

GENERAL STUDIES-1

INDIAN CULTURE

INDIA'S FIRST WORLD HERITAGE CITY

Where was it selected? 41st session of the World Heritage Committee in the Polish city of Krakow

Which city? Ahmedabad

Founded by: Sultan Ahmed Shah

Who decided? The World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO

Why has it been selected?

Ahmedabad is recognized as the cradle of India's non-violent freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi. The selection acknowledged the preservation efforts made by the city in keeping its historical fabric intact.

The city's historic characteristics include densely-packed traditional houses ('pols') in gated traditional streets ('puras') with features such as bird feeders, public wells and religious institutions.

Of the 287 World Heritage Cities across the globe, only two were hitherto on the Indian subcontinent: Bhaktapur in Nepal and Galle in Sri Lanka. The Unesco tag will add immense brand value to the city and boost tourism.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the nodal agency for forwarding any request for World Heritage status to any Indian site whether cultural or natural. Based on the proposals received from the Central or State Government agencies as well as management Trusts, etc., and after their due scrutiny, the Government forwards the nomination dossiers to the World Heritage Center.

A World Heritage Site is a place (such as a building, city, complex, desert, forest, island, lake, monument, or mountain) that is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as being of special cultural or physical significance.

The list is maintained by the international World Heritage Programme administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, composed of 21 UNESCO member states which are elected by the General Assembly.

Each World Heritage Site remains part of the legal territory of the state wherein the site is located and UNESCO considers it in the interest of the international community to preserve each site.

Advantages of having a heritage tag?

- ✓ The tag of a UNESCO World Heritage City will be a powerful addition to a city's tourist branding. Rome, Paris, Cairo and Edinburgh are good examples.
- ✓ A tourism boost is generally associated with growth of employment in allied industries.
- ✓ According to the UNESCO website, "a country may also receive financial assistance and expert advice from the World Heritage Committee to support activities for the preservation of its sites".

INDIA CELEBRATES A BANNED PRACTICE OF CHINA

Falun Gong, the ancient Chinese holistic system that is banned in China

- ✓ The event highlighted the persecution against the practitioners in China.
- ✓ Falun Gong is a Chinese spiritual practice that *combines meditation and qigong exercises with a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.*
- ✓ The practice emphasizes morality and the cultivation of virtue, and identifies with qigong practice of the Buddhist school, though its teachings also incorporate elements drawn from Taoist traditions.
- ✓ The practitioners of Falun Gong aspire to eliminate attachments, and ultimately to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

THEATRE OLYMPICS COMES TO INDIA

India hosted 8th Edition of Theatre Olympics, 'The Biggest Theatre Celebration of the World', for the first time.

- It is being organised by National School of Drama, under the aegis of Ministry of Culture.

The National School of Drama is one of the foremost theatre training institutions in the world and the only one of its kind in India, set up by Sangeet Natak Academy in 1959. Later in 1975, it became an autonomous organisation under Ministry of Culture.

July 9th to July 20th



- The Theatre Olympics was established in 1993 in Delphi, Greece, as the first international theatre festival.
- With the tagline 'Crossing Millennia', this is an initiative to connect the cultural past with the present and future, bringing the richness and diversity of theatre heritage to the experiments and research of contemporary theatre.

SOCIAL ISSUES AND INDIAN SOCIETY

FOOD WASTAGE HAS NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The issue of food wastage is considered an issue of national importance. Food wastage is sometimes linked to people's behaviour. However, there are wastages which happen in any case due to food's perishability and the absence of an effective distribution mechanism and legal framework.



How much is being wasted?

Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production to final household consumption.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), *"One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year."* The losses represent "a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain".

Implications

Food wastage has multiple socio-economic and environmental impacts.

- ✓ India ranked 97th among 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index for 2016. Though hunger cannot be tackled directly by preventing food wastage, a substantial amount of food that is wasted in our country can feed many hungry people.
- ✓ The wastage of food entails loss of considerable amount of resources in the form of inputs used during production- Water, manpower, fertilisers etc
- ✓ The energy spent over wasted food results billions of tons of carbon dioxide production every year. Decay also leads to harmful emission of other gases in the atmosphere; for instance, decaying of rice produces methane.

Suggestions



We have to frame a comprehensive strategy by combining the efforts of the government and private sectors and civil society. The government can create a time-bound task force under Niti Aayog, with experts from different sectors, to frame a national policy to tackle this gigantic issue, which can recommend the legal framework to support initiatives to reduce food loss and waste.

MANUAL SCAVENGING CONTINUES UNABATED

Why in news?

Madras High Court asked the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government to ensure the strict enforcement of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013. Despite the most stringent penal provisions in the law against manual scavenging, it continues in parts of India.

Reasons as to why it persists?

- ✚ Continued presence of insanitary latrines that require cleaning by hand.
- ✚ State governments have not shown interest to demolish and rebuild old facilities lacking sanitation, or to conduct a full census of both the latrines and the people engaged in clearing such waste. States are obligated to undertake these activities.
- ✚ Many communities still regard the inclusion of a sanitary toilet as ritual and physical pollution of the house
- ✚ Even the less conservative are ready to accept only large, expensive and unscientific structures much bigger than those recommended by the WHO.
- ✚ Caste system that assumes Dalits will readily perform the stigmatized task of emptying latrines clearly hoodwinks the law.

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

clear that no person, local authority or any agency shall, from such date as the state government may notify, engage or employ, either directly or indirectly, any person for hazardous cleaning of a sewer or a septic tank.

Features

- 1) It also seeks to expand the definition of manual scavengers.
- 2) Every unsanitary latrine is to be demolished or converted into sanitary latrines within 9 months of coming of the law.
- 3) Falls under residual powers under the Union list (Entry 97).
- 4) National Commission for Safai karmachari is the implementing authority.
- 5) Rehabilitation of estimated 2 lakh manual scavengers with one-time cash assistance, Rs 3,000 per month during training for other livelihood options, concessional loans for at least one member of the family and financial assistance for building a house.
- 6) It also fixes the responsibility on local governments for ensuring sanitary community toilets.
- 7) It seeks to more strict punishment for employing manual scavengers with a fine of Rs 50,000 or/and imprisonment up to a year. While the practice of hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks will attract a fine of Rs 2 lakh and up to 2 years of imprisonment

July 9th to July 20th



- ✚ The Central government, which directly runs the self-employment scheme for the rehabilitation of these workers, has also reduced funds this year.

Solutions

- ✓ A campaign against social prejudice that impedes solutions.
- ✓ Change now depends on the willingness of the courts to fix responsibility on State governments
- ✓ Raising the confidence level among those engaged in manual cleaning is vital; even official data show their reluctance to take up self-employment.
- ✓ Empowerment holds the key to change, but that would depend on breaking caste barriers through education and economic uplift.
- ✓ Compensation sanctioned should be paid immediately; only a fraction of those with verified claims have received it.

GENERAL STUDIES-2

POLITY

A SEPARATE STATE FLAG

Why in news?

The Karnataka State government has constituted a committee to study and submit a report on the possibility of “designing a separate flag for Karnataka and providing it a statutory standing.”

Can states have their own flags?

In S.R. Bommai v/s Union of India (Supreme Court 1994) case, the Supreme Court has declared that federalism is a basic feature of the Constitution and States are supreme in their sphere.

1. This being the Constitutional position, there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag.
2. However, the manner in which the State flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag. It has to be always below the national flag.
3. The national flag code specifically authorises use of other flags subject to the regulation by the court.

So, State flag is not unauthorised.

THE DIMINISHING STATURE OF PARLIAMENT

Parliament was supposed to play a central role in our democracy, as visualized by the founding fathers of our constitution. It has the responsibility to frame legislations after engaging in meaningful debates, discussions and discourses, thus ensuring accountability. However, the significance of the parliament has diminished in stature and significance due to various reasons.

The signs are quite conspicuous

- ✓ The process of legislation has become slow and lagging. Or Laws are often passed in rush with little scrutiny and no follow- up rules. In some cases, it takes sessions together for a bill to become law.
- ✓ Parliament, which was meant to invoke accountability, has almost forgotten its role. When questions are asked, they are often answered with less or hidden facts by the government.
- ✓ Discourse and debate on issues of national importance were an attribute and highlight of Parliament during the first two decades of the republic, until around 1970. Now, there is discussion but it is often partisan between groups where party lines are sharply drawn. Thus, differences lead to protests in the form of walk-outs or rushing to the well of the house.
- ✓ Number of days when the parliament meets and discusses the relevant issues have also gone down.
- ✓ The criminalization of politics is another concern. Reports show that 34% of the MPs in the 2014 Lok Sabha faced criminal charges, as compared with 30% in 2009.

Reasons

- The barriers to entry in to politics are formidable. The only access comes from kinship or money. And muscle power matters as a determinant of success.
- Also, there are institutional constraints on the performance of MPs as well. The allocation of time for MPs to speak is proportional to the strength of their political party in the house and its leadership decides who gets to speak and for how long.
- The only other opportunities for MPs are during question hour or zero hour. Answers to unstarred questions are simply laid on the table of the house.
- Strict party lines deter MPs from speaking their mind. For another, party whips are a problem. Any violation of whip could lead to an MP's expulsion from the house.
- Parliament also does not meet or work long enough and there are institutional constraints on its performance while working.

