The creation of an AIJS was first proposed in 1960.

First Law Commission of India (LCI) in its 14th Report on Reforms on the Judicial Administration, recommended an AIJS in the interests of efficiency of the judiciary.

In its 77th Report, dealing with “Delay and arrears in trial courts”, the LCI once again said the AIJS needed serious consideration.

The Constitution (Fourth-seventh Amendment) Act 1976 inserted an “all-India judicial services” provision into Article 312 that lays down the legal ground for creation of All-India Services.

The Indian legal service has quality challenges.

There are also a large number of vacancies in lower courts (5,000 at least).

The judiciary is not representative.

Study shows that women judges constitute barely 9% of the current working strength in high courts of the country.

In 2014, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes demanded that reservations should be provided in the judiciary because of almost no representation for such groups across the judicial services.

Going by the latest figures published by the Supreme Court, many States are doing a very efficient job when it comes to recruiting lower court judges.

In Maharashtra, of the 2,280 sanctioned posts, only 64 were vacant.

In West Bengal, of the 1,013 sanctioned posts, only 80 were vacant.

However, there are States such as Uttar Pradesh where the situation is shocking. Of the 3,204 sanctioned posts, 1,348 are vacant, i.e. 42% vacancies.

These numbers show that the problem of vacancies is not uniform across different States.

The solution is to pressure poorly performing States into performing more efficiently.

The argument that the centralisation of recruitment processes through the UPSC automatically leads to a more efficient recruitment process is not a guarantee of a solution.

For example, the IAS — its recruitments are through the UPSC — reportedly has a vacancy rate of 22%.

The Indian Army’s officer cadre, also under a centralised recruitment mechanism, is short of nearly 7,298 officers.

The Centre, state governments and the judiciary need to find out ways of improving the quality of intake of Judges.

Conduct transparent performance evaluations based on disposal of cases by a judge, the quality of judgments and legal reasoning, knowledge of the law, behaviour towards lawyers in court proceedings, independence and transparency.

There is an urgent need for the judiciary to revisit the manner in which cases are heard and decided.

Niti Aayog in its report, ‘Strategy for New India@75’, mooted the creation of an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) for making appointments to the lower judiciary.

It is through an all India judicial services examination conducted by the UPSC in order to maintain “high standards” in the judiciary.

Similar proposals were made by the Union Law Minister as a solution to the problems of vacancies in the lower judiciary and a lack of representation in the judiciary from marginalised communities.

The report claimed that the move will attract young and bright law graduates and help build a new cadre “that can enhance accountability in the governance system”.

It suggested the introduction of an administrative cadre in the judicial system to streamline processes.

To maintain judicial independence, the cadre should report to the Chief Justice in each High Court.

A performance index for judges should be considered and a separate state-wide index for “ease of getting justice” should be prepared.

It said there is a need to facilitate the availability and usage of video-conferencing facilities to assist in speedy access to justice and to minimise logistical issues.

The creation of the AIJS and a centralised recruitment process will help the lower judicial services.

Centralisation of recruitment processes through the UPSC leads to a more efficient recruitment process.

This can have far-reaching impact on the quality of justice and on people’s access to justice as well.

Given the strength of the judiciary in subordinate courts is over a fifth short of the total number of the sanctioned posts, such a move is likely to help ease pendency.

Only the judges of proven competence will preside over the benches and it will minimise the scope of aberration, arbitrariness and nepotism in judiciary.

India can look in to the French model, where the judiciary is operated by a career judicial service.

Reservations for the marginalised communities and women, will lead to a better represented lower judiciary.

Several States already provide for reservations in their lower judicial service.

At least 12 States provide for caste-based reservation in the direct recruitment examination for district judges.

In addition, U.P., Karnataka, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh provide women with special reservations.
The pace of reduction of poverty in India has speeded up in recent years as per the Global Multi-dimensional Poverty Index 2018.

This is due to the schemes like the Deendayal Antodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)

People in rural areas have higher livestock now than before April 2014.

Other findings include the higher tendency of people to save in formal institutions, higher loan size and more borrowing capacity from formal institutions.

The households under the mission earned 22 per cent more than those which are not under the scheme.

NRLM households also pay a lower rate of interest.

Participate more in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

Poor have a strong desire to come out of poverty, and they have innate capabilities.

Social mobilization and building strong institutions of the poor is critical for unleashing the innate capabilities of the poor.

An external dedicated and sensitive support structure is required to induce the social mobilization and empowerment process.

Facilitating knowledge dissemination, skill building, access to credit, access to marketing, and access to other livelihoods services underpins this upward mobility.

DAY-NRLM was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India in June 2011.

