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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PIB, APRIL 17, 2023

Government has set target to increase share of gas in energy mix up to 15 per cent by 2030 : Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing & Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri

Energy security to remain vulnerable until alternative fuels not developed indigenously based on renewable feedstock: Shri Hardeep Singh Puri

Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing & Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri highlighted the need for domestic production biofuels and said it will play a pivotal role in achieving reduction in import of fossil fuel and ultimately help to achieve the target of net zero emission. He was addressing the Global Conference on Compressed Biogas (CBG) in New Delhi today, which was organised by the Indian Federation of Green Energy (IFGE).

Highlighting the need for alternative fuels, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri said, “Considering the limited domestic availability of fossil fuels and import dependence for this, the energy security of the country will remain vulnerable until alternative fuels to substitute/supplement fossil fuels are developed based on indigenously sustainable renewable feedstock”.

The Minister said that the production of CBG would have multiple benefits viz. reduction of natural gas imports, reduction of GHG emission, reduction in burning of agriculture residues, providing remunerative income to farmers, employment generation, effective waste management etc adding, “Government of India has set a target to increase the share of gas in the energy mix up to 15% in 2030 to make India a Gas-based economy. Presently we are importing around 50% of our requirement of Natural gas. Speedy expansion of CBG will help in meeting our additional requirement from domestic resources.”

Policies of the Government has enabled the adoption of green renewable energy in the last 10 years. Shri Hardeep Singh Puri especially mentioned about the Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) Scheme and the use of agro-waste to generate compressed biogas. He said, “Under SATAT initiative various waste streams such as animal dung, agricultural residues, MSW (Municipal Solid Waste), sewage water and industrial wastes such as press mud, spent wash from sugar industry, food processing industry etc. is being looked into as feedstock for production of Biogas/CBG.”

The Minister also shared India’s ambitious target to set up 5,000 commercial plants by 2024- 25 and produce 15 MMT of CBG which would replace other gaseous fuels being used in the country. He mentioned that India had commissioned 46 compressed biogas plants under SATAT Scheme and there were 100 outlets currently dispensing the compressed biogas across the country.

Talking about the ecosystem, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri emphasised that present Government has been persistent in developing a conducive ecosystem in order to promote sustainability for all actors of the Triple Bottom Line (environment, society and economy). He indicates how the Government has formulated policies, developed schemes providing support through Central Financial Assistance, etc to support the adoption of green energy in any form. He also mentioned that the Government is engaging with other departments and ministries to simplify the regulations further, resulting in easier adoption and implementation of projects. He

mentioned about Department of Fertilizers, which issued letter to Fertilizer companies for mandatory offtake of FOM with chemical fertilizers as a "Basket approach" and Central Pollution Control Board that included plants under 'white category' status on case-to-case basis.

While mentioning the importance of green and clean energy, the Minister stressed the need for generating renewable, sustainable and indigenous energy sources that can supplement other conventional energy sources in the short term and take over as the primary source of energy in long run. In addition, the Hon'ble Minister highlighted how Fermented Organic Manure (FOM), a by product of the CBG manufacturing process, might be applied in the agricultural sector to encourage organic farming and lower the usage of artificial fertilisers.

While talking about the financing of projects, he indicated that Amrit Kaal Budget 2023 gives a huge boost to India's Bio-Gas and clean energy revolution:

- With special attention given to CBG projects and announced establishment of 200 CBG projects under the umbrella of GOBARdhan scheme,
- Five per cent CBG mandate will be introduced for all organizations marketing natural and bio gas.
- To avoid cascading of taxes on blended compressed natural gas, excise duty on the amount of GST paid on compressed biogas contained in the blended CNG has been exempted.

Stressing about the inclusive growth approach of the Government, Minister said agriculture & farmers are integral part of it, which will benefit directly through more & more penetration of green energy, particularly Compressed Biogas, through the use of agricultural and animal waste largely available in the rural India. He appreciated various States and their role in promoting the adoption of green energy and particularly the Compressed Biogas and congratulated the organisers for taking a step to further promote Compressed Biogas,

which will play an important role in boosting the country's energy basket and strengthening India's energy security in the long run.

PIB, APRIL 18, 2023

Namami Gange: 8 Projects Worth Rs. 638 Crores Approved

4 Projects For Hindon Rejuvenation Worth Rs. 407.39 Crore Approved

The 48th meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) was held on today under the chairmanship of Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) Shri G. Asok Kumar. Eight projects worth around Rs. 638 crore were approved in the meeting. In an attempt to clean River Hindon, which is a tributary of River Yamuna, four projects worth Rs. 407.39 crore were approved for pollution abatement in the Shamli district. These projects are part of the comprehensive Hindon Rejuvenation Plan. Hindon river is identified as Priority I polluted river stretch. The projects which were sanctioned are to prevent the flow of polluted water into Krishna River. Krishna is one of the major tributaries of Hindon which discharges pollution from Shamli district into River Hindon.

The four projects in Shamli district include construction of i) 5 Million Litres per Day (MLD) Sewage Treatment Plant (Nirmal Jal Kendra), 5 KLD Septage Co-treatment Facility, Interception & Diversion (I&D) and other works in Babri and Bantikhera villages, ii) 5 MLD STP, 5 KLD Septage Co-treatment Facility, Interception & Diversion (I&D) and other works in Banat town, iii) 40 MLD STP, 20 KLD Septage Co-treatment Facility, Interception & Diversion (I&D) and other works in Shamli town and iv) 10 MLD STP, 10 KLD Septage Co-treatment Facility, Interception & Diversion (I&D) and other works in Thanabhawan town.

As part of preparations for the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, in 2025, one project for development of 7 ghats in Prayagraj was also approved in the EC meeting. The ghats include Dashashmedh Ghat, Quila Ghat, Naukayan Ghat, Gyan Ganga Ashram Ghat, Saraswati Ghat, Maheva Ghat and Rasulabad Ghat. These ghats will have amenities such as area for bathing, change room, universal access ramp, drinking water points, flood lights for night, kiosks, landscaping etc.

Two more sewerage management projects were approved in the 48th EC meeting, one each in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. In Bihar, a project to construct 3 STPs (7 MLD, 3.5 MLD and 6 MLD in Zones 1 and 2 respectively), among other works, was approved at an estimated cost of Rs. 77.39 crore. These projects will prevent the flow of polluted water into River Kiul, a tributary of Ganga. In Madhya Pradesh, one project to construct a 22 MLD STP, 2.38 MLD Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) and other works was approved at a cost of Rs. 92.78 crore. This project will prevent the flow of polluted water into River Kshipra, which is sub-tributary of Yamuna. During the meeting, Shri G. Asok Kumar, DG, NMCG urged the officials from the States to do solar farming on the STP sites and promote the use of solar power to run the Nirmal Jal Kendras. He also exhorted the officials to use grills to separate and dispose solid waste from the drains that are flowing into the Rivers. Pointing out that it is the responsibility of the State Governments to maintain the assets created under Namami Gange Programme, DG, NMCG said that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) being adopted by the ULBs for cleaning of existing ghats should be communicated to NMCG.

Another project for ghat development was approved for Haridwar, Uttarakhand where Akhand Param Dham ghat will be constructed at a total cost of Rs. 2.12 crore. The project includes construction of Shop/Kiosk (for Ghat pe Haat activities), yoga/meditation lawn, handicap ramp, promenade, platform for cultural and religious activities etc.

The meeting was attended by Shri S.P. Vashishtha, Executive Director (Admin.), NMCG, Shri Bhaskar Dasgupta, Executive Director (Finance), NMCG, Shri D.P. Mathuria, Executive Director (Technical), NMCG, Ms. Richa Misra, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor, Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti and senior officials from the concerned states.

PIB, APRIL 18, 2023

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission launches National Campaign “Sangathan se Samridhhi” to mobilize 10 Crore Rural Women into Self Help Groups

The Ministry of Rural Development's Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) today launched “Sangathan Se Samridhhi– Leaving no Rural Woman Behind”, a national campaign under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Samaveshi Vikaas, aimed at mobilizing 10 crore women from eligible rural households. This special drive will go on till June 30th 2023 and aspires to bring all the vulnerable and marginalized rural households under the Self-Help Group (SHG) fold to enable them to draw benefits provided under the programme. The campaign's primary objective is to mobilize disadvantaged rural communities unaware of the benefits of the DAY-NRLM program. The campaign will be organized in all states, with the expectation of forming more than 1.1 lakh SHGs during the period through interventions like organizing General Body Meetings of Village Organizations and experience sharing by SHG champions to motivate left out households to join SHGs, conducting Community Resource Person drives, mobilizing eligible women from PMAY-G beneficiary households, training new SHG members, reviving defunct SHGs, opening SHG bank accounts and creation of a common database of SHGs promoted by other stakeholders.

The campaign was launched by Shri Giriraj Singh, Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in New Delhi in the presence of dignitaries and officials from other ministries and lead partner banks. Also, present were Shri Shailesh Kumar Singh, Secretary - Rural Development, Shri Charanjit Singh, Additional Secretary – Rural Livelihoods and Smt. Smriti Sharan, Joint Secretary – Rural Livelihoods representing the Ministry and DAY-NRLM. CEOs, Mission Directors and senior mission staff from the State Rural Livelihoods Missions were the other notable guests present during the event.

Speaking on the occasion Shri Giriraj Singh said, “The rural population accounts for 65% of India’s total population. Hence, it is extremely important that women from these areas are accorded all possible opportunities to enable them to contribute significantly into making our country a 5 trillion economy. When 10 crore SHG members all become LakhpatiDidis, it will automatically have a considerable effect on the country’s GDP. And this was the vision with which DAY-NRLM was started so that at least one woman member from every rural household can join a Self Help Group and take advantage of the opportunities and financial support offered under the programme to improve their livelihoods. I am pleased that on the occasion of celebrating 75 years of Independence, we are launching this “Sangathan Se Samriddhi” campaign to mobilize an additional 1 crore women to the 9 crore women already part of the SHG movement. Even then, let us not stop at 10 crores. Let us go beyond and ensure that all rural women across the country join the SHG movement. I urge all our SHG members to reach out to left out women in their respective villages and inspire them to join existing SHGs or form their own SHGs”.

SHG women from across states actively participated in the event and women from Bihar, Tripura, Telangana, Maharashtra and Haryana shared their experiences on how the DAY-NRLM SHG movement supported them

to come out of poverty by creating livelihood opportunities leading to their economic independence and social empowerment.