July 9th to July 20th



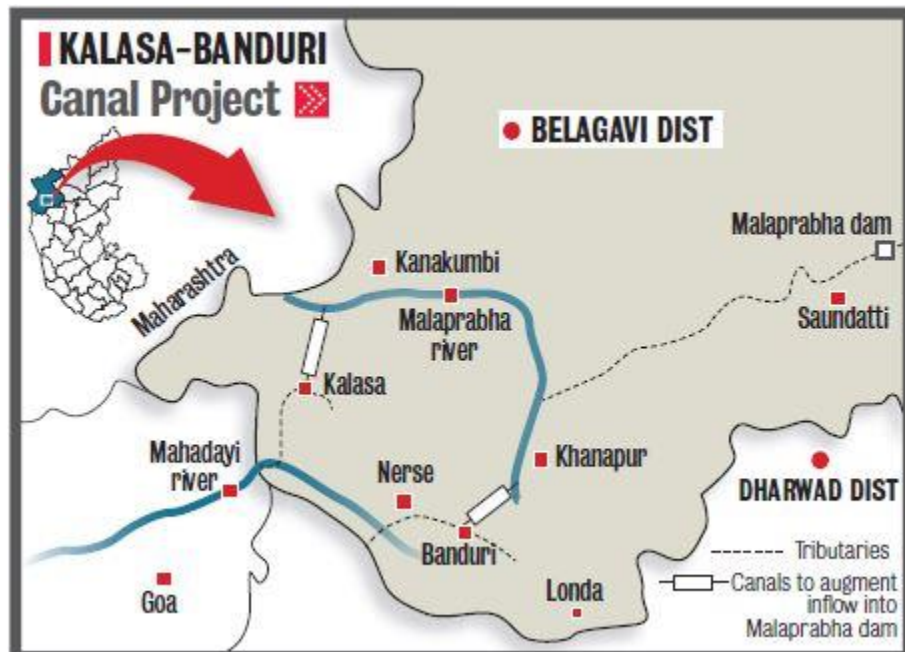
Course correction needed

Almost 70 years after we began life as a republic, there is a clear and present danger that we could be the world's most vibrant democracy with the world's least effective, and perhaps most dormant, Parliament. It is time for MPs in India to reclaim their rights in Parliament as representatives of the people. And there is an urgency to bring about electoral reforms. Also, the time has come for citizens, whom it represents, to vote on the basis of evaluation.

MAHADAYI RIVER DISPUTE

Why in news?

Goa has said that it is open to talks with Karnataka and Maharashtra to explore an out-of-tribunal settlement on Mahadayi issue.



July 9th to July 20th



Backgrounder to the Dispute:

Mahadayi, also known as the Mandovi river, is considered a lifeline in the northern parts of Karnataka. The river originates and flows in Karnataka and goes through Goa before meeting the Arabian Sea.

The Karnataka government and Goa government are fighting on sharing of waters of the Mahadayi river.

- In order to divert water to the Malaprabha river basin, Karnataka government proposed to build canals to link Kalasa and Banduri, the tributaries of Mahadayi.
- However, objecting the move, Goa government argued that if Karnataka implemented the Kalasa-Banduri project, it would prove disastrous for the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats as the proposed project was deep inside the forest.

Karnataka had petitioned the tribunal seeking release of 7.56 tmcft of water for Kalasa-Banduri Nala project. The tribunal, which gave its interim order after hearing arguments from both Karnataka and Goa, had rejected the state's plea citing various grounds including ecological damage that the project may cause.

DEBATE ON J&K SPECIAL STATUS: GOVT TO SC

The Centre requested the Supreme Court to debate on the special status granted to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, as it is both a sensitive and constitutional matter. The court agreed to schedule the same.

Why in news?

The centre's response came on a PIL plea filed by a Delhi-based NGO contending that the J&K government was discriminatory against non-residents as far as government jobs and real estate purchases were concerned.

J&K High Court ruling:

Jammu and Kashmir High Court had previously ruled that *Article 370 assumed a place of permanence in the Constitution and the feature was beyond amendment, repeal or abrogation*. The court said Article 35A gave “protection” to existing laws in force in the State.

It also observed that the President under Article 370 (1) was conferred with power to extend any provision of the Constitution to the State with such “exceptions and modifications”, as may be deemed fit, subject to consultation or concurrence with the State government. The High Court said J&K, while acceding to the Dominion of India, retained limited sovereignty and did not merge with it.

Article 370

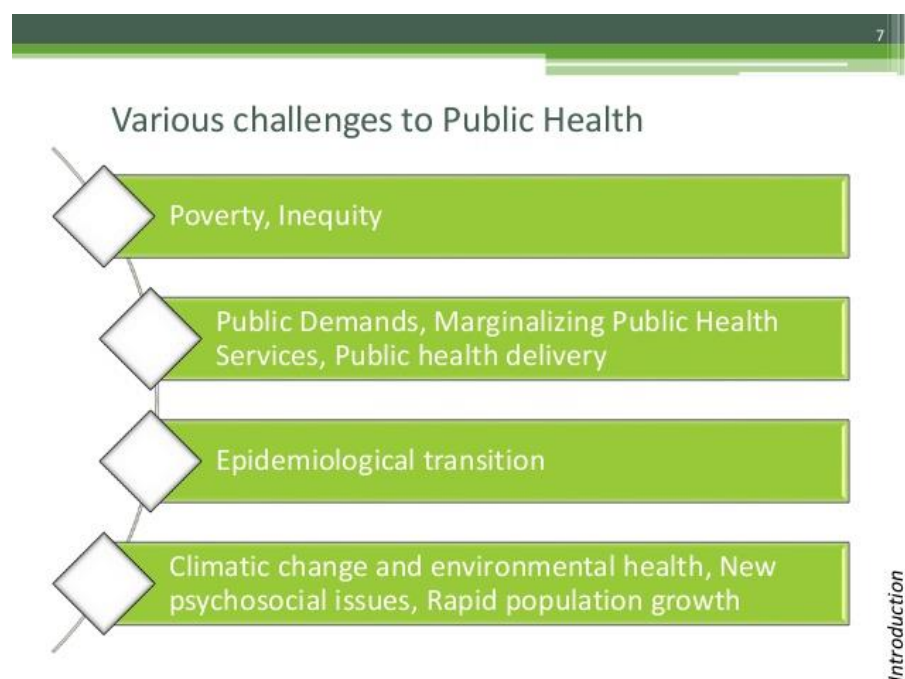
Article 370 of the Indian Constitution is a ‘temporary provision’ which grants special autonomous status to Jammu & Kashmir.

- Under Part XXI of the Constitution of India, which deals with “Temporary, Transitional and Special provisions”, the state of Jammu & Kashmir has been accorded special status under Article 370.
- All the provisions of the Constitution which are applicable to other states are not applicable to J&K.
- Except for defence, foreign affairs, finance and communications, Parliament needs the state government’s concurrence for applying all other laws.
- Thus the state’s residents live under a separate set of laws, including fundamental rights, as compared to other Indians.
- Indian citizens from other states cannot purchase land or property in Jammu & Kashmir.
- The Centre has no power to declare financial emergency under Article 360 in the state. It can declare emergency in the state only in case of war or external aggression only, not on grounds of internal disturbance or imminent danger unless it is made at the request or with the concurrence of the state government.
- Under Article 370 the Indian Parliament cannot increase or reduce the borders of the state.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND POLICIES

PUBLIC HEALTH: CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES

Despite having seen a remarkable has not been able to accomplish a balanced progress in the field of health indicators given the slow pace of improvements. Several weaknesses embrace the policies, investments and education system, required for a strong public health workforce.



- Total Fertility rate→ 2.2
- Infant mortality rate(IMR) per 1000 live births→ 41
- Maternal Mortality rate(MMR) per 1 lakh live births→274

Problems with workforce

Public health professionals, with requisite educational qualifications, play a central role in ensuring the appropriate management of all aspects of the healthcare system.

- The foremost concern is that India's public health workforce infrastructure is inadequate, in terms of numbers and quality, to tackle its current and future public healthcare issues.

- Public health training remains neglected and no institute provides a bachelor's degree on public health.

Suggestions

- Local colleges and universities should be supported financially and encouraged to develop undergraduate degree programmes in public health, especially in poorer states.
- Bachelor's level training is essential to undertake programmes on immunization, nutrition and tropical disease control. Preventable morbidity and mortality should be the prime focus in developing countries.
- Developing public health undergraduate degrees should be prioritized over introducing more masters. However, a multidisciplinary workforce is to be maintained in order to promote a proactive environment for public health education, research, advocacy and services.

Challenges need to be surmounted

As of now there is fragmented regulation in this field, thus amputating the establishment of international standards of accreditation.

1. Medical Council of India (MCI) is the statutory body responsible for establishing and maintaining uniform standards of medical education, that is offered at the medical college level only.
2. Public health training at non-medical colleges or universities come under the purview of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) or the University Grants Commission (UGC). A single uniform, overarching, body or council, responsible for public health education in the country as a whole is the need of the hour.

The undergraduate degree level must be made a stepping stone to graduate level courses.

Conclusive statements

Sustainable economic growth requires robust policies that improves the population's health and raises productivity levels across the nation. *Since 1993, the World Bank has considered investments in health as a vital factor*

July 9th to July 20th



to promote economic growth and not as, previously considered, a burden on economic progress.

