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Sr.No	Subject	Page No.
1	Polity and Governance	3-14
2	Economic and Social Development	15-30
3	Science and Technology	31-41
4	Environment and Climate	42-46
5	Current Events	47-60

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PIB,DEC5,2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh to inaugurate a conference on “Women Leading Change in Health and Science in India” in New Delhi tomorrow. Ms. Melinda French Gates, Co-chair and Trustee Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will also share her thoughts on the subject.

The Conference will seek to identify attainable pathways and goals to strengthen the representation of women in leadership positions in India and Global health ecosystem.

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 will inaugurate a conference titled, “Women Leading Change in Health and Science in India” in New Delhi tomorrow. Dr. Bharti Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Ms. Melinda French Gates, Co-chair and Trustee Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Ms. Amie Batson, Executive Director, WomenLift Health will also address the conference. The conference being organized by Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a PSU of DBT, in collaboration with WomenLift Health and Grand Challenges India will highlight and promote the importance of women’s leadership in health and science and seek to identify attainable pathways and goals to strengthen the representation of women in leadership positions in India and Global health ecosystem.

This conference honours and celebrates Indian women's accomplishments in overcoming unprecedented challenges over the past few years and advancing STEM innovation and healthcare with their indefatigable resilience and unwavering perseverance. Speaking ahead of the conference, Dr Rajesh S. Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology & Chairperson, BIRAC said “Women’s leadership throughout centuries has been transformative. I congratulate all women, and I believe that this is the time we need to empower more women in leadership positions so that India becomes the superpower that our Prime Minister dreams of.”

Dr Alka Sharma, Senior Adviser, DBT & Managing Director, BIRAC, said, “Women’s leadership is now recognized at the highest level and is steadily on the rise. Through various schemes and programs of BIRAC, the researchers and entrepreneurs are being promoted and supported across the country”. She further added that “this conference is certainly going to help in building a national focus on women’s leadership”. The global healthcare workforce is predominantly women and yet they remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions, especially at the higher executive or board levels. Under-representation in STEM is also one of the major concerns. In India, even though the healthcare workforce participation is somewhat similar between men and women, there are fewer women in leadership roles. Recognizing the importance of this issue, BIRAC has been working to advance scientific and technological research to alleviate India’s most critical health and development issues. Initiatives in agriculture, food, and nutrition are centered on improving health outcomes for women by mitigating maternal and child health issues. Initiatives like BIRACTiE Women in Entrepreneurial Research focus on Women in Entrepreneurial Research- strongly promote and recognize women in science and entrepreneurship. Co-host WomenLift Health works to accelerate the advancement of talented women into senior leadership by investing in mid-career women and influencing the environments in which they live and work.

The esteemed panel of speakers at this conference includes Dr Soumya Swaminathan, former Chief Scientist World Health Organization, Dr Renu Swarup, former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Dr Vinod Kumar Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, and Dr Rajiv Bahl, Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, and Secretary, Department of Health Research, Dr. Tessy Thomas, Director General of Aeronautical Systems, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and many other prominent names working in health and science.

#### About DBT

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, boosts and augments the development of biotechnology ecosystem in India, through its expansion and application in agriculture, healthcare, animal sciences, environment, and industry.

#### About BIRAC

Set up by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), is a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, Public Sector Enterprise, which acts as an Interface Agency to improve and encourage the evolving biotechnology industry to execute strategic research and development activities in context to Nation's product development needs

#### About WomenLift Health

The WomenLift Health conference is an initiative of Stanford University and is organized since 2017 to provide a forum for established and emerging leaders across the global health community to meet and work together to advance gender equity in health leadership, contribute to the growing momentum to advance diversity and women's leadership in global health and expand understanding of the opportunities and challenges across countries, sectors, and disciplines for women's leadership.

PIB,DEC6,2022

National telemedicine service of India - eSanjeevani achieves 8 crore teleconsultations

eSanjeevani surpasses records by registering 1 crore consultations in approximately 5 weeks

eSanjeevaniOPD trains and onboards 2,22,026 specialists, doctors and health workers

More than 45,000 ABHA IDs have been generated via eSanjeevani application

In a significant achievement, eSanjeevani, Govt. of India's free telemedicine service, has crossed another astounding milestone by clocking 8 crore teleconsultations. The last 1 crore consultations were recorded in a remarkable time frame of around 5 weeks, signaling a wider adoption of telemedicine. An e-health initiative of Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, eSanjeevani is a national telemedicine service that strives to provide an alternative to the conventional physical consultations via digital platform. In less than 3 years, this initiative has garnered the distinction of being the world's largest government owned telemedicine platform. It consists of two verticals that cater to patients across all states and UTs successfully making its presence felt in the innermost regions of the nation.

The first vertical eSanjeevaniAB-HWC endeavors to bridge rural-urban digital health divide by providing assisted teleconsultations, and ensuring that e beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat Scheme are able to avail of the benefits they are entitled to. This vertical operates on a Hub-and-Spoke model wherein the ‘Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centers’ (HWCs) are set up at state level, act as spokes, which are mapped with the hub (comprising MBBS/ Specialty/Super-Specialty doctors) at zonal level. With the objective to provide quality health services to a patient residing in rural areas, this model has been successfully implemented in 1,09,748 Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) and 14,188 Hubs, achieving a total of 7,11,58,968 teleconsultations.eSanjeevaniOPD is the latter vertical which caters to citizens in both rural and urban alike. It leverages technology via smartphones, tablets, laptops enabling doctor consultations to be accessible from the patient’s residence regardless of location. eSanjeevaniOPD has acquired 1,144 online OPDs with 2,22,026 specialists, doctors and health workers that have been trained and onboarded. This platform has an impressive record of having served over 4.34 lakhs patients in one day. Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Mohali, which is providing holistic technical training and support to users, is augmenting the faculties of this vertical to be able to serve up to 1 million patients per day.eSanjeevani is a cohesive part Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM), and more than 45,000 ABHA IDs have been generated via eSanjeevani application.

Leading ten states for usage of this platform are: Andhra Pradesh (28242880), West Bengal (10005725), Karnataka (9446699), Tamil Nadu (8723333), Maharashtra (4070430), Uttar Pradesh (3763092), Madhya Pradesh (3283607), Bihar (2624482), Telangana (2452529), Gujarat (1673888).

**PIB,DEC6,2022**

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar along with Union Minister of State (IC) Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh chairs “Women leading Change in Health and Science in India” Conference

Government has taken several interventions to create a vibrant ecosystem where women can flourish and harness their full potential: Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar“Women have played a crucial role from time immemorial, be it freedom struggle to present times in wide variety of fields. Seeds of gender equality have been sown in our country through various steps; it will reap benefit for our society on the whole. As a consequence, women empowerment will lead to an equitable, inclusive and diverse growth story of India.”, this was stated by Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar

as she chaired the “Women leading Change in Health and Science in India” Conference along with Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (IC) Science and Technology, here today. Ms. Melinda French Gates was the Guest of Honour at the event.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Pawar said that “we must take inspiration from the Indian women personalities like Anandibai Joshi, Kadambini Ganguly, Kalpana Chawla etc., who despite against all odds achieved stupendous feats in their fields. We must celebrate their impact and strive to do more in several ways.” She said that significance of the women’s crucial role in our progress especially in health sector can be adjudged from the fact that one million ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers, who remained at the forefront of healthcare service delivery in India especially as first line of defence in the crucial period of COVID-19, received the Global Health Leaders Award-2022 in the backdrop of 75th World Health Assembly. Highlighting various steps taken by Government of India, Dr. Pawar emphasized that “Government is dedicated towards making our women capable in every field. Taking consistent efforts, Government has initiated new programs and continuing previous interventions through its institutions, scholarships, financial support etc leading to a vibrant ecosystem where women can flourish and harness their full potential.” “We observed that post-independence, attention was not given on this aspect of India’s growth story, but under the visionary leadership of our Hon’ble Prime Minister several steps have been taken. Flagship schemes like “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao”, Ujjwala Yojana for free cooking fuel, initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, financial inclusion through PM Jan Dhan Yojana, MUDRA scheme for entrepreneurial ambitions, Permanent Commission in our defence services are some of the notable interventions for not just the welfare for women but also empowering them”. Dr. Pawar emphasized on bringing women workforce at par with men workforce, more women centric initiatives being the need of the hour for holistic development. This would be an apt celebration to our golden period of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM).

Union Minister of State (IC) Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that “women are taking their well-deserved place in the society and we must do away with the past hangover of gender specified roles. In the spirit of AKAM, government schemes must not be seen from a welfare perspective but also as a platform that can strengthen their resolve. Women remain crucial part of our human resources of the country and if efficiently harnessed they can contribute immensely towards the development of our country”. Ms. Melinda French Gates said that the “government has taken crucial steps like emergency cash transfer through Direct Benefit Transfer which is a great example of gender intentional policy. The Indian Government has been pushing forward from bottom up to build a gender equal country”. She was hopeful that Gates Foundation and Government of India would work in coordination to achieve shared goals and improve the aspect of gender equality in the

country even further. Dr. Rajesh S. Gokhale, Secretary Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Dr. Renu Swarup, Former Secretary, DBT, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, WHO, Dr. Alka Sharma, Senior Advisor, DBT & MD, BIRAC, Ms Amie Batson, Executive Director, Women Lift Health, Dr. Shirshendu Mukherjee, Mission Director, Grand Challenges India along with other dignitaries were also present.

TELEGRAPH, DEC 6, 2022

Deeper rift: Editorial on India's pole position in Social Hostilities Index involving religion

The rise in India's score could be attributed not only to the violence witnessed against Muslims during the protests against the divisive CAA but also to pandemic-related hostilities perpetrated on minorities

The Narendra Modi government has often been criticised for India's poor performance on indexes that measure a wide range of phenomena — hunger, press freedom and so on. The Centre has now reasons to gloat that India has claimed pole position in at least one such register. A study by the Washington-based Pew Research Center has found that India has topped the Social Hostilities Index involving religion. Of the 198 nations that were assessed, India found itself, along with Mali, Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and so on, among 11 nations with scores of 7.2 or higher: none of the other countries in this list, arguably, can stake a claim on a democratic and pluralist heritage that marked Old India. The rise in India's score, the report stated, could be attributed not only to the violence witnessed against Muslims during the protests against the divisive Citizenship (Amendment) Act but also to pandemic-related hostilities perpetrated on minorities. In India, slander against and vilification of Muslims during the Covid surge was common: Sikhs in Afghanistan and Shia Hazaras in Pakistan bore the brunt of similar attacks. What is shameful and worrying for India and Indians who believe in the nation's multi-religious character is evidence of the institutionalisation of such bigotry. Private actors — the media's role must not be undermined — were instrumental in the dissemination of the poison: the toxic campaign against the Tablighi Jamaat meeting, highlighted by the report, was but one example. That an unprecedented crisis in public health could be weaponised to bolster majoritarianism speaks of tectonic shifts in India's body politic that are deeper and fundamental. Worse, the deterioration continues, as is evident from the recent plea for protection from the authorities from Karnataka's Christians in the month of Christmas. The findings by the Pew Research Center are not novel. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom has been warning of rising communal strife for a while. The stock response to these criticisms on the part of Mr Modi's government has been denial and derision. But as the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign in the Gujarat polls showed, polarisation, international



editor notwithstanding, is unlikely to exit India's social and political spheres. It is up to the people and the Opposition to reject a politics that feeds on social hostilities. But neither constituency seems to be able to succeed on this count.

INDIAN EXPRESS, DEC 6, 2022

Counting India's poor: Numbers suggest the need for a welfare state

Madan Sabnavis writes: In such a situation, it is but natural that the government has to assume the role of a welfare state. But the focus has to be on job creation. A joint effort between the Centre and states is needed to push this agenda forward.

Madan Sabnavis

The Global Hunger Report has caused a lot of controversy with questions being raised as to what exactly we are talking about. India is definitely the fastest growing economy and has received praise when it comes to reaching out to the needy during Covid or in technology-led innovations like UPI. We are an attractive market for foreign investment and can be reasonably confident of taking up where China has left. Can such a country be so low down the hunger index? There is a need to introspect on who exactly is poor in India. The concept is nebulous. There was a time when calorie intake was the yardstick. But converting only 2,400 calories a day into a monetary value was always challenging. Besides, people cannot live with just calories. They need access to other amenities like housing, clothing, education and so on. Hence the calorie concept, though a possible criteria, is not really workable today. We need a broader concept.

