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**INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL**

**NOVEMBER 2017**

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## INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL

### 02/11 - There can be no solution under the shadow of the gun: Dineshwar Sharma.

#### Context:

The special representative will initiate dialogue in Kashmir on what led to unrest in the Valley and the way forward.

On October 23, Home Minister announced the appointment of former Intelligence Bureau (IB) chief Dineshwar Sharma as a special representative to “initiate” and “carry forward a dialogue” with elected representatives and various individuals in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### Background

J & K Valley’s prolonged anti-India protest; rising insurgency in Kashmir, intense counter- insurgency operation has caused acute distress in the region. Demand for the political outreach emerged to prevent radicalisation of local youth which is the topmost concern for the Indian security establishment.

Prime Minister mentioned in his Independence Day declaration that ‘Neither by bullet nor by abuses but only by an embrace we can solve the problem of Kashmir’.



#### Tasks ahead for the Interlocutor:

- He will have rank equivalent to a Cabinet Secretary and complete independence in deciding who to hold talks with.
- He is likely to hold talks with mainstream local political workers of the PDP, National Conference and Congress, heads of various religious seminaries in the Valley, local student unions etc.
- He would try to know how things are panning out on the ground for and against India and try to understand the legitimate aspirations of the people of the state.

#### What is the Centre’s intention behind the talks?

The government is in no hurry to talk to the separatists and would like to approach the Kashmiri people directly through various other organisations.

- It is obvious that the government and everyone else want peace in Kashmir.
- It (peace) should be durable. It cannot prevail for a few months and be disrupted by violence three years later.
- The focus is on bringing permanent peace in the Kashmir Valley.
- Sharma will initiate a ‘sustained interaction and dialogue to understand the legitimate aspirations of the wide cross sections of society, particularly the youth in Jammu and Kashmir and communicate them to the state government and the Centre.

#### What about on-going security operations?

As many as 248 operations by security forces have been conducted this year, which is the highest in the past seven years. It was said that this would also contribute to peace.

- The actions of security forces are there to counter the actions of terrorists or armed groups.
- Permanent solution and peace can only be brought about by dialogue.

#### What escalated the unrest in J&K?

- Radicalisation played a major role, though its impact was felt in other parts of the country as well, as several men were arrested for being inspired by the Islamic State.
- Brainwashing via the Internet played a key role.
- Poor and Unemployed youth can easily be targeted by radicalists.

- It was a concerted effort by some to radicalise the youth to spread violence.
- It's been closely watched and took several steps to ensure that the youth don't fall for such propaganda.

#### **What is the immediate measure needed in J&K?**

- The guns of terrorists should fall silent.
- At the same time, Security forces should not harass ordinary Kashmiris.
- They should not be targeting innocent people.
- Security forces should have the confidence of the people living in the State.

#### **Reports of previously appointed interlocutors on J&K issue.**

From 2000, this is the fourth interlocutor appointed by Centre.

The first one was done by Vajpayee government when former Union Minister KC Pant was named. The second effort was when NN Vohra was entrusted with the job (who is incidentally the Governor of the state currently). The third one was done in 2010 by UPA government when a three-member committee (of Dileep Padgaonkar, Radha Kumar, and MM Ansari) went to Kashmir as interlocutors.

- In the case of KC Pant, he failed to achieve much as none of the separatists except Shabir Shah talked to him. The Hurriyat Conference played spoilsport with its demand for getting Pakistan also part of the talks.
- In 2002, the Kashmir committee was formed to reach out to all stakeholders in the Valley. As an informal committee, it managed to meet the separatists but didn't result in any tangible results.
- In 2003, the Indian government appointed NN Vohra as their new point person in the Valley. It was pretty much the repetition of the old story. However, Vohra managed to get the moderates of the Hurriyat for talks but they were not fruitful.
- Later, the five working groups on strengthening relations across the Line of Control, confidence-building measures across segments of society in the state including detainees, economic development, ensuring good governance and centre-state relations submitted their report but their recommendations were not acted upon.
- The committee headed by Padgaonkar suggested in their final report in 2012 among other steps review of AFSPA, talks with Hurriyat and setting up of the constitutional committee. The government has not yet taken any decisions on the report. Incidentally, the separatists stayed away from talks with the panel also.

#### **Conclusion**

The representative is meant to have a sustained dialogue to understand the legitimate needs of the cross-section of society in J&K, and then communicate them to the state and central governments.

A Kashmir dialogue is a minefield that will have to be negotiated by Sharma as consensus needs to be built on common issues while avoiding the contentious legacy issues of the past.

## **03/11 - The war on TB**

#### **Context:**

According to recently published WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2017, India stood out as a country in which the budget envelope for TB was substantially increased in 2017 (to US\$ 525 million, almost double the level of 2016).

Report also mentioned political commitment from the Prime Minister to the goal of ending TB by 2025. The budget is fully funded, including US\$ 387 million (74%) from domestic sources (triple the amount of US\$ 124 million in 2016) and the remainder (26%) from international donor sources.

#### **Global tuberculosis report**

WHO has published a global TB report every year since 1997.

- The main aim of the report is to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the TB epidemic, and of progress in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the disease at global, regional and country levels.
- This is done in the context of recommended global TB strategies and targets endorsed by WHO's Member States and broader development goals set by the United Nations.

For the period 2016–2035, these are WHO's End TB Strategy and the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which *share a common aim: to end the global TB epidemic*.

### **Why is Tuberculosis a major cause of concern?**

*TB is the ninth leading cause of death worldwide* and the leading cause from a single infectious agent, ranking above HIV/AIDS.

- TB is an infectious disease caused by the bacillus Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
- It typically affects the lungs (pulmonary TB) but can also affect other sites.
- The disease is spread when people who are sick with pulmonary TB expel bacteria into the air, for example by coughing.
- Broader influences on the TB epidemic include levels of poverty, HIV infection, under nutrition and smoking.
- Diagnostic tests for TB disease include – Rapid molecular test, Sputum smear microscopy, Culture-based methods
- Without treatment, the mortality rate from TB is high.



### **Drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) has been a continuing threat.**

- The bacteria that cause tuberculosis (TB) can develop resistance to the antimicrobial drugs used to cure the disease.
- Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is TB that does not respond to at least isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful anti-TB drugs.
- In 2016, there were 600 000 new cases with resistance to rifampicin (RRTB) of which 490 000 had multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB).
- Globally, the TB mortality rate is falling at about 3% per year. TB incidence is falling at about 2% per year.

Most high TB burden countries have major challenges ahead to reach SDG targets related to these and other determinants.

### **Strategies to end TB**

From 2000 to 2015, global and national efforts to reduce the burden of tuberculosis (TB) disease were focused on achieving targets set within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by United Nations.

In 2016, the MDGs were succeeded by a new set of goals, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- The consolidated goal on health is SDG 3. One of these targets, (Target 3.3), explicitly mentions TB.
- SDG 3 also includes a target (Target 3.8) related to universal health coverage (UHC) in which TB is explicitly mentioned. This includes an indicator on the coverage of essential prevention, treatment and care interventions.
- Emphasis is also given to the importance of death registration within national vital registration systems for accurate tracking of causes of death (WHO Global Task Force on TB Impact Measurement).

### **The End TB Strategy**

- The overall goal is to “End the global TB epidemic”, and there are three high-level, overarching indicators and related targets and milestones.
- The three indicators are: the number of TB deaths per year; the TB incidence rate per year; and the percentage of TB-affected households that experience catastrophic costs as a result of TB disease.
- The 2035 targets are a 95% reduction in TB deaths and a 90% reduction in the TB incidence rate, compared with levels in 2015.
- The 2030 targets are a 90% reduction in TB deaths and an 80% reduction in the TB incidence rate, compared with levels in 2015

- Two new TB drugs, *bedaquiline and delamanid*, have already received accelerated or conditional regulatory approval based on trial results and is now in next stage trials.

Achieving these targets requires,

- Provision of TB care and prevention within the broader context of universal health coverage,
- multi-sectoral action to address the social and economic determinants and consequences of TB
- Technological breakthroughs by 2025 so that incidence can fall faster than rates achieved historically.

### **Key facts about the status of TB in India as per Global tuberculosis report, 2017**

India registered a slight drop in the number of new tuberculosis cases and TB deaths in 2016 compared with 2015.

- From an estimated 2.84 million new cases in 2015, the number dropped marginally to 2.79 million in 2016, according to the World Health Organisation's Global tuberculosis report, 2017.
- In terms of mortality, the drop was from 0.51 million in 2015 to 0.43 million in 2016. The number of deaths and the incidence rate have been falling both globally and in India.
- With 1.7 million new cases in 2016, India still continues to be the largest contributor to the global burden with up to a quarter of the 6.3 million new cases of TB (up from 6.1 million in 2015).
- Funding Source: 74% domestic funding and 26% international funding.
- More men above the age of 15 suffer from TB than women.

### **What are the present issues concerning regarding TB in India?**

The government has committed to achieve a '*90-90-90 target*' by 2035 (*90% reductions in incidence, mortality and catastrophic health expenditures due to TB*). This is premised on improved diagnostics, shorter treatment courses, a better vaccine and comprehensive preventive strategies.

- However, much work remains to improve case notifications as only 1.9 million TB cases in the public and private sectors were notified in 2016, leaving a 25% gap between incidence and notification, the largest in the world.
- Though notification was made mandatory in 2012, multiple surveys and surveillance data still show large under-reporting of detected TB cases, especially in the private sector.
- Top-line drugs are still inadequate to treat people who suffer from the drug-resistant forms of the disease.
- The number of estimated multi-drug-resistant TB cases increased marginally to 84,000. But the number of people with MDR-TB enrolled for treatment improved marginally between 2015 and 2016.
- For the first time, steps have been taken to offer preventive TB treatment to a small (5%) number of people who are HIV-positive, and 1.9% of children below five years who are household contacts of people recently diagnosed with pulmonary TB.
- Notably, domestic funding (74%) for anti-TB work has been more than that from international sources (26%).
- The surveillance systems remain inadequate.

### **What should be done to achieve the set targets under End TB strategy?**

The targets set in the End TB strategy are global reduction of 20% in incidence and 35% in mortality by 2020, taking 2015 as the base year.

- To reach that target, the global drop in incidence has to be 4-5% a year — currently it is about 2% a year.
- The percentage of deaths should come down from the current 16% to 10%.
- With India accounting for the highest TB incidence (23%) and mortality (26%) globally, success in realising the End TB targets hinges largely on the country strengthening its systems.
- The major step in defeating the disease and achieving the targets is to record every diagnosed patient through case notification.
- When a person is diagnosed with TB, it is reported to the national surveillance system, and then on to the WHO.
- While better funding might help India inch closer to its stated goal of ending TB by 2025, much more is needed in terms of funding and commitment on all fronts.

**Way forward**

The pipelines for new diagnostics, drugs, treatment regimens and vaccines are progressing, but slowly. Increased investment in research and development is needed for there to be any chance of achieving the technological breakthroughs needed by 2025.

The WHO Global Ministerial Conference on ending TB in the SDG era in November 2017 and the first UN General Assembly high-level meeting on TB in 2018 provide a historic opportunity to galvanize the political commitment needed to step up the battle against TB and put the world and individual countries on the path to ending the TB epidemic.

**07/11 - Beyond big game hunting: the 'Quadrilateral' meeting****Context:**

India responded to Japan's move to include Delhi in a Quadrilateral dialogue with U.S., Australia. India said that it was "open" to work with partner countries for regional issues that are 'relevant'.

India has taken a significant turn in its policy for the subcontinent by accepting an invitation to join the Japan-proposed, U.S.-endorsed plan for a "Quadrilateral" grouping including Australia to provide alternative debt financing for countries in the Indo-Pacific.

As Prime Minister heads to the East Asia summit in the Philippines next week, where the first 'Quad' meeting is likely to be held, it is necessary that India analyse the impact of this admission on all our relations.

**Background: Japanese proposal to revive the quad**

It was Abe who conceived the idea of Asian democracies joining forces. In 2006, Abe called for a quadrilateral dialogue among Japan, India, Australia and the United States.

Emphasising the shared values of freedom and democracy between India and Japan, Abe called for a joint effort by New Delhi and Tokyo for the formation of an arc of freedom and prosperity along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent.

Abe hoped that an India-Japan strategic partnership will help construct a "broader Asia" that could evolve into an "immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the United States of America and Australia. Open and transparent, this network will allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely.

- New Delhi, however, seemed reluctant. Having seen the quad disintegrate quickly, New Delhi was content with expanding its trilateral engagement with the US and Japan at one forum, and with Australia and Japan at another.
- The idea seemed to gain some real world significance with the annual Malabar exercises between India and the United States in 2007; the exercise saw ships from Japan.

Japanese Foreign Minister recently presented to US President a formal proposal for a high-level dialogue among the four nations. Japan would like to see substantive cooperation among them on defence cooperation, maritime security, and infrastructure development.

- The current Indian government has changed its stance and signalled little more flexibility to the Japanese proposal to revive the quad. Government indicated willingness to participate in the meeting saying open to work with the 'like-minded'.

**What is the response from China on 'Quad'?**

When proposal came for the first time, Beijing went onto attacking it as the first step towards the formation of an "Asian NATO".

China reacted cautiously to a proposal by the Trump administration for a working-level quadrilateral meeting with India, Japan and Australia, saying Beijing hopes that it would not target or damage a "third party's interest".

The proposal was seen by China as an attempt to counter its influence in the region.



**Why is it necessary that India analyse the impact of its admission into Quad on all its relations?**

Quad would serve as a useful exercise to understand why India has conceded it requires “other parties” in the neighbourhood, even as it seeks to counter the influence of China and its Belt and Road Initiative.

It is necessary that India analyse the impact of this admission on all our relations. Because,

As a growing economy with ambitious domestic targets, India’s own needs often clash with those of its neighbours.

Even as Indian and Chinese troops were facing off at Doklam on land claimed by Bhutan, a very different sort of tension regarding its external debt was claiming the attention of the government in Thimphu.

- The Bhutanese Finance Minister warned that the external debt is about 110% of GDP, of which a staggering 80.1% of GDP is made up by hydropower debt mainly to India.
- Its government report points out that construction delays, mainly due to Indian construction issues, were taking the debt up higher.
- As a result, Bhutan’s external hydropower debt financed by India at 9-10% rates was piling up.
- The Cross Border Trade of Electricity (CBTE) guidelines issued by India had not been revised, which put severe restrictions on Bhutanese companies selling power, and on allowing them access to the power exchange with
- Relations with Bhutan took a backseat to the fact that India already has a power surplus, and its new renewable energy targets come from solar and wind energy, not hydropower.
- Moreover, given falling prices for energy all around, India could not sustain the Bhutanese demand that power tariffs be revised upwards.

Another problem is what one diplomat in the region calls ‘India’s big game hunting attitude’: “India chases its neighbours to cooperate on various projects and courts us assiduously, but once they have ‘bagged the game’, it forgets about us. As a result, crises grow until they can no longer be ignored, and the hunt begins again.”

- Over the past decade, since the defeat of the LTTE, India passed up offers to build the port in Hambantota, Colombo.
- With the U.S. and other Western countries taking strident positions over human rights issues and the reconciliation process, Chinese companies stepped in and won these projects, for which Sri Lanka recklessly took loans from China’s Exim bank.
- This year, the government decided to bid for the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport at Hambantota and a flight training school at Mattala. India is also hoping to win the bid to develop Trincomalee port.
  - India has also been ambivalent on tackling political issues in its region, often trapped between the more interventionist approach of the U.S., which has openly championed concerns over ‘democratic values’ and human rights in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh, and the approach of China.
  - In Nepal, India lost out to China when it allowed a five-month-long blockade at the border, calling for a more inclusive constitution to be implemented by Kathmandu
  - In the case of Myanmar, it lost precious ground in Bangladesh when PM refused to mention the Rohingya refugee situation during a visit to Nay Pyi Taw.

**Need of the hour:**

In Sri Lanka, the U.S. and Japan will now partner in India’s efforts to counter China’s influence, but whereas India objected to Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean, it will not be able to object to an increase in U.S. naval warships and Japanese presence there.

The emergence of new players like the U.S., Europe and Japan has increased multiple regional rivalries in the region. This does partly benefit India.

It is important to note that the government’s new plan to involve the U.S. and Japan in development projects in South Asia will yield the necessary finances, should not come at the cost of India’s leverage in its own backyard.

**Conclusion**

India must demonstrate the will to influence geopolitical outcomes in Asia and beyond. There is no doubt that the construction of Quad will face many challenges, given the deep divisions in all countries on how best to deal with

China. There will be differences on setting priorities and allocating resources. Yet, India's incipient engagement with Japan, America and Australia on the quad agenda suggests that India is now confident enough to embark on complex geopolitical engaging in Asia.

Importantly, PM, who began his pitch for his "neighbourhood first" plan by inviting the neighbours to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014, must look before he leaps while inviting other powers into the neighbourhood.

## 08/11 - Full text of interview with Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of Naval Staff

### **Context:**

The Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) was inaugurated by Honourable Defence minister at INS Mandovi, Goa. The first Goa Maritime Conclave saw the participation of Ten Indian littoral states.

For our collective aspirations to bear fruition and their impact to be sustainable, having a peaceful, stable and secure maritime environment in the region is a prerequisite.



### **What is the aim of Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC)?**

The conclave was aimed at "Addressing Regional Maritime Challenges" wherein the deliberations were focused on emerging maritime threats and force structuring, maritime domain awareness, maritime security architecture, and maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- It aims to bring together like minded nations to evolve and formulate collective responses to emerging challenges in the maritime domain.
- It would also provide an opportunity to communicate our viewpoints in a forthright manner and collectively shape a favourable maritime environment for all countries in the region.

### **Reason for Security challenges in IOR**

Though globalisation have enabled economics to shape transactional relationships between nations, incoherent behaviour by certain nations are preventing these very relationships from evolving beyond their transactional nature.

- The IOR has progressively gained centre-stage largely due to the political impact of its regional dynamics on international geo-politics.
- Increasing Chinese presence in Djibouti and the Indian Ocean.
- On land, the unresolved borders and riparian disputes which are predominantly a legacy of the colonial era are some of the key causes of conflict.
- Further, this stalemate in international relationships, is a product of many causes such as ideological differences, political insecurities, economic dependency, technological dependencies, inequitable access to resources, geographical imperatives etc.
- The net impact of these differences is that trust deficit and tensions between nations continue to persist, on account of perceived challenges to sovereignty, despite positive economic interactions between them.

### **What is the outcome and take away from GMC?**

- The most important outcome is everyone acknowledged the centrality and importance of the Indian Ocean as a key gateway to connect the East and the West
- The dependence of the global economy on the sea lanes of communication.
- The key takeaways have been
- The importance of coordination of efforts is realized.
- Common security threats across all countries are identified.

- Agreed on greater degree of coordination and information sharing to take things forward to provide maritime security and safety of the global commons of the Indian Ocean.

### **What are the threats identified and what is the plan to overcome them?**

Common security threats identified are non-traditional threats in the form of maritime terrorism, unregulated fishing, and illegal fishing in the global commons, pollution, at sea piracy, drug and human trafficking.

- It is agreed on need to put in place a coordination mechanism.
- India already has architectures available with several island nations. As part of conclave, coordinated patrols are planned with a number of countries who are participating.
- Identified the ways on how the information can be exchanged.
- India will continue to work with likeminded nations.

### **Extra-regional navies making permanent presence in the Indian Ocean**

When you look at geo-strategic situation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), what is happening on the ground is a fact of life.

- There is permanent presence of a large number of extra-regional navies in the IOR especially in the Northern Indian Ocean where at any given time there over 100 multilateral ships in the vicinity.
- We need to be deploying surveillance missions so that we are aware what is happening.

### **Are we looking at more countries coming in as part of 'coordinated patrols'?**

India does coordinated patrols and joint patrols with nations who are our maritime neighbours.

- We already doing it with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand.
- We are doing Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) patrols for island nations of Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles.
- Some of the avenues available are – increasing the frequency, increasing the assets which are deployed during the coordinated patrols.
- India has the Malabar series of exercise with US and now the Japanese Maritime Self Defence force joining it. That exercise will continue.
- Chief of naval staff says that India is not looking at joint patrols with the US Navy at this moment.

