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Is Social Media Globalizing Terrorism?

Link: [https://youtu.be/R9S7fh-T0fU](https://youtu.be/R9S7fh-T0fU)

Social media in the present times has emerged as something inevitable for everyone. In some way or the other, it is having an impact on people and their daily lives. According to a Report from the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, United Kingdom, social media has been consciously failing to combat extremism and not doing enough to stop online radicalization. Many nations including India are facing this problem. Companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter are passing the buck on tackling terror and are hiding behind their supranational legal status despite knowing that their websites are being misused in this regard. We have moved towards a world where the threat of terrorism does not confine itself to be coming up from the other side of the border only. These people are actually those citizens who can be easily brainwashed based on a certain ideology and are prompted to take certain terrorist acts. Individuals pick up this ideology and get radicalized within 1-2 months. Earlier it took 1-2 years to pick up persons, assess them, know their inclinations, train and evaluate them as per a certain ideology.

Role of Internet in Radicalization:

1. Social media provides certain form of anonymity for propagation of ideologies. It also acts as a platform for early recruitment of youths in terrorist organizations.
2. Technological information can be provided in a very rudimentary manner. For example: Getting information about making explosives at home can become very easy after watching a certain type of video. A common person has access to this information as well.
3. Terrorist groups work as a dispersed network. If some websites are closed or shut down for their posts, they can easily access some other social media platform for propagating their ideas because social media platforms have instantaneous and worldwide reach.
   For example: When Twitter removed tweets related to terrorism, IS moved to Diaspora. Diaspora is a social media platform that provides total anonymity and security and once something is posted, the website cannot take it away or remove it.
4. These days the basic use of internet is done by terrorist groups for two purposes: propagation of ideas and communication. Communication is end to end encrypted now and there is no practical way for any intelligence agency to decrypt these communications in real time.
5. Organizations prefer for decentralized planning of terrorist attacks and the reason lies in the fact that if the planning is done from one centre or in centralized manner, they can be easily targeted by those against them. It is easier to open a franchise operation for them because it gives the attacker...
a sense of belongingness and identity that they are working on terrorist organization’s behalf and serving its purpose.

For example: The recent attacks in France, Belgium and Germany were of this nature and it is very difficult to control every individual.

**Indian Scenario and what needs to be done:**

As far as India is concerned, there have been cases of youths from Maharashtra and Kerala who wanted to join IS. There was a case of a corporate executive in Bengaluru who had lakhs of followers for his ideas supporting IS ideology.

1. **Section 79 of the Information Technology Act 2000** says that Intermediaries, like Google, Yahoo, Facebook and Twitter are not liable for third party information if they observe due diligence while discharging their duties. Further if the companies take action within 36 hours of complaint made to them for content, then one cannot move to court against them. There are other provisions in this Act but they are not applied in a stringent manner.

2. If there is a complaint regarding any content, there is no institutional mechanism where a user can put forward his complaint. Institutions such as Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) are there in UK to counter online extremism and India needs to have such mechanisms. Although there are some police patrolling pages on Facebook but are not very popular yet. Most of the people don’t know about it.

3. An inclusive and transparent approach to community outreach is necessary. Citizens need to be aware of any suspicious person or activity and report it to the concerned authorities. Their involvement will also help to put a check on these activities up to some extent at least.

4. There is a need for the Indian agencies countering terrorism to link up with international agencies like Europol or Interpol as they make considerable contributions in combating extremism and terrorism.

**Other Issues:**

1. The servers are located outside India and therefore, they are beyond the control of the Government of India.

2. Whenever social media is touched, the response from civil society is terrible. They don’t want to be restricted in any way unmindful of the actual problems.

3. **Attitude of US Government on putting restrictions on social media by India is taken as efforts to curb freedom of speech and expression.** It is a medium of soft power for US

4. Technically there are no algorithms, neural networks or artificial intelligence mechanism with which these social platforms can put a check on the bulk of posts being made every day.

Although no company wants to willfully promote terrorism but terrorism, radicalization and extremism are something that has taken a gigantic shape. It needs simultaneous efforts both nationally and internationally to eradicate this disease.

**The Usefulness of G20**

Link: [https://youtu.be/__wW9fLHi_0](https://youtu.be/__wW9fLHi_0)

The 11\(^{th}\) G20 summit of major economies of the world recently got concluded in Hangzhou, China in the midst of pessimism about global economic growth and prosperity. The economy of G20 countries accounts for more than 80% of the global GDP of the world. The group was created with an idea of reflecting the power of the so called emerging world as well particularly China and India. The initial meeting of the G20
was held in November 2008 right after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in Washington. The aim was to ensure that if all the big economies are pulled together, global growth could be preserved despite financial crisis. The common programme to do this was announced in its next meeting in London in 2009. However, there are claims that after the first two meetings, G20 has done nothing significant.

Analysis on G20’s usefulness:

It can be said that global economy lacks a global leadership and works only in times of crisis such as in 2008. G20 began as global economic super power kind of idea. The real issue is that when there is a crisis the solutions are anyway found by different mechanisms. It has however, expanded its agenda and gone beyond just the pure economics like climate change, sustainable development, terrorism, refugee crisis and many others. It is well known that the communiqué that comes out after such summits say heights more than what it actually reveals. Political undercurrents are not manifested in such meetings for example South China Sea might not be mentioned in the documents of the summit though it was mentioned in speeches.

Secretariat of G20 shifts from country to country and therefore, it is unlikely that it would impact a large number of countries apart from some individual nations. The plus point G20 has is that it compels local bureaucracies of the countries to at least think through and work out what other 19 countries are likely to come up with. In a way, it makes them slightly more globally minded than they would otherwise have been.

There are two sets of countries in G20 i.e. the emerging market economies and the advanced industrialized economies. Economies are driven by innovation and this has slowed down considerably in last few years. This has almost been zero in industrialized nations. Now, there is still a scope here for developing countries and therefore, India and China have become prominent in the last few years in world economy and everyone is turning to them. These countries need to talk to old industrialized nations somewhere and G20 seems to be a good platform for this.

The developed nations started talking of fair trade and the developing economies talked of free trade. At present it is in our interest to use these forums for maintaining pressure of the continuing relevance of free trade and liberalization. On a public forum, it is very difficult to go against the idea free trade although the developed nations privately do not favour it.

Chinese President said that the world economies still faces multiple risks and challenges including a lack of growth momentum and consumption, turbulent financial markets, receding global trade and investment. Trade and growth have a life cycle of their own up to some extent. In this case, the dialogue among the major players does give them an advantage to talk of some policies based on the fact the slow growth phase might stay for some time to come and chalk out a plan that may work for all of them together in the global markets. A kind of consensus if derived upon might be beneficial which can be implemented individually by all countries.

The global economic might may shift to China in the coming times but Americans still retain great dominance in terms of technology, economic, political and international agendas. US is neither going to vacate this space easily nor will be compelled to vacate it because there are many other players who in their own interest would prefer American supremacy politically although economic scenario might be different. In the recent years, the TTP and TTIP have been proposed by US. They are clearly meant to give US a greater leverage in global trade and contain China. These are attempts for setting benchmarks on intellectual property, investment protection etc. something which US could not get through WTO. These are meant not to promote trade but to control trade.
Structural reforms to raise productivity and output are major issues. In Japan, economics has not led to fulfillment of promises, big banks in US still have more control over economy and are more powerful, Europe has not been able to revive public investment and commodity exporting countries have not been able to diversify their economies. Structural reforms will meet a lot of local opposition. India’s fiscal position and balance of payments is good at present. So it depends on **how a country manages its economy in the long term.**

In a nutshell, though G20 is a big show but it needs to have some substance as well.

### India Afghanistan Strengthen Security Ties

**Link:** [https://youtu.be/yyR1EPMQft8](https://youtu.be/yyR1EPMQft8)

Afghan President Mr. Ashraf Ghani concluded a successful visit to India recently. There are indications that India is considering scaling up of security ties with Afghanistan, training Afghan defence forces as well as supplying military hardware. India has offered a $1 billion package for assistance this time. This is a shift in India’s primary focus on Afghanistan now of only providing development assistance. India is already Afghanistan’s 5th largest donor having provided developmental construction assistance of $2 billion since 2001.

**Analysis:**

1. **Strategic Convergence:**
   
   Afghanistan had 46 military partners that had been a part of International Security Assistance Force including the US. When it started negotiating strategic partnership agreements, the Afghan leadership was clear that the first such arrangement should be with India. But, it did not fructify as a really strategic partnership at that time when the agreement was signed because the then government of India could not fulfill the demands made by Afghanistan which the present government is more forthcoming about. In the present meeting, the Indian PM and the Afghan President have decided that the Strategic Partnership Council which has to meet at the ministerial level will have its first meeting soon. Somewhere this effort from India signifies that the other nations involved there need to do their duty as well.

2. **Break from past strategies of India with Afghanistan:**
   
   To an extent it can be said that the current strategy is not a continuation of India’s previous policy with Afghanistan. When President Ashraf Ghani was elected, he had kind of put India Afghanistan relations on the sidelines and concentrated on building up relationships with Pakistan. He sent Afghan cadets to Pakistan’s Military Training Academy and went to Pakistan to meet Chief of Army Staff Mr. Raheel Sharif. He was perhaps doing so in the hope of turning a new chapter in the Pakistan Afghanistan relationship. But after 2 years, it seems he is quite disappointed and has reassessed his policy.

3. **The Ghani Shift:**
   
   Providing military hardware is a part of India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement and therefore, in a sense India is not doing anything beyond its role outside the parameters. It is important to see whether the Ghani shift towards India is tactical or strategic. There are groups in Afghanistan of the view that Pakistan is not going to change its hostility and therefore, there is a natural coincidence of interest between India and Afghanistan. US is also withdrawing from there which can be seen from the fact that 2014 election in Afghanistan was a highly contested one and the National Unity Government was put by Obama-Kerry team which is going out by the end of this year. This is what has further turned Afghan PM to turn towards India. There was pressure on Mr. Ghani from his own government to shift towards India.
4. **Taliban’s Role:**
India supplying weapons to the Afghan army has got nothing to do with Taliban. Taliban is a fringe element now in Afghanistan. It’s ideological and organizational links with groups like Al Qaeda are unbroken. The leadership changes in these groups are done by Pakistan army. The people in charge today are members of the Haqqani network. They are closely related with the Taliban leadership. India’s relation is with the Afghan government and its citizens. Afghanistan has changed in last 20 years. Taliban is not strong enough today to overwhelm this government in Kabul. Although it is ill equipped militarily, it is strong enough to keep away Taliban from its provincial capitals and Kabul. Even during the Taliban phase, India gave its support to the Rabbani government and recognized it as legitimate.

5. **Pakistan’s worry:**
Pakistan has always maintained that Indian influence in Afghanistan would be disadvantageous strategically for its own interests. The first interest that Pakistan has shown is a desire to control Kabul’s India policy which no Afghan government is willing to grant. If this is how Pakistan defines its strategic interest, it is irrational. Though Pakistan has its concerns and it says that it wants to bring peace and stability in Pakistan but in actual sense, it is doing just the reverse.

6. **Analogy between India-Nepal versus Pakistan-Afghanistan:**
Drawing this analogy is not correct because India and Nepal share an open border and give national treatment to Nepali people in terms of work and livelihood. Pakistan-Afghanistan relation is a very complex one. 2/3rd of the Pashtuns live in Pakistan and not in Afghanistan. This is the crux of the problem along Durand line. No Afghan leader is willing to recognize this line as the border. They see their natural frontiers in Attock and Indus River. Pakistan keeps on creating troubles for Afghanistan by sending insurgents to its neighborhood.

7. **Access to Chabahar Port:**
Access to Chabahar Port is strategically important for Afghanistan to provide an alternate sea route and will change its dependence on Pakistan. This was discussed way back in 2003 but because of sanctions on Iran and other developments, it became difficult. But now the situation has changed and this could be a game changer offering landlocked Afghanistan access to external markets while bypassing Pakistan.

8. **Terrorism:**
Both India and Afghanistan are equally affected by Pakistan sponsored terrorism who are externally oriented. The aim of terrorists in Afghanistan is to make it unstable and to try to control the government. In India, terrorism is aimed to destabilize India and take the state of Jammu and Kashmir out of the Union and control it. The objectives and methods are both the same and so is the master manipulator of these activities in both the nations.

9. **Role of US:**
In the last 2 years, US policy in Afghanistan has been holding on to the dispensation that they created post the presidential elections, maintain the National Unity Government at all cost and holding on operations till the new administration comes in the US. Basically, the old engagement of United States is not going to come back but what the new administration might want to do is to make Afghanistan capable enough to fight its own war and stabilize itself. The army they have left there has good quality of training but this is an army which is fighting with personal infantry weapons bereft of any support systems like protected surface mobility, medical evacuation and they have no heavy weapons, tanks or artillery to fight. It has welcomed greater Indian military assistance to fill shortfalls.

**Limitations and Precautions:**
The fact that much of the proposed equipment originates from Russia like Mi-25 need not be a stumbling block to the agreement. India has to ensure that it builds institutional linkages with Afghanistan and does
not have Indian troops on its grounds engaging in combat while strengthening the institution of the Afghan army. India has to be cautious that it does not give any significant political actor the feeling that it is being neglected or its interest is being harmed.

The Big Picture

Misleading Ads: Onus on Celebrity Endorsers Also

Link: https://youtu.be/Q-ZvWUsX-c

Celebrities endorsing various brands or companies might have to face some trouble in the coming time if the amendments proposed to the Consumer Protection Act are carried out in the next session of Parliament. They will put onus on celebrities in case of misleading ads. The issue came into light after Maggie noodles were found with presence of excess lead and monosodium glutamate. The amendments proposed by the Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution have been approved by the Ministries of Consumer Affairs and Law.

Provisions:

According to the official amendment made to the Consumer Protection Bill in 2015;

“Whoever makes an endorsement which is false or misleading and prejudicial to the interest of any consumer shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years and with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees; and for the second and subsequent offences, be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and fine which may extend to fifty lakh rupees”.

1. The amendment has put up a harsher mode of punishment for the celebrities endorsing a brand through misleading ads. It redefines endorsement as one of the features of advertisement thereby making celebrities liable as well.
2. Endorsement under Section 17B is defined as “any message, verbal statement, demonstration” or depiction of the name, signature, likeness or other identifying personal characteristics of an individual or the name or seal of an organization “which make the consumer to believe that it reflects the opinion, findings or experience of the person making such endorsement”.
3. Section 75B has provision for liability of an endorser, i.e. a celebrity would be liable if the endorsement is “false or misleading” and prejudices the interests of consumers and “mistaken belief” by the celebrity cannot be taken as a defence. He/she could also be liable in case it is proved that he or she had falsely claimed to have been using a product, be it noodles, RO or shampoo.
4. According to the draft, cognizance of an offence under the provision can be taken by the court only on a written complaint by or on behalf of the Central Consumer Protection Authority. The provision to section 75B allows a celebrity to escape liability if it is proved that he/she took reasonable precautions and exercised due diligence before endorsing the product or service.

Views and Counterviews:

1. Consumers tend to believe advertisements promoted by eminent personalities or celebrities blindly. But when the unfair trade practices are exposed the celebrities are quick in disassociating themselves with the products/companies they were representing.
2. While a celebrity has the ability to influence masses, he/she is also morally responsible of leading the people in right direction.
3. Endorsers must be accountable for the ads they do. They are mature enough and know exactly what they are doing. Due diligence is required in the question of making wise choices. Consumers are more important than anyone else and this legislation takes care of this fact. A jail sentence might not be recommended by many, but a hefty fine should be levied.

4. It has to be understood that a celebrity might be a perfectionist in his field but he is no specialist. He/she has been signed by the brand for his ability to connect to the masses only by lending his/her face and voice. For example: If a DTH is being advertised by a celebrity and its services are disrupted for some reasons, then the celebrity of course cannot be held guilty of misleading the people.

5. If a celebrity has to be booked for misleading ads, then all media channels that played the ad should also be punished and similarly entire manufacturing unit or creator too as everyone made profit out of it. So, if the authorities need to do consumer protection, then it has to be full-fledged and cannot just attack celebs. Trust for a brand is a combination of several factors and celebrity is one of them. Liability is something that cannot be shifted to one person only.

6. Before going to endorse a brand, the celebrities should ask for the tests or verifications that have been done by the company.

At present authorities like ASCI (Advertising Standard Council of India) are engaged in scrutiny of ads i.e. after they are made. What is required is pre checking before the ads are run in the media and a national advertising standard which clearly lays down rules and regulations regarding advertisements. There is no control of ASCI over ads running in the print media or internet. So, a large chunk of ads remain unchecked as well. The provisions at present in the amendments leave a lot of grey area in terms of the words like “mistaken beliefs” and “misleading”. Evidence is required to prove a celebrity guilty whether he/she knowingly did an ad or not. In the present scenario what is apparent is the fact that a moral onus can be created on the celebrity but creating a legal one might be difficult.

Indo-US Strategic Ties: Where Is It Heading?

Link: [https://youtu.be/9aldfP4zvag](https://youtu.be/9aldfP4zvag)

The relationship between India and USA which has been on an upward curve for some time is further seeing an upward trend. The crucial LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) recently signed by both the countries is a significant step towards strategic and defence ties.