The World Bank uses the concept of income per day, which is now taken at \$1.90. Roughly, this translates to Rs 160 a day in India, and for a family of four would mean Rs 640 a day. On a monthly basis, this will come to around Rs 19,200 or Rs 2.3 lakh for a year. Such an approach runs the risk of using a universal yardstick across the world which is not right. While a weak currency can give a high value in India, this amount may be too low for a developed country (in the US a burger costs more than \$1.90). Besides, using either the calorie or income approach runs the risk of extrapolation as it is not possible to get these numbers for the entire population.

Income tax data, while useful in indicating who pays tax, captures only a small segment as it leaves out the big universe of rural people. Hence one cannot even use the Rs 2.5 lakh per annum criterion as a cutoff for measuring the poor. If, however, the concept of poor is broadened to represent the needy or the vulnerable section of society, there can be some ideas from government action. The government has been aggressive in reaching out to the vulnerable during the pandemic, providing them free food as well as income through cash transfers. This can be a good starting point to assess the population that requires support to maintain their minimum needs. But, here the support has been limited to cash transfers or free food. It does not cover education or health, which are supported through other schemes. According to IBEF, the PMGKY covered 800 million people. Intuitively, this means that nearly 60 per cent of the 1,350 million population required support from the government and would have found it hard to survive without that. That this has been extended till December 2022 means that the vulnerable population is still very high. This number also includes the 136 million families that were covered under MGNREGA. In fact, the National Portal of India in September 2020 had put out a statistic that 42 crore poor people benefited from PMGKY which means that around 30 per cent of the population was declared poor by this yardstick. The PM Kisan Scheme involves outlays of between Rs 60,000-70,000 crore. Considering that all the retired urban population does not make a claim by becoming farmers, the cut-off for the pension was put at Rs 10,000 per month. One can assume that the same yardstick was followed for cherry picking the farmers for delivering this benefit.

Here it has been highlighted that 110 million farmers were registered and drew the benefit of Rs 6,000 per annum. Using this policy as a measure to figure out the vulnerable class, which would be restricted only to the farming community, would yield a number of close to a third of the population, assuming that families comprise four members. This will not cover the vulnerable non-farming class, especially in urban areas where there is little information available as there are few urban support programmes run by even the states. The government programmes are structured well and the use of technology has ensured that there is targeted delivery of benefits. Leakages can be ruled out. Putting all these numbers together, the proportion of vulnerable people in the economy would range between 30 per cent to 60 per cent. The higher end would be more time specific and the revelation of the number of beneficiaries of free food in the last quarter would give a more nuanced number of the vulnerable.

It can, hence, be said the size of the needy population is close to 60 per cent of the total with at least 30 per cent or half of this amount being most vulnerable. In such a situation, it is but natural that the government has to assume the role of a welfare state. But the focus has to be on job creation. Agriculture in particular should be commercialised — the farm laws sought to do so. State governments have a big role to play here. Also, manufacturing has to be revived to create meaningful jobs. A joint effort between the Centre and states is needed to push this agenda forward.

PIB,DEC7,2022

18 routes are operational in the North Eastern Region under the scheme RCS-UDAN to provide air connectivity : Shri G. Kishan Reddy

Tourism Ministry approved the project ‘Development of View Points in the North East Region’ at 22 scenic locations: Shri G. Kishan Reddy

The Market Development Assistance Scheme has been revised to include online promotions for the North Eastern Region (NER) and to enhance the extent of financial assistance permissible under the scheme. The Ministry also provides financial assistance to North Eastern states, which include assistance for development of tourist infrastructure, promotion of fairs/festivals and tourism related events, information technology related projects, publicity campaigns, human resource development, market research etc. Ministry of DoNER also supports tourism programmes/events regularly. ‘Destination North East’ event is organized annually to attract tourists.

27 cleanliness activities have been undertaken in the North East Region under the Ministry’s Swachhta Action Plan (SAP). The NER is the focus area of the RCS-UDAN launched to facilitate/stimulate regional air connectivity. Under the scheme, 18 routes in the NER are operational. Ministry of Railways has also upgraded its infrastructure in the North East by way of gauge conversion, introduction of Vista Dome coaches and upgradation of stations. For giving a fillip to tourism in the NER the Ministry approved the project ‘Development of View Points in the North East Region’ at 22 scenic locations. The Ministry has identified and forwarded a list of 25 tourist sites which could be taken as pilot project for formation of a separate police unit in the States/UTs. Ministry has also set up a 24x7 Multi lingual tourist info helpline in 12 languages. A Code of Conduct for Safe & Honourable Tourism have been adopted to encourage tourism activities. The Ministry also organized a National Conference of DGPs on Tourist Police Scheme on 19.10.2022 in New Delhi in collaboration with Ministry of Home Affairs.

This information was given by Minister of Tourism Shri G. Kishan Reddy in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

STATESMAN,DEC10,2022

Mixed bag

It is an achievement without parallel in many ways. But the BJP also suffered a setback in Himachal Pradesh which it lost decisively to the Congress. In the Delhi municipal polls, it was beaten by the Aam Aadmi Party fair and square though in a close election. So, a state each to the two major national parties, BJP and Congress, and a major municipal poll victory for the third, AAP, though we must wait for the Election Commission to ratify its national party status. The poll results were along expected lines, with the performance of the national parties providing very few portents about how they are likely to fare in the next round of major state elections in 2023 and 2024 Lok Sabha poll. Even the by-poll results were a mixed bag. The Samajwadi Party (SP) retained the prestigious Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh (UP). The BJP, while it wrested the Rampur Sadar Assembly seat in UP from the SP and the Kurhani Assembly constituency in Bihar from the ruling Janata Dal United Rashtriya Janata Dal alliance, lost Khatauli in its western UP stronghold to SP ally Rashtriya Lok Dal. The Congress retained the Assembly seats of Bhanupratappur in Chhattisgarh and Sardarshahar in Rajasthan, both states where it is in power on its own. The Biju Janata Dal, meanwhile, continued its dominance in Odisha, winning the Padampur Assembly seat. Regional parties, as can be gauged from the by-poll results, too have nothing major to crow about or, indeed, lament because of the by-poll results. The bottom line is that for all the sound and fury of their post-verdict narratives, neither the national parties nor the regional forces even if they manage to form a cohesive front can claim the election results have significantly changed the status quo. The BJP remains the party to beat in 2024 and Mr Modi retains his status as the clear frontrunner for the top job. But given the BJP's electoral over-dependence on the North and West of the country, even minor slips in its strongholds could prove to be the proverbial banana skin. Time will tell.

PIB,DC10,2022

Union Minister of Rural Development Shri Giriraj Singh calls for need-based skill mapping for employment and training to India's youth, mainly in the rural areas. The Minister inaugurates new campus of the National Academy of Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSET) - NAR at Kumbalagodu in Bengaluru in the august presence of Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri Basavaraj Bommai.

RSETIs have trained 44 lakh youths of which nearly about 31 lakh candidates have settled so far.

Giriraj Singh says, out of 44 lakh youths trained, about 29 lakhs are women candidates (about 66%), which underlines RSETIs mandate and role for "Women Empowerment".

14.28 Lakh trained candidates received cumulative credit to the tune of Rs.7200 crores from Banks and Financial Institutions at the behest of RSETIs.

Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Shri Giriraj Singh has called for need-based skill mapping for employment and training to India's youth, mainly in the rural areas. Noting that the quality of job training is important, the Minister urged to explore means to see how best the traditional trades can be integrated with electronic, education and training, IT & BPO and tourism and hospitality sectors to create more employment opportunities for the youth in the country. The Minister was speaking after opening the new campus of the National Academy of Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSET) - NAR at Kumbalagodu in Bengaluru on today. Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri Basavaraj Bommai, Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti, Union Minister of State for Rural Development, Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution, Sri Faggan Singh Kulaste, Union Minister of State for Rural Development and Steel, Dr. C N Ashwath Narayan, Minister of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, and Livelihoods of Karnataka State, Sri S T Somasekhara, Minister of Co-operation of Karnataka State and Dr. Dr. Veerendra Heggade, MP and President, NAR joined the inaugural event.

Shri Giriraj Singh said, the Rural Self Employment Training Institutes - RSETIs have a significant role in building India into a major human resources hub and added that RSETIs have trained 44 lakh youths of which nearly about 31 lakh candidates have settled so far. The Minister also informed that of the total candidates trained, about 29 lakhs are women candidates, over 66 %, which proves that RSETIs are giving lot of importance to "Women Empowerment".

Dr Giriraj Singh cited a United Nation's report that says in the coming 20 years, India's work force would grow by 32 per cent while the overall global manpower would dip by four per cent. He said that RSETIs are following up with the Banks and Financial Institutions to make available required credit to the trained candidates for their successful settlement. 14.28 Lakh trained candidates were credit linked and the cumulative credit disbursed is to the tune of Rs.7200 crores. The average level of credit linkage of RSETI trained candidates is 51%, the Minister added. A sum of Rs 25 crores has been approved for the project of new campus of NAR in Bengaluru. The State Government has allotted 3.5 acres of land. At present, there are 590 RSETIs functioning covering 572 districts spreading over 27 States and six Union Territories. These include 33 RSETIs in Karnataka having trained 3.49 lakh unemployed youths so far. RSETIs are sponsored by 24 banks including banks in public, private, co-operative sectors and Garmin Banks.

In 1982, Canara Bank, erstwhile Syndicate Bank and SDME Trust, Dharmasthala pioneered the unique concept of Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute (RUDSET) to address the problem of unemployment amongst the rural youth in the country under the leadership of Dr. D. Veerendra Heggade, Dharmadhikari, Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala. The Ministry of Rural Development has since replicated RUDSETI model across the country and advised banks to set up Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) in each of their Lead District. The National Academy of RUDSETI-NAR, set up in 2008 entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rural Development Ministry in 2011 for providing training to youths in self-employment ventures.

Earlier, Shri Giriraj Singh formally opened the Hostel Block while Shri Bommai inaugurated the Admin Block of the new campus. The Chief Minister also addressed the gathering. Shri Shailesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, Rural Development, Government of India, Shri Karma Zimpa Bhutia, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, senior officers of Government of Karnataka and top bank executives attended the event. An experience sharing session of successful RSETI trainees and distribution of bank loans to entrepreneurs also formed part of the programme.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PIB,DEC6,2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, Indian women are gradually evolving from participatory to leadership role and constitute an essential component of nation's inclusive growth as envisaged by Prime Minister Modi

The Minister inaugurates a conference titled “Women Leading Change in Health and Science in India” in New Delhi in the august presence of Ms. Melinda French Gates, Co-chair and Trustee Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Dr Jitendra Singh lauded Gates Foundations for committing around 65 million USD for women empowerment and women leadership initiatives. Ms. Melinda French Gates said that policies designed for women must be made by women themselves and called for their greater say in the decision-making process





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 said, that Indian women are gradually evolving from participatory to leadership role and constitute an essential component of nation's inclusive growth as envisaged by Prime Minister Modi.

Inaugurating a conference titled, “Women Leading Change in Health and Science in India” in New Delhi in the august presence of Ms. Melinda French Gates, Co-chair and Trustee Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr Jitendra Singh said, women leaders are a crucial part of the new India growth story, as projects, programmes and policies are now moving from women-specific to women-led, or we can say from an era of women participation to an era of women leadership.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, that the women power has already arrived, but there is a need for change in mindset. He said that time has come to avail the change being led by the women, as they are increasingly becoming initiators of policies, rather than passive consumers of government initiatives. Dr Jitendra Singh referred to Prime Minister’s recent statement that India cannot achieve success if 50 per cent of the population being women are locked at home. He quoted Modi as saying, “From financial inclusion to social security, quality healthcare to housing, education to entrepreneurship, many efforts have been made to put our Nari Shakti at the forefront of India’s development journey. These efforts will continue with even greater vigour in the coming times”.