PIB, APRIL 21, 2023

PM addresses 16th Civil Services Day at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi

Confers Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration to 16 awardees

Releases E-books 'Viksit Bharat - Empowering Citizens & Reaching the last mile Volume I and II

"For a developed India, the government system should support the aspirations of common people"

"Earlier thinking was that the government will do everything, but now thinking is that the government will work for everyone"

"Motto of the government is 'Nation First-Citizen First', today's government is prioritizing the deprived"

"Today's aspirational citizens are not willing to wait for long to see changes in the systems"

"As the world is saying that India's time has arrived, there is no time to be wasted by the bureaucracy of the country"

"Basis of all your decisions should always be the national interest"

"It is the duty of the Bureaucracy to analyze whether a political party is making use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of their own organization or for the nation"

"Good governance is the key. People-centric governance solves problems and gives better results"

“The century of independence will be the golden century of the country when we will give first priority to our duties. Duty is not an option for us but a resolution”

“The aim of Mission Karmayogi is to utilize the full potential of civil servants”

“You will not be judged by what you have done for yourself, but by what changes have you brought in the lives of the people”

“The power of the citizens of the country has increased in the new India, the power of India has increased”

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed Civil Servants on the occasion of 16th Civil Services Day, 2023 at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi today. The Prime Minister also conferred the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration and released the e-books ‘Viksit Bharat - Empowering Citizens & Reaching the last mile Volume I and II.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister congratulated everyone on the occasion of Civil Services Day. The Prime Minister noted that the occasion of Civil Services Day this year becomes much more special as the nation has completed 75 years of its independence and is starting to move forward to achieve the goals and objectives of a developed India. He highlighted the contributions of those Civil Servants who joined the service 15-25 years ago and emphasized the role of young officers who will contribute towards nation-building in the next 25 years of Amrit Kaal. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that the young officers are extremely fortunate to serve the nation in this Amrit Kaal. “The responsibility to accomplish the dreams of every freedom fighter of the nation lies upon every shoulder”, the Prime Minister remarked as he pointed out the paucity of time but the abundance of potential and courage in the country.

The Prime Minister said that the country is prepared for take off due to the work done in the last 9 years. He said that different results are being obtained with the same bureaucracy and personnel. He acknowledged the role of Karmyogis in the growing profile of the country on the global stage, for the growing confidence of the poorest of the poor in 'Sushasan' and for a new momentum of development of the country. He mentioned India rising as the 5th largest economy in the world, taking strides in fintech as India is number one in digital transactions, one of the cheapest mobile data countries and the third largest startup ecosystem in the world. He remarked on transformative changes in the rural economy, railways, highways, port capacity augmentation and the number of airports. He said that the awards today reflect the contribution and sense of service of the Karmyogis.

Recalling his address from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 15th August last year when the Prime Minister invoked the 'Paanch Pran' namely the development of Viksit Bharat or developed India, breaking the slavery mentality, taking pride in India's heritage, strengthening the unity and diversity of the country, and keeping one's duties before anything else, the Prime Minister underlined that the energy emanating from these five resolves will take the nation to its deserved place in the world.

Dwelling on the theme of this year's Civil Service Day being based on the notion of Viksit Bharat, the Prime Minister said that the concept of Viksit Bharat is not limited to modern infrastructure. "It is important for Viksit Bharat that India's government system supports the aspirations of every Indian and every government servant helps every citizen in realizing their dreams and the negativity that was associated with the system in the previous years, turns into positivity", the Prime Minister added.

Throwing light on decades of experience after India's independence, the Prime Minister stated the importance of last-mile delivery in the implementation of government schemes. He gave examples of results from policies of previous governments and mentioned that there were more than 4 crore fake gas connections, more than 4

crore fake ration cards, and support was provided to 1 crore fictitious women and children by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, fake scholarships were offered to approximately 30 lakh youths by Ministry of Minority Welfare, and lakhs of fake accounts were created under MGNREGA to transfer the benefits of workers who never existed. The Prime Minister highlighted that a corrupt ecosystem had emerged in the country under the pretext of these fake beneficiaries. He credited the civil servants for the transformation that has taken place in the system where roughly 3 lakh crore rupees have been saved from landing in the wrong hands, which is now being used for the welfare of the poor.

The Prime Minister emphasized that when time is limited, it becomes very critical to decide the direction and working style. “Today's challenge is not about efficiency but in figuring out how to find and remove deficiencies”, he said. He recalled the time when in the garb of deficiency even the small aspect was attempted to be controlled. Today, he continued, the same deficiency is being turned into efficiency and removing obstacles in the system. “Earlier, the thinking was that the government will do everything, now the thinking is that the government will work for everyone”, said the Prime Minister highlighting the efficient use of time and resources to serve everyone. “Motto of the government is ‘Nation First-Citizen First’, today’s government’s priority is prioritizing the deprived”, the Prime Minister remarked, informing that the government is going up to Aspirational Districts and up to Aspirational blocks. He said today’s government is treating border villages as the first villages rather than the last villages. He said that for 100 percent saturation, we will need even more hard work and innovative solutions. He gave the example of departments asking for NoCs and information that is available somewhere in the system. He said for ease of living and ease of doing business we will have to find solutions for these.

Giving the example of PM Gatishakti Master Plan, the Prime Minister explained that all data layers related to any infrastructure project can be found on a single platform and stressed the need to utilize it to the maximum for better planning and execution in the social sector. He further added that it will greatly benefit in identifying

the needs of citizens, tackling issues related to education that might arise in the future, and enhancing communication between departments, districts and blocks while also helping in the formulation of future strategies.

The Prime Minister stressed that the Amrit Kaal has brought immense challenges along with great opportunities. The Prime Minister elaborated that today's aspirational citizens are not willing to wait for long to see changes in the systems and this will need our full effort, he said. Taking quick decisions and implementing them with speed has become all the more important as the expectations of the world from India have also risen dramatically. As the world is saying that India's time has arrived, there is no time to be wasted by the bureaucracy of the country. "The country has put its faith in you, work while maintaining that trust. Basis of all your decisions should always be the national interest", he insisted.

Highlighting the importance and necessity of political parties with different ideologies in a democracy, the Prime Minister stressed the need for Bureaucracy to assess whether the political party in power is utilizing the taxpayers' money for the benefit of the nation. "It is the duty of the Bureaucracy to analyze whether a political party is making use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of their own organization or the nation's", the Prime Minister continued, "if it is using the money to create a vote bank or making the lives of the citizens easier; if it is advertising itself with the government treasure or making the people aware; if it is appointing its own party workers in various organizations or creating a transparent process for recruitment." Recalling the words of Sardar Patel about the Bureaucracy being the steel frame of India, the Prime Minister said that it is time to live up to the expectations and prevent the dreams of the youth from getting crushed along with taxpayers' money from being destroyed.

The Prime Minister told the government servants that there are two approaches to life, first, getting things done and second letting things happen. The first is an active attitude and the second reflects a passive attitude. People with faith in getting things done take ownership in a proactive manner and become the driving force of their teams. “By this burning desire to bring change in the lives of the people you will be able to leave a memorable legacy. You will not be judged by what you have done for yourself but by what changes have you brought in the lives of the people”, the Prime Minister told the Karmyogis. Therefore, he said “Good governance is the key. People-centric governance solves problems and gives better results”, he said. He gave examples of Aspirational districts that are performing better than other districts on many development parameters due to good governance and the efforts of energetic young officers. By focussing on people’s participation a sense of ownership is created among the people and this people ownership ensures unprecedented results, he said. He illustrated this with examples of Swacch Bharat, Amrit Sarivar and Jal Jeevan Mission.

The Prime Minister referred to the District Visions@100 that are under preparation and said that such visions should be prepared up to Panchayat Level. What sectors should be focussed in the Panchayats, blocks, district and the state, changes for attracting investment and identification of products that can be taken up for exports, a clear vision for all this should be developed, he said. He emphasized linking the chain of MSME and Self-Help Groups to promote local products and said “It is very important for all of you to encourage local talent, promote local entrepreneurship and start-up culture.”

Underlining that he has been the head of the government for more than 20 years now, the Prime Minister expressed delight at getting the opportunity to work with civil servants. He emphasized capacity building and expressed happiness that ‘Mission Karmayogi’ has become a huge campaign among all civil servants. He underlined that the Capacity Building Commission is taking this campaign forward with full force and said, “The aim of Mission Karmayogi is to utilize the full potential of civil servants.” Highlighting the iGOT

platform that has been created to ensure the availability of quality training material everywhere, the Prime Minister stressed that training and learning should not remain a formality for a few months. “Now, all the recruits are also being trained on iGOT platform with the orientation module of ‘Karmayogi Prarambh’”, Shri Modi added.

Highlighting the government’s initiative to do away with the protocol of hierarchy, the Prime Minister said that he constantly meets the secretaries, assistant secretaries, and trainee officers. He also gave the example of brainstorming camps to increase everyone's participation within the department for new ideas. He also stated that the issue of officers getting work experience in the Central Government on deputation only after living in the states for the first years has been addressed by filling the gap through the assistant secretary programme where young IAS officers now get a chance to work in the Central Government at the very beginning of their career.

The Prime Minister said that 25 years of Amrit journey is considered a time of duty (Kartavya Kaal). “The century of independence will be the golden century of the country when we will give first priority to our duties. Duty is not an option for us but a resolution”, the Prime Minister stressed. “This is the time of rapid change. Your role will also be determined not by your rights, but by your duties and their performance. The power of the citizens of the country has increased in the new India, the power of India has increased. You have got an opportunity to play an important role in this new emerging India.”, he added.

Concluding the address, the Prime Minister stated that young civil servants have the opportunity to make a mark of prominence in history when the accomplishments of the nation will be evaluated after 100 years of independence. “You can say with pride that I have played a role in creating new systems for the country and

also improving it. I am sure all of you will continue to expand your role in nation-building”, Shri Modi concluded.

Union Minister of State for Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr Jitendra Singh, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister, Shri P K Mishra, Cabinet Secretary, Shri Rajiv Gauba and Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances, Shri V Srinivas were present on the occasion.

The Prime Minister has constantly appreciated the contribution of Civil Servants towards nation-building and enthused them to work even harder. The programme served as an apt platform for the Prime Minister to motivate and inspire Civil Servants across the country so that they may keep serving the nation with the same zeal, especially during this crucial phase of Amrit Kaal.

During the event, the Prime Minister also conferred the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration as well. These have been instituted with a view to recognize the extraordinary and innovative work done by districts & organizations of the Central and State Governments for the welfare of common citizens. Awards will be given for exemplary work done in four identified priority programmes: Promoting Swachh Jal through Har Ghar Jal Yojana; Promoting Swasth Bharat through Health & Wellness Centres; Promoting quality education with an equitable and inclusive classroom environment through Samagra Shiksha; Holistic Development through Aspirational District Programme - overall progress with special focus on saturation approach. Eight awards for the above four identified programmes will be given while seven awards shall be given for innovations.

PIB, APRIL 21, 2023

Ministry of Civil Aviation Launches UDAN 5.0

Following the four successful rounds of bidding, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the 5th round of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) – Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) to further enhance the connectivity to remote and regional areas of the country and achieve last mile connectivity.

Key Features of UDAN 5.0 are as follows:

This round of UDAN focuses on Category-2 (20-80 seats) and Category-3 (>80 seats).

The earlier stage length cap of 600 km is waived off and there is no restriction on the distance between the origin and destination of the flight. Viability gap funding (VGF) to be provided will be capped at 600 km stage length for both Priority and Non-Priority areas which was earlier capped at 500 km. No predetermined routes would be offered. Only Network and Individual Route Proposal proposed by airlines will be considered. The airlines would be required to submit an action/business plan after 2 months from the issuance of LoA wherein they submit their aircraft acquisition plan/availability of aircraft, crew, slots, etc. at the time of the Technical Proposal. The same route will not be awarded to a single airline more than once, whether in different networks or in the same network. Exclusivity will be withdrawn if the average quarterly PLF is higher than 75% for four continuous quarters, to prevent exploitation of the monopoly on a route.