### **What are the measures taken by India to safeguard its and other littoral states' interests in IOR?**

#### **1. Increasing the footprint of the Indian navy under the Mission Based Deployment**

- At the recent Navy Commanders Conference one key thing that came was increasing the footprint of the Indian navy under the Mission Based Deployment.
- Consensus reached within the Navy to have mission based deployment so that our areas of interest can be kept under permanent surveillance.
- It started off by having a ship deployed permanently in Andaman Sea and approaches to the Malacca straits.
- Then mission based deployments are made in the North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf.
- Similarly, in the Northern part of Bay of Bengal and our surveillance in the South part, near Sri Lanka was increased.
- Also sending ships to the Lombok and Sunda straits. So the ingress and egress routes of Indian Ocean region are being kept under surveillance so that we have better maritime domain awareness and know what is happening.

#### **2. Undertaking Capacity building:**

- India has been working in close liaison with island nations Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka.
- It (India) is assisting them in capacity and capability enhancements in the form of training to their personnel and other is proving assets in the form of ships and aircraft.
- India is also working with them in coordinated patrols, keeping surveillance of EEZ on their request.

### 3. Information exchange with the littoral states

- India has been examining signing of technical agreements and sharing of white shipping information.
- India already has agreements in place with 12 countries and most of them have been operationalized.
- Through these agreements information has already started to flow in and it is resulting in greater awareness.

## 09/11 - Plotting social progress

### Introduction:

The accomplishments of modern India are recognised around the world. A country that was a symbol of hunger and poverty at the time of Independence has now transformed itself into one of the fastest growing major economies.

Today we judge the success of the countries based on GDP. GDP has defined and shaped our lives for the last 80 years. GDP is a tool to help us measure the economic performance; it's not a measure of our well-being.

The societal reach of this economic growth and well-being still remains unquantified. A common measure to quantify the social progress of Indian States that can pinpoint the achievements and the challenges is still missing.

Computing development and well-being is an on-going project. Introducing the Social Progress Index at the sub-national level can be a game changer

## 2017 Social Progress Index Overall ranking (1/2)

### Social Progress categorization:

- SPI rank 01 – 14: very high
- SPI rank 15 – 38: high
- SPI rank 39 – 69: upper middle
- SPI rank 69 – 94: lower middle
- SPI rank 95 – 121: low
- SPI rank 122 – 128: very low

SPI rank	SPI score	Country	SPI rank	SPI score	Country	SPI rank	SPI score	Country	SPI rank	SPI score	Country
1	90.57	Denmark	18	86.43	United States	35	78.09	Lithuania	52	70.97	Albania
2	90.53	Finland	19	85.92	France	36	78.04	Croatia	53	70.80	Georgia
3	90.27	Iceland	20	85.44	Portugal	37	77.32	Hungary	54	70.01	Montenegro
3	90.27	Norway	21	84.32	Slovenia	38	75.90	Argentina	55	69.97	Ecuador
5	90.10	Switzerland	22	84.22	Czech Republic	39	75.18	Mauritius	56	69.85	Jordan
6	89.84	Canada	23	82.96	Estonia	40	74.61	Panama	57	69.45	Saudi Arabia
7	89.82	Netherlands	24	82.62	Italy	41	74.42	Bulgaria	58	69.35	Macedonia
8	89.66	Sweden	25	82.54	Chile	42	74.12	Kuwait	59	69.01	Armenia
9	89.30	Australia	26	82.08	Korea, Republic of	43	73.97	Brazil	60	68.73	Paraguay
9	89.30	New Zealand	27	81.15	Cyprus	44	73.53	Romania	61	68.68	Turkey
11	88.91	Ireland	28	81.03	Costa Rica	45	73.41	Serbia	62	68.51	Thailand
12	88.73	United Kingdom	29	80.61	Israel	46	72.42	Jamaica	63	68.42	Dominican Republic
13	88.50	Germany	30	80.22	Slovakia	47	72.15	Peru	64	68.35	Ukraine
14	87.98	Austria	31	80.09	Uruguay	48	71.93	Mexico	65	67.80	Belarus
15	87.15	Belgium	32	79.65	Poland	49	71.72	Colombia	66	67.25	South Africa
16	86.96	Spain	33	78.92	Greece	50	71.14	Malaysia	67	67.17	Russia
17	86.44	Japan	34	78.61	Latvia	51	71.09	Tunisia	68	67.10	Philippines

Source: Social Progress Imperative

### GDP: a brief history

Out of the bloodshed of the Great Depression and World War II rose the idea of gross domestic product, or GDP: the ultimate measure of a country's overall welfare.

- In January 1934, Simon Kuznets prepared a report titled 'National Income, 1929-32' and presented it to the U.S. government.
- It laid the foundation of how we judge the economic success of countries today.
- Its use spread rapidly, becoming the defining indicator of the last century. Today, almost every country maintains GDP statistics.

But in today's globalized world, it's increasingly apparent that this metric is too narrow for these troubled economic times.

#### **Merits:**

- GDP growth over time enables central banks and policymakers to evaluate whether the economy is in recession or inflation.
- GDP has held significance as a universal metric over the years.

#### **Demerits:**

- With rapid globalization and technology-oriented integration among countries, this metric has become out-dated
- Does not accurately take into consideration other aspects like the wellbeing of the residents of a country.
- Fails to account for productive non-market activities, like a mother taking care of her child, a homemaker doing household chores.
- GDP also ignores important factors like environment, happiness, community, fairness and justice.

To be fair, GDP was not intended to measure wellbeing and happiness. But these are important aspects of development.

GDP is a measurement tool invented in 20<sup>th</sup> century to address the challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we face new challenges: aging, obesity, climate change and so on. To face those challenges we need new tools of measurement, new ways of valuing progress.

#### **Some of the recent approaches that have tried to go beyond GDP**

- **GINI coefficient** which was introduced in 1912 by Corrado Gini and adopted by World Bank, and measures the income inequality among a country's citizens — but it fails to measure social benefits or interventions that reduce the gap or inequality between rich and poor.
- **GNH (Gross National Happiness)**, which was introduced in the 1970s by the king of Bhutan, similarly measures the happiness levels of the citizens in a country while it ignores other important elements like gender equality, quality education and good infrastructure.
- **HDI (Human Development Indicators)**, devised and launched in 1990 by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, is computed and published by the United Nations Development Programme. Many prospects of a healthy society, such as environmental sustainability and personal rights, are not included in HDI.
- The National University of Educational Planning and Administration and the Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy) compute an **Educational Development Index** for primary and upper primary levels of education that compare States on different aspects on education universalization.
- NITI Aayog has rolled out the **health, education and water index**.

However, common measure to quantify the social progress of Indian States that can pinpoint the achievements and the challenges is still missing.

#### **Social Progress Index (SPI) as complementary index**

The next stage in the measurement of well-being went into creating what is termed as the Social Progress Index (SPI). It goes beyond the traditional measure of GDP and has most parameters that are required to fulfil SDGs.

#### **Social Progress Index:**

It is a measure of wellbeing of our society completely separate from GDP. It is a whole new way of looking at the world.

The SPI begins by defining what it means to be a good society based around three dimensions.

1. **Basic Human needs** (Nutrition and Basic Medical care, Water and Sanitation, Shelter, Personal Safety)
2. **Foundation of wellbeing** (Access to basic knowledge, Access to info and Communication, Health and Wellness, Ecosystem sustainability)
3. **Opportunity** (Personal Rights, Personal freedom and choice, Tolerance and inclusion, Access to Advanced education)

Together these 12 components form Social Progress framework.

- It does not measure how much a country spends on health care; it measures the length and quality of people's lives.
- SPI focuses on outcomes rather than inputs that are used in GDP.
- It does not measure whether governments pass laws against discrimination; it measures whether people experience discrimination.

SPI can best be described as a complementary index to GDP and can be used along with GDP to achieve social progress.

### Highlights of Social Progress Index – 2017

The study released by Institute for Competitiveness, India in collaboration with Social Progress Imperative is the first edition of a sub-national Social Progress Index for India.

The global Social Progress Index ranks India at the 93rd position. However, the country-level insights are not sufficient to devise a plan of action as the conditions vary significantly within the country.

Therefore, a regional study is conducted. States are ranked using social and environmental indicators on the basis of

- Their capability to provide for basic needs such as shelter, water, and sanitation; a foundation for well-being with education, health, and communication facilities;
- the prejudices that prevail in a region prohibiting people from making their personal decisions;
- Evaluating whether citizens have personal rights and freedom or whether they are susceptible to child labour, human trafficking, corruption, etc.

### Highlights

- The overall social progress score for the country now stands at 57.03 (on a 0-100 scale), approximately eight points higher than in 2005. The country performs better in the provision of basic human needs rather than opportunities for its citizens.
- Kerala emerges as the top performer by making remarkable progress across social indicators.
- Other states that demonstrate strong social progress performance include – Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, and Goa.
- The top performers on social progress reveal that **there are several ways to achieve world-class social progress**, economic growth being one of them.
- The state scores range from low 40s to high 60s on a scale of 0-100, exemplifying the **immense scope of improvement for even the best performing states**.
- Inclusion of high – income states, like Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, in the tier of Middle Social Progress reflects that **social progress not only depends on the economic development but also on the use of revenues generated by economic expansion**.
- Social progress over the period of eleven years has improved in every state. The group of states that have registered the highest improvement are the ones that were categorized as Very Low Social Progress States in 2005.
- This demonstrates that **states at a relatively low level of social progress may be able to improve more rapidly since they have both more opportunities for improvement and can also draw on lessons and approaches that have been implemented elsewhere**.

### Way Forward

- Countries need to prioritize social progress in its development plan and see that it's not just growth alone, its growth with social progress.
- SPI reframes the debate about development, not just about GDP alone, but inclusive and sustainable growth that brings real improvements in people's lives.
- Social progress needs to be stimulated by focusing on policies directly targeting social issues.
- We need a cohesive measure of social progress in individual States.

**Conclusion**

SPI can bring substantial betterment in the policy discourse on development.

With the move to getting it introduced at a sub-national level, the index is expected to help development practitioners and other stakeholders in analysing well-being in a better manner.

**11/11 - Will bank recapitalisation fix NPAs?****Context:**

The Centre unveiled an ambitious plan to infuse ₹2.11 lakh crore capital over the next two years into public sector banks (PSBs). 1.35 lakh cr. will be through sale of recapitalization of bonds. This sum is more than one-third the tier I or core capital (equity plus reserves) of public sector banks (PSBs) and the equivalent of about 1.25% of gross domestic product (GDP).

PSBs are burdened with high, non-performing assets. Indiscriminate lending earlier by banks may be the main reason for high level of NPAs (non-performing assets).

The government's capitalisation package for public sector banks will provide a strong booster dose of relief for the capital starved public sector banks.

**What are the causes of deceleration in credit growth?**1. Poor demand:

Some observers ascribe the deceleration in credit growth to poor demand. They say that corporates have excessive debt and are in no position to finance any investment. This may be true of large corporates.

2. Supply of credit:

The government has realised that there is a problem with the supply of credit. It has to do with PSBs' inability to lend for want of adequate capital.

- Market estimates had placed the requirement of government capital at a minimum of ₹2lakh crore over a four-year period.
  - In 2015, under the Indradhanush Plan, the government chose to commit a mere ₹70,000 crore over the period.
3. PSBs, unlike their private sector counterparts, had lent heavily to infrastructure and other related sectors of the economy. Following the global financial crisis of 2007, sectors to which PSBs were exposed came to be impacted in ways that could not have been entirely foreseen.
  4. The failure to quickly recapitalise PSBs has adversely impacted the economy.
    - It has hindered the effective resolution of the NPA problem and kept major projects from going through to completion.
    - Corporates are stuck with high levels of debt and are unable to make fresh investments.

**Why did government take the route of recapitalizing PSBs?**

With India's economic growth faltering in the last couple of years, the government has been casting about for ways to galvanise the economy like Demonetisation and introduction of GST. Its economic benefits will be long in coming while the short-term disruption has been very real.

- Bank's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) has become adverse.
- The recovery process set up through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) reform had not been working at the desired pace.
- PSBs are facing the prospect of having to take haircuts on loans stuck in insolvency proceedings.
- The size of the haircuts the banking system is expected to become more expensive in terms of capital in the banking system.



- Till the recovery process gathers momentum, more capital would be required. There is also a time dimension associated with this equation.
- Enhancing the flow of credit is critical for revitalising India's growth momentum at a time when the global economy is recovering.
- Private investments remain elusive in the face of the "twin-balance sheet problem".
- If banks do not have adequate capital, they cannot lend. This would dampen the economy.

### **What is a 'Haircut'?**

A haircut is the difference between the market value of an asset used as loan collateral and the amount of the loan. The amount of the haircut reflects the lender's perceived risk of loss from the asset falling in value or being sold in a fire sale.

### **What is the source of funds for Recapitalization by government?**

- Of the ₹2.11 trillion package, ₹1.35 trillion will be towards issue of recapitalisation bonds. PSBs will subscribe to these bonds. The government will plough back the funds into banks as equity.
- Another ₹180 billion will be provided as budgetary support.
- The remaining ₹580 billion will be raised from the market.

Analysts believe the package should enable banks to provide adequately for NPAs and support modest loan growth.

### **Criticism on Recapitalization**

- This measure is not going to result in the recovery of bad loans.
- It is a very temporary solution and only treats symptoms and not what causes these symptoms.
- The IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code) is only a ploy to extend favours to big corporates to escape from their liability at the cost of the public exchequer.
- It is labelled as inefficient and incompetent. If banks would have recovered these loans, their interest revenue would have been more; and they would have generated capital internally out of the profit.
- The proposed recapitalisation bonds are likely to add to the fiscal deficit.

### **Other measures to revive bank credit:**

The last thing the economy and the banking system can afford is a further drop in economic value. There will have to be more reforms to put a higher order of governance in the banking sector.

#### 1. Tenure and remuneration of senior management:

- For improving governance of PSBs, questions like the tenure of senior management have to be addressed.
- Public Sector Bank chiefs and their managing/executive directors must have a fixed tenure of at least five years.
- Offer incentives by way of very good annual bonus based on performance would enable them to take the right decisions.
- Political and economic influence on senior management decisions should be avoided.

#### 2. Adopt best practices

- Lateral entry at the level of general managers and not at the ED/MD level.
- The banking boards need to be manned by professional directors rather than political nominees.
- Accountability needs to be fixed by removing senior management for non-performance.
- Create a framework for funding of projects to be undertaken by one bank which down sells it within a period of 90 days, but could breach exposure limits in that period.

#### 3. Fill the gaps in the regulatory framework

- One of them is joint lending. Borrowers borrow from one bank and go to another and borrow money. Banks do not talk to each other. Also, there are issues in getting loans approved for large projects. Borrowers have

to run to 20 banks to get a sanction, which is uneconomical, costly and leads to corrupt practices as bank officials seek favours to agree to a proposal.

#### 4. The appointment of statutory auditors

- Shortlisted auditors by promoters should be assessed by the Audit Committee and Board.
- In case of wrong reporting, these have to be punished by prohibiting them to audit any financial entity regulated by the RBI, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

5. Action must be taken against promoters who have siphoned off funds and transferred them to their personal assets.

#### 6. Needed one Quick action plan

- NPA cases caused by the cyclical nature of the sector need to be supported if there are no issues with fund utilisation.
- Deal with NPAs sector by sector like power, roads, steel and so forth.
- We need to pick NPAs from PSBs of each sector, park them in one place by creating an entity like a SUUTI (specified undertaking of the Unit Trust of India), fund the banks and invite international and national investors to dispose of the assets.
- The system will have to conduct more analysis, more evaluation sector-wise in terms of its potential for value restoration and enhancement.

### Conclusion

In the last three years, banks have written off ₹1,88,287 crore. We have to bear in mind that when banks lose money or when the government recapitalise PSBs, it is all people's money and out of public savings kept in trust in the banks. People's money should be for people's welfare and not to fund corporate default or to recapitalise the banks to adjust these bad loans.

This capital infusion is a welcome step but there are issues that should have been dealt with first. The good part is that after putting this capital, the government's equity would be close to 70-80% in each PSB. The government could make a huge profit by selling this equity after improving the management of PSBs.

Recapitalisation could give the banking system a good breathing time to enhance its credit portfolio and restore value out of the NPA accounts.

## 13/11 - For a wider cover: meeting climate goals

### Context:

In 2015, India made a Bonn Challenge commitment to place into restoration 13 million hectares (Mha) of degraded land by 2020 and an additional 8 Mha by 2030 which will have potential climate benefit of 2 GtCO<sub>2</sub> sequestered.

India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) have also pledged to sequester 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent additionally by 2030 through enhanced tree cover.

Initial government estimates suggest that to achieve this, India will need to extend tree cover on at least 28-34 million hectares, outside of the existing forest cover.

As different States work to achieve these commitments, it appears that there is an over-reliance on plantations. In July this year, Madhya Pradesh planted 66 million trees in 12 hours to enter the record books, overtaking Uttar Pradesh's record of planting 49.3 million trees in a day, in 2016. Other States are also expected to follow suit.

### The Bonn Challenge: A global effort to improve ecology

The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030.

- Underlying the Bonn Challenge is the forest landscape restoration (FLR) approach, which aims to restore ecological integrity at the same time as improving human well-being through multifunctional landscapes.

- It will create approximately USD 84 billion per year in net benefits that could bring direct additional income opportunities for rural communities.
- The Bonn Challenge is not a new global commitment but rather a practical means of realizing many existing international commitments, including the CBD Aichi Target 15, the UNFCCC REDD+ goal, and the Rio+20 land degradation neutrality goal.
- It is an implementation vehicle for national priorities such as water and food security and rural development while contributing to the achievement of international climate change, biodiversity and land degradation commitments.

### **What is FLR?**

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) is the on-going process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human well-being across deforested or degraded forest landscapes.

- FLR is more than just planting trees – it is restoring a whole landscape to meet present and future needs
- It is long-term because it requires a multi-year vision of the ecological functions.
- The majority of restoration opportunities are found on or adjacent to agricultural or pastoral land. In these situations, restoration must complement and not displace existing land uses.
- This result in a mosaic of different land uses including: agriculture, agroforestry systems and improved ecological corridors.
- It integrates a number of guiding principles, including: Focus on landscapes, restore functionality, Involve stakeholders, Tailor to local conditions and Avoid further reduction of natural forest cover.

### **Improving ecology: Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):**

196 Parties came together under the Paris Agreement to transform their development trajectories so that they set the world on a course towards sustainable development, aiming at limiting warming to 1.5 to 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels.

- Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are at the heart of the Paris Agreement
- NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Each climate plan reflects the country's ambition for reducing emissions, taking into account its domestic circumstances and capabilities.
- The NDC also lays emphasis on carbon sequestration through a strengthened flow of benefits to local communities that are dependent on forests and agriculture for sustenance.
- India's policy framework on forests also lays emphasis on a landscape approach to manage forest and tree cover, so that the flow of multiple ecosystem services — including food security, climate mitigation and adaptation, conservation of biological diversity and water supplies — is secured.

### **Over emphasis on large-scale plantation drives**

Neither the Bonn Challenge nor the NDCs are about large-scale plantations alone.

Large-scale plantation drives alone do not achieve the targets because they do not lay stress on

- species selection,
- The quality of planting materials or survival rates,
- recognise tenure and resource rights to ensure that the benefit flows to communities,

Plantations do have their space, but as one among a larger suite of interventions.

An important success factor in large-scale tree-based programmes is security of tenure and land rights.

However, to operationalize a landscape approach, we must protect healthy forest areas from deforestation, degradation and fragmentation. We must also creatively integrate trees into different land uses.

India has numerous models that are suited for different regions and farm household sizes to draw upon, and must not rely on plantation drives alone to secure environmental and developmental outcomes.

**India needs to design its tree-based programmes better to meet climate goals**

Traditional and current reforestation practices are inadequate to reverse the currents of increasing deforestation and desertification. Small-scale grass roots development projects are the future for development in India.

1. **Agroforestry**: The nation practises at least 35 types of agroforestry models that combine different trees that provide timber, fruits, fodder, fuel and fertilizers with food crops.
  - Agroforestry is defined as a land use system which integrates trees and shrubs on farmlands and rural landscapes to enhance productivity, profitability, diversity and ecosystem sustainability.
  - India has designed a comprehensive policy with the goal to
    - Improve productivity,
    - create employment opportunities,
    - Generate income and
    - Meet the ever-increasing demand for timber, food, fuel, fodder, fertiliser and fibre from a growing population.
2. **Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)**
  - A simple, income generating and self-promoting reforestation system called Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) has been developed at Maradi, Niger.
  - It is a low-cost land restoration technique used to combat poverty and hunger amongst poor subsistence farmers by increasing food and timber production and resilience to climate extremes.
  - This system is based on the natural regeneration and management of tree stems from underground stumps, roots and seeds.
  - FMNR also increases resilience to climate extremes.
  - In Niger, West Africa, farmers operating on 5 Mha of land added roughly 200 million on-farm trees using FMNR in the past 30 years. This has sequestered 25-30 million tonnes of carbon and increased annual agricultural production by about 500,000 tonnes.
3. In India, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development's (NABARD's) 'Wadi' model and the Foundation for Ecological Security's re-greening of village commons project are good examples of tree-based interventions which are proving to have great value in terms of cost-effectiveness as well as the range of benefits they deliver to communities.

