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INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL

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Table of Contents

INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL	2
01/09 - Is it time to review Section 377?	2
02/09 - Unending Slowdown	4
04/09 - Economy outlook still cloudy	6
05/09 - Making up for lost time	8
06/09 - Ghazipur disaster: Stop our cities from becoming choked with garbage	10
07/09 - Development must be climate-smart	13
08/09 - Demonetisation: now a proven failure?	15
09/09 - All that data that Aadhaar captures	18
11/09 - The disaster next door: on the Rohingya issue	22
12/09 - New strategy, old game: on Trump and Afghanistan	24
13/09 - Time for course correction	28
14/09 - The new Highways	30
16/09 - The arc to Tokyo: on India-Japan ties	32
18/09 - Reading the tea leaves	36
19/09 - Reimagining the OBC quota	38
20/09 - India needs to push for a new deal	40
21/09 - Beyond social media	43
22/09 - Is the Sardar Sarovar Dam boon or bane?	45
24/09 - From ocean to ozone, the limits of our planet	48
25/09 - Turn the Economic Ship Around	51
26/09 - Dairy of a very long year	52
27/09 - Solving the food problems with more research	54
28/09 - Falling off the health-care radar	56
29/09 - Will Swachh Bharat Abhiyan be a success?	58
30/09 - New U.S. policy can boost Indo-Afghan security ties: Abdullah Abdullah	60
Rajya Sabha TV: Synopsis	63
India's World – Korean crisis: is the war the only option?	63
The Big Picture – Takeaways from 2017 BRICS Summit	64
The Big Picture – Mumbai floods: The Urban Infrastructure Challenge	64
The Big Picture – Takeaways from Abe visit	65
Security Scan – Terrorism in South Asia – Ideology & Finance	66

INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL

01/09 - Is it time to review Section 377?

Context:

In 2013, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court upheld Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which discriminates against a section of individuals in society on the basis of their sexual orientation, and placed the onus of repealing it on the Parliament.

Recently, a nine-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court accorded the status of a fundamental right to one's right to privacy. The giant leap for Right to Privacy could be a small step towards decriminalizing the draconian Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, offering a ray of hope to the LGBT community.

A review petition filed by Naz Foundation against the 2013 judgment was dismissed in 2014. But a curative petition is still pending before the top court.



What is Section 377?

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code dating back to 1860, introduced during the British rule of India, criminalises sexual activities "against the order of nature", including homosexual sexual activities. Prior to that, sexual activities, including amongst homosexuals, were not penalised in India.

Though it textually applies to all persons, homosexual and heterosexual, it has been targeted at Transgender men.

Courts judgement on Section 377

The **Delhi High Court** in Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi (2009) rightly held that criminalising sexual activities with consent in private not only impairs the dignity of those persons targeted by the law, but it is also discriminatory and impacts the health of those people.

The top court had set aside a historic Delhi High Court judgment that had decriminalized homosexuality.

Supreme Court, in Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Naz Foundation (2013) case, set aside the Delhi High Court judgment and said that homosexuality or unnatural sex between two consenting adults under Section 377 of IPC is illegal and will continue to be an offense. The court said that Section 377 did not suffer from any "constitutional infirmity".

The astounding claim made in *Koushal* case that there was no need to challenge Section 377 because the LGBT community constitutes only a minuscule minority has been completely discredited. It was unreasonable to advance the view that constitutional protection is available to a group based on its size.

The Section 377 is discriminatory in nature

- The rights of LGBT population cannot be construed as "so called" rights. This is an inappropriate construction of the privacy based claims of the LGBT population.
- 'That a minuscule fraction of the country's population constitutes LGBT' (as observed in the judgement of this court) is not a sustainable basis to deny the right to privacy.
- After the *Koushal* verdict, there have been a large number of cases where transgender men are being blackmailed by their acquaintances and the police. These cases have sharply risen in the last three years.
- Though there is recourse in law, it is difficult for a transgender person to take recourse to it because Section 377 itself makes transgender's sexual practices illegal and would put them in danger of being arrested.
- In addition to it, people have undergone terrible humiliation and psychological stress, apart from being blackmailed.
- No human being ought to be subject to such acts on account of a natural sexual affection for another human being

Regaining fervour

The debate has regained fervour after the privacy judgment. Specifically referring to the rights of the LGBT community, the court said these are not “so-called” rights but are real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine.

- They inhere in the right to life.
- They dwell in privacy and dignity.
- They constitute the essence of liberty and freedom.
- It further added that sexual orientation is an essential component of identity, and equal protection demands protection of the identity of every individual without discrimination.
- It will be extraordinarily dangerous to give an exhaustive catalogue of what will constitute privacy. Because privacy includes at its core the preservation of personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home, and sexual orientation

While the progressive and timely judgement of the apex court needs to be celebrated, one should not be unmindful of the dangerous path we may tread on if the right to privacy is not tempered with reasonable restrictions.

Religion and rights

Many religions consider homosexuality a sin, a conduct against the order of nature, and hold that an individual falling in this category be considered a criminal. However, by the end of the 19th century, a strong opinion emerged that it was a pathological condition and that the person should not be blamed for such conduct. Later, a dominant view emerged that homosexuality was inborn and therefore not immoral, and it was not a disease. However, there is still no unanimity on the issue and individuals continue to hold diverse opinions

We are living in a democratic society governed by our Constitution. And the Constitution gives certain fundamental rights to citizens and one of the rights is the choice to lead the life one wants. Nobody has the right to disturb and intrude into someone’s private life. In the context of rights enshrined in the Constitution nobody should be harassed. At the same time, they should be aware that such activities are private, to be conducted within their homes.

Should homosexuality be decriminalised?

Speaking in the context of the Constitution nobody has the right to say how an individual should conduct his life, what to eat and what not to eat, what to wear, or comment about people’s sexual activities.

The Supreme Court was right in making this observation in the right to privacy judgment, delivered by a nine-judge Bench, and in another judgment in another case of instant triple talaq as the privacy judgment wherein personal laws have been reaffirmed as being protected under the Constitution. The court has also observed that this right cannot be abrogated by a community in the name of majoritarian view.

In the context of religion and morality, homosexuality is prohibited by Islam. But the Constitution provides fundamental rights — we are a democratic country. But this does not mean a license to do anything.

The question that arises is, whether by repealing Section 377 we will achieve the objective of privacy and giving equal rights to individuals of any sexual orientation?

- The worst aspect of Section 377 is at the individual level. It makes Transgender person feel like lesser human beings because they are seen as criminals by law. That impairs not only their dignity, but forces them to go into the closet.
- So, the rights of individuals belonging to the LGBT community need to be recognised, and these persons must be treated with dignity. Nevertheless, the law must ensure that the rights of others, especially women and children, must also be protected.
- The order on privacy has to be seen in the context of freedom to religion and the private lives of individual citizens.
- To protest the criminality of Section 377 is the right of every citizen.

Way forward

The purpose of elevating certain rights to the stature of guaranteed fundamental rights is to insulate their exercise from the disdain of majorities. The right to privacy cannot be denied, even if there is a miniscule fraction of the population which is affected. Majoritarian concept does not apply to Constitutional rights.

One’s sexual orientation is undoubtedly an attribute of privacy.

As far as the private affair of an individual is concerned, within the four corners of the house, nobody has the right to interfere into it. Everybody has the right to lead the life they want.

Conclusion

The British, who enacted the law, got rid of it in the 1960s in England. Many countries have got rid of such laws, either by amendment of legislation or vide decisions of the court. India now remains with countries which India would not like to be associated with otherwise.

At the same time, we have to respect our Constitution. We are a country of many religions. One cannot impose his/her views on others. That's the beauty of our Constitution.

So it is the right time that Section 377 has to be read in totality to safeguard the rights and dignity of miniscule fraction of the country's population.

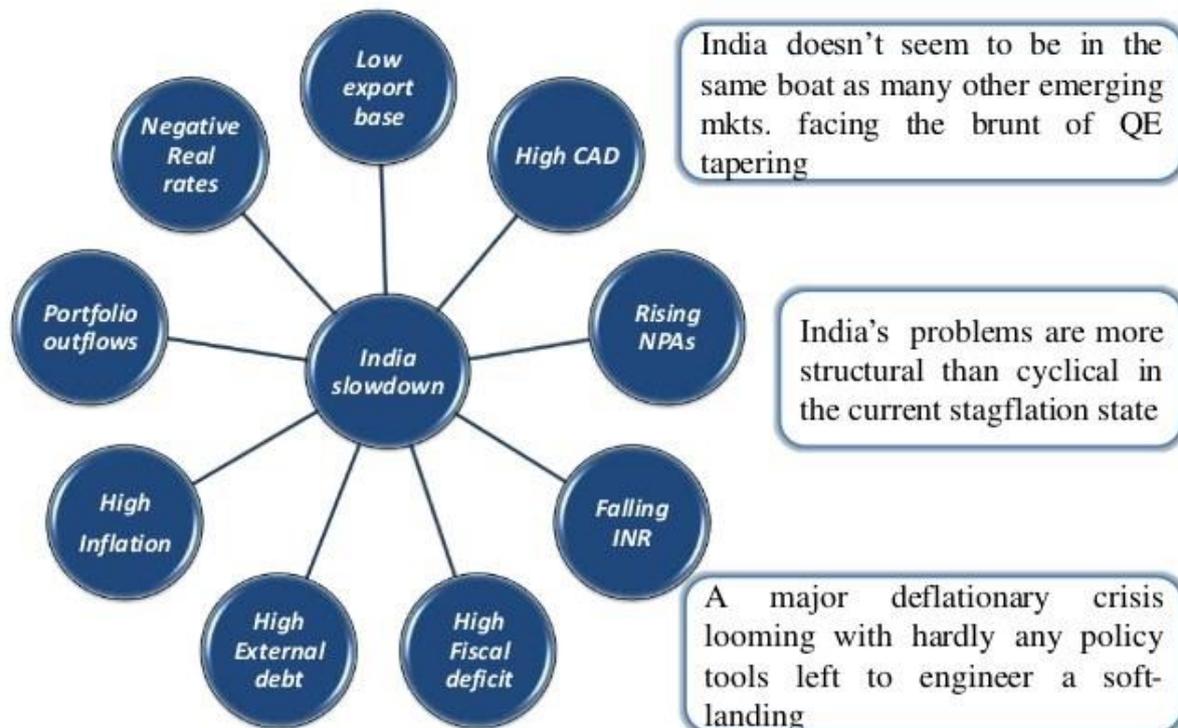
02/09 - Unending Slowdown

Context:

The Indian economy lost steam in the April-June quarter, slowing to a 13-quarter low of 5.7% as companies stalled production in June to prepare for the switch-over to the Goods & Services Tax regime. According to economists, prolonged effects of demonetisation also contributed to the slowdown. Data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed the economy grew 5.7% in April-June, the first quarter of the current fiscal year, slower than the previous quarter's 6.1% and much lower than the 7.9% growth registered in the first quarter of 2016-17.

Finance Minister said recently, the 5.7 percent GDP growth rate in first quarter of this fiscal is a matter of concern and it throws up challenge to the economy.

India heading towards a major slowdown



Services sector post higher growth

Economic activities that saw growth of over 7 per cent in the first quarter are trade, hotels, transport and communication, among others. Trade, hotels, and transportation, impacted by demonetisation in the March quarter (6.5%), rebounded to grow 11.1%, mostly due to discount sales ahead of GST implementation. Growth in government spending held up close to double digits at 9.5%, continuing to support overall economic growth.

Slowdown steepest in manufacturing, mining

Uncertainty related to the GST rollout on 1 July, which came about eight months after the government cancelled 86% of the currency, saw manufacturers cutting production and dealers offering discounts on items such as cars. As a result, manufacturing growth slowed to 1.2% in the June quarter from 5.3% in the preceding quarter while mining activity contracted by 0.7%.

However, construction activity revived marginally from the negative print (-3.7%) in the March quarter to 2% in the June quarter, signs that the impact of demonetisation is receding. The agricultural sector grew 2.3 percent and the civil aviation sector saw passenger traffic soaring by 15.6%,

Why is there a decline in Growth Rate?

The slower growth is due to the decline in inventories ahead of the rollout of GST combined with the Demonetisation exercise. The rate has come down predominantly due to pre- GST effect as manufacturers were focusing more on clearing the existing stock.

Chief statistician of India said rising cost of intermediate goods and inventory deaccumulation in anticipation of GST implementation led to manufacturing growth falling sharply. Though he expects a revival in the second and third quarters as manufacturers normalise their stock positions subject to how well they have integrated with GST.

Why current trend in GDP growth is a matter of concern

The slower pace of GDP growth also means India lost the tag of the world's fastest-growing large economy for the second straight quarter to China, which grew 6.9%.

The Reserve Bank of India said that its industrial outlook survey had revealed a waning of optimism in Q2 on capacity utilisation, profit margins and employment.

With capacity utilisation expected to weaken this quarter, according to the RBI, and with surveys suggesting that consumer sentiment has deteriorated steadily in August, the auguries for a demand rebound are far from promising.

The pick-up in government expenditure was reflected by the latest Controller General of Accounts data which showed that the government exhausted 92.4% of fiscal deficit target within the first four months (April-July) of the fiscal year 2017-18.

In addition to it, Finance Minister has said, the 5.7 percent GDP growth rate in first quarter of this fiscal is a matter of concern and it throws up challenge to the economy. He said, in coming quarters there is a need to work more on policy and investment to improve the figures.

Challenge before the government now

While expressing concern about the slower-than-expected expansion, the Finance Minister has acknowledged that the challenge before the government now is to work out both policy and investment measures to boost momentum.

- The risks of fiscal loosening are manifold, especially at a juncture when several State governments have either announced or are contemplating large-scale farm loan waivers, which would push up interest rates and crowd out fresh lending.
- Still, there is a thin sliver of a silver lining in the GDP data. The services sector continues to remain buoyant whereas manufacturing and mining sector showed a steepest decline.

The need of the hour

- One option would be to suspend the fiscal road map for a limited period in order to pump prime the economy through increased capital spending by the government.
- Government Policies should focus on country's development and people should give ideas for better governance.
- Niti Aayog Vice Chairman said transformational ideas are the need of the hour to boost economy.
- There is a need to modernise agricultural sector to increase productivity and income of farmers.

The Finance Minister has his task cut out: to find ways to restore momentum before the tailwinds of low inflation and affordable energy prices start reversing direction.

Conclusion

The reforms undertaken by the current administration so far are will generate a positive impact on growth. Also, by the end of year, transitory and negative impact of GST, as well as demonetisation, will gradually diminish. The central bank (Reserve Bank of India) has also taken steps to clean (up) bad loans. This will improve the health of the banking sector, especially public banks, and help aid private investment. Now inventories have returned to normal levels, which will help revive economic growth in coming months.

04/09 - Economy outlook still cloudy**Context:**

Data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed the economy grew 5.7% in April-June, the first quarter of the current fiscal year, slower than the previous quarter's 6.1% and much lower than the 7.9% growth registered in the first quarter of 2016-17.

The real growth of GDP, i.e. after removing the impact of inflation, was only 5.7%, much lower than expected. This steady declining trend in the growth rate is a matter of concern.

Some of the favourable factors of current economy

- Inflation has been moderate, and touched a low of 1.5% recently.
- Both trade and fiscal deficits are moderate and manageable. So they don't eat up investible resources or precious foreign exchange.
- The interest rate has been cut repeatedly over the past year and a half.
- The inward rush of dollars is at a peak, both in financial markets (stocks and bonds) and as direct investment.
- The stock market index is at an all-time high.
- Oil prices have been stable and comfortably low.
- Finally, the monsoon has been normal.

Despite these favourable macro factors, our economy has not managed to convert them into a higher growth rate. Even the Economic Survey Part 2 cautioned that there would be a potential loss of 1% growth.

Loss of 1% growth rate means a lot. In nominal terms, one percentage less of growth translates into a loss of ₹1.5 lakh crore of national income. It also signifies millions of jobs not created.

Slowdown steepest in manufacturing.

The manufacturing growth at 1.2% is the lowest in the past five years. It's the lowest since we switched to a new methodology (based on Gross Value Added).

Reasons:

- Uncertainty related to the GST rollout on 1 July, which came about eight months after the government cancelled 86% of the currency, saw manufacturers cutting production and consequent inventory deaccumulation. As a result, manufacturing growth slowed to 1.2% in the June quarter from 5.3% in the preceding quarter.
- Bank credit shrank by 1.8%, i.e. negative growth. This is the lowest it has been for at least 13 years. A State Bank of India report said that credit growth for the year ending last March was the lowest in 63 years!

Growth rate in other sectors:

- Service sector— trade, hotels, transport and communication etc. posted growth rate of over 7 per cent in the first quarter. Trade, hotels, and transportation, impacted by demonetisation in the March quarter (6.5%), rebounded to grow 11.1%, mostly due to discount sales ahead of GST implementation.
- Mining activity contracted by 0.7%
- Construction activity revived marginally from the negative print (-3.7%) in the March quarter to 2% in the June quarter
- The agricultural sector grew 2.3 percent
- The civil aviation sector saw passenger traffic soaring by 15.6%,

Significant Challenges before the government

The GDP is measured in at least two different ways. The first is by looking at the production side while the second is by looking at the aggregate of all spending, whether on consumption, or by foreigners buying our exports, or on investments into new factories and projects and government spending.

Big priority areas before government are-

- **Declining Private Investment:**

Investment, which is between 30 and 35% of the total pie, needs to grow at least in double digits. Investment in future capacity creates GDP growth of the future. It needs to be led by the private sector. Currently, that component is barely growing at 1.5%. As a result, capital formation is steadily declining for several years. Private sector investment has practically come to a standstill. Despite the push for 'Make in India', reforms for improving 'Ease of Doing Business', increased access to electricity, improvement in infrastructure and private investment are not picking up.

Initiatives such as Housing For All, Smart Cities and Digital India give room for huge opportunities for private entrepreneurs.

- **Twin Balance sheet problem:**

The corporate sector and banks have been affected by the twin balance sheet squeeze wherein corporates are over-leveraged, and banks have mounting bad loans.

The new insolvency code and regulator and the Reserve Bank of India's aggressive intervention may resolve this puzzle.

- **Strengthening rupee:**

Another significant challenge to the domestic industry is the ever-strengthening rupee. Since January the rupee is 7% stronger compared to the American dollar. It is stronger than its Asian peer currencies too, including China, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand.

- **This directly hurts our export prospects.** Due to this our exports are barely up 12% since January, whereas imports are up more than 30%.
- More importantly, **the strong rupee hurts the domestic industry since cheaper imports flood the country and eat into the market share of domestic players.** The GST regime has given an extra advantage to importer traders since the countervailing duty that they now pay as GST can be offset against other taxes, a concession which was not available earlier. A jump in gold imports is also due to strengthening of rupee.

The need of the hour is to take measures for safeguarding domestic manufacturing industry from strengthening of rupee.

- **Effects at demonetisation**

The first half of the last fiscal year, that is the period prior to demonetisation, recorded a real growth of 7.7%. The present April to June quarter's growth at 5.7% certainly includes the negative impact of demonetisation on the informal and rural economy.

Investment and consumption spending which were postponed due to cash shortage might recover. But jobs that are lost are lost forever.

- **Low agricultural prices**

The Economic Survey warns about the deflationary impact of low agricultural prices. The agriculture sector GDP shows nominal GDP growth to be lower than real GDP (values are adjusted for inflation), which is very unusual. It means that farmers' incomes will be depressed, and doubling of farm incomes in five years becomes that much more of a distant dream.

Measures needed to spur economic growth:

- One option would be to pump prime the economy through increased capital spending by the government.
- Government Policies should focus on country's development and people should give ideas for better governance.
- Niti Aayog Vice Chairman said transformational ideas are the need of the hour to boost economy.
- There is a need to modernise agricultural sector to increase productivity and income of farmers.

The Finance Minister has his task cut out: to find ways to restore momentum before the tailwinds of low inflation and affordable energy prices start reversing direction.

Conclusion

Perhaps in the coming quarters we may see a rebound. That will crucially depend on a big pick-up in manufacturing and private investment spending. The big structural reforms of GST, the new insolvency code, the new monetary framework and Aadhaar linkage are measures which will show results in the medium to long term.

What we need is an immediate stimulus to re-inject the momentum to get us to 8% growth.

05/09 - Making up for lost time

Context:

Indian Prime Minister has begun his three-country tour. His first stop is Myanmar, where he will be participating in the ASEAN and East Asia Summits (EAS) in Nay Pyi Taw.

PM's visit to Myanmar is significance for two reasons. First, this is his first visit to the country as Prime Minister (his earlier visit was in 2014 to attend the ASEAN-India summit meetings) and second, he debuts in the multilateral EAS. The visit gives Prime Minister an opportunity to spell out his vision on India-Myanmar bilateral relations as also India's wider interests when he meets other regional leaders at the EAS.

Introduction:

Earlier, despite India's push to Look East policy with an Act East policy, PM did not visit Myanmar due to elections in Myanmar in November 2015 and in the U.S. in late 2016; the finalisation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its assertiveness in the South China Sea; the India-China border stand-off; and Myanmar's efforts over the peace process, the Rohingya issue and the economy.

Now Prime Minister is visiting Myanmar after India-China Doklam stand-off and at a moment when there is a growing international concern about the sectarian violence in the country.

The Rohingya crisis

The conflict involving Buddhists and Muslims in the Rakhine province has been simmering for a few years. In the last week of August, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA, now designated as 'terrorists') launched a major attack on police posts, in Rakhine state, resulting in significant casualties.

The attacks and clearance operations against it have resulted in some 400 deaths, mostly Rohingya; widespread arson and burning of villages allegedly by both sides; displacement of thousands within Rakhine state and across the Naf river to Bangladesh; and severe disruption in food and humanitarian supplies

The scale and coordinated nature of this attack have generated deep anxiety within Myanmar's leadership, on the nature of the security threats they are encountering. The international community is worried about the reports of harsh response of the Myanmar security forces resulting in civilian casualties and forced migration.

The Indian Prime Minister, during his visit, will have to navigate this complex and painful terrain of sectarian violence in the neighbouring country. There is a need for integrating both developmental as well as humanitarian aspects in response to the security situation in the Rakhine state.

Myanmar's more dependence on China:

Given that the visit will be taking place after the Doklam crisis, there will be a temptation in India to see the visit of the prime minister as an attempt to build a robust relationship in the neighbourhood to counter the growing Chinese presence in the region.

It should be noted that the Myanmar government today is more dependent on Chinese support than it was two or three years ago. Its dependence on China characterised by



- a largely extractive relationship focused on natural resources and access to the Bay of Bengal where it already has an oil and gas terminal,
- concession to build a Special Economic Zone and
- Seeks a possibly controlling stake in a **natural deep sea harbour at Kyaukpyu** that could form part of its ambitious BRI.
- China has been a major player in the peace negotiations between the armed ethnic groups and the Myanmar government.
- Further, because of the on-going conflict in the Rakhine state, the Myanmar government will be dependent on the support from China on various human right platforms including the Security Council.

Successive Indian prime ministers have refrained from assessing the relationship with Myanmar through the prism of China and instead focused on developing a comprehensive bilateral relationship.

Bilateral relationship between India and Myanmar

In the economic realm, the bilateral trade between the two countries is around \$ 2.2 billion, and there is scope for significant improvement. These cover large directly funded and executed connectivity infrastructure projects like

- Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport project and
- The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway has picked up momentum in the recent past.
- High value capacity and human development projects like the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology in Mandalay. There is a possibility that new connectivity projects or cooperation on Special Economic Zones may be announced during the visit.
- Small border area development projects in Chin and Naga areas of Myanmar
- Soft lines of credit for other infrastructure projects amounting to nearly \$750 million

When they are all completed and fully operational by about 2020, they will amount to a substantial mass and base for an expanded relationship.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of commercial trade and investments. Both stand on narrow bases. Primary agricultural and forest products from Myanmar, and oil and gas need to expand in ways that also contribute to Myanmar's development needs and meet India's \$3 billion trade target set in 2012.

India and Myanmar have been promoting regional frameworks such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

- The Goa BIMSTEC summit, in October last year, stressed the importance of strengthening transit agreements and early conclusion of Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- The first meeting of National Security Chiefs of the BIMSTEC countries was held in March this year.

In the light of recent developments, Prime Minister and his counterparts in Myanmar may examine new frameworks to cooperate on regional security issues.

In the political domain, India has scaled up its engagement with all the important power centres in Myanmar.

