge given India’s human problems.

Ignorance, government apathy and general neglect are reducing our national treasures to dust.

The air and water pollution pose a threat to the foundation, stones of such structures as observed in the case of Taj Mahal.

Another common problem observed in India is spitting and inscribing names/messages on these masterpieces.

Lack of manpower and resources have also limited ASI’s reach and there are instances of ancient buildings and monuments left without any protection.

Ever-increasing pressure of population and unplanned urbanization has started impacting the monuments.

Best way to preserve historical monuments and artifacts is to turn them into sources of employment and revenue generation.

Given India’s rich past, our monuments and museums can rival the best in the world.

India should learn from Taiwan and enact a national mission to reclaim, restore and preserve our historical heritage on a war footing.

The government should hire the best archaeologists, scholars, historians and specialists for this purpose.

The investment made will give back 10 times in revenue if museums and monuments are managed properly.

The industries should not be set up within the perimeter of these heritage sites.

More and more companies can take up the restoration and preservation works of these sites as part of their CSR.

Apart from chemical and structural restoration, thought must be placed to protect them from natural hazards (earthquake, tsunami, floods etc.)

It is the responsibility of the civil society to transfer the very precious heritage to the next generation.

Indian Youth comprising of children in schools have a special duty towards raising awareness and protecting the rich cultural heritage.

Let’s Keep India Beautiful and preserve the monuments unitedly!

Without architecture, we cannot remember.” — John Ruskin, ‘The Seven Lamps of Architecture’

India has an extraordinarily rich, vast and diverse cultural heritage in the form of built heritage, archaeological sites and remains since prehistoric times.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance is the prime concern of the ASI.

It was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham.

Preservation, conservation and environmental development of centrally protected monuments and sites, including World Heritage Monuments and antiquities.

Maintenance of gardens & development of new gardens surrounding centrally protected monuments and sites.

Exploration and excavation of ancient sites.

Specialized study of inscription and various phases of Indian architecture.

Maintenance of Archaeological site Museums.

Research and Training in different areas of Archaeology.

Some of the conservation work done by ASI are in Junagadh in Gujarat, Taj Mahal, Tomb at Sikandara, Qub Minar, Sanchi and Mathura.

Conservation work in other countries include Bamiyan in Afghanistan, Angkor Vat of Cambodia etc.

Built heritage is a significant public good and is recognised as such in the Constitution’s Seventh Schedule.

It nurtures our collective memories of places and is a significant constituent in the identity of cities.

It has invaluable potential to contribute to our knowledge of not just history and the arts, but also science and technology.

Knowledge gained from such resources can provide constructive ways to address development challenges.

Historic cities are examples of sustainable development. They demonstrate complex connections of man with nature.
Internet governance is the development and application of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.

The most appropriate way forward is to incorporate ICANN under international law, which has to be in the form of a treaty.

ICANN can continue to be in the US, but with jurisdictional immunities as available to other global governance bodies like those of the UN.

Larger public policy principles should be laid out for ICANN, as was directed by the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005.

The whole system should further be subject to judicial oversight that can be done by instituting a special digital bench of the International Court of Justice.

It is vital to protect the global infrastructure of free speech and thus one has to be very careful about the governance structures around the global internet.

It is for developing countries' leaders like India to come up with alternative governance forms and proposals, and build global support for them.

Individual governments should have more control, or that the International Telecommunication Union or the United Nations should have a function in Internet governance.

India's government must play an active role in formulating the rules, given its social responsibility to ensure equitable access to the one billion “unconnected” citizens for service and governance delivery.

India should take the lead in setting up a group of experts from 15 to 20 countries in the digital sector to shape internet governance, a proverbial “D-20”.

Such a forum would translate the key features of India's bilateral agreements into global norms and bring it cyber height.

India should consolidate its leadership by creating ideation forums to shape the discourse. This would also complement the "Digital India” initiative.

To bring all Indian stakeholders on the same page, an Indian internet governance council must be established.

India is in a position to shape cyberspace debates, but for that it will need to be flexible, propositional and present everywhere that internet governance is debated.

India hosted the ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) 57th meeting in Hyderabad.

The language of the Internet cannot be English and English alone,” and India appealed to the ICANN community to make more local languages available to users.

ICANN helps organise the Internet with the allotment of domain names such as .com, .org and .net.

Recently US government gave up oversight of Internet naming functions and handed over it to ICANN.

ICANN is a non-profit that manages the Domain Name System (DNS).

ICANN is an organisation with a significant global public policy role now being rendered practically without any public oversight.

ICANN continues to be dominated by businesses, largely US-based ones, and handing over such important global governance functions to a business dominated body with no effective oversight at all is quite scary.

The struggle by the Supreme Court of India to rein in BCCI provides an apt example of how an agency exercising a public or quasi-public function can go disloyal if freed from any public interest oversight.

An ICANN freed from all oversight is very much expected to have self-aggrandisement, even corruption, as we found the BCCI on.

It is better to put an effective public interest minded oversight body rather than wait for any calamitous circumstances.
Gauhati High Court in 2011 found the state’s reasons for not granting Naga Mothers Association (NMA)’s demand flimsy and baseless.

The NMA argues that article 243(T) of the Constitution, which provides for 33% women’s reservation in municipal bodies, applies to Nagaland as well.

No woman has ever been elected to the state assembly in over 53 years of Nagaland’s existence as a state.

Most of the tribal bodies which act as the custodians of tribal culture and traditions are dominated by men.

The property and inheritance rights are highly skewed against women.

Towns and municipalities are new concepts and have nothing to do with tradition and customary practices of the Naga.

The under-representation of women in Indian legislatures is a fact.