**Significance of Performance monitoring system and scientific evidence based methodology:**

As we regenerate trees through different interventions, it is critical to ensure that owners have the right to manage and use these trees.

1. **Performance monitoring system**
  - It is important to have in place a performance monitoring system to quantify tree survival rates and the benefits to communities.
  - This can be achieved through a combination of remote sensing, crowd sourced, ground-level monitoring with support from communities and civil society organisations.
2. **Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM)**
  - It is critical to use scientific evidence-based methodology with a participatory approach to determine the right type of tree-based interventions most suitable to a certain land use.
  - The Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) Tool is being used in 40 countries to find the best methods for landscape restoration.
  - The tool includes rigorous analysis of spatial, legal and socio-economic data and draws on consultations with key stakeholders to determine the right type of interventions.
  - In India, this tool is being piloted in Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

## Conclusion

India has the policy framework, the political will and financing to endorse landscape restoration. What we really need now is innovation and imagination to build replicable and scalable models with a participatory approach to achieve the country's climate goals through landscape restoration.

## 14/11 - Why ABBA must go: on Aadhaar

### Context:

The public distribution system (PDS) and its disbursement of rations to the poor have come under the scanner in Jharkhand after three persons died recently, allegedly owing to lack of food.

On September 28, Santoshi Kumari, an 11-year-old from Simdega district, died. Her mother, Koyli Devi, said the child died of hunger as the family was not getting rations under the State-run PDS for the past several months because of a biometric mismatch.

Government agencies claimed that the family was removed from the list of PDS beneficiaries as their ration cards were not linked to Aadhaar. The death triggered widespread criticism and it drew attention to the glitches in the PDS.

Earlier, Supreme Court order which says Aadhaar cannot be made compulsory for social welfare schemes.

### Why were names deleted?

At the centre of the controversy is an order by Chief Secretary in March, directing the district administration to delete the names of PDS beneficiaries whose ration cards were not linked to Aadhaar. The aim was to prevent leakages but it attracted sharp criticism from several quarters.

In their zeal to achieve 100% Aadhaar-seeding targets, some field functionaries just deleted the names of those who did not submit Aadhaar details. Others waited till the deadline and then struck off names. The government claims that all of these were "fake", detected due to Aadhaar, thus saving crores of rupees. Santoshi's family was one such example. According to the State Food Minister, their ration card was cancelled in July because they failed to seed it with Aadhaar.

Deleting ration cards for not being able to link them with Aadhaar has adversely affected the poor.

### What is ABBA?

For months, the Central government has been insisting on 100% Aadhaar "seeding" across schemes such as the PDS, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and pensions. Seeding refers to the practice of entering Aadhaar numbers for each household member on the ration card. It is a pre-requisite for the Aadhaar-based Biometric Authentication (ABBA) system. The government has made seeding and the ABBA mandatory in the PDS.

The ABBA system in PDS outlets is built around a set of "fragile technologies" that need to work simultaneously for successful transaction. These are:

1. **Seeding of Aadhaar numbers:** An eligible individual can become a beneficiary and access the PDS system only if her Aadhaar number is correctly seeded onto the PDS database and added to the household ration card.
2. **Point of Sale (PoS) machines:** The entire process at the PDS outlet is dependent on the PoS machine. If it malfunctions, no transaction can be made. The first step in the process requires the dealer to enter the ration card number of the beneficiary's household onto the PoS machine.
3. **Internet connection:** Successful working of the PoS machine depends on internet connectivity as verification of the ration card number and the beneficiary's biometric fingerprint is carried out over the internet.
4. **Remote Aadhaar servers:** Remote Aadhaar servers verify the ration card number and initiate fingerprint authentication.
5. **Fingerprint recognition software:** The beneficiary proves her identity by submitting to fingerprint recognition in the PoS machine. Upon verification, the PoS machine indicates that the beneficiary is genuine and that foodgrains can be distributed to her household.



The stated purpose of introducing ABBA in the PDS is to eliminate identity fraud and reduce siphoning of grains by the dealers, thereby improving the delivery of welfare schemes “to the benefit of the poor.”

### **Several reasons for Exclusions**

- Many of the aggrieved are unaware of the seeding requirement.
- When pensions in Jharkhand suddenly stopped for many pensioners, they had no idea why.
- In some cases, the middlemen had seeded it wrongly.
- Seeding process is not as simple as it sounds.
- The ABBA requires that family members be enrolled for Aadhaar and correct seeding. At the time of purchase, the ABBA requires power supply, a functional PoS machine, mobile and Internet connectivity, State and Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR) servers to be ‘up’, and for fingerprint authentication to be successful.
- The Finance Ministry’s latest Economic Survey based on micro-studies, reports high biometric failure rates.

### **What are the issues that crop up with the introduction of ABBA?**

The identification of eligible households involves two kinds of possible errors:

- Inclusion of an ineligible household on the NFSA list (“inclusion errors”)
- Exclusion of an eligible household from the NFSA list (“exclusion errors”).

While inclusion errors increase the financial burden of the state, exclusion errors can often leave poor families vulnerable to hunger.

Since the PDS was introduced to overcome chronic hunger and malnutrition, exclusion errors should be of greater concern.

- Though *Aadhaar is technically not an eligibility criterion, ABBA is systematically leading to exclusion at two levels.*
- The lack of an Aadhaar number automatically disqualifies eligible individuals from being listed in the household ration card.
- Beneficiaries face persistent and pervasive issues related to ABBA due to issues with one or more of the five technological components of the system such as reported fingerprint authentication errors, Aadhaar seeding issues, and poor connectivity.
- Several surveys revealed a fact that 10% of households are excluded due to ABBA and two-thirds reported errors with one or more of its five technological components.
- It raises Privacy issues.
- It is flexibility (an elderly person asking a neighbour to fetch their grain would count as identity fraud) that is lost when the ABBA is made mandatory.
- ABBA has minimum role in reducing corruption in the short time.
- Aadhaar endeavours of government are in violation of several Supreme Court orders that had ruled (even after the passage of the Aadhaar bill in Lok Sabha) that Aadhaar cannot be mandatory to access welfare services.

### **Way forward**

The results suggest that the ABBA system is neither as efficient nor as dependable as it is made out to be, even in a seemingly best-case environment.

- The Food and Public Distribution Department has directed officials to adopt a humane approach by giving rations to even those who are not on the list yet.
- The Department is also trying to provide compensation as per the National Food Security Act to those who have not got PDS supplies.
- It is essential to deal with issues of duplication, less disruptive methods than Aadhaar such as food coupons, smart cards, and last-mile tracking can be used to produce the same effectiveness with far less administrative burden.

## 15/11 - On maternity benefits

### Context:

The amendments to the Maternity Benefit Act, which were introduced this year, in particular the provision of 26 weeks of paid maternity leave and the mandatory crèche facility, are path-breaking, but there are concerns over their feasibility. Recently, the Labour Ministry placed the financial burden of implementing these measures squarely on the employers; this legitimises these concerns.

### Duties of Employee for Maternity Benefits:

- Under Section - 5(2) of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961: No woman shall be entitled to Maternity Benefit unless she has actually worked in an establishment **not less than 80 Days** in the 12 months immediately preceding the date of her expected delivery. But aforesaid shall not apply to a woman who has immigrated into the State of Assam and was pregnant at the time of the immigration.



- Ten (10)** weeks before the date of her expected delivery, she may ask the employer to give her light work for a month. At that time she should produce a certificate that she is pregnant.
- She should give written notice to the employer about **Seven (07)** weeks before the date of her delivery that she will be absent / on leave for six weeks before and after her delivery. She should also name the person to whom payment will be made in case she cannot take it herself.

### Maternity Benefit Act

#### Need

- With the advent of modern age, as the number of women employees is growing, the maternity leave and other maternity benefits are becoming increasingly common.
- But there was no beneficial piece of legislation in the horizon which is intended to achieve the object of doing social justice to women workers employed in factories, mines and plantation.

#### Objective:

- Providing maternity leave and benefit to women employee to protect the dignity of motherhood by providing for the full and healthy maintenance of women and her child.

#### Applicability of Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

The Act is to regulate the employment of women in certain establishments for certain period before and after child-birth and to provide for maternity benefit and certain other benefits.

- It applies to every establishment being a factory, mine or plantation including any such establishment belonging to Government and to every establishment wherein persons are employed for the exhibition of equestrian, acrobatic and other performances.
- It will also apply to every shop or establishment within the meaning of any law for the time being in force in relation to shops and establishments in a State, in which ten or more persons are employed on any day of the preceding twelve months.

**Key Amendment to the Act**

The provisions of The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 is effective from April 01, 2017.

The amendments seek to improve infant mortality rate (34 per 1,000 live births) and maternal mortality rate (167 per 100,000 live births).

1. **Increased Paid Maternity Leave:**

- The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act has increased the duration of paid maternity leave available for women employees from the existing 12 weeks to 26 weeks.
- Under the Act, this benefit could be availed by women for a period extending up to 8 weeks before the expected delivery date and remaining 18 weeks can be availed post childbirth.
- For women who are expecting after having 2 children, the duration of paid maternity leave shall be 12 weeks.

2. **Maternity leave for adoptive and commissioning mothers**

- Every woman who adopts a child shall be entitled to 12 weeks of maternity leave, from the date of adoption

3. **Work from Home option:**

- This may be exercised after the expiry of the 26 weeks' leave period.
- Depending upon the nature of work, women employees may be able to avail this benefit on terms that are mutually agreed with the employer.

4. **Crèche facility**

- The Act makes crèche facility mandatory for every establishment employing 50 or more employees.
- Women employees would be permitted to visit the crèche 4 times during the day.

The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act makes it mandatory for employers to educate women about the maternity benefits available to them at the time of their appointment.

**Challenges for the implementation of the Act**1. **Cost intensive**

- The measures introduced, particularly the crèche facility, are cost-intensive and may deter employers from hiring or retaining pregnant women.
- A 2014 International Labour Organisation report specifically cautions against making employers solely liable for the cost of maternity benefits for this reason.

**Solution:**

- Maternity benefits can be provided either through compulsory social insurance or public funds.
- The government should create a corpus fund to partially sponsor the costs to be incurred by the employer to provide maternity benefits.

2. **Less spending per child to meet the breastfeeding guidelines**

- One of the key goals of the act is to facilitate breastfeeding by working mothers.
- Studies have shown that health benefits that accrue to both the mother and her child by breastfeeding are more than matched by economic returns at family, enterprise and national levels.
- A 2017 report released by the Global Breastfeeding Collective, led by UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, has termed breastfeeding the "best investment in global health" generating \$35 in global return for every dollar invested.
- But, a 'Global Breastfeeding Scorecard, 2017' released by the Collective shows that India spends an abysmal \$0.15 (less than ₹10) per child to ensure that it meets the breastfeeding guidelines. As a result, India is poised to lose an estimated \$14 billion in its economy to a high level of child mortality and growing number of deaths in women from cancers and Type II diabetes, directly attributable to inadequate breastfeeding.

**Way Forward**

It is time for the government to shoulder the financial responsibility of providing maternity benefits.

- This could be implemented by enabling employers to seek reimbursement of the expenses incurred by them in this respect.
- In addition, the government must find innovative and cost-effective ways to ensure that working women are not forced to discontinue breastfeeding.
- A simple method is to express breast milk and store it to be given to their children while they are away.
- Employers need to facilitate a clean and private pumping room.

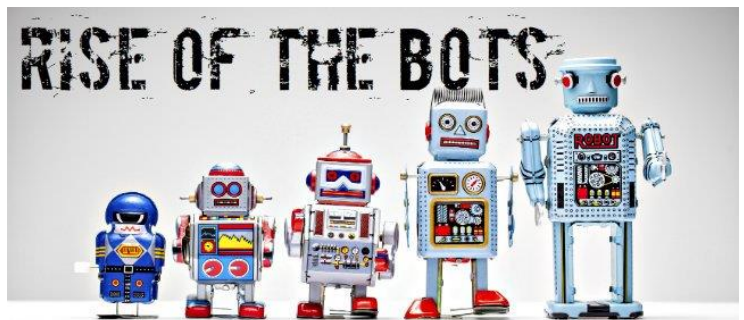
Government has to show the will to change this status quo by ensuring effective implementation of maternity benefits.

**17/11 - The rise of the bots****Context:**

Bots are shaping the Internet today. Despite being around since the beginnings of the Internet, they are getting their time in the spotlight.

**What are bots?**

A bot is a computer programme designed to work automatically. It is mainly used to gather information on the Internet or perform repetitive jobs at a much higher rate than would be possible for a human alone. The largest use of bots is in web spidering (web crawler), in which an automated script fetches, analyses and files information from web servers at many times the speed of a human.



Specifically, a bot is an application that performs an automated task, such as setting an alarm, telling you the weather or searching online. Some of the examples are Siri and Cortana, Microsoft's Clippy and AOL Instant Messenger's SmarterChild.

Bots are everywhere in technology, ranging from malicious bots that come with a virus to search engine spiders that crawl the Internet looking for new Web pages to add. For instance, chatbots can hold a conversation with you to accomplish a task.

**What can bots do?**

Today's bots can help us order food, shop for clothes, save money and find restaurants. For example, the Hi Poncho chatbot available in Facebook Messenger tells you the weather around you.

Many bots are programmed to act like humans when you talk to them so it feels like asking a person for help instead of just typing in a search engine.

Artificial intelligence-based bots are increasingly being used by organisations and entities to provide customer care, and sales and marketing services.

Some developers and companies believe that people are tired of apps and would rather use bots. Instead of having many different apps on your phone, you could have one with multiple bots that can help with different tasks, like ordering food or checking sports scores.

**Are they good or bad?**

Like for every technology, there are two sides to bots as well.

- One of the typical beneficial uses of a bot is to gather information.
- Another good use is automatic interaction using instant messaging, instant relay chat or other web interfaces.
- Dynamic interaction with websites is yet another way bots are used for positive purposes.

Norton defines a **malicious bot** as self-propagating malware that infects its host and connects back to a central server(s). Malicious bots can gather passwords, log keystrokes, obtain financial information, relay spam, and exploit back doors opened by viruses and worms, among other things.

Bots have also come under scrutiny in relation to automated accounts on Twitter and Facebook. Efforts are being made to restrict these bots from spreading misinformation on the respective platforms.

### **How do you know your computer is infected?**

According to Norton, symptoms such as a slow Internet or crashing of computer for no apparent reason, pop-up windows and advertisements appearing even when a web browser is not being used, friends and family receiving mails you did not send, or a fan going into “overdrive” when the device is idle may mean that your system is infected.

### **Use of Bots for malicious purposes**

Malicious use of bots is the coordination and operation of an automated attack on networked computers, such as a *denial-of-service attack* by a botnet. A spambot is an internet bot that attempts to spam large amounts of content on the Internet, usually adding advertising links. More than 94.2% of websites have experienced a bot attack.

- There are malicious bots (and botnets) of the following types:
- Spambots that harvest email addresses from contact or guestbook pages
- Downloader programs that suck bandwidth by downloading entire websites
- Viruses and worms
- DDoS attacks
- Bots are also used to buy up good seats for concerts, particularly by ticket brokers who resell the tickets.
- Bots are also used to increase views for YouTube
- Bots are used to increase traffic counts on analytics reporting to extract money from advertisers.
- Bots may be used on internet forums to automatically post inflammatory or nonsensical posts to disrupt the forum and anger users (Internet Troll).

### **What are the precautions and remedies?**

The most widely used anti-bot technique is the use of CAPTCHA, which is a form of Turing test used to distinguish between a human user and a less-sophisticated AI-powered bot, by the use of graphically-encoded human-readable text.

Captchas, however, are not foolproof in preventing bots as they can often be circumvented by computer character recognition, security holes, and even by outsourcing captcha solving to cheap laborers.

It is important to have good anti-malware software. All software should be updated and system updates should not be ignored.

## **18/11 - Timely recognition: on the Moody's upgrade**

### **Context:**

US-based International rating agency Moody's Investors Service has upgraded India's sovereign credit rating by a notch to 'Baa2' with a stable outlook citing improved growth prospects driven by economic and institutional reforms. Moody's has revised the sovereign rating of India after a long gap of 14 years.

The decision to upgrade the ratings is underpinned by Moody's expectation that continued progress on economic and institutional reforms will

enhance India's high growth potential. It will also improve large and stable financing base for government debt, and will likely contribute to a gradual decline in the general government debt burden over the medium term.

The global ratings agency, however, cautioned that high debt burden remains a constraint on the country's credit profile.

### **MOODY'S UPGRADES INDIA TO 'Baa2'**

#### **What Moody's Says**

- Progress On Reforms Will Enhance High Growth Potential
- Reforms Reduced Risk Of A Sharp Increase In Debt
- Rationale For Upgrading The Rating To Baa2
- Implemented Reforms Will Advance Objective Of Improving Biz Climate
- Reform Program Will Complement Existing Shock-absorbance Capacity



**What is a credit rating?**

A credit rating is an assessment of the creditworthiness of a borrower. Individuals, corporations and governments are assigned credit ratings — whoever wants to borrow money. Individuals are given ‘credit scores’, while corporations and governments receive ‘credit ratings’.

**What factors decide these ratings and what could move the Rating Up?**

There are several criteria behind rating a government’s creditworthiness. Among them are political risk, taxation, and currency value and labour laws.

- Another is sovereign risk where a country’s central bank can change its foreign exchange regulations. These risks are taken into account and ratings assigned accordingly.

The rating could move up if there were to be a material strengthening in fiscal metrics, combined with a strong and durable recovery of the investment cycle, probably supported by significant economic and institutional reforms

- Sustained reduction in the general government debt burden, through increased government revenues combined with a reduction in expenditures, would put positive pressure on the rating.

**Rationale for upgrading the Rating to Baa2**

The government is mid-way through a wide-ranging program of economic and institutional reforms.

- While a number of important reforms remain at the design phase, Moody’s believes that those implemented to date will advance the government’s objective of improving the business climate, enhancing productivity, stimulating foreign and domestic investment, and ultimately fostering strong and sustainable growth.
- The reform program will thus complement the existing shock-absorbance capacity provided by India’s strong growth potential and improving global competitiveness.
- Key elements of the reform program include
  - The recently-introduced Goods and Services Tax (GST) which will promote productivity by removing barriers to interstate trade;
  - improvements to the monetary policy framework by efforts to improve transparency and accountability, including through adoption of a new Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act;
  - measures to address the overhang of non-performing Assets (NPAs) in the banking system through an Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code;
  - demonetization;
  - The Aadhaar system of biometric accounts and targeted delivery of benefits through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system intended to reduce informality in the economy.
  - Other important measures which have yet to reach fruition include planned land and labour market reforms, which rely to a great extent on cooperation with and between the States.

**India’s Growth forecast by Moody’s**

Most of these measures by government will take time for their impact to be seen, and some, such as the GST and demonetization, have undermined growth over the near term.

- Moody’s expects real GDP growth to moderate to 7% in the fiscal year ending in March 2018 (FY2017).
- However, as disruption fades, assisted by recent government measures to support SMEs and exporters with GST compliance, real GDP growth will rise to 7.5% in FY2018, with similarly robust levels of growth from FY2019 onward.
- Longer term, India’s growth potential is significantly higher than most other Baa-rated sovereigns.

**What is the significance of this Rating on Indian Economy?**

India’s sovereign credit rating is undoubtedly a welcome recognition of the country’s enormous economic potential.

The ratings agency has said the reforms undertaken until now would advance the government’s objective of improving the business climate, enhancing productivity, stimulating foreign and domestic investment, and ultimately fostering strong and sustainable growth.

The significance of the Rating:

- Rating will enable Government to borrow money from various sources.
- Rating shows India worth as investment destination.
- This will enable India to position itself as a destination for foreign direct investment.
- It is undoubtedly a welcome recognition of the country’s enormous economic potential.

What are the constraints?

The high public debt burden remains an important constraint on India’s credit profile relative to peers.