- In the recent past, President, State Counsellor (Aung San Suu Kyi) and Myanmar military Chief have visited India.
- In an interesting development, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh visited Myanmar in August this year. During his interactions, he referred to Myanmar as 'Brahmadesh' and updated his hosts on the improvements to the Buddhist circuits in India.
- The fact that a Chief Minister of the most populous state chose Myanmar for his first overseas visit suggests that this neighbour has acquired a prominent position in the cultural map of India.

In line with such thinking, new nodes of cultural cooperation may receive significant attention during Prime Minister's visit

Trade has been the keystone of our post-Independence relationship.

- Indian imports of beans and pulses that play a vital part in our food security and Myanmar's economy.

- Standing at around a million tonnes and \$1 billion in value, over 90% of which is exported to India, it is vital to Myanmar's farmers and foreign exchange earnings, greater even in the value of its exports of rice to China that are prone to periodic restrictions, tough inspections and crackdowns at the Myanmar-China border.

Unfortunately, the recent decision to impose quantitative restrictions on the trade in pulses does exactly the opposite. In part, this is because of our own concerns vis-à-vis speculative global trade in pulses and in part on account of resistance to such a move in Myanmar.

PM's visit should focus on

Beyond these topical issues, and the issue of Indian insurgent groups in Myanmar, the visit will most likely be taken up by the fundamentals of the bilateral relationship. The two countries reached several agreements and Prime Minister should use his visit to review the progress of the various bilateral projects that was underway.

- The substantive development partnership, trade issues, and
- revival of cultural and people-to-people ties
- Defence relations too have been growing steadily, especially between the two armies and navies.
- Security related talks have been taking place at the National Security Adviser (NSA) level
- Underlining our strong cultural, people-to-people and diaspora relationship, PM will also visit Bagan where the Archaeological Survey of India is in the final stages of a face-lift to the venerated Ananda Temple and where the Cabinet has approved Indian assistance for the restoration of pagodas damaged by the powerful 2016 earthquake;
- As part of his emphasis on re-connecting with the neighbourhood, bringing connectivity as the top priority during his meetings with Myanmar leaders is of urgent need.

A recent positive development was the agreement to launch a weekly bus-service between Mandalay in central Myanmar and Imphal. There is need to push for operationalisation of the service at the earliest possible.

- India had earlier agreed to undertake the task of repair and upgradation of 71 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa friendship road, the Kalewa-Yargyi road segment and the Yargyi-Monywa stretch. Progress in these segments is important as they form part of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway.
- In maritime connectivity, the joint study group on shipping was set up to examine the commercial feasibility of direct shipping links. India's interest to strengthen maritime connectivity with Southeast Asia in the recent years is a good opportunity for India to involve itself the Dawei port in southern Myanmar, a port that might emerge as main sea link between India and Southeast Asia and the main point of proposed India-Mekong Economic Corridor.

Conclusion

In India, we often say Myanmar is our "gateway" to the East. Against the rhetoric, the existing connectivity between the two neighbours remains much to be desired. With long land and maritime boundaries, surely, the neighbours are yet to take full advantage of geography.

Historically, India has been a major player in Myanmar's socio-economic landscape till the 1960s. The advent of military dictatorship and its economic policies reduced India's interactions with Myanmar. As the political transition in Myanmar picks up momentum, it provides an excellent opportunity for Prime Minister to explore new avenues of cooperation.

06/09 - Ghazipur disaster: Stop our cities from becoming choked with garbage

Context:

One of the big problems of massive urban agglomerations and cosmopolitan cities such as Delhi and Mumbai is that of waste management. Solid waste generated in a city the size of Delhi needs to be immediately reduced, reused, and recycled if we want to save our cities from becoming choked with garbage.

The collapse in the Ghazipur landfill that led to the death of two people is a warning to all civic agencies. National Green Tribunal (NGT) issued show cause notices to Delhi government, East Delhi Municipal Corporation and National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) over Ghazipur landfill collapse.

Municipality officials said they were investigating the reason for the collapse, but experts said a recent spell of heavy rains was possibly one of the triggers. Whatever may be the reason but still such incidents must be an eye opener for everyone.

Recent Ghazipur disaster:

Ghazipur landfill in the East Corporation is the oldest functional landfill in the city. Recently, two people died in East Delhi after a large part of the Ghazipur landfill — which should have been closed 15 years ago — collapsed, sweeping several people on a road nearby into a canal.

The Ghazipur landfill is among four dumpsites in the national capital, spread over 70 acres and towering to a height taller than a 15-storey building. The mountain of trash is a stark reminder of administrative apathy and the capital's struggle with waste management.



Around 200 metres from landfill is the Ghazipur slum. It is home to about 1500 families of rag pickers. The residents claim that proximity to the landfill leads to various problems. Landfill often catches fire due to release of methane. Municipal Corporation of Delhi is burning garbage for electricity. Due to low quality of waste, little energy is generated. According to experts, due to lack of leachate treatment facility by-products released during decomposition seep into the ground water and pollute it.

There are more such hillocks in our Indian cities.

Causes of the incident:

- Half-hearted attempts have been made to segregate waste at source and to create waste to energy plants within these landfills.
- There has been no real change in the way that Delhi deals with the problem of waste management— be it e-waste, biodegradable waste or plastic.
- One recent report has highlighted, 50% of the generated garbage is fit for composting and 30% is recyclable; which means that only 20% should reach the landfill.
- Dumping should have been halted when the landfill reached a height of 20 metres, but when it collapsed, it was 50 metres high.

With no alternatives to dispose the 10,000 tonne of garbage generated by Delhi every day, the city keeps adding to the mountain of stinking, towering eyesore daily. The East Delhi Municipal Corporation officials said the threats of more such landslides remain.

Building new landfills is not the solution

Building new dumpsites is not easy. There is no shortage of land. But who would want a giant landfill in their backyard?

- Building new landfills is not the solution. Apart from the fact that they are dangerous and dumping garbage like this causes the leaching of hazardous chemicals into the soil, it would be unfair to citizens of that neighbourhood to export the city's garbage to their locality.
- The Waste Atlas 2014, a compilation of data on the 50 biggest dumpsites of the world, listed asthma, tuberculosis, skin diseases as some common health conditions among the rag pickers working at Ghazipur.

The need of the hour is to focus more on Urban Solid Waste Management.

Solid waste is defined as discarded solid fractions, generated from domestic units, trade centres, commercial establishments, industries, and agriculture, institutions, public services and mining activities. Characteristics of waste vary based on place of generation and season in which it is generated.

Solid waste is classified into several categories based on source; origin and type of waste. These include domestic waste, municipal waste, commercial waste, institutional waste, garbage, rubbish, ashes, bulky waste, street sweepings, dead animals, construction and demolition waste, industrial waste, hazardous waste and sewage waste.

A solid waste management (SWM) system includes collection, segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of waste.

Several cities in India have taken positive steps towards implementing sustainable waste management practices by involving the community in segregation, by enforcing better PPP contracts and by investing in modern technology for transportation, processing and disposal. The role of waste pickers/ informal sector in SWM is also increasingly being recognized. These interventions have great potential for wider replication in other cities in the country.

- **Improvements in Waste Segregation, Collection and Transportation**

- Segregated waste collection from households is the key to reducing landfilling. Segregation ensures maximum recycling and treatment at the local level. The emphasis in this category is on initiatives that have strengthened the door to door collection system and have involved informal sector/waste pickers and citizen groups to collect segregated waste.
- Segregation should at least be at the level of separation of wet and dry waste at the source, that is, at the household or establishment level. Ideally, the separation should be in the following categories:
 - biodegradable waste, waste that is non-biodegradable, and
 - Hazardous domestic waste such as batteries, etc.

- **Waste Recovery**

- The high degree of biodegradable content in municipal solid waste in India makes it ideal for techniques like composting wherein the chemical and biological transformation processes reduces the quantity of waste and products of economic value are recovered.
- Various initiatives being undertaken by cities to incorporate decentralized waste treatment options such as composting units, bio gas plants, waste to energy plants

- **Scientific waste disposal**

ULBs are challenged to dispose waste in engineered/ sanitary landfill sites. The various issues that have been cited include lack of land, lack of capacity to design and operate a landfill site.

- The unscientific waste disposal at the landfill is a source of nuisance in the surrounding areas. During summers the terrible stink of the leachate used to engulf the entire city. The leachate also polluted the underground water in the region.
- Modernization of the Landfills accompanied by improvements in overall SWM services in the city to be taken as a priority.
- **Planning for improved solid waste management**

Comprehensive planning is the first step towards achieving an efficient and robust solid waste management system in a city. Many cities in India are keen to achieve "zero-waste" status by improving and strengthening their waste management practices. The concept of Zero Waste aims to minimize use of resources and maximize the on-going benefits of the intrinsic value within the waste generated by society.

- Preparing an integrated solid waste management master plan, allows an urban local body to assess its current and future waste management needs, identify problems and efficiencies within the current system and identify strategies and solutions to address those gaps.
- The solid waste master plan also provides a framework for prioritization of various initiatives and resource allocation.
- For a solid waste management plan to be effective and implementable, it should be accompanied with a strong enforcement framework, community involvement and awareness campaigns.
- **Involving community in solid waste management**

Many cities in India have initiated programs for waste recycling and processing to minimize the amount of garbage going into landfills.

- The success of these initiatives is fundamentally based on proper segregation of waste at source, for which the involvement of community is imperative.
- Bangalore faced a severe garbage crisis in August 2012 when two dumpsites in the outskirts of the city were shut following protests by villagers against deteriorating environmental and health conditions. The city came to a standstill as vast mounds of garbage lay scattered on streets and open plots all across the city.

- The crisis situation pushed the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to initiate a change in course towards more sustainable waste management practices.
- The BBMP decided to enforce waste segregation and decentralize waste processing to divert waste away from the landfills, and actively involve the community and large corporations in this endeavour as part of the zero-garbage program initiated by the BBMP with an emphasis on the Information Education and Communication (IEC) activities that were started and continue to be undertaken to inform and educate citizens about waste segregation and make them active stakeholders in the waste management
- **Reaching out to school students to generate awareness about sustainable waste management**
 - The 'Engage 14' outreach initiative was launched by the GMC(Gangtok Municipal Corporation) to engage school students from classes 4 to 12 in the process of understanding aspects of waste management

Conclusion

What is needed is dedication and discipline from both the civic agencies and the citizens to effectively implement segregation of waste at source to reduce the amount of garbage that reaches landfills.

07/09 - Development must be climate-smart

Context:

Heavy rains from the southwest monsoon and accompanying floods have devastated people's lives in parts of Mumbai, Chandigarh and Mount Abu (Rajasthan), all in the same period as Hurricane Harvey's rampage through Houston. Mumbai is reported to have received 400 mm of rain within a matter of 12 hours while Houston received about 1,300 mm over several days with Harvey.

Climate models to study the dynamics of climate system:

Global climate models (GCMs) are mathematical formulations of the processes that comprise the climate system including, radiation, energy transfer by winds, cloud formation, evaporation and precipitation of water, and transport of heat by ocean currents. Climate models use quantitative methods to simulate the interactions of the important drivers of climate, including atmosphere, oceans, land surface and ice. Climate models can be used to make projections about future climate and the knowledge gained can contribute to policy decisions regarding climate change. An advantage of GCMs is their ability to perform multiple simulation experiments using different greenhouse gas emissions scenarios.

These climate models have indicated that climate change will lead to an increase in extreme rainfall events. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Extreme Events, global warming leads to "changes in the frequency, intensity, spatial extent, duration, and timing of extreme weather and climate events, and can result in unprecedented extreme weather and climate events".

For India, examining daily rainfall data between 1951 and 2000 showed that there has been a significant increase in the magnitude and frequency of extreme rainfall events along with a decrease in the number of moderate events over central India. These changes interacting with land-use patterns are contributing to floods and droughts simultaneously in several parts of the country.

The use of understanding Extreme events:

Extreme weather and climate events (e.g., heat waves, droughts, heavy rainfall, hurricanes) have always posed risks to human society. Given that climate change affects the climate system globally, it is impossible to rule out some contribution from climate change to any extreme event. A matter of growing interest is the degree to which humans are changing these risks through anthropogenic climate change. This concern has been driven by the growing impacts on ecosystems, communities, and infrastructure of recent extreme events across the world.

Extreme weather is one way that people experience climate change. Extreme events are abrupt, occur in the present, and are highly visible, as opposed to long-term climate change trends that seem abstract, distant, gradual, and complicated.



There are several motivations for investigating the causes of individual extreme events. There is an element of scientific curiosity, but the primary motivation for event attribution goes beyond science.

- Extreme events are directly traceable to loss of life, rising food and energy prices, increasing costs of disaster relief and insurance, fluctuations in property values, and concerns about national security.
- To help policymakers, emergency responders and local communities to plan and prepare for them.
- In addition, it is important to assess what is known about climate and non-climate causes of such events in order to evaluate whether they are likely to pose increasing risks to life and property in particular regions in the future.
- Cities could be laid out to reduce flooding by following natural contours, drainage and tank systems.
- Emergency responders could be well prepared to transport and care for people who may become stranded during disasters.
- Some of the anticipated impacts can be reduced, however, through such management strategies as land use planning if the connections between climate change and extreme events like intense precipitation are better understood.
- Such planning would ideally be based on a broad risk assessment, including projections of future trends in extreme events.
- Once an extreme event such as a heat wave or heavy rain occurs, people want to know to what extent a single event has been caused by climate change, that is, by greenhouse gases released through human activities.

'Attribution' studies more reliable when based on sound physical principles

Research that tries to understand this relationship between anthropogenic climate change and extreme events in particular locations is called "**attribution**".

- Attribution studies could able to answer the following questions:
 - Is an extreme event, such as torrential rainfall or record storm surges, part of a natural cycle of variability or due to human-induced climate change?
 - To what extent do poor preparedness and ecologically insensitive land-use worsen the impacts?
- Attribution studies can be a tool for informing choices about assessing and managing risk and guiding adaptation strategies.
- Such information may be critical to multiple decision makers, among them insurers, elected officials and policy makers, local and regional land and resource managers, zoning and infrastructure planners and engineers, litigators, and emergency managers who focus on disaster risk reduction.

Event attribution is more reliable when based on sound physical principles, consistent evidence from observations, and numerical models that can replicate the event.

Conversely, for rainfall simulation, climate models cannot mimic or simulate extreme rainfall such as the kind Chennai experienced in 2015. The 494 mm rain in Chennai was a rare event, with less than a 0.2% chance of occurring in any given year. The Chennai flood of 2015 did not have a clear climate signature to show that it was due to warming of the earth. On the other hand, with regard to Hurricane Harvey, climate change made the impact much worse, because of higher sea surface temperatures and a blocking region of high pressure that kept the rain clouds over Houston for a long period.

Urbanisation and hydrology

The actual patterns of flooding in Chennai, Mumbai and Houston, however, were due to several human-induced activities:

- Rampant increase in built-up area across natural drainage channels,
- The diversion or damming of rivers upstream leading to sediment transport and siltation,
- Coastal subsidence and other effects of development.

Any rain that falls on soil or vegetation is mostly absorbed into the earth's surface. Some of it slowly trickles into shallow or deep protected aquifers that make up what we call groundwater. The rest usually flows downhill along

surface or subsurface stream channels. The spread of infrastructure such as roads, highways, buildings, and residential complexes, tiled or asphalt-covered land obstructs rainwater from percolating into the soil. Often there are further barriers that block movement of water and increase flooding.

In India, urban growth over the past few decades has casually ignored the hydrology of the land. In Chennai, for example, systematic intrusion into the Pallikarandai marsh and other wetlands by housing complexes and commercial buildings; slums along Adyar river and large-scale construction along the coast are just examples of the open encroachment of the built environment that obstructs rivulets and absorption of rainwater into the earth.

When it rains heavily, exceeding the capacity of the soil to absorb it and regular stream flows are blocked from proceeding into the sea, these heavily built-up areas get inundated. Satellite images from 15 or more years back show the existence of hundreds of lakes and tanks, and several waterways within the city's boundaries.

What is to be done?

- Development needs to be climate-smart, but also avoid social and institutional challenges such as moral hazard.
- No investments should be made in places where severe impacts are likely,
- Construction on existing lake beds and other water bodies needs to be removed or redesigned to allow flood drainage along natural water channels.
- Construction in cities or in urbanising areas should take into consideration the existing topography, surface water bodies, stream flows or other parts of terrestrial ecosystems.
- Based on the traditional hydrological work, more monitoring networks with high density and precision, automatic water quality analysis and evaluation systems, flood protection and forecasting models and emergency response plans should be established. All of these urban hydrological strategies provide strong support for urban places.
 - Water Resources monitoring like routine measurements of river flow
 - Water quality monitoring of surface water, groundwater and drinking water.
 - Research on the Urban Hydrological Issues
 - Improve the Capacity of Hydrological Forecasting Systems

Conclusion

As the frequency of extreme weather events increases around the world, losses in rich countries are higher in terms of GDP, but in terms of the number of people at risk, it is the poor countries that suffer the most.

Those who are the most vulnerable and the poorest end up bearing the brunt of the burdens of climate change and mal-development, together operate to worsen impacts.

For decades, urbanisation has ignored ecological principles associated with water bodies, vegetation, biodiversity and topography. These are not 'environmental' issues to be disregarded or attended to only after we have attained 'growth'. Rather, they are part and parcel of and integral to how we live and whether we prosper.

08/09 - Demonetisation: now a proven failure?

Context:

Data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed the economy grew 5.7% in April-June, the first quarter of the current fiscal year, slower than the previous quarter's 6.1%. The first half of the last fiscal year, that is the period prior to demonetisation, recorded a real growth of 7.7%.

The present April to June quarter's growth at 5.7% certainly includes the negative impact of demonetisation on the informal and rural economy. Investment and consumption spending which were postponed due to cash shortage might recover. But jobs that are lost are lost forever.

Any disruption in the flow of money, verily the economy's lifeblood, impacts business cycles quickly. There is no precedent to the scale of demonetization that has taken place in India.



Ever since demonetisation initiative was announced by Prime Minister, several developments have taken place related to the move. While some have been encouraging, others highlight the flip side of the historic step taken by the Centre.

2016 Indian banknote demonetisation

On 8 November 2016, the Government of India announced the demonetisation of all ₹500 and ₹1,000 banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi Series. The government claimed that the action would curtail the shadow economy and crack down on the use of illicit and counterfeit cash to fund illegal activity and terrorism. The sudden nature of the announcement—and the prolonged cash shortages in the weeks that followed—created significant disruption throughout the economy, threatening economic output.

The Specified Bank Notes (Cessation of Liabilities) Ordinance, 2016 was issued by the Government of India on 28 December 2016 ceasing the liability of the government for the banned bank notes.

Demonetization technically is a liquidity shock; a sudden stop in terms of currency availability. It created a situation where lack of currencies jams consumption, investment, production, employment etc. The intensity of demonetization effects clearly depends upon the duration of the liquidity shocks. Following are the main impacts.

- Currency crunch in our economy
- Welfare loss for the currency using population.
- Consumption was adversely affected

Consumption ↓ → Production ↓ → Employment ↓ → Growth ↓ → Tax revenue ↓

- Loss of Growth momentum
- Increase in bank deposits and reduced interest rate
- Countering of black money
- Check on counterfeit currency

Criticism against demonetisation

Critics say, the Demonetisation as a means of tackling the black economy, carried out on the incorrect premise that black money means cash. It was thought that if cash was squeezed out, the black economy would be eliminated. But cash is only one component of black wealth: about 1% of it.

- Black money is a result of black income generation. This is produced by various means which are not affected by the one-shot squeezing out of cash.
- Any black cash squeezed out by demonetisation would then quickly get regenerated.
- So, there is little impact of demonetisation on the black economy, on either wealth or incomes.

Changed narrative from Black money to cashless economy

The original intent of demonetisation was to address the issue of black money. There is enough work that suggests that people with black money hold a very small proportion of it in cash. Most of it is usually invested in gold, or real estate, or in the stock market, or abroad, and the share of black cash is 6% of the total black economy.

- The primary pitch and narrative of the demonetisation drive by Prime Minister seems to have taken a major shift to cashless economy from the initial key highlights of war against black money, corruption and counterfeit currency.
- Now Government says that idle money has come into the system, the cash-to-GDP ratio will decline; the tax base will expand. But none of these required demonetisation and could have been implemented independently.
- The government now also said that demonetisation is only one of the many steps to tackle the black economy.
- The government's argument that cash coming back to the banks will enable it to catch the generators of black income, and there will be formalisation of the economy, may not hold.

Then the goalposts started shifting when it became apparent that the main reason was not justified by what was happening. First it was cashless, then less cash economy, then formalisation of the economy. The final step was in saying this would give IT authorities the information to go after people who had deposited black money.

Who mostly have borne the brunt?

Large deposits by businesses do not automatically become black. The Income Tax department has to prove that the sums deposited resulted from generation of black income. According to the Finance Minister, big data analytics would track black money holders who have deposited cash in their bank accounts.

- The negative effect of demonetisation can be seen in terms of big losses to the unorganised sector, farmers and traders.
- The start-up world has seen a drop in investment activity
- The brunt of this move actually has been borne by those who never had any black money. The note shortage is slowly waning and the long-term economic and social effects are becoming evident.

Critics overlook the significant gains of demonetisation which have begun to accrue and will gather momentum

For India to achieve prosperity for all, three ingredients are essential: a transparent, effective government, flourishing of competitive free markets, and huge investment in the poor.

Corruption had made the government dysfunctional, crony capitalists flourished at the expense of honest entrepreneurs, and rampant tax evasion that hindered state's capacity to invest in uplifting the most vulnerable citizens. Note ban was announced to overcome these issues to some extent.

Short-term costs inevitable

There were always going to be costs in the short run — people would be short of currency, businesses would be disrupted, consumption would fall, and GDP growth would take a hit.

- The government announced the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana where cash could be declared, deposited, and a hefty penalty paid. For those determined to deposit their illicit wealth without disclosure, the cash has not become white. It will be scrutinised by the tax authorities and penalties levied.
- The gains may accrue in the coming year once tax authorities have scrutinized through accounts with suspiciously large deposits.
- According to Finance Minister, between November 8 and December 31, 2016, deposits between ₹2 lakh and ₹80 lakh, and deposits of more than ₹80 lakh amount to some two-thirds of the value of the demonetised currency. The holders of these suspicious accounts will now be in the tax net for perpetuity.
- However, not all of that money deposited is black. Perfectly white cash holdings were common. To be able to distinguish the black from the non-black would be the responsibility of the IT authorities. They have to analyse the deposits and correlate them with the tax payment records, which is relatively easy to do.

Move to a less cash economy

The significant gain which has begun to accrue, and will gather momentum, is the move to a cashless economy.

- In the long run, a move away from the use of cash is the surest way of curbing the black economy.
- Less cash economy can happen with shift in payment patterns. There was certainly evidence that the number of electronic transactions went up. But after the money supply started coming back, those dropped. Whether Indians have changed the way they make payments is questionable.

Other significant gains from demonetization

- Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi and others working to fight human trafficking said that the note ban had led to a huge fall in sex trafficking.
- The Demonetisation has badly hit Maoist and Naxalites as well. The surrender rate has reached its highest since the demonetisation is announced. It is said that the money these organisations have collected over the years have left with no value and it has caused them to reach to this decision.
- Mumbai Police reported a setback to Hawala operations. Hawala dealers in Kerala were also affected. The Jammu and Kashmir Police reported the effect of demonetisation on hawala transactions of separatists.
- Several e-commerce companies hailed the demonetisation decision as an impetus to an increase in digital payments, hoping that it would lead to a decline in COD returns which could cut down their costs.
- The demand for point of sales (POS) or card swipe machines increased. E-payment options like PayTM and Instamojo Payment Gateway, PayUMoney also saw a rise.

- The number of I-T returns filed for 2016-17 grew by 25 per cent and the advance tax collections during that period rose 41.8% over the 1-year period, as increased number of individuals filed their tax returns post demonetization

Why Demonetisation alone is not responsible for slow GDP growth?

Reading the signals from the growth numbers is proving a tricky affair — especially as answers have to be shifted from multiple, intertwined narratives: the political, the economic as well as the purely business. There are multiple villains to blame, though, the most immediate being the damper of demonetisation of November 2016 and the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) in July this year. Following may also be the reasons for slow GDP growth.

