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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PIB SEP 5, 2022

The Minister was addressing the women officers and staff of DoPT, DARPG and Department of Pensions on the occasion of Teacher's Day, dedicated to Matrashakti Building of household toilets, Ujjawala, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Mahila E-haat, STEP & Working Women Hostels were aimed at women empowerment: 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 said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance reforms in the last 8 years have enabled "ease of working" for women and are actually, in a broader sense, huge social reforms aimed at providing women employees an opportunity to perform to the best of their potential with a high level of dignity and self-esteem. Addressing the women officers and staff of DoPT, DARPG and Department of Pensions on the occasion of Teacher's Day, dedicated to Matrashakti, Dr Jitendra Singh said, his Ministry has taken concerted efforts to increase the representation of women in Central Government jobs and to provide them a balance between professional as well as family life. Referring to Prime Minister's 76 th Independence Day speech, wherein Modi said, "I can see the manifold contribution of 'Nari Shakti', my mothers, sisters and daughters, in the next 25 years compared to the contribution in the last 75 years of India's journey", Dr Jitendra Singh said, right from his 1 st Red Fort address in 2014, Modi has announced several schemes for empowerment of women, be it building of household toilets, Ujjawala, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Mahila E-haat or Working Women Hostels. He said, even STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme) for Women Scheme aims to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed/ entrepreneurs. Dr Jitendra Singh said that only three days back, DoPT has taken a historic decision to grant a 60-day special maternity leave for women Central government employees in case of stillbirth or death of an infant within a few days of birth. He pointed out that various instructions have been issued by DoPT from time to time highlighting the special provisions in the rules/regulations for the benefit of women employees for increasing representation of women in Central Government jobs and ease the difficulties being faced by them. Referring to some of the major reforms / initiatives taken towards women welfare, Dr Jitendra Singh said, steps like continuation of grant of 730 days CCL, facility of Leave Travel Concession (LTC), while an employee is on CCL, removal of the limit of 22 years in case of disabled child for the purpose of a Government servant availing Child Care Leave and Special Allowance @ Rs.3000/- p.m. to Women employees with Disability has been granted for child care have resulted in better output, besides bringing ease of living for women employees. Dwelling on Pension Reforms, Dr Jitendra Singh said, a number of revolutionary reforms including relaxation in the provision of Family Pension for divorced daughters and Divyangs, introduction of Face Recognition Technology through mobile app for ease in submitting Life Certificate by elderly pensioners, Electronic Pension Pay Order, assistance from Postal Department to facilitate pension process etc and steps like extension of Family Pension to differently abled child of a deceased

Government employee/Pensioner or giving a major hike in the Family Pension emoluments for Divyang children of a deceased government servant/pensioner are not only pension reforms but these are social reforms having wide socio- economic implications.

The Minister said, in May this year, DoPT relaxed family pension rules for missing central government employees and the new rule has done away with seven-year mandatory wait and, in all cases, where a government servant covered by NPS goes missing during service, the benefits of family pension will be immediately paid to the family of the missing Government servant. Speaking on the issue of Capacity Building and Empowerment of Women, Dr Jitendra Singh informed that Institute of Secretariat Training & Management (ISTM) extensively covers topics relating to the women, their empowerment, protection from domestic violence and prevention from sexual offences, in all its major cadre training programmes. It organizes women issue specific training courses also, ranging from two-day to five-day long durations at ISTM and outside. The Minister added that during the last five years, about 800 officers of different grades and positions have been covered in as many as twenty-five (25) courses, which have been organized at ISTM on the topics of, Gender Sensitization, Gender Budgeting, Protection, Prevention and Redress of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence.

Dr Jitendra Singh concluded by saying that in the last few years India has graduated from women participation to women led leadership and today they are an equal stakeholder in the nation building. He said, in the next 25 years of Amrit Kaal, women folk will contribute their might in making India a frontline state in 2047 in an enabling milieu and they will confidently assert their rightful place, when India celebrates 100 th year of Independence.

STATESMAN, SEP 7, 2022

Sahakar Se Samriddhi: Cooperative Policy being formulated to realise the vision Towards this end, a committee, under the chairmanship of former Union cabinet minister Suresh Prabhu, has constituted.

Anjali Bhatia

The new National Cooperative Policy is being formulated to realise the vision of ‘Sahakar Se Samriddhi ’ under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Towards this end, a committee, under the chairmanship of former Union cabinet minister Suresh Prabhu, has constituted. The committee comprises experts from the cooperative sector, representatives of national/state/district & primary cooperative societies, secretaries (Cooperation) & Registrars of Cooperative Societies of States / UTs, and officers from central ministries and departments. The existing National Policy on Cooperatives, was formulated in 2002 with the objectives of facilitating all round development of cooperatives and providing necessary support, encouragement and assistance to them, so as to ensure that cooperatives work as autonomous, self-reliant and democratically managed institutions accountable to their members and make a significant contribution to the national economy.

“Today, India has around 8.5 lakh co-operative societies with a member base of around 29 crore, spread across the length and breadth of the country. These cooperatives are engaged in varied activities like agro-processing, dairying, fisheries, housing, weaving, credit, marketing, to name a few,” the Ministry of Cooperation said in a release. The new policy document is being formulated to strengthen the cooperative movement in the country and deepen its reach,

promote cooperative-based economic development model, create an appropriate policy, legal and institutional framework to help cooperatives realise their potential.

PIB, SEP6, 2022

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, PM Modi's government is reaching out to the remotest of the remote and seeking to make up for the negligence of over six decades meted out to far flung regions by the past governments. Modi government is reaching out to the remotest of the remote and seeking to make up for the negligence of over six decades meted out to far flung regions by the past governments. This was stated today by the 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 while addressing an enthusiastic public rally in the peripheral hilly location of Dudu in the higher reaches of the Udhampur district in Jammu and Kashmir. People in large numbers from neighbouring villages had gathered to hear him. Earlier, the Minister inaugurated a mega Multi Specialty Medical Camp organised by the Indian Army through Command Hospital Udhampur. Specialist doctors from different streams including Medicines, Paediatrics, ENT, Ophthalmology, Gynaecology, Dermatology, etc. attended to the patients who turned up in large numbers from all the surrounding villages. Dr Jitendra Singh thanked Indian Army and the medical team led by Major General Dr. Dash for providing health care facilities to the people who were actually in need but sometimes found it difficult to access it.

Addressing the public rally, Dr Jitendra Singh said Dudu and other such hilly regions were endowed with amazing mountainous beauty and mountainous resources. Nature, he said, had bestowed in abundance but they faced injustice in the hands of their own elected previous governments, which did not find them of much consequence because of the vote bank consideration. Referring to district Udhampur, he said the development of the last eight years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi far surpasses the development of the past several decades. For the last three years, he pointed out, Udhampur has been figuring as the top district of the country in implementation of centrally funded PMGSY road projects. Similarly, several important new national highways are under construction in the region which include Sudhmahadev - Marmat- Goha-Khelani National Highway and Lakhanpur-Bani-Bhaderwah-Doda Highway. He informed that the critical Chattergala Tunnel enroute the second highway got delayed because of the heavy budget of over Rs.4,000 crore, but will now be taken under Bharatmala scheme. Referring to nearby Mantlai, Dr Jitendra Singh said, a state of the art wellness centre with even a helipad for the outside visitors will be ready very soon, through central funding. He said that the previous government did not care for the project and it was in shambles. It is only now, after PM Modi took over that the issue was brought to the notice of the Central Govt and the project was undertaken, he said.