Dr Jitendra Singh lauded the noble intentions of Gates Foundations for committing around 40 million USD till July, 2022 through its collaboration with Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under Grand Challenges India (implemented by BIRAC) and the Foundation has an additional commitment of 25 million USD for the next five years. The Minister said, conferences like “Leading Change: Women in Health and Science in India” are good opportunities to showcase emerging changes in the way leadership is practised and perceived in India and how women can be promoted to leadership roles with the right mentoring and support. These platforms will certainly help in creating momentum toward parity and more gender-inclusive culture and policies, he added.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that women scientists have carved a niche for themselves in science-based Start-ups, STEM, IT, Space, Nuclear Science, Drone and Nano-technology and informed that many of the big scientific projects including that of Gaganyaan are being led by women scientists. He said, the remarkable success of the second lunar mission Chandrayaan-2, led by two female scientists from the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), is an inspiration for all the women working in sectors like health, education, business, medicine, sports and agriculture. Dr Jitendra Singh said, DBT and BIRAC have implemented a number of dedicated schemes and programs to promote women researchers and entrepreneurs across the country. The STEP-Support to Training and Employment Program launched under Start-up India initiative aims to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed/entrepreneurs.

In her address, Dr. Bharti Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare said that under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, there is a special focus on women and girl child and added the NDA government has provided a level-playing field to women along with men. She said, women are better equipped to take leadership roles when they are given self-esteem, an equal opportunity for decision-making, access to opportunities, and the ability to influence social change. Dr Pawar underlined that Modi government is taking pro-active steps to bring the women workforce at par with the men workforce in all aspect. Ms. Melinda French Gates said that policies designed for women must be made by women themselves. She asserted that the women must have a greater say in the decision-making process for its ultimate success.

Ms Gates was happy to note that in the last two years the Indian Government has taken measures for making the country gender equal literally through the bottom-up approach. She also lauded the emergence of the direct cash transfer scheme of the Indian Government during COVID-19. She added that nearly 200 million received direct cash benefits, which led to their empowerment and greater societal benefit. Dr Rajesh S. Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology & Chairperson, BIRAC said that Department of Biotechnology always took positive endeavours to put women leaders at the top of decision-making process. He said, women entrepreneurs in DBT are playing an important role and 30 percent of them are supported by BIRAC. Dr Alka Sharma, Senior Adviser, DBT & Managing Director, BIRAC said that role of women in India's healthcare system is recognized globally. She recalled that India's one million all-women Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers, were honoured with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General's Global Health Leaders Award 2022 for their crucial role in providing direct access to healthcare facilities in rural areas and their magnificent efforts to rein in the coronavirus pandemic in the country. Ms. Amie Batson, Executive Director, WomenLift Health said, when India and the world

is facing unprecedented challenges like climate crisis, covid-19 or future health challenges, India's role will be critical to address those challenges. He said, investments in technical solutions are not enough, but efforts should be made to create change leaders, especially the women change leaders. The conference being organized by Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a PSU of DBT, in collaboration with WomenLift Health and Grand Challenges India is aimed at highlighting and promoting the importance of women's leadership in health and science and seek to identify attainable pathways and goals to strengthen the representation of women in leadership positions in India and Global health ecosystem.

STATESMAN, DEC 6, 2022

Rupee fared relatively well versus other emerging market currencies, says World Bank

Currently, Rupee is trading around 82.0 against the US Dollar as against a record low of 83 it breached in mid-October. Indian Rupee has fared relatively well in 2022 in comparison to other emerging market peers, senior World Bank economist Dhruv Sharma said Tuesday after the global financial body revised India's GDP forecast to 6.9 per cent. "The Rupee has depreciated just about 10 per cent over the course of this year. That might sound like a large number, but relative to many other emerging market peers, India hasn't fared that badly," Sharma told a press briefing today after the launch of the World Bank's India Development Update titled "Navigating the Storm". For the record, the rupee has come substantially off its all-time low. Currently, it is trading around 82.0 against the US Dollar as against a record low of 83 it breached in mid-October. Tightening monetary policy by the US Federal Reserve and central banks in other advanced economies triggered the depreciation of the Indian currency. An increase in policy rates in the US and other advanced economies typically leads to a depreciation of the Rupee. The US Federal Reserve has been raising key interest rates in its fight against red-hot inflation in the country. It raised the key policy rate by 75 basis points to over a decade high at 3.75-4.0 per cent, the fourth consecutive hike of such magnitude. Back home, the Reserve Bank of India had already hiked the key policy rate by 190 basis points since May to 5.9 per cent to cool off domestic retail inflation that has stayed above the RBI's upper tolerance limit for over three quarters now.

The World Bank has revised India's 2022-23 GDP growth forecast upward to 6.9 per cent from the earlier estimate of 6.5 per cent, due to robust economic activities. "India is more resilient now than it was 10 years ago. All steps taken over the past 10

years are helping India navigate the global headwinds,” said Sharma. “Indian economy has rebounded fairly robust following the contraction that occurred during the pandemic year. India performed quite well relative to other large emerging market economies, and this story of the rebound has been largely driven by robust domestic demand, and consumption investment,” the World Bank economist said. On rising inflation in India, Sharma said it was driven by the supply side as well as external factors. In October, retail inflation was 6.77 per cent as against 7.41 per cent the previous month.

**INDIAN EXPRESS, DEC 6, 2022**

Ambedkar death anniversary: This is not B R Ambedkar’s India

He stood for constitutional morality. The Modi regime does the opposite. Those ruling India should be mindful of the issues raised by Ambedkar and adopt the constitutional method to save India from impending calamity.

D. Raja

India has gained the G20 presidency by rotation. The BJP-RSS, though, has tried to project this as an achievement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, not as respect for and responsibility on India. There is publicity in the name of PM Modi that “India’s G20 agenda will be inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented and decisive. Let’s work together to shape a new paradigm- of human-centric globalisation”. This is noble preaching to the international community. But one should know what India is today. In 2022, India has been ranked at 107 in the Global Hunger Index, 150 in the Press Freedom Index, 136 in the World Happiness Index, was at 85th position in the Corruption Perception Index, 71 on the Global Food Security Index, at 77 on Rule of Law Index and at 46 in Democracy Index. Neoliberal policies aggressively pursued by the present regime have led to this disaster. The Modi regime is pursuing a divisive, sectarian, communal agenda. The conditions of socially-discriminated sections and minorities in India are before the international community. B R Ambedkar’s prescient warnings are significant in this regard. “Minority communities may be crushed. If not crushed they may be tyrannised and oppressed. They are sure to be discriminated against and denied equality before the law and equal opportunity in public life.” These lines create an impression that a sensitive commentator on contemporary politics has written on the plight of minorities in Modi-ruled India. But they were written by Ambedkar in a chapter devoted to majorities and minorities in Thoughts on Linguistic States. On the occasion of the anniversary of his parinirvan on December 6, it is clear his words have come true. He also warned that minorities would feel insecure and get excluded from all spheres including politics because of the communally-charged

electoral process. Shockingly, a communally-charged electoral process has become a determining factor for electoral outcomes in favour of the BJP, whose leaders target minorities in the name of their faith, dress, food and their choices for love and marriage. Ambedkar's idea of minorities included not only Muslims, Christians and other religious minorities but also Dalits and weaker sections of society. Some BJP legislators have openly called for social and economic boycott of Muslims who constitute 12 to 14 per cent of the population. Ambedkar could foresee this possibility. Therefore, in his draft Constitution for the United States of India, which he prepared in 1945, he put the issue of the boycott of minorities in the chapter on Fundamental Rights. He prescribed that any measure, in the form of word or deed, for boycotting minorities would be dealt with a deterrent penalty and the future legislature of India would enact legislation with provisions for exemplary punishments against the guilty. In fact, Ambedkar submitted a memorandum to the Constituent Assembly in March 1947 and it contained the above-mentioned issue. Why is it that Modi and his ministerial colleagues, who are desperately trying to appropriate Ambedkar, are silent when BJP legislators brazenly call for the boycott of minorities? The PM's silence indicates that he is not in tune with Ambedkar's vision. Ambedkar underlined the point that the cultivation of constitutional morality by every citizen is a categorical imperative to uphold the constitutional vision of India. The PM blows the "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas" trumpet but in practice, he and his party target minorities and remain silent calls for genocide and boycott are made.

India's image is getting badly tarnished at the global level because of such sinister developments. Tragically, our country has been described as an "elected autocracy" and "partially-free". Ambedkar would have been shocked and shaken beyond measure by the deliberate denigration of the Constitution, constitutional morality and the legislative intent of the Constituent Assembly by those controlling the state apparatus today. Ambedkar called for the adoption of the constitutional route to achieve social and political goals and cautioned that any other method would spell the grammar of anarchy. The calls for the exclusion of Muslims, and violence against them spell out the grammar of anarchy. This threatens to create permanent social and economic turmoil, which may well go to a level that is beyond the control of any power. Therefore, those ruling India should be mindful of the issues raised by Ambedkar and adopt the constitutional method to save it from calamity.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 6, 2022

RBI Meet: How India's key economic indicators shaped up before policy decision tomorrow

Gourab Das

The Reserve Bank of India-led rate setting panel is widely expected to raise the benchmark rate for a fifth straight time at the end of its policy review tomorrow. However, it is unlikely to go overboard as it needs to fuel growth amid forecasts of deteriorating global outlook and chances of price pressures easing from multi-year highs. Key global central banks, including the Federal Reserve, are also likely to take the foot off the pedal. The Monetary Policy Committee is expected to raise the repo rate by 35 basis points or lower, compared with sharp 50 bps rate hikes in each of the last three meetings that had taken the policy rate to a three-year high of 5.9%. HDFC Bank's Principal Economist Sakshi Gupta said the central bank is unlikely to go for a 50 bps hike as that will be too aggressive given that inflation has started showing signs of moderation and is progressing in line with the RBI's projections. "Central banks across the world are facing the challenge of walking the tightrope between growth and inflation," Gupta said. To recap, RBI Governor and MPC Chair Shaktikanta Das in the last policy had said, while advanced economies' actions are driven by their domestic considerations, emerging markets suffer the consequences due to global spillovers. The rate hike back then was largely guided by the ambition to tame galloping inflation and in line with aggressive policy tightening by key global central banks. Since the last meeting, analysts believe synchronised rate hikes are behind us and the inflation outlook has brightened. India's finance ministry has also acknowledged that easing international commodity prices and new Kharif arrival are set to dampen inflationary pressures in the coming months. Pressure on India's local currency has also eased as the dollar index slumped.

However, what is of concern is the looming global slowdown and the rippling effect on the world's fifth largest economy as well. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that economic expansion was the top priority for the government now. "We expect the Monetary Policy Committee's policy outlook to be data dependent contingent upon Fed action, inflation trajectory and financial stability... In our base case, we expect the MPC to raise the repo rate by another 25-35 bps in the upcoming policy review on 7th Dec," said Tanvee Gupta Jain, economist at UBS. On that note, let's take a look at the movement of key economic indicators since the last policy meeting in September.

Growth:

Shaktikanta Das has ruled out a recession for India, while key government officials including the finance minister have said India remains a bright spot amid the global headwinds. However, from foreign brokerages to rating agencies, most of them have in recent days slashed India's economic growth forecasts. The expected slowdowns in Europe and North America, along with China's sluggish economy are likely to hurt growth, while Russia's attack on Ukraine lingers. Geopolitical uncertainty, synchronized monetary tightening and high energy prices are clearly weighing on global growth in the first quarter of 2023, SBI said. India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the July-September quarter slowed to 6.3% from 8.4% a year earlier, and 13.5% in the previous quarter, owing to slower growth of the manufacturing and mining sectors. Nomura economists Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi said in a report that they believe India's growth rate cycle has peaked and a broad-based slowdown is underway. "Going forward, the most critical aspect would be a further pick-up in the domestic demand scenario as the external environment would remain challenging. The pick-up in private capex cycle would be contingent on continued improvement in the domestic demand scenario. The fall in global commodity prices should provide comfort to the manufacturing sector in the coming quarters. We expect GDP to grow at 6.9% for the full fiscal year," CARE Edge's Chief Economist Rajani Sinha said.

#### Inflation:

One of the key drivers for the policy decision will be the inflation readings and their trajectory. Indicating easing of the price situation, retail inflation moderated to a three-month low of 6.7% in October, while the wholesale price index fell to a 19-month low mainly on account of subdued rates of food items. Food inflation for October came in at 7.01 per cent as against 8.6 per cent a month before. However, the inflation print remained above the central bank's mandate to keep inflation at 4% with 2% of upside and downside margins for the 10th straight month. Retail inflation in India had surged to 7% on an annual basis in August from 6.71% in July, snapping a three-month downtrend. Consumer prices in India had surged to an eight-year high of 7.80% in April. In the September policy, the RBI had left the inflation projection for this fiscal unchanged at 6.7%, as it flagged persisting pains from food price pressures and amid global risks to costlier imports. There is some moderation seen in global commodity prices with US gasoline prices recently hitting their lowest level since February. Markets Insider said citing a Bank of America note that prices for the international oil benchmark averaged around \$101 per barrel this year, while Brent currently trades around \$86 per barrel.

