Women's access to decent paid work is an ethical and economic imperative as well as a primary human right.

The participation of educated, capable women in the workforce makes for a strong economic argument.

Women entrepreneurs help drive innovation and job creation, besides assisting in addressing the world's most critical challenges.

Providing greater impetus to women entrepreneurs would be critical for India's growth.

Socio-cultural norms and perceptions about what a woman can and should do.

Man and women do not have access to the same amount of information and opportunities pertaining to education, skills, and jobs.

Factors such as time constraints, safety and transportation considerations that hinder women's entry and progress in training programs and jobs are not adequately addressed.

There is a need to redefine the social norms that govern women's economic participation.

Innovative policies are required to incentivize more active sharing of children caregiving responsibilities.

Need to change the overall organisational culture to reverse what is known as "motherhood penalty."

Companies could support the return of working mothers into the workforce by paying more to fathers/other parents for taking over the caregiving responsibilities.

Social, political, and economic incentives must allow for the redistribution of unpaid work and care work.

India will need to find ways of meeting existing gaps in social security and protections.

Link protections directly to individuals rather than providing them through employers.

Healthcare, pensions, and insurance must be portable and aggregatable across the new workplace and designed based on the employment circumstances.

As work becomes more fluid and traditional conceptions of workplaces change, individuals must be ensured protection at their place of work rather than place of employment.

Legislate equal compensation, and gender performance of organisations must be subject to audits and public scrutiny.

Interventions to aggressively promote women in leadership positions are necessary.

Women in leadership positions create a critical mass and perhaps a collective voice.

Policy interventions aimed at increasing female labour force participation must acknowledge the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes.

There is a need for India to find ways to recognise and institutionalise sharing of care work between men and women, to reduce the gender wage gap, and aggressively work towards creating a violence-free, level playing field for its women to thrive and become leaders in the economy.

India has made significant economic progress in recent decades, including increasing GDP per capita between 1990 and 2015.

Such economic growth has not been matched by progress towards women's equal economic participation.

The country's female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) stands at just 27 per cent, compared to 66 per cent for men.

The global average of female labour force participation rate is 49 percent.

Patriarchal social norms that hinder women's agency, mobility and freedom to work.

In a recent survey over 40 percent of surveyed men report that married women whose husbands earn a decent living should not work outside the home.

Rising household incomes that create a disincentive for labour market participation among women.

The disproportionate burden of unpaid work and unpaid care work on women.

Lack of quality jobs for women and a significant gender wage gap.

On average, 66 percent of the work done by Indian women is unpaid, compared to 12 percent of men's.

Girls' household and domestic responsibilities contribute to a gender gap in secondary education.

India's Amended Maternity Benefit Act stipulates that employers must provide women with 26 weeks of paid time off.

The absence of a corresponding benefit for new fathers perpetuates the gender stereotype of men being the primary caregivers.

The law also covers only formal and large-sized firms which, overall, employ only a small proportion of the country's female workers.

Institutionalising voluntary paternity leave and 'flexi-time' for mothers remain inadequate.

A significantly higher number of women in India work in the informal economy compared to the formal sector.

These workers lose out on the social security, benefits and protections afforded to those employed in permanent jobs.

Safety, in general, remains a key concern in India and the perception of danger restrict women's mobility and freedom.

This has direct implications for women's economic participation and freedom.

Women's participation in the industries with the highest average wages (including information and communications and financial services) stands at a low 15 percent.

Lack of will among Indian firms to hire more women workers.

India has a gender wage gap of 34 percent, despite the existence of India's Equal Remuneration Act 1976 which mandates equal pay for equal work.

Further, the pay gap increases with age, work experience, and rise in occupational hierarchy — thus disincentivising the women to stay on.

In 2018, Iceland became the first country in the world to mandate companies to prove that they do not have a gender and ethnicity-based pay gap.

