

NEWS ALERT

AUGUST 15-21, 2022



LIBRARY
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
NEW DELHI

News Alert is a weekly service offered by the Library, Indian Institute of Public Administration. It contains news items on topical aspects pertaining to Public Administration and allied areas of governance. The service is meant for the IIPA faculty, APPPA participants and staff members only.

COMPILED BY
NARENDRA KUMAR



**Indian Institute of Public Administration I.P. Estate,
Ring Road, New Delhi-110002**

LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

ASIAN AGE

BUSINESS LINE

DECCAN HERALD

ECONOMIC TIMES

HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

MINT

PIONEER

PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

TIMES OF INDIA

TRIBUNE

CONTENTS

AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTASAV	5-10
CASTE SYSTEM	11-13
CLIMATE CHANGE	14-16
CYBER SECURITY	17-19
DEMOCRACY	20-21
ECONOMY	22-23
EDUCATION	24-26
ENVIRONMENT	27-28
FOOD SECURITY	29-30
FOREIGN POLICY	31-32
GOVERNANCE	33-40
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	41
LAW	42-43
POLICY	44-45
POLITICS	46-47
POLLUTION	48
PRIVATISATION	49-50
RURAL ECONOMY	51-52
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	53-55
SOCIAL SECURITY	56-58
TERRORISM	59-60

AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTASAV



TELEGRAPH,AUG19,2022

Words of wisdom

Narendra Modi has unveiled a new vision

Swapan Dasgupta It is a commentary on the low esteem with which politicians are held that the articulation of what is sometimes referred to as the ‘vision thing’ has faded from our list of expectations. Politicians, not least those enjoying offices of State secured through a popular mandate, are blessed with popular expectations that mainly extend to the realms of good governance and personal integrity. Unfortunately, over the years, this has not extended to something more enduring. Today’s leaders are increasingly seen as birds of passage, occupying a temporary space and then departing with not even a footprint on the snow, barring their acts of institutional devastation.

This wasn’t always so. What marked the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi from others wasn’t merely his mass following — many others had equal, if not more popular, adulation — but his reputation as a moral beacon. He combined the role of a political leader — and there is no doubt that he was quite accomplished in this game — with that of a religious guide, a sphere where his teachings were less adhered to but nevertheless respected. The religious idiom was less apparent in the public lives of his contemporaries, such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Subhas Chandra Bose, V.D. Savarkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, to name just a few of the pre-Independence stalwarts. However, such was the nature of the swaraj project that galvanised the entire Indian subcontinent that politics invariably

meant much more than plotting the overthrow of the British raj. It also involved painting, however sketchily, a picture of the good life that would follow the attainment of self-rule. Sri Aurobindo — one of the most profound thinkers of the preceding century — didn't feel that the reflection of a blueprint of the future involved was possible with the rigours of routine political activism. Consequently, he abandoned the political struggle and retreated to Pondicherry for a life of reflection. The others tried to blend politics with a view of the future but ended up focussing disproportionately on activism.

This tradition of reflection which was a hallmark of the freedom struggle persisted in the immediate aftermath of Independence. Nehru, much more than others, was mindful of the fact that it was important to chart a future course for a country that had experienced the loss of sovereignty for at least 200 years, if not since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. It isn't that others didn't have their own ideas of a future India. What marked Nehru from the others was that he, and only he, enjoyed complete political authority. This gave him the necessary space and the acceptability to take the necessary steps — often decisive and more often tentative — to create an intellectual consensus over the future course for India. The four pillars of that unstated consensus — democracy, socialism, secularism and non-alignment — weren't debated either in Parliament or in the hustings. They were presented to India either as fragments in speeches or, at best, in the Five Year Plans. Yet, by default, these ideas were elevated to the realms of India's national philosophy. Nehru was accorded the de facto status of being the only leader who had both the right and the authority to set out India's future trajectory. It is not that India lacked others in the political arena who had different ideas. In writing the history of post-1947 India, alternative visions articulated by, among others, Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, M.N. Roy, Deendayal Upadhyaya and C. Rajagopalachari must find place. However, they were less heard and less accepted because Nehru had the political authority and they didn't.

It is a tragedy that after Nehru, most of India's prime ministers fell back on the mundane, if not the banal. Indira Gandhi's Independence Day speeches from the Red Fort were replete with concerns over inflation and shortages. But since these were recurrent, there are grounds to believe that there were no serious attempts to discover alternative approaches. Rajiv Gandhi, to his credit, realised that the consensus forged by his grandfather had run out of steam. He had the desire to refashion India into the 21st century. Unfortunately, his modernisation plans weren't ever backed by the necessary intellectual rigour and remained piecemeal. After he lost the 1989, India entered the 25-year phase of coalition governments where instead of vision there was cacophony, accompanied by backroom deals. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was one of the most accomplished orators of his day. Yet, his prepared texts delivered listlessly on August 15 reflected the political uncertainties and confusion of the times. Had Vajpayee discarded caution, put aside his prepared speech, avoided the dhobi list of well-intentioned schemes and spoken from his heart about the India that was confronting the 21st century, the country may well have been spared the wasted decade that came with two terms of the equally well-intentioned Manmohan Singh.

It is in this context that the speech from the Red Fort to mark the Amrit Mahotsav by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was such a breath of fresh air. Mindful of the exceptional importance of the occasion, Modi spoke from his heart, not about the welfare schemes that deliver the incremental vote in the elections but about the direction India must take in the coming 25 years. First, he envisaged an India that would put an end to shoddiness and

mediocrity and emerge as a developed nation with an indigenous capacity that will be the envy of the world. In the process, he performed the last rites of Nehruvian socialism built on inefficiency, shortages and shoddiness. Secondly, he addressed the real meaning of freedom and called for an end to centuries of mental servitude, what some would call dhimmitude. India's national identity would be its very own. Finally, he called for a new path based on zero corruption and zero entitlement based on family connections. These had hitherto been hallmarks of India and he sought to relegate them to the dustbins of history.

This was more than a routine Independence Day speech. In effect, Modi unveiled the contours of a new nationalist consensus.

TRIBUNE, AUG18, 2022

Goal of developed India

Modi envisions strategy for 25 years

ON the historic occasion of India completing 75 years of freedom from colonial rule, Prime Minister Modi, in his Independence Day speech, laid out the path envisaged by him to take the country ahead in its march towards progress. There is much that remains to be done to fulfill the dream of the freedom fighters and a country envisioned by our forefathers, as laid out in the Constitution. Ambitiously aiming for a developed status for India by its centenary year of independence, he listed some key goals. Filtering out the jingoism from his utterances — that is by now predictably a tom-tomming of his government's schemes and a strong bias against the regimes from 1947 to 2014 — an outline of the future strategy is visible. Not surprisingly, it rides majorly on the thrust of economic and education empowerment through the 'Make-in-India' initiative and the 'New Education Policy', respectively. Fuelling them would be the new-age buzzwords of technology and digitisation.

To achieve this end, the PM has rightly sought the helping hand of our demographic dividend: the youth, including from smaller towns and villages. After all, with 66 per cent of the population below the age of 35, India has the advantage of being home to the largest youth population in the world. The 'paanch pran' that he enumerates for the citizens are geared towards a society collectively aspiring to bring about change. The pledges include working for a developed India, abolishing slavery, taking pride in heritage and adopting unity and a sense of duty. While these are commendable, a lot remains to be set right before the ground is conducive to fomenting such a spirit of unity in the increasingly polarised cultural and socio-economic set-up.

Significantly, in the bid to maximise the reaping of this large productive pool of people, Modi's calculations foresee a critical role for women. This is a heart warming. For, it is an acknowledgement of the fact that even 75 years after the right to equality was given to the fair sex, it continues to be treated unfairly, with the society failing to unshackle itself from misogynist and patriarchal tendencies. At the same time, it is pregnant with the promise of opportunities on equal terms for the women in every field.

PIONEER, AUG 20, 2022

INDIA@2047 MUST WEED OUT CORRUPTION

Pramod Pathak

There is a need for an overhaul of governance

There is no limit to what a man can do if he does not care who gets the credit: this famous quote was written on a plaque that US President Ronald Regan kept on his desk. Something similar needs to happen here.

Leaders may come and go, but the country moves on. And the credit for this goes to all those people, leaders and all, in the last 75 years who saw to it that India keeps on marching. As we enter the 76th year of independence, we need to look forward to the next milestone. Where next? And the Prime Minister has pointed that out. India@100 needs to be a developed country.

From an underdeveloped country 75 years ago to a developing one has been a long and challenging journey. That a member of the third world with a poor and colonial past can think of getting the developed tag is no small deal. More so, because we proved many prophets of doom wrong. But we still have a long way to go. We cannot just sit on the laurels.

Two important questions, then, arise. Where do we go from here? And how do we reach there? The first question has already been dealt with in the Independence Day speech of the Prime Minister who has set a target for the hundredth year. But goal setting is not enough. How do we get there? This calls for a comprehensive and serious SWOT analysis. Our strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities need to be carefully thought over. In a typical management jargon, this requires a detailed environmental appraisal and an objective status report. If we are honest enough, the past 75 years have been a mixed bag. We succeeded on some counts and floundered on others.

Those on which we failed will have to be addressed in real earnest. The reason being that most of these are persisting ever since we got freedom. Lest we forget, in one of his popular speeches, Jawaharlal Nehru had talked about hoarders and black marketeers, emphasizing the need to hang them from the nearest lamp post. Alas, their tribe has grown, both in numbers and variety. Despite prime minister after prime minister raising concern over corruption, much does not seem to have been achieved.

Rajiv Gandhi in his famous Congress centenary speech at Bombay in 1985 expressed his anguish at the 'fence eating the crop'. It still continues. The present Prime Minister sounded no less concerned about corruption. Why we are so helpless against corruption is the question that must find answers. Poverty is another concern that is persisting since the famous 'Tryst with Destiny' speech of the first Prime Minister. Another Prime Minister reminded us loud and clear about the need for 'Garibi Hatao'. Poverty has been a major challenge all these 75 years, tweaking with definitions and statistics notwithstanding. If we have to provide free food grains to 80 crore people because they can't earn them, something is amiss somewhere. After all, it is more than half the population.

If we want to graduate from a developing country to a developed one in the next 25 years, there is a need for a complete overhaul of the entire governance system. A paradigm shift is called for to force India's entry into a different orbit. Solutions that did not work will not work. An India where the mind is without fear and the head is held high can do it. We will have to unleash the potential of every Indian.

(The author is former Professor of Management, IIT-Dhanbad.)



10 Crore rural households get drinking water through taps

More than 52% of rural households are getting water through taps

Women and girls of 10 Crore households now free from drudgery of collection of water. As the country celebrates Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, to mark 75 years of India's Independence, Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) achieves a new milestone by providing 10 Crore rural households with safe and clean drinking water through taps. On 15th August 2019, when the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched Jal Jeevan Mission, from the ramparts of the Red Fort, only 3.23 Crore (16.90%) of the households in villages had access to piped water connection. The country achieved the landmark of 10 Crore Functional Household Tap Connection on 19th August 2022.

As on date, 3 States (Goa, Telangana and Haryana) and 3 UTs (Puducherry, D&D and D&NH and A&N Islands), have reported 100% coverage. Punjab at 99.93%, followed by Gujarat at 97.03%, Bihar at 95.51% and Himachal Pradesh at 94.88% are also poised to achieve saturation shortly. On 17th August, 2022 Goa and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (D&NH and D&D) became the first 'Har Ghar Jal' certified State and UT in the country respectively, where people in all villages confirmed availability of adequate, safe and regular supply of water for all households in their villages, through Gram Sabhas. The objective of the Mission is to provide every rural household with drinking water in adequate quantity of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis. Despite various disruptions and challenges like CoVID-19 pandemic, States/ UTs are working relentlessly overcoming the challenges like harsh weather conditions, remoteness, tough terrains, hills, forest, etc. to ensure tap water in every rural home. On many occasions the pipes and other equipment are transported on helicopters, boats, camels, elephants and horses. The relentless efforts of the

Union and State governments have also resulted in ensuring provision of tap water supply in 8.67 lakh (84.35%) schools and 8.96 lakh (80.34%) anganwadi centres in the country. In the 117 aspirational districts of our country, at the time of launch of the Mission, only 24.32 lakh (7.57%) household had access to tap water which has now increased to 1.54 Crore (48.00%). Three Aspirational districts from Telangana (Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Jayashankar Bhupalpalli and Bhadrabri Kothagudem) and 1 district each in Punjab (Moga), Haryana (Mewat) and Himachal Pradesh (Chamba) have reported 100% tap water coverage.

JJM has brought huge socio-economic benefits to the rural population. Regular tap water supply relieves people, especially women and young girls, from carrying heavy bucket loads of water to meet their daily household needs thereby reducing age-old drudgery. The time so saved can be used for income generation activities, learning new skills and supporting children's education.

In order to achieve long term sustainability of the schemes, community participation has from the very beginning been at the heart of planning, implementation, operations and maintenance of Rural Piped Water Supply schemes. A total of 5.08 lakh Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSC)/ Pani Samitis have been constituted in the country. Also, 4.78 lakh VAPs have been prepared which detail out the plans for drinking water source augmentation, greywater treatment and its reuse, and regular operation and maintenance of in-village water supply systems. Water Quality under this mission is a very important aspect. A total of 2,070 water testing laboratories have been developed, strengthened and empaneled in the country during the Mission period. As on date, more than 64 lakh water quality tests have been conducted in 4.51 lakh villages through water testing laboratories. Water quality testing labs of States/ UTs are now open for the public for testing water samples at nominal rates. Till now, 10.8 lakh rural women have also been trained to use Field Testing Kits (FTKs). Over, 58 lakh water quality tests have been conducted by trained women in 1.7 lakh villages using FTKs.

CASTE SYSTEM

TELEGRAPH,AUG 19,2022

Daily Horror: Editorial on crimes against Dalits being on the rise

Laws against these targeted atrocity do not change the conditions — not episodes — of intimidation, exploitation and coercion that certain castes have grown used to. Certain acts expose the inhumanity at the core of Indian society. In Rajasthan, a nine-year-old Dalit child was beaten so severely by his teacher for touching a pot for drinking water meant for the upper castes that he died. The assault tore through the bonds of teacher and student, adult and child. Instead, the disproportion of the supposed offence with its punishment revealed an all-important division that ignores bonds — that of caste. That the child was killed for touching a pot of water brought out even more clearly the naked lack of humanity that underlies the belief in and practice of caste. Water is one of the major conflict areas in caste practice, and this is not the first crime of this kind. And this tragedy cannot be called exceptional or unspeakable; oppression of and violence against Dalits are so common that they are almost invisible. Laws against these targeted crimes do not change the conditions — not episodes — of intimidation, exploitation and coercion that certain castes have grown used to. Violence is implicit in the system; the solution must be sought not in law but in education. Governments pass the buck by legislating, but they do not ensure that schools teach children about the evils of the system and that adults participate in awareness programmes. Sections of ancient texts facilitate the perpetuation of belief and practice. Countering this requires courage, energy, patience, tact, determination, and an unwavering faith in equality and humanness.

