The share of agriculture and allied sector in gross value added (GVA) is on the decline. Poor agricultural performance can lead to inflation, farmer distress and unrest, and larger political and social disaffection. In recent years, farmers have suffered because of erratic monsoon rains, unseasonal showers on the eve of harvest and volatile prices. Unabated shrinking of land holdings due to partitioning and persistent degradation of vital resources such as land and water. Water scarcity and limited efficiency in existing irrigation schemes. Fully irrigating Indian agriculture will be a challenge for the future. Currently more than half of India’s crop area is rain-fed. Significant price fluctuations in perishables such as onions, potatoes and tomatoes have also contributed to income uncertainty for farmers. Farm revenues declining for a number of crops despite increasing production. Market prices falling below the minimum support price (MSP).

The government has committed to double farmer incomes by 2022, but the sector’s projected growth of 2.1% doesn’t seem coherent with this. For addressing agricultural stress and doubling farmers’ incomes requires radical follow-up action, and bringing science and technology to farmers. It is imperative to replace power and fertiliser subsidies by direct income support. Dramatically extending irrigation but via efficient drip and sprinkler technologies. Crop land holdings must be consolidated to reap the benefits of agricultural mechanisation. It is estimated that agricultural workers in total work force would drop to 25.7% by 2050 from 58.2% in 2001. Thus, there is a need to enhance the level of farm mechanisation. Promote the rental model of farm machinery and reduce the cost of operations. Investing in research and technology for non-cereal crops, removing market barriers, improving post-harvest facilities, and developing a better livestock policy. Diversify farmers’ income generating opportunities by facilitating the development of agricultural sub-sectors like livestock and fisheries.

Agriculture accounts for 16% of GDP and 49% of employment in India, making it crucial in the overall economy. The agriculture sector is experiencing structural changes which are opening up new challenges and opportunities. Agriculture sector will remain an engine of broad based growth which will reduce inequalities and provide food security. Agriculture income may fall by 25% per cent in unirrigated areas due to climate change. Crops grown in rain-fed areas, pulses in both kharif and rabi, are vulnerable to weather shocks while the cereals, both rice and wheat, are relatively more immune. Agriculture GDP growth and farm revenues have stagnated in the past four years due to repeated monsoon failures. It estimated that in a year when temperatures are 1 degree higher, farmer incomes would fall by 6.2% during the kharif season and 6% during rabi in unirrigated areas. In a year when rainfall is 100 mm less than average, incomes would fall by 15% during kharif and by 7% during the rabi season. Efforts to promote climate-resilient agriculture have been lax. Need for mitigating this vulnerability through the rapid extension of climate resilient technologies.

The Economic Survey has proposed an agricultural policy aimed at integrating women as active agents in rural transformation. There is an increasing number of women in multiple roles in agriculture sector, as cultivators, entrepreneurs and labourers. Women farmers must get enhanced access to land, water, credit, technology and training at a time when migration of men from rural to urban areas is growing. Gender-specific intervention to raise productivity of small farm holdings is required. The government has earmarked 30% of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all ongoing schemes and programmes.
Bharatmala Pariyogana is a new umbrella program for the highways sector across the country for bridging critical infrastructure gaps. Focuses on development of Economic Corridors, Inter Corridors and Feeder Routes, National Corridor Efficiency Improvement, Border and International connectivity roads, Coastal and Port connectivity roads and Green-field expressways.

Promoting inclusive employment-intensive industry and building resilient infrastructure are vital factors for economic development. Survey highlighted the structural reforms like GST, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and measures to facilitate Ease of Doing Business.

Priority to social infrastructure is stated as essentials to inclusive and sustainable growth. Higher public investment in the social sector, including education and health, is critical for India. Being a developing economy “there is not enough fiscal space” to increase expenditure on critical social infrastructure.

India lags behind many emerging economies in terms of providing qualitative transportation related infrastructure. Around US$4.5 trillion worth of investments is required till 2040 to develop infrastructure to improve economic growth and community well-being.

Social Infrastructure

India has made significant progress in quantitative indicators such as enrolment levels and physical infrastructure like construction of school buildings, drinking water facilities, toilet, etc. The quality of education also needs to be monitored and assessed.

So India will face a $526 billion infrastructure investment gap by 2040, according to Economic Survey. The current trend shows India can meet around US$3.9 trillion infrastructure investment.