The lack of access to formal and collateral financing, reinforced by cultural bias has been found to be the major obstacle for women entrepreneurs in India.

The recent establishment of NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a step in the right direction.

Women comprise only 12 percent of the members of the national parliament.
The debate regarding the judges accepting post-retirement jobs is an issue that recurs frequently. Since 1950, there have been 44 Chief Justices of India who have accepted post-retirement jobs. According to a study, as many as 70 of over 100 retired Supreme Court judges have taken up such assignments in organizations like NHRC, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Armed Forces Tribunal, Law Commission of India etc. Some have been appointed heads of commissions or as governors of states.

About 36 per cent of the appointments were made by the central government, mainly to tribunals, commissions, ad hoc committees and government positions like that of Lokayukta. The study says that the statutes of these bodies have laid down that only candidates with specific qualifications will be considered. At least 56 per cent of the appointments were made because they were required by law, implying a structural problem. In some cases, Supreme Court judges have been appointed to commissions even four months ahead of retirement.

The valuable experience and insights that competent and honest judges acquire during their period of service cannot be wasted after retirement. Unlike abroad, a judge of the higher judiciary in India retires at a comparatively young age and is capable of many more years of productive work. However, government-sponsored post-retirement appointments will continue to raise suspicion over the judgments. Therefore, the viable option is to establish, through a statute, a commission made up of a majority of retired judges to make appointments of competent retired judges to tribunals and judicial bodies.

Supreme Court can put in place a process to regulate post-retirement appointments for judges. The immediate appointments suggest that decisions regarding their post-retirement assignments were already taken by the government. Immediate post-retirement appointments of the judges create a cloud over the sanctity of their judgments, irrespective of their merits. Judges accepting jobs under the Executive certainly creates situations of conflicts of interest. It tends to undermine public faith in judicial independence.

In the recent ‘master of roster case,’ the Supreme Court reiterated that public confidence was the greatest asset of the judiciary. Judiciary and executive should remain mutual watchdogs than mutual admirers.
While the cash-transfer model may be popular and politically rewarding, it is unlikely to solve the crisis in agriculture.

Primarily because the crisis is not just of low incomes in agriculture. It will be a short-term solution and not a long-term one to provide real relief to the farmers.

Faulty and ad hoc export-import policy

Lack of infrastructure

Cartelisation and collusion in agricultural markets, which have prevented farmers from realizing the market prices for agricultural produce. It is the combination of these, along with the twin droughts of 2014 and 2015, which created the crisis. The current crisis may have worsened due to the sharp fall in agricultural crop prices.

Cash transfers do not guarantee any protection against unforeseen events, whether natural or policy induced.

It is not a substitute for the structural reforms needed in agriculture.

Except for the Kalia scheme, which offers some relief to the sharecroppers and landless labourers, most other schemes are regressive with amount of transfer proportional to the land owned.

The real problem is also of identifying the beneficiaries.

In the absence of proper tenancy records, it will also benefit the absentee landlords.

It is no substitute for the lack of investment in agriculture, which has declined by 2.3% per annum in real terms.

By taking away precious fiscal resources, it makes the farmer more vulnerable to both market as well as non-market induced risks.

State governments which have committed a large part of state revenues to loan waivers, will find it difficult to spare money for investment in agriculture. The income transfer scheme will further erode the fiscal capacity of states.

Also it may not be feasible to initiate Rythu Bandhu Scheme on national level as land data in several states, including Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu are yet to be digitised.

For a long-term solution, the government should first implement existing schemes, like it should give assured procurement and marketing of all commodities having MSP. 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.

Farmer wants an enabling infrastructure, which allows him to compete globally.

There is a need to make agriculture a profitable profession.

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

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

The crisis in agriculture has continued to worsen with the latest trend of decline in farm produce prices.

But with the worsening of the crisis, newer ways of providing relief to the farmers are being experimented with.

Loan waivers and price support through minimum support price (MSP) were tried in some states.