The centrally sponsored programme is implemented in partnership with the State governments.

The Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.

In addition, the poor would be facilitated to achieve increased access to their rights, entitlements and public services, diversified risk and better social indicators of empowerment.

NRLM believes in harnessing the innate capabilities of the poor and complements them with capacities to participate in the growing economy of the country.

The Deendayal Antodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is aimed at alleviation of rural poverty through building sustainable community institutions of the poor.

It seeks to mobilize about 9 crore households into SHGs and link them to sustainable livelihood opportunities.

It aims at building their skills and enabling them to access formal sources of finance, entitlements and services from both public and private sectors.

The intensive and continuous capacity building of rural poor women will ensure their social, economic and political empowerment and development.


day-nrlm in reducing poverty in india

Achievements of the Mission during April 2014-November 2018

Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index 2018 Report

Introduction

Unleashing the innate capabilities of the poor

About DAY-NRLM

Value Chain Initiatives

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme

Deendayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY)

Deendayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

Maha Kisan Shashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)

Mahila Kisan Shashaktikaran Pariyojana

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Livelihood Services

Financial & Capital Services

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme

DDUGKY aims at building placement linked skills of the rural youth and place them in relatively higher wage employment sectors of the economy.

In FY 2017-18, as of Feb 18, 1.28 lakh rural youth have been trained and 69,320 have been placed.

DAY-NRLM has another sub-scheme viz., Deendayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY).

It was launched in August 2017 to provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services to connect remote rural villages.

DAY-NRLM has been promoting SVEP to promote and strengthen rural start-ups in the non-farm and off-farm sector.

The strategy is to promote knowledge about business feasibility and to provide access to loan finance for start-ups.

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Under Articles 40 and 246(3), the Constitution grants powers to the states to make laws to enable the functioning of self-government units.

Recently Rajasthan’s newly elected government decided to get rid of the minimum education qualification required to contest elections to panchayats and urban bodies.

This criterion was introduced by the previous government.

The criteria was: for contesting municipal, zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls, the contestant must have minimum qualification of secondary education (Class X).

To contest the sarpanch elections, the aspirant from general category must have passed Class VIII and the SC/ST aspirant must have passed Class V.

The new government’s move is welcomed by many.

This will restore the right for the underprivileged sections, particularly Dalits and women and to a large section of the population in the State.

In Rajasthan the literacy rate, according to the 2011 Census, was 52% for women and 79% for men.

Their educational levels are in no way a reflection of their efficiency, and rather speak more about the disadvantages of the social locations they come from.

Minimum qualification for contesting elections is against the very spirit of 73rd and 74th amendments.

It also violates the right of every citizen to vote and to contest elections, which formed the basic structure of the constitution.

This law has prevented many people from coming to the mainstream.

Getting rid of the minimum education criteria for contesting panchayat polls is a welcome decision, especially in India which is home to 35% of the world’s illiterate population.

It is unfair to propose a move that can potentially disenfranchise a substantial population of the country, solely based on its education levels.

There is no evidence to demonstrate that people with a formal education can do a better job as elected representatives than those without.

It has no tangible effect on the quality of decision-making.

Those who insist on literacy as a condition precedent to enfranchisement commit two mistakes.

Their first mistake consists in their belief that an illiterate person is necessarily an unintelligent person.

Their second mistake lies in supposing that literacy necessarily imports a higher level of intelligence or knowledge than what the illiterate possess.

Opinion of B.R. Ambedkar

Honesty, reliability, ability to connect with the common people, and the strength to deal with crises are the important traits of a leader.

We live in a democracy, and at the heart of our democracy is the concept of representation.

To mandate what makes a person a ‘good’ candidate goes against the spirit of the attempt to deepen democracy.

Voters will decide who will best represent their interests, and elect them to legislative bodies accordingly.

The criteria discriminate on lines of gender and caste, because those who have been deprived of access to education, are inevitably the most vulnerable members of society.

It completely ignores the outstanding work done by many uneducated leaders, despite being illiterate they played the major role in effective implementation based on the local resources and local cultural knowledge and experience.

Experience has shown that wisdom plays a greater role than education at local governance level, especially villages.

There are no required minimum educational qualifications for MLAs and MPs or even the ministers.

**Education Criteria for Contesting Panchayat Polls**

**Consequences**

The criteria penalised the people for failure to meet certain social indicators. It defeated the very purpose of the panchayati raj institutions, to include citizens in multi-tier local governance from all sections of society. These requirements had the effect of excluding the marginalised.

Even Haryana had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions. The Supreme Court had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government in Rajbala v. State of Haryana.

The Supreme Court had ruled that “it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad”.

