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PIB,OCT3,2022

ECI launches Radio series - 'Matdata Junction' in collaboration with All India Radio for voter awareness

52 Episodes of 15 minutes each to be broadcast every Friday on Vividh Bharati stations, FM Rainbow, FM Gold and Primary channels of AIR.Programs to be broadcast in 23 languages across 230 AIR channels.Actor & State Icon Shri Pankaj Tripathi joins the launch of the Matdata Junction - declared ECI's National Icon

First Episode of Matdata Junction to go on air on October 7, 2022

Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar along with Election Commissioner Shri Anup Chandra Pandey today launched a yearlong Voter Awareness Program - 'Matdata Junction' during an event organised at Akashvani Rang Bhavan, New Delhi. The 'Matdata Junction' is a 52 episode radio series produced by the Election Commission of India, in collaboration with All India Radio. Senior ECI officials, CEO Prasar Bharati, DG AIR News and ECI Icon & Actor Shri Pankaj Tripathi were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, CEC Shri Rajiv Kumar said that the program Matdata Junction, produced in collaboration with All India Radio, will be a strong platform to connect with the voters across the country. The program as a combination of information and entertainment, would specifically help address urban apathy and inform the audience about the election processes in the conduct of free, fair, transparent, inducement free, accessible and inclusive elections in an interactive communication format.

While complimenting Shri Pankaj Tripathi, Actor and ECI state icon for his association with ECI in creating awareness amongst voters, CEC Shri Rajiv Kumar announced Shri Pankaj Tripathi, would henceforth be the National Icon for Election Commission of India, keeping in view his commitment to the cause and wide appeal across the country.

EC Shri Anup Chandra Pandey during the launch event recalled that since time immemorial, All India Radio has been enthusing masses as a legendary storyteller with its voice appeal and strengthening the democratic spirit. Since the very first general elections, AIR with its extensive coverage and reach to diverse audiences, has been a primary medium of communication with citizens across the country. Addressing the audience, Shri Pankaj Tripathi, recollected his memories of becoming a first time voter and how that process gave him not only the right of Matdan but also Samman as a contributory voice in democracy. While appreciating the efforts made by ECI for reaching out to the voters, he urged all young voters to pro-actively participate in the elections to reflect their democratic choices and make their voices heard.In her welcome address, Director General (Media) Ms. Sheyphali Sharan gave a detailed overview about the Programme - 'Matdata Junction: Har voter ka apna station'. She pointed out that ECI & AIR, the two iconic institutions, known for their credibility and grassroot connect, have got into an apt collaboration to ensure extensive outreach.

The 15 minutes program will be broadcast every Friday during 7- 9 PM slot on All India Radio network covering 25 FM stations, 4 FM Gold stations, 42 Vividh Bharati stations, and 159 primary channels/local radio stations in 23 languages, i.e., Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili, and Dogri.

The 52 episode series will cover various aspects of election and related processes from voters' perspective. It will have thematic episodes on voter registration, Informed & Ethical Voting, Value of Vote, Inclusive & Accessible Elections, Model Code of Conduct, IT Applications, EVMs, stories of election officials, BLOs, etc. All episodes include interactive messaging aimed at encouraging eligible citizens and especially the young and first time voters to vote and make an informed decision during the elections. The series will be in the genre of infotainment program having a kaleidoscope of drama, storytelling, Quiz, Experts' interview, and Songs produced by the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) division of the Election Commission of India in every episode. The program includes a Citizen's Corner where any citizen can ask a query or also provide suggestions for making elections inclusive and participative.The first episode of the program on the theme - 'Voter Registration' will be broadcast on 7th October, 2022 Friday at 7:25 PM. Citizens can also listen to the Program on 'Twitter on @airnewsalerts and @ECISVEEP, News On AIR' App and YouTube channels of ECI & All India Radio. Tune in and be a part of India's vibrant democracy.

PIB,OCT3,2022

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh says, the concept and format of PM's Excellence Award has undergone revolutionary change since 2014.The Minister launches the Scheme and Web-portal for PM's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration for the year 2022.Prize money for PM's Excellence Awards will be Rs.20 lakh in 2022

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 today officially launched the Web-portal(http://www.pmawards.gov.in) for Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2022.The formal launching was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances, Union Ministry of Personnel, at Sardar Patel Bhavan in New Delhi..Principal Secretaries (AR)/(IT) and DCs/DMs of all the 28 States and 8 UTs of India as well as Assistant Secretaries of 2020 Batch were invited for the launch ceremony in hybrid mode.

The registration on PM's Awards web portal will commence from 3rd October, 2022 for due registration and the submission of applications will also be operational from 3rd October 2022 to 28th of November, 2022.Speaking on the occasion, Dr Jitendra Singh said, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the entire concept and format of the PM Excellence Awards has undergone a revolutionary change after 2014. The objective of the Scheme is to encourage constructive competition, innovation, replication and institutionalisation of best practices.The PM's Awards, 2022 will consist of: (i) Trophy, (ii) Scroll and (iii) an incentive of Rs 20 lakh to the awarded District/organisation to be utilised for implementation of project/programme or bridging resources gaps in any area of public welfare.The Period of consideration is 1st April 2020 to 30thSeptember, 2022. The total number of Awards under the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2022 would be 16.Under this approach, the emphasis would be on good governance, qualitative achievement and last mile connectivity, rather than only on achievement of quantitative targets. With this focus, the applications for Awards would be evaluated on three parameters, Good Governance, Qualitative and Quantitative, the Minister said.Dr Jitendra Singh recalled that during his address on Civil Services Day, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasised to continuously create a perfect seamless mechanism to give due benefits to the last person. The more we build this mechanism, we can achieve the country's mission of empowerment of the last person. Civil Services Day should become an opportunity to infuse new energy within us and to make new resolutions. We should handhold the new officers with new enthusiasm. Certain entrepreneurs from the district or who have been active in a particular district can be called to share their

learning and experiences which can then be replicated as best practices.It is expected that all the districts participating in this scheme will get an opportunity to showcase their performance while competing for Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2022.For the year 2022, the scheme for Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration aims to recognize the contribution of civil servants in following areas: a. Promoting Swachh Jal (Clean Jal) through Har Ghar Jal Yojana b. Promoting Swasth Bharat (Healthy Bharat) through Health & Wellness Centres c. Promoting quality education with an equitable and inclusive classroom environment through Samagra Shiksha d. Holistic Development through Aspirational District Programme overall progress with special focus on saturation approach and Innovations.

The eligibility to submit nominations for the Prime Minister's Awards 2022 will be open to the following: i. Awards for Scheme (a) to (c) at para 6 above for holistic development to Districts and (d) for Aspirational Districts only. ii. Award for Scheme (e) at para 6 above shall be open to Districts as well Organizations of Central/State Governments/District Implementing Units.The criteria for evaluation of PM's Awards, 2022 is based on predetermined indications in consultation with Line Ministries/Departments (excluding Innovation). There would be a mix of common parameters across schemes and flexible parameters which would be provided by the concerned Line Ministries/Departments. The award for Innovation category will be evaluated based on introducing and implementing an innovative idea/scheme/project to meet stakeholders' requirements.The evaluation process would include (i) Short-listing of Districts/Organisations by Screening Committee (first and second stage), (ii) Evaluation by Expert Committee and (iii) Empowered Committee. Prime Minister's approval will be taken on the recommendations of the Empowered Committee for Awards.

PIB,OCT4,2022

President of India launches 'HERSTART' – A start-up platform of Gujarat University for Women Entrepreneurs and Inaugurates/Lays Foundation Stone for various Projects of Government of Gujarat Related to Education and Tribal Development

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, launched 'herSTART' – a start-up platform of Gujarat University in Ahmedabad today (October 4, 2022). She also inaugurated/laid the foundation stone virtually from Gujarat University for various projects of the government of Gujarat related to education and tribal development.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that it is a matter of pride for Gujarat University that not only Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi but also the father of India's space program, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai; former chairman of ISRO, Dr. K. Kasturirangan; and Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah are alumni of this university.

The President said that it is natural for an institution which has alumni like Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, to be a pioneer in science, research and innovation. She noted that there are more than 450 start-ups working in the campus of Gujarat University. And more than 125 women-led start-ups are being actively supported by this university. Also around 15,000 women entrepreneurs are associated online or offline with this initiative. She said that she was happy to inaugurate a start-up platform dedicated to women entrepreneurs in such a start-up friendly university. She expressed confidence that this platform will not only boost innovation and start-up efforts of women entrepreneurs but also prove to be an effective platform in connecting women entrepreneurs with various government and private enterprises. The President said that she was also happy to inaugurate projects like Sainik School, Girls Literacy Residential School and Eklavya Model Residential School related to education, especially girls and tribal education in Gujarat. Because the foundation stone for further strengthening India's position in science, research and innovation will be built through school education.

The President said that Gujarat has made remarkable progress in the field of education among other sectors. The school drop-out rate in the state has come down from 22 percent to 1.37 percent in the last two decades. The teacher-student ratio has also improved from 40 to 26. Today, through 'Vidya Samiksha Kendra', real-time monitoring of students and teachers is being done in about 55,000 schools, which is resulting in an increase in the learning outcome of the students. She noted that under the 'Mission School of Excellence', a target has been set to upgrade the infrastructure of about 20,000 schools in the state in the next five years.

The President noted that Gujarat has also made significant progress in the field of higher education. While the number of colleges in the state was 775 in 2001-02, in 2020-21 this number increased to more than 3,100. India's first education quality and monitoring cell, 'Garima Cell' has been established in this state for evaluation of higher education. She said that with the effective implementation of 'Van Bandhu-Kalyan Yojana', there has been a significant increase in the literacy rate in the tribal society. This scheme has also improved the school dropout rate among tribal students.

The President said that Gujarat has been a leading state in the last two decades on many parameters of development. It has presented many benchmarks in the inclusive development of industry, innovation and infrastructure. The President said that every state has its own model of development which is determined by the resources and needs of the state. But the manner in which Gujarat has made all round progress, has shown the path of inclusive development to other states. She expressed confidence that India will secure its place as a developed country during Amrit-Kaal, if all states move forward by learning from each other and adopting their successful models.

STATESMAN,OCT5,2022

Democracy is dying of success!!

What is democracy if not the battle of ideas? Will India be the phoenix of freedom or the phoenix of fear?

Ash Narain Roy

India is no ordinary country. They say if India didn't exist, no one would have had the imagination to invent it. We Indians love to gossip and quarrel over smallest of issues. For us, ideas are worth dying for. The more adversarial the idea the better. We are also born to oppose. We Indians always need an enemy to fight, perhaps a fortress to capture! India has survived through the long tradition of discussions, contestation and debate.

For the newly independent countries in the post-war period, India became a flag-bearer of democracy in spite of high illiteracy, bone-chilling poverty and social evils like the caste system. Such were the odds against India that the Western commentators believed if democracy can make it there, it can make it anywhere. Ironically, India stuck to democracy while country after country fell perilously into the hands of autocrats and tin-pot dictators.

How did that happen? Gopal Krishna Gandhi says, "The people are fuel. They combust, ignite. They spur, empower." Building democracy is like searching for truth. The search for truth is like digging for gold. You wash the nuggets under the tap and you have the full value of the gold. In the immediate aftermath of independence, India did precisely that.Using the power of democracy, India created a new paradigm. It rejected the view that a country must first become economically fit for democracy. It chose to be economically fit through democracy. India debunked the perception that democracy impeded development. India's success extended the hand of democracy globally. By holding the banner of democracy aloft, India

blazed a new trail in a world surrounded by democratic darkness. That prompted Bernard Levin, renowned columnist of The Times (London), to say that "if democracy in India falls, the end of democracy itself will be in sight."