Greater participation of women in the political process would be a pre-condition for their economic and social emancipation.

Among 193 countries ranked by Inter-Parliamentary Union, India’s lower house stands at a poor 145 in terms of women’s representation.

One of the alternatives to reservations in legislatures was reservations in tickets distributed by political parties.

We will need adequate representation of all genders to make decision-making bodies that are capable of doing good for all.

Objection to reservations is that women’s empowerment cannot take place by women winning elections against other women.

Reservation for women is necessary in patriarchal societies like Naga society.

Denial of women’s rights cannot and shouldn’t be an option in a progressive society.

The government should have upheld Rule of law, by stating that ULBs are not part of traditional Naga society and adherence to their laws does not bypass any fundamental right of the citizens.

The protesting tribal bodies should be persuaded, showing the examples of reservation in other rural areas, which has helped improve local governance and enhancing outcomes in delivery of civic services.

Infusing modern ideas while keeping the Naga customs intact, to promote gender equality and emancipation of women.

women will be men’s equals only if incompetent women could hold important jobs just like men did.

Arguments in favour of women’s representation

Arguments against women’s representation

Way Forward

Introduction

Nagaland Crisis

Women Reservation in Politics

Nature of the problem

All-male tribal bodies have been against the 33% reservation for women in urban local bodies (ULBs) in Nagaland

Women in Nagaland have been fighting for representation in municipal and town councils.

Time and again women’s movements in India have confronted issues of community identity vs the rights of women.

In almost every instance, communities and their leaders have chosen to sacrifice the rights of women to safeguard patriarchal practices.

It’s all about huge funds and unwillingness to share power with women.

Various tribal bodies, including the Naga Hoho, have called for a boycott to oppose 33% reservation for women.

It’s a direct confrontation between articles 243(D) — which gives 33% per cent reservation for women — and 371(A), which gives special status to the Nagaland State.

Tribal communities are stating that the reservation is against tribal customs.

Reservation violates special rights guaranteed to Nagaland state under Article 371(A) of the Constitution.

Article 371(A) gives precedence to Nagaland’s customary traditions and laws over the laws passed by Parliament.

The male-dominated tribal bodies assert that Naga society offers equal opportunity to their females. So there is no need for any reservation.

Since the seats reserved will not be permanent, it will lure elected women representatives to indulge in corruption, which in turn will lead to instability.
Future rural sanitation programmes must address villagers’ ideas about pollution, pit-emptying, and untouchability, and should do so in ways that accelerate progress towards social equality for Dalits.

Rural sanitation policy must address untouchability.

Behaviour change is a key priority. It involves a change of mindset amongst people to stop open defecation and to adopt safe sanitation practices.

When we say “toilet” people often think of dark, dirty and smelly places.

Instead, we need them to think of toilets as rooms of happiness – clean, colourful and not smelly.

Make the conversation more accessible by saying what we mean.

Sanitation, latrine. Wash [water sanitation and hygiene], open defecation. These words don’t mean anything to the masses.

Replace words like sanitation and open defecation with toilets and shifting outside.

People need to understand the worth of investing in toilets in terms of the health benefits.

We need to be better at making the case that it’s a great investment, with tremendous return, due to the impacts on public health, education, gender, and dignity.

For local governments, it is key they see that delivering on sanitation might help them win their next elections.

Excessively centralised planning with subsidy-focussed, construction-driven approach should be done away with.

Micro-planning should be undertaken at the gram panchayat level for more effective and efficient functioning of Swachh Bharat Mission.

The government should focus on using the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach with people building toilets on their own.

Trained in participatory approaches as well as facilitation skills, people will be able to mobilise and inspire the community to expedite change.

Post construction of toilets, there should be regular monitoring by the community of whether people are actually using the toilets.

Mobile application to track the use of toilets.

Innovative ideas with successful results should be replicated in other places.

Spread of technologies across states and to partner with all stakeholders including researchers, academic institutions and NGOs working on sanitation.

Microfinance could be a solution for funding sanitation facilities in developing countries.

Open defecation is the practice of people defecating outside and not into a designated toilet.

Eliminating Open Defecation in India by 2nd October 2019 – the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi – is one of the key aims of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan movement.

However, this has only been achieved in 17 of 686 districts so far.

Eliminating open defecation is the part of sustainable development goals.

India has far higher open defecation rates than other developing regions where people are poorer, literacy rates are lower, and water is relatively more scarce.

2011 Census found that 70% of rural households do not have a toilet or latrine.

As per the most recent Swachhta Status Report in 2015, more than half of the rural population (52.1 per cent) of the country still defecates in open.

SQUAT survey conducted by r.i.c.e found that 40 per cent of households that have a working latrine have at least one person who regularly defecates in the open.

Around 60% of Indians do not have access to safe and private toilets.

In rural sub-Saharan Africa, where people are, on average, poorer, less educated only about 35% of people defecate in the open.

In rural Bangladesh, only 5% of people defecate in the open.

In rural China, 2% of people defecate in the open.

A study points out that widespread open defecation in rural India is on account of beliefs, values, and norms about purity, pollution, and caste that cause people to reject affordable latrines.

The most important barrier to the adoption of affordable latrines in rural India is the unique history of untouchability and its continuing practice.

Open defecation in urban areas is driven by lack of space to build toilets in high-density areas, landlords not providing toilets to the tenant.

A toilet is available but is of “low quality”

Government programmes in rural India have paid little attention in understanding why so many rural Indians defecate in the open.

Very often, people who receive government latrines do not use them for defecation at all.

People reject these latrines because of concerns about pit emptying.

CAG report said that of the constructed toilets, around 30 per cent were found to be dysfunctional.