THE ISSUE OF LATERAL ENTRY INTO CIVIL SERVICE

Why in news?

The Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) has been instructed by the Prime Minister's Office to put up a proposal on the induction of outsiders/Private individuals in the ranks of deputy secretary, director and joint secretary.

The move was in response to a central government staffing policy paper where the DoPT had indicated a huge shortage of officers in the middle management level.

Not a new idea though

It was recommended by the 2nd Administrative Reform Commission, high level committees appointed by different governments and a plethora of think tanks.

Necessity of such a move

1. Shortfall in numbers: There is an overall 20% shortfall of IAS cadre officers. The Baswan Committee (2016) has shown how large states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a deficit of 75 to over 100 officers and their unwillingness to sponsor officers to go to the Centre on deputation is understandable.
2. Target oriented: Outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be target-oriented, which will improve the performance of the government. Also, more competition will encourage career civil servants to develop expertise in areas of their choice.
3. Improved governance: The conventional wisdom is that lateral entry infuses fresh energy and thinking into an insular, complacent and often archaic bureaucracy. It enables the entry of right-minded

professionals and the adoption of best practices for improving governance.

Counter arguments

1. Disturbed balance might be in the offing as the lateral entrants directly access policy making positions and career civil servants will be left with the implementation part.
2. Policy-implementation disconnect may as well crop up, as career civil servants will have a better idea of grass roots. But the policy making lateral entrants are at a distance with such experiences.
3. While there may be exceptions, the experience of inducting private-sector managers to run public-sector enterprises is not particularly satisfactory. Private sector, which ran Air India, Indian Airlines and Vayudoot proved to be failures. Clearly, performance is vitally influenced by the enabling environment and the best managerial capability cannot deliver results in an adverse operating environment.
4. The best talent can be attracted only if there is reasonable assurance of reaching top level managerial positions. Any dilution of the potential horizon for growth would discourage competent and motivated people.
5. Discontent among the existing government personnel
6. It would be as difficult to measure the performance of lateral entrants as it would of career civil servants.

What can be done?

A good managerial system encourages and nurtures talent from within instead of seeking to induct leadership from outside. Any failure in this matter is primarily a failure of the system to identify and nurture talent at the appropriate stage. For this, the remedy lies not through lateral induction but through more rigorous performance appraisal and improved personnel management.

- The government could contemplate hiring outside talent to head certain pre-identified mission-mode projects and public-sector entities where private-sector expertise could be invaluable — like in the case of Nandan Nilekani and Aadhaar.



- Similarly, leadership positions in large infrastructure projects could be filled through open competition between civil servants and market talent.
- The recruitment and service rules for such posts have to be clearly defined and the processes must be managed transparently. A credible statutory agency like the Union Public Service Commission should be entrusted with the responsibility of recruitment.
- All this, coupled with competition among both serving bureaucrats and market participants, would help avoid many of the aforementioned pitfalls associated with general lateral entry.
- Such an approach would have to be complemented with liberalised norms that allow civil servants to work outside government — with multilateral agencies, nonprofits and corporations — for short periods. This would engender infusing outside talent into government.

In conclusion

India's Civil services needs internal reforms—such as insulation from political pressure and career paths linked to specialization—and external reforms such as lateral entry. However, lateral entry cannot be a panacea for everything.

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL AUDITS

The recent report of a joint task force on social audit has made unanimous recommendations for strengthening social audit as a systemic solution in law. The supreme court too has expressed its desire to make this system a robust one.

What are social audits?

Social audits refer to *a legally mandated process where potential and existing beneficiaries evaluate the implementation of a programme by comparing official records with ground realities*. Social audits culminate with public hearings, which remain its soul.



The proceedings cannot be scripted and it is a process of redistribution of power based on evidence and fact. These audits were first made statutory in a 2005 Rural Employment Act.

Objectives

- Accurate identification of requirements.
- Prioritization of developmental activities as per requirements.
- Proper utilization of funds.
- Conformity of the developmental activity with the stated goals.
- Quality of service.

Benefits

- Involvement of people in developmental activities ensures that money is spent where it is really needed.
- Reduction in wastage, leakage and corruption.
- Awareness among people.
- Promotes integrity and a sense of community among people.
- Improves the standard of governance.

Need

In the course of a social audit, individuals and communities get empowered and politicised in a way that they experience the practical potential of participatory democracy.

- Since more than 50% of the government's budget goes towards welfare schemes, Social audits serve as a better monitoring tool for these schemes.
- Comptroller and Auditor General of India remarks: "*All over the world, there is a growing perception among the supreme audit institutions that it is important to partner with civil society to ensure the latter's participation in service delivery and public accountability.*"

Losing relevance

- ✓ Social audits have been sidelined because of the lack of support from government machineries, thus not institutionalising social audit

July 9th to July 20th



- ✓ They are not independent from the influence of implementing agencies.
- ✓ Social audit units, including village social audit facilitators, continue to face resistance and intimidation and find it difficult to even access primary records for verification.
- ✓ Lack of any legal proceedings for not following social audit principles.
- ✓ Lack of awareness among the common masses

Social audit is no longer a choice. Along with other transparency and accountability platforms, it is a legal, moral, and democratic necessity. The government can decide to use these interventions and harness peoples' energies in facing the vast challenge of implementation and monitoring.

CATTLE SALE RULES STAYED

Why in news?

The Supreme Court stayed Centre's notification banning the sale of cattle in livestock markets for slaughter and religious sacrifices. The order came after the centre accepted that public outcry and objections from the states regarding impact on livelihoods and the need for tweaking.

What is being questioned?

The centre had, in May 2017, notified the amendments to Prevention of Cruelty to Animals act in the form of rules for Regulation of Livestock Market.

- ✓ The notification had dismayed cattle traders, butchers and beef eaters.
- ✓ Farmers were also hit as they were also barred from selling non-milch and ageing cattle thus being deprived of their traditional incomes.
- ✓ Various states too opposed the notification saying that it would impact the livelihoods of many.

The validity of the rules was challenged in various high courts and the SC. The Madurai bench of Madras HC had stayed the rules

GOVERNMENT E-MARKETPLACE

In the spirit of cooperative federalism, 5 States and a Union Territory (UT) have formally adopted the Centre's initiative called the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).



E-Marketplaces

- **e-marketplace**
An online market, usually B2B, in which buyers and sellers exchange goods or services; the three types of e-marketplaces are private, public, and consortia
- **marketspace**
A marketplace in which sellers and buyers exchange goods and services for money (or for other goods and services), but do so electronically

IS 671: Electronic Commerce
Lecture 2

2-4

About GeM

It aims to ensure that public procurement of goods and services in India worth more than Rs. 5 lakh crore annually is carried out through the online platform to ensure transparency and to eliminate corruption.

- The ultimate aim is to transform the way in which procurement of goods and services is done by the Government Ministries/Departments, PSUs, autonomous bodies etc.
- GeM is a completely paperless, cashless and system driven e-market place that enables procurement of common use goods and services with minimal human interface.

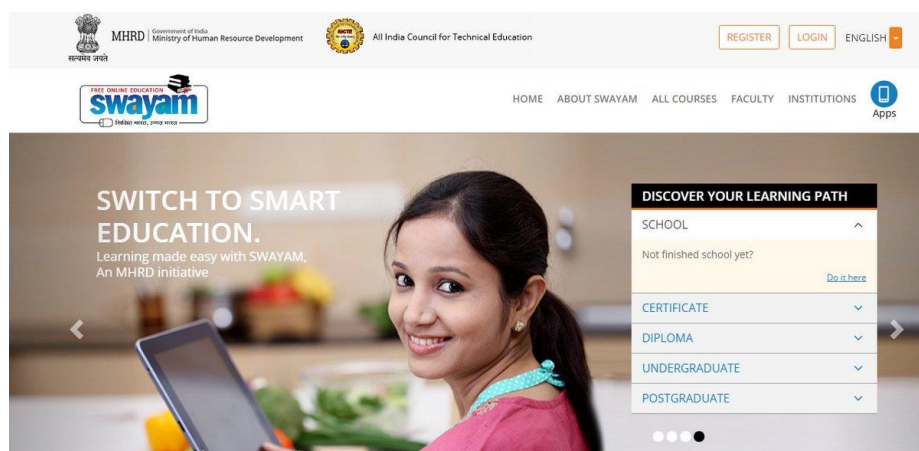
July 9th to July 20th



WELFARE SCHEMES AND DEVELOPMENTAL GROUPS

SWAYAM AT DOORSTEP

President of India has launched a portal called SWAYAM, which brings high quality education to the doorstep and the SWAYAM Prabha which includes 32 DTH channels for telecasting high quality educational content free of charge.



About Swayam

It is an online interactive learning platform that provides, not only video lectures, reading material but also assignments/quizzes which provide credits after completing the assessment system.