Democracy by its very nature is a contested terrain. Its genius, material value and implications must be constantly debated. What is beyond debate is that no one has a right to question that contestation. Democracy is a daily plebiscite. Demand for more power, more autonomy represents a daily interrogation of that existence. Democracy goes through frequent negotiations, compromises, failure of talks and accords. It is through constant churning that Indian democracy matured.In History in the Making, J H Elliot makes a distinction between a chosen nation and a victim nation. A chosen nation thinks it has spiritual, biological and other characteristics to make it a dominant power and a victim nation tends to attribute its misfortunes to others.

Nehruvian India didn't blame others for all its miseries. It believed that discrimination against the oppressed classes and women was not the fault of the White coloniser, but a product of traditional Indian practices. Tagore insisted that Indians should glory in the illumination of lamps lit everywhere in the world. The nationalism of Gandhi and Tagore was not based on a sense of persecution nor a sense of cultural or racial superiority. India today claims to be a chosen nation but continues to behave like a victim nation.

India has much to celebrate, but much more to ponder. Are we celebrating too much? Are we celebrating to be amused or entertained? Grace is the celebration of life which seems to be in short supply. We are looking for history in all the wrong places. We have thus become the victims of streetlight effect, that is, propensity to look for something only where the search is easy.Asked about the impact of the French Revolution on the Western civilisation, Chou Enlai told Kissinger, "too early to tell." The jury is still out on many historic events. It is indeed too early to pass conclusive judgement on India's 75-year journey. But the journey is long enough to notice the spots on the skin.The journey of Indian democracy has many proud moments. India has crossed many pinnacles and climbed many summits. But the journey has also been littered with many flashpoints, fault-lines and reckless brinkmanship. The journey of ideas has been perilous. What is democracy if not the battle of ideas? Will India be the phoenix of freedom or the phoenix of fear?

India has a proud history of thought — from thought to discussion, from tradition to canon formation and from sociology of knowledge to the anthropology of knowledge.In the initial years, the network of gatekeepers-free press, vibrant civil society, enlightened citizenry kept democracy shining. As years passed, the gatekeepers have become increasingly powerless. India's attractiveness about democracy is increasingly tarnished while its economy continues to limp.

India finds itself in a state of aporia and rupture. How has it come about? Political parties are largely to blame. Most parties are shells built around a single leader's transient popularity. Parties no longer have roots in our society. Parties treat citizens as consumers. They have dialogue with pollsters, not voters. Age of "intermittent citizenship" perhaps?While a new kind of 'leaderism' has emerged, parties have become bodies without organs, clenched and muscular but without real internal metabolism. The supporters don't swarm the rallies, leaders choreograph the swarm of supporters with tweets and Russian bots. We don't know who to trust, leaders promising El Dorado or the media and their condescending comments. Today everything is politics.

Spanish philosopher Daniel Innerarity calls it "democracy without politics". The difference between the representatives and the represented is becoming too large. French historian Pierre Rosanvallon terms it "impolite democracy". People are aggravated and the political system is agitated, but their interaction barely produces anything new.Another disturbing trend is the near complete merger of the nation with the state. The boundary between the state and market too is becoming fuzzy.The phenomenon of what John Keane of University of Sydney calls "unelected representatives" has seriously undermined democracy. At a time when Parliament is being used increasingly as a rubber stamp and other democratic institutions have suffered serious erosion, unelected representatives (bureaucrats, religious leaders, business tycoons and media empires) have begun to alter the political geography of democracies.

Democracies are increasingly turning to the unelected bodies to demarcate boundaries between the market and the state as also to resolve conflicts of interest and to allocate resources. If remedial action is not taken, such bodies may become, for all practical purposes, a new branch of government. It is not clear who is accountable to whom and for what. Bureaucracy is happily unaccountable.Politics has become nastier and murkier. It is too fractious. The toxicity of public discourse is undermining critical thinking. The crescendo of abuse towards political rivals is alarming. Social media has deepened polarisation. It isn't the cause but a conduit. Political class has become a consummate cultural warrior.

Politics is increasingly being reduced to procedures of consensual governance which engages different stakeholders but excludes any voices contesting the hegemonic consensus. This phase has been variously described as "post-democracy" and "post-politics" era.Citizens are treated as conscripts. Citizens are fast losing their power of 'no'. Gandhi taught us how to say 'no'. 'No' is not only a symbol of resistance, it is the strongest word in any language. It implies a halt, a cessation that enough is enough.Democracy needs opposition, what J K Galbraith calls "countervailing power". Quoting John Stuart Mill on how

democracy is government by discussion, Amartya Sen argues that "if you make discussion fearful, you are not going to get a democracy, no matter how you count the votes".Democracy also requires a strong citizenry, and not citizens as conscripts. In some countries, citizens' assemblies now seem a viable addition to the tools of democratic governance. These assemblies give voice to citizens on complex, value-laden topics outside of what can be the polarising dynamics of electoral politics.

Democracy today exhibits plebiscitary trends and clientelist distribution of offices and resources to loyal soldiers of supporters. India is no exception. We often hear ruling party leaders claim that whosoever wins an election has the popular mandate to govern. Has India become what Guillermo O' Donnell calls "delegative democracy?"

In a delegative democracy, the supreme leader becomes the embodiment of the nation and the main custodian of the national interest. By implication, it means that whatever the prime minister does need not bear any resemblance to what he said or promised during the electoral campaign. Institutional vandalism is there for all to see. Because the government needs to rescue the nation from the crisis, its actions don't always respect democratic institutions.Delegative democracy is anti-pluralist and, in the end, anti-democratic. What we are attempting at is the re-foundation of the nation and righting the wrongs of history. Prime Minister Narendra Modi often proclaims: "Ours is a new India with new methods and policies." The grand narrative of what is new and modern presupposes that it is an incomplete project. It is also imbued with the idea of progress. The problem is that the philosophy of progress rejects cultural pluralism.

Democracy means power coming to where the people are. What is happening today in many parts of the world is the people coming to where the power is.The day party members and bureaucrats begin falling over themselves to prove their loyalties to a leader by outdoing the other in extremism, democracy dies.Large sections of people live under hardscrabble conditions. In the midst of massive growth of inequality, there is a grotesque celebration of greed. On all global parameters of democracy, India is slipping. As the Berggruen Institute Governance Index shows, on all the three measures — state capacity, public goods provisioning and democratic accountability, India's decline is significant.

There is a danger of democracy degenerating into power grabbing. India remains vulnerable to populist demagoguery and the predatory power of cross-border corporate and governing institutions,What lies ahead is the great unknown. Politics is turning into a one-way mirror. While India remains a democracy at the core, the gamification of democracy is worrying. The self-restraint of the executive has all but disappeared and gatekeepers of the cabinet meant to step in when all else fails have disappeared. The shine came off Indian democracy's halo long ago. Today, it is no more a shining beacon of hope.

Myth makes the people, not the people the myth. Modi holds a Manichean vision of the world often taking an anti-elite tone. He not only looms large on Indian politics, he is, today, among the most popular leaders in the world. He owes his success to his ability to keep his narrative people-centric, making a fine distinction between "good people" and "evil elites". He has invented a new notion of 'people' which is anchored in a religiously defined community. What is important is what he says. It is even more important what he doesn't. He smartly seeks to convey through symbols and allusions. However, it is not hard to see how he has attempted to replace unpleasant facts with comfortable fantasies.There has been genuine progress in some sectors but a positive political narrative is also the result of media grandstanding and statistics being cherry-picked.

India seems to be moving towards "post-democracy" where formal aspects of democratic institutions remain largely in place while politics and government are increasingly slipping back into the control of privileged groups. Leaders have become big. It is the people and the institutions that have become small.Great leaders create more leaders, not gobs of followers. In German dramatist Bertolt Breadt's play, "Life of Galileo", one of the characters says, "unhappy land that is in need of heroes."

No democracy is imperishable. In fact, the most notable quality of democracy is its fragility. Democracy often gives its deadly enemies the means by which it is destroyed. John Adams went to the extent of saying that "there never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide." Democracy is facing a critical crisis globally.Political parties, core institution of democratic accountability, need to be reformed and strengthened. They need to be rescued from leaders. Weak parties are prone to patronage deals. The political parties have become the hidden world of match-making, who gets what and why. It is time to save democracy from itself. Democracy has expanded in India but has it deepened? Democracy requires new imagination and constant reaffirmation. We don't know what the best model of democracy is. As Turkish writer Nazim Hikmat says, "The most beautiful ocean is the one we have not yet seen." What we know is that "peacock dance"—three steps forward, one step backwards and spread colourful feathers is not the model to flaunt. Democracy is a journey but also a destination. India hasn't lost the path, but hasn't found the way.

TRIBUNE,OCT6,2022

Feasibility of freebies

Political parties need to spell out financial ramifications

POLITICAL parties have no qualms about promising all kinds of freebies to voters in the run-up to elections, even if the state's coffers are empty or highly depleted. With the freebies coming under the Supreme Court's close scrutiny, the Election Commission (EC) has proposed that the Model Code of Conduct be amended so that all parties can be asked to apprise the electorate of the financial viability of their poll promises. The EC has noted that the high frequency of elections in India provides opportunities to the parties to indulge in competitive electoral promises 'without having to spell out their financial implications, more particularly on committed expenditure.'

Even as PM Modi has repeatedly derided the politics of freebies as 'revdi culture', the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is of the view that governments should spend the taxpayers' money to provide facilities to people. Undoubtedly, the promise of freebies such as providing 300 units of electricity free of cost per month to domestic consumers helped AAP storm to power in Punjab earlier this year. However, election-centric sops deny a level playing field to the stakeholders as the ruling party can afford to splurge — at the cost of the overstretched exchequer. The distribution of free food kits powered the ruling Left Democratic Front to an emphatic victory in the 2021 Kerala Assembly elections, in stark contrast to the rout it had suffered in the Lok Sabha polls held two years earlier.

Unreasonable freebies need to be weeded out as they are taking a heavy toll on the states' fiscal health. In a research report, the State Bank of India has suggested that the expenditure on populist welfare schemes should be capped at 1 per cent of the state's GDP or 1 per cent of its own tax collection. The report has noted that freebies have exceeded 2 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product for debt-ridden states such as Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. A financially feasible road map for fulfilling poll promises is the need of the hour to help voters make informed choices and deter irresponsible governments from living beyond their means.

INDIAN EXPRESS,OCT6,2022

Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: The fraying framework

Across the world, foundational ideas of major political systems are under challenge

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

The extraordinary protests by women in Iran. The growing repression needed to sustain the Communist Party Congress in China. Anxieties over the quality of liberal democracy. The looming political crisis in South Africa. These all seem like disparate, unconnected anxieties. But in a larger historical arc, they suggest that we might be in the midst of a global legitimation crisis. The normative horizons within which politics was conducted in different parts of the world are simultaneously being questioned. During the Cold War, the basic terms of ideological competition were defined in terms of economic systems — capitalism vs communism. Or another axis is authoritarianism versus freedom. But there might be another way of thinking about the world. This is in terms of different "foundational" frameworks that have provided the starting point for thinking about politics.At the first cut, take four foundational questions. In the Western world and other countries like India, the horizon was broadly some version of liberal, representative constitutional democracy. In a large part of the world, from Pakistan to Egypt, there was a quest for some version of modern Islamic constitutionalism, reconciling the sovereignty of God with the requirements of the modern world. In Africa, the political and moral aspiration of politics was shaped by trying to think of a political form that could be an effective bulwark against the creation of the colour line and imperialism in the organisation of the world system. And China has, for the better part of its recent history, been shaped by the idea of the party-state as a distinctive political form.