Udhampur, said Dr Jitendra Singh, is perhaps the only Lok Sabha constituency in the country which received three centrally funded Medical Colleges in recent years. In addition, there was a chain of important projects and Kedriaya Vidyalaya set up in and around this hilly region. A large number of local body reps including BDC, DDCs Sarpanches and Panches met Dr Jitendra Singh after the rally. The Minister assured them that he and his office is always in touch with them and they were free to approach him whenever required. He also issued on the spot instructions to the civil administration to resolve some of the issues related to forest clearance etc. which were delaying central road projects etc.

Targeting to developing 300 Gati Shakti Terminals in next five years: Ashwini Vaishnaw

The target of developing 300 Gati Shakti terminals within the next five years is doable and will boost the cargo movement on the Indian Railway network, bringing down overall logistics cost of the country said Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. According to officials in the know, the new railway land policy will result in incremental annual revenue of Rs 30,000 crore after five years to the national transporter.

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday had approved a policy on long term leasing of Railways Land. The revised policy provided for long term leasing of railway land for cargo related activities for up-to 35 years at 1.5% of market value of land per annum. It was also decided that there will be a 6% increment in the Land Leasing Fee (LLF) value payable to the Indian Railways. Under the earlier policy, railway land could be leased by private players just for five years. The annual LLF was fixed at 6% of the market value of land with a yearly increment of 7% in the payable amount.

An official statement said that the revised land policy has been formulated while keeping in mind the PM Gati Shakti programme and the target to develop 300 Cargo Terminals over the next five years. Speaking to journalists a day after the Cabinet decision, Vaishnaw said, “We have already got firm application from over 90 players to develop Gati Shakti cargo terminals, another 60 have expressed interest to develop these terminals on railway land.” According to Vaishnaw, the five year limit and renewal requirement in earlier railway land policy was a hindrance for higher investments. Rail Ministry officials are estimating an incremental revenue of around Rs 100 crore per new terminal. “This estimate pegs the railway revenue growth at Rs 30,000 crore annually after the new Gati Shakti Cargo terminals are operationalized,” a senior Rail Ministry official said.

Commenting on whether this development has been undertaken with the proposed Container Corporation of India (CONCOR) privatisation in mind, Vaishnaw said that this policy covers all railway land, including those held by other public sector enterprises. “Existing terminal holders such as CONCOR, Food Corporation of India (FCI), Coal India, and SAIL, are public sector undertaking units. There is a 30 year lease policy already in place for them and we have consciously made a decision that we are not changing any terms and conditions of existing cargo terminals,” Vaishnaw said. “For the existing players, their terms and conditions, lease rates, escalations, and terms and conditions will remain the same,” he added.

Vaishnaw also noted that these existing players have the option to switch to the new lease policy, but they will have to go through a bidding route for the same. “No leasing is infinite, suppose the lease period of a cargo terminal expires after seven years, then they have the option of coming to a new policy. They will have to come through a bidding process,” he said. “If someone has invested and developed a terminal at a land parcel, then they will get the right of first refusal, but still they will have to come through a transparent bidding process. Some body can outbid them and take that terminal,” he added.

Vaishnaw said that the bid parameter will be on the share of Terminal Access Charge (TAC) and Terminal Charge (TC) that the operator would like to share with the Indian Railways. This is similar to the current process for bidding out terminals but it did not cover public sector undertakings, which were given a special dispensation.

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP11,2022

President Murmu appoints Gulam Ali from Jammu & Kashmir to Rajya Sabha

President Draupadi Murmu has appointed Gulam Ali to the Rajya Sabha on Saturday. Ali hails from Jammu and Kashmir.;In exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-Clause (a), of clause (1) of article 80 of the Constitution of India, read with clause (3) of that article, the President is pleased to nominate Shri Gulam Ali to the Council of the state to fill the vacancy caused due to the retirement of one of the nominated members," read a Union Home Ministry notification on Saturday. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party lauded the appointment saying that now the Jammu and Kashmir community is being recognised after the abrogation of Article 370. The President on the recommendation of GoI has appointed Shri Gulam Ali, a Gurjar Muslim, from J-K, to the Rajya Sabha. This is a significant step assuming that prior to abrogation of Article 370, the community was literally not recognised and all social benefits to them were denied, BJP IT Cell head Amit Malaviya said in a tweet.

ECONOMIC TIMES,SEP11,2022

UP to prepare proposal asking centre to redefine; 17 OBC sub-castes as SCs With the Allahabad High Court quashing two previous government orders which had called for inclusion of 17 OBC sub castes into the SC list, the UP government has now decided to get started on taking the appropriate route for "redefining" them as SCs and will be preparing a proposal for the centre to effect the change under article 341 of the constitution. Article 341 empowers the parliament alone to make inclusions or exclusions to a state&39;s SC list.

The move also comes to honour a promise made by the BJP to its ally Nishad party whose case is that many castes synonymous with the 17 subcastes/surnames in question are already part of the SC list- for example Majhwar (boatmen) are SCs but Mallahs, Nishad, Kewats, Manjhi, Machhua- different surnames of the same Majhwar community are instead part of the OBC list. Similarly, while 'Shilpkar'(artisan) is part of the SC list- synonymous castes like Prajapati and Kumhar (potter community) are OBCs. Therefore, the need is to quot;redefine these castes as SCs.

Nishad met CM Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday urging him to make haste on the move. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Nishad said the state government never had the power to make this change but previous governments of SP in 2005 and 2016 tried to; the community by passing government orders related to it (BJP government too passed a similar order in 2019 which was also quashed by the HC). Nishad said now that the matter is no longer pending in the court, both centre and state governments can successfully make the change.

After his meeting with Nishad, CM Yogi directed minister for social welfare Asim Arun to prepare astrong proposal to be sent to the centre.We are working on a proposal to be sent to the centre under article 341 as soon as possible Arun confirmed to ET.

The Allahabad HC last week quashed two GOs- one issued under the SP government in 2016 and one under the BJP government in 2019, saying only the centre had the right to change the status of OBCs to SCs. The whole change is integral to UP politics with about 45% of the population being OBCs. It is also crucial for BJP effort to maintain its alliance with the Nishad party with 2024 general elections getting closer. The party won six seats in the assembly elections.

Last year, in a joint rally of BJP and Nishad party, union home minister Amit Shah had promised the community that its demand to be recognised as a SC will be fulfilled. Soon after, a letter was also sent by the state to the Registrar General and Census commissioner in Delhi seeking guidance on the issue.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ASIAN AGE, SEP5, 2022

Growth: India must aim higher As India's strategic rival China's economy stands at \$19 trillion, India should aim at crossing the \$10 trillion mark India has finally overtaken its erstwhile colonial master, the United Kingdom, in terms of the size of the economy — the first time after nearly 150 years. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India is now the fifth largest economy, relegating the UK to the sixth spot in the global economic pecking order.

The Indian economy is now worth \$3.5 trillion compared to Britain's \$3.2 trillion. It is now just behind the United States, China, Japan and Germany. The announcement, coming in the 75th year anniversary of Indian Independence, will offer an occasion to rejoice. This proud moment, however, has come five years late as the country had almost poised to beat Britain in 2016. In October 2016, India's GDP was \$2.29 trillion compared to \$2.34 trillion of the Brexit-mauled UK economy — a difference of just \$50 billion — which was expected to be erased by 2017. But the demonetisation programme announced in November 2016 slowed India's victory lap. Having finally beaten the former colonial master, India must not become complacent about the economy as the fruits of economic growth will manifest only when the average income — as measured on per capita basis — of a citizen grows. India's per capita income is \$2,500 compared to Britain's \$47,000. While the tag of the fifth largest economy is incredible, the country and its governments should not lose sight of the fact that a large number of people are still dependent on agriculture and manufacturing does not contribute anywhere close to what it does in the United States, China, Japan or Germany. As India's strategic rival China's economy stands at \$19 trillion, India should aim at crossing the \$10 trillion mark, if we wish to have any heft in the global community. Let's hope this government takes steps to facilitate that.