The Court’s interpretation is based on the fact that uneducated or illiterate people getting elected to the local bodies can easily be misled by officials if they don’t know to write and read.

Many say that the minimum education criteria acts as an incentive for women to study.

Although more educated people should be part of the political system, more ground reforms are needed before such a law is implemented. It is the state’s responsibility to provide the infrastructure and incentives for school and adult education.

In a liberal democracy, governments must desist from putting bars on who may contest, except in exceptional circumstances, such as when a candidate is in breach of particular laws.

**Supreme Court’s Response**

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**Why has it been scrapped?**

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**Arguments against Minimum Education Qualification**

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Because the farmer knows that the loan will be waived in the future, she will prefer to default on the loan rather than work towards repayment.

The RBI, in a report on state finances, had cautioned against the propensity of waiving loans as they were increasing the fiscal deficits of the states.

The RBI said that debt waivers can deflect the state from its fiscal consolidation path.

If the waivers are not targeted efficiently, the potential for these waivers contributing to inflationary pressures via higher fiscal deficits remains a key concern.

Farm loan waivers have also resulted in a spike in banks' NPAs, in the agricultural sector.

It has also pushed farmers into borrowing from money lenders at an exorbitant interest rate because banks become wary of lending to farmers fearing loan write-offs by the government.

With loan waivers, capital investment takes a back seat, aggravating both demand and supply side constraints in the agriculture sector due to a likely fall in asset creation (irrigation, markets, power, etc.) that is crucial for sustainability of the agriculture sector.

**Consequences**

**FINANCES TAKE A HIT**

The government does not have the capacity to fund loan waivers and resort to higher market borrowing. As a result:

- Fiscal Deficit Rises
  - Fiscal deficit, as a% of GDP
  - FY09 - 6.4
  - FY10 - 5.4
  - FY11 - 5.4

- Market borrowings increase

- Interest rates go up

- Overall interest rates in the economy may rise, damping activity

**DEVELOPMENT ON THE BACK BURNER**

The government reduces the budget to fund waivers while sticking to the fiscal deficit target, because of which:

- Revenue deficit rises
  - Capital spending fails
  - Revenue expenditure, as a% of total
  - FY09 - 16.6
  - FY10 - 10.1
  - FY11 - 11

- Asset creation suffers, productivity declines

- Other welfare schemes are scaled back

**LENDERS SUFFER**

- Loan repayments stop as waivers are announced

- Compensation from govt. taken time to come

- Asset quality deteriorates, provisions rise

- NPAs rise in anticipation of a bailout

**CREDIT DENIED**

- Private borrowers are crowded out as govt. borrowings rise

- Banks become wary of lending to farmers

- Farmers turn to informal sources and indelibility rises

The first in the line of any loan waiver story.

Greater focus is required on enhancing farmer loan repayment capacity via smooth supply and value chains, and better price realizations.

Monitoring of debt and ensuring appropriate governance mechanisms for new loans.

The enforcement costs for this will likely be far lower than the huge fiscal burden associated with debt relief schemes.

Encouraging adoption of appropriate crop insurance products that operate along pay-on-harvest lines.

This has found to be effective in reducing farmer vulnerability in Kenya.

A mix of policy interventions that are aimed at reducing farmer vulnerability and helping them save more for tomorrow so that they can invest in improving their agricultural productivity.

Bold steps now have to be taken to allay the apprehensions of the farming community.

An Income Support Scheme for small and marginal farmers might turn out to be a viable solution.

The cost of such a scheme will be around only Rs 50,000 crore a year -- or 0.3% of GDP. This is lower than the incremental debt waiver.

Partial waivers or small loans waivers alone won't help.

The Swaminathan Committee in 2004 had recommended farmers be allowed to fix the price for their produce on their own (cost of production plus 50% as profit), keeping local factors in mind.

The government must focus on three things: crop insurance, better irrigation and subsidised seed and fertilisers.

Alternative ways to help farmers in distress, such as raising the interest subvention limit for borrowers who repay on time.

**Arguments against Loan Waiver**

- Study shows that farm loan waivers are not the answer.

- There are evidences on the ineffectiveness of the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme (ADWDRS) of 2008.

- Loan waiver scheme did not have any positive impact on household savings, credit uptake from banks, or investments.

- Economic theory suggests that waiving debts via such a scheme will lead to debt overhang (essentially stagnated investments due to any new income being used largely for paying back old debts)

- A farm loan waiver benefits only farmers who have access to formal credit—commonly estimated at 30% of farmers.

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said, Farm loan waiver adversely impacts the credit culture and the behaviour of borrowers.

Despite substantial increase in agriculture production and productivity levels over the years, farmers’ indebtedness has not changed significantly.

