The deterioration in quality learning in primary education sector and achievement of targeted enrolment level in the middle education is a challenge.

There is lack of reliable jobs data

Employment in India is dominated by informal, unorganized and seasonal workers.

High levels of under employment and skill shortages

Labour markets impacted by rigid labour laws, and the emergence of contract labour.

The health sector faces many challenges like declining role of public delivery of health services and high Out Of Pocket (OoP) expenses on health.

Swachh Bharat Mission has had remarkable progress since its inception.

India’s balance of payments situation improved in 2016-17, as a result of low trade and current account deficits and rising capital inflows, resulting in accretion of foreign exchange reserves.

India’s exports turned positive at 12.3 per cent in 2016-17 after an interregnum of two years.

The ratio of external debt to GDP fell to 20.2 per cent from 23.5 per cent.

India ratified the Paris Agreement on 2nd October, 2016.

India is implementing the largest renewable energy expansion programme in the world.

It envisages a 5-fold increase in the overall renewable energy capacity to 175 GW by 2022.

Energy deprivation levels for a sizeable portion of population remain at high levels.

Higher Social cost of coal and renewables based power

Industrial performance has shown moderation from 8.8 percent during 2015-16 to 5.8 percent in 2016-17.

Government introduced Minimum Import Price (MIP) to check dumping of steel into Indian markets, and it seems to have worked.

Imports of Steel by India have declined by 36.2 percent while exports have risen by 102 percent in 2016-17.

India is far ahead than many emerging economies in terms of providing qualitative transportation related infrastructure.

The second volume of Economic Survey for the financial year 2016-17, proved to be a mixed bag.

It mentions about a 'rekindled optimism' on structural reforms, driven by launch of GST, rationalization of energy subsidies and actions to address the twin balance sheet challenge.

Achieving the upper end of its economic growth estimates of 6.75% to 7.5% in the current fiscal will be difficult.

Demonetization, GST, rupee appreciation and a continued deficiency of private investment and export demand has impacted the GDP growth.

Owing to the fiscal consolidation chalked out in Union Budget 2017-18, the fiscal deficit is expected to be 3.2% of GDP in the current fiscal.

The fiscal deficit target of 3% under the FRBM framework is likely to be achieved in 2018-19.

The Survey mentioned Goods and Services Tax (GST) as the most significant economic reform in the financial year 2016-17.

The asset quality of banks has taken a hit on account of slow growth and increasing indebtedness in some sectors.

The Disinflationary pressures allowed Reserve Bank of India cut the policy rate by 50 basis points during 2016-17.

It shifted its monetary policy stance from accommodative to neutral in February 2017.

The services sector remains the key driver of India’s economic growth, contributing almost 62 per cent of its gross value added growth in 2016-17.

However, the Services sector has shown moderation recently.

Regional disparity in the distribution of agricultural credit needs to be addressed.

The key challenges in the horticulture sector are post-harvest losses, availability of quality planting material, and lack of market access for small farmers.

The average farm size in India is small, and declining since 1970-71.

The predominance of informal sources of credit for farmers is a concern.

CPI inflation fell to a series low of 1.5 percent in June 2017.

Food inflation, which was the main driver of inflation in the past, declined significantly because of improvements in supply of pulses and vegetables on the back of a normal monsoon.

Core inflation too declined in the last few months.

The gap between rural and urban inflation has narrowed down in recent months.
A 2015 study shows that 36% of Indian companies and 25% of MNCs in India were not compliant with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act. The delayed compliance with this law is due to a lack of awareness, coupled with misconceptions about implementation. According to a survey by the Indian National Bar Association, 38% said they had faced harassment; 69% of them did not lodge a complaint.

Domestic and construction workers are also often targeted. They have little recourse to institutionalised redressal mechanisms. The problem is of mindset, particularly those educated and well trained.

In India wherever the accused has been influential they have got a free hand. It creates a sense of alienation, disbelief about the law. Women are exploited by the superior in the matter of promotion, emoluments and better prospects in job etc.

State governments should take on the responsibility of enforcing implementation. Greater gender diversity at the workplace—an area where India lags. Sensitise female employees to their rights and the guidelines.

There has to be a sense of fear in the mind of the offenders which has to be ensured. There must also be equal punishment to women who make false charges.

Any complaint of rape should have a time bar and complaints cannot be entertained beyond certain time limit. The attitudinal change, socialisation process and education must go towards making man more sensitive while dealing with women.

The process of making sexual harassment complaints should be simplified. Workplace audits should be as big a priority as auditing the finances of the company. The law that mandates that the investigation should be completed within 90 days should be strictly adhered to.

Adequate workshops and awareness programmes against sexual harassment must be conducted across the organisation.
A 2015 study shows that 36% of Indian companies and 26% of MNCs in India were not compliant with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.

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In India the concern of sexual harassment of women at workplace is increasing.

Currently, the state’s response to workplace sexual harassment in India rests on two pillars.

The first is guidelines issued by the Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in 2012.

The second is the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

In 1992, Bhanwari Devi, a social worker in Rajasthan, was gang-raped for stopping the marriage of an infant girl child.

Her prolonged legal battle saw activists and lawyers coming together to file a PIL in the Supreme Court.

This PIL brought to light the vulnerabilities that Indian women were exposed to in the workplace.

In 1997 the Supreme Court gave a landmark judgement, which came to be known as the Vishakha Guidelines.

These guidelines have now been superseded by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Tackling workplace sexual harassment is an ethical imperative and an economic imperative.

Such harassment infringes on an individual’s right to freedom of profession and occupation and undercuts the ideals of a modern democracy.

Getting and retaining more women in the workforce has the potential to be a major growth driver.

The Act does not address accountability. It does not specify who is in charge of ensuring workplaces comply with the Act, and who can be held responsible if its provisions are not followed.

To address anonymous complaints
- Work forces and priority on the auditing the finances of the company.
- The law that mandate that the investigation should be completed within 90 days should be strictly adhered to.
- Adequate workshops and awareness programme against sexual harassment must be conducted across the organisation.

Many companies do not have the internal complaint committees (ICCs) and there is no check to see if they are following all the rules.
India’s GDP growth slumped to a three-year low of 5.7 per cent during the April-June period, lagging behind China.

The Gross Value Added, a more appropriate measure of economic expansion remained flat at 5.6%.

The slower pace of GDP growth also means India lost the tag of the world’s fastest-growing large economy.

The manufacturing sector expanded at a mere 1.2 per cent compared with a 10.7 per cent growth in the same quarter last year.

Businesses focused more on clearing inventories rather than production ahead of GST.

Demonetisation have also impacted economic activity during the quarter.

Slowdown in the agricultural sector as well which grew at 2.3 per cent down from 2.5 per cent in the same period last year.

The mining sector showed a dismal performance during the quarter.

**Why the Picture is Grey**

**Frequent Shocks:** Demonetisation, GST and the RERA Act may be good structural reforms, but have serious economic side-effects in the short to medium term.

**Private Sector Woes:** Poor consumer demand, low capacity utilisation and a bad asset overhang have curbed India Inc’s appetite for risk and investing.

**Job Crisis:** Key labour-intensive sectors like SMEs, construction and manufacturing are not hiring in an economy that adds 12 million new workers annually.

**Farmer Crisis:** Farms face structural issues like small holdings, low yields, volatile and poor incomes.

**NPA Burden:** A section of economists feels the government has paid more attention to managing perceptions than to boost economic growth and create employment.

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Growth of over 7 per cent are in trade, hotels, transport and communication and services related to broadcasting, public administration, defence and other services.

Annual infrastructure output growth accelerated to 2.4% in July, driven up mainly by higher electricity and steel production.

Creating jobs to absorb a million people entering the workforce every month.

Household savings moving away from physical assets, especially real estate, may not be a good thing for the economy.

Share of bank deposits is not growing.

Continuous reduction in fixed capital formation which means low investment expenditure.

Low private sector credit offtake from the banks.

Exports are moderate and they are affected by rupee appreciation.

Reviving the investment cycle and tackling bad loans will be the key challenges in the current fiscal.

Bad loans in the banking system continue to remain high. Crisil estimates gross NPAs at 10.5% by March 2018.

Poor implementation of the Kelkar Committee report and tackling the institutional bottlenecks that constrain PPP in India.

Make in India has not given successful results.

Economic Survey pointed out that mounting debt of corporates is holding up investments by the corporate sector.

State governments contemplating large-scale farm loan waivers, would push up interest rates and crowd out fresh lending.

Intense focus of the government on implementation of announced reforms.

Pushing forward Government’s ambitious mass digital and financial inclusion plans.

Increase in capital spending by the government. Public sector must be proactive in expanding the investments.

A major thrust has to be given to Defence industry and India should become a member of Global Value Chains especially in electronic sector.

Steps should be taken to solve the twin balance sheet problem as early as possible.

The stress in the MSME sector must be addressed immediately and bring them on-board with GST.

Modernise agricultural sector to increase productivity and income of farmers.
Cyber bullying, under the Information Technology Act, is not an offence. The Act was last amended in 2008. Since then, social media has exploded in the country. The ground reality of 2017 is vastly different. Under-reporting of cases. The reasons are People don’t want unnecessary media publicity; the current process is very slow; and there is low confidence in the ability of the system.

The US has often failed to share information vital to dealing with cyber crime. It denies access to data held by companies such as Google and Facebook. Indian laws like the Information Technology Act do not apply to US firms.

Because cyberbullying is difficult to track, many victims feel helpless and unable to cope with it, especially if the bullying is personal and long-drawn.

As we are spearheading into the age of digitalization, there is a constant need to upgrade the knowledge about cyber security to deal with all consequences smartly. According to UNICEF’s 2016 ‘Child Online Protection in India’ report, "The transnational nature of cyber crime calls for international cooperation".

It is essential for all involved parties, the government, the community and the online community to come together and resolve this problem as a whole.

There is a need to head towards a safer digital India.

Spread awareness about the 'Blue Whale' game which is in the news lately for manipulating teenagers to commit suicide.

Parents should regularly discuss Internet safety with their children and teens and ways to prevent problems.

Make counselling mandatorily available at local levels - at schools, colleges, communities, and so on.

Parents need to restrict internet access and monitor their children’s online activities in the form of parental controls that can be installed on devices.

Make self-harm videos illegal, mandatory helpline notices, search result optimisation norms and putting age restrictions.

Cyberbullying or cyber harassment is a form of bullying or harassment using electronic forms of contact.

Cyberbullying has become increasingly common, especially among teenagers.

Cyberbullying occurs through the use of electronic communication technologies, such as e-mail, instant messaging, social media, online gaming.

Harmful bullying behavior include posting rumours about a person, threats, sexual remarks and disclose victims’ personal information.

Victims may have lower self-esteem, increased suicidal ideation, and a variety of emotional responses, being scared, frustrated, angry, and depressed.

Individuals have reported that cyberbullying can be more harmful than traditional bullying.

Strangers can conveniently access private photos or data and misuse them by creating fake accounts.

Problems like obesity, mood swings, and online addiction have been observed in recent times.

Children have found it difficult to cultivate real life inter-personal skills due to excessive dependence on social media.

Technological advancements have made aspects of our lives easier, made information and people more easily accessible.

Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting kids with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment.

But, it has also aggravated a kind of social alienation, relative deprivation, stress and poor lifestyle choices.

People who use social media excessively tend to neglect personal life, suffer from mental preoccupation and escapism and negative tolerance to any situation.

Increasing number of suicides, some attributed to Blue Whale, have put schools around India on alert.

The risk to children is also greater than before, as their accessibility and exposure on the internet increases.

One million children were harassed, threatened or subjected to other forms of cyberbullying on Facebook during the past year.

Internet addiction is now being included as a disorder which needs further study and research.
Shell Companies in India

**Introduction**
- Shell Company is a corporate entity without active business operations or significant assets.
- There is no clear definition of shell companies under the Companies Act, 2013 in India.
- The Centre has been cracking down on shell companies in recent months.

**Recent Initiatives**
- SEBI directed to stock exchanges to initiate action against 331 suspect shell companies and ban them from trading.
- BSE and NSE moved 162 and 48 companies, respectively, into Stage-VI of the Graded Surveillance Measure (GSM), implying these stocks would not be available for active trading.
- With over ₹7,000 crore of public money stuck in them, investors are rankled by the move.
- A ‘Task Force on Shell Companies’ was constituted in February, 2017 for effectively tackling the malpractices by shell companies.

**Way Forward**
- Either to avoid tax or use them as conduit for money laundering, these are generally viewed as dubious and questionable enterprises.
- Most of the shell companies are registered in tax havens, where there is nil or low tax.
- Shell companies had been set up in the recent past to launder black money and hold benami property or companies.
- Shell companies were used to deposit large amount of cash during the period of demonetization.
- The leaked Panama Papers (2016) exposed a global network of shell companies operating from tax havens used for moving assets and cash from one country to another illegally.
- Not all shell companies are illegal.
- Some were formed to raise funds to promote startups.

**Why is Shell Companies Setup?**
- Reducing the menace of black money will over time result in higher tax revenue which will not only help the government enhance public spending, but will also lower the tax burden on honest taxpayers.

**Conclusion**
- It is important to protect investor interest.
- To contain the menace of black money.
- The crackdown of shell companies will hit tax evasion.
- To ensure Ease of Doing Business.
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**Concerns / Challenges**

- There is potential for dormant companies being misused as shell companies.
- Transactions from multiple accounts will make tracking difficult.
- Shell companies could be the result of the complex corporate structure that exists in India.
- Capital markets regulator must consider having a rigorous approach to discern shell companies that are genuine and those that are being used for money laundering.
- Define shell companies based on revenues, assets, employee strength, or other operational metrics.
- Stepping up the surveillance measures, independent audit and if required, forensic audits to check their credentials.
- A balance needed to be maintained between ease of doing business and ensuring that wrongdoing is stamped out.
- The real owners behind such entities need to be identified.

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- The crackdown of shell companies will hit tax evasion.

**Why is tackling Shell Companies Important?**

- To ensure Ease of Doing Business.
- To lower the tax burden on honest taxpayers.
- The government enhance public spending.

- Use Big Data for tracking tax evaders.
- Target individuals who are suspected to be avoiding taxes.
- Government intends to make the Aadhaar mandatory for regulatory filing. This will help track individuals indulging in illegitimate activities.
- Use of information technology to track multiple transactions done by a single person or entity.
- The government should be careful in taking action against shell companies as it can affect investor confidence and market sentiment.
One of the most challenging problems would be human resource integration and management. Employees would fear job loss, reduced promotional avenues, new culture, etc.