What does the Agreement mean?

1. It provides for automatic approvals process in place to militaries of both the nations to share each other’s bases for various operations. It establishes basic terms, conditions, and procedures for reciprocal provision of logistic support, supplies, and services.
2. It covers logistics supplies during disaster relief efforts, joint exercises, port visits, joint training and humanitarian assistance along with other uses to be discussed on a case by case basis.
3. The agreement does not create any obligation on either party to carry out any joint activity compulsorily and also does not provide for any basing arrangements.

Analysis:

The agreement is a strategic binding between India and the US. This is the final lap for Obama administration not only with respect to India but also with other countries. This is the time when Obama’s legacy is being finally summed up. From USA’s point of view this agreement is a tremendous success which was held back for several years.
By signing this agreement India does not agree to provide basing rights to USA or being a military ally to it. As per the agreement, it only facilitates the Indian military to fulfill its basic logistic requirements such as food, water, transportation, petroleum, oils, lubricants, clothing, communication services, medical services, storage services, training services, spare parts and components, repair and maintenance services, calibration services and vice versa. Since America is already a strong military power, at present India seems to have an edge as this agreement gives an enabling framework and will enhance its sustainability in different areas of humanitarian work.

This agreement has taken more than 14 years to be signed. America has put India as a defence partner and not an ally. It wants India to be a rising power and this is in interest of both the countries. In 2003 during Iraq war, India had provided logistic facilities to the US ships for refueling. Ships were escorted through the Malacca Strait. The agreement is more than logistics supplies and has to be looked in terms of trade, defence and technological initiative. For example: DTTI (Defence Technology and Trade Initiative) aims to strengthen India US cooperative research, co-production, and co-development of capabilities which are required for modernization of our military forces and for this US has set up an Arms Act as well specifically for India. An India Rapid Reaction Cell has been set up in Pentagon as well to speed up defence ties.

The key point is access to bases today and if India gets access to the US bases in South China Sea, South East Asia or Asia Pacific, then it would be a major plus point. India holds more joint military exercises with US than any other nation in the world. These exercises will become much easier to conduct.

Geostrategic Importance:

This is a kind of litmus test from America’s point of view. India has taken a leap of faith and has come much closer to US in strategic and geopolitical terms. While having its own strategic autonomy, India has identified itself with US strategies as well in a harmonious manner. However, this is a foundation agreement and there are many other agreements which are major ones yet to be signed. China may or may not be much concerned about this agreement because it already has it owns bases in Djibouti and access to Pakistani ports. So, China can take care of its requirements. If such agreements are signed by India, it cannot stop Sri Lanka in future to sign any pact with Chinese. The aim is basically to have a containment strategy against China. Russia has got access to our region through Iranian ports very recently. So, India has taken correct steps in its interest and there is no alternative to it.

Conclusion:

The non alignment era has ended now and this is the time for multi alignment. India has maintained good relations with Japan, US, China, Russia and other countries while talking of strategic autonomy. Indo-US relationship tends to work in bits and pieces as the role of US in South China Sea is still not clear and both countries have different views on Afghanistan. Now in the pretext of current events this diplomacy is something that needs to be maintained in future as well.

Trade Union Strike: Why Is It On?

Link: [https://youtu.be/z24-r8dQZos](https://youtu.be/z24-r8dQZos)

Recently, there was a nationwide strike by 10 central trade unions to protest against what they termed as government’s inaction on the 12 point charter of demands that they presented a year back. The strike paralyzed normal life in many states and affected sectors like transport, banking, insurance, automobile, oil, defence, education and many others. The government also announced that it was revising the basic minimum wages, one of the demands of the unions apart from other demands on
bonus and social security. However, the trade unions rejected the offer and continued to go for strike except the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS).

Causes for the strike:

1. The 12 point charter of demands contains price-rise through universalization of public distribution system and banning speculative trade in commodity market, containing unemployment, universal social security cover for all workers, enhanced pension not less than Rs.3,000 per month for the entire working population, stoppage of disinvestment in Central/State PSUs, no amendments in labour laws, no FDI in railways, insurance and defence. However, most of the steps taken by government in this regard does not gel with the demands being made by the trade unions and goes in opposite direction.

2. It was announced by the Union Labour Minister that the minimum wages for contract workers will be increased to Rs.10,000 which didn’t come into effect. The government in the last minute announced a hike for un-skilled non-agricultural workers from Rs.246 to Rs.350 or Rs.9100 per month which is half of what is being demanded by the labour unions. The offer made is not significant as per trade unions because only 70 lakh workers employed in central government out of approximately 40 crore workforce will be taken care of under this change.

3. Only some of the trade unions have been called upon for discussions and not all and it has been alleged that there is a confrontationist attitude of trade unions towards government. Notice for strike was sent five months ago but they were called for meeting only a few days back. There were no conclusions of the meeting held with the Advisory Board.

4. The amendments proposed in different labour laws are pro employer and are less favourable for workers according to the trade unions.

A minimum wage has to be fixed in such a way that it can address concerns of industries, employers and workers together. The government is moving towards this process. Larger issues like FDI needs time to be sorted in best interest of the nation. Both permanent and contract workers need to be at par and differential wages will not solve this issue, therefore amendments in Minimum Wages Act is required. The government needs to act in a neutral way at present. It cannot agree to all the demands. It has to work in the larger interest of every stakeholder. Economy, resources, employment generation all has to be taken care of by the government.

Internet Based Mobile Telephony: What Will Be The Impact?

Link: https://youtu.be/yImOq-ffDxY

The era of mobile phones is on the verge of undergoing a vital transformation. From a time when we had to pay Rs.32 per minute, we may be entering into a phase of free calls. The announcement of launch of Jio Mobile Services by Reliance has taken the entire country and telecom industry to a new level. Reliance Jio’s plan will have a cascading effect on the entire industry as it is expected to move from voice to data services in a major way where voice services are being expected to be offered free. The data services are also supposed to be available at drastically reduced prices in comparison to what other companies are providing at present.

Transformation and Impact on People:

What Reliance has done is quite innovative, visionary and impactful. This is going to reposition the whole telecom industry in terms of providing, pricing and experiencing of services. The bars set will be very high for other operators. More and more services are being offered on the digital platform to the consumer.
Customer experience along with network is the key which is going to take it forward from here. The Indian customer is very intelligent and price sensitive so he/she would not mind switching to a different network.

The services are not really free as there is a data cap. Looking at the data plans, it cannot be said to be as attractive as they initially seemed to be. For example- Rs50 per GB will be charged when a consumer subscribes to Rs.1400 per month kind of data plan. Voice calls are being provided on VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). Therefore, whether call rate goes down or not, charges for data being consumed for the voice call will have to be paid by the customer. From circuit switching we are moving to packet switching. The benefit of this service lies in the fact that from being a voice country, India will become a video country. This is a paradigm shift where now a consumer will get an option to have access to education plus entertainment in the form of video content.

**Infrastructure Requirements:**

On the other hand, the infrastructure for this kind of seamless network is not in place yet. Right now the network is already choking at the pace consumers are using it. So, they need to be transformed at a rocket speed which is not going to happen. Call drop is a major issue which needs to be addressed. How the infrastructure and related resource capabilities of Reliance will play in the coming time is important as it has slightly bigger edge compared to other players in this field.

Reliance has 4G spectrum at present because of takeover of Infotel. The last mile infrastructure is missing while they do have the backbone infrastructure of broadband (optical fibres). Again at the base station level, microwave infrastructure is not very sound. There might be severe call drops because of this up to 60-70% while connecting to another network. VoIP is never going to give that voice quality which is provided by a 2G GSM services. Connectivity also needs to be seen with other service providers as well because initially a new user tends to make 90% of the outgoing calls to other networks than he/she receives. People may need to buy new cellphones to have a device which supports 4G network. Security of the network is something that has not drawn attention of people. How personal data of individual Indians will be secured on a completely data driven network is a big question.

**Impact on Other Operators:**

As of now this is an open field and only announcements are made. We need to see what plans will be finally announced by Reliance. If in case there are any monopolistic practices, safeguards are provided for that under Competition Act. The services being provided in the trial period if continue to go on, that would further bring the question of competition in the scene. Free pricing can be offered only for a limited period of time attracting a large chunk of consumers initially. This might appear disruptive to other service providers and they can demand that this predatory pricing will finish off competition eventually. But for this, complaint has to be made if someone is legally aggrieved by it. Just under the garb of Competition Act, one cannot be stopped from offering free services to consumers.

**Telecom sector is already stressed.** There are indications from the investor community as well as stock market that this kind of pricing will lead to elongation in payback period and return on investment might be subdued. The company should be cautious while going through this route of free pricing and should not fall into a death spiral like some airlines companies did and killed themselves.

**Conclusion:**

The shift has already started and people are moving to data in both urban and rural areas. Other service providers have already geared themselves up to face the competition. In case of any disruption, Reliance does not have a 2G or 3G network to fall upon as compared to other networks. What is apparent now is the fact that 2G might fade away slowly with 3G/4G services running parallel for some time.
PM at ASEAN and East Asia Forum: Takeaways?

Link: https://youtu.be/yWy8zikzrvY

Recently Indian Prime Minister has been involved in some robust diplomacy while attending ASEAN and East Asia Summits in Laos apart from having a series of bilateral meetings with US and Japanese counterpart. India this year marked its 20 years for full dialogue partnership with ASEAN. The importance of these countries to India is very significant ever since it adopted the Look East Policy which later got converted into Act East Policy. These ASEAN countries are not only important with respect to trade and economic cooperation but also security and defence aspects.

Takeaways:

1. The conversion of Look East to Act East Policy happened because India’s focus shifted away from ASEAN and now there is a clear indication that defence and security cooperation has assumed a larger share. A lot depends on the implementation of India’s projects and promises in order to regain the lost ground in the east.
2. China is both the determinant as well as a constraint in policies of India towards South East Asia and this constraint is compelling India to take some tough decisions. Indonesia has been left out and this where a shortfall is being seen.
3. Prime Minister’s visit to Vietnam and the fact that he announced a 500 million dollar credit line that would be focused on the defence and security shows the commitment India is bringing in the bilateral arrangements with a regional impact.
4. One of the most important aspects is security in maritime domain. There is a need to ensure security and stability in the sea and efforts are required collectively in this matter. The SAGAR initiative by Indian Prime Minister is a clear underpinning of the fact that maritime security has to be given its due importance.
5. Indian projects are delayed in this region like the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project and the north-east Myanmar connectivity has also been a problem. China has now gained an edge in this area and therefore, it is important to contain them. Countries like Thailand, Laos and Cambodia are much closer to China. At present, ASEAN is itself split on issues like South China Sea and does not have a united kind of stand. Indian trade under performs in this region and China is far ahead of India. Security policies follow trade policies in a certain way. Both have to match up with each other.
6. This region always had more Chinese influence at least in those countries which are on the Pacific side. China wants to dominate the region like freedom of navigation in South China Sea or over flights. India can play a major role here by having good diplomatic ties with Japan because it is unlikely that Japan will move on towards Chinese side.
7. This platform has also been utilized by India to raise the issue of terrorism. Since 2008, Pakistan supported terrorist attacks have been declining. Though India wants to sensitize other international leaders on this issue, these summits have to be used by India to put up its positive agenda because it has huge economic prospects in terms of manufacturing and trade.
8. Primary area of concern for India right now is China Pakistan nexus. Indian Prime Minister has been candid in showing China that on one hand it wants to be a responsible nation but on the other hand, it is abating terrorism. China is rewarding countries which support terrorism.

The mild language in the statement, despite growing tensions in the region over China’s claims, is quite striking given that the summit included US President, whose administration has repeatedly expressed concern over Beijing’s actions in the resource-rich sea. The lukewarm rebuke is a reflection of Beijing’s diplomatic, economic and military clout within the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which spearheaded the summit with the United States, China, Russia, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
Railway Flexi Fares: Why Is It Necessary?

The Indian Railways has come up with a surprise for the passengers travelling by Shatabdi, Rajdhani and Duronto trains by introducing flexi fares like in airlines. As a result, the passengers will be paying different prices for the same seats and berths depending upon when they book their tickets. The difference can go up to 50% of the original fares. On some routes these fares might turn out to be more than the fares in economy airlines. The 150 trains under the three heads account for 13 to 14 per cent of the Railways’ passenger revenues. According to flexi fare system only the first 10 per cent of seats and berths will come at the base fare, with 10 per cent increases for every batch of 10 per cent sold. The increase will be capped at some fixed limit of the base fare.

Reasons for flexi fares:

1. Indian Railways run about 12900 passenger trains per day and the railways is losing around more than 40% of what they spend on passenger trains.
2. The trains like Rajdhani are the ones in which the elite class prefers to travel. So, some revenue can be garnered from them.
3. The cost of service is almost double of what is being charged from the passengers.
4. Freight business is already very expensive in India as compared to other countries in the world. Therefore, further increase in this area is not feasible.

Impact:

1. The total number of passengers which travel per year on Indian Railways is around 840 crores. Out of this half of the passengers are sub-urban people which are only a losing traffic. The non sub urban traffic is 380 crores. Out of this 230 crores are exempted from flexi fares because they are ordinary second class. The upper class is only 14 crores in total. So this concept is going to affect very few people at present.
2. This system adopted by airlines as well takes care of yield management. It is important to see what the occupancies are. As the occupancies shrink, fares go up so that maximum yield per seat can be obtained on an average coach. This method is quite successful in airlines. When trains are full all the time, there is no question of yield management.
3. The Rajdhani and the Shatabdis are premium trains, which are favoured by the relatively better off. Those who plan their journeys later or in case of an emergency will be at loss.

Analysis:

An upper ceiling of the flexi fares has to be fixed. During festive seasons, airlines charge exorbitantly high amounts. This should not be allowed by railways being a government institution. Quality of services in these trains need to be improved as it is still not up to the mark compared to its international counterparts. Progress is there but still a lot more has to be done. More trains need to be run on flexi fares as the revenue generated will help in improving amenities for people.

It is important to note here that middle class and the upper middle class also travel by these trains. Unlike taxi, bus or air services, train services in this country are a monopoly. This experiment may be extended to include other long-distance trains in the future. A poor or a lower middle class person who decides to travel later should not be priced out by such a system by a monopolistic provider that aims to provide a public service.

This is not a precursor to privatization of railways though there are fears. Indian railways cannot be privatized because this is a system which joins the entire nation. If it is privatized there is a threat to the
unity of the nation. However, some segments of railways may be privatized for better services to the passengers.

**Conclusion:**

In a nutshell, the person who reserves earliest will get the maximum benefit. The economic situation of railways is not very good. This is one step for a way forward. There is a need for tariff regulator for regulation on prices.

This system has to be *evolved slowly and gradually*. This is a slow medicine which needs time to work for railways and passengers as well. For now, it can be said that the concept of dynamic pricing is a commendable move by Indian Railways.

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**Cauvery Dispute: Why Has It Gone Out Of Hand?**

Link: [https://youtu.be/q6RZCGV_cU4](https://youtu.be/q6RZCGV_cU4)

The dispute over sharing of Cauvery water between the two states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu once again stirred the emotions in both the states leading to violence and destruction of public property in Karnataka. The monsoon which started on a promising note in Karnataka later on suddenly tapered off leading to shortage of water in four reservoirs across the Cauvery. Due to this Karnataka has not been able to fulfill its obligation of ensuring 94 tmc feet of water between June and August to Tamil Nadu as mandated by the Cauvery tribunal in its final order in 2007. The shortfall is more than 60 tmc feet with Karnataka releasing 33 tmc feet in the last three months. Following Tamil Nadu’s appeal before the Supreme Court, Karnataka was ordered to release 15000 tmc feet of water for 10 days between between 7th to 16th September 2016 and in the recent order Supreme Court asked to release further 12000 tmc feet till 20th September 2016.

**Reasons:**

1. There are many issues which need to be resolved in this regard one of them being to make both the states agree to a distress formula in a season of deficit rainfall. Both the states have not agreed to any such thing so far.
2. The *Cauvery Supervisory Committee that is a temporary arrangement* has a fairly limited operational scope though it was formulated on the directions of Supreme Court when a similar kind of situation prevailed in 2012. There is a need to have a permanent body which has been recommended by tribunal as well.
3. The way media has presented and blown this issue out of proportion has also led to escalation of emotions without much reason. It has become something more about regional and linguistic identity rather than water or irrigation.
4. Ideally, as stipulated by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, Cauvery Management Board should look into the technicalities of water sharing which is there to monitor the water flows. These technical aspects have not been taken into consideration in the decision given by the Supreme Court.

Courts and tribunals are good and of course they do provide constitutional schemes but what is needed now is a *bilateral or trilateral consensus that works for a longer duration than this piecemeal approach of tribunals and courts*. Politicians need to be on ground to control mobs, emotions and passions of people when judiciary verdicts do not find acceptance among people.

Taking into account geographical aspects, *Karnataka depends upon south west monsoon* for water. Rainfall occurs from June to September. This is the reason for Krishnasagar dam and Coorg area to have low water levels. On the contrary, rainfall occurs in Tamil Nadu in October. This issue is all about *managing the scantly*...
resources effectively and in a sustainable manner. There is a need for an independent body or the supervisory committee to look the requirements of the states, the ground situation and measurement of water level.