Bhavenar Bhugtan Yojana in Madhya Pradesh was sought to provide relief to farmers by providing the differential between MSPs and market prices.

The Rythu Bandhu scheme of the Telangana government provides Rs. 4,000 per acre for every season to all the farmers of the state.

Jharkhand has introduced a scheme similar to the Rythu Bandhu scheme with enhanced payout of Rs. 5,000 per acre to 2.28 million farmers at the cost of Rs. 2250 crore to the state government.

Kalia has been started by the Odisha government.

Unlike Telangana and Jharkhand, Kalia does not provide income transfer on the basis of land holding, but on the basis of households as unit.

The payout at Rs.10,000 per family per year also extends to sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers.

This targets 10 lakh landless households, and specifically SC and ST families.

Unlike a loan waiver, KALIA’s main targets are rural activities as a whole.

To provide an assured income support to the small and marginal farmers, the Government is launching the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).

Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year.

This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each.

It would also meet their emergent needs especially before the harvest season.

Cash transfer programmes have become an important tool of social protection and poverty reduction.

It has immediate impact on reducing hunger and rural poverty.

They can help households to overcome credit constraints and manage risk.

This can increase productive investment, increase access to markets and stimulate local economies.

Income support can be used to make a repayment or at least activate a bank account which can then receive a loan.

It can serve as an important complement to a broader rural development agenda, including a pro-poor growth strategy focusing on agriculture.

It can increase investment in agricultural inputs, including farm implements and livestock.

Nonbeneficiaries and the local economy also benefit from cash transfer programmes via trade and production linkages.

It prohibits conversion of wetland for non-wetland uses, setting up of industries near wetlands, and waste dumping into the water.

The Wetlands Rules 2017 require setting up of a State Wetlands Authority in each state and union territory to monitor the notified wetlands in their state. This is a move in the right direction.

With the level of urbanisation likely to increase from 30% to 50% in the next decade, a legal framework to protect these wetlands and their catchments are urgently needed.

There is enough evidence, both internationally and at home, that involving citizens, especially those who live near wetlands—be a good way to achieve conservation success.

This helped in reviving the Mangalajodi Wetland located at the northern edge of Chilika.

Focussing on directing CSR funds towards protecting wetlands could also be useful.

NGOs, activists, conservationists and advocacy experts have a huge role to play in the conservation of wetlands and the government needs to work closely with them with international best practices.

The database of wetlands in India is not complete and money needs to be invested in groundwork and diligent survey of wetland areas across the country.

In the absence of information on the wetland boundaries, it is often difficult to control the encroachment on wetlands.

It is therefore necessary to notify the wetlands, clearly demarcating the wetland boundary and zone of influence of the wetlands.

The Government of India should enact a wetland conservation act, on the lines of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

The government ought to become a facilitator, while society should become caretaker of wetlands.

The Ramsar Convention came into force in 1975 as an intergovernmental treaty that aims to promote conservation and wise use of wetlands. Today, we have 27 Ramsar Sites in the country. Sundarban Wetland was designated on 1 February 2019.

Ramsar is the only convention of its type that focuses on a particular type of ecosystem.

Montreux Record under the Convention is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.

The coastal wetlands are largely dominated by mangrove vegetation.

Wetlands in southern peninsular India are mostly manmade and are known as yedis (tanks).

Wetlands are defined as "lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water".

India has a wealth of wetland ecosystems distributed in different geographical regions.

As they support a variety of plant and animal life, biologically they are one of the most productive ecosystems.

Wetlands are important, both economically and ecologically, providing food, water, livelihood, fisheries, birdlife, controlling floods, and acting as a natural filter for groundwater.

Significant socio-economic values include constant water supply, fuelwood, medicinal plants, agriculture, energy resource, wildlife resource, transport, recreation and tourism.

Wetlands are also important as a genetic reservoir for various species of plants including rice.