India has been successful in achieving gender parity in the school sector and in higher education it is moving towards a better gender parity. Growing expenditure on health is burdening the public in general.

The Global Infrastructure Outlook reflects that rising income levels and economic prosperity are likely to further drive demand for infrastructure investment in India over the next 25 years.

India needs funds for ambitious plans such as Sagarmala and Bharatmala to improve its transport infrastructure.

Stressed balance sheets of private firms.

Experts believe that an innovative financial solutions to attract investments into infrastructure to sustain growth is the need of the hour.

Problems with land and forest clearances.

Fund raising from long-term global investors, including sovereign wealth funds, insurance and pension funds and endowments.

Collapse of public private partnership funding model.

Railways need to tap non-fare revenue.

India has high logistics costs of 16-18% (of the cost of a product), which make exports uncompetitive when compared with those of China, where these costs make up 8-10%.

Enhanced investment on infrastructure sector will help in creating jobs both directly and indirectly.

The logistics sector needs to be improved because of its impact on improving competitiveness in the economy.

The Economic Survey says the infrastructure investment gap needs to be filled by private investments and the National Infrastructure Investment Bank (NIIB).

Improving logistics sector has huge implication on exports and it is estimated that a 10% decrease in indirect logistics cost can increase 5-8% of exports.

Support from global institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank is required.

India also plans to set up 35 multi-modal logistics parks and develop 50 economic corridors.

Encourage ship-building and manufacturing, given India’s strategic location along international trade routes.

The Global Ranking of the World Bank’s 2016 Logistics Performance Index shows that India jumped to 35th rank in 2016 from 54th rank in 2014.

“Railway station redevelopment” could be a big source of revenue generation by providing “world-class amenities and services”.

Recommendations

Logistics Sector

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Investments Required

Need of the Hour

Infrastructure Sector: Economic Survey 2017-18

Reasons behind Infrastructure Investment Shortfall

Stressed balance sheets of private firms.

Problems with land and forest clearances.

Collapse of public private partnership funding model.

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The Global Ranking of the World Bank’s 2016 Logistics Performance Index shows that India jumped to 35th rank in 2016 from 54th rank in 2014.
Govt. to implement minimum support price for all crops; it is hiked to 1.5 times of production costs.

Cluster development model of agricultural commodities, emphasis to encourage for organic farming.

To ensure agriculture received boost, agricultural products will now be in futures markets.

22,000 rural haats to be developed and upgraded into Gramin Agricultural Markets to protect the interests of small and marginal farmers.

“Agricultural Market and Infra Fund” with a corpus of Rs 2,000 crore will be created for 22,000 gramin agricultural markets and 585 APMCs.

Aim to move from black board to digital board with push for digital technology and e-education.

By 2022, every block with over 20,000 tribals and over 50 per cent STs will have a special Ekdaya school.

To address brain drain, a new scheme to identify students studying B Tech in top engineering schools and allow them to study and do research in IITs and IISc.

“Revitalising of Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE)” scheme to promote research in Higher education institutes.

Higher targets for Ujjwala, Saubhagyam and Swach Mission to cater to lower and middle class in providing free LPG connections, electricity and toilets.

Changes in customs duty to promote creation of more jobs in the country and ‘Make in India’ in sectors such as food processing, auto components, footwear and furniture.

With oil prices projected to be $10-$12 higher in the coming year, growth could be adversely impacted by 0.3%.

Many analysts had expected tax concessions to the salaried classes and measures such as loan waivers which was absent in the budget.

Instead of providing basic health care through government hospitals, budget is providing insurance for care at private hospitals.

We are going down the American route to health care instead of, the Canadian route.

Fiscal policy is not being used to stimulate growth.

With inflation running at 5%, the scope for monetary easing too is limited.

Majority of the borrowing are going towards revenue expenditure, without creating capital assets.

The resource constraints have forced the govt to rely on extra budgetary resources and external agencies. If they fail it may lead to gap between the promise and delivery.

Union Finance Minister presented the annual budget for 2018-2019 in the Parliament.

This is the first budget after big-ticket economic reforms like the GST, dynamic fuel pricing, mega PSU bank recapitalisation etc.

Fiscal deficit for 2017-18 at 3.5%, projected at 3.3% for 2018-19.

Free power connections to 4 crore homes under Saubhagyam Yojana.