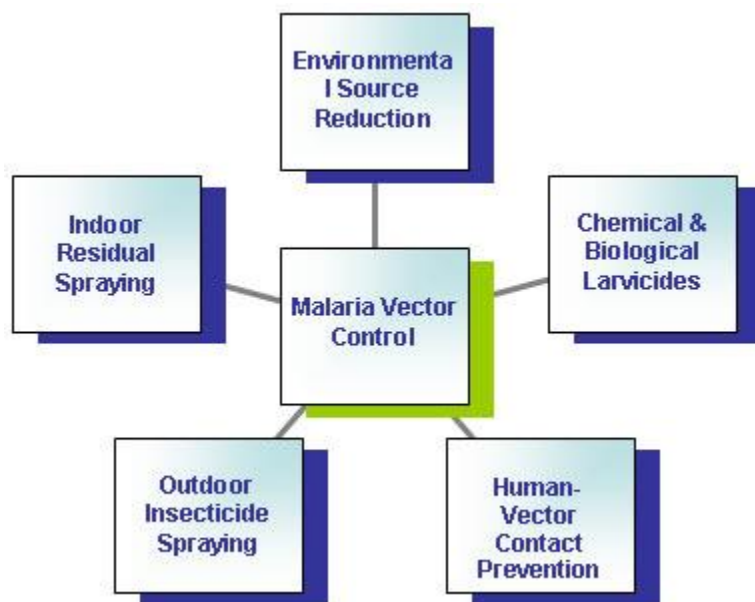
- More than 400 Courses are available on SWAYAM covering all the engineering and non-engineering subjects at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.
- The UGC has let the transfer of credits earned into the academic record.
- Prestigious IITs or IIMs can be accessed, without formally studying there.
- The platform is being delivered by Microsoft.

About Swayam Prabha

The SWAYAM Prabha channels are available for free for anyone who has a set top box

NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MALARIA ELIMINATION

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Malaria Elimination (2017-22) has been launched. The year-wise roadmap for malaria elimination is based on last year's National Framework for Malaria Elimination, which was, in turn, spurred by World Health Organisation's Global Technical Strategy for Malaria, 2016-2030.



How to go about this plan?

The NSP divides the country into four categories, from 0 to 3. Zero, the first category, has 75 districts that have not reported any case of malaria for the last three years.

- Category 1, 2 and 3 have districts with increasing annual parasite incidence (API, or the number of positive slides for the parasite in a year)
- The plan is to eliminate malaria (zero indigenous cases) by 2022 in all Category 1 and 2 districts. The remaining districts are to be brought under a pre-elimination and elimination programme.
- It seeks to achieve universal case detection and treatment services in endemic districts to ensure 100% diagnosis of all suspected cases, and full treatment of all confirmed cases.

July 9th to July 20th



Components:

The plan has four components, based on WHO recommendations:

1. diagnosis and case management
2. surveillance and epidemic response
3. prevention — integrated vector management
4. 'cross-cutting' interventions, which include advocacy, communication, research and development, and other initiatives.

Challenges to implementation

1. Shortage of manpower. According to the Health Ministry, there are only about 40,000 multipurpose health workers (MPWs) against the approximately 80,000 sanctioned posts in the 1,50,000 subcentres in the country.
2. Access to conflict-affected tribal areas, and to areas with a high malaria endemicity and insecticide resistance.

Malaria parasites in India

In India, malaria is caused by the parasites *Plasmodium falciparum* (Pf) and *Plasmodium Vivax* (Pv). Pf is found more in the forest areas, whereas Pv is more common in the plains. The disease is mainly concentrated in the tribal and remote areas of the country. The majority of reporting districts are in the country's eastern and central parts — the largest number of cases are found in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and north-east.

INDIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SASEC ROAD CONNECTIVITY

Why in news?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister gave its approval for upgradation NH-39 in Manipur. The project is being developed with ADB's loan assistance under the South Asian Sub-

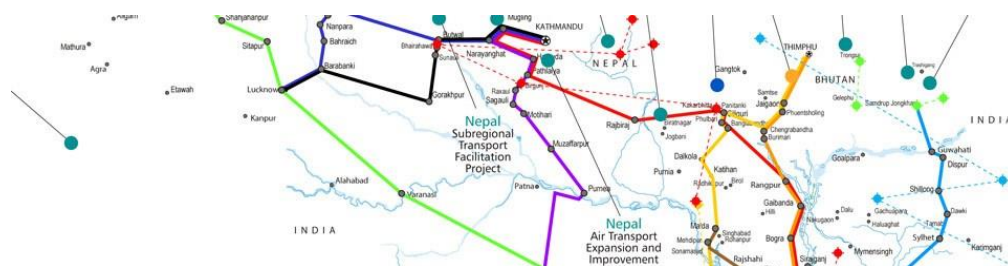
July 9th to July 20th



Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Investment Program.

Location

The project corridor is a part of the Asian Highway No. 01 (AH01) and acts as India's Gateway to the East. Thus trade, commerce and tourism in the region will get a boost.



SASEC

Established in 2001, the SASEC program is a project-based partnership to promote regional prosperity by improving cross-border connectivity, boosting trade among member countries and strengthening regional economic cooperation.

ADB is the secretariat and lead financier of this program in multiple fields → transport, trade facilitation, energy and information and communications technology (ICT).

INDIA-EU: INVESTMENT FACILITATION MECHANISM

The European Union (EU) and India have announced the establishment of an Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM) for EU investments in India.

About IFM

The IFM has been established with *the key objectives of paving the way for identifying and solving problems faced by EU companies and investors with*

regard to their operations in India. The EU Delegation to India and the DIPP will hold regular high level meetings to serve this purpose.

- The IFM will cover new investors as well as those already established in India.
- The IFM is also going to serve as a platform for discussing general suggestions from the point of view of EU companies and investors with regard to ease of doing business in India.

This will include identifying and putting in place solutions to procedural impediments.

RCEP TALKS ON E-COMMERCE

Sixteen Asia Pacific nations, including India, are negotiating on norms on e-commerce as part of mega Free Trade Agreement known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

What the well-off members want?

Many RCEP nations including Australia, Japan and China, are pushing for inclusion of a host of elements for 'Terms Of Reference' for RCEP negotiations concerning e-commerce. They want some binding commitments on liberalising e-commerce.

India's position:

India has been opposing binding norms on opening up the e-commerce sector at the level of RCEP as well as the global level (WTO) talks on grounds including that it (India) is yet to have a comprehensive national policy on the topic.

RCEP

RCEP is proposed between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-→Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the six states with which ASEAN has existing Free Trade Agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).

- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the TPP trade agreement, which includes the United States but excludes China.

It is also believed that such binding norms would harm development by diminishing policy space.

INDIA-ISRAEL: RENEWED RIGOR

After 25 years of diplomatic relations, India and Israel have achieved a lot and there are enthusiastic and passionate discussions on both sides broaden the horizon of achievement.

Political rejuvenation

Indian prime minister's first visit is considered 'groundbreaking' event in the diplomatic world. This is because it was the first visit of an Indian PM after the establishment of full diplomatic ties in 1992, and also because an Israeli PM, Ariel Sharon, had already visited India back in 2003.

Israel's importance to India can be viewed from various prisms.

Trade: Bilateral merchandise trade increased from \$200 million in 1992 to around \$4 billion in 2016, an increase of 2,000% in 25 years. In 1996, India and Israel signed a BIT. However, this was reportedly terminated by India when it unilaterally discontinued 58 BITs recently. For a new BIT to be negotiated, both sides will have to start afresh.

FDI: Cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows from Israel are low, constituting only 0.04% of total FDI inflows to India, yet there is enormous potential for Israeli investment in fields such as renewable energy and water management.

Defence production, which is at the heart of the 'Make in India' campaign, is another area with significant potential for Israeli investment, a move that will help India save billions of dollars it currently spends on importing weapons from Israel.

Arms: Israel is the third largest supplier of arms to India after Russia and the U.S. Investment in defence production will also give a fillip to domestic manufacturing, reduce dependence on bureaucratic state-owned ordnance factories and bring in new technology.

Challenges ahead:

There are challenges given the many fundamental differences Israel and India have on BITs, as outlined in their Model BITs of 2003 and 2016, respectively.

- Israel model allows *Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS)* provision, that allows foreign investors to bring claims against a host state for alleged treaty breaches at international arbitral forums, after 6 months. But the Indian model imposes many procedural and jurisdictional restrictions as also the foreign investor having to litigate in domestic courts for five years before pursuing a claim under international law.
- *MFN provision*: The Israeli model contains a broad most favoured nation (MFN) provision — a cornerstone of non-discrimination in international economic relations — which is missing in the Indian model. The absence of MFN would mean that its businesses would have no remedy under international law.
- *Taxation*: The Indian model excludes taxation altogether from the purview of the BIT. Thus, the foreign investor cannot bring an ISDS claim even if taxes imposed are confiscatory, discriminatory or unfair.

In sum, the Indian position on BITs is very pro-state, offering limited rights and protection to foreign investors. The Israeli position is the opposite. Both sides should work towards having a BIT that reconciles investment protection with a state's right to regulate.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

G-20: HAMBURG ACTION PLAN

2017 G20 summit: Germany's Hamburg city

The summit concluded with the leaders proposing the Hamburg Action Plan.

Details of the action plan

They pledged to move towards achieving joint objectives of attaining a strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. They resolved to take on common global challenges including terrorism, displacement, poverty, hunger and health threats, job creation, climate change, energy security, and inequality including gender inequality, as a basis for sustainable development and stability.

Environment and livelihoods: To build sustainable livelihoods, collective commitment has been endorsed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through increased innovation on sustainable and clean energies and energy efficiency.

- The Leaders also quipped that Paris Agreement is irreversible and reiterated the significance of fulfilling the UNFCCC commitment by developed countries to avail financial resources to assist developing countries in mitigation and adaptation actions.

