

# POLISYS

Whether studying in a college, walking down a road or defending yourself in the court, we are always surrounded by policies. “The state”, as is said, “is always interested in you, even if you are not interested in the state”. But who should one blame when the policies don’t deliver to their ideals?

Public Policy Club, Bits Pilani presents POLISYS, an event centred on ‘effective’ policy making. The event will have 2 rounds-

## **Elimination Round:**

- In *teams of 2-4*, participants are required to mail a short abstract (300-400 Words) to [publicpolicybitspilani@gmail.com](mailto:publicpolicybitspilani@gmail.com)
- The abstract has to be an answer to any **one** of the following 4 Problem Statements:

### *1. The Income Tax Dilemma*

How Many People in India Pay Income Tax?

*Hardly Anyone*

A meagre 2% of the total population pays income tax in India. The revenue generated from Income Tax today is nowhere near to the total revenue obtained from various taxes (Service tax, VAT, entertainment tax, custom duty etc.) by our government.

It has been reported that roughly 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the total Income Tax payers are servicemen who are obliged to pay taxes- income tax is directly deducted from their source of income. This leaves us with all the unsalaried people, who in total form just 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the total income tax payers. Considering the demographics of India, this is a ridiculous figure. Certain figures state that a meagre 20 Lakh out of the 3.6 million unsalaried people in India are paying taxes.

But despite its shortcomings, ITR remains the only source of knowledge about the financial operations and assets of non-governmental employees, however vague it might be.

The above scenario has compelled many to reconsider the purview of the Income Tax regime. What steps could be taken in such a scenario? Can the Income Tax system be made more efficient? Can it be replaced?

2.

One in every three child in India is malnourished and unkempt, a figure that is greater than that in the Sub-Saharan desert. The condition of children in our country is nothing like what our constitution envisages.

On 15th August 1995, the then UPA government came up with the flagship Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE), popularly known as the *Mid-day* meal scheme, to abate this problem. Since then, the 12PM meals in government schools have fed millions of school-going children and have increased the school enrollment. But its implementation has not been as desired and malnutrition among children is still a lurking problem.

Then there is the ugly side of things. On July 2013, 23 children from Bihar died as a result of toxic food preparation. 12 students in the Buxar district, 33 students in Vaishali and 64 students in Lucknow suffered from food poisoning all during the same month.

Then there have been delayed payments to the cook, snakes and worms found in food, deplorable food quality and reports of food being wasted and stocks getting 'disappeared'. Embezzlement of the money by way of fake enrollment has also been reported.

The benign intentions of Mid-Day meal have been over-shadowed by its poor implementation. If you were a policy maker, what changes in this policy and its implementation would you suggest to reduce some of these problems?

3.

In several of his public appearances, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pitched for ***simultaneous elections*** for Lok Sabha and state assemblies. It is not an entirely new concept for India- Simultaneous Elections were held for Lok Sabha and state assemblies from 1952 to 1967.

There are some obvious advantages of this– huge savings, avoiding repeated enforcements of the Model Code of Conduct and avoiding electoral paralysis (an example of which occurred during the UPA tenure when the monthly diesel price hikes were repeatedly put on hold due to an election taking place in one state or the other.)

But when we dig deeply into the issue, some problems begin to surface. While problems like requirement of large-scale purchase of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines and enormous human resource from ground workers to armed personnel might be tackled, there are some unsolvable issues.

Simultaneous elections can work only if each and every government lasts five years regardless of confidence. So, if a state government does lose the vote of trust, what happens to the tenure of the new government? What happens to the disrupted cycle? Also if simultaneous elections are held, then for the first time what happens to Assemblies whose scheduled tenure either ends before or after the proposed date of holding elections? What would happen in case by-elections are necessitated in between terms? What happens in case the ruling party or coalition loses majority in between term, either in the Lok Sabha or in Assemblies?

When the Prime Minister of a country pitches for such a policy, it sure holds importance. As a policy-maker, what decisions would you take to tackle one or more of these problems?

4.

India- the largest democracy in the world- is surrounded by scores of public policies. When a policy is not implemented properly, the problem sometimes lies in its improper implementation, but sometimes the problem is in the policy itself. It

could have been because the policy makers didn't consider all the highly complex parameters involved, or simply because the policy is outdated. There could be many other reasons.

Choose any one such policy and suggest improvements in it to eradicate the problems or make it better. Just remember- **choose a well-established policy within India that has been passed and approved by the respective legislature.** Don't take issues- like Jallikattu. Take policies and acts- Like Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960. Take cues from above problem statements for a better idea.

### **Final Round:**

- Based upon the entries from the above round, selected teams would qualify for Round 2 on campus. These teams would be given a topic (and additional details) a week in advance. The teams would be required to put forward their views on the subject matter. The teams can use a presentation, a video or anything else for their aid, *as long as plagiarism is avoided*. This includes answering cross-questions from anyone present. Judges will decide the winner.

### **Deadlines:**

The deadline for Round 1 is 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. Further deadlines would be duly conveyed to the participants.