Eight crore free gas connections for poor women through Ujjwala Yojana.

Disinvestment target for this year set at Rs 80,000 crore.

To strengthen agriculture, rural development, health, education, employment, MSME and infrastructure sectors.

Ten prominent sites to be developed as Iconic tourist destinations.

Comprehensive Gold Policy on the anvil to develop yellow metal as an asset class.


Tax on Long Term Capital Gains exceeding Rs 1 lakh at the rate of 10%, without allowing any indexation benefit. However, all gains up to 31st January, 2018 will be grandfathered.

The government will pay 12% to the Employee Provident Fund for new employees in all sectors for the next three years.

Target of Rs. 3 lakh crores for lending under the MUDRA scheme for MSMEs.

More concessions for International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), to promote trade in stock exchanges located in IFSC.

To roll out E-assessment across the country to eliminate person to person contact leading to greater efficiency and transparency in direct tax collection.

Two major initiatives in health sector, as part of Ayushman Bharat programme: Health and Wellness Centre and National Health Protection Scheme.

Under National Health Protection Scheme, providing a health insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh per family per year announced.

Setting up 1.5 lakh Health and Wellness centres to provide health facilities with an allocation of Rs 1,200 crore.

Two New Funds of Rs 10,000 crore announced for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry sectors, Re-structured National Bamboo Mission gets Rs 1,250 crore.

“Operation Green” launched to address price fluctuations in potato, tomato and onion for benefit of farmers and consumers.

NITI Aayog to initiate a national programme on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and centres of excellence will be set up on robotics, AI, Internet of things etc.
Urban local governments in India generate 44 per cent of their total revenue from own sources.

Urban local governments have emerged more fiscally empowered than rural local government in India.

This highlights the difference in fiscal empowerment between urban local governments and rural local governments in India.

Tax collections at panchayat level are extremely low, which is posing a challenge to fiscal federalism and accountability.

Direct taxes account for around 35 per cent of total taxes in India, while it is about 70 per cent in Europe.

The rural local governments in India generate only 6 per cent of revenues from own resources compared to 40 per cent in Brazil and Germany.

Unlike in other countries, reliance on direct taxes in India seems to be declining.

This trend will only be reinforced if GST proves to be a buoyant source of revenue.

Local governments in tier 2 and tier 3 locations rely much more on devolved resources, they generate less tax resources and collect less direct taxes.

A better data and evidence to evaluate the impact of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments.

The underlying problems need to be identified and solved.

The Survey emphasized the importance of fiscal decentralization.

Quoting Rabindranath Tagore, the Survey underlined that fiscal decentralization captures the idea that spending and tax decisions must reflect local preferences.

This is essential to address the issue of local governments stuck in a 'low equilibrium trap' depending largely on outside resources.

Economic and political development is associated with a rising share of direct taxes in total taxes.

India has a federal form of government, and hence a federal finance system.

For the successful operation of the federal form of government financial independence and adequacy form the backbone.

The Economic Survey 2017-18 highlighted the need for fiscal federalism.

Panchayats received 95 per cent of their revenues from the devolved funds from the centre/state, while generating only 5 per cent from own resources.

Panchayats in states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka do collect some direct taxes.

Villages in states like Uttar Pradesh almost entirely depend on transfer funds.

Some state governments have not devolved enough taxation powers to the Panchayats.

In some states permissible taxes for Panchayats include Property and Entertainment Taxes but not Land Taxes or Tolls on roads.

In cases where more powers are devolved, Land revenue collection remained low between 7 to 19 per cent due to low base values applied to properties and low rates of taxes levied.

In rural Kerala and Karnataka, which are ahead of others in devolving powers to panchayats, the house tax revenue collection is only one third of the potential.

Local governments are not fully utilising existing taxation powers.

Unwillingness to tax by the state, possibly due to close proximity between the state and the citizens.

Unwillingness by abled citizens to pay because of dissatisfaction with the quality of services they are receiving.

Centre and States’ desire to use their devolution powers to control lower levels of government.
Indian government continues to "carefully monitor" the situation in Maldives.

India said that the Maldivian government must respect the Supreme Court verdict and release the political prisoners, citing the "spirit of democracy and rule of law".

This will pave the way for genuinely inclusive, free and fair elections with full international monitoring.