Challenge for integration of technology as various banks are currently operating on different technology platforms.

Failure of a very large bank may have macro implications on the economy and may have to be bailed out during stress periods.

RBS from United Kingdom is an example of how a big global bank collapsed post the global financial crises and had to sell its assets globally.

Large-scale shutting of branches in urban centres
Rationalisation of branches due to overlap may lead to their relocation.

Many big private banks globally, including in the US, have failed
In the US and the UK, political campaigns have been run advocating break-up of big banks.

Following the merger of 5 SBI associate banks, SBI’s gross NPAs jumped from Rs. 1.08 trillion to Rs. 1.79 trillion.
Recruitment for bank jobs will be hit badly due to consolidation of PSBs.

The Union Cabinet has given in-principle approval for Public Sector Banks to amalgamate through an Alternative Mechanism (AM).

Mergers to be decided on commercial considerations.
The proposal must start from the Boards of Banks.
Group of ministers to oversee the bank merger process.
Merger proposals have to be approved by the parliament.
This would also expedite decision-making and address issues well in time.

RBI should continue to give banking licences for more small finance banks as well as universal banks along with bank mergers

The Narasimham committee had spoken about a large number of regional and local banks at the lowest tier of banking structure.

Address the core concerns of employees, mitigate their anxieties, and create an environment of trust.

Consolidation should be done keeping in mind the interest of minority shareholders and bring in greater autonomy for banks.
It is high time that Government takes stringent measures to recover the bad loans and take bold action on these big defaulters.

The government is working on a consolidation agenda with a view to creating 3-4 global-sized banks and reduce the number of state-owned lenders to about 12
Indian banking sector is highly fragmented. especially in comparison with other key economies.
To protect the financial system and depositors’ money
Many banks are not in a position to raise equity from the market.
For cutting operational cost and acquiring efficiency.

To build capacity to meet credit demand and sustain economic growth.
The need to bridge geographical gaps.
In 1991 it was suggested that India should have fewer but stronger PSBs.
The gross NPAs increased enormously for Public sector banks (PSBs).
The share values of several PSBs are trading at a discount to their book value.

From regulatory perspective, monitoring and control of less number of banks will be easier after mergers.
For meeting the norms under BASEL III, for ensuring capital adequacy ratio, the larger banks will be at ease.
Large sized banks enable disbursement of greater credit, for large developmental projects and effective management of NPAs.
Add commercial strength and prevent multiplicity of resources being spent in the same area.
Improve the capacity of the banking system to absorb shocks that the markets may cause to it.
Bigger banks can attract more current Account, Savings Account (CASA) deposits.
They can take up high-end technological upgradation.
They can establish oversees operations.
Companies' current accounting practices do not factor in the cost of natural or environmental resources consumed.

With increasing economic activity, natural capital assets are on the decline, directly affecting the quality of life and giving rise to future inefficiencies in the economy.

'Earth Overshoot Day', a date when humanity's annual resource consumption for the year overshoots the earth's capacity to regenerate it, has advanced every year at an alarming rate. This year it was observed on August 2.

A recent study shows that India will become water scarce by 2025. There are chances of ignoring or undervaluing natural capital, leading to projects with higher negative externalities compared to the benefits.

Scientists have identified nine earth system processes which mark the safe zones, beyond which there is a risk of irreversible environmental change.

Climate change
Loss of biosphere integrity
Land system change
Altered biogeochemical cycles, such as phosphorus and nitrogen cycles

Four of these boundaries have now been crossed

This means that human activity has altered the balance of a few delicate equilibriums.

The effects are: changing weather patterns, accelerated extinction events for both flora and fauna, and global warming.

Comprehensive evaluation system that takes the undesirable side-effects of economic activities
Integrating natural capital assessment and valuation into our economic system is critical to usher in a truly sustainable future for India.

Adoption of valuation frameworks such as the Natural Capital Coalition's Natural Capital Protocol

Each sector should come up with appropriate mechanisms for conservation and sustainable biodiversity use.

Proactive efforts in ecosystem management that involve government and community are needed.

Public and private entrepreneurs and entities as well as the public need to come forward to mainstream Natural capital.

Develop a framework to minimise impact through conservation measures and restore its lost value.

Create opportunities to innovate and adopt newer, more efficient technologies.

Natural capital represents the combined value of all biodiversity — life-forms, flora and fauna.

It is from this natural capital that humans derive wide range of ecosystem services, which make human life possible.

Businesses draw natural resources such as wood, water, oil, vegetables, fish and more from the ecosystem to sustain their ever-growing operations.

Natural capital has the potential to optimise resources and thus maximise the net benefits of economic growth and development.

It provides services such as water purification and supply, waste assimilation and the cleaning of air and water, regulation of pests and diseases, and soil nutrient cycling and fertility.

A rich biodiversity is the basis for good health, food security, economic growth, livelihood security and moderation of climatic conditions.

Many biodiversity goods and services act as a safety net to indigenous peoples, poor and vulnerable groups, women and children.

Operating costs are lowered as a result of drawing support from the ecosystem and using naturally available material and resources.

Why is natural capital an issue?

Just like financial capital, natural capital too needs to be managed well.

If we keep drawing natural capital without allowing it to recover, we run the risk of local, regional or even global ecosystem collapse.

Poorly managed natural capital becomes not only an ecological liability, but a social and economic liability too.

There have been many studies that have calculated natural capital's value in financial terms.

The financial value of India's forests, for example, timber and fuel wood, and ecological services such as carbon sequestration, is estimated to be $1.7 trillion.

Street trees in California provide $1 billion per year in ecosystem services, through atmospheric regulation and flood prevention.

Mexico's mangrove forests provide an annual $70 billion to the economy through storm protection, fisheries support, and ecotourism.

Natural capital valued in financial terms

Way Forward

Natural and biodegradable

India, one of the 17 mega-diverse countries, is rich in biodiversity

India exhibits a rich variety of ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, deserts, wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs.

Biodiversity is a unique and a critical asset which is under pressure due to anthropogenic reasons, and there is a need for its mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming means integrating including actions related to conservation and promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Mainstreaming helps to reduce the negative impacts on biodiversity.

For example, optimum use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides reduce negative impacts on soil, groundwater, surrounding habitats and wildlife.
The move could have a far-reaching political and social impact. It will ensure that the benefits are distributed fairly among constituent castes instead of going only to a few dominant ones.

The Centre’s decision will be a significant addition to the Mandal Commission-based OBC reservation regulations. Politically, this can be seen as an attempt by the government to reach out to the most backward castes among the OBCs.

It is likely to face opposition from dominant OBC groups. The regional parties championing the interests of dominant OBC castes are likely to oppose such sub-categorisation.

An earlier attempt to provide sub-quotas for OBCs in Andhra Pradesh was stalled by courts on the ground that religion-based quota is not permitted.

The Union Cabinet increased the "creamy layer" ceiling for the OBCs to Rs. 8 lakh per annum from the existing Rs. 6 lakh for Central government jobs. This means that the umbrella of reservation is widened and those earning up to Rs. 8 lakh per annum would now get the benefits.

The OBCs are entitled to 27% reservations in public sector employment and higher education.

The list of OBCs is maintained by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution, it is obligatory for the government to promote the welfare of the OBCs.

The Constitution refers to the term 'backward classes' in Articles 15(4), 16(4) and 340(1).

Articles 15(4) and 16(4) empower the State to make special provisions for any socially and educationally backward class of citizens.

The Union Cabinet approved to set up a commission which will examine the issue of sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBC).

The proposed commission will be set up under Article 340 of the Constitution.

In the Indian Constitution, OBCs are described as "socially and educationally backward classes".

Examine the "extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation" among Central OBC list.

Work out the mechanism, criteria and parameters for the actual sub-categorisation.

Bringing order to the Central list of OBCs by removing any repetitions.

The Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney and others vs. Union of India case (1992) had observed that there is no Constitutional or legal bar on states for categorizing backward classes.

Already 11 States, including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Jammu region have such a categorisation in State government jobs.

There is no sub-categorisation in the central list.

The benefits of reservation have not been distributed equally.

Large segments of the weaker sections and backward classes continue to have no access to quality education or meaningful employment.

The relatively rich and dominant sections among the backward castes have tended to take up a larger share of the reservation pie.

Further differentiating caste groups under backward classes will seek to ensure more equitable distribution of reservation benefits.

There is inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation because of the broad categories of OBCs included in the central list.

The National Commission for Backward Classes had recommended sub-categorisation in 2011.

A standing committee too had recommended this.
Food Processing Sector has emerged as an important segment of the Indian economy contributing to GDP, employment and investment.

The food sector has emerged as a high-growth and high-profit sector due to its potential for value addition.

The Indian food processing industry accounts for 32% of the country's total food market, which is one of the largest industries in India. India's organic food market is expected to increase by three times by 2020.

100% FDI in trading including through e-commerce, for food products manufactured in India.

Special Fund of Rs. 2000 crore in NABARD to provide credit at concessional rate of interest to designated food parks and agro-processing units.

Food and agro-based processing units and cold chain infrastructure have been brought under the ambit of Priority Sector Lending (PSL).

Mapping all agro-clusters in the country.

The Ministry of Food Processing Industries announced Human Resource Development (HRD) in the food processing sector.

Setting up testing laboratories, laying down of food standards and their harmonization with international standards.

National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) in Haryana acts as a "one Stop Solution Provider" to all the problems of the sector.

An integrated Food Law i.e. Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 will provide single window to food processing sector.

The adoption of food safety and quality assurance mechanisms by the food processing industry offers several benefits.

- Adherence to stringent quality and hygiene norms and thereby protect consumer health.
- Prepare the industry to face global competition.
- Enhance product acceptance by overseas buyers.
- Keep the industry technologically abreast of international best practices.
- Encourage R&D in food processing for product and process development and improved packaging.
- Intensive consultation with industry, academia, scientists and representatives of State Governments for smoother and inclusive growth of the sector.
- Decentralisation in the implementation of various schemes with greater involvement of the States/UTs.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)

Measures to give a boost to Food Processing Sector

SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) has been renamed as the "Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)" for the period of 2016-20 coterminus with the 14th Finance Commission cycle.

It is an umbrella scheme incorporating ongoing schemes of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries like:

- Mega Food Parks
- Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure
- Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure
- Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters
- Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages
- Creation / Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities

The objective of PMKSY is to supplement agriculture, modernize processing and decrease Agri-Waste.

Creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.

- Provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country.
- Help in providing better prices to farmers and is a big step towards doubling of farmers' income.
- Create huge employment opportunities especially in the rural areas.
- Help in reducing wastage of agricultural produce
- Increasing the processing level and availability of safe and convenient processed foods at affordable price to consumers
- Enhance the export of the processed foods.
- Value addition to agricultural produce

Ways Forward

Factors that influence the growth of Food Processing Sector

- The demand for ready-to-eat foods is rising rapidly with growing urbanization, increase in nuclear families, Indian middle class and more exposure to global markets.
- With consumer tastes evolving, flavoured milk is gaining popularity, especially among the urban population.
- In the meat products category, the consumption of chicken is increasing more rapidly than any other category of meat.
- India has abundant resources in terms of raw materials for food production, including fruits, vegetables, spices, dairy products and edible oils.
- The presence of a skilled workforce and low labour costs.
India’s primary interests in Myanmar

- To build an economic and security relationship that prevent Myanmar from slipping into the orbit of China.
- Ensure the Myanmar military’s cooperation in preventing Northeastern militants, most notably Naga insurgents, from using Myanmar as a safe haven.
- Support the country’s transition into a full-fledged federal democracy.
- Ameliorate the plight of the Rohingya as well as ensure the tense relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar do not spiral out of control.

Economic Relations

- Myanmar is one of India’s strategic neighbours and shares a long border with north-eastern states of Nagaland and Manipur.
- India has “historical ties and traditional bonds of friendship and cooperation” with Myanmar.
- Five Bs are the base of India-Myanmar relations – Buddhism, Business, Bollywood, Bharatnatyam and Burma teak.
- Bilateral trade between the two countries has, for long, remained at around $2 billion.
- Chinese, Singaporean, Korean, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese businesses have actively seized business opportunities in Myanmar.
- Pulses form the single largest item in Myanmar’s limited export basket.
- Indian businesses could invest in the power, steel, automobiles and even textile sectors in Myanmar.

Concerns / Challenges

- India and Myanmar have been trying to strengthen their defense ties over the past few years.
- Over 200 Myanmar military officers have been trained in the medical, airforce and navy fields in India.
- Myanmar has acquired rocket launchers, night vision systems, radar and engineering equipment, including $37.9 million worth of torpedoes, from India.

India-Myanmar Relations

- The 11th-century Ananda Temple in Myanmar was damaged during an earthquake last year and is being renovated with India’s assistance.
- People to people ties are the strength of India-Myanmar relations.

Way Forward

- Implementing the recommendations of Kofi Annan Advisory Commission report on Rohingya refugee issue.
- India can help in improving the socio-economic conditions in the Rakhine state and also create employment opportunities.
- Both sides share a long maritime boundary and land border, which has led to concerns around transnational issues.

Cultural Relations

- No other country has committed as much in grant-in-aid to Myanmar as India. These include:
  - Kaladan multi-modal corridor
  - Repair of 69 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa road
  - Construction of the 120-km Kalewa-Yargyi corridor
  - Rhi-Tiddim road in the Chin state bordering Mizoram

India’s assistance in Capacity Building

- Unfortunately, the projects have not been completed on time. As a result, India has not got due credit.
- Capacity building in Myanmar with six centres imparting training in diverse subjects, from English language to industrial skills.
- Myanmar Institute of Information Technology set up in Mandalay with the collaboration of IIT Bangalore has been a success with all its graduates finding ready employment.
- The Advanced Centre for Agriculture Research and Education set up in collaboration with India’s ICAR is a fine example of pooling research efforts on pulses and oilseeds.
To build an economic and security relationship that prevent Myanmar from slipping into the orbit of China.

Ensure the Myanmar military’s cooperation in preventing Northeastern militants, most notably Naga insurgents, from using Myanmar as a safe haven.

Support the country’s transition into a full-fledged federal democracy.