So, different regions have a "foundational" question within which politics is conducted. These horizons are fleshed out in a variety of ways, some better and worse than others. They are often challenged. They all have to be embedded in different national traditions. But they are foundational in the sense that any plausible answer to the question of political legitimation in those societies must make reference to, or flesh out the meaning of this starting point. Countries like Pakistan, Iran and Egypt, have to take "Islamic" as a starting point, even if they interpret its meaning differently. Liberal democracies work within the entrenched "liberal" principles, however they might be interpreted. Most varieties of Chinese political thought, including many forms of neo-Confucianism, take the Party-State as an institutional form with which to work. Often, in these countries, the distinction between the "Left" and "Right" or "authoritarian" and "liberal" versions is a distinction within their foundational question; they all claim to be the true inheritors of this foundational legacy. Often, this foundational question is deeply institutionalised, not easy to shake off.The Party-State as a distinctive 20th-century political form involved the thought that the Party would be a vanguard political formation that overcame, as Mao put it, the principal contradictions of society and catapult it to the next stage of development. All social mediation was to be carried out within the Party. In the Chinese case, the Party was also a stand-in for national identity as a whole. In China, in particular, the Party-State has a remarkable

history, unleashing both immense violence but also creating unprecedented development success. But does the party face a legitimation crisis? Perhaps in two senses. First, its ability to manage the principal economic contradictions will be open to question. Second, it will require more control and repression to retain its grip on power. Neither of these challenges means the party will collapse. It still has the nationalism engine to shore it up. But it will increasingly face legitimation crises.

If the Party-State owes its strongest version to Mao, that of theo-democracy was shaped by Abul A'la al-Maududi, one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. This was the project of reconciling an acknowledgement of the formal sovereignty of God, with modern democracy, and a theological role for clerics. Iran is one version of this project; Pakistan, half-heartedly another, and Qutb in Egypt a third. This model has been under strain in two respects. Even in Maududi, its insistence on politically, not just socially, sanctifying patriarchy was bound to evoke resistance of the kind we are now seeing in Iran. And its inability to handle the contradictions that come from an allegiance to notions of heresy and blasphemy in turn produces conflict. This framework has never stabilised enough to bring peace or prosperity. But it has enduring power in that it is proving hard to jettison.

Mandela might be the iconic figure in the battle against Apartheid. But so much of African political thought in the 20th century — from Fanon to Cesaire — was haunted by the deep organising principle of power in international politics: The colour line as a deeply oppressive basis of subordination. African socialists and pan-Africanists were in search of a political form that could give Africa effective political agency. This project has been floundering for a while. But the South African experiment was meant not just to give ballast to the continent because of its power, but as an example. But South Africa is struggling to become the flag bearer of this project.

James Madison's version of democracy is arguably the most influential because it was the least ambitious. The Party-State wanted a vanguard function for the Party. The Madisonian party was less exalted. No party could represent the whole. The party was organised around interests. Social stability could be secured by orderly competition and rotation of power. Combined with the promise of individual liberty, this form of government would not only be stable, but produce prosperity, and require the least coercion. This model has a crisis of its own. In most democracies, including the US, we can no longer be as confident about peaceful transitions of power. There is impatience with individual liberty. The free competition of different groups has really descended into democracies being controlled by oligarchies, less able to solve collective problems.

The foundational frameworks iconically represented by Madison, Mao, Maududi and Mandela are floundering. (Our Mahatma was already killed in 1948). To be sure, the crisis is not symmetrical. Liberal democracies have great regenerative power; the Party-State has proved to be more resilient than its critics suggested. The politics internal to these horizons might be overshadowed by global problems, climate change and strategic competition. Nationalism might be used as more of an answer to this crisis. But it is unclear, as we grow weary of old horizons, what else will come in their wake.

PIB,OCT7,2022

TRAI extends time to receive comments on 'Draft Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2022'

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had issued the 'Draft Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations 2022' on 9th September 2022 for comments/counter-comments of stakeholders. The last date for receiving written comments from the stakeholders was fixed as 7th October 2022 and counter comments, if any, by 21st October 2022.The stakeholders have sought extension of time for sending their comments on the 'Draft Telecommunication (Broadcasting and Cable) Services Interconnection (Addressable Systems) (Fourth Amendment) Regulations, 2022'. In view of this, it has been decided to extend the last date for submission of written comments up to 4th November 2022. Counter comments, if any, may also be submitted by 18th November, 2022. No further requests for extension would be considered.The comments and counter-comments may be sent, preferably in electronic form on the email: advbcs-2@trai.gov.in and jtadv-bcs@trai.gov.in. For any clarification/ information, Shri Anil Kumar Bhardwaj, Advisor (B&CS) may be contacted at Tel. No: +91-11-23237922.

PIONEER,OCT8,2022

Karnataka to hike SC/ST quota through Constitutional amendment

In a major decision ahead of the Assembly polls a few months away, the BJP government in Karnataka on Friday decided to increase the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/STs) quota in the state, by seeking a Constitutional amendment.

The decision has been taken by the government on the basis of the report of Justice H N Nagamohan Das Commission, which has recommended hiking the quota for SCs from 15 per cent to 17 per cent and for STs from 3 per cent to 7 per cent.Chief

Minister Basavaraj Bommai made an announcement to this effect after chairing an all-party meeting that was attended by Congress and JD(S) leaders.Noting that it was a "long-standing and a just demand" from the communities that the reservation should be based on population, he said, "The Nagamohan Das Commission's recommendations were discussed at the all party meeting today and has been approved. Before that it was discussed within our party (BJP) where it was decided to keep up our commitment for the welfare of SC/STs."The Cabinet meeting will be convened on Saturday itself, where a formal decision will be taken in this connection, he added.The Bommai government was under tremendous pressure from SC/ST lawmakers to implement the commission's report. Also, the 'Valmiki Gurupeetha' seer Prasannananda Swami has been on a hunger strike demanding the ST quota hike.The opposition parties, especially the Congress had been attacking the government for the delay in implementation.The commission had given its recommendations to the government in July 2020.

However, following a couple of judgements from the Supreme court regarding reservation, the government had constituted a committee under Justice Subhash B Adi on implementation of the recommendations as per law and Constitution, which too submitted its report subsequently.After studying both the reports, the government wanted to take everyone into confidence before arriving at any decision on a matter relating to law and Constitution, hence the all party meeting was called today, Bommai said.

At present, Karnataka provides 32 per cent reservation for OBCs, 15 per cent for SCs and 3 per cent for STs, totalling to 50 per cent, and the only way before Karnataka to hike the SC/ST quota is via the Schedule 9 route.Noting that if the reservation exceeds 50 per cent, then courts will take exception, Law Minister J C Madhuswamy said there is a SC decision saying reservation in the states should not exceed 50 per cent, but some states have exceeded the ceiling and there is a provision to do it under special circumstances."We will introduce it under Schedule 9, because it has judicial immunity. Tamil Nadu did it under Schedule 9 to increase reservation to 69 per cent. We will recommend to the Union government to amend the Constitution," he added.Responding to a question, the Minister said hiking the SC/ST quota and exceeding 50 per cent would eat into the general category space to some extent".Reservation in Karnataka is already on the borderline and it will be difficult to rejig quotas within the 50 per cent, he said. "If we have to do it, we will have to reduce the OBC quota by six percentage points, which nobody will tolerate. So, to exceed 50 per cent, it must be done via Schedule 9."Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, also another former CM and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy attended the all party meet.The decision is also being seen by some with a political prism with Assembly elections due in about six months.

HINDUSTAN TIMES,OCT3,2022

Gandhi and Ambedkar argued against purdah

Mahatma Gandhi and BR Ambedkar analysed the issue in detail and strongly argued in favour of developing a healthy society, ending gender discrimination

Balbir Punj

The ban on the hijab in some Karnataka classrooms, and the subsequent case in the courts, may be a recent one, but the controversy around it dates back to the pre-Independence era. Mahatma Gandhi and BR Ambedkar analysed the issue in detail and strongly argued in favour of developing a healthy society, ending gender discrimination.

Hijab and chadar are garments used by wo9men to cover their head and face partially, and other parts of their body in varying degrees, as part of the purdah system in public spaces. The burqa is one step forward -- it shrouds the entire physique of a woman, with two netted slits for eyes. Gandhi's unequivocal stand on the issue provoked Muslim leaders to label him an "unbeliever" who had no business "interfere" in their religious matters. While Ambedkar's critique of the purdah system was scathing, Gandhi's approach was mild and persuasive. The latter called upon Hindu women to reach out to their "Muslim sisters" and "rescue" them from this "hypocrisy". Gandhi felt the practice went against the tenets of Islam. His views are at variance with the line pro-hijab appellants have taken in the SC.

"Purdah deprives Muslim women of mental and moral nourishment. Being deprived of a healthy social life, the process of moral degeneration must and does set in," Ambedkar wrote. He said the practice was "responsible for the social segregation of Hindus from Muslims, which is the bane of public life in India. This argument may appear far-fetched. But the Hindus are right when they say that it is not possible to establish social contact between Hindus and Muslims because such contact can only mean contact between women from one side and men from the other".

Dwelling on the practice, Ambedkar said, "Not that purdah and the evils consequent thereon are not to be found among certain sections of the Hindus in certain parts of the country. But the point of distinction is that among the Muslims, purdah has a religious sanctity which it has not with the Hindus and can only be removed by facing the inevitable conflict between religious injunctions and social needs".

Gandhi's brush with purdah started with a casual remark. While speaking at Bhatialpur on January 14, 1947, he said that "it should be scrapped. The system kept women in complete darkness in every respect. …If the darkness of their mind was not removed they could not do anything with outward purdah". The next day, at Narayanpur, he said it was the "duty of Hindu women to befriend their Muslim sisters and rescue them from the thraldom of the purdah."

Gandhi urging Muslim women to drop the purdah created resentment among Muslims. Addressing a prayer meeting on January 25, 1947, Gandhi alluded to two telegrams received from the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam in Madras and Bombay, which said that he, "an unbeliever, had no right to interfere in the Islamic Law."Hostile reactions to Gandhi's views on purdah continued unabated. He received another telegram: "Madras Ulemas meeting held under auspices of Primary Muslim league, Royapettah, Madras, says Islamic Code ideal. Please desist from pronouncement against Islam. Muslim nation will not tolerate interference with Islamic tenets."Responding to these messages, Gandhi wrote to one M Ismail on January 31, 1947. "In this age of reason why do you want to shelter Islam from reasoned criticism, especially when it is from a friend of Islam that I claim to be? What I have said is, I claim in consonance with the Prophet's teachings. Purdah as it is practised today in many parts of India is a mockery."Gandhi reiterated his stand while speaking at Amisha Para on February 1. He asserted that he was "certain it (purdah) had little to do with the Koran. He was sure that the practice "was contrary to Islamic teaching."

On March 23, 1947, a question was put to him in Patna on women not giving up untouchability and purdah. His answer: "If they do not give them up, they must be persuaded to do so". On April 27, in Patna, Gandhi told a woman who had come in purdah, "The real meaning of purdah is that you should guard against lust, anger and attachment. This outward purdah is mere hypocrisy".Politics is full of surprises. It can be argued that the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Karnataka is fighting to partially realise Gandhi's and Ambedkar's vision to free young Muslim women of the "thraldom" of purdah. The Congress, a claimant to Gandhi's legacy, is speaking against such a move.A picture is worth a thousand words. On September 19, Congress shared a photograph — Rahul Gandhi walking hand-in-hand with a little girl wearing a hijab during his 'Bharat Jodo' Yatra. At the same time another picture was splashed across the global media reporting massive protests by women all

over Iran against mandatory veiling of women in the Islamic nation.Developments in India are happening at a time when women have hit the streets across Iran over the past few weeks to protest the killing of a young woman for not wearing the hijab. In Iran, thousands of young women had joined the Islamist and Leftist groups to ensure the success of the Islamic revolution. In the process, they tightened the noose around themselves. Now they are paying with their lives to break free. Life has come full circle for them.