India said it was "disturbed" on the declaration of the emergency by the government and expressed "concern" over the arrests of the chief justice and political figures.

India is hoping to work together with countries like US and Saudi Arabia, to bring pressure on the Yameen government.

China called for "resolving differences through dialogue and negotiation".

Western governments, including the US, Canada and Britain, have all expressed dismay at the deterioration of the political situation.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres urged the Yameen government to lift the state of Emergency and guarantee safety for its citizens, "including members of the judiciary".

When the Commonwealth pressed Yameen to uphold the rule of law, his government voted for the Maldives to quit the Commonwealth.

He has also disregarded all international calls to solve the political crisis through dialogue.

The international community must persuade Yameen to steer the Maldives out of this crisis amicably without coercion.

Fresh elections, with the opposition free to contest with an equal playing field, are the best option for the Maldives.

Being largest neighbouring nation and SAARC member, India also has a moral responsibility to facilitate "inclusive, free and fair elections in the Maldives" in 2018.

The political crisis in the Maldives reached a flashpoint, as President Abdulla Yameen declared a 15-day state of Emergency in the country.

The chief justice and other top judges were also arrested.

The Maldives Supreme Court ordered the release of political prisoners including former President Mohamed Nasheed and former Vice-President Ahmed Adeeb.

The court said the previous proceedings had violated the constitution and international law.

It also reinstated 12 Members of Parliament who had earlier been stripped of their seats.

This gives the opposition coalition a majority, and makes President Abdulla Yameen vulnerable to impeachment.

The court annulled all proceedings against the jailed political prisoners.

Supreme Court had ordered the release of political prisoners and reinstate 12 Opposition MPs in parliament — a directive that the President has refused to follow.

Yameen asked the judges to reverse their decision citing that the court had carried out an "infringement of national security and public interest".

He said, releasing the incarcerated politicians would "raise concerns over national security".

The crisis could affect the tourism in Maldives, the lifeblood of the country's economy.

China, which has boosted its investments in the Maldives may slow down the deals, given concerns about political stability.

The Maldives will descend into instability, constitutional crisis and lead to a national security crisis.

In 1988, the then PM Rajiv Gandhi had sent special forces to safeguard President MA Gayoom from an attempted coup.

Operation Cactus was a major success in India's foreign policy without signalling any interference in domestic affairs of a sovereign country.

India had then intervened following an appeal from MA Gayoom.

Standoff between Government and Supreme Court

Yameen's Reaction

Impact

Operation Cactus: When India Helped

Introduction

How did the current crisis begin?

Way Forward
In the US, tax compliance is high and ascribed to strong deterrent effect of selective, intensive audits. In advanced countries, high tax collection and excellent public services reinforce each other. Globally the revenue from personal income tax is much higher compared to corporate income tax. While in India the personal income tax collection has to go up.

China’s taxpayers are more than those of India, even when its income levels were similar to those of India. Rewards could be more effective in motivating people to pay tax like reduced public transportation fares or special privilege in government-operated hotels, hospitals, and airlines. South Korea considers allowance to airport, VIP rooms, and free parking in public parking facilities. Providing tax-compliance certificates to firms to help them build an image.

Making tax certificates mandatory to renew certain licenses. Good financial behaviour needs to be celebrated publicly. Need to create trust and cooperation between citizens, corporate/business sector and the Government. Government could consider an insurance scheme for informal sector business tax payers by providing financial support in times of distress.

Need to create a conducive tax administration. Incentivising tax collection and tax intelligence agencies, probably with higher allowances and compensation. Electronic surveillance through technology upgradation. Quick settlement of disputed cases. Ensuring equity, certainty, convenience and simplicity in taxation.

For creating conducive tax administration there is a need to introduce academic courses on ethics and business practices for business graduates, chartered accountants, company secretaries, auditors and legal experts. "The government will also need to stabilise GST implementation to remove uncertainty for exporters, facilitate easier compliance, and expand the tax base," the Economic Survey 2017-18 said.

It is often said that India is “a tax non-compliant society and too many people evade taxes”. The fact that less than 3% of Indians pay income tax implies that a large majority avoid paying income tax. It is also said that most Indians under-report their incomes. Tax compliance will increase the per-capita tax revenues.

With rising per capita incomes, the tax-to-GDP levels are rising quite well due to increasing formalisation of the economy. Between 2000-01 and 2017-18, the tax-to-GDP rose from 8.7% to 11.6%.