Lesser funds are now being spent on Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities.

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation says that adequate availability of water for toilets is also a concern.

Poor sanitation is widely recognised as a cause of poor health, especially in places with high population density.

Open defecation spreads bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections, including diarrhoea, polio, cholera and hookworm and is an important cause of child stunting and infant death.

Open defecation is also a classic example of a “negative externality” in which one person’s behaviour hurts other people.

Open defecation makes women vulnerable to sexual assault.
A Rail safety fund or Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh with a corpus of Rs 100,000 crore will be created over a period of 5 years

The service charge on rail tickets booked through IRCTC will be withdrawn which can be seen as promoting digital transactions

As many as 500 rail stations will be made differently abled-friendly by providing lifts and escalators.

Steps will be taken to launch dedicated trains for pilgrimage and tourism. This helps in unlocking the tourism potential of the country.

A new metro rail policy will be announced. This is expected to open up new jobs for the youth.

At least 25 train stations are expected to be awarded during 2017-18

By 2019, all coaches of the Indian Railways will be fitted with bio-toilets

Railways will integrate end to end transport solutions for selected commodities through partnerships

Unmanned railway level crossings to be eliminated by 2020

A 22% rise in the Railways Budget was announced

switching over from ICF to Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches as recommended by Anil Kakodkar

Incorporate technology for maintenance of track infrastructure

Modernization of Indian Railways

Replace all the direct discharge toilets in the trains with eco-friendly bio-toilets

Indian Railways needs an empowered safety regulator

Safety as an objective should have precedence over other regulatory issues like non-discriminatory pricing and infrastructure access.

Technologies such as ultrasonic flaw detection to keep tracks safe

Use of Derailment Detection Devices and automatic fracture detection system

Hot Axle and Box Detection (HABD) systems which are used world over for monitoring the possibility of derailment in realtime.

Increased budgeting for rapid roll out for rail safety, and more dependence on IT-based platforms as against manual labour is the need of the hour.

Railways can embrace a target of zero accidents, zero casualties by 2022

India’s Railways serves the vital function of providing travel access to millions

Indian Railways is in urgent need to modernize and bring about generational change to its system to assure safety to the users

The result of sabotage, Human Failure and Equipment Failure

Large vacancies for safety officers. 1.42 lakh posts for safety staff remain unfilled across India

Existing staff work under sub-standard conditions.

The automated anti-collision device tested previously does not seem very promising.

Engineering staff, signalling staff, and even loco pilots are frequently working 20-24 hours straight due to vacant positions.

In the 6-year period between 2009-10 and 2014-15, there were a total of 803 accidents. 47% of these accidents are due to derailment of trains.

collisions and accidents at level crossings

One of the major causes of rail fractures is the heavy load on tracks.

New trains are constantly introduced, burdening the track infrastructure to unbearable levels.

The political incentives also come in the way of removing human encroachments on railway infrastructure—another source of casualties.

slow pace of technology adoption.

The Kakodkar committee noted that the direct discharge of human waste has several serious safety implications arising out of corrosion of rails

According to observation of Commission of Railway Safety (CRS) report variation in the wheel gauges of two coaches and carriages also causing accidents.

Italian railway has come to the assistance of Indian railways in improving the rail safety

Italian railway will conduct a safety audit of the Indian Railways

The development comes in wake of recent rail accidents in India

Emphasis will be on upgrading the track conditions so that they can support the movement of high-speed trains.
A strong resilient democratic Africa helps in supporting the voices of all democratic countries like India in international forums.

Aligning with strong democratic Africa will act as counter to aggressive China.

Adopting 2015 Delhi Declaration and supporting Agenda 2063 will help India in its bid for UNSC permanent membership.

Mutually both countries can benefit in terms of trade, labour, goods and services.

Indian diaspora in Africa is about 2.7 million who will be benefited with development of the continent and benefit India with greater remittances.

Africa has a coastline of 26,000 km with some of the major rivers like Nile and Niger. India can setup Hydro power projects and develop ports interlinked with Mausam project.

India is connected to the eastern side of Africa through Arabian sea and provides a good and cheap transportation system for economic activities.

India can share its experience of democracy and help the countries who wish to establish democratic form of government. This will also build trust and road for future ties.

Africa is full of natural resources. India can help Africa in extracting them for African people which will help in their development. At the same time, a part of it would benefit India as well.

Indian IT can look for new markets in a continent which has a lot of potential in coming years. With world going towards protectionist policy, Africa is a good destination for IT.

Agenda 2063 focus on health for inclusive development and hence, medicines can help to eradicate many diseases and India can provide that at affordable costs.

Establishing cooperation between United Nations and the leaders and people of Africa for advancing inclusive and sustainable development and deepening cooperation for peace and security.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 must be strategically aligned for the benefit of the people of Africa

More investment in education, training, decent work, and engaging young people in shaping their future.

Empower women so that they can play a full role in sustainable development and sustainable peace.

Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of Africa over the next 50 years.

It seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development.

It is a call for action to all segments of African society to work together to build a prosperous and united Africa based on shared values and a common destiny.

A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

An integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa’s Renaissance.

An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

A peaceful and secure Africa.

An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics.

An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

All of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of the continent

Africa is a continent of hope, promise and vast potential.

Africa provides the majority of UN peacekeepers around the world.

African nations are among the world’s largest and most generous hosts of refugees.

Africa includes some of the world’s fastest growing economies.

The recent resolution of the political crisis in the Gambia demonstrated the power of African leadership and unity to overcome governance challenges.

African Union has consistently placed a special focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment. When we empower women, we empower the world.