Ameliorate the plight of the Rohingyas as well as ensure the tense relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar do not spiral out of control.

The Indian government is concerned about Rohingyas immigrants in the country. Around 40,000 Rohingyas are said to be staying illegally in India.

Negotiations on the deportation of Rohingyas to Myanmar is a point of contention.

Lack of basic infrastructure and low trading volume at the Indian border.

The India Intelligence Agency stated that the smuggling of light arms, drugs and counterfeit currencies have been spotted along the border.

Beijing is investing in projects to improve the Sittwe-Kunming route.

Momentum of the Belt and Road Initiative may and India’s East Act Policy like Obama’s pivot to Asia.

Both sides share a long maritime boundary and land border, which has led to concerns around transnational issues.

Strengthening existing cooperation in areas of security and counter-terrorism, trade and investment, infrastructure and energy, and culture.

Boosting cooperation in areas like training and capacity-building of Myanmar’s military.

Implementing the recommendations of Kofi Annan Advisory Commission report on Rohingya refugee issue.

India can help in improving the socio-economic conditions in the Rakhine state and also create employment opportunities.

The two countries must start negotiating for the smooth movement of goods and vehicles.

With Myanmar’s government emphasising higher education and vocational training, more Indian-assisted institutions can be setup in the country.

Border trade need to become more formalised with single-window clearances and easier currency arrangements.

The border haats can energise exchange of local produce.

Cross-border bus services can promote people-to-people connectivity.

Cross-border trade in services can be boosted in sectors like medicine, diagnostics, education and training for which there is a large market.

All this will mean that the Northeast will gain from the Act East policy.

Indo-Myanmar Relations

India’s primary interests in Myanmar

Introduction

Economic Relations

Concerns / Challenges

Indo-Myanmar Relations

Defence Relations

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Kanadu multi-modal corridor

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Construction of the 120-km Kalewa-Yargyil corridor

Rhe-Tiddim road in the Chin state bordering Mizoram.

Unfortunately, the projects have not been completed in time. As a result, India has not got due credit.

Way Forward

Capacity building in Myanmar with six centres imparting training in diverse subjects, from English language to industrial skills.

Myanmar Institute of Information Technology set up in Mandalay with the collaboration of IIT Bangalore has been a success with all its graduates finding ready employment.

The Advanced Centre for Agriculture Research and Education set up in collaboration with India’s ICAR is a fine example of pooling research efforts on pulses and oilseeds.
Tinkering with Article 35A would lead to further erosion of J&K’s autonomy.

Various Articles in the Constitution provide special rights to states like Nagaland (Article 371A) and Mizoram (Article 371G) based on historical reasons.

Article 35 A protects the demographic status of the Jammu and Kashmir in its prescribed constitutional form.

The major political parties of the Kashmir Valley, NC and PDP support the safeguarding of Article 370 and Article 35A.

In the last 70 years, demography of Kashmir Valley has remained unchanged even as Hindu majority in Jammu and Buddhists in Ladakh have rights to buy property and settle in the Valley.

Any adverse order against the provision, could give the separatists a chance to stoke violence in the Valley.

If Article 35A is scrapped, the extension of the Fundamental Rights and every other provision to J&K through Presidential Orders will cease to apply.

Only Article 1 and Article 370 of the Indian Constitution will then apply to J&K.

The Article 370 deals with certain special powers provided to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

It grants a ‘temporary’ autonomous status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Except for Defense, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Communications, the Indian Government needs the State Government’s nod to apply all other laws.

The central government has no power to impose financial emergency in the state.

Emergency can be imposed on the grounds of internal disturbances and imminent danger from a foreign enemy.

The state government has the control on how it needs to govern the state.

Indian nationals belonging to other states cannot buy land or property in the state of J&K.

Woman who marries a person belonging to any other state loses her right to ownership.

There is a need to have a larger debate on Article 35A including political parties, intelligentsia and the civil society at large.

Article 35A has not only a constitutional or legal issue, it has larger socioeconomic and political issue.

The Centre needs to take all political parties along for protecting the rights and privileges of the people of the state.

Article 35A of the constitution empowers J&K legislature to define state’s "permanent residents" and their special rights and privileges.

Special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.

No act of the State legislature can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.

It was added to the constitution through a 1954 presidential order under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution.

After J&K’s accession, Sheikh Abdullah in 1949, negotiated J&K’s political relationship with New Delhi, which led to the inclusion of Article 370 in the Constitution.

Article 370 guarantees special status to J&K.

Under the 1952 Delhi Agreement between Abdullah and Nehru, several provisions of the Constitution were extended to J&K via presidential order in 1954. Article 35A was inserted then.

An NGO, We the Citizens, challenged 35A in SC in 2014 on grounds that it was not added to the Constitution through amendment under Article 368.

It was never presented before Parliament, and the parliamentary route of lawmaking was bypassed.

It argues that four representatives from Kashmir were part of the Constituent Assembly involved in the drafting of the Constitution and J&K was never accorded any special status in the Constitution.

Article 370 was only a ‘temporary provision’ to bring normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir and strengthen democracy in the State.

Article 35 A is against the “very spirit of oneness of India” as it creates a “class within a class of Indian citizens”.

Restricting citizens from other States getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.

In another case in SC, Article 35A restrict the basic right to property if a native woman marries a man not holding a permanent resident certificate.

Her children are denied a permanent resident certificate, thereby considering them illegitimate.

The Supreme court has indicated that the validity of Articles 35A and 370 may be decided by a Constitution Bench.
To preserve the centuries old theatre art form of Koodiyattam, a recently launched crowdfunding campaign seeks to fund the training of a new generation of artists. Teenagers across India are crowdfunding to help social causes.

Paralympic badminton star Mark Dharma’s crowdfunded campaign to compete at the Thailand Para-badminton International 2017 resulted in a silver medal for him.

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people. In short, people lend money to support a cause or an idea.

Crowdfunding is not new to India. Since centuries we have been donating ‘chanda’ for some or the other socio-cultural cause.

SEBI is finalizing the norms for crowdfunding in India. The equity-based model allows for a stake in the venture via private placement. Peer-to-peer (P2P) lending, under RBI’s purview, connects lenders and borrowers who mutually agree upon either a fixed interest rate or a variable one.

Allow those start-ups and small enterprises without access to venture capital or credit from the formal banking system to acquire funding, spurring innovation and entrepreneurship.

This helps India’s MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) sector. Higher levels of business partnership, greater publicity, a stronger customer base, and an easier time finding employees.

It bypasses caste or gender prejudice—to community networks that underlie India’s business networks. Easy to persuade small time investors as most of them are peer groups.

Crowdfunding is a way to give back to society. It generates traction, social proof, and validation. Most people who take this route encounter failure in the first few projects.

Protecting retail investors and keeping regulatory costs low enough to make capital access viable. The immaturity of digital crowdfunding globally and the start-up sector in India.

Small investors lacking expertise could funnel capital to unviable enterprises which is not the case with Venture capital (VC).

Problem of credit- worthiness and enforceability. Fraud and money laundering are risks as well.

Without a regulatory framework, the likelihood of a scam or an abuse of funds is high.
Rising tide of trade protectionism across the globe and stronger voices against trade liberalisation by US President Donald Trump.

Critics argue that the deal favoured developed nations since developing and LDC nations will face tougher challenges in bringing up their regulatory and customs practises and in modernising trade infrastructure to reap the benefit of TFA.

Contentious issues of public stockholding of food and a special safeguard mechanism in agriculture have not seen much progress.

For India, a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding of foodgrain will remain of primary importance at the upcoming ministerial conference in Argentina.

TFA on services would ease movement of skilled professionals across borders as well as reducing transaction costs for India.

Requires legislative changes for the smooth implementation of TFA.

Digitalization, along with institutional coordination, is a great tool to further enhance trade facilitation implementation and reduce trade costs.

Improve trade facilitation in major sub-regional cooperation initiatives like South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation.

Development-based issues of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) need to be uniformly reaffirmed.

Effective monitoring of logistics and efficiency at ports and related issues.

Greater integration with global economy has made India more global.

Indians have been able to influence key decisions in US and UK because of the growing economic importance of Indian Markets.

Trade extends the scope for efficient division of labour. It thus raises productivity.

Free trade can help millions of Indians to come out of poverty.

The challenge is to keep dismantling barriers to internal and external trade.

India need to shape its domestic and foreign policy to overcome the new challenges.

The TFA is the WTO’s first multilateral accord that aims to simplify customs regulations for the cross-border movement of goods.

It was outcome of WTO’s 9th Bali (Indonesia) ministerial package of 2013 and came into force from February 2017.

It aims to create a less discriminatory business environment.

Lowering import tariffs and agricultural subsidies.

It will make it easier for developing countries to trade with the developed world in global markets.

Abolish hard import quotas.

Developed countries would abolish hard import quotas on agricultural products from the developing world.

Instead developed countries would be allowed to charge tariffs on amount of agricultural imports exceeding specific limits.

Reduction in red tape at international borders.

It aims to reduce red-tapism to facilitate trade by reforming customs bureaucracies and formalities.

Preferred Rules of Origin for Least-Developed Countries.

Simplified rules for identifying origin and qualifying for preferential treatment with importing countries.

Trade will ease trade processes, bring down barriers to trade and enhance the capacity of the developing world to better engage with the global trading network.

Significantly change the global trade scenario with international customs practices becoming streamlined and easier trade movement.

Faster clearance procedures.

Enhanced conditions for freedom of transit for goods.

Reduced fees and formalities connected with the import and export of goods.

TFA is estimated to reduce global trade costs by more than 14% and could boost global growth by half a percentage point per year.

Trade facilitation increases trade flows and lowers trade costs, making it critical for development in Asia and the Pacific.

Bring in simplification and enhanced transparency in cross border trade in goods.

Boost economic growth by reducing trade costs and integration into the global economy.

The increase in global economic activity will add new jobs and lower the cost of doing international trade by 10 to 15 per cent.

Likely to reduce the time needed to import and export goods.

Predicted to increase the number of new products exported by as much as 20 per cent.
India slipped three places in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders at 136 out of 180 countries.

India was ranked just three places above Pakistan and one notch below violence-torn Palestine.

The report cites the rise of Hindu nationalism as a reason for the drop.

Self-censorship is growing in the mainstream media.

Journalists were increasingly targets of online smear campaigns and threats.

In the absence of any “protective mechanism, coverage of sensitive regions continued to be “very difficult”.

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The one who brings unwelcome news holds a losing office, Shakespeare had written in his 16th century play Henry IV.

The murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru once again raises questions on freedom of press in our country.

The violation of human rights and free speech have come under the spotlight.

US Embassy in India Condemns Murder of Gauri Lankesh. This is the first time in several years that the US embassy has reacted to an incident in which an individual has been targeted.

As a public good, the news media has an important role in our democracy.

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Corporate and political power has overwhelmed large sections of the media, both print and visual.

They have large financial stakes in either print or visual media.

They have full ownership of both categories in innumerable cases.

Owners having themselves the editorial roles.

News media organisations diversifying into non-media businesses.

Overemphasis on TRPs because they determine advertising revenue

The recent elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have innumerable documented cases by the Election Commission (EC) of paid news.

The Press Council of India’s report on “Safety of Journalists” states that 80 journalists have been killed in India since 1990, with conviction in only one case so far.

Decline in autonomy of editors/journalists

Press Council of India (PCI) lacks regulatory powers.

In India, there are no statutory rights accorded to journalists to protect their sources which is an important element to unearth the truth.

Corruption – Paid news, advertorials and fake news.

Intimidation from the state like in the case of NDTV shutdown for reporting during Pathankot attack, weak whistle-blower protection act, defamation suits, etc. have restricted the freedom of press.

Competition for instant and quick news and reporting without first checking the facts. For example: Reporting of GPS nano-chips in new 500 and 2000 notes.

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Senior print and television journalists must speak, write and expose more clearly the issues plaguing the Press in India.

Ownership restrictions on holdings have to be legislated.

Implementing the recommendations of TRAI with regard to media ownership and investment disclosure norms would help in maintaining transparency required for the news media sector.

Legislation must create mandatory Chinese walls between managerial and editorial departments.

Contracts and employment conditions for journalists must meet international labour standards.

Employees must have the right without fear of retribution, to refuse any form of work that infringes upon their professional codes or conscience.

Create ‘genuinely independent and transparent systems for assessing circulation and ratings of media’.

Disclosure, in bold letters, of paid-for news or any reporting at the end of each print article or visual programme.

Need for political will in improving India’s ranking on the Press Freedom Index as they do towards the World Bank’s Doing Business Rankings.

In the interest of democracy it is essential that the exchange of ideas take place in an uninhibited manner where all citizens can access information free of bias and prejudice.
All the stakeholders including parents, teachers, students, school management, the education department authorities must identify the lacunae and create a manual for school safety.

These stakeholders must be given responsibility for implementing the guidelines.

The list of criminals with past cases of wrongdoing against kids must be circulated in each & every school of our country.

Schools should deploy sufficient security guards from recognised security agency only.

Safety protocols must be put in place and police verification conducted for all employees.

As a parent, it is important that we teach our children to be assertive in order to protect themselves against incidents of bullying and emotional exploitation.

At school, creating a safe learning environment, identifying pupils who are at risk of harm and then taking suitable action.

Create a buddy system where children are paired up, or are in groups of three.

Educate children and make them aware of their own rights over their bodies. Teach children about good touch and bad touch.

Healthy and open conversations within schools can identify potential flash points and early action can be taken to save children from harm.

Auditing the school infrastructure and amenities to create a better and safe learning environment.

Make self defense classes mandatory for both boys and girls.

Child Abuse Prevention Committee should be appointed including staff and parents to tackle local issues.

Child counselor should be a full time employee in every school and she/he should talk to every child regularly.

We need to create quality human beings. We need to radically change the education system.

The children are the biggest asset of the nation. They are the most vulnerable part of the society who needs to be protected.

With care, with vigilance and with supervision the school can be made a safe space.

Ever since the incident at Ryan International School, Gurgaon, where an eight year old boy was sexually abused, the issue of child safety in school has come to limelight.

Children spend more time in school – making it extremely important for school authorities, teachers, and parents to ensure that every child is safe inside the school premises.

We lack a value system. Our education only provides skills to get a job.