India's politicians are not interested; caste divisions make vote blocs. Registering a case under the right law and paying off the victim's family with five lakh rupees — why would a Dalit family need more? — as Rajasthan's chief minister has done, is considered business closed. Crimes against Dalits have risen sharply in the last few years — noticeably so in Rajasthan. Uttar Pradesh records the highest number of crimes against Dalits, but Rajasthan has the highest rate. This rise is often seen as a backlash against the growing awareness and spread of education among Dalits. Other studies show that violence is frequent in regions where Dalits are catching up with the higher castes. In Rajasthan, that may be part of the problem, as elsewhere. But a country cannot be free when at least 200 million of its people are not so.

STATESMAN, AUG21, 2022

India should target a casteless society

While taking the necessary precautions to avoid misinterpretation, society must certainly move in various ways towards the objective of a casteless society.

BHARAT DOGRA

The caste factor has been of enduring importance in India for a long time, cutting across regional and provincial boundaries. Its worst manifestation has been in the form of the practice of untouchability, which means a very extreme form of discrimination in which people of some castes are treated as untouchables. This practice was abolished very firmly by the Indian Constitution and made both illegal and punishable. Yet more than seven decades after India got its admirable Constitution, periodic surveys and studies remind us that this

practice has still not gone away and in fact has wider prevalence than what may be visible on the surface. On the plus side, certainly this evil has reduced compared to pre independence days, both due to the law and wider social forces like urbanisation, education, and reform efforts. An increasing number of educated people oppose it in very strong terms. This limited social progress by itself is good, but we should have been able to go much beyond this.

Untouchability should have been a matter of history by now. Unfortunately, as already stated, the reality is far from this. In addition to the extreme practice of untouchability, there are various other forms of social discrimination in our society. This can be based on several identities, but caste is often an important factor. In some cases, this discrimination can be more subtle than crude, yet in certain conditions can take even violent forms. What is more, discrimination is not just the only negative aspect of narrow caste-based identity, although it is quite often the most objectionable one. Much that happens in society because of excessive identification with caste has adverse impacts on the capacity of society to progress. It has been reported that several hundred thousand castes and sub-castes (and perhaps sub-subcastes) have already been identified in earlier caste census and survey efforts. Such data collection on several hundred thousand sub-castes certainly appears to be an avoidable pursuit at a time when the entire humankind faces survival issues.

In fact, several leading and highly respected social reformers have given the call for a casteless society from time to time. On the other hand, there are several trends which appear to be taking us in an opposite direction. One reason for this is that many political parties identify their agenda primarily in terms of caste alignments. Perhaps this is the reason why they also keep raising demands like caste census and caste surveys. There are several parties, groups and leaders who would like to be seen as a part of progressive forces (and in fact have been involved with progressive causes) who also raise such demands. Linked to them are caste groups more specifically of historically weaker sections who identify their solidarity in terms of caste groups rather than class groups. They may have their reasons but a big question before us today is whether India is at all moving on the path towards a casteless society, even if slowly.

As a result of various trends described above, we may be moving away from the objectives of such a society. Just to remove a possible misunderstanding, let me state here clearly that pursuing the objective of a casteless society does not mean the exclusion of affirmative action to help those groups that have historically been victims of great injustice. Such affirmative action, like reservation, should continue until historically discriminated groups and castes reach a position of equality. While making this clarification, it is necessary also to assert clearly that the agenda of a casteless society is an agenda of equality and justice and should not be allowed to be misinterpreted or even hijacked by the forces which are anti-equality and anti-Dalit. While taking the necessary precautions to avoid misinterpretation, society must certainly move in various ways towards the objective of a casteless society.

The agenda for this can be discussed and various specific issues and campaigns can be identified, but not much is happening in this context precisely because most governments, most of the leading political parties and even several of the progressive groups are not really interested in this; their concerns are narrower. Hence it is important today to give much more attention and thought to the objective of creating a casteless society in India, thereby getting rid of the burden of centuries which has hindered equality, harmony, and progress. Creating a casteless society used to be a respectable assertion at one time, but somewhere along the line it appears that we started neglecting this, with the result that today we seem to have drifted further away from the objective. This is a neglected agenda, and one does not see many signs of its revival, at least none that are visible. So, is Indian society condemned to be ridden by

casteism, despite this being almost certainly a narrow and regressive feature of society? To conclude on an optimistic note, however, one can only hope that the next generation will show a keen desire to move away from this.

CLIMATE CHANGE

TELEGRAPH,AUG19,2022

Double trouble

While the BJP and Opposition continue with their political machinations, the larger issues on the ground are these: climatic aberrations and consequent losses

Jaideep Hardikar

How are we supposed to deal with long, dry spells as well as sudden and extreme rainfall in the same season? Or drought in one state and floods in another, for that matter? While the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Opposition continue with their political machinations, the larger issues before the people on the ground at this point are these: climatic aberrations and consequent losses. We'd do well to smell the coffee and see the elephant in our drawing rooms.

June saw the country receiving abysmal rains, paralysing kharif sowings; central India was badly affected. There was no government in place in Maharashtra at that time. Sowings came a dud, prompting hundreds of thousands of farmers to go for a resowing because the rains failed to show up on time. Then, it started raining cats and dogs in July for long stretches without any let up, leading to floods, soil erosion and flattening everything that had just germinated.

Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, southern Madhya Pradesh and parts of Chhattisgarh have seen massive soil erosion — topsoil washed away with heavy rains, leading to a crisis that will take years before it can be undone. If you lose topsoil, you lose much of your income for years. It's mid-August and many parts of India have witnessed both long, dry spells and extreme to heavy rainfall, causing flash floods that washed away topsoil — over 1.5 million hectares in Maharashtra alone by preliminary estimates — and led to irreversible devastation of kharif crops.

Jharkhand, for instance, is experiencing drought. It hasn't rained there yet and farmers growing paddy in that state are on the brink. Down south or to the west, in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, farmers have begun offering prayers for the rains to abate. Some areas haven't seen a break from the rain for almost a month now — this is bad for agriculture and surely bad for livestock keepers.

Luckily there hasn't been much loss of life, except in a few sporadic cases, but crop, material and property losses in central India are unprecedented, yet not reported. In Chandrapur, a district with forests and mines, several seasonal rivers are overflowing. So much so that many villages have lost contact with the nearest cities. This, they'd not seen in ages. Unchecked sand mining from river beds has played its part. Extreme rainfall events made it worse.

A young doctor who is part of a network that volunteers to provide medical services in flood- or rain-affected parts of India, put it this way: "Assam, Chittoor, Wardha, Bhandara... the list is long where flash floods caused by extreme and sudden rains have caused immense turmoil and pain to the very poor people. Assam saw floods at the end of May, which is unusual. Hunger, diseases, and loss of property and belongings have unsettled people big time." The

national media have no time to report on this turmoil because the events happened beyond the realm of national or state capitals and the victims are not news consumers or payers.

Political parties can't think beyond ad hoc doles because none of them comprehend more than the symbolic spheres of religion or development to deal with a challenge that is complex and calls for a layered, scientific understanding of a changing climate for a multi-pronged response. The State's extension systems are in tatters. People have no clue how to deal with aberrations of this intensity, both droughts and floods, especially when regulatory apparatus has long been dismantled.

On the country's 75th Independence Day, displaying the Indian Tricolour on our social media handles is a shortcut to hallowed nationalism. Dealing with more complex and urgent issues like climate change — alas — has no shortcuts.

STATESMAN, AUG21, 2022

Climate change isn't the only challenge

Perhaps inevitably, there was a backlash against Carson even before her book was published, because it had been excerpted in *The New Yorker* a few months earlier.

MAHIR ALI

The opening chapter of *Silent Spring*, published 60 years ago, paints a devastating picture of “a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings”. Its abundant flora and fauna attracted visitors from far and wide. Birds sang, bees buzzed, wildflowers bloomed, farms flourished, and trout proliferated in the clear, cool streams. “Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community.” New maladies appeared, “even among children, who would be stricken while at play and die within a few hours”. The birds disappeared — “It was a spring without voices” — and farm animals withered like the flowers and trees and crops, just as the streams were bereft of visible life.

A few weeks earlier, “a white, granular powder ... had fallen like snow upon the roofs and lawns, the fields and streams”. The author, Rachel Carson, then offers an introductory explanation: “No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.” She concedes that she knows of “no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe”, but adds: “Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere...” Carson's primary target is the consequences of World War II alchemy — the ingredients of chemical warfare that were adapted to peacetime usage, sometimes with honourable intent but often overlooking the potential collateral damage. She directed much of her wrath against DDT, which had proved extremely effective against malaria and whose inventor's efforts had won him the Nobel Prize.

Its potential as a human carcinogen, however, had yet to be investigated, let alone its effects on other species. I still remember well the smell of DDT. In powder form, it was liberally sprinkled around the family home as an insecticide — mostly, but not exclusively, outdoors. The risks never registered, even after it was banned in the US a decade after Carson's eloquent diatribe. I first heard about Carson and her best-known book some 35 years after its publication in a long-distance interview with the American musician and activist Pete Seeger, in the context of his motivation for a remarkable 1966 LP titled *God Bless the Grass* —

perhaps the first album by a popular artist to reflect largely on environmental concerns. Seeger went on to spearhead a successful campaign to clean up the Hudson River. It was another decade or so before I got hold of a copy of *Silent Spring*, and found it a riveting read — not just as a historical text but as a contemporary manifesto. Not surprisingly, when the use of DDT was banned in the US, exports of the substance weren't affected. Sixty years after Carson exposed its carcinogenic qualities, it remains a potent risk.

Perhaps inevitably, there was a backlash against Carson even before her book was published, because it had been excerpted in *The New Yorker* a few months earlier. The highly lucrative chemical industry was vociferous, and the various denunciations included the unfounded claim that she was a secret communist. It's telling that this is frequently the standard smear in America against those who elevate human existence above corporate imperatives. *Silent Spring* illustrates in poetic language how the overuse of chemical compounds in herbicides, insecticides and the like poses a threat to all life. Indiscriminate aerial spraying across fields, farms and human abodes was a particular *bête noire*.

Contrary to accusations that she was condemning millions to death by malaria and other such diseases, Carson did not advocate a ban on the use of chemicals but merely more judicious use — in far smaller concentrations, and — where possible — pest reduction through biological alternatives. Despite her valid argument that chemicals intended for curbing a particular form of pestilence invariably affected a wide range of species and inevitably leached into the human food chain — including baby foods — a US study earlier this year found traces of glyphosate, a chemical linked to cancer, in 80 per cent of samples taken from Americans of all ages.

That is the key ingredient in herbicides used across the globe, including the common Roundup brand. Understandably, concerns about the palpable climate emergency nowadays cloud human consciousness. It's worth remembering two things, though. First, that the pattern of resistance to meaningfully combating climate change has plenty of precedents, including the vociferous opposition to doing very much about the poisoning of all forms of life on earth through chemical contamination. And, secondly, that even if by some miracle humankind can conjure up the will to effectively resist the ongoing depredations associated with fossil fuels and the powerful corporations and states intent upon prolonging their deleterious usage, other arduous — and as yet unconquered — challenges lie in wait.

CYBER SECURITY

HINDUSTAN TIMES,AUG 20,2022

New privacy law may only cover only digital data at first

The move will include making a distinction between digitised and non-digitised data, according to internal discussions held at the ministry of electronics and information technology

An official said that the Bill will be a truncated version as compared to the report that was tabled by the Joint Committee of Parliament in December 2021

An official said that the Bill will be a truncated version as compared to the report that was tabled by the Joint Committee of Parliament in December 2021

Deeksha Bhardwaj

The data protection bill that is being redrawn after being withdrawn in Parliament by the government earlier this month will initially only cover digital personal data and not records on paper, people aware of the matter said, adding that possible legacy provisions will be included to cover any data that is subsequently digitised. The move will include making a distinction between digitised and non-digitised data, according to internal discussions held at the ministry of electronics and information technology. "The government is still working on how to segregate the two, with a special focus on ensuring safety of sensitive personal data," said one official, asking not to be named.

"The ultimate aim will be to digitise all data, but the bill, as it is shaping up, is likely to only apply to digital data initially," the official added. But, this person said, a legacy provision will be included to cover any data later digitised. "Think of birth certificates that are old, and so far, only maintained as physical records. Over time, they will be digitised and all forms of personal data will be protected under the bill," the official added.

A second official said that the Bill will be a truncated version as compared to the report that was tabled by the Joint Committee of Parliament in December 2021. "The idea is to make the bill less complicated and more easily accessible," the second official said.

The first official added that the problems remain the same, and will have to be addressed in the new bill. The bill will be put for public consultation once it is finalised. "To try and apply the laws to data that is on paper will take extensive time. Right now the need is to prioritise privacy of citizens and provide a mechanism to ensure it," the official said. "There are other recourses that citizens can take if data which is on paper is missed." "Sensitive personal data will have to be tackled with great care and the government is taking all necessary steps to ensure its safety," the official reiterated.

Experts, however, raised some concerns over the delay. "Legacy provisions were weak to begin with for digitised data and clarity and precision were hoped for from the new law. Unfortunately, it appears that there will be more delays for this," said Supreme Court lawyer and founder of Cybersaathi NS Nappinai. "The first leaked version of the privacy law draft of 2011 itself explicitly covered digital and digitised data."

She added that whilst simplicity and clarity are welcome, ensuring a comprehensive law is equally essential.

PIONEER,AUG20, 2022

Cloud technology may hasten digital connectivity

Rohit Paranjpe

It is imperative that the private sector collaborate with the government agencies to bridge the digital divide

Today, 5.1 billion people, three-quarters of the earth's population, communicate and connect to the internet using mobile devices, and over half of these connections come from smartphones. While 76 per cent of the people in the developed nations own smartphones, the number stands at a meagre 45 per cent in emerging economies, revealing a striking digital divide.

Although the pandemic has played a pivotal role in making the internet an essential part of our existence, it has witnessed a paradigm shift over the last decade. The Internet of today has far-reaching implications with respect to spreading awareness, seeking out information, and support for education. In many ways, it has transformed the way we live. Over 700 million people, mostly residing in over 20,000 villages across remote locations, continue to stay unconnected. Lack of access to digital services has been due to the absence of digital infrastructure.

Solution for improving digital access may lie in distributing the cloud from huge data centres (storage) into smaller fragments, placed closer to the users. This edge-cloud ecosystem helps provide best-in-class 'Quality of Service' by embedding the nodes deep within the digital network ecosystem. A miniaturised version of the data centre looks like a tiny device that can be installed anywhere (anytime), enabling access to relevant information, for audiences across the economic strata. The analogy is that of understanding how a power bank works.