This issue needs to be dealt in a sensitive manner keeping in mind the requirements and limitations of both the states. The needs of the farming community is something that has to be safeguarded at large and the fringe elements involved in acts of violence should be strictly dealt with to send out a strong signal that this is not a solution to any problem.

India’s Concerns on PoK Corridor and China-Pak Defence Pact

Link: https://youtu.be/14iGLjXlyk8

Few days back, there were important developments in the international arena with the G20 leaders gathering in Hangzhou in China where the BRICS meeting was also held on the sidelines. As far as India was concerned, bilateral ties between India and China and also its role in PoK has figured prominently. Indian Prime Minister also raised concerns about the CPEC and also problems of terrorism and its funders. Meanwhile, there has been news from Pakistan about its cabinet approving a long term defence agreement with China.

Analysis and India’s Concern:

The summit has not come out with something different as these issues have been discussed before when Indian PM went to China in 2015 and also in 2014. The meeting was more at economic level rather than political or security level. G20 is both economics and politics. It also comprises the emerging powers of the world and is therefore going to be a more meaningful forum in future. Good economics is always about politics. But there are geopolitical perspectives in different templates as far as India is concerned in terms of relations with China and Pakistan, South China Sea issue and so on.

The news coming from Pakistan is a significant development. The military relations have been formalized with a pact between China and Pakistan. This can be a negative repercussion for India, US and other nations. If Pakistan has cleared this pact then obviously there is a greater receptiveness from the Chinese on this idea. What this pact contains is still not clear yet. There is a paradigm shift in the geopolitics of our region and realignment is on the cards based on issues like greater proximity between India and US, India- China relations cooling down, rebalance strategy of US with Asian countries, deterioration of US-Pakistan relationship and so on.

Though relations cannot be improved overnight between India and China, but efforts are being made from both the sides to reboot and revive this relation. Indian Prime Minister mentioned that New Delhi and Beijing must be sensitive to each other’s “strategic concerns” — a theme which included a reference to terrorism radiating from the controversial China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Issues, including China’s reservations in sanctioning Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and the CPEC, are expected to be discussed openly and frankly in future. In terms of CPEC, China- Pakistan bond has become quite strong in a positive way and they would not want India to interfere in any way. India needs to think of its security and defence strategy as what China is doing is not India centric. It is a move to counter US rebalancing strategy. There was clear reference by the Indian Prime Minister towards terrorism and its funders. He mentioned that the countries which support and reward terrorism should be isolated and sanctioned in the international community.

The issue is not what emerges out of G20 communiqué. The PM’s intervention on terrorism was crystal clear on this international platform. India has adopted a much more robust approach towards such issues.
However, China sees Pakistan as a solution to the problem and India sees it as a problem. Now how these changing relationships among the countries emerge later is something that rests with future.

**SC Collegium: Demand for Transparency**

Link: [https://youtu.be/t9Bliz5Z-wk](https://youtu.be/t9Bliz5Z-wk)

Even as the government and the Supreme Court is involved in intense and sometimes unpleasant engagements on what should be the nature of Memorandum of Procedure for appointments and transfer of judges, internal problems have cropped up within the Supreme Court collegium. Justice J. Chelameswar, one of the members of the collegium has raised several questions on its functioning. In a letter to the Chief Justice of India, he has raised the issue of lack of transparency. He has also refused to attend any of the collegium meetings henceforth and is demanding that the recommendations of other four judges to be sent to him through circulation. He has recorded that so far there have been no records of the meetings of collegium and no minutes have been maintained of these meetings.

It has brought the focus again on the manner in which the judiciary functions on its administrative side. Mr. Chelameswar’s boycott is undoubtedly based on principle. He has highlighted that transparency is a vital factor in constitutional governance and proceedings of the Supreme Court in terms of appointments and transfers is completely opaque. Proceedings of the collegium are not recorded. There are no records on why a judge is selected or rejected. He has exposed the working of the Supreme Court. Previously, these issues were raised but this is the first time a member of the collegium has raised it publicly.

**Requirements:**

There is a need for clearer criteria for selection of judges, there has to be a method for evaluating various candidates based on those criteria and also, there is a requirement of some transparency in the whole process of the appointment at least to the extent that the names of the proposed candidates are put up on a public website. Public can also contribute in sending whatever information they have about the judges. What is being said by the members of the collegium about appointments should be recorded and made known under RTI.

**Possible Drawbacks:**

The judiciary needs to handle this matter in a much more responsible manner. Whether the concerns raised by Justice J. Chelameshwar will be helpful in strengthening the institution or not cannot be said. His position is consistent with his dissent, in which he has spoken clearly on the ills of the system. If there is transparency, there are drawbacks as well attached to it.

For example: There is transparency and a judge gets further elevated to the Supreme Court but then if one or two judges in the collegium have something against that judge being considered and if they put this in writing, this will pose difficulty for the candidate to work even in his/her present position. Therefore, even if minutes are to be maintained, there should be a procedure that they don’t come to public knowledge immediately. They should be kept where they can be looked up after a period of 5-6 years down the line. This kind of limited transparency where reasons are compulsorily recorded and don’t bring unwarranted consequences with them is something that is required.

**Conclusion:**

The judiciary showed the way forward by asking the Centre to prepare a revised memorandum. It should also end the impasse by taking an early call on firming up the procedure. Raising the issue of transparency
in a non-transparent manner is not the right thing. Institutional reforms need public debate and their involvement. It cannot be left to the institution itself. There is no harm in truth being known.

## Uri Attack: Reasons and Responses

**Link:** [https://youtu.be/TFJEmdK6N2Q](https://youtu.be/TFJEmdK6N2Q)

The recent attack on Indian Army camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir has raised serious concerns for India as 17 soldiers were killed and 23 more were injured. This is supposed to be the heaviest blow the army has suffered in a single incident since the insurgency began in the valley in 1990 according to some observers. This is the second attack on military establishment after the Pathankot air base attack this year. The needle of suspicion points to militant outfits from across the border after the four suicide bombers were killed during the counter attack by the Indian forces. The attack has enraged the country and the demand for action to counter these attacks is gaining momentum.

### Reasons:

Prima facie, the first reports that have come from some the site of this particular incident seem to suggest few things:

1. The perpetrators **had very detailed information** about the layout of the camp itself. Perhaps, they had information about change of guard i.e. the fact that two units were handing over and these groups of soldiers were the most vulnerable and therefore, they used innovative tactics of setting the tents on fire later on using their ordinance to kill them. Clearly, this points to an intelligence advantage with the adversary. Whether there was a local collusion involved or not is a matter of investigation.
2. Local intelligence agencies of the Indian side had provided some kind of indication that there were 4-6 people in the region and were planning such kind of attack. So there was a lapse from the Indian side. **And the intelligence asymmetry worked in favour of the terrorists.**
3. There is an **element of vulnerability when turnover takes place not only on the base but also at the pickets because the soldiers deployed are new to the place for a couple of days.** The units are deployed on pickets and they come to the base. From the base, some of the soldiers go to the pickets and some come back. The soldiers are housed in tents because there are a larger number of people in the barracks than normal which should not be done.
4. This attack **is traditional to India-Pakistan tensions. The Pakistani intentions are to bring India over to the negotiating table on Kashmir issue through talks.**
5. There have been **shortcomings on the military leadership** because somewhere these repeated incidents of assaults are not being taken seriously. Pathankot incident has shown that a **military target is good for a terrorist attack as it delegitimizes the army in front of its own people and enhances the profile of the terrorists as they take up on the might of a country and succeed in it.**
6. There are **shortcomings on the political front** also because the rhetoric that has come after each attack of taking strict action, using harsh words etc. makes us look very silly when such attacks actually happen.
7. The **Pakistani military may have a possible major role** in this action because the details of battalions are maintained by them as well and the attack at this crucial time cannot be done without military inputs.

Pakistan embarked on a proxy war against India since 1990. India has been dealing with this problem since then for last 26 years be it the attack on Parliament, Mumbai attack and the recent ones. Indian Prime Minister at every international forum has mentioned terrorism and his concerns over it. In his 15th August speech of this year, he referred to Baluchistan and PoK. These are some strands of this attack. **Pakistan wants to maximize its advantage by instigating Kashmiri people against India and the fact that there are number of teams operating along the LoC looking for these kinds of vulnerability is known to India.** Indian
Army keeps a check on such attacks. Currently in the international community, Pakistan is maintaining a defensive stand. It is also engaged with US and China. There is a need for three sided attack through military, operational and diplomatic means to counter Pakistan.

India has to look into domestic part. **Government has to safeguard the national security. There is a lot of criticism on social media and the government needs to act on it.** Politically, there are six state elections coming up in India which is also very important. This is not a situation which can be micro managed or controlled. Responding to this situation on the ground is not that easy because if an operation is started, it would trigger a chain of other activities which would be difficult to control. The idea of isolating Pakistan may not help much because many countries are investing in Pakistan.

**Some military response or covert action** is absolutely necessary for now to break out of these frequent attacks. India is capable enough and has options. What the **political leadership needs to do here is to demonstrate its resolve while doing a cost benefit analysis** about which path should be adopted. India is trying to share its experience globally on terrorism and this has to be done constantly as this is a long term challenge. **Our security architecture has been neglected for long and this has to be given due attention. It is high time now that India gets out of its strategic patience.**

### Uri Attacks: Diplomatic Options and Challenges

Link: [https://youtu.be/98Udyaw9pnU](https://youtu.be/98Udyaw9pnU)

The attack on army base in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir and the killing of Indian soldiers continues to hold the attention of the entire country. The government faced with the demands of actions against perpetrators has been approaching the issue cautiously. Meanwhile, Pakistan has rejected the role its role in this attack and has criticized India for blaming Pakistan ever prior to conducting a proper investigation. Indian government is preparing to take on Pakistan diplomatically at the international level and expose it for supporting terrorism.

It is quite evident in this attack that there was certain collaboration between Pakistani army and intelligence that supported terrorists with funding, training and other kind of things which cannot be done without the support of leadership of that country. The international community has also observed in last few years that all kinds of terrorist attacks have linkages to Pakistan. There is a support to these acts from organizations like IS, Al-Qaeda and the Chinese.

Though Pakistan is also suffering from terrorist attacks like in Peshawar but this is the result of their own activities of nurturing and encouraging these organizations to flourish in their country which is biting them back now. In the past, Pakistan has put in a lot of money to create unrest in Kashmir, attacks on Mumbai and other parts of India. Uri attack is an act of aggression. It is very difficult to believe that when Prime Minister appoints the army chief in Pakistan and the ISI Chief becomes an army chief, they would be unaware of this attack.

**Options for India:**

1. At present whatever decision India takes, it has to first of all ensure that Pakistan moves on it based on a civilized code of conduct and improve relations on the basis of whatever commitments they are making. It has been seen in the past that Pakistan adhered to its commitments for a few months but very soon they lose track of it because the inside consensus in Pakistan gets disrupted like in case of 2004 Joint Statement.
2. For India, all options exist in sub-conventional, military, political and diplomatic domain. Indian government has to consider the possible fallouts of whatever course it chooses to adopt. In past few months, it has been evident that Pakistani military has taken a major role on the happenings in
Kashmir and not the political leadership. We are at the receiving end of what they are doing. Though there is a subterfuge that Pakistan is not involved now but all kinds of information like Wikileaks say that Jihadis are strategic assets for them. So, India does not need to waste its attempt on proving that the people who came to Uri were from Pakistan.

3. Right now military option is complicated to adopt because if international border is crossed in the heartland, there is a risk of triggering off a bigger conflict which might eventually end in a nuclear war. Military action taken on the Line of Control might not put enough pressure on Pakistanis. India cannot completely crush Pakistan. What it needs to do is to harden itself and mange Pakistan. This hardening has not been seen even after Pathankot attacks.

4. India has to keep pressurizing Pakistan by making references in terms of Balochistan, Gilgit and PoK, give moral and political support to leaders there and take this issue to international forums as well. For an aggressive diplomacy, India first needs to counter the two linchpins i.e. US and China of the Pakistani support system. Both of them are equally difficult to tackle.

5. As far as isolating Pakistan is concerned, it is little difficult because there are many other interests which come into play. What goes here in India’s favour is the fact that US, UK, France in recent months have suffered acts of terror with direct links to Pakistan. Financial sanctions can be imposed as a first step if India can convince these countries in UN or other international forums. As a small step, India may ban Pakistani artists or cricketers to come to India for shows or matches as this also generates a lot of money. Russia even cancelled its forthcoming exercise with Pakistani troops in light of the current attack.

Pakistan has somewhere convinced itself that it can keep its low cost proxy war going on against India and India would do nothing about it until a threshold is crossed. This threshold has already been crossed and it is high time now that India does take an action which is carefully calibrated.

**Indus Water Treaty: Can It Be Used As A Handle?**

Link: [https://youtu.be/XR1mbM7jq9E](https://youtu.be/XR1mbM7jq9E)

The confrontation between India and Pakistan following the attack at army base in Uri has resulted in various options being discussed at different levels as far as India is concerned. While there are demands for instant retaliation, the diplomatic options are also being taken into consideration. The Spokesperson from Ministry of External Affairs has mentioned Indus Water Treaty in a statement hinting it as an option to teach Pakistan a lesson by turning the tap off.

**Analysis:**

The Treaty has been very unpopular ironically in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The genesis of the Treaty lies in Pakistan’s absolute fear that India might turn off the tap. Therefore, India entered into a Treaty which was mediated by the World Bank and others to assure Pakistan that they don’t need to fear. It was well known that the Treaty would benefit Pakistan more than India because the western rivers which have been given to Pakistan i.e. Chenab, Jhelum and Indus have far more waters than the eastern rivers with India i.e. Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. The water from these rivers can be used for non-consumptive purposes like power generation. There has been a feeling in significant sections of our public opinion that the Treaty has not served its purpose and is far too generous. Pakistan has objected to every project on some grounds which India has built like in Kishanganga and Baglihar projects although the arbitration court gave its judgement in
favour of Kishanganga project. Therefore, India could not use these waters much even for non-consumptive purposes.

India is entitled to respond with an appropriate action but it should not be a knee-jerk reaction. The Treaty signed in 1960 was simple and well thought. On the face of it, it appeared that Pakistan got more water. 135-140 MAF of water generated in western rivers goes to Pakistan whereas India just gets 34 MAF of water. About 40 MAF of water goes to sea through Pakistan’s land. Silting is a big problem in Pakistan. Himalayan rivers carry a lot of silt. The Mangla Dam in Pakistan is already 30% silted. Pakistan does not have enough storage systems to store these waters. There is insecurity with Pakistan in this regard. Apart from this, Jihadis have circulated that India can cut off water supply to arouse sentiments of people in Pakistan.

But today, this has caused problem for India as its dependence on eastern rivers is not sufficient enough to meet the requirements of states like Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. If another 5-10 MAF of water is diverted from western rivers, it can solve the problem for India. This process has to be diplomatically handled i.e. renegotiation or signing a fresh treaty and terminating the Treaty might not solve the issue. There are no dams or diversion canals across these rivers on western side; therefore, India cannot stop the flow of water to Pakistan as it has no control. There is a lack of necessary infrastructure. Under the existing framework of the Treaty, India has very little scope to do anything.

**Conclusion:**

This can only be a part of the package to counter Pakistan. As a response measure, it cannot be used as a step in isolation. A unilateral abrogation could also lead to criticism from world powers as this arrangement has stood the test of time. In order to turn the tap off, India itself first needs to build that tap.

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**Indo-Pak War of Words: What It Takes To Isolate Pakistan?**

Link: [https://youtu.be/771fXZjk9vg](https://youtu.be/771fXZjk9vg)

The war of words between India and Pakistan has reached a new height following the attack on Uri army base few days back. While India has witnessed serious outrage among the people as well as in media over the attack, the Indian Government has come under tremendous pressure to act. The Pakistani Prime Minister used his address in the United Nations General Assembly to blame India for problems in Kashmir. The speech was countered equally strongly with the speech given by Indian External Affairs Minister for nurturing terrorism.

At one level, it is good that India has put its concerns in front of the international community but the question is whether they would do something to address India’s concerns or not. This is a question of gathering moral support as nothing can be done in isolation. There are a large number of countries which have criticized the Uri attacks and also advised India to resolve issues with Pakistan through bilateral dialogue.

United Nations speeches are largely for record and this might not work to build pressure on Pakistan as support to terrorist groups in not new and it has been raised time and again by India. For the first time, India seems to have attacked on vulnerabilities of Pakistan both internally and externally. Balochistan, Sind, Frontier Province, Indus Water Treaty are internal fault lines of Pakistan which India so far never sought to exploit. India has to raise the cost which Pakistan has to pay by supporting these activities. Merely bringing such issues on the table will not serve the purpose. This can be done either consistently and in a very systematic manner or as a diplomatic or bargaining tool in a well thought manner. For example: Operation Parakaram was thought to be putting pressure on Pakistan but it turned out to be a diplomatic ploy.