- At 68% of its GDP in 2016, general government debt in India is significantly higher than the 44% median for other similarly ranked economies.
- Rating agency sees the debt-to-GDP ratio widening by about 1 percentage point this fiscal year to 69%.
- Farm loan waivers by States, the Centre’s implementation of the pay commission’s award and even weaker tax receipts amid teething issues with the GST will create more fiscal burden.

Way Forward

The large pool of private savings available to finance government debt, the steps taken to enlarge the formal economy by mainstreaming more and more businesses from the informal sector, and measures aimed at improving spending efficiency through better targeting of welfare measures, as all broadly supportive of a gradual strengthening of the fiscal metrics over time.

For the economy to capitalise on this upgrade, the political leadership must stay the reform course.

**20/11 - In the database: on registration of marriages**

**Context:**

In October, the Supreme Court held that that sexual intercourse by a man with his wife who is below 18 years of age is rape. The judgment was interpreted as a strong warning against child marriage. Similarly, in July 2017, the Law Commission of India suggested amendments in the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 to make registration of marriages compulsory, like births and deaths, as an effective antidote to social evils like child marriage, bigamy and gender violence.



### **Registration of Marriage in India**

A marriage which has already been solemnised can be registered either under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 or under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

- The Hindu Marriage Act is applicable in cases where both husband and wife are Hindus, Buddhists, Jains or Sikhs or where they have converted into any of these religions.
- Where either of the husband or wife or both are not Hindus, Buddhists, Jains or Sikhs, the marriage is registered under The Special Marriage Act, 1954.

### **Need to make the registration of marriages compulsory**

The Law Commission of India has communicated to the government the need for a new law to make the registration of marriages compulsory.

- There is no central Act making the registration of marriages compulsory but individual states such as Bengal and Punjab have laws for compulsory recording.
- The commission said many countries had made the registration of marriages compulsory and there was no reason why India should not do so too.

The intervention was based on a request from the Department of Legal Affairs to end the continued prevalence of practices such as child marriages, bigamy and gender violence in Indian society.

Bearing in mind the diversity of family laws, customs and traditions, it has endeavoured to create an all-India framework under which all marriages can be registered regardless of the differences in the procedure of solemnisation.

The Commission has found that the act of compulsory registration of marriage would be acceptable across the religious spectrum and that marriages can be registered under any of the prevailing marriage acts.

### **Law commission recommendations**

To make the registration of marriages mandatory, the commission has suggested an amendment to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.

- The Commission suggested that the Registrar who is responsible for the registration of births and deaths be responsible for the registration of marriages as well.
- The Amendment Bill should provide a provision of late fee in case if the birth or marriage or death is not registered within the specified time limit.
- In a marriage solemnised abroad, and in which one of the parties Indian, the Registrar is shall verify it was conducted as per the laws of that country and the marriage satisfies conditions laid down in Section 4 of the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969.
- The Commission called for village panchayats, local civil bodies and municipalities to create awareness about compulsory registration of marriages
- Law commission also recommended production of a marriage certificate should be made mandatory
  - for anyone applying for any benefit on behalf of the spouse;
  - for making application to government departments;
  - for getting benefits of any welfare schemes like agricultural and education loans

### **Significance of Marriage registration**

Non-registration of marriage affects women and children. Women are the prominent victims of bigamous relationships and property disputes and face immense difficulty in establishing their marriage.

- It will be beneficial for the women from unnecessary harassment in matrimonial and maintenance cases.
- It will also provide evidentiary value in the matters of custody of children, right of children born from the wedlock of the two persons whose marriage is registered and the age of the parties to the marriage.
- A unified database that consists of birth, marriage and death records would allow easy tracing of records. If registration of marriage is linked to the unique identification number (UID), it would be possible to achieve universal tracing of records

**Conclusion**

It has become necessary to enact a law to safeguard the future of married/ divorcees and to check child marriage trafficking of young girls under the garb of marriage.

In India, because of its size, population and the sheer diversity of customary forms of marriages, it has often been canvassed that an endeavour to register all marriages would be difficult. However, the difficulty in implementation does not overshadow the merits of such an enactment.

**21/11 - More than just a counting game****Context:**

November 19<sup>th</sup> was World Toilet Day, with the theme 'Wastewater and Faecal Sludge Management'.

In India, there is greater awareness about the importance of using toilets, largely due to the high profile, *flagship programme Swachh Bharat Mission launched in 2014*, so much so that even Bollywood capitalised on this topic in the recent film Akshay Kumar starrer, *Toilet — Ek Prem Katha*, where a marriage is saved thanks to toilets.

However, in real life, the sanitation story only begins with toilets, something clearly stated by the targets under the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. These targets are not just about 'toilets' but also suggest improvements to the entire cycle of sanitation, which certainly begins with toilets but has to end with safe waste disposal.

On the occasion of World Toilet Day today, PM stressed the need to end the concept of open defecation saying that this is the best gift that can be given to women.

**World Toilet Day**

The World Toilet Day is observed every year to raise awareness about of the global sanitation crisis and encourage people to use toilets.

- United Nations General Assembly designated 19th November as World Toilet Day to help break taboos around toilets and make sanitation for all a global development priority.
- The day is about inspiring action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.
- Today, 4.5 billion people live without a household toilet that safely disposes of their waste.
- Toilets save lives because human waste spreads killer diseases.
- The Sustainable Development Goals, launched in 2015, include a target to ensure everyone has access to a safely-managed household toilet by 2030.

**Why Is Sanitation Important?**

Sanitation is intrinsically linked to health, and unless faecal waste is treated properly and disposed of safely, it will find its way back into our bodies and make us sick either by contaminating our sources of drinking water or getting into the food chain.

- Illnesses like diarrhea, worms, cholera and malaria caused by poor sanitation needlessly take the lives of millions of people every day,
- Diarrhea alone responsible for the deaths of 5,000 children a day, says Unicef.
- Providing sanitary conditions such as proper toilet facilities, clean running water and a means of safe garbage disposal can therefore prevent the incidence of such widespread disease and death.
- Sanitation plays an important part in ensuring that children have fair access to an education which will help them succeed in life as adults.
- Sanitation can help to promote the economic development of a country by providing the means for food production and a healthy workforce while reducing the drain on public health services.

- Sanitation plays an important part in protecting the environment and promoting sustainability. According to the United Nations, reusing human waste through ecological sanitation can produce fertilizers which can be used in agriculture.

### What Is Sanitation?

Sanitation is the process of providing services and facilities which safely dispose of human waste and maintain public hygiene. This includes using clean and safe toilets, keeping water sources clean and disposing of garbage safely. Sanitation is a global issue which affects the health and well-being of the population, food production and the environment.

India's National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP, 2008) defines sanitation as "safe management of human excreta, including its safe confinement treatment, disposal and associated hygiene-related practices."

The full cycle of sanitation has four stages:

- Access to toilets;
- safe containment;
- conveyance either through the sewerage network or de-sludging trucks,
- Treatment and disposal.

The faecal waste needs to be handled safely at each of these stages in order to gain public health benefits. Following policy goals have been specified under National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP):

- Awareness Generation and Behaviour Change
- Open Defecation Free Cities
- Integrated City-Wide Sanitation
- Sanitary and Safe Disposal
- Proper Operation & Maintenance of all Sanitary Installations

### Sewerage systems and Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)

Urban India faces considerable gaps along the full cycle of sanitation due to inadequate sewerage and sewage treatment systems in all cities.

Sewerage refers to fully sealed pipes that are underground, and must not be confused with open storm water drains that are supposed to carry only rainwater.

- After decades of investment, India has managed to connect only a little more than a third of its urban households, most of which are located in metropolitan cities, to sewerage systems.
- This is because sewerage systems and sewage treatment plants (STPs) — a preferred system in most western countries — are not only expensive but are also complicated to maintain.

An alternative to sewerage systems is something known as on-site systems. Septic tanks and pit latrines, which are prevalent in many Indian households, fall into this category. If these systems are designed, constructed and managed properly, they can be perfectly safe options.

Safe containment, collection and treatment are known as septage management or faecal sludge management (FSM), and are being increasingly recognised by the Government of India as a viable option.

### Why Management of On-site Sanitation needs attention?

- At least a third of Urban Indian Households depend on on-site sanitation.
- Management of septage from on-site facilities appears to be an area of neglect
- Urban India has limited Sewage Treatment Facilities and little experience of Septage Treatment Facilities.

### Multi-stage challenges

Though viable, there are several challenges for FSM across all stages.

#### 1. Construction of On-site systems:

On-site systems are not constructed properly. While the designs of 'septic' tanks and leach pits have been set out in standards issued in government documents, house owners and masons are often not aware of these.

The most severe consequence of these poorly designed pits is the potential contamination of groundwater.

#### 2. De-sludging:

In addition, they are not de-sludged at regular intervals. Faecal waste needs to be transported using de-sludging vehicles.

#### 3. Treatment of sludge:

Once collected, the waste needs to be treated properly to ensure that it does not land up in our lakes and rivers. There aren't enough treatment facilities to guarantee proper treatment of the sludge.

### Need of the Hour:

- Raising awareness about correct design and construction practices of on-site systems. Urban local bodies and State governments could start by ensuring that the larger containment systems such as community toilets and public toilets are properly constructed and managed.
- Permission could be granted to new buildings, especially large apartment complexes only when the applicants show proper septage construction designs.
- The safety of sanitary workers who clean tanks and pits must be ensured by enforcing occupational safety precautions and the use of personal protective equipment as set out in the law.
- Home-owners and residents must empty their tanks and pits regularly, thereby preventing leaks and overflow.
- Governments must invest in creating treatment facilities that our cities can afford.

### A way forward

After the National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP) in 2008, a national policy on Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) was released earlier this year.

- Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Odisha have released State-wide septage management guidelines and taken concrete steps to execute these policies.
- While de-sludging vehicles and robust informal markets exist for de-sludging services in some States, others are either procuring vehicles for their urban local bodies or encouraging private players to get into this.
- Tamil Nadu has decided to utilise existing infrastructure, namely STPs, and allowed the co-treatment of faecal sludge in these facilities.
- It has also put in additional infrastructure called decanting stations at some pumping stations to make it easier for de-sludging vehicles to deposit their waste.
- Devanahalli in Bengaluru has a dedicated Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) operational since 2015.

Thus, there are many promising steps being taken, but much more needs to be done if we are to truly become an open-defecation free nation.

## 22/11 - Pacific Ocean's 11: on TPP without U.S.

### **Context:**

In a major breakthrough, trade ministers from 11 Pacific Rim countries said they reached a deal to proceed with the free-trade Trans-Pacific Partnership deal that was in doubt after US President abandoned it.

The revival of the Trans-Pacific Partnership minus the U.S. opens opportunities for India.

### **TPP in a nutshell**

Twelve countries that border the Pacific Ocean signed up to the TPP in February 2016, representing roughly 40% of the world's economic output.

- The pact aimed to deepen economic ties between these nations, slashing tariffs and fostering trade to boost growth. Members had also hoped to foster a closer relationship on economic policies and regulation.
- The agreement was designed so that it could eventually create a new single market, something like that of the EU.
- But all 12 nations needed to ratify it, before it could come into effect.
- US participation was the major linchpin for the deal. It may be possible for the other countries to forge a smaller scale pact in its place, but it can't go ahead in its current form.
- Those other member states are: Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, Chile and Peru.

Former President Barack Obama treated trade deals as a priority during his tenure, and this particular deal would have bolstered America's position in the Asia-Pacific region, where China is growing in influence.

But US opponents have characterised the TPP as a secretive deal that favoured big business and other countries at the expense of American jobs and national sovereignty.

### **How big a deal was the TPP?**

The 12 countries involved have a collective population of about 800 million – almost double that of the European Union's single market. The 12-nation would-be bloc is already responsible for 40% of world trade.

The deal was seen as a remarkable achievement given the very different approaches and standards within the member countries, including environmental protection, workers' rights and regulatory coherence – not to mention the special protections that some countries have for certain industries.

The US pulling out will be seen as big blow for other nations that signed up.

### **United States withdrawal**

US President argued that the agreement would “undermine” the U.S. economy and their independence.

- Instead he introduced an economic strategy of “putting America first”, stating that he would negotiate “fair, bilateral trade deals that bring jobs and industry back onto American shores.
- As part of this plan, Trump confirmed his intent for the United States to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership on his first day in office.

### **Without the US does it definitely fail?**

To take effect, the deal would have had to be ratified by February 2018 by at least six countries that account for 85% of the group's economic output. The US would need to be on board to meet that last condition (US contributed 60% of the combined Gross Domestic Product of the 12 members).

TPP's future was uncertain given US withdrawal. Several signatories signalled their intentions to rework TPP without US participation.

Some countries, including New Zealand, have suggested some sort of alternative deal may be possible without the US.

Whereas Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said a TPP without the US – and its market of 250 million consumers – would be “meaningless”.

**TPP has been resurrected — and it's happening without the US**

When US President was visiting Vietnam, trade ministers from the remaining 11 nations agreed in Danang in principle to a new pact, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), revising some of the features of the TPP.

- For the agreement to take effect, the pact requires domestic ratification, which is expected to be complete by 2019.
- This major step taken by the 11 countries of the Pacific Rim excluding the U.S. is a reflection of two things.
- These countries recognise that multilateral free trade, contrary to any misgivings, is beneficial in the long run. The TPP in its current form has significant protections for labour and environment and is in this regard an advance over other free trade agreements.
- The U.S.'s self-exclusion reflects a failure on the part of the Trump administration; studies have shown significant benefits in comparison to minor costs — in terms of jobs — to the U.S. on account of the pact.

**Countering China**

Countries like Japan are eager to use the salvaged TPP to counter China's growing sway.

Beijing is increasingly seeking to influence the region, notably through its Belt and Road Initiative that aims to foster greater trade across Asia and Europe through huge investments in things like roads, railways and ports.

Major Asian powers will continue to seek opportunities to balance against China — with or without the U.S. and despite Trump's withdrawal from TPP, China won't necessarily find it easy to draw countries fully into its orbit.

**Suspicious about American commitment**

US President couches his regime's policies as populist nationalism — 'protecting labour' in the case of the abandonment of the TPP, promoting jobs in fossil fuel-intensive sectors to justify the repudiation of the Paris Accord, and retaining American exceptionalism in West Asian policy in scrapping the Iran nuclear deal.

While rhetoric to this effect had fuelled his presidential campaign with a heavy dose of populism, the actual effect of going through with these actions has been to create a suspicion among America's allies about his reliability when it comes to standing by old commitments.

US President's agenda to pull his country out of multilateral agreements has coincided, ironically, with the rise of China as the leading world power promoting globalisation.

**A Way forward for India**

The pressure on New Delhi to fast-track on-going free-trade negotiations with countries that were part of the TPP, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, is going to increase.

The eagerness of members to conclude the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) — the ambitious free trade pact that India is negotiating with the 10-member ASEAN, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand — will also intensify as seven of its 16 members are also part of TPP.

India must utilise this opportunity to win concessions on services trade liberalisation as part of the plan.

**23/11 - Ripe for intervention****Context:**

Yemen was already reeling from a humanitarian catastrophe when Saudi Arabia imposed a land, sea and air blockade on the country earlier this month. The poorest Arab nation has now plunged into further crisis, with the UN warning of "the largest famine the world has seen for many decades" there if the blockade is not lifted.

**Yemen Crisis**

Yemen, historically divided between Shiites, who live mostly in the northeast, and the majority Sunni population who live in the southeast, is important to regional players and the United States.

Yemen, one of the Arab world's poorest countries, has been devastated by a war between forces loyal to the internationally-recognised government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement.

The conflict and a blockade imposed by the coalition have also left 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and created the world's largest food security emergency.

### **How did the war start?**

The conflict has its roots in the failure of a political transition supposed to bring stability to Yemen following an uprising that forced its long time authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to hand over power to Mr Hadi, his deputy, in 2011.

Mr Hadi struggled to deal with a variety of problems, including attacks by al-Qaeda, a separatist movement in the south, the continuing loyalty of many military officers to Mr Saleh, as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity.

The Houthi movement, which champions Yemen's Zaidi Shia Muslim minority and fought a series of rebellions against Mr Saleh during the previous decade, took advantage of the new president's weakness by taking control of their northern heartland of Saada province and neighbouring areas.

Alarmed by the rise of a group they believed to be backed militarily by regional Shia power Iran, Saudi Arabia and eight other mostly Sunni Arab states began an air campaign aimed at restoring Mr Hadi's government. The coalition received logistical and intelligence support from the US, UK and France.

### **Present crisis in Yemen could Cause 'Catastrophic' Famine**

The Saudis say the blockade, imposed after a long-range missile from Yemen was intercepted near Riyadh airport on November 4, was aimed at preventing the Houthi rebels from smuggling in weaponry.

- But in effect, Riyadh is starving millions of people who are already dependent on international aid for food and drugs.
- For almost three years, Saudi Arabia has been bombing Yemen with impunity.
- King Salman launched the war with the aim of defeating the Houthis, who the Saudis see as Iranian proxies. The U.S. offered support for the Saudi campaign.
- Now the war has entered a stalemate, with the Saudis seeing no face-saving exit.
- More than 10,000 people have been killed in the Saudi bombing, and many more injured and displaced. The country doesn't have a functional government.
- Large parts, including Sanaa, the capital city, are controlled by the Houthis, while the Saudi-backed government is operating from Aden, a southern city. Al-Qaeda has become stronger in the chaos triggered by the war.

Never-ending bombing and the failure to provide basic services have resulted in a food crisis and a medical emergency.

- At present, 17 million people in Yemen are dependent on external aid for survival.
- The country has also seen a cholera outbreak.
- Despite the terrible consequences of its actions, Saudi Arabia has not halted bombing.
- There has been no meaningful effort from the international community to put pressure on Riyadh to end the war either.

### **Regional power play**

The problem is that Saudi Arabia and its allies look at Yemen as a theatre for regional power play. The Saudis don't want the Houthis to control the country as they fear it would extend Iran's influence right to its backyard.

But Saudi Arabia lacks the strategic depth and resources to shape Yemen's future and yet, driven by geopolitical ambitions, it is resorting to excessive use of air power. But that is not enough to defeat the Houthis, who have the support of both the country's Shia community and the loyalists of the deposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

As a result, the Houthis still remain powerful even as Saudi Arabia continues to attack Yemen's cities. From the blockade, it is evident that Saudi Arabia will not wind down this war.

### **What is the international community saying?**

Eighteen humanitarian agencies penned a joint letter condemning the closure and demanding that humanitarian operations are allowed to resume immediately.

The group also requested clarity on how long the blockade was intended to be in place; right now it appears indefinite and no aid has entered the country for days.

### **The Need of the hour**

Access for humanitarian personnel and cargo into Yemen is essential to deliver desperately needed assistance to a population already severely affected by more than two and a half years of conflict.

A spokesperson for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs called the blockade “catastrophic,” warning that millions of people are only being kept alive by humanitarian assistance, which has suddenly vanished.

It is absolutely essential that the operation of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) be allowed to continue unhindered.

UN and other international bodies should deal with Saudi Arabia in the way aggressor nations are dealt with and bring some real pressure on the kingdom to end this brutal war.

## **24/11 - Do we need an anti-superstition law?**

### **Context:**

Recently, the Maharashtra State Legislature passed the much publicized Anti- Superstition Bill. Maharashtra became the first state in the country to pass a bill to combat practices like black magic.

The act criminalises practices related to black magic, human sacrifices, use of magic remedies to cure ailments and other such acts which exploit people’s superstitions.

This amended bill was drafted by the Social Welfare Ministry of the Maharashtra Government. A police officer of any rank has the power to investigate cases of black magic.

### **Different types of Superstitions practiced**

- Faith healers, inflict physical injury to exorcise spirits or cure ailments.
- Branding children with heated objects and using spurious surgical methods to change the sex of a foetus.
- Practising witchcraft.
- Made-snana, a ritual where devotees from across castes roll over the leftover food of Brahmins in certain temples to cure themselves of skin diseases
- Godmen abusing disciples by calling it his blessing
- Practices, like throwing children on thorns, parading women naked, etc., obviously harm others and can’t be allowed in the name of religion.

### **Brutal exploitation in the name of Religion**

Inhuman practices in the name of religion in the country are a cause of worry. In Maharashtra, there were several cases where people murdered or brutally injured others and held them responsible for some deaths in their families, merely on suspicion.

There were several groups which tilted the conversation by projecting it as a law against religion. Opponents to the legislation in Maharashtra had claimed that the law would affect the religious practices of Hindus; that it was anti-Hindu.