Last mile digital connectivity will positively impact GDP. A World Bank analysis states that increasing broadband internet penetration can have a significant impact on a country's GDP. However, in a recent survey, about 60 per cent of India's rural population is still not actively using digital services.

As we move out of a metro city to travel into remote parts of a particular state, one experiences lack of network connectivity. And even if it's there, the experience is quite unreliable. In the absolute last mile of the country, probably villages with 2000-5000 people, or even lesser, the availability continues to stay limited or possibly absent. This is where 'Edge Cloud' technology can add impactful value.

In a situation like this, where users are located far from the big data centres, which is the case for most tier 4, 5 or rural areas in India, some content can be cached in distributed servers, or 'Edge Cloud', and placed closer to the end user, which in this case could be Gram Panchayats, Citizens Service Centres (CSCs), government schools, etc. Therefore, rather than content travelling from a central origin server to fulfill each request, cached content from the 'Edge Clouds' travel a short distance to reach the end-user.

Thus, even in an area with unreliable or no data connection, one can access native digital content, as if they were residing in a (digitally) connected area. How is that possible? Firstly, content travels a shorter distance to reach end users, which results in faster transfer of data and no buffering. Secondly, by routing fewer requests to the central cloud, network capacity is increased, thereby eliminating the need to invest in additional network infrastructure, as well as optimizing the existing bandwidth. This makes it economical both for telecom service providers (TSPs) and the end user.

But why is it important to consider economics, not just from the perspective of end users, but also TSPs? Network operators and ISPs have to bear huge infrastructure costs, and their profitability depends on the number of users available in a particular geography, multiplied by the average revenue earned from those users.

In villages or other remote areas, owing to the sparse population and low purchasing power of the users, it doesn't make economic sense for network operators and ISPs to extend their services. Therefore, the onus of digital connectivity lies largely on the government for villages or remote areas. Around 20,000 villages in India, predominantly in the north-east, lack reliable internet connections. The Government is undertaking several initiatives such as PM Gati Shakti, Vibrant Village Program and Model Villages under the Border Area Development Programme that will bridge the digital divide to a large extent. In addition, schemes such as BBNL phase 2, PM WANI along with installing VSAT, are initiatives that the government is currently undertaking to ensure that no one is deprived of the access to digital connectivity.

It is imperative that the private sector, aided by new technologies, collaborate with government agencies to assist individuals in gaining access to services as well as education, thereby improving the quality of life and their livelihood opportunities.

(The author is CEO & Co-founder, SugarBox Networks.)

DEMOCRACY

INDIAN EXPRESS,AUG 20, 2022

At 75, battles won and losing

Ashutosh Varshney writes: Two foundational projects in India – national integration and commitment to democracy – have been weakening

Ashutosh Varshney

In 2013, just before the rise of Narendra Modi to national power, I published a book, “Battles Half Won”. I devoted the first 45 pages to an evaluation of India’s foundational projects at independence. Going through the speeches of India’s freedom fighters and debates in the Constituent Assembly, I identified three projects as key: “Securing national integration, bringing dignity and justice to those at the bottom of the social order and eliminating mass poverty”. My unsurprising conclusion was that six and a half decades after independence, the battles were only “half won”. A significant part of my assessment was also that India had committed itself to a political framework — democracy — within which these projects would be pursued. The three projects — national integration, social justice and poverty elimination — were common to most newly decolonised nations. What set India apart was its categorical commitment to democracy. In most post-colonial nations, if a conflict between democracy and any of the national projects arose, democracy was tossed aside. By the 1960s, democracies collapsed in most of the newly decolonised world. India’s authoritarian turn did arrive in June 1975, but it was short-lived.

In 2000, analysing a world-wide data-set on democratic survivals and discontinuities, Adam Przeworski wrote that India’s democracy was the most surprising exception to an empirically-based theory of democracy. Once established, democracies survived mostly in wealthy countries. India departed from this theory. After eight-and-a-half years of BJP rule in Delhi, what has happened to the half-won battles for national integration, social justice and elimination of poverty? Equally important, how strong is India’s commitment to democracy?

Let us begin with those elements of the BJP’s record that show it joining older battles. The attack on poverty persists, but the mode of intervention is different. What Arvind Subramanian calls Modi’s “new welfarism” is essentially an attempt to provide private goods — toilets, gas cylinders, income supplements — through public resources. Land reforms in the 1950s and employment generation after the 1970s had led the attack on poverty. Moreover, Modi has deployed new technology — Aadhaar, cell phones, bank accounts — to transfer many benefits directly. Government has not provided recent data on poverty, and Covid did put a lot of Indians below the poverty line. But the assault on poverty continues. On caste, the new BJP is no longer a replica of the old RSS, which under Golwalkar was committed to the caste system. Starting with the Deoras era of Hindu nationalism, the idea of lower caste incorporation — as a way to weaken caste hierarchies — took root. Modi was schooled in this new RSS ideology. Affirmative action was India’s original means of attack on caste hierarchies. Modi has brought about two changes. He has sought to reformulate affirmative action to include lower-income Brahmins, which Ambedkar would have found inconceivable. India’s affirmative action was initially envisioned not in terms of income, but something more wide-ranging. It understood deprivation as a consequence of the widely practised and historically entrenched forms of social discrimination, reflected in residential segregation, marriage practices, clothing, diet and access to temples, schools and wells. It was about comprehensive deprivation, not simply meager incomes.

After eight-and-a-half years of BJP rule in Delhi, what has happened to the half-won battles for national integration, social justice and elimination of poverty? Equally important, how strong is India's commitment to democracy?

Modi's approach is basically focused on enhancing the political representation of lower castes. This is not only reflected in picking an Adivasi or a Dalit for President, but more importantly, in recruiting more OBC MPs and MLAs than the earlier BJP ever attempted. This increase is not wrapped in an anti-upper caste rhetoric. Rather, it is aimed at emphasising Hindu unity and de-emphasising caste distinctions. In Hindu nationalist politics, it is the Muslim who is the other, not the upper caste. Lower castes are rising, but instead of displacing the upper castes, they are becoming more Hindu. What about the two remaining original commitments — national integration and democracy? Severely at risk, let me call them India's twin emaciations and analyse their devolution.

Democracy first. Modern democracy has two separable dimensions: The electoral and the non-electoral. We can't have a democracy without freely contested elections. But democracy is also about freedoms that must be made available above and beyond elections, which means most of the time in a citizen's life. Three civil liberties are critical to this wider view of democracy: Freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religious practice. All three have been eroding since 2014. In 2021, Sweden's V-Dem Institute calculated that "over 7,000 people have been charged with sedition after the BJP assumed power and most of the accused are critics of the ruling party". As for freedom of association, which affects civil society most, Rahul Mukherji (Heidelberg) has recently calculated that between 2015 and 2022, nearly 17,000 civil society organisations were denied registration or renewal. India is democratic at the time of elections, and increasingly undemocratic otherwise.

Finally, let us turn to the project of national integration. Because of the enormity of Partition upheavals, how to deal with the Muslim minority was viewed as the crux of national integration. Nehru argued — and Ambedkar agreed — that "whatever the provocations from Pakistan and whatever the indignities and horrors inflicted on non-Muslims there... we must give (Muslims) security and the rights of citizens... If we fail to do so, we shall have a festering sore which will eventually poison the whole body politic and probably destroy it." India's founding principles were different from those of Pakistan. Religious equality and minority rights would firmly guide India. The BJP's policy towards Muslims is uprooting this foundational Ambedkar-Nehru understanding. Laws (like the CAA), executive decrees (such as the hijab ban and the bulldozing of Muslim property) and the anti-Muslim lynchings, rarely punished, are severely undermining equality of citizenship. The use of government bulldozers to demolish Muslim homes and businesses, with Hindu mobs cheering, is actually a new form of pogrom. A pogrom is defined as a state-approved or state-condoned attack on minorities.

How far will these twin emaciations go? Very far unless the courts check the excesses, or the elections do. But judicial subservience is rising. Only electoral pushbacks are likely to alter politics. Will they come? Social science is bad at dealing with high improbabilities. So let us turn to poetry, a more hopeful domain, and end with the words of Sahir Ludhianvi. Wo subah kabhi to aayegi (that morning will come, some day)!

The writer is Sol Goldman professor of international studies and the social sciences at Brown University.

ECONOMY

MINT, AUG 20, 2022

The Indian economy needs a radical reset

To employ the 9 million persons joining the labour force every year and absorb the 89 million backlog by 2047, we will need to generate some 12 million additional jobs every year.

Sudipto Mundle

India's digital and green thrusts will help, as will geopolitical factors, but job generation and the state's role need sorting out.

Much has been written this past week about our achievements and failures of the past 75 years. It is a mixed picture. After stagnating for nearly 150 years during colonial rule, the standard of living started rising rapidly after independence. The average Indian is nearly 700% better off today than s/he was in 1950. Life expectancy has also doubled to 70 years during this period and literacy has gone up from just 18% to 74% (see charts). However, we have fallen behind many neighbouring Asian countries, including Bangladesh, in terms of per capita income and many social indicators. Globally, India is the second most unequal country. Sad news just this week tells us that social inequality and untouchability are still entrenched. Finally, our biggest failure is high unemployment. Ajit Ghosh, an authority on employment issues, has estimated an unemployment backlog of 79 million workers including 50 million in disguised unemployment.

The political picture is also mixed. Contrary to widely held expectations, Independent India did not disintegrate because of its enormous cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. Our diversity has become a cause for celebration rather than disintegration. India is also the only developing country in the world that has sustained universal adult suffrage for 75 years. However, critics now describe India as an "illiberal democracy", pointing to the spread of divisive, majoritarian politics and the growing tendency towards authoritarianism.

So our legacy of 75 years of independence is very mixed. What should be our priorities as we proceed to the 100th anniversary of Independence in 2047? On the political front, non-BJP parties are in power in a dozen major states. Also, anti-incumbency is giving way to pro-incumbency. Outgoing governments are being voted back to power. Presumably they are delivering, at least partially, on what voters expect of them. That gives us hope that India will remain a robust democracy, even if incomplete, with universal adult franchise and political competition based on performance. With that admittedly optimistic political assumption, let me turn to long-term priorities on the economic front.

Here is an interesting paradox. India is already the third largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity. In nominal terms, it is the fifth largest after the US, China, Japan, Germany and the UK, at \$3.2 trillion. Yet, it is among the poorest 30% of the 218 countries listed by the United Nations, with a per capita income of \$ 2,277, only a fifth of the world average of \$11,000. Underlying this paradox is the huge challenge of unemployment mentioned earlier. To employ the 9 million persons joining the labour force every year and absorb the 89 million backlog of unemployment by 2047 we will need to generate some 12 million additional jobs every year. A very tall order when jobs are hardly growing and many of the existing jobs may soon disappear due to technical obsolescence. That is not all. The skill level of our workforce is extremely low, with barely 4% having any certified skills. We need a massive skilling programme to radically change the skill profile of our workforce.

No one knows how this challenge will play out over the next 25 years. But overcoming the challenge will clearly require a very radical transformation of the economy. A few helpful factors should be noted. First, 'services' is our largest sector and India is a major hub especially for IT-enabled services. This services-led pattern of growth will get a big push from the ongoing digital revolution. The transition from a fossil-fuel based economy to one based on renewable energy is another disruptive change. These changes could completely transform the nature of the economy. We need to be prepared for these changes. In particular, the skill profile of the workforce will need to be completely transformed. Third, strategic autonomy in foreign policy is especially helpful in the emerging geopolitical conjuncture. The world is increasingly wary of the rise of an assertive China, while India's rise is seen as benign and widely welcomed. India is even seen as a potential countervailing power. The consequent benefits in access to capital, technology and markets can be another major driver of change. There could be other disruptive changes not seen at present. So the Indian economy will be quite transformed by 2047, but whether all these changes will overcome the challenge of unemployment or exacerbate it remains an open question.

Finally, what should be the role of the state? As a developing country, our state capacity is limited. The central and state governments must develop their own capacity, focus their efforts on doing only a few essential things and do them well. These include pure public services like security and national defence, effective delivery of justice and the rule of law, protection of the environment, building good infrastructure and the provision of merit services like social protection, basic education, public health, water supply and sanitation. In addition to these essential public services, the state also has to provide an appropriate regulatory framework that incentivizes the private sector to grow economic activities in agriculture, industry, services and trade. This is already a tall order. Whether the state should additionally partner the private sector in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge remains another open question.

Sudipto Mundle is chairman, Centre for Development Studies

EDUCATION

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG19 , 2022

CUET PG 2022: JNU is appealing govt to change MCQ format of the entrance test, says V-C

JNU VC Appeal, CUET PG 2022 Exam Pattern: Speaking at The Indian Express's Idea Exchange session, university V-C, Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, said admissions to master's programmes require qualitative testing and should not be conducted through multiple choice questions

NTA CUET PG 2022 exam pattern, JNU CUET PG 2022: JNU vice-chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit has said the university has been appealing to the Centre to change the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) format for postgraduate admissions. Speaking at the Idea Exchange programme of The Indian Express, Pandit said admissions to the Master's programmes could not be conducted through Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) tests. She spoke of the impact on student intake in the absence of qualitative testing.

Referring to the university's decision to follow the CUET for admissions, she said, "The acceptance to join (CUET)... was done by the previous administration... If I was there, I would have put in these concerns in writing. Because it's very important, I think, that we tell the government because the bureaucracy does not understand." "So, it is important that as a teacher, stakeholder within the system, we have to make them understand that these are the difficulties that we have in reality," she said, adding "We are not opposing the system, per se, but the implementation of the system can be disastrous if we are going to have this kind of uniformity."

The CUET-PG is the new common entrance test for admission to postgraduate programmes at Central universities. As many as 66 universities, mostly Centre-run, have adopted the computer-based CUET-PG for admissions in the academic session 2022-23. It will be held in two shifts each on September 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 in around 500 cities in India and 13 centres abroad.

The entrance examination tests students only through MCQs. There will be 100 questions in each paper on subjects ranging from language comprehension, verbal ability, social sciences, mathematics, science, general awareness, mathematical and quantitative ability, analytical skills, as well as domain subject-related questions. Before JNU agreed to adopt CUET-PG, it had its own entrance test which was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA). The question paper differed for each programme and carried different types of questions — objective type, subjective type, or short answer type questions.

"In Master's (programme), you cannot have admissions based on MCQs because we don't even know whether the student can write anything... There should be qualitative answering and testing of other abilities rather than rote memory... This is a limitation... could raise issues with the kind of students we'll get. Many of them may not even understand the language and problems of communication," she said.

Pointing out that there was criticism about the same from various quarters, Pandit said, "There has been major criticism that has come from our faculty. Not only our faculty, even from universities where I was earlier. University of Pune also opposed it saying that the students are completely ill-equipped. And once they get that score, there is nothing much you can do. And in social sciences, it's not like mathematics and science. One question can have several right answers. So it's very difficult to point out one being right... I think they must

have at least two-line answers, essays. Variety has to be there. Otherwise, after five years, this will have a huge impact on the kind of intake in universities.”