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP7, 2022

Global financial biggies see India an island of hope amid a sea of despair

Gourab Das

Foreign banks and rating agencies are increasingly growing bullish on India's growth potential and as a key investment destination, while the global economy keeps brooding over deep pains brought about by the biggest economies be it in the form of frontloading of Federal Reserve rate hikes or China's worsening construction bubble.

Moody's yesterday affirmed a stable outlook on India, saying its credit profile reflects key strengths, including its large and diversified economy with high growth potential, a relatively strong external position, and a stable domestic financing base for government debt. In fact, McKinsey & Co's chief executive said it's not India's decade, but it's India's century. A large working population, multinational companies reimagining global supply chains, and a country leapfrogging at digital scale to achieve something special not just for the Indian economy but potentially for the world are the key elements in place to drive Asia's third largest economy. "India is the future talent factory for the world. By 2047, India would have 20% of the world's working population. And with supply chains being reimagined, it has massive potential for India across all aspects of manufacturing. The third is digitisation. India has leapfrogged on the digital scale. All those are the raw materials to do something special for not only the Indian economy but potentially for the world," McKinsey's Bob Sternfels told ET.

India's finance minister today highlighted that emerging economies like that of India are showing full potential to lead the global economy for the next 50-60 years. "They (emerging economies) are the ones which are robust and are coming out in a very comprehensive way out of the economy. They are the ones who have solutions for many of the issues, whether it is based on food security or commodity prices. These are the markets which will give you both the supply and the demand side answers in the next 25-40 years," she added.

India's Rebound Story

India's rebound story is also getting too common for the markets, economy and its financial instruments. On August 29, Sensex jumped a whopping 1,564 points to record its second best single-day gain of the year, while the local currency too logged its biggest one-day gain in a year against a wobbly dollar. The Nifty 50 rose 2.9% between Aug 29 and yesterday, outperforming the US and Chinese markets. In contrast, the Dow fell 2% and Hang Seng dropped 3.3% over the same period.

Foreign Investors Return To India

Moreover, foreign investors, who had earlier shunned India as an investment destination, are returning to Asia's third largest economy and have pumped in about \$7.6 billion in one month. August marked the first month this year when overseas investors turned net buyers of India's government debt. In August, FIIs bought equities worth Rs 51,000 crore, a sharp rebound from Rs 5,000 crore of net investment by FPIs in July, when they turned net buyers for the first time after nine months. Between October last year and June 2022, the overseas investors had sold a massive Rs. 2.46 lakh crore of Indian equities. When the FII selling was at its peak and many global markets were caught in a bear grip, the downside in Nifty was relatively less because of heavy participation from domestic investors. With FII support, Nifty is now 950 points away from racing past all-time highs. India is now reaping the benefits of stronger corporate earnings, despite higher crude oil prices and fears of global recession. "For India, the FPI movement has been similar to that of other major EMs like China, Korea, Taiwan, etc. A stabilized inflation scenario compared to other countries and sustainable growth in earnings from Indian companies have also helped in a big way," Jisang Yoo, CEO, Mirae Asset Capital Markets, had told ETMarkets. The central bank too has helped attract the flows as they took a slew of measures in recent months.

Growing Confidence of New Delhi, Mint Street

Another revival story is also entrenched in the government's and the central bank's conviction in the inflation trajectory and the economic growth. Sitharaman had categorically refused to associate terms like- stagflation and recession with the current state of the Indian economy. "India's general debt is also in a good position compared to many other countries," she said.

Noel Quinn, Group Chief Executive at HSBC, the world's local bank, told ET that inflationary pressures in India are not as great as that prevalent elsewhere in the world. "I think India in particular, has a very strong, bright future ahead of it. It's quite a stable economy, with manageable inflation, very strong growth prospects, and a stable political environment within India. And I think that fosters a very strong growth environment," he said.

Quinn said the Indian economy is progressively getting unlocked because of digitisation and simpler tax structure and is poised to reap the benefits of "re-globalisation" that is underway as companies alter supply lines to face the new geopolitical realities. Mint street on its part has in recent weeks repeatedly said that India's inflation has peaked. Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das had referred to the country's economy as an island of stability despite two Black Swan events and multiple shocks. Black Swan events refer to unpredictable incidents that lead to negative consequences.

While Das did not list the Black Swan events, the global economy in recent times was ravaged by the coronavirus-induced crisis, which did not spare India as well and Asia's third largest economy suffered one of its worst contractions in fiscal 2021. Soon after, Russia's invasion of Ukraine destabilised the global food and oil supply chain, triggering multi-year high inflation readings. India's retail inflation print surged to about eight-year high in April. But as mentioned, the revival story is intact, and it is coming at a time when investors across the globe are jittery.

India To Benefit From China's Miseries

China had by a whisker avoided posting a contraction in the second quarter as pandemic-led lockdowns and the plunging construction sector wrecked consumer and business confidence. The property sector crisis inflicted serious wounds to China's largest lenders, as real estate bad debt surged in the first six months of the year.

Home sales in China have fallen for 11 straight months, the longest such streak since the world's second biggest economy created a private property market in the late 1990s. "The future outlook of the construction sector in China over the long run structural factors such as demographic ageing and rebalancing of the economy will eventually remove a substantial portion of demand," State Bank of India said in a research report. However, while the China story may now be facing clear headwinds, India is likely to benefit from such stark realities over the longer term, it added. "India is likely to be the beneficiary as China slows down in terms of new investment intentions."

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP8, 2022

The wheat of the matter: Disruption of supply chains due to Ukraine war has implications for India's food security

Christophe Jafferlot and Hemal Thakker write: There is a need to set restrictions on the reserves that the private sector can hold. This will help prevent the opaqueness of private sector reserves, which often fuels speculation by large international financial actors. Internationally, positional limits could be set on speculators

Christophe Jafferlot , Hemal Thakker

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Food Price Index has increased by 30 per cent in the year 2021-22. The last time it had increased in similar proportion was in 2010-11. This phenomenon was one of the factors that led to the Arab Spring. Currently, at a time when the [Covid-19](#) pandemic had already disrupted the food supply chains around the world in 2020, tensions are exacerbated by Vladimir Putin's war on [Ukraine](#): Russia and Ukraine represent 27 per cent of the world market for wheat, 16 per cent for corn, 23 per cent for barley, and 53 per cent for sunflower.

In peacetime, the Black Sea ports, now blocked, account for about 95 per cent of grain exports from Ukraine. Railways could have taken over, and Ukraine certainly has a rather exceptional railroad network. Unfortunately, the gauge of the railway tracks built by the USSR in Ukraine is not the same as in neighbouring countries. As a result, wagons have to be transferred one at a time at the border.

Twenty-six countries, mainly in Africa, West Asia and Asia, depend on Russia and Ukraine for more than 50 per cent of their wheat imports. India wanted to fill in this gap and, in April 2022, the Prime Minister said that “India can feed the world if the WTO allows it”. However, just one month later, New Delhi banned wheat exports to control rising domestic prices amid concerns over production due to the heatwave and uncertainty about existing reserves due to private sector hoarding.