But after examining more than 350 FIRs lodged across Maharashtra in the last four years, it is found that these claims were unfounded. Data from more than 350 FIRs lodged across Maharashtra in the last four years show that the accused persons belong to various religions.

The new law addresses exploitation in the name of religion.

### **Other Challenges**

Bigger challenges to religion have come from mutually reinforcing, external sources.

- Religions in India came under the scrutiny of Modern science, secular statecraft and liberal legal principles. In asking for a ban on Sati in the early 19th century, Raja Ram Mohan Roy argued that it did not have approval from

within Hindu religious texts. This was a commonly heard refrain in later decades too that vested social interests and not Hindu dharma were responsible for these practices.

- Rationalists debunked religion as superstition, and the communists, who felt religion distorted reality. Driven by more modest aims, many rationalists laboured tirelessly to denounce miracles and astrology as cheap tricks.
- Over recent decades, around 800 women in Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha have been killed for practising witchcraft. Laws that aim to prevent this practice exist.

#### **It is argued that a substantive law of such a nature is not required**

- An anti-superstition law may seem necessary, but it cannot take cognisance of all realities. The domain of an anti-superstition law is to curb superstition, associated primarily with religious and occult practices.
- However, the question of whether we need a separate law to curb such practices has to be debated. This is because the substantive legal framework of our country is sufficiently adequate to address such crimes. For instance, throwing a child on thorns is an offence under Sections 307 and 323 of the IPC. Similarly, parading a woman naked can also be addressed specifically by Section 354B of the IPC.
- Critics argue that a substantive law of such a nature is not required; it works to the detriment of the larger objective it seeks to work for.
- Law and order is a State subject, so States are free to enact specific criminal laws. In the same way, States are also free to make amendments to Union laws. Therefore, ideally, Karnataka or any other State is free to amend the IPC, to accommodate specific requirements.

#### **Why do we need a separate law for preventing Black Magic?**

Around seven instances of human sacrifice have been reported since the passing of this law in 2013. Two such instances could have been prevented through timely intervention.

- Before this law, acts involving human sacrifice could not be stopped as they were preceded by some puja and offerings — not banned under any law. Now they are.
- The cognisance of human sacrifice is in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) only after the murder is committed.
- The present IPC is not equipped to take care of all crimes committed on account of black magic and other superstitious practices.
- Thus, legislation has a capacity to act as a deterrent.
- The Maharashtra legislation has stopped the act of human sacrifice.

There are provisions in the IPC to punish violence, but the peculiar nature of the violence faced by women within the family needed a separate law.

There is a section in the Maharashtra legislation which specifically addresses and checks claims made by 'godmen' who say they have supernatural powers. Once something is made illegal in the eye of the law, it will not be possible for anyone to openly support fraudulent godmen.

#### **The best way forward**

Secular temptations and anxieties of money and power in the modern world explain better perhaps the rise in need-based rituals for placating deities than inner tendencies within religion. Lacking access to proper health care and poverty will also make victims fall to such methods.

- If the executive is serious about curbing such practices, active implementation and enforcement of existing laws need to be made more effective. Studies in criminology have already established that certainty of punishment curbs the rate of crime and not the type or the quantum of punishment.
- The enforcement machinery needs a major overhaul to make criminal justice more accessible.
- Moral resources for replacing unacceptable practices are explored within tradition.

#### **Conclusion**

India needs legislation on superstition, though what should go into it requires debate. Every superstition cannot be removed by the force of law. For that, a mental change is necessary. However, superstitious practices that are utterly dehumanising, brutal and exploitative need to be dealt with by a law that specifically addresses them.

## 25/11 - Pill talk — On antibiotic resistance

### Context:

Around the time the UN Climate Change Conference drew to a close in Bonn last week, so did the World Antibiotic Awareness Week, a World Health Organisation campaign to focus attention on antibiotic resistance. The global threats of climate change and antibiotic resistance have much in common. In both cases, the actions of people in one region have consequences across the globe. Also, tackling both requires collective action across multiple focus areas.

### World Antibiotic Awareness week

World Antibiotic Awareness Week is celebrated from 16th- 22nd November. The event was established by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to raise awareness of antibiotic resistance and judicious use of antibiotics.

This year the theme of the event is “Antibiotics: Handle with Care”.



- A global action plan to tackle the growing problem of resistance to antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines was endorsed at the 68th World Health Assembly in May 2015.
- One of the key objectives of the plan is to improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education and training

At least 2 million people get infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria each year, resulting in at least 23,000 deaths, according to the US Centres for Disease Control.

WHO has called antibiotic resistance is a major global threat to public health.

### What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotics are medicine used to treat infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotic Resistance refers to resistance developed by bacteria against antibiotics or the ability of bacteria to mutate or change so as to resist the effects of antibiotics. The more we use them, and the more we abuse them, the less effective they become.

Antibiotics are unquestionably useful against bacterial infections. However, indiscriminate use has resulted in development of resistance in patients with bacterial infections thereby leading to long lasting illnesses.

Thanks to that annoying thing called evolution, bacteria are constantly adapting to counter-attack antibiotics. Antibiotic resistance is one of the most significant threats to patients' safety. It is driven by overusing antibiotics and prescribing them inappropriately.

### Negative effect:

- Antibiotic resistance causes people to be sick for longer and increases the risk of death.
- Resistance also increases the cost of health care with lengthier stays in hospital and more intensive care required.
- Antibiotic-resistant bacteria increase the chance and severity of illness and ultimately death.
- Few new antibiotics are being developed, which is exacerbating the situation as more antibiotic resistant bacteria adapts and arises.

Therefore, rational use of antibiotics is essential in order to minimize antibiotic resistance.

### Antimicrobial Resistance in India

AMR is of particular concern in developing nations, including India, where the burden of infectious disease is high and healthcare spending is low. The country has among the highest bacterial disease burden in the world. Antibiotics, therefore, have a critical role in limiting morbidity and mortality in the country. The 2015 WHO multi-country survey revealed widespread public misunderstanding about antibiotic usage and resistance.

- AMR has huge implications for India. There is a need to have in place a good comprehensive AMR National Action Plan in line with the Global AMR action plan.
- For resistance, this means cutting the misuse of antibiotics in humans and farm animals, fighting environmental pollution, improving infection control in hospitals, and boosting surveillance.
- While most of these goals need government intervention, individuals have a critical part to play too.

- This is especially true for India, which faces a unique predicament when it comes to restricting the sale of antibiotics — some Indians use too few antibiotics, while others use too many.
- Many of the 410,000 Indian children who die of pneumonia each year do not get the antibiotics they need, while others misuse drugs, buying them without prescription and taking them for viral illnesses like influenza.
- Sometimes this irrational use is driven by quacks. But just as often, qualified doctors add to the problem by yielding to pressure from patients or drug-makers.

This tussle — between increasing antibiotic use among those who really need them, and decreasing misuse among the irresponsible — has kept India from imposing blanket bans on the non-prescription sale of these drugs.

When policymakers did propose such a ban in 2011, it was met with strong opposition. Instead, India turned to fine-edged tools such as the Schedule H1, a list of 24 critical antibiotics such as cephalosporins and carbapenems, whose sale is tightly controlled.

### **What are Schedule H drugs?**

Schedule H is a class of prescription drugs in India appearing as an appendix to the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 introduced in 1945.

- These are drugs which cannot be purchased over the counter without the prescription of a qualified doctor.
- The manufacture and sale of all drugs are covered under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules.
- It is revised at times based on the advice of the Drugs Technical Advisory Board, part of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

### **Why hasn't Schedule H1 accomplished much?**

Enforcement of Schedule H laws in India is lax, compared to the more restrictive Schedule X, for which a mandatory documentation trail must be maintained.

- Pharmacists often flout rules, and drug controllers are unable to monitor them. Thus, the power to purchase antibiotics still remains in the hands of the consumer.
- It is up to consumers now to appreciate the threat of antibiotic resistance and exercise this power with care.
- These miracle drugs form the bedrock of modern medicine today, and are needed for everything from prophylaxis for a complicated hip surgery to treatment for an infected knee scrape.
- Losing these drugs would mean that even minor illnesses could become killers, and the cost of health care will soar.

### **How can we prevent antibiotic-resistant infections?**

It is important to understand that, although they are very useful drugs, antibiotics designed for bacterial infections are not useful for viral infections such as a cold, cough, or the flu.

- Before taking any antibiotic ask the physician if it is required and beneficial.
- Always take antibiotics as prescribed by the physician.
- Take antibiotics to treat only bacterial infections.
- Do not take antibiotics in viral infections such as cold, cough, or flu
- Do not repeat the same antibiotic for the next time you get sick.
- Do not stop antibiotic before complete prescribed course of treatment.
- Do not skip doses.
- Do not copy the antibiotic with the same diseases which is prescribed for someone else.

### **Way Forward**

Consumers need to remember that not all illnesses need antibiotics and the decision on when to take them and for how long are best left to a doctor.

Multi-resistance in some tertiary-care hospitals to bugs like *Staphylococcus aureus* has grown to dangerous levels. But the experience of countries like Australia shows that cutting down on antibiotics can reverse such trends. The National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance aims to repeat such successes in India.

Meanwhile, awareness must be built among consumers so that they see the coming crisis and take up the baton.

## 26/11 - The numbers game — On India's victory at the ICJ

### **Context:**

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the highest judicial body having trans-national jurisdiction, is in the process of filling a clutch of vacancies, with the terms of five serving judges coming to an end. Dalveer Bhandari, an incumbent who represented India at the ICJ has been re-elected. The import of India's efforts at securing a place at the high table of global jurisprudence should be seen in the backdrop of the Kulbhushan Jadhav case, which is currently pending before the court.

The election of Justice Dalveer Bhandari to the International Court of Justice for a second term is a major diplomatic success for India.

### **What is the ICJ?**

The International Court of Justice commonly referred to as the World Court, ICJ or The Hague is the primary judicial branch of the United Nations (UN).



- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) started work in 1946, after half a century of international conflict in the form of two World Wars.
- The ICJ has its seat at The Hague, the Netherlands, and has the jurisdiction to settle disputes between countries and examine cases pertaining to violation of human rights according to the tenets of international law.
- The statute of the ICJ regulates the functioning of the Court.
- All members of the UN are automatic parties to the statute, but this does not automatically give ICJ jurisdiction over disputes involving them.
- The ICJ gets jurisdiction only on the basis of consent of both parties.

The ICJ has passed many landmark judgements, but the execution of its verdicts have often been hindered by the skewed balance of power in the United Nations wherein enforcement is subject to veto by permanent members of the Security Council.

Despite inadequacies in overturning the hurdles erected by members with veto power, the ICJ remains the apex court in settling disputes between nations.

### **How are judges elected?**

The ICJ has a total strength of 15 judges who are elected to nine-year terms of office.

- They are elected by members of the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, where polling takes place simultaneously but independent of each other.
- In order to be elected, a candidate must have an absolute majority in both bodies, which often leads to much lobbying, and a number of rounds of voting.
- In order to ensure a sense of continuity, especially in pending cases, elections are conducted triennially for a third of the 15-member Court.
- Judges are eligible to stand for re-election.
- Elections are held in New York during the autumn session of the United Nations General Assembly, and the elected judges enter office on February 6 of the subsequent year.
- After the Court is in session, a President and Vice-President are elected by secret ballot to hold office for three years.

- If a judge were to die in office, resign, or be incapacitated to perform the duties expected of her, a special election is held as soon as possible to fill the vacancy for the unexpired duration of her tenure.

The Court also adheres to a rigid ethno-cultural matrix to ensure that it is representative of the 'main forms of civilization and the principal legal systems of the world.' This internal arithmetic is maintained at every election to the ICJ. Of the 15 judges, it is mandated that three should be from Africa, two from Latin America and the Caribbean, three from Asia, five from Western Europe and other states, and two from Eastern Europe.

### **Re-election of Justice Bhandari as ICJ judge**

Five of the 15 judges of the ICJ are elected every three years. This year there were six candidates for five slots.

While four candidates were elected smoothly, Justice Bhandari and Christopher Greenwood of the United Kingdom ended in a dead heat as the former won the UNGA and the latter the UNSC in multiple rounds of voting.

The U.K. wanted to end the voting and move to a conference mechanism, which involves selecting a panel of three UNGA members and three UNSC members, who would then elect the judge.

This mechanism has never been used before. India opposed the move, and the U.K. could not gather adequate support for its demand in the UNSC.

The U.K. then withdrew its candidate, paving the way for Justice Bhandari's re-election. India and the U.K. had staked considerable diplomatic goodwill in the election, and the outcome is significant politically for both.

### **Britain's loss in ICJ is reflective of failure of diplomacy**

The UK will not have a judge on the bench of the International Court of Justice for the first time in its 71-year history.

It is also the first time that a permanent member of the UNSC has lost at the ICJ on a vote.

For British Prime Minister the loss comes at a difficult time as she struggles with the process of leaving the European Union and with her own leadership coming under assault from Conservative MPs.

In this context, the loss at the ICJ is being read as confirmation of the U.K.'s diminishing role in global affairs.

As America's inseparable and unquestioning junior partner, the country had asserted its relevance in the post-War order even as its military and economic power eroded.

### **What this election means, why it matters**

1. A worrisome precedent for P5 countries: The prospect of India winning against a P5 member through democratic means was something that this elite club of veto-wielding countries – Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States – was unnerved with, because this would set a precedent that they did not want to see repeated.
2. UNGA's vote in India's favour reflects new global order: In the 11 rounds of the election, Bhandari had been receiving the support of nearly two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly but was trailing by three votes against Greenwood in the Security Council.

According to reports, the voting in the General Assembly, which overwhelmingly favoured India, is reflective of the new global order, which is not pleasant to the world powers.

3. Trade with India could have played a role: The fact that India could emerge as a "more significant trading partner" after the UK's exit from the European Union, or Brexit, could have contributed to the decision to withdraw.

### **Take away for India**

Earlier, the 11-judge bench of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague unanimously agreed to accept India's plea against Pakistan's death sentence to Kulbhushan Jadhav.

The bench led by Judge Ronny Abraham asked Pakistan not to execute Kulbhushan Jadhav till the final verdict in the case is not pronounced by the International Court of Justice.

Now this election for India, soon after its failure to gain membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the lobbying for the ICJ election has different lessons.

- With all five permanent members of the UNSC fiercely locking arms to protect their collective interest of dominating the world body, India's success was built primarily on the support of developing countries, among which it has nurtured goodwill over the decades.
- Japan also appeared to align with the P-5.

- India's call for a more equitable world order has a better resonance among developing countries than the custodians of the current order.
- India's support in the UNGA was expanding with subsequent rounds of voting, a reality the U.K. and the U.S. could not brush aside.

For India, the takeaway is clear: to find a louder global voice, it also needs to put more emphasis on ties with countries away from the high table. India's victory at the ICJ reinforces the importance of small power diplomacy.

## 27/11 - A toolkit to think local

### Context:

The 'India State Level Disease Burden' report, prepared as part of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2016, and published in Lancet, has found that every State in India has a higher burden from non-communicable diseases and injuries than from infectious diseases. The study used multiple data sources to map State-level disease burden from 333 disease conditions and injuries, and 83 risk factors for each State from 1990 to 2016. It was released by Vice-President.

The estimates are based on analysis of all identifiable epidemiological data from India over 25 years. The report, which provides the first comprehensive set of state-level disease burden data, risk factors estimates, and trends for each state in India, is expected to inform health planning with a view toward reducing health inequalities among States.

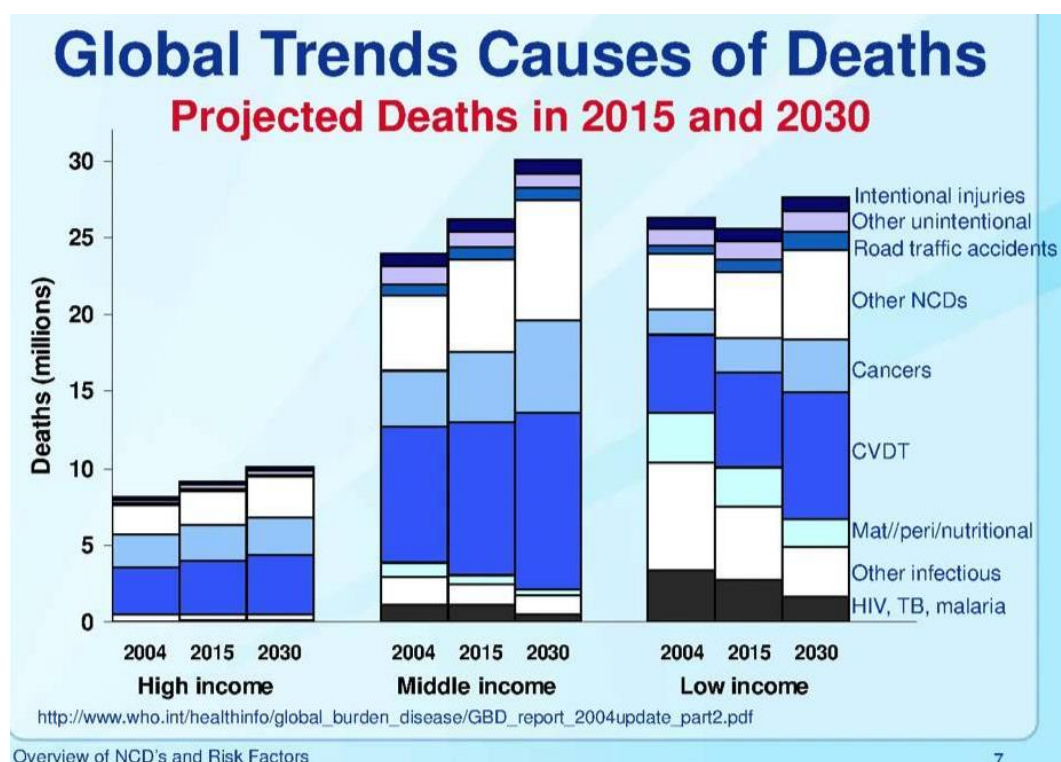
### What is GBD and why is it important?

The Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) is the single largest and most detailed scientific effort ever conducted to quantify levels and trends in health. Led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, it is truly a global effort, with over 1,000 researchers from more than 100 countries, including 26 low- and middle-income countries, participating in the most recent update.

GBD creates a unique platform to compare the magnitude of diseases, injuries, and risk factors across age groups, sexes, countries, regions, and time.

For decision-makers, health sector leaders, researchers, and informed citizens, the GBD approach provides an opportunity to compare their countries' health progress to that of other countries, and to understand the leading causes of health loss that could potentially be avoided, like high blood pressure, smoking, and household air pollution.

IHME provides GBD results in visualization tools, allowing people to interact with the vast amounts of data and the trends they identify. These unique tools are beneficial when trying to identify specific information for age groups, sexes, causes, risks, and comparison to other regions.



**India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative:**

In order to improve health programs and planning in India, The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) is partnering with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) – in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India – to generate subnational disease burden and risk factor estimates.

**Need of this initiative:**

Over the past 25 years, India has seen a major epidemiological transition.

- The burden of premature death and health loss from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and road traffic injuries has increased substantially, while the burden due to lower respiratory infections, tuberculosis, diarrhea, and neonatal disorders remains high.
- With over 1.2 billion people in its 29 states, India's disease burden due to these major conditions is expected to vary significantly by geography and across different population groups.
- Because national estimates do not provide enough detail for targeted action, reliable subnational estimation of disease burden in India will allow policymakers to make more informed decisions to improve population health.

Policymakers in India need reliable disease burden data at subnational levels. Planning based on local trends can improve the health of populations more effectively.

To address this crucial knowledge gap, a team of over 250 scientists and others from around 100 institutions who are part of the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative has analysed and described these trends for every State from 1990 to 2016.

With support from the World Bank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, IHME, ICMR, and PHFI will work together over the next few years to provide a disease burden analysis, by age and gender, over time, for hundreds of diseases, injuries, and risk factors for each of India's states.

**Basis of the study**

The findings of the study are based on analysis of data from all available sources.

- This includes vital registration, the sample registration system, large-scale national household surveys, other population-level surveys and cohort studies, disease surveillance data, disease programme data, administrative records of health services, disease registries, among others.
- The key metric used to assess burden is disability-adjusted life years (DALY), which is the sum of the number of years of life lost due to premature death and a weighted measure of the years lived with disability due to a disease or an injury.
- This allows comparisons of health loss between diseases, risk factors, States, sexes, age groups, and over time.