PIB AUG 17, 2022

NCTE is driving NEP-linked reforms and initiatives in teacher education

NCTE celebrates 28th Foundation Day in New Delhi

National Council of Teachers Education (NCTE) today celebrated its 28th Foundation Day in New Delhi today. Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education Smt. L. S. Changsan was the Guest of Honor on the occasion. Chairperson NCTE, Prof. Dinesh Prasad Saklani; Member Secretary NCTE, Ms. Kesang Y. Sherpa and senior officials of Ministry of Education attended the event.

Smt. L.S Changsan appreciated NCTE for the reforms in Teacher Education sector through various NEP mandates. Some of the initiatives have been National Professional standards for Teachers, National Mission for Mentoring and 4 Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme.

While addressing the gathering Prof. Saklani said that teachers play an important role in the growth of a society. The Foundation Day of NCTE is about celebrating the revolution in the system by equipping the teachers with relevant 21st Century skills. He also mentioned the role of teachers in ancient Universities like Takshila and Nalanda and the need to stay connected with our Indian Values and Culture.

Ms. Kesang Y. Sherpa in her welcome address said that the NCTE is bringing a paradigm shift in the field of Teacher Education by introducing various NEP2020 mandates. In alignment with NEP 2020, Teachers are at centre of reforming education. She also quoted, "Be the change you want to see in the world".

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG21, 2022

'Factories of education' are causing devaluation of human resources, says CJI N V Ramana

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana stressed on developing a model of education that teaches students how to face real-life challenges and lamented that institutions (of higher learning) were losing their social relevance with the 'mushrooming of factories of education' on Saturday.

Such education should also be an enabler to achieve social solidarity and create individuals as meaningful members of society, he said while delivering the convocation address after receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU), his alma mater.

Justice Ramana further said the youth must be "conscious change-makers" who should think of sustainable models of development. "This consciousness must acknowledge the needs of our community and environment while being pioneers in your respective fields," PTI quoted him as saying.

He expressed regret that the focus of professional courses continued to be on creation of an obedient workforce, like in colonial times, that could generate the required output. "The harsh reality is that even after the students enter professional universities, the focus is on

classroom-learning and not on the world beyond. Securing highly remunerative and profitable job opportunities has become the sole objective behind such education," he said.

There was a total neglect of equally important subjects like humanities, natural sciences, history, economics and languages, he added. "We are witnessing mushrooming of factories of education which are leading to devaluation of degrees and human resources. I am not sure, who or what is to be blamed," he said. Justice Ramana said it was time for a transformation of the country's education system.

"Our institutes must focus on the value of social relationships and conscious citizenship. Education should blend our historical baggage with a futuristic vision to equip young minds with the right tools and attitudes to transform our society with awareness and right understanding," he said. The CJI called upon universities and their research wings to focus on issues affecting the country and try to find comprehensive solutions.

The State should actively co-operated in this endeavour by earmarking funds required for research and innovation. "It will be a sad commentary if we allow our key areas of learning and research to suffer on account of lack of funding," Justice Ramana said. The Chief Justice of India, who will be retiring next week, exhorted the graduating students to "build a democracy filled with vibrancy and idealism, where differences of identities and opinions are respected." "Don't allow corrupt thoughts. Don't tolerate injustices. Think beyond yourself and be willing to make sacrifices. Be sensitive to the needs of the community and society," he said. Andhra Pradesh Governor and ANU Chancellor Biswabhusan Harichandan presided over the 37th and the 38th convocations of the university.

Education Minister B Satyanarayana, Vice-Chancellor P Raja Sekhar and others attended. Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court Prashant Kumar Mishra and other judges, too, were present on the occasion. Later, the Andhra Pradesh government hosted lunch for the CJI at a convention centre in Mangalagiri. The Governor, the Chief Minister, and judges and senior officials attended.

ENVIRONMENT

STATESMAN, AUG18,2022

Ecological marvel

Legal provisions were put in place to ensure the continuity of this ecosystem by dedicating an entire Act for its governance.

DHRUBA DASGUPTA

Forty years ago, an engineer-ecologist in-the-making started a serendipitous journey mandated by his government to enquire into the possible uses of city wastewater. He had just completed his Ph.D from the University of Calcutta, to become the first civil engineer to choose ecology as the subject of his doctoral degree. Without a clue about what to do to find the answer that his superiors wanted, he did what was usual to do in those days. He used his common sense. Dr Dhrubajyoti Ghosh started walking along the outfall canals of the city to check where the city's sewage was going. Lo and behold, he stumbled across the largest contiguous set of ponds functioning as the sewage treatment plant of the city of Calcutta; an engineered landscape that both treated sewage and kept treatment costs at zero for the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. This unique ecosystem he named the East Calcutta Wetlands. It was to become his muse till the end of his time.

Dhrubajyoti Ghosh worked tirelessly for its preservation, innovated as best as he could and, when he passed away in 2018, he was the only environmental thinker in this city who had twice been honoured by the United Nations for his efforts to name, map and take to the world the sustainability chronicle of these wetlands. His single-minded pursuit, with support from unexpected allies, got East Calcutta Wetlands the Ramsar recognition on 19 August 2002, as a Wetland of International Importance, that the government would have to be committed to protecting. As we complete two decades of that recognition, it is germane to ask what lessons we have learnt for ourselves and for posterity. Though the Ramsar Convention began as an international covenant to protect waterfowls and their habitat, it soon evolved to making 'wise use' the cornerstone of its deliberations and this formed the core of its understanding of conservation.

Today, Ramsar's definition of wise use stands thus: "Wise use of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development." It was this wise-use criterion that led to the identification of the East Calcutta Wetlands as a Ramsar site. In 1985, after completing the mapping of the wetlands, Dhrubajyoti Ghosh visited Lima, Peru as a World Bank consultant and was asked by experts to visit their respective countries to deliver lectures on this wetland. He proudly invited them to Calcutta if they wanted to understand 'uniqueness'. Hundreds of international scholars visited the wetlands for more than two decades. In the bargain, Ghosh earned endless brickbats on his home turf. Ironically, as these wetlands gained international recognition, they hit the impregnable wall of apathy of the very city whose citizens of yore had engineered a masterful transformation of a saline ecosystem endangered by the death of the once-flourishing river Bidyadhari. Integrated sewage and solid waste management were central to this innovative effort.

Engineering interventions led to the successful emergence of an upscaled sewage-fed ecosystem whose foundations were laid by Bengali entrepreneur Bhabanath Sen as early as 1880. The Dhapa Square Mile in the outskirts of Calcutta, where Sen began his garbage farming and fish growing initiative, formed the template of an expanded ecosystem after he

lived no more. Dhapa was the place from where vegetables and fish produced at a low cost were supplied to the city, saving food miles in the process. Besides sewage being available at no cost and serving as a nutrient for production, organic material, plentifully recovered from the solid waste collected from the city, was used as manure for vegetable production. All this was discovered in the course of an immersive learning process. Little wonder then, that Ghosh named Calcutta ‘an ecologically subsidised city’. Long before sophisticated foreign scholars had begun to talk about smart cities and urban circularity, Calcutta’s frugal innovators had woven sustainability into city survival in their own backyard by utilising its waste. Today, we have forgotten these lessons, banking on our culturally inherited pride in the built environment and dumping our living heritage.

Ghosh’s task was simple: he re-discovered this living heritage as he, with his uncanny wisdom, discarded the typical Bengali bhadralok’s ‘cognitive apartheid’ and upheld the true value of these wetlands. The local community learnt to preserve this integrated waste management ecosystem for purposes of their own survival. They developed knowledge of the lay of the land and the plentifully built engineering structures such as lock gates and siphons, to facilitate the spread of sewage as widely as possible. This led to the nurturing of a stable urban fringe, whose inhabitants do not demand regular employment from the core city. Sadly, the fault lines of misperception, especially by the learned, are jeopardising the survival of this tutorial ecosystem. When the Central Wetland Rules came into existence in 2010, they forbade the entry of sewage into any wetland.

This led to a long innings of official correspondence between the state government and the Centre regarding East Calcutta Wetlands. When the amended rules rationalised this in 2017, much misunderstanding still remained and the Dhapa dumpsite was frowned upon. Opinion was expressed that this dumpsite should go outside the ambit of the Ramsar site, without once attempting to understand the integrated nature of resource recovery from waste in this total ecosystem. Today, the cost saving of these wetlands for the city administration is given no importance, much less it is attempted to improve their health by generating real-time data and monitoring.

As usual, the wetlands face urbanisation pressure that is chipping away at their vitality. Legal provisions were put in place to ensure the continuity of this ecosystem by dedicating an entire Act for its governance. But in the face of political and external interference, the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act 2006 has proved quite ineffective. Evolving a sustainable and climate-friendly governance model demands that the productivity of this ecosystem be ramped up on all counts and by all available pathways. Engaging innovative capabilities of the wetland community and experts, together with institutional and informal financing initiatives, are the key to the survival of this ecological marvel. After all, we should not be proselytising sustainability while actually facilitating destruction.

FOOD SECURITY

DECCAN HERALD, AUG20 ,2022

The role of technology in India's nutritional securityThe success of genetic modification technologies lies in supporting public policy and transparency of data obtained during safety studies and field trials

Shambhavi Naik

As India celebrated its 76th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid out the vision for an aspirational India. Indeed, building on a foundation of seven decades of economic progress, India should now look to a future of growth and prosperity on par with developed economies. Core to this goal is the requirement of a healthy population. India has made stupendous strides in becoming self-sufficient in food, primarily driven by technological investments during the green revolution. Using hybrid varieties of plants, new irrigational methods and chemicals in the form of fertilisers and pesticides allowed India to achieve food security when most of the international community had low expectations of us. However, this shift was more than three decades ago. An aspirational India cannot be satisfied with only achieving food security. An aspirational India has to aim at nutritional security – providing high-quality, nutritious food to all Indian citizens.

Nutritional security would include not only providing necessary nutrition to those malnourished but also targeting those with diet-driven lifestyle diseases. Growing and consuming healthy food has to be at the centre of achieving this ambition. For example, the consumption of iron is a significant component of maternal service schemes – but can that excess iron requirement be met through food instead of external medicines?

Similarly, lack of protein intake can result in malnutrition but can be countered by access to protein. Malnutrition is widespread in children, with a UNICEF report estimating that 69 per cent of deaths of children under the age of 5 years is because of malnutrition. Further, the report suggested that only 42 per cent of children (in the age group of 6 to 23 months) are fed at an adequate frequency, and 21 per cent get an adequately diverse diet. Conversely, India has also recorded a four per cent increase in obesity in both men and women in the last five years, according to the fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). While a host of reasons drive obesity, access to nutritious food is a key influencing factor. To resolve both undernutrition and obesity, the availability of a variety of nutritious food is essential.

The key to accessing nutritious food lies in getting good agricultural produce – be it crops or fisheries. This would require increasing both the yield and quality of our crops. The PM hinted at organic or natural farming as a potential way of achieving better yields. However, as evident from the recent experience of Sri Lanka, investing in a single form of farming can adversely impact national food security. Changes to agricultural strategies have to be gradual and safeguard against a variety of assaults such as pests, famine and deteriorating quality of soil, whilst increasing yields to suffice an increasing population. No single farming strategy can solve these problems; indeed, India has to deploy a mix of natural, organic and technology-enabled farming to stay apace of our nutritional demands. In this regard, genetically modified crops also increase crop yields by protecting against pests.

Further, India will also require produce that can deliver better nutrition – be it in the form of an increased repertoire of nutrients, reduced harmful components or food that preserves nutrients longer. Achieving this using traditional farming methods is possible only to a certain extent. Traditional breeding also takes relatively longer and may not result in the

desired characteristic. The solution to better quality produce lies in innovation – another facet of agriculture that the PM highlighted. His call for the inclusion of Jan Anusadhan – growth driven by innovation – to Jai Kisan, Jai Jawan, is the way forward for Indian agriculture to provide nutritional security. Genetic modification technologies provide a method to achieve a desirable characteristic while retaining other important food traits. These technologies are relatively faster than traditional breeding and can be targeted to add or subtract particular characteristics. Gene modifications can also result in characteristics that may not be easily achievable using traditional breeding – resistance to bollworms in cotton, for example.

Efforts are being made to fortify traditional staples to deliver more nutrients and produce healthier oils. For example, Genetically Modified (GM) soybean – a good source of protein - has been engineered with relatively lower levels of polyunsaturated fats. The oil derived from this soybean has been demonstrated to confer certain health benefits compared to oil derived from conventional soybean. Further understanding of crop biology and increased dexterity of gene modification techniques will yield crops better tailored to tackle problems that will inadvertently arise as a result of climate change, increasing food demand and decreasing biodiversity.

However, the success of genetic modification technologies lies in the formulation of supporting public policy and transparency of data obtained during safety studies and field trials. Thus, innovation can only thrive when a conducive environment is created. The current narrative of all genetically modified food being unsafe or "bad" precludes any new investment or research in this area. Instead, a case-by-case evaluation of the net benefits offered by a particular genetically modified crop would ensure India avails of beneficial crops whilst also safeguarding the health of our citizens. As India progresses, we have to aspire to aim for nutritional security instead of only food security. Technology has to be a major driver, and judging emerging technologies without a complete evaluation and benefit to risk assessment would result in India missing out on key advances. Therefore, India needs to embrace the call for Jai Anusandhan and develop policies that can enhance the development and adoption of key emerging technologies.

(Shambhavi Naik is Head of Research, Takshashila Institution)

FOREIGN POLICY

TRIBUNE,AUG19 ,2022

Reorienting India away from Russia long-term challenge, says US as Doval meets Patrushev

Sandeep Dixit

Even as National Security Adviser Ajit Doval held confabulations with his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev to advance bilateral ties, the US today said it recognised that there were countries around the world that had long-standing ties with nations like Russia.

“Reorienting a country’s foreign policy or a country’s security establishment or defence procurement practices away from a country like Russia is not something that we can do overnight. It’s not something that we can do over the course of weeks or even months. We do see this as a long-term challenge,” said US State Department spokesperson Ned Price. On the other hand, Moscow said Doval and its Deputy PM Denis Manturov also met to use the mechanism of the Inter-governmental Commission to the maximum degree to “strengthen bilateral collaboration across the board.” This is Doval's first visit to Russia since the Ukraine conflict and it comes ahead of the Vostok (East) 2022 exercises to be held in Russia from August 30 to September 5 in which India, China, Belarus, Tajikistan, Mongolia and other countries will participate. Asked if India’s participation in the Vostok military exercises represented the failure of the US approach to isolate Russia, the US State Department said the US did not ask countries to choose between the US and any other country.