At home, the State Bank of India said the fear of impact of unseasonal rains on CPI inflation (particularly on food CPI) is likely to be unfounded. It expects inflation to be on a downward trajectory after this month. The retail inflation rate should be around 5.2% in March.

#### Rupee movement:

Till before the September policy, the Rupee had depreciated around 9% against the greenback year to date. The fall further aggravated and the local unit hit a nadir in late October, breaching the 83 per dollar mark. The rupee is still down over 9% so far in this calendar year, but has come off the record lows. The rupee recently hit a seven-week high of 80.52 per dollar, indicating an over 3% recovery from the record low of 83.29 it touched around mid-last month, aided by softer-than-expected U.S. inflation data. HDFC Bank's Gupta aims rupee at around 80.50-82 per dollar by December-end as against 81.50-83 previously, banking on the extent of reversal in the dollar and inflows into Indian equities. While a relatively stronger dollar helps in easing imported inflation pressure, this also aided the central bank to avert further burning of its forex reserves to support the local unit. The RBI in recent months had to use its forex stockpile across platforms - spot, futures, forwards and non-deliverable forwards markets - to prevent the rupee's rout in calibrated interventions. The central bank was also said to be contemplating several bespoke measures, such as opening a special window for oil importers and reducing hedging costs for foreign-currency depositors, to minimize the pace of decline in the rupee against the surging US dollar. SBI said the rupee will remain anchored at close to current levels as RBI recoups dollars at every possible opportunity.

#### Forex Reserves:

Ahead of the policy review in September, India's foreign exchange reserves had dropped to \$545.65 billion, which was then the lowest level since Oct 2, 2020. The reserves fell further to an over two-year low of \$524.52 billion for the week ending Oct 21, depleting by \$117.93 billion from the record high of \$642.45 billion seen on September 3 last year.

However, it has now risen for three straight weeks stood at \$550.14 billion for the week ending Nov 25. For the week ending Nov 18, the foreign exchange reserves had risen to \$547.25 billion, while in the prior week it jumped by a whopping \$14.72, the biggest weekly jump since August 2021, reflecting the impact of recent overseas currency purchases by the central bank amid rising global appetite for local growth assets.



However, experts opine that the future pace of increases in forex reserves may not be sharp. China is re-emerging as a competitor for international investors' funds. As China begins to ease curbs and move to focus on the economy, its beaten down valuations vis a vis India's steepest valuations could turn out to be India's disadvantage and temper down flows.

#### Trade Deficit:

India's trade deficit narrowed to \$26.91 billion in October from \$27.98 billion in August. The merchandise trade deficit for April-October 2022 was estimated at \$173.46 billion as against \$125.22 billion between April-August 2022. Exports dropped to \$29.78 billion in October, which was the first decline below \$30 billion for the first time in nearly 20 months. India's exports contracted 16.7% on an annual basis from a growth of 4.8% seen in September, pointing to a decline in global demand.

Briefing media, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that global headwinds are impacting consumption worldwide and that would have an impact on India's exports as well. "The pinch from slowing external demand is going to get more painful for the Indian economy in the months to come. We could see a significant portion of India's GDP shaved by widening of trade deficit in the subsequent quarters," CARE's Sinha said. Meanwhile, India's quarterly current account deficit had surged to a decadal high in the June quarter amid a surge in imports due to high crude oil prices and higher repatriation of income by foreign investors, data in September from the RBI showed. The shortfall in the current account - the broadest measure of trade in goods and services was \$23.9 billion, or 2.8% of gross domestic product during the quarter ended June'30 compared to a surplus in the same period a year ago.

#### Rate Differential:

While announcing the policy in September, Shaktikanta Das had said that the world is in the eye of a new storm or the third major shock, which he said was arising from aggressive monetary policy actions and even more aggressive communication from advanced economy central banks like the US Fed. The Federal Reserve raised the target range for the federal funds rate by 75 bps to 3.75%-4% during its policy review last month, after starting the year with a near zero rate. This was the sixth consecutive rate hike and the fourth straight three-quarter point increase, further pushing borrowing costs to the highest since 2008. The funds rate was at 3%-to-3.25% before RBI's September review. Year to date, RBI has raised rates by 190 bps, while the Fed has increased policy rates by 375 bps. However, the Fed is now expected to dial down the pace of rate increases as the hikes may be adequate to push down the price pressure. That would give a breathing space to the RBI. The Fed's rate-

setting panel meets a week later, after the release of inflation data that would need to validate recent easing."With the Fed indicating its desire to slow down the pace of rate hikes to 50 bps clips and the October US CPI momentum easing relative to expectations, thereby reducing the depreciation pressure on the rupee, we think the monetary policy committee will be comfortable to dial down the pace of rate hikes to 35 bps in December," said Kaushik Das, Deutsche Bank's chief India economist. The rate differential between India and other nations is a key driver for foreign fund inflows and Fed's rate increases make the Indian market less attractive.

#### Global Crude Prices:

The price of the Indian basket of crude oil was around \$88.6 a barrel in November, government data showed. This is sharply lower from a decadal high of \$121.28 per barrel on June 10. The average as of September 22 was 90.75/bbl. Brent crude futures were at \$83 a barrel and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures stood at \$77.32. They were down from \$87.69 a barrel and \$81.73, respectively, before the September policy review. It will be interesting to see if the RBI revises its oil price assumption tomorrow from the \$100 level it factored in earlier.

#### Banks' Credit Disbursals:

While the RBI has looked to check the run-away inflation, it will also look to keep the economy humming. Demand for loans is a key parameter to gauge economic activities. According to RBI data, bank credit rose by 16.96% to Rs 133.29 lakh crore as of the fortnight ended November 18. Before the last policy meeting, bank credit rose by 16.2% to Rs 125.5 lakh crore in the fortnight ended September 9. Growth in bank credit has accelerated during the financial year which is a positive sign of economic activity picking up though banks are challenged by a slower growth in deposits, Bank of Baroda said in a note. RBI data for the month ending October shows that overall gross bank credit has grown by 17.9% on an annual basis compared with 6.8% last year. However, there has been higher than average growth in credit to the services and personal loans segments, while that to agriculture and industry has trailed, it added.

PIB, DEC 7, 2022

Toilets 2.0 campaign gains momentum as ULBs and Citizens join hands to transform public/community toilets in urban areas

The recently launched Toilets 2.0 Campaign focuses on the thematic areas of 1. People for Toilets 2. Partners for Toilets 3. Design Toilets 4. Rate your Toilets 5. My Thoughts – Our Toilets. The campaign is witnessing the large-scale mobilization of citizens, NGOs, private sector by Urban Local Bodies to refurbish public and community toilets. The six-week long campaign aims to make toilets functional, usable, and aesthetic.

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) have been mobilizing enthusiastic citizens to clean and maintain public/community toilets under the People for Toilets theme. Wall paintings showcasing cultural heritage found their way on the exteriors of some facilities. Guntur Municipal Corporation organised a Swachh Wall Art contest in which citizens were seen beautifying the walls of many public restrooms with paintings. From the farthest corners of Jammu & Kashmir to Andhra Pradesh, citizens with support from NGOs, and SHGs have been conducting cleanliness drives outside the public toilets. While Chandigarh MC hailed the selfless efforts of the Safai Karamcharis and honoured the ones who cleaned the public toilets during this drive, Vijayawada escalated its efforts in cleaning and beautifying the toilets across the region and aimed to gather massive public participation in ensuring better and sustainable community and public toilets. Malleshwaram has unveiled newly constructed toilets in various locations for an improved user experience. ULBs are organising various awareness programs to promote use of toilets under the People for Toilets theme. Nearly 80,000 volunteers have registered so far to participate in the cleaning and beautification activities. ULBs are seeking to engage Partners for Toilets in the operation and maintenance of public/community toilets, to provide (i) One-time financial support (ii) Periodic/recurring on-demand cleaning (iii) Adoption of toilets for a year and (iv) Annual operations and maintenance via <https://www.mygov.in/>. Professional architects/urban designers and students are submitting innovative designs for public and community toilets under the Design Toilets Challenge via <https://ecoa.in/samarthaya/>

Citizens' views on public/community toilets across urban India are being aggregated under the MyThoughts – Our Toilets initiative on MyGov. It has been gathering views of public on public/community toilets across urban India to help States and cities improve sanitation infrastructure and services. The online survey can be accessed on <https://www.mygov.in/>. The performance of the cities in the Toilets 2.0 campaign will be evaluated and top performing cities will be recognised by MoHUA.

MINT, DEC 8, 2022

Rupee ends flat as broader markets muted on growth concerns

Anushka Trivedi

The rupee ended at 82.42 per dollar, against its previous close of 82.47, having traded in a narrow band all day.

The Indian rupee closed little changed on Thursday as gains from softer crude prices and a sombre dollar were offset by weakness in the broader markets over worries of a slowdown in developed economies. The rupee ended at 82.42 per dollar, against its previous close of 82.47, having traded in a narrow band all day. State-run banks were seen bidding for dollars on behalf of oil marketing companies through the session as crude slumped, three foreign exchange traders confirmed. The rupee was sold heavily ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision on Wednesday, but has found some stability after the central bank hiked rates and took a hawkish stance. The RBI's stance signals more rate hikes are on the cards and that has brought some relief to the local unit, said a trader with a private bank.

However, a strong rally can't be expected until the Federal Reserve meeting next week is out of the way, the trader added. An overnight drop in U.S. yields and oil prices helped the currency, but the mood was tempered on concerns over higher interest rates sparking a recession in the United States and other developed economies. Asian currencies closed between marginally weak to slightly higher, while global equities mostly declined. The Chinese yuan and shares fell, even as COVID rules were relaxed in the country. Brakes on global markets rally as growth fears resurface. The dollar index edged up 0.2% as investors balanced risks between upcoming rate hikes by the Fed and the recession it could induce. Money markets see a 91% probability of the Fed raising rates by 50 basis points next week, and peaking at just under 5% in May. USD/INR premiums were unchanged from Wednesday, with the 1-year forward implied yield holding the 1.76% level it jumped to after RBI's monetary policy decision.

**ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 8, 2022**

Reserve Bank of India raises repo rate by a smaller 35 bps as fight against inflation continues amid growth woes

**DIKSHA TRIPATHY**

The Reserve Bank of India-led rate-setting panel on Wednesday raised the country's policy rate by a modest 35 basis points in its last policy review of the calendar year, as the fight against inflation is not over yet while the central bank will also have

to fuel the country's economic output. The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) with five-to-one majority increased the repo rate, or the key rate at which the RBI lends short-term funds to commercial banks, to 6.25% from 5.9%. With this hike, the RBI has broken the 50-basis-point-hike trend that it opted for in each of the last three policy meetings. The key rate has now been raised by 225 (190 + 35) bps since May by the panel. The panel also decided to remain focused on withdrawal of accommodative stance. RBI Governor and MPC's Chair Shaktikanta Das said while headline inflation may ease through the rest of the year and in the first quarter of the next fiscal year, it is expected to rule above the target. The medium-term inflation outlook is exposed to heightened uncertainties from geopolitical tensions, financial market volatility and the rising incidence of weather-related disruptions. Growth prospects across the world are dampening. Financial markets remain nervous and are characterised by high volatility and price swings, he said. "On balance, the MPC was of the view that further calibrated monetary policy action is warranted to keep inflation expectations anchored, break core inflation persistence and contain second round effects. These actions will strengthen the medium-term growth prospects of the Indian economy," the governor said. Meanwhile, the more modest RBI rate hike also coincides with indications that the Federal Reserve will shift to smaller rate increases at its policy meeting this month, as the US monetary authority too have to perk up growth while it probably has done a lot with 375 bps of rate hikes to control inflation. While talking about the rate hikes, RBI deputy governor Michael Patra indicated that the 50bps consecutive hikes are over.