A speech from the ramparts of Red Fort or in United Nations will not affect Pakistan. India has to subvert Balochistan. Now, for this India has to operate out of Afghanistan. Balochistan’s stability is also very important for China as well as Iran at present. Creating problems there would mean destabilizing Afghanistan.
which is very difficult as US has a presence of 40,000 trained military personnels there as well as Pentagon troops. Drone operation in Iran is conducted through Afghanistan. Pakistan maintains a stand that the time is ripe in Kashmir to intervene diplomatically. Given India’s open support to Baluchi nationalists in Pakistan, Pakistan is determined to ensure that there will be no nexus possible between Delhi and Kabul in any future political dispensation in Afghanistan. Hekmatyar can guarantee that, one of the prominent figures of Afghan jihad who signed a peace deal with Kabul few days before the Uri attack.

Debt rescheduling talks of Pakistan is coming up. This can be put as a negotiating pressure if there is sufficient support internationally. Covert action needs strategic patience. For example: In 1971 war, there were issues of Muhajir movement and others which were able to put Pakistan on the defensive and there was peace for a decade. In recent years, because of nuclear deterrence in effect, India has been put on back foot. India removing the Most Favoured Nation status to Pakistan is also an option.

If India starts using its own share of Indus River, it would affect Pakistan in one way or the other without violating the Treaty. Internally, there is problem between Sind and Punjab in Pakistan over the sharing of water so this option can be exploited. The Treaty cannot be abrogated as there is role of US involved in the form of World Bank and they have immediate role in India Pakistan tension. Indus Water Treaty is the finest moment of mediation for US. All countries have counseled that India and Pakistan should talk to each other but none of them have pointed finger towards Pakistan. Countries like US and China maintain a view that Uri attack was an outcome of Kashmir unrest and raising the issue of Balochistan and Sind would affect international security. Even Iran has said that it would like to be a part of CPEC.

India has limited options. It has to take steps as a responsible nation in a responsible manner. India has to decide its discourse whether other countries favour it or not. India’s rhetoric should not overcome its capability.

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**Asylum To Baloch Leader: Should It Be Granted?**

Link: [https://youtu.be/h-iQV2x7VtU](https://youtu.be/h-iQV2x7VtU)

As the tension between India and Pakistan rises after the attacks on Uri army base, recently there was an interesting development. Following the recent decision of the Indian Government to highlight the issues of Balochistan, the Baloch leaders have started looking for support from India. Indian Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech highlighted the issue of human rights violation in these parts of the world. In the light of this, Baloch leader in exile in Geneva approached the Indian embassy there seeking asylum in India.

There is a great degree of consensus in Pakistan and in other parts of the world that the policy of Pakistan towards Balochistan has been a failure. Placed in these circumstances, the policy that India has adopted with respect to Tibet, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka has been one of self-restraint. Pakistan violated the 1947 Agreement and forcibly went to occupy Balochistan in which it succeeded. India if moves forward in this regard has to adopt a deliberate policy of giving justice, human rights and freedom of expression to Balochistan.

India had a practice which started with granting asylums to Parsis in pre independent era. The king of Nepal, the leaders from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Tibet have also been given shelter in India in the past. At present, there are no policies or laws to approach these issues in India and therefore, in the absence of any law it essentially becomes a political decision. There was a Private Member’s Bill last year on asylum issue. The application of the Baloch leader Brahmdagh Khan Bugti deserves consideration as there is a well-founded fear of persecution.

Baloch leaders have been backed by India since 1950s covertly. This tactic has become overt now and what has made it to bring on the table is the issue of Kashmir. India’s backing of Balochistan would be akin to
Pakistan’s backing of Khalistan movement in Punjab. As Pakistan didn’t have any territorial claim on Punjab, India does not have territorial claim on Balochistan historically plus this is an area which does not share border with India. This is a tactical move from India to make Pakistan more preoccupied in its internal problems and create less trouble for India in Kashmir.

Even in the case of asylum given to Dalai Lama, it was made clear that they had to fight their own struggle. Similarly, in this case as well India would help to keep the cause alive for which Baloch people and leaders are fighting. India is not going to take part in their freedom struggle. The natural ally for Baloch people in political as well as geostrategic sense is India.

The civilian character of a refugee populace is paramount. Therefore, Mr. Bugti’s activities as a Baloch leader need to be thoroughly examined. India’s approach towards the larger Baloch refugee community in the future is yet to be addressed. Does India intend to grant asylum to Mr. Bugti alone or to other Baloch asylum-seekers as well, or on a case-by-case basis. Irrespective of the modality it chooses, the Indian state will have to invest in setting up both a policy mechanism as well as the physical infrastructure for management of this group and in this regard, a uniform asylum law is necessary.

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**AIR Spotlight Summary**

**Intelligence sharing for internal security**

**Introduction**

- Any fight against terrorism, insurgency and internal security would be incomplete without a strong and a robust **intelligence network**, feedback or its analysis. Prime Minister speaking at 11th meeting of **Inter-State Council** pointed out about internal security.
- There is a need to improve intelligence, improve the system of information exchange between different stake holders and states should remain alert and updated.
- The present scenario of the country is that the threat from outside is not only along borders but anywhere in the country. All the states have to remain alert and they have to coordinate and share the intelligence gathered. In the same manner centre should also share the intelligence with the states.
- It is the coordination between all the agencies which are working with in the country and those gathering information outside the country. Having coordination with peace loving countries is very important.
- In India there is a thin line between external security threat and internal security threat. We live with an **aggressive neighbourhood**. Pakistan which is a nursery of terrorism is waging proxy war on India over the decades.
- **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** was created in 2012 and due to some circumstances it slowed down. The present government is reviving it to give it a practical shape. This is known to be a robust intelligence gathering mechanism.
- All the intelligence agencies in the country sit together, coordinate and analyse all the intelligence information available and analyse the real threat and pass on to agencies which are required to take counter action.
- The passing of information is very quick and if this carries on in a positive manner, this will benefit all the security forces and the people working on ground.
Centre and State coordination

- Centre is operating internal security through its Armed forces, Para military forces and intelligence agencies. Apart from the union government, the states cannot ignore the developments taking place inside the country and even globally.
- Terrorism has become a global phenomenon now. The developments taking place in any part of the world may have the ramifications on our internal security.
- There is a need to keep politics aside while discussing issues like National security, NATGRID, and upgrading Armed forces. Having national consensus on security related issues is very important.

Importance of technology in Intelligence gathering

- **Human intelligence** is different from technology intelligence. Human Intelligence may not include featureistic intelligence. Where as in technology intelligence the access to information is fast and easy. While tracking a suspicious movement, this technology plays an important role like tracking through satellites.
- With the coordination of Technology intelligence and human intelligence we can get real time information which is required for action against the terrorist threat or any other threat to the country.
- NATGRID is also going to be an ambitious counter terrorism programme. No counter terrorism programme in the world would be complete without use of the latest technology. It is believed that latest technology would be available to NATGRID and these should be available to other arms of intelligence gathering systems also.

Coastal Security

- India’s very long coast line makes the coastal security a significant importance. We have a National Maritime Awareness Grid which coordinates with coastal guard, the coastal police and with the Navy. There are two different ministries – Ministry of shipping and Ministry of fishing who are also involved.
- The terrorist infiltration through coastal areas is increasing as seen in Mumbai and Gujarat. Coastal areas cannot be ignored. There is already a great surveillance in the land borders of the frontiers. Government has laid a great importance on coastal security.
- Earlier coastal borders were considered safer than land borders with countries like Pakistan and China. Now there is a great emphasis on coastal security.

Importance of Rapid Response capabilities

- In today’s world an important element while fighting against terrorism is the time frame. We need to strengthen the Rapid Response capabilities.
- In case the information is delivered late and the terrorist activity has already taken place, this would cause a major damage to the nation. This was happening previously when the technology intelligence was not available. Now with the latest technology available we are preventing these activities.
- There is a need to go ahead and anticipate in case there is any security threat to our country. This can happen only when the information is available with the security agencies much in time.

Cyber Crime

- The technology is not available only with security agencies, but also with terrorist organisations. This brings in the importance of cyber crime.
- Cyber crime has two aspects. Cyber crime is not only related to local crime, but the terrorist network all over the world is increasingly using cyber technology.
- **Cyber space and social media** is the fastest means available with the terrorists. They can brain wash the youth through their network. This is used by ISIS and it played a big role in motivating youth in Australia, Europe and Kashmir.
- There is a need to protect critical network infrastructure of Banks and Government Agencies. People are being trained to counter cyber attack.
- There are many initiatives taken by the centre like modernising the police forces to update the intelligence network.
- In 2014 there was 136% increase in cyber crime threats and attacks against Government of India organisations. 126% increase in cyber attacks in financial services organisations. We have seen Chinese hacking our Armed forces website and Pakistan hacking our security forces website,
- This shows the challenge cyber crime poses. **National Cyber Security Policy** is been strengthened. Steps are taken to plug the loopholes.

**Conclusion**

No internal security network would be strengthened unless centre and state focus on intelligence gathering and sharing. A coordinated plan of intelligence gathering and dissemination should come into place immediately without any delay so that we can tackle the present challenges effectively.

**Prime Minister’s visit to Tanzania and Kenya.**

**Introduction**

Prime Minister’s African nation visit includes Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya. The visit of Prime Minister comes close on the heels of the high level visit earlier by President Pranab Mukherjee and Vice President Hamid Ansari.

Earlier visit of Vice president to Morocco and Tunisia covered North Africa. Later President’s visit to Ghana, Namibia and Ivory Coast covered West Africa. Now the Prime Minister’s visit covers South and East Africa. Through this our three topmost leaders have covered the whole of Africa.

It is projected that by 2020 the collective GDP of all African nations will be $2.6 trillion.

**Strategic significance of Prime Minister’s visit**

- The Prime Minister’s focus of the African tour is on deepening cooperation in areas of hydrocarbons, maritime security, trade and investment, agriculture and food. Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya are very important and all are littoral states. They had very close connection with India.
- India-Kenya ties have stood the test of time. Both our nations have had very strong people-to-people ties and both nations have successfully fought colonialism in the previous century.
- Mozambique was a Portuguese colony earlier. Till 1750 the country was managed from Goa. There are large numbers of Goans in Mozambique.
- Prime Minister addressed the Indian Diaspora at Nairobi. **Terrorism** and **Global Warming** are the two major global challenges faced by all the nations. No country is immune to the state of terrorism. Concerted action is required by the global community through UN frame work.
- India and Tanzania have agreed to deepen overall defense and security partnership, especially in the maritime domain.
India’s strengths

- India had age old cultural, historic and civilization ties with Africa and around 16\textsuperscript{th} century India’s indentured labor had come here and now they have all prospered and helped in the progress of these countries.
- India and Africa are neighbors which are connected by Indian Ocean. Maritime security, counter terrorism operation, utilization of the Blue Economy is the important element between India and Africa.
- There are opportunities for Indian private companies and Public sector entities to invest in Africa. India is interested in securing energy needs, renewable and non conventional sources of energy where Africa is rich in all these resources.
- Energy security is a significant element of our partnership with Africa. 25% of India’s total investment in Africa is in Tanzania that is $8 billion. Around 10% of total investment is in Tanzania that is $3 billion. These investments are in the field of Energy.
- India will grow and India will need Energy. Large numbers of countries of Africa are members of International Solar Alliance. Prime Minister also met ‘Solar Mamas’, a group of rural women solar engineers from Africa who have been trained under Government of India-supported programme to fabricate, install, use, repair and maintain solar lanterns and household solar lighting systems in their villages.

Difference in India and China approach in Africa

- India is different from other large investors in Africa. China is considered to be exploitative in terms of exploitation of Natural resources and there is not much benefit to the local people of Africa.
- China has acquired land for agriculture which has got its own work force and this has not benefited Africa.
- India wants African nation to get equal benefits from India’s economic development in Africa. India wants a win-win situation for both the countries.
- There are concerns that India has been very slow on delivery. It makes promises and commitments, but it doesn’t have the wherewithal. There was a tangential comparison with China where China was able to deliver. India in the last 2 years has demonstrated through certain projects that now India will deliver on its promises.
- India is interested in improving the living standards of the common people. Whether it is energy, renewable energy, agriculture, food processing etc. The strength India has in terms of Human Resource Development, capacity building, education, health care and large numbers of African students are in India.
- $92 million line of credit that has been agreed to is for water distribution and purification systems. India has long term agreement with Mozambique for the purchase of pulses.

Supreme Court upholds Lodha Committee Report

Introduction

Lodha committee report is to cleanse BCCI’s functioning. Supreme Court has accepted the Lodha Committee report and Supreme Court wants it to be implemented in letter and spirit.

Implications

This will have a far reaching impact. The unprecedented, richest and one of the oldest sports body in the country have been told, how they should run the game or how to conduct themselves and they have been reminded that they have to work in the interest of the masses.
This is the beginning of a new era in the cricket administration. This will bring transparency and restore the faith of masses on BCCI.

**Recommendations**

- The Supreme Court upheld the ‘one state, one vote’ formula recommended by the Lodha committee. This means every member state will get full member status and they will have the voting rights. States with more than one cricket association, as in the case of Gujarat and Maharashtra, will have voting rights on a “rotational basis”—one at a time.
- The states of the North East will now be made members, they will have a voice, they can look forward to participate, and there will be a platform for them to showcase their talent on the field and in administration. This is a positive step.
- The Supreme Court also accepted a recommendation which stipulated that **office-bearers of BCCI must not be over 70 years of age**. This would also apply to state associations.
- The Supreme Court upheld the **term-limit** recommended by the committee. Each of the office-bearers would have a **three-year term** and could contest a maximum of three terms, with a mandatory cooling-off period after each term.
- The Supreme Court upheld to abolish dual posts, i.e., holding two posts at the same time. That would mean holding a post in the state association as well as the cricket board itself. When implemented, this could mean that some of the board’s most senior office-bearers would be compelled to choose one of the two posts they currently hold. There will be an end to cases of conflict of interest.
- The Supreme Court also **barred serving civil servants and ministers from being on BCCI’s board** or that of their respective state associations. Government officials have their own role to play and have a great responsibility to run the respective departments. They should be concentrating on their departments. Same is the case with ministers.
- BCCI is the country’s most powerful and richest sports body. The transaction of money is to be accounted. Supreme Court upheld that a nominee from the office of the **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)** be made a part of BCCI’s managing committee. The aim is to bring in transparency and keep an eye on revenue utilisation.
- BCCI gives subsidies to every state association which is to be used for the development of the game. We have seen the state associations not utilising this money. They don’t have a stadium of their own. The CAG will ensure there is no misuse of the funds.
- **Restructuring of IPL governing council** will be done. Two nominees from the franchise will be represented in the governing council. Franchise is investing money which in turn is used for popularising the game or improving the infrastructure. They are a party to the success of IPL. So it is important to have their representation in governing council.
- The Supreme Court also ordered BCCI to establish a **players’ association** and fund it. Most of the countries encourage players association. It is basically to interact, debate, discuss the matters related to improving the state of the game and to improve the relation between the players and the administrators.
- Supreme Court has left to the parliament to decide whether BCCI can come under the ambit of the **Right to Information Act**, and whether betting can be legalized. **Justice Mudgal** also recommended that betting should be legalized.

**Conclusion**

- BCCI gives pension, medical insurance to its players, and it looks after its player’s best in the world. Ultimately in the whole exercise cricket will gain more than the officials or the players.
- Youth is the soul of the system. Youth should come forward and bring in revolution not just in cricket administration but overall sports administration in the country. The Lodha committee report and Supreme Court’s decision will pave the way for better functioning of BCCI.
The first experimental mission of ISRO’s Scramjet Engine towards realisation of Air Breathing Propulsion System was carried out successfully. It is a new technology which is not available with many countries. India is the fourth country to demonstrate the flight testing of scramjet engine. Many countries have tested a Scramjet but no country has mastered a Scramjet.

The development of a supersonic combustion Scramjet Engine is a mile stone for ISRO and India. To give a simple analogy, it is trying to light a candle when there is a super cyclone blowing through. This is what ISRO has done. Lighting the rocket engine when it is travelling six times the speed of sound and to sustain the fire for a sufficient time is a big leap forward. ISRO is continuing its Innovation spree.

How is Scramjet Rocket different from Conventional Rocket

- Conventional rockets have to carry fuel as well as oxidising agent because no fuel can burn without oxygen and in space there is no oxygen. Scramjet rockets draw oxygen from the air and use a compressor to compress the air, ignite it and burn the fuel.
- The uniqueness of the Scramjet Engine is that it draws oxygen from the air. Here the compression is done during the movement of the rocket itself. Therefore it moves very fast, 6 times the speed of sound.

ISRO’s scramjet engine launch

- Scramjet was tested with Rohini Rocket, which is a conventional sounding rocket used regularly for scientific studies.
- Scramjet was fixed to the second stage, the first being conventional rocket which fell off at 11 kms and then the Scramjet was ignited and started.
- The test-flight is maiden short duration experimental test of ISRO’s scramjet engine with a hypersonic flight at Mach 6 (six times the speed of sound).
- Scramjet engines designed by ISRO uses hydrogen as fuel and the oxygen from the atmospheric air as the

Uses of Scramjet Engine

- Scramjet can be used in Rocket Engine and to make more efficient missiles. In the long run in four to five decades we can have planes powered by Scramjets which would make travel faster and cheaper.
- Services from space will become cheaper and more people will be able to access space services. Banking industry, television broadcasting, and connectivity is dependent on satellites. Launching cost will come down. It will take a long time to have a full fledged Scramjet rocket.
- Scramjet and Reusable launch vehicle will be of great use because the launch cost will come down.
- Essentially the endeavour is to lower the cost of rocket launcher. Carrying oxidiser is an unnecessary weight for the rocket during atmospheric phase if we can use the oxygen around it.