Balbir Punj is a former Member of Parliament and a columnist

Old playbook

Shah announces quotas for Gujjar, Bakarwal, Pahari communities in Jammu and Kashmir

Home Minister Amit Shah's announcement on Tuesday at Rajouri in Jammu and Kashmir regarding quotas for the Gujjar, Bakarwal, and Pahari communities may be a smart move to get a foothold in the separatism-afflicted state but still it is from the old playbook—and that may not be without consequences. He mentioned the GD Sharma Commission which had recommended reservation for Gujjar, Bakarwal, and Pahari communities, adding that it will be given soon. The Paharis are both Hindu and Muslim. Shah was speaking at a rally that began the Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign for elections which are expected next year. These are nomadic pastoralists who have been on the margins of the society in Jammu and Kashmir. They retain much of tribal mores and ethos. Consequently, they have not been exposed as much to the influence of radical Islamism as the mainstream Muslims in the Valley are. This also explains why these tribal communities helped the Indian Army in the past, including during the Kargil War. Separatist militants have also attacked these communities for their (the latter's support to India). The BJP may be trying to capitalise on this fact; it is aware that getting votes of Muslims is not easy, despite the good development work done in Kashmir. Shah has correctly pointed out that the removal of Article 370 in 2019 has made many progressive steps possible, including affirmative action for the communities marginalised earlier. But that won't be without hiccups; for one, Gujjar and Bakarwal communities already enjoy the 10 per cent ST quota and are not happy with the Paharis getting the tribal status.

Shah, however, downplayed the fears of the existing STs, claiming that they "will not lose anything." Such fears, however, are an integral part of the system of reservations for some communities in educational institutes and jobs. The beneficiaries

want to perpetuate quotas for themselves and want to exclude others. The non-beneficiaries, on the other hand, resent exclusion. Besides, there are questions about the genuineness of beneficiaries. For example, does the son or daughter of an IAS officer deserve to get reservation just because his or her caste is entitled to? These issues have not been resolved in the past; in fact, in the wake of the Mandal Commission, resentment became ubiquitous. The way out is not some imaginative social engineering but economic progress and development. It would be instructive to notice immediately after the Mandal flare-up, economic reforms were carried out, resulting in the unleashing of animal spirits of entrepreneurship, brisk growth, employment generation, and reduction in poverty. Interestingly, in the 1990s and early 2000s, the country did not suffer from any major quota stir. Therefore, it would be better for the BJP to focus on the economy rather than the politics of quotas, which is essentially divisive politics. Yes, the saffron party would like to perform better in polls, but there are other ways, like concessions on civil liberties, to woo the electorate.

ECONOMIC TIMES,OCT6,2022

Reserve Bank of India introduces internal ombudsman mechanism for Credit Information Companies

India's central bank today directed all Credit Information Companies (CICs) to appoint internal ombudsman at the top of their internal grievance redress mechanism by April 1 of next year.The directions include the appointment/tenure, role and responsibilities, procedural guidelines, and oversight mechanism for the IO, the Reserve Bank of India said in a statement.

All complaints that are partly or wholly rejected by CICs will be reviewed by the IO before the final decision of the CIC is conveyed to the complainant, it said, adding that the IO will not entertain any complaints directly from the members of public.The RBI said these directions will strengthen the internal grievance redress mechanism within the CICs by enabling a review of customer complaints before their rejection, by an independent apex level authority within the CIC.

In August, the RBI had decided to bring CICs under the ambit of Reserve Bank-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, which covers regulated entities such as scheduled commercial banks including urban cooperative banks, non-banking financial companies and non-scheduled primary co-operative banks with a deposit size of Rs. 50 crore and above, to provide a cost free alternate redress mechanism to customers of REs for grievances against CICs.According to the directions issued today, the following types of complaints shall be outside the purview and shall not be handled by the IO:

1. Complaints related to fraud, misappropriation, etc., except those resulting from deficiency in service, if any, on the part of the CIC

2. Complaints/references relating to (a) internal administration, (b) human resources, or (c) pay and emoluments of staff

3. References in the nature of suggestions and commercial decisions of the CIC

4. Complaints which have been decided by or are already pending in other fora such as Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, courts, etc.

5. Disputes for which remedy has been provided under Section 18 of the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005

Currently, consumers raise disputes through CICs' websites, which is then routed to the credit institution from where the consumer has taken loan. CICs cannot make any changes to the data unless authorised by the credit institution concerned.According to the scheme, a regulated entity will not have the right to appeal in cases where an award is issued by the ombudsman against it for not furnishing satisfactory and timely information or documents. The executive director-in charge of consumer education and protection department of RBI would be the appellate authority under the scheme.

ECONOMIC TIMES,OCT6,2022

ECLGS: Finance Ministry increases loan limit to Rs 1,500 cr for aviation sector

The finance ministry on Wednesday modified the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) by increasing the loan limit to Rs 1,500 crore from Rs 400 crore under the scheme. The limit has been raised to help the Covid-hit industry tide over liquidity stress.

Recognising that an efficient and strong civil aviation sector is vital for the economic development of the country, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) has modified the ECLGS on Tuesday to enhance the maximum loan amount eligibility for airlines, reported PTI citing an official statement.As per the modified ECLGS 3.0, an airline would be eligible for "100 per cent of their fund based or non-fund-based loan outstanding as on the reference dates or Rs 1,500 crore, whichever is lower; and of the above, Rs 500 crore shall be considered, based on equity contribution by the owners."

All other criteria terms and conditions parameters prescribed under the operational guidelines of the ECLGS on August 30, 2022, would be applicable as it is, it said.The modifications introduced are aimed to give necessary collateral-free liquidity at reasonable interest rates to tide over their present cash flow problems.Earlier in March 2022, the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) was extended beyond March 2022, till March 2023, to implement the announcement made in the Union Budget 2022-23 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Keeping in view the high proportion of non-fund based credit in the overall credit of the civil aviation sector, the eligible borrowers were permitted to avail up to 50 per cent of their highest total fund and non-fund based credit outstanding, subject to a maximum of Rs 400 crore per borrower, it said.The ECLGS was announced in May 2020 in wake of the outbreak of COVID-19 to help various sectors, especially in the MSME segment, to get credit at a concessional rate of 7 per cent.

Post announcement, the scheme was modified several times depending on demand of various industries. Besides, the deadline of the scheme was extended several times to support various sectors of the economy that were hit hard due to the outbreak of the pandemic.On August 17, the Union Cabinet approved the enhancement in the limit of ECLGS by Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 5 lakh crore. The additional amount is being earmarked exclusively for enterprises in hospitality and related sectors including the aviation sector.Loans worth around Rs 3.67 lakh crore have been sanctioned under ECLGS till August 5, 2022.

INDIAN EXPRESS,OCT8,2022

Best case scenario will be growth rate with a 7% handle in front: Chief Economic Advisor at Express Adda

Referring to the post-pandemic recovery in the domestic economy, the CEA said some of the so-called high frequency indicators such as retail footfalls, air travel, railway freight, have held up far better than expected.With most high-frequency indicators showing an uptick in the domestic economy even as risks stemming from global factors loom large on the external front, the "best case scenario" for the Indian economy would be a growth rate with "a 7 (per cent) handle in front of it", Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said Friday.

Speaking at the Express Adda event of The Indian Express, the CEA also said: "The dollar still remains an important vehicle for financial markets or trade transactions etc. But yes, there are countries, not just India, but even many other countries, given the fact that foreign exchange reserves themselves have become subject to sanctions, have become instruments of international power relations, that it naturally encourages many countries to look at barter arrangements or trading settlements other than

dollars…""So, that process is a natural reaction to the weaponisation of currencies or foreign exchange reserves etc. But these are still very early days to talk about that. But the overall confidence in the dollar hasn't really diminished… I think we need to (think of these alternate ways) because in any case as we grow in size, and we have just become the world's fourth largest economy, we should be growing further along those lines, then I think it is a logical step to look at ways to internationalise the Indian rupee, and it will happen. It's a logical evolution."

At the Express Adda, Nageswaran was in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director of The Indian Express Group, and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor, The Indian Express.Referring to the post-pandemic recovery in the domestic economy, the CEA said some of the so-called high frequency indicators such as retail footfalls, air travel, railway freight, have held up far better than expected."The best case scenario given the state of the world would be for India to be able to achieve a real growth rate of which has a 7 (per cent) handle in front of it. That would be a good situation. But if I look at some of the so-called high frequency indicators, like footfalls and restaurants, air travel, railway freight, etc since we have data up to August more clearly, some of those indicators have held up far better than expected."

"One or two areas which were lagging behind such as contact services, hotels, restaurants … even they have improved, although they have not gone back to the pre pandemic levels… only two of them are still below the pre-pandemic levels such as international tourist arrivals and domestic travel, but everything else has gone past the pre pandemic levels," he said.On the risks to the economy, Nageswaran said the external sector is "one area that we need to be very watchful about".

"As a country that runs a current account deficit, naturally, we look for external capital. And yes, FDI and FII flows are two components, but there are other components as well — bilateral credit, external commercial borrowings, those also meet our current account funding requirements. As of now, of course, we feel that it is something that we need to be watchful about but not necessarily something to lose sleep over. Because we do have at the moment the kind of reserves covered that do take care of eight to nine months of inputs.""And so all I would say is, it all depends on how commodity prices evolve. In the last 2-3 months, they have dropped quite materially, but in the last few days, oil prices have firmed up a little bit. But these things, we just have to be very watchful… luckily, in good times we have built up the safety net or we have bought umbrellas that we can use in these times."

He said the country was strong on the macroeconomic stability front and that it could gear for growth in the coming years. "India enjoys a return to macroeconomic stability, and also prospects of growth not just in the current financial year, but

subsequent years as well, which I think is something given the headwinds that we face and which might linger. I think it's something that should make us feel relatively comfortable. Yes, we could… we should be able to grow much faster. But I mean, under the circumstances, to the kind of role position that we are seeing whether it is six and a half or seven or whatever… we should be somewhat relieved that these growth outcomes do materialise under the situation that we find ourselves in. It will be a creditable achievement," he said.On the day the rupee fell past the 82 level to a fresh record low of 82.33 per US dollar, Nageswaran said the domestic currency's performance needs to be seen in the global context.

"If you look at the rupee's performance in the course of the current financial year or current calendar year, it is one of the better ones. And I am not just talking about the emerging economies, including advanced currencies, such as the euro, the pound, the yen and the Korean won etc… The rupee has done far better against the US dollar … It is not a big historical low. No, it's probably stronger than it was a year or two ago. So I think we need to sort of keep these kinds of headlines in perspective. I wouldn't be worried about this being neither good nor bad because the reality is when the United States raises interest rates and when investors around the world become cautious, and flows of capital get affected and the dollar tends to appreciate against all currencies… Since the conflict broke out, it's the story of dollar strength. It's not a story of rupee weakness," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS,OCT8,2022

Accounting for subsidies: Let's build on the 'revdi' debate

A fiscal council can help the government streamline disbursement of freebies

Nitya Chutani

The debate that began with an RBI 2022 report on state finances followed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comment on "revdi culture" aka freebies, has garnered substantial attention — so much so that the Supreme Court is hearing on this issue. In a country where millions of people were only a pandemic away from being pushed back into poverty, freebies have now assumed more importance than ever.

Freebies could be defined as non-merit subsidies. Subsidies are money transfers (implicit or explicit) by the government in an attempt to drive prices artificially below market prices. As a National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) study

by Sudipto Mundle and Satadru Sirkar puts it, budget subsidies, in particular, are defined as the unrecovered cost of economic and social services. However, all subsidies cannot be easily classified into merit or non-merit.It could be said that providing freebies empowers the state to, first, deliver welfare as a welfare state should, by providing subsidised merit goods like health and education; second, to help households combat poverty (especially in economically stressed times characterised by fewer job opportunities, lower incomes, high inflation, etc.) by providing subsidised public goods like food, electricity, etc.; and third, to appeal to the electorate (through outright populist spending).