Trade and globalization: Emphasis has been laid on harnessing the benefits of globalisation, reaffirming the importance of transparency for predictable and mutually beneficial trade relations.

- Harnessing digitalisation to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has also been stressed.
- The leaders underlined to boost employment by improving sustainable global supply chains, which have propelled job creation and balanced economic growth.

Financial architecture: The leaders resolved to structure a resilient global financial system based on agreeable international standards, to support sustainable growth.

G-20

The G20 started in 1999 as a meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.

- It is a premier forum for international economic cooperation and decision-making. It comprises 19 countries plus the European Union.
- G20 represents 85% of global GDP, 80% of international trade, 65% of world's population.

In 2008, the first G20 Leaders' Summit was held, and the group played a key role in responding to the global financial crisis.

July 9th to July 20th



Health: A call was given for safeguard against health crises and strengthening health systems, for which global health is to be kept high on the political agenda and countries have to strive for cooperative action to strengthen health systems worldwide. Special reference was made on combatting Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR), which is a growing threat to public health and economic growth.

CHINA'S FIRST MANNED OVERSEAS BASE

China sent People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel to man its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the strategic Indian Ocean region.

About the base

The decision made by the two countries after friendly negotiations, in common interest of the people from both sides. The base is aimed at ensuring China's performance of missions, such as escorting, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid in Africa and West Asia.

The base will also conduct overseas tasks, including military cooperation, joint exercises, evacuating and protecting overseas Chinese and emergency rescue, as well as jointly maintaining security of international strategic seaways.

US worries

Base at Djibouti is close to Camp Lemonnier, established after 2001 terror attacks, is home to 4,000 personnel.

The base, which is run by the Navy and abuts Djibouti's international airport, is the only permanent U.S. military installation in Africa.

INDIA'S PERFORMANCE ON SDG INDEX

Report: SDG Index and Dashboards Report

Published by: Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung

The SDG index, to assess the performance of countries in terms of achieving the ambitious sustainable development goals (SDGs), has been released for the year 2017.

SDG index pointers:

- Report points at the need to strengthen joint efforts to realise the 17 global goals.
- Among the G7 countries, only Germany and France can be found among the top ten performers.
- India is ranked 116th, behind countries such as Nepal, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and China. Pakistan is ranked 122.
- Many of the richest countries in the world are nowhere near achieving the global policy objectives but also deteriorate the implementation process for poorer countries because of negative spillover effects.
- One of the greatest obstacles to achieving the global goals for high-income countries are poor performers with regards to sustainable consumption and production.

With ideas of ultra-nationalism and protectionism impeding of the implementation of the goals can be observed.

IN THE RACE

The 2017 Sustainable Development Goals Index

Rank	Country	Score
1	Sweden	85.6
2	Denmark	84.2
3	Finland	84
4	Norway	83.9
5	Czech Republic	81.9
6	Germany	81.7
7	Austria	81.4
8	Switzerland	81.2
9	Slovenia	80.5
116	India	58.1

Source: SDG Index and Dashboards Report

The SDGs are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets, for a period of 2015-2030, aimed at resolving global social, economic and environmental problems. SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were adopted in 2000. Aiming to encompass almost every aspect of human life, the main themes of the SDGs are ending poverty, tackling inequality and combating climate change.

UNITED NATIONS PARTNERSHIP FUND

India contributed an additional million dollars to a UN partnership fund launched to support sustainable development projects across the developing world.

India-UN Development Partnership Fund

The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was set up in 2017 as a partnership between India and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).



- *It will be managed by UNOSSC and the fund will support Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world.*
- The fund, launched by External Affairs ministry, prioritises reducing poverty and hunger, improving health, education and equality, and expanding access to clean water and energy.

UNOSSC

UNOSSC, hosted by UNDP since 1974, was established by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and UN system-wide basis. UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance from the General Assembly

ALL ABOUT THE NUCLEAR PROHIBITION TREATY

Why in news?

In July 2017, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which bans and makes it illegal to possess, use, produce, transfer, acquire, stockpile or deploy nuclear weapons.

July 9th to July 20th



It was signed and approved by 122 of the 123 participant nations, representing two-thirds of the nations in the UN. Interestingly, none of the nuclear weapons nations participated.

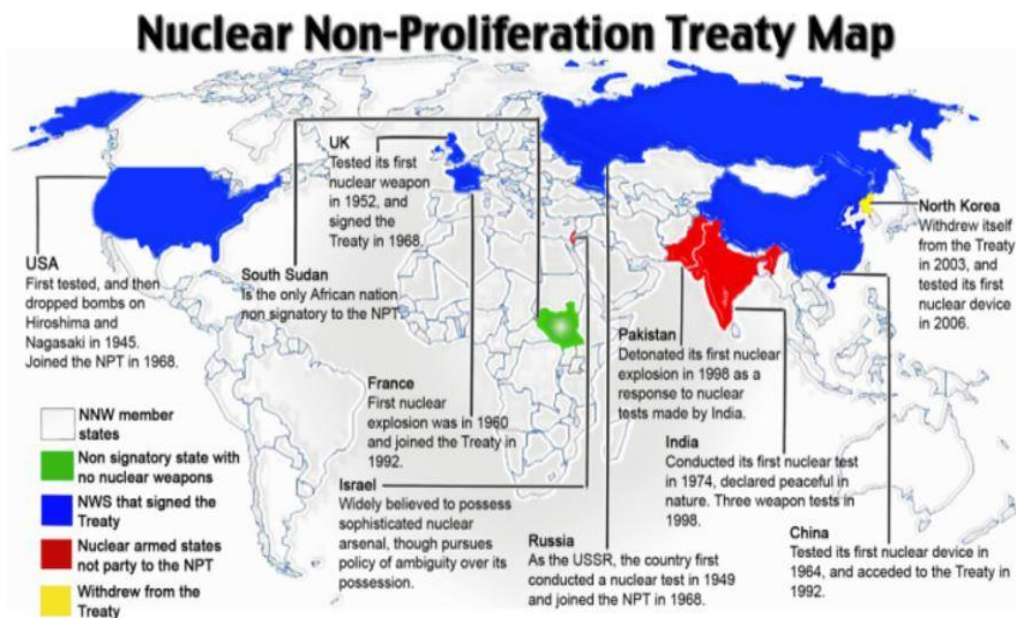
The **Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty (NWPT)** is the most significant multilateral development on nuclear arms control since the adoption of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968.

141 countries joined hands in drafting the treaty in the hope of increasing pressure on nuclear states to take disarmament more seriously.

- None of the 9 nuclear weapons states took part in the negotiations or the vote.
- Japan, the only country to have suffered atomic attacks, in 1945 boycotted the talks as did most NATO countries.

As of today, only 9 countries possess nuclear weapons.

1. United States
2. Russia
3. Britain
4. China
5. France
6. India
7. Pakistan
8. North Korea
9. Israel



World map showing nuclear weapons states (Image by British American Security Information Council)



List of earlier efforts

- a. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) for proscribing atmospheric and underground testing
- b. The Nuclear Suppliers Group set up after India's testing breakout in 1974
- c. Various regional nuclear weapon-free zones that cover the southern hemisphere and extend to a limited extent into the northern hemisphere in Central Asia and Mongolia
- d. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) acts as the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog to ensure compliance with nonproliferation obligations.

Arguments of Nuclear weapon states:

These states contend that the nuclear prohibition treaty will distract attention from other disarmament and nonproliferation initiatives, such as negotiating a fissile material cutoff treaty or ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). They have expressed concern that the a nuclear prohibition treaty could undermine the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – and the extensive safeguard provisions included therein – by giving states the option to choose between the two treaties.

Arguments of Proponent States:

Supporters of the CPNW argue that new treaty will close a “legal gap” that exists regarding nuclear weapons, which are not expressly outlawed by the NPT, even though their use would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict.

Lacunae in the new treaty

- ✓ It does not offer a practical approach on how to prod nuclear weapons states to join it.
- ✓ It contains no mechanism to verify the reduction and abolition of nuclear weapons.
- ✓ It also does not provide a solution to the risk of nuclear weapons being used by accident or miscalculation, or by terrorists.

Need for total ban

Disarmament and deterrence are usually advocated by the nuclear weapons states. But, the failure of this policy is never discussed. If a nuclear-armed nation was attacked, either by intention or error, the expected response would be retaliation with a bevy of nuclear weapons and these weapons are indiscriminate and would invariably kill millions. The only fail-safe way to prevent a catastrophe is to eliminate the existence of nuclear weapons.

Ethically right

Nuclear weapons obliterate the distinction between combatants and civilians that is central to every moral code in all cultures and civilizations. Most countries have chosen nuclear abstinence because people overwhelmingly abhor the bomb as deeply immoral.

Its primary intended deterrent effect relies on the threat to kill millions of innocent civilians.

The preamble of the NWPT explicitly acknowledges “*the ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament*” and describes a nuclear weapon-free world as “*a global public good of the highest order, serving both national and collective security interests.*”

The new treaty challenges the MYTHS of NPT

- Firstly, that nuclear weapons are an entitlement bestowed upon only a handful of countries that had tested a nuclear weapon before the treaty entered into force in 1970.
- Second, that the security of most of the world’s nations—indeed world order itself—is based on the possession of or protection by nuclear weapons.
- Third, that nuclear weapons cannot be banned and nuclear disarmament was only possible as part of a process of “general and complete disarmament”, implying that nuclear weapons might be the last to be disarmed.