"We have moderated the size of the policy rate increase. It is a fundamental guidance we are giving to the market. If things pan out as we have projected, 50 bps consecutive hikes are over. But we cannot take our shoe off the break because inflation is still averaging 5-5.4% next year. We must guide it to a place where it remains stable at those ranges and then move on to 4%. Till then we must be on our toes," said Patra. "The RBI policy announcement was broadly in line with our expectations with a 35bps rate hike and no change in stance. That said, the statement was slightly more hawkish than perhaps expected by markets, with no indication that the central bank is coming to the end of its rate hiking cycle for now," said Sakshi Gupta, principal economist at HDFC Bank. Indicating that the rate cycle is not over yet, she added, "the reiteration of the fact that growth continues to be resilient while there are upside risks to inflation suggests the central banks' resolve to not let up its fight against inflation continues. This at the margin could provide a soft support for the rupee — especially ahead of the Fed meeting next week. We continue to expect another rate hike in the Feb policy of 25bps."

Retail inflation, which is one of the key factors taken into consideration by RBI while deciding the monetary policy, moderated in October to a three-month low. It nonetheless remained above RBI's tolerance band of 2-6% for the 10th consecutive month. "The 35 bps hike is as per market expectations. The positive is RBI has broken the 50-bps rate-hike trend as growth headwinds intensify amid easing inflation pain. Until RBI isn't completely sure of inflation's downward trend it may opt for a smaller rate increase, as it has to also focus on growth amid bets of easing inflation pressure," said Anu Aggarwal, Head Corporate Banking, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Earlier, Rajani Sinha, chief economist at CareEdge had said, "The moderation in rate hike is on expected lines. With CPI inflation likely to moderate further supported by base effect and the relief provided by moderating global commodity prices, RBI could take a breather." "However, core inflation and household inflationary expectations still remain high, hence the Central Bank would remain vigilant on the inflation front," she added. As central banks are perhaps preparing for a potential low inflation regime, global growth slowdown has emerged as a new pain point for them to act on policies. India's economic growth for the July-September quarter slowed to 6.3% from 8.4% a year earlier, and 13.5% in the previous quarter, owing to slower growth of the manufacturing and mining sectors. The moderate pace of growth has raised RBI's concern and it largely shifted the focus from inflation to growth. RBI commentary and announcement is mostly in line with street expectations and thus we don't see any material impact on the economy from RBI rate hike decision. Inflation is expected to be around 5% in Q1FY24 and 5.4% in Q2FY24, thus repo rate is expected to peak around 6.7% for this rate hike cycle. Government Capex has slowed down in Q2, which is a bit negative however since we are entering into pre-election year, we can see that reversing over the next two quarters," said Anil Rego, founder and fund manager at Right Horizons, SEBI Registered Portfolio Management Service provider. In addition, the impact of past rate hikes and liquidity tightening measures have yet to be seen. Thus, going overboard with the monetary policy could hurt growth recovery.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PIB,DEC5,2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh describes India as a key Global Player in the Space sector and says, India is keen to take its Space cooperation with the UAE to newer heights Dr Jitendra Singh leading the official Indian delegation to “Abu Dhabi Space Debate” shared his thoughts along with the resident of Israel, Isaac Herzog in the opening ceremony. The Minister says, the Indian space industry today is renowned across the globe for two things – reliability and economy. India is also keenly promoting development of start-ups in the space sector to facilitate entry of foreign government and private sector entities: Dr Jitendra Singh

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 described India as a key Global Player in the Space sector and reiterated that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is keen to take its Space cooperation with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to newer heights. Addressing the Opening Ceremony of the UAE summit, "Abu Dhabi Space Debate", Dr Jitendra Singh acknowledged the presence of the UAE President, Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed at the Opening Ceremony and conveyed PM Modi's warm greetings to him and the people of UAE. Dr Jitendra Singh is leading the official Indian delegation to United Arab Emirates (UAE) at the “Abu Dhabi Space Debate”, a 2-day international meet. Apart from Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, and Diplomats from several countries attended the opening ceremony. Dr Jitendra Singh greeted the people of the United Arab Emirates on the occasion of the celebration of 51 years of the formation of this great country on behalf of the people of India. He said, another laudable achievement for the UAE this year is completion of the silver jubilee of its space odyssey with several golden milestones.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, development of the Space sector is one of the priority areas for the leaders of both India and the UAE and added that India started its space journey seven decades back from a scratch and is today acknowledged to be a leading space power. He said, the highlight of India's journey has been its thrust on indigenous development through dedication and hard work of its scientists guided by the commitment of the leaders.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, the indigenously developed Space sector of India and the fast-growing Space sector of the UAE have a lot of complementariness that can be harnessed. He said, if we want to ensure that the Space remains a sector to serve our shared humanity, it is important to bring all the stakeholders together to discuss and deliberate about the Space and in this regard, this platform has the potential to shape the future of the Space sector. The Minister said, the Indian space industry today is renowned across the globe for two things – reliability and economy. India is proud to have the maximum success ratio in the world for its flagship space launching vehicle – Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle or PSLV. Just a few weeks back, India's PSLV launched 36 satellites including for countries from both the developed and developing world.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, the list of achievements of India's Space industries is quite long and informed that Indian Space Research Organization or ISRO has launched more than 100 satellites so far and has immense in-house satellite building capabilities for GSAT, Earth Observation Satellites and Space based Satellite Navigation Systems. He proudly stated that India has also developed its own GPS, which we call the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System or IRNSS. Besides the successful launch of India's Mars orbiter mission in 2013, India has twice attempted to send its Mission to the moon known as Chandrayaan 1 and Chandrayaan 2. The third satellite mission to the moon, the Chandrayaan 3 will be launched next year, thr Minister informed. Dr Jitendra Singh said, India's other flagship space programmes also include Human Space Flight Centre or what we call in India as Gaganyaan project under which we are planning to send our first crewed flight in space in 2024. Dr Jitendra Singh said, in the light of the Indian philosophy of Vasudeva Kutumbakam which means - the World is one family, India wants to share the fruits of space development to reach all countries and bring closer cooperation between governments and private entities in the space sector. He said, with this idea, India has recently brought landmark reforms leading to policy initiatives to tap the best of our research potential as well as participation of the private sector.



The Minister said, India is also keenly promoting development of start-ups in the space sector to facilitate entry of foreign government and private sector entities. In this regard, India has established a dedicated organisation called Indian Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre or IN-SPACe which is tasked with the objective of hand-holding our nascent private entities in the Space sector, he added. Dr Jitendra Singh recalled that among the several pioneering initiatives of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed is the Abu Dhabi Space Debate which reflects his commitment and vision for the Space sector. He said that much of this vision has already become a reality with the UAE sending a space mission to Mars orbit, thereby becoming the sixth such country demonstrating its prowess in the space sector and on top of that, the UAE became the only second country, other than India, to successfully launch a Mars orbiter in its very first attempt.

The Minister also congratulated the UAE for planning its second human space mission next year by sending four astronauts in space for six months. The launch of Rashid Rover, UAE's Moon Mission in the near future, and creation of the Space fund are milestones which reflect the commitments and determination of the UAE to excel in the Space sector. He shared that India's active space partnership with the UAE dates back to 2017, when our PSLV launched UAE's first nanosatellite - 'Nayif-1' meant for collecting environmental space data. Dr Jitendra Singh appreciated the thrust of the Abu Dhabi Space Debate for building the role of Governments in empowering space business and technology. He said, the list of discussions in ADSD on the role of the space sector to solve the climate issues, bringing accountability to environmental commitments, threats to and from space to the political discourse and making the presence of private sector and space innovation people driven that serve humankind; are very relevant to our time and are eye-opening topics, setting apart this initiative from any other such gathering in Space sector in the past.

Dr Jitendra Singh concluded by saying that he is confident that the Abu Dhabi Space Debate will grow in stature in the coming years and become a pre-eminent platform for discussions in space related matters and take India-UAE space cooperation into an entirely different and much higher spatial orbit. Lastly, as India assumed the chairmanship of G-20 on Dec 1, the Minister once again welcomed the UAE to the G-20 Summit and G-20 meetings in the period of India's chairmanship.

PIB, DEC 7, 2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra says, ISRO will develop "Spatial Data Infrastructure geoportal 'Geo-Ladakh' for UT-Ladakh"

The project encompasses spatial database generation (water resources, vegetation and energy potential) using remote sensing, geospatial techniques and the development of a Geo-portal for hosting this database. 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 informed that Government of UT – Ladakh has approached the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), a unit of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for developing “Spatial Data Infrastructure geoportal ‘Geo-Ladakh’ for UT-Ladakh”. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha today, Dr Jitendra Singh said, the project encompasses spatial database generation (water resources, vegetation and energy potential) using remote sensing, geospatial techniques and the development of a Geo-portal for hosting this database.

The project also aims towards training of UT-Ladakh officials on Geospatial techniques and applications. Portal provides geospatial data visualization and analytics for UT-Ladakh, consisting of Spatial viewer, Carbon Neutrality, Geospatial utility mapping and Geo-Tourism. An MoU was also signed between IIRS (ISRO) and UT-Ladakh Administration on January 1, 2022 towards carrying out the above work. The potential of space technology could be used for generating the spatial database on time series snow cover, fresh water availability, sites for renewable energy potential (solar and wind), availability of alpine pastures/grazing lands for natural resource management and change assessment at periodic interval. Presently, ISRO is setting up an optical tele-scope at Hanle for tracking spacecraft and space objects.

**PIB,DEC7,2022**

Union Minister Dr Jitendra says, the Department of Space has initiated studies towards undertaking the development of critical technologies required to achieve Autonomous Precision Landing of Space Rockets

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said, the Department of Space has initiated studies towards undertaking the development of critical technologies required to achieve Autonomous Precision Landing of Space Rockets and their demonstration through Vertical Take-off & Vertical Landing (VTVL) of Test Vehicles.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha today, Dr Jitendra Singh said, in order to become an active stakeholder in the small satellite market, ISRO/DOS has initiated development of Spacecraft buses for the small satellites, which includes nano-satellite and micro-satellites. Further to that, the development of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is also underway to provide launch services catering to small satellite market. The Minister said, Department of Space has put in place appropriate measures to manage the increasing space debris in low earth orbit comprising of defunct satellites, discarded rocket stages and other orbital debris. He said, ISRO has been an active member of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) and India has contributed immensely to the IADC and UN guidelines for safe and sustainable space operations. Mechanisms are in place for ensuring that the space activities are conducted in a safe and sustainable manner, which include:

Establishment of facilities for tracking and monitoring of space objects.

Best practices such as passivation of launch vehicle upper stages, conjunction assessment and collision avoidance for satellites, post mission disposal of satellites and upper stages, etc.

Operationalization of ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM) for safeguarding Indian space assets against space environmental hazards, to pursue the related R&D activities, and also to contribute to awareness raising on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.

**PIB, DEC 7, 2022**

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, India will make significant investment in R&D to develop a roadmap for design and delivery of vaccine development for future pandemic. An International meet on “Preparedness for Future Epidemics: Is India ready to meet the CEPI 100 days vaccine challenge?” was organized at Biotech Science Cluster, Faridabad

For a better and more equitable approach to vaccine development and access, there is need for a globally collaborative and aligned regulatory processes and an ethical public health policy in place: Dr Soumya Swaminathan

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh said, India will make significant investment in R&D to develop a roadmap for design and delivery of vaccine development for future pandemic. In his message to the two-day International meet on “Preparedness for Future Epidemics: Is India ready to meet the CEPI 100 days vaccine challenge?”, Dr Jitendra Singh said, while efforts are still on to uncover findings about the COVID-19 and the epidemiological models, India is ready to invest in future challenges. The Conference on 5th and 6th December, 2022 has been organized by Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), an autonomous institute of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, Faridabad in its campus at NCR Biotech Science Cluster.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, the Department of Biotechnology was at the center of pandemic response and took unprecedented steps to curb the threat posed by COVID 19. He said, DBT was aided very ably, by its 14 autonomous institutes, the primary lead taken by THSTI as it quickly set up patient cohorts, bioassay systems, immune and cellular response assays, animal studies required for vaccine development, and supported vaccine industry in developing India's first DNA and protein subunit vaccine Corbevax. Dr Jitendra Singh reiterated that Covid-19 has given an urgent wake up call to prepare ourselves for any future threat and it is timely that Department of Biotechnology and THSTI are leading India's IndCEPI program for future preparedness. This meeting brought together leaders and experts from academia, industry and regulators to discuss important aspects of vaccine development for emerging infectious diseases. India as a country will take lead in providing a policy framework for pandemic preparedness especially for global south, aligning respective national regulatory processes with international processes, and enhancing and pooling manufacturing capacity for large scale production quickly. This will also help the country to garner the strength of our biotech industry to improve human health and also contribute to our economy beyond its current share of \$80 billion.