25% of the Performance Guarantee to be encashed for each month of delay up to 4 months, to further incentivize quick operationalization. Airlines would be required to commence operations within 4 months of the award of the route. Earlier this deadline was 6 months. A list of airports that are ready for operation or would soon be ready for operations has been included in the scheme to facilitate quicker operationalization of routes under the Scheme. Novation process for routes from one operator to another is simplified and incentivized. Commenting on the launch of UDAN 5.0, the Minister of Civil Aviation & Steel, Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia said, “UDAN has proved to be a lifeblood of many regions which are now well connected with places across the country. This new & stronger version of the scheme will raise the momentum,

connecting new routes, and bring us closer to the target of operationalizing 1000 routes & 50 additional airports, heliports, and water aerodromes in the near future. अब उड़ेगा देश का हर आम नागरिक!”

UDAN Scheme has benefitted a diverse set of stakeholders. Passengers have got the benefits of air connectivity, airlines have received concessions for operating regional routes, unserved regions have received the direct and indirect benefits of air connectivity for their economic development. It is another step towards the prime minister’s vision of the common man traveling by air at affordable and subsidized airfares.

PIB, APRIL 21, 2023

Launch of the Inclusive Development (Samaveshi Vikaas) campaign on 24th April 2023 by the PM during the National Panchayati Raj Day Programme

The Prime Minister will launch nine campaigns under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav-Inclusive Development (Samaveshi Vikaas) theme led by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will launch these nine campaigns under the theme Inclusive Development (समावेशी विकास) as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav on the 24th April 2023 during the National Panchayati Raj Day at Rewa, Madhya Pradesh. The PM will also launch the Website and Mobile App “Samaveshi Vikaas” on the same day.

The nation is observing Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) till August, 2023. A number of events/campaigns under various themes are being organised by the Government to celebrate the occasion by involving State Governments and the public in general. One of the themes under AKAM is Inclusive Development (Samaveshi Vikaas). Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) is the lead Ministry for the same, with four other supporting Ministries/Departments of the Government of India. Out of the nine campaigns under this theme, five are under the Ministry of Rural Development viz., (i) Samagra Awaas under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-

Gramin (PMAY-G), (ii) Financial Literacy at District Level, (iii) Promoting Digital Transaction at Gram Panchayat Level and (iv) Social Mobilisation of Eligible Rural Women into Self Help Group (SHG) Network, (v) Plantation Drive on River Banks under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Four other Campaigns are being led by the partnering Ministries/Departments viz., (i) Swastha Mahila- Samriddha Samaj (SMSS)- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, (ii) Pashudhan Jagriti Abhiyan Intensive Awareness Campaign in Aspirational Districts-Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, (iii) SVAMITVA, Meri Sampatti, Mera Haq- Ministry of Panchayati Raj and (iv)Natural Farming with SHG Women campaign-Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

Under the Inclusive Development theme, the selection of the campaigns is focused on high-impact value and high Jan-Bhagidari potential. The campaigns are designed to have a “whole of society approach”, ensuring 100% outreach to the beneficiaries of the campaigns. The entire campaign is termed “Samaveshi Vikaas ”, which finds its foundation rooted in the concept of “Convergence” and “Reaching the last mile”, aiming at targeted interventions through all States/UTs, districts and gram panchayats, focusing on selected campaigns in the areas of employment generation, health, social inclusion, social security and livelihood creation by each of the participating ministries/departments. With a view to capturing and monitoring the progress of these campaigns, a website has been designed named “<https://akam-samveshivikaas.nic.in>” which is proposed to be launched by the Prime Minister on 24th April, 2023 on the National Panchayati Raj Day at a function at Rewa, Madhya Pradesh. This vibrant and dynamic website will provide real-time progress of various activities under Samaveshi Vikaas campaigns and will also capture the key performance indicators, calendar of events, event-related pictures and videos, newspaper clippings and public opinion. The website will enable this Department to generate reports and assess and monitor the progress of the campaigns through technical tools.

In order to ensure the documentation of Jan Bhagidari and public participation, a simple and user-friendly Mobile App named “Samaveshi Vikaas” has been designed. Through this, the general public can share their

experience and opinion/feedback about the impact and benefits these campaigns have brought along with photographs on these campaigns.

A small brief about the individual Campaigns:

(1) Samagra Awas-Convergence under PMAY-G: In this campaign, a sanction of additional 45 lakh PMAY-G houses over and above 2.50 Crore already sanctioned will be ensured along with the saturation of benefits provided in convergence with Schemes providing electricity, LPG, water connections and toilets in all PMAY-G houses. The campaign will start in April, 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(2) Financial Literacy at District Level: The main purpose of this campaign is to create awareness and increase the outreach of various banking & financial services and social security schemes. The campaign will be carried out in 500 districts and is expected to provide need-based training and awareness to 2.0 crore SHG members. Through village-level awareness programme, about 2.5 crore SHG members will be enrolled under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and 3.0 crore under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). During the campaign period, 750 SAKSHAM Centres will be established across states as a one-stop solution for financial awareness, service delivery and basic grievances redressal. The campaign has already started from 11th January, 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(3) Promoting Digital Transaction at GP level: The main purpose of this campaign is to create awareness and increase the outreach of various digital modes of transactions among women SHG members and their households. The nationwide campaign will be carried out to create awareness to 50,000 Gram Panchayats with 3.0 Crore number of transactions and deployment of 20,000 SHG Members as Business Correspondents Sakhi /Digipay Sakhi/ Paypoints. Apart from this, awareness camps will be organised at Gram Panchayat level also. This campaign started from 1st February, 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(4) Social Mobilisation of Eligible Rural Women in SHG Network: This Campaign aims to motivate eligible rural women to join the SHG Network, to bring eligible SHGs into VOs (Village Organisations) fold, to bring eligible VOs into Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) fold and to release capitalisation support to eligible SHGs. The campaign aims to mobilise a total of 10 crore rural households by end of the FY 2023-24 with an objective to bring all vulnerable and marginalised rural households under SHGs and draw benefits provided through this Government initiative. It is expected that 20-lakh left-out households shall be mobilised and more than 60,000 SHGs shall be formed during the period.

(5) Plantation Drive on Riverbanks: Under this campaign, plantation drive under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA will be conducted on the riverbanks. During the campaign period, around 4.0 crore plants will be planted in around 20,000 km of river banks. The campaign started on 1st March, 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(6) Swastha Mahila Samridhdha Samaj: This campaign is led by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW), which will promote health as a Credit-plus activity among Women SHGs in villages for making 'Wellness' a people's movement and lay emphasis on prevention and control of cancer in women – focus on screening for breast cancer and cervical cancer. During the campaign period, 10 lakh cancer screening/awareness camps will be organised by PRIs/NRLM units on functional HWCs across the country. It is also expected that 2.5 crore women will be screened for breast cancer & cervical cancer each (25 for cervical cancer and 25 for breast cancer per camp * 10 lakh camps) and cumulatively eight crore footfall for

access to women care at AB-HWCs at the end of the campaign period. This campaign started on 14th January, 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(7) Natural Farming with SHG Women: This campaign will be led by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW). The campaign will ensure the restoration of soil health, including the capture of atmospheric carbon to mitigate climate change, reversal of biodiversity loss at the farm and local ecosystem levels and maintain/recycle scarce farm resources. During the campaign period, formation/ facilitation of 10 women-only Farmer Produce Organisations (FPOs) (One FPO has a membership of a minimum ten, which may go up to 2000 based on the availability of members) and organising special campaigns on National/International important days will be ensured. An awareness campaign has already been organised involving around 440 (Progressive Women farmers/members of FPOs/RCs/SHGs and Krishi Sakhis of NRLM/SRLMs/Women Agri-preneurs This campaign started from 11th February 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(8) Pashudhan Jagriti Abhiyan- Intensive Awareness in Aspirational Districts: This Campaign is being led by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DoAH&D). In this campaign, efforts will be made to effectively transform the 112 most under-developed districts across the country by organising around 16,000 village-level camps to spread awareness on entrepreneurship and other schemes of the Department, Scientific Management of Disease and Conducting Animal Health Camps at Aspirational districts ensuring the Jan Bhagidari. Two Animal Health camps per district will be organised in all aspirational districts, and in each health camp 100 farmers will be participating. The virtual camps will be disseminated on various social media platforms of the Department, and State AH district institutions will mobilise the farmers for Animal Health camps. In addition to this 224 Animal Health camps will be organized in all aspirational districts benefiting around 22,400 farmers. The campaign started from 22nd February, 2023 and will continue till August, 2023.

(9) SVAMITVA-Meri Sampatti, Mera Haq: This Campaign is led by Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR). The campaign aims to provide 'Record of Rights' to property owners in inhabited area (abadi) of a village by the use of latest drone-based survey technology under SVAMITVA Scheme. It aims to generate 1.50 crore "Records of Rights"/ Property Cards under SVAMITVA Scheme by August 2023. The campaign started from 18th April, 2023 and will continue till 30th June, 2023.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PIB, APRIL 17, 2023

Indian Railways registers record Revenue of Rs. 2.40 Lakh Cr. for FY 2022-23

This is nearly Rs 49000 Cr. more than previous year, reflecting 25% growth

Freight revenue too has leapfrogged to Rs. 1.62 lakh Cr, a growth of nearly 15%

Passenger revenues registered an all time high growth of 61% to reach Rs 63,300 Cr.

Indian Railways is now fully meeting pension expenditures

Operating Ratio of 98.14% registered, well within the Revised Estimates

Indian Railways has registered record revenue figures of Rs. 2.40 Lakh Crores for Financial Year 2022-23. This is nearly Rs.49,000 Crores more than the previous year, reflecting 25% growth. During this financial year 2022-23, Freight revenue too has leapfrogged to Rs.1.62 lakh Crores, a growth of nearly 15% on previous year. Indian Railways' passenger revenues have registered an all-time high growth of 61% to reach Rs.63,300 Crores. After three years, Indian Railways is able to fully meet the pension expenditures. Buoyancy in revenues and tight expenditure management have helped in achieving an Operating Ratio of 98.14%, well within the RE target. After meeting all revenue expenditure, Railways generated Rs 3200 Crores for Capital investment from its internal resources (Rs.700 Cr for DRF, Rs. 1000 Cr for DF and Rs 1516.72 Cr for RRSK)

In terms of Traffic revenue, Indian Railways earned Rs 63,300 Cr. as passenger revenue in 2022-23 as compared to Rs 39,214 Cr. in 2021-22 which is 61% higher than the last financial year. Indian Railways earned Rs 5951 Cr as other coaching revenue in 2022-23 as compared to Rs 4899 Cr during 2021-22 which is 21% higher than the last financial year, Sundries revenue stood at Rs 8440 Cr during FY 22-23 as compared to Rs

6067 Cr in 2021-22 which is 39% higher than the last year. During 2022-23, Gross revenue stood at Rs 2,39,803 Cr compared to Rs 1,91,278 Cr in 2021-22. Also, Gross Traffic receipts stood at Rs 2,39,750 Cr as compared to Rs 1,91,206 Cr in 2021-22. Total Railway Receipts during 22-23 is Rs 2,39,892 Cr as compared to Rs. 1,91,367 Cr. in 2021-22. Total Railway expenditure during 22-23 is Rs 2,37,375 Cr as compared to Rs 2,06,391 Cr. in 2021-22. Operating ratio during FY 22-23 is 98.14%.