The refusal to make complaint about the misbehaviour of the school staff. The accused in the Ryan school case was suspended at another school without a police complaint.

Not complaining emboldens serial sexual offenders & jeopardizes the lives of innocent children.

Parents do not want to get into the legal system and fear vindictive action from the school.

The lack of reporting leaves children even more vulnerable to attacks.

Guidelines for Prevention of Child Abuse have been largely ignored.

There is no specific law passed by Parliament to deal with the crimes against children in schools.

Deficient infrastructure, lack of toilets and inadequate safety measures are the reasons for children to feel unsafe. Toilets were identified as vulnerable areas for children.

The Child Protection Policy ensures safety of children in schools. But, apart from Delhi, this has not been adopted by any other state.

Children have been hurt and abused at school.

Children are being abused by the caretaker and bus attendant.

Abuse that our children face from classmates, teachers and even school heads.

Many students have died or been injured due to poor infrastructure at the schools.

A survey conducted by World Vision India revealed that one in every two children is a victim of sexual abuse.

A UNICEF report said that majority of abuses of children was reported for the age group of 5 to 11 years.

Children are unable to deal with the consequences of the humiliation meted out to them.
To ensure large-scale job creation, the freedom to create jobs must be on a par with other freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. For a secure, prosperous and strong nation we must provide every able-bodied individual an opportunity to create jobs.

The government initiatives on job creation are having limited impact. Farmers have the potential to emerge as the largest direct and indirect job creators in the economy. A fundamental right to create jobs will aid growth by repeal of restrictive policies and practices. Farmers will be able to demand their rightful access to land, capital, technology, markets, inputs, skills, remunerative pricing.

If there is a fundamental right of job, quality of basic education, health and social service between urban and rural residents will be narrowed. India needs a focused strategy for creating an environment in which export competitive firms can emerge, especially in labour-intensive sectors.

labour law reforms, ease of doing business and action in specific manufacturing and services sectors.

Exports rather than the domestic market is to be the engine of industrial growth. Export zones are to be seen as hubs for employment rather than just investment.

Expanding the formal and organized sectors of the economy.

The need of the hour is reversing the agrarian crisis, strengthening the education system, greater labour protections and promoting labour-intensive small manufacturing.

Intense revision of the syllabus and a culture of innovation that will feed startups that will help create more opportunities.

The government should promote non-technical education too.

Create jobs at smaller towns which truly needs political will & Govt Policies.

Teaching more practical & job oriented subjects
Setting up college level incubators
Guiding job seekers

Thrust on job intensive sectors like textiles and garments, leather, tourism, jems and jewellery. Schemes like MUDRA yojana must support big employers in SME.

Prioritise investments in labour-intensive sectors. NITI Aayog has suggested tax holidays for big job creators.

India's private sector needs to come forward to create well-paid and highly productive jobs, said former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya.

Sustainably increasing farm income needs 4is (Incentives, investments, institutions, and innovation).

Startup India programme should be replicated in rural areas, with a focus on the non-farm sector.

65% Indians are younger than 35 years, and they dream of a better life built on well-paid and secure employment.

Unemployment is a major hurdle in India’s growth path. Therefore, Jobs are the pivot for the social and economic growth of the country.

According to labour ministry's report on the Fifth Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (2016-16), the unemployment rate in 2016-16 was 5% of the labour force, up from 4.9% in 2013-14.

Employment in the formal sector has fallen since 1997.

People are pushed into either self-employment; or the unprotected and casualised wage employment.

A shift to casual and contract employment has an ‘adverse effect’ on the level of wages, stability of employment, and employees’ social security.

The worst-hit by jobless growth indeed are rural workers and distress migrants.

Families migrate along with men, interrupting children's schooling, forcing women to bear and raise children on dusty city streets and leaving behind old people in the village to starve.

The socio-economic and caste census (SECC) survey revealed that 56% rural households own no land, and depend primarily on manual labour to survive.

The stagnant rural economy offers meagre opportunities for employment, a large segment of these households are described as ‘hunters and gatherers of work’.

Casual workers took the maximum hit from demonetisation.

Out of 1.5 million engineering graduates, only 500,000 are absorbed into the market. This raises concerns about the quality of engineers produced.

Make in India, Digital India, Startup India and the Smart Cities project did not create the number of jobs it aimed at.

IT is particularly hurt as automation is taking away low skilled jobs.

Technology such as 3D printing or Internet of Things (IoT) is impacting the job scenario everywhere, be it mechanical or civil or any other engineering stream.

Indian companies in US are generating employment for the Americans.

Between 2011 and 2015, the Indian companies have made an investment of $2 billion and paid taxes worth $20 billion in US.

Indian talent is essential for the US to maintain its leadership in the field of innovation and research, a top American senator had said recently.
S&T has long been regarded as important for economic growth.
S&T is also a crucial tool to pursue a geopolitical agenda and build strategic leverage in international affairs.
Advances in nanotechnology, autonomous cars, gene-editing techniques, and battery technology alter life not only for individuals but also for the nations they inhabit.

S&T is critical for ensuring national security and opening new market opportunities.
Ownership of superior technology brings greater power and control.
Economic competitiveness has become a proxy for military influence.

S&T capabilities of middle powers like Canada and Switzerland help them stay relevant in the international arena.
Estonia shows how a country can leverage its digital ecosystem to boost its position in the international arena.

One of the reasons for India’s recent tilt towards Israel is the latter’s strength in S&T, especially in agriculture.
For the past 50 years, the US has been the world’s superpower which correlates with its leadership in S&T.
Facebook controls large amounts of data generated around the world. This is power in today’s age.

Chinese innovation policy is a “geopolitical instrument to gain economic and military supremacy”.
Today, China aims to become a superpower in leading to a technology race with the US.

Technological advancement will continue to make communication an easier and richer experience.
The advancement in technology will further help strengthening regional co-operation.

Strengthening diplomacy by technology transfer from developed countries to developing and least developed countries
Promote global peace and security

India’s make in India campaign can be benefited by adopting the technological innovations by other countries.
Extraction of polymetallic nodules by using technologies helps countries in economic growth.
Shale gas production by US has led to decrease in oil price thus benefitting oil importing countries like India reduce their Current Account Deficit.

India’s efforts to shore up its domestic defence manufacturing industry, develop a regional satellite for South Asia and a home-grown GPS, and establish 20 world-class universities, are all steps in the right direction.
But a quick look at the numbers shows how much still needs to be done.
India currently spends only 0.9% of GDP on R&D where as South Korea and Israel each spent 4% of their GDP
India needs to recognize the geopolitical reality of S&T.
India needs to build the infrastructure which can generate new technologies.
Invest in human capital, maintain a cadre of top scientists and professionals, and develop industry-lab links.
Identify focus areas, the role it can play and where the state can make tactical investments overseas.

The gap between developed and developing countries might increase.
Boundaries might be completely redrawn along early adopters of technology, fast followers and those who lag behind.
Challenges include terrorism, climate change and natural disasters.
Mineral extraction in African countries has robbed Africa from its natural resources.
The US THAAD missile system deployed in South Korea is straining the relationship between US and North Korea.
Technologically dependent least developed countries might want to abide by the rules of developed countries.
Less spending on other social sectors like health, education, agriculture etc due to arms race.
**India-Switzerland Relations**

**Introduction**
- Development cooperation and humanitarian aid
- India and Switzerland relations are built on common values: strong traditions of democracy and pluralism.
- Switzerland recognised India after independence in 1947 and established diplomatic relations thereafter.
- From 1971 to 1976, during the dispute over Bangladesh, Switzerland represented the interests of India in Pakistan and those of Pakistan in India.
- Both countries concluded Treaty of Friendship in 1948.

**Cultural ties**
- India is one of Switzerland’s main partners in Asia.
- India and Switzerland have been regularly conducting a political dialogue since 2005.
- Bilateral agreements in various fields including trade, education and vocational training, visas, migrations, investments, taxation, and cooperation in science and technology.
- In order to facilitate easy accessibility and rendering services to Swiss citizens and companies in India, Switzerland maintains a wide network of representations across India.
- In 2018, Switzerland and India will celebrate the 70 years of the Indo-Swiss Bilateral Friendship Treaty of 1948.
- Switzerland launched a programme “70 Years of Swiss-Indian Friendship: Connecting Minds — Inspiring the Future”.

**Political and diplomatic relations**
- India is a priority country for Swiss foreign economic policy.
- India is Switzerland’s third largest trading partner in Asia, and its first in South Asia.
- Both countries signed a joint declaration on the automatic exchange of information (AEOI) in tax matters.
- Switzerland is the 11th largest foreign investor in the country.
- Swiss companies made investments worth USD 7.93 billion in India during 2006-2015.
- The number of jobs created through Swiss direct investment in India stood at about 100000 at the end of 2015.
- Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme
  - Swissnex India programme connects Switzerland and India in the fields of science, education, art and innovation.
- India is a priority country for the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships.

**Way Forward**
- Further deepen the cooperation and take a determined approach to addressing global challenges for the benefit of both countries.
- At a time when protectionism is gaining ground in many places, both countries must seize the opportunities and promote free trade and economic agreements.
- Cooperation in the fields of transport, energy, vocational education and training, digitalisation and climate change.
- Both countries should act together on climate policy. Melting of glaciers in the Himalayas and the glaciers receding in Switzerland too will impact on the lives of millions of people.
- Gotthard base tunnel, the world’s longest railway tunnel was recently opened in Switzerland. India can learn from this advancement to build railway tunnels in the Himalayan region.

**Economic cooperation**
- India must raise the issue of black money stashed by Indians in Swiss banks.
- Exchange of related information by Switzerland is necessary to support India’s fight against black money.
- M.S. Swaminathan said, Sustainable development goals can be a common binding factor between India and Switzerland.
- Switzerland is a global leader in innovation and technology, and the Swiss SME sector can contribute for growth of Indian SME.

**Development and Cooperation**
- Development and Cooperation activities focus on climate change related issues which aims to contribute to India’s climate-compatible development.
- Promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency in key sectors.
- One of those is CapaCITIES, where Switzerland is helping municipal authorities in India to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Cooperation activities on other global issues such as food security and water.
- M.S. Swaminathan is working for the Swiss Development Cooperation on food security and climate change.
- Numerous Swiss artists and researchers have been active in the Indian subcontinent, notably Le Corbusier (architecture) and Alice Biner (painter, sculptor, art historian).
- Popular Hindi movies are filmed in the Swiss Alps.
- Both countries promote cultural exchanges.
- Tourism is also thriving with many Indians travelling to Switzerland to discover the country — and many Swiss enjoy travelling to India.
Unlike the Champaran Satyagraha, national attention has been lacking. Large farmers typically have access to modern pumps, consuming huge amounts of water and leaving hardly anything for small and marginal farmers. The limited availability and high cost of high-yielding seed varieties also hampers agricultural productivity.

Farmers have limited scope for crop diversification and focus primarily on wheat and rice.

India’s agricultural policy has historically disinvested the creation of a formal credit culture among farmers.

We have the second largest amount of arable land in the world. Yet, less than 35% of this land is irrigated.

Farm loan waivers do more harm than good. They spoil the credit culture and erode macro-economic stability.

Every census shows the number of marginal farmers going up, and a further sub-division of minuscule plots.

Eight decades after B.R. Ambedkar wrote his Annihilation of Caste, the bulk of Dalit farmers in the country are unable to earn a better living.

The panacea for rural distress can only be agricultural reforms that will raise farm productivity and incomes.

Greater subsidies could be extended for the purchase of agricultural equipment, fertilizers and pesticides for small and marginal farmers.

Medical insurance coverage could be expanded through the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana.

The scope of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act could be increased.

Agricultural reforms, such as in irrigation and warehousing infrastructure, can increase farm productivity and therefore incomes.

Value addition and supply chain for agricultural produce - more income and profitable.

Improve the quality of education and health services in government schools and hospitals.

Create productive employment avenues in rural areas to deal with rural distress.

Greater public spending in rural infrastructure and watershed development.

Efforts to develop agriculture allied sectors such as horticulture, Poultry, fisheries etc.

We need a national conversation on rural distress.

With empathy for India’s farmers and a truthful assessment of on-the-ground farming reality, we must make the right choices for Indian agriculture.

Yet, a century after Mahatma Gandhi fought against the exploitation of farmers, India’s agrarian community still remains under siege.

Rural distress is a recurring theme in India.

Rural distress involves drought, unpredictable monsoon, lack of financial support, failure of crop insurance, unsustainable agriculture etc.

Rising prices of agricultural inputs, landholding size decreasing, non-availability of water, soil suitability and pest management.

Small and marginal farmers face a greater burden of debt.

Large fall in food prices.

The income of landless rural population is hardly enough to cover its consumption requirements.

Climate change impacting the monsoon.

Decline in land available for agriculture and its diversion for non-agricultural use.

More than 50% of people in rural India do not own land and have to depend on manual labour.

Sub-optimal utilisation of MSP.

Green Revolution caused regional and other disparities.

All these factors create a narrow window of economic benefit for the marginal farmer.

Data shows that over the years, MGNREGA wages have increased only in nominal terms with no increase in real wages.

The most vulnerable are the landless, given their income-consumption gap is negative.

Farmers committing suicides which have grown primarily in States with limited irrigation and variable rainfall.

Size of the agricultural workforce is shrinking and seeking employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

Rural distress could trigger mass migration to cities. For the first time as per 2011 Census, urban India added more to its population than rural India.
Bullet trains have been the symbol of Japan’s engineering prowess.

The Shinkansen is the symbol of innovation and technological advancements in Japan after the devastation of the World War 2.

For Japan, which has strategic rivalry with China for commercial contracts abroad, the Indian project marks a victory for Japan.

The export of its bullet train know-how is crucial to revitalise the stagnant Japanese economy.

The competition between China and Japan, especially in the ASEAN region, has been intense and in India, there will be more competition for other phases of the bullet train project.

China outbid Japan to win a $5.5 billion project in Indonesia in 2015.

In India, concerns related to costs, safety and misplaced priorities persist.

The fares for Shinkansen are costly.

Before signing on India, Taiwan had been Japan’s only successful sale. Today Taiwan has suffered heavy losses since opening in 2007.

The profitability requires high volumes of passengers and highly priced tickets.

Over the last decade China has developed a 22,000 km high-speed rail network. It boasts the ‘world’s fastest train’, the Shanghai Maglev that hits speeds of 430 km. Its technology is also cheaper.