PIONEER, AUG 20, 2022

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES GROW IN AMRIT KAAL

Kumardeep Banerjee

Foreign policy must evolve to meet economic clouts

Imran Khan, the ousted Prime Minister of Pakistan, recently praised India’s autonomous foreign policy in a political meeting. He complimented India for choosing a path of calibrated diplomacy in the aftermath of the ongoing war in Ukraine. While Khan’s praise may not be the most sought after accolade for India’s foreign policy strategy, it does reflect the directional shift in our external relations, in the nearly 75 years of being an independent democratic republic.

India’s foreign policy stance in the last 75 years has been a matter of careful choices made as result of its colonial past and a cold war era world order cleaved in the middle. India in 1947 was an infant republic, which had almost overnight chosen the path of democracy to govern one of the largest, diverse crowds of citizens around the globe. It meant, laying the foundations of democracy first, thereby bringing in political empowerment, before economic prosperity.

The founding architects of the Indian republic also had socialist bent of mind and believed in the idea of a welfare state. That meant the state would be the biggest job creator and would be present in every domain of public life. This inward focus of the state meant India’s foreign policy remained an ambiguous bunch of principles, better left for the most seasoned bureaucrats and statesmen to tackle.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the longest serving external affairs minister of India, besides being a Prime Minister. All his successors in the next 50 years were in the hot seat of managing external relations for less than four years.

However, this changed in 2014 when the Narendra Modi-led BJP government came to power and an articulate Sushma Swaraj occupied the seat for five years. The change and the willingness to showcase India's diplomatic prowess had started somewhere in the early 2000, when India realised it must have an independent foreign policy. The 1960s hangover of the nonaligned era, which was the underlying template for India's foreign policy, was slowly beginning to wane. India had chosen nonalignment along with a few other like minded countries as the stated strategy to engage with the external world, which had been split between the US and the USSR blocs.

The neutral stance underscored India's bilateral, and plurilateral engagements on the global stage. It also meant India never tried to engage with its global counterparts beyond a couple of issues (such as Kashmir and relations with its neighbour Pakistan). India and China had a bitter military faceoff in the 1960s, but it didn't leave a lasting dent in the bilateral relations beyond the decade. In fact, many subsequent leaders since the first faceoff, tried to bunch India China as two Asian powers which could be a formidable force for the rest of the world. An aggressive

China gobbling up islands in the Indian Ocean Region, coercing smaller nations into binding aid for development of infrastructure (Belt and Road Initiative), the growing distance between China and the US and finally the military faceoff between China and India in 2020 in Galwan ensured India's foreign policy architecture has a permanent China docket.

India in 2022 is a nearly \$3 trillion economy and making steady progress towards being the third largest economy in the world by 2030. This economic power means a vociferous say in global affairs and an assured seat on multilateral high tables. India in the 75th year of its Independence has to keep realigning its foreign policy to match the changed status.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator.)

GOVERNANCE

PIB AUG 17,2022

Cabinet approves widening access of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) database to users, besides patent offices

The Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the “Widening access of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) database to users, besides patent offices”. The opening up of the TKDL database to users is an ambitious and forward-looking action by the Government of India. This will be a new dawn for Indian traditional knowledge, as the TKDL will drive research & development, and innovation based on India’s valued heritage across diverse fields. The opening up of the TKDL is also envisaged to inculcate thought and knowledge leadership through Bharatiya Gnana Parampara, under the New Education Policy 2020.

Indian traditional knowledge (TK) offers immense potential to serve national and global needs, therewith providing societal benefits as well as economic growth. For example, the traditional systems of medicine and wellness from our country, namely Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Sowa Rigpa, and Yoga are serving the needs of people from India and abroad even today. The recent COVID- 19 pandemic has also been witnessing extensive use of Indian traditional medicines whose benefits range from immune-boosting to symptoms-relief to anti-viral activity. Earlier this year in April, the World Health Organization (WHO) established its first off-shore Global Centre for Traditional Medicines (GCTM) in India. These demonstrate the continued relevance of traditional knowledge in address the current and emerging needs of the world.

The approval of the Cabinet to widen the access of the database beyond patent offices lays emphasis on integrating and co-opting traditional knowledge with current practices towards enhancing innovation and trade. The TKDL will act as an important sources of TK information for advancing knowledge and technology frontiers. The current contents of TKDL shall facilitate wider adoption of Indian traditional medicines, while also propelling new manufacturers and innovators to gainfully build enterprises based on our valuable knowledge heritage.

The TKDL can cater to a vast user base that would include businesses/companies {herbal healthcare (AYUSH, pharmaceuticals, phytopharmaceuticals, and nutraceuticals), personal care, and other FMCG}, research institutions: public and private; educational institutions: educators & students; and others: ISM practitioners, knowledge holders, patentees and their legal representatives, and government, among several others. The access to the TKDL database would be through a paid subscription model with a phase-wise opening to national and international users.

In future, more information on Indian traditional knowledge from other domains will be added to the TKDL database from the perspectives of the “3P – Preservation. Protection and Promotion”. While catering to its primary mandate of preventing grant of wrong patents on Indian traditional knowledge, the TKDL database will also push creative minds to innovate for better, safer and more effective solutions for a healthier and technology endowed population. India’s rich heritage shall lay a strong foundation for newer socio-economic developments.

About TKDL: The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is a prior art database of Indian traditional knowledge established in 2001, jointly by the Council of Scientific and

Industrial Research (CSIR) and Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H, now Ministry of AYUSH). The TKDL is a first of its kind globally and has been serving as an exemplary model to other nations. The TKDL currently contains information from existing literature related to ISM such as Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Yoga. The information is documented in a digitized format in five international languages which are English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish. TKDL provides information in languages and format understandable by patent examiners at Patent Offices worldwide, so as to prevent the erroneous grant of patents. Until now, access to the complete TKDL database is restricted to 14 Patent Offices worldwide for the purposes of search and examination. This defensive protection through TKDL has been effective in safeguarding Indian traditional knowledge from misappropriation, and is considered a global benchmark.

PIB AUG17, 2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, Government has institutionalised Capacity Building of its officials for getting maximum output. Addressing the Assistant Section Officers (Probationers) of 2019 Batch at ISTM in New Delhi, Dr Jitendra Singh calls upon civil servants to work towards fulfilling the expectations of a citizen in a diligent and result-oriented manner

The Minister lauds the role of training division of DOPT and ISTM in their efforts to fulfil the vision of the Prime Minister in this massive and historic effort of Capacity Building for all categories of Civil Servants

Dr Jitendra Singh releases a book “Transforming India- Governance for Atmanirbhar Bharat” & “Adhigam”, ISTM’s Journal on ‘Research on Training and Governance’ on the occasion

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said, Government has institutionalised Capacity Building of its officials for getting maximum output.



Addressing the Assistant Section Officers (Probationers) of 2019 Batch at ISTM here, Dr Jitendra Singh said, welfare of every citizen is at the heart of national planning and programmes in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision for building a New India. He said,

citizen welfare is not only the prime constitutional mandate for the government, but it is also important for ensuring a participative form of the Government.



Dwelling on the training aspects of civil servants, Dr Jitendra Singh underlined that Government of India attaches high priority to training needs of every official and it is now implementing the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building or Mission Karmayogi aimed at creating an opportunity of world class capacity building to all Government officials based on the key principle of “role-based” learning” than the earlier practice of training in Rule based programs. He also expressed satisfaction that the ASO Foundation Training Programme is one of the first to have been redesigned incorporating important principles of Mission Karmayogi.

This is the second batch to undergo the revamped “role based” and “competency-based” training, where there will be a mix of online, on the job and class room training as well. The Ministries and Departments where they will be posted now will also be planning for their capacity building in the domain specific competencies, so that they can deliver the best in their allocated job.

Dr Jitendra Singh told the officers that after qualifying the difficult exam, they are part of the government machinery, and the entire nation looks towards them for playing their role efficiently, smartly and effectively. He said, it is time for them to work towards fulfilling the expectations of a citizen in a diligent and result-oriented manner by cutting down delays, ensuring timely disposal of business and strengthening the system of monitoring of outputs and outcomes. The Minister said, the ASOs have the advantage of bringing in the fresh perspective and views on existing problems and they can use new thinking and ingenuity in their work processes, wherever posted.

Dr Jitendra Singh felt happy for being informed that more than half of this batch are Science Graduates and added that this will help in adapting to the changing roles of CSS – being tech savvy for citizen centric feedback, real time monitoring of schemes/programmes etc. He also pointed out that Prime Minister Modi’s many new schemes have strong scientific basis and orientation, be it Gatishakti, Digital India, Start-up India, Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile trinity, Direct Benefit Transfer and dashboards and platforms for monitoring of all major programmes. He said, the background of probationers and skill set will greatly help them to quickly understand the job requirements and help in making important contribution.

Dr Jitendra Singh reminded the probationers that Prime Minister always emphasised to treat “Government Service as your “Seva” and not “Naukri”. Referring to his personal experience, the Minister told them that no other job will provide them an opportunity to work in several

Ministries and Departments and connect with so many colleagues in other organisations and to directly serve the society than the one they are now part of.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, Central Secretariat, as the entire universe of Central Ministries and Departments is commonly referred to, is the nerve centre of functioning of the Government of India as the Secretariat is essentially meant for policy formulation, implementation, coordination with State Governments and field agencies and monitoring organisation of the government. He said, the Secretariat's primary responsibility is to assist and advise the political executive in policy formulation, implementation, review and modification of such policies from time to time. Besides, the Secretariat also looks after several other important functions such as drafting legislations, rules and regulations, Sectoral planning and programme formulation, and exercises budgetary control, the Minister added.

Referring to Prime Minister's speech, Dr Jitendra Singh said, "In this period of "Amrit Kaal", we have to take Reform, Perform, Transform to the next level. That is why today's India is moving ahead with the spirit of Sabka Prayas". He also recalled Mahatma Gandhi's mantra that every decision should be evaluated on the touchstone of the welfare of the last person in the last line. The Minister reminded the officers that they have a long way to go and serve the Secretariat for the next 30-35 years or so and they will be part of the great process of social and economic transformation being carried forward in terms of the vision of the Prime Minister to take the country to the Golden era in its 100th year of Independence in 2047.

Dr Jitendra Singh also released a book "Transforming India- Governance for Atmanirbhar Bharat" & "Adhigam", ISTM's Journal on 'Research on Training and Governance' on the occasion. Dr Jitendra Singh congratulated the officers for joining the central secretariat service, which serves as an institutional memory and provides continuity in Administration. He also wished success to the training division of DOPT and ISTM in their efforts to fulfil the vision of the Prime Minister in this massive and historic effort of Capacity Building for all categories of Civil Servants.

Smt. S. Radha Chauhan, Secretary (Personnel), Smt. Deepti Umashankar, EO & Additional Secretary, DoPT, Dr. R. Balasubramaniam, Member (HR), CBC, Shri S.D. Sharma, Director, ISTM & Joint Secretary (Trg.) and other senior officers joined the event.

PIB AUG 17, 2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh and Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Shri Pema Khandu to inaugurate the two-day Regional Conference on Administrative Reforms at Itanagar tomorrow

DARPG to ink an MOU with Government of Arunachal Pradesh for conducting Mid-Career Building Programs in Governance for 500 officers of Government of Arunachal Pradesh Administrative Services over the next 5 years. This Conference is dedicated to the region of North Eastern States and Eastern States of India with more than 300 delegates are expected to participate in the Conference

A two-day Regional Conference on the theme "Bringing Citizens and Government Closer through Administrative Reforms" will be held at Itanagar on 18-19th August, 2022. The Regional Conference is being organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in collaboration with Government of Arunachal Pradesh. Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge)

Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh along with Shri Pema Khandu, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and Shri Chowna Mein, Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh will inaugurate the two-day event. The National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG) shall enter into an MOU with Government of Arunachal Pradesh for conducting Mid-Career Building Programs in Governance for 500 officers of Government of Arunachal Pradesh Administrative Services over the next 5 years.

During the 2-day event, presentations will be made in the following sessions: (i) Reforms in Governance; (ii) Public Grievance Redressal and e-Office in N. E. States; (iii) Good Governance Practices in North Eastern States; (iv) District Good Governance Index and (v) Good Governance Practices. This Conference is dedicated to the region of North Eastern States and Eastern States of India. More than 300 delegates from PAN-India are expected to participate in the Conference. The conference is being held in a semi-virtual mode.

The conference is an effort to bring the Government and Citizens closer through various administrative reforms at the centre, state and district level. It is being factored by use of digital technology pursuing next generation reforms and innovations with policy objective of "Maximum Governance, Minimum Government", entailing Government process Re-engineering, Universal access to e-services, excellence in digital initiatives at district level and excellence in adopting emerging technologies and use of ICT Management.

Shri NBS Rajput, Joint Secretary, ARPG will present the welcome address. After welcome address, Shri Dharmendra, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh; Shri Lok Ranjan, Secretary, DoNER and Shri V. Srinivas, Secretary, ARPG will also address the inaugural session. A film on PM Awarded initiatives 2021 in North East Region, made by DAR&PG will be screened. The vote of thanks will be presented by Shri Ajai Chagti, Secretary (AR), Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh during the inaugural session.

PIB AUG 18, 2022

“Inspired by Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, and to bring ‘Blue Revolution’ TDB-DST supports its first aquaculture project”

“TDB-DST contributes to ‘Blue Revolution’ through technology intervention, supports sustainable & responsible development of fisheries sector in India” “TDB-DST enters new domain, funds its first ever ‘Aquaculture’ project using ‘state of the art’ Israeli technology for production of Tilapia Fish”

“TDB-DST supports M/s Fountainhead Agro Farms Private Limited, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra for ‘Advanced, Intensive, All Male Tilapia Aquaculture Project with Israeli Technology”

Fisheries is one of the fastest growing sectors amongst the primary producing sectors. The sector plays a vital role in economic and overall development of the country, also referred as the “sunrise sector”, it is poised to bring in immense potential through equitable and inclusive growth. The sector is recognized as a powerful engine for providing employment to 14.5 million people and sustaining livelihood for 28 million fishermen community of the country. Thus, the sector urges young entrepreneurs of the country to come forward and offer solutions, resolving on-ground challenges through technology interventions and innovative solutions. To promote this, the cabinet under the chairmanship of Hon’ble Prime Minister, came up with ‘Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)’ to bring about ‘Blue Revolution’ through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India. The

scheme targets to enhance fish production to 220 lakh metric tons by 2024-25, at an average annual growth rate of about 9%. The ambitious scheme also aims to double the export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore and generate about 55 lakhs direct and indirect employment opportunities in fisheries sector over a period of next five years.

Realizing the potential of Fisheries sector, Technology Development Board, a statutory body under Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India supports M/s Fountainhead Agro Farms Private Limited, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra for 'Advanced, Intensive, All Male Tilapia Aquaculture Project with Israeli Technology'. The board has penned an mutual agreement, to provide loan assistance of Rs. 8.42 crores out of the total project cost of Rs. 29.78 crores to the company. 'Tilapia' has emerged to be one of the most productive and internationally traded food fish in the world. The culture of tilapia has become commercially popular in many parts of the world and the fishery experts have dubbed the tilapia as "aquatic chicken" due to its quick growth and low maintenance cultivation. Today, if any fish that could be named as global fish, no better name can be thought of than Tilapia.