Rs 1 lakh cr was invested in augmenting capacity of network. FY23 saw highest ever commissioning of New lines and Doubling/Multi-tracking etc of 5243 KMs.6565 KMs of Track were electrified with investment of Rs 6657 cr, propelling Railways towards achieving goal of 100% electrification in current fiscal.Railways are focused on providing safety highest priority. An investment of Rs 11,800 Cr under Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh was made during FY23 for various safety works. Government while appreciating the need for renewal of ageing assets, has provided Rs 10,000 Cr, and Railways also contributed Rs 1800 Cr from internal resources for upgradation of depreciated assets.Total investment of Rs 25,913 Cr was made towards safety in strengthening Tracks, Bridges, Grade separators etc.The higher investments in DFC and Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project has ensured rapid progress in these projects. NHR SCL was provided Rs. 12,000 Cr and DFCCIL Rs 14900 Cr.Vande Bharat is being proliferated on the system. Wagon procurement jumped by 77.6% over previous year to 22,747 wagons. Modern Rolling stock of Rs 44,291 Cr was procured for better passenger comfort and for augmenting Railways loading capacity.

During 2022-23, Total GBS was Rs 1,59,244 Cr. as compared to Rs 1,17,507 Cr. during 21-22. Total capex was Rs 2,03,983 Cr as compared to Rs 1,90,267 Cr in 2021-22.

PIB, APRIL 18, 2023

16.03 lakh new employees added under ESI Scheme in February, 2023

Around 11,000 new establishments registered under ESI Scheme in February, 2023

16.03 lakh new employees have been added in Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI Scheme) in the month of February, 2023, as per provisional payroll data released by Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC).

As per data, around 11,000 new establishments have been registered in the month of February, 2023 under the Employees' State Insurance Scheme ensuring social security cover to their employees.

Employees up to the age group of 25 years constitute the majority of new registrations, as 7.42 lakh employees amounting to 46% of the total employees added in the month, belong to this age group. It shows that the youth of the nation are getting good employment opportunities in the country. Gender-wise analysis of payroll data of February, 2023 indicates addition of 3.12 lakh female workers under ESI Scheme. The data shows that a total 49 transgender employees got registered under ESI Scheme in the month of February 2023. It shows that ESIC is committed to deliver its benefits to every section of the society.

The payroll data is provisional since the data generation is a continuous exercise.

TELEGRAPH, APRIL 20, 2023

Quick change: Editorial on Karnataka govt's decision on reservations

The state government ignored every principle, including the need for discussions with stakeholders, before this major change

There has grown a sense of limitless power among governments. The Karnataka government calmly withdrew the 4% reservation given to Muslims among other backward classes in the state and divided it between the powerful Lingayats and Vokkaligas at 2% each. It may or may not be relevant that the assembly elections are in May. The OBC-minority group was shifted to the economically weaker section quota which, presumably,

it will share with Brahmins. One of the chief objections to the EWS quota was that it excluded all groups that received reservations, that is, it was meant for higher castes alone. The Karnataka government ignored every principle, including the need for discussions with stakeholders, before this major change. The Backward Classes Commission headed by the former apex court judge, O. Chinnappa Reddy, had, after meticulous surveys, concluded that Muslims in Karnataka were socially and educationally backward, apart from being poorly represented, and were therefore fit candidates for reservations. This was before the Sachar Committee report made the same findings for India. Even the Supreme Court reportedly found the Karnataka government's action hasty, its grounds shaky and flawed.

The issue, though, is not just one of procedural glitches. The change should revive the discussion about the fundamental reason for reservations as presented in the Constitution. Those citizens whose backwardness is the result of historic injustice need a leg up. Such affirmative action is deployed in cases of social and educational backwardness — excluding the 'creamy layer' — that has led to poor representation in the different spheres of the country's activity. The Constitution, by forbidding discrimination on the basis of religion, had appeared to make quotas possible only within the majority religion, but social and educational backwardness unrelated to religion among certain groups, as in Karnataka, did bring about quotas for Dalit-minorities. The principle behind such reservations is that behind all affirmative action — backwardness, not poverty, and poor representation. So the tussle — deliberations on granting reservation to Dalit Muslims and Christians continue — over it seems strange. The problem would appear to lie elsewhere, and it is a problem with the entire system of reservations. Politicians have increasingly used quotas to shore up their vote banks, turning reservations into one more electoral carrot. Shifting populations from one reservation box to another is possibly another manifestation of political intent, apart from being a display of the state government's power. Both are equally sinister.

STATESMAN, APRIL 20, 2023

Power of the PM's words

With over three decades of my association with this sector and being on the wheel chair myself, I have observed that the nation faces certain pressing challenges when it comes to divyangjans. The three most crucial ones are unproductivity, education and accessibility.

SANJANA GOYAL

In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a unique suggestion for the listeners of 'Mann ki Baat' - "I thought that we call or know people as handicapped since they are lacking in some ways in terms of their body structure or whose organs do not function properly. However, when we interact with them, we realize that...God has bestowed upon them some different power which we cannot see with our eyes, but it is only when we see them working that we realise their talent.

So, I thought why not use the term 'Divyang' instead of 'viklang' in our country." This was the start of a revolutionary approach towards inclusivity and accessibility in the field of disability and I can confidently say that this is the power of this medium, which the Prime Minister has realised and internalised. With over three decades of my association with this sector and being on the wheel chair myself, I have observed that the nation faces certain pressing challenges when it comes to divyangjans. The three most crucial ones are unproductivity, education and accessibility.

However, in the past decade, a paradigm shift has been seen in the country under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister. With the vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', the launch of the Accessible India Campaign, on 3 December 2015, was a necessary step taken in the direction of providing equal opportunity to persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of life and live independently. But along with this

Government policy, it was equally necessary to initiate a change in the narrative around such people or as I like to call it, “Mass Advocacy for Behaviour Change”.

Today after seven years of that radio address, the change in the attitude of people towards persons with disabilities is quite apparent in society. ‘Mann ki Baat’ connects our Prime Minister directly with the masses where he speaks extensively about the cause and this generates energy for individuals and organizations to work more in their respective areas. It has helped change public perception about persons with disabilities across sectors, be it media, education or sports, for which several Paralympians have even thanked the Prime Minister. From inviting ideas for innovation that may assist the divyangjan to increasing awareness regarding the existing initiatives and policies for them, the Prime Minister frequently utilises the platform of ‘Mann ki Baat’ to not let the light go out on this important subject.

Even the smallest of innovative and inspiring initiatives being taken in the country are brought to the fore by him in his radio address. Take for example Muscular Dystrophy, an inherited disorder that causes progressive loss of muscle mass, which was highlighted in the 95th episode of Mann Ki Baat aired on 27 November 2022, where the Prime Minister talked about our institute, Indian Association of Muscular Dystrophy that worked wonders in spreading awareness around the disease. Although there is a long, long way to go, the renewed interest in the lives and rights of persons with disabilities is what will take us to newer heights of success.

As this transformative ‘Mann Ki Baat’ programme is reaching an important milestone of 100 episodes on 30 April 2023. I am hopeful that this platform will be an important medium to realize the vision of an inclusive India, even in times to come. Some of the important subjects that require more awareness are ‘Universal Design’ to increase accessibility for divyangjans, the approach of ‘Reasonable Accommodation’ to create a

level playing field for divyangjans in the workplace, and promoting a substantial market opportunity for potential startups and innovators to enter the Assistive Touch (AT) sector with its demand on the rise.

India's presidency of the G20 with the theme "One Earth – One Family – One Future" presents an opportunity to prioritize the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in discussions surrounding growth and development. This would position India as a global leader in promoting inclusivity and accessibility – a noble goal to aim for as India approaches its centenary.

To this end, it is suggested that a yearlong campaign be implemented wherein the 11th of every month is designated as a "Special Day for Disability." This day would be an occasion to commemorate, celebrate, and support persons with disabilities by offering jobs, sharing stories of courage and initiatives, and there is no better platform than 'Mann Ki Baat' to initiate this idea. The choice of 11 as the symbolic date signifies the concept that small efforts when combined can yield significant outcomes. Thus, every contribution towards promoting disability rights and inclusion is valuable and should be acknowledged. I am looking forward to the upcoming 100th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' and to hear our Prime Minister's words of wisdom on various issues of national importance. I am confident that the steps taken by the Government, that are instilling a 'Can Do' attitude in all of us, will continue to be talked about and featured in and through 'Mann Ki Baat' so that the whole country can be filled with enthusiasm for building an inclusive India, fulfilling the 'Panch Pran' given by the Prime Minister, as we walk into 'Amrit Kaal'.

ECONOMIC TIMES, APRIL 20, 2023

Cumulative impact of monetary policy actions still unfolding: RBI Gov Shaktikanta Das in MPC meeting

In the Monetary Policy Committee meeting earlier this month, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das opined that the cumulative impact of the monetary policy actions over the last one year is still unfolding and needs to be monitored closely.

RBI Governor, along with the five other members of MPC, voted for a pause in rate hike.

"The cumulative impact of our monetary policy actions over the last one year is still unfolding and needs to be monitored closely," Das said during the last Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting held during April 3-6, as per the MPC minutes released on Thursday. RBI effected six back-to-back hikes in the key short-term lending rate (repo) since May 2022 to check high inflation. The central bank decided to take a pause early this month. The cumulative rate hike since May 2022 is 250 basis points. Inflation for 2023-24 is projected to soften, but the disinflation towards the target is likely to be slow and protracted. The projected inflation in Q4:2023-24 at 5.2 per cent would still be well above the target, he noted. "Therefore, at this juncture, we have to persevere with our focus on bringing about a durable moderation in inflation and at the same time give ourselves some time to monitor the impact of our past actions. Das said, "I am, therefore, of the view that we do a tactical pause in this meeting of the MPC", as per the minutes of the MPC meeting released by the RBI.

MPC member and RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra said that an ongoing assessment of the macroeconomic outlook should inform a preparedness to re-calibrate monetary policy towards a more restrictive stance with consistent actions, should risks to the inflation trajectory materialise and impede its alignment with the target. The process of getting inflation back to target could turn out to be gradual and uneven but the mission of monetary policy is to shepherd this process through potential bumps while containing second-round effects and anchoring inflation expectations, he added.

The retail inflation in March fell to a 15-month low of 5.66 per cent and came back to the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent.

PIONEER, APRIL 23, 2023

‘Blue economy’ as next great frontier

This economy encompasses cross-cutting sectors, ranging from fisheries and aquaculture to maritime transportation and renewable energy

Wedged behind towering skyscrapers is the 800-year-old Worli Koliwada, the home of Koli community in Mumbai. A lively fish market typically awaits visitors at the entrance of these settlements. However, behind the charm of such “artisanal fishing” is a tale of threats to their very source of livelihood, fish, to a receding and restricted shoreline. The upcoming coastal road is built on land reclaimed from the sea and the long-term impact of the reclamation on the availability of fish stock hasn’t been assessed.

Worli Koliwada is just a tiny blip on the 7,516-km-long jawline of the country that abuts the sea. This long coastline was the subject of a performance audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India last year. By its very nature, a performance audit goes beyond conventional audit to evaluate the key challenges in say, a programme or a scheme and provide actionable recommendations to the Government. This audit on the conservation of coastal ecosystems in India covered ecological, societal and economic issues on the coastline under the larger gamut of the blue economy.

The blue economy emerged as one of the two priority areas (the second theme being Responsible Artificial Intelligence) for collaboration amongst Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of G20 nations — the SAI20 — at the meeting in Guwahati in mid-March under the chairmanship of the Comptroller and Auditor General of

India. The coastline of G20 countries accounts for 45 per cent of that of the world's and India's theme found an encouraging resonance among the member SAIs.