This is not a new phenomenon. In 2009, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), a World Bank initiative, in a report — Agriculture at a Crossroads — observed that speculation with agricultural commodities on the commodity futures exchanges was one of the main reasons for the spike in food prices. The original purpose of futures markets was that farmers could transfer the price risk — a “future” contract would allow them to sell the produce at the current price but for delivery in the future. This safeguarded both sellers and buyers against any excessive price jumps — for example, those caused by the vagaries of the weather or conflicts and war. It was a mechanism to ensure that the basic livelihood and survival of farmers were not jeopardised. However, the arrival of large pension funds, hedge funds and investment banks in these markets has resulted in excessive speculation. The derivative markets set a benchmark for the prices in the real world, and this is where excessive speculation became a problem. The logic of the markets has changed as price evaluation is not dictated by supply-demand or quality of the markets but by major financial actors' bets on higher prices, which leads other actors to also speculate. While large financial actors bet on the futures markets and cause price volatility, when food prices rise, they endanger the food security of millions of people around the world.

An investigation by Lighthouse Reports, a non-profit media outfit, concludes from this phenomenon that no lessons had been learnt from the food crisis of 2008. It reports that the influx of speculators can be observed in the Paris milling wheat market, the benchmark for Europe: Speculators' share of buy-side wheat futures contracts has increased from 23 per cent of open interest in May 2018 to 72 per cent in April 2022. Therefore, by April 2022, "Seven in 10 buyers of futures wheat contract were speculators in the form of investment firms, investment funds, other financial institutions and commercial non-hedgers whose aim was to profit from the rise in prices."

In India, even though the year-long farmers' protests have forced the Modi government to repeal the infamous farm laws, the growing role of the private sector in agriculture has increased the risk of speculation. For 2022-23, the government has already lowered wheat purchase estimates to 19.5 million tonnes — down by 50 per cent compared to the previous year and the lowest in 13 years. Union Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said this sharp decline was due to huge buying by private players. India faced a similar situation during the 2008 global food crisis but managed to weather the storm due to the APMC food stock reserves.

Today, food [inflation](#) is a major cause for concern for food security in India. Declining incomes because of the pandemic have already raised hunger levels in India — India ranks 101 among 116 countries in the 2021 [Global Hunger Index](#). According to the Hunger Watch Report conducted in February, 45 per cent of respondents reported running out of food in the preceding month. The situation could be even more precarious now because of the spike in prices.

So, what should be done? The Indian government could ensure more transparency on food stocks and regulate the private sector. For that, there is a need to set restrictions on the reserves that the private sector can hold, as they often tend to hoard food stocks to later sell at a profit. This will help prevent the opaqueness of private sector reserves, which often fuels speculation by large international financial actors. Internationally, positional limits could be set on speculators but that would require a multilateral accord, a topic which should be on the agenda at the next G-20 meeting.

INDIAN EXPRESS,SEP8,2022

Three developments that have brightened the outlook for capital expenditure by state governments

Aditi Nayar writes: Higher devolution, interest-free loans and easing of restrictions will ease stress on state finances

Aditi Nayar

Three recent developments have brightened the outlook for capital expenditure by state governments. First, the Union government has stepped up tax devolution during July-August. Second, the interest-free capex loan scheme for states has seen a sharp pickup in off-take in July. Third, the norms for the adjustment of off-budget borrowings for the current fiscal have been eased. We believe all of these will reduce the stress on state finances and support higher capex in the coming months.

First, the Centre has stepped up the amount of tax devolution to states, releasing a double tranche in August. We believe this was warranted given the expected overshooting of its tax revenues relative to the budget estimates for 2022-23. We estimate that Rs 3.2 lakh crore has been devolved in the first five months of this year. This implies a growth of 49 per cent over the corresponding period last year. This should encourage the states to step up their capital spending in the post-GST compensation months. Based on our projection, tax devolution will need to be as high as Rs 9.3 lakh crore this year, overshooting the budget estimates by more than Rs 1 lakh crore. Therefore, the amount left to be disbursed to the states in the remainder of the year is quite substantial. Additional double tranches may be prudent every quarter after the advance tax inflows are received to ensure that there isn't too much back-ending of the devolution in the fourth quarter as was the case last year.

The Centre could also consider sharing with states the likely amount of devolution prior to the start of each quarter. This revenue visibility would enable states to plan their capital spending, given the lead time required to plan and execute capital projects. It may also result in more accurate assessments of their quarterly market borrowings, which have been woefully off-the-mark in recent quarters.

Second, this year, the Centre massively stepped up interest-free loans to states, which are earmarked for capital spending. The scheme for special assistance to states for capital investment was launched in October 2020 as part of the measures to support economic activity which had been negatively impacted by the [Covid-19](#) pandemic. In the Union budget 2022-23, the Centre had stepped up the allocation towards this scheme to Rs 1 lakh crore for the current fiscal from under Rs 15,000 crore in the previous two years. This amount will be given to the states as a loan, over and above the normal borrowing ceiling fixed. But, not all states had included the estimated inflows from the capex scheme in their respective budgets, although this does not prevent them from participating in the scheme. The guidelines for the usage of the funds under the Capex scheme permit the states to settle their pending bills for ongoing capital projects in addition to using them for new and ongoing capital projects that are duly approved by the Centre. The scheme is divided into seven parts. The bulk of the total or Rs 80,000 crore has been earmarked under part I of the scheme which does not have a sectoral end-use specified for the capital spending. Under this, 50 per cent of the approved amount will be released upfront after the list of projects is approved. The balance will be released after a utilisation certificate of at least 75 per cent of the first instalment is provided.

After a tepid start, capital expenditure amounting to Rs 31,500 crore was approved for 10 states in July 2022. Execution of capital projects typically witnesses a slowdown during the monsoon months. Accordingly, the second instalments are likely to be released in the second half of the year. Given the rising interest rates scenario, it makes economic sense for the states to avail the interest-free borrowing for fresh capital spending and/or clearing pending bills. However, the jury is still out on whether the capex loan will supplement the budgeted capex amount or simply fund the same. The answer may differ across state governments.

Lastly, the latest guidelines by the Centre indicate that states' off-budget debt only for 2021-22 would be adjusted over a four-year period beginning 2022-23 and ending in 2025-26. This could provide relief to those states that had undertaken large off-budget borrowings in the previous two years, thereby creating the fiscal space for states to ramp up capital spending.