In order to facilitate the culture of Tilapia in India in responsible manner, M/s Fountainhead Agro Farms Private Limited envisages setting up of a complete production line (from breeding to full fish) in Mudhol (Karnataka). The company aims to produce 500 tons of Tilapia, to be grown from the imported parent broodstock 'Hermon' from Nir David Fish Breeding Farm, Israel. Hermon is a hybrid of two selected strains of Tilapia, namely *Oreochromis Niloticus* (Male) and *Oreochromis Aureus* (Female), and is known for special characteristics such as high growth rate; resistance to low temperature; light (attractive) colour; all hybrid fry progeny of males only, without the conventional system of usage of hormones.

The company has adopted advanced Israeli Technology from Aquaculture Production Technology Limited (APTIL), Israel (under Technology Service Agreement signed in October, 2020) for land locked locations through closed loop farming for arid zone with seasonal water supply from rivers, which may be replicated throughout India in multiple arid landlocked locations with reasonable water sources. In order to suit Indian conditions, the complete engineering of the facility is tuned as per the requirement of site conditions such as land availability, water availability, weather conditions, availability of the surrounding resources, soil conditions, topography.

Sh. Rajesh Kumar Pathak, IP&TAFS, Secretary, TDB said that, "The Govt. of India has placed special attention to fisheries sector with a view to uplift fishermen community of India economically through 'Blue Revolution'. The sector holds vast potential for export, especially the 'Tilapia Fish' considering its huge demand in the global market. Also, the imported technology being 'one of its kind' will be a great addition to Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), the ambitious scheme of Hon'ble PM, which aims to double the export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore from fisheries sector.

PIB AUG 20,2022

Grameen Udyami Project launched in Ranchi to promote skill development and Entrepreneurship amongst the tribal youth, gives boost to Skill India Mission

Skilling is the passport to prosperity: Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, MoS, MSDE

Shri Narendra Modi has emphasised that the route to Atmanirbhar Bharat will be through Atmanirbhar villages, Atmanirbhar towns and Atmanirbhar districts -Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar

Phase-II of the project launches in Ranchi, Jharkhand, to multiskill youth in tribal areas

To augment skill training in tribal communities for their inclusive and sustainable growth, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in partnership with Seva Bharti and Yuva Vikas Society, today launched the second phase of Grameen Udyami Project, today. Under the initiative, the endeavour is to multiskill India's youth and impart functional skills to them for enabling livelihoods. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has emphasised on the involvement of tribal communities in the workforce, ensuring their holistic development to make them self-reliant and contained within their respective geographies.

Shri Arjun Munda, Union Minister of Tribal affairs launched the programme, Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State (MoS) for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship; and Electronics & IT, virtually addressed the august gathering and Shri Bishweswar Tudu, MoS, Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti inspired the audience with his encouraging words. The event witnessed the presence of key dignitaries, Shri V. Satish, Mahamantri, Rashtriya Seh Sangathan, Shri Samir Oraon, Rashtriya adyaksh, Ansuchit Janjati Morcha evam Rajya Sabha Sansad and Shri Shivshankar Oraon, MLA, Gumla, Jharkhand.

Grameen Udyami is a unique multiskilling project, funded by NSDC that aims to train 450 tribal students in Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. The project is being implemented in six states— Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Gujarat. This concept was crystallized by MoS, Shri. Rajeev Chandrasekhar and tribal MPs.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Arjun Munda stated that our complete focus is on strengthening sustainable livelihood for tribal populations and with this, the central government has sanctioned a budget of 85,000 cr. exclusively for tribal areas. There is also a dire need of increasing ownership so that there is awareness built around such schemes and initiatives. There is so much potential and ability in the tribal youth that all we need to do is lay down the right avenues for them to use their talent in the right places. He expressed that Grameen Udyami project will prove to be game changer for the tribal communities of Jharkhand and will extend the right opportunities to them to stand on their own feet. He urged gram panchayats, villages, and blocks to bring these initiatives to youth for their progress.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar said that we recently celebrated Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav to honour India's rich past and committed ourselves to Amrit Kaal, a vision for New India for the twenty five years. This New India will bring new opportunities and better prospects for India's youth. We all witnessed the challenges posed by COVID-19 but also experienced India's win over this grave situation and our efforts got recognised, globally. Our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has emphasised that the route to Atmanirbhar Bharat will be through Atmanirbhar villages, Atmanirbhar towns and Atmanirbhar districts. Therefore, our tribal communities take precedence in our efforts to propel India's economic growth, he added. He hoped that the success that Grameen Udyami project has achieved in Madhya Pradesh, it will receive the same response in Jharkhand since skilling is the passport to prosperity of any region.

Shri Bishweswar Tudu expressed that a nation can develop if cities develop and cities will develop, if we invest in the development of villages. And a key component of this is to provide quality education to our tribal communities so that several prospects open-up for their growth. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has also focused on the inclusivity, financial growth of our tribal areas and certainly, Grameen Udyami project will provide economic empowerment to our tribal population. Umpteen number of schemes and pilot projects have also been initiated for accelerating the economic engine of India, he added. In the first phase of training, candidates were mobilized from rural and tribal areas of

Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. Since candidates were mobilized from the rural areas, transportation, boarding & lodging was provided to candidates so that they do not miss out the learning opportunity due to lack of resources. In Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, training of 157 candidates started in seven batches in the month of May, 2022 and approximately 133 candidates completed the training successfully on June 27th, 2022. The phase-II of the pilot project launched in Ranchi today is being implemented by Yuva Vikas Society, through Seva Bharti Kendra in Ranchi. NSDC under the aegis of MSDE has supported in setting up of labs and classrooms through Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) in Seva Bharti Kendra Skill Development Center. The training under the project will be conducted in the following Job roles which are relevant to the local economy.

Electrician & Solar PV Installation Technician

Plumbing & Masonry

2-Wheeler Repair & Maintenance

IT/ITES with e-Governance

Farm Mechanization

Grameen Udyami Yojana is implemented under Sansadiya Parisankul Yojana. A two-day conference of Honorable MPs was held in Mumbai to discuss the upliftment of tribal communities in January 2020 in which various experts and government organizations shared their experiences. Further, Scheduled Tribe organizations called for a 'Parliamentary ST Cluster Development Project' which has been initiated. Under which, 49 clusters in 15 states of India have been selected by 40 tribal MPs of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Under their leadership, the scheme in respective clusters will be implemented. One development associate is appointed by the MPs in each cluster.

Following objectives must be achieved under the project:

Increase in Rural/Local Economy

Enhance employment opportunities

Reduce forced migration due to lack of local opportunities

Conservation of natural resources

Due to lack of skill and education, organized sectors have very poor contribution in tribal livelihood as compared to the national average. Therefore, initiatives like Grameen Udyami project are critical for their betterment and to ensure their livelihood generation.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TELEGRAPH,AUG19,2022

Near Northeast, 'aggressive' steps by Chinese army

Increasing deployment of troops closer to the border in eastern sector is alarming: Defence ministry official

Imran Ahmed Siddiqui

The Chinese army is making "aggressive" moves along the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, an assessment by security agencies suggests.

Multiple sources in the security establishment told The Telegraph that the Chinese, besides trying to alter the status quo in Ladakh, had intensified patrolling along the undemarcated eastern frontier and begun reinforcing military posts and infrastructure. "Intelligence reports and a ground assessment indicate aggressive patrolling by the Chinese, especially in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh," a security official attached to the Union home ministry said.

"They have been reinforcing their military posts closer to the frontier and have intensified infrastructure building." A defence ministry official said: "The increasing deployment of Chinese troops closer to the border in the eastern sector is alarming. They have also been deploying additional military assets, besides showing aggressive intent and increasing patrolling." India too is building infrastructure along the border, and has brought additional troops to the eastern sector to dissuade the Chinese from coming closer, the official said.

Some 1,346km of the 3,488km LAC falls in the eastern sector. The Tawang sector alone has a 270km border with China. Beijing claims 90,000sqkm of territory in the eastern sector, practically the whole of Arunachal, as its own. The two armies had been locked in a "face-off" for a few hours in the Tawang sector last October following a crossover by nearly 200 Chinese soldiers. The Chinese later returned to their side.

"To guard against further Chinese transgressions, the Indian Army too has reinforced its posts," another defence ministry official said. He said the army had deployed additional cameras and was using satellite imagery to keep an eye on the Chinese troops along the LAC in the eastern sector. The two armies have been locked in a border standoff in Ladakh since May 2020, with the Chinese estimated to have taken over nearly 1,000sqkm of India-claimed territory.

LAW

STATESMAN , AUG 19, 2022

Defection law needs safeguards

Interestingly, post-poll alliances have numbered more in India than pre-poll alliances.

ASHIT KUMAR SRIVASTAVA

In the recent political shift, there was another alliance broken and an old one resurrected in an Indian state. Interestingly, post-poll alliances have numbered more in India than pre-poll alliances. Rather, it seems quite comfortable for those in political parties to make their choices to ensure their longer occupation of office. However, from a democratic and individual voter-centric perspective how far these alliances seem justifiable needs to be scrutinized carefully.

In the last decade or so, India has seen five to six post-poll alliances, this number will only increase if the overall history of Indian politics is seen. Such events showcase poor control or rather weak regulatory mechanisms to keep a check on such camaraderie. But it is not like post-poll alliances are anti-democratic or against the idea of the Constitution.

Unlike the West, where there are limited political parties, the Indian political ecosystem gives a flexible mechanism to parties to merge and to create new hybrid ideological alliances. Thus, post-poll alliances are not per se illegitimate. However, our Constitution does make an earnest effort to keep a check on horse-trading practices or what is famously slanged as ‘aaya ram gaya ram’ practice. Constant floor-crossing practice of elected representatives has the capacity of diluting constitutional values.

Thus, to stop this practice the Parliament had brought the 52nd amendment in the Indian Constitution, commonly termed as the Anti-Defection law, which prohibits defection. However, intrinsically, the Anti-Defection amendment is more individual centric, meaning it prohibits an individual elected representative from going against the whip of the original political party or leaving the political party from which he/she was the candidate. However, rules 3 and 4 are the exceptions to this amendment.

In case of a merger of a political party with another political party, it will not count as a defection by the candidate as she or he will be a part of the new hybrid or combination of political parties. Additionally, if a faction making up 1/3rd of the legislature party leaves the original party, it will also not amount to defection by the candidates (refer to rule 3 of Xth schedule of Indian Constitution). This has certainly turned out to be a boon for political defectors, as horse-trading might still be taking place, not on the level of the individual member but on a mass level. Even if these members are adjudged disqualified by the presiding officer of the legislature, for defection, they tend to lower the strength of the house, thus allowing the second largest party to form the government.

This is a mandate followed in pursuance of the S.R. Bommai (1994) judgement wherein the Governor tends to call the parties to showcase their strength on the floor of the House. However, there are larger Constitutional questions lurking behind this phenomenon, if mass defections are utilised to topple a government. For this would tend to defeat the very objective of the Xth Schedule, which is to ensure a stable government with stable governance.

If defection continues to take place, even by means of exceptions, it will open the polity to the same social evil which was persisting prior to the amendment. Though Supreme Court of India has from time to time intervened in questions of disqualifications of elected representatives – as in the cases of *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillu* (1992), *Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix v. Deputy Speaker, Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly and others* (2016) – these instances cannot keep a lid on the political upheaval that takes place with the movement of a large number of elected representatives from one political party to another, as the exception is becoming a generic rule.

Thus, it is necessary that a normative interpretation should be given to the provisions of the Xth Schedule, and same kind of safeguards should be created for the purpose of exceptions given in the given provisions. The Constitution cannot stand as a mute spectator to such political gimmicks. In the name of stakeholders (the people of India) political parties cannot be moulding the mandate of the people who voted with a particular purpose, for a particular party or coalition. That mandate has a purpose which must be fulfilled. It cannot be dispensed with for personal gain.

POLICY

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG19, 2022

Elevated inflation warrants appropriate policy response, says RBI article

Inflation is persistently at elevated levels that warrants appropriate policy responses to anchor expectations going forward, said an RBI article published on Thursday.

Retail inflation based on the consumer price index (CPI) softened to 6.71 per cent in July, mainly on account of moderation in food prices. The Reserve Bank has increased the benchmark lending rate (repo) in three quick successions by 140 basis points to tame inflation, which remains above its tolerance level for the seventh month in a row....perhaps the most heartening development in recent times has been the easing of inflation in July 2022 by 30 basis points from June 2022 and an appreciable 60 basis points from the average of 7.3 per cent for Q1:2022-23.

"This has validated our hypothesis that inflation peaked in April 2022," said the article on the 'state of the economy'. For the rest of the year, the RBI's projections scent a steady easing of the momentum of price changes, it said. The article has been authored by a team led by Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra. The RBI said the views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India. "With the trajectory of outcomes largely in line with projections, we expect momentum to ease from 3.0 per cent in Q1 to 1.7 per cent in Q2 and further to 1.3 per cent in Q3 and turn mildly negative in Q4 before picking up modestly and on seasonal food price effects to 2.2 per cent in Q1: 2023-24," according to the article.

If these expectations hold, inflation will fall from 7 to 5 per cent in Q1 next financial year - within the tolerance band, hovering closer to the target, but not yet positioned for landing, the authors said. Imported inflation pressure points remain the overarching risk, followed by pending pass-through of input costs if producers regain pricing power and wages. Yet, some risks have turned down - commodity prices, especially of crude; supply chain pressures; and revving up of monsoon activity due to the depression in the Bay of Bengal. "Inflation has edged down, but its persistence at elevated levels warrants appropriate policy responses to anchor expectations going forward," the article said. It further said that global growth prospects have turned gloomier over the month.

The easing of supply chain pressures and the recent ebbing of commodity prices are providing some breather from record high inflation. In India, supply conditions are improving, with the recent monsoon pick-up, strong momentum in manufacturing and a rebound in services. The onset of the festival season should boost consumer demand, including rural, also as sowing activity picks up. Robust central government capital outlays are supporting investment activity, it said.

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 19, 2022

Shipping ministry proposes amendment to 110 year-old Indian Ports Act

The Shipping Ministry has proposed establishing a national council for structured growth and development of the port sector in the draft Indian Ports Bill. The proposed bill seeks to amend The Indian Ports Act, 1908 with the intent of empowering and establishing State Maritime Boards. The changes are targeted towards effective administration, control and management of non-major ports in India. These boards will also provide for adjudicatory mechanisms for

redressal of port related disputes. An official statement said the existing act is more than 110 years old and it needs to be revamped for reflecting the present-day frameworks. This draft bill proposes to repeal and replace the existing 1908 Act. An official statement said the focus is on prevention and containment of pollution at ports, ensuring compliance with the country's obligation under the maritime treaties and international instruments.