The demographic dividend and huge resources will turn Africa into future investment and development destination

Significant reduction of armed conflicts, improved peace and stability, coupled with advances in democratic governance promotes international peace and security.

Reduced refugee outflux will help revive global economy

A fast rising broad-based African entrepreneurial and middle class can act as catalyst for further growth and technological progress.

While the world economy is going towards stagnation, African continent as whole could be another hope apart from India and China.

If the Agenda 2063 is worked out properly, poverty will be lessened and hence, there would be less chance of growth of terrorism.
Iran, unlike the Iraq of 2003, is a strong regional power whose influence runs from Iraq and Syria to Lebanon and Yemen.

Any meaningful effort to stabilise West Asia calls for Iran’s cooperation, not hostility.

The world, including the U.S., needs Iran’s cooperation to fight the Islamic State, particularly in Iraq, where Iranian-controlled Shia militias played a key role in liberating cities.

Iran is an important regional power in the dialogue process as seen in the recently concluded Astana Peace talks.

Deterioration in US-Iran ties could spell trouble for India’s plans to develop the Chabahar port.

Oil exports to India could once again be carried out in rupees as Iran would be forced to make concessions to revive its economy amidst sanctions and therefore, limit India’s CAD.

Iran would look for new geopolitical avenues like China to reduce effect of sanctions.

Iran moving closer to China can impact India’s strategic interest in Iran.

Chinese believe the new sanctions will create valuable opportunities for China’s interests in the Middle East.

Country like India which has significant stake in Iran will have to take its move with caution in order to maintain its relationship balance with both US & Iran.

The need of the hour for the Trump administration is to continue with the Dialogue process carried forward by his predecessor Obama for creating a peaceful world.

New sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States over Iran’s Ballistic missile test

This has taken ties between the two countries, which saw incremental improvement over a couple of years, back to the pre-Obama era.

The sanctions target 13 people and 12 companies, including groups in China, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates.

The measures were invoked in response to Iran’s support for Houthi rebels in Yemen.

US may not repeal the nuclear deal as it is a multilateral agreement.

US may put immigration curbs on Iranian citizens, impose new sanctions on Iran and branding the country “the greatest state sponsor of terrorism”.

Mr. Trump appears determined to pursue the agenda of restoring the bipolar balance between Saudi Arabia and Israel, the U.S.’s strongest allies in West Asia.

Targeting Iran by siding with the Saudis would only prompt Tehran to step up its activities in other countries through the “Shia corridor”.

If Mr. Trump ignores the ground realities, he runs the risk of making West Asia even more chaotic than it is.

Iran is an oil rich region so an isolated or unstable Iran which likely will result into burgeoning oil prices hence affecting Iran’s trade.

Business investments in Iran would further decrease and increase in trade deficit would lead to deteriorating socio-economic indicators like high inflation and unemployment.

Moscow considers Tehran as its critical ally, and sidelining of Iran by US might negatively affect improving US-Russia relations.

Russia & China has disagreed to sanctions against Iran. This may have negative impact on their relations with US.

It will strengthen US-Israel relations especially at time when relations between both took a hit by US abstention on resolution declaring Israeli settlements illegal.

Iran is one of the possible candidates for the enlargement of SCO. If Iran becomes a full member, it is quite likely that the SCO would turn from a neutral international group, to an “anti-U.S.” regional organization.
An additional Rs 10,600 crores have been allocated for health in this budget compared to previous year.

With severe cuts in health budget over last three years, the increase in allocation this year may not be enough to maintain existing health programmes.

The union and states’ health spending together is about 1.2% of GDP.

WHO recommends that governments spend between 2.5% to 5% of their GDP on health.

Funds allocated in the budget were transferred to health ministry with considerable delays and with cuts and as a result little was spent on the ground.

As a result most central programmes were facing severe cash crunches.

The Economic survey glosses over the persistent underfunding by the government.

With centre’s tax devolution to states accelerated from 32% to 42%, a sharp deceleration in Central govt. allocation to states through health schemes was also effected.

Immunization against TB and measles have been included in Mission Indradanush.

Incentives are given to ASHA workers in bringing Kala Azar patients to healthcare facility. Regular supply of diagnostic kits and drugs to states is ensured.

Mass administration of DEC tablets are being given to check filariasis.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is reducing sanitations and hygiene issues.

Government has also announced steps to improve secondary and tertiary health care facility by increasing and strengthening PG courses, opening of new AIIMS etc.

Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana makes BPL people avail healthcare facility all over India.

The Budget allocation for the health sector is not even one-third of the target laid out in the draft National Health Policy.

Investments are needed for strengthening health services for the urban poor.

The unhealthy, over-crowded and impoverished living conditions of urban slums provide the ideal environment for proliferation of infectious diseases, and could easily undo targets of eliminating tuberculosis and leprosy.

planning to address the health problems of India is a daunting task especially as health priorities vary widely across the country.

There has been poor rehabilitation facilities for leprosy patients

Concerns / Challenges

Since Independence, a significant portion of the health budget has been channelised into infectious disease control programmes

The Finance Minister in his budget speech announced that the government has prepared an action plan for eliminating kala-azar, filariasis, leprosy, measles & TB.

The announcement is significant because India shares a high global burden of these diseases.

The health budget this year has made special provisions for elimination of five infectious diseases, strengthening of rural sub-centres,

Recruitment of specialist doctors in government hospitals, increased allocation for programmes for women and children, and free treatment for the elderly poor.

Missing in this list is a mention of increased budgetary support for the prevention, control and care for non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

NCDs like cancer, diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases — the major causes of ill health, disability and death in the country today.