During this period, personal income taxes, as a ratio to GDP, are up from 1.5% to 2.6%. Corporate taxation levels have been falling for several years, with the slowing of corporate profitability, and had this not happened, tax revenues would have grown even faster.

In the personal income tax (category), the salaried ones are paying more compared to business people. It is important to ‘remove this unevenness’. Demonetisation, sustained campaign against tax evasion and the implementation of GST have resulted in greater tax compliance.

GST implementation has increased the indirect taxpayer base by more than 50%. There has been a concerted effort to make India a tax compliance society.

In Union Budget 2018-19, corporate tax rate of 25 per cent for businesses with turnover of up to Rs 250 crore was proposed. With agriculture not taxed, over 60% of the population is out of the ambit of the tax system or other exemptions given for senior citizens, etc.

The Economic Survey highlighted some local bodies are not collecting property taxes adequately. The Government and citizens suspect that corporate business is dishonest and accumulating profits at their cost. The private sector and citizens suspect that the Government does not use their tax collection for general welfare of the society and taxes are wasted. The businesses, especially in informal sector, have to be self-dependent and, hence, they save on taxes.

When employees are not secure at workplaces compulsion of tax compliance would generally be weak.
Khap panchayats are caste or community organisations in rural parts of western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and certain other parts of India. They at times act as quasi-judicial bodies and pronounce harsh punishments based on customs and traditions. Khap panchayats are mostly run by male village elders. They have considerable influence in rural north India.

“Khap panchayats” argue that they stand to protect “age-old traditions”. They are known for issuing diktats aimed at upholding the socially conservative traditions and resisting modernisation. Critics accuse them of acting like kangaroo courts. Political leaders view communities as vote-banks and khap leaders as the key actors which can swing the community’s votes.

There were reports about the Khap in UP ordering the ban on women using mobile phones in public in an attempt to restrict their contacts with men. Such orders are against the constitution and curb the freedom of women. There were 291 honour killings in India between 2014 and 2016, as per data from the National Crime Records Bureau. Often the perpetrators are relatives seeking to punish young couples for bringing “shame” to the family. So there is a need for creating awareness among traditional communities through education.

Introduction

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court by NGO Shakti Vahini against khap panchayats, seeking directions to the centre and state governments for preventing honour crimes. The centre had also urged the court to put in place a mechanism to monitor crimes against women by khap panchayats.

Now, the Supreme Court has ruled that Khap panchayats has no right to interfere in any marriage.

The Supreme Court declared it was illegal for parents or khap panchayats to interfere in decisions of adult men and women of different castes to marry.

Attacking adults in inter-caste or inter-faith marriages in the name of being “conscience keepers of society is absolutely illegal”.

Any adult man or woman can marry anyone of their own choice.

Under the law, when two people marry, no third party can interfere in an individual or collective capacity.

Khap panchayat cannot summon adults and question their choice of marriage partner.

The court would step in if the centre failed to take steps to stop such interference.

Customs were not above human life and rights of persons concerned.

Police should be held responsible for protection of couples in such matters.

Whether a marriage is legally valid or not should be left for the courts to decide.

The SC also mentioned that solution for consanguineous marriages must be derived from counselling such couples rather than encouraging hostility against them.

To check growing instances of honour killing taking place in the name of caste and religion.

To protect the dignity of all citizens, particularly women.

Such crimes are also in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women which provide that women should have the right to freely choose a spouse.

To protect individual liberty, right of association, and the right of adults to choose their own partners in marriage.

Supreme Court on Khap Panchayats

Supreme Court's Decision

Why did the Court Intervene?

Khaps interference in the freedom of youths

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To protect individual liberty, right of association, and the right of adults to choose their own partners in marriage.
Farmer income is crucial for livelihood and economic growth. MSPs are effective for wheat and rice, but not for crops like potatoes, onions, and vegetables. APMC systems in India are not effective. Kharif and rabi crops are vulnerable to weather shocks. Water scarcity and limited irrigation efficiency are major challenges. Significant price fluctuations in perishables such as onions, potatoes, and tomatoes make it difficult to predict income.

The average growth rate of agricultural GDP in the last four years was only 2.2% per annum. The Economic Survey indicates that the level of agricultural GDP and real agricultural revenue has remained constant in the last four years. A minimum support price of 1.5 times the input cost for Kharif crops is necessary to ensure fair compensation to farmers.