The boundaries between the aforementioned objectives begin to blur when it comes to classifying one form of freebie as a merit or a non-merit subsidy. For example, are corporate tax cuts non-merit subsidies or a measure to boost investment? Is making bus rides free for women in the national capital a non-merit subsidy or a way to boost women's mobility and labour-force participation? In a similar tone, are free laptops to students in Tamil Nadu not a way to bridge the digital divide in education? The existing arguments develop an understanding that freebies cannot be defined in a finite context, and that the definition varies across space and economic conditions.

Regardless of which one gets classified as good or bad, freebies are simply expenditures or foregone revenues. Either way, they lead to an increase in fiscal deficit whose financing could necessitate taking on debt. The targeting of beneficiaries to ease the burden on the exchequer is one way to check these expenditures but lack of data has forced a situation wherein leakages and duplication of beneficiaries is commonplace.Going ahead, any freebie-induced debt burden could have an adverse effect on the state finances if, one, it hasn't been properly accounted for through transparent budgeting procedures (including off-budget borrowings in debt calculations), and two, it threatens fiscal sustainability, ie, it limits the state's ability to service its debt-related commitments without making an unrealistic fiscal adjustment.

That said, in the absence of adequate avenues of revenue mobilisation, any fiscal adjustment achieved by contracting critical expenditures on the social sector and capital formation further jeopardises long-term growth and development. The emanating risk of fiscal sustainability means a "revdi" today would take a toll on tomorrow's generation.A solution to this problem lies in setting up an independent fiscal council that has been recommended by the FRBM Review Committee (2017), and recently constituted Finance Commissions too, including the 15th Finance Commission. Incidentally, the FRBM panel and 15th FC were both headed by N K Singh. The FRBM report says, "the council will serve both an ex-ante role — providing independent forecasts on key macro variables like real and nominal GDP growth, tax buoyancy, commodity prices — as well as an ex-

post monitoring role, and also serve as the institution to advise on triggering the escape clause and also specify a path of return."

Such a council should work for the union as well as the states. Furthermore, such monitoring of finances and fiscal rules could also help ensure that states comply with a medium-term fiscal policy framework, which has been long argued for by economists. For the above reasons, it is imperative to fill the widely recognised institutional void.

In summary, freebies cannot be defined easily, and constitutionally, any state government should be empowered to spend the way it wants, provided the fiscal policy is sustainable. Such a debate, therefore, warrants undertaking strategic measures via strengthening fiscal guidance through an institution like a fiscal council. That will enable the state to make informed economic decisions whilst attending to key development objectives.

TELEGRAPH,OCT8,2022

Digital currency must grant anonymity, says RBI

Concept note says retail CBDC is an electronic version of cash primarily meant for retail transactions

The Reserve Bank has said the central bank digital currency – dubbed as the e-Rupee – should confer some degree of anonymity to the person who possesses it, mimicking the critical feature of the physical currency, even as it admits that this could present a challenge as all digital transactions leave a trail.In a concept note on the digital currency released on Friday, the RBI said it favoured the use of the e-Rupee for both retail and wholesale transactions, marking a shift in its stance ahead of the proposed launch of the CBDC later this year.

The digital cur rency will have two avatars: the CBDC-R meant for retail transactions by the general public and the CBDC-W for wholesale transactions like inter-bank transfers. Earlier, the RBI had wanted the CBDC-W to be tested first.The Retail CBDC is an electronic version of cash primarily meant for retail transactions, the concept note said.While releasing the document, the RBI said it will soon start limited pilot launches of the central bank digital currency (CBDC) or the e-rupee for specific use cases. The proposed CBDC will co-exist with the current fiat currency and other forms of digital payments.

DIGITAL CURRENCY: A READY RECKONER

- **What is CBDC:** A legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form. It is the same as a sovereign currency and is exchangeable at par with the fiat currency and accepted as a medium of payment. It will be referred as e₹

- **When does India plan to launch its digital currency:** This fiscal year. RBI to soon commence limited pilot launches

- **What are the types of CBDC:** General purpose (retail) (CBDC-R) and wholesale (CBDC-W).

- **CBDC-R** is for use by all private sector, non-financial consumers and businesses.

- **CBDC-W** is for restricted access by financial institutions

- **Will CBDC keep its anonymity like physical cash:** RBI wants anonymity but admits it will be a challenge to design such an architecture as all digital transactions leave a trail

- **What is the model for issuance:** The indirect model where consumers would hold their CBDC in an account or wallet with a bank or service provider.

- The obligation to provide CBDC on demand would fall on the intermediary

- **Will token or account' based CBDC be introduced:** A token CBDC is a bearer-instrument such as banknotes. Meant for retail users. Account-based CBDC would require the keeping of a record of balances and transactions. Meant for wholesale users

- **Will CBDC be of fixed denomination or minimum value:** Introduction of fixed denomination CBDC is preferable taking into account the Indian scenario

The RBI felt that since CBDCs are electronic form of sovereign currency, it should imbibe all the possible features of physical currency.The concept note suggested an "indirect" model to issue CBDC, wherein the central bank and other intermediaries (banks and any other service providers), each play their respective role.In this model, the RBI will issue CBDC to consumers indirectly through intermediaries and any claim by consumers is managed by the intermediary as the central bank only handles wholesale payments to intermediaries.The model is similar to the current physical currency management system wherein banks manage activities such as distribution of notes to public, account-keeping and adherence to KYC requirements.

The note suggested a token-based CBDC to be the preferred mode for retail CBDCas it would be closer to physical cash, while account-basedCBDC may be considered for CBDC-W.

TELEGRAPH,OCT8,2022

Through a rosy lens

The airbrushing of the Indian economy is damaging

Anup Sinha

The latest Monthly Economic Review from the ministry of finance gives the reader a great deal of comfort by indicating that all is well with the Indian economy. If there is any cause for concern at all, it is from external economic and political shocks: events like the Federal Reserve in the United States of America raising interest rates, or Russia invading Ukraine. Anticipating global macroeconomic changes is the need of the hour according to the Review. In a similar vein, when the Reserve Bank of India recently raised the repo rate for the fourth time since May 2022, the problems facing the economy were identified as being external. Domestic economic conditions have been claimed to be quite rosy, with credit growth increasing, investment activities picking up, and the utilisation of existing capacity in industry increasing perceptibly. There is a puzzle, however, when one notes that almost all major international agencies that make forecasts about GDP growth have reduced India's projections for the current year and indicated that the next year would be worse than the current one. The RBI and the ministry of finance appear quite happy with forecasts that are higher than those made by other forecasting agencies. The International Monetary Fund has reduced the forecast for the current year as have Ficci, Crisil, Moody's and the Asian Development Bank.

Why are there distinct differences in perceptions? One reason could be that the rating agencies and global organisations are more aware of external economic shocks looming on the horizon. That would cast India's analysts in poor light for having missed out on foreboding signals. The other reason, of course, is the possibility that official Indian sources believe in painting a comforting picture, choosing to ignore disturbing trends and possibilities. In either case, Indian households and firms are unable to factor in the problems that might arise in the near future — in the next four or five quarters.It is well known that economic activity thrives best in an atmosphere of peace and stability along with a well-established rule of law. These parameters depend on a number of social and political factors like freedoms and rights, institutional autonomy, a free press, and economic deprivations kept as low as possible, to name just a few.

A number of different international agencies monitor many of these parameters for a large number of countries and rank them annually, or every two years, according to some composite score they arrive at for each nation. The way the results are arrived at is transparent and available to anyone interested. The number of countries included in these indices are well above 150, barring one or two instances where the number of countries ranked are above 100. Sometimes, one hears the refutation of these results with the claim that the methods adopted for computing the indices are far from perfect and biased against India.

A couple of clarifications are in order at this point. No composite index of this nature is perfect; there are issues pertaining to data accuracies as well as what weights are attached to the various components of a measure. However, if an agency carries out the exercise for a large number of countries, and does so repeatedly for a certain period of time, then one question arises clearly: how is a particular nation faring visà-vis other nations? Is the ranking improving or deteriorating? Finally, there is no reason to believe that these agencies single out India and purposely choose methods that distort India's numbers and ranks. One can give a long list of such indices where, during the last two or three years, India's rank has deteriorated significantly. India has deteriorated in indices like Economic Freedom, Corruption Perceptions, Global Hunger and Global Food Security Index, Human Freedom, Human Development Index, Democracy Index, Press Freedom Index, Gender Gap and the Global Competitiveness Index. In the Global Peace Index and the Global Innovation Index, India's position has improved marginally even though the rank is still very low. In the ranking for the Environmental Performance Index, India touched a low of 180 in 2022 from 177 in 2018. India's rank was among the lowest two or three in the world. This particular index is a danger signal for environmental management for the future. In the World Bank published Ease of Doing Business Index, there was a remarkable improvement in India's rank, jumping from 130 in 2016 to 63 in 2019. Since this went in India's favour, the result was proclaimed loudly with no one stopping to critically review the methodology used. However, after an independent audit, the World Bank withdrew the results, claiming that there were data compromises that needed further investigation.

The tolls that the pandemic took on education and health infrastructures are likely to have long-lasting adverse effects on society. If one adds to these data — mostly obtained from non-government sources — on the changes in poverty levels, unemployment, informalisation of the labour force, the overcrowding in the agriculture sector, a shrinking of the MSME sector by almost half, and the shocking increase in economic inequalities, the underbelly of the Indian economy would be fully revealed. According to the Niti Aayog, the current level of poverty in India is 25 per cent; that is one in four Indians remains poor. If one adopts the US $2 per day income as the cut-off level for poverty, then the ratio of poor people rises to 67 per cent of the population. According to an Oxfam Report on inequality, in 2021, the top 10 per cent of India's population held 57 per cent of the nation's wealth while the bottom 50 per cent held only 13 per cent.

The slowdown in the economy is also revealed by the decrease in India's savings and investment rates. The gross savings rate has fallen from almost 37 per cent in 2011 to 32 per cent in 2018 to 28.2 per cent in 2021. The investment rate dropped from 32.2 per cent in 2018 to 30.7 per cent in 2022. The ability to save determines how much resources can be mobilised for investments. If investments are higher than domestic savings, the gap is met by foreign investments. Direct foreign

investments into India have been increasing in recent years. This can lead to a number of problems associated with foreign investments and can tarnish the image of an atmanirbhar nation.

While it is good to portray positive developments in a nation, it is unwise to brush problems under the carpet by blaming methods or data or the intentions of researchers. Knowing the truth, however uncomfortable it might seem, cannot hurt. It helps the nation to focus on, and prioritise attention to, problems that require decisive solutions. Many of the problems have been bequeathed to the nation as legacy issues. Discrediting the past does not offer real solutions. Not all is encouraging in the nation and not all the problems emerge out of international headwinds. Ignoring reality will only make matters worse.

Anup Sinha is former Professor of Economics, IIM Calcutta

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MINT,OCT3,2022

Low code and no code can drive India's digitization

India has the potential to grow and generate $4 billion in revenue by 2025 from the LCNC market, accounting for 10% of the global market share

Sunil Chemmankotil

Companies must welcome citizen developers with open arms to support agility

In 2011, investor Marc Andreessen warned us against an impending software revolution when he said "software is eating the world". Companies in every industry need to prepare for a software revolution. However, a global shortage of highly skilled software developers is a key risk factor for IT businesses today; not only are there not enough developers to meet the demand, but lack of necessary coding knowledge and experience is a major stumbling block.

India's software industry is embracing open architecture by enlisting citizen developers to create a scalable self-healing system for coding. This will enable the software industry to leapfrog its competitors in efficiency, innovation, and speed of software development.

Increasing demand for software development to perform IT operations is the driving force behind the growth of Low-Code and No-Code (LCNC) development. LCNC allows apps and solutions to be built with minimal to no coding knowledge. Industry data suggests that there is a huge shortage of talent, with just over 9,000 active job seekers available for over 16,500 jobs. LCNC provides the means to create software applications by utilizing visual design tools and a drag-and-drop user interface without any prior knowledge of coding.LCNC platforms are adaptable and expandable too, and thus provide the opportunity to create scalable designs which can be implemented on the cloud. Increased awareness and training around LCNC can fill the demand-supply gap. The lack of a highly qualified workforce means a longer hunt for talent, a spike in salaries and possible stagnation in growth.