The Budget outlined an ambitious action plan to eliminate Kala-Azar and Filariasis by 2017, Leprosy by 2018, Measles by 2020 and Tuberculosis by 2025.

Budget 2017-18 is equally silent about the National Health Policy

Viability and ambition of these targets.

Health Budget 2017

Steps in the Right Direction

Tuberculosis

With around 3 million cases, India shares a quarter of this disease.

New elimination deadline of 2025 will also depend on improved capabilities in the health system to meet the daily drugs requirement

Integration of private practitioners with the national mission on tuberculosis is needed for guaranteed access to drugs

Continuous monitoring of such patients.

leprosy

Once hailed as eliminated in hurry, has again showed its head with more than 1 lakh cases.

Detecting new cases early and preventing them from progressing to disability-inducing grade two level is crucial

More research institutes like one in Agra with the help of Japan are needed to rehabilitate such patients.

Complete removal by 2018 as envisaged in the Budget may prove difficult.

Kala-azar, though underreported and mainly confined to Bihar and Jharkhand, is a promising candidate for elimination in the current year since the few thousand cases are caused by a protozoal parasite with no animal reservoir; control of the vector, the sand fly, holds the key.

If good medical protocol is pursued, pockets of filariasis in many States can be removed.

Rehabilitation programmes for these diseases require more resources and policy support.

Measles is a deadly disease and one of the major causes of disability and death among children.

Diseases can make child vulnerable to life threatening complications like pneumonia and diarrhoea.

Elimination by 2020 is very much needed since it may render India a blow for its young population and their capacity to be a healthy workforce.

Kala-azar

Filariaisis

Measles
A special economic zone (SEZ) is an area in which business and trade laws are different from the rest of the country. The aims of SEZ include increased trade, increased investment, job creation, and effective administration. Companies may be offered tax holidays, where upon establishing in a zone they are granted a period of lower taxation. The creation of special economic zones by the host country may be motivated by the desire to attract FDI. Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, envisages that the SEZs would attract a large flow of foreign and domestic investment in infrastructure.

**Economic costs of SEZ**

Positive
- They can develop relatively less developed areas and reduce disparities in socio-economic development
- Accelerating industrialisation and urbanisation.

Negative
- The bulk of the land acquired for these zones is fertile agricultural land.
- Loss of livelihood of farmers whose agricultural land is allocated for such non-agricultural purposes.
- Loss of forest land to set up industries.
- Increasing disease burden due to high pollution, leads to further degradation of social life.
- The inefficient water utilization has drained out the available water resources.
- People lose their permanent source of livelihood and get pushed towards poverty.
- Concessions in terms of taxes, implementation of labour welfare laws and incentives in the SEZs are not being utilised for the benefit of the more backward states.
- Where the SEZs are operating, neither the farmers and small landholders nor their dependents have got jobs except in the lowest non-skilled categories.

**India’s SEZ policy**

Positive
- It leads to less migration, promote literacy and skills upgradation.

Negative
- There is a big difference between formally approved SEZs and those in operation.
- Barring a few, we haven’t seen big investments.
- Deficiencies in the availability and quality of power are an equally important constraint.
- Withdrawal of tax incentives in the recent past has made SEZs an unattractive proposition.
- Absence of complementary infrastructure, power, roads and ports.

**Way Forward**

- Government should undertake comprehensive social-impact study to determine the compensation due to farmers for taking away their livelihoods.
- Returning unutilised land back to farmers
- The SEZ policy needs a serious review
- The government should also put performance-measuring mechanisms in place so that the promoters can be held accountable.
- Figure out how agriculture and industry can coexist and strike a clear distinction while notifying land for such projects.
- Forge linkages between Special Economic Zones and the domestic economy.
- Considering the enormous success of China’s SEZs, similar SEZ model of development can lead to higher growth in India too.
**Nature of Inequality**

Inequality has been a hot topic of international discussion for around a decade. The evidence is that the problem has intensified, not reduced.

According to Global Wealth report the richest one per cent of the world’s population had the same amount of wealth as the other 99 per cent.

Between 1998 and 2011 the incomes of the poorest 10 per cent of people increased by only $3 a year, while the incomes of the richest 10 per cent increased by $11,600.

Women workers, who are more likely to be in precarious low-paid work, are among the worst affected.

Women face gender pay gap and unequal access to social protection.

According to Global Risks Report which identified a number of threats to the world order, income inequality tops the list.

Migrant workers are one group that is often on the front lines of inequality.

Worsening income and asset distribution in the era of globalisation.

One-third of the world’s billionaire wealth is derived from inherited wealth, while another 43 per cent can be linked to “cronyism”.

Large corporations use their huge power and influence to ensure that regulations and policies are shaped to deliver continued profitability.

Manipulated tax systems. Apple paid only 0.005 per cent on its European profits in 2014.

**India’s case**

India is one of the most unequal countries in the world — the richest 1 per cent own 60 per cent of its wealth.

In India women are poorly represented in the top bracket of wage-earners and also experience wide gender pay gap.

Women are not recognised as farmers and do not own land, they have limited access to government schemes and credit, restricting their agricultural productivity.

CEO of India’s top information technology firm earns 416 times the salary of a typical employee in his company.

There are evidences against cotton-spinning mills of India using forced labour.

As per ILO, there are 5.8 million child labourers in India."

While coal provides 75 per cent of the nation’s electricity, many areas with the densest concentration of coal plants have low access to electricity.

Reducing inequality is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals which India has signed up to.

**Inequality across the world**

**Reasons**

Require national policies and international collaboration.

More equitable tax policies and Progressive taxation.

Implementing higher minimum wage.

Providing universal social protection.

Regulating companies to ensure sustainable production and prevent exploitation.