India is set to import iconic ‘Shinkansen’ bullet-train technology from Japan.

The train runs from Mumbai to Ahmedabad known as Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project.

The Japanese government is financing 81 percent of the cost, with a $12 billion soft loan carrying an interest rate of 0.1 percent.

Japan will also supplement the financing with technical assistance and training.

Length: 508-km double line. MAHSR will be passing through two States, Maharashtra and Gujarat and one Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

Longest 21 km tunnel with 7 km under sea at Thane Creek.

Maximum Design Speed: 350 kmph

Maximum Operating speed: 320 kmph

The project is set to be completed by August 15, 2022 when India marks 75 years of Independence.

Reduce travel time between the two cities to around 2 hours from the existing 7 hours.

High Speed Railway training Centre will be setup at Vadodara.

The project will be executed through a special purpose vehicle, the National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd.

Bullet train will modernize rail infrastructure in India after decades of underinvestment.

Make In India will also get a major boost as the project will spur manufacturing and create employment in the country.

The High Speed Rail (HSR) system is more energy- and fuel-efficient. Studies show that HSR systems are around three times more fuel-efficient than aeroplanes and five times more fuel-efficient than cars.

Given the traffic density in Ahmedabad-Mumbai corridor, this project could lead to a significant reduction in India’s carbon footprint.

Shinkansen project has tried to minimise noise pollution.

Japan has a longer history of operating the system without any fatalities. This is important for India given the challenges experienced by the Indian Railways due to recent accidents.

In Japan the train has an average delay of less than one minute.

This could help in transforming India as earlier Golden Quadrilateral and upgraded national highways added to GDP, created efficiencies in transportation, provided jobs and improved rural development.

Indian companies will imbibe the new technologies and become suppliers to High Speed Rail contracts worldwide.

Cultural transformation through a demonstrated ability to implement large projects and improve safety.

This project could provide an important boost to public investment.

India-Japan Bullet Train Deal

Indo-Japan Bullet Train Deal

Acquiring new land for laying down the tracks and constructing new stations might face legal hindrances, delaying the process.

Increasing the stoppages will increase the journey time up to three hours.

It will defeat the purpose of high-speed connectivity that the project promises.

Ahmedabad and Mumbai - have airports and passengers could consider taking a flight instead of boarding the bullet train.

Land acquisition, finalising route design and laying down of tracks through hilly areas, across rivers and passing through densely populated regions make the deadline look ambitious.

Its successful and timely completion could act as a powerful catalyst to create a culture of efficient project implementation in India.

There should be a focus on leveraging the post-implementation synergies, which could make this a transformational project for India.

Land acquisition

Stoppages

Challenges

Profitability

Deadline

Conclusion

Benefits

Key features

Strategic Significance

Introduction

Criticism
American involvement in Afghanistan is the country’s longest war which has entered its 18th year.

US and NATO troops for the past several years could not bring peace in Afghanistan.

Taliban is holding control over substantial portion of interior hinterland and attacks by Taliban is common in Kabul.

Corruption and unemployment is rampant in Afghanistan.

The system of President and CEO is leading to more confusion and struggle.

There is poor governance and Afghanistan is yet to develop proper governance structures.

It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order and to peace

Prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists.

Security situation must be improved for Indian development to progress in Afghanistan.

Military power alone will not bring peace to Afghanistan or stop the terrorist threat arising in the country.

U.S. should also bring in Japan, the European Union and others into the developmental framework of Afghanistan.

U.S must have a “sustainable, sustained commitment” in Afghanistan.

Fight against terrorism is not in the villages of Afghanistan, it has to be the fight against those who finance them and train them too.

Parallel to the reconciliation process, the training of Afghan security forces (ANSDF) and equipping them is most important.

Put pressure on those countries that support the terror groups that come and commit violence in Afghanistan.

India as a good friend of Russia and Iran, can convince them to work with the Afghan government to support the peace process.

China can use its influence on Pakistan to change its policy and to support the peace process in Afghanistan.

India-U.S.-Afghanistan partnership is the way forward for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

US recently announced its South-Asia policy with prime focus on Afghanistan.

Trump’s decision to deepen its military engagement in war-torn Afghanistan signals a significant shift in his position.

US president Donald Trump has accused Pakistan for giving “safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror”.

US would no longer tolerate Pakistan’s policy of harbouring terrorists.

He mentioned on the role of India in stabilizing Afghanistan with economic assistance and development, but wants India to do more.

“Time-based approach” based on “conditions” for placing American troops in Afghanistan. Meaning, if the conditions are ripe, US troops will be pulled out.

America’s strategic partnership with India will deepen in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Military will have more operational autonomy to pursue terrorists, and commanders have been given authority to attack whenever they chose to.

India has welcomed United States new policy on Afghanistan, saying his move will help target “safe havens” of terrorism in South Asia.

US support for an Afghanistan-led peace process addresses a core concern of India.

India is committed to support Afghanistan in their efforts to bring peace, security and stability and prosperity in their country.

India has extended reconstruction and development assistance to Afghanistan.

India will have to be watchful for the manner in which the Trump Afghan strategy will unfold.

From Obama’s “AfPak,” policy Trump has changed this to “AfPak-India” policy.

Afghanistan-led and Afghanistan-owned peace process will ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan.

New US Afghan policy may push Pakistan towards China and Russia.

US statement against Taliban and other terror groups ended distinctions like ‘good Taliban’ and ‘bad Taliban’.

Pakistan may restrict the movement of trucks carrying supplies to US forces in landlocked Afghanistan.
The 9th BRICS Summit was held in Xiamen, China. The summit was reported as being forward-looking and focussed on healthy and stable India-China ties with talks about peace and tranquility along their border.

China promised $60 million for BRICS economic and technology cooperation plan and another $4 million for New Development Bank (NDB).

Leaders agreed to “intensify dialogue and experience sharing for fighting corruption in BRICS countries”.

International cooperation to fight corruption will be strengthened.

The New Development Bank will now work closely with the BRICS Business Council to facilitate business and trade prospects in the bloc.

BRICS Business Council will suggest projects that need support from the New Development Bank.

India urged for setting up of a BRICS credit rating agency to counter western rating institutions.

A separate rating agency would help the economies of the member countries as well as other developing nations.

BRICS leaders agreed to allow economic growth to be shared among the members of the bloc.

BRICS leaders emphasized the importance of an open and inclusive world economy enabling all countries and peoples to share the benefits of globalization.

BRICS Summit agreed to adopt environment-friendly energy resources and technologies.

Need for Joint research on energy cooperation and energy efficiency and establish BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform.

Deeper cooperation in areas such as adaptation of agriculture to climate change, agricultural technology cooperation and innovation, agricultural trade and investment, and ICT application in agriculture.

Member countries named Pakistan-based terror groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Haqqani Network in the declaration.

Those responsible for committing, organizing, or supporting terrorist acts must be held accountable.

BRICS countries responded to North Korea issue by stating that the solution lies through advocating dialogue and not by use of force.
Provided a huge boost to manufacturing activity and productivity in districts located within 10km of the network.

Facilitated the movement of growing young firms out of the congested big cities.

49% overall output increase for the average district located on the Golden Quadrilateral network.

Encouraged efficient decentralization by making intermediate cities more attractive to manufacturing entrants.

Moderate-density districts—like Surat in Gujarat or Srirakulam in Andhra Pradesh—that border Golden Quadrilateral registered more than 100% increase in new output.

Industries showed improved efficiency.

Golden Quadrilateral has added to GDP, created efficiencies in transportation, provided jobs and improved rural development through enhanced connectivity.

Tight fiscal space and broader issues of governance, doing business, climate change and competition policy have made it more challenging for infrastructure investments.

Districts near to the north-south and east-west (NS-EW) highway did not experience any change in activity.

India has one of the lowest average speeds for trucks which adds to fuel consumption costs and transportation delays.

Transportation of goods and passengers for short and medium distances.

Establishes easy contact between farms, fields, factories and markets and provides door to door service.

Roads are a necessary complement to railways.

Roads are highly significant for the defence of the country. Border roads facilitate the movement of troops for the protection of borders.

In 1999, then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee laid the foundation stone for the Golden Quadrilateral (GQ) Highway project.

The Golden Quadrilateral is the longest road project in India and the fifth-longest highway in the world.

It connects four major cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

The GQ project is managed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) under the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways.

The Golden Quadrilateral constitutes only the national highways of the country and not state highways and rural-urban roadways.

Provides faster transport networks between major cities and ports.

Provides connectivity to major agricultural, industrial, and cultural centres of India.

Provides smoother movement of goods and people within the country.

Enables industrial development and job creation in smaller towns through access to varied markets.

Farmers are able to transport their produce to major cities and towns for sale and export, and there is less wastage and spoils.

More economic growth through construction and indirect demand for steel, cement, and other construction materials.

Giving an impetus to Truck transport throughout India.

Reduced wastage for the agriculture sector, and a decrease in vehicle operating costs and time.

An efficient road network is essential for a large country like India to maintain national integration and socio-economic development.

It promotes rapid industrialization through cheaper and more efficient movement of goods, people, and ideas across places.

Road infrastructure affects the flexibility and mobility of the workforce.

Rapid urbanization and demographic changes in India call for an acceleration of investment in road infrastructure.
The World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business ranking for 2017 reveals that India continues to fare badly on enforcement of contracts, with an average of 1,420 days taken for enforcement.

The absence of effective means for enforcement of contracts impedes economic growth and development.

High pendency of cases and endemic delays in Indian courts.

Many arbitral institutions have outdated rules of procedure, inadequately trained staff, and poorly staffed panels of arbitrators.

The difficulty of cutting the red tape of the lower bureaucracy.

The World Bank’s report said that delays in issuing construction permits affected the ease of doing business in India.

There is an imperative need for the government to ensure effective implementation of all reforms introduced across all states uniformly.

It is imperative to create awareness of all reforms introduced so that the enterprises can benefit from it.

Labour compliances need to be further eased.

Better rank in ease of doing business and greater awareness about opportunities in India in manufacturing sector would lead to growth in the manufacturing sector.

Government has to proactively pursue with the state governments and local bodies for necessary reforms.

Regular feedback on reforms undertaken, and ensure the reforms are implemented at the ground level.

Setup fast-track commercial courts in Delhi and Mumbai to improve India’s record in enforcing contracts.

Increase awareness about institutional arbitration in India.

The ease of doing business index is an index created by the World Bank in its Ease of Doing Business Report. It was introduced in 2004.

10 indicators are: starting business, getting electricity, dealing with construction permits, registering property, protecting investors, getting credit, employing workers, trading across borders, paying taxes, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

Delhi and Mumbai are used as samples for ranking India under the World Bank’s Doing Business report.

India has improved in areas such as electricity connection, but slipped in areas such as payment of taxes and enforcing contracts.

The ease of doing business index is an index created by the World Bank Group.

India is placed at 130th position among the 190 countries in the ease of doing business index for the year 2017.

A higher ranking in this list means the country’s regulatory environment is more conducive and favourable for the starting and operation of firms.

The report examines India’s recent regulatory progress in order to evaluate the efficacy of the reforms.

Lack of awareness about single window clearance system among enterprises and ineffective implementation of the system.

Access to finance has either remained the same or worsened over the last year.

The average time taken to set up a business in India is 118 days, varying widely across states.

Time taken for dispute resolution by enterprises varied across states, from less than one year to 13 years.

Labour-intensive industries face obstacles in getting land and construction-related permits and tax-related compliances compared to capital-intensive industries.

The reforms and their impacts can be seen in big cities but are not clearly noticeable in smaller cities.

However, the report says there is greater positivity about India among investors and the coming years will see faster growth with a lower compliance burden on companies.

Do away with various compliances under the Companies Act such as the minimum capital requirement.


Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 to introduce global insolvency practices and a quick redressal mechanism.

Liberalised its foreign direct investment policy in order to attract investors.

Model Shops and Establishments (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Bill, 2016 is a step in the right direction and should enable labour-intensive industries to achieve higher productivity.

The government abolished the foreign investment and promotion board (FIPB).

National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) to transform cross border clearance ecosystem.
India-Nepal relations derive their strength from shared history, common cultural ethos, and long years of close and intense people-to-people contacts facilitated by open borders.

The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the relations that exist.

Ties between the two countries are sliding backwards since 2015.

India's blockade at the border over its concerns about the rights of the Madhesi people saw bilateral relations take a severe hit.

Nepal raised the issue of India's "trade blockade" at the UN in October 2015.

The Nepali earthquake in 2015 was the perfect time for China to make massive investments in infrastructure.

2016 saw China as the top assistance provider to Nepal.

Nepalese prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his Nepali Congress Party are perceived to be pro-India.

Deuba said that Nepal would never allow any anti-India activities to stem from its soil.

Way Forward

Recent Nepal Prime Minister visit to India

The visit was to enhance the partnership for overall development of Nepal and consolidate the relations between the two countries.

The two leaders jointly inaugurated the Kataijya-Kusaha and Raxaul-Puranipur cross border power transmission lines.

Eight MoUs in various fields, including Housing grant, prevention of drugs, post-earthquake reconstruction packages in health and education sectors were signed.

Concerns / Challenges

New Delhi's demand for adequate political representation to the Madhesis living in Nepal's Terai region did not go well with Nepal's complex and diverse society.

Any disturbance in the Terai could affect peace and stability in Bihar and UP, given the two states share long borders with Nepal and deep cultural and familial ties with the Madhesi.

Each time India pushes for the concerns of Madhesis to be addressed, it finds Nepal pulling out the China card.

New Delhi is worried about the expanding Chinese footprint in Nepal.

New Delhi's abysmal track record in project implementation in Nepal which has contributed to the trust deficit.

In the Pancheshwar multipurpose project, the two sides failing to finalise a Detailed Project Report.

China's activities have been steadily expanding in Nepal after Kathmandu's support for OBOR materialized.

India must focus on connectivity as a leverage to increase its strategic influence in the neighbourhood.

India must counter growing Chinese influence in Nepal.

India must make swift and effective implementation of infrastructure and development projects in Nepal.

India must continue with post-earthquake reconstruction assistance.

This "aid diplomacy" will help India to reduce the 'trust deficit' which widened after the 2015 blockade.

Finalise the Detailed Project Report of the Pancheshwar multipurpose project.