The blue economy encompasses a wide range of cross-cutting sectors ranging from fisheries and aquaculture to maritime transportation and renewable energy, making it a complex and labyrinthine landscape to navigate in the audit. But it also holds tremendous value. The World Bank pegs the economic potential of ocean resources at \$24 trillion to provide livelihood to over 3 billion people. India has 1.85 lakh licenced vessels for industrial fishing, besides small-scale artisanal fishery that bears a significant footprint of fisherwomen.

Living in fishing hamlets with a proud history like Worli Koliwada and now, sharing the same uncertain future. Nearly 34 per cent of global fish stocks are currently overfished, and another 60 per cent are fished at their maximum sustainable level. Ocean ecosystems are under threat from many directions. For instance, ballast water of large shipping vessels has brought along alien invasive species like *Mytella Strigata*, a mussel of South American origin, which has wiped out populations of green mussel (*Perna viridis*) in the Ramsar site of Ashtamudi Lake in Kerala, besides threatening the survival of indigenous clam and backwater oysters.

The enormous potential of the blue economy cannot be realised without addressing critical issues such as marine biodiversity conservation, gender equity and effective coastal spatial planning. Spatial planning divides the coastal map into thousands of bite-sized squares. For instance, the Worli hamlet falls in grid number 75 in a 100-plus grid for the coastline in Maharashtra. Each grid demarcates an ecologically sensitive zone, supported by management plans that specify the (permissible) activities that it can sustain — fisheries, tourism, infrastructure projects etc.

One of the areas examined in the performance audit was the extent of compliance with management plans for grids along 6,100 km of the coastline, which would have been impossible to check but for the use of a

technology-enabled toolkit. Using GIS software, the grids were assigned geographical attributes that transformed the management plan maps into dynamically active spatial files with grids colour-coded on the grade of their ecological sensitivity. By transposing on this base (of “what should be”), the images from Google Earth (of “what is”), the auditors could see how far the on-site reality differed from what is mandated.

The toolkit revealed, among others, a racetrack in a Coastal Regulation Zone-1 area in Pattipulam in Tamil Nadu; Coastal Regulation Zone-1 being the ecologically most sensitive in the hierarchy of regulated areas. While resorts and shopping malls dotted “no development zones” along the coastline of Kerala. This toolkit is not just an audit resource shared by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India at the SAI20 meeting. It can be adapted for use by the Government for oversight of compliance with the coastal management plans. And since it uses open resources, the same tools can be put together in an app that allows communities to partner government in conservation as “blue marshals”.

Imagine if the Kolis were to be drafted to monitor activities in grid number 75. And what if the Kolis could join hands with other fishing communities along the coast — just as auditors and Governments join hands under the G20 banner — to protect the waters which, in any case, recognise no grids or boundaries? The waters bind us to one earth, one family and one future and as Amitav Ghosh reminds us: “No place was so remote as to escape the flood of history.”

(Mathai is the Additional Deputy CAG and Gahlaut is Senior AO, CAG of India)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PIB, APRIL 17, 2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh addresses G20 meeting, describes India as an emerging Space economy

Minister says, India is one of the very few countries who have built end to end capability in Space. As a result, there is a huge demand for Space based services which have huge commercial potential.

Addressing the inaugural session of G20 Space Economy Leaders Meeting here today, 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 described India as an emerging Space economy. G20 Space Economy Leaders Meeting is being organised under India's G20 presidency by the Department of Space, Government of India,

The Minister said that India is one of the very few countries who have built end to end capability in space. Over these years, space technology has penetrated to all walks of life. As a result, there is a huge demand for space based services which have huge commercial potential, he said.



Dr Jitendra Singh said that under the able leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government has decided to open up the space sector for the Indian private industry through the 2020 Space Sector reforms to enhance their participation in end-to-end space activities with hand holding of ISRO. The Minister further said that the reforms aim to make private industries a co-traveller in India's Space journey by allowing them to undertake independent end to end space activities. The increased private industry participation will eventually result in increased contribution of India in the global space economy.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that a nodal entity called Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Center IN-SPACE has been created towards promoting and authorising private industries participation. The creation of IN-SPACE has received overwhelming response from the Indian space industry. The first privately built sounding rocket was launched last November and a space start-up has established a launch pad inside ISRO's launch complex. A few start-ups have built and launched satellites, he added. The Minister said that in order to give further boost to private investments, the Union Cabinet had approved India's space policy which envisages and encourages private participation in all areas of space activities.

Dr Jitendra Singh appreciated the Department of Space for organising the Space Economy Leaders Meeting at Bengaluru and a Precursor event at Shillong. He added that the major objective of these events should be to make Space as a formal element of G20 discussions, in future. The Minister concluded by wishing all the best to the diplomats, heads of national space agencies and the space industries from G20 and guest countries for participating in the deliberations.

PIB, APRIL 17, 2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, "YUVA PORTAL", launched today will help in connecting and identifying potential young Start-Ups

While launching the NPL's "One Week -One Lab" program in New Delhi, Dr Jitendra Singh again underlined that unless the Stakeholders' Participation is broad-based, particularly the Industry, the StartUps may not remain sustainable for want of proper industry mapping and right aptitude.



Hails the launching of the astronomy lab in Haryana's Karnal and said it will provide level-playing field to all and even Divyangs can excel in various forms of skill, art and craft; Says, facility in different languages to start with will enable hearing impaired students to learn about sun, moon and stars apart from simple to complex concepts of space. 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 launched "YUVA PORTAL", which will help in connecting and identifying potential young Start-Ups. While launching the NPL's "One Week -One Lab" program in New Delhi, Dr Jitendra Singh again underlined that unless the stakeholders' participation is broad-based, particularly the Industry, the StartUps may not remain sustainable for want of proper industry mapping and right aptitude, he cautioned.

It may be recalled that Union Minister, Dr Jitendra Singh had launched "One Week- One Lab" campaign on 6th Jan 2023. Highlighting India's global excellence in technology, innovation and Start-Ups, Dr Jitendra Singh said each of the 37 CSIR (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research) Labs spread across the country is dedicated to a different exclusive area of work and the "on week, one lab" campaign will offer an opportunity to each one of them to showcase the work being done by it so that others can avail of it and stakeholders learn about it. Dr Jitendra Singh referred to PM's address at 108th Indian Science Congress held in Nagpur this Tuesday, when he said, "We are also seeing the results of the scientific approach with which today's India is moving forward. India is fast becoming one of the top countries of the world in the field of science.

Dr Jitendra Singh also hailed the launching of the astronomy lab that has come up in Haryana's Karnal and said it will provide level-playing field to all and even Divyangs can excel in various forms of skill, art and

craft. He said, the facility in different languages to start with will enable hearing impaired students to learn about sun, moon and stars, apart from simple to complex concepts of space.

It may be informed that the Indian Sign Language AstroLab has 65 pieces of equipment, including a large telescope, interactive models, audio visual aids, and fun fact posters and a 24 X 7 virtual access to stream over 90 videos, including biopics, hands-on demonstrations, fun facts, and explanatory videos about simple to complex concepts of space and science in Indian sign language. Dr Jitendra Singh said, with today's program, in which all labs of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) will reach out to public to not only showcase their technologies but also to ignite the minds of young innovators, students, start-ups, academia, and industry to look for opportunities through deep tech ventures. In the "One Week, One Lab" campaign, in successive weeks, each of the CSIR labs is showcasing their exclusive innovations and technological breakthroughs to the people of India. The CSIR laboratories are unique and specialise in the specific areas which span from genome to geology, food to fuel, minerals to materials, and so on.

Dr Jitendra Singh recalled that CSIR-NPL is the custodian of Indian Standard Time (IST), generated using an atomic time scale consisting of Cesium atomic clocks and Hydrogen masers. Not just that, IST is kept traceable within a few nanoseconds to the international reference time UTC (coordinated Universal Time) using ultra-precise satellite links. Come and witness how CSIR-NPL keeps the nation's time ticking! Did you know that the CSIR-NPL standardised the measurements of gas and airborne particles for monitoring atmospheric pollution?

CSIR-NPL Director, Prof Venugopal Achanta said, "CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (NPL) is going to organise the One Week- One Lab program from 17-21 April, 2023. The aim of this program is to create awareness about the available technologies and services present at NPL among potential stakeholders, to

provide solutions to societal problems, to sensitise the masses about the importance of precise measurements and to develop the scientific temperament among masses especially amongst students who are the future of the country”.

Dr Achanta said 180 schools of Delhi -NCR were exposed to NPL to labs for different activities and more and more schools will be thrown open for such open interactions in future.

It preserves and maintains the measurement standards of length, mass, temperature etc including the task of dissemination of the Indian Standard Time (IST). NPL is conducting multidisciplinary R&D with a mission to establish the futuristic quantum standards and upcoming technologies so that India remains on par with international measurement laboratories. It is developing sophisticated analytical equipment (i.e. import substitutes) under “Make in India” programme to cater the ever increasing demands of emerging India and training of young scientists and industry personnel in the area of measurements under “Skill India” programme.

From April 18-20, there will be three days of Start-up/MSME/Industry Meet. The aim of this event is to showcase various services extended by NPL to industries. In this event, all stakeholders have been invited whom NPL has helped/connected/provided technological support/ consultancy/ services. During this event each day, more than 20 industries will be joining where they will not only showcase their technologies/services (where NPL has contributed) but also talk about NPL’s scientific and technological help they have received. Several other crucial issues will be discussed related to the innovation framework and ecosystem. MoUs with 4 new industry partners will be signed for technology transfer and development. On 19th April, the Metrology Conclave will be organised where a Handbook on Advances in Metrology at CSIR-NPL will be released.

CSIR-NPL's Role and Efforts in the field of Metrology, CSIR-NPL Road Map for Future and Developing National and International Collaborations, panel discussion are the other attributes of the metrology conclave.

On 20th April, R&D Conclave & Women in STEM is planned where eminent scientists of the NPL family and alumni will share their vision and showcase the role of CSIR-NPL in recent advancements in science and technology. The focus of this one-day event will be on Women's empowerment during the above-said event and a series of activities will be conducted by women scientists to discuss the recent trend in Research and Development, Challenges, and Opportunities for Women in STEM Careers. Also, there will be a documentary film to showcase renowned Women Scientists in India. On 21st April, a one-day Skill Conclave will be held. The prime focus of the conclave is to sensitise/educate masses about CSIR-NPL's skill program and inspire locals by hosting various expert lectures and skill demonstrations in the fields related to all aspects of our lives. To train skilled manpower needed in the country by different industries, academia, and society, CSIR-NPL is carrying out, from time to time, many events.

PIB, APRIL 19, 2023

Cabinet approves National Quantum Mission to scale-up scientific & industrial R&D for quantum technologies

National Quantum Mission received cabinet approval at a total cost of Rs. 6003.65 crore, to scale up scientific and industrial R&D, for accelerating Quantum Technology led economic growth and leverage India into a leading nation in the area

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, today approved the National Quantum Mission (NQM) at a total cost of Rs. 6003.65 crore from 2023-24 to 2030-31, aiming to seed, nurture and scale up scientific and industrial R&D and create a vibrant & innovative ecosystem in Quantum

Technology (QT). This will accelerate QT led economic growth, nurture the ecosystem in the country and make India one of the leading nations in the development of Quantum Technologies & Applications (QTA).

The new mission targets developing intermediate scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits in 8 years in various platforms like superconducting and photonic technology. Satellite based secure quantum communications between ground stations over a range of 2000 kilometres within India, long distance secure quantum communications with other countries, inter-city quantum key distribution over 2000 km as well as multi-node Quantum network with quantum memories are also some of the deliverables of the Mission.