A convention prohibiting nuclear weapons will serve as a crucial impetus for fulfilling the disarmament obligations of the NPT. Its adoption will generate decisive momentum for nuclear weapons abolition.

July 9th to July 20th



The fact that the majority of the 193 UN members voted for the treaty, including nearly a third of the Group of Twenty, nearly three-fourths of the Non-Aligned, and old NPT members, reflects that most countries do not depend on nuclear weapons for their security. In fact, the entire southern hemisphere is free of nuclear weapons. India and other nuclear weapon states would do well to track its progress—the future of their nuclear arsenals might depend on it.

So long as arsenals of nuclear weapons continue to exist on our planet, we will be forced to live with the threats like the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis may again arise. In fact, these weapons must be treated as a liability, not as assets

GENERAL STUDIES-3

INDIAN ECONOMY

INDIA TO FORAY INTO GLOBAL FOREX COMMITTEE

India will soon get a seat on the Global Foreign Exchange Committee (GFXC)

What is GFXC?

It is a newly-constituted forum of central bankers and private sector experts with the objective to promote a robust and transparent forex market.

It replaces a similar informal organisation, with a more formal organisation with expanded membership.

The committee has been set up under the guidance of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), an international financial organisation owned by 60 member central banks, representing countries from around the world.

IBBI CAN INVESTIGATE SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), which is implementing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), has come up with rules for inspection and investigation of service providers registered with it without intimating them or with a 10 day notice.

Who are these service providers?

Insolvency professional agencies, professionals, entities and information utilities are considered as service providers under the Code.

Powers of investigating authority

Among others, the investigating authority has powers to seize records of the service provider being probed through a court order. The investigating authority can be one officer or a team of officers of the IBBI.

IBC

The Code, which provides for a market-determined and time-bound resolution of insolvency proceedings, became operational in December 2016. It offers a market determined, time bound mechanism for orderly resolution of insolvency, wherever possible, and orderly exit, wherever required.

Framework

The Code envisages an ecosystem comprising National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT), Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT), Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Board), Information Utilities (IUs), Insolvency Professionals (IPs), Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPAs) and Insolvency Professional Entities (IPes) for implementation of the Code.

AGRICULTURE AND CROPPING PATTERNS

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING AND THE SECTOR'S DISTRESS

With agrarian distress looming large, many states have been demanding relief. This might as well derail the carefully crafted budgetary discipline.

Why do we have a distress?

- ✓ Indebtedness and prolonged low profitability
- ✓ Ineffective support prices
- ✓ Lack of procurement by para-statal agencies
- ✓ Competition in labour
- ✓ Input prices that are increasingly higher
- ✓ Lack of options other than selling in opaque markets dominated by organised traders



In essence, it is the result of the friction between inefficient markets for agri-output and efficient markets for their inputs.

What is the APMC model doing?

The Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) model was supposed to provide an efficient solution, but has instead fuelled the distress, leading to a clamour for amendment of state APMC Acts. Since 1991, with liberalisation, the industrial sector can buy from and sell to anyone in the world, but farmers in many states must buy and sell only in the government-designated APMC market-yards, which is crowded with exploitative agents.

e-NAM can be a solution

The initiative aims at breaking the traders' nexus.

- It can be a panacea for all anomalies including fragmented markets, restrictions on movement of farm commodities, varying state taxes, etc.
- Transparent and robust electronic physical markets, backed by greater standardisation and quality awareness will stimulate PPP for standardised infrastructure, assets, warehousing & logistics, etc.
- Additionally, farmers can access buyers from across states and can offer prices after a complete review.
- The principle of 'One Trader One License' will enable growth of secondary trading among traders, throwing light on the 'price discovery' process as it attracts participation.
- Bulk-buyers like large retailers, processors or exporters, will save on costs of intermediation buying through eNAM if supported by a robust logistics network and a well-developed quality testing mechanism.

e-NAM

It is an online platform with a physical market or mandi at the backend. NAM is not a parallel marketing structure but rather an instrument to create a national network of physical mandis which can be accessed online. It seeks to leverage the physical infrastructure of mandis through an online trading portal, enabling buyers situated even outside the state to participate in trading at the local level.



Suggestions

- ✓ e-NAM, which is a spot market, can be linked with derivative markets. This would help farmers realize higher prices. With exchange specific standards delineated, farmers will produce and segregate higher quality products.
- ✓ The best practices and their demonstrable benefits of the futures market can be taken to e-NAM. As exchanges work to expand their product portfolio and there are common commodities being traded on both the platforms, integration of players of both ecosystems can be considered by permitting traders, aggregators, FPOs, and hedgers to register under a common license.
- ✓ Price disseminated through mobile phones could serve as a reliable reference price for farmers.
- ✓ Allowing warehouse receipts, generated by the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority, to be traded and delivered in both e-NAM and commodity derivative exchanges will go a long way in integrating both the markets, besides contributing to the healthy development of warehousing infrastructure.
- ✓ Financial institutions that may lend against such warehouse receipts should be encouraged

In conclusion

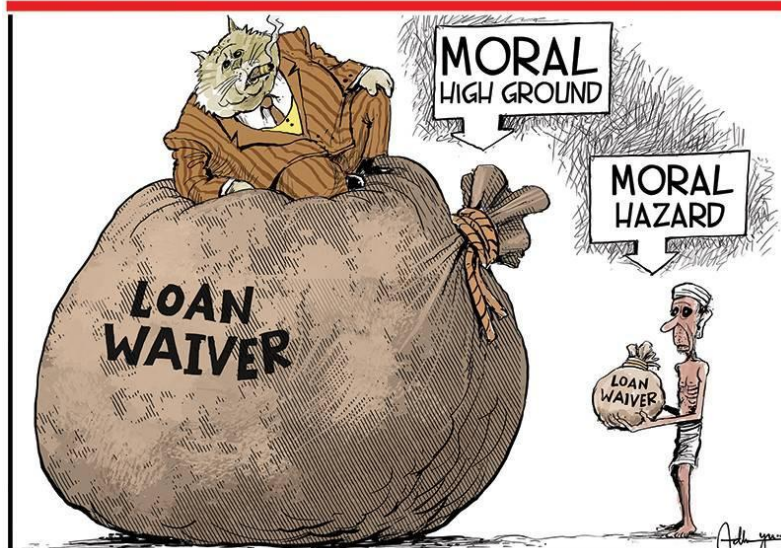
Indian agriculture needs robust and transparent institutions, price-based signals to the stakeholders. A lot in terms of institutional (markets and finance) connectivity, infrastructure and logistics, quality and standards would have to be looked into, if e-NAM were to deliver long-term benefits. Although e-NAM's implementation has been slow, owing to some operational challenges, the farmer needs access to competitive market channels and e-NAM is a major step in this direction.

A SPATE OF LOAN WAIVERS ACROSS STATES: GOOD OR BAD?

To avail immediate relief to distressed farmers, states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka have responded by rolling out farm loan waiver schemes. The demand for such measures is spread to other States too. However, the success of the loan waiver lies on the extent to which the benefits reach the needy farmers.

LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU



Inherent weaknesses of such schemes

- It covers only a fraction of farmers and most of the beneficiaries are well off.
- Loan waiving excludes agricultural labourers who are even weaker than cultivators in bearing the consequences of economic distress.
- It severely erodes the credit culture, with dire long-run consequences to the banking business.
- The scheme is prone to serious exclusion and inclusion errors, as evidenced by the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) findings in the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008.
- These Schemes have serious implications for other developmental expenditure, having a much larger multiplier effect on the economy.

Corrective measures

- ✓ Proper identification methodology which is inclusive to identify the vulnerable farmers based on certain criteria.
- ✓ As a sustainable solution, efforts have to be made to enhance non-farm income apart from raising income from agricultural activities.
- ✓ Improved technology, expansion of irrigation coverage, and crop diversification towards high-value crops are appropriate measures for raising productivity and farmers' income.
- ✓ Removal of old regulations and restrictions on agriculture to enable creation of a liberalised environment for investment, trading and marketing. This would make farming more remunerative.
- ✓ States have to undertake long-pending reforms in the agriculture sector with urgency, which would serve as a long lasting solution.

It appears that loan waiving can provide only a short-term relief to a limited section of farmers. There is no concrete evidence on reduction in agrarian distress following the first spell of all-India farm loan waiver in 2008. In the longer run, strengthening the repayment capacity of the farmers by improving and stabilising their income is the only way to keep them out of distress.

INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

CENTRE'S GRANT TO NIIF

The Department of Economic Affairs has signed an agreement with the NIIF for a ₹20,000 crore contribution to the Fund.

About NIIF

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) is a fund created by the Government of India for enhancing infrastructure financing in the country. This is different from the National Investment Fund.

NIIF was proposed to be set up as a Trust, to raise debt to invest in the equity of infrastructure finance companies such as Indian Rail Finance Corporation (IRFC) and National Housing Bank (NHB). The idea is that



these infrastructure finance companies can then leverage this extra equity, manifold. In that sense, NIIF is a banker of the banker of the banker.

NIIF is envisaged as a fund of funds with the ability to make direct investments as required. As a fund of fund it may invest in other SEBI registered funds.