India must assure swift completion of the two cross-border rail connectivity projects: the Jayanagar-Bijapur-Bardibas and the Jogbani-Biratnagar rail-links.

Other rail links and road connectivity projects too need to be executed swiftly, else China will eagerly step in with aid and infrastructure.

Deepen and strengthen cooperation in areas like trade, economic, investments, water resources, energy cooperation, security, efforts, culture, education and people-to-people ties.

A permanent bilateral mechanism is required to save the plains population of Nepal suffering from massive floods that have also affected downstream areas across the border.

India wants Nepalese government "to take all sections of society on board in the Constitution implementation process and in establishing Nepal as a federal, democratic republic."

For mutually beneficial and sustainable partnership, both countries will have to take a deep look at history to avoid past mistakes.

India must realise the competition it faces from the China in Nepal and it can no longer rely merely on its historical, cultural and people-to-people ties to earn goodwill.
Marital rape is the act of sexual intercourse with one’s spouse without the consent of the other spouse.

Although it was once widely unrecognized by law and society as wrong or as a crime, it is now recognized as rape by many societies around the world.

The Centre has pleaded for not criminalising marital rape in an affidavit filed in response to pleas seeking its criminalisation.

Section 375 of the IPC holds that “sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape”.

No other statute or law recognises marital rape.

Victims only have recourse to civil remedies provided under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

The Justice Verma committee had recommended removing the exception made for marital rape in the law.

The report ‘Status of Women in India, by the high-level Pam Rajput committee of the Ministry of Woman and Child Development, criticised the legislation for its failure to criminalise marital rape.

Till date, 51 countries have criminalised marital rape, beginning with Poland in 1932.

United Kingdom, whose common law was followed by India, made marital rape a criminal offence in 1991.

There are several studies to show the prevalence of non-consensual sex with their wives, and physically forcing their wives to have sex.

Marriage is an equal-relationship contract and not a one-time consent to everything.

The legal exception to the rape laws gives men unequal privilege.

Marital rape victims suffer from long-lasting psychological scars.

Exception under Section 375, violates Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21.

It “may destabilise the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing the husbands”.

“Rising misuse of Section 498A of IPC, known as the dowry law, “for harassing the husbands”.

Other countries, mostly western, have criminalised marital rape does not necessarily mean India should also follow them blindly.

Law Commission on Review of Rape Laws has examined the issue but not recommended the criminalisation of marital rape.
The World Bank, which had earlier agreed to fund the project, refused to give loan for it raising environmental concerns.

Dispute between Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh on the sharing of the water and electricity.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), led by activist Medha Patkar, an anti-dam agitation took the matter to the Supreme Court over environmental concerns.

Inter-state disputes, land acquisition and environmental problems and the rehabilitation and resettlement of those displaced by the project.

Negative impact it would have on the local tribals in the region.

Thousands of families along the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh are at risk of getting displaced with the closing of gates of Sardar Sarovar Dam and resultant rise in the water level in its catchment area.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan group claims that 40,000 families in 192 villages in Madhya Pradesh would be displaced when the reservoir is filled to its optimum capacity.

Large dams have forced the displacement of millions of India’s small farmers and landless peasants from across the country, forcing them into urban slums and breaking apart families.

Downstream habitat change and impacting biodiversity.

The Narmada estuary has become increasingly saline because of the decrease in fresh water flow.

Situation is one of the biggest challenges faced by dams worldwide, and giant dams such as the Sardar Sarovar cannot be easily desilted.

The dam is expected to provide water and power to millions of people in four states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The storage capacity has increased 3.75 times to 4.73 million acre-feet.

The dam stands at 138 metres height.

The project is being executed by the Gujarat government’s Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL).

The Sardar Sarovar project is the biggest dam in terms of volume of concrete used in it.

It is the second biggest dam after the Grand Coulee Dam in the United States.

Narmada is India’s largest west-flowing river.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada river.

A multi-purpose project with irrigation, power and drinking water benefits, it is meant to benefit Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

It would become a symbol of the country’s growing prowess and boost growth in the region.

The Sardar Sarovar project was a vision of the first deputy prime minister of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

The foundation stone of the project was laid out by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on April 5, 1961.

The project took form in 1979 as part of a development scheme to increase irrigation and produce hydroelectricity.

In 1996, the Supreme Court stayed the project, further delaying the work on the dam.

After the supreme court gave an order in October 2000 in favour of construction of the dam, the work resumed.

It will provide drinking water to 4 crore people and help irrigate 2.2 million hectares of land.

The irrigation benefits will help in doubling the farmers income by 2022.

The Narmada canal will also irrigate lands in the desert districts of Barmer and Jalore of Rajasthan.

Project has successfully brought water to the dry Kutch district, where the armed forces are guarding the nation.

Drop-out ratio of girls from schools reduced after Narmada waters started reaching homes of the people.

Providing drinking water to animals and livestock.

Provide domestic and industrial water, generate employment, and provide valuable peak electric power.

Provide flood protection to riverine reaches.

Wild life sanctuaries viz. "Shoolpaneshwar wild life sanctuary", Wild Ass Sanctuary, Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, Nil Ghar & Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and many others will be benefited.

Benefits of fisheries development and recreational facilities.

It is an engineering marvel that has become a case study for large projects across the world.
Financial inclusion is to bring the common people into the formal channel of the economy, thereby ensuring that even the last person in the queue is not left out from the benefits of economic growth.

It refers to delivery of banking services to masses including privileged and disadvantaged people at an affordable terms and conditions.

It is important priority of the country in terms of economic growth and advancement of society.

The poor are encouraged to invest in various financial products and can borrow from formal channels.

Increases the amount of available savings, the rate of capital formation, and thereby allows the tapping of new business opportunities.

Helps government plug leakages in public subsidies and welfare programmes as the government can directly transfer the subsidy amount into the account of the beneficiary.

Reduce the gap between rich and poor population.

Boost the financial condition and standards of life of the poor and the disadvantaged population.

Helps in implementing social security schemes.

Lowers transaction costs for daily economic activities.

Enables the creation of a buffer for emergencies.

Better monitoring and regulation of financial transactions using digital technology.

JAM — Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile.

To provide social security to all citizens - Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY).

Under Atal Pension Yojana a monthly pension is guaranteed to the subscriber.

To expand the network of ATMs, the RBI has allowed non-bank entities to start White Label ATMs.

Banks are deploying micro ATMs in rural areas.

RuPay Cards have significantly increased its market share.

Financial Literacy Centres were started by commercial banks at the request of the RBI.

Financial inclusion of women through the implementation of its biometric identification system 'Aadhaar'.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) platform built by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

Recent Initiatives to provide financial inclusion

Proper financial inclusion regulation in the country to access financial services

Financial Inclusion is necessary before comprehensive success of Mobile Wallets.

As India uses Aadhaar to advance financial inclusion, the government must examine and put into place a robust regime for data protection.

Financial services must be made accessible for people with disabilities at par with non-disabled people.

A financial inclusion strategy sensitive to regional, demographic and gender related factors, needs to be carefully crafted.

NABARD has an extensive presence across the country, it should be made the nodal and accountable agency for financial inclusion.

Requires grass-root level research as to why people prefer to go to moneylenders, despite a network of banks, cooperatives, MFI’s and SHGs.

Most of commercial banks operate only in commercial areas. Therefore rural population find it difficult to access the financial services.

A lot of hidden bank charges have demotivated poor persons in availing financial services.

Making banking accessible for people with disabilities

Money lenders continue to account for nearly 30 per cent of total banking business.

Any dispute between lenders and borrowers cannot be settled legally.

Fraud due to illiteracy

In India, where nearly one-fourth of population is illiterate and below the poverty line, ensuring financial inclusion is a challenge.

Due to this, ensuring deposit operations in the jan dhan accounts is a challenge.

The lack of financial inclusion is costly to the individual as well as to society as a whole.

In the informal banking sectors, the interest rates are higher and the amount of available funds are smaller.

Financial Inclusion in India

Introduction

Lack of financial inclusion

Advantages

Challenges

Way Forward
Embankments as a solution for flooding have a long history in India, stretching back to the Mughals and the British.

An embankment is an uplifted earthen structure constructed along the river channel to artificially reduce the size of the floodplains.

The land outside the embankment is supposed to be safe from floods.

However, embankment breach resulting in flooding the safe areas is routine.

**Methods of flood control**

The two most common ways to try to contain flooding rivers:

- **FLOOD WALL**
  - Barrier built along riverbanks – made of concrete, stone or brick

- **LEVEE**
  - Wide embankment built along riverbanks – made from clay, sand, or soil; sometimes topped with sandbags

Embankments are widely used in Assam and elsewhere in the country as a way to contain river flooding.

They help in water resources management, which benefit people inhabiting the watershed.

They are generally cheap, quick and most popular method of flood protection.

Once embankments are built, more cropping is possible in previously flood-prone areas.

Construction of embankment with proper roads has been perceived as providing useful communication linkages.

The build-and-forget mentality that is currently present in the the bureaucracy.

The construction of an embankment causes the drainage lines to be blocked.

In Bihar in 2008, there was an embankment breach in the Kosi river basin. This year in parts of Assam, Bihar and West Bengal breaches have caused flooding.

Only in a few cases have newly constructed embankments been able to protect villages from floods.

The decentralisation with community management of embankments will not be easy when society is fractured along the lines of caste, class, and religion.

The embankment-related flood generally comes fast, without warning and hence is more destructive.

Additional problem to people who live within the embankments, which number in the millions in India.

Their propensity to cause waterlogging and disease in stagnant water

Destruction of many embankments is due to earthquake.

**Managing Embankments**

We need a paradigm shift in the way the embankments are managed.

Raising and strengthening of existing embankments.

To incentivise collective action from the community, the state has to create an enabling institutional environment.

The community-based organisations should be empowered to earn revenue from the embankments through levying tolls (as most embankments are used as roads), and plantation activities (and sale of the harvest).

The community could act as a partner for maintenance activity, or act as a monitoring agency.

Improving the maintenance of existing flood infrastructure rather than spending money on new embankments.

Sustaining and improving natural systems’ ability to absorb floodwaters.

Flood mitigation policies that compliment embankments are urgently needed to mitigate the impacts of the largest floods.

Such policies might include floodplain zoning, relocation of at-risk people, enforcement of the existing building code, insurance and better warnings.

If we have to shift from reactive flood protection to year-round flood governance, we must design ways of embankment management in flood-prone areas.

Participatory embankment management could be the need of the hour.

**Conclusion**

**Way Forward**

**Benefits**

**Concerns / Challenges**
A high proportion of children with anaemia, low weight, lower levels of breast feeding and evolving problems of obesity

Anemia and other deficiencies can have irreversible damage on a child’s ability to learn.

Losses via poorer cognition, and losses via reduced schooling for children.

Every year, one million children die in India due to causes related to the lack of nutrition

Research suggests that $1 spent on nutritional interventions in India could generate $34.1 to $38.6 in public economic returns.

Boosting nutrition levels across the country is one of the biggest low hanging fruit in the Indian public policy sphere.

According to M S Swaminathan, to promote nutrient value food production, a multi-pronged strategy involving academic institutions, government, scientists and farmers should be evolved.

Ingenious tribal women are growing plants of nutritious value following their age-old tradition and other people must follow it by including such plants in their backyard.

Sustained efforts to promote millets and pulses production and distribution under food security programme

To exploit the rich coastline, sea water tolerant plant varieties and developing genetic shield to grow plants in saline and marsh lands

Creation of web-enabled Nutrition Information System, which should be synergised with the health information management system and mother- child tracking system

Engaging the private sector for fortification of wheat, flour, rice, edible oils and milk.

Fortified food can be incorporated into mid-day meals, public distribution shops and anganwadi centres

State governments must adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach and demonstrate better governance

Women empowerment can help India end malnutrition

A food and nutrition commission should be established, headed by the prime minister

Seeking the help of corporates is an easy way out.

Focus also on adequate intake of oils and fats, which are necessary for the absorption of micronutrients and something poorer households often miss in their diet.

If we can conquer space, we can conquer childhood hunger

The prevalence of malnutrition—encompassing both undernutrition and overnutrition—is an important indicator of a country’s health.

Those who are either undernourished or are obese underperform in various aspects of life.

As the country aspires to fulfills its economic and social development goals, malnutrition is an area which requires greater attention.

Study shows that, factors like poverty, dietary issues, poor sanitation and low social status of women are the likely reasons for high child malnutrition in India.

One of the primary reasons for children being undernourished is that often their mothers are undernourished.

Malnourishment in a girl, combined with early marriage, has a cascading effect of health complexities across generations.

Women without education or without much voice in their families often fail to ensure adequate diets for their children

India has the highest levels of malnutrition and the highest number of stunted children in the world.

India loses over $12 billion in GDP to vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Childbearing at an early age can cause nutritional deficiencies in the womb and increase the risk of death by 2-10 times.

Poor people avoid hospitals due to the high out-of-pocket expenditure during delivery.

Inadequate iron intake can lead to iron deficiency anaemia (IDA) which leads to permanently impaired cognitive abilities, which leads to a reduction in adult wages.

National Family Health Survey IV of 2015-16 suggest only modest improvement in child malnutrition since the National Family Health Survey III of 2005-06.
**Concerns / Challenges**

- Skill development initiatives by the government have not yielded the desired result and the country still faces a challenge of training a large workforce.
- The quality of skills imparted is also a matter of concern.
- Only 2.3% of India’s workforce has undergone formal skill training, compared to United Kingdom’s 88%, Germany’s 75%, USA’s 52%, Japan’s 80%, and South Korea’s 96%.
- Various professional councils complicate the regulatory environment in higher education.
- Improving learning outcomes in school education system.
- High rate of teacher absenteeism, limited time spent on teaching when the teacher is in class and poor quality of education.
- There is considerable unevenness across the country in access to digital network.
- Consistently reduced landholding is cause for concern.
- Artificial intelligence and use of robots in manufacturing and services sector creates fears of job losses.

**Introduction**

- NITI Aayog’s Three Year Action Agenda document is a comprehensive framework for policy changes to be implemented in the short term in India.
- Three Year Action Agenda forms part of a larger vision document which spans a seven-year strategy and a 15-year vision document.
- The action agenda has replaced the five-year plans of the erstwhile Planning Commission.
- It covers the different sectors of the economy — agriculture, industry and manufacturing.
- It discusses the policies necessary for urban and rural transformation.