Farm loan waivers, is now seen as a necessary promise for electoral victory.

After corporate bad debt, banks are worried about the next threat — farm loan waivers.

Since 2014, India has seen large-scale loan waivers as a populist device and a short-term tool addressing the plight of farmers.

According to the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey (NafS) 2016-17, 62.5% of agricultural households were indebted.

Increasing allocations by Rs 1 lakhs across every Union Budget over the past three years for the farm sector.

But non-institutional credit still hovers around 40%, and the majority of small and marginal farmers rely on moneylenders.

The primary reason for this persistent distress is the inability of farmers to get remunerative prices, due to the prevailing disconnect with the value chain resulting from market asymmetry, and lacking institutional and infrastructure support.

Way Forward

**Introduction**

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A study by the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA) revealed that teachers spend only around 19 percent of their time teaching. They spend the rest of their time mostly on non-teaching administrative work. This must be stopped.

Employ young people, equip them with a tablet computer and let them be the classroom assistants.

One cluster of schools consists of around ten schools.

The cluster administrators will take on the administrative tasks and ensure that teachers and headmasters can focus on academic work.

At the same time, millions of qualified young people are seeking jobs. We can tackle both.

It will increase the effectiveness of schools, improve learning and contribute to a revival of an old and honorable profession – teaching.

This will be highly cost-effective.

In Bihar, only around 10 percent of the schools fulfill infrastructure norms.

A study revealed that files for renovating schools often take two-year time through various departments.

We can digitalize this process entirely and create a single-window system.

The same can be applied for teacher salaries and school funds.

These can be transferred directly from the State to the teachers and schools.

In return, this will free the District and Block administration from the burden of moving files in the bureaucratic hierarchy.

Instead, the BEOs and DIOs can focus on ensuring that all children go to school and that the schools function.

School Management Committees are largely dysfunctional.

Parents are often not aware of their rights and if they are, it is difficult for them to make their voice heard.

Social audits have proven to be effective.

It allows us to do this on large scale at low cost.

Mobile phones are largely available to literate parents.

Text-To-Voice systems can be facilitated for large scale social audits.

The government can enquire parents about their satisfaction and facilitating their participation in School Management Committee.

The data collected can help to detect corruption, leakage, and giving voice to parents without relying on local meddlemen.

Central call centers connected to a state level database can record and track complaints.

This does also need proper staffing, reorientation and reorganization of the education bureaucracy at the Block and District level.

Technology is a tool, not a panacea.

It is not just the teachers and educators who form it, but also the students who shape it.

Empowered by technology and tools, our education system can indeed scale up to edify, empower our citizens to help the country on its journey to becoming a digital and knowledge economy.

Education is the foremost sector that shoulders the biggest responsibility of shaping the future of nation.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) on India’s education system has once again highlighted the low learning levels in the country’s schools.

For the country to play a rightful role in world affairs, it is imperative that the government takes education as a major area for intervention.

Promoting creativity and incentivizing innovations through our educational institutions is a first step towards broadening and deepening the impact of innovations in our society and economy.

As in all sectors, innovation will be essential to bring about qualitative changes in education.

These changes are needed to increase efficiency and improve the quality and equity of learning opportunities.

Skills including critical thinking, creativity, and imagination can be fostered through appropriate teaching, and practices.

Technology-based innovations in education reshape the environments in which schools operate.

To provide alternative ways of learning for students with special needs.

The infrastructure provision is far from satisfactory (for both students and teachers).

The administrative support system is also not contributing to solving the crisis.

Privatization is not a remedy. If one compares children from similar backgrounds, private schools in many States are not better than government schools.

With two-thirds of its population under the age of 35, India will soon be the youngest country in the world.

If well-trained and well-skilled, it could be the workforce for the world.

The key to reaching and teaching a vast population spread across a large and diverse country is digital technology.

Thanks to the ubiquity of mobile devices, they can reach a much larger audience via online courses and virtual classrooms.

Not only organizations, but the government is also investing heavily on bolstering the education ecosystem, be it with revamping the National Education Policy, launching SKILLS India initiative, SWAYAM rollout, etc.

Technology assists teachers in providing a more effective learning experience for the students.

Schools must therefore strike a balance between technology-enabled and nature-based teaching so that its students for a better tomorrow.

Convincing parents and teachers about the benefits that technology-driven education offers is one of the biggest challenges.

Use of technology in education is dependent on Internet connectivity that requires more bandwidth and infrastructure. This is an added cost to the institution.

India still faces internet connectivity issues in rural areas.

Many teachers are still skeptical about the use of technology in education as they fear it might replace their role in future.

So the challenge here is to convince them to incorporate technology as an aid in teaching rather than a threat.