Limitations of Scramjet Rocket Engine

- Scramjet cannot be used to launch the rocket. We have to use the conventional fuel and oxidiser to launch the rocket. We know that oxygen is available till 50 kms from the ground. Scramjet will be into operation till that distance, beyond that it will not work.
- It has a limited role. Normally in the first or the second stage is when a Scramjet can be deployed.

Scramjet Engine is different from Cryogenic Engine. Cryogenic Engine functions in the space in near vacuum condition and it provides a specific impulse which is very high.
ISRO says there was the challenge of making the right materials so that at high velocity the engine ignites. Right now it is the mastery of materials which is required for Scramjet.

**Conclusion**

- The desire of ISRO is to place the Scramjet below the Reusable Launch Vehicle while launching. This will reduce the launch cost drastically. In Reusable Launch Vehicle 85% of the material cost is saved and by using the oxidiser from the atmosphere would further reduce the cost drastically.
- The next step is to make it a bigger test flight, make it a prototype, then take it to an experimental flight, and finally to an operational flight. This is a matter of next 20 to 25 years of development and will be an ultra-futuristic rocket engine. This is a first step towards realisation of a complex technology and a step in the right direction.

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**Task Force to prepare for Olympic Games.**

**Introduction**

With India getting only two medals in the Rio Olympics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the decision to set up a Task Force to prepare a comprehensive action plan for effective participation of Indian sports persons in the next three Olympic Games 2020, 2024 and 2028. It will prepare an overall strategy and plan for facilities like infrastructure, training and selection procedure.

**What will the Task Force Do?**

- Task Force will comprise members who are in house experts in sports as well as those from outside. The decision to set up the Task Force comes against the backdrop of India’s dismal performance in Rio Olympics as the country won only one Silver and one Bronze even after sending its biggest contingent of 118 athletes.
- Task force will be an umbrella body which will work to supervise and channelize the process like inducting the talent, training, facilitating through infrastructure and preparing for the next three Olympics.
- It is likely that experts from various fields who have a certain bearing of their expertise on sports can put their heads together. Task force should be given a clear mandate.

**Reasons for poor performance at Olympics**

- Several athletes have continued to complain about the coaching facilities and the lack of funds for training for the Olympics.
- The run-up to the Olympics was mired in mismanagement and red tape with most of the financial assistance coming only in the last eight months
- Most of our Athletes tend to focus on qualifying for Olympics and give their best during qualifying stage. Some may not be able to perform at their best in Olympics because their energy has been spent in getting through selection process and for some performing under pressure.

**Need of the Hour**

- What is needed is to change in the way we approach our sports administration, professionalise it, it should have minimum political interference, make it accountable, and make data available.
- We have an existing body like Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Task force is an addition to it. What we need is streamlining and making things easier.
- The number of parks and grounds vanished in the last 20 years are alarming. There are no open grounds for children and there are number of schools coming up without proper playground. These issues should be looked up by Task force.
- Include other ministries like education ministry because children education is very important and Task force should see how sports at the school level can be improved, provide infrastructure facilities, and track their performance.
- Try and pick up talents from different corners of the country. What is happening is only those people who are able to afford to be sports persons are the privileged ones.
- There are so many government schemes existent, what is required is to keep track of an identified talent. The National database of talent must be updated on a regular basis so that it can be accessed at various administration levels. These persons should be trained and not let their talent to vanish.
- The decision to make a separate task force will only work for the betterment of the nation if it is an independent authority which is not answerable to the Sports Ministry as the latter have been criticised over their handling of the athletes in the recent past.

Conclusion

The Task force which is to be a long term plan spanning over the next 12 years, which is judiciously taken pragmatic decision which will not only put in place the aspects of facilities, training, selection, but should be creatively active with an immediate task of resolving, renovating, creating, consolidating the resources for the next first step towards 2020 Olympic games in Tokyo.

Inauguration of first phase of SAUNI Project

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today inaugurated the first phase of SAUNI (Saurashtra Narmada Avatara for Irrigation) project which aims to take water to Saurashtra region, help in irrigation and drinking water. This is a multipurpose project considered to be an ambitious one to fill up nearly 115 dams of water scarce Saurashtra region through network of canals and pipelines. The government has set a target to complete the four phase project by 2019.

Advantages of SAUNI Project

- Nearly ten dams of three districts would be filled up with water from Narmada under the project. The excess water which otherwise would have gone to the sea is been diverted.
- Such a project is happening for the first time in a large scale. This is described as an Engineering marvel because water will flow through 100s of kms through pipes to fill dams.
- The water will flow through pipelines which replaces open channel flow of water. This is a new concept which is not adopted often. The dam water is usually taken to the farmers fields through open channel flow. Through dams water is taken from water surplus to the water deficit region.
- Flowing water through pipes has many advantages. There is no seepage into the ground, no evaporation of water as it happen through open channel, pipes can traverse adverse gradient and there are no issues of land acquisition.
- The area in Saurashtra had been experiencing migration over the years because of lack of water availability and cultivation of only one crop that too was uncertain, which was dependent on rain. Now because of the assured water supply it is possible to avail two crops a year. People who had migrated are returning back.
Feasibility of using flood water for irrigation and drinking water

- Flood water is usually considered as wastage because there is a feeling that excess water should be allowed to flow into the sea without creating much disturbance in its path.
- If we construct a dam and impound the flood water into the reservoir, then the reservoir becomes a storehouse of energy and the water stored can be used for irrigation and many other purposes. We get rid of flood problems.
- The water will flow to water scarce regions which makes agriculture possible. Earlier people thought agriculture won’t be possible in Kutch region. The water scarcity is an impediment in the economic development of a particular region. If water is available it leads to economic emancipation of the area.

Other areas of SAUNI Project

- In case of seepage within the pipe which is located underground, there are methods to check like manholes and choking.
- This project will set an example of great efficiency because there are no losses of water. All the water sent will reach the farmers field.
- India has limited monsoon period and the excess rainfall has to be stored in dams and use it in the remaining months. With the increase in demand for water, only small dams are not enough. A combination of suitable structures is required in the national perspective.
- Pricing water or treating it as an economic good is a good concept. It will enforce efficiency into the water use.
- Rain water harvesting has been popularized by many states; they are helping in recharging the ground water. Lot of awareness in public domain is required.
- The investment on fertilizers and seeds would give commensurate benefits only with the availability of water.

Conclusion

- The infrastructure created for water distribution and water use has to be managed necessarily through the participatory approach. Participatory irrigation management has been a component in command area development and water management programme which is being implemented by Ministry of Water Resources, with the help of Central Water Commission.
- Once this project shows the way, this will be followed by other regions. This is a very ambitious project. Everyone will be looking at its implementation and how it will be replicated elsewhere in the country.

Cabinet approval on ordinance to Enemy Property law

Introduction

The Cabinet gave post facto approval to promulgate for the fourth time an ordinance to amend the nearly five-decade old Enemy Property Law to guard against claims of succession or transfer of properties left by people who migrated to Pakistan and China after wars.

Provisions in Enemy Property Act

- There are about 10,000 properties spread over about 12,000 acres in India which belongs to Pakistani or Chinese nationals. These properties are vested in the Custodian. There was an Enemy Property Act prior to Independence, in which Japan and Germany were considered as Enemy. After Independence it was remodeled and only Pakistan was the enemy country. Later china also became the enemy country because of the wars with china.
After the 1965 war, India and Pakistan signed the Tashkent Declaration on 10 January 1966. The Tashkent Declaration inter alia included a clause, which said that the two countries would discuss the return of the property and assets taken over by either side in connection with the conflict. However, the Government of Pakistan disposed of all such properties in their country in the year 1971 itself.

The Enemy Property Act was enacted in the year 1968. It provided for the continuous vesting of enemy property in the custodian. The Union Government through the Custodian of Enemy Property for India is in possession of enemy properties spread across many states in the country.

To ensure that the enemy property continues to vest in the Custodian, appropriate amendments were brought in by way of an Ordinance in the Enemy Property Act, 1968 by the then Government in 2010.

As per the proposed amendments, once an enemy property is vested in the Custodian, it shall continue to be vested in him as enemy property irrespective of whether the enemy, enemy subject or enemy firm has ceased to be an enemy due to reasons such as death, etc.

The amendments are aimed at plugging the loopholes in the Act to ensure that the enemy properties that have been vested in the Custodian remain so and do not revert to the enemy subject or enemy firm.

Changes made in the ordinance

- **Definition of Enemy** has taken a quantum change. Earlier the successors of enemy were not considered as Enemy. They were treated as citizens of India. Now the successors of an enemy property will be treated as an enemy. There is a provision that the enemy property cannot devolve.

- The purpose of the act is to clarify that the law of succession shall not apply to the legal heir or successor of the enemy. Place of death of enemy subject and his property will have no meaning and impact. The property will continue to vest in the Custodian.

- The custodian has been vested with the power to fix and collect rent, lease the property, dispose the property, collect the license fee, user charges and secure the vacancy of the possession.

- Enemy property will be returned to the owner only if the aggrieved person applies to the government and if the property is not found to be an enemy property. Earlier automatically the property was reverted back to the owner.

- Any transfer made after 1968 will stand to be void retrospectively.

- Civil courts will not have any jurisdiction. It is vested with the High courts. The **Custodian will have quasi-judicial powers**.

- In 1968 Act it prohibited transfer of property by an enemy if it was against public interest. The ordinance removes this provision and prohibits transfer of properties by enemies. It also renders the transfers which had taken place before the commencement of 1968 act. The ambiguity regarding the ownership of the property has been clarified.

- The suggestions made by the Select committee of Rajya Sabha are incorporated in the ordinance. Select committee said that the process of identifying the enemy property was not been completed. The act has to be modelled in a way so that identification is completed and an end to the whole process is put.

**AIR spotlight summary on Green Highways Project**

**Introduction**

Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkari launched the initial **plantation drive** on 1,500 km of National Highways at a cost of about Rs 300 crore under the **National Green Highways Mission**. The launch was announced at a workshop organized by the National Green Highways Mission on the theme “**Green Highways Projects: Way Ahead**”. 
Highlight of Green Highways Project

- The initiative is much more than Afforestation. It is to improve the livelihood and providing the green canopy all through the highways. Such an initiative had not been contemplated earlier.
- People in these areas will be roped in to implement the programme along with companies, NGOs, cooperatives and institutions to undertake the work of planting trees along the highways and therefore the local people would stand to gain. Some PSUs like IOC and Coal India Limited are contributing under their CSR initiative.
- The government has made it mandatory to set aside 1% of the total project cost of any national highway contract to a Green Fund for plantation.
- For any project it is important to create a separate fund and 1% of the total project cost should be earmarked for the fund, especially for a green project. It ensures that there will be additional activity along with laying and repairing of roads.
- The government plans to spend an estimated Rs 5,000 crore, which is 1% of the road construction cost of Rs 5 trillion till 2019 on the mission and link it with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) to boost the rural economy.
- Calling upon government and private agencies to join hands under the initiative, Gadkari said only serious players need come forward as the projects will be monitored through satellite technology, and payments will be made only after successful implementation. An app to monitor real-time progress of the plantation drive and plants was also launched.
- There will be a separate implementing and monitoring agency. The modus operandi of selection will be based on specific criteria and the best implementing agencies will be chosen.
- Ten states are already on board. States participation is very important.

Importance of Green Highways Project

- Greening project has a huge potential to generate jobs and can prove to be a game-changer for agriculture and rural economy.
- It may even be linked with the NREGA scheme. It is not only on providing employment. The emphasis is on creation of durable assets. These assets will strengthen livelihood security and provide nutrition security. This is a good initiative of tying up different programmes as grass root level.
- The Afforestation is expected to help in sequestering approximately 12 lakh mt carbon annually. This helps in achieving the commitment made by India in Paris summit.
- Plantation will be area specific. We can’t have one tree planted across the length and breadth of the country. People’s participation is important in the selection of trees.
- There have been reports of increase in forest cover in India. The target is to have 33% of forest area. At present it is 22%. Achieving the target is feasible and doable. We had 33% forest area not so long back. The Green Highways Project adds to it.

Other Initiatives taken on the occasion

- Besides this ‘Kisan Harit Rajmarg Yojana’ was also launched on the occasion. The Yojana is a pilot scheme to extend green belt beyond the existing ‘Right of Way’ of highways by engaging farmers and providing alternative livelihood option to the nearby communities. The idea is to involve entire population in the development process and standing by environmental commitments is important to India.
- There is a proposal to use solid waste in the construction of roads. This is a very significant step contemplated by the ministry. We are struggling with waste management in urban areas for a long time and the situation is alarming in Delhi.
- Other initiative the ministry has taken is to switch from Bharat Stage IV to Bharat Stage VI emission norms to improve fuel standards. There has been some reluctance on part of auto industry and oil
refining sector. It is important to have goals and make sure that everybody else who is involved in the changeover is on the same page and works according to the same time frame as the government does.

- The government intends to expand the Green Highway Project to state and district highways.

**Conclusion**

- Unless there is **policy initiative** by the government in this direction not much will happen on the ground. Over a period of time the pollution levels would come down and the auto industry should fall in line and may have to join hands in curbing the menace of pollution.
- There is need to have good efficient public transport, only then we can expect people to switch over from personal to public transport. There is also a need to change the public mindset. It has become a status symbol to own multiple cars. There has to be lot of advocacy and public sensitization to make people realize the enormous costs to the environment and to the country.

Tax on Junk Food.

**Introduction**

Kerala has introduced a ‘fat tax’ of 14.5% on the consumption of junk food items like pizzas and burgers sold through branded restaurants. This is analyzed as a two-pronged strategy for increasing revenue and also to promote healthy food habits and hence preventing obesity and health related issues.

**Effect of ‘fat tax’ on consumption pattern**

Fast food are luxury products which display conspicuous consumption pattern and seen as style statement or glamorous for youth.

**Short term impacts**

- In the short term this is going to be a disincentive for youth and we can see a decline in consumption.
- In the branded food chain there will be an Impact on employment and also on volume of their business.
- There will be significant Increase in the revenue of the government.
- Negative impact on the fattening food products

**Long term impacts**

- The impact on the consumption might not be significant. The reason behind is that even these food companies may try to reduce their prices. They will work on their cost of production.
- In the long run there won’t be any Impact on employment and volume of the business of food chain.
- If there is no decline in the consumption they will add to **inflation**.
- The branded food chain will come up with new products with better nutritional values and there is an opportunity for local food chain. If local vendors come up with healthy food products, they can see a good establishment for themselves in the business.
- This could encourage **Research and Development** resulting in alternate food with the better nutritional content and less sugary saturated food. The challenge will be to maintain the taste the moment companies start playing with ingredients.
- The young generation would be more aware and sensitive towards healthy food.
- India has traditionally been nutritional food lifestyle country. The new options are going to emerge not just from existing companies but also through new **start-ups** coming with healthy options. This is going to help our economy in a big way.
- It is not going to have any negative impact on the **food processing industry** with the healthy products. India’s food processing industries are at a very nascent stage.
**FDI inflow** into hospitality sector and food tourism will increase as India has a large market and their products can be catered to large population. What is required is FDI in healthy food like organic food which should be accepted across the globe. It is like Standardization of nutritional content and food across the globe.

- We must provide Healthy food to our generation. It is the objective in the broader parlance of WHO. All this is done in sync with advocacy of WHO.

**Impact at four fronts**

1. Increase in government revenue.
2. Fattening food companies are to come with improved products.
3. Start-ups will be ready to grab the opportunity
4. The local vendors can offer healthy food

**Other examples**

Demark and Hungary has also tried for similar kind of taxation. Bihar too had ‘samosa tax’. Any product which is not healthy should be taxed high. The other states may follow the footsteps.

**Need of the hour**

- In the long run, comprehensive and holistic approach is needed. It is highly important to sensitize our young generation. Time management is a big issue in the present generation. They feel this food is quick, easily available and tasty. The businesses have to come up with new offerings which are quick, easily available and tasty.
- It is highly crucial that we start talking about a mission ‘Healthy India’. Talking to young generation, creating the environment and making them understand the importance of healthy body and healthy mind for a healthy life.
- Add-on initiatives like awareness drives in schools, railway stations and bus stands to tackle obesity and health issues. Healthy food must become part of the curriculum. Negative impacts of such fattening foods have to be understood.
- No country is allowed to play with health and education. If such is the case, the country has unsustainable future.

**Conclusion**

- There is a case to provide fillip to provide organic food or alternate food with apt nutritional value by fast food chains.
- The only challenge facing is that how to bring change in the eating habits of the young people. The present move is a win-win situation for various stakeholders in the value chain that is government, consumers and MNCs. This is going to be a positive move.