- There has been a sign of distrust in financial investments.
- While GST pushed up gold buying, it pushed down manufacturing. Manufacturing companies sent out their old stocks to market, holding back on production. It brought down manufacturing sector growth from 5.3% in January-March to 1.2% in April-June.
- In the post-rabi-season quarter we expected strong agricultural growth but it was pulled down by the animal husbandry sector. In fact, animal husbandry, specifically buffalo meat exports, has been the leading contributor to growth among all the areas that are clubbed under agriculture.
- Uttar Pradesh, India's largest meat processing state faced huge shutdowns from end-March. Livestock contributes a little over 4% to GDP and roughly a quarter of total agricultural GDP. Agri-sector growth dropped to 2.3% in April-June quarter against 2.5% in the same quarter of 2016.
- Robust government expenditure rose 27% in the April-June quarter, to 6.5 lakh crore. The not so good news: *fiscal deficit touched 92% of its budget estimates* by July. At the same time, some of the government's revenue-generating plans have not being implemented. While disinvestment and spectrum sales have yet to make significant headway.
- Lack of PPP projects is clearly our biggest problem. Implementing the Kelkar Committee report and tackling the institutional bottlenecks that constrain PPP in India are the need of the hour. There is an institutional capacity issue. With an NPA overhang, corporates are wary and lack appetite to take risks.
- Savings from physical assets were being moved from gold and real estate to financial assets. Gold (valuable) imports go up sharply. Household savings moving away from physical assets, especially real estate may not be a good thing for the economy. The second largest job creator after agriculture is real estate and construction growth has already tapered.

Way Forward:

Government should focus on ensuring growth, job creation and investment. The urgent need is to get the private sector to start investing. One way to avoid winds of deflation is to kick-start private investments.

Reviving the investment cycle and tackling bad loans will be the key challenges to be tackled on a priority basis in the current fiscal.

Government has launched a multipronged attack on corruption and black money. Government discretion has been reduced particularly in the allocation of natural resources.

There is a concerted attempt to improve ease of doing business, and technology is being used to deliver public services without leakages.

It is far too early to write-off any of these efforts, and demonetisation. There is a future beyond the present.

09/09 - All that data that Aadhaar captures

Context:

In 2009, the government of India launched a new identification program that has gone on to become the largest biometric database in the world. The program, known as Aadhaar, has collected the names, addresses, phone numbers—and perhaps more significantly, fingerprints, photographs, and iris scans—of more than 1 billion people. In the process, Aadhaar has taken on a role in virtually all parts of day-to-day life in India, from schools to hospitals to banks, and has opened up pathways to a kind of large-scale data collection that has never existed before.

The Indian government views Aadhaar as a key solution for a myriad number of societal challenges, but critics see it as a step toward a surveillance state. Now, the Aadhaar experiment faces a significant threat from the Indian Supreme Court.

Privacy had emerged as a contentious issue while the apex court was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the Centre's move to make Aadhaar mandatory for availing government schemes. With recent Supreme Court order affirming that privacy is a fundamental right, one of the central questions that came up there was how does the government view the fundamental right to privacy and what does this mean for the government's Aadhaar programme?

CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), asserted, "The Aadhaar Act is based on the premise that privacy is a fundamental right." He also clarified that the judgment would not affect Aadhaar as the required safeguards were already in place.

What is Aadhaar?

Aadhaar is a 12 digit unique-identity number issued to all Indian residents based on their biometric and demographic data. The data is collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a statutory authority established by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, benefits and services) Act, 2016.

To obtain an Aadhaar number, an individual has to submit his, (i) biometric (photograph, finger print, iris scan) and (ii) demographic (name, date of birth, address) information. The Unique Identification Authority (UID) may specify other biometric and demographic information to be collected by regulations.

At the time of enrolment, the individual will be informed of, (i) the manner in which the information will be used, (ii) the nature of recipients with whom the information will be shared, and (iii) the right to access this information. After verification of information provided by a person, an Aadhaar number will be issued to him.

To verify the identity of a person receiving a subsidy or a service, the government may require them to have an Aadhaar number. If a person does not have an Aadhaar number, government will require them to apply for it, and in the meanwhile, provide an alternative means of identification. Any public or private entity can accept the Aadhaar number as a proof of identity of the Aadhaar number holder, for any purpose. Aadhaar number cannot be a proof of citizenship or domicile.

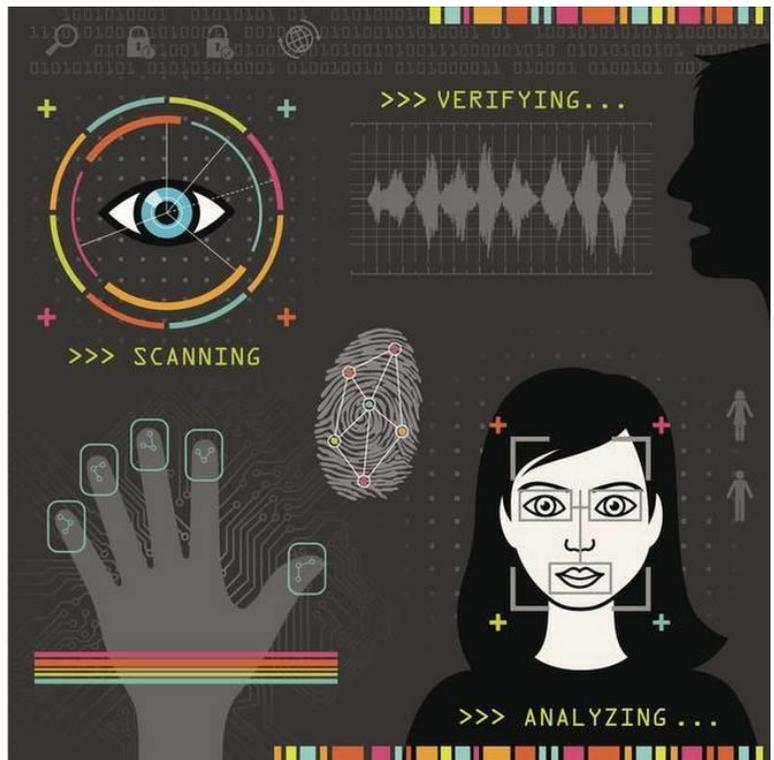
The Role of UID Authority

The key functions of the UID authority include,

- specifying demographic and biometric information to be collected during enrolment,
- assigning Aadhaar numbers to individuals,
- authenticating Aadhaar numbers, and
- Specifying the usage of Aadhaar numbers for delivery of subsidies and services.

The UID authority will authenticate the Aadhaar number of an individual, if an entity makes such a request. A requesting entity (an agency or person that wants to authenticate information of a person) has to obtain the consent of an individual before collecting his information. The agency can use the disclosed information only for purposes for which the individual has given consent.

The UID authority shall respond to an authentication query with a positive, negative or other appropriate response. However, it is not permitted to share an individual's finger print, iris scan and other biological attributes.



The UID authority shall record the entity requesting verification of a person's identity, the time of request and the response received by the entity. The purpose for which an individual's identity needs to be verified will not be maintained.

However, Aadhaar in its current form is a major threat to the fundamental right to privacy. Why?

Open to all Indian residents, Aadhaar was optional at first and associated with only a handful of government subsidies, including those for food and liquefied petroleum gas for cooking. It was targeted at those who needed help the most, particularly rural villagers who lacked official forms of identification, and were therefore unable to open bank accounts or access welfare programs in the past.

But over time, Aadhaar has been used as a way to apply data-driven improvements to a wide range of government and private-sector services. Aadhaar was soon linked to so many activities that it has now become almost impossible to live in India without enrolling. Participation in the program is a requirement for filing taxes, opening bank accounts, receiving school lunch in the state of Uttar Pradesh, purchasing railway tickets online, accessing some public Wi-Fi, participating in the state of Karnataka's universal health-care coverage, and benefiting from a wide range of welfare programs. This increased ambit of usage of Aadhaar has also raised privacy concerns.

Types of information

The Aadhaar Act 2016 puts in place a framework for sharing most of the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR) information.

In the Aadhaar Act, **biometric information** essentially refers to photograph, fingerprints and iris scan, though it may also extend to "other biological attributes of an individual" specified by the UIDAI.

Identity information has a wider scope. It includes biometric information but also a person's Aadhaar number as well as the demographic characteristics that are collected at the time of Aadhaar enrolment, such as name, address, date of birth, phone number, and so on.

The term "**personal information**" (not used in the Act) can be understood in a broader sense, which includes not only identity information but also other information about a person, for instance where she travels, whom she talks to on the phone, how much she earns, what she buys, her Internet browsing history, and so on.

Among three different types of private information: biometric information, identity information and personal information. The first two are formally defined in the Aadhaar Act, and protected to some extent. Aadhaar's biggest threat to privacy, however, relates to the third type of information.

Sharing identity details

The Aadhaar Act puts in place a framework to share it with "requesting entities". The core of this framework lies in Section 8 of the Act, which deals with authentication. In the initial scheme of things, authentication involved nothing more than a Yes/No response to a query as to whether a person's Aadhaar number matches her fingerprints (or possibly, other biometric or demographic attributes). In the final version of the Act, however, authentication also involves a possible sharing of identity information with the requesting entity.

When biometric information is used to access a service via Aadhaar, such as purchasing a new cell phone, the service provider receives that person's demographic data (name, address, phone number), and the government receives the metadata—specifically, the date and time of the transaction, the form of identification used, and the company with which the transaction was carried out. That information can paint a vague but intimate long-term picture of a person's life, and raises concerns about both government surveillance and private-sector abuse.

Quite likely, this little-noticed change in Section 8 has something to do with a growing realisation of the business opportunities associated with Aadhaar-enabled data harvesting. "**Data is the new oil**", the latest motto among the champions of Aadhaar, was not part of the early discourse on unique identity.

Section 8, of course, includes some safeguards against possible misuse of identity information. A requesting entity is supposed to use identity information only with one's consent, and only for the purpose mentioned in the consent statement. But it is difficult for anyone to read the fine print of the terms and conditions before ticking or clicking a consent box.

One more concern is that the Aadhaar Act includes a blanket exemption from the safeguards applicable to biometric and identity information on "national security" grounds. Considering the elastic nature of the term, may make identity information accessible to the government without major restrictions.

Mining personal information

There is ample evidence of misuse. For instance:

- 210 government agencies published full names, addresses, and Aadhaar numbers of welfare beneficiaries;
- 120 million users' Aadhaar information appears to have been leaked from the telecommunications company Reliance Jio;
- Bank-account and Aadhaar details of people were disclosed through certain open-government portals;
- The government's e-hospital database was hacked to access confidential Aadhaar information.

The proliferation and possible misuse of identity information is one of the privacy concerns associated with Aadhaar, and possibly not the main concern. A bigger danger is that Aadhaar is a tool of unprecedented power for mining and collating personal information. Further, there are few safeguards in the Aadhaar Act against this potential invasion of privacy.

For example, if Aadhaar is made mandatory for SIM cards, the government will have access to your lifetime call records, and it will also be able to link your call records with your travel records. The chain, of course, can be extended to other "Aadhaar-enabled" databases accessible to the government — school records, income-tax records, pension records, and so on. Aadhaar enables the government to collect and collate all this personal information with virtually no restrictions.

What should the government do?

- Government should assure the citizens that it has the technology and systems to protect the data collected.
- It should assure the citizens of India that it will do everything possible to prevent unauthorised disclosure of or access to such data.
- It should recognise all dimensions of the right to privacy and address concerns about data safety, protection from unauthorised interception, surveillance, use of personal identifiers and bodily privacy.
- The data controller should be made accountable for the collection, processing and use to which data are put.

As an alternative to the collection of biometric information few experts have suggested shifting to smart cards. How will this help?

- Biometrics allows for identification of citizens even when they don't want to be identified. Smart cards which require pins on the other hand require the citizens' conscious cooperation during the identification process.
- Once smart cards are disposed nobody can use them to identify.
- If the UIDAI adopts smart cards, the centralized database of biometrics can be destroyed just like the UK government did in 2010. This would completely eliminate the risk of foreign government, criminals and terrorists using the breached biometric database to remotely, covertly and non-consensually identify Indians.
- Smart cards based on open standards allow for decentralized authentication by multiple entities and therefore eliminates the need for a centralized transaction database.

Conclusion:

This century comes with certain risks. Therefore, we need to take a level-headed approach and ensure that ample safeguards are put in place for data protection and privacy. The government should recognise both the need for Aadhaar and the need for stringent rules concerning access to and security of citizens' biometric data, in order to preserve their privacy. The very foundation of Aadhaar must be reconsidered in the light of the privacy judgment.

11/09 - The disaster next door: on the Rohingya issue

Context:

The Rohingya people are a Muslim minority group residing in the Rakhine state, formerly known as Arakan and are considered to be a variation of the Sunni religion. The Rohingya people are considered “stateless entities”, as the Myanmar government has been refusing to recognise them as one of the ethnic groups of the country. For this reason, the Rohingya people lack legal protection from the Government of Myanmar, are regarded as mere refugees from Bangladesh, and face strong hostility in the country. *They often described by Amnesty International as one of the most persecuted people on earth.* To escape the dire situation in Myanmar, the Rohingya try to illegally enter Southeast Asian states like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, begging for humanitarian support from potential host countries

As per the United Nations refugee agency, in a span of last two weeks, almost 300,000 Rohingya have crossed over to Bangladesh from the northern Rakhine state in Myanmar, putting Bangladesh under immense strain and compelling the refugees to find shelter in filthy, unsanitary camps scattered along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. The latest surge follows attacks on police posts by an extremist Rohingya group, **Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)**, in late August this year and military action. While the Myanmar authorities claim that 400 lives have been lost, advocates cite double this number.

Who are the Rohingya Muslims and how did the Rohingya Muslim crisis start?

Since the Rohingya are considered to be illegal Bengali immigrants and were denied recognition as a religion by the government of Myanmar, the dominant group, the Rakhine, rejects the label “Rohingya” and have started to persecute the Rohingya. Nearly 90% of Myanmar’s population is Buddhist, and only 4.3% is Muslim. In Rakhine State, however, Muslims comprise nearly half of the population.

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. The restrictions include: “marriage, family planning, employment, education, religious choice, and freedom of movement” and they are facing discrimination because of their ethnic heritage.

The people in Myanmar are also facing wide spread poverty, with more than 78 percent of the families living below the poverty line. With most of the families living below the poverty line, tensions between the Rohingya and the other religious groups have exploded into conflict. The violence and turmoil began in 2012; the first incident was 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. People from all over the world started calling this crisis and bloodshed “campaign of ethnic cleansing.”

For years the Rohingyas have faced discrimination and persecution, today they are still facing this problem and have started to flee to other countries for safe haven.

What is the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army?

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army emerged in 1948, immediately after Burma gained independence from the United Kingdom. On their flag, the military group pictured two assault rifles and the contours of Rakhine State, formerly known as Arakan State, suggesting that they see the area as an independent state from Myanmar.

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army remained silent for decades, until it found financial support in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s. The “army” is led by Rohingya people living in Saudi Arabia, and their training camps are located outside Myanmar. Militants have reportedly intensified their provocations in the country, attacking police posts, burning Buddhist villages and smashing Buddhist statues.

The violent actions of the militant group have prompted the Burmese military to declare the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army a terrorist group and crack down on insurgents in Rakhine State. Human rights groups accuse pro-government forces of carrying out attacks against the Rohingya Muslims indiscriminately, killing both insurgents and civilians.

Rohingya crisis and Implications for the Region

Myanmar does not recognize the Rohingya, preferring to refer to them as Bengali, which suggests they are from neighbouring Bangladesh. Apart from impinging upon Myanmar’s internal security, the Rohingya crisis is also posing a security challenge to the South and Southeast Asia.

- Although ARSA has reportedly denied any connection with the IS, suspicions persist about linkages between the two groups. An ARSA leader mentioned that they are fighting to stop the state-led oppression against the Rohingyas in Myanmar and get citizenship rights to them.
- The systematic deprivation and gross violations of basic human rights have forced Rohingyas to flee their native land and seek refuge in neighbouring states including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and India.
- They have been unable to rebuild their lives in most of these countries due to the lack of opportunities provided by the host nations to contribute to the economy of that country even through semi-skilled and unskilled labour work as well, due to the growing fear of their linkages with Islamic extremism.
- The economic burden emanating from the huge refugee influx, the growing fear of linkages between the Rohingyas and the IS, coupled with the apathy of the countries of the region towards the problem, explains the stance of the ASEAN countries in advocating a domestic solution to the crisis.

India's stance on Rohingya Crisis:

India called for restraint on the part of the Myanmar government to end the violence in Rakhine state – days after New Delhi dissociated itself from a joint statement by the Bali Declaration adopted at the World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development held at Nusa Dua in Indonesia that included a reference to human rights in Myanmar.

The Bali Declaration, which was joined by India's neighbours Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, had expressed concern about the violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state, where the UN says at least 1,000 Rohingya Muslims have been killed, and 300,000 have fled to Bangladesh in the past two weeks.

The declaration had called on all parties to contribute to the restoration of stability and security, exercise maximum self-restraint from using violent means, respect the human rights of all people in Rakhine State regardless of their faith and ethnicity, as "there can be no sustainable development without peace".

During Prime Minister's recent visit to Myanmar, he had expressed his concern at the casualties of security forces as well as other innocent lives.

- He had also urged a solution based on respect for peace, communal harmony, justice, dignity, and democratic values.
- India also offered development assistance in Rakhine in cooperation with the Myanmar government.
- Prime Minister in a joint address to the media in Nai Pyi Taw with Myanmar State Counsellor, said that India shared Myanmar's concerns over the Rakhine situation but did not mention anything about alleged human rights violations against the Rohingyas, tens of thousands of who have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, with many thousands spilling over to India.
- We are partners in your concerns over the loss of lives of security forces and innocent people due to the extremist violence in Rakhine state, he said.

The latest exodus began on August 25, after Rohingya insurgents attacked police posts in Rakhine, leading to a violent offensive by the Myanmar Army.

- India also faces the problem of Rohingyas fleeing into the states bordering Myanmar.
- The government has said it would deport all Rohingyas living in India illegally but the Supreme Court has said that it will hear a plea seeking a direction to the central government not to deport about 40,000 such refugees back to Myanmar.

India's tough stand on deporting Rohingyas back to Rakhine State in the midst of the ongoing violence has evoked criticism from national and international human rights activists.

Outrage grows in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has received the most number of refugees in the recent crisis primarily for two reasons. First, geography makes it easier for Rohingyas to cross the border into Bangladesh. And second, Rohingya Muslims are culturally and ethnically closer to the people of Bangladesh, given that they are descendants of Bengali-Muslims from the Chittagong area who had migrated to present-day Myanmar during the British Raj.

Through the International Committee of the Red Cross, Dhaka has proposed that Myanmar secure areas in Rakhine under international relief agency supervision, but there has been no response so far from Myanmar. Bangladesh has plans of making another 607 hectares of land available near the Myanmar border for camps to accommodate

refugees. It has also urged the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to take back the refugees and stop the violence against them.

Indian PM's visit and his statements in Myanmar had received wide coverage in Bangladesh, with a largely negative angle. The sudden torrent of refugees, coupled with the reports of human rights violations and the burning of entire villages, had put Bangladesh under pressure.

What is the need of the hour?

Bangladesh government should have registered a strong protest against atrocities against Rohingyas as Bangladesh has to bear the brunt of the Rohingya influx. Unfortunately, however, Bangladesh's position in this issue has so far been hesitant and shaky which exposes a hiatus in the country's security. UN Secretary General said the Rohingya Muslim crisis is now at risk of reaching the level of "ethnic cleansing"

- The countries of South and Southeast Asia need to ponder whether it is rational to push Rohingya refugees back to violence-torn Myanmar.
- Regional countries need to take into account the fact that the Rohingya crisis is not just Myanmar's internal problem; rather, its spill over effect into their own territories is already evident.
- Myanmar should create a congenial atmosphere so that they can be returned with dignity
- There should be sincere efforts to bring some peace for the most persecuted and tortured Rohingya community.
- In addition to being active in the social media, the conscious sections of the society should think of doing something meaningful for this helpless and hapless community.
- Without addressing the root cause of the problem, it will only add to the misery of the Rohingya people.

The Rohingya crisis is a regional issue and it needs to be tackled at the regional level in a more comprehensive way.

Conclusion:

The statelessness of the Rohingyas and the lack of empathy towards the plight of the Rohingyas have contributed to the adoption of extremist methods by them. If not addressed pragmatically, the Rohingya crisis will only cause more violence, leading to more refugees and chronic instability in the region. ASEAN, India and Bangladesh need to discuss the Rohingya crisis together to work for an optimum solution to the problem. The first step would be to convince the present government in Myanmar about the benefits of well-coordinated cooperation between ASEAN members, India and Bangladesh to tackle the issue.

The platforms of the regional and sub-regional institutions including ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) need to be more effectively used to discuss the issue openly and take advantages of the experience of countries like India and Thailand who have long experience in dealing with insurgency and terrorism. Here, ASEAN needs to push aside the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a member country as the Rohingya crisis is not a one-country problem.

12/09 - New strategy, old game: on Trump and Afghanistan

Background:

Afghanistan is experiencing political, social and security instability, with extremists taking advantage of the turmoil in the country. The United States and its allies launched a military operation in Afghanistan in 2001, just after the 9/11 terror attacks. The mission in Afghanistan ended in 2014.

On January 1, 2015, NATO announced its new mission in the country, called Resolute Support, to train and assist the Afghan security forces. Despite Washington's efforts, the Asian state is still being hit by multiple attacks against its civilians and military targets.

"As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people, we are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future," said the President of the United States in 2009, announcing a "regional strategy" for Afghanistan after the worst year of the conflict.

On August 21, this year when President of United States unveiled his new "regional strategy" for Afghanistan, it was in large part a reiteration of the above speech in terms of strategic objectives. By now 2016 has become the worst year of the conflict.

Earlier US strategy on Afghanistan

Key templates of previous US president's strategy:

- Establishment of permanent US military bases in Afghanistan.
- Drawdown but not total withdrawal of American troops.
- Periodical review of troop levels.
- Rejection of outright Taliban takeover.
- Willingness to negotiate a settlement with the Taliban but from a position of advantage.
- Termination of the combat mission but with flexible terms of engagement to meet emergent security challenges.
- Incremental reliance on the Afghan forces.
- Training and capacity-building of the Afghan forces.
- Pressure on Pakistan to shut down "safe havens" and crack down on the Haqqani Network.
- Robust support to the Afghan National Unity Government.

Different international conferences on Afghanistan issue**1) Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process**

The Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process was established to provide a platform to discuss regional issues, particularly encouraging security, political, and economic cooperation among Afghanistan and its neighbours. This region-led dialogue was launched in November 2011 to expand practical coordination between Afghanistan and its neighbours and regional partners in facing common threats, including counterterrorism, counternarcotic, poverty, and extremism. The United States and over 20 other nations and organizations serve as "supporting nations" to the process.

6th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia summit was held in Amritsar, India:

Amritsar Declaration: Highlights

Terrorism, particularly, state-sponsored terrorism was identified as a key challenge and members agreed upon a concerted effort to dismantle all kinds of terrorism. The regional meet unanimously named Terrorist groups in Pakistan and asked for action.

- Members reiterated their belief in principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, sovereign equality of nations as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.
- Members expressed their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Members called up for leveraging the cultural heritage of the region to drive economic and social development.
- Members consented on eliminating non-tariff barriers to trade.

2) Tokyo Conference

The Afghan Government and the International Community met on July 8, 2012 in Tokyo to reaffirm and further consolidate their partnership from Transition to the Transformation Decade. The Tokyo Conference, together with the Chicago Summit of Afghanistan and ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) contributing countries, established a renewed stronger foundation for partnership to support sustainable growth and development of Afghanistan throughout the Transformation Decade (2015-2024).

These undertakings are built on the outcome of the Bonn Conference in December 2011, where the Afghan Government and the International Community mutually renewed their long-term commitments in the areas of governance, security, peace process, economic and social development, and regional cooperation.

- Chaired by the Japanese and Afghan Governments with the participation of ministers and representatives from 55 countries and 25 international and other organizations from around the world, today's conference also recognized the increasing roles of new partners and neighbouring and regional countries for the sustainable development of Afghanistan.
- The Participants reaffirmed their respect for the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan

- Tokyo international conference for development and economic stability of Afghanistan ended on 8th July 2012 with International donors pledges to assist \$16 billion aid for Afghanistan over the next four years.

Since the landmark Tokyo Conference of January 2012, with the steadfast and strong support of the International Community, financial and otherwise, Afghanistan has achieved substantial development and made notable progress in many fields of development, including education, health, roads, electricity, and telecommunication.

However, much remains to be done to realize the aspirations of the Afghan people for a peaceful, stable and self-sustaining Afghanistan.

India's role in Afghanistan and significance of Afghanistan to India

"Your immediate neighbour is your enemy and the neighbour of your neighbour is your best friend."