Innovation in School Education in India

Creation of a single window for infrastructure and mainstream fund-flows

Recommendations for Improving School Education

Innovative Status

Empower School Management Committees

Enabling, Empowering Parents at Every Step

Driving Digital Change in India

Challenges in Implementing Technology in Education
South Asia is a region with several developmental challenges and space technology could play a role in dealing with these challenges. In May 2017, India launched the GSAT-9, also dubbed the South Asia Satellite, aiming to provide space-enabled services to other South Asian countries. The recent launch of the Bangabandhu-1, Bangladesh's first geostationary satellite to orbit, shows the growing use of space technology for development among the South Asian countries.

South Asia is a region with uneven development and serious social, economic, and developmental challenges. Space technology capabilities are also unevenly spread with China and India as established space players in the region. Countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives have requirement for space capabilities for dealing with natural disasters and communication. The region has remained prone to many weather-related calamities on a frequent basis. This makes disaster warning and mitigation important drivers for pursuing an outer space agenda.

South Asia has not fully exploited the space domain for several reasons. Availability of resources and lack of visionary leadership in the region are important factors. But so are international insecurity and conflict. The competition between India and China, spills over into the space domain too. Most South Asian countries are members of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) that is governed by Japan.

Bangladesh is the latest South Asian country to join India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan in having its own national satellite. Sri Lanka’s space development remains largely for domestic commercial usage. Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan are also taking steps to progress their national space development.

Space technology has great potential to help social and economic development. Smaller countries in the region having international collaboration in developing outer space assets and technologies can meet developmental challenges. Strengthening connectivity, communication, tele-education, teledmedicine and broadband internet across rural and remote areas of the region. With the high frequency of natural disasters in the region, space-enabled services that augment natural resource management and disaster response will benefit affected states immensely.

Joint projects could help mitigate environmental degradation and weather-related disasters in these areas.
Specialization is the process of concentrating on and becoming expert in a particular subject or skill.

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Specialization of fields of education and profession is an ever-growing phenomena.

With greater and deeper development of various fields of science, technology and even the social sciences, specialization is inevitable and even necessary in the contemporary world.

This has yielded many important, even life-saving results etc.

But with a focus on expertise, polymaths are becoming rare in the 21st century.

The “expertism” contributes to a host of problems that are being called the Anthropocene.

The tragedy of specialization is that it leads members of the knowledge industry to see little beyond their bulwarks.

Or for an engineer to understand why decentralised solar power that allows greater democratisation among local communities is an opportunity to be grabbed instead of installing large solar parks by mega-corporations.

It, therefore, becomes difficult or impossible for an economist to appreciate the importance and value of biodiversity or why its loss is a major casualty.

It is about ownership, biodiversity, science and soils — cross-cutting domains that super-specialists will not be able to see.

With increasing specialization, what one gets are experts who do not understand the connections between knowledge systems and ways of knowing.

While geoengineers say that we need to seed the upper atmosphere with exotic chemicals to cool the planet, there is rightly a hue and cry from many quarters.

When renewable energy experts call for more biomass plantations, others worry about the displacement of farmers, the reduction of food production and the loss of biodiversity.

Polymaths means a person of wide knowledge or learning.

Among scholars and knowledge makers in history, one can identify a large number of intellectuals whose interests lay in disparate spheres.

A poet and philosopher could also be an astronomer, technical innovator and mathematician.

Consider for instance Galileo, Ziyab, Leon Battista Alberti, or Leonardo da Vinci.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a polymath: jurist, economist, politician, anthropologist, sociologist, educationist, editor, journalist, historian and writer.

Each person’s many spheres of knowledge create a syncretic world view that contribute to a broad perspective.

Polymaths have the ability to see connectedness among multiple domains of knowledge of the natural world and human interaction.

It is becoming difficult for any single person to excel in more than one sub-discipline.

The academic system of rewarding greater specialization has fed the knowledge industry and universities too prepare students in precisely this manner.

Policy makers are listening to the experts seeking their guidance, thus promoting further fragmentation.

The assault on nature from the ramparts of specialization creates narrow viewpoints that are defended by specialists.

Those at the short end are the most vulnerable creatures and humans on earth making up the vast connected webs of life.

As Max Weber wrote “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilisation never before achieved.”

If we want to bring back a renaissance in innovation, we will need to break down the silos of our research and find ways to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration.

This will call for a fundamental re-design of the methodology we adopt for systematic research.

We will have to resist the urge to curb curiosity regardless of where it leads us.

We need to change the way we currently impart education and develop, in young learners, the ability to make connections outside of their prescribed syllabus.

Best leadership is provided by generalists who have a breadth of understanding and experience.