The budget has not talked about reducing subsidies and increasing investments. The budget has focused on infrastructure development for agriculture. The government has set up Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (FAIDF) and Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore. The budget also includes setting up of fisheries and aquaculture infrastructure development fund (FIAIDF) and Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore.

Government proposals for enhancing farmer income include setting up a National Agro-Processing Park and an Agri-Treasury. The government has also proposed setting up a new mode of financing agriculture through the Agri-Pension Scheme. The government has also proposed setting up a new mode of financing agriculture through the Agri-Pension Scheme.
India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) enjoy strong bonds of friendship based on age-old cultural, religious and economic ties between the two nations.

Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited UAE and the two sides signed five new agreements related to energy sector, railways, manpower and financial services.

This was PM Modi’s second visit to the UAE. These visits are important for enhancing and strengthening the bilateral relations.

This signifies India’s growing engagement with the Gulf.

ONGC Videsh, Indian Oil Corp. Ltd (IOC) and a unit of Bharat Petro Resources Ltd (BPCL) paid $600 million for a 10% stake in the UAE’s offshore oil and gas field Zakum.

This is the first Indian Investment in upstream oil sector of UAE, transforming the traditional buyer-seller relationship to a long-term investor relationship.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Abu Dhabi.

Both sides signed a MoU that aims to institutionalise the collaborative administration of contractual employment of Indian workers in the Gulf country.

Under the MoU, both the sides will work for ending the existing malpractices, combat trafficking and organise collaborative programmes for education and awareness of contractual workers.

A MoU for technical cooperation in railways was also signed. This aims at cooperation in infrastructure sector especially railways.

It will facilitate development of joint projects, knowledge sharing, joint research and technology transfer.

A MoU between Bombay Stock Exchange and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange was also signed.

It aims at enhancing cooperation between both the countries in financial services industry.

It would facilitate investment in financial markets by investors from both the countries.

A MoU to establish multi-modal logistics park and hub in Jammu & Kashmir comprising warehouses and specialised storage solutions.

Around 2.8 million Indians are living harmoniously in the UAE.

As India seeks to enhance economic engagement and deepen security cooperation with the Gulf, it finds a willing partner in the UAE.

As UAE ‘Look[s] East’ to find partners for its economic growth and with security concerns emanating from turmoil in West Asia and growing threat from terrorism, it finds a natural partner in India.

UAE has a special place due to its business-friendly atmosphere, willingness to invest in the Indian economy and its important role in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

The UAE occupies a key place in India’s West Asia policy.

The high-level visit from both sides has given a new impetus to this partnership.

In Jan 2017 the two sides signed the agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

Trade and commerce forms the backbone of the bilateral relations.

Investment from UAE to India exceeds $11 billion, about $4-5 billion in the format of FDI.

The UAE accounts for 8% of India’s oil imports and was fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India in 2015-16.

Another significant pillar of India-UAE ties is reflected in their growing cooperation in security and defense sector.

With the spread of radicalism in Gulf and South Asia, India looks to enhance security cooperation with UAE to counter terrorist threats and combat radicalization.

’Desert Eagle II’, a ten day air combat exercise, was held in May-June 2016 between the air forces of India and UAE.

As far as investments are concerned, slow implementation from Indian side is a major obstacle.

The bilateral trade has come down significantly in the past four years.

It has been noticed that workers from other nationalities including Filipinos and Bangladeshis are replacing Indian workers.

India needs to ensure the execution of the investment projects with required expertise.

Potential areas to enhance bilateral trade include defense trade, food and agricultural products as well as automobiles.

Medical tourism can be an important area where India can attract Emiratis.

Indian companies with expertise in renewable energy sector can invest in UAE.

In defense sector, there is a need to further enhance cooperation through joint training programmes.

Concerns / Challenges

Way Forward

India - UAE Relations

Establishing an Enduring Link

Introduction

Economic Relations

Security and Defence Cooperation

Agreements signed during the Visit

Bilateral Relations

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AI development in India is still lagging behind many other G20 countries. Indian technical universities are not doing enough to strengthen the AI ecosystem unlike their global counterparts. If the control of machines goes in the wrong hands, it may cause destruction. Artificial intelligence would not give value to human lives. Artificial intelligence can be used to mine large amounts of public domain and social network data to extract personally identifiable information which can be used for hacking. It can also be used to automatically monitor e-mails and text messages, and to create personalized phishing mails for social engineering attacks.