For India its main importance is its proximity to Afghanistan. Apart from that Afghanistan doesn't share a cordial relationship with Pakistan which plays right into India's hands. India also has a lot of investment in the country. Many infrastructure projects are carried out by Indian corporations.

- Afghanistan has an estimated 1 trillion USD of untapped resources according to a joint report of The Pentagon and US Geological Survey. If these resources get in the wrong hands, it can be disastrous. That is the reason behind not mining them in an unstable government regime. Afghanistan stability is in the best interest of the stability of India.
- **Afghanistan is our gateway to central Asia**, which is a reservoir of energy resources. The TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline passes through Afghanistan. Securing Afghanistan will result in securing India's energy requirements.
- In case of trade, Afghanistan can help India export its products to Europe, gaining foreign exchange. The Chabahar port in Iran and the railway line from Chabahar to Zahedan in Afghanistan envisages connecting New Delhi with Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Europe.
- Afghanistan is in the initial stages of nation building. India can transfer its expertise in order to gain a trusted friend. The Salma Dam renamed as friendship dam, the Afghanistan Parliament that India has built are some welcome steps in this direction.

The importance of Afghanistan is multi-dimensional. It is geo strategic, energy guarantor as well as economical. Also, India understands that a peaceful Afghanistan will help in a peaceful India and South Asia in a world which is threatening to break into a war anytime.

How could be changed US strategy a game changer?

The core goal of the U.S. must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.

The White House is calling its strategy a South Asia policy, to distinguish it from the Obama administration's so-called Af-Pak policy. Officials said it would include diplomacy with Pakistan, India and even Iran, a nation that American diplomats cooperated with during the early months of the Afghan war but that the White House now sees as a bitter foe.

The most important reason for Afghanistan's failure to stabilise has been the uncertainty around security. US President's announcement of military commitment without a deadline in Afghanistan could be a game changer. This may allow creating a culture of peace, to build institutions and improve delivery of public services.

Not announcing a timeline is wise strategy. Withdrawal would have been unwise. Significant scaling up of American troops would also have been unwise. It is hard to fundamentally change the balance of power without a large number of forces there for ever.

President's declaration that the U.S. would go after terrorists has already made a difference on the ground in Afghanistan. More than the number of American boots on the ground, the nature and quality of America's military presence has changed, and this could make a difference.

- **It puts more pressure on Pakistan**

President singled out "valued partner" Pakistan for increased American pressure to act against "agents of chaos" such as the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network who attack American service members and officials.

The most tangible measure against Pakistan is that the administration decided to keep \$255 million in military assistance to Pakistan in suspension until Islamabad demonstrates action against terrorist groups. This was earmarked in the U.S. budget for 2017. In July, Defence Secretary did not provide certification that Pakistan was taking action against the Haqqani network, and held back \$50 million from reimbursements to Pakistan for logistical support for the war in Afghanistan.

Though the new President spoke tough on Pakistan, it is still unclear what could be the tough measures. Pakistan should make the best use of Afghanistan's economic potential as Afghanistan has good relations with the countries on the north, west and south. New trade routes and opportunities are opening up and Pakistan has a lot to gain from it all.

- **Larger role to be played by India**

In June, the Pentagon's half-yearly report on the situation in Afghanistan described India as "Afghanistan's most reliable regional partner".

In his new strategy, US president called upon India to play a larger role. USA would like India to help in working with Afghanistan's domestic factions in widening and buttressing the political legitimacy of the current government, and helping it improve its governance. He also sought India's help in Afghanistan while ignoring the increased Iranian and Russian involvement in helping the Afghan Taliban.

India needs to create a positive view in the country about Afghanistan so that the private sector understands the economic opportunity in Afghanistan. India has been self-restrained — "for good reasons" — in its role in Afghanistan, though from 2012 onwards US administration was open to New Delhi playing any role that it could agree with the Afghan government. There is value in signalling that the U.S. sees India as a critical partner for Afghanistan.

This is a continuation of U.S. policy under Previous President: "The current administration has spoken more clearly and more directly about safe havens, not only for Afghan-focussed groups but also for Indian-focussed groups.

Criticism against New Strategy:

- The President of US was widely expected to announce a troop surge but instead offered a number of vague details that include authorizing more power to "target the terrorist and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan."
- New strategy in Afghanistan is aimed at preserving and strengthening the American presence in this country.
- They [the US] will increase their contingent and strengthen their presence in Afghanistan in connection with a new policy towards Iran, Pakistan, India and China. They will use Afghanistan as its base.
- Washington's new strategy on Afghanistan indicates that the war in this South Asian country will show no sign of abating and that the Taliban will expand their influence.

Way forward

Announcing its new Afghan strategy, America is entering a new stage in the fight against war and violence in Afghanistan. The past few years have seen many international conferences and meetings on Afghanistan but they failed to meet expectations. The goal of new strategy is to put an end to the war in Afghanistan. Any solution to the Afghan problem must be regional.

- The advisers would call in air and artillery, which would enable the United States to expand its firepower on behalf of Afghan forces. That would more closely resemble what American forces are doing in Iraq and Syria to fight the Islamic State.
- Need to tie US strategy in Afghanistan to a much broader strategy for both counterterrorism and regional security. Any strategy for the Afghan war needs to be part of a broad strategy to deal with both the threat posed by global Jihadist international terrorism, and the need for regional security as it affects the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, and Southwest Asia and the Gulf.
- A valid Afghan strategy cannot be separate from what happens in Pakistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan are so different that the US must effectively coordinate two different strategies to achieve common ends. At the same time, it is clear that Afghanistan's future will play a critical role in defining Pakistan's security and vice versa.

Conclusion:

Current President said that it would be “possible” to eventually negotiate a political settlement with the Taliban, even though previous administrations had said that the US would never negotiate with terrorists. He noted the importance of cooperating with the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India in order to bring stability to the region.

He wants New Delhi to assist with diplomatic and economic measures against terrorist forces in the region, particularly by pressuring Islamabad to decrease cooperation with terror groups.

There require all strategies to have detailed plans and schedules for implementations, and credible measures of effectiveness. Focus on real-world plans to increase Afghan security forces and their effectiveness, and the level of US military mentors, trainers, and partners necessary to make them effective.

13/09 - Time for course correction**Context:**

Data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed the economy grew 5.7% in April-June, the first quarter of the current fiscal year, slower than the previous quarter’s 6.1% and much lower than the 7.9% growth registered in the first quarter of 2016-17.

The real growth of GDP, i.e. after removing the impact of inflation, was only 5.7%, much lower than expected. This steady declining trend in the growth rate is a matter of concern.

What accounts for the decline in growth rate by almost 2 percentage points?

The slower growth is due to the decline in inventories ahead of the rollout of GST combined with the Demonetisation exercise. The rate has come down predominantly due to pre- GST effect as manufacturers were focusing more on clearing the existing stock.

Chief statistician of India said rising cost of intermediate goods and inventory deaccumulation in anticipation of GST implementation led to manufacturing growth falling sharply. Though he expects a revival in the second and third quarters as manufacturers normalise their stock positions subject to how well they have integrated with GST.

The most disappointing aspect of the first quarter numbers is the steep fall in the growth rate of manufacturing to 1.2%. Because of the good monsoon, agriculture will do better. Since agricultural growth rate last year was also good, the increase may not be that much.

Sharp decline in growth rate noted in the last few quarters cannot be attributed to poor export performance.

Growth is fuelled broadly by two types of demand, **domestic and external.**

- High export growth has propelled the growth rate of many countries, including China’s. In India’s own experience, the high growth phase between 2005-06 and 2007-08 saw exports growing at an average annual rate exceeding 20%.
- India’s declining growth rate has also coincided **with poor export performance.** Export demand has been weak because of the tepid growth rate of the advanced economies.
- Both in 2014-15 and 2015-16, the export growth rate was negative. However, the export growth rate has become positive since the second half of 2016-17.
- While undoubtedly export demand is critically important to sustain high growth, the sharp decline in growth rate noted in the last few quarters cannot be attributed to poor export performance. In fact, as compared to the previous year, the export performance has improved.

The fundamental problem has been the sharp fall in the investment rate

GFCF(Gross fixed capital formation) is a measure of gross net investment (acquisitions less disposals) in fixed capital assets by enterprises, government and households within the domestic economy, during an accounting period such as a quarter or a year.

In India, Gross fixed capital formation rate stood at 34.3% in 2011-12. This started falling steadily and touched 29.3% in 2015-16. It fell further to 27.1% in 2016-17.

- According to the latest numbers, in the first quarter of 2017-18, it stood at 27.5%.

- Since the **public investment rate has not shown any decline** (*it stands at 7.5% of GDP*), it is the decline in private investment, both corporate and households, that has been responsible for the steady fall.
- While the fall in corporate investment is steep compared to what was achieved in 2007-08, it has more or less stabilised at a lower level of around 13%.
- Household investment has continued to decline even in recent years. Household here includes not only pure households but also unincorporated enterprises.

Declining growth rate and its effect on employment

Jobless growth is an economic phenomenon in which a macro economy experiences growth while maintaining or decreasing its level of employment. Deep concerns have been expressed about the fact that the growth that we have seen in recent years has not resulted in an increase in employment.

It may be noted that data on employment are not very reliable. Firm data are available only for the organised sector. The rest are estimated through surveys. In fact, in the case of unorganised sectors, very often the position is one of 'underemployment' rather than unemployment.

Growth can occur because of two reasons. One, it results from better utilisation of existing capacity. Two, it can come out of new investment. Whatever growth we have been seeing recently has come out of better utilisation of capacity rather than new investment. It is real growth spurred by new investment that generates more jobs.

Falling investment rate

Investment, which is between 30 and 35% of the total pie, needs to grow at least in double digits. Investment in future capacity creates GDP growth of the future. It needs to be led by the private sector. Currently, that component is barely growing at 1.5%. As a result, capital formation is steadily declining for several years. Private sector investment has practically come to a standstill. Despite the push for 'Make in India', reforms for improving 'Ease of Doing Business', increased access to electricity, improvement in infrastructure and private investment are not picking up.

Another interesting factor about the falling investment rate is that the last few years have shown a steady and substantial increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). FDI inflows in 2016-17 were at an all-time peak of \$60 billion. In the first quarter of 2017, the inflows were \$10.9 billion. With this type of inflow and if the investment rate has not grown, the one inference that one can make is that much of the FDI has gone into acquiring old assets rather than going to Greenfield projects. All this implies is that domestic investors continue to remain shy.

What can be done to stimulate private investment?

- First, in **creating an appropriate investment climate**, reforms play an important role. Some of the noteworthy changes that have happened in the last few years are the passing of the bankruptcy code and GST legislation, and modifications in FDI rules. We must continue with the reform agenda and there is still a lot to be done in the area of governance.
- Second, financing investment has taken a beating because of the poor health of banks. Banks in India today are universal banks providing both short-term and long-term credit. The sharp reduction in the flow of new credit has also put prospective investors in a difficult situation. To resolve the non-performing asset (NPA) problem and to bring banks back to good health, **recapitalisation has become urgent.**
- Third, a **close look must be taken at stalled projects** to see what can be done to revive those which are viable. This must be part of an overall effort to hold consultations in small groups with investors to understand and overcome the obstacles that come in the way of new investment. Industry-by-industry consultations and analyses are needed to pinpoint problems and their solutions.
- Fourth, even though the progress of small and medium industries is very much dependent on the fortunes of the large, a separate look at medium and small enterprises may be needed to prod them into new investment.

Conclusion

The growth rate in 2017-18 is unlikely to exceed 6.5%. Perhaps in the coming quarters we may see a rebound. Once the glitches and fears of the GST are over, the growth rate may pick up. Our goal must be to achieve and sustain a growth rate of 8% and above over an extended period and what we need is an immediate stimulus to re-inject the momentum. That will crucially depend on a big pick-up in manufacturing and private investment spending.

However, there has been a slight pick-up in public investment recently. That is not enough. Only when the two engines of public and private investment function at full throttle will India fly high.

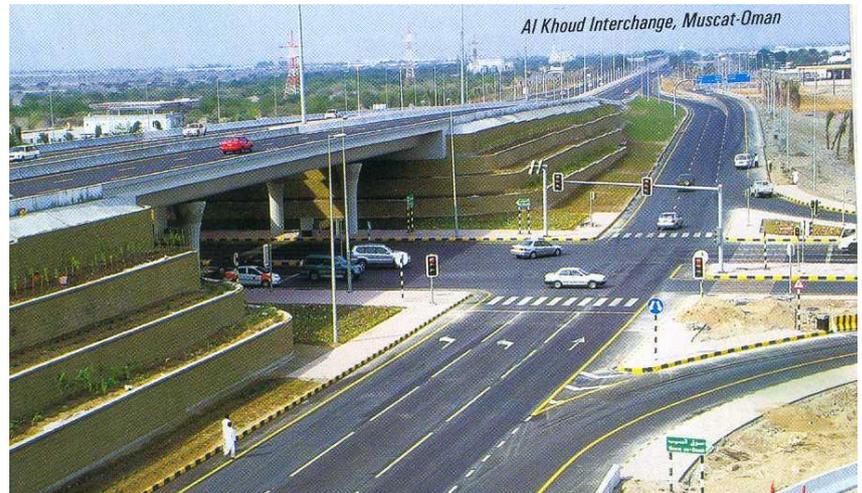
The big structural reforms of GST, the new insolvency code, the new monetary framework and Aadhaar linkage are measures which will show results in the medium to long term.

14/09 - The new Highways

Context:

As acquisition of land for national and State highways becomes scarce and the cost of construction of roads, flyovers and bridges goes up, the government is now exploring using water as a means of public transportation.

With the enactment of the National Waterways Act, 2016, the total number of national waterways is now 111. But providing infrastructure such as jetties, terminals, and navigational channels continues to pose a challenge.



The government has proposed an amendment to the Central Road Fund Act, 2000 to enable allocation of about Rs2000 crore from the central road fund (CRF) for developing inland waterways.

Inland waterways of India

India has an extensive network of inland waterways in the form of rivers, canals, backwaters and creeks. The total navigable length is 14,500 km, out of which about 5,200 km of the river and 4,000 km of canals can be used by mechanized crafts.

Inland waterways in India consist of the Ganges (Ganga)–Bhagirathi–Hooghly rivers, the Brahmaputra, the Barak river, the rivers in Goa, the backwaters in Kerala, inland waters in Mumbai and the deltaic regions of the Godavari – Krishna rivers.

Freight transportation by waterways is highly under-utilized in India compared to other large countries and geographic areas like the United States, China and the European Union. The total cargo moved (in tonne kilometres) by the inland waterway was just 0.1% of the total inland traffic in India, compared to the 21% figure for United States. Cargo transportation in an organised manner is confined to a few waterways in Goa, West Bengal, Assam and Kerala.

Water transportation is receiving significant attention in recent times since logistics cost in India is one of the highest among major countries – it is 18% in India versus 8-10% in China and 10-12% in European Union.

While inland waterways are recognised as a fuel efficient, cost effective and environment friendly mode of transport, it has received lesser investment as compared to roads and railways. Since inland waterways are lagging behind other modes of transport the central government has evolved a policy for integrated development of inland waterways.

National Waterways Act, 2016

Under Entry 24 of the Union List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the Central Government can make laws on shipping and navigation on inland waterways which are classified as National Waterways by Parliament by law.

- The Act merges five existing Acts which have declared the 5 National Waterways.
- It has declared 106 Waterways as NWs through a single piece of legislation, in addition to the existing five NWs.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) which is mandated to develop, maintain and regulate these for navigation would be the nodal agency.

Benefits:

- Water transport is not only environment-friendly but also cheaper than other modes of transport
- It takes lesser time to transport cargo by waterways and the chances of congestion and accidents on highways are eliminated.
- There is a huge potential for domestic cargo transportation as well as for cruise, tourism and passenger traffic.

- There is huge potential for public private partnership (PPP) led investments in dredging, construction, operation and maintenance of barges, terminals, storage facilities, and navigation, as well as tourism.
- It will help in the generation of millions of job opportunities.
- It will boost the maritime trade of the states and augment their economies.

The need of amendment to the Central Road Fund Act, 2000

These waterways can be developed as environment-friendly modes of transport. This will decrease the huge logistics cost in India significantly. But the Government will have to figure out innovative ways of financing as they would be requiring about Rs. 70,000 crore to develop these river stretches into navigable transport ways. Government will explore multiple sources of finance, including market borrowings and tapping the National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF) and the Central Roads Fund (CRF).

With the enactment of the National Waterways Act, 2016, the total number of national waterways is now 111. But providing infrastructure such as jetties, terminals, and navigational channels continues to pose a challenge.

Central Road Fund Act, 2000 Act regulates the Central Road Fund (CRF) that is credited with the cess collected on high speed diesel oil and petrol. This collected amount is then released to National Highways Authority of India, and to the state/union territory governments for the development of national and state highways. The Bill seeks to allocate a share of this cess towards the development of inland waterways.

Once enacted, Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017 will give a big boost to our waterways as cargo transportation through water is a much cheaper and cleaner way of transportation. It will bring down logistics cost that is very high.

- **Utilisation of fund:** Under the 2000 Act, the fund can be utilised for various road projects including: (i) national highways, (ii) state roads including roads of inter-state and economic importance, and (iii) rural roads. The Bill provides that in addition to these the fund will also be used for the development and maintenance of national waterways.
- **Powers of central government:** Under the Act, the central government has the power to administer the fund. The central government will make decisions on the: (i) investments on national highways and expressways projects, (ii) raising funds for the development and maintenance of national highways, and rural roads, and (iii) disbursement of funds for national highways, state roads and rural roads. The Bill provides that central government will make all the above decisions for national waterways as well.
- **Allocation of cess:** Under the Act, the cess on high speed diesel oil and petrol is allocated towards different types of roads. The Bill seeks to decrease the allocation of cess towards the development and maintenance of national highways from 41.5% to 39%. It allocates 2.5% of the cess towards the development and maintenance of national waterways.
- As per the financial memorandum of the Bill, at the current rate of levy of this cess, the share allocated towards waterways will amount to around Rs 2,000 crore per annum. The remaining cess amount will continue to be used for the development of other roads such as national highways, state highways, etc.

This move will also offer incentives and certainty for the private sector to invest in the inland waterways transport sector. This would accelerate the development of national waterways by utilising the funds generated by way of cess.

Some of the other steps needed for the development of Inland Water Transportation

- Inland navigation is considered to be an energy saving mode of transport. It requires the maintenance of a specified water depth and width depending upon the size of vessels expected to use that waterway. This necessitates the release of adequate discharges.
- The detention of water in upstream storages may put some of the existing navigable waterways out of use unless adequate provision is made to release sufficient water downstream. Therefore, the discharge required to be made for maintaining the required water depth in the reaches of river planned for inland navigation should be made.
- Sometimes water released for some other purpose may simultaneously serve the requirements of navigation. Efforts should be made plan such complimentary uses as far as possible.

- Prevention of run off and preservation of water should be planned in all rivers to retain the present discharge level and to augment the lean season discharge which would not only facilitate improved navigability but also result in availability of water for other purposes.
- In all multi-purpose projects in water resource management, the navigational component should be identified at the inspection stage and provisions made to derive the maximum navigational potential.
- This is applicable in case of dams' canalisation and also in planning of diversions as part of flood season.
- Preservation of existing canals, lakes etc. is an essential ingredient of environmental protection.
- In case of taking up multipurpose projects on any river the navigational requirement should be kept in view for which a list of navigable waterways in the country is enclosed.

Conclusion

National waterways provide a cost-effective, logistically efficient and environment-friendly mode of transport, whose development as a supplementary mode would enable diversion of traffic from over-congested roads and railways. Hence, the waterways project deserves better regulation and development across the country.

16/09 - The arc to Tokyo: on India-Japan ties

Context:

Japanese Prime Minister's visit to India, part of annual summits between the two countries, has set strategic ties on a fast track. This is best symbolised by the 508-km Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project that was launched by Prime Ministers of India and Japan.

This is a significant success for Japanese PM's signature Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (EPQI) initiative. The EPQI, which is critical to achieving Japan's national growth strategy and facilitating expansion to emerging Asian markets, intersects with Prime Minister India's 'Make in India' initiative and 'Act East' policy.



Last November, Prime Minister of India got an opportunity to understand first-hand the value of Japanese technology when he travelled to Kobe by Shinkansen to visit a bullet train plant of Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd.

While the HSR(High Speed Rail) project and mega-industrial corridors lay a strong foundation, the depth and scope of bilateral relations has been redefined with 'India-Japan Vision 2025' underscoring an 'action-oriented partnership', founded on the pillars of mutuality of interests, shared universal values and commonality of vision in the Indo-Pacific.

Shared Universal Values and Vision

2017 holds special significance since it marks a decade of Japanese Prime Minister's celebrated speech at the Indian Parliament— 'Confluence of the Two Seas', underscoring shared universal values and interests.

- Ten years down the line, India is envisioned as a critical strategic anchor in Abe's latest 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy'.
- India-Japan 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership', aimed at securing strategic stability and economic prosperity of the Indo-Pacific space, culminated into the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) this year.

Asia-Africa Growth Corridor

- The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor or AAGC is an economic-cooperation agreement between the governments of India and Japan.
- India on 25 May 2017 launched a vision document for Asia-Africa Growth Corridor or AAGC at the African Development Bank meeting in Gujarat.
- It aims for Indo-Japanese collaboration to develop quality infrastructure in Africa, complemented by digital connectivity, which would undertake the realization of the idea of creating free and open Indo-Pacific Region.
- The AAGC will give priority to development projects in health and pharmaceuticals, agriculture and agro-processing, disaster management and skill enhancement. The connectivity aspects of the AAGC will be supplemented with quality infrastructure.
- Unlike OBOR, now BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), which entails development of both land corridor and ocean, AAGC will essentially be a sea corridor linking Africa with India and other countries of South-East Asia and Oceania by rediscovering ancient sea-routes and creating new sea corridors that will link ports in Jamnagar (Gujarat) with Djibouti in the Gulf of Eden and similarly the ports of Mombasa and Zanzibar will be connected to ports near Madurai; Kolkata will be linked to Sittwe port in Myanmar.
- As the rationale of value-oriented foreign policy (based on universal values like democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and so on) gained traction, India has been accorded space in Japan's value-based foreign-policy frameworks including 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity', 'Confluence of the Two Seas', 'Quadrilateral Initiative' and subsequently Asia's 'Democratic Security Diamond'.
- As India's strategic thinking navigated through the policy discourse of 'Look East', 'Look East 2.0' which further culminated into 'Act East' policy, Japan graduated from a valuable friend to an indispensable partner and emerged as a 'key player in India's modernization'.

Action-oriented Partnership

In keeping with 'India-Japan Vision 2025', robust bilateral relations have laid the foundation to expand the scope of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific theatre. Strong India-strong Japan will not only enrich two nations. It will also be a stabilising factor in Asia and the world.

Uncertainty in regional geopolitics paved way for greater strategic coordination on a few specific regional issues in trilateral frameworks and regional forums, including terrorism and violent extremism, North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile program, and peaceful resolution of disputes in South China Sea in compliance with international law, including the UNCLOS.

In addition, the latest US-Japan Security Consultative Committee Meeting in August 2017 identified India, along with South Korea, Australia, and Southeast Asian countries, as one of the priorities while pressing the significance of advancing trilateral and multilateral security and defence cooperation in the region.

The 2016 India-Japan Joint Statement underscores the importance of coordinating bilaterally and with other countries to develop better regional connectivity and facilitating industrial networks.

Securing the Maritime Commons

As maritime democracies, both nations have argued for rules-based international order, freedom of navigation and over flight, unrestricted lawful commerce, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

- India, US and Japan conducted the annual Malabar Exercise in the Bay of Bengal in July 2017 aimed at enhancing interoperability between the navies of the three democracies and strengthening trilateral cooperation in the Indo-pacific region.
- With the aim of augmenting cooperation, both India and Japan are considering incorporation of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) training and exchanges by ASW aviation units such as P-3C in addition to mine-counter measures (MCM) training.
- The 'shared responsibility' in securing the regional SLOC (Sea Lines of Communication) as a 'public good' reinforces India-Japan maritime cooperation.

- Japan desires India's cooperation in guarding the Indian Ocean SLOCs since it is critical for its energy shipments. With dependence on imports for 94 per cent of its primary energy supply, Japan is severely dependent on Middle Eastern oil imports, and the Indian Ocean is, therefore, vital for Japanese energy imports from the region.
- While Japan has depended on the US Navy for safeguarding critical SLOCs, it is increasingly cognisant of India's capabilities in playing a productive role in defending the regional sea lanes.
- At the India-Japan shipping policy forum, launched in 2010, both countries focus on cooperation in maritime sector such as development of ship recycling facilities, ports and inland water transport, ship building and repair, and cooperation on International Maritime Organisation (IMO) issues.
- Besides, there is a 2+2 dialogue framework between the Foreign and Defence Secretaries of both countries since 2010, as mandated by the Action Plan to Advance Security Cooperation concluded in December 2009.