Specialists, no matter how competent, tend to have a tunnel vision and are not equipped to take a broader view.

Domain knowledge can be accomplished by domain experts advising the generalist leader in decision-making.

Only someone who has learnt the subject from the trenches, can provide competent leadership in a functional area.

The complex and interconnected nature of policy-making demands that specialist expertise has to go with generalist experience.

The Constitution Review Commission 2002 suggested the “need to specialise some of the generalists and generalise some of the specialists”.
The Finance Act, 2016, accommodated a 6% equalisation levy (EL) in lieu of specified digital services provided to residents in India. However, EL can only be imposed on advertising services.

Through the Finance Act, 2018, the Income Tax Act was amended to expand the meaning of business connection to "significant economic presence", which includes digital services. As a result, any income attributable to significant economic presence is taxable in India. However, it is not clear whether the assessment of attributability is based on value creation per se.

As the basis of attributability to Indian services/activities is not clear, this can raise a serious problem at the time of assessing income tax. For instance, Uber use data of users as inputs to develop their surge pricing algorithm. This algorithm enables these companies to assess the maximum fare a user would be willing to pay based on passenger demand.

Entities are not taxed in the source country for the revenue generated with the help of this created value. Difficulty to devise a definite method of assessing the value that users generate in a source country.

People have argued such steps are disruptive of the international taxation framework. Political pressure to resist further delay of taxing these entities.

OECD highlights that the assessment of value of user contribution in the source country is subjective. Government of the source country would always try to argue that the value of user contribution that has translated into the entity's revenue is far more than what the state where the entity is established would claim it to be.

This could, in turn, create greater friction and undermine the efficacy of double taxation agreements. Countries like France have suggested imposing such an interim tax only on high profit big-tech businesses like Google and Amazon.

It is imperative that policymakers deliberate upon the possibility and feasibility of adopting a methodology to assess value creation objectively to tax digital players more effectively in the source country.

Recently France announced the introduction of a GAFA tax—named after Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon—on large technology and internet companies in France from 1 January 2019. This is all based on the perception that the digital economy is not contributing its "fair share" of tax revenues.

Existing tax norms that are framed envisaging brick and mortar business models are not suitable to regulate online services. What distinguishes technology companies from traditional businesses is user participation in creating value, which, in turn, translates into revenue.

The unique ability of digital businesses lies in their power to analyse big data collected via constant user interaction and data mining. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) acknowledges the need to tax value at its source.

It protects the interests of small and medium enterprises who suffer from the dominance of these tech giants.

Israel – VAT payable on digital services from 2016
Russia – VAT payable on B2B digital services from 2017
Saudi Arabia – VAT payable on digital services from 2018
A new report by the United Nations has warned that the world is soon going to be hit by a tsunami of electronic and electrical waste (e-waste).

This is due to the sheer amount of e-waste being generated currently and the lack of its recycling.

By 2040, the e-carbon emissions from the production and use of electronics will reach 14 per cent of total emissions.

E-waste export is regulated under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which has been ratified by 188 nations.

Even with the convention in place, large amounts of e-waste continues to be shipped illegally.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, MeitY, has initiated an E-waste Awareness programme under Digital India initiatives, along with industry associations from 2015. This is to create awareness among the public about the hazards of e-waste recycling by the unorganised sector, and to educate them about alternate methods of disposing of their e-waste.

The general public is also encouraged to participate in ‘Swachh Digital Bharat’, by giving their e-waste to authorised recyclers only.

The programme has adopted the best practices for e-waste recycling available globally.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has developed affordable technologies to recycle valuable materials and plastics in an environmentally sound manner.

Effective awareness would be the right step for all stakeholders.

Need for adopting environmentally friendly e-waste recycling practices.

Unless we have effective implementation of the rule, the country would end up creating many informal processing hubs.

Strict implementation of the rule, creating adequate awareness and training for requisite skill sets to the informal sector could be a game-changer.

This sector needs technological support, from land to capacity building to IT.

This sector could generate jobs as well as viable business prospects for locals.

Waste pickers should be trained to collect e-waste.

More emphasis should be on to reuse the e-waste, for which industries need to design a framework.

India has lot to learn from Norway model of e-waste management.

E-waste is technically all waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) discarded without the intent of reuse.

It is one of the fastest growing waste streams in both developed and developing countries.

According to a 2011 Rajya Sabha secretariat study, e-waste accounts for 70% of Indian landfills.

E-waste is growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 30% in the country.

Assocham estimated that e-waste generation was 1.8 million metric tonnes (MT) per annum in 2016 and would reach 5.2 million metric tonnes per annum by 2020.