**Inequalities among States**

The per person disease burden, measured as DALY rate, has dropped in India by 36% from 1990 to 2016, but there are major inequalities among States with the per-person DALY rate varying almost twofold between them.

- The burden of most infectious and childhood diseases has fallen, but the extent of this varies substantially across India.
- Diarrhoeal diseases, lower respiratory infections, iron-deficiency anaemia, neonatal disorders, and tuberculosis still continue to be major public health problems in many poorer northern States.
- The contribution of most major non-communicable disease categories to the total disease burden has increased in all States since 1990. These include cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, mental health and neurological disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, cancers, and chronic kidney disease.
- The contribution of injuries — the leading ones being road injuries, suicides, and falls — to the total disease burden has also increased in most States since 1990.

The continuing high burden of infectious and childhood diseases in poorer States along with the rising tide of non-communicable diseases and injuries poses a particularly ominous challenge for these States.

Substantial increases in health spending by the government and expansion of suitable preventive and curative health services are necessary to prevent this potentially explosive situation.

Major differences are also observed for individual diseases between neighbouring States that are at similar levels of development. This points to the need for State-specific health planning instead of generic planning.

### **The leading risk factors**

Disease burden can be reduced by addressing the risk factors for major diseases.

The findings of the study reveal that three types of risks – undernutrition, air pollution, and a group of risks causing cardiovascular disease and diabetes – are akin to national emergencies as these have the potential to significantly blunt the rapid social and economic progress to which India aspires.

1. **Under Nutrition:** It is remarkable that even though there is a declining trend in child and maternal under nutrition, this is still the single largest risk factor in India, responsible for 15% of the total disease burden in 2016.
  - Under nutrition increases the risk of neonatal disorders, nutritional deficiencies, diarrhoeal diseases, and lower respiratory and other common infections.
  - This burden is 12 times higher per person in India than in China.
  - While this risk factor is relatively worse in the major northern poor States and Assam, it is amazingly the leading risk in over three-fourths of the States across India.
2. **Air Pollution:** Air Pollution levels in India are among the highest in the world, making it the second leading risk factor in 2016, responsible for 10% of the total disease burden in the country.
  - Air pollution increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, respiratory infections, and cancer.
  - The burden of outdoor air pollution has increased in every part of India since 1990 because of pollutants from power production, industry, vehicles, construction, dust and waste burning.
  - Air pollution is higher in the northern States, but is considerable even in the southern States.

The unacceptably high disease burden due to undernutrition and air pollution in most of India must be brought to an end through systematic large-scale interventions with robust short- and long-term goals.

3. **Non Communicable Diseases:** A group of risks that include unhealthy diet, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol and overweight, which increase the risk of ischaemic heart disease, stroke and diabetes, contributed a tenth of the total disease burden in India in 1990, but increased to a quarter of the total burden in 2016.
  - While these risks are currently higher in the relatively more developed States, their phenomenal increase in every State over the past quarter of a century poses a grave threat.

Unless serious attempts are made soon to address this surge through massive up scaling of interventions in the health, food, agriculture, housing and urban development sectors, these risks can result in major deterioration in the health status across all States, rich and poor.

An important point to note related to undernutrition, air pollution, and the risks causing cardiovascular disease and diabetes is that the interventions needed to address them have to involve extensive collaborations between the health sector and other relevant sectors.

### **Inputs for health planning**

These findings reported by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative provide the most comprehensive mapping so far of the magnitude of diseases and risk factors in every State, their age and sex distributions, and trends over a quarter century — all in a single standardised framework.

- This initiative will produce scientific papers, policy briefs, workshops, and seminars to encourage discourse and monitor changing disease trends.
- State-of-the-art GBD interactive visualization tools will be used to bring to life the initiative's findings.
- This will allow comparisons between states, which will be particularly useful for decision-makers in understanding trends in diseases and risk factors in order to plan further action.
- The findings of the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative will aid in decentralised health planning.

**Way Forward**

The effort was to produce an open-access, public good knowledge base, which has the potential of making fundamental and long-term contributions to improving health in every state of the country, through provision of the best possible composite trends of disease burden and risk factors for policy makers to utilise in their decision making.

The chances of achieving the overall health targets for India and of reducing health inequalities among States would be higher now if the biggest health problems and risks identified for each State are tackled on priority basis rather than with a more generic approach.

This new knowledge base and the annual updates planned by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative will provide important inputs for the data-driven and decentralised health planning and monitoring recommended by the National Health Policy 2017 and the NITI Aayog Action Agenda 2017-2020.

**28/11 - Reaching out to neighbours****Background:**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is among the world's largest regional intergovernmental organisations. Since its inception, the countries in the region have become more integrated through enhanced intraregional trade and connectivity.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), geographically proximate to ASEAN, started its journey in 1985 with similar aspirations but over time has failed to deliver. It has been unable to integrate the region through trade and connectivity and continues to be stuck in the quagmire of regional politics and rivalry and stagnates from historical distrust and old animosity. More often, Indo-Pak relations overshadow SAARC meetings.

As ASEAN celebrates 50, reflections on SAARC are failed decades.

**ASEAN and SAARC**

ASEAN started with founding members Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand; then added Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam in later years.

The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) came into being in 1985, with founding members Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan joined in 2007. Both were set up because the members were embroiled in serious disputes. ASEAN was also more troubled because of its conglomeration of islands and unclear laws dealing with maritime frontiers. Yet, while ASEAN was able to avoid conflict, SAARC was not.

**Achievements of SAARC**

- SAFTA: A Free Trade Agreement confined to goods, but excluding all services like information technology. Agreement was signed to reduce customs duties of all traded goods to zero by the year 2016.
- SAARC visa exemption decided that certain categories of dignitaries should be entitled to a Special Travel document, which would exempt them from visas within the region.
- Greater cultural co-operation

**Main difference between ASEAN and SAARC**

ASEAN's comparative success in conflict management is the use of alternative dispute resolution, through justice or mediation.

In its first two decades, ASEAN focussed on a limited range of issues, but over time its mandate expanded and now includes climate change, disaster management, counterterrorism, drugs and human trafficking.

**1. On Resolution of disputes:**

ASEAN's greatest success has been its ability to deftly resolve disputes.

In the early years, for instance, its unity was challenged by the Philippines-Malaysia dispute over Sabah, but the founding members found a peaceful mechanism to mitigate opposing claims.

In the case of SAARC, political squabbles, deep mistrust and military conflict between India and Pakistan have frustrated regional cooperation. The whole region is suffering from lost potential due to India-Pakistan hostility which hit a new low when India boycotted the 19th SAARC summit as a result of the Uri terrorist

attack, with Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan following suit, eventually resulting in cancellation of the summit.

## 2. **Trade and Economic Growth**

Trade in ASEAN has grown rapidly and it has focussed on promoting rapid economic growth and modernisation.

It has created the Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA), which ensures liberalisation and protection of cross-border investments operations, together with best practices for the treatment of foreign investors and investments.

On the other hand, trade amongst the SAARC members stands at 3.5% of their total volume of trade.

- Initiatives under the South Asian Free Trade Association have failed to make much headway.
- Sub regional initiatives like the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement also have stalled.

## 3. **Regional Connectivity**

The Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations (FATA) has called on the ASEAN nations to waive entry requirements amongst the member states.

A feasibility study has been conducted on the development of a rail link from Singapore to Kunming in southern China to enhance seamless connectivity among the ASEAN nations to boost intraregional trade and people-to-people connectivity.

Projects aimed at promoting the region as a tourist destination have also been undertaken.

On the other hand, the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme only allows certain categories of dignitaries to be exempt from visas, excluding ordinary citizens from accessing unimpeded travel in the region.

- It is difficult for Indians to enter Pakistan and vice versa.
- Even citizens of other SAARC countries who have visited either India or Pakistan before and now wish to travel to the other face hassles during visa issuance by either country.
- SAARC infrastructural problems plague connectivity.

## 4. **Existence of Practical diplomatic tools**

The main difference between ASEAN and SAARC lies in the existence of practical diplomatic tools to address these issues.

ASEAN member States and other regional and international stakeholders created in 1994 the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to promote confidence-building and develop preventive diplomacy in the region.

Often criticized for its lack of efficiency in tackling long-standing issues like Myanmar's democratization, the ARF has nevertheless established a diplomatic forum to address these specific concerns.

On the other hand, A SAARC Regional Forum to discuss disputes would be a proper way to take political pressure away from SAARC Summits but the creation of such a mechanism seems unlikely as long as SAARC lacks a common vision of regionalism.

## 5. **Sub-regional short-cuts**

As the biggest country of SAARC, India is trying to exert leadership by forming subregional initiatives like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Another objective is to isolate Pakistan.

Such attempts to forge sub-regional ties at the cost of jeopardising the regional vision for unity have not been witnessed in ASEAN.

When ASEAN was criticised for taking in Myanmar in spite of its military rule, the grouping emphasised the importance of keeping open the channels of communication and engagement as a better means to influence the regime. Bilateral bickering never got in the way of trade and travel.

## 6. On the political and economic continuum

On the political and economic continuum, ASEAN has behaved pragmatically and sensibly whereas South Asia has been bogged down by bilateral animosity and the bitter legacy of partition.

- ASEAN members have avoided showing outward hostility against each other and have tried to resolve differences through dialogue, engagement and cooperation.
- Politicians in SAARC have mostly catered to their domestic constituents without having any broad regional vision, so that it takes years to sign agreements and even more time to implement them.
- As a regional organisation, while ASEAN has grown from strength to strength.

### Conclusion

The major limitations of SAARC are Domination of India, Political differences and inequality among members. SAARC charter excludes bilateral and contentious issues discussion on forum. Obstructionist policies of Pakistan have created problems in economic cooperation.

SAARC despite these limitations and poor performance, however, remains a useful tool for smaller countries to promote understanding and cooperation at bilateral level.

There is a serious and concerted effort should be made by the political leadership of SAARC, led primarily by India and Pakistan, to revitalise the regional body.

## 29/11 - Childhood foregone

### Context:

Two years after governments set a 2025 target to end child labour, delegates from 100 nations at a recent conference in Buenos Aires were told that they will miss the deadline. The implication is also that realising the objective could take well over 20 years after the expiry of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### What is meant by Child labour?

According to International Labour Organization (ILO), the term 'child labour' is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

Bonded Labour is exploitation in which the child is forced to work as a payment of debt taken by his/her parent.

Urban Child Labour is where the street children who spend almost all of their life on street work as labourers.

In India, the child labour has been a long and common practice where children help their parents at their farms and in other activities.

### What are the consequences/adverse effects of child labour on a child's life?

Child labour hinders the education – which affects their future as lack of education causes unemployment, and thus the result is poverty. It affects the child's health and growth process.

- The children are endangered to accidental and other injuries at work.
- Sexual assault, especially sexual exploitations of girls by adults, prostitution, rape which leads to abortions, unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted disease (STDs), alcoholism and drugs.
- Physical abuse involves punishment, such as caning or flogging known as corporal punishment, emotional abuse such as blaming, making bad remarks, humiliating, verbally attacking, and rejection.
- Emotional neglect. depriving the child of family love and affection which results in hopelessness and loneliness
- Physical neglect such as not giving sufficient food, shelter, medical treatment and clothing

### Constitutional provisions against child labour in India

- As per Article 21(A) and Article 45 – The child has the right to Education i.e. the state shall provide compulsory and free education to the children of the age six to 14 years.
- As per Article 24 – There is a provision under which a child below the age of 14 years cannot be employed in any mine, factory or hazardous workplace.

- As per Article 39(f) –The child’s youth and childhood are to be protected against moral and material abandonment and exploitation.

### **Initiatives against child labour in India**

- The Act that regulates child labour is “The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 which defines a child as any person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age. The Act prohibits children from working in any occupation which includes dhabas, domestic labour, hotels, catering or construction work on railways or anywhere near the tracks, automobile garages and plastics factories, places where the process of soap manufacturing, beedi making, brick kilns, tanning and roof tiles units.
- A National Policy on Child Labour was formulated in 1987 to focus on rehabilitating children working in hazardous occupations.
- Many NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, CARE India, Child Rights and You, Global march against child labour, RIDE India, Childline etc. have been working to eradicate child labour in India. However, these efforts have been inadequate to eradicate Child labour.
- Child labour has also been a subject of public interest litigations in Indian courts

### **The International Labour Organization focuses on five key issues related to child labour:**

- Prohibition of child labour
- Protecting child at work
- Tackling the core causes of child labour
- Helping children to adjust to future work
- Protecting the children of working parents

### **Alliance 8.7**

Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda, UN Member States, employers’ and workers’ organizations, as well as civil society organizations, are urged to eliminate child labour by 2025, and forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030.

In order to contribute to this goal, the ILO launched **Alliance 8.7**, a global partnership designed to align the efforts of those working towards the achievement of SDG Target 8.7.

- Goal 8 aims to Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- In Target 8.7 leaders committed to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms

### **Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour**

Since 1997, countries around the world have shared knowledge on policies and good practices, and have committed to eliminate child labour in a series of global conferences held in Oslo (1997), The Hague (2010) and Brasilia (2013).

The IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour was organized by the Government of Argentina and will be held in Buenos Aires on 14-16 November 2017.

While significant progress has been made globally in the fight against all forms of child labour between 2000 and 2012, with ILO constituents having increasingly adopted and implemented integrated strategies and coordinated policies to combat child labour the goal that was set to eliminate it in its worst forms by 2016 was not achieved.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that eight years from now, around 121 million boys and girls would still be engaged in various occupations. The present figure is around 152 million children aged 5-17. That is to say, only 31 million children are expected to be rescued between now and 2025 from conditions that deprive them for life of the fundamental ingredients of basic survival.

Should countries resolve to reinvigorate their efforts to reach the target, they would be looking at a reduction each year of 19 million. That is close to five times the prevalent pace of decline. That would be a stupendous record of eradicating a practice inconsistent with modern democratic norms.

**Four systemic failures in eradicating Child labour**

The ILO points to four systemic failures that underpin the lack of progress.

- The absence of national legislation to give effect to global conventions on the employment of children in hazardous industries, as well as on the minimum age of work.
- The lack of harmony between global commitments and domestic priorities.
- Incoherency between laws that prescribe a minimum age for employment and those for completion of compulsory school education. It also means that the expansion of quality universal basic education has to extend beyond the fulfilment of statutory provisions.
- Lack of effective labour inspections in the informal economy. Around 71% of working children are concentrated in the agriculture sector, with 69% of them undertaking unpaid work in family units.

**Key policy 'pillars' in the fight against child labour**

A new ILO report says improving legal protections, labour market governance, social protections, access to quality education and social dialogue between governments, the social partners and other stakeholders are critical aspects in battling child labour.

1. Legislation alone cannot eradicate child labour. There is also a need for stronger labour inspection systems as it rarely reaches workplaces in the informal economy, where most child labour is found. A strong legal framework that mandates punitive action against errant firms and recruitment of youth and adults are important tools to guarantee the protection of children.
2. Work for adults and youth of legal working age that delivers a fair income and security means that households do not have to resort to child labour to meet basic needs or to deal with economic uncertainty.
  - Well-designed labour market policies focused on where most child labour persists – in the rural economy and the informal economy – can help curb the demand for child labour. At the same time, establishing regulatory frameworks is critical to addressing child labour in supply chains.
3. Continued progress against child labour requires policies that help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households. Accelerating progress towards universal social protection is key, as social protection helps prevent poor households from having to rely on child labour as a coping mechanism.
4. The single most effective way to stem the flow of school-aged children into child labour is to improve access to and quality of schooling.

**Conclusion**

Child Labour is like a termite which is affecting the strength and growth of Child as an individual and as a citizen and future of the country. It has to be eradicated from routes so that the children of the country can have better future and help in the development of the country.

The ILO report said, "we must turn this renewed commitment into accelerated action and consign child labour to the dustbin of history, once and for all."

**30/11 - A neutral Internet****Context:**

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) finally came out with clear guidelines in favour of Net neutrality that are consistent with its earlier stand on Facebook's Free Basics proposal. After consultation papers issued in May 2016 and this January, the regulator reiterated that there cannot be discriminatory treatment of websites on the Internet by service providers.

**Introduction**

In the last few decades, the Internet has emerged as an important resource for innovation and economic growth and as a medium to support information exchange within and across borders. It has attained a size unrivalled by any other network by several orders of magnitude. The Internet has come to be created by the cooperative efforts of several stakeholders, but is controlled in its entirety by none.

The future growth of telecom sector and of other access networks is contingent upon innovation in and growth of the Internet infrastructure and the many applications, content and services linked to it. However, increasingly, concerns have been raised globally as well as in India relating to the potential for discriminatory treatment of Internet traffic by the entities that control access to the Internet.

These concerns regarding non-discriminatory access have become the centre of a global policy debate, often referred to as the debate on “net neutrality”.

### **What is “net neutrality”?**

The term “net neutrality” was coined to represent the idea that a maximally useful public information network aspires to treat all content, sites and platforms equally.

Over the past few years, this term has acquired a central place in many global debates on Internet policy and governance. Interestingly, most jurisdictions, including those that are said to have adopted a “net neutrality” framework; do not explicitly define the term in their policy or regulatory framework. Instead, they have tried to evolve appropriate principles of non-discrimination and neutral access in their respective contexts.

### **Key highlights from TRAI recommendations on Net Neutrality:**

TRAI’s decision comes in the wake of international focus on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission’s decision to scrap regulations on service providers imposed during the Obama administration. While batting for the right to an open Internet, however, TRAI has been careful to allow some exceptions that allow companies to discriminate between content if it helps them regulate the flow of traffic or offer “specialised services”.

1. **Discriminatory treatment of content** is prohibited. TRAI warned providers against the practice of blocking certain websites and tinkering with content speeds. Internet access services should be governed by a principle that restricts any form of discrimination or interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content.
2. **Content delivery networks (CDN)**: TRAI has kept content delivery networks (CDN) out of the regulation. CDNs enable telecom deliver content within their network without going through the public internet in order to create a content ecosystem to drive user traction.

#### Several reasons have been cited in favour of such exclusion.

- It has been contended that CDNs reduce latency and congestion and improve the overall efficiency in the delivery of traffic.
  - It is not a consumer based offering – there is no direct link with end-user, nor is it a licensed service.
  - CDNs do not slow down other applications; to the contrary, they benefit other users by decongesting the network.
3. **Internet of Things (IoT)**, as a class of services, is not excluded from the scope of the restriction on non-discriminatory treatment. However, critical IoT services, which may be identified by department of telecom as specialised services which could include telemedicine, B2B services will be automatically excluded.
  4. **Watchdog**: TRAI has also recommended a watchdog along the lines of BARC India for enforcing Net Neutrality and proposed reasonable measures of traffic management, in line with TRAI guidelines.
  5. International treaties, court orders, government order on blocking certain sites are exempt from these guidelines.

### **Regarding Concerns of service providers**

While TRAI’s new guidelines will help the cause of building the Internet as a public platform with open access to all, the concerns of service providers should not be dismissed altogether.

The Internet has spread all over the world, so widely that many believe it is now an essential good. But the infrastructure that serves as the backbone of the Internet has not come without huge investments by private service providers.

So any regulation that severely restricts the ability of companies to earn sufficient returns on investment will only come at the cost of the welfare of the public.

In this connection, TRAI has been open to adopting a nuanced view that differentiates between various forms of content instead of imposing a blanket ban on all forms of price differentiation.

**Way forward:**

TRAI's measured response is likely to effectively address the problem of anti-competitive practices adopted by certain providers. Interestingly, it has left it, with important caveats, to the government to decide on services that count as "specialised" and deserve exceptional treatment by regulators.

A proper mechanism needs to be instituted to make sure that the exceptions are not used as loopholes by the big Internet players.

Policymakers will also need to think hard about creating an appropriate legal framework to prevent the capture of regulation by special interests.

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## Rajya Sabha TV, AIR Synopsis

### Policy Watch: Episode – 292 | Do Govt's poverty alleviation programs need a revamp?

India has a serious hunger problem and ranks **100 out of 119 countries on Global Hunger Index** behind North Korea, Bangladesh and Iraq but ahead of Pakistan. The country's serious hunger level is **driven by high child malnutrition** and underlines need for stronger commitment to the social sector. The International Food Policy Research Institute said in its report that India stood at 97<sup>th</sup> position in last year's rankings. The GHI now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year ranks countries on four key indicators:

1. Undernourishment
2. Child mortality
3. Child wasting
4. Child stunting

The report ranked 119 countries of the world nearly half of which have extremely alarming hunger levels. In 2017, **India scored 31.4 and was placed at high end of "serious" category**. The report said that India's top 1% own more than 50% of its wealth. India is the world's second largest food producer, yet it is also home to the second highest population of under-nourished in the world.