ECONOMIC TIMES,SEP11,2022

India rice exports may fall by 4-5 million tonnes post ban on broken rice, 20 pc duty

India rice exports could fall by 4-5 million tonnes this fiscal year due to imposition of ban on broken rice as well as export duty on non-basmati rice, except for parboiled grains, exporters said. India, which commands 40 per cent share in the global rice trade, exported 21.23 million tonnes of rice in 2021-22 fiscal as against 17.78 million tonnes in the previous year. Before the COVID pandemic, the exports were 9.51 million tonnes in the 2019-20 fiscal. During April-August period of the current financial year, the government data showed that the country has already exported 9.35 million tonnes as against 8.36 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

The exports may fall to 16-17 million tonnes in this financial year because of ban on broken rice and 20 per cent export duty. All India Rice Exporters Association (AIREA) former president Vijay Setia said. He said the country was exporting non-basmati rice for USD 380- 400 per tonne, lower than the rate of shipments from other countries. The price realisation is expected to improve at par with our competitors after these decisions, Setia said. On Friday, food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey explained the rationale behind the ban on exports of broken rice. There has been an absolutely abnormal rise in shipments of broken rice and the broken grains were also not available in sufficient quantity for animal feed as well as ethanol blending programme, Pandey had said. During April

to August this fiscal, the export share of broken rice increased to 22.78 per cent as compared to the 1.34 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20," the secretary had said. India exported 3.89 million tonnes of broken rice in 2021-22 fiscal and out of that

China imported 1.58 million tonnes of broken rice last fiscal year. Exports of broken rice stood at 2.06 million tonnes in 2020-21, just 2,70,000 tonnes in 2019-20 and 1.22 million tonnes in 2018-19. In April-August period of this fiscal year, the export of broken rice increased to 2.13 million tonnes from 1.58 million tonnes in the year-ago period. Export policy of broken rice ...is amended from prohibited . the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification dated September 8, 2022. The notification comes into effect from Friday, September 9, 2022. As per the DGFT notification, provisions under the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-2020 regarding the transitional arrangement shall not be applicable to this notification. It added that during September 9-15, certain consignments of broken rice will be allowed to be exported. The government has made no policy change in parboiled rice so that farmers continue to get good remunerative prices. There is neither a ban nor customs duty on exports of basmati rice. Shipments of basmati rice fell to 3.94 million tonne in last fiscal from 4.63 million tonne in 2020-21. However, during April-August of this fiscal, the exports of premium basmati rice went up to 1.82 million tonnes as against nearly 1.7 million tonnes in the year-ago period. In non-basmati category, exports of parboiled rice increased to 7.43 million tonnes in FY22 from 6.17 million tonnes in the previous fiscal, while shipments of non-parboiled rice rose to 5.21 million tonnes from 4.23 million tonnes. The uptick in domestic wholesale and retail prices of rice was also one of the reasons cited by the government for imposing restrictions. The wholesale prices have risen by 8 per cent to Rs 3,291 per quintal as on September 7 from Rs 3,041 per quintal a year ago, while the retail prices have gone up by 6.38 per cent to Rs 37.5 per kg from Rs 35.25 per kg. Animal feed prices too have also gone up. Maize price increased from Rs 19 per kg on January 1, 2022 to Rs 24 per kg on September 8, 2022. Broken rice price has also increased from Rs 16 per kg to Rs 22 per kg during the same period. On Thursday, the government imposed a 20 per cent export duty on non-basmati rice except for parboiled rice. According to a notification by the revenue department, an export duty of 20 per cent has been imposed on rice in husk (paddy or rough) and husked (brown) rice. The export duty comes into effect from September 9. The ban on broken rice and export duty of 20 per cent on non-basmati rice, except for pa-boiled, have been imposed amid concern over likely fall in rice output. The area under coverage for the paddy crop has declined by 4.95 per cent to 393.79 lakh hectare in the ongoing kharif season so far due to poor rains in some states, according to the agriculture ministry data released on Friday.

Paddy was sown in 414.31 lakh hectares (LH) in the year-ago period, the data showed. It is the main kharif crop and its sowing begins with the onset of the southwest monsoon in June and harvesting from October onwards. India total rice production during 2021-22 crop year (July-June) is estimated at a record 130.29 million tonnes (111.76 million tonnes in kharif and 18.53 million tonnes in rabi season) as against 124.37 million tonnes in the previous year. The food

ministry has said on Friday that the country's rice production in kharif (summer sown) could fall by 6-7 million tonnes but the country would still have surplus output. The Centre is sitting on a stock of 47 million tonnes of rice, including rice equivalent of unmilled paddy, as of July 1. The buffer stock requirement is to have 13.5 million tonnes of rice as of July 1.

ECONOMIC TIMES,SEP11, 2022

India stays out of Trade Policy Pillar at IPEF; broader consensus yet to emerge among nations

Surabhi Agarwal

India has chosen to stay out of the Trade Policy Pillar - which deals with issues pertaining to labour, environment, digital, and agriculture at the Indo-Pacific Economic Forum (IPEF) – a two-day ministerial meet of 14 countries taking place at Los Angeles, United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai said on Friday. While India has not joined the trade pillar, it is engaging in three other areas - supply chains, clean energy, and fair economy (tax and anti- corruption issues), officials said. India is not now in the trade pillar. However, minister (Piyush) Goyal and I have been talking and we have our bilateral and trade policy forum, Tai told reporters at a briefing. "I should be meeting him by the end of this year. We would cover the same issues in that bilateral channel. Minister Goyal and I will stay in touch, but he is not now in the trade pillar."Commerce and industry minister Goyal held bilateral meetings with Tai and US commerce secretary Gina Raimondo on Thursday on the sidelines of the IPEF ministerial meeting.

India will act in national interest; we also have to become a developed country, so we have to keep our own national interest in mind, a senior Indian government official said, adding that India own policy in these areas is still evolving. India has agreed to the remaining three pillars. We are not yet clear on the binding commitments of the trade policy. So, we will wait and see what are the commitments set out in further deliberations, and we will act accordingly the

official said. India cannot agree on free agriculture trade if it is high standard of export, we are agreeable, the person said. "India has stood up to its own interest and we can be arm-twisted like smaller countries," the official said. IPEF has 14 members - Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the US. The framework is structured around four pillars relating to trade, supply chains, clean economy, and fair economy.

IPEF was launched jointly by the US and partner countries of the Indo-Pacific region on May 23 in Tokyo. It seeks to strengthen economic partnership among participating countries with the objective of enhancing resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness and competitiveness in the region."That question you should pose to minister Goyal Tai told reporters when asked why India opted out of the trade pillar. "I would not characterise it as opting out, India is not in the trade pillar right now she added. Goyal had said on Thursday that during the bilateral with the US, several areas of mutual interest where the two countries share concerns were discussed.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

STATESMAN,SEP8,2022

IIT researchers spot biochemical link between fatty liver disease, diabetes

‘S100A6’ adversely affects the insulin secretion ability of the beta-cells, thereby resulting in or exacerbating existing type 2 diabetes.

Rahul Yadav

A team of researchers from IIT Mandi on Tuesday said it has discovered a biochemical link between fatty liver disease and type 2 diabetes which allows newer techniques to diagnose and offer new therapeutic pathways for fatty liver-induced diabetes.

The prevalence of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) in India is rapidly increasing and recent surveys show that 40 per cent of adults suffer from it, according to the team, adding that NAFLD is often associated with type 2 diabetes, with nearly 50 million adults having both diseases. NAFLD is an independent predictor of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

“However, how NAFLD affects the insulin-releasing pancreatic beta-cell function was not fully understood. We aimed at finding the relationship between beta-cells failure and the accumulation of liver fat produced from carbohydrates in a process called ‘de novo’ lipogenesis,” said Dr Prosenjit Mondal, associate professor, school of biosciences and bioengineering. The findings were published in the Journal Diabetes.

The research team analysed blood samples extracted from fat-fed mice and human NAFLD patients. Both samples had high amounts of a calcium-binding protein termed ‘S100A6’ (this protein is released by the fatty liver and serves as a communication link between the liver and the pancreas). ‘S100A6’ adversely affects the insulin secretion ability of the beta-cells, thereby resulting in or exacerbating existing type 2 diabetes. Biochemically, ‘S100A6’ was found to inhibit insulin secretion by activating the Receptor for Advanced Glycation End product (RAGE) on pancreatic beta-cells. The study also presents the molecular and cellular events associated with ‘S100A6’ secretion in fatty liver, and its adverse impact on beta-cell insulin release. However, at a therapeutic level, this study shows that removing the circulating S100A6 from blood can help in preserving beta-cell function.