Experts predict that it gets buried under the ground in landfills for centuries as it is not biodegradable.

E-waste contains substances that are hazardous to human health, including, mercury, cadmium and lead.

E-waste can pollute water sources and food-supply chains.

A big majority of the e-waste is recycled by the informal sector, where very crude methods are used.

Women and children are particularly affected as they burn the plastic from electronic goods, in the process getting to metals and other toxins that are also carcinogenic and enter their blood stream.

Findings from many studies show increases in spontaneous miscarriages, still and premature births, as well as reduced birth weights and birth lengths associated with exposure to e-waste.

In India, e-waste accounts for 4% of global e-waste and 2.5% of global GDP (2014 figures) – so it has a higher share of e-waste than its share of gross domestic product (GDP).

In India most consumers are still unaware of how to dispose of their e-waste.

Most Indians end up selling their e-waste to the informal sector, which poses severe threats to human (including children’s) lives.

Use of improper and highly hazardous methods of extracting the trace amounts of precious metal from it for profit.

Due to informal processing hubs in Moradabad and Seelampur, soil, water and air are polluted to a beyond-repairable level.

E-waste will also contribute to carbon emissions.

India figures as one of the regions that receives most of the e-waste export.

India notified the E-waste (Management) Rules, 2016, on October 1, 2016, which made ‘extended producer responsibility’ (EPR) mandatory.

The implementation of EPR remains extremely poor.

The informal sector recycles 95 per cent of the e-waste in India and there is no tangible method to link the formal sector with the informal one.

There is lack of awareness among people as they don’t know that there exist collection centres that collect items for recycling.

The producers/manufacturers do not have adequate information on their website regarding e-waste management.

India being a vast country, setting up collection mechanism is a big challenge.

Improper enforcement of the existing laws is another hurdle.
Last year apart from the six cyclonic storms that formed over the northern Indian Ocean, India experienced "high impact weather" events.

There were extreme heavy rainfall, heat and cold waves, snowfall, thunderstorms, dust storms, lightning and floods.

Uttar Pradesh was the most adversely affected state which reported near 600 deaths due to cold waves, thunderstorm, dust storm, lightning and floods.

Two extreme weather events: the Kerala floods in August and the thunderstorm activity over the northern states in May-June of 2018.

Kerala floods were due to unusually heavy rains and are very rare over Kerala, which is not conventionally flood prone.

Sea level rise will have a disastrous impact on the country, given its large coastline, and the number of people who live close to and depend on the sea for their livelihoods.

A series of extreme weather events that took place last year concern about the future.

India said merely achieving its INDC targets would cost it $1tn. It is unclear who will bear these enormous costs.

The Green Climate Fund has been woefully missing its deadlines for gathering funds.

India has set ambitious renewable energy targets, but these come with their own set of challenges.

It would need to store renewable energy on a massive scale, but the price of battery storage has not been falling fast enough.

Another challenge is India's growing demand for transport.

To limit ourselves to 1.5°C, global net anthropogenic CO₂ emissions should reduce by about 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, and should reach net-zero around 2050.

Use of coal should reduce steeply and its share in electricity mix should be reduced to close to 0 per cent by 2050.

To limit global warming, countries will have to change policies in sectors like land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and urban development.

India needs to focus on improving air quality which can deliver returns in health and productivity as well as the recovery of monsoon.

The efforts should include reforestation which would reduce the impact of extreme events.

India needs to introduce electric vehicles and also urgently strengthen its bus, rail and public infrastructure to move towards more sustainable means of transport.

Better city planning and architecture.

Systems to monitor and control industrial and vehicular pollution.

Providing environmentally sustainable cooling solutions to citizens.

Developing and implementing heat action plans for both rural and urban areas.

Conserving water resources.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) said 2018 was the sixth warmest year on record, a result of the global warming trend.

It said, the average temperature over India is "significantly above normal".

The IMD said that 11 of the 15 warmest years were during the recent past fifteen years (2004-18).

The trends of recent years are part of the "global warming" trend.

The rate of increase of temperatures over India is almost similar to the global average.

Mean temperature during the monsoon and post-monsoon seasons were also above normal.

Temperatures are increasing during both day and night time.

Heat waves are increasing in frequency as well as magnitude.

Extreme rainfall and rainstorms which can cause floods are increasing.

Dry spell duration is also increasing.

Human activities have already raised the global temperature by one degree centigrade compared to the pre-industrial levels.

The global warming is now likely to reach 1.5 degree between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to rise at the current rate.

The world is already witnessing the consequences of 1 degree global warming in the form of extreme weather events, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice.

There will be long-lasting or irreversible changes like the loss of some ecosystems if the temperature rises further.