#### Key Issues to Address in India:

1. Focus on poverty issue.
2. Clean water is the key to nutrition absorption particularly among children.
3. Hygiene defines good health (issues of open defecation, sanitation, women education).
4. Overall expenditure on health is abysmally low, therefore, allocation of expenditure on health as well as hygiene needs to be raised.
5. Increase awareness about vaccination from diseases.

#### Poverty Alleviation Programmes:

Poverty alleviation schemes and programmes have been in pace for a long time now. The programmes and schemes have been modified, consolidated, expanded and improved over time. They fall into four broad categories:

1. Self-employment programmes
2. Wage-employment programmes
3. Public distribution system (PDS)
4. Other social welfare oriented programmes

Example- Jan Dhan Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, National Social Assistance programme (NSAP), Aam Admi Bima Yojana (AABY), Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) etc. There are numerous centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) belonging to all the four categories.

Successful implementation of these programmes require an **appropriate policy framework, adequate funds and an effective delivery mechanism**. A distinction has to be made between two categories of poor, namely, those who have some skills and thus can take up self-employment and others who are to be provided with wage-employment. Each category should be treated separately by appropriate policy measures.

#### What more can India Do:

1. Building upon the **Mid-day meal scheme along with improving nutritional levels** for women during pre and post pregnancy, and ensure child nutrition support up to the age when he/she enters school. Thereafter, the mid-day meal program must be used effectively.
2. India has massive **integrated child development scheme (ICDS)**, providing supplementary nutrition, immunization, referral services, health check-up, pre-school non-formal education, and health and nutrition education all aimed at a holistic development of children under six.
3. Making and **maintaining toilets to make sure that they are used** under Swachh Bharat Mission.
4. **Garbage treatment in cities** with adequate capacity before they get into river systems or water bodies to reduce contamination of water.
5. Social mobilization through self- help groups.
6. Focus more on **Primary Health Care units** so that basic medical facilities are easily accessible to the public.

#### Conclusion:

Ending poverty and malnutrition is a complex issue and it needs a multi-dimensional action to bring about changes in these areas.

### Security Scan – Tackling Hate Speech on Social Media

Link: <https://youtu.be/mMwTHmoZn8Q>

Social media platforms like **Facebook, Twitter, Google** and many others have revolutionized the way we communicate as a society. These platforms, which are used to chat with friends and families, have a **powerful impact on public discourse**. Like any other mode of communication, this medium too is susceptible to misuse. **People are vulnerable to the content that grabs their attention regardless of its substance**. The problem becomes grave when these platforms are used for propaganda or propagation of hate speech and by the terror outfits to spread their message of hate and violence to radicalize the youth. This in turn **affects internal security** of the country. Several steps have been taken by various countries such as Germany and United Kingdom to combat the menace of hate speech on social media platforms.

#### Issues:

1. It is very **difficult to trace** who is posting such content. Robots can post fake news items. It can morph pictures and video clips to create hatred. Indian masses are more susceptible than the West because of the lower level of education.
2. In terms of **analyzing what constitutes hate speech** and what does not, there is a **lack of clarity**, which has led to the culprits not being prosecuted properly.
3. Hate speech has been covered under 6-7 provisions of IPC in India. Despite best intentions, the government's actions are often marred by **procedural irregularities and overreach**.

#### Indian Scenario:

In India too, this issue has been debated and discussed since the Supreme Court struck down **Section 66A of IT Act** in March 2015 terming it as open ended, undefined and vague. The Central Government has then set up an expert committee headed by the former Law Secretary and Secretary General of Lok Sabha Mr. T.K. Vishwanathan to propose new laws or amendments to deal with hate speech on internet. According to reports, the Committee has suggested that some sections of IPC, Code of Criminal Procedure and the IT Act should be amended to introduce stringent provisions specifying punishment to deal with cases of hate speech and use of cyberspace to spread hatred and incitement.

The **public order concerns of law enforcement are often in tension with the free positions of social media platforms** and in many cases, they tend to tilt towards protecting freedom of speech and retaining material online.

After the Supreme Court decision in the **Shreya Singhal judgment**, Facebook stated that it will not remove content unless received by a binding court order or notification from an authorized agency which conforms to the constitutional safeguards laid down by the court.

#### Possible Solutions to Tackle Hate Speech:

1. **Clarity and technological upgradation** is needed to deal with this and a mechanism to get down such material, which is prone to disturb social setup.
2. Improving the **level of training in equality and non-discrimination among police forces and legal bodies**, improving research and encouraging reporting of such content.
3. Indian government has been pushing for internet platforms to **locate their servers** in the country, which might help address dangerous speech in real time.
4. Generating contra-narratives on social networks and **raising public awareness** through campaigns to tackle extremism.
5. There can be an **internationally accepted law that places the responsibility on social media companies** like Facebook to tackle hate speech by deleting obviously illegal content within 24 hours if there is a request from the Government of a particular nation.
6. Social media platforms need to take responsibility to ensure **transparency, accountability and a system of rules and guidelines that users can recognize as standards**, and which when enforced in a regularized fashion can begin to act as precedents. Thus, users, police and civil society actors will have a clear sense of what kind of material is likely to be taken down.

#### Conclusion:

Internet has made everybody a speaker and for the first time, Indian masses have access to large audience for broadcasting their messages. Though the threat of hate speech cannot be wished away completely but it can be ensured that the mechanisms to tackle it are strengthened in future with a fine balance between freedom of speech and enforcement of laws.

### AIR spotlight summary: Setting up of special courts for the trial of politicians

#### Context:

SC is setting up a plan to exclusively try pending criminal cases against politicians and law makers by constituting special courts on the lines of Fast track courts.

#### Significance:

This is an important development given the fact that we are faced with criminalization of politics at every level right from gross root level to parliament level. Many politicians are facing criminal charges.

This is significant because country should strive for corruption free and elimination of criminalization of politics. If the cases are pending against law makers for a long time then it's neither good for them nor the people of the country. If they are innocent then they should be adjudged not guilty and in case of convictions they should be punished.

As many as 1352 politicians are involved and at the same time our courts are overburdened. So if we go by the normal procedure it will take lot of time. SC, in 2014, has already passed an order and they have decided a limit of one year.

Recently, SC realized that unless the special courts are constituted for this purpose. By now they came up with this solution and this has a great significance.

#### SC has talked about setting up of special court on the lines of Fast track courts. What are these fast track courts?

Fast track courts are different than the normal courts; instead of routinely waiting for your turn judges are allocated, time is allocated and cases are heard on day to day basis. As a result of that the valuable time of Judiciary will saved and cases will be closed in a short span of time.

In the case of UK and US, even in ordinary criminal trial, once the evidence is ready, they do it from day to day basis instead of waiting for long time. This reduces the case where people taking advantage of delay in judgements.

The principle is very clear that the guilty should be punished and innocent should not be punished.

While coming to the problem faced by the criminal justice system and judicial system in general the court has asked central government to present a scheme in 6 weeks. Then SC will take up the matter in December.

Since it affects the entire country, the SC itself said in national interest. Central government is in a much more good position to come up with much needed solution in coordination with the state governments. SC is suggesting on the lines of fast track courts, centre should fund these special courts.

### **What are the implications of life time ban on politicians who are convicted?**

The court is dealing with the petition that demanded a life time ban on politicians who are convicted and sentenced for any criminal offence. What is important is right from the beginning if such cases are decided and then accordingly action is taken.

EC has already written to the government, supported the demand of petitioners that there should be life time ban on convicted politicians.

Generally the political parties are reluctant in taking any stand on such issues irrespective of their ideological lenience. Perhaps that is the reason in last 5-6 years; most of the electoral reforms have come from SC.

Politicians if they are left to regulate themselves will not regulate themselves. In fact it's a human nature. Hence people still place highest confidence and trust in judiciary.

In many cases it is the SC or HC decision which have really initiated the action like in environmental cases In this case also it is the leadership of the SC will make this thing happen.

Because disqualification under RPA act is for 6 years but the demand is that instead of 6 years plus whatever may be that term of the sentence, the convicted politicians should be completely out of politics.

In India implicating somebody on a false case is not too difficult. It goes on for years. It is prone to misuse by the rival political leaders.

So, putting a complete ban for life is not suggestible in the Indian political system.

Law commission report on criminalisation of politics, it is recommended various measures to clean up the politics. But unfortunately no action on that has been taken. The political parties are not enthusiastic about electoral reforms.

### **How is this entire system coping up with issue of pendency in general?**

SC mentioned that lots of cases are pending in trial courts, and on an average a trial court judge is dealing with 4200 cases.

Indian judges are overburdened. Apart from judicial decision, they have to deal with a lot of administrative works.

There is report by a committee setup by SC which pointed out that, the pendency of cases are likely to increase manifold because of various reasons like rise in literacy rates, improvement financial conditions. People are in a position to assert their right and more people will go to courts. So, accordingly the no of judges should be increased.

Judge population ratio is one of the poorest in India. We are not spending enough on judicial delivery system which required for its improvement. Judicial expenses are very less as compared to advanced countries. The government has to pay attention to that part also because judiciary is the backbone of any democracy.

### **Will fast tracking of only the cases related to politicians, violate Right to equality?**

There are many politicians saying why should our cases are fast tracked while others not. And this violates Right to equality.

But, right from the very beginning, SC has made a clarification that like are to treated alike and those who are different treated differently.

Politicians, administrators are different from ordinary people. They have more powers than ordinary people. Hence, cases related to them should be treated differently.

### **Conclusion:**

Setting up of a special court on the lines of fast track courts is a significant development in our judicial system. This development may lead to decriminalisation and cleaning up of politics.

## AIR spotlight summary: World Food India 2017

### **Context:**

Prime Minister inaugurated World Food India 2017 in New Delhi. This is the first time that India is hosting such an event for the Food processing sector.

It's a mega event where 200 companies from 30 countries are participating. Germany, Japan and Denmark are the partner countries in the event. More than 50 global CEO have also attended the event.

### **Significance of the event:**

This kind of events is a great opportunity for the country as a whole and food processing sector in particular.

PM wanted India to be seen world over with a different perspective. Earlier days India was seen as developing country. But PM wants to showcase that India is emerging nation where we have all the amenities and facilities.

This mega event will give opportunities to all these participating countries to taste the Indian cuisine, see how Indian cuisines are flourished in the years and how Indian cuisines can become household name in the coming years in the world over.

In many counties Indian restaurants are quite popular. It shows that even foreigners have started liking Indian Food. Hence such Mega events are important for showcasing the success that India has achieved in terms of cuisines.

### **Objectives:**

Government is expecting 11 billion dollars' worth of investment in food processing industry.

- There are Indian entrepreneurs who built Indian brand like Hindustan unilever, Dabur. So world industry leaders would get an opportunity to meet all these companies.
- They will get a chance to interact with the regulators, in terms of how the environment will be if they come to invest.
- It would encourage people to invest and bring that expertise and knowledge in terms of equipment, gadgets and technology.
- As a result huge job opportunities will be created.

### **PM said Food processing is a way of Life. How important is this statement for the current generation?**

It is important because as Indians highly dependent on homemade foods. Indians have not moved to the modernized concept of processed food.

- But in order to reduce wastage and take full advantage of the harvest and in order to ensure that we are able to add value to the product we have to adopt food processing as a way of life. Then only we will make sure that food is utilised in a best possible manner.
- Food also India's soft power, because the diversity we have and 120 agro climatic zones in the country. This type of mega event also helps in showcasing our diversity of the country.
- This will bring in lot of knowledge in terms of farming practice, setting the standards.

Laws like Food safety and standards act, 2006 which we have brought in now is actually moving towards to ensure that Indian food is seen at par with the global foods.

### **Government has also relaxed the norms for indirect investment in food processing sector and 100 % allowed in Cold chains:**

When we want to attract the people to invest in your country the most important thing is to provide proper infrastructure.

- The government has promoted Mega food parks, in various states so that there is an easy method of people to invest.
- There is a favourable environment for people to invest to ensure that many rules and regulations are merged to make it very simple under the single widow process.
- All these attribute to an ease to do business.

India had 100% FDI allowed in cold chains in our country but we couldn't get that kind of investment desired. Because that point of time government did not give stress on making energy accessible at a very competitive price. But today we will see in all the states which were starving due to lack of energy having surplus.

Now if you create that kind of an environment naturally investments would come in terms of cold chains strengthening distribution and in terms of good practices.

### **Need of the Hour**

Food processing industry is labour intensive and these kinds of initiatives will trigger employment.

- We need to create our own brand. Indian food brand.
- Our food should be showcased as a healthy fast food. We have to compete in a manner that India should be seen as a leader in the healthy fast food and become more visible than what it is today.
- Food safety is a key part. But our food wastage is very high in global standards. Food safety which is very important that's why we need standards to ensure that safe food is accessible to the consumers.
- Food prices have to be competitive and should be as potable as possible.
- To bring down the prices bring in competitors, bring in investors, bring in business to compete with each other in a healthy manner.

That is where the events like this are the good initiatives in the interest of consumers.

### **Way forward**

In a country of 1.2 billion there is huge potential of business opportunities.

PM said each district should identify one particular food and promote it. In this event the government was showcasing Kichidi.

Same food is being prepared differently in different parts of the country. That's the speciality of Indian food.

Huge investment is being made to create global brands like McDonalds, Pizzahut etc. So government of India should also encourage entrepreneurs to create such kind of Indian brands where India will be recognised world over.

We should see how the benefits of this reach to common man.

Such events should also take place overseas so that local population can come know about Indian cuisines and Indian brands.

## **The Big Picture – India, Iran & Afghanistan: Converging Interests**

India in October 2017 sent its first **shipment of wheat to Afghanistan** through **Iran's strategic Chabahar port** from its western port of Kandla, Gujrat, thus launching a **trade route bypassing Pakistan**. It is to be taken further by tracks to Afghanistan. The new trade route is expected to provide **greater access for Afghan goods** to India as Pakistan does not allow India to transport through its territory to Afghanistan.

### **Analysis:**

- **Trump in his new strategy** had asked to do more for **development of Afghanistan**. By developing this trade route, **India** has provided a clear signal to Pakistan and China that it can **overcome all barriers** when it comes to **developing ties with Afghanistan**.
- Although **US** has been **putting sanctions on Iran** for many years, but developing a port there points out to US that **India** has its own **independent foreign policies with Iran**.
- **Discussions about Chabahar** had been in picture **since 1990s**. But, it was felt in **2002 (after the defeat of Taliban rule** in Afghanistan) that this port can provide **connectivity to Afghanistan** as Pakistan can be a permanent blockage on other routes.
- Through Iran, India can approach further Central Asia and Russia (North South Transport corridor). Through these routes and by developing maritime relations with Japan, Australia and USA, India is providing an **alternative maritime route to China's OBOR and CPEC**.
- Chabahar port can be a **clear competitor to Gwadar port** in Pakistan and **Dubai port** in UAE. The marine distance to Dubai is 406 miles, Karachi is 525 miles and Mumbai is 970 miles.

- Reaching **Dubai port or Bandar Abbas port** required Indian cargo ships to **cross Strait of Hormuz** to reach Persian Gulf. Approach to **Chabahar port** (Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti) located in South East Iran in **Gulf of Oman** will be easier. Also, the highly congested Bandar Abbas port cannot handle 250,000 ton ocean-going cargo ships and therefore, Iran was dependent on UAE causing loss of revenue to it. Chabahar has the **ability to handle standard cargo ships**.
- **India** has signed a **series of MOUs since 2016** centred around Port of Chabahar and is also **making huge investments** for developing transport facilities in the region. India will also be **developing various industries** (aluminium and urea plants) in the **Chabahar Economic Zone**.
- India and Afghanistan can **together tackle terror**. But, Iran has many other considerations of its regional politics when it comes into play for this.

#### Conclusion:

Therefore, development of this trade route and facilities at Chabahar port is going to **change geopolitics** of the region. It is being looked upon as a competitor by UAE and the Gulf countries. But, it is beneficial for developments of Iran and Afghanistan and also gives access to India further to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Europe via 7,200 km long **multi-modal North-South Transport Corridor**.

### AIR spotlight summary: PM visit to Manila and its significance

#### Introduction:

PM will be attending 15th ASEAN summit and 12th East Asian Summit and PM will also call a bilateral meeting with US president. Will this visit an enhancement and boost to PM's Act East policy?

Very much so. From the very beginning PM has given a lot of attention for strengthening relationship to all the countries towards east. PM named out old Look East policy as Act East policy. PM has attended all the four meetings since he had become PM. This shows how significant this policy is.

2017 is again a landmark year; India has 25 years of dialogue partnership and 15<sup>th</sup> year of India-ASEAN summit. In addition to it there has a lot been done and lot has been planned.

So this is a right time for PM to personally interact with leaders of ASEAN countries and 8 other members who are part of East Asian summit too strengthen its policy towards East Asia.

#### Significance of Indian PM's bilateral meeting with US President

PM's bilateral meeting with US President. This is also first time that PM is meeting US president after both the leaders had met four and half months ago. And we have also seen that Pakistan and Afghanistan Policies of US are slightly tilting towards India.

There are issues like Rise of China, North Korea proliferation which US president wants India's support, understanding and cooperation.

US president during APEC summit singled out India for appreciation. He also singled out PM for dynamic leadership. There has been good chemistry between India and US countries and also between both the leaders.

Repeatedly US president in all his statements has called Asia Pacific region as Indo-Pacific. This shows that he is giving due importance to India as well as the security of the Indian Ocean.

China has been quiet aggressive under the present leadership. China is also asserting itself very strongly in Asia. This usage of word Indo-Pacific may be an intention where US is trying to reemphasize the Indian component in Asia as compared to China.

Few years back US's focus perhaps was on Western pacific and India's focus was on security of sea lanes and maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean. But now interests of both the nations are converging. India, US along with other countries like Japan, South Korea and Australia concerned about increasing naval might of China.

Whatever china has been doing in South China Sea where unilaterally claiming a huge area which has never been there. So there is an apprehension that in course of time china could impose limitations on the maritime traffic.

PM during last East Asia summit strongly said that maritime traffic should flow, and all the countries should obey the rules under UNCLOS.

QUAD meeting on the side-lines of this summit:

QUAD has really come from Japan. Now the situation in East Asia and Indo-Pacific is changing very rapidly. It is important that the major democracies which are active in this area, which have security issues and which have capabilities should work together, exchange views and harmonize their positions so that no country unilaterally disturb the status quo.

Present Indo-Pacific region is peaceful and it should continue to be so. So meeting between 4 major democracies is very useful where china perhaps try to disturb the status quo.

India's Act east policy

India's Act east policy stands on its own and it has its own logic because for our own prosperity and economic integration. India can't look towards its west because of hostile Pakistan and turmoil in Afghanistan.

For our own economic growth and prosperity and for the integration of NE India needs to look East.

So whatever China does or doesn't in our neighbourhood, there is a compelling logic for India to work closely with all the countries of ASEAN and further east with Korea and Japan. Element of China is there but perhaps it is not the predominant reason for India's active policy towards East Asia.

Trade between India and ASEAN relations in 2015-16 stood at more than 60 Billion dollars, how important is this bulk of trade in keeping this relationship intact and give further boost to relationship?

Any relationship becomes closer if it has a strong economic and investment partnership. 17% of FDI has come from ASEAN countries mainly from Singapore. Many of Indian companies have invested more than 40 Billion dollars in ASEAN countries, for instance in Indonesian mining sector.

Trilateral highway which India is trying to connect its North East through Manipur, Myanmar and Thailand and further east will further strengthen our trade with East Asia.

Conclusion

Traditionally India has been nonaligned. Now we can call the present foreign policy of government as multipolar policy. It looks to all the countries which are friendly to India with the equal attention. Certainly in all these bilateral and multilateral forums there are many opportunities to exchange words. These brief interactions are sometimes useful in giving a relationship a push. All these interaction will help India to promote its own interests and relations.

Even though the interactions as part of QUAD (US, Japan, India and Australia) are a one on one interaction there is still be a common thread of quadrilateral of a common security umbrella. Worlds different centres of powers are coming together to try and assure peaceful rise of China.

It is true that China is rising but when china talks about its core interests it should also take into account the core interests of other countries.