Its creation was announced in the Union Budget 2015-16. NIIF got registered with SEBI as Category II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)

Objective

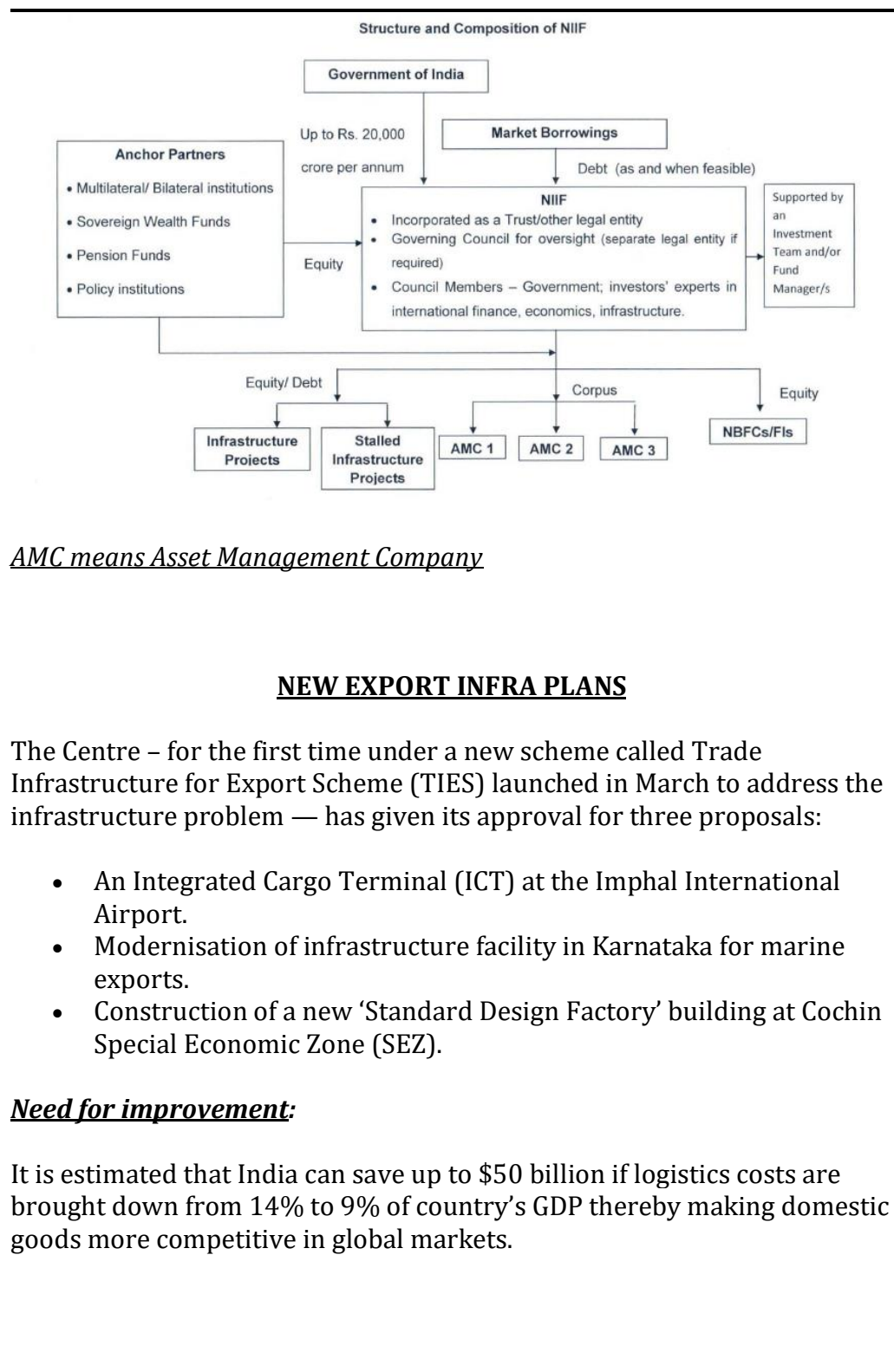
The objective of NIIF would be to maximize economic impact mainly through infrastructure development in commercially viable projects, both greenfield and brownfield, including stalled projects. It could also consider other nationally important projects, for example, in manufacturing, if commercially viable.

Functions of NIIF

The functions of NIIF are as follows:

1. Fund raising through suitable instruments including off-shore credit enhanced bonds, and attracting anchor investors to participate as partners in NIIF;
2. Servicing of the investors of NIIF.
3. Considering and approving candidate companies/institutions/projects (including state entities) for investments and periodic monitoring of investments.
4. Investing in the corpus created by Asset Management Companies (AMCs) for investing in private equity.
5. Preparing a shelf of infrastructure projects and providing advisory services.

July 9th to July 20th



TIES

The Scheme is focussed on addressing the needs of the exporters. The scheme replaces a centrally sponsored scheme — Assistance to States for creating Infrastructure for the Development and growth of Exports (ASIDE).

- The objective of the TIES is to enhance export competitiveness by bridging gaps in export infrastructure, creating focused export infrastructure and first-mile and last-mile connectivity.
- The Central and State Agencies, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ Authorities and Apex Trade Bodies recognised under the EXIM policy of Government of India are eligible for financial support under this scheme.

The scheme would provide assistance for setting up and up-gradation of infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, dry ports, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports/airports cargo terminuses.

INVESTMENT POTENTIAL AMONGST STATES

Gujarat retained the top position amongst states and UTs with most investment potential

The report is based on State Investment Potential Index (SIPI 2017), prepared by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), which measures competitiveness in business and their investment climate.

- Gujarat is followed by Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Telangana.

While Gujarat topped in economic climate and perceptions, Delhi ranked one in infrastructure. While Tamil Nadu topped the chart in labor issues, Madhya Pradesh ranked one in land pillar.

July 9th to July 20th



BHARATNET DEADLINE EXTENDED

Even as the GoI approved the second phase of the BharatNet project, which forms the backbone for the government's Digital India initiative, the deadline for project has been pushed to March 2019.

It had been able to lay optical fibre in nearly one-lakh GPs, however, only about 22,000 GPs have been provided Internet connectivity due to equipment procurement issues. The second phase aims at covering the remaining 1.50 lakh GPS.

BharatNet project:

Bharat Net seeks to connect all of India's households, particularly in rural areas, through broadband by 2017, forming the backbone of the government's ambitious Digital India programme. It proposes broadband connectivity to households under village panchayats and even to government institutions at district level. The project is being funded through the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

IWAI ALLOWED TO ISSUE BONDS

The Union Cabinet has given its nod to Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) for raising ₹660 crore in bonds for extra budgetary resources in 2017-18.

The proceeds from the bonds will be utilised by IWAI for development and maintenance of National Waterways (NWs) under National Waterways Act, 2016.

IWAI:

Statutory authority in charge of the waterways in India.

Headquarters: Noida, UP.

The National Waterways Act, 2016 merges 5 existing Acts which have declared the 5 National Waterways and proposes 106 additional National

July 9th to July 20th



Waterways. The Act came into force in 2016, as also provided for setting up IWAI.

Objective: To build the necessary infrastructure in these waterways, surveying the economic feasibility of new projects and also administration.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SARASWATI: SUPERCLUSTER OF GALAXIES

Discovered by: A group of scientists from IUCAA (Pune), IISER (Pune), NIT Jamshedpur and Newman College (Thodapuzha)

The previously unknown 'supercluster' of galaxies, some four billion light years away from Earth, has been named Saraswati.

Superclusters are a group of clusters of galaxies, are the largest structures of stars, planets and other heavenly bodies in the universe, and very few of them are known. A cluster could roughly have galaxies ranging from 1000 to 10,000. A supercluster could have clusters ranging from 40 to 43.

How does the Saraswati supercluster compare with the Milky Way?

The newly discovered Saraswati supercluster is 600 million light years across. The Milky Way is 150,000 light years across.

Where does the supercluster Saraswati lie in the sky?

The supercluster Saraswati lies in the Stripe 82 of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. It is about 4000 million light years away from us. It is in the constellation of Pisces.

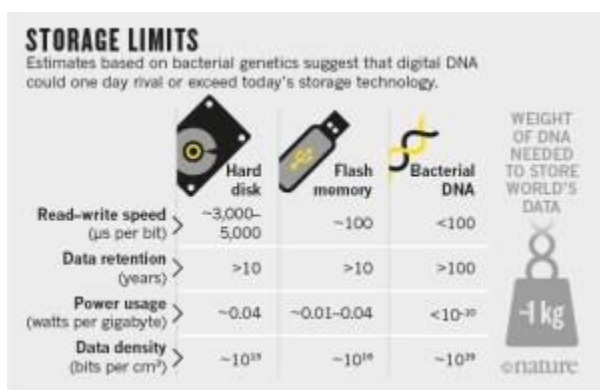
What is "Stripe 82 region of SDSS"?

SDSS stands for the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. This is an ambitious plan to make a digital 3D map of the universe. Started in 2000, it has, over eight years, mapped more than a quarter of the sky. It has mapped nearly

930,000 galaxies. The SDSS has found nearly 50 million galaxies so far. The central stripe is known as Stripe 82.

INCREASING THE STORAGE EFFICIENCY WITH DNA

Scientists have successfully encoded a movie in the DNA of a living cell, where it can be retrieved at will and multiplied indefinitely as the host divides and grows. It signifies the genome's potential as a vast storage device.