South Asia, particularly India, Pakistan and China are hotspots in a warming world.

IPCC report warns that global warming is occurring faster than anticipated and that it can have devastating impacts if steps are not taken to cut down emissions.

India will be among the worst hit countries that may face wrath of calamities like floods and heatwaves, and reduced GDP.

Other impacts include intensified droughts and water stress, habitat degradation, and reduced crop yields.

Extreme temperature in India will affect agriculture, water resources, energy, and public health sectors.

It will "disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable populations through food insecurity, higher food prices, income losses, lost livelihood opportunities, adverse health impacts, and population displacements".

India stands to be one of the nations most significantly affected, given its huge population and levels of inequality and poverty.

The impact on India could be devastating - not just socially but also politically.

Floods of all kinds - riverine floods and coastal flooding are increasing, and are projected to increase further.

Both the intensity and area affected by floods are projected to increase over India.

Shortage of fish-based protein in the Indian Ocean due to rapid degradation of coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves and factors like pollution, overfishing, unsustainable coastal development.
The recently held BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu has ignited a debate as to whether BIMSTEC will soon replace SAARC. While remaining committed to regional development through SAARC, India is also promoting the inter-regional cooperation through platforms such as BIMSTEC.

In recent years there has been a spurt in its activities in the backdrop of SAARC becoming more or less dysfunctional. SAARC has failed to attain its objectives and numerous agreements have not been adequately implemented.

In the many failures of SAARC, lack of trust among the member countries has been the most significant factor between India and Pakistan.

India deliberately chose BIMSTEC over SAARC for outreach meetings with BRICS at the BRICS Goa Summit in November 2016.

BIMSTEC is the natural platform for India to implement its regional connectivity, Neighbourhood First and Act East policies.

BIMSTEC is important for free trade agreement, poverty alleviation, tourism, energy and climate change, and even counter-terrorism and disaster management.

BIMSTEC could allow India to push a constructive agenda to counter Chinese investments, and follow best practices for connectivity projects based on recognised international norms.

Myanmar and Thailand, have a crucial place for India’s ambitious connectivity plans for north-eastern region.

Myanmar is only Southeast Asian country India has a land boundary with.

India-Myanmar-Thailand highway is one of the key projects that figures in a big way in the government’s Act East policy.

The members need to work collectively towards making BIMSTEC a stronger, more effective and result-oriented organisation for achieving a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region.

Leverage BIMSTEC as a bridge linking South and Southeast Asia.

BIMSTEC secretariat must be significantly empowered with more human and financial resources.

BIMSTEC will have to prioritize economic connectivity, which is the prerequisite for regional integration.

Need for upgrading cooperation in disaster management, terrorism, maritime security and transnational crime.

BIMSTEC weather and climate centre at Noida should be converted into a development centre on disaster management.

India can provide training to member states at its disaster management training centre in Nagpur.

India will need to take on an informal BIMSTEC leadership role and let its commitments lead by example.

Now is the time not just to deliberate, but also to deliver. Now is the time to translate promises into performance.

Way Forward

Cyber Security Cooperation

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional grouping of seven countries i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand that lie in the littoral and adjacent regions of the Bay of Bengal.

This sub-regional organisation came into being on June 6, 1997, through the Bangkok Declaration.

The first summit was held in 2004 and the secretariat established in Dhaka in 2014.

Technological and economic cooperation among South Asian and Southeast Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal is the main objective of BIMSTEC.

Following the fourth meeting of BIMSTEC in Kathmandu in August 2018, there is a renewed push to conclude a series of proposals to further cooperation and connectivity.

The top among them are a master plan on connectivity and the motor vehicle agreement.

The motor vehicle agreement which aims to streamline vehicle movement across the region is also in an advanced stage of finalisation.

Other proposals like a parliamentarian’s forum, cooperation on cyber and space cooperation and maritime security are under discussion.

Recently, the member countries got together in New Delhi to hold the first conference on cyber security cooperation from 05 to 07 December 2018.

The region is witnessing an exponential growth in internet usage and mobile telephony.

It is therefore crucial that BIMSTEC takes an active part in various internet governance forums, promulgates best practices and cyber norms.

Its poor literacy rates make the population susceptible to cyber-crime, data thefts, identity frauds and propagation of rumours and fake news.

The overall cyber security posture of the region is poor and much needs to be done towards building a safer cyber environment.

In order to fully exploit the digital dividend, it is imperative that the member countries collaborate and cooperate to ensure rapid cyber capacity and capability building.

Intelligence and law enforcement agencies of the BIMSTEC region need to cooperate with each other for intelligence sharing, combating crime and maintaining a highly resilient and safe cyber environment.