Companies must welcome citizen developers with open arms to support agility in software development and redefine how business apps are built. LCNC platforms allow developers and businesses to quickly develop apps thus driving productivity and cost efficiency. Going ahead, the increased adoption of LCNC platforms with citizen developers will also reduce the reliance on third-party vendors.LCNC programming is providing a tantalizing opportunity to job seekers, especially freshers and greenhorns who can utilize their time to develop customized apps with minimal programming skills.

As for those who are already in the field, the world of programming is extending an opportunity to simplify the process by moving from spot low-code solutions to integrated enterprise-wide functionality. By making software development accessible to a wide range of skill sets and areas of expertise, LCNC platforms are empowering candidates to play a very important role in accelerating digital journeys.

By dramatically increasing the demand for candidates with little or no coding knowledge, LCNC has also increased the participation of non-tech candidates in the workforce, which is a huge milestone towards addressing the twin issues of skill shortage and rampant unemployment in the country.Every industry, including IT services, is embracing LCNC to cater to the rising demand for technical tools and infra, like mobile apps, websites, desktop apps, etc. Importantly, the technology is also being used in comparatively less technology intensive industries too, such as telecom, e-commerce, entertainment, and healthcare.LCNC facilitates businesses by expediting IT services, automating workflow and streamlining customer services to meet business goals at a faster pace with a more affordable ecosystem. LCNC thus supports better customer retention, brand satisfaction and greater revenue generation.While the adoption of the LCNC platform is not widespread in India yet, this is an immense opportunity for companies to utilize these platforms to massively improve their productivity levels while rationalizing costs.

India has the potential to grow and generate $4 billion in revenue by 2025 from the LCNC market, accounting for 10% of the global market share. Bill Gates said, in 2013, that "the internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow", and while LCNC is a long way from mainstream adoption in India, it will help give the power to more and more people to join this town square.

Sunil Chemmankotil is the CEO of TeamLease Digital.

PIB,OCT4,2022

India will lead the world in Technology: MoS Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar

Under PM Shri Modi, there is democratisation of opportunities and democratisation of capital

Dholera to become Semicon hub, will usher in for Gujarat's Techade

riven by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's proactive policies and the launch of 5G services in India, Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, in Rajkot, Gujarat today, said that India will soon emerge as a leader in Electronics Manufacturing in the world with its youth playing a big role in this effort.

"Prime Minister, Shri Modi's vision of India's Techade can be realised by our young Indians through their hard work, determination and enterprise. The Government on its part can only be the enabler with its initiatives like the Digital India, Skill India etc," said Shri Chandrasekhar addressing students of the Saurashtra University and Atmiya University in Rajkot.

Emphasising that the Government's strategy was to encourage the "deepening and broadening" of the electronics space through investments in semiconductors, AI, machine learning, blockchain etc., the Minister said, "For this purpose, the Government was ready to give grant up to Rs 100 crore for investment in semi-conductor designs."Stating that he will soon embarking on roadshows in different parts of the country to encourage entrepreneurs to grab the opportunities, Shri Chandrasekhar said our strategy is to cut down on imports and aim to become a value creator to the supply and value chains and not just being a commodity exporter.

Referring to Gujarat's initiative in the electronics sector, Shri Chandrasekhar said that the State has taken several proactive measures like announcing its own Semicon policy and establishing Dholera as Asia's largest electronics hub. "Dholera will bring along a lot of opportunities for entrepreneurs of the State."Talking about how PM Shri Modi's government has demolished old narratives about India as a dysfunctional, corrupt and low-growth economy, that favoured only the influential and the well-networked, the Minister said that there is democratisation of opportunity and democratisation of capital in today's India. "We follow the dictum - maximum governance and minimum government"

"Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi is building a New India for Young India with reimagined ambitions so that we can achieve our target of One Trillion USD Digital economy/ 5T USD Economy and also emerge as a trusted partner in

technology. He does not believe in revdi economics or freebies culture as populated by some Opposition parties," he emphasised.Shri Chandrasekhar also met several young startups and entrepreneurs at the Marwari University and discussed with them their apps/innovations and how those could be escalated into marketable products.

Later he attended a meeting with industry leaders and other district officials, organized by CII. The Minister urged them to consider how Industry and Academia and the Government can together support incubated startups in commercialising their innovations. He also asked industry leaders as well as District administration officials to contribute towards framing District Skill Development Programme by mapping local aspirations.The Minister who was on a two-day official tour of Rajkot and Surendranagar, since yesterday, met students, entrepreneurs, startups, leaders from the industry, academia and other eminent personalities and shared PM Shri Narendra Modi's vision for empowering all Indians - Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas.

PIB,OCT7,2022

All India Institute of Ayurveda signs MoU with National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, Japan

The All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), the apex institute of Ayurveda in India under the Ministry of AYUSH, and the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), Japan have signed an MoU for academic establishment. AIST is a reputed and one of the largest public research organizations in Japan, focusing on technologies and on "bridging" the gap between innovative technological seeds and commercialisation.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Tanuja Nesari, Director, AIIA and Dr. Tamura Tomohiro, Director General, Department of Life Science and Biotechnology, who was present online. The event was graced by Renu Wadhwa, Prime Senior Researcher, Head AIST-India DAILAB, Dept of Life Science and Biotechnology, whose efforts have been instrumental in making this collaboration a reality. Other dignitaries who were present virtually at the occasion were Dr. Manoj Nesari, Advisor, Ministry of Ayush; Dr. Chiba, Director, AIST, Japan; Dr Ohmiya Yoshihiro, Principal Senior Researcher, AIST; Dr Sunil Kaul, Invited Senior Researcher, Dept. of Life Science & Biotechnology AIST; Mrs. Sheila Tirky, Representative of MoA.

With the signing of this MoU, AIIA aims to promote Institute's research activities both at a national and international stage. The MoU will enable both countries to promote research collaboration and building capacities in the field of the Indian Ayurvedic system of traditional medicines. All these activities will be executed in support of the Ministry of Ayush.The scope of activities that is intended by the participants includes research activities in the field of Ayurveda including studies in design

and execution with the purpose of developing evidence-based guidelines for integrating Ayurvedic principles and practices with conventional medicine, evolving safety standards and protocols for the use of Ayurveda in Japan in conformity with medical guidelines, exchanging scientists, researchers and staff as determined by the collaborators on a project-to-project basis, students' participation in collaborative activities to achieve excellence in Ayurveda towards achieving scientific advances, tools and techniques.

AIIA already has MoUs with the European Academy of Ayurveda, Bernstein, Germany; Western Sydney University, Australia; Graz Medical University, Austria; College of Medical, UK; London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK an Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

PIB,OCT7,2022

Artificial Intelligence to act as a catalyst in India's development journey and help realise goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047: Shri Goyal.Government using AI to redefine the way it works: Shri Goyal

'Make in India' initiative juxtaposed with AI technology, will enable India to become the factory of the world, says Shri Goyal.AI being used to effectively distribute food to the poor under PMGKY, monitor performance of fair price shops, help map needs of the poor: Shri Goyal

Shri Goyal urges young minds to explore new ways of harnessing AI technologies for empowering the society

Shri Goyal addresses 3rd edition of Global Artificial Intelligence Summit & Awards

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Shri Piyush Goyal today said that if India truly aspires to be a developed nation by 2047, as articulated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech on 15 August 2022, Artificial Intelligence will help the country reach that destination and bring prosperity to every citizen of this country. He was addressing the 3rd edition of Global Artificial Intelligence Summit & Awards.Quoting Prime Minister Modi, "Any society which does not innovate, stagnates", Shri Goyal said Artificial intelligence will truly be a catalyst in India's development journey. He said that 'The Make in India' program when juxtaposed with AI technology, will enable India to become the factory of the world providing both equipment and technology to the world. He noted that the huge talent pool available in the country will definitely help in exploring newer ways to take AI in

every sector of economic activity. The Minister appreciated the Department of Science and Technology for their wonderful work in supporting the efforts of the scientific community of the country over the years, and particularly during the challenging times of Covid.

Shri Goyal said that the Government is using AI to redefine the way it works. He cited the example of Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP), which is leveraging AI to improve the entire logistics ecosystem of the country. Similarly initiatives like PM Gatishakti National Master Plan, which aims at developing our infrastructure smarter; ONDC, which aims at democratising E commerce, GeM which has made a significant impact for government procurement - all these are leveraging Artificial Intellegence to bring efficiency and better delivery of services.Elaborating on the use of AI, Shri Goyal said that 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana', a major initiative of the Government that was launched during covid pandemic to provide additional food security to over 80 crore people, is also using AI in many ways - to help understand the needs and behaviour patterns of beneficiaries and get feedback about the performance of the Fair Price Shops. It helps in assessing which shops are performing efficiently and providing good services to beneficiaries, he said. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) uses AI and can help us to analyse the mobility patterns of our migrant workforce, he added.

Shri Goyal remarked that the Artificial intelligence revolution is here to stay and added that with the meaningful contribution by Industry, startups, incubators and academia, India is going to emerge as the hub of the artificial intelligence revolution across the world. He urged the young minds to inculcate the spirit of inquiry and start thinking of different ways the AI technologies can be harnessed to bring prosperity in our day to day life. He asked them to explore how AI can play a crucial role in empowering the lives of farmers, fishermen and the MSME sector.The third AI Summit has been organised by AICRA and is focusing on the areas of defence, healthcare, agriculture, smartcities, mobility and education in partnership with the government. The aim is to develop a roadmap on how to use AI ecosystem and startups for the benefit of society. The 3rd Annual conference has set up multidisciplinary groups to break down the silos in which different stakeholders have been working and to find technological solutions for the key sectors of our society.

ECONOMIC TIMES,OCT9,2022

How 5G will change your life, a glimpse

Kalyan Parbat

Next-generation 5G telecom services have been launched, bringing the promise of superfast gaming, enhanced virtual reality, high-resolution video and efficiency-enhancing communication as businesses adjust to post-pandemic flexible workplaces. Sunil Mittal-led Bharti Airtel was the first to start the nextgen mobile broadband service in several cities this month, while India's biggest telco, Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio Infocomm, has started 5G beta services in four cities. Both plan to cover India in 18-24 months. For a country hooked on data, blazing 5G data speeds promises a new era.

5G technology

New global wireless standard after 2G, 3G and 4G

It can deliver multi-Gbps peak data speeds

Supports better mobile broadband, and unfolding internet of things (IoT)

Industrial use for mission-critical communication

Industrial use cases for increasing efficiency of enterprises

Indian telcos' rollout plans

Bharti Airtel

LAUNCH: Started 5G services on Oct 1 in eight markets—Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Siliguri, Nagpur and Varanasi

EXPANSION: Across urban India by Dec 2023 and the entire country by March 2024

CONSUMER OFFER:
5G Plus service promises upto 30 times faster data speeds than 4G

Reliance Jio

LAUNCH: Beta services on October 5 in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Varanasi

EXPANSION: Will take 5G to every town, taluka and tehsil by Dec 2023

CONSUMER OFFER:
'True 5G Welcome Offer' promises unlimited 5G data with up to 1 Gbps+ speeds

Vodafone Idea

LAUNCH: No 5G launch date yet, telco yet to finalise 5G network deals with vendors

Tariffs Unchanged for Now

As of now, consumers won't pay extra to go 5G

Telcos not pricing 5G at a premium as 5G phones make up only 8-9% on network

Telcos fear prer can hinder 4G to 5G upgrades

Going forward, telcos say ____ as current rates not sustainable to lift ARPU to ₹200 and beyond

What's in it for consumers?