The mission will help develop magnetometers with high sensitivity in atomic systems and Atomic Clocks for precision timing, communications and navigation. It will also support design and synthesis of quantum materials such as superconductors, novel semiconductor structures and topological materials for fabrication of quantum devices. Single photon sources/detectors, entangled photon sources will also be developed for quantum communications, sensing and metrological applications.

Four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) will be set up in top academic and National R&D institutes on the domains - Quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing & Metrology and Quantum Materials & Devices. The hubs will focus on generation of new knowledge through basic and applied research as well as promote R&D in areas that are mandated to them. NQM can take the technology development ecosystem in the country to a globally competitive level. The mission would greatly benefit communication, health, financial and energy sectors as well as drug design, and space applications. It will provide a huge boost to National priorities like digital India, Make in India, Skill India and Stand-up India, Start-up India, Self-reliant India and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

PIB, APRIL 22, 2023

Dr Jitendra Singh addresses World Earth Day celebrations, reiterates 'LiFE' movement launched by PM Modi
Union Minister says , India is committed to furthering sustainable development in line with our culture of living in harmony with nature

Addressing an event organised by the Ministry of Earth Sciences to celebrate World Earth Day here today, 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 reiterated the "LiFE" (Lifestyle for Environment) movement launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said, India is committed to furthering sustainable development in line with our culture of living in harmony with nature. United Nations Ambassador and Grammy Award Winning Indian music composer and environmentalist, Rickey Kej was the special guest of the day whose new music composition on 'Earth and Environment' was launched by Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh. Dr Jitendra Singh recalled that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) Movement in June 2022 and stressed that the need of the hour is to solve the challenge faced by our planet using human-centric, collective efforts and robust action that further sustainable development.

Earth Day is an annual event observed on April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental protection. It was first held in 1970. The theme for World Earth Day 2023 is 'Invest In Our Planet. This ongoing theme encourages us all to invest in a better future for our planet by tackling environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity, and waste reduction. The Minister mentioned that the idea of LiFE was introduced by the Prime Minister during COP26 promotes an environmentally conscious lifestyle that focuses on 'mindful and deliberate utilisation' instead of 'mindless and wasteful consumption'. Dr Jitendra Singh said that the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) holistically addresses all the aspects relating the Earth System Science for providing weather, climate, ocean, coastal state, hydrological and seismological services. The services include forecasts

and warnings for various natural disasters like tropical cyclones, storm surge, floods, heat waves, thunderstorm and lightning; alerts for Tsunamis and monitoring of earthquakes etc. In addition, the ministry also has the mandate of making ocean survey and exploration for living and non-living resources and exploration of all the three poles (Arctic, Antarctic and Himalayas).The Minister added that the services provided by the ministry are being effectively used by different agencies and state governments for saving human lives and minimizing damages due to natural disasters.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the Ministry of Earth Sciences has been supporting celebration of Earth Day / Ozone Day for the purpose, of spreading awareness and sensitizing the general public on the issues concerning to Earth and Earth Sciences in the country. MoES is also supporting celebration of Earth Day at more than 75 places / schools / colleges / Institutions across the country with a focus on Girls students / Differently abled students and aspirational districts.The Minister said the across India, more than 7500 students / volunteers are participating in the activities comprising sowing the seed and seeing then grow as plants / plantation / slogan / rallies / paintings, etc. as part of Earth Day 2023. Moreover popular lectures are being organized at different Institutes including at MoES HQ.

Dr M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, also spoke on the occasion and reiterated the Ministry's commitment to furthering "LiFE" movement and sustainable development in India

MINT,APRIL23,2023

Google Bard set to develop software codes with its latest AI chatbot upgrade

According to Google's announcement on Friday, Bard will possess the ability to code in 20 different programming languages, including Python, C, and Java. Additionally, the AI chatbot will assist users in

debugging and explaining code. On Friday, Google, a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc, announced its plans to enhance its generative AI chatbot, Bard, to aid individuals in coding for software development. The tech giant's move comes as it endeavors to keep pace in the rapidly advancing race for AI technology.

In an effort to catch up with Microsoft Corp, Google recently launched Bard for public use. Microsoft's AI chatbot, ChatGPT, which was released last year by the Microsoft-backed startup OpenAI, sparked a race among technology companies to make AI more accessible to users. Bard is characterized by Google as an experimental project that enables users to collaborate with generative AI, a type of technology that creates content based on past data rather than identifying it.

According to Google's announcement on Friday, Bard will possess the ability to code in 20 different programming languages, including Python, C, and Java. Additionally, the AI chatbot will assist users in debugging and explaining code. Bard will also be capable of optimizing code to enhance its speed and efficiency with uncomplicated prompts like "Could you make that code faster?" At present, only a limited group of users can access Bard and interact with the chatbot by asking questions, rather than utilizing Google's conventional search tool. Google's Bard was introduced last month. The conversational chatbot is aimed at countering the popularity of the ChatGPT tool backed by Microsoft. However, the announcement was termed as 'rushed' and 'botched' by Google employees themselves.

Bard has the capability to present users with three distinct versions or "drafts" of any given response, allowing them to switch between them. Additionally, if a user wishes to obtain web results for a particular query, Bard will display a "Google it" button.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

PIB, APRIL 18, 2023

Shri Bhupender Yadav says India's SCO Presidency is guided by the mantra "TOWARDS A "SECURE" SCO" promoting multilateral, political, security, economic and people-to-people interaction in the region

The Fourth Meeting of the Heads of Ministries and Department of SCO Member States Responsible for Environment Protection was held virtually today under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav. The meeting was attended by high-level delegation from the SCO Member States led by Ministers/Deputy Ministers from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and representative from the SCO Secretariat. Prior to this meeting, there was 3rd Expert Group Level Meeting on 17th April, 2023, 1st Ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on 18 January 2023 and the 2nd Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on 15 February 2023 with four resumed sessions which were all held virtually.

In the Meeting, there were statements/speeches by the SCO Member States on the status and prospects for developing cooperation in the field of environment protection in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states and follow up of the action plan to implement the 2022-24 concept of cooperation in the field of environment protection of SCO member states. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Bhupender Yadav said India's SCO Presidency is guided by the mantra, "TOWARDS A "SECURE" SCO", which was given by our Prime Minister at the Qingdao Summit in 2018. He said India attaches special importance to SCO in promoting multilateral, political, security, economic and people-to-people interaction in the region.

Sharing India's Experiences and LiFE, Shri Yadav mentioned about the Mission LiFE, which was launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 20th October 2022. He invited the SCO community to be a part of Mission LiFE for individual, family and community-based actions. The meeting resulted in adoption of the Joint communiqué on the results of the Fourth Meeting of the Heads of Ministries and Agencies of the SCO Member States Responsible for Environmental Protection Issues, 18th April, 2023, New Delhi. The Joint Communique has been framed on the basis of the SCO Action Plan to implement the 2022-24 concept of cooperation in the field of environment protection.

PIB, APRIL 21, 2023

The sudden presence of elephants in an area can be explained by genetic memories that last for up to five generations

Elephants from Konkan region are also mentioned in Mahabharata: Elephant expert Anand Shinde

Central Bureau of Communication organises various programmes at Chandgad, Kolhapur on the occasion of World Earth Day

Kolhapur, April 17, 2023

Understanding the elephant and taking measures will make it easier to find a solution to the elephant-man conflict. "Elephants tell us what cannot be easily said, , Anand Shinde of Trunk Call the Wildlife Foundation said while speaking at an event organised at Madkholkar College in Chandgad, Kolhapur (Maharashtra) on the occasion of World Earth Day being celebrated on 22nd April. On this occasion, he shared his experiences about pacifying an elephant named Gajraj, who had killed three people in the sanctuary at Tadoba, as well as his other experiences.

He further said that "In Mahabharata also there is a mention of elephants in Konkan region, in Mahabharata it is written in one place that elephants in Aparant area are red, the color of red soil has been associated with the color of elephants in ancient texts. The nature, behavior, mental state of the elephant is very similar to that of a human being and elephants easily express feelings of love, anger, laughter, mockery, etc. "If we want to preserve this very intelligent animal that has very sharp senses which can recognize odors up to seven kilometers away and communicate with each other for up to seven kilometers through sound waves that the human ear cannot hear, it will take at least five years for the efforts we start today to succeed."

Shinde further said that we should remember that we will be safe in our homes only when the elephant is safe in its home, He added that the genetic memory of the elephant lasts for five generations. That's why in some areas where there was never an elephant in the past, elephants suddenly appear and we are surprised. In such a situation, it is likely that earlier generations of elephants lived there, and the present generations of elephants are traversing that area using the genetic memory of geography of that area, but we are unaware of that. Speaking on the occasion, Principal of the college P R Patil expressed hope for greater understanding from human beings in the struggles of humans and animals and opined that the plight of farmers needs to reach to the government.

Central Bureau of Communication, Kolhapur and Forest Range Officer's Office, Chandgad, jointly organised the programme on the occasion of world Earth day being celebrated on April 22. Various awareness programmes were organized at Madkholkar College Chandgad. After guidance from experts on the issue of human and wild animal conflict, the prize distribution for competitions held yesterday was done at the hands of the dignitaries. An awareness round was also taken out by the students in the area. Forest Range Officer Nandkumar Bhosale, Wildlife Expert Girish Punjabi and villagers of nearby villages were present on the occasion.

Trunk Call: the Wildlife Foundation

Trunk Call the Wildlife Foundation is implementing an elephant conservation programme in 70 villages, including 50 villages provided by the Maharashtra Forest Department and another 20 villages that have joined it on their own. Apart from elephant conservation, the biggest part of the programme is to educate people about elephants and bisons. For the past 20 years, the main part of the program has been to give elephants an elephant's corridor, restore their food chain that has ended, and secure their habitat, rather than bursting crackers, planting bio fences and blocking the elephant's path through trenches. The organization and the forest department will continue to strive for the next few years to help reduce the conflict between elephants and humans.

CURRENT EVENTS

PIB, APRIL 17, 2023

3rd meeting of the Education Working Group scheduled to be held in Bhubaneswar from April 27-28, 2023 and Precursor events to be held from April 23-26, 2023

Month long Jan Bhagidhari events already underway in the state in the run-up to Education Working Group meeting in Bhubaneswar; Participation from more than 86000 people across schools and institutes in Odisha

Secretary, Higher Education, Shri K. Sanjay Murthy; Secretary Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari and Secretary Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education Shri Sanjay Kumar today held a curtain raiser press conference on the upcoming 3rd Education Working Group meeting and precursory events in Bhubaneswar. While addressing the press conference Shri Murthy informed that the 3rd meeting of the Education Working Group will be held in Bhubaneswar from April 27-28, 2023 and the precursor events to the G20 Education Working Group Meetings would be held from April 23-26, 2023. A special exhibition on the theme of “Future of Work” will be organized and will be open to public between April 23-25 and then on April 27 & 28. Delegates from G20 countries would be attending these meetings. The programmes under the Education Working Group, selection of themes and ensuring reach to the youth of the country are being led by the vision and guidance of the Union Minister for Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, he added. In case of Odisha, where the theme is ‘Future of Work’, the activities are based on the vision that there should be widespread deliberations and effective outreach in every district on the emerging skilling requirements and the need for continuous skilling reskilling and up-skilling as relevant to the district.