Special Strategic and Global Partnership

In the run up to Prime Minister Abe's visit to India, the annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue was hosted in Tokyo on September 5-6. There is a shared recognition that a stronger bilateral strategic partnership entails wider cooperation while responding to global and regional challenges and jointly contributing to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

While regional concerns such as the security challenges emanating from Pyongyang and the proliferation network including North Korea-Pakistan nexus featured as a top priority, bilaterally furthering defence technology cooperation under the framework of the 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' was underscored during the annual dialogue.

- Both defence ministers stressed the value of deepening interaction between the respective governments and defence industries with the aim of enabling collaboration in defence and dual-use technologies.
- The difficult negotiation over cost and technology transfer with regard to the US-2 amphibious aircraft has not restricted the two countries from exploring and identifying specific items and future areas for cooperation.
- Building on the 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership', Indian navy has issued Request for Information (RFI) to six overseas manufacturers including Japanese Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries to build six advanced submarines with air-independent propulsion (AIP) technology under the Project 75 (I) initiative.
- Two agreements signed in December 2015 — 'Agreement Concerning Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation' and 'Agreement Concerning Security Measures for the Protection of Classified Military Information', marked a new beginning in bilateral defence cooperation.

The outcomes of the 12th India – Japan Annual Summit and its Significance

- Prime Minister and his Japanese counterpart jointly laid the foundation stone of the country's first bullet train project between Ahmedabad and Mumbai. The train will cover a distance of over 500 kilometres in around two hours. The project is expected to be completed by 2022
- The two leaders also laid the foundation stone of a dedicated High Speed Rail Training Institute for the bullet train to be established inside the existing campus for the National Academy of Indian Railways at Vadodara.
- Four locations have been finalized for development of Japanese Industrial Townships in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- India and Japan signed 15 agreements for enhancing bilateral co-operation in several key areas including investment promotion, civil aviation and science and technology, disaster risk management, skill development besides other Economic and Commercial agreements.
- Both the leaders condemned the growing menace of terrorism and violent extremism in the strongest terms. In a joint statement, both the leaders shared the view that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a global menace that must be forcefully combated through concerted global action with **the spirit of zero tolerance.**
- The two Prime Ministers also called upon Pakistan to bring to justice the perpetrators of attacks including those of the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai and the 2016 terrorist attack in Pathankot.
- They also called upon all countries to work towards rooting out terrorist safe havens.

Significance

- PM of India said the bullet train the biggest gift from Japan to India. The high speed rail corridor will give a new momentum to the development of New India.
- The bullet train will not only bring about economic transformation but will also lead to social transformation of the country.
- The project will strengthen the Make in India initiative as large number of employment opportunities will be created in the country.
- The economic aid, technology and skill transfer by Japan will not only benefit the Indian railway sector but will be beneficial for human resource development of the country.
- The growing convergence between Japan and India on strategic and economic issues has capacity to stimulate the global economy.
- Prime Minister said that the civil nuclear pact between India and Japan would open a new chapter in cooperation in the clean energy sector between both countries.
- The Japan Prime Minister called this historic moment as a confluence of the Indian ocean with Pacific Ocean and vowed for developing a new world order based on these oceans.
- Strong India is in the interest of Japan likewise a Strong Japan is in the interest of India.
- Indian Human Resource coupled with Japanese skill and technology, will make India a manufacturing hub of the world.
- Japan will share with India the expertise of safe transport which will help the entire Indian rail network. The Bullet Train project will be a stimulus for India's manufacturing and construction sector while creating new job opportunities.

The Way Ahead

India-Japan relations are witnessing the most productive period in history. Mutuality of interest in each other has become irreversible. Prime Minister of India and his Japanese counterpart have unveiled an era of high-powered diplomacy.

It is clear that the present Indian government has set India-Japan ties on an accelerated geopolitical course that will be a major factor in its dealings with the rest of the world, especially China, at a time when the U.S. is perceived to be retreating from the region.

- Having made this leap, it is imperative that India and Japan also look beyond their lofty geopolitical aims, at the more basic aspects of bilateral engagement.
- While Japan is India's largest donor and the third largest provider of FDI, bilateral trade has steadily declined since 2013, and is down to \$13.61 billion in 2016-17 from \$14.51 billion the year before. The contrast with India-China trade, at \$71 billion a year, and Japan-China trade, at \$279 billion, is stark.
- Bilateral and regional ambitions in the Indo-Pacific have been clearly laid out in 'India-Japan Vision 2025'. However, history will judge this 'special' partnership based on how the political will translates into tangible deliverables.
- Synergizing their resources and capabilities, and ensuring the efficient implementation of joint projects will be critical.
- As the Indo-Pacific construct assumes greater space in policy designs given its geo-political and strategic dimensions, it is imperative for both India and Japan to engage in forward thinking to accomplish the full potential of this 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'.
- India and Japan must coordinate and cooperate on connectivity projects in South Asian neighbourhood including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and even Myanmar.
- India and Japan will benefit by exploring the potential for joint projects in Africa, including in countries like Nigeria, Mozambique, and Angola and elsewhere, given common energy interests.

- For securing the global commons and realizing a stable Indo-Pacific, India and Japan both have to work individually, bilaterally and at a regional level in order to guarantee a rules-based order in accordance with international law.

18/09 - Reading the tea leaves

Context:

Reading the tea leaves indicates that 2017 may well be the year which marked the reordering of the Asian strategic landscape. Although it has become fashionable to talk about a transformed or transforming Asian strategic landscape, the landscape has been characterized by both continuity and change. The change dimension in the Asian strategic landscape stems primarily from the sustained rapid economic growth of Asian countries especially China over the last several decades.

China's rise in one generation as a global player under authoritarian rule has come to epitomise the qualitative reordering of power in Asia and the wider world. China will likely stand to more profoundly affect global geopolitics than any other country. China's ascent, however, is dividing Asia, not bringing Asian states closer. In addition, Beijing has been pushing India closer to the US through continuing military and other provocations.

Given that the balance of power in Asia will be determined by events as much in the Indian Ocean rim as in East Asia, Tokyo and New Delhi are keen to work together to promote Asian peace and stability and help safeguard vital sea lanes.

China's ascent, U.S. 'rebalancing' and shifting balance of power

The two slow moving trend lines clearly discernible since the Cold War ended a quarter century ago are the shift of the geopolitical centre of gravity from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific region and the rise of China.

The U.S. 'rebalancing' announced in 2011 driven home by the impact of the 2008 financial crisis. Most of the rivalries are being played out in the crowded geopolitical space of the Indo-Pacific, and Asian economies now account for more than half of global GDP and becoming larger in coming years.

China's rise is reflected in a more assertive China. According to Chinese **President 'two guides' policy** announced in February, China should guide 'the shaping of the new world order' and safeguarding 'international security'. China is not just willing but eager to assume leadership and expects other countries to yield space. China has suggested 'a new type of great power relations' to the U.S. Its assertiveness in the East China Sea with Japan and in the South China Sea with its Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) neighbours sends a signal that while multi polarity may be desirable in a global order, in Asia, China is the predominant power and must be treated as such.

Even though China has been a beneficiary of the U.S.-led global order, it is impatient that it does not enjoy a position that it feels it deserves, especially in the Bretton Woods institutions. During the last five years, it has set about creating a new set of institutions (the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank) and launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to create a new trading infrastructure that reflects China's centrality as the largest trading nation.

The BRI is also complemented by a growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Beginning in 2009, the PLA Navy started rotating three ship task forces through the Indian Ocean as part of the anti-piracy task force off the Somalia coast. Visits by nuclear attack submarines to littoral ports began to take place. In addition to Gwadar, China is now converting the supply facility at Djibouti into a full-fledged military base.

What are the recent developments that accelerated these geopolitical trends?

▪ **America First policy:**

The U.S. "pivot" to Asia has been the defining feature of American foreign policy in 2008-2012. Essentially, the pivot is meant to be a strategic "re-balancing" of U.S. interests and resources from Europe and the Middle East toward East Asia. As the United States pulls together its resources from within and afar to bring to bear on the Asia-Pacific region, it tried shaping a new regional order in the process.

But after the recent US elections, by invoking 'America first' repeatedly, President of US has made it clear that the U.S. considers the burden of leading the global order too burdensome. Policy has already made several US loyalists recalibrate their alliances.

▪ Nuclear and long-range missile tests by North Korea

Recent nuclear and long-range missile tests by North Korea have added to South Korean and Japanese anxieties. Japan has been particularly rattled by the two missiles fired across Hokkaido. Given the U.S. push for more sanctions that depend on China for implementation, most Japanese reluctantly admit that North Korea's nuclear and missile capability is unlikely to be dismantled any time soon.

The US military build-up on its Asian bases, the deployment of its Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system across the Korean border, and China's anxiety because of this deployment, along with US frustration with China's inability to contain the erratic North Korean leader – all these factors are leading to a number of possible eventualities.

▪ Doklam stand-off between India and China

Another significant development was the Doklam stand-off between India and China that lasted from June to August. The Chinese playbook followed the established pattern — creating a physical presence followed by sharpened rhetoric, together becoming an exercise in coercive diplomacy. This worked in pushing the nine-dash line in the South China Sea with the Philippines and Vietnam even as China built additional facilities on reclaimed land in the area.

Differences with China did not begin with Doklam.

- It was preceded by the stapled visa issue for Indians belonging to Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir,
- growing incidents of incursions along the disputed boundary,
- blocking of India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group last year,
- ensuring that no language relating to Pakistan-based terrorist groups found mention in the BRICS summit in Goa and
- Preventing the inclusion of Masood Azhar from being designated as a terrorist by the UN Security Council by exercising a veto.

Old China policy does not serve India's national interest

Since 1988, India has followed a consistent China policy based on putting aside the boundary dispute and developing other aspects of the relationship in the expectation that this would create mutual trust and enable a boundary settlement. However, the gap between India and China has grown, both in economic and military terms, and with it has emerged a more assertive China. The shared vision of an Asian century with a rising India and rising China is long past. After Doklam, there is changing consensus that the old China policy does not serve our national interests and a review is long overdue.

A new strategic landscape for India

The contours of a new relationship were defined during Japanese PM's earlier tenure, in 2006-07, when annual summits were introduced, the relationship became a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership', Japan was invited to join in the Malabar naval exercises and a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was concluded. Since then, significant content has been added.

- A singular achievement was the conclusion of the agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy last year. Under negotiation for five years, this was a sensitive issue for Japan given the widespread anti-nuclear and (misplaced) faith in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- To deepen strategic understanding, the **two sides initiated a 2+2 Dialogue** involving the Foreign and Defence Ministries in 2010. A memorandum on enhancing defence and technology/security cooperation was signed and talks on acquiring the amphibious maritime surveillance Shin Maywa US-2i began in 2013.
- Trilateral dialogue involving both the U.S. and Japan and covering strategic issues was elevated to ministerial level in 2014. Japanese participation in the Malabar exercises, suspended because of Chinese protests, was restored in 2015. Once the agreement for the 12 US-2i aircraft is concluded with a follow-up acquisition as part of Make in India, the strategic relationship will begin to acquire critical mass.

The imperative is that India and Japan should look beyond their lofty geopolitical aims

The strategic partnership between Indian and Japan needs stronger economic ties. Today, India-Japan trade languishes at around \$15 billion, a quarter of trade with China while Japan-China trade is around \$300 billion. Therefore, the primary focus during the recent visit has been on economic aspects. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed rail corridor is more than symbolism, in demonstrating that high-cost Japanese technology is viable in

developing countries and that India has the absorption capacity to master it. The bigger challenge will be to transfer the know-how of best practices to other sectors of the economy.

Another major initiative is the recently launched Asia-Africa Growth Corridor to build connectivity for which Japan has committed \$30 billion and India \$10 billion. This adds a critical dimension to the 'global partnership' between the two countries. However, to make this productive, India needs to avoid cost and time over-runs in implementing projects abroad.

Ensuring effective implementation and setting up mechanisms for delivery will align India's Act East policy with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. This alignment sets the stage for the reordering of the Asian strategic landscape.

Conclusion

The China-U.S. dynamic is growing in significance in the Asian strategic landscape. In the foreseeable future the foreign and security policies of Asian countries, especially India, will be driven by the symbiosis of continuity and change with strong emphasis on territorial integrity, preserving sovereignty, resisting imperial domination, and increasing their weight and influence in regional and global orders.

19/09 - Reimagining the OBC quota

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved a proposal to set up a panel to examine sub-categorisation of the Socially and Educationally Other Backward Castes (OBCs).

The stratification of OBC quota could lead to a quota within quota in OBC reservations. This is a move which could affect educationally and socially advanced communities within the backward classes who have benefited from the policy of positive discrimination over the past three decades.

Regardless of the political impulse that led the government to announce creation of a committee to look into sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC), it provides an opening to ensure social justice in an efficient manner.

Mandal Commission resulted in a paradigm shift in the national polity

The Mandal Commission was established in India in 1979 by the (Janata Party) government with a mandate to "identify the socially or educationally backward." It was headed by Indian parliamentarian B.P. Mandal to consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination, and used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness.

In 1980, the commission's report affirmed the affirmative action practice under Indian law whereby members of Other Backward Classes (OBC), were given exclusive access to a certain portion of government Jobs and slots in public universities. 27% seats in central government jobs and educational institutions are reserved for the backward classes after Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented by the government in 1990, resulting in a paradigm shift in the national polity. The decision was later upheld by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney Case.

Earlier this year, the government gave constitutional status to the National Backward Classes Commission through a Constitution amendment Bill.

Sub-categorisation of OBC in central list too

Nine States — Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu — have already implemented sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes. There is no sub categorisation in the central list.

Recently, the government approved setting up of a commission to examine the sub categorisation of backward communities in the central list to ensure that the benefits extended to OBCs reach all the backward castes.

The Cabinet also increased the 'creamy layer' ceiling for the OBC category to Rs 8 lakh per annum from the existing Rs 6 lakh for central government jobs. Those in the OBC category earning up to Rs 8 lakh per annum would now get the reservation benefits.

Mandate of the commission on OBC subcategorisation

- Thee commission will examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes/communities included in the broad category of OBCs, with reference to the OBCs included in the Central list.

- It will also work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters, in a scientific approach, for sub-categorization within such OBCs, and take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes/communities/ sub-castes/ synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.
- The Commission will submit its report within 12 weeks from the date of appointment of the chairperson of the Commission

The jobs-claimants mismatch

The National Sample Survey (NSS) data from 2011-12 shows that about 19% of the sample claims to be Dalit, 9% Adivasi, and 44% OBC. Among the population aged 25-49, less than 7% have a college degree. By most estimates, less than 3% of the whole population is employed in government and public-sector jobs. A vast proportion of the population eligible for reservations must still compete for a tiny number of reserved and non-reserved category jobs. It is not surprising that there is tremendous internal competition within groups.

If we want reservations to make a significant difference in the lives of the marginalised groups, there are only two options. Either the government must drastically increase availability of government jobs and college seats or it must reduce the size of the population eligible for these benefits. Out of these two options the viable option is to reduce the size of the eligible population, possibly along the lines of sub-categorisation proposed by the government.

However, while the media and claimants to the popular OBC status such as Jats, Kapus and Patels are busy arguing over the merits of this proposal, very little attention is paid to the practical challenges facing sub-categorisation. How will we know which castes are the most disadvantaged? At the moment, the only reputable nationwide data on caste comes from the 1931 colonial Census and some of the ad hoc surveys conducted for specific castes.

Lack of credible caste information from both Census and SECC data

The Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 was supposed to provide up-to-date comprehensive data. However, the results remain hidden in mystery. When releasing poverty and deprivation data from the SECC in 2015, it was found that about 4.6 million distinct caste names, including names of gotra, surname and phonetic variations were returned, making the results almost impossible to interpret.

For nearly 80 million individuals, caste data were believed to be erroneous. In 2015, the then NITI Aayog Vice Chairperson was asked to head a committee to chair the caste classification using SECC data. But little seems to have come of it.

SECC data have not been able to shed light on socio-economic disadvantages faced by different caste groups: addition of caste information was an ill-conceived graft on what was supposed to be a Below Poverty Line (BPL) survey. This patchwork solution had to be adopted because in spite of widespread demands to include caste data in the Census of 2001 and 2011, the Office of the Registrar General was reluctant to add this burden to the decennial exercise. As a way of appeasing the OBC lobby, it was decided that the BPL census would incorporate caste information.

However, after the probable failure of this effort, it would make sense to rethink collection of caste data in Census.

Address caste-based inequalities

What would it take to eliminate caste-based disadvantages in next three or four decades?

A two-pronged approach that focuses on eliminating discrimination and expanding the proportion of population among the disadvantaged groups that benefits from affirmative action policies could be a solution.

The present policies focus on preferential admission to colleges and coveted institutions like IITs and IIMs. But these benefits may come too late in the life of a Kurmi or Gujjar child. Their disadvantage begins in early childhood and grows progressively at higher levels of education.

- The India Human Development Survey of 2011-12 found that among families where no adult has completed more than Class X, 59% children from the forward castes are able to read a simple paragraph while the proportion is only 48% for OBCs, 41% for Dalits and 35% for Adivasis.
- So, Improving quality of education for all, including those from marginalised groups, must be a first step in addressing caste-based inequalities.

The second line of attack must focus on ensuring that benefits of reservations are widely spread.

- It makes little sense for a young man to obtain admission to a prestigious college, get admitted to a postgraduate course, get a job as an assistant professor, and be promoted to the position of a professor using the same caste

certificate. It would make even less sense if his children are also able to obtain preferential treatment using the same caste certificate.

- Thus, use of the OBC quota must be limited to once in a person's lifetime, allowing for a churn in the population benefitting from reservations.
- Linking the Aadhaar card to use of benefits makes it possible that individuals use their caste certificates only once, spreading the benefits of reservations over a wider population.

Way Forward

The present move by the government to rethink OBC quota creates a wedge that could potentially be used to ensure that we have better data on caste-based disadvantages for future discourse.

It is somewhat disheartening to think that even after 70 years of Independence, we still must rely on a colonial Census to tell us about the condition of various castes in India.

It also indicates a mood that wants to ensure that the benefits of reservation are widely spread. Increased attempts at linking benefits to Aadhaar allow us with an option to ensure that reservation benefits are not captured by a few.

Preparations for Census 2021 are on-going. There is still time to create an expert group to evaluate the methodology for collecting caste data and include it in the Census forms. Losing this opportunity would leave us hanging for another 10 years without good data for undertaking sub-categorisation of OBC quota or evaluating claims to OBC status by different groups.

This should probably be taken as a good opportunity to reshape the nature of affirmative action in India.

20/09 - India needs to push for a new deal

Context:

Global trade and intellectual property are at a crossroads. In a time when multilateral consensus is deteriorating on a large number of issues, the US administration is considering pulling the U.S. out of most free trade agreements on the ground that it needs a more favourable environment for its companies and its people.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s recent Trade and Development Report calls for stronger measures to protect domestic sectors against the undue domination of large companies. There are on-going attempts by big business to push for new rules in upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference in Argentina.

The focus of the debate now is how trade deals are becoming the new Trojan horse to ensure stronger patent protection and continued profits to global companies.

Developed Countries have been pushing for the implementation of IPR

The Developed Countries have been pushing for the implementation of intellectual property rights (IPR) in developing countries, through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and bilateral or regional free trade agreements.

The fact that the Developed nations promotes IPR protection in trade agreements suggests that trade should increase with foreign patent protection.

The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) embodied an international regulatory regime for the first time, in 1995

TRIPS Agreement

The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) is an international legal agreement between all the member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

- It sets down minimum standards for the regulation by national governments of many forms of intellectual property (IP) as applied to nationals of other WTO member nations.



- TRIPS was negotiated at the end of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994 and is administered by the WTO.
- The *TRIPS agreement introduced intellectual property law into the international trading system for the first time.*
- In 2001, *developing countries, concerned that developed countries were insisting on an overly narrow reading of TRIPS, initiated a round of talks that resulted in the Doha Declaration.*

Problem with trade deals

Since it is the developed countries who own most of the technologies and patents, they are using various international forums to pressurize higher level of protection for intellectual property. Over the last few decades they are creating Free Trade Agreements to give higher level of protection to IPRs. Often these FTAs are outside the WTO framework and hence they can give higher level of protection to IPRs there.

Since TRIPS came into force, it has been subject to criticism from developing countries. TRIPS's wealth concentration effects moving money from people in developing countries to copyright and patent owners in developed countries are common bases for such criticisms.

- Although TRIPS represented a major compromise for most developing countries, it was only the starting point for many other nations, which have since then promoted excessive protection of private investor interests through bilateral trade agreements, often at the expense of wider public interests.
- Corporates, riding high on increased market power, continue to lobby their governments for absolute protection of intellectual property (IP) rights of corporations.
- For the U.S. in particular trade agreements are a prime vehicle to replace its strong domestic standards of IP protection in partner countries, in a bid to ensure the same level of privileges for its companies abroad.

Over the past 20 years, the American strategy has been to pursue bilateral agreements with individual countries one by one to ensure stronger IP protection across markets, by sidestepping the multilateral regime.

How these IP protection rules are changing the global corporate landscape?

The problem is that the failure of TRIPS to accelerate investment and technology flows to low-income countries, a benefit advanced by WTO members in the lead-up to the agreement's formation.

- For years now, while patent protection is getting stronger in all sectors in a large number of countries, the conditions for its grant are becoming relaxed.
- Not only do such lax patenting requirements allow companies to claim patents more broadly – with little show of original effort as in the case of evergreening — but also patents can be claimed on all possible inventions (and discoveries) that are of relevance to the present, and even to the future.
- A large number of countries have already foregone many degrees of policy freedom by signing up to 'TRIPS-Plus' standards of protection.

TRIPS-Plus:

The developed countries are not happy about the TRIPS provisions. They demand higher protection to intellectual property rights including inventions, internationally. These higher levels of protection norms are named as TRIPS Plus.

- TRIPS Plus are higher level of protection norms *demand*ed by the developed countries that are not prescribed by the WTO's TRIPS regime.
- Although they are named as 'TRIPS-Plus,' they are not formally related to TRIPS. Rather, the term is used to indicate that these requirements go beyond the minimum standards imposed by TRIPS.
- Many developing countries who are members of FTAs are under pressure to enact these tougher conditions in their patent laws.
- The developing countries have concerns over the higher level of protection demanded by the developed world. They fear that once such levels of protection are given multilaterally, it will reduce competition and may led to price rise of medicines, affecting health security in poor countries
- The demand for Data Exclusivity protection (protection of clinical test data submitted to a regulatory agency) that have high commercial value is a major demand from the developed world which doesn't usually come under TRIPs.

- India has consistently objected to put higher level of protection (TRIPs Plus) than provided by the TRIPs. The implication of TRIPs Plus on India is that it will restrict the operation of the countries' generics drugs manufactures
- TRIPs plus, in conjunction with other trade measures, will disintegrate existing markets and change the established rules of the game.
- A superstar firm today is not necessarily one with the greatest technological breakthroughs or the largest research and development labs, but surely is one that has a large IP portfolio, engages in extensive litigation on patent issues, and thrives on licensing revenues.
- It argued that established companies are "becoming more entrenched" in existing markets worldwide, and made the case for reining in IP rights.
- At the global level, these sectors are stratified, with profits neatly split up between large corporations and new kinds of non-innovator firms that simply accumulate patents speculatively in upcoming, promising technologies for spurious returns.

Patents as an instrument of unfair market power across markets

For India, the fate of its pharmaceutical and software sectors swings in the balance, and guaranteeing fair and freed competition will be critical to ensure that we do not lose more ground to global companies abroad and at home.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s recent ***Trade and Development Report calls for stronger measures to protect domestic sectors against the undue domination of large companies, particularly in high-profit sectors such as pharmaceuticals, media and information and communications technology (ICT), where foreign companies still account for most of the transfer of profits across borders.***

The report uses data for U.S. multinational companies (MNCs) and their foreign affiliates in India to show that patent reforms have led to significant increases in the rates of return to affiliates of American companies by enabling monopoly profits when compared to publicly listed and locally headquartered companies, which are increasingly being left behind.

In the pharmaceutical sector, for example, the analysis that ranges 20 years shows that profits of domestic companies are in sharp decline since the late 2000s while those for the American MNC affiliates operating in the Indian market are rising steeply. A similar trend is visible in the ICTs sector as well.