Need to develop a robust ecosystem to promote AI in health, education and agricultural sectors. India needed to view AI as a critical aspect of its national security strategy. India must foster AI innovations and set up AI-friendly infrastructure to prepare India’s job and skill markets for AI-based future. With China, the US and South Korea making tremendous advances in AI, it is high time for India to have a strong AI policy in place to benefit from AI revolution.

The government should identify public sector applications like detecting tax fraud, preventing subsidy leakage, and targeting beneficiaries, where current advances in AI could make a significant impact. India must view machine intelligence as a critical element of its national security strategy and evaluate models of defense research in collaboration with the private sector and universities. Banks may look at using AI for enhancing customer experience, security, and risk management.

AI makes our way of living intelligent, helps us to focus on creativity and innovations, and propels our country towards a technology-driven path. The announcement on AI in Budget 2018 is just a step ahead in that direction.

Global economy is transforming into a digital economy with the development of cutting edge technologies in digital space. Technologies such as Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence and others are the technologies of the future.

Establishment of a national programme to direct efforts in the area of Artificial Intelligence (AI). NITI Aayog will establish a national programme to conduct research and development in these areas. The programme will explore both AI and machine learning technologies and their use in India. Government decided to invest in research in technologies such as AI, robotics, Big Data Intelligence, 3D printing, Blockchain, Machine Learning and Internet of Things.

The government will establish Centres of Excellence (CoEs) for research, training and skilling in these technologies.

Niti Ayog said, new technologies will play in the development of the economy. Helps in improving the ease of doing business, as well as making the lives of people simpler.

According to a report, AI holds the potential to add $957 billion to the Indian economy, thereby increasing its yearly growth rate of Gross Value Added (GVA) by 1.3%, and also boost nation’s income by 15% in 2035.

It will give India the opportunity to innovate and succeed in today’s technology-driven world.

The announcement in the Budget will go a long way in providing the necessary AI support required by startups. A study shows AI will create 2.3 million jobs by 2020.

The national programme on AI can address the skilled workforce demand-supply gap effectively. ‘Make in India’ programme can be strengthened and help India in becoming a major manufacturing hub with AI-assisted technology.

From healthcare to agriculture, AI is expected to improve the quality of life of people.

AI could support Smart City Programme regarding technology. Counter China’s commitment towards artificial intelligence.
India is in the midst of a major urbanization boom. India’s level of urbanization is lower than its peer group of developing countries: China (45%), Indonesia (54%), Mexico (78%) and Brazil (87%). By 2030, India’s urban population is projected to increase to 600 million.

The Union government is set to come up with India’s first National Urban Policy framework. Globally, around one-third of countries have a NUP in place.

To spell out the country’s plan for urbanisation.

To outline and highlight the importance and objectives of cities.

UN Habitat mandates that all member-nations should have such a policy.

For leveraging urbanization to the fullest extent and with the greatest efficiency.

For addressing India’s current urban distress.

To build capacities at the state/urban local bodies level to prepare cities for future challenges.

To focus on areas such as inclusive growth, infrastructure finance system and robust urban information system.

To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable as per goal11 of UN’s SDG.

To streamline development and ensure that all urban missions are brought under a common platform.

To deal with issues like slum prevention and regularization, access to land, basic services and infrastructure, urban mobility, urban energy requirements and job creation.

To address this, India needs to develop its own national urban policy (NUP) for future growth of cities.

A NUP will provide a framework for states, which would be encouraged to adopt a state version of this policy.

It would encourage programmes and policies to be integrated and aim at operationalizing the spirit of the 74th Amendment.

NUP would involve participation of all stakeholders.

The policy will look at urban legislation, urban economy, and urban planning.

Increases private and public investments in urban development and consequent improvement of cities’ productivity, inclusiveness and environmental conditions.

Better coordination by national actors, as well as lower levels of government in all sectors.

Environmentally friendly urban and national development.
India seeks to pursue a multi-dimensional engagement with West Asia.

While much focus is often given to India’s ‘Act East’ policy, India’s ‘Look West’ policy too is evolving rapidly.

Sustained high-level engagements have ensured that India’s voice is becoming an important one in the region.