Furthermore, since the biochemical pathway by which S100A6 acts can now be understood, the use of RAGE antagonistic molecules can restore the functions of beta-cells in NAFLD patients, the researchers said. “Another important observation was that the depletion of ‘S100A6’ improves insulin secretion and the regulation of blood glucose in mice, which suggests that aS100A6’ contributes to the pathophysiology of diabetes in NAFLD,” said Surbhi Dogra from IIT Mandi.

Life beyond earth? Water-rich exoplanets discovered outside our solar system: Report

Science As water is considered as the prerequisite for life, this new founding of water-rich exoplanets is tantalising the astronomers in the hope of a life beyond Earth.

Singh Rahul Sunilkumar

In a major accomplishment in the investigation of life beyond our Earth, researchers have found a third category of exoplanets - rich in water - revolving around the red dwarf stars, the most common and long-lived stars. It is an epochal step because, for the first time, the habitability of other planets can be scientifically proven, a report in Popular Science says. What are exoplanets?

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), an exoplanet is a planet that is orbiting other stars beyond our solar system. Nasa's Kepler Space Telescope has shown that the galaxy has more numbers of planets than stars. The elements of some of these planets are similar to the planets of our solar system, although they do not necessarily revolve around any stars, as there are some exoplanets which are free floating and orbit around the galactic centre. Nasa estimates that apart from iron or carbon, some may have an abundance of water or ice. What are the two category of planets? Astronomers have long divided the planets into two categories based on their radii – rocky planets with shorter radius and gaseous planets with larger radius. Although water is found on Earth, it is placed into the category of rocky planets because water amounts to only 0.02 percent of its total weight. Experts believed that the reason behind the difference in radii is the varied effect on erosion of a planet's atmosphere due to the star's radiation, around which the planets are rotating. Rocky planets were left with very thin atmospheres, making up a largely exposed rocky surface. Gaseous stars had larger radii because they were able to keep thick, puffy atmospheres.

What is the new finding?

However, in the new study published in the journal Science on September 8, researchers have categorised the planets based on density rather than radius, adding one more category of water-rich planets. The report says that these types of exoplanets are alien to us because we don't have any such similar planets in our solar system. This new founding is tantalising the astronomers in the hope of a life beyond Earth. Water is considered as the prerequisite for life, though not a sufficient condition to foster habitation. The report says that although water is present on the planet; it is not in the form found here on Earth. The sample

suggests that the water cannot be on the surface, but either in combined form with magma or trapped below the surface. The exuberant researchers are expecting to find more about these exoplanets by focusing the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) to investigate the possibility of habitation on other planets.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

STATESMAN,SEP10,2022

Air pollution may trigger lung cancer in non-smokers: Scientists

Scientists have discovered a new mechanism through which very small pollutant particles in the air may trigger lung cancer in people who have never smoked. Scientists have discovered a new mechanism through which very small pollutant particles in the air may trigger lung cancer in people who have never smoked. Particles linked to climate change also promote cancerous changes in airway cells, they found, paving the way to new approaches for lung cancer prevention and treatment. Scientists of the Francis Crick Institute and University College London, funded by Cancer Research UK, presented the data at the ‘ESMO Congress 2022’.

According to them, the particles which are typically found in vehicle exhaust and smoke from fossil fuels, are associated with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) risk, accounting for over 250,000 lung cancer deaths globally per year. “The same particles in the air that derive from the combustion of fossil fuels, exacerbating climate change, are directly impacting human health via an important and previously overlooked cancer-causing mechanism in lung cells,” they informed. The risk of lung cancer from air pollution is lower than from smoking, “but we have no control over what we all breathe”. “Globally, more people are exposed to unsafe levels of air pollution than to toxic chemicals in cigarette smoke, and these new data link the importance of addressing climate health to improving human health,” said Charles Swanton from the Francis Crick Institute.

The new findings are based on human and laboratory research on mutations in a gene called EGFR which are seen in about half of people with lung cancer who have never smoked. In a study of nearly half a million people living in England, South Korea and Taiwan, exposure to increasing concentrations of airborne

particulate matter (PM) 2.5 micrometres (1m) in diameter was linked to increased risk of NSCLC with EGFR mutations. In the laboratory studies, scientists showed that the same pollutant particles (PM2.5) promoted rapid changes in airway cells which had mutations in EGFR and in another gene linked to lung cancer called KRAS, driving them towards a cancer stem cell like state. “We found that driver mutations in EGFR and KRAS genes, commonly found in lung cancers, are actually present in normal lung tissue and are a likely consequence of ageing,” said Swanton.

However, when lung cells with these mutations were exposed to air pollutants, “we saw more cancers and these occurred more quickly than when lung cells with these mutations were not exposed to pollutants”, suggesting that air pollution promotes the initiation of lung cancer in cells harbouring driver gene mutations. “The next step is to discover why some lung cells with mutations become cancerous when exposed to pollutants while others don’t,” said Swanton. Tony Mok from Chinese University of Hong Kong, who was not involved in the study, said that the research is intriguing and exciting. “It means that we can ask whether, in the future, it will be possible to use lung scans to look for pre-cancerous lesions in the lungs and try to reverse them with medicines such as interleukin-11 inhibitors,” said Mok. “We don’t yet know whether it will be possible to use highly sensitive EGFR profiling on blood or other samples to find non-smokers who are predisposed to lung cancer and may benefit from lung scanning, so discussions are still very speculative,” he added..

CURRENT EVENTS

PIB, SEP6, 2022

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission observes Rashtriya

Poshan Maah

The month of September every year is celebrated as the Rashtriya Poshan Maah or the National Nutrition Month across the country. The Ministry of Rural Development (M/oRD) is leveraging this occasion to intensively disseminate key messages to all intended beneficiaries on positive nutritional behaviours and practices. The activities during the month will be centred on key themes like Mahila and Swasthya, Bachcha and Shiksha – Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi, gender-sensitive water conservation and management, and traditional food for women and children in tribal areas. Poshan Abhiyaan aims to improve the nutritional status of women, pregnant and lactating mothers, children and adolescents, etc., and people’s participation (Jan Andolan) and community mobilization are essential components of this endeavour. The Ministry of Women & Child Development aims to convert this Jan Andolan into a Jan Bhagidari by activating Poshan Panchayats in villages and making the Gram Panchayats and the Sarpanch the fulcrum of activities.

To initiate POSHAN Maah celebrations, all necessary advisories and guidelines including an activity calendar have been issued to the State Rural Livelihood Missions and a video conference with all State Mission Directors/CEOs and state nodal persons was held yesterday by Smt. Nita Kejrewal, Joint Secretary, M/oRD to discuss and plan preparations. The Ministry is also actively looking at building convergences with other line departments at the state level and enhancing participation by ASHA, and Anganwadi Workers in the Village Organization meetings. Towards this, the Ministry has suggested the formation of the State Core Committee and holding regular meetings for facilitation. All State Missions under the DAY-NRLM are observing POSHAN Maah with full vigour under the guidance and support of the national Mission. Apart from activities such as Poshan Rallies, Poshan Rangolis, Poshan Pledges, recipe competitions, and promotion of Agri-Nutri-Gardens, a traditional Millet Food Festival is also being considered. Under Food, Nutrition, Health & WASH (FNHW) component of DAY-NRLM, FNHW Digital Toolkit was formally launched to provide standard and uniform messaging across materials on the identified FNHW topics and operational aspects. This comprises resource material such as flipbooks, facilitator guides, posters, counselling cards, Standard Operating Procedures, etc. The Toolkit has been developed with the support of technical agencies i.e BMGF supported TA to NRLM (PCI) and inputs from UNICEF supported ROSHNI Centre. States have been urged to diligently follow COVID-19 prevention protocols and maximally utilize the technology platforms for disseminating key messages and reaching SHGs and their families.