Dr. Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, DBT, reiterated DBT's commitment to foster enterprise and innovation with new and special emphasis of enhancing manufacturing and bio-manufacturing. He added that the process for vaccine preparedness was complex and DBT would facilitate with putting into place easier scientific policy on place. The need for synchronized system such that India can combat disease dengue, Chikungunya, TB and other viral/bacterial infection, bringing more proactive solution in means of vaccine, diagnostics, curative therapeutics quickly. Prof. Pramod Garg, Executive Director, THSTI highlighted the work that THSTI has been doing in various R&D fields. Dr. Garg spoke briefly about the clinical cohorts, vaccine effectiveness studies, pan-hospital network studies, diagnostic modalities and in-house vaccine development research on infectious diseases such as SARS-CoV-2, TB, Dengue, etc. He mentioned about the newly launched MSc in Clinical Research program. Prof. Garg also emphasized having synergy between academia and industries and informed the audience that THSTI has recently got a \$12 million funding from CEPI for a collaborative work on developing pan beta corona vaccine in collaboration with industry. He said that THSTI is ready to meet the academic component of the challenge of developing a new vaccine. The keynote address was delivered by Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan, former Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India. He spoke about the challenges posed by the CEPI's 100 Day challenge and the role of public health information and data flow systems, vaccine platforms, preclinical facilities, animal experiments, regulatory system, implementation system and funds in pointing out the processes for meeting these challenges that are critical. He cautioned that while we were lucky to have a strong immunogenic spike protein antigen for the corona virus, this may not be the case with other infections. Therefore, developing a sustainable and economically viable system flow for achieving 100 day challenge was critical.

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, WHO emphasized the need for India to develop road maps and target product profile for diseases important for India. She mentioned that WHO had set up a committee to prioritize viral families and pick prototypes from these families for vaccine development. For a better and more equitable approach to vaccine development and access, it was important to be collaborative, have globally aligned regulatory processes and an ethical public health policy in place.

Experts from the academia, industry and regulators viz., Leiden University Medical Center, The Netherlands, Emory University USA, IISc Bangalore, CMC Vellore, THSTI, ICMR, CDSCO, WHO, CEPI, Serum Institute of India Pvt. Ltd., Zydus Life Sciences, Bharat Biotech International Ltd., Premas Biotech Pvt. Ltd., Biological E Pvt Ltd., Panacea Biotech Ltd., & Gennova Biopharmaceuticals Ltd. made presentations during the meeting.

**PIB,DEC10,2022**

International Workshop on Research Agenda, Social Needs and Open Science

CSIR-NIScPR is the largest government organization of India that publishes more than 15 journals in S&T under open access mode: Prof. Ranjana Aggarwal

CSIR-NIScPR (National Institute of Science Communication & Policy Research) is involved in creating livelihood and foster skill development in rural areas through CSIR technologies. Recent cutting-edge fields are being worked on by various R&D divisions of the lab. Scientometric has been one of the institute's strongest areas and CSIR-NISTADS (which was one of the laboratory which together with CSIR-NISCAIR merged to become NIScPR) was instrumental in bringing this area as a focus area of research and input to policy making in India. These were the words of Prof. Ranjana Aggarwal, Director, CSIR-NIScPR who was delivering a welcome address in an International Workshop on 'Research agenda, Social needs and Open science' organized by CSIR-NIScPR.

Prof. Ranjana Aggarwal, Director, CSIR-NIScPR addressing the workshop

Prof. Aggarwal highlighted that CSIR-NIScPR is the largest government organization in the nation that publishes more than 15 journals in a variety of research fields in an open access mode as there is no APC involved for publishing along with popular science magazines publications to bridge the gap between science and society. An online repository National Open Periodicals Repository (NOPR) of CSIR-NIScPR also provides to access of older papers from anywhere in the world. She concluded by emphasizing that CSIR-NIScPR is working towards solving problems under the motto "One Earth, One Family, and One Future." The global challenges have called for scientific research to increasingly reshape their agenda to focus more on societal problems. The reshaping can be seen prominently in the STI (Science-Technology-Innovation) policy framing of different countries and funding bodies. Responsible research and innovation, open science, open innovations are some of the key terms of new era that get space in policy articulations of different countries. Innovation System is also paying serious attention to informal, grass root and frugal innovations as they intervene to address unmet societal challenges. Cross-disciplinary interactions across different stakeholders have become important in this environment. The policy interactions need to be more evidence based to reshape the agenda and design pathways for implementation. In this context, an International Workshop on Research Agenda, Social needs and Open Science was organized on 8 December 2022 at CSIR-NIScPR. The conference was addressed by eminent scholars and policy makers from India and abroad.

Dr. Ismael Rafols, UNESCO Chair, Leiden University, Netherlands delivering keynote address

Dr. Sanjay Kumar Mishra, Sr. Advisor, Department of Biotechnology, put forward his initial remark about the subject of workshop as putting three oceans of knowledge set into one go, namely bibliometrics, scientometrics and infometrics. Dr. Mishra urged to take into consideration social needs of societies, countries and on global level in research and research agenda to extract maximum benefit out of scientific research to mankind. He also opined that science advisory role is as important as research output. Usually science research is in general pro urban, pro affluent, there is need to be new focus on society oriented and need for synchronization of science and society. Bibliometrics and scientometrics tool can be used to understand the gap in the research for society by scientific communities.

Speakers of the second session focused on ‘Frugal Innovations and Openness

Dr. Sujit Bhattacharya, Chief Scientist & Dean-Policy Research, CSIR-NIScPR and Coordinator of this Workshop began his talk by giving a brief overview of STS (Science, Technology and Society), innovation studies and Scientometrics research, drawing upon the strong linkages among these fields of research. He stressed that the contemporary global challenges have called for science-technology-innovation agenda be shaped by societal needs and user driven approach. Scientists, staff members and audience of the workshop

Dr. Ismael Rafols, UNESCO Chair, Diversity and Inclusion in Global Science Centre for Science and Technology Strategies (CWTS), Leiden University, Netherlands delivered the keynote address. Dr. Rafols reinforced UNESCO recommendation of diverse and inclusive matter for research agenda for benefit of whole human kind. He brought forth the usual notion that research agenda tends to favour elite and rich though not universal but true to a greater extent. He justified his argument by describing concentration of research in global north, being driven by market demands and incentivized by few narrow academic goals and social groups. Dr. Rafols highlighted that research agendas are not in sync with SDG goals in higher and middle income countries. Evidence indicates better alignment in least developing countries of research with SDGs. He emphasized upon the need for more open access to science and having more open infrastructure so that maximum benefit can be achieved by mankind. He concluded by highlighting need for inclusion of citizen in sciences to lessen the misalignment.

Prof. Saradindu Bhaduri, Associate Professor, Centre for studies in Science Policy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and coordinator of the Trans-Disciplinary Research Centre on frugality studies (a joint initiative of JNU with Leiden University) gave his presentation on how research agenda, innovation, regulation, and user driven research conflict with each other. He highlighted some interesting engagements between policymakers and stakeholders. He highlighted how useful and widely used appliances such as stove suffer from agencies not giving standard certification.



Dr. Vivek Kumar Singh, Professor and Head of the Computer Science Department, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi provided an overview of open access and its various forms, such as Gold, Platinum, and Diamond open access. He highlighted the open archive available at India such as the IndiaRxiv, eprints by the Indian Institute of Science, Krishikosh by the ICAR etc. Dr. Singh correctly emphasized the need for making research accessible to society because there is a gap in knowledge access in India, and we need to seek for effective policy implementation to address this. Dr. Kavita Shah, Professor, Purdue University, USA gave a brief insight of the changing environment she has been observing in India now. The infrastructure, and support to research and many institutions now are in India which is bringing a positive change for doing high end research. She felt that this opportunity calls for students and researchers to make their research more aligned to the challenges faced by the society. Dr. Madhulika Bhati, Principal Scientist, CSIR-NIScPR and Dr Anurag Kanojia, Policy Fellow, Department of Computer Science, BHU as discussant drew upon the important learning from this workshop. They stressed upon the important argument and key issues that linked the different presentations together.

Dr. Shiv Narayan Nishad, Scientist, CSIR-NIScPR gave a broad overview of the ongoing project on Social Network Analysis by CSIR-NIScPR. This study led by Dr. Sujit Bhattacharya and team in which he is the Co-Principal Investigator is exploring how social network analysis can be developed as a resource material for its application in different fields of studies. The project intends to impart training and provide the resources developed in open access. The interactive session led to many questions and comments that enriched the workshop. The large number of young researchers who were among the attendee raised many important issues related to their research and how this workshop has benefitted them to think of Open access, aligning their research in proper direction, etc. At the end of the workshop, Dr. Sandhya Lakshmanan, Scientist CSIR-NIScPR proposed vote of thanks. Dr. Kasturi Mandal, Principal Scientist, CSIR-NIScPR anchored the whole event and young researchers who acted as rapporteurs.

## ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

PIB,DEC5,2022

### Analysis of paddy stubble management in NCR States and Punjab

Significant reduction in paddy crop residue burning events in the current year is reflective of vigorous and consistent efforts made by Central Government and State Governments and other stakeholders. As per the figures based on Standard ISRO Protocol for monitoring paddy crop residue burning events, the total paddy crop residue burning events during the period 15.09.2022 to 30.11.2022 in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and NCR Districts of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) and Rajasthan have come down from 78,550 in 2021 to 53,792 in 2022, i.e., a reduction of 31.5%. Total Active Fire Counts (Kharif Season) in Punjab, Haryana, NCR-UP, NCR- Rajasthan and NCT of Delhi for 2021 and 2022

The Central Government, under its CRM Scheme, has released more than Rs. 3,062 crores, to the Government of Punjab, NCR State Governments and GNCTD during the five-year period from 2018-19 to 2022-23 towards effective management of stubble in the region. Of the total releases, more than Rs. 1,426 crores have been released to State Government of Punjab. Regarding availability of machinery for crop residue management procured through the scheme so far, Punjab has about 1.20 Lakh machines; Haryana about 72,700 and U.P. (NCR) about 7,480 machines. During the period, about 38,400 Custom Hiring Centers (CHCs) have been established in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, of which about 24,200 CHCs are in Punjab and about 6,775 in Haryana. Based on the Framework advised by the Commission, Action Plans were prepared by the NCR State Governments and Government of Punjab to control stubble burning. For effective monitoring and to ensure integrity of data, the Commission had also formulated a standard protocol for monitoring of paddy residue burning using satellite data with the help of ISRO, IARI and other stakeholders. The concerted efforts of the Central Government, Government of Punjab, NCR State Governments and other Stakeholders towards better in-situ management of crop residue through the use of CRM machinery, use of PUSA bio-decomposers, facilitating various options for ex-situ utilization of paddy straw and extensive IEC activities, educational campaigns, awareness camps and publicity through print, electronic and social media have helped significantly in reducing the fire counts.

The total crop residue burning events in Haryana have come down from 6,987 in 2021 to 3,661 in 2022, i.e., a reduction of 47.60% as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Similarly, total crop residue burning events in Punjab have come down from 71,304 in 2021 to 49,922 in 2022, i.e., a reduction of 29.99%. The total crop residue burning events in NCR Districts of U. P., Rajasthan and NCT of Delhi have come down from 259 in 2021 to 209 in 2022, a reduction of 19.30% as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Out of 23 districts of Punjab, the five hotspot districts with maximum number of crop burning events during the current year are Sangrur, Bhatinda, Firozpur, Muktsar and Moga, recording a total of 21,882 fire counts, i.e., 43.83% of total fire counts during current year. Only one district reported more than 5,000 fire counts during the current year. In comparison, in 2021, five (5) Districts of Punjab reported more than 5,000 fire counts totaling 32,053 contributing to 44.95% of fire counts. In 2021, there were Eleven (11) Districts with a fire count of more than 3,000 contributing to 79.6% of total fire reported in Punjab. In the current year, there were only seven (7) Districts with more than 3,000 fire counts contributing to 57% of total fire counts. The single day highest fire counts in Punjab were 3,916 in 2022 as compared to 5,327 in 2021, i.e., a reduction of about 26.5%.