The bill also proposes to promote integrated planning between States inter-se and Centre-States through a consultative and recommendatory framework. "The proposed bill will homogenize and streamline the development of the maritime sector. It will incorporate State Maritime Boards in the national framework," the statement said. "The Maritime State Development Council will ensure cooperative federalism where Centre and State and Union Territory Governments will work together towards preparing progressive road map for the country," it added. It is said that the redundant provisions of the Act have been deleted or replaced with more relevant provisions. The existing penalties in the Act which are out dated have been updated with respect to amounts and offences relevant to present day scenario.

In another development, Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal is on an official visit to Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). An official statement said the Ministerial visit will strengthen ties and maritime relationship between the two nations. A Memorandum of Understanding concerning Mutual Recognition of Seafarer's Certificates of Competency in Unlimited Voyages between India and Iran is also proposed to be signed during this visit.

POLITICS

PIONEER,AUG 20, 2022

Propaganda politics at its best

Shshank Saurav

Propaganda politics seems to be the order of the day. Political parties are harping on propaganda to win people's confidence but it has its own perils

Joseph Goebbels famously said that if you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. Our political leadership seems to be following these principles and manufactured lies are spread to mislead the masses.

Congress is dying a slow death and many contenders want to fill the vacuum. Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is pushing hard and going beyond the established principles of politics to project itself as an alternative to the ruling BJP. In the recent series of attacks, AAP is accusing the Modi government of giving undue financial benefits to corporates by writing-off the loans of more than Rs. Ten lakh crores. A loan write-off is a technical term that is often used to sanitise the balance sheet and get some taxation benefits. A write-off doesn't mean that the bank will stop chasing recoveries. A loan waiver is different in which banks waive off the amount and no efforts are made for further recovery. It is naïve to assume that Kejriwal and the team are not aware of these technicalities.

RBI data shows that corporate loan accounts which were subjected to restructuring have decreased consistently after 2015. Corporate loans and overall loans restructured in 2015 were Rs. 180,299 crore & Rs. 476,853 crores which came down to Rs. 22,941 crore and Rs. 143,010 crores in 2021. Insolvency law was implemented in 2016 and it has been a huge success. Cases involving amounts worth approximately Rs. Seven lakh crores have been resolved under IBC. Capital adequacy is another major indicator to measure the health of the banking industry and it has improved after the introduction of IBC.

This entire discussion originated after PM Modi criticised freebies and Supreme Court also commented that freebie culture is not sustainable. AAP is no longer new to politics and they have been ruling Delhi for almost 8 years. CM Kejriwal often highlights that Delhi is a revenue surplus state despite giving subsidies but he hides that Delhi has been a revenue surplus state even since 2004-05. Delhi is a revenue surplus state primarily because pension liability of the Delhi govt. employees and expenditure of Delhi Police are borne by the central government. This luxury is not available to other states and perhaps this is the reason for Punjab CM asking the Centre to fund his irrational poll promises. Delhi CM conveniently skips the fiscal deficit situation and increased borrowings. Delhi had close to nineteen thousand crores of fiscal deficit in 2021-22 and the estimated fiscal deficit for 2022-23 is fourteen thousand crores. Transparency has gone for a toss during the AAP regime which is evident from the fact that annual accounts of various State Public Sector Enterprises (SPSEs) and autonomous bodies were not submitted to C&AG for audit. Entrepreneurship culture is missing in the government and the net worth of various SPSEs has been completely eroded. A few notable names are Delhi Power Company Limited and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) which had a negative net worth of Rs. 37,125 crores on 31 March 2020. Even Delhi Jal Board's (DJB) annual accounts are not published after 2017 and opposition is alleging a huge scam in DJB. C&AG has already highlighted that concessionaires by Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (DSIIDC) have been given undue financial benefits. The AAP government also canceled the liquor licenses after the

recommendation of CBI inquiry on the new Excise Policy which bypassed the rules. Health and education sector reforms are highlighted as a major achievement of Kejriwal. However, facts and figures reveal the dismal performance of the Delhi government. Data published by the government shows that the number of teachers for primary till secondary schools has reduced and investment in education as a percentage of overall expenditure almost remained at the 2014 level. Pass percentage in class 10 for Delhi govt. schools and India were 81.27 and 94.4 respectively for 2022 which punctures the whole narrative of education reform. The number of hospitals in Delhi decreased from 95 in 2014-15 to 88 in 2021-22 and if this decline is sought to be offset with Mohalla clinics then there could be no cruel joke on Delhiites than this.

Delhi is struggling to control pollution but the number of fleets operated by DTC has come down from 5,223 in 2014 to 3,762 in 2020 (pre-Covid era). Fleet utilisation percentage and daily average passenger have also gone down in the AAP era. Delhi government is giving electricity subsidy and Capex amount is diverted to fund this. Expenditure in the energy sector was 4.15% of total plan expenditure which came down to 0.03% in 2021. Goebbels also said that propaganda is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Maybe Arvind Kejriwal is a die-hard fan of propaganda politics and using his lies as a means to amass political power.

(Writer is a chartered accountant, author, and public policy analyst)

POLLUTION

TRIBUNE, AUG19,2022

Preventing pollution

Challenge is to tap into yearning for making a difference

Pollution is typically viewed as a local issue to be addressed through provincial regulation, though its drivers and its effects on health transcend boundaries. Synergising environmental policies becomes essential considering that by 2050, as much as 68 per cent of the world's population is expected to live in urban areas. A US-based research organisation's report on air pollution exposure and health impacts in 7,239 cities across the globe (with a minimum population of 50,000) from 2010 to 2019 presents the grim reality for India, which it says is home to 18 of the 20 cities with the most severe increase in fine particle pollutants (PM2.5). Delhi and Kolkata had the highest average levels among the most-populated cities, recording 106 and 99 deaths per one lakh population in 2019, respectively, attributed to air pollution. Worldwide, air pollution alone is said to account for one in nine deaths.

According to another report, about 93 per cent of India's population was living in areas where PM2.5 pollution levels were worse than even the lowest recorded by the World Health Organisation for its new air quality standards. Amid the scary numbers, a tiny window of hope is the mounting public concern and awareness. How to tap into this yearning for making a difference at an individual level and through community participation is a challenge, of course, but also an opportunity. The Centre and states have come up with policies that incentivise renewable sources of energy, but the rapid combined thrust for a large-scale transition still awaits an effective strategy.

Pollution prevention has to be integrated into the development agenda. No amount is enough as an investment in monitoring and supporting pollution reduction efforts. As extreme weather conditions and unsafe settlements test human survival, the close link between pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss could not be clearer.

PRIVATISATION

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG19, 2022

Bank privatisation should be gradual, notes RBI paper

Bank privatisation should be a gradual process as big-bang sales of public sector banks can do more harm than good, a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) paper said.

The paper argued that while private sector lenders are more efficient in profit maximisation, public sector banks (PSBs) have done much better at promoting financial inclusion, delivering farm loans and achieving monetary transmission, which are key objectives of both the government and the RBI. The government had announced a plan to privatise two state-owned banks in the FY22 budget.

"Such a gradual approach would ensure that large-scale privatisation does not create a void in fulfilling important social objectives of financial inclusion and monetary transmission," said the paper authored by Snehal S Herwadkar, Sonali Goel and Rishuka Bansal of the RBI's banking research division. A recent policy paper by former Niti Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya and Poonam Gupta, a member of the economic advisory council to the Prime Minister, had called for the privatisation of all PSBs except State Bank of India. 'More Welfare Enhancing than Private Peers' Gupta is also the director general of National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), an economic policy research think tank.

"An important aspect that is often ignored by researchers proposing privatisation is the role played by PSBs (public sector banks) in financial inclusion," the RBI paper said. "An alternate perspective provides empirical evidence on how PSBs have been more welfare enhancing than their private sector counterparts in India." "When the objective function is changed to include financial inclusion--total branches, agricultural loans, priority sector advances--PSBs prove to be more efficient, it said.

Points to Ponder

A recent policy paper by Arvind Panagariya and Poonam Gupta had called for privatisation of all PSBs except SBI

Paper authored by Snehal S Herwadkar, Sonali Goel and Rishuka Bansal of RBI's banking research division takes a different view

Views expressed are those of the authors and do not represent those of RBI

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- PSBs more welfare enhancing than private banks
- Lending by PSBs more pro-cyclical
- They help countercyclical monetary policy to gain traction, contribute more to macroeconomic stability
- Labour cost efficiency of PSBs higher than that of private lenders
- PSBs on a stronger footing after mergers and therefore govt should not rush bank privatisation

© ECPI 2022. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The views expressed in the paper are those of the authors and do not represent those of the RBI.

Providing empirical evidence, the paper said that lending by government-owned lenders is more pro-cyclical compared with private sector peers and thus they help the countercyclical monetary policy to gain traction and contribute more to macroeconomic stability. Several recent research efforts suggest that private ownership alone does not automatically generate economic gains in developing economies, the paper said. It has also often been argued by economists that government-owned banks contribute more to economic development and improve general economic welfare, it added. The privatisation of public sector banks has long been viewed as a key area of pending reforms in India. The paper, after empirically examining the performance of PSBs, found that the labour cost efficiency of PSBs is higher than that of private lenders. This implies that state-owned banks can incur lower labour costs and generate higher levels of output.

With the recent mergers of state-owned banks, along with efforts to clean up balance sheets and legacy bad loans, the PSBs are now on a much stronger footing and therefore the government should not rush bank privatisation, the paper added.

RURAL ECONOMY

BUSINESSLINE, AUG20, 2022

The forest economy must be nurtured

Ashwini Chhatre

Promoting partnerships between local communities, industry and government will ensure multiple benefits

The extent to which forests are present in our urban middle-class homes is underestimated. It's not just the timber used in our furniture, but also the 'wild' and 'natural' ingredients in our hand-lotions and soaps are sourced from our forests.

Consumers do not realise that the amla used in hair oil or the beheda included in traditional ayurvedic preparations like Triphala originated in a forest somewhere in central India. Or that sal butter is used as a substitute for cocoa butter in chocolate. Yes, the butter is derived from the seeds of Shorea Robusta, the most common tree species in many parts of eastern India. There is a large forest economy, which is the sum of all products that use raw materials sourced from a forest somewhere in India. Forests play a crucial role in supporting rural livelihood. An estimated 200 million forest-dependent people collect several valuable products from India's jungles. These are used as raw materials in diverse industries, such as processed foods and confectionery, pharmaceuticals, alternative medicine, cosmetics and perfumery, and paper and pulp.

Despite this, forests are generally seen as a space of poverty and deprivation. This indeed is true, as there is a strong congruence in the location of poverty and forests. The collection and trade of forest products is enmeshed in the informal sector, making it invisible. And the people who collect these forest products are also erased from the picture at the same time.

Unaware of the potential

At the other end, the industry is equally unaware of the potential of forests in creating jobs and wealth in the rural economy. They do not have information on the value, volume and distribution of seasonal forest products in the country because the first mile of the supply chain is invisible. Currently, forests do not create wealth at the source or benefit the people who ensure the supply of raw materials to industry. Wealth is created elsewhere, far away from the forests, leading to a congruence of forests and poverty.

Forests represent a significant source of opportunities for the creation of jobs, wealth, and prosperity. A three-pronged approach will convert forests into a space of opportunity. First, increase visibility by formalising the first-mile production system using digital technology. The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile trinity provides a ready-made working solution.

Second, achieve economies of scale through community-based enterprises for aggregation and market linkage. The experience of FPOs (farmer producer organisations) in agriculture can be easily replicated to include forest products. Third, increase productivity by setting up processing for value-addition at the local level.

Aggregation, processing and market linkages for forest products will increase household incomes for some of the poorest and marginal communities in India. As a result, the volume of the collection will increase, with an obvious threat to the health of forests. To ensure sustainability, incentives of individuals must be aligned with the community to prevent the

tragedy of the commons. The recognition of community forest resource rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 is an easy solution to ensure the long-term sustainability of forests. Investing in the forest economy presents several win-win opportunities. The only reason why forests are protected and will be protected in the future is if the local communities living in and near the forest profit from it in tangible ways. They have intimate knowledge of the forest, its products, as well the threats to its sustainability. If we create and capture value at the local level by empowering communities, we can ensure that our forests not only produce local benefits but enhance other services we expect from them.

The lynchpin of such an effort is a partnership between local communities as the custodians of forest resources, industry leaders using the products of these forests as raw material, and government agencies facilitating and regulating the creation of jobs and wealth. This proposal represents a triple-win opportunity by reducing environmental threats, creating jobs at the bottom of the pyramid, and establishing sustainable forest management systems. It will bring greater transparency and traceability to forest-based supply chains, ensure quality and sustainability, and bring millions of forest-dependent households into the formal economy while also creating opportunities for businesses to demonstrate their commitment to responsible and sustainable practices.

We already have examples of such collaborative efforts bearing fruit. In Gujarat, for instance, communities in the Narmada district are managing forests while also supplying bamboo to the paper and pulp industry. It is now time to nurture the forest economy across India.

The writer is a Professor at Indian School of Business

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PIB AUG17, 2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh announces financial support of Rs 3.29 crores to M/s Kritsnam Technologies, a Start-up Company, incubated at IIT Kanpur to develop smart water management technologies.

MoU signed between the Technology Development Board (TDB) under DST and M/s Kritsnam Technologies for production & commercialization of Dhaara Smart Flow Meter. The technology can be a game changer in effectively monitoring & controlling the ground water exploitation across country in future: Dr Jitendra Singh

The Minister says, Water Meter will greatly benefit Prime Minister Modi's Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal), a Rs.6,000 crore Central Sector Scheme, for sustainable management of ground water resources with community participation.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh announced financial support of Rs. 3.29 crores to M/s Kritsnam Technologies, a Start-up Company, incubated at IIT Kanpur to develop smart water management technologies. He said, the technology, initially focused on commercial users, can be a game changer in effectively monitoring & controlling the ground water exploitation across country in future.

An MoU was signed in the presence of Dr Jitendra Singh between the Technology Development Board (TDB) under Department of Science and Technology and M/s Kritsnam Technologies Private Limited, Ranchi, Jharkhand for production & commercialization of Dhaara Smart Flow Meter.