STATESMAN,SEP10,2022

Moderniser who steered monarchy

Elizabeth II inherited a monarchy whose political power had been steadily ebbing away since the 18th century but whose role in the public life of the nation seemed, if anything, to have grown ever more important.

SEAN LANG

When the late historian Sir Ben Pimlott embarked on his 1996 biography, his colleagues expressed surprise that he should consider Queen Elizabeth II worthy of serious study at all. Yet Pimlott's judgement proved sound and, if few academics have followed his lead, the political role of the monarchy has received thoughtful treatment in the creative arts. Stephen Frears's 2006 film, *The Queen*, showed her dilemma after the death of Princess Diana; Peter Morgan's stage play *The Audience* showed the monarch's weekly meetings with her prime ministers. And she has been shown in a generally positive and sympathetic light by both Netflix's acclaimed drama series *The Crown* and even in Mike Bartlett's speculative play *King Charles III*, about the difficulty her heir would have in filling her shoes. Elizabeth's reign was a delayed result of the abdication crisis of 1936, the defining royal event of the 20th century. Edward VIII's unexpected abdication thrust his shy, stammering younger brother Albert onto the throne as King George VI. Shortly thereafter he was thrust into the role of figurehead for the nation through the second world war. The war was the most important formative experience for his elder daughter, Princess Elizabeth. Her experience as a car mechanic with the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service – the women's army service) meant that she could legitimately claim to have participated in what has been called "the people's war". The experience gave her a more naturally common touch than any of her predecessors had displayed. When, in 1947, she

married Philip Mountbatten – who became Duke of Edinburgh (and died in April 2021 at the age of 99) – her wedding was seized on as an opportunity to brighten a national life still in the grip of post-war austerity and rationing. Elizabeth II inherited a monarchy whose political power had been steadily ebbing away since the 18th century but whose role in the public life of the nation seemed, if anything, to have grown ever more important.

Monarchs in the 20th century were expected both to perform ceremonial duties with appropriate gravity and to lighten up enough to share and enjoy the tastes and interests of ordinary people. The Queen's elaborate coronation in 1953 achieved a balance of both these roles. The ancient ceremony could be traced to the monarchy's Saxon origins, while her decision to allow it to be televised brought it into the living rooms of ordinary people with the latest modern technology. Royal ceremonial was henceforth to be democratically visible, ironically becoming much better choreographed and more formal than it had ever been before. The Queen went on to revolutionise public perceptions of the monarchy when, at the urging of Lord Mountbatten and his son-in-law, the television producer Lord Brabourne, she consented to the 1969 BBC film *Royal Family*. It was a remarkably intimate portrayal of her home life, showing her at breakfast, having a barbecue at Balmoral and popping down to the local shops. Prince Charles's investiture as Prince of Wales the same year, another royal television event, was followed in 1970 by the Queen's decision during a visit to Australia and New Zealand to break with protocol and mix directly with the crowds who had come out to see her. These "walkabouts" soon became a central part of any royal visit. The highpoint of the Queen's mid-reign popularity came with the 1977 Silver Jubilee celebrations, which saw the country festooned in red, white and blue at VE Day-style street parties. It was followed in 1981 by the enormous popularity of the wedding at St Paul's Cathedral of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer. The following decades proved much more testing. Controversy in the early 1990s about the Queen's exemption from income tax forced the Crown to change its financial arrangements so it paid like everyone else. Gossip and scandal surrounding the younger royals turned into divorces for Prince Andrew, Princess Anne and – most damagingly of all – Prince Charles. The Queen referred to 1992 – the height of the scandals – as her "annus horribilis". The revelations about the misery Princess Diana had endured in her marriage presented the public with a much harder, less sympathetic image of the royal family, which seemed vindicated when the Queen uncharacteristically miscalculated the public mood after Diana's death in 1997. Her instinct was to follow protocol and precedent, staying at Balmoral and keeping her grandchildren with her. This seemed hard and uncaring to a public hungry for open displays of emotion that would have been unthinkable in the Queen's younger days. "Where is our Queen?" demanded *The Sun*, while the *Daily Express* called on her to "Show us you care!" insisting that she break with protocol and fly the Union Jack at half-mast over Buckingham Palace. Never since the abdication had the popularity of the monarchy sunk so low. Caught briefly on the back foot by this remarkable change in British public behaviour, the Queen soon regained the initiative, addressing the nation on television and bowing her head to Diana's funeral cortege during a cleverly conceived and choreographed televised service. The extent to which she quickly regained public support was shown by the enormous, if unexpected, success of her 2002 Golden Jubilee, which was ushered in by the extraordinary sight of Brian May performing a guitar solo on the roof of Buckingham Palace. By the time London hosted the Olympics in 2012 she was sufficiently confident of her position to agree to appear in a memorable tongue-in-cheek cameo in the opening ceremony, when she appeared to parachute down into the arena from a helicopter in the company of James Bond. Queen Elizabeth kept the crown above party politics, but she was always fully engaged with the political world. A firm believer in the Commonwealth, even when her own prime ministers had long lost faith in it, as its head she mediated in disputes between member states and provided support and guidance even to Commonwealth leaders who were strongly opposed to her own UK government. Her prime ministers often paid tribute to her political wisdom and knowledge. These were the result both of her

years of experience and of her diligence in reading state papers. Harold Wilson remarked that to attend the weekly audience unprepared was like being caught at school not having done your homework. It was widely believed that she found relations with Margaret Thatcher difficult.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh sometimes objected to the political use to which governments put them. In 1978 they were unhappy to be forced by the then foreign secretary, David Owen, to receive the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife as guests at Buckingham Palace. The Queen could act to very positive effect in international relations, often providing the ceremonial and public affirmation of the work of her ministers. She established a good rapport with a string of American presidents, particularly Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama, and her successful 2011 state visit to the Republic of Ireland, in which she astonished her hosts by addressing them in Gaelic, remains a model of the positive impact a state visit can have. She was even able to put aside her personal feelings about the 1979 murder of Lord Mountbatten to offer a cordial welcome to the former IRA commander Martin McGuinness, when he took office in 2007 as deputy first minister of Northern Ireland. Only very occasionally and briefly did the Queen allow her own political views to surface. On a visit to the London Stock Exchange after the 2008 financial crash she asked sharply why nobody had seen it coming. In 2014, her carefully worded appeal to Scots to think carefully about their vote in the Independence Referendum was widely – and clearly rightly – interpreted as an intervention on behalf of the Union. And in the run-up to the 2021 UN COP26 conference in Glasgow, from which she had to pull out on medical advice, she was overheard expressing irritation at the lack of political action on the climate change emergency. As she approached her tenth decade, she finally began to slow down, delegating more of her official duties to other members of the royal family – even the annual laying of her wreath at the cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, while in May 2022 she delegated her most important ceremonial duty, the reading of the Speech from the Throne at the State Opening of Parliament, to Prince Charles. She retained her ability to rise to a crisis, however.