Faster data speed than 4G

No buffering when streaming 4K video

Faster downloads; more efficient for work

What's in it for business?

5G-based fixed wireless access (FWA) services

Enterprise services, including captive private networks for industries

Industrial/ enterprise apps; use cases across industry verticals; will drive IoT growth

What's in it for economy?

$13.1 trillion of global economic output: **Qualcomm**

500 million 5G subscriptions in India by end-2027: **Ericsson**

$17 billion revenue opportunity for telcos in India by 2030: **Ericsson**

5G smartphones base in India to hit 250 million by FY25 from 50 million now: **CLSA**

Data Explosion

Mobile Data Traffic per Smartphone (GB per month)	2021	2027	CAGR: 2021-2027 (%)
North America	15	52	24
Western Europe	15	52	24
Gulf Cooperation Council	22	50	15
South East Asia	9.4	45	30
India, Nepal, Bhutan	20	50	16
Middle East/ North Africa	10	45	28
Latin America			28
Central /Eastern Europe	10	32	22
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.9	11	25

Source: Ericsson

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

PIB,OCT3,2022

Inter-ministerial meeting to review progress of biomass co-firing in thermal power plants held in New Delhi today

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav advocates 'Must Run' status for thermal power stations co-firing Biomass and strict action against those Thermal Power Plants failing to take enough steps to curb emissions and not co-firing sufficient quantity of biomass

Union Environment Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav directs CPCB to disseminate the information about the projects and organise workshop regarding the same

An Inter-ministerial meeting to review progress of biomass co-firing in thermal power plants was held in New Delhi today. The meeting was co-chaired by Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav and Union Minister for Power, New & Renewable Energy, Shri R. K. Singh. The meeting was held in the backdrop of the onset of the harvesting season for Kharif crops in the country. The meeting was also attended by Secretary (Power / Environment, Forest &CC / MOA&FW) and senior officials from the state governments of Haryana, Punjab & Uttar Pradesh and heads of all power utilities in the NCR region, as well. The meeting also drew participation from important government bodies like CAQM, CEA, CPCB etc.

The SAMARTH Mission presented the details of Biomass cofired in different NCR plants, Purchase orders placed, action on short term and long term tenders in process vis -a-vis the quantity required by NCR GENCOs as well. Regarding the quantity of biomass co-fired till date, it was mentioned that while till FY 2020-21, only 8 power plants had co-fired biomass pellets, the corresponding number has increased to 39 as on date. In the NCR region, 10 TPPs have started co-firing. However, the amount of biomass co-fired is still lagging. As on date, 83066 MT of biomass has been co-fired in 39 thermal power plants across the country totalling to a capacity of 55390 MW. In NCR region, the biomass co-fired is 22,696 MT out of which 95% has been done by NTPC. Further, 99% of the PO in place has been contributed by NTPC Ltd. Action by NTPC for both Biomass cofiring and procurement initiative was praised and it was mentioned that other GENCOs should follow the footstep of NTPC for successful implementation of Biomass cofiring in the country.

Different activities undertaken by MOP to expand Biomass co-firing in the country were discussed. Among the prominent activities are issue of revised Biomass policy, long term model contract, model SOP, Database development of Biomass stakeholders, lab development for testing of Biomass, initiation of R&D projects on Biomass, development of Biomass Mission website etc. It was also discussed that 25 number of offline and online training cum awareness programmes for various stakeholders in the sector including farmers, pellet manufacturers and power plant officials were held. While in the FY 2021-22, 10 such programs were held in a period of six months, 15 events have already been held in a period of six months in this Financial Year. Mission also highlighted various advertisements given in national &regional dailies for stopping stubble burning and raising awareness about SAMARTH mission in association with Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) & Power Foundation of India (PFI).On the biomass pellet procurement side, a large no. of tenders have been floated by several power plants. Around 106 MMT of biomass tenders are at various stages of the tendering process. Out of these, order has already been placed for 43.47 Lac MT of biomass tenders by 35 power plants while tendering process is ongoing for 1064 Lac MT.During the review, it was observed that the target of 5% co-firing of biomass along with coal in TPPs in the country was still far off. However, most power plants have issued long term tenders and the situation is expected to improve when the supply will start in those tenders. Meanwhile, Union Power Minister directed that till the time supply from the tenders is not started, power utilities should start procurement for the short term via alternate methods like spot market or commission agents as the harvesting season has already started.All TPPs were directed that they should issue enough tenders to cover 5% requirement of biomass with special emphasis on plants located in Punjab and Haryana. It was also directed that power utilities should make all out efforts to complete the procurement process for existing tenders as soon as possible.

Direction was given to all thermal power plants in NCR region to install biomass pellet manufacturing plants (torrefied / non-torrefied) in their premises, including the private power companies. GENCOs may also explore to put up plant through Consortium. It was further highlighted that the non-compliance in this regard would be viewed very strictly. He further directed that Principal Secretary (Environment) from each State should act as nodal person for Biomass co-firing in the state.

Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had accepted the suggestion. He further communicated that MOP may think of giving Must Run status for the thermal power stations co-firing Biomass. He has praised the initiative by MOP and remarked that all should support Biomass Mission objective, which is a Mission of Prime minister of the country.CAQM was also communicated to start considering penal provisions on Thermal Power Plants which are not taking enough steps to curb emissions and not co-firing sufficient quantity of biomass.Ministry of Agriculture apprised that the Govt. has distributed

Rs 600 crore worth of machinery to the Custom Hiring Centres of state governments under its scheme. Union minister requested that MoA should monitor whether the scheme is benefiting the intended beneficiary and that machines for stubble collection are made available in the vicinity of thermal power plants.Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had further taken a review meeting for Financial support methodology. Union Environment Minister directed CPCB to also disseminate the information about the projects and organise workshop regarding the same.It was also emphasised that the Power ministry would consider reduction in coal supply of those thermal power plants that do not comply with the MoP's policy on biomass co-firing. Sufficient emphasis was given on the fact that the health and safety of the citizens was topmost priority and no one has the right to put innocent lives in danger.

Union Minister (Power and New & Renewable Energy) lauded the efforts of the SAMARTH Mission and directed it to continue its good efforts and hoped that the measures of the government in transforming the problem of stubble burning into a solution of power production would bear fruit with the cooperation of state governments.

TELEGRAPH,OCT3,2022

Unsafe Law

Would the new regulations endanger the rights of forest dwellers and tribals?

Chiranjib Haldar

Rahul Gandhi has accused the National Democratic Alliance government of disempowering adivasis and forested communities by bringing in the new forest conservation rules. The Congress leader, Jairam Ramesh, has also vehemently opposed the new Forest Conservation Rules, 2022, alleging that its guidelines stifle the ease of living of the many in the name of ushering ease of doing business for a chosen few. The Union environment minister, Bhupender Yadav, has said that the new rules do not dilute or infringe upon the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Would the new regulations endanger the rights of forest dwellers and tribals?

Worryingly, the ministry of environment, forest and climate change has delinked the processing of forest diversion applications from the requirement of the nod of the gram sabha. Moreover, the state government will not be able to tell its citizens that land has already been given for a project, becoming complicit in the Centre's decision.

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has formed an expert committee to study the rules. This in itself is an acknowledgement that the FCR 2022 treads on the rights of marginalised communities dwelling in forest areas as defined in FRA 2006. The Congress's bone of contention is that while the flagship FRA made it mandatory to seek prior approval of the gram sabha for diversion of forest land, the new FCR violates this statutory clause as the final clearance would be given by the Centre. To pacify those apprehensive about tribal displacement and our fragile ecology, the environment ministry has asserted that simultaneous compliance of FRA can be ensured with its nodal agencies to reduce the time lag.

But not everything is as it seems. According to FCR 2022, the transfer of forest land is sealed when a user hands over the net present value — a mandatory one-time payment made to divert forestland for non-forestry use. Most critics feel this could lead to the dilution of tribal rights and the grabbing of forest land.There have been instances when the Supreme Court has stepped in to prevent the transfer of forest land. In Odisha's Niyamgiri hills, the apex court had ordered that 12 gram sabhas of tribal communities would decide if they have the rights over the mountain and whether bauxite mining in Lanjigarh, situated below the peak, would affect their religious rights. In 2013, the Orissa Mining Corporation lost its bid when all gram sabhas spread across Rayagada and Kalahandi districts unanimously voted against its plan. There have been other success stories as well: indigenous communities had opposed POSCO's project in Odisha.

FRA 2006 was enacted to rectify the imbalance of power between vulnerable forest-dwelling communities and the authorities since the State is a flagbearer of environmental protection. However, the provisions of FCR 2022 threaten to shove the agency of marginalised communities out of the land-clearance process. In 2009, the environment ministry had itself opined that consultation with gram sabhas was essential before any alteration was made to forestland. The idea was to ensure stipulated resettlement and an opportunity of redressal. Many ecologists feel that the present controversy is a case of the ministry of environment riding roughshod over the ministry of tribal affairs. The reason being compensatory afforestation for forest land diverted and the creation of a land bank.

PIB,OCT7,2022

Indian Railways has adopted an integrated approach for a Green Environment

Indian Railways plans to become Net Zero Carbon Emitter by 2030

The Government of India, as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), has set a target of 33% emissions intensity reduction, with the transport sector being one of the key sectors with substantial mitigation potential.One of the most vital transportation emissions mitigation strategies agreed to by the Government of India was increasing the share of Indian Railways in the movement of freight from the current ~35-36% to 45% by 2030.Indian Railways has a major role in contributing India's NDC towards combating Climate Change through several means:

To enhance the share of the Railways in the overall land based freight transport from present 36% to 45% by the year 2030.

Indian Railways is setting up Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) across the country. The first phase of the project alone is estimated to reduce emissions by about 457 million ton CO_2 over a 30 year period.

Increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix.

Railways to further improve its energy efficiency for both diesel and electric traction thereby facilitating the reduction of GHG emissions for the country.

PAT Scheme to be implemented in railway sector.

Use of 5% blending of biofuels in traction diesel fuel.

Improve water use efficiency by 20% upto 2030.

Tree plantation to increase Carbon sink.

Waste Management and Pollution control.

Adopting the good practices on Green Buildings, Industrial Units and other establishments for the management of resources and infrastructure to achieve Environmental Sustainability in growth of IR.

Contribution in "Swachh Bharat Mission".

IR has set a target of becoming a "Net Zero" entity by 2030 by completing electrification of all railway tracks.

Indian Railways has taken steps to streamline its initiatives with regards to environmental management, with some notable initiatives including Energy Efficiency Management, Renewable and Alternate sources of Energy, Water conservation, Afforestation, Water Management and Green Certifications.The reforms undertaken by Indian Railways since 2014 can be broadly categorized in following areas:

Net-Zero Carbon Emission:-

IR has planned to gradually reduce its carbon footprint and become Net Zero Carbon Emitter by 2030. IR will attempt to reduce its carbon footprint primarily through sourcing of its energy requirements from renewable energy sources. By 2029-30, expected requirement of installation of renewable capacity would be about 30 GW. IR has installed 142 MW solar rooftop capacity and 103.4 MW of Wind energy till August, 2022.

Other strategies towards Net Zero emitter includes taking a multi-pronged approach of Electrification of its routes, shifting from diesel to electric traction, promotion of energy efficiency, construction of Dedicated Freight Corridors, Green certification of Railway Establishments etc.IR has electrified 52,508 RKM out of total BG network of 65,141 RKM (80.61%).

With 100% electrification, the demand for electricity will go up to about 72 BUs by 2029-30 from 21 BUs in 2019-20. Carbon emission by 2029-30 as per Business As Usual mode is estimated to be 60 million tons which would be offset by various measures planned by IR.

 Issuance of Water Policy 2017 for effective water management:-

Water Policy 2017 has been issued to all Zonal Railways and Production Units for implementation in Railway Stations, Trains, Railway Colonies etc. This is a part of overall efforts to achieve 20% reduction in water consumption by 2020 by the Government of India as part of Nationally Determined Contribution. Main objective of this policy are to improve water use efficiency by effective demand and supply management, installing water efficient systems and setting up Water Recycling Plants on railway land.