Ludhiana and Malerkotla reported more than 50% reduction in active fire counts in 2022 compared to 2021. Maximum reduction in active fire events in Punjab this year was reported from Ludhiana district with a reduction of 3,135 farm fire events (from 5817 to 2682). Out of 22 districts of Haryana, the five hotspot districts with maximum number of farm fire counts this year are Fatehabad, Kaithal, Jind, Sirsa and Kurukshetra, which recorded 2,548 fire counts, i.e., 69.6% of total fire counts during current year. These five districts had reported 4,644 fire counts last year, reduction of 45.1%. The single day highest fire counts in Haryana were 250 in 2022 as compared to 363 in 2021, i.e., a reduction of about 31.1%. Hisar, Karnal, Palwal, Panipat, and Sonapat reported more than 50% reduction in active fire counts this year. Maximum reduction in active fire events in Haryana this year was reported from Fatehabad district with a reduction of 712 fire counts (from 1479 to 767).



Though there is overall reduction in the area monitored, two (02) Districts of Punjab (Bhatinda and Fazilka); one (01) NCR District of U.P. (Bulandsahar); and one (01) District of Haryana (Yamuna Nagar) have reported significantly higher number of farm fire counts as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Maximum contribution of farm fires to the daily PM2.5 levels in Delhi was 34% in current year (on 3/11/2022) as against 48% last year (on 7/11/2021). The daily Average AQI of Delhi in November, 2022 registered an improvement at 320.60 as compared to 376.50 in November, 2021, i.e., a reduction of about 56 points.

**PIB, DEC 5, 2022**

International Cheetah Day and Wildlife Conservation Day celebrated at National Zoological Park

The National Zoological Park, New Delhi (Delhi Zoo) celebrated “International Cheetah Day” and “Wildlife Conservation Day” yesterday in collaboration with Central Zoo Authority. The purpose behind the celebration of “International Cheetah Day” and “Wildlife Conservation Day” is to spread awareness among present generation about the Wildlife Conservation.

To create awareness on the celebration of these days, a team from National Zoological Park and Central Zoo Authority visited and interacted with 175 Divyang school students of Jormal Periwal Memorial Senior Secondary School for Blind, New Delhi. All Divyang school students took part in the Wildlife Conservation Pledge. The expert talks on ‘Wildlife Conservation and Role of Zoos’ and “Cheetah – a Keystone Species and Food Web” were given by the officials of National Zoological Park and Central Zoo Authority. The goal of arranging these expert talks is to create the curiosity among these young minds to understand the importance of Wildlife Conservation, Keystone species and role of Cheetah in grassland ecosystem. Participation certificates and souvenirs were distributed among the students.

**TELEGRAPH, DEC 6, 2022**

Strange logic: Editorial on provision of compensatory afforestation in other states

Union environment ministry thinks that the loss of forest in Great Nicobar Island can be compensated by afforestation in the Aravalli Range

Geographical boundaries are, evidently, elastic. Why else would the Union environment ministry think that the loss of forest in Great Nicobar Island can be compensated by afforestation in the Aravalli Range — 2,400 kilometres away and in a different ecological zone — in Haryana? This ludicrous suggestion comes in the backdrop of major infrastructural projects worth Rs 75,000 crore that are being planned for the Great Nicobar Island, one of India's last bastions of threatened flora and fauna, ecologies and cultures. This would require the diversion of 15% of the forested area in Great Nicobar. Compensatory afforestation in Haryana is being deemed beneficial not for the island but for controlling air pollution in the national capital region. The policy obsession with the urban mainland is shocking. The people of NCR have the right to breathe unpolluted air; but what about the rights of the inhabitants of Great Nicobar? Incidentally, the Expert Appraisal Committee, which evaluated the proposal, had raised concerns about the project's environmental impact, but technical and financial viability outweighed the environmental red flags.

Astoundingly, the environment ministry's proposal falls within existing rules: a 2019 Central government directive allows states with over 75% forest cover looking to divert forest land for non-forestry purposes to carry out compensatory afforestation in other states. Yet, the Central government itself has blocked similar plans of afforestation by the Goa government, which sought to compensate for the diversion of forest land in Madhya Pradesh as well as in Karnataka. The ministry's directive and, indeed, these rules lay bare the under-reported failures of the Narendra Modi government on environmental protection. The Bharatiya Janata Party's ascendancy to power in 2014 was followed by the environment ministry removing a ban on the setting up of factories in eight 'critically-polluted' industrial belts. The number of independent members in the National Board for Wildlife fell from 15 to three. There has also been a discernible push in favour of business and 'development' in ecologically sensitive areas bulldozing environmental imperatives in the process. Mr Modi's government has also been simultaneously criticised for weakening critical environmental legislations. These facts poke holes into the grand declarations of the prime minister that affirm his government's commitment to green causes. The massive gap

between word and deed can be gauged from India's place at the bottom of the 2022 Environmental Performance Index, which ranks 180 countries on ecosystem vitality, health, and climate policy.

PIB,DEC8,2022

UNFCCC COP 27 and India's promise to achieve carbon neutrality

At the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the final outcomes are in the form of various decisions agreed to by consensus of all the Parties following extensive negotiations. The decisions carry varying degrees of commitments and responsibilities of Parties ranging from the purely voluntary or invitation to consider to the fully mandatory. Such decisions also carry caveats and exemptions under the principles of the Convention and the Paris Agreement, especially the principles of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities & Respective Capabilities in the light of different national circumstances, as applicable to developing countries. Based on the exact text of decisions in the light of these principles, India undertakes such actions as appropriate in fulfilment of its responsibilities.

Under the terms of the Paris Agreement, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy(LT-LEDS) are determined by countries themselves and communicated to the UNFCCC. In keeping with this, India has submitted its updated NDCs on 26th August 2022 and its long-term low carbon development strategy on 14th November 2022. These documents lay out India's vision and approaches towards reaching net-zero by 2070, which are expected to evolve as necessary over time. As per LT-LEDS, India's vision of low carbon development is based on the need to ensure India's high energy needs for development, including poverty eradication, achieving Sustainable Development Goals and economic growth. Further, it is necessary that the plan for the country's energy security is based both on the expansion of non-fossil fuel sources for power generation and rational utilization of fossil fuel resources. Specific steps for such utilization include, inter alia, expanding renewables and strengthening the grid and focusing on demand-side management. This information was given by the Minister of State for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.



## CURRENT EVENTS

PIB,DEC5,2022

Union Agriculture Minister inaugurates the National Conference on Soil Health Management for Sustainable Farming

Prime Minister committed to achieve the goal of sustainable development: Shri Narendra Singh Tomar

22 crore Soil Health Cards distributed to farmers across the country: Union Agriculture Minister

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar today inaugurated the National Conference on Soil Health Management for Sustainable Farming. On this occasion, Shri. Tomar said that due to chemical farming and other reasons, soil fertility is getting eroded and climate change is going to be a big concern for the country as well as the world. He said Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has concerns about climate change and from time to time prepares plans and keeps working on these plans. He said Prime Minister Shri Modi is committed towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and World Soil Day, NITI Aayog in collaboration with GIZ affiliated to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany, Chief Guest Shri Tomar said that the lack of organic carbon in the soil is a serious concern for us. To meet this serious challenge and for better soil health, we have to promote natural farming, which is beneficial for the environment. He said that to promote natural farming, the Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Modi is working with the States. The Government has re-adopted the Indian Natural Farming System for Agriculture. Natural Farming System is an ancient technique used by farmers for farming and at that time people also knew how to live in harmony with the nature, he added. States like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu etc. have made many innovations to promote natural farming. During the last year, an additional area of 4.78 lakh hectares has been brought under natural farming in 17 States. To promote natural farming, the Central Government has approved the National Mission on Natural Farming as a separate scheme with an expenditure of Rs. 1,584 crores, Shri Tomar said. Under the Namami Gange programme, the project of natural farming is going on along the banks of the Ganges, while the Indian Council of Agricultural

Research (ICAR) and all Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Central and State Agricultural Universities and Colleges are making all-round efforts to promote natural farming.

Shri Tomar said that the Government of India is also working through Soil Health Card. In two phases, more than 22 crore Soil Health Cards have been distributed to farmers across the country. Infrastructure development is also being done by the Government under the Soil Health Management Scheme, in which there is a provision to set up different types of Soil Testing Laboratories. So far, 499 permanent Soil Testing Laboratories, 113 Mobile Soil Testing Laboratories, 8,811 Mini Soil Testing Laboratories and 2,395 Village-level Soil Testing Laboratories have been established. He said that there was a time when the policies were production-oriented, due to chemical farming, agricultural yield increased, but now the situation has changed, and with climate change, keeping soil health intact is a big challenge. He said that if an attempt is made to exploit the earth contrary to the principles of nature, the consequences can be dangerous. Today, due to chemical farming, the soil's fertility is being eroded, the country and the world should avoid this and fulfill our environmental responsibility. In the conference, Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, Shri Suman Berry, Member Prof. Ramesh Chand, CEO Shri Parameswaran Iyer, Senior Advisor Ms. Neelam Patel, Central Agricultural University Vice Chancellor of Jhansi, Dr. A.K. Singh and Mr. Drik Steffis, along with several scientists, policymakers and other stakeholders were present. Various technical sessions were addressed by experts at the conference.

PIB,DEC6,2022

PM pays homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on Mahaparinirvan Diwas

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on Mahaparinirvan Diwas and recalled his exemplary service to our nation.





In a tweet, the Prime Minister said;

"On Mahaparinirvan Diwas, I pay homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and recall his exemplary service to our nation. His struggles gave hope to millions and his efforts to give India such an extensive Constitution can never be forgotten."

PIB,DEC7,2022

Text of the maiden speech by the Vice President & Rajya Sabha Chairman, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar at the 258th session of Rajya Sabha today

Hon'ble Members:

1. Deeply moved and touched by the indulgent words of welcome by the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and those who followed.
2. Grateful to the Hon'ble Members of Parliament for affording opportunity to be in service of Bharat as Vice-President of India and Chairman of this august House.
3. Looking forward to contributing to the growth trajectory of the largest vibrant democracy in the world and vindicate its trust and confidence.
4. Availing this historic opportunity to share some concerns with the distinguished Members of this august house.

Hon'ble Members:

5. Terms 'Upper House' or 'House of Elders' though not part of official glossary, amply reflect uniquely significant importance of this institution. Nation justifiably expects the House of Elders to take decisive directional lead in reaffirming and enhancing the core values of the Republic and set up the traditions of parliamentary democracy exemplifying the highest deliberative emulative standards.

6. Today, as we are in अमृतकाल, we cherish one of the world's finest constitutions as our own. Members of the Constituent Assembly were enormously talented with impeccable credentials and immense experience. The Constituent Assembly, given the scenario then, was as representative as was practicable.

Hon'ble Members:

7. With each election there has been progressively authentic enhancement in the representation gradient. Presently the parliament reflects with authenticity the mandate and aspirations of the people as never before.

Hon'ble Members:

8. Constituent Assembly addressed sensitive, complex and critical issues, exemplifying sublimity engaging in dialogue, discussions, deliberations and debate marked with cooperative and consensual attitude. Diverse issues were traversed without there being any disruptions or rancour.

9. Obstruction and Disruption of proceedings as parliamentary practice or option are antithetical to democratic values. Contemporaneous scenario on this count is concerning and makes it imperative for us to follow the high standards set in the Constituent Assembly. We need to be cognizant of severe public discomfort and disillusionment at lack of decorum in the temple of democracy.

Hon'ble Members:

10. Democracy blossoms and flourishes when its three facets - the Legislature, the Judiciary and the Executive scrupulously adhere to their respective domains.

12. The sublimity of Doctrine of Separation of Powers, is realised when Legislature, Judiciary and Executive optimally function in tandem and togetherness, meticulously ensuring scrupulous adherence to respective jurisdictional domain. Any incursion by one, howsoever subtle, in the domain of other, has the potential to upset the governance apple cart.

13. We are indeed faced with this grim reality of frequent incursions. This house is eminently positioned to take affirmative steps to bring about congeniality amongst these wings of the governance. I am sure you all will reflect and engage in way forward stance.

Hon'ble Members:

14. Essence of democracy lies in the prevalence of the ordainment of the people reflected through legitimised platform. In any democracy, Parliamentary sovereignty is inviolable. We all here are under oath to preserve it.

15. Power of Parliament of the day to act in exercise of its constituent power to “amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure” is unqualified and supreme, not amenable to executive attention or judicial intervention except for the purpose of deciding any case involving a substantial question of law as to interpretation of the Constitution envisaged in article 145(3) of the Constitution.