**National Mission for Clean Ganga**

**Introduction**

- Giving a wider shape to Namami Ganga programme, Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation inaugurated 231 projects worth Rs 20,000 cr related to the construction of Ghats, crematoriums, sewage treatment plants, Afforestation, tree plantation (medicinal plants) and conservation of biodiversity. Rs 196 cr online pollution monitoring system will also be launched.
- Ganga is the largest river in India with an extraordinary religious importance. Varanasi and Patna situated along its branch are the world’s oldest inhabited cities. Ganga provides water to about 40% of India’s population serving an estimate 500 million people which is larger than any other river.
- **Ganga Gram Yojana** is implemented under **Namami Ganga Programme**. 400 villages along the river Ganga will be developed as **Ganga Gram** in phase one. 13 IITs have been adopted for 5 villages for the development of Ganga Gram. There is large public participation, science and societal interaction.

**Causes of pollution**

- This is another initiative taken by the government for cleaning river Ganga along with the 1986 launch of **Ganga Action Plan**.
- The main causes for the pollution along the river are the increase in the **population density** and enhanced per capita pollutants discharge into the river.
- 15,000 million litres of sewage flows into the river untreated every day. This is a huge quantity and this is to be treated upfront. Source of pollution is to be treated. We often emphasise on non point source like surface flow and fertilizer flow from the agriculture fields. The point of source is municipal sewage and industrial waste.
- During festival season over 70 million people take bath in Ganga over a few weeks. Materials like food, flower and plastics are let into the river.
- Human impact on Ganga river showed significant rise in water borne diseases including cholera, hepatitis and dysentery.

**Areas left out in National Mission for Clean Ganga**

- The overall trouble in understanding the river flow in India is that we are not looking at it from the **basin perspective**, but we are looking at it from the **sectoral perspective** with respect to irrigation, hydro power generation, human consumption and industrial use. Due to this we are not able to tackle the issue of revival and river pollution control.
- The new projects still have a sectoral approach that is the crematorium at the ghats, beautifying river banks, plantation and eco forestry. Addressing the core issue of flow of pollutants, untreated sewage and untreated industrial load into the river are to be addressed. These issues are not highlighted in the mission.
- If any water body is flowing polluted, there is a general tendency for the masses to over pollute it. If the clean river is flowing the tendency is not to pollute it. The problem is we haven’t been able to control the large chunk of pollution which is coming from non point source.
- If we look at the history of pollution control in the country, we can notice that the point sources are not considered properly despite the existence of **pollution control act** which prohibits polluting any fresh water body.
- We have an **Environmental Impact Assessment, 2006** and recent draft notification called the **Environment supplemental plan (ESP)** by MoEFCC. The plan gives the opportunity for the industrial units along the river to pollute the river and pay fine for it. This goes in line with the approach of the government to increase investment and growth in industrial sector. This is in contradiction to Ganga Rejuvenation Plan. Such supplemental plan should be withdrawn in the interest of protecting the river from further pollution.

**Need of the Hour**

- The focus has to be more on **technology and source of pollution**, while rest would follow in due course.
- **Fishery** is one component which is not highlighted. The economics of fish development and the dependence of the population on the fishery along the Ganga River have not been computed. This is one area which is to be looked at.
- Ganga river Dolphin is one of the few species of the fresh water Dolphins listed as an endangered species. Their population is less than 2000. Hydro electric and irrigation dams along the Ganga are the main reason for their reducing population.
- Conservation of biodiversity requires more focus. The river dolphins, river biota, river fish, aquatic biodiversity and upland biodiversity are very important in keeping the river healthy.
- Pollution itself does not contribute to GDP but installing Pollution control equipments contribute to GDP. The cache here is to install more Pollution control equipments. The core aim should be to get the river clean as much as possible.
- There is a need to examine the pollution control initiatives in the light of the changes the society has gone through. The consumption pattern has changed.
- The Thames River at once was heavily polluted and today it is not. When India started its Ganga Action Plan in 1986 it was in a socialist kind of an era. In 2016 we are part of a Globalised world. These are the two socio economic changes we see. During this period the society, its consumption pattern, and its behaviour have gone through significant changes.
- Engaging the people who are dependent on the river and who live along the banks is very important. This will contribute in the achievement of the project’s objective.

Conclusion

The economic transition the country has gone through should bring in the changes in the people’s behaviour. These changes cannot be enforced. They occur as part of the economic transition the community go through. If we have to protect biodiversity then all the physical barriers along the river have to be removed.

BRICS Conference on Negation of Drug Abuses

Introduction

The inauguration of the second Anti-Drug Working Group meeting of Heads of Drug Control Agencies was held in New Delhi. It comprises heads of Anti-Narcotics Bureau of 5 countries. Drug Abuse is a subject which is posing a serious challenge to the global community today and most recently highlighted in India with the controversy of the movie Udta Punjab.

BRICS angle to the issue

- 2013 BRICS meeting at Durban saw some very important decisions like the establishment of BRICS Bank. In the same meeting it was decided that the drugs are becoming the major problem for BRICS and the outside world.
- One of the areas the BRICS members could focus would be Drugs and Anti Drugs policy.
- The first meeting of heads of Anti-Narcotic agency was held in Moscow in Nov 2015.

The focus area of the meeting

- There is so much to do as far as Drug prevention, cure, how to vain people away, money laundering and Information exchange. The international trade in drugs is estimated to be about $500 billion to more than a $trillion.
- The aim of the meeting is to evaluate the drug abuse situation in the member countries and analyze the legislations of BRICS member states as well as devise modalities to share the best practices of enforcement and demand reduction being followed in the member countries.
The issue of Drug Abuse

- Today the drug business generates the highest illegal fund flows and leads to Narco-Terrorism, which poses a serious threat to global security and endangers peace, health and stability across regions.
- Today Russia is affected by terrorism, China has terrorism in xinjiang province, and India is also the victim of terrorism. There are estimates from the western writers that almost 25 % of the ISI (Pakistan) funding to terrorists is generated through drug trafficking.
- Recently, in Pathankot attack, there were allegations that it was mixed up with drug trade and drug mafia and that is how they could enter India. The inquiry is still going on.
- India is poorly situated in the sense that on its west is the ‘Golden Crescent’ and on east is the ‘Golden Triangle’. The usage of drugs in India is increasing, particularly in the border areas due to their porous nature, especially in Punjab and North East states.
- Each country has its own unique method of suffering the problem. Brazil has Columbia drug trade which is perhaps the worst in the world. Afghanistan, Laos and Myanmar situated in India’s neighbourhood are also suffering from illegal drug trafficking.
- Terrorism is the direct outcome of this industry. All the countries have a large youth component, below 35 years which are badly affected.

Need of the Hour

- For cooperation among BRICS members, synthetic drugs, money laundering, banking channel, information exchange etc are the focus areas. Synthetic drugs have become a problem for India, South Africa and Russia.
- The synthetic drugs move as pharmaceuticals. India has lot of exports of pharmaceuticals and chemicals etc. to African and other countries. This area should be focused upon.
- Money laundering channels should be targeted. The billions of black money are converted to white money which is detrimental to the economy. Cooperation among BRICS countries would be helpful.

Best practices to tackle Drug Abuse

- Intelligence sharing: Usually the last point peddlers get into police net. The real movers or illegal traders get away. So to identify those people and isolate them, the countries have to cooperate.
- To vain people away, drug rehabilitation and Society awareness programmers are very important.
- Global cooperation for AIDs has been successful. It is not a menace now as it was a decade back. It is due to the focused attention against its spread, prevention and taking care of AIDs patients. Africa had a big problem, but now it has been contained due to education and preventive methods.

For effective implementation

- Law and Order: If any drug carriers and masterminds have been caught, we should find out what are his/her travel links. This information can be shared.
- Revenue intelligence: Huge amount of money is getting transferred across borders and somehow it is getting done through banking channels. Hawala money is also there. There are concerted efforts from India to curb Black money. Wherever there are tax havens, they need to be plugged.
- Health issues: Any one consuming drugs suffer physically and mentally. Treating those people and bringing them back to normal health is very important.
- Awareness programme: Education through schools and colleges.
- Social welfare and rehabilitation: It includes rehabilitation of drug addicts as most of them are very poor and bringing them back into society. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment task is involved here.
Conclusion

This has been a multipronged effort to contain narcotics problem. If the BRICS countries try to coordinate their position, then with a greater voice they can speak in other international forum like United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna and try to set the agenda and make them take steps which we feel would curb this menace.

Nominations for Padma Awards.

Introduction

- **Padma Awards** – one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, are given in various disciplines/fields of activities are going online. The government is opening nomination for ordinary citizens to nominate anyone. This is happening for the first time and it will open the flood gates for nomination.
- Earlier it was wrapped in misery where ordinary people think that these awards are given to those who are influential, political functionaries, and government officials. Public never associated themselves with the entire process of these awards.

Benefits of Nominations for Padma Awards

- This decision by the government is revolutionary in itself. There are lots of people in the country side and elsewhere who have worked diligently in improving the status of people in the villages, protecting the environment, creating water bodies, developing agriculture in a new manner. These have not come to light.
- This effect to involve the public in decision making of Padma awards will be very significant. This can unravel the real talent existing in our country.
- The nominators would be required to furnish their Aadhar details for authenticity and accountability. Lot of frauds will be eliminated through this.
- The aspirations of the people who have silently been working towards achieving targets in purpose will be recognised.
- This will give the citizens a chance to have their view in the Padma awards.
- We may see the faces and names of people who we may not have heard in the past.
- We may expect the 2017 Padma awards will have eye openers and they will make a difference to the overall development scenario in the country.
- Earlier the ordinary citizens did not know the nominees and the selection process was opaque. Through the new initiative the people will get to know the total number of nominations received.
- Up to this time unfortunately we have found that the powerful and influential people have been able to get their way by making recommendation and lobby very hard for a particular individual to get the award. This will not be the case anymore because of the nomination by the ordinary citizens.
- Baba Amte got the Magsaysay Award only after certain magazines and news paper published the work done by him. The work done by Baba Amte towards Leprosy was not known to people at large. There are 1000’s of Indians working throughout without asking for any recognition and rewards.

The limitations of the award

- Padma wards were instituted in 1954. We saw a brief period in 1977. In 1977, 1980 and from 1993 to 1997 there were no Padma awards.
- We have seen celebrities and eminent personalities refusing these awards feeling that they should have got Padma Bhushan or Padma Vibhushan and not Padma Shri and many refusing it for getting it very late in their carrier.
Conclusion

- Simple online nomination encourages and facilitates all Indian citizens to participate. This is technology at work and this is going to make a real difference to the awards per se when they are presented and approved by the government.
- With this process we can hope that these awards will reflect the ethos of the country and will become the people’s award. The nominations can be made online but the nominators would be required to furnish their Aadhaar details for authenticity and accountability. The nominations can be made online but the nominators would be required to furnish their Aadhaar details for authenticity and accountability. The nominations can be made online but the nominators would be required to furnish their Aadhaar details for authenticity.

India and Hangzhou G20 Summit.

Introduction

The 2016 Group of Twenty (G20) Summit was held in Hangzhou, China to discuss efforts to reform Global Economic Governance. It was the eleventh meeting of the G20. G20 accounts for 85% of the world trade and two-third of world population. It consists of 19 head of the state and European Union.

Historical evolution of G20

- It was started in 1999 as an institution of Finance Minister’s of 20 countries. They would meet on the sidelines of the IMF and World Bank meeting in Washington DC. It was upgraded to a summit level in 2008 after global economic crisis.
- G20 does not have a Secretariat, does not have any staff working for it, and it is basically a leader led forum. The recommendations of G20 are advisory in nature. The G20 leaders want to conclude the Doha round of trade talks.
- The basic agenda in all these meeting is Growth. How to have better, transparent, and effective global economic governance and how to promote growth.

Highlights of the G20 Summit

- It is up to the host country to set up the agenda. China wanted to focus on Financial and Economic issues. The theme of the Summit is “Toward an Innovative, Invigorated, Interconnected and Inclusive World Economy”.
- The forum provides an opportunity for bilateral and multilateral meetings.
- Finance, Trade and Investment is the major problems in international community. At present Europe and America is out of recession but the economic growth is not much in these countries. The whole world depends on their economic growth.
- Globalization has benefitted developing countries and emerging markets like China and India. It has helped to get several millions of people out of poverty and provide them a decent standard of living.
- Developed countries in terms of climate change, environment, and economics where rich are getting richer and those at the lower segment, their prosperity is not growing at a rapid pace.
- In Developed countries the disparity between haves and have-nots are increasing. This is the reason we had BREXIT. Britain decided to come out of EU because they were forced to accept migrants to their country and migrants up their own jobs and their economy is not growing up adequately to be able to sustain that.
- Obama expressed concern about Britain coming out of EU. Many believe BREXIT is affecting the British economy.
Bilateral meeting between India and China

- There was a bilateral meeting between India and China. The two significant take away are: Our Prime Minister said, both countries should respect the strategic interests, concerns and aspirations. We have to realize the full potential of our bilateral partnership.
- Prime Minister criticized the terrorist attack on the Chinese embassy in Kyrgyzstan. No politics should be played while dealing with terrorism, because China had blocked India’s United Nations bid to ban Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar.
- China’s President Xi Jinping also said that the two countries should constructively handle the differences. On one side China is opposing India’s entry into NSG, Masood Azhar case, South China Sea dispute and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) going along POK. We can see duality in Chinese stand.
- What India is doing at present is taking up these issues with China at every available opportunity.

India’s Strategy

- India is reaching out and strengthening its strategic cooperation partnership with other countries. These can be seen in Prime Ministers visit to Vietnam and decided to enhance the partnership to comprehensive strategic partnership, issue of Chabahar, reaching out to central Asia etc.
- India will host the BRICS summit in Goa in October. BRICS have a very influential voice; they represent 40% of the world population and similar GDP and Trade levels. The power is shifting from west to east. In that sense how to have a better voice for these emerging economies in the world governance is going to be an important area of discussion.

Egyptian President’s visit to India.

Introduction

The visit sets the tone for the next couple of decades. This is the first significant bilateral visit after the Arab Spring which swept through Egypt. India has long historical and cultural relationship with Egypt dating back to Non Aligned Movement, freedom movement and in Suez crisis we supported Egypt. The Arab spring brought about a small hiatus. The visit is kind of a course correction bringing back the bilateral relations and a more forward movement.

India – Egypt Relations

- We have relations encompassing every sector that is political, security, economic, cultural, science, investment and defense. Defense has acquired a little higher emphasis in the recent visit.
- This is a forward movement. It lays a foundation for new relations between the two countries.
- India and Egypt decided to significantly step up their defense and security cooperation to effectively deal with twin challenges of terrorism and radicalization.
- Egypt participated in the World Sufi Forum in India. Harmony, tolerance and coexistence were the theme.
- Prime minister mentioned Egypt as a bridge between Asia and Africa. Defense trade is an important issue of the visit with expanding defense trade, training and capacity building.
- In the Afro – Asian solidarity which evolved into Non Aligned Movement, Egypt played a role along with India. India and Egypt are the founding fathers of Non Aligned Movement.
- There exists Literary, linguistic and scientific contacts between the two countries. Indian films are popular in Egypt. This shows the cultural empathy between the two countries.
- Egypt can also invest in Make in India, defense and industries. They have a very good technical man power which is best recognized in the Arab world.
- There is a Pakistan angle to our relations with the gulf countries. They did influence for some time, but this is not the case now. India has invested in gulf countries in terms of man power.

**Terrorism and Radicalization**

- With both India and Egypt engaged in fighting terrorism, the two leaders identified the menace as one of the "gravest threats" and decided to have greater information and operational exchanges to combat it, besides ramping up defense cooperation.
- We are of one view that growing radicalization, violence and spread of terror are a real threat across regions.
- India has been a victim of terrorism; Egypt has seen a lot of unrest. The radicalization is taking the form of global terrorism.
- Egypt is very well placed to play its role in halting radicalization and rolling back all the factors which are contributing to it. It is the centre of **Al-Azhar University for Islamic education**. It has suffered as a victim of radicalization. Muslim brotherhood had created havoc in the country.
- One of the issues that India and Egypt face is terrorism. An overarching framework and support from G20 will greatly enhance the joint efforts of both the countries in fighting terrorism.

**Importance of Egypt**

- Egypt is the member of the organization for Islamic cooperation (OIC). It is a powerful global organization. OIC had a pro Pakistan slant in its deliberations and declarations since inception. Pakistan insisted India should not be a member despite having second largest Muslim population. Over the years the Pakistan stand has got diluted.
- OIC can play a role in this institutional framework in resisting radicalization. India has got good bilateral relations with the members of OIC. What India discusses with these countries is same as what OIC discusses.
- Egypt has a triple identity in terms of African identity, Arab – Asian Identity and Mediterranean identity. These identities will make them unique. This casts upon it certain responsibilities and roles in the region and beyond it. It is a large country with historical and civilization strength.
- Egypt has a long history in the defense sector. In the emerging west Asian scenario, exchange in the production, training and information is very important. The Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen issues are conflict based. So Egypt has a special significance.
- The culture is the least controversial aspect of all global relations. It promotes people to people contact, understanding and appreciating each other’s culture and lays a ground basis for other aspects.
- The prime minister of Egypt represents a secular A secular government anywhere is welcomed in the current scenario where radicalization is taking place and terrorism is striking roots.
- **Economics** is the binding glue in the contemporary world. Egypt can be a gateway to Africa, Mediterranean and to the Arab world. It is a member of the Arab Free Trade Area. If India find a way to Egypt and meet the value addition criteria then we will have a duty free access.