It is important to take these findings in the broader perspective of what India's growth drivers will be in the years to come.

What India needs right now is a clear and tough stance on intellectual property both in domestic policy and at the multilateral level.

At home, support for innovation has to be accompanied with instruments that guard against the misuse of market power, coercive bargaining and aggressive merger and acquisition strategies if local firms should survive and flourish.

Heated negotiations in the run-up to the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference in Argentina already show that these issues will be central:

There are on-going attempts by big business to push for new rules in areas such as e-commerce to slice up profit-making opportunities of the future. Other proposals being made will largely limit the ability of governments to constrain corporate behaviour in the public interest.

- In such an international context, we need to stop soft-peddling on these issues in the pretence that we aspire to be a major IP player in the same manner as the U.S.
- What we need is a return to old-fashioned pragmatism that clearly shows the West that India recognises the fallacy of the current IP system and leads the way to broker a global new deal.
- This new deal should not only call for a return to business in the WTO by tackling the forgotten issues of the Doha Round but also firmly reopen the discussion on balancing the global IP system with development.

Conclusion:

The 11th Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference (MC) is likely to follow the footsteps of Nairobi closely. This is because; some new issues were opened at Nairobi. At least the member countries have shown interest in discussing new issues like e-commerce. In the context of this fresh willingness, the members may discuss new issues like e-commerce, enhancing the participation of MSMEs in ecommerce trade, service trade promotion etc.

At the same time, there are several issues that the Nairobi pledged to consider or finalize at the 11th MC. These include –public stockholding for food security purposes, a special safeguard mechanism for developing countries in agriculture and measures related to cotton trade.

The food security related public stock holding is of prime importance for India. At the Bali MC, WTO has promised to settle India's food subsidy for securing food security at the eleventh MC. Such a dead line is occurring at Buenos Aires. Similarly, the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) against high level of agricultural goods imports are requested by India and the issue is yet to be solved.

In conclusion, supporting IP standards that simply follow a 'winner takes all' ideology without emphasis on technological advancement and competitive markets will be a regrettable mistake. India should also ensure that the new deal firmly reopen the discussion on balancing the global IP system with Development.

21/09 - Beyond social media

Context:

On September 4, the Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) under the aegis of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, launched a social media campaign to promote Geographical Indications (GIs) with the hashtag #LetsTalkIP. The initiative, designed to make more people aware about the importance of Intellectual property rights.

The press release says that GIs are of utmost importance to the country as they are an integral part of India's rich culture and collective intellectual heritage and that their promotion is in line with the Government's 'Make in India' campaign.

It adds that it is an area of strength and optimism for India as the "GI tag" has accorded protection to several handmade and manufactured products, especially in the informal sector.

CIPAM proposes to talk about interesting facts and stories on GIs using social media.

In the recent past, the government had launched similar initiatives such as #IWearHandloom and #CottonIsCool to promote and revive traditional hand-woven textiles.

What is Geographical Indication?

A Geographical Indication, or a GI, is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. Such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality.

Darjeeling tea became the first GI tagged product in India. Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Banarasi Sarees and Tirupati Laddus are some of the other GIs in India.

Why GI should be protected in India?

- India is a rich storehouse of goods with reputation for quality which can be presented to their geographical origin or place of manufacture
- Need to protect Indian Treasures.
- Promotes Brand building.
- The economic potential of these goods is enormous.
- To prevent GI goods becoming generic.
- Need for a rule based system that is open, fair and provides for an enforcement mechanism.

Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999

Protection of Geographical Indication (GI) has, over the years, emerged as one of the most contentious IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) issues in the realm of the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).



The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (GI Act) is a sui generis Act of the Parliament of India *for protection of geographical indications in India*. Around 295 names registered with the Geographical Indications Registry.

The Geographical Indications Registry is located at Chennai. This Act is administered by the Registrar of Geographical Indications i.e. Controller General of Patents and Designs. The registration and administration have been envisaged to be discharged by the Geographical Indications Registry under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection), Act, 1999.

Under this act, ***Goods under Agricultural, Natural, Goods of Handicrafts, Industry, Manufactured goods, Food Stuffs categories can be registered.***

- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization(WTO), enacted the Act *to comply with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights*.
- The GI tag ensures that none other than those registered as authorised users are allowed to use the popular product name.
- An application for registration must be made *before the Registrar of Geographical Indications* by any association of persons or producers or any organization or authority established by or under any law for the time being in force representing the interest of the producers of the concerned goods.
- A GI is registered for an initial period of ten years, which may be renewed from time to time.
- Registration of a GI gives its owner and the authorised users the exclusive right to use the indications on the good in which it is registered.
- Further, registration gives right to institution of suit against infringement and recovery of damages for such infringement.
- The registration cannot be transferred, mortgaged, assigned or licensed, except in case of inheritance of the mark upon death of an authorised user.

Can GI boost rural development?

Our rural artisans possess unique skills and knowledge of traditional practices and methods, passed down from generation to generation, which need to be protected and promoted. *Certain GI products can benefit the rural economy in remote areas, by supplementing the incomes of artisans, farmers, weavers and craftsmen.*

The proposed campaign is certainly heartening because goods branded as GIs can be made indigenously by local communities independently and in a self-sustaining manner. And India, with its rich cultural heritage and diversity, has GIs.

- **GI and Industry:** Many registered and potential GIs of India are in the Micro and SME sector. GI protection enables them to develop their market and increase returns
- **GI and Tourism:** GIs are unique products coming from demarcated areas. Cultivation or manufacturing process itself can attract tourists. Handicrafts and handlooms with special characteristics are always attractive to tourists. Regions can provide attract tourists to taste the special GI foods or drinks or buy the unique products with discounts

It is an added advantage that if protected the correct way, GIs can promote rural development in a significant manner and could be fitted in as the most ideal intellectual property right to bolster a programme such as 'Make in India'.

Quality control of GI products in international and Indian context:

A GI is supposed to convey to a consumer the assurance of a certain quality, reputation or other characteristics of the goods on which it is applied, which are essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

- The keywords here are ***"quality control"***. *This is the sine qua non of any GI protection.*
- In fact, the **European Community Regulation 1151/2012** for the protection of GIs is titled as a regulation **"on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs"**.
 - The emphasis laid on quality must be underscored here.
 - Recital 46 of this regulation *states that the added value of GIs is based on consumer trust and that it is only credible if accompanied by effective verification and controls.*

- Further, the quality schemes should be subject to a monitoring system of official controls to ensure verification of compliance with the law and rules relating thereto.
- It should include a system of checks at all stages of production, processing and distribution.

The Indian context:

In the Indian scenario, the question arises whether the GI Act provides for quality control measures and verification of compliance.

- The word 'quality' appears in the GI Act only in two instances, first in Section 2(1)(e) which defines a GI, and second, in connection with Section 11(2) that stipulates that the application should state as to how the GI serves to designate the goods in respect of, *inter alia*, quality.
- Unlike the European Regulation, the GI Act does not provide for monitoring mechanisms at multiple levels.
- There is no or little reference to an inspection or monitoring structure in the Act. In contrast, the European Regulation stipulates multiple monitoring measures, both within the GI-controlling body and outside it.

The need of the hour is to ensure quality control through monitoring mechanisms.

It is essential to identify all the potential GIs in the country, Prepare detailed documentation on each of them, Organize the producers and take measures for protecting the quality.

Currently, there is a proliferation of GI registrations in India without any legal provisions stipulating post-registration quality control measures that are to be employed in the production of goods branded as GIs.

This is detrimental not only to the protection process of GIs in India but also to the very existence of these GIs, because *prolonged failure to meet consumer expectations would dilute the premium and credibility of GI-branded goods.* Why would a customer pay a premium to a GI branded product if there is no difference in quality as compared to similarly placed goods?

While the campaign is a wonderful idea to promote awareness, there is more work that is required at the legislative level to ensure credibility of the GI protection process in India.

To make such efforts more meaningful and worth the passion put in by bodies such as CIPAM, we need to first fill the legislative gap in ensuring quality control through monitoring mechanisms.

Finally the need of the hour is that the Government of India should create awareness to rural producers regarding registration of GIs so that their products will be marketed globally it will generate huge foreign exchange to exchequer.

Conclusion:

Intellectual property is an integral part of international trade. Since an intelligent and effective use of knowledge always contributes in the national economic prosperity. Given its commercial potential, the legal protection of GI assumes enormous significance. Without such protection, competitors not having legitimate right on a GI might ride free on its reputation. Such unfair business practices result in loss of revenue for the genuine right holders of the GI and also misleads the consumers. Moreover, such practices may eventually hamper the goodwill and reputation associated with the GI. *In order to rule out its misuse and to tap the potential economic and socio economic benefits emanating from this IP, it is essential to ensure an appropriate legal protection for GIs at the national as well as the international level.*

22/09 - Is the Sardar Sarovar Dam boon or bane?

Context:

Prime Minister inaugurated the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat on his 67th birthday. PM called the dam an engineering marvel. "A massive misinformation campaign was launched against the dam project, which is an engineering miracle," he said.

The foundation stone was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru nearly six decades ago, on April 5, 1961. But, the construction began only in 1987. The Prime Minister said the Sardar Sarovar Dam will become a symbol of India's new and emerging power. *It is the second biggest dam in the world after the Grand Coulee Dam in the United States.*

The Sardar Sarovar Dam is a gravity dam on the Narmada River near Navagam, Gujarat in India. The construction and development of Sardar Sarovar Dam lie between three states of India. They are Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya

Pradesh. The Sardar Sarovar dam Project is said to be the lifeline of Gujarat, and a very beneficial resource for the rural areas in these states.

The dam is a case of development which affects the environment directly and indirectly.

Sardar Sarovar project

The Sardar Sarovar Project was taken up after the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal gave its final award vis-à-vis Gujarat-Madhya Pradesh in 1979.

The Sardar Sarovar project is the second biggest dam in terms of volume of concrete used in it. The project, on the Narmada River, is the third highest concrete dam in India.

The 1.2-km-long dam, which is 163 metres deep, has an installed capacity of 1,200 MW and 250 MW, respectively. Officials



say the power generated from the dam would be shared among three states — Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The new gates raise the height of the dam to 138.68 metres. The Narmada Control Authority in June granted permission to the state government to close the gates, which will raise water level in the Sardar Sarovar reservoir, after being convinced that rehabilitation of the people displaced due to the project was complete.

The water level in the submergence area of the dam in Barwani and Dhar districts of Madhya Pradesh is rising steadily since closure of the dam's gates began in July. 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

Activists have been long demanding that the filling of the reservoir with water be stopped immediately and the dam's gates remain open so as to reduce the water level.

How is Sardar Sarovar Dam Project is a lifeline for the drought-prone areas of Gujarat?

The Sardar Sarovar Dam Project (SSP) was proposed as a multipurpose dam and was intended to be beneficial to the four states. It has the third largest spillway discharge capacity in the world that is 87000 m³/ second.

The benefits from the project are immense. The following list of benefits shows how the SSP is a lifeline for the drought-prone and parched areas of Gujarat.

- The waters of the Narmada river would flow into the sea being unused, and could be used for serving many dry towns, villages and districts of Gujarat. There was a tremendous amount of water flowing that could also serve the neighbouring provinces.
- It was determined that after the successful completion of the project, the dam would provide water to 30 million people (including 9633 villages and 131 towns) that could be used for industrial and domestic purposes.
- The SSP would employ about one million people starting from the start to end of the project.
- There are many regions in Gujarat and Rajasthan that are out of electricity almost throughout the year. To overcome this issue, the powerhouse was installed with a capacity of 1450MW, which would provide electricity to those areas in the peak hours of the day.
- The farmers would also get electricity to pump the water and water their farmlands. This will increase agricultural production.
- The SSP will provide water for irrigation and benefit 1.8 million hectares of land. Besides, 2.46 lakh hectares in Rajasthan will be also irrigated.
- Drinking water will be provided to 9,500 villages, 173 towns of Gujarat and 124 villages of Rajasthan.
- The project will provide flood protection to an area of about 30,000 hectares which is prone to the fury of floods.
- The Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary area is going to increase from 150 square kilometres to 607 square kilometres.

What are the shortcomings of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project?

The project was being conceptualised since the early 1940s but the dam construction could not be planned properly for a long time as there was no agreement on the sharing of waters. After the Narmada tribunal was instituted in 1969, and with the award announced in 1979, the project was operationalized in full swing.

For the initial stage of construction there were disputes within the states, and this dispute was referred as a Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal, established under India's Interstate Water Disputes Act, 1956. In 1985, World Bank financed India with loan of US \$450 million as an aid for construction of the dam and canal.

- According to the World Bank, the project started with very little assessment of resettlement and rehabilitation, and environmental impact.
- People who lost their lands and were under submergence received little compensation, which was hardly sufficient to find a replacement land.
- The states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra provided little land for resettlement.
- The displacement of the people caused them to adapt a new and different lifestyle. Now, they were more dependent on public institutions and services than, living a non-dependent and isolated life.
- The policy of resettlement was based on the 1979 Tribunal act, both by the SSP and World Bank. However, the tribunal act was just set for resolving the disputes with the states, not for the resettlement of the affected people.
- The culture and heritage of those people being displaced has been lost.
- In addition, farmers lost their land; huge cultivated land was removed and used for construction of the dam.
- Farmers and tribal people who made their living from that land had nothing to depend on now; they were without a home and employment.
- The livelihood of at least 10,000 families depending on the Narmada estuary has been affected.
- Gujarat's major attraction from the SSP was 11 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water to irrigate 1.8 million hectares of its parched land. But, the SSP irrigates less than a quarter of this area, benefitting little more land than was acquired to construct it
- The Narmada Bachao Andolan is formed by the group of people that represent all the tribal people, and take action for their rights. The Narmada Bachao Andolan had many conflicts with the government of India, its policies and actions. There were constant protests and hunger strikes for bringing an end to the construction of the dam.
- The political, economic and environmental negative affects went hand in hand, and continued simultaneously.

The need of the hour

Aquifers are omnipresent. Farmers access them through wells and tube wells. Increased storage in aquifers directly and immediately translates into benefits for the user. Not so with dams like the SSP.

- Their benefits depend on an effective distribution system. All the incomplete canal network of the project should be completed.
- The Sardar Sarovar Project needs to be reimagined in today's context. Gujarat's irrigation challenge is the annual ₹10,000 crore subsidy bill for farm power supply. Spreading SSP water on depleted aquifers can cut this bill down to a quarter, bolster the finances of distribution companies and cut power cost for the industry.
- Task of rehabilitation and resettlement of affected people should be completed immediately.
- There is a need of an independent review of the project on continuous basis in fulfil the real objectives of the project. There should be tracking of sufficient data starting from the scratch.
- Much of the information about the project derived from government data, rather than from recent, independent, empirical data. Studies should take into consideration the seasonal temporal variations in the climate and many other important parameters.
- Fluoride in groundwater that most Gujaratis use for drinking is a public health time bomb. Bringing SSP water to every home can defuse this.

- With 11 BCM in live storage, Gujarat can ensure water for people and livestock for two successive droughts. But all these can happen only if it creates and masters a distribution system that carries dam water to every home and every field.
- Along with half a million check dams and desilting old tanks and reservoirs, SSP should be utilised properly for the groundwater recharge.
- Environment safeguards should be put in place.

Conclusion

The water security of the country depends on water storage. Our water storage is low when compared to Russia (per capita storage of 6,100 cubic metres), the U.S. (1,960 cubic metres), China (1,100 cubic metres); in India, it is only about 200 cubic metres. Unless we have water storage, we cannot have water security. As per the National Commission report of 1999, we should have storage of about 450 billion cubic metres; we have so far only developed 253 billion cubic metres of storage — dams and reservoirs taken together. About 50 billion cubic metres of storage is under development.

Our food security and energy security are also dependent on water security. Lastly, inter-linking of rivers is essential to addressing the problem of floods and droughts in the country because water from the basins of water-surplus Brahmaputra, Ganga and Mahanadi rivers can be channelized to deficit areas. This would require storage by means of large dams. Planners and Policy makers should ensure that the lives of affected people are well safeguarded along with timely completion of large projects like SSP.

24/09 - From ocean to ozone, the limits of our planet

Background:

The population of vertebrate species on Earth in the wild saw a dramatic fall of about 30% between 1970 and 2006, with the worst effects being in the tropics and in freshwater ecosystems. Destruction of species' habitats by pollutants and land-use change are destroying flora and fauna at unprecedented rates. In fact, the ecological footprint of humanity — the natural habitats, such as water and land, transformed or destroyed as a result of human activity — far exceeds the biological capacity of the earth.



Identifying and quantifying planetary boundaries that must not be transgressed could help prevent human activities from causing unacceptable environmental change.

What is Ecological footprint of humanity and Biocapacity?

The ecological footprint measures human demand on nature, i.e., the quantity of nature it takes to support people or an economy

- It is a measure of human impact on Earth's ecosystem and reveals the dependence of the human economy on natural capital.
- The ecological footprint is defined as the biologically productive area needed to provide for everything people use: fruits and vegetables, fish, wood, fibres, absorption of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel use, and space for buildings and roads.
- Biocapacity is the productive area that can regenerate what people demand from nature.
- Ecological footprint and biocapacity can be compared at the individual, regional, national or global scale.
- Both footprint and biocapacity change every year with number of people, per person consumption, efficiency of production, and productivity of ecosystems.
- Ecological footprint analysis is widely used around the Earth in support of sustainability assessments.

From 1961 to 2010, Ecological Footprint accounts indicate that human demand for renewable resources and ecological services reaching a point where the planet's bio productive area is no longer sufficient to support the competing demands.

What is a safe operating space for humanity and Planetary Boundaries?

Although Earth has undergone many periods of significant environmental change, the planet's environment has been unusually stable for the past 10,000 years. This period of stability — known to geologists as the **Holocene** — has seen human civilizations arise, develop and thrive.

Such stability may now be under threat. Since the Industrial Revolution, **a new era has arisen, the Anthropocene**, in which human actions have become the main driver of global environmental change. This could see human activities push the Earth system outside the stable environmental state of the Holocene, with consequences that are detrimental or even catastrophic for large parts of the world.

During the Holocene, environmental change occurred naturally and Earth's regulatory capacity maintained the conditions that enabled human development. Regular temperatures, freshwater availability and biogeochemical flows all stayed within a relatively narrow range. Now, largely because of a rapidly growing reliance on fossil fuels and industrialized forms of agriculture, human activities have reached a level that could damage the systems that keep Earth in the desirable Holocene state. The result could be irreversible.

In an attempt to understand the natural world, its relationships with human societies and limits, in 2009, Johan Rockström and others from the Stockholm Environment Institute described **elements of the biophysical world that link us together.** *Often regarded as a "safe operating space for humanity"*, these planetary boundaries include

- loss of biodiversity,
- land-use change,
- changes to nitrogen and phosphorus cycles,
- ocean acidification,
- atmospheric aerosols loading,
- ozone depletion,
- chemical production,
- freshwater use and
- Climate change.

These Planetary boundaries define the safe operating space for humanity with respect to the Earth system and are associated with the planet's biophysical subsystems or processes. If the Earth-system processes and associated thresholds which, if crossed, could generate unacceptable environmental change.

Biophysical considerations

Many of these conditions respond in a non-linear manner to changes. This means that ecosystems that are stressed by their exposure to pollutants may not recover once the pollutants are removed. When ecological thresholds or tipping points are crossed, significant large-scale changes may occur, such as breakdown of glaciers in Greenland and the Antarctica, the dieback of rainforests in the Amazon, or failure of the Indian monsoons.

Since these boundaries interact with one another and cause changes across scales, crossing a threshold in one domain can speed up or undermine processes in another subsystem. Although the planetary boundaries are described in terms of individual quantities and separate processes, the boundaries are tightly coupled. For instance, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions increase ocean acidification, land-use change often increases GHG emissions, and increasing nitrogen and phosphorus deplete species biodiversity and freshwater resources and increase warming from climate change.

The boundaries that are proposed represent a new approach to defining biophysical preconditions for human development. For the first time, quantified the safe limits outside of which the Earth system cannot continue to function in a stable, Holocene-like state

Planetary Boundaries and limits to growth

Various concepts exist to describe global environmental constraints: "carrying capacity", "sustainable consumption and production", "limits to growth", "tipping points", "footprints", "safe operating space" or "planetary boundaries". The concept of planetary boundaries which provides a powerful description of the global "adding-up" constraints across key dimensions

According to Mr. Rockström and others, we are already at critical levels of concern for climate change, fresh water, species biodiversity and changes to nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, which are reaching tipping points. For example, GHG emissions have led to average atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations being about 410 ppm. This is well above the 350 ppm level considered a 'safe' limit, and the earth is already about a degree Celsius warmer than average pre-industrial temperatures.

One may regard planetary boundaries as support systems for life on Earth or view them as expressing "carrying capacity" and defining "limits to growth".

- The latter is a thesis that was originally published nearly half a century ago by the Club of Rome as a book in 1972.
- It described the situation we would find ourselves in with exponential population and economic growth.
- While the "limits to growth" argument was challenged for good analytical reasons, *it still provided a lens through which to view the changing world of the 21st century*.
- It also offered the idea of thinking about a system as a whole — systems thinking — not just as separate parts and feedback mechanisms as valuable processes in considering long-term change.

The significance of inter-linkages approach for sustainability

The idea of sustainability has been embedded in the human imagination for a very long time and is expressed through our ideas of nature, society, economy, environment and future generations. But it became formally a part of international agreements and discourse when it was recognised at the Earth Summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.

Recently proposed Sustainable development goals (SDGs) include promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth as well as wellbeing for all. Economic activities ultimately depend on ecological assets and their capacity for provisioning primary resources and life supporting ecological services. Managing the latter is becoming a central issue for decision makers worldwide. Thus, living within the limits of the biosphere's ecological assets is a necessary condition for global sustainability, which can be quantitatively measured and must be met to achieve SDGs.

The systems view and the recognition of inter-linkages among the social, environmental, and economic pillars of sustainability, and between biophysical planetary boundaries and social conditions, are essential to have a chance of keeping the world safe for future generations. It is telling that scholars who work on planetary boundaries regard climate change as one of the easiest to manage and contain. For that,

- The world should live within the planetary boundaries through the deployment of new sustainable technologies and new global rules of the game.
- An orderly and cooperative process will lead to dramatically improved outcomes for all parts of the world.
- These transformations would only form a subset of a post-2015 agenda, since they do not fully address issues such as ending extreme poverty, gender equality, health, education

Needed a shared global framework

In the absence of a shared global framework individual countries fail to acknowledge planetary boundaries in national policymaking. They each scramble for scarce resources. Fossil fuel and food prices soar, and planetary boundaries are exceeded as the middle-income countries catch up with the high-income countries. The weakest countries find themselves pushed out of the marketplace and fail to develop. This zero-sum or negative-sum struggle can easily turn nasty. Richer countries will guard their advantage with military force if necessary

Rather than knowingly crossing the planetary boundaries, the world can agree and cooperate on living within the playing field they imply, by adopting improved technologies, stabilizing the world's population, and protecting threatened species and ecosystems.

Placing the world on such a "Sustainable Development Trajectory," must be a central objective of world nations.

Conclusion

In thinking about these planetary limits then, researchers and policymakers should reflect on multiple systems and the linkages among them, and whether step-by-step or transformative changes must be considered to keep the planet safe for the future.

25/09 - Turn the Economic Ship Around

Context:

Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus launched Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, which made capital available to the poor, especially women. His new book- *A World of Three Zeros: The New Economics of Zero Poverty, Zero Unemployment, and Zero Net Carbon Emissions*, the impact of microcredit in enabling millions of people to lift themselves out of poverty, helped to expose the shortcomings of a traditional banking system.

The low-income people in the world's richest nations were suffering from the same problems the poor faced in poorer nations: lack of institutional services, health care, inadequate education, substandard housing, and so forth. It is argued that problems of poverty are failures of our economic system.

The persistence of poverty, unemployment, and environmental destruction are failures of our economic system — and since the economic system was created by human beings, these failures can be corrected if human beings choose to replace that economic system with a new system that more accurately reflects human nature, human needs, and human desires.

Economics of social business

Critics argue that capitalism is associated with the unfair distribution of wealth and power and is mainly profit motive. As a result, only businesses designed around this goal are recognised and supported. Yet millions of people around the world are eager to pursue other goals, including the elimination of poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation. All three can be dramatically reduced if businesses are designed with these goals in mind. And that is where social business plays a crucial role.

What is the concept of Social Business?