**Highlights**

- It is the move from plan to strategy.
- Allocating a larger proportion of additional revenues to high-priority sectors.
- The share of non-developmental revenue expenditure in total expenditure would decline from 47% in 2015-16 to 41% in 2019-20.
- Share of capital expenditure, which is more likely to promote development, would rise significantly.
- Expansion in expenditures by 2019-20 on education, health, agriculture, rural development, defence, railways, roads and other categories of capital expenditure.

**Advantages of Action Agenda**

- Government needs to create 20 world-class universities
- Provide autonomy for top colleges and universities
- Outcomes are critical components of a vibrant and successful higher education sector
- Reform the regulatory system
- Establish system of project-researcher-specific grants
- Increase focus on vocational and profession-led education
- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) should target a placement rate of 80 per cent or more by 2020.
- Modify the RTE Act to make it a ‘right to learning’, instead of ‘right to go to school’
- The UGC Act, 1966 is in need of reform.

**Key Suggestions**

- A national-level Overseas Employment Promotion Agency should be set up under the Ministry of External Affairs to consolidate all the promotional initiatives of the government.
- Quality improvement in school education through improved governance.
- To deal with small and fragmented landholdings, use modern land-leasing law that balances and protects the rights of the tenant and landowners.
- Create Coastal Employment Zones to boost exports and generate high-productivity jobs.

**Steps to ensure effective implementation of the action agenda**

- Constitute a separate parliamentary committee on planning, which could engage with the NITI Aayog’s policy prescriptions.
- Create state-level bodies, called Sub-National Institutes for Transforming India (SuNITI), in formulating and expediting state-specific policies.
- This should enable state assemblies to discuss state-level plans in sync with the Three Year Action Agenda.
- Form “Regional Councils to address specific issues impacting more than one state or a region.”
Economic gender inequality could be costly for the global economy in general and Indian economy in particular.

Key challenge is unequal access to the internet.

Getting women educated about the digital world.

The gender gap in mobile ownership

According to a survey, in rural areas majority of the women who owned cellphones did not know how to operate the phone.

There have been numerous reports of khp panchayats and other conservative groupings banning or restricting mobile phone use for women

Gender biased belief and value systems that impose restrictions on the education and free mobility of women.

Sometimes digital technologies can act as tools of control and surveillance, not empowerment.

Cumbersome banking procedures and delayed funds flow under DBT in some cases.

Automation is expected to spread across most sectors and occupations, affecting women

If women are to realize their full potential in the digital age, the government need to target the current gender gaps.

Help women complement their social skills with higher education and advanced digital skills

Support high-quality online platforms to foster women’s entrepreneurial skills

Popularize innovative web-based instruments that improve female entrepreneurs’ access to financial capital

Governments can develop customer protection frameworks to help protect women with low financial literacy and build trust in digital payments.

For ‘Make in India’ to grow even further, women should be considered and promoted as key drivers.

Blockchain technology can improve the financial inclusion of women in the economy. Blockchain lowers costs, shortens settlement times, and can provide a user-friendly experience for payments.

Only 28% of India’s internet users are women. This digital gender divide must be bridged.

Making the Internet accessible, open and safe is an urgent priority.

Need for broader shifts in social and cultural belief systems

**Digital Economy** refers to the full range of economic, social and cultural activities supported by the Internet and related information and communications technologies.

Women play a crucial role in the growth of the economy.

Over the years, Indian women have made a substantial impact and achieved success across sectors, both within the country and overseas.

Digitalization offers a variety of opportunities for female empowerment and for a more equal female participation in labour markets, financial markets, and entrepreneurship.

**Digitalization** is a positive move for Indian woman.

Digital economy allows opportunities for ‘flexi-work’ and diminishes the reliance on physical workspaces and balancing work-home commitments.

Access to economic prosperity and the benefits of technology to women will have a positive impact on the whole of society.

Increased incomes for poor mothers results in immediate dietary improvements for their children.

Direct Benefit Transfer makes women have greater access to finances which improve the socio-economic circumstances of women.

Enable women entrepreneurs to succeed and to grow their business at the same rate as their male counterparts.

Digital payments can promote women’s economic empowerment and yield social and economic gains.

Promotes formal savings.
**Introduction**

- Popularise these sports and familiarise the public with the names of para-athletes.
- Government needs to ensure that these sportspersons have job security in return for the pride they bring to the nation.
- We must learn to treat para-athletes on par with sportspersons without disabilities.
- Finding the right training facility and providing sponsorship to participate in international events.
- Raising funds through innovative ways. NGOs can promote plant adoption programme, where a person can adopt a plant by paying a small amount. This money can be used for supporting the green project and also helping a para-athlete.
- There should be separate grounds with facilities such as ramps and easy movements for wheelchair-bound athletes.
- The sports organisations, gym centres and hospitals can adopt para-athletes where they can access the gym facilities, physiotherapy services and sport psychology services.
- The government or the corporate need to provide for proper training of the coaches – especially the local coaches.
- Need for inclusive sports development and accord equal priority to both able-bodied and disabled-sport development in the country.
- Issue comprehensive guidelines stipulating minimum standards that need to be maintained in national championships of para-athletes.
- Rewarding para-athletes acts as extra motivation.
- Working towards a lasting solution for the multifaceted problems faced by the Para-athletes is the need of the hour.

**State of Para-Athletes in India**

- Para-athlete is a sports person with disability.
- For the first time in India, a Paralympian, Devendra Jhajharia, has received the country's highest sporting honour, the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna.
- This honour will surely give a boost to young para-athletes.
- Indian public as well as the government seem ignorant towards Paralympians even though these sportspersons won more medals in Rio than their Olympic counterparts.
- There were no sports officials or ministers to felicitate or even welcome athletes returned to India after winning five medals, including a gold, at the Deaflympics held in Turkey.
- The media coverage of events and achievements is limited.
- The Rio Summer Paralympics weren't even broadcast on Indian television.
- Kanchanmala Pande the blind athlete was forced to beg in Berlin to take part in the Para-Swimming Championships as the money sanctioned to the athletes failed to reach them.
- Para-athletes, even after winning medals, find it difficult to sustain themselves.
- It is a reflection of how society treats persons with disabilities.
- Most para-athletes have to deal with prejudices and apathy.
- In the National Paralympic Games athletes were put up in unhygienic conditions.
- Funding is a challenge.
- Providing aid to the disabled athletes is a challenge when the country lack adequate infrastructure for disabled people.
- Most schools in the country do not have programmes for disabled sports.
- Lack of trained coaches for para-athletes and lack of incentives for the coaches.
The continued violence in Rakhine state is affecting India’s Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport project.

Rohingya Muslims, considered by the UN to be the most persecuted minority in the world.

Rohingya crisis pose a security challenge to the South and Southeast Asia.

Rohingyas have acquired documents like Aadhaar, PAN and Voter-ID. This raises the concern of naturalisation of illegal migrants by fraudulent means.

In the absence of a law to deal with refugees in India, their identification and surveillance will become difficult.

The Rohingyas are a Muslim minority group residing in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.

They are considered “stateless entities”, by the Myanmar government and has been refusing to recognise them as one of the ethnic groups of the country.

This has led to large scale exodus of the Rohingya population to neighbouring countries like India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

Rohingyas are considered to be illegal Bangladeshi immigrants by the government of Myanmar.

The 1982 Citizenship Law denies the Rohingya Muslims citizenship despite the people living there for generations.

The Rohingya are fleeing Myanmar because of the restrictions and policies placed by the government.

Tensions between the Rohingya and the other religious groups have exploded into conflict.

The violence and turmoil began in 2012 when a group of Rohingya men were accused of raping and killing a Buddhist woman.

The Buddhist nationalists retaliated by killing and burning the Rohingya homes.

Rohingyas, who number about 40,000 in India, has national security ramifications.

Islamic State and other extremist groups may expand their networks through some hard-line Rohingyas.

There are suspicions that Rohingyas are indulging in illegal/anti-national activities i.e. mobilisation of funds through hawala channels and also indulging in human trafficking.

The fragile north-eastern corridor may become further destabilised.

Possibility of violence erupting against the Buddhists.

Influx of migrants leads to social, political and cultural problems.

The platforms like ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and BIMSTEC need to be used to discuss the issue and take advantages of the experience of countries like India and Thailand who have experience in dealing with insurgency and terrorism.

The United Nations appealed to the entire international community to keep the political differences aside and help Rohingya Muslim refugees.

It is high time to formulate a strong refugee policy. It will help to mitigate the present Rohingya refugee problem and provide a structure to be used wherever similar problem arises.

Provide funding to socio economic developmental projects in partnership with Myanmar government in the Rakhine region.

India should improve border security and regulate inflow of illegal migrants.

India should show leadership by protecting the Rohingyas and calling on the Myanmar government to end the repression and atrocities causing these people to leave.

Way Forward

Why is India planning to deport Rohingya refugees?

ASEAN needs to abandon its consensus and non-interference approach and perceive the ongoing problem as a regional problem.

Kofi Annan-led Advisory Commission report needs to be considered seriously by the authorities in Myanmar.

Why should India help Rohingya refugees?

The need to address the root cause of the problem is evident.

The need to bring about overall socio-economic development in the Rakhine state by undertaking both infrastructure and socio-economic projects.

Reconciliation between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists is necessary for peace to prevail.

Solution based on respect for peace, communal harmony, justice, dignity, and democratic values.

The 1982 Citizenship Law denies the Rohingya Muslims citizenship despite the people living there for generations.

The violence and turmoil began in 2012 when a group of Rohingya men were accused of raping and killing a Buddhist woman.

The Buddhist nationalists retaliated by killing and burning the Rohingya homes.

If we abandon the Rohingya, we abandon the idea of India as a home of refugees and hospitality.

A country which offered a home to the Parsis, the Tibetans, the Afghans and the Jews cannot turn a little minority of helpless people back.

With deportation of Rohingyas, the idea of India, the India of democracy and hospitality will disappear.

As the largest democracy in the world, India should extend help to Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds.

Myanmar and Bangladesh governments are refusing to accept them as citizens.

Peace and stability in the Rakhine state is important for India’s economic investment.

India does not want a strained relationship when it is exploring ways to enhance its presence and influence in Myanmar and the Southeast Asia region through its Act East policy.
India must follow Rwanda and Kenya which have introduced stiff penalties for the use of flimsy plastic bags. Alappuzha (Kerala) and Panaji (Goa) have no landfills. Both convert their trash into compost or biogas and recycle plastic, glass, metals and papers. Kerala’s Green Protocol, which is aimed at reducing garbage generation by discouraging disposables and using reusable alternatives.

Segregation of waste at source
- Compost making from wet waste within the premises/neighborhood area
- Recycling of dry waste
- Freeing the neighborhood from open defecation and open urination
- Motivating the residents of neighborhood against throwing garbage in open spaces
- Adopting a near by park or open place for collection and waste segregation.

The neighborhood action plan leads to substantial reduction in the quantum of solid waste sent to landfill.

It enables better performance of Waste-to-Compost and Waste-to-Energy plants.

Minimising waste generation and recycling or processing every possible bit of it.

Segregating waste at source holds the key to effective waste management.

An integrated system to transport and process what has been segregated at source.

The Mysuru City Corporation has focused on segregation of trash at source, door-to-door collection, recycling and involvement of non-profits and educational institutions in public awareness campaigns. This could be followed in other cities too.

Green belt around landfill sites with “appropriate plant species for vegetation cover” to assist in reducing odour pollution.

Selection of landfill site should be integrated with the urban development planning.

Require behaviour modification among citizens and institutions.

The Central Pollution Control Board should conduct periodic assessments of the urban local bodies in waste management.

Cities need to break the vicious cycle of “collect, dump and incinerate”. Instead, they should segregate, recycle, compost, process, and dump only what cannot go anywhere else.

Recognise cleaner households by giving certificates, publishing their names on respective websites or reduce property tax.

The wastepickers should be employed in composting units that must be set up at dumpsites as well as in neighbourhoods.

Successful Waste Management practices

Solid waste management is a major problem in India.

As per official estimates, at present around 62 million tonnes of solid waste is generated every year.

Solid waste management is important for ensuring a clean Urban India.

The collapse of a great wall of garbage in east Delhi’s Ghazipur area is a stark reminder that India’s neglected waste management crisis can have deadly consequences.

New Delhi generates more than 10,000 tonnes of garbage every day, posing environmental and public-safety hazards.

Dump sites in most Indian cities are handling much more waste than they can hold.

Urban landfill sites with biodegradable waste are a major source of odour pollution.

It leads to vomiting, headaches, nausea, anxiety, frustration, restriction in outdoor activities, children unable to sleep, and discomfort for elderly people and others.

Only 80% of waste generated is collected and just 28% of it is processed.

Finding new landfills would mean merely relocating the problem.

Garbage management becomes difficult when recyclables, organic wastes and toxic wastes are all dumped together.

Increasing urbanisation is putting additional pressure on landfill sites in urban areas.

Toilet building is much easier but solid waste management is the real challenge to ensure a clean Urban India by 2019.

Waste management rules continue to be ignored even a year after they were notified.

The Swachh Bharat programme has focused too narrowly on individual action to keep streets clean, without pressure on State and municipal authorities for scientific management and arrest the spread of pollution from trash.

Organic waste that could help green cities and feed small and affordable household biogas plants is simply being thrown away.

India is doing little to prevent plastic from drifting into suburban garbage, rivers, lakes and sea, and cattle feeding on dumped sites.

Considering that waste volumes are estimated to grow to 165 million tonnes a year by 2030, many more suburbs are threatened by collapsing or burning trash mountains.
Numerous regulatory roadblocks, unfavourable land and labour laws, inadequate transport, communication and energy infrastructure, among others.

India faces stiff competition from South-East Asian and other South Asian countries.

Global technological and geo-economic changes.

Impact of a strong rupee in recent times on Indian industry and the economy.

According to our latest salary index, manufacturing is the lowest paid sector with Rs. 211.7 median hourly gross salary in 2016.

According to a FICCI report, India has 5.5 million people enrolled in vocational courses, while China has 90 million of them.

Make in India initiative with the primary goal of making India a global manufacturing hub.

‘Zero defect zero effort’ for MSMEs to deliver top quality products using clean technology.

‘SKILL INDIA’ - a multi-skill development programme with a mission for job creation and entrepreneurship.