Moving away from a simplistic focus on GDP growth to focusing on improving the conditions of the bottom half.

IMF should be serious about such measures.

Independent media that is free of the influence of both governments and rich elites.

Fundamental reform of capitalism is necessary.

**Consequences**

A nation will not survive morally or economically when so few have so much, while so many have so little.

Effects that inequality has on societies: Eroding trust, increasing anxiety, and illness, (and) encouraging excessive consumption.

Strong correlation between higher levels of national inequality and a wide range of health and social problems.

Rising inequality is a major driver for the emergence of authoritarian leaders.

Rising inequality is fuelling conflict, both the incidence of crime in our daily lives and full-scale civil conflict and war.

Inequality corrodes the fabric of a society that is crucial for all people to feel they belong to it.

Inequality destroys the soul of nations, of societies, of communities and, ultimately, of every individual’s well-being.

Rising inequality will lead to slower poverty reduction, undermine the sustainability of economic growth.

**Strategies to tackle Inequality**

Oxfam said it is time to build a human economy that benefits everyone, not just the privileged few.

Inequality can be reduced, but it requires strong political will to do so.

Bringing in the wealthy people within the tax-net through inheritance tax and increase the wealth tax.

Fundamental reform of capitalism is necessary.
The tax-to-GDP ratio is the ratio of tax collected compared to national gross domestic product (GDP). The tax-to-GDP ratio gives policymakers and analysts a metric that they can use to compare tax receipts from year to year.

The number of taxpayers is a key indicator of fiscal capacity.

Major reason for the poverty of the Indian State was the dependence on land revenue for a large portion of tax collections. These revenue were low as well as inflexible.

Today tax base is no longer dominated by land.

Yet, the problem of low tax collections persists.

"Generous" government policy

Tax exemption raj that benefited the richer private sector.

India has relatively large informal/unorganised sector, and tax evasion is more rampant in informal sector compare to organised sector.

Low per capita income, high poverty, keeps tax collections low.

Out of 25 crore households in India, 15 crore belong to agricultural sector which are exempted from taxes.

A parallel economy of unaccounted incomes and expenditures which goes untaxed.

India has one of the highest numbers of disputes between tax administration and taxpayers, with lowest proportion of recovery of tax arrears.

India's direct to indirect tax ratio is roughly 35:65. This is in contrast to most OECD economies where the ratio is the exact opposite, 67:33 in favour of direct taxes.

The 2016 Economic Survey said that India's ratio of tax-to-GDP is 5.4 percentage points below that of comparable countries.

The actual number of people who pay tax is lower because of those who report zero tax liabilities.

India has one direct tax payer for every 16 voters.

only 1% of India's population pays income tax.

India's tax to GDP ratio is 16.6 percent, which is much lower than the emerging market economy average of 21 per cent and OECD average of 34 percent.

Check on exemptions – transfer pricing, Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) etc

Widening of the individual tax-payers’ base as suggested by Economic survey.

Implementing the recommendations of Tax Administration Reform Commission (TARC) to merge CBDT and CBEC.

Use of PAN, simple laws among others to increase tax buoyancy.

Attitudinal change in citizens by invoking sense of duty towards the nation.

The benefits of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems have to be reaped.

Need for effective dispute settlement mechanism

Create a special task force to track economic activities that are predominantly settled in cash thus bringing the parallel economy under the tax net

Monitoring jewellery stores to find people who bought gold without paying taxes

The imbalance between the number of people who pay income tax on the one hand and the number of people who can vote on the other hand has profound implications for the Indian social contract.

It creates political incentives for successive governments to borrow money to buy votes rather than build an effective tax system that will spur economic growth.

Citizens are also less likely to put pressure on governments to spend wisely on public goods.

The Indian State is incapable of spending for national security, a modern welfare system or public goods from its tax revenue.

Because of low tax revenue government has to borrow heavily. The result is a persistent deficit bias in Indian fiscal policy.

Successful nation states cannot be built on widespread tax evasion.

Most of the tax burden falls on the precisely the high-productivity sectors that need to grow.

Lack of adequate tax base create avenues for creation of black money and it hampers governance due to generation of black money and parallel economy

Lower revenue collection reduces the Government capacity to incur expenditure for welfare schemes. For ex. Recent cut in the budget of ICDS, shutting down of Nutrition Bureau etc.

It will increase government’s dependence on Indirect tax which is regressive.

Widen social inequality due to ineffective distribution of economic resources

Political efforts to bring India's informal sector into the formal sector, levelling the playing field, and increasing total wealth

Reduce tax rate as India has one of the highest tax rates in the world and thereby preventing tax evasion.

Focus on widening tax base rather than deepening it

Simplification of direct tax laws as suggested by Justice Easwar committee must be looked into.

Introduction of GST coupled with robust IT infrastructure (ex. Project SAKSHAM, Project INSIGHT) will bring transparency and accountability in tax payment and collection.

"In the long run, if India is to stay "on the line" as its per capita income grows, it will need to build fiscal capacity," the Survey said.

Economic survey has suggested Taxing farm sector.

Nobel-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz summarizes that optimal tax system would be "progressive income taxes, complemented by indirect taxation, property taxes and capital taxes that enhance the progressivity that can be achieved by the tax system while limiting the level of distortion

India must work towards achieving this ideal.
Post liberalisation, cutbacks in agricultural subsidies combined with the necessity to meet the international standards of quality increased the costs of input. Government encouraged shift from foodgrain to cash crop cultivation. However, due to an excess of such products in the market, prices fell making cash crops uneconomical. Production costs have steadily risen in the years since but market prices have not seen a corresponding increase. They do not even have many job options to fall back on when cultivation fails.