The world has already lost 35% of its wetlands since 1970.

We lose wetlands three times faster than forests.

India has nearly 30,000 wetlands of which we are losing 2-3% each year.

The Punjab State Administration was recently pulled up by the courts for allowing illegal construction near the Harke Wetland, a designated Ramsar Site.

In the latest census, Emakulam district in Kerala saw a drop of 37% in waterbirds as its wetlands face continued threats from road construction and waste dumping.

There is no National Wetland Policy, which is a requirement under the Ramsar treaty obligation by India.

Several water bodies of Delhi NCR have either been encroached upon or turned into garbage dumps.

Most of the wetlands in the urban areas are under threat.

The loss of wetlands leads to environmental and ecological problems, which have a direct impact on the socio-economic benefits of the associated populace.

Climate change and sea level rise could also affect wetlands.

Showing an early commitment to protecting wetlands, India became one of the first signatories to the Ramsar Convention in 1981.

The good work in Chilika continues today; it is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the subcontinent.

The Indian government has been updating Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS), an international resource guide and information database for Ramsar wetlands globally.

Through this searchable database, one can track spatial boundary management plans and up-to-date information on any wetland of importance.

India has also identified 115 sites as wetlands of national importance so far, and the maintenance of these sites is funded through the MoEFCC.

National Wetland Conservation Programme (NWCP), a MoEFCC scheme under which funds are allocated to wetland site management, and asking the states to identify wetlands of importance in their state for such management.
Water scarcity will likely worsen due to inefficient water management and treatment systems. According to the United Nations, water use has grown at more than twice the rate of population increase in the last century. Drying up of rivers, changing climatic conditions and unpredictable patterns of rainfall is making it a challenge for countries to sustain irrigation.

International water disputes have been a contentious long. Eg Indus Water Treaty. Various interstate and intercountry water disputes between upper riparian and lower riparian regions are testimony to the growing concern viz. Cauvery water dispute, Krishna water dispute, Teesta river dispute etc.

Groundwater in India is severely contaminated with uranium higher than the WHO standard. As climate change alters the Indian monsoon, the stresses on India’s groundwater resources may increase.

India faces national water scarcity by 2050 if current trends continue. States that usually have surplus water, such as Latur and Uttarakhand, currently experience acute water scarcity.

Managing water resources is the key to create a water-secure future. Need for a systemic change in urban planning and urban water management. Appropriate and effective ICT solutions in the form of smart-water management (SWM) also must be adopted to address water issues. Encouraging community involvement for improving water management. More efficient irrigation, growing less water-intensive crops in the dry season.

Training farmers on water conservation practices. Implementing Israel’s water management systems and technologies. Long-term investment in educational programs, social awareness campaigns, improved infrastructure and facilities, and water diplomacy. Rainwater harvesting can provide the country with reliable water supplies throughout the year.

The implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has a significant role in the sustainable availability of clean, adequate and safe water.

In many cities across the world, rapid urbanisation and population growth have led to scarcity and rising costs of water. Scientists predict that water demand will exceed supply by 40 percent by 2030, due to the combined threat of climate change and population growth.

Achieving universal access to improved water supply and sanitation facilities by 2030 is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The importance of water in the 21st century is comparable to that of oil in the 20th century.

Oil has alternatives like natural gas, wind, solar, and nuclear energy. The only alternative to water is water. Water is the most important component for growing food which is indispensable for survival.

It is essential for agriculture and hence for national food security.

Water issues will continue to be a strategically important variable in foreign policy development.

Poor infrastructure, a lack of legislation, inefficient farming and groundwater exploitation has contributed to the mismanagement of the country’s water supply.

Water mismanagement is arguably a more pronounced factor of the impending water crisis.

The problem is not lack of adequate water, but its reckless overuse. China, with a larger population, uses 26% less fresh water than India.