16. Using this Constitutional power to amend, Parliament effected wholesome structural governance changes to further spinally strengthen democracy. This has been by way of incorporation of Part IX, IX A and IX B in the Constitution providing comprehensive mechanism for Panchayati Raj, Municipalities and Co-operative Societies.

17. In similar vein, the Parliament in a much needed historic step passed the 99th Constitutional Amendment Bill paving way for the National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC).

18. There was unprecedented support to the above. On August 13, 2014, the Lok Sabha unanimously voted in its favour with there being no abstention. This House too, passed it unanimously on August 14, 2014 with one abstention. Rarely in Parliamentary democracy, there has been such massive support to a Constitutional legislation.

19. This process fructified into a Constitutional prescription, after 16 State Assemblies out of 29 States ratified the Central Legislation; the President of India in terms of Article 111 accorded his consent on December 31, 2014.

20. This historic parliamentary mandate was undone by the Supreme Court on October 16, 2015 by a majority of 4:1 finding the same as not being in consonance with the judicially evolved doctrine of 'Basic Structure' of the Constitution.

21. There is no parallel to such a development in democratic history where a duly legitimised constitutional prescription has been judicially undone. A glaring instance of severe compromise of parliamentary sovereignty and disregard of the mandate of the people of which this house and the Lok Sabha are custodians.

Hon'ble Members:

We need to bear in mind that in democratic governance Basic of any 'Basic Structure' is the prevalence of primacy of the mandate of the people reflected in the Parliament. Parliament is the exclusive and ultimate determinative of the architecture of the Constitution.

22. It is disconcerting to note that on such momentous issue, so vital to democratic fabric, there has been no focus in the Parliament, now for over seven years.

23. This House, in concert with the Lok Sabha, being custodian of the ordainment of the people, is duty bound to address the issue, and I am sure it will do so.

24. Authorities in constitutional positions in any institution are required to exemplify their conduct by high standards of propriety, dignity and decorum.



Hon'ble Members:

25. Time for all constitutional institutions to reflect and give quietus to public display of adversarially challenging stance/trading or exchange of advisories emanating from these platforms. I urge the Members of the House to proactively catalyse evolution of wholesome cordial ecosystem ending this aberration.

26. It is institutional seamless connect marked with mutual trust and respect that generates eco system best suited for serving the nation. This House needs to catalyze this wholesome environment to promote synergic functioning of Constitutional Institutions, emphasising need to respect Laxman Rekha.

Hon'ble Members:

27. As Vice President, I had the honour to represent the country at the India-ASEAN and East Asia Summits in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on November 12 & 13 2022 and at the FIFA World Cup Inaugural Ceremony in Doha, Qatar on 20 November 2022. I share with you my deep sense of pride and satisfaction of the level of respect India commands amongst world leaders and hope our growth trajectory generates for global peace and prosperity.

Hon'ble Members:

28. I look forward with hope and expectation to pleasant and fruitful association so that we all in togetherness optimally serve the Nation.

29. Once again, I thank you most earnestly for your most generous felicitations.

30. As a foot soldier of the Constitution, आप सबको प्रणाम करके कार्य का श्री गणेश करता हूँ ।

STATESMAN,DEC10,2022

Goa: PM Modi to inaugurate Mopa International Airport on December 11

The development comes in the wake of the Centre's constant endeavour of providing world-class infrastructure and transport facilities across the country. The foundation stone of the airport was laid by the Prime Minister in November 2016. With an aim to boost connectivity in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Mopa International Airport in Goa on Sunday, the PMO said on Saturday. The development comes in the wake of the Centre's constant endeavour of providing world-class infrastructure and transport facilities across the country. The foundation stone of the airport was laid by the Prime Minister in November 2016.

Developed at a cost of around Rs 2,870 crore, the airport has been built on the theme of sustainable infrastructure and has solar power plant, green buildings, LED lights on the runway, besides rainwater harvesting, state of the art sewage treatment plant with recycling facilities, among other such facilities. "It has adopted some of the best-in-class technologies like 3-D Monolithic Precast buildings, StabilRoad, Robomatic Hollow precast walls, 5G compatible IT infrastructure. Some of the features of the airport include runway capable of handling world's largest aircrafts, 14 parking bays along with night parking facility for aircrafts, self-baggage drop facilities, state of the art and independent air navigation infrastructure, among others," read an official statement by the Prime Minister's Office.

Initially, phase I of the Airport will cater to around 4.4 million passengers per annum (MPPA), which can be expanded to a saturation capacity of 33 MPPA. The airport is expected to boost the socio-economic development of the state and serve the needs of the tourism industry. It has the potential of serving as a key logistics hub, directly connecting many domestic and international destinations. It is also planned for the airport to have multi-modal connectivity. "While being a world-class airport, the airport will also provide visitors a feel and experience of Goa. The airport has extensively used Azulejos tiles, which are native to Goa. The food court also recreates the charm of a typical Goan cafe. It will also have a designated area

for a curated flea market where local artisans and craftsmen will be encouraged to display and market their wares,” the statement said.

PIB,DEC11,2022

PM inaugurates greenfield International Airport in Mopa, Goa

“This advanced airport terminal is an attempt to return the affection and blessings of people of Goa”

“Through Manohar International Airport, Parikkar Ji will remain in the memories of all the commuters”

“Earlier, places that were in dire need of infrastructural development remained neglected”

“In last 8 years, 72 new airports came compared to 70 airports in earlier 70 years”

“India has become the world’s third-largest aviation market”

“India of the 21st Century is New India which is making a mark on the global platform, and as a result, the perspective of the world is changing rapidly”

“Efforts have been made to improve ease of travel and enhance tourism profile of the country”

“Today, Goa has become the perfect example of a 100% saturation model”

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Mopa International Airport, Goa. The foundation stone of the airport was laid by the Prime Minister in November 2016. Developed at a cost of around Rs 2,870 crores, the airport has been built on the theme of sustainable infrastructure and comprises a solar power plant, green buildings, LED lights on the runway, rainwater harvesting, state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant with recycling facilities, among other such facilities. Initially, phase I of the Airport will cater to around 4.4 million passengers per annum (MPPA), which can be expanded to a saturation capacity of 33 MPPA.



Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister congratulated all the citizens of Goa and the country for the inauguration of the greenfield airport in Mopa. Recalling his visits to Goa in the last eight years, the Prime Minister asserted that the love and affection shown by the people of Goa towards him will be repaid with interest in the form of development. “This advanced airport terminal is an attempt to return the favour” he added. He expressed happiness that the Airport is named after the late Manohar Parrikar.

Remarking on the approach towards infrastructural development by the governments in the past, the Prime Minister said that the vote bank had been the first priority instead of the needs and requirements of the citizens. The Prime Minister underlined that thousands of crores were spent on projects that were not even required. As a result, the places that were in dire need of infrastructural development remained neglected. “Goa International Airport is a clear example of this”, he added. Recalling Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s government that had initially planned this airport, the Prime Minister lamented the lack of effort after his government was out of power and the project remained abandoned for many years. In 2014, the Prime Minister said that once the Double Engine Government came to the scene, work on the airport gained new momentum and he laid the foundation stone 6 years ago despite legal hurdles and the pandemic, this airport is ready to function today. The airport has the facility to handle about 40 lakh passengers per year which can be scaled up to 3.5 crores in future. Apart from tourism benefits, the presence of two airports has created new opportunities for Goa as a cargo hub.

The Prime Minister pointed out that Manohar International Airport is proof of the changed working style and approach to governance. He said before 2014, air travel was an elite affair for well-to-do people. This neglect of the common citizen’s desire for air travel led to low investment in airports and other infrastructure related to air travel and India lagged behind in air travel despite huge potential. The Prime Minister said that in the first 70 years of independence, the number of airports in the country was just 70 and air travel was restricted to big cities. The Government worked on 2 levels, the Prime Minister continued, First, the Airport network was expanded throughout the country. Second, common citizens got the opportunity for air travel via the UDAN scheme. In the last 8 years, 72 airports have been constructed compared to 70 in the 70 years before that. This means that the number of airports has doubled in the country. Furthermore, the number of air passengers rose to more than 14 crores in 2020 (just before the pandemic) compared to just 6 crore passengers in the year 2000. More than 1

crore passengers flew under the UDAN scheme. “Because of these measures, India has become the world’s third-largest aviation market”, he said. Referring to the achievements of the Udaan Yojna, the Prime Minister said that it has the potential to become a case study for the academic world. The Prime Minister also remarked on the changing trend of the middle class checking for air tickets instead of railways even for shorter distances. He remarked that as the network of air connectivity expands in the country, travel by air is fast becoming the go-to means of transportation.

The Prime Minister said, “It is true that tourism helps in boosting the soft power of a nation, while as a nation becomes stronger, the world wants to know more about that nation and is attracted towards it.” The Prime Minister further added that if one glances at India’s prosperous history, it was the centre of attraction for the entire world where scholars, travellers, businessmen, industrialists and students would come to India to know more about the land. The Prime Minister also lamented the dark time of slavery faced by India which transformed the image and perspective toward the country even though the culture and traditions remained the same. “India of the 21st Century is New India which is making a mark on the global platform, and as a result, the perspective of the world is changing rapidly”, the Prime Minister remarked. He underlined that the world of today wants to know India and understand its ways. He further added that a lot of foreigners are narrating India’s story on digital platforms.

The Prime Minister listed the steps taken to ensure ease of travel and improve the country’s tourism profile in the last 8 years. He talked about easing the visa process, improved visa-on-arrival facilities, modern infrastructure and last-mile connectivity, and accompanying digital, mobile and railway connectivity. These measures have borne results. In 2015 the number of domestic tourists in India was 14 crore. Last year this number increased to about 70 crores, he said. The Prime Minister reiterated that tourism has the biggest potential for employment and self-employment and elaborated upon the steps to improve the tourism infrastructure in Goa. “More than 10 thousand crores have been invested in highway projects in the state since 2014. The traffic problem in Goa is also being addressed. Electrification of the Konkan Railway is also benefiting the state”, he said.

The Prime Minister said, apart from increasing connectivity, the government's focus is also on promoting heritage tourism by improving the upkeep of the monuments, connectivity and related facilities. Shri Modi mentioned the development of the Agoda Jail Complex museum as an example of this effort. He added that modern technology is being used to make the monuments more attractive and the journey to the places of pilgrimage and the monuments is being facilitated via special trains, he said.

The Prime Minister also praised the efforts of the Goa Government for laying equal importance on social infrastructure as much as physical infrastructure. The Prime Minister praised the success of Swyampurna Goa Abhiyan which was the key to promoting ease of living and making sure that no citizen remains deprived of the government schemes. "Today, Goa has become the perfect example of a 100% saturation model", the Prime Minister concluded as he encouraged everyone to carry forward the development work that is taking place in the state. Chief Minister of Goa, Dr Pramod Sawant, Governor of Goa, Shri P S Sreedharan Pillai, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Jyotraditya Scindia, and Union Minister of Port, Shipping and Waterways, Shri Shripad Yesso Naik were those present on occasion.

## Background

It has been the constant endeavour of the Prime Minister to provide world-class infrastructure and transport facilities across the country. In yet another step towards this, Prime Minister inaugurated the Mopa International Airport, Goa. The foundation stone of the airport was laid by the Prime Minister in November 2016. Developed at a cost of around Rs 2,870 crores, the airport has been built on the theme of sustainable infrastructure and comprises a solar power plant, green buildings, LED lights on the runway, rainwater harvesting, state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant with recycling facilities, among other such facilities. It has adopted some of the best-in-class technologies like 3-D Monolithic Precast buildings, StabilRoad, Robomatic Hollow precast walls, and 5G compatible IT infrastructure. Some of the features of the airport include a runway capable of handling the world's largest aircrafts, 14 parking bays along with a night parking facility for aircrafts, self-baggage drop facilities, state of the art and independent air navigation infrastructure, among others.

Initially, phase I of the Airport will cater to around 4.4 million passengers per annum (MPPA), which can be expanded to a saturation capacity of 33 MPPA. The airport will boost the socioeconomic development of the State and serve the needs of the tourism industry. It has the potential of serving as a key logistics hub, directly connecting many domestic and international destinations. It is also planned for the airport to have multi-modal connectivity. While being a world-class airport, the airport will also provide visitors with a feel and experience of Goa. The airport has extensively used Azulejos tiles, which are native to Goa. The food court also recreates the charm of a typical Goan café. It will also have a designated area for a curated flea market where local artisans and craftsmen will be encouraged to display and market their wares.