How was the movie encoded in the cell?

- The geneticists sequenced DNA molecules that represented the entirety of the film. Then they used a powerful new gene editing technique, Crispr, to slip this sequence into the genome of a common gut bacteria, E. coli.
- Despite the modification, the bacteria thrived and multiplied. The film stored in the genome was preserved intact with each new generation of progeny.

CRISPR

Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats allows scientists to selectively edit genome parts and replace them with new DNA stretches.

- Cas9 is an enzyme that can edit DNA, allowing the alteration of genetic patterns by genome modification.
- CRISPR is a collection of DNA sequences that direct Cas9 where to cut and paste.

GONORRHOEA TREATMENT NEEDS NEW DRUGS

Gonorrhea has, over the years, become harder and sometimes even impossible to treat with the existing line of antibiotics, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Therefore, an alarm has been sounded to develop a new drug, given the multi drug resistance (MDR) it has developed.

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea, also referred to as “the clap”, is a disease caused by bacteria. It can cause painful pelvic inflammation in women, and infertility in both genders. In extreme cases, the bacteria can spread in the blood to cause life-threatening infections in other parts of the body. Symptoms of infection include painful urination and abnormal discharge, but many will experience no symptoms at all.

How bacteria become resistant?

Bacteria can become resistant to drugs when people take incorrect doses of antibiotics. Resistant strains can also be contracted directly from animals, water and air, or other people. When the most common antibiotics fail to work, more expensive types must be tried, resulting in longer illness and treatment.

SVAROP: A COMMITTEE ON PANCHGAVYA

A 19-member panel has been set up to carry out scientifically validated research on cow derivatives called panchgavya — the concoction of cow dung, cow urine, milk, curd and ghee — in various spheres such as nutrition, health and agriculture.

SVAROP

The project *SVAROP*, which stands for *Scientific Validation and Research on Panchagavya*, and says it is a “national programme” that’s being conducted



July 9th to July 20th



by the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Ministry of Science and Technology in collaboration with IIT-Delhi.

ENVIRONMENT

NGT'S PROHIBITION NEAR GANGA BANKS

The edge of the Ganga(100m) between Haridwar and Unnao has been declared a 'No Development Zone,' with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently prohibiting dumping of waste within 500 metres of the river. An environment compensation of Rs. 50,000 will be imposed on anyone dumping waste in the river.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

NGT has been established under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

- The tribunal deals with matters relating to the enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property.
- The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- The Tribunal's dedicated jurisdiction will help reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts.
- The Tribunal is mandated to disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

Members:

- Sanctioned strength: currently, 10 expert members and 10 judicial members (although the act allows for up to 20 of each).
- Chairman: is the administrative head of the tribunal, also serves as a judicial member and is required to be a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court or a judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- Selection: Members are chosen by a selection committee (headed by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court of India) that reviews their applications and conducts interviews.

Other directions

- ✓ The Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments should formulate guidelines for religious activities on the ghats of the Ganga and its tributaries.
- ✓ Authorities should complete sewage treatment plant projects and cleaning of drains, within two years.
- ✓ The court also appointed a supervisory committee to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its verdict. The committee is to submit reports at regular intervals.

THE THREAT OF PLASTIC

The use of plastics has increased substantially since 1960s. Though, various regulations are in place to curb the overuse of plastics, hardly anything has changed on the ground.

Threats of overuse

Environmental threats: Pollute the environment, especially soil and water, as they take about 200 years to decompose naturally.

Food chain: They have become a part of the diet

Microbeads: Microbeads have emerged as a new form of threat. First patented in 1972 for use in cleansers, microbeads began to replace natural material like ground almonds, oatmeal and sea salt in the area of cosmetics. Many cosmetics and toiletry products — ranging from facewashes to toothpastes — use it today. Their abrasive nature lends itself to use in industries such as petroleum, textiles, printing and automobile. BIS has classified them as unsafe for consumer products.

Solutions

People's participation is of utmost importance, alongside the government should take measures to strengthen the recycling. People should make it a habit to sort waste so that waste management facilities and businesses can easily separate the recyclable waste to turn them into resources again

SECURITY CHALLENGES

A REJIG IN INTERNAL SECURITY NEEDED

The scale of the internal security challenge is truly massive. Given the vast expanse of our nation, with the growing intensity and frequency of security ‘triggers’ and the asymmetrical force aspect, a multi-pronged approach to sustain and accelerate improvements in the security environment is quintessential. A federal system with multi and regional party system also throws open the challenge of centre and state co-ordination.

Given the constraints, successive governments face a formidable task in identifying and containing security threats. The internal security situation of India has not shown a marked improvement over the years. The growing number of violent incidents signal the need for seminal changes in India’s approach to its security mechanism.

Reforms needed

Codification of an internal security doctrine with long-term policy and a strategic vision to tackle the Maoist insurgency.

An institutional response with proper mechanisms on the lines of The National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), which stands liquidated.

Police reforms are of urgent need, which continue to gather dust, despite Supreme Court giving historic directions in 2006. States have been indifferent to the suggested reforms. The prime minister’s concept of a SMART police could never take off as well.

A new formula of SAMADHAN has been evolved to tackle the Naxalites problem

- ✓ S → smart leadership
- ✓ A → aggressive strategy
- ✓ M → motivation and training
- ✓ A → actionable intelligence
- ✓ D → dashboard-based key performance indicators
- ✓ H → harnessing technology
- ✓ A → action plan for each theatre



- ✓ N → no access to financing.

However, a very comprehensive strategy has to be evolved in each of the above mentioned areas as the naxal problem is way too complex.

Collaboration: All successful human and organizational initiatives need widely accepted statement of intent and direction.

- ✓ States have to be taken into confidence while framing these.
- ✓ The specific roles of agencies are clear, but the policy would need to lay stress on the collaborative process between agencies.
- ✓ Annual and multiyear tactical plans must be in consonance with the in broad intent and direction

Invest in people and infrastructure: Large investments are to be earmarked and deployed in initiatives like the Police, force modernization and mega city policing. Trained and motivated personnel can provide the winning edge

Continuation in policy related to personnel and procurement : Typical tenures of service in a post are 2-3 years for security officers. While this rotation is desired, it has a down side leading to choppiness in initiatives. In equipment procurement it can result in mismatched pieces of equipment and technology that do not form part of a holistic system.

Communication and seamless exchange: In a security framework that is diffracted across multiple operational and intelligence agencies, information sharing, rapid and frequent communications and collaborative planning, assume great importance.

- ✓ Roles, responsibilities and areas of operation for various agencies are clearly demarcated; yet the challenge lies in operating in a unified coordinated manner.
- ✓ The current working of the Multi Agency centre and State Multi Agency centres need to be widened to aid systemic information collation and dissemination.
- ✓ Specifically the sharing of actionable intelligence in real time – upwards and laterally – would make quantum difference to event outcomes.

July 9th to July 20th



Let community be a part: Community outreach and involvement needs to be expanded and accelerated. Citizen groups and Focused attention groups can be a great force multiplier and help build strong alignments with the citizenry who are a major stakeholder in the security process. In the far flung regions which have seen limited economic development and are also hot spots for rebel groups, this gains greater significance.

Technology: The two new frontiers – cyber and space, bring new challenges and the old tools will not suffice to cope with them. Adoption of new technologies to combat the newer threats, with trained personnel in these technologies is needed.

Conclusive statements:

India now stands at an inflexion point where it can take quantum steps to further improve and strengthen its internal security mechanisms.

MALABAR 2017

It is a Naval exercise amongst the navies of India, US and the Japan

- ✓ It is aimed at achieving deeper military ties between the three nations. It is the 21st edition of the Malabar exercise.
- ✓ It is the fourth consecutive year Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force (MSDF) has taken part in the Malabar Exercise, conducted annually by the US and India in the Bay of Bengal since 1992.

INDIA DOES WELL ON CYBERSECURITY

India is ranked 23rd on the 2nd Global Cybersecurity Index (CGI).

Index by: The UN telecommunications agency, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Table 5.1: Top ten most committed countries, GCI (normalized score)

Country	GCI Score	Legal	Technical	Organizational	Capacity Building	Cooperation
Singapore	0.92	0.95	0.96	0.88	0.97	0.87
United States	0.91	1	0.96	0.92	1	0.73
Malaysia	0.89	0.87	0.96	0.77	1	0.87
Oman	0.87	0.98	0.82	0.85	0.95	0.75
Estonia	0.84	0.99	0.82	0.85	0.94	0.64
Mauritius	0.82	0.85	0.96	0.74	0.91	0.70
Australia	0.82	0.94	0.96	0.86	0.94	0.44
Georgia	0.81	0.91	0.77	0.82	0.90	0.70
France	0.81	0.94	0.96	0.60	1	0.61
Canada	0.81	0.94	0.93	0.71	0.82	0.70

Details:

- ✓ The Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative to measure the commitment of countries to combat cybercrime. Cybersecurity has a wide field of application that cuts across many industries and sectors: Legal Measures, Technical Measures, Organizational Measures, Capacity Building and Cooperation.
- ✓ The report advocates for encouraging governments to consider national policies that take into account cybersecurity and encourage private citizens to make smart decisions online.
- ✓ India's position, though appreciable, should not make the policy makers to become complacent. The findings show that there is "space for further improvement in cooperation" at all levels