Labor reforms through a dedicated Shram Suvidra Portal, Random Inspection Scheme, Universal Account Number and Apprentice Protsahan Yojana.

Defence Procurement Policy (DPP) under which the priority will be given to the indigenously made defence products.

Technology Acquisition and Development Fund (TADF) under the National Manufacturing Policy (NMP) to facilitate acquisition of Clean, Green and Energy Efficient Technologies by MSMEs.

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) for providing loans to small-scale businesses.

Improving physical infrastructure from transport systems to the power sector is essential.

Improve access to finance for smaller enterprises.

Making firm entry and exit easier.

Enhancing the flexibility of labour regulations.

Low-cost manufacturing is important for India.

If India has to raise its share of manufacturing in GDP to around 25%, industry will have to significantly step up its R&D expenditure. This must be addressed by the new industrial policy.

The quantum of value addition has to be increased at all levels. Larger the value addition, greater the positive externalities.

FDI policy requires a review to ensure that it facilitates greater technology transfer, leverages strategic linkages and innovation.

Aim for higher job creation in the formal sector and performance linked tax incentives.

Attractive remuneration to motivate people to join the manufacturing sector.

Need to have a curriculum that focuses on soft-skills and value-based training that meets the demands of the industry.

India’s manufacturing sector has evolved through several phases - from the initial industrialisation and the licence raj to liberalisation and the current phase of global competitiveness.

The Indian Manufacturing sector currently contributes 16-17% to GDP.

By 2020, the country is expected to become the fifth largest manufacturing destination.

India offers the 3 ‘Ds’ for business to thrive - democracy, demography and demand.

Manufacturing sector holds good prospects for jobs with promising remuneration.

Various studies have estimated that every job created in manufacturing has a multiplier effect in creating 2-3 jobs in the services sector.

65% of India’s population is below the age of 35 - giving us the edge of demographic dividend.

GST and improving public spending through infrastructure projects are favourable moves for the sector.

The labour-intensive manufacturing sector is the only ray of hope for India to absorb its huge labour force.

Robust domestic demand, a growing middle class, a young population and a high return on investment, makes India an attractive opportunity to manufacturers.

The cost of manpower is relatively low as compared to other countries.

Small Enterprises suffer from low productivity given that their small size prevents them from achieving economies of scale.

The jobs the small enterprises create are low-paying ones.

Industry’s inadequate expenditure on research and development (R&D). Currently, R&D spending amounts to around 0.9% of GDP.

MSME sector facing tough competition from cheap imports from China and other countries with which India has free trade agreements.

Black money generation, not complying with tax laws, and the attendant corruption, has an adverse impact on making India a competitive manufacturing destination.
India has 18% of the world’s population but only 4% of the usable water resources.

Irrigation potential from interlinking rivers will have limited impact. The net national irrigated area from big dams has decreased and India’s irrigated area has gone up primarily due to groundwater.

Large hydropower projects are no longer a viable option in India.

Storing large quantities of waters. Most of the sites suitable for the big reservoirs are in Nepal, Bhutan and in the North-East—who are in opposition to big storage reservoirs.

There are political challenges as well. Water transfer and water sharing are sensitive subjects.

If the glaciers don’t sustain their glacier mass due to climate change, the interlinking project will have limited benefit.

Usually rivers change their course and direction in about 100 years and if this happens after interlinking, then the project will not be feasible for a longer run.

The biggest, cheapest, most benign, possibly fastest and most decentralized storage option for India is the groundwater aquifer.

Invest in water conservation, more efficient irrigation and better farm practices.

We need a mandatory enforceable river policy aimed at treating rivers as national treasure.

Accumulation of silt in huge quantities, particularly the Ganga and its tributaries. These rivers need to be desilted.

Planting trees on the river banks is one way of bringing life back to the rivers.

Forest catchments will need to be restored, wastewater from industries and towns will need to be treated, sand mining need to be stopped.

Need to build the responsibility, capability and accountability in our water management institutions to revive our rivers.

The government plans to work on an $37 billion scheme to connect nearly 60 rivers in the country.

The idea is to connect the Himalayan and peninsular rivers via a network of canals so that excess water can be diverted.

The project includes Ken-Betwa, Par-Tapi-Narmada and Damanganga-Pinjal river inter-linking projects and building Pancheshwar and North Koel dams.

It will irrigate about 87 million acres of farmland, control floods, and generate 34 GW of hydroelectric power.

This will cut farmers’ dependence on monsoon rains by bringing millions of hectares of cultivable land under irrigation.

Crop productivity would increase and so would revenues for the State.

Even one bad monsoon has a direct and debilitating economic impact.

The river linking project will ease the water shortages in western and southern India while mitigating the impacts of recurrent floods in eastern India.

Simultaneous floods and droughts continue to wreak havoc, destroying the lives and livelihoods of millions.

India needs clean energy to fuel its development processes, and river water can be leveraged for this.

Fulfilling water needs impact socio-economic life of people which will help end poverty.

Need for interlinking of rivers to prevent inter-state water disputes.

Potential benefits to transportation through navigation, as well as broadening income sources in rural areas through fishing.

Interlinking of rivers is a very expensive proposal.

The river interlinking project will adversely affect land, forests, biodiversity, rivers and the livelihood of millions of people

The Ken-Betwa link threatens about 200 sq. km of the Panna tiger reserve

Interlinking of rivers will lead to destruction of forests, wetlands and local water bodies, which are major groundwater recharge mechanisms.

Less than positive experience that other countries have, like diversion of Amu Darya and the Syr Darya or the Australia’s experiments in its Murray Darling basin.

It causes massive displacement of people. Huge burden on the government to deal with the issue of rehabilitation of displaced people.

Due to interlinking of rivers, there will be decrease in the amount of fresh water entering seas and this will cause a serious threat to the marine life.

The Shah committee pointed out that the linking of rivers will affect natural supply of nutrients for agricultural lands through curtailing flooding of downstream areas.

The judicious use of canal water, growing crops that are appropriate to a region, encouraging drip irrigation and reviving traditional systems such as tanks.
Plastic pollution is the introduction of plastic products into the environment which then upset the existing ecosystems in different ways.

These pollutants cause environmental degradation and also affect different living organisms and their habitats negatively.

Humans have produced 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic since the 1950s, with the majority ending up in landfill or polluting the world's continents and oceans.

Sea salt around the world has been contaminated by plastic pollution and finding their way into the food chain via the salt in our diets, according to study.

The majority of the contamination comes from microfibres and single-use plastics such as water bottles.

Plastic pollution is more permanent contamination of natural environment

Planning Commission in 2014, estimated that 60 cities across the country generate over 15,000 tons of plastic waste every day

Microplastic contamination has been found in tap water in countries around the world.

Plastic pollution in marine ecosystems is causing health hazards and economic loss.

A large number of city drains are clogged by plastic bags which are leading to water logging and urban floods as seen in recent times.

According to a 2014 report of UNEP, "the overall natural capital cost of plastic use in the consumer goods sector each year is $75 billion".

A 2016 report warned that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean, measuring by weight.

Study finds river Ganga is the world's second biggest carrier of plastic waste.

In developing economies like India, a rise in the middle class population has meant a higher level of consumption — and plastic waste generation

African country Rwanda has banned plastic bags since a few years. This has made the nation much cleaner.

Kenya has just announced a ban on plastic bags, and a fine of 4 years in prison and/or $40,000.

Morocco has had such a ban for almost a decade.

U.S., Canada and the Netherlands have regulations to stop the use of microbeads in personal-care products. India must adopt such regulations.

It is time that India learns from these Africans and ban plastic bags and related stuff.
Protection of forests is done through implementation of Forest Conservation Act (1980) and through establishment of protected areas.

The International Day of Forests is observed every year on March 21 to celebrate and raise awareness on the importance of forests and trees.

The 2017 theme is ‘Forests and Energy’.

The theme highlights the importance of wood energy in improving people’s lives.

It is one of the eight Missions under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). It was launched in 2014.

It is aimed at protecting, restoring and enhancing India’s diminishing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.

Objective is increasing the forest and tree cover by 5 million ha, as well as increasing the quality of the existing forest and tree cover in another 5 million ha in 10 years.

The National Forest Policy must be refreshed as it contains concepts that have been long discarded.

There is no official definition for the term ‘forest’. Define forest as “a self-sown and self-regenerating community of plants that supports a community of creatures dependent on those plants, for food and shelter”.

Primary aim of the National Forest Policy must be “Maintenance of a healthy natural environment through preservation and restoration of the original natural ecosystems that have been adversely affected by over-exploitation of the forests.”

Degraded lands be protected so that original ecosystems can re-establish themselves on those lands.

Protecting the catchment areas of rivers, lakes, reservoirs to enable natural vegetation to grow back to conserve soil, help groundwater recharge, and for mitigating floods and droughts.

The principal aim of Forest Policy must be to ensure a healthy natural environment and healthy functioning of life-support systems, including the water cycle and nutrient cycle.

Need for participatory models of afforestation in which the local knowledge helps to regenerate and manage the forest resources.

The protection of natural ecosystems in catchment areas should be a vital national goal, given the challenges of failing freshwater systems facing the nation at present.

Review the curriculum of the Indian Forest Service meeting the present situations and challenges.

Green Credits intervention for afforestation and sustainable agro-forestry; Hence poverty alleviation for communities involved in practicing sustainable agro-forestry.

India is one of the mega diversity countries in the world with different types of forests.

Officially 20% per cent of geographical area in the country is under forest cover.

The National Forest Policy (1988) aims to increase the forest cover to one third.

More forests mean more water that benefits farmers and future generations.

According to Rabindranath Tagore, life in forest is the highest form of cultural evolution.

Trees are able to store carbon for a long time and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere is one of the ways of mitigating climate change.

Tree roots are key allies in heavy rain. They help the ground absorb more of a flash flood, reducing soil loss and property damage by slowing the flow.

Forests provide a wealth of natural medicines.

They contribute to the overall economy – through employment, processing and trade of forest products and energy.

Benefits from Recreational, aesthetic, cognitive and spiritual activities

Though Mizoram has the highest 93% forest cover, many northern states have experienced decline in green cover.

The problem of degraded soil in India’s forest lands increases the probability of forest fires and depletion of groundwater resources.

Poor soil quality diminishes a forest’s ability to act as a carbon sink.

Causes of forest decline

Natural causes
- Natural disasters
- Agriculture
- Mining and oil extraction
- Construction of dams
- Roads.

Market failures
- Loss of forest goods and services
- Monopolies and monopsonistic forces

Mistake policy interventions
- Wrong incentives
- Regulatory mechanisms
- Government investment...

Goverance weaknesses
- Concentration of land ownership
- Weak or non-existent local government and land tenure arrangements
- Illegal activities and corruption...

Due to the rising population there is enormous pressure on forest land for extraction of forest based resources and encroachment for extension of agriculture.

The rising conflicts between conserving forests and diversion for developmental projects.

Forest fires caused both due to natural as well as man-made factors.

Large tracts of forest cover suffer from plant diseases, insects and pests which leads to considerable loss of forest wealth.
Subnationalism is positively linked to social development.

Greater the level of subnational solidarity, higher will be the State’s commitment to social welfare. Kerala’s success is the most striking example.

Subnationalism can be seen as a counter-narrative to the idea of aggressive nationalism that restricts any alternative ideas of self-identification.

It works towards fostering a shared political community accommodating the multiple aspirations of a diverse population.

It gives space for expressing the linguistic and cultural rights in a plural society.

In certain cases it may represent one of the most disadvantaged sections of the society and thus opens new avenues for their socio-cultural upliftment.

The anti-Brahmin movement in South India brought the unity among remaining sections of society to fight against caste oppression.

Sub nationalism promotes ideal of competitive federalism where every state strives to compete with each other for prosperity.

High levels of subnationalism have spawned violent ethnic conflict in many states.

Gujarat and Maharashtra have witnessed ethnic riots unleashed against their religious minorities and immigrants, respectively.

Assam has periodic violence targeting alleged Bangladeshi settlers.

The ‘othering’ of those who do not form an integral part of the subnation warns us of the dangers of subnationalism.

With hyper-nationalism on the rise, it is important to reassert the pluralistic character of the Indian nation state.

Within the sub-nationalism, there is further sub-nationalism of caste.

The system of job reservations is challenging the idea of national unity.

Sub nationalism may lead to fragmented political group that represents particular group rather than overall population which threatens the very basic principles of democracy.

In some cases sub nationalism creates challenges for law and order situation.

As long as subnationalism is not secessionist, it should not be viewed as a threat, but rather as a constitutive element of India’s plural democracy.

Subnationalism is the policy of asserting the interest of one’s own state/region/province, as separate from the interest of the nation and the common interest of all other states/regions/provinces.

Along with the nationalism, India is also witnessing the re-emergence of subnationalism.

This is emerging strongly from Karnataka, for a separate State flag.

Protest against the imposition of Hindi on the signboards of Metro stations in Bengaluru.

Demands for language-based provinces during the freedom movement.

States Reorganisation Act, 1966 providing for linguistic States.

The Official Languages Act, 1963 preventing the transition of India’s official language from English to Hindi.

The first past-the-post electoral system tends to favour ethnocultural majorities.

There are certain group-based fundamental rights provided in the Constitution, such as in Articles 29 and 30.

Part XXI of the Constitution has a set of special provisions for certain States and sub-State regions.

Fifth and Sixth Schedules give special measures for the administration of areas with high Scheduled Tribe populations.

India has flexible constitutional order that enables creative solutions to subnational aspirations.

The creation of new States based on varied grounds.

Subnationalism has sustained India as a nation state for 70 years, respecting “multiple but complementary” socio-cultural identities.

It also provides constitutional mechanisms to accommodate political claims arising out of these identities.
**Subnationalism**

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- Subnationalism can be seen as a counter-narrative to the idea of aggressive nationalism that restricts any alternative ideas of self-identification.
- It works towards fostering a shared political community accommodating the multiple aspirations of a diverse population.
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**Introduction**

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**Advantages**

- Demands for language-based provinces during the freedom movement.
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- India has flexible constitutional order that enables creative solutions to subnational aspirations.
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- Subnationalism has sustained India as a nation state for 70 years, respecting “multiple but complementary” socio-cultural identities.
- It also provides constitutional mechanisms to accommodate political claims arising out of these identities.

**Concerns / Challenges**

- Views that support subnationalism aspirations