The Minister was apprised that the start-up is developing 'Dhaara Smart Flowmeter' - an integrated system for online monitoring using two beam ultrasonic flowmeters that is designed to track the water distribution in real-time for applications such as drinking water supply, ground water extraction, industrial water usage and precision irrigation. The device collects data through sensors, stores it in the device, and transmits to the online cloud servers and thereafter the data transmitted to servers is analysed and displayed in the dashboard. This unique solution is a combination of hardware & software for flow measurement and water management respectively.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that Dhaara Smart Flow Meter will greatly benefit Prime Minister Modi's Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal), a Rs.6,000 crore Central Sector Scheme, for sustainable management of ground water resources with community participation. The scheme is being implemented in 80 water stressed districts and 8,565 Gram Panchayats of seven States viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh from 01.04.2020 for a period of five years. He said, Dhaara Smart Flow Meter can also help bulk water consumers to budget their water usage and empower them to understand their patterns, points of inefficiencies and help them to build strong strategies for reducing water wastage. The Dhaara Smart Flow Meter is battery operated and does not require external power and the hardware architecture is based on the internet of things (IoT) communication circuits which is patented in India. In addition, it complies with ISO and Central Ground Water Authority standards. The water usage data is automatically recorded in an online logbook through telemetry via 4G/2G. The built-in telemetry and battery-operated capabilities make it easy for users to monitor their water consumption virtually anywhere

(even when the power is out). The product being developed initially aims at commercial users like hotels, hospitals, malls, IT parks, schools, colleges and industrial users (food products, packaged drinking water, pharmaceuticals, paper & pulp etc.). It may be recalled that the Central Groundwater Authority issued guidelines under which every commercial ground water user must install a smart water meter and pay yearly bills. All the project proponents/users drawing ground water and seeking/having NOC shall have to mandatorily install tamper-proof digital water flow meters with telemetry on all the ground water abstraction structures within their premises.

Ground Water levels in various parts of the country are declining because of continuous withdrawal due to reasons such as increased demand of fresh water for various uses, vagaries of rainfall, increase in population, industrialization and urbanization etc. As per the assessment of Dynamic Ground Water Resources (2017) carried out by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) in collaboration with States/UTs, out of the total 6,881 assessment units (Block/ Taluks/ Mandals/ watersheds/ Firkas) in the country, 1,186 units in 17 States/UTs have been categorized as 'over-exploited' where 'Annual Ground Water Extraction' is more than 'Annual Extractable Ground Water Resource'.

Shri Rajesh Kumar Pathak, IP&TAFS, Secretary, TDB said, "Water is essential to all humankind & the ground water is dominant source of drinking water but the pace at which the ground water is depleting is alarming. Govt of India is taking urgent steps needed to replenish the ground water level through water harvesting technologies as well as planned & controlled ground water extraction. 'Dhaara Smart Flow Meter' from startup 'Kritsnam' would be a great addition to this endeavour. The smart meter has been designed in such a way that, it can perform ground water management with real time processing, even without electricity".

STATESMAN, AUG 18, 2022

Digital clash

This is the position Mr Ismailov represents. The ITU conference is all set to be the venue for this clash of cultures in the digital age.

Termed the "most important United Nations agency you have never heard of", the International Telecommunication Union or ITU will be holding its quadrennial conference in Bucharest, Romania, from 26 September to 14 October. The plenipotentiary conference is scheduled to elect the ITU's new secretary general. What makes this poll so consequential, say experts, is that it is not just about who occupies the secretary general's plush office in Geneva but the fact that, to quote Tom Wheeler of the Brookings Institute, "lurking behind the scenes in this election is a competition between two visions of the internet: An open internet, or a kind of state-controlled internet that resembles Russia's and China's." Invariably, given the New Cold War thesis currently in vogue, the electoral race has boiled down to one between an American and a Russian and the worldviews their respective backers represent.

The ITU, founded in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union for the purpose of facilitating cross-border operations of the new technology, has since been the primary standard-setter for telecommunications networks. The ITU asserts that every time anyone in the world makes a call on their mobile phone, accesses the internet, or even sends an email, they are benefitting from the work of ITU. As the standards for fibre-optic cable and mobile networks are a part

of the ITU process, adds Wheeler, this claim is substantially correct; the issue, however, is that when it comes to the internet, the ITU has played a less determinative role. For, the internet grew apart from the ITU and not from it. The standards by which the internet operates are not ITU standards but were developed by a multi-stakeholder process in which technologists, companies, civil society, and governments reached a consensus. The vehicle for such internet standards is the Internet Engineering Task Force, one of several voluntary institutions that together maintain and run the internet. Wheeler and other Western experts argue that now Russia and China are seeking to move internet governance to the ITU where “bottom-up design” of internet standards could be replaced with “top-down decisions” based on the politics of its member nation-states. So, when the top item on the agenda of the Bucharest conference ~ the election of the new ITU secretary general ~ is taken up, there will be much at stake. The American candidate, Ms Doreen BogdanMartin, is an ITU veteran and the first woman to head one of the agency’s three major bureaus. The Russian candidate, Mr Rashid Ismailov, is a former deputy minister in the Russian Ministry of Telecom and Mass Communications, and an ex-Huawei executive.

International tension over internet policy first came to the fore at the ITU-sponsored 2012 World Conference on International Telecommunications when a majority of nations voted to increase ITU’s authority over the internet but the USA refused to sign the resulting treaty. Ms Bogdan-Martin is thought to be in sync with Washington’s stand. In June 2021, Russia and China signed a pact to ensure “all states have equal rights to participate in global-network governance, increase their role in this process and preserve the sovereign right of states to regulate the national segment of the internet”. This is the position Mr Ismailov represents. The ITU conference is all set to be the venue for this clash of cultures in the digital age.

SOCIAL SECURITY

PIONEER, AUG 20 ,2022

Wrong to call welfare schemes ‘freebies’

Vanam Jwala Narasimha Rao

State governments must work for the welfare of the poor, for their empowerment and providing them with basic amenities

Delivering the Independence Day address at the Historical Golkonda Fort in Hyderabad, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao (KCR) criticized the Center for insulting States’ welfare schemes by labelling them as ‘freebies’. He added that public welfare is the foremost responsibility of the government and hence Center’s remarks are highly objectionable.

Disagreeing vehemently with the Center’s concept of freebies, KCR said that it also amounts to weakening the nation’s cooperative federal spirit and running down welfare schemes of States. Centre, which is supposed to fulfill that social responsibility, has done miserably over a period, observed KCR.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent remark on ‘revdi culture’ perhaps is at the center of CM KCR’s observations similar to some of his counterparts in the country. According to Modi, attempts are being made in the country to bring a culture of garnering votes by distributing revdis, a sweet popular in North India, distributed during festivals, which is very dangerous for the development of the country.

Criticizing some opposition parties for engaging in the politics of freebies, the PM said that they are obstacles to India’s efforts to become self-reliant while also being a burden on taxpayers. Notwithstanding this, the Independence Day was celebrated across the country with several chief ministers making a slew of welfare scheme announcements and countering Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘revdi culture’ remark. Unfortunately, PM Modi seems to have failed to take into account that social welfare schemes that subsidize the populace are a universal phenomenon now and, in a democracy, these are but natural. For instance, in the USA, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is the largest federal nutrition assistance program that provides food-purchasing assistance for low and no income people.

Similarly, the Singapore Government provides financial aid to any family making less than \$1,900 a month, besides providing aid in other forms such as making education more affordable, tax exemptions for impoverished families and more affordable housing. Its system of social security is based on enabling self-reliance, supported by strong family and social networks. These are a few examples only. Would these fit into the concept of freebies?

We defined our country as a welfare state, which is a form of government in which the state protects and promotes the economic and social well-being of the citizens, based on the principles of equal opportunity and equitable distribution of wealth. The welfare state is a way of governing in which the state or an established group of social institutions provides basic economic security to its citizens.

By definition, in a welfare state, the government is responsible for the individual and social welfare of its citizens. A fundamental feature of the welfare state is social insurance and social security. This is exactly or perhaps even more as envisaged in the definition of a welfare state. Welfare encompasses those government programs that provide benefits and economic assistance to no or low-income people living in Telangana.

Welfare programs of Government of Telangana aims to improve the quality of life and living standards of the poor and underprivileged. People are able to stand on their own feet with an assured monthly or annual income making them prosperous. KCR's preference is social insurance. It may sound a bit philosophical, but the schemes conceived and being implemented by the KCR Government takes care of every stage of a human being's life true to the saying caring from 'cradle to grave'. In the letter and spirit of the welfare state, the Telangana Government implements a number of welfare programs. To name a few identified priority areas of welfare of Telangana Government, there is Kalyan Laxmi, Shaadi Mubarak, Aasara pensions, Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bhima, Sheep distribution, Fish breeding, Free Double bedroom houses, Residential school education, Dalit Bandhu, etc.

Despite spending huge amounts on these schemes, Telangana has emerged financially strong in the country. The Government's top priority has been to extend a real helping hand to the needy, helpless and poorest of the poor strata and accordingly, welfare programs were conceived and implemented. The Aasara Pensions, aimed at providing security to life, are being given to every poverty-stricken individual, identifying them either as old or widow or single woman or a beedi worker or a handloom worker or an old age artist or a filarial affected person or AIDS patient or for that matter any one below the poverty line. This social security pension scheme is now extended to 10 lakh new beneficiaries from August 15 for a total of 46 lakh beneficiaries. Should this be called a freebie or a social security measure?

The large-scale distribution of sheep substantially enhanced the livestock wealth of Golla and Kurumas communities. The investment support scheme for agriculture, the Rythu Bandhu meant for providing financial assistance to farmer towards crop investment enthused the hearts of farmers. These are not freebies but welfare aimed at social security for the poor farmer. The Dalit Bandhu Scheme, yet another welfare measure, is bound to change the life and financial status of Dalits in Telangana forever. In the long run, it will become a model policy for other states to emulate. It will herald a sea change in the lives of Dalits and will become torchbearer for Dalits elsewhere in the country. The Telangana Dalit Bandhu Scheme would help Dalits to define their own development and become partners in the development. This is certainly not a freebie but by all means a social security measure.

Empowerment is the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities, enabling them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. CM KCR is laying a strong foundation for future generations' prosperity and making all sections of the society become economically self-reliant. Why call them freebies?

In a democratic society like India, people have several hopes, purposes, aspirations, ambitions, desires, requirements, passions, problems, needs and so on. People from time to time elect the party, which in their view will fulfill their needs. The contesting parties make promises in the form of election manifestos keeping in view the people's welfare in focus.

Voters consider them and choose a particular party and elect it to power. The Government thus elected by them to keep their promises has to initiate and implement a number of welfare programs and they cannot be dubbed as freebies. Unfortunately, most of the parties after coming to power fail to keep up their promises. In the case of KCR, he has not only fulfilled all the promises and even gone beyond though not mentioned in the election manifesto.

CM KCR firmly believes that mere growth has no meaning and even legitimacy, if the deprived sections of the society are left behind. Inclusive growth should not only ensure a broad flow of benefits and economic opportunities, but also encompass empowerment and participation. And hence it's all public welfare, please don't call them freebies, Modiji.

(The author is Chief Public Relations Officer to Chief Minister, Telangana.)

TERRORISM

STATESMAN,AUG 19,2022

An enforceable global law needed to curb terrorism

Freedom from terrorism is just one important element in the larger scheme of things – climate emergency, unprecedented economic crisis, massive social breakdown, to list just a few.

A. K. MERCHANT

As we remember the victims of terrorism, offer homage to millions of innocent people who have perished, terrorists continue to strike at will, utilizing the latest that technology has to offer such as missiles and drones, which extend the reach of their attacks. Terrorist groups are taking full advantage to consolidate their networks making the spread of propaganda and recruitment easier. The acts of violence carried out by lone individuals or small, non-state groups of people, bring great tragedy into other people's lives. At the same time it must be acknowledged that even greater damage is done when terrorism is state-sponsored. Terrorism of any kind destroys efforts to establish peace among nations. Terrorism is rooted in every human being's need to belong to a group of peers. In these times it has become ideologically acceptable to indiscriminately murder innocents to meet a terrorist's goal.

Every year hundreds of people are killed through suicide attacks resulting in untold pain and destruction. The terrorists, like the egotist, somehow cannot consider the feelings or the life of others as important. They require instant, exact and complete obedience to their orders and tenets, as verified by the actions of human suicide bombers. Part of the background to the current waves of terrorism is the lack of a proper balance between the liberty of the individual and the needs of society. The rights of an individual to act as he or she wishes can never be absolute. Such craving for extreme freedom leads to sedition and overstepping of the bounds of propriety, while it debases the individual to depravity and wickedness. Even when the cause which the terrorist group espouses is driven by a sense of injustice, there is no real justification for the acts of violence. A United Nations Convention for prevention of terrorism is still a work in progress. In addition to treaties that address particular manifestations of terrorism, the international community has endeavored to develop treaties that address terrorism on a more inclusive basis. India first proposed this convention in 1996.

It has been pushing for the treaty consistently at the sessions of the UN General Assembly, in 2014 and again in 2016. Although consensus has not yet been reached for the wording of the comprehensive terrorism convention, discussions have yielded three separate protocols that aim to tackle terrorism: the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, adopted on 15 December 1997; the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, adopted on 9 December 1999; and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted on 13 April 2005. The negotiations are deadlocked because of differences over the definition of terrorism. The key sticking points in the draft treaty revolve around several controversial yet basic issues. For example, what distinguishes a "terrorist organization" from a 'liberation movement'? Does it exclude activities of national armed forces, even if they are perceived to commit acts of terrorism? If not, how much of this constitutes 'state terrorism'? Even so, national governments must make these rules work.

In a system of sovereign states, the role of the UN organization in checking or reversing these human rights abuses remains severely limited and largely dependent upon the political will of the member states. As a consequence, part of the price paid for protecting national security against threats posed by cross border terrorism may well be the curtailment of some human rights and civil liberties within the liberal democratic state. Religion is also frequently used by terrorists as an excuse for their actions, despite the fact that every religion forbids murder, and demands that individuals live in harmony. Until some sort of world laws are established, terrorism can never be eliminated. And different states around the world will continue to offer refuge, supply, finance, train and sponsor terrorist groups for their own ends. Citizens in every country repeatedly voice their readiness for peace and an end to the tormenting trails in their daily lives.

Yet in the same breath uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and therefore incapable of building a social system that is progressive, harmonious, and peaceful. In order to move forward, humanity must overcome this fundamental contradiction; it demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view of humankind's historical predicament is based. It also calls for understanding the true nature of human beings and the moral imperatives that should govern the functioning of global community. Such an understanding will enable all people to set in motion constructive social forces which, because they are consistent with human nature and would encourage harmony and cooperation instead of conflict and war. The UN system must evolve into a world super-state in whose favour all the member-states would willingly secede every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such aspirations should not be dismissed as utopian ideas.

There is no other alternative. The world's leadership must take affirmative action at this juncture when efforts at ending the war between Ukraine, supported by Nato, and Russia threatens to escalate into World War III. Time is running out, all the forces of history are impelling humankind to take immediate action. Freedom from terrorism is just one important element in the larger scheme of things – climate emergency, unprecedented economic crisis, massive social breakdown, to list just a few.

Whether collective security among all nations is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behaviour, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth. It is my firm optimistic conviction that root causes of international terrorism can be curbed not through constant conflicts among nations and within each sovereign state but by enforceable world law, effective global governance and peace education.