PM Modi’s Palestine visit was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister.

With New Delhi’s policy of trying to build capacity of Palestine, India signed six agreements worth around $50 million with Palestine.

A landmark pact awarding a consortium of Indian oil companies a 10% stake in offshore oil concession is the first Indian investment in the UAE’s upstream oil sector.

There is growing convergence between India and UAE on tackling terrorism.

New alignments have allowed India to de-hyphenate ties with Israel and Palestine.

India has established independent links with estranged players in the region such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Iran.

The relations traditionally were based on energy and Indian Diaspora, but now India seeks to maintain relations to be a significant power in the world as well.

Oman has been a long-standing partner of India in West Asia, where Indians constitute the largest expatriate community.

With the Indian Ocean becoming a priority focus area for New Delhi, Oman’s significance is likely to grow.

Naval cooperation has already been gaining momentum with Muscat giving berthing rights to Indian naval vessels to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

India and Oman are enhancing cooperation in the field of health, tourism and peaceful uses of outer space.

India is in the good position of being trusted by all the major factions in the Middle East; it has good relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq, and the Gulf States.

The numbers on trade between India and the Gulf countries are impressive.

There are large Indian communities in the Gulf States.

The remittances sent by Indian labour migrants have added to the economic relationship.

West Asia is crucial for stability and economic growth in India because around 65% of our oil and more than 80% of our gas supplies come from this region.
A PIL was sought in the Supreme Court for live streaming and/or video recording of Supreme Court cases of national importance that impact the public at large.

Indian legal system is built on the concept of open courts, which means the proceedings are open to all members of the public. But in reality only a handful of people can be physically present and allowed in the courtroom.

Most citizens have no idea how some of the biggest decisions that impact them are taken. Judicial process plays a crucial role in our lives. Recent controversies surrounding the judiciary have fuelled interest in the common people for live streaming.

Justice should not only be done, it should also be seen to be done. The possible manner to achieve this goal is to live stream the proceedings in important cases.

International examples show that this exercise is not so difficult. Streaming of Parliamentary proceedings has generated awareness amongst the people about the work of their elected representatives, as well as enhanced transparency.

Now technology is the game changer and India should utilise it to the maximum extent.

It promotes transparency as live-streaming is allowed for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings since 2004.

Right to receive information under Article 19(1)(a) and the principle of open courts and access to justice as protected under Article 21.

It educates common people on how the judiciary functions.

We can avoid wrong projections of facts, or the menace of fake news or faulty reporting.

The Indian legal system can deliver on its promise to empower the masses.

It helps to build the right perception among the public.

When people understand how the judiciary functions it gives them more power, it gives them the tools to protect their rights, it gives them more respect and confidence in the judiciary.

It could be an important educational resource as well.

It will empower and provide access to citizens who cannot personally come to the court due to socio-economic constraints.

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Introduction

Cases which can be Live streamed

Present Status

International Practice

Need for Live Streaming

Arguments against Live Streaming

Live Streaming of Supreme Court’s Proceedings

Concerns / Challenges

Way Forward

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Matters of great public importance such as entry of women to the Sabarimala temple, or the constitutionality of the Aadhaar scheme, or the legality of Section 377 of IPC.

The apex court may place restrictions in cases where there are countervailing interests of privacy as in family law cases, criminal law cases etc.

It is practiced in highest courts in UK, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, as well as in some international courts, most notably in the International Court of Justice.

The role of Judiciary cannot be equated to the role of executive and legislature.

Judiciary is not accountable to the general public. They are accountable only to the rule of law and to the constitution.

Live streaming will make judges subject to popular public opinion.

The individuality of judges is likely to become a subject of public debate. Whereas the focus should be on judgement delivered and not on judges.

The objectivity may be lost as the lawyers will now address not only judges but also the public.

Constitutional debates are technical and ordinary citizens cannot be expected to understand the legal proceedings.

The Canadian Supreme Court has got lesser workload, whereas in the Indian Supreme Court there are more than 55,000 pending cases.

There is lot of pressure on Indian SC when compared to SCs like Canada and South Africa.

If live streaming of top court’s proceedings is not possible, then alternately the video recording should be allowed.

It can be used at the time of review or appeal of a case.

The judiciary must employ a press officer and issue summaries of its judgements to the media to facilitate greater public understanding.