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**Prime Minister’s Vietnam and China visit.**

**Introduction**

The Indian Prime minister’s visit to Vietnam upgraded the relationship to comprehensive strategic partnership. It was the first visit of Indian prime minister to Vietnam after 15 years.

**India-Vietnam Relationship**

- In the context of developments taking place in **South China Sea** and **Sino-Indian bilateral tensions** the visit acquires a greater significance. India and Vietnam had strong historical ties from the days of
freedom struggle, Ho Chi Minh movement and then Prime Minister Vajpayee returned from China because China had attacked Vietnam in 1979.

- The significance of Indo-Vietnam relationship is acquiring a strategic dimension now very strongly. The Vietnam will see the visit as a long awaited turning point in the relationship.
- India upgraded the relationship to comprehensive strategic partnership. Vietnam has this kind of relationship with only Russia and China. After the end of cold war countries have welcomed the possibility of establishing multi vector relationship with whole range of countries without it becoming zero-sum.
- Strategic partnerships have become the vehicle for expanding relationships bilaterally with all the major countries without it becoming a problem in terms of affecting other countries. Foreign policy should have the flexibility to establish these long term strategic relationships.
- Both countries have mutual interests in terms of developmental partnership and in terms of larger strategic issues that are emerging in the South China Sea, South East Asia and India is moving from look East towards Act East. So Vietnam is a key player.
- One significant outcome of the visit was rising of special line of credit of $500 million to Vietnam for acquiring defence equipments from India. In the last two years India has focused on strengthening Vietnamese defence needs.
- Economic dimension seems to be proceeding slowly. It is important to India to push the economic dimension. There should be a comprehensive approach in both bilateral and multilateral platforms.
- India has ties with Vietnam oil and gas industry. Of late China is objecting India’s activities in Vietnam which offered India 8 blocks for oil and gas exploration.
- India has been supportive to Vietnam’s position in the maritime area. India is echoing the sentiments of most of the countries of the region. This is to uphold UNCLOS, and other international norms. Vietnam has concerns about Chinese building new islands in South China Sea.

India’s position on Arms Export

- There are speculative reports that India would be transferring Brahmos supersonic missile to Vietnam, but India is not accepting it. Until now the Indian position has been that we do not export arms to countries for other than self defence Brahmos with its capacity is not intended for self defence.
- This has a certain offensive aspect to it. Giving Brahmos missile to Vietnam would invite retaliatory actions from countries like China. We need to balance all the pros and cons because for India it is important to build comprehensive partnership with all countries in our national interest.
- There are reports that China is supplying various weapon systems to Pakistan and even India should do the same by supplying weapons to Vietnam. There is a certain realistic logic to this and should be analysed in medium to long term perspective and not in short term perspective.
- Our focus should be on developing India, Make in India, Clean India, and skill India. We need to focus on these areas. Entering the arms race, arms game and balance of power has its one consequence.

China’s role in South East Asia

- China’s role in South East Asia is in the context of new emerging groups, new economic dynamics in the region; China is becoming a bigger player in the region. The G20 summit in China has clearly established China’s leading role as one of the major global players.
- The countries in south Asia have very strong relation with China.
- China is talking about mutual win – win partnership, inclusion, integrated networks and innovation. India has to get into this discourse. It helps in establishing itself in the changing scenario.
- A very strong information network among the countries affected by terrorism needs to be fashioned.
Successful launch of Weather Satellite INSAT 3DR

Introduction

- ISRO successfully launched the country’s weather satellite INSAT-3DR, into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO). The launch took place from the Second Launch Pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR (SDSC SHAR), Sriharikota, the spaceport of India.

- The operation of India’s heavier rocket GSLV Mark-2 equipped with the indigenous Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS) opens up more launch service revenue opportunity. ISRO is looking at various avenues to earn foreign exchange using this rocket.

India’s Rocket Technology

- India started launching satellites by developing its indigenous launch vehicles since 1980. We successfully launched our satellite ROHINI by using SLV-3 rocket. Subsequently India had developed 2 launch systems namely ASLV and PSLV.

- ASLV was used for specific launches however PSLV has emerged over the years as India’s reliable launch system. PSLV has got some limitation in terms of its launch mass. It can carry up to 2 tonne of satellite. Hence there was a need to develop Launch vehicles to carry heavier satellites. For that India started its GSLV programme.

- India has made a significant progress in PSLV technology market. Till date India has launched 74 satellites for other players which include countries like USA.

- There are various labs involved into this like labs in Sriharikota, Ahmadabad and there are few private industries associated with ISRO which are involved in development of technology and Satellites.

- Aerospace Engineering is in a nascent stage in India. There are no essential agencies working on space other than ISRO. The opportunities are limited but they are increasing. Private industries are also motivated to enter into this field.

Importance of GSLV and INSAT-3DR Satellite

- 2211 kg INSAT-3DR is the heaviest satellite to be launched from the Indian soil. This is required for the future because many communication satellites and weather satellites belong to a heavier category and ISRO wants to achieve a mark where it wants to launch satellites of 4 to 6 tonne weight into space.

- GSLV has got various stages and right now ISRO has operationalised GSLV Mark-2. This allows carrying satellites of 2.5 to 3 tonne varieties. Earlier India relied on French agency Ariane Space to launch satellites of more than 4 tonne weight.

- By developing GSLV technology and launching these satellites on our own reduces the cost by 50% what ISRO pays to French agency Ariane Space.

- GSLV-F05 carrying with it the INSAT-3DR weather satellite is the tenth flight of India’s Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)

- INSAT-3DR has a Data Relay Transponder as well as a Search and Rescue Transponder to assist search and rescue operations of security agencies including all defence forces, the Coast Guard, and in shipping. The vehicle launch will be able to provide meteorological services and continue the INSAT-3D mission.

- PSLV has 4 stages. First is the solid stage which uses a solid propellant. Next is a Liquid stage followed by solid and liquid stage. By using only solid and liquid propellants we cannot create more amount of thrust which is required to launch heavier satellites. Where as in GSLV first is a solid stage followed by a liquid stage and the third stage is a cryogenic stage. Cryogenic stage allows the satellite operators to launch heavier satellites with more amount of thrust.

- INSAT-3DR is an advanced meteorological (weather observation) satellite built by India to provide a variety inputs essential for accurate weather forecasting. For this, it is equipped with three payloads (instruments), namely, a Multispectral Imager, Sounder and weather Data Relay Transponder.
• INSAT-3DR also carries a satellite aided **Search and Rescue Transponder** that picks up and relays alert signals originating from distress beacons of maritime, aviation and land based users.

• India’s capability in meteorological satellites focuses exclusively on weather and meteorology. India is an agriculture economy and weather related inputs are required based on satellite technology for the purposes of agriculture. Indian economy is based on fishery industry which requires weather related inputs.

• INSAT-3DR is the advanced version of our earlier satellites and the data obtained will be accurate than the earlier data captured by previous satellites. **Sea surface temperature** is also measured by the satellite. Sea surface temperature is required for the fishing industry which helps to find out better areas in the sea for catching fish. More accurate information helps the fishing industry.

• It will help during **low visibility periods** and during night time also. Particularly during night time fog and low clouds usually come over the horizon and satellite systems are not able to monitor these because they do not have that type of a sensor capability. INSAT-3DR has got higher sensors which allow them to monitor fog and low visibility and low clouds. This will help agriculture and tourism industry.

**Cryogenic technology**

• Cryogenics is low temperature physics. Cryogenic technology uses **oxygen and hydrogen**. These gases liquefy at -180 and -250 degree Celsius temperature. During early 1990s India was offered Cryogenic technology by Russian agencies. In those days India was under the sanctions regime and **Missile Technology Control Regime** never allowed Russians to transfer this technology to India.

• India took some time to master Cryogenic technology, but now it has mastered Cryogenic technology. Even the two launches before INSAT-3DR used indigenous Cryogenic technology which was successful.

**India’s future missions**

• **Chandrayan-2** is a complex mission than Chandrayan-1. Chandrayan-1 was launched which was floating around the moon and observations were taken. Chandrayan-2 consists of a **Rover and a Lander** where the Robotic system will be put on the surface of the moon. This weighs more and requires a strong rocket.

• In 2020 India intends to launch a second Mars mission in which GSLV rocket will be used.

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**Prime Minister’s visit to Laos.**

**Introduction**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Vientiane, Laos to attend two important meetings – the **14th Indo-ASEAN summit** and the **11th East Asia forum**. Participation in these multilateral gathering which are focussed on economic issues is important for India.

**India-ASEAN Relations**

• The first ASEAN-India summit was held in 2002 and during that time the prime minister of Malaysia was not keen on India having a separate summit with ASEAN. During that time ASEAN was focussed on East Asia, china, Japan and Republic of Korea. The beginning of ASEAN-India summit was a breakthrough for India in our **Look East Policy** and now we have an **Act East policy**.

• In 10 years we have gone from the point of starting of the dialogue with ASEAN to an ASEAN-India summit. Since then we have created an excellent infrastructure of cooperation with ASEAN. We have a **strategic partnership with ASEAN**. ASEAN as a group is the 7th largest in the world as an economic entity.
Our trade with ASEAN is worth about $65 billion a year, we have a separate ASEAN-India meeting at foreign minister’s level, commerce minister’s level, special areas like tourism and New and Renewable Energy.

ASEAN-India summit shows how both countries are progressing in the partnership. We are looking keenly for a regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) agreement which will allow India to deal with ASEAN as a group like we deal with EU. This is very important because ASEAN is now an economic community (AEC).

There is need for Act East because we need to implement the projects discussed for many years with ASEAN. There has been discussion about trilateral highway between India-Myanmar-Thailand. India has also proposed extending the highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. This project is under discussion for long time but the implementation is little slow.

People of ASEAN will be looking for active participation from India. Thailand has great interests in educational partnerships in terms of study of Sanskrit, Hindi and people to people links.

India-Laos Relations

- The Laos is among the 4 CMLV (Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam) countries of ASEAN. Laos’s economy is less developed than others in the region. There is a special reason for India to have an active relationship.
- In Laos teaching of English as a foreign language is in demand. India has a whole of civilisation and cultural heritage links with Laos.

China-Japan equation

- Interaction of India with ASEAN as a group gives India many opportunities. At one time china had close relations with ASEAN countries. Over the years ASEAN has become bit vary over China. So ASEAN is trying to develop and value their relationship with India.
- India has a strong bilateral relationship with Japan as well.

The issue of South China Sea

- South China Sea issue is a direct issue between china and ASEAN. The Arbitration was called by Philippines and china is not pleased by the decision of the Permanent of Court Arbitration. As a responsible international power China should think of abiding by the decision of the Arbitration.
- India is a great supporter of maritime security and freedom of seas. For India South China Sea is very important for trade, shipping, import and export to the region and oil exploration (like in Vietnam).

The issue of Terrorism

- Many countries in the region like Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia are affected by terrorism. Terrorism is an issue of general and genuine concern to all the countries of ASEAN. Counter terrorism measures, exchange of information and keeping in touch with each other on terrorism are very important.
- It is important for India to raise the issue of terrorism in international forums like G20, ASEAN etc. If we do not raise the issue of terrorism it is not only a mistake but it will be misunderstood by the world community.
- Everyone is aware of the proxy war the Pakistan is fighting, the radicalization of youth in J&K, sending infiltrators, sending black money and all these efforts to keep the situation in J&K in boil. In the international community it is important to raise these linkages.
- Prime minister at G20 said that those who are responsible for terrorism or allow terrorism to take place from their soil should be isolated and sanctioned and must not be rewarded. Terrorism is now a globalised issue.
China and Pakistan factor

- China has considerable muscle power backing Pakistan. All these years we had not talked about Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and China has done things against India’s interest. They have taken shaksgam valley from Pakistan which is the part of PoK and built Karakoram highway. Now China is building China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is passing through PoK. India has to raise these issues at various bilateral and international forums.

India-Afghanistan Relations

Introduction

Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani held a close consultation on key issues with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Afghanistan has been demanding increased defence supplies; with rising violence by Taliban in the region, India is one of the biggest donors to Afghanistan pledging $2 billion in support for reconstruction.

Relations between India and Afghanistan

- The relations between India and Afghanistan go back to 1000s of years. We are much more than strategic partners; there are a number of agreements signed between both the countries.
- Since 2002 when Taliban went out of Afghanistan, India has lent more than $2 billion and now India has promised to provide $1 billion in aid for development, reconstruction and economic progress.
- India has invested $10.8 billion in Afghanistan which includes setting up of iron mines, 6 steel plants and 800 Mega Watt power plants, hydro electric power projects, roads and other investments. India is also involved in many projects like building hospitals and parliament building.
- The Salma Dam known also known as Afghanistan-India friendship dam took 40 years for its completion.
- Indian government intends to complete all the pending projects going on for a long time.
- In recent time we can see collaboration in outer space, capacity development, pharmaceuticals, and solar alliance between the governments and between the private sectors of the two countries.
- Another issue is connectivity where India is helping Afghanistan-Iran Connectivity. India is building Chabahar port in Iran and has built the zaranj delaram highway.
- Afghanistan is a landlocked country and it does not have access to sea. The Chabahar port will connect through zaranj delaram highway to Afghanistan and from there to central Asia.
- The development of Chabahar Trilateral Agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran will prove to be a game changer.
- India and Afghanistan are collaborating and have signed a strategic partnership Agreement; India has gifted 3 MI-25 Helicopters. They were used earlier while dealing with Taliban and they had established control over Kunduz in the north of Afghanistan.
- There is discussion going on between the two governments that more equipments, armaments, and weaponry should be supplied to Afghanistan to take care of its security, stability and introducing peace.
- Both India and Afghanistan should work closely to deal with the menace of Terrorism.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relationship

- After Ashraf Ghani came to power, he had great hopes on Pakistan that Pakistan will be able to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and Pakistan will be able to impress Taliban that they should stop their attacks on Afghanistan. After a year all these hopes are belied.
- Pakistan does not permit Afghanistan to send its products through its land route to India. So Afghanistan is not able to take advantage of the Indian market by supplying Afghan’s Hirati saffron and they are not able to take benefits of what India can provide them.
Afghanistan has said Pakistan is lying when it says it is restraining Taliban, but they are actually helping Taliban to launch attacks against Afghanistan.

Afghan president has threatened Pakistan to allow Afghanistan the access to Indian markets; otherwise Afghanistan will stop the access of Pakistan to central Asian countries.

India, Afghanistan, Iran and Bangladesh have become the victim of Pakistan militancy. Pakistan is trying to destabilise the whole region. Pakistan has emerged as the epicentre of Terrorism. We see the signature of Pakistan in the Terrorist attacks all over the world. The whole international community should come together to sanction and act against the state sponsoring Terrorism.

**Conclusion**

After the withdrawal of US forces, NATO and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) the responsibility devolves upon the neighbouring countries. China does not seem to be interested because even the initiative taken by India in UN to have people like Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi and Masood Azhar to be designated as terrorists. All the countries should work together and draw up security architecture.

We now have the option of Heart of Asia taking place in Amritsar and the trilateral initiative between US-Afghanistan-India and all countries should work together to ensure that terrorism is not able to play a havoc with the life and stability of Afghanistan.

There is responsibility of international community to deal with the militancy, sanction those and not allow them to promote terrorism. Terrorism should not be viewed from the prism of politics and is the need of the hour. The world needs to come together and present a solid unified front against the menace of terrorism.

**India-Nepal Relations**

**Introduction**

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda visit to India is his first bilateral visit abroad after assuming office. Nepal and India relations have always been very important since Nepal is one of our most important neighbours.

**Highlights of Nepal Prime Minister’s visit to India**

- This is indeed a very important visit because there is a change in the government and India had very difficult time during the term of previous Prime Minister K. P. Oli when there were blockades and allegations.
- We see from both sides there is conscious and deep desire to overcome all the difficulties of the past and move ahead in the spirit of a standing state of mutual accommodation and with the realisation that both countries need each other.
- We are close neighbours connected with geography while Himalaya acts like a barrier between China and Nepal. The intensity of relationship between both the countries is like any other two countries. We have an open border, free movement of people, and Gorkha regiments of Indian Army.

**India-Nepal Relationship**

- Both countries have to work together to see what India needs, India’s security interests, Nepal’s economic development and prosperity and workout what we need from each other.
- India-Nepal relations are part of South Asian family and china is not a part of it. Both countries should work together to build the brand of South Asia.
- There can be problems between the neighbours as it happens everywhere, but how we solve the problem is what is required.
The cause of concern in the recent times is the Constitution of Nepal. The new Constitution was criticised by the Madhesi Morcha led by leaders from the plains of Nepal who led the movement for blockade of economic supply lines on the Nepal-India border. There were huge loss of life and property.

Now there seems to be a broad consensus by all political parties in Nepal. We need a consensus which is inclusive, accommodating the aspirations of all sections of its diverse society and this is a progressive step happening in Nepal.