Private companies and state-run Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) reject many applicants due to the lack of collateral or land titles. The impact of the new Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) on protecting them in case of crop failure is yet to be seen. MNREGA Act hasn’t done much to ensure jobs to the rural population. Many migrate to cities in search of labour work.

Unviable Farming

- Low profitability: Input cost of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and diesel have shot up, but procurement price for farm produce did not keep pace
- Soil quality: Alternating between wheat and paddy has affected soil quality, forcing farmers to use more fertilisers which makes the ground less permeable

Exposure to toxins: The Malwa region is known for its high cancer cases due to increased use of pesticides.

Falling water table: With water table falling steadily, farmers forced to spend lakhs on deeper borewells.

Education and health: Hospitals and schools inadequate for rural people.

How agrarian policies heightened farmers’ economic vulnerability?

Introduction

- Over three lakh farmers have committed suicide in India since 1995.
- Several socio-economic factors have enabled an environment vulnerable to distress in the agricultural belts of the nation.
- Unable to cope with mounting debt and the inability to take care of their families, many choose to end their lives.

Current Status

- According to the NCRB data, “bankruptcy and indebtedness” witnessed the sharpest spike in 2015, registering an almost three-fold increase (3,097) as compared to 2014 (1,163).
- Maharashtra (3,030), Telangana (1,358), Karnataka (1,197), Chhattisgarh (854) and Madhya Pradesh (516) led the table.
- Karnataka saw a more than three-fold rise in farmer suicides in 2015, as compared to 2014.
- Maharashtra recorded the highest number of suicides.
- More than 72% of farmers who commit suicide have less than two hectares of land, latest data on farmer suicides compiled by NCRB.

Reasons

- 80 per cent of farmers killed themselves in 2015 because of bankruptcy or debts after taking loans from banks and registered microfinance institutions.
- Moneylenders were more flexible compared to banks and microfinance institutions. “The organised sector is less flexible because rules don’t permit them flexibility.”
- Suicides were recorded due to crop-failure and other farm-related issues like drought, price crashes etc.
- Family problems, illness and ‘Drug Abuse/Alcoholic Addiction’ were other top reasons for suicides among farmers.
- Many of the farmer loans are for marriages. It is a social obligation to spend well on weddings, which sometimes even includes dowry.
- The dependence of farmers in Marathwada on water-guzzling cash crops such as sugarcane has been cited as one of the reasons for the distress.
- Increased compensation to the next of kin of farmers who commit suicide has been cited as reason for the spike in suicide rate.
- APMC and local traders exploiting farmers.
- Lack of skills to opt for alternate employment when farming seems non profitable.
- High input costs and worsened quality of soil due to excessive use of fertilisers.
- Small Farmers grow cash crops such as cotton on small land which is highly susceptible to global price fluctuations.

Way Forward

- A concrete reorientation of policy is crucial to stopping this depressing trend.
- Need for a nationwide farmer movement. A revolution saved agriculture once, it can save farmers again.
- Proper counselling of farmers by giving them emotional support at the time of crisis.
- Increasing number of crops under MSP.
- Effective irrigation facilities should be provided. Drip and sprinkler irrigation should be popularized. Canals should be build to reach deep into villages.
- Using Information technologies and electronic media (like DD Kisan channel) to spread awareness about government schemes and monsoon predictions.
- Skill development of farmers, so that they can develop alternative sources of income. Government should initiate alternative employment generation programmes.
- Land pooling, where lands of small farmers can be pooled into a larger piece, and benefits can be maximized.
- Effective implementation of various government schemes like pradhan mantri kishin sinchay yojana, pradhan mantri fasal bima yojana and Soil Health Card scheme.
Fourth Industrial Revolution, built around AI, eliminates jobs, both blue and white collar, at a rapid pace.  
AI could drive global unemployment to 50%, wiping out middle-class jobs and exacerbating inequality.

In China the AI has already affected thousands of jobs, as electronics manufacturers develop precision robots to replace human workers.

Automation’s effect on unemployment would have huge political consequences.

Creation of artificial intelligence requires huge costs as they are very complex machines. Their repair and maintenance require huge costs.

They have software programs which need frequent upgrading to cater to the needs of the changing environment.

High Cost.

Intelligence is believed to be a gift of nature. An ethical argument continues, whether human intelligence is to be replicated or not.

Machines do not have any emotions and moral values. They perform what is programmed and cannot make the judgment of right or wrong.

They cannot take decisions if they encounter a situation unfamiliar to them. They either perform incorrectly or breakdown in such situations.

No Replicating Humans

Unlike humans, artificial intelligence cannot be improved with experience. With time, it can lead to wear and tear.

Machines are unable to alter their responses to changing environments.

No Improvement with Experience

In the world of artificial intelligence, there is nothing like working with a whole heart or passionately.

There is no sense of belonging or togetherness or a human touch.

No Original Creativity

If the control of machines goes in the wrong hands, it may cause destruction.

They are no match for the power of thinking that the human brain has or even the originality of a creative mind.

The inherent intuitive abilities of the human brain cannot be replicated.

Applications of AI

Artificial Intelligence is the branch of computer science concerned with making computers behave like humans.

It is the study of ways in which machines can be made to have sufficient creative reasoning power to perform mental tasks.

Examples of problem that falls under the area of Artificial Intelligence include understanding of language, recognising scenes, finding a way to reach an object that is far overhead etc.

In addition Artificial Intelligence includes expert tasks, such as diagnosing diseases, designing computer system and planning scientific expedition.

AI can be used in places where you have to take a decision and recommend products.

Through AI an entire manufacturing process can be made totally automated, controlled & maintained by computer system.