While addressing media Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari said that with ground-breaking advancements and digitization, the nature of work is witnessing a fundamental change. This change will also bring immense

economic potential while augmenting productivity gains and stimulating growth. He further said that the G20 nations are also experiencing this active evolution in several sectors and can only prepare the youth by equipping them with relevant skills, speed, and agility. Embracing this transformation and finding solutions for the most pressing issues related to the future of work, we look forward to the upcoming third meeting of the Education Working Group in Bhubaneswar. The precursor events and an exhibition, bringing together experts, stakeholders, and thought leaders will help to explore a coordinated approach to prioritize reforms, reimagine learning, redefine talent and at the same time create frameworks for preparing social, political, and business leaders for future of work, he added.

Shri Sanjay Kumar spoke about integration of skills in the school curriculum and equipping children with a range of future skills to set them on a course of lifelong learning. He informed about the breakout session on 'integration of skills in school curriculum' in the workshop on Future of Work between India and Singapore on 25th April of the Working group meeting. The discussions will also be organised on 'equipping children with a range of future skills' to set them on a course of lifelong learning he added. The Secretary also informed that as recommended under NEP 2020, exposure to skill Education from class 6 will be provided. It will be optional for class 9 and 10 and compulsory for class 11 and 12. During the conference, it was informed that drawing inspiration from the Prime Minister's call to make 'Jan Bhagidari' a strong element of India's G20 Presidency, month long events have commenced in the state of Odisha from April 1, 2023 which is also celebrated as "Utkal Dibasa" or "Odisha Day". So far, 86,000 people have participated in the Jan Bhagidari events, such as, Quiz contests, Essay competitions, Declamation contests, Yuva Samvad etc. Seminars have been organized on various topics related to Future of Work like workshop on drone application in agriculture, future of robotics, climate change impact on livestock productivity, future of chemical engineering, decarbonization aluminum production, – towards net zero, etc. Students from schools, ITIs, Polytechnics, colleges including engineering colleges, NSTI and beneficiaries of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) are

participating in these events. These programmes and activities are Youth -Led and Women-Led. Engagement Groups of G20, viz., Start up 20, B20 etc. are also providing support to organize these events across the state. Precursor events are being organized in collaboration with various institutions, such as, IIT Bhubaneswar, IIM Sambalpur, Central University, NIT, IMMT Bhubaneswar, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. Deloitte. CII and USIBC are industry connects for the various events. These week long deliberations would focus on strengthening international collaboration and support in germinating a Framework for Future of Work.

The structure of these events are as follows:

Month long 'Jan Bhagidari' events already commenced from April 1st

Conference on Deep Tech with a focus on advanced technology in Future of Work on April 23rd

Conference on Transforming Logistics for coastal economies with focus on sustainability on April 24th

Workshop on Future of work: Skill Architecture and Governance Models of India and Singapore on April 25th

Seminar on Building Capacities for lifelong learning, in the context of the Future of Work on April 26th

Future of Work exhibition from April 23-25 & April 27-28

3rd G20 Education Working Group meeting from April 27th to April 28th

Mock G20 is being organized in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Democratic Leadership at Siksha Anusandhan (SOA) on April 21st, 2023. The Mock G20 will be organised on the theme of 'Future of Work: Industry 4.0, Innovation and 21st Century Skills' in the following format: 4 Delegates per team x 20 Countries (Total 80 students) plus 20 students representing International Organizations (IOs), multilateral institutions and invitee countries.

An Exhibition on Future of Work is a 6-day exhibition on the theme- 'Future of Work' as a side event to the 3rd Education Working Group meeting from 23rd April to 28th April 2023 at CSIR-IIMT Grounds (except on 26th April). A thirty-four thousand sq. ft exhibition area with 100+ stalls has been setup to provide a glimpse into 'future of work'. The exhibition has representation from industry, academia, civil society, government, etc. focusing on different aspects of 'future of work' converging into a central idea of how we perceive- Work. Worker and Workforce' from the prism of emerging tech with an unprecedented, accelerated pace. The exhibition with an expected footfall of 50 thousand visitors will have experience zones focusing on future of manufacturing, future of governance, future of learning, inclusive growth etc. giving live demos and immersive experiences interactive walls, Holographic displays, AR/VR solutions, 3-D printing, assistive technologies, etc. leveragingThe seminar on Deep Tech will have panel discussion on (1) India's prospects in global semiconductor ecosystem (2) The World of Digitalization focusing on automation, deep tech, digital first future, etc (3) New Age Startups with focus on Deep Tech startups. This session will have senior leaders from the Industry, Government & academia

Seminar on Transforming Logistics for coastal economies with focus on sustainability will have panel discussions on (1) enabling infrastructure for the future focusing on themes like PM Gati Shakti, Sagarmala, etc (2) Challenges posed by climate change focusing on coastal infrastructure, rising sea levels, etc. Workshop

on Future of work: Skill Architecture and Governance Models of India and Singapore focusses on three panel discussions (1) integration of skills in school education curriculum (2) Agile and resilient TVET ecosystem for creating future ready workforce (3) Lifelong learning and skill recognition in the context of future of work. A structured Student-Industry-Academia discussion session has been planned. The key learnings from India and Singapore will be deliberated and an action plan will be developed for the 3 focus areas.

As the state of Odisha has a significant tribal population, a special focus would also be on Tribes of Odisha and their products would be showcased during various events and programmes. As 2023 is the international year of Millets, food festival where millets and local cuisines would be served to introduce the G20 delegates and participant's to India's traditional food.

PIB, APRIL 19, 2023

Ministry of Panchayati Raj organizes National Conference on Child-friendly Panchayat, Women-friendly Panchayat and Panchayat with Self-sufficient Infrastructure to celebrate National Panchayat Awards Week as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - 'Inclusive Development' (Samaveshi Vikaas)

As the celebrations of the National Panchayat Awards Week entered third day, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj organized National Conference on Child-friendly Panchayat, Women-friendly Panchayat and Panchayat with Self-sufficient Infrastructure, in New Delhi on 19th April, 2023. The inaugural address of Shri Alok Prem Nagar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj set the tone for the National Conference, and underlined the importance of grassroots leadership in Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) and its significant role in achieving thematic goals of Child Friendly Panchayat (Theme 3), Women Friendly Panchayat (Theme 9) and Panchayat with Self-sufficient Infrastructure (Theme 6). The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India is celebrating the five-day National Panchayat Awards Week to mark Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) – 'Inclusive Development' (Samaveshi Vikaas) and today's Conference focused

on interactive dialogues with well-performing Panchayats and various key stakeholders for sharing experiences and innovative ideas with regard to three themes of LSDGs viz. Child-friendly Panchayat, Women-friendly Panchayat and Panchayat with Self-sufficient Infrastructure. Audio-visual presentations on commendable works of award-winning Panchayats were also showcased before the participants of the National Conference. On the third day of National Panchayat Awards Week Celebrations, the Technical Session–I on Theme 3: Child Friendly Panchayat was chaired by Smt. Indra Mallo, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women & Child Development and Mission Director of Mission Vatsalya. The composition of the panel included award-winning Gram Panchayats and Domain Experts. The panel discussion started with a brief address by Smt. Indra Mallo on the roadmap for achieving Theme 3 –'Child Friendly Panchayat.' The top three awardees under Theme 3: Child Friendly Panchayat, namely Shri John Mathe from Cheruthana Panchayat, Alappuzha District, Kerala, Shri Makhan Singh Manhas, Sira Panchayat, Udhampur District, Jammu and Kashmir and Shri Dilip Kumar Tripathi, Hansudi Ausanpur Panchayat in Siddharthnagar District, Uttar Pradesh, delivered a keynote address, followed by a short video presentation that described the various initiatives taken by them to establish a Child-friendly Panchayat.

The program continued with a short video film presentation and addresses by Shri Daljeet Kumar, Sarpanch of Daduhi Gram Panchayat, Shri Sandeep Mitra of "CHILD LINE FOUNDATION" and Padma Shri Dr. Abhay Bang of Search Foundation, Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. Smt. Hyun Hee Ban, Chief Social Policy & Social Protection, UNICEF delivered keynote address on interventions for Child-friendly Panchayat and articulated the path forward to attaining the goal of Child-friendly Panchayat. The Elected Representatives of Panchayats from different parts of the country shared their views and experiences on Child-friendly Panchayat.

The Technical Session–II on Theme 9: Women Friendly Panchayat was chaired by Dr. W. R Reddy, Former Director General of NIRD&PR. The panel of Session–II comprised representatives from Gram Panchayats

and Domain Experts. Dr. W. R. Reddy initiated the discussions by giving a brief address on the roadmap for achieving Theme 9, 'Women Friendly Panchayat.'

During the session, the top three awardees for Women-Friendly Panchayat gave short video presentations and addressed the delegates. Smt. Sanaboina Rajitha of Panchayat Aipoor in Suryapet District of Telangana secured the first position, followed by Smt. Amandeep Kaur of Panchayat Fatehpura in Baramulla District of Jammu and Kashmir at the second position, and Smt. Sou Latatai Baburav Kamble of Panchayat Alabad in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra secured the third position.

Moreover, elected representatives of Panchayats and representatives from various organizations such as UNFPA and Action Aid Association also expressed their views and insights. Short video presentations were made by the Sarpanch of Manikpara Gram Panchayat in Jhargram District of West Bengal and the Sarpanch of Leng Gram Panchayat in Serchhip District of Mizoram. Chairing the Technical Session–III of National Conference on Child-friendly Panchayat, Women-friendly Panchayat and Panchayat with Self-sufficient Infrastructure, Shri Amarjeet Sinha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development & Ministry of Panchayati Raj welcomed the Panchayats doing laudable development works related to LSDG Theme 6 – self-reliant infrastructure or self-sufficient infrastructure.

On this occasion, Shri Prahlad Singh, Sarpanch of Laxminagar of South Andaman District of Andaman and Nicobar Islands shared experiences on how he succeeded in ensuring infrastructure development in Gram Panchayat. Smt. Sheeja Surendran, Veeyapuram Panchayat, Alappuzha District, Kerala, spoke about the

various initiatives taken by the Gram Panchayat towards its progress and the establishment of a Self-sufficient Infrastructure Panchayat. Shri Katakam Sridhar Pantulu, Sarpanch, Gambhiraopet Gram Panchayat, Telangana, presented the journey of the Gram Panchayat in securing Third Rank at national level for its spectacular developmental activities under Theme 6 of LSDG – Self-sufficient Infrastructure in Panchayat.

Shri Suresh Chhanga, Deputy Sarpanch of Kunaria Gram Panchayat of Gujarat shared that Kunaria Gram Panchayat is making all-out efforts to improve the quality of life of its citizens and ensuring self-sufficient infrastructure in Gram Panchayat practices that lead to sustainable development. Adarsh Gram Panchayat Longwala of Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan is an example of innovation. Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat, Shri Sunil Kranti is providing education, health, better employment, road construction and other facilities to the villagers. Shri Embissy Kharkongor, Sarpanch, Mawiong (Myllem) Gram Panchayat, Rangbhibih, Meghalaya, delivered a presentation on the various initiatives & awareness programs implemented to empower the villagers and encourage their participation in the development of the village.

Concluding the last technical session for the day, Dr. Anjan Kumar Bhanja of NIRD&PR enlightened all the participating States/UTs with methods, ideas and strategies to achieve Theme 6- Self-sufficient Infrastructure in Panchayat.