From India’s side any internal problem particularly in the Terai region spills over to India. So India has to be very concerned about security, law and order and stability aspect of happenings in Terai and its implications on India.

The devastating earthquake in 2015 had affected millions of people and the $1billion assistance promised by India will be distributed now.

Agreement on water resources, Mahakali-Pancheshwar project, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda visit to Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Project a concrete gravity dam on the Sutlej River in Himachal Pradesh. The primary purpose of the dam is hydroelectric power production and it supplies 1,500 megawatts of power and is very significant as Water resource development is very important for Nepal.

Prime Minister Prachanda is making the right gesture in his second term as Prime Minister with sincerity and determination to have good relationship with India.

Prime Minister launches Irrigation & Drinking Water Supply Projects in Gujarat

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has dedicated the water supply and irrigation projects worth of 4800 crore rupees in Gujarat at Limkheda in tribal district of Dahod. Mr. Modi has also handed over the forest land titles to the tribal people of Dahod and adjoining districts.

Irrigation Projects

- Prime minister inaugurated six water supply projects worth 1757 crore rupees and four lift irrigation projects worth another 2,000 crore rupees are under the Gujarat Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojna.
- The six water supply projects will provide drinking water to about 21-lakh people residing in 960 villages including 23 settlements in Dahod, Mahisagar, Narmada and Chhota Udepur districts. Similarly, the four lift irrigation projects based on Kadana- Karjan and Kakrapar Reservoirs will provide irrigation in 97,455 hectares of land in Dahod, Narmada, Mahisagar and Surat districts.
- Dahod district alone will get benefits for lift irrigation projects worth 1055 crore rupees from Kadana Reservoir and drinking water projects worth Rs.890 crore from the Narmada based Hafeshwar.
- These initiatives will have a great impact in Saurashtra region and the people of the region will benefit at large. Drought is the major problem and in the past 3 years there had been hardly any rain in the area.
- There are big industries in Saurashtra region, agriculture has done extraordinarily well. If there is a proper water supply then the farmers can do much better. Prime minister had inaugurated first phase of SAUNI (Saurashtra Narmada Avataran for Irrigation) project in which nearly 10 dams and reservoirs of Rajkot, Jamnagar and Morbi would be filled up with the water of Narmada River.
- Saurashtra and Kutch have traditionally been areas which have faced water scarcity and now steps are being taken by the government to make water available to the people.
- The problem in India is that there is excess water supply during monsoon season and in many areas it remains selective.
- Narmada is the key to the lifeline of Gujarat like Ganges is in north India. The important point is that the surplus water of Narmada is to be used till the last drop and there by the problem of water scarcity can be solved in the context of the drought areas in the region.
The recent Mihir Shah report to the government on the restructuring of central water commission wherein there should be piped water supply to the irrigation fields. There is also a problem with silting where projects like Narmada will have to face like Bhakra is facing today.

- Piped irrigation is a good idea because in the context of the extreme heat, lot of water can be preserved. The question is the availability of water in the river basin and the preserving of surplus water during the time of monsoon.
- Pradhan Mantri krishi sinchay yojana has been renewed and more funds are allocated to it and NABARD has got a corpus of 20,000 crore. This is to see that more hectares come under irrigation in the next two years. The country suffers from lack of irrigation and we have got 60 % farmers in rain fed area.
- The projects are being expedited wherever possible, micro planning is also taking place and there is an equal emphasis on water conservation.
- Rain water harvesting and increasing use of solar power can save lot of water. What is required is a comprehensive planning and awareness to the people that water is a precious commodity. It is said in the context of west Asia that the next war may not be over oil, but over water. India must never face such a kind of a situation.

**Initiatives for Disable Persons**

- In another program, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute Aids and Assistive Devices to the persons with Disabilities at Samajik Adhikarita Shivir at Navsari in South Gujarat. More than 11,000 people were provided free-of-cost assistive equipment worth Rs 10 crore.
- This camp also holds the prospect of entering the ‘Guinness Book World Records’ in three categories namely most people fitted with hearing aid in eight hours, largest wheelchair logo image and most oil lamps lit simultaneously at single venue.
- The aim of the programme is to provide opportunities for the growth and development of differently-abled persons so that they can lead productive, safe and dignified lives. These initiatives will broaden the base and incorporate more disabled people into the main stream and making them self reliant.
- The modern civilisation is all about caring for Tribal development and taking care of disabled and these are the important areas of a welfare state.

**Conclusion**

- People’s participation has to be at the centre of the decentralised planning which is a bottom up approach. We see this is yet to be developed in a big way in terms of water conservation, rejuvenation, bringing back to life the old projects, and the rain water harvesting.
- People’s participation must have at most priority and localised efforts are needed in the context of the world where we should “Think globally but act locally”.

**Demand for Special Category Status by Andhra Pradesh**

**Introduction**

- The Centre has announced a financial package for Andhra Pradesh. This comes at the end of the persistent demand by Andhra Pradesh for special category status.
- All the agricultural surplus of Andhra Pradesh and the irrigated district of Hyderabad where the climate was good, open land, productive labour, immense technical capability acted as a magnet. None of these will come to Andhra Pradesh.
Parameters for Special Category Status

1. hilly terrain;
2. low population density and/or sizeable share of tribal population;
3. strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries;
4. economic and infrastructure backwardness; and
5. Non-viable nature of State finances.

Special category status

- Andhra Pradesh is asking for special status because the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh or the creation of Telangana gave rise to a revenue deficit — since Hyderabad (which was in AP), which housed several IT and pharmaceutical companies as well as PSUs, industries, trade and commerce went to Telangana.
- With the forthcoming of GST certain taxation situation also changes making it redundant having a special category status. There will be vast increase in the transfer of revenue from the Government of India to various states.
- Perhaps the idea of Special category status is no longer valid after the **14th Finance Commission (FFC) removed the distinction between general and special category states**, given that it had factored in the levels of backwardness to devolve funds to states.
- There has been a demand for special category status from Bihar, west Bengal and odisha. All the industrially backward states felt the need for special category status for them to make the leap in terms of economic growth.

Financial package for Andhra Pradesh

- The Financial package will fund the **revenue deficit**; they will **enhance the railway profile** by adding a zonal head quarter; **fund irrigation projects**; and set up **education institutions**. So vast investments will flow over time.
- This is the one time financial assistance which should be used carefully by taking help of the best brains in the country so that there is equilibrium between Andhra Pradesh and other states. Andhra Pradesh is way high up in the ease of doing business.
- Now is the time to utilise the resources given by Government of India and make use of it so that the state in the shortest span of time has achieved something.
- This kind of packages should be used properly without any wastage, leakage and without unnecessary wastage in unnecessary area.
- It is up to the government and the people to chart the new path. There are different trajectories and different routes.

Need of the Hour

- Every state can specialise and make strong its assets and then go forward. There is no need that every **development model** has to be the same. If China has industry as its model of development, then other countries can have other entity. China with all the wherewithal has never been able to develop an Aero Space Industry like USA or France.
- Develop **education skills**; develop world class **educational institution and health facilities**. To set up a big steel and aluminium industries one job is generated for every 2 or 3 crore of investment. But a small portion of it is enough to generate a job in healthcare sector, tourism and education sector. There is no gestation period in these sectors.
- The challenge for the Andhra Pradesh government now is to chart a path towards growth. They have an excellent hill terrain right from Vizianagaram to west Godavari, presence of Eastern Ghats, long coastline, favourable climate for tea and coffee and tourism. Developing small cities into smart cities.
Conclusion

Political leadership will be the key in the task of implementation and need of technological expertise to translate projects into realities. The bureaucrats from the central services should be given some opportunity so that they are attracted to come to Andhra Pradesh.

Launch of New Smart Cities

Introduction

- In the future decade in the Asia-Pacific region, more than half of the continent’s 4.3 billion population is expected to live in cities by 2018. The regions rapid urban growth is set to take place in India. McKinsey Global Institute has estimated that India’s urban population will rise from 340 million in 2008 to 590 million by 2030. This is the unprecedented rate of urbanisation compared to other countries.

Need for Smart Cities

- Existing cities are struggling with overcrowding, extreme poverty, lack of basic amenities like water, housing and electricity. Other issues include water pollution, piles of untreated waste and some of the worst air quality levels in the world. We have seen Delhi reeling under vector borne diseases which are because of over population and lack of infrastructure. Cities such as Mumbai and Chennai are frequently affected by catastrophic floods because of urbanisation and improper city planning.
- Keeping these issues in mind Government of India announced Smart Cities Mission in July 2015. The urban development ministry has come up with new list of Smart Cities.

Progress in Smart Cities Mission

- The first phase included 20 cities. There after there was a need felt across the country and consequently 13 cities were shortlisted. As per the mission guidelines these cities were required to formulate as Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) headed by a CEO. Most of the cities have constituted the SPV and appointed the CEO.
- Smart City is an open ended term. As per the mission guidelines the whole objective is to improve/upgrade the quality of life of the citizens. Each chosen city has been given a consultant who engages with citizens and come out with specific solutions the city is looking for.

Aims and objectives of Smart Cities Mission

- Smart city Mission aims to create some portion of the cities to be smart, user friendly, and the model can be replicated in the other part of the city and country as well. Key focus is on Sustainability and Inclusivity.
- The funding varies depending on the solution sought by the respective citizens. There is a provision of Municipal bonds, pooled financing and funding from multilateral and bilateral financing bodies. The important component of the mission is to utilise the existing funds of Government of India schemes and state government schemes. The funds from Make in India, Skill India, Digital India and Swachh Bharat will be utilised.
- The challenge is that the state government and Urban Local Bodies must also match the centre’s contribution.
- India being the federal country and many of the state governments and local bodies do not have a good financial position.
  1. For this the biggest motivation in India is the occurrence of Crisis or Disasters where the cities need to plan and build necessary infrastructure.
2. Citizens have also realised and it’s time for the city administration to charge the property tax and other taxes from the citizens and also ensure that the quality of service the citizens get in return is at par.

3. There is a provision that State Government and ULBs will have to agree for the Mission guidelines

- The smart city list has started to expand because states have gone ahead and have announced their own cities like in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The state governments are taking the best features of the Smart Cities Mission and try to adopt it in the local circumstances and improve the quality of life in cities.
- The selection framework of Government of India was very objective which includes expert from the government and its agencies like National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and other global experts.
- The only sector in the mission which might see an impetus would be Affordable Housing. Government has long term vision of investing in Infrastructure which will be running simultaneous to the Smart Cities Mission.
- Key towards success or failure will depend on:
  1. Procurement guidelines that come under Smart Cities Mission.
  2. Spatial planning and land use: Whether expanding geographic size of the city or vertical expansion
  3. Governance rules: In Indian cities the role of Mayor is ceremonial in nature. We need to decide whether the role of city administration is only to provide services or to govern cities like in western countries in New York and London.

- The Landmark provision in the Smart Cities Mission is that the citizens are empowered in true sense. Each and every project under the Mission will be determined by the citizens and the implementation will be governed by them.

The Mission has got the international attention where USA was the first country to adopt Allahabad, Ajmer and Visakhapatnam. Subsequently UK, Germany, France and many other countries through their Diplomatic mission have conveyed their willingness to come forward.

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Venezuela NAM summit

Introduction

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit was held in Venezuela and was attended by Indian vice president Hamid Ansari. The genesis of NAM was the result of the two blocks during the cold war era. Even before the first meeting of NAM in Belgrade by Yugoslavia, it was in the meeting at Bandung in Indonesia in which the five principles of NAM evolved. It was Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K Krishna Menon who for the first time used the expression Non Alignment in 1953 and 1954.

Significance of NAM

- Since the end of Cold war, NAM is trying to find a role for itself. Earlier it was fighting against colonialism, racism, apartheid, developed countries and their imperialism on developing countries. After the end of the Cold war the focus of the movement was changed. It focused on economic cooperation so that the economic conditions of the citizens of the developing countries could improve.

- There are other organisations like NATO which was the product of the Cold war, but that did not cease to exist after the disintegration of Soviet Union.

Need for UNSC Reforms

- India has been actively pushing for UNSC Reforms at various forums and even in NAM and vice president Hamid Ansari raised question whether an organisation designed in 1945 with 51 members is really
appropriate to serve the needs and demands of the international community that now comprises 193 independent sovereign states.

- All the 193 nations of the UN acknowledge and accept the need for UN Reforms. The question is how to take the reform forward. In this context NAM is also not a united house, it is a divided house.
- In 2005 at UNGA it was acknowledged for UN reforms particularly in the size, structure and composition of UNSC. In the 70th session, the United Nations adopts documents based negotiations for Security Council reforms.
- There are vested interests of some countries who do not wish for UNSC reforms.
- We need to raise this subject at every forum so that international community comes to know about the importance of UNSC reforms.
- India has all the eligibility to become the permanent member of UNSC.

**Issue of Terrorism**

- India has raised the issue of Counter Terrorism and it has to be the top priority for NAM. India is pushing for the world community to recognise that terrorism is no longer a regional issue but a global issue. Today there is hardly any country in the world without affected by terrorism. Be it Paris, Turkey, London, USA, Spain and the list goes on and all are affected by terrorism.
- For many decades India has been proposing for a comprehensive UN convention on Terrorism. We are not able to take that forward because there is no agreement on the definition of Terrorism. There are some countries like Pakistan who try to divide Terrorism into Good and Bad Terrorism.
- Countries like India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh claim that the perpetrators are trained and funded by Pakistan. China feels that its political relations and strategic partnership with Pakistan is more valuable to it than a fight against Terror.
- India must find its way to make the global community aware that Pakistan is responsible for Terror activities. India tried to pass a resolution on counter terrorism in NAM. The resolutions in NAM are based on total consensus and Pakistan blocked the resolution. We had a similar move by China when it blocked India’s UN Bid for Ban on Jaish Chief Masood Azhar.
- This is like a catch 22 situation for India. India must continue applying global pressure in forums like NAM, G20, East Asia Summit and ASEAN upon Pakistan.

Iran is part of India’s extended neighbourhood, it is our civilisational partner and there is no need to depend only on NAM to come together with Iran.

**Conclusion**

- There are so many issues which confront the International community today like UNSC reforms, terrorism, climate change, ensuring peace and sustainable development. NAM can play a useful role in dealing with these issues.

**Merger of Railway and General Budget**

**Introduction**

- The Union Cabinet approved the merger of the general budget with the railway budget. In 1924 based upon the recommendations of Acworth Committee, railway budget was separated from the general budget.
- This year there was lot of pressure because of the 7th pay commission payouts that the railways will have to meet. The Bibek Debroy Committee report suggested there is no need for a separate railway budget and there should be a union budget in which the railway budget should be presented.
• Railways continue to be the lifeline for Indian citizens because it is a common mass movement transporter.

**Highlights of the Merger of Railway and General Budget**

• This is a good development. In 1924 a separate railway budget was necessary because railway budget at that time was almost 5/6th the size of union budget. At present the size of the railway budget is about 6% of the size of the union budget. India’s union budget has become huge. It is now around 290 to 300 billion dollars.

• **Financial autonomy and the extra budgetary resource mobilisation** would continue with the railways. Financial burden of dividend has gone off from the Railways so they will now have more resources in hand.

• Finance Minister will present a **single Appropriation Bill**, including the estimates of Ministry of Railways, thereby saving precious time of Parliament by not having to hold separate consideration and passing of two Appropriation Bills.

• **Social obligation of the railways**
  
  • Railways bear about 30,000 crore each year to give concessions to different category of citizens like differently abled, senior citizens and those suffering from critical illness.
  
  • Finance ministry has announced there would be a separate committee to examine the social obligations of the railways. There is a crying need for the railways to reduce the amount of subsidy it gives to passenger traffic which amounts to little over 50%.

• The railways have to find some ways to bridge this gap by raising fares. The government has raised the fares of Rajdhani express, brought in dynamic prising which needs to be expanded for other trains.

• In the category of **senior citizens concession** government has given the option of **Give it up** like the LPG subsidy. About 94% of the passengers belong to the unreserved category from the sub-urban classes. There has been a rise in India’s per capita income over the previous years along with GDP. But in the past 15 years there is hardly any increase in the fares of general category.

• Increasing passenger fares by 10% will fetch railways huge amount of money and it helps in bridging the gap to a certain extent. **Social equity** will be served if the prices of the tickets of higher classes are higher.

• Today railways are competing with the roadways and roadways are competing with the shipping. They are all operating under the silos. The freight share of the railways has come down by 30%. The cars manufactured in Chennai are transported to Delhi through trucks even though there are freight trains from Chennai to Delhi. There is a need for **integrated transportation solution**.

• Railways basically carry iron ore, steel and fuel oils. It does not transport much of the value added goods which the truckers do.

• The Cabinet also approved **removal of distinction between Plan and Non-Plan expenditure** as the present classification resulted in excessive focus on former with almost equivalent neglect to items such as maintenance which are classified as non-Plan.

• The Cabinet felt it is the total expenditure, irrespective of Plan or Non-Plan, that generates value for the public

**Bibek Debroy Committee report**

• Suggested the need for a separate railway budget.

• Restructuring of Railway Board.

• The report is about turning the railways into a commercial entity and using advertising space. These are areas which can be implemented very fast and this will augment the railways finances.