Example: car manufacturing machine tool production, computer chip production. Etc.

They carry out dangerous tasks like handling hazardous radioactive materials

Banks use intelligent software application to screen & analyse financial data.

Software that can predict trends in stock market have been created which have been known to beat humans in predictive power.

Aviation

Air lines use expert system in planes to monitor atmospheric condition & system status.

Weather Forecast

Neural Network is used for predicting weather condition.

Previous data are fed to a neural network which learns the pattern & uses that knowledge to predict weather pattern.

Microsoft develops AI to help cancer doctors find the right treatments

Google uses machine learning to auto-complete search queries and often accurately predicts what someone is looking for.

Facebook and Amazon use predictive algorithms to make recommendations based on a user’s reading or purchasing history.

AI is the central component in self-driving cars— which can now avoid collisions and traffic congestion

Recommendations

For India to maximally benefit from the AI revolution, it must adopt a deliberate policy to drive AI innovation, adaptation, and proliferation in sectors beyond consumer goods and information technology services.

Policymakers should make AI a critical component of the prime minister’s flagship Make in India, Skill India, and Digital India programs.

Offering incentives for manufacturers, creating regional innovation clusters for manufacturing automation and robotics in partnership with universities and start-ups.

The National Education Policy must make radical recommendations on alternative models of education that would be better suited to an AI-powered economy of the future.

The government should identify public sector applications like detecting tax fraud, preventing subsidy leakage, and targeting beneficiaries, where current advances in AI could make a significant impact.

India must view machine intelligence as a critical element of its national security strategy and evaluate models of defense research in collaboration with the private sector and universities.

Banks may look at using AI for enhancing customer experience, security, and risk management.

Intuitive and personalised customer experience is one of the benefits that AI can provide.

With the use of AI, banks’ call centre work could get reduced to a certain extent.

Repetitive Jobs

Repetitive jobs which are monotonous in nature can be carried out with the help of machine intelligence.

Machine intelligence can be employed to carry out dangerous tasks.

Artificial intelligence and the science of robotics can be put to use in mining and other fuel exploration processes.

These complex machines can be used for exploring the ocean floor and hence overcoming the human limitations.

Difficult Exploration

Artificial intelligence helps us in reducing the error and the chance of reaching accuracy with a greater degree of precision a possibility.

Artificial intelligence is applied in various studies such as exploration of space.

They are created and acclimatized in such a way that they cannot be modified or get disfigured or breakdown in the hostile environment.

Error Reduction
Introduction

More than 11 million Indians now reside abroad and 20 million travel internationally every year.

The increasing size and complexity of the diaspora requires the government to expand capacity and improve procedures.

The diaspora’s security has become an Indian national interest.

India needs to develop a coherent and strong diaspora strategy that includes strategic evacuation operations.

Whether it is Operation Raahat in Yemen, Operation Safe Homecoming in Libya, Operation Sukoon in Lebanon and Operation Sankat Mochan in South Sudan, evacuation operations have become a recurrent phenomenon in the world today.

Background

On January 26, 1986 South Yemen was being engulfed in a civil war that threatened the lives of thousands of foreigners living there.

850 Indians in the country were forced to wait for several days until New Delhi finally managed to convince a merchant ship to pick them up.

Fast forward almost 30 years, to April 2015, when Yemen was on fire once again.

Indian government successfully conducted Operation Raahat to evacuate almost 5,000 Indians and nearly 1,000 citizens from 41 other countries.

Such unprecedented efforts and use of resources reflect New Delhi’s new drive to protect the lives and assets of its citizens abroad in times of crisis.

Evacuation Operations of Indian Diaspora

Given the lack of any formal doctrine or emergency plan, the success of India’s missions has mostly been due to the individual sacrifices of officials from its diplomatic corps.

The government will no longer be able to rely on heroic, ad hoc efforts and quick-fix solutions.

Challenges will only intensify as evacuation operations become larger in scale and public scrutiny increases.

Keeping track of and monitoring this growing mobile population will pose a significant challenge to the Indian government.

Statistics does not speak very highly about India’s preparedness in times of crisis.

Rising Challenges in Protecting a Growing Diaspora

The evacuation of Indians has become challenging due to factors like the host country’s politics, geo-political shifts, the Indian Government’s stand on various issues etc.

As India aspires to become an important global power in the near future it would need the consistent support of the Indian Diaspora.

The Government should consider these steps and put them urgently in place so that India is able to invest in its capacity to carry out airlifts in the future.

Solutions

India will have to invest in cooperative frameworks that facilitate coordination among countries that have large expatriate populations.

Adapt military modernisation plans to increase capacity for out-of-area deployment and evacuation.

The government will have to invest in new technologies to better monitor the diaspora’s profile and mobility.

Making the Aadhaar card compulsory to facilitate biometric identity verification and reduce identity fraud during evacuation.

Licensing clause with commercial airlines which mandates that they will make their aircraft and crew available during crises times for evacuation operations anywhere in the world.

An agreement with international logistics companies and transport operators with insurance liabilities would facilitate immediate movement of the people to the focal point of evacuation.

Forge agreements with friendly countries for sea and air bases.

Conclusion

Supporting policy-oriented research at universities and think tanks to document the memory of senior officials.

Formulate a blueprint that lists core tasks for all operations.

An inter-ministerial committee should prepare a manual with guidelines.

India’s diplomatic cadre must be given specific training to operate in hostile environments.

Police or Army can train Indian Foreign Service probationers to operate in war zones; conduct frequent evacuation simulations and emergency drills.

The government will need to build on its rich experience in conducting more than 30 evacuation operations since the 1950s.