The National Conference concluded with a cultural programme presented by cultural troupes of talented and experienced artists of Central Bureau of Communication (erstwhile Song & Drama Division), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

[PIB, APRIL 22, 2023](#)

[Bengaluru Hosts Conference to Help Cities Mainstream Climate Action](#)

National and International partners came together in Bengaluru to discuss “Mainstreaming Climate Action in Cities”, in an effort to shape G20 priorities and develop next steps for accelerating climate action in India and beyond. Three of the six current U20 priority areas (accelerating climate finance, ensuring water security, and encouraging environmentally responsive behavior), were the matter of contention.

Participants concurred that it is necessary for cities to accelerate climate action and receive added support from national governments and international investors to address vulnerabilities due to increasing heat and rainfall. They deliberated that the city governments should consider climate impacts when making budgeting decisions, while leveraging public-private partnerships, municipal green bonds and other innovative financing mechanisms where available. Climate action plans should address water security and resilience; institutional and regulatory reforms should be considered where needed to protect and revitalize vulnerable water resources, mainstream integrated urban water resource management, ensure equitable and safe access to water and reduce risk from water-related hazards like flooding.

“To create sustainable cities, innovative and inclusive city design is crucial. Without it, behavior nudges and policy changes would not work. Let’s tweak policies, implement congestion pricing, and give incentives for sustainable living. We must also broaden the agenda and create neighborhoods where people can step out and enjoy the city. Telangana’s cool roof policy is a great example. Let’s demystify climate finance for a better future.” said Kunal Kumar, Joint Secretary and Smart Cities Mission Director of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India.

Shruti Narayan, C40 Regional Director for South and West Asia, said: “Cities across India and the world are stepping up as climate leaders, but they continue to face daunting capacity constraints as they pursue urgently needed climate action. That’s why city voices are so vital on the national and international stage. This gathering serves as a clarion call for leaders around the world to make our climate a priority.”

Rakesh Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development Department, and Government of Karnataka, said: “Bengaluru is leading the way in sustainable urban infrastructure, with a strong focus on public transport, solid waste management, and citizen engagement. Role of civil society is crucial for collaborative and cohesive solutions.”

The conference was organized by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, together with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in Bengaluru on 21 April 2023. The gathering was part of a series of events organized during India’s G20 Presidency under the ambit of the Urban 20 (U20), which is chaired this year by city of Ahmedabad and supported by MoHUA, with various partner organizations. The key takeaways of this conference will contribute to the U20 communiqué of recommendations, which will be presented to G20 negotiators later this year.

Around 135 people attended in person, in addition to participants joining virtually, including city officials from across the country and region as well as experts, funders and partners. The conference was not only insightful but also interactive with participants engaging with a number of start-ups focused on environmental sustainability and climate solutions.

The conference concluded with a series of plenary sessions and two masterclasses (on leveraging nature-based solutions and climate bonds) for city representatives, urban planners, engineers and other professionals.

About Urban 20

Urban 20 is a city diplomacy initiative that brings together cities from G20 member states under a common frame work to discuss global economic, climate and development issues. The cities form a common position and issue recommendations for consideration by the G20 presidency and heads of state, enhancing the role of cities as global economic and political leaders.

The U20 initiative is permanently convened by C40 Cities and United Cities and Local Governments, under the leadership of a chair city that changes each year. Prior U20 cycles were chaired by Buenos Aires and Paris (2018), Tokyo (2019), Riyadh (2020), Rome and Milan (2021) as well as Jakarta and West Java (2022).

About the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group

C40 is a network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities who are working to deliver the urgent action needed right now to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone, everywhere can thrive. Mayors of C40 cities are committed to using a science-based and people-focused approach to help the world limit global heating to 1.5°C and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities. Through a Global Green New Deal, mayors are working alongside a broad coalition of representatives from labour, business, the youth climate movement and civil society to go further and faster than ever before.

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PIB, APRIL 24, 2023

Shri Bhupender Yadav launches new features in eShram Portal to enhance utility of the portal and facilitate ease of registration for unorganised workers

Union Minister for Labour & Employment and Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, launched new features in eShram Portal today in presence of Ms. Arti Ahuja, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment and other Senior officers of the Ministry. (Launch of new features in eShram portal by Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Minister for Labour & Employment and Environment, Forest and Climate Change) The new features added in eShram portal will enhance the utility of the portal and facilitate ease of registration for unorganised workers. The eShram registered workers can now connect with Employment opportunities, Skilling, Apprenticeship, Pension Scheme, Digital Skilling and States' schemes through eShram portal.

A feature of capturing family details of migrant worker has been added to the eShram portal. This feature can help in providing Child education and women centric schemes to the migrant workers who have migrated with family. Further, a new feature on sharing of data of construction workers registering on eShram with the concerned Building and Other Construction Workers' (BOCW) Welfare Board, has been added to ensure registration of eShram construction workers with the respective BOCW board and access to the schemes meant for them. The Union Minister also formally launched Data Sharing Portal (DSP) for sharing of eShram data with the State/ UT Governments. Data Sharing Portal will allow sharing of eShram beneficiaries data with the respective States and Union Territories in a secured manner for targeted implementation of social security/welfare schemes for the unorganised workers registered on eShram. Recently, Ministry initiated mapping of different schemes data with eShram data to identify the eShram registrants who have not yet

received the benefits of these schemes. This data is also being shared with States/UTs based on which, States/UTs can identify unorganised workers who have not yet received benefit of the social welfare/security schemes and provide schemes' benefit to them, on priority. Ministry of Labour & Employment is continuously working for the welfare of workers in the country. In this endeavour, Ministry launched eShram portal on 26th August 2021 to create a comprehensive National Database of Unorganised Workers which is seeded with Aadhaar. As on 21st April 2023, over 28.87 crore unorganised workers have registered on eShram portal.

PIB, APRIL 24, 2023

28 States / UTs adopt the National Generic Document Registration System for Land Records

Bhu-Aadhar adopted by 26 States/UTs and pilot testing done in 7 more States /UTs

As many as 28 States / UTs have adopted the National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) for Land Records. The Department of Land Resources (DoLR) says eRegistration is being done in these States/UTs or they have started sharing data with the national portal of NGDRS through User Interface / API.

According to the latest data provided by the Land Resources Division of the DoLR, Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) or Bhu-Aadhar has been adopted by 26 States/UTs and pilot testing done in 7 more States /UTs. Some States are also using ULPIN in SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) portal. As on 18.04.2023, computerization of Record of Rights (RoRs) has been completed in 6,22,030 (94.62%) villages out of 6,57,403 villages. 1,28,72,020 Cadastral maps/FMBs have been digitized (75.62%) out of 1,70,22,935 Maps/FMBs) while Cadastral maps have been linked to RoRs in 4,22,091 villages (64.21%) out of 6,57,403 villages. 4922 (92.82%) Sub Registrar Offices (SROs) have been computerized and 4031 (76.01%) SROs integrated with Revenue Offices out of a total of 5303 SROs. 3297 (85.73%) Modern Record Rooms (MRRs) have been established out of sanctioned 3846 MRRs (Total MRR-6866).

The Department of Land Resources is implementing the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) with effect from 01.04.2016 as a Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding by Government of India. The Department has achieved 100% expenditure target of Budget Estimates of Rs.239.25 crore fixed in respect of DILRMP for the year 2022-23.

PIB, APRIL 24, 2023

PM addresses 'Chintan Shivir' of Ministers of Youth Affairs & Sports of States/UTs being held in Imphal, Manipur

Northeast and Manipur have significantly contributed to taking forward the sports tradition of the country: PM

Northeast adds new colours to the country's cultural diversity and provides new dimensions to the country's sports diversity: PM

Central and State government should come together and have an open discussion on how to promote sports in their respective states : Shri Anurag Singh Thakur

Completion of National Sports University (NSU) is underway and would play an important role in shaping the future of Sports: Shri Biren Singh

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the 2-day 'Chintan Shivir' of Ministers of Youth Affairs & Sports of States/UTs being held in Imphal, Manipur today via video message.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister expressed delight that ‘Chintan Shivir’ is taking place in Manipur this year and many sportspersons from the Northeast have raised the glory of the Tricolour by winning medals for the country. The Prime Minister highlighted the indigenous games of the region such as Sagol Kangjai, Thang-ta, Yubi Lakpi, Mukna and Hiang Tannaba, and said that they are very attractive in their own right. “Northeast and Manipur have significantly contributed to taking forward the sports tradition of the country”, Shri Modi added. Further explaining the indigenous games, the Prime Minister mentioned Oo-Lawabi of Manipur which resembles Kabaddi, Hiyang Tannaba reminds one of Kerala's boat race. He also noted Manipur’s historical association with polo and said that the Northeast adds new colours to the country's cultural diversity and provides new dimensions to the country's sports diversity. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that Sports Ministers from all over the country will have a learning experience at the end of the ‘Chintan Shivir’. “Any Chintan Shivir begins with contemplation, proceeds with rumination and ends with implementation”, the Prime Minister remarked, throwing light on the Chintan Shivir and underlined the need to discuss future goals and also review the previous conferences. Recalling the previous meeting in Kevadiya in 2022, the Prime Minister pointed out that many important issues were discussed and an agreement was reached to make a road map for an ecosystem for the betterment of sports. The Prime Minister touched upon increasing the participation between the center and the states in the sports sector and highlighted the strides that have been made possible. He further added that this review should not be carried out at the level of policies and programs but on infrastructure development and sports achievements of the previous year. Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports (YAS) and Information and Broadcasting Shri Anurag Thakur, Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh Shri Banwari Lal Purohit, Manipur Chief Minister Shri N. Biren Singh, Union Minister of State for YAS and Home Shri Nisith Pramanik, Secretary Youth Affairs Meeta R. Lochan and Secretary Sports Sujata Chaturvedi of the Ministry of YAS and Manipur Chief Secretary Dr. Rajesh Kumar graced the inaugural session of the Chintan Shivir.

Shri Anurag Singh Thakur in his key note address said that despite having small population of just 36 lakhs Manipur had contributed a lot in the field of sports, compared to other bigger states. Acknowledging the contribution, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had sanctioned for developing the first National Sports University in the State and an approximate amount of Rs. 900 crores will be spent for developing the University, he added. He also spoke on the popularity of indigenous games of Manipur, adding that the Central Government had also adopted many indigenous games in the Khelo India. He further said that Central and State governments should come together and have an open discussion on how to promote sports in their respective states.

The Union Minister also categorically mentioned the achievements of sportspersons of the State, mentioning the sportsmanship of Manipuri sportspersons who had brought laurels for the country. He commended the sportswomen who had made the country proud and hoped the other states will give extra efforts to bring more players who could add to the pride. Concluding his speech, Shri Anurag Thakur suggested the participating sports ministers of different states and union territories to share their experience and showcase what initiatives they had taken up to develop sports infrastructure in their respective states. He also asked them to learn from the experiences of one another and stressed the need to work together to make India a sports superpower.

The Chief Minister of Manipur Shri Biren Singh expressed gratitude that the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India approved the opening of 32 Khelo India Centres across 16 districts of the State. Khelo India State Centre of Excellence in three sports disciplines of Archery, Hockey and Weightlifting would also start very soon, he said. He also informed that completion of National Sports University (NSU) is also underway and added that the University would play an important role in shaping the future of Sports in India. He also maintained that the State Government is extending every possible support to promote sports culture and sportspersons in the state.

Shri N. Biren further informed that upgradation of Khuman Lampak Sports Complex through PPP model and as External Aided Projects are also underway. Integration of Sports Science, Use of Artificial Intelligence and video analysis in the training of young budding