Deforestation, land conversion and degradation, as well as urban encroachment due to illegal construction, pose major threats to the water bearing capacity.

Lack of education and financial resources has prevented farmers from obtaining “more crop per drop”.

Poor sewage treatment facilities, little public sanitation, poverty, industrial runoff and a lack of government regulation.

An effective valuation supports better informed decision-making in the allocation and use of the resource.

As well as in the implementation of SDG6, i.e. to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”

Valuation of water will help in its conservation, infrastructure investment, setting of water quality standards, water pricing and water allocation.

By valuing water, varying preferences are taken into account in the decision-making process.

Appropriately designed water tariffs will discourage or prevent waste and encourage water-saving.
Technical solutions are necessary to augment and complement the traditional methods of border guarding. They enhance the surveillance and detection capabilities of the border guarding forces. They also improve the impact of the border guarding personnel against infiltration and trans-border crimes. The stress level among the border guarding personnel would also reduce to a large extent. The CIBMS enables round-the-clock surveillance on border and under different weather conditions. The use of high-tech equipment as an integrated instrument for border security has been experimented in various countries. Many, including the United States, have tried high-tech solutions for securing their borders. The operation and maintenance of the existing sophisticated equipment remain a problem. Many of the high-tech surveillance devices deployed by the BSF are not optimally utilised because of the required technical expertise are not uniformly available amongst the force's personnel. The exorbitant cost of the electronic devices and the lack of easy availability of spare parts act as a deterrent against their use. Centralised decision making could hamper timely and effective response on the ground. Erratic power supply and adverse climatic and terrain conditions in the border areas could potentially undermine the functioning of the sophisticated system. The experiences of countries such as the United States show that such devices fail to provide a comprehensive solution to border security problems. Implementation of similar solutions for the US-Mexico border has been facing several technical glitches and financial challenges. Given that detection and interception of infiltrators at the border require a quick response which can be achieved only through a decentralised decision making process. Caution must be exercised while advocating the use of high-tech and high-cost electronic devices for border security. A judicious mix of properly trained manpower and affordable and tested technology is likely to yield better results. By this India can show the way to the international community on how to lower the cost of border security, and in turn, counter terrorism.

The India-Pakistan border in the Jammu and Kashmir region has been vulnerable to infiltration and cross-border strikes. These incidents had raised the demand for the deployment of high-tech border surveillance equipment. The trigger for implementing the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) was the Pathankot terrorist attack. The Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) is an integration of a number of new gadgets and technologies to ensure electronic surveillance of India's international borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh. The smart border fencing projects built under CIBMS programme is the first of its kind in the country.

The emphasis on the use of high-tech gadgets for border security is not new. The need for effective technical means to prevent infiltration along the India-Pakistan border first arose during the 1980s when Punjab was in the grip by militancy and numerous incidents of infiltration. Border Security Force (BSF) has detected number of cross-border tunnel in the Jammu sector along the India-Pakistan international boundary. Besides tunnels, the Jammu sector also witnessed quite a few instances of successful infiltration by terrorists. Large consignments of heroin and fake Indian currency notes in these stretches highlight their vulnerability. There were attacks on strategic installations - prominent among these being the Pathankot and Uri terrorist attacks in 2016. These incidents have raised serious concerns about the efficacy of the existing border security system. This demands for the deployment of high-tech border surveillance equipment. The Madhukar Gupta Committee on border protection had reported to the Union Government to strengthen border protection and address vulnerabilities in fencing along the Indo-Pakistan border. It is generally felt that the one who has better technology will dominate in the future.

At present, the CIBMS is being implemented along two stretches in the Jammu sector of the India-Pakistan border. The CIBMS is capable of addressing the gaps in the present system of border security by seamlessly integrating human resources, weapons, and high-tech surveillance equipment. The purpose of the CIBMS is to eventually replace manual surveillance/patrolling of the international borders by electronic surveillance to enhance detection and interception capabilities.