In 2020, as the Covid pandemic descended, the Queen, in sharp contrast to her prime minister, addressed the nation from lockdown at Windsor in a calm, well-judged message. Her short address combined solidarity with her people with the reassurance that, in a conscious reference to Vera Lynn's wartime hit, "We will meet again." The decade also brought sadness. Her grandson, Prince Harry, and his wife Meghan Markle withdrew completely from royal duties, causing deep hurt to the royal family. This hurt was compounded when the Sussexes accused the royal family, in an interview with Oprah Winfrey which was watched around the world, of treating them with cruelty, disdain and even racism. The shock of the interview was followed quickly by the death of Prince Philip, her husband of 73 years, a few months short of his 100th birthday. At his funeral, which was reduced in scale to meet the requirements of COVID regulations, the Queen cut an unusually lonely figure, small, masked and sitting alone. As her health declined in the months following his death, the deep impact of his loss became all too apparent. The pain of the Sussexes' estrangement from the royal family was heavily compounded by the disgrace soon afterwards of Prince Andrew, her second and, it was often suggested, her favourite son. His close involvement with the convicted American paedophile, Jeffrey Epstein, led to the unedifying spectacle of a senior member of the royal family being accused in an American court of underage sex; he made his own position immeasurably worse by agreeing to a disastrous interview on the BBC current affairs programme Newsnight. The Queen responded to the scandal with remarkable decisiveness: she stripped her son of all his royal and military titles, including the cherished "HRH", and reduced him, in effect, to the status of a private citizen.

Even her closest family were not to be allowed to undermine all she had done to protect and preserve the monarchy. The remarkable success of her 2022 Platinum Jubilee was a sign of just how much she had retained the affections of her people; a particularly well-received highlight was a charming cameo performance showing her having tea with the children's television character, Paddington Bear.

Apart from in dreams, in which she was often popularly supposed to appear, the Queen's most regular contact with her subjects was in her annual Christmas message on television and radio. This not only reflected her work and engagements over the previous year, but it reaffirmed, with greater frankness and clarity than many of her ministers seemed able to summon, her deeply held Christian faith. As head of the Church of England she was herself a Christian leader and she never forgot it. The Christmas message adapted over the years to new technology, but it was unchanging in style and content, reflecting the monarchy as she shaped it. Under Elizabeth II, the British monarchy survived by changing its outward appearance without changing its public role. Republican critics of monarchy had long given up demanding its immediate abolition and accepted that the Queen's personal popularity rendered their aim impracticable while she was still alive.

Elizabeth II, whose 70-year reign makes her the longest reigning monarch in British history, leaves her successor with a sort of British monarchical republic, in which the proportions of its ingredients of mystique, ceremony, populism and openness have been constantly changed in order to keep it essentially the same. It has long been acknowledged by political leaders and commentators all over the world that the Queen handled her often difficult and delicate constitutional role with grace and remarkable, even formidable, political skill. Her wisdom and unceasing sense of duty meant she was widely viewed with a combination of respect, esteem, awe and affection, which transcended nations, classes and generations. She was immensely proud of Britain and its people, yet in the end she belonged to the world, and the world will mourn her passing.

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STATESMAN,SEP11,2022

Short of Teesta

While India's studied silence on Teesta has disappointed Dhaka, Mr Modi's pledge to discuss the economic issue has been generally welcomed by the Bangladesh delegation.

India's equation with Bangladesh ~ as often as not on a roller-coaster depending on the dispensation in Dhaka ~ could scarcely have got off to a more reassuring start than it did on Tuesday when Begum Hasina arrived in Delhi on a four-day visit. Remarkable must be the fact that no fewer than seven Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were concluded within a couple of hours after she landed in Delhi. Quite the most critical among these was the one on sharing river water with the pre-eminent exception of Teesta. Small wonder that the rather shallow river that meanders through North Bengal has been referred to as the "elephant in the room" for all the "positives" in the other segments. Short of Teesta, a major water-sharing pact related to the MoU for the withdrawal of 153 cusecs of water from the Kushiya river which flows into Bangladesh from Assam, the junction of transfer being Sylhet across the border.

This agreement is a major victory, so to speak, for Hasina not the least because it signals a breakthrough on a politically sensitive issue not merely in the bilateral construct but also within Bangladesh. The Awami League government in Dhaka has since 2011 been waiting for an agreement on Teesta, one that has not materialized in the face of the stiff opposition by the West Bengal chief minister. Bangladesh has also been insisting on what it calls a “framework for water-sharing”, given the geographical reality that the two countries boast as many as 54 rivers in common. The focus must of necessity be on reality; hilsa diplomacy can scarcely improve the bilateral equation ~ an iterated promise by the Bangladesh PM ~ as it scarcely covers the brass tacks of the diplomatic engagement. For all the grandstanding in Delhi on Tuesday, Narendra Modi’s diplomatic silence on Teesta might arguably provoke the somewhat pro-Islamic opposition in Dhaka to use the handle to attack Hasina, who has often been criticised for being pro-India. Opposition entities such as Begum Khaleda’s BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami have already articulated the cavil on the “futility of the visit”. The Opposition includes fundamentalist forces, notably the militants who cross over to India. Realpolitik has seemingly guided India’s response ~ “It is in our interest that her visit to India is seen as a success back home,” is the MEA’s response. At another remove, the junior foreign minister of Bangladesh, Shahriar Alam, said relations between the two countries were not based solely on the logic of lina-dena (give and take)’. While India’s studied silence on Teesta has disappointed Dhaka, Mr Modi’s pledge to discuss the economic issue has been generally welcomed by the Bangladesh delegation. Specifically, this will envisage a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) to increase the volume of bilateral trade. Both countries have agreed to accelerate this growth. Short of a forward movement on Teesta, the proposed pledge on trade must be a salutary development of Begum Hasina’s visit.

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Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change organises National Conference on Sustainable Coastal Management in India

Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav inaugurated the first National Conference on Sustainable Coastal Management in India in Bhubaneswar today.

This conference is being organized by the Green Climate Fund supported project – Enhancing Climate Resilience of India’s Coastal Communities. The objective of the conference is to bring officials from all 13 coastal states of India under one roof to focus on the three interrelated themes of coastal and marine biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation and coastal pollution. This endeavour is aimed at creating a vibrant network of stakeholders who will continue to engage with each other on the topics but also on cross-cutting themes such as coastal governance, technologies and innovation as well as domestic and international finance. “The Indian coastline is of immense strategic, economic and social importance to the country. Spanning 7,500 kilometres, it is the seventh longest in the world, and is home to 20 percent of the country’s population. Three of our four metropolitan cities lie on the coast. There is a great diversity of ecosystems within our coastal regions that support more than 17,000 species of plants and animals. With the changing climate, we need to build the resilience of communities living in coastal areas.” said Shri Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. “This conference comes at an important time as India has submitted its revised NDCs and seeks to create multi-sectoral partnerships to meet these targets” he added

Speaking on the occasion, Shri. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Environment, Forest Climate Change, said: “Such conferences are important to bring the conversations of resilience and sustainability to our country’s coastal areas. This was also envisioned in the Honourable Prime Minister’s LiFE movement.” Sustainable coastal management is recognised as need of the hour. Data-driven policies and management frameworks, participatory conservation models, and convergence between stakeholders are the key pillars for effective coastal management. A programme on Enhancing Climate Resilience of Coastal Communities is being implemented in partnership with UNDP in the states of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Supported by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the initiative is integrating ecosystem and community-based approaches to adaptation into coastal management and planning.