According to Professor Muhammad Yunus, Social Business can be defined as A non-dividend company that is created to address and solve a social problem. It is a non-loss, Non-dividend Company, that means

- It is financially self-sustainable and hence it is free from the need to constantly attract new streams of donor funding to stay afloat.
- Profits realized by the business are reinvested in the business itself (or used to start other social businesses), with the aim of increasing social impact.
- Unlike a profit-maximizing business, the prime aim of a social business is not to maximize profits. Even social businesses are allowed to make profit with the condition that profit stays with the company; the owners will not take profit beyond the amount equivalent to investment.
- On the other hand, unlike a non-profit, a social business is not dependent on donations or on private or public grants to survive and to operate, because it is self-sustainable.
- Unlike a non-profit, where funds are spent only once on the field, funds in a social business are invested to increase and improve the business' operations on the field on an indefinite basis.

Social business offers advantages that are available neither to profit-maximising companies nor to traditional charities. The freedom from profit pressures and from the demands of profit-seeking investors helps make social businesses viable even in circumstances where the rate of return on an investment is near zero, but where the social return is very high.

Thus, the economics of social business can be simple and sustainable, as illustrated by successful experiments that have already been launched in both the developing world and the wealthy nations.

The combined power of Social business and technology

A social business owner who devises a product or service that helps the poor or benefits society in some other way may be able to attract a wide market by using social networking and other online tools to spread the word. Thanks to the Internet, good ideas can spread more rapidly, and proven business models can grow to scale more quickly and easily than ever. Health care, education, marketing, financial services, and many other economic arenas can be revolutionised through the combined power of social business and technology.

Social Business To Change the World By changing individuals, communities, villages, cities and countries

Social business introduces a totally revolutionary dimension to the free market economy. The satisfaction gained in achieving the stated social goals are the only motive behind the investment, and the business will be evaluated according to that standard.

Essentially it is a non-loss, non-dividend business aimed at social objectives education, health, environment, whatever is needed to address the problems faced by society. The profits here remain with the business and help it to grow further

Social business is about making complete sacrifice of financial reward from business. It is about total delinking from the old framework of business. It is not about accommodation of new objectives within the existing framework.

It's exciting to observe how these new economic concepts have been spreading around the globe through the efforts of entrepreneurs, executives, academics, students, and political leaders. Now it's time to apply the potential of social business to solving the problems of inequality, unemployment and environmental decay — which are referred by critics as symptoms of the broken engine of capitalism.

We owe it to future generations to begin moving towards a world of three zeros: zero poverty, zero unemployment, and zero net carbon emissions. A new economic system in which social business plays an essential role can enable us to achieve this goal.

Crisis of Capitalism

Humankind as a whole is living in a time of unparalleled prosperity, fuelled by revolutions in knowledge. This prosperity has changed the lives of many. Yet billions of people still suffer from poverty, hunger and disease. And in the last decade, several major crises like Economic recession have combined forces to bring even greater misery and frustration to the world's bottom 4 billion people.

Few people foresaw these crises. The 21st century began with high hopes and idealistic dreams, encapsulated in the UN initiative known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many of us were convinced that the coming decades would bring unprecedented wealth and prosperity, not just for a few but for all people on this planet.

The establishment of the MDGs led to significant progress on several fronts in the battle against poverty. The year 2008 was of the food price crisis, the oil price crisis, the financial crisis, and the ever-worsening environmental crisis. In combination, these crises caused a profound loss of faith among people who thought they had full understanding of and control over the global system.

For instance, early in 2008, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) reported dreadful news: more than 73 million people in 78 countries were facing the reality of reduced food rations. Since the June 2008 peak in global food prices, prices have continued to fluctuate, reaching another record high in 2011. As of 2016, they had fallen slightly, bringing a bit of short-term relief to millions. But continuing high food prices have created tremendous pressure in the lives of poor people, for whom basic food can consume as much as two-thirds of their income.

Need for redesign of international framework

We need to consider how the evolution of the world economy and, in particular, of the system whereby food is produced and distributed has led us to today's dilemma. Perhaps surprisingly, the economic, political, and business practices of the developed world have a profound impact on the availability of food in the poor nations of the world. Thus, solving the global food problem will require a redesign of the international framework, not merely a series of local or even regional reforms.

26/09 - Dairy of a very long year**Background:**

A top Army commander said the surgical strikes carried out last year at terror camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) were intended to convey the message that the Line of Control (LoC) can be breached whenever the need arises.

Lt Gen General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Northern Command, also ruled out any Doklam type stand-off between the armies of India and China in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), saying a multi-tier mechanism is in place to resolve any issue that may arise due to differences in perception of the border.

“The surgical strike was a point we wanted to drive home, that the Line of Control is not a line that cannot be breached. When we want to, we will be able to breach it, go across and strike when we need. This was the message we wanted to convey and we did,” he said.

It has been one year since the special forces of the Indian Army carried out surgical strikes to destroy terror Launchpad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on September 29, 2016.

It is important to take stock at this point on how India-Pakistan bilateral relations and the regional security situation have evolved over the past year since the strikes.

Success of Surgical Strikes

The challenge for New Delhi has been to develop a military response that does not cross Pakistan’s nuclear threshold, owing to the latter’s credible nuclear deterrence. It was the reason why the Indian army started planning a doctrine of waging a low-scale and swift conventional attack, known as the Cold Start doctrine, as early as 2004.

Then the Primary objective for having conducted the surgical strikes in September 2016 – eliminate and destroy terror launch-pads in PoK across the Line of Control (LoC). A large number of terrorist camps and launch pads exist across south and north of Pir Panjal, they have not decreased, so this kind of action is needed.

Surgical strikes must be seen as the Indian military response to Pakistan that does not cross the latter’s nuclear threshold. It can be seen as India’s attempt to make India’s response to Pakistan’s sub-conventional war. The Central government argues that surgical strikes have been a spectacular success.

Shift in India-Pakistan Relations after Surgical Strikes

Post-Surgical strikes, showing no appetite for a bilateral rapprochement; the two unfriendly neighbours have limited their interactions to firing across the borders in Jammu and Kashmir and calling each other names in global forums.

- In his first speech after the attack, PM gave a firm but measured response and made a point to distinguish between Pakistan’s people and its leadership.
- India’s foreign minister followed up with a sharp speech at the United Nations, which framed Pakistan-based terrorism as a global challenge and stepped up Indian rhetoric on Pakistani human rights abuses in Balochistan.

India’s diplomatic efforts over the years and in recent days seem to have increased pressure on Pakistan.

- The U.S. response to the earlier Uri attack has been far more supportive of India than in the past. Also stressed the need for Pakistan to take effective action against UN-designated terrorist individuals and entities, including Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Jaish-e-Muhammad and their affiliates.
- Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states broke from past precedence and unequivocally condemned the Uri attacks.
- Bhutan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh joined India in boycotting the summit of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Now the future direction of the foremost regional forum, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), remains unclear after India dropped out of the 2016 Islamabad summit in the wake of the Uri terror attack.
- At the United Nations General Assembly a few days ago, for instance, External Affairs Minister termed Pakistan a “pre-eminent exporter of terror” — to which Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, responded: “India is the mother of terrorism” in South Asia.

On the other hand, China has continued to back Pakistan while Russia staged military exercises (Friendship/Druzhba) in Pakistan, much to the disappointment of its close defence partner India.

In addition to it, the regional security situation remains embattled, thanks to confused American policies in South Asia, continuing turmoil in Afghanistan, heightening India-China rivalry, and the India-Pakistan hostility.

Regional stability

From a regional stability point of view, the surgical strikes do not seem to have had much of an adverse impact. The fact that Pakistan neither acknowledged the attacks nor responded in kind shows that the general deterrence between the South Asian nuclear rivals remains intact.

It is easy to talk about nuclear use and threaten nuclear retaliation but not easy to translate such talk into action. In that sense, the surgical strikes have called Pakistan’s nuclear bluff. And that certainly is good news for regional stability.

But such higher-level stability seems to have come with heightened lower-level instability. There are several sets of challenges that are more apparent today, one year after the surgical strikes.

- One, the India-Pakistan escalation ladder has become far more dangerous today it has ever been in the past one and a half decades, i.e. since the ceasefire was agreed to in 2003. The border stand-offs often lead to military, political and diplomatic escalation. It contributes to escalating an on-going crisis.
- Ever since the surgical strikes, Pakistan has been retaliating by increasing the pressure on the frontlines. The surgical strikes have reduced the critical distance between ceasefire violations and conventional escalation.
- The other challenge is more practical than theoretical. The risks of preventive strikes are unpredictable. Preventive strikes may have immense potential to lead up to a 'competition in risk-taking', a tendency already prevalent on the frontlines of the India-Pakistan border in J&K.

Need of the hour

- Despite the success, this strategy of punishment requires consistency and commitment and the momentum achieved by the surgical strikes has to be followed up on a continuous basis.
- Pakistan's responses thereafter of supporting insurgency in Kashmir, aiding infiltration across the border, and allegedly supporting attacks on the Indian army convoys and bases continued. This has to be controlled.
- They should be check on large number of terrorist camps and launch pads that exist across south and north of Pir Panjal.

Conclusion

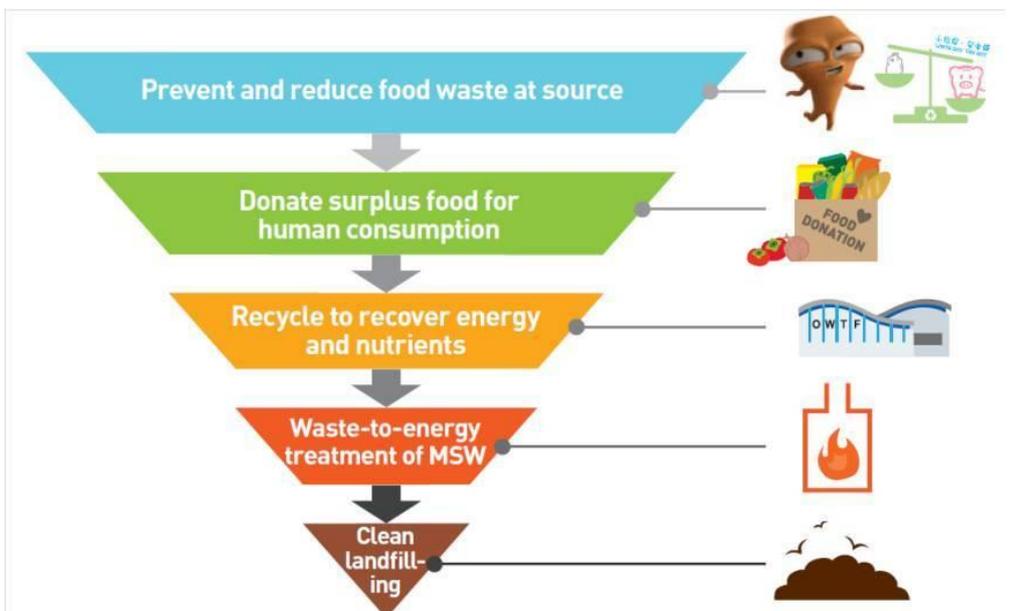
A year after the surgical strikes across the Line of Control, India must recover its role as a regional stabiliser

27/09 - Solving the food problems with more research

Context:

As the second goal of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals says: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture."

The world's population is booming. According to estimates, the global population is likely to exceed 9 billion by 2050, with 5 billion people in Asia alone. The capacity to produce enough quality food is falling behind human numbers. Food production in the region must keep pace, even as environment sustainability and economic development are ensured.



The answer to these challenges lies in research for sustainable development. As part of it, linking agricultural and nutritional outcomes is crucial.

Green revolution turned India into Food surplus nation, but malnutrition still prevails

India's fivefold increase in grain production over the past 50 years is largely the result of strong scientific research that has focussed on high-yielding crop varieties, better agronomic practices, and pro-farmer policies. However, India continues to face challenges such as food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in rural areas.

Malnutrition refers to the situation where there is an unbalanced diet in which some nutrients are in excess, lacking or wrong proportion i.e. under nutrition or over-nutrition. Despite India's growth in GDP since 1991 more than one third of the world's malnourished children live in India.

The World Bank estimates that India is one of the highest ranking countries in the world for the number of children suffering from malnutrition.

The 2017 Global Hunger Index (GHI) Report ranked India 97th out of 118 countries with a serious hunger situation. Amongst South Asian nations, it ranks third behind only Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Government of India has launched several programs like ICDS, National Children's Fund and National Health Mission to converge the growing rate of under nutrition children. Improving nutrition is a major goal of these agricultural programmes and policies.

However, substantial evidence confirms that increases in agricultural production alone and/or increased income do not necessarily translate into improved diets and nutrition without concurrent and well-designed nutrition education and behaviour change approaches, women's empowerment and inter-sectoral collaboration.

Growing focus on integrating agri production, nutrition and health

Though providing the world's growing urban population with safe and healthy food is a huge challenge, it also provides an opportunity for creativity. Government and implementing organizations have been assisted to promote food and dietary diversification through integrated farming systems, including crops, orchards, livestock and fisheries.

Integrating agricultural production, nutrition, and health is emerging as a key focal point throughout Asia, with policymakers shifting their attention to the role of biodiversity and the power of local farming systems to improve nutritional status.

It is now well accepted, that in order to make agriculture work for nutrition, agricultural production and markets must improve access to diversified nutrient-dense foods from all the food groups, i.e. vegetables, fruits, animal-source foods, legumes, nuts, oilseeds and fats to balance and complement staples

- There is considerable potential in targeting underused crops such as millets, pulses, and vegetables as a sustainable means of increasing agricultural production and improving nutrition and health in high-need areas.
- In one project, researchers tested the sustainable use of traditional crops, vegetables, and fruit trees, as well as greater livestock diversity, to increase income and improve food and nutrition security in rural India.
- This project demonstrated that in three Indian "agro-biodiversity hotspots", home gardens could provide households with up to 135 kg of legumes, vegetables, tubers, leafy greens, and gourds per year — more than double the amount of vegetables they were buying in local markets.
- These crops add value to existing farming systems by providing an additional source of income and/or more nutritious food for the family.
- The Food Security Act of 2013 was welcome, as was the inclusion of millets in the Public Distribution System as millets are superior to common grains in many ways and are also climate-resilient.
- Bio-fortification is also important in overcoming hidden hunger caused by micronutrient deficiencies such as iron, iodine, zinc, vitamin A, and vitamin B12.

How empowering women helps improved nutrition?

Studies show that women make up nearly half of agricultural labourers, yet they carry out approximately 70% of all farm work. Women are among the most disadvantaged because they are typically employed as marginal workers, occupying low-skilled jobs such as sowing and weeding.

Empowering women is one of the best ways to improve nutrition. Research needs to continue focussing on the needs of women farmers to ensure that they are the direct recipients of development impacts, such as access to markets and income, to improve theirs and their children's access to adequate and diversified diets.

Several recent review papers have also concluded that interventions which promote good complementary feeding practices have a high potential to improve the nutritional status of children and should focus on improved access to complementary foods that are nutrient dense and affordable. Nutrition education, especially of women, is thus becoming increasingly accepted as a powerful intervention strategy.

Investing in Research

Most importantly, it is crucial to continue to identify issues and seek evidence-based solutions through research. Building on the momentum of recent efforts by the government to improve understanding of India's nutritional situation, there is considerable potential in building partnerships to extend the reach of research for

development and to improve the connections between agricultural and nutritional research with extension services and policy. Taking a multisectoral approach that links agricultural and nutritional outcomes will help India sustainably grow, feed its people, and maintain the agricultural sector over the coming decades.

India's research community is poised to be a leader in meeting new food challenges by increasing food quantity and quality to improve food security and nutrition. The world needs to tap into India's research excellence to experiment, innovate, share knowledge, and scale up effective solutions.

Along with investing more in research, following challenges to be tackled for food security.

- Increase yields, profitability and environmental sustainability simultaneously
- Develop the varieties and breeds needed for sustainable food systems
- Decrease food loss and waste through more efficient distribution systems
- Create and share resources that serve all populations
- Ensure inclusive and equitable food systems
- Address the dual burdens of under-nutrition and obesity to ensure full human potential
- Ensure a safe and secure food supply that protects and improves public health

Conclusion

Given that the emphasis on enhancing agriculture's impact on nutrition is relatively new, some key knowledge gaps exist on the relative mix of components and the extent of their integration that make implementation most effective. The institutional aspects of programme delivery, technical capacities with major focus on research and intersectoral collaboration should be well understood. It is important to know which type of programmes delivers the greatest benefit to target beneficiaries and are likely to have the greatest impact.

28/09 - Falling off the health-care radar

Context:

National Health Policy, 2017 (NHP, 2017) seeks to reach everyone in a comprehensive integrated way to move towards wellness. It aims at achieving universal health coverage and delivering quality health care services to all at affordable cost.

The policy recognises the growing need for rehabilitative care for all geriatric illnesses and advocates the continuity of care across all levels. However, the National Health Policy, 2017, has failed to discuss anything substantive in relation to health problems particularly faced by the old-age population of the country.



With rising age, numerous physiological changes occur and the risk of chronic diseases rises. The co-occurrence of chronic diseases and disability elevates the risk of mortality. Recent report, "Caring for Our Elders: Early Responses, India Ageing Report – 2017 (UNFPA)", complements the NHP by focussing on the vulnerability of the aged to NCDs, recent policy initiatives and the role of non-governmental organisations in building self-help groups and other community networks.

While all this is valuable, it fails to make a distinction between the aged in general and those suffering from chronic conditions. It matters as many suffering from chronic conditions and disabilities may find it harder to participate in such networks.

Introduction

It is well-known fact that India enjoys a rich demographic dividend. The population between the age group of 18 and 35 years accounts for almost 65% of the total. This is considered to be one of the key drivers for India's growth in the near future. While this is an important aspect, the story concerning our country's old age citizens must not be neglected.

What are the weaknesses of our health system w.r.t elderly care?

- The health system is ill-equipped to deal with surging NCDs(Non Communicable diseases);
- The staffs are not well trained to treat/advise the aged suffering from dementia or ill-health, and for early diagnosis and management of conditions such as hypertension.
- The quality of medical care is abysmal
- Hospitalisation costs are exorbitant and impoverishing.
- Health insurance covers a fraction of medical expenses incurred.

However, many of these chronic conditions such as hypertension can be prevented or delayed by engaging in healthy behaviours. Physical activity and healthy diets can mitigate these conditions. Others could be managed effectively if detected early such as diabetes. Supportive families and community networks often make a significant difference.

Why is no of aged people who are suffering from NCDs increasing?

Based on the *India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2015*, among aged males and females (over 60 years) , the proportions of those suffering from NCDs nearly doubled during 2005-12, accounting for about a third of the respective populations in 2012. More females than males suffered from these diseases. The proportions were higher among those over 70, and these doubled in the age groups 60-70 years and over 70.

A vast majority of those with NCDs had access to medical advice and treatment and the proportion remained unchanged during 2005-12. A sharp deterioration in the quality of medical services, the proportions suffering from NCDs have shot up despite high access.

Access to government health insurance nearly doubled but remained low as barriers for the aged remain widespread such as fulfilling eligibility criteria, slow reimbursement and a lack of awareness of procedures. In any case, the proportion of medical expenses covered was meagre.

Loneliness poses serious health risks

Loneliness is a perceived isolation that manifests in the distressing feeling that accompanies discrepancies between one's desired and actual social relationships. The link between loneliness and mortality is mediated by unhealthy behaviours and morbidity. The fact that loneliness predicts health outcomes even if health behaviours are unchanged suggests that loneliness alters physiology at a more fundamental level. Research shows that loneliness increases vascular resistance and diminishes immunity.

Shattering of the spousal bond in old age poses serious health risks. In 2005, old females with NCDs were twice as likely to live in single member households than the corresponding males. In 2012, while the females were two and a half times more likely to be living in single member households, the share of males rose more than moderately. In effect, old females with NCDs became much lonelier.

The widowed were much higher among the females in 2005. Both male and female proportions of those married doubled in 2012 but the latter remained larger. So if we look at households with 2-4 members, we find that the proportion of aged females with NCDs living in them was much higher than that of males in 2005, and both rose rapidly, especially the latter.

So it is arguable that family support more than compensated for the sharp rise in loneliness. An important point is that today, 'women are increasingly filling other roles, which provides them with greater security in older age. But these shifts also limit the capacity of women and families to provide care for older people who need it'.

In addition to loneliness, a high risk factor for NCDs is daily consumption of alcohol, especially local beverages. Daily consumption of alcohol among the aged with NCDs rose more than twice over the period 2005-2012. Banning of liquor sales in a few States hasn't helped because of strong resistance from vested interests including politicians and expansion of illicit sales.

Networking as support

Children often play an important role in elderly support with the caution that filial piety shows signs of diminishing. That social networks are effective in providing support to the aged is far from accepted as there are questions of size of a network, whether it is proximal or non-proximal and whether there is social harmony. If social networks are instrumental in bonding together in periods of personal crises, this could compensate for a lack of family support, e.g. widows living alone, and help alleviate morbidity.

The IHDS also provides data on inter-caste and village conflicts, with the proportion of those suffering from NCDs living in villages that experienced inter-caste or other conflicts more than doubling during 2005-2012. Lack of social harmony induces helplessness, disruption of medical supplies and network support.

The World Report on Ageing and Health 2015 (WHO) is emphatic about what is known as ageing in place, that is the ability of older people to live in their own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income or level of intrinsic capacity. Ageing in place can be further enhanced by creating age-friendly environments that enable mobility and allow them to engage in basic activities. This reinforces the case that solutions to those with chronic diseases lie within but also outside health systems.

Need of the hour

- From a policy perspective, health systems have to be configured to deal with not one NCD but multiple NCDs to manage them better.
- The impact of multi-morbidity on an old person's capacity, health-care utilisation and the costs of care are significantly larger than the summed effects of each.
- Besides, the reconfigured medical system must be complemented by stronger family ties and social networks.

Conclusion

Indian population has approximately tripled during the last 50 years, but the number of elderly Indians (aged 60 plus) has increased by more than four times. In India, the population of elder persons will cross 18% figure. It is against this backdrop that one should realise the need to look into the existing policy regime dealing with care and maintenance of elderly people.

29/09 - Will Swachh Bharat Abhiyan be a success?

Background:

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a campaign which was launched on 2 October 2014, and aims to eradicate open defecation by 2019, and is a national campaign, covering 4,041 statutory cities and towns. Its predecessors were the "Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan" and before that the "Total Sanitation Campaign".

It is reported that the idea was developed and initiated in March 2014 after a sanitation conference was organised by UNICEF India and the Indian Institute of Technology as part of the larger Total Sanitation Campaign, which the Indian government launched in 1999.

The government is aiming to achieve an Open-Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2 October 2019, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, by constructing 12 million toilets in rural India.

Swachhta Abhiyan has turned into a National Movement

A sense of responsibility has been evoked among the people through the Clean India Movement. With citizens now becoming active participants in cleanliness activities across the nation, the dream of a 'Clean India' once seen by Mahatma Gandhi has begun to get a shape.

People from different sections of the society have come forward and joined this mass movement of cleanliness. From government officials to jawans, bollywood actors to the sportspersons, industrialists to spiritual leaders, all have lined up for the noble work. Millions of people across the country have been day after day joining the cleanliness initiatives of the government departments, NGOs and local community centres to make India clean. Organising frequent cleanliness campaigns to spreading awareness about hygiene through plays and music is also being widely carried out across the nation.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has become a 'Jan Andolan' receiving tremendous support from the people. Citizens too have turned out in large numbers and pledged for a neat and cleaner India. Taking the broom to sweep the streets, cleaning up the garbage, focussing on sanitation and maintaining a hygienic environment have become a practice after the launch of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

People have started to take part and are helping spread the message of 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.'



From Behavior Change to Social Change

SBM was envisaged to be community led people's movement with focus on behavioural change and not just construction of toilets. Other than ensuring hygiene, waste management and sanitation, the mission has been focusing on removing the bottlenecks that were hinder the progress in terms of capacity building, coordination, logistics, finance etc.

How are we faring on the toilet construction front?

In the short span of three years, about 50 million toilets have been constructed in rural India, increasing the coverage from 39% to 69% now; another 3.8 million have sprung up in cities and towns and another 1.4 million are presently under construction. As against this, only 300,000 toilets were built during the 10-year period between 2004 and 2014.

- So far, 248,000 villages have been revived from the disgrace of open defecation; 203 districts, over one-third of the total, have banished open defecation.
- Five States have declared themselves Open Defecation Free (ODF) in rural areas: Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand and Haryana.
- About 1,200 of our cities and towns, about one-third of the total, have already become ODF.
- More importantly, all ODF claims are scrutinised by third-party independent verification.
- As per an independent survey released by Quality Council of India in August 2017, overall national rural "household access to toilet" coverage increased to 62.45 per cent and usage of 91.29 per cent, with Haryana topping the national ranking with 99 per cent of households in rural areas covered and usage of 100 per cent.