## The Big Picture – Will Apathy of Rich Nations Derail Climate Action?

**16 out of 25** analyzed that **major Carbon emitting countries** and regions are **not on track** to achieve the **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** targets they have set for themselves on **greenhouse gas emissions**, as per a new study. The countries had promised to implement policies to reduce their Greenhouse gas emissions as per the **Paris Climate Agreement**. Only 9 of the 25 countries studied (such as Brazil, China, India, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation) are on track to achieve or even over-achieve their self-determined unconditional targets.

**Analysis:**

- The study conducted by **International Institute for Applied System Analysis** and two other institutions provides an overview of **projected GHG emissions** in 25 major emitting countries **up to 2030** taking into account the emission trajectories based on their current policies and the implementation of their NDCs under the Paris Agreement.
- **Paris Agreement** is an agreement within the **UNFCCC** dealing with GHG emissions, mitigation and finance starting in the 2020. As of November 2017, Paris Agreement has **195 signatories** and 170 parties. Now, **even Nicaragua and Syria** have recently signed the agreement leaving **US isolated as President Trump has announced intentions to quit** the historical accord.

- The Agreement aims at keeping a **global temperature rise** this century **well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels** and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Developed countries had also reaffirmed the commitment to raise \$100 billion a year by 2020 in **Green Climate Fund**.
- A **recent UN report says** countries have to **do more from now to 2020** to achieve the above temperature targets. The **developed countries need to understand the purpose** of lowering the rise in temperature. The agreements of climate changes which are being discussed for several years and at the highest levels plus the works of environment scientists are for healthy living of our future generations.
- **Pulling out of US from this agreement is a big blow** to the entire global community as there was a big hope of the agreement getting signed up by so many countries. Developing countries have a lot of energy requirement to feed a large population and so there is an ample scope from developed countries in terms of technology transfer and Green Climate Fund.
- But, even if some of the countries do not participate in such Climate accords there is **a momentum among the business communities, industries and civil societies** which take environment in consideration. Better future can be seen in for example, renewable energy coming up in India.
- **India, is already on tracks of reducing its emissions.** It has been targeting development of solar energy and other renewables. But, it is **lacking in terms of Carbon Sink** (a natural/ artificial reservoir that accumulates and stores some Carbon-containing chemical compound for an indefinite period). This can be done by **afforestation programmes** of which government needs to keep a **transparent database**.
- **Exiting of US** can actually also be seen as **an opportunity for countries like India to take a stand on global platform**. Initiatives like **International Solar Alliance** (consisting of more than 121 countries) proposed by the Prime Minister in November 2015 are welcome steps.
- Developments of concepts like **Green building, Renewable energies, use of public transport, technology transfer** from developed countries for **CO<sub>2</sub> capture**, etc need to be focussed upon to achieve the set targets.

#### Conclusion:

To keep the hazards of increasing global warming and uneven climate changes the whole global community should work together towards a common goal. These problems may be faced more by our **future generations** than the present ones. Thinking should be based in an **integrated way**– taking nature, science, requirements, and finance into account and **planning should be long-term**.

### AIR spotlight summary: Initiatives for Tribal Welfare

#### Introduction:

The 142<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary of the great freedom fighter who belong to the Tribal community of Jharkhand – Bhagvan Birsa Munda was celebrated across several parts of India.

He fought against the might of the British Empire and he has a place of pride in the Indian Culture especially among the Tribal communities.

It is also an occasion to look back at the progress of the Tribal sector in the country and how far the community has come in terms of welfare ever since the ministry of Tribal affairs was set up in 1999.

A lot of work has been done for the upliftment of the community which is extremely marginalised because of their cultural practices and geographical and cultural exclusion.

#### How do you look back on the journey of Tribal welfare in India? Where do you think we stand today?

Entire Tribal welfare ministry is dedicated to the development of the Tribal communities in the country. Ministry has various schemes like Tribal research institutes which are spread across the country.

##### 1. Tribal Research Institutes

These institutes are engaged in the work of providing planning inputs to the State governments, conducting research and evaluation of studies and collection of data in training and capacity building of the stakeholders.

## 2. TRIFED

Apart from the Tribal institute there are organizations which are working for the livelihood of the Tribals such as TRIFED.

- It has been setup in 1987 and since then in various states TRIFED has taken various activities such as Collection of Minor Forest Produce (Non-timber forest produce) by ensuring remunerative price for their products.
- This helps farmers who are unaware of the real value and thereby they will be protected from exploitation of middlemen and unscrupulous traders.

### **Is there any uniform centralised platform for the tribals to know what the MSP of a particular MFP (Minimum Forest Produce) is?**

MFP is the major source for the livelihood of the no of Tribals in the country.

- Recently the government has initiated fixing of minimum support price of MFP. Adequate publicity arrangement have been made and recently TRIFED has organised a national wide workshop by inviting Chief Secretaries, Secretary tribal welfare, Secretary of Ministry of forest, managing directors of state tribal federations and forest corporations.
- This prestigious scheme of central government is to endure remunerative price for totally 24 commodities like Mahua Seed, Sal leaves and Tamarind and Wild Honey.
- There is a national level committee which fixes the price by taking various factors of production keeping in view of the market trends.
- 75% of the funds for the procurement will be provided by the government of India to the State government's tribal welfare department and this department will provide 25% of the funds to the implementing agencies for the procurement.

### **Forests Rights Act and PESA Act**

Forests Rights Act, 2006 has given adequate ownership powers for the tribals. It is a very path breaking Act in a sense that for the very first time it not only recognised the traditional forest dwellers as the legitimate owners of the forest land but also for the very first time made conservation accountable.

PESA (Panchayat raj extension to scheduled areas) act 1996, provides Gram panchayat the ownership and the authority to deal with forest produce and tribals issues.

### **Education of Tribals**

Many girls' hostels and Ashrams have been setup in tribal dominated blocks for the education of tribal children.

- Ekalavya model of residential schools are set up: Poorna Malavath who climbed Everest is also from one of the tribal welfare schools.

### **Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana:**

Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana has been launched by Central Government of India for holistic development and welfare of tribal population of India.

- The scheme proposes to bring tribal population of the country at par with other social groups and include them in overall progress of the nation.
- The government aims for holistic development of tribals by plugging in the infrastructural gaps and lags in human development indices.

### **Tribal Handicrafts**

Employment opportunities for the tribals are shrinking on the account of shrinking forest cover.

TRIFED has setup Tribes India a chain of showrooms where several categories of handicrafts are being marketed like tribal textiles, tribal jewellery.

TRIFED is also working on the capacity building of the tribals.

### Challenges

#### ▪ Issuing of Forest Pattas:

Over 58 lakh people have applied for the forest pattas (for the ownership of forest produce) but only just about 14 lakh pattas have been issued individually and some more have been issued at the community levels.

#### ▪ Nutrition and health of the tribal community:

It was identified a while ago that sickle cell anaemia is one of the major diseases afflicting the tribal community in the country and a lot of effort is being made to improve the health status of the community.

Research by the Indian Council of Medical Research has further shown that the scheduled tribal community is generally at the lower level of nutrition.

#### ▪ Tribal Housing

Most of the tribals live in single room houses and faced challenges in accessing potable drinking water, Sanitation and electricity access.

### Way forward:

Infrastructure facilities like road connectivity will improve the quality of life in tribal areas, in terms of quick access to health services, better education, and social service. Special focus is also given for repair and maintenance of existing roads in tribal areas.

## The Big Picture: Strategic Importance of Quadrilateral

Rising of a great power in world has led to convergence of other powers with time. Therefore, the senior leaders from **India, Japan, Australia and US** met on the **side-lines of the East Asia Summit** in Manila (Philippines) on **12 Nov 2017**. This has led to rising of the 10 year old **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue** from its embers and has also put India on the forefront in the now termed **"Indo-Pacific" region**.

### Analysis:

- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD)** is an informal security dialogue between India, Japan, US and Australia that is maintained by talks between member countries. It was first initiated a decade ago in **2007 by PM Shinzo Abe of Japan**, but **ceased later** following **Australia's withdrawal**. The diplomatic and military arrangements (**Trilateral naval Exercise – Malabar Exercises**) were viewed as a **response to Chinese** increasing economic and military power.
- **India** had developed its **"Look East Policy"** initiated during the government of **V. Narashima Rao (1991-1996)** to cultivate extensive economic and strategic relations with the **South East Asian nations** providing a counterweight to the **strategic influence of China**. PM Modi's visit to Manila to attend the ASEAN-India Summit has put **ties with US on the centre-stage** in its now called **"Act East Policy"**.
- **Malabar naval exercises** which **first began in 1992** were held first time off the Japanese island in **Bay of Bengal in 2007** including Japan and Australia as non-permanent participants as well, leaving China unhappy then. Japan later became a permanent member in 2015. **2017 Malabar exercises** were conducted in Chennai and Bay of Bengal from **10-17 July** by India, US and Japan.
- All the countries of the Quadrilateral have major interests in China economically (being their major trade partner) and yet have major security concerns about China. So, there is a need to keep a balance between controlling Chinese rising aggression and, keeping trade relations with China in parallel diplomatically.
- **China** has been **expanding in South China Sea** (and says it has its exclusive economic zone there) which has tremendous strategic importance. **1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's shipping** passes through it. It contains **lucrative fisheries** and **huge oil and gas reserves** are believed to present beneath its seabed. Patrols have to be done to counter China in this region which is trying to reach further to Indian Ocean region like Sri Lankan coast now.
- It will be good for **India to have a forward presence** in regions like Vietnamese coasts. US is also being expected to take a more aggressive stance against China in SCS.
- **India** has taken its **own stand** in recent past against Chinese aggression. In **Doklam issue**, it took security issues of land to a third nation Bhutan. It had first taken a stand against **China's OBOR** project and also took up security issues in Indian Ocean.

**Conclusion:**

India's MEA said regarding quadrilateral that a "free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large". After this initiation, much will depend on operability, cooperation and convergence of thinking. The **Quadrilateral is still little more than a concept** and not a military alliance like NATO. How the sovereign nations come up with this successfully overcoming possible internal and external pressures faced in past as well, has to be seen.

**AIR spotlight summary: Anti Profiteering Authority for GST****Context:**

Union Cabinet has approved creation of National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) under GST, to ensure benefits of reduction in indirect tax rates are passed on to consumers.

The constitution of NAA will bolster the confidence of consumer as they reap the benefits of recent reduction in GST rates.

**GST**

Goods and Services Tax was introduced across all the countries on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. It subsumed over a dozen different kinds of taxes particularly Excise, State VAT, and Service Tax into one single Tax which is called GST. There are about different rate slabs and different commodities were categorised under these Tax slabs.

One of the objectives of this GST was to introduce a Single market and a Single Tax regime so that both businesses and consumers can transparently know what the taxes are and how those taxes are to be paid.

**Need of an Anti-profiteering Authority**

The international experience of GST is that whenever such a Tax is rolled out there is an element of unscrupulous and unprincipled trade and industry which tries to take advantage of the new system by blaming it on the new tax system and they tend to raise prices. So therefore the Government in its wisdom, planned to setup an Authority which would keep an eye on whether trade and industry are taking undue advantage of the new tax regime and raising price to generate undue profit.

This undue profit is on the basis of committing fraud which is after all a crime by deceiving customers in believing that there is a higher tax rate.

The cabinet gave clearance for setting up of an Anti-profiteering authority and it will be assisted by Safeguards authority. Directorate General of Safeguards in the Ministry of commerce has the mechanism to monitor the price behaviour patterns of Trade and industry.

During last GST council meeting held Guwahati, tax rates have been reduced on several items. It is expected that the reduced tax rates will make prices come down. But instead, Trade and industry can also take advantage and make profit out of it. With the introduction of NAA, now consumers will have recourse to justice.

APA is different from consumer court. This APA will have secretarial help from Directorate General of Safeguards.

**Consumer Welfare Fund**

There is a proposal to create a Consumer Welfare Fund under GST. The NAA authority will have a power of disgorgement. It means when an industry made an undue profit as a result of not passing on the benefit of lower taxes then that undue profit will have to be disgorged by industry. This money can be kept as part of Consumer Welfare Fund.

**The success of this authority would lie in its efforts of deterrence**

This authority will have to establish difference between genuine profit and an act of profiteering.

NAA has powers to initiate an enquiry and will recommend de-registration of Trade and industry under GST as an extreme step for any repeated violation.

It can also ask the trade and industry to deposit excess profits into Consumer Welfare fund.

It is like a sanction rather than an acknowledgement of a crime on the part of perpetrator. So there would be a penalty attached to it and non-compliance means they cannot carryout business any further.

Deregistration is a very useful step in a sense that the industry will have a fear of making undue profits.

This specific piece of legislation will have to be passed by parliament and then it will become a body.

### Sunset Clause

There is a sunset clause that this body will exist only for a period of Two years from the date of its setting up. The idea is that it should not be permanent body.

So idea is that within two years GST tax will become part and parcel of the system therefore people will not indulge in any profiteering activity using GST as an excuse.

### Way Forward

NAA must be backed up with a proper secretariat which does these investigations. The trade and industry will have to justify and establish that any increase in the price was backed up by a genuine increase in the input cost.

We cannot allow the functioning of this authority to act as an agent that dilutes the principle of Ease of doing business.

This authority cannot bring in another inspector raj; this authority will have to keep that in mind so that harassments are kept completely eliminated.

The investigation has to be carried out as per the rule of law. Conflicts with other authorities which are empowered in a similar manner should be eliminated.

It is also important for consumers to take action immediately.

## **AIR spotlight summary: National Press freedom day**

### Context:

PM has given a speech at Vigyan Bhavan and announced government's policy on media freedom. This announcement is much needed at a time when there is a perception about media sensation. But he came absolutely clear saying that Press freedom will be upheld at all cost and there would be no kind of external control or government intervention. Freedom of press will be respected everywhere.



#PRESSFREEDOM #WPF2017

He also mentioned role of Social Media and said that it should be more participative and creative for all Indians.

### National Press Day

The National Press Day is observed on 16th November every year. It was on this day the Press Council of India started functioning in 1956, as a moral watchdog to ensure that the press maintain high standards and is not fettered by any influence or threats.

### How this announcement becomes relevant at the time when there have been series of attacks on Media?

PM has reiterated the government's commitment of the freedom of the Press which is already enshrined in the constitution under the Fundamental Rights. But because of certain incidents and the propaganda, the perception sought to be created that the Freedom of press is under threat.

The only time when the freedom of Press had been curtailed in the country was when emergency was imposed in 1970's. Since then all political parties whosoever been ruling the centre or for that matter in the State learnt a lesson not to impose any kind of censorship and also any sort of curtailment of the Freedom of Press.

So PM has categorically stated that the government is committed to freedom of Press in all forms and also highlighted the role of the Social Media. At the same time He has also talked about the responsibilities of the Press in highlighting the achievements of the country.

**Media is trying to use the freedom of Press as a licence**

When India is progressing it becomes incumbent upon the media also to highlight the achievements of the country. But unfortunately what is happening now is that the media is trying to use the freedom of press as a licence.

Debate in the Constitution Assembly when the FRs chapter particularly Freedom of Speech and expression under 19(1) (a) was being discussed, the B.R Ambedkar made important remark that the press and media must enjoy freedom from 19(1) (a) and there should not be any special mention about Freedom of Press. Because we will never know when the time may come that the media will use this particular reference of the article and misuse it.

Today unfortunately there is a section of media which is trying to enjoy more freedom than the freedom of free speech and expression enjoyed by the citizens. That is where the role of the media organization comes into play that the media should not use the Freedom of Speech as a licence where there is no accountability.

In Constitution there is one clause called 19(2) which imposes restriction on the citizens not to misuse their right to freedom of speech. It should not infringe upon the sovereignty, unity, integrity and security of the country. Hence that applies to media as well. Anything which is said in violation of these things will not come under the Freedom of Speech and expression.

Similarly it should not infringe somebody else's freedom of Speech. Restrictions on Defamation, contempt of court are violated by a section of media today in the name of the Freedom of Press.

While we appreciate the government's declaration on freedom of press, we must also have a kind of introspection on the media itself.

**Role of media in Swachch Bharath initiative**

PM also appreciated that the media has partnered him in the Swachch Bharath initiative and it wouldn't have been a success without the participatory mechanism of the media particularly at the local district level. He also appreciated the media with regard to dissemination and information gathering from the grass root.

We will never undermine the contribution of media for the upliftment of downtrodden or raising social issues. But the actual problem will arise when it comes to crossing the limits and trying to set the agenda by a section of media.

**Role of Press Council of India**

National press day is because on this day Press council of India came into being.

There was a Press Commission which recommended the PCI. Since then there has been no Media Commission or Press commission. Because today's electronic media is not covered under the jurisdiction of Press Council of India.

PCI is teeth less organisation. It cannot take any punitive action. Another unfortunate fact of PCI is that the Electronic media came into being much later and therefore it is not covered.

What PM was trying to talk about the self-regulation is apparently in context of the electronic media. PCI jurisdiction is only confined to the Print media. That anomaly has to be rectified by setting up another Press Commission and where by the entire media industry should be given a relook. PCI should also be revised and re-enacted and it should also incorporate the electronic media.

**Is there any move to form such an industry body? Are there any such efforts being made?**

Electronic media has crossed the line and there is a continuous pressure on government to setup a regulatory mechanism. There is already a self-regulatory body of Electronic Media. But the limitation is that it comprises of its own people.

Today media industry is so powerful that don't want any regulatory mechanism.

By using Freedom of Press media is trying to dictate agenda to the government and want to set the agenda in the society. So this is a high time that media does some introspection.

**The participatory nature of Social media has also led to a lot of misconception. How do we centre the right kind of input from social media considering it a vibrant media?**

Social media can't be controlled. It's being used by anti-social elements and even the terrorist organisations. But in matured democracy like India we have to face this kind of problem. We can't shut down the social media or impose any censorship. This has to be addressed by all the stakeholders.

Media Commission which must have a look at the entire spectrum of Media industry including the salary structure of the working journalists.

India world over is known as one of the largest democracy with a vibrant media. So it is important that the problems faced within the media should also be addressed.

## The Big Picture – Moody’s upgrades India’s Rating

Global credit rating agency **Moody’s investor services** has **increased** for the first time since 2004 **India’s sovereign rating**, overlooking a haze of economic uncertainties to bet on the nation’s prospects from a set of policy changes by PM Modi. It cited **country’s high growth potentials** in the years to come due to **recent economic and institutional reforms**.

### Analysis:

- Moody’s has upgraded the GOI’s rating as local and foreign currency issuer **from Baa3** (with a positive outlook) **to Baa2** (with a stable outlook). This is an upgrade from previous lowest credit rating to a rating with moderate credit risk of medium grade.
- This has happened as a consequence of recent **rise of India in World Bank’s Ease of Business Index** from 130 (in 2017) to 100 (in 2018). Higher ranking in this index implies simpler regulations for businesses and stronger protection of property rights.
- It is a **good sign** that an upgrade has happened finally in Moody’s rating for India, though it is delayed. The **complexities of a large economy** functioning in a democratic set up and **Moody’s as well as other ratings company like Standards and Poors were probably not appreciating federal democracy at top of it**.
- Similar to a person applying for a bank loan with good credit profile, good Moody’s ratings make it **cheaper for Indian companies to raise a loan** from abroad. It reduces the interest cost regime (viz. **cost of capital gets cheaper**), which is **helpful for entrepreneurs** as well.
- Many recent government reforms like **GST, Insolvency Act** being put into action and announcement of **bank recapitalization** (which increases bank’s ability to lend) have taken place. This gives a **sense of support to foreign investors** that a code is present and it is being implemented by the government.
- But **credit rating companies** are also **worried about fiscal deficit of the country, which** is still high in India. This may have prevented them from putting India in even higher grade.
- There is also the issue of **uncertainty in private sector investments**. Question arises how much to rely on government’s incentives and expenditures like Sagarmala Project. It may have some positive things like creation of more jobs, but fiscal deficit of the nation needs to be looked at.
- Rating agencies look at **long-term stability of policies**. Impact on employment and other issues come with it later. These ratings do not look at short term uncertainties which are part of discussions for a common voter in an upcoming election
- Rating agencies see how quickly the government can correct any shock or depressions. Moody’s is looking as a positive signal for the path which has been set for growth and development
- As an impact of this upgrade, **market also reacted positively** showing a boost in SENSEX and NIFTY as well as appreciation in rupee. This shows a boost of confidence in the market.

### Conclusion:

Thus, there is an **expectation of** gradual decline in the general government debt burden due to recent government reforms. Moody’s ranking gives a hope that government’s objective of improving the business climate, enhancing productivity, stimulating foreign and domestic investment & ultimately fostering strong and sustainable growth will be advanced.

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