 Creation of Additional Carbon sink by Afforestation

Afforestation on vacant railway land and in between sections is carried out by Railway departmentally. In pursuance of Railways' commitment towards environmental improvement and sustainable development, Forest Departments of States are being involved in plantation as well as maintenance and disposal of trees.

IR has been planting around 1 crore trees annually since 2017 onwards. 72 lakh saplings have been planted during the year 2021-22.

Waste Management:-

Waste to energy/compost/biogas plants/Material recovery facility have been set at more than 250 stations to manage waste. Separate bins have been provided for dry and wet waste for waste segregation at source.Green certification/Consent to operate from State Pollution Control Board since 2015

Around 700 Railway Stations have been certified for implementation of Environment Management System to ISO:14001

More than 545 stations have achieved Consent to operate (CTO) from respective State Pollution Control Board.

31 railway buildings (including offices, training institutes, hospitals and schools), 32 stations and 55 workshops/PUs have achieved green certification.Policy for allocating 1% cost in all sanctioned Works for executing environment related works:-

To contain the impact of activities on environment and for protection of the environment, policy issued in May 2016 making provision for allocating 1% cost in all sanctioned Works for executing environment related work.

Cleanliness of Trains & Railway Stations:-

Cleanliness of Trains & Railway stations have gained increased thrust in last 08 years with the increasing numbers of mechanized cleaning contracts at stations & Coaches in trains, rag picking & garbage disposal contracts at stations and On Board Housekeeping Service (OBHS) increased in number of trains.

Environment friendly Bio–Toilets for Passenger Coaches:-

Environment-friendly Bio-toilets for passenger coaches have been developed by Indian Railways (IR) jointly with Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO).

9,587 bio-toilets were fitted in 3,647 coaches up to March 2014. With the installation of 2,58,990 bio-toilets in nearly 73,110 coaches up to March 2021, the work of fitment of bio-toilets in all the passenger carrying coaches, running on Indian Railways has been successfully completed. The direct discharge of human waste from trains has thus been eliminated in line with 'Swachh Bharat Mission'.Third party Audit/Survey including Passenger feedback on Cleanliness:-

Third Party audit cum survey on cleanliness of major stations started in 2016 and carried out again in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

First ever Third Party audit cum survey on cleanliness of important trains was carried out in 2018.

Such surveys provide independent assessment and also instill a sense of healthy competition in improving cleanliness in passenger interface areas.Standard Bid Document for Housekeeping of Stations and Trains & General Conditions of Contract for Services:-

Standard Bid Document (SBD) (Aug 2017) and General Conditions of Contract for Services (GCCS) (Feb 2018) have been issued to improve effectiveness of housekeeping / cleaning contracts with special focus on passenger interface areas.

TRIBUNE,OCT8,2022

Curbing pollution, job loss

Holistic plan a must for green industry

After stringent pollution control norms came into effect in the National Capital Region (NCR) on October 1, a predictable chain of events followed — thousands of industrial units that have not switched to green fuels have been shut down, and lakhs of workers are facing the prospect of unemployment and migration. The situation is particularly dire in Haryana, where 47 per cent of the total geographical area falls under the NCR. Reports from Panipat say that close to 500 factories running on coal have shut operations — leading to a daily loss of Rs 100 crore — after they failed to switch to green fuels in compliance with the directions of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM). Similar stories of non-compliance with norms, shutdown and unemployment have come from Faridabad, Ballabhgarh and Gurugram in the state, apart from cities or towns in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan that come under the NCR umbrella.

Unfortunately, despite warnings, inspections by flying squads and risk of closure, only a fraction of the industries falling under the NCR have switched to green fuels such as piped natural gas (PNG). Owners of units and industry associations have cited three reasons for non-compliance — expenses involved in the structural modifications needed in their units, lack of the requisite equipment and the high cost of PNG. They have been demanding subsidies on the cost of conversion and PNG and a reduction in GST. While government officials say the process to switch from coal to PNG was initiated soon after the CAQM order was issued in June, it seems the industrialists were expecting an extension in the deadline.

With our cities regularly topping the list of the world's most polluted cities, reduction in pollution and the use of fossil fuels must be treated as a national emergency. To achieve this without massive job loss is a big challenge, and it cannot be left to industrialists and business owners to deal with. The problem requires a long-term, holistic solution that addresses the interests of all the stakeholders. It's in the interest of the nation to create a clean fuel infrastructure and make it available to the industry, which too must adopt a progressive, far-sighted approach and adapt quickly.

PIB,OCT3,2022

World Habitat Day 2022 with theme 'Mind the Gap. Leave No One Behind and No Place Behind' celebrated

Theme serves as a strong reminder that we cannot leave behind any citizen and any place as we build towards a more resilient future: Shri Hardeep S Puri

Government's resolve towards inclusive and equitable development is demonstrated in its flagship urban missions and initiatives: Shri Hardeep S Puri

Delivering the keynote address at an event organised to celebrate World Habitat Day 2022 today, Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs and Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Hardeep S Puri said that the theme serves as a strong reminder that we cannot leave behind any citizen and any place as we build towards a more resilient future.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) celebrated World Habitat Day 2022 at Vigyan Bhawan today. Shri Hardeep S Puri, Shri Kaushal Kishore, Minister of State, Housing and Urban Affairs, Shri Manoj Joshi, Secretary, MoHUA, Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator, UN-Habitat, along with several other dignitaries participated in the event.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Hardeep S Puri said that the pandemic highlighted the problem of growing inequalities, vulnerabilities and challenges in cities and human settlements. It galvanised national and local governments to embark on a transformative path towards achieving the central pledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), i.e. 'leave no one behind' a reality. In India, that effort took shape in the form of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'.

The theme of World Habitat Day 2022 also resonates deeply with the Gandhian philosophy of 'Antyodaya se Sarvodaya'. The government's resolve towards inclusive and equitable development is demonstrated in its flagship urban missions and initiatives., he said.Referring to the various schemes of Ministry in specific and Government of India in general, the Union Minister that the schemes like Pradhan Matri Awas Yojana (PMAY), PM SVANidhi scheme, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM), Swachh Bharat Mission have been conceptualised with focus on vulnerable and marginalised sections.

Shri Hardeep S Puri further added that the theme of this year's World Habitat Day provides us with an opportunity to further discuss these subjects and conceptualise innovations to ensure that 'No one and No place is left behind'. There can be no doubt that the pandemic, just like climate change, is going to permanently alter India's urban areas. Historically, such shocks have led to permanent changes in urban landscapes. I believe that under the urban rejuvenation initiated by Prime Minister Modi, India's self-reliant and productive cities will soon alchemise the socio-economic transformation that India seeks for its citizens.He expressed confidence that India will be able to make the central pledge of Sustainable Development Goals, i.e. 'leave no one behind' a reality by 2030.

In his address at the event, Minister of State for Housing & Urban Affairs, Shri Kaushal Kishore stressed on making cities cleaner, greener and economically, socially and environmentally sustainable in line with the vision of Prime Minister for next 25 years.The United Nations designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of our habitats, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. The Day is also intended to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns.

In 2022, World Habitat Day (WHD 2022) under the theme "Mind the Gap. Leave No One and Place Behind" looks at the problem of growing inequality and challenges in cities and human settlements. World Habitat Day 2022 seeks to draw attention to the growing inequalities and vulnerabilities that have been exacerbated by the triple 'C' crises — COVID-19, climate and conflict.

PIB,OCT4,2022

MoU signed between Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and NAFED to boost International Year of Millets (IYOM)-2023

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited in New Delhi yesterday to boost the initiative visioned by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to promote Millets towards celebration of the International Year of Millets 2023.

Both organizations will work together for the promotion and marketing of millet-based products, keeping in view the initiative of "International Year of Millets (IYOM)-2023" proposed by the Government of India to the United Nations, which is to be celebrated across the world. As India is gearing up to bring millet back on the global map, they will build support and organize, promote, market, and forge effective market linkages for millet-based products to maximize the value capture and millet-based commodities across the country.

DA&FW and NAFED will collaborate in key areas like facilitating advisory support to manufacturers/processors of millet-based products to develop value-added millet-based commodities; on-boarding of start-ups, inclusive of start-ups empanelled with Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR); formation of FPOs specifically for developing a range of millet-based products; promote and market millet-based products through the network of NAFED Bazaar Stores and other institutions linked with NAFED as well as installation of Millet based Vending Machines at various locations across Delhi-NCR; and dispensing millet-based products that shall assist in establishing the focus on millet-based commodities.

PIONEER,OCT5,2022

PM Modi inaugurates AIIMS Bilaspur

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the fully functional All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Himachal Pradesh's Bilaspur.The AIIMS -- whose foundational stone was also laid by the prime minister in October 2017 -- has been established under the Central sector scheme Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana.

AIIMS Bilaspur, constructed at a cost of more than Rs 1,470 crore, is a state-of-the-art hospital with 18 specialty and 17 super specialty departments, 18 modular operation theatres and 750 beds with 64 ICU beds.Spread over 247 acres, the hospital is equipped with 24 hours emergency and dialysis facilities, modern diagnostic machines like ultrasonography, CT scan, MRI etc., Amrit Pharmacy and Jan Aushadhi Kendra and also a 30-bedded AYUSH block.The hospital has also set up the Centre for Digital Health to provide health services in tribal and inaccessible tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh.Also, specialist health services will be provided by the hospital through health camps in the inaccessible tribal and high Himalayan regions like Kaza, Saluni, and Keylong. The hospital will admit 100 students for MBBS course and 60 students for nursing courses every year.Modi will also address a public meeting at Luhnu ground in Bilaspur.

The prime minister will later participate in the historic Kullu Dussehra celebrations.

TRIBUNE,OCT8,2022

Rs 498 cr to be spent on upgrading IT services: Haryana Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal

Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal today said five projects worth Rs 498 crore had been approved for upgrading IT services and resources in the state.

Presiding over the meeting of the state-level IT steering committee here today, Kaushal said the IT system and the local area network (LAN) system were an integral part of the ICT infrastructure to ensure that the benefits of schemes and policies reached the people of the state.

A complete redesigning of the IT infrastructure and LAN using latest techniques will be done in the state," the Chief Secy said, adding that of the Rs 498 crore, Rs 50 crore had been sanctioned for the installation of new and high-speed optical fibre lines at the Haryana Civil Secretariat, the new secretariat in Chandigarh and mini secretariats across the districts.

STATESMAN,OCT9,2022

Gujarat: PM Modi to declare Modhera as India's first solar-powered village today

According to the Gujarat government, which shared information in a series of tweets, over 1000 solar panels have been installed on the village houses, generating electricity round the clock for the villagers.In a significant step towards promoting clean energy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will declare Modhera, a village in the Mehsana district of Gujarat as India's first solar-powered village on Sunday, said the state government.

Modhera is famous for its Sun temple. According to the Gujarat government, which shared information in a series of tweets, over 1000 solar panels have been installed on the village houses, generating electricity round the clock for the villagers. Significantly they will be provided with solar electricity at zero cost.The Gujarat government has said that it has ensured the sustainable implementation of various welfare projects in Gujarat, keeping in mind the Prime Minister's vision of increasing the use of renewable energy in India.A protected archaeological site, Modhera's Sun Temple will get a 3-D projection facility on October 9. The solar-powered 3-D projection will be dedicated by PM Modi and will educate visitors about the history of

Modhera, the Gujarat government had said.As part of the project, heritage lighting has been installed on the temple premises. Witnessing the lighting, people can visit the temple from 6 pm to 10 pm. The 3-D projection will operate every evening.Sun Temple is situated at Modhera in the Mehsana district on the river Pushpavati. It was built by King Bhima-I of the Chaulukya dynasty in 1026-27.