One might cynically argue that building toilets is easier than putting them to use. This is valid only up to a point. Credible surveys show that 85% of toilets built under this mission are being used. Long-inculcated or forced habits take time to change, but they definitely will.

SBM campaign can transform the lives of Indian women

SBM is not a campaign to just clean India, but has a much deeper significance. If successful, this campaign can transform the lives of Indian women, bringing in its scope issues of women's safety, their access to higher education and will even challenge the caste system.

All houses being built under the 'Housing for All' mission will have toilets and the title will vest in the name of women, either individually or jointly. This is about women's empowerment, freeing them from domestic subjugation besides liberating them from humiliating open defecation.

Proper integration of various components of the sanitation chain such as ensuring water supply, seepage management, sewerage networks, prevention of manual scavenging and solid waste management form the key for the Swachh Bharat Mission. Given the efforts underway to make this chain work, the way forward is towards a Clean India.

SBM Urban component needs more fund allocation

- For 2017-18, the government has allocated ₹13,948 crore for the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) project; for the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) project, the allocation was merely ₹2,300 crore. This has to be seen in the light of the 2011 Census, according to which 31.16% of the total population lives in urban areas.
- Also, the growth of population in urban areas is 32% over a decade and rural is 12%.
- In urban areas, huge landfill sites running beyond capacity are the biggest problem.
- Decentralisation, segregation of garbage at source, and encouraging community/household treatment of waste is the only viable alternative.
- These alternatives have been successfully implemented at various places including Alappuzha in Kerala. The Centre for Science and Environment, in its survey of June 2016, assessed Alappuzha as the one of the leading cities in terms of innovation and improvement of the SWM, but the government's Swachh Survekshan rated it poorly, which reflects the ill-conceived direction of SBM-U and its assessment parameters.

Need of the hour

- The components of the problem in urban areas are very different from those in rural areas. A case study (Annual Status of Education Report) done in 2016 revealed that as many as 96.5% of rural elementary government schools

had toilets, but more than one in four toilets (27.79%) were dysfunctional or locked. So importance should be given to the upkeep, maintenance and sustainability of these community infrastructures.

- The focus of the SBM-G should be on behavioural change; the guidelines also require that 8% of the funds be allocated for information, education and communication activities. But during 2016-17, up to January 2017 only 1% of the total expenditure had been made on information, education and communication.
- Swachh Survekshan is a ranking exercise to assess rural and urban areas for their levels of cleanliness and active implementation of Swachhata mission initiatives in a timely and innovative manner. It should be implemented successfully every year.
- Empowerment holds the key to change, but that would depend on breaking caste barriers through education and economic uplift. Compensation sanctioned for the families of those who died in the course of the humiliating and hazardous work should be paid immediately;
- Modernising the sewer lines and septic tanks and investing money and energy on smart techniques of sanitation

Conclusion

Today swachh Bharath mission and ODF has become a household name among children, women and men, evoking in them a sense of responsibility and pride in keeping their surroundings clean. The on-going mass mobilisation campaign 'Swachhata Hi Seva' highlights sanitation as the real service to the nation. We owe a 'Swachh Bharat' to the Mahatma on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary in 2019.

30/09 - New U.S. policy can boost Indo-Afghan security ties: Abdullah Abdullah

Background:

During his recent visit, Chief executive participated at the India-Afghanistan Trade & Investment Show which was inaugurated on September 27, 2017 by Finance Minister. He delivered Lecture on 'Regional Peace-building' at the Indian Council of World Affairs.

The outcomes of recent visit

- Both sides positively assessed the recent developments in bilateral relations, including the outcomes of the recently concluded meeting of the Strategic Partnership Council.
- The 'New Development Partnership' was described as paving the way for the new generation partnership in development cooperation between the two countries aimed at community development, infrastructure creation and human resource and capacity building in Afghanistan.
- The Indian leadership reiterated its support for all efforts to build stable, secure, peaceful, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.
- Both sides condemned the continuing acts of terror and violence in Afghanistan, including the recent attack at the Kabul airport. It was agreed the issue of safe havens and sanctuaries needs to be addressed effectively.
- A Memorandum of Understanding on technical cooperation on police training and development was signed. This has created an enabling framework for training and capacity building of Afghan National Police personnel in various fields in addition to India's on-going assistance for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.
- Trade and Economic cooperation was also the focus of discussions.
- Better connectivity was emphasised upon. In this context, both sides expressed determination to strengthen the Air Freight Corridor and also welcomed the steps being taken to operationalise the Chahbahar port, including the forthcoming supply of wheat to Afghanistan from October 2017.
- Afghanistan was invited to participate in the International Solar Alliance Summit meeting being held in India in December 2017 and also to the World Food Processing Show being held in November 2017 in India that would enable the Afghan businessmen to engage with the international markets.

Introduction

The new U.S. policy in Afghanistan is an "opportunity" for India-U.S.-Afghanistan cooperation on security as well as development issues, says Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

How important is the MoU on technical and training cooperation signed during the visit?

The MoU is an important step in the security sector. India's support has been comprehensive here and has always looked at the priorities and the wishes of the Afghan government and people.

Chief Executive's visit to India had two parts:

- One was the bilateral meetings where the entire gamut of bilateral relations and areas of cooperation from security to trade and investment were being discussed.
- The other part was the trade and investment show which was ***cooperation between the U.S., Afghanistan and India***. Lots of businessmen and women had the opportunity to interact and bond.

Do recent MoUs represent a bigger picture, in which India takes a larger security role, and the India-Afghanistan-U.S. trilateral emerges as an axis?

India has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years in many ways. The United States has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years.

- The cooperation between India and Afghanistan had a security element throughout, like the helicopters India transferred, or training Afghan troops.
- What was added to that was the announcement of the U.S. policy, which is an opportunity to take this relationship to the trilateral level as well. Hence it is going to be a good opportunity for India to take a larger security role.

Opportunity for India still exists even after Indian Defence Minister said that there will be no Indian boots on the ground in Afghanistan. Because

- India has always behaved as a friend to Afghanistan, and wished for a stable and democratic country, and an Afghanistan at peace, within and without, contributing to the prosperity of the region.
- Based on this shared vision, India has been ready to provide assistance based on Afghanistan priorities, as presented by its people and government.

India's role in Afghanistan has been important, contributing to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, contributing to country's wellbeing and is appreciated by country's people.

Is there still a chance of reconciliation for Afghanistan government with the Taliban?

The policy has been constant in the past 16 years. The door for talks and negotiations is always open. Periodically there have been contacts, messages communicated to the government. People of Afghanistan are supportive of the talks, but at the same time, won't give up their achievements, including the Constitution.

The story of reconciliation in Afghanistan is much deeper than this. Afghans were fighting against the Soviets, as a result of which millions of people were refugees, hundreds of thousands were killed. In national interest, a unified Afghanistan is important. They shouldn't get stuck in the past, even if they can't forgive or forget. There were some incidents of revenge that did happen.

The people who were responsible for the killing of thousands in the past were still around, but the spirit of reconciliation is still important.

The new U.S. policy has seen a mere 3,000 plus troops from the U.S. When a force strength of 100,000 didn't finish the Taliban, how do you think this will?

The important thing from the U.S., apart from troops and military hardware, is the clarity of the message.

- The clarity that this policy is not time-bound, but condition-based, with a regional component.
- The bulk of the responsibility is on the shoulders of Afghan soldiers and of the people they support.
- That is the hope, not just for individuals but it is the support for a free, unified, democratic Afghanistan with equal rights for men and women.

Could Afghanistan become the ground for yet another 'Great Game', given that there are now two distinct camps with U.S. and Europe on one side and Russia China, even Iran and Pakistan on the other?

Major global powers like Russia and China and regional powers like Iran are now ready to embrace the Taliban — in their own interest, but ostensibly for peace in Afghanistan.

The security situation in Afghanistan is getting worse by the day. As the civil war continues and number of deaths rise, Western and regional stakeholders are deeply worried and realigning themselves in Afghanistan.

- The most prominent but opposing groups are the Afghan Taliban and the Islamic State. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) welcomed disgruntled Taliban fighters in its ranks and has become a dangerous force.
- ISKP emerged simultaneously as US forces began withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2015. It has drastically changed the strategic landscape and war dynamics in Afghanistan as regional alliances began shifting.
- Pakistan's ISI created the Taliban and has used it to destabilise the "unfriendly" governments in Kabul. Pakistan, having deep strategic interest in Afghanistan, always played a double game with Kabul through its influence over the Taliban. But now Pakistan is faced with a bigger enemy — the Islamic State.
- Afghanistan-Pakistan-India relations are a complicated narrative. India has always tried to reach Afghanistan over the head of Pakistan and develop close strategic relations with Kabul. In May 2017, Delhi offered USD 1 billion to Kabul as economic assistance. However, India is the only major power that does not have any communication channel with the Taliban or ISKP.
- Tentative US attempts to contact the Taliban in the past have not produced any positive results. Even after 16 years of Operation Enduring Freedom there is no peace in sight.
- Russia, after being ousted from the country in 1988, has developed links with the Taliban. Moscow has always called Taliban a terrorist organisation and supported the Northern Alliance. But now with the presence of ISIL, Russia has changed its position, primarily because it does not want Central Asian Republics to come under the influence of ISKP extremism.
- Though (Shiite) Iran supports the current government, it has also developed clandestine links over the past few years with the Taliban. The presence of (Sunni) ISKP on its borders is bad news for Tehran. Besides, Iran has always opposed US presence in Afghanistan, but since the Taliban fights US forces it is only natural that Tehran would maintain links with the Taliban.
- China while assisting Kabul in fighting terrorism has maintained links with the Taliban. China certainly does not want ISKP's fundamentalism spreading to the Xinjiang province bordering Afghanistan. China wants to help resolve the conflict as it has invested billions of dollars in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Saudi Arabia which has been deeply involved in Afghanistan maintains dual tracks — supporting President and funding the Taliban.

All the powers know that there is no military solution to this conflict. Peace will not come to Afghanistan as long as the stakeholders pull Afghanistan in different directions. So need of the hour is to bring back the [global] consensus that existed in 2001 [post fall of Taliban], that was a very broad one with very few exceptions.

Rajya Sabha TV: Synopsis

India's World – Korean crisis: is the war the only option?

Link: <https://youtu.be/VXQ9UvICtJY>

North Korea has recently in 2017 **improved its nuclear weapons** capability, increasing tensions **against the US and its allies**. It has been threatening US and neighbour South Korea by successfully conducting intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) tests. **US** president Donald Trump has also responded **back by tough words** pointing that US can reply by its military solutions with fire and fury. These latest developments are also compared to the **Cuban missile crisis** (1962) between Soviet and US during the Cold War.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Korea was divided into two zones along the **38th parallel** after the end of WW II in **1945**, with the northern half of the peninsula occupied by the **Soviet Union** and southern half by the **US**. Before this it was under **Japanese control since 1910** which had industrialised the peninsula and exploited Koreans mainly for benefiting Japan.

ANALYSIS:

- **North Korea-US relations** are **hostile** till date that developed primarily during the Korean War. The two nations are **separated by the Pacific Ocean**. Since the Korean War, US has maintained a strong military presence in South Korea.
- **North Korea (DPRK)** is a one-party state under a **totalitarian dictatorship**. It maintains a huge number of military forces as per its '**military-first**' policy. It has a military nuclear weapons program. Also, after US and Russia, it ranks 3rd in possessions of chemical weapons.
- North Korea has been conducting nuclear tests since 2006. As a result, **several sanctions** have been imposed by various countries and international bodies. **Latest Resolution 2371, by UN** in August 2017 tightened economic sanctions for the 6th time over DPRK in response to its July 2017 missile tests. The latest tests have resulted in missiles which flew over Japan and DPRK threatening Guam (US).
- **US** which has all three types of weapons of mass destruction, a very strong army, naval and air forces also responded with strong words. Trump has also warned of sending US Carl Vinson super carrier and its carrier strike group to Korea.

The use of any kind of weapons of mass destruction or armed conflicts on large scale will lead to :

1. Casualties and losses as had occurred during the Korean War or the larger scale world wars which involved more countries of the world.
2. Major economic problems in Korea and other countries like Japan, South Korea and China.
3. Rise in debt levels of US.
4. Severe effect on global supply chains.
5. South Korea is the biggest producer of liquid crystal displays in the world (40% of the global total) and the second biggest of semiconductors (17% market share). It is also a key automotive manufacturer and home to the world's three biggest shipbuilders. If South Korean production is badly damaged by a war there would be shortages across the world which would last for a few years.
6. Migration of refugees from North Korea to China, Japan or nearby countries.

Conclusion:

It should be better if some **diplomatic solutions** instead of this continued "**frozen war**" involving both show of words and missile tests comes up. Also, **China** which supplies a lot of different supplies and aid to DPRK and is also its largest trading partner should take some steps which help towards controlling these tests of the totalitarian North Korea.

The Big Picture – Takeaways from 2017 BRICS Summit

Link: <https://youtu.be/DImX80ZtHQI>

Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping had their first bilateral meeting since the **Doklam standoff**. This meeting at the **9th BRICS summit** (3rd-5th September 2017) in Xiamen, China came just a few days after 28 August 2017 when both the countries announced that they had withdrawn all their troops from the face-off site in Doklam. The summit was reported as being forward-looking and **focussed on healthy and stable India-China ties** with talks about peace and tranquillity along their border.

Analysis:

- The Doklam impasse is now over, with New Delhi emerging on equal terms despite withdrawing the troops. But, with such meetings both nations need to develop relations and mechanisms so that such situations are prevented in future along the border.
- **Terror attacks were condemned** by the leaders and Pakistan based terror groups (Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad) with global terror groups (Haqqani network, Islamic State and al-Qaida) were mentioned from the Chinese territory. This is the first time anti-India groups have been **named in a BRICS declaration**.
- Among **five guests invited** (Thailand, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya and Tajikistan), **Pakistan was not**. This indirectly points to China's favour to India on the issue of terrorism.
- There was **no mention of the Belt and Road Initiative** in the Xiamen Declaration. India and Bhutan have strong reservations on this initiative.
- Though global issues like climate change, terrorism, solar alliance, promoting effective use of fossil fuels, etc were discussed, there is need for India and China to increase cooperation on **other bilateral issues** like **river water** (Brahmaputra) **data sharing**, entry of Indian pharmaceutical companies in China, etc.
- Chinese economic expansion with other countries is also parallel to its military expansions like in South Asia also (South China Sea near Philippines).
- India-China relations are entering a very difficult stage with standoffs occurring in 2013 (Aksai Chin region) and 2014 (Chumar, Eastern Ladakh) as well and, this is quite a natural process for two large nations with very large economies and growing capabilities.
- It is a rare scenario that meetings are held in completely peaceful time between both the nations, so India and China need to look at other relevant topics in parallel which will be **beneficial for development of both the nations**. But, mere good meetings and positive declarations don't point that relations are good in every aspect. Doklam standoff occurred on 16th June 2017, just after the Astana meet of SCO (7th-10th June 2017). So, India needs to be prepared to play tough balancing acts as the need may arise.

The Way Ahead:

The way forward is to **enhance strategic communications**. Building strong strategic partnerships meetings of state leaders is essential but **meetings at senior and junior levels** should also be done frequently between government, military officials and academic level. China and US are maintaining a lot more dialogues frequently and India needs to learn from that. **BRICS is thus a possible platform** where many of these issues can be settled down. China and India need to look forward so that this **five-nation group of major emerging economies** keeps on moving in good terms.

The Big Picture – Mumbai floods: The Urban Infrastructure Challenge

Link: <https://youtu.be/Jn7Zi1cmf7s>

Flooding occurred in Mumbai on 29th August 2017 as the metro city recorded nearly **300mm of rainfall** during that day. This event comparable to the **2005 floods** (944mm rainfall on 26th July 2005) in Mumbai resulted in water-logging, halting of all three modes of transport, power-cuts and some casualties as well. Big cities like **Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru also** have slowed down during heavy rains.

Analysis:

- Though flooding occurred because of heavy rains, but **lessons had to be learnt** from the earlier 2005 flooding and failures in Mumbai. The **2013 North India floods** due to cloudburst in Uttarakhand, and **2015 South Indian floods** resulting from NE monsoon that mainly hit Chennai had caused huge losses as well.

- Such disasters of urban flooding are bound to come owing to the kind of **haphazard development projects being carried out** by builders in these cities. These are **man-made disasters to some extent**. These are **recent Indian phenomenon**, not heard in other countries of the world.
- Further, **drainages**, both natural and man-made, get **blocked due to fillings** by mud, plastic, etc. To prevent havoc of flooding, these drainages **should be cleaned** in advance as a **preventive action** and **awareness** should be created among people as well. Issues like encroachments in river bed and dumping of garbage, and other pollutants in rivers and lakes also need to be solved.
- Several decades **old drainage system** in India should be improved as they are unfit to meet the demands of the present population. Urban government should use **technology like satellite imagery data** through **Bhuvan** (a software application developed by ISRO) and **National Urban Information System (NUIS)** to map natural drains. Unauthorised construction activities in natural drainage areas should be checked. This will help the **water to take its natural course**.
- Water should be taken as a factor while constructing and making architectures of buildings (**water-centric approach**).
- Mumbai faces high tides which result in backflow of water. Improvements like construction of gates should be done to prevent this from causing losses to human lives.
- **Various agencies** of governments should **coordinate their works** with municipality. Schemes like **AMRUT (2015) and JNNURM (2005)** aimed at improving infrastructure and ensure adequate robust sewage network for urban transformation.
- The **NDRF**, under Ministry of Home Affairs formed under Disaster Management Act, 2005 has well trained, equipped and energetic personnel of CRPF, BSF, etc. It has given **commendable performance** during various disasters. The **SDRF at state level**, on the other hand, is only 'filling the gap' and **needs to improve a lot**. Also, communication and co-ordination of various government agencies and NGOs should be improved.
- Technology for forecasting floods of urban cities needs to be made available like the one for river flooding present with Central Water Commission. **A model needs to be developed by Indian Meteorological Department relating occurrence of flood in cities** with rainfall to increase the lead time available for response.

Conclusion:

Though climate change and other effects on environment may be the reason for these floods, they are also aggravated and occur frequently in big cities because of anthropogenic activities. There is a **need to integrate all the development activities and urban governance**. Various organizations and NGOs need to be better equipped and also coordinate with each other. **Disaster management consists of various steps in which early preparedness must be focused upon to prevent such incidents in future.**

The Big Picture – Takeaways from Abe visit

Link: <https://youtu.be/oXC63n7Bs8o>

Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi and his **Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe** met at the **12th India-Japan annual summit** and signed **15 agreements** recently to strengthen cooperation in the **Asia Pacific region**. The agreements were done on **various issues** including Disaster Risk Management, Skills Development, Connectivity, Investments, Civil Aviation, Science & Technology and focussed on improving **people to people relation** as well. The main highlight was the massive high-speed **Bullet train project** between Ahmedabad and Mumbai at a cost of Rs.1.1 lakh crores.

Analysis:

1. The **political relations** of India and Japan, that were enemies during WW II, have remained **warm since India's independence**. **Japanese companies** like Sony and Honda have invested in India and people from both the countries have made **cultural exchanges** too, primarily due to **Buddhism**.
2. The **bilateral trade** between the two nations was **\$13.48 billion** and Japanese FDI in India was \$4.7 billion in **2016-17** and India remains an **attractive investment destination** for Japan. Economic relations between both have vast potential for growth, as **Japan finds market** for their sophisticated engineering & various kinds of infrastructure facilities in India, and it is expected to reach \$50 billion by 2019-20.

3. MoU was signed to set up **India Japan Act East Forum** to enhance connectivity and promote developmental projects in **India's Northeast region**. Japan has a historic connection to the Northeast which are the country's **gateway to ASEAN members**.
4. The signing of **bullet train** project is good as it connects two big cities and reduces the time of travel. But, the **primary responsibility** at present is to focus upon **protection and maintenance of our own railways**. Hopefully, introduction of this well-proven Japanese train project may make our railways to learn and improve from it.
5. But for bilateral relations, **strategy is more important** than just economic takeaways. Improving relations with Japan provides a **natural counterbalance to China** and check its hegemony which was recently engaged over the **Doklam issue** with India. The trilateral naval exercise (**Malabar**) between **US, Japan and India** is important. USA has already its seventh fleet deployed in Yokosuka, Japan. Also, Shinzo Abe has talked about the Quadrilateral Dialogue, which runs in the background, and includes **Australia**
6. The summit also talked about **terror** that originates in Pakistan, that was recently also mentioned in the BRICS summit. It is symbolic to Pakistan to clean up its house, as this issue is being highlighted by various countries now.
7. India should increase its view and focus upon **the huge oceanic regions** which has Andaman, Lakshadweep, South China Sea, etc. To improve its security operations there, it needs to upgrade itself with more advanced and efficient flying boats like the **ShinMaywa US-2** already offered by Japanese. South China Sea is a region claimed by China, and India should combat China when it claims the region as their territory, if it wants **to be a major power in Asia**.
8. The **Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)**, an economic cooperation between India and Japan, is also important in providing an answer to **China's Belt & Road initiative**.

Conclusion:

Improving relations with **technologically advanced Japan** is a good step and provides way forward for other **developmental projects in India**. Moreover, being a **counterbalance to China**, this relation can help India in improving its **Look East Policy** and open its gateways in **Indo-Pacific region**. Japan would also benefit and may like to improve its relations with **ASEAN members**, where India already has good relations with countries like Indonesia and Philippines.

Security Scan – Terrorism in South Asia – Ideology & Finance

Link: <https://youtu.be/zQfCxRc5Ic>

Terrorism which is used to **intentionally create violence** to achieve a **political, religious or ideological aim** has become a talk of international politics. It is originating largely from **parts of South West Asia** which are affected by **political instability** most of the time. An account relating to their finance is pointed out by the **2017 Basel AML Index** which annually ranks countries risk regarding money laundering/ terrorism financing. It places India's neighbourhood nations in top 50 – Afghanistan (2), Nepal (14), Sri Lanka (25) and Pakistan (46) – among 146 nations. This is important as terrorism can't survive only based on ideology; it needs a finance and some state backing to sustain on a large scale.

Analysis:

Terrorism is mainly a **political struggle for power** by radicalisation of certain people. It arises when there is lack of normal **means and freedom to express one's views**. Therefore, other underground and violent means are taken to do so. This happens generally in nations which **lack a democratic establishment** (though the equation is actually somewhat complex) like some of the West Asian countries and Pakistan.

The **Mujahideen** engaged in **Jihad** mainly originated during the **1980s Soviet-Afghan war**. It was a **proxy war fought by US** (to win their own cold war interests). Pakistan, China and Gulf backed the Mujahideen. These groups in 1990s and later, grew as Taliban, Al-Qaida, etc as part of the modern-day terrorism.

People join these terrorist groups when they feel certain **alienation and denial of justice** in their own home states. This vacuum is utilised by people having their own vested interests and thus, use **religion as a tool**. These **ideological issues** cannot be solved by security forces alone who are engaged in counter-fighting, interrogations, etc. Its onus falls on the society and state government.

Terror Financing:

Financing of terrorism is a mixture of both legal (provided by state support) and illegal money (Hawala channels, counterfeit, donations like from Gulf countries, etc). This needs to be controlled, to counter terrorism.

It is difficult to break the **financial connection** of these terror groups as **money is fungible and has high liquidity**. Steps like **demonetisation** are appreciable to check counterfeit money, black money, etc up to some extent. Moving towards a **cashless society** can be more helpful to keep a track of all the remittances.

But, in the age of increasing technology, there still exist other payment systems like **digital currency** (virtual currency, blockchain and cryptocurrency like Bitcoin). They pose challenges for financial regulators and ministries. Some **multilateral agreement needs to be made** to have a better control over these globally distributed currencies with almost zero barriers.

Way Ahead:

India has pushed for **UN convention on international terrorism** after July 1, 2016 Dhaka attack. But, an international law as such like the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism proposed by UN General Assembly to criminalize all forms of terrorism and deny their support of finances, arms and safe havens **still exist in a deadlock**. If such an international convention comes up, terrorist activities may be controlled better.

Conclusion:

Terrorism has grown because it had some state-support in the past which provided finances to terrorists, just to serve their own political interests. To curb terrorism, the onus falls on state and society as well apart from the security forces. The financial support available to them needs to be checked and some international convention on terrorism is the need of the hour to check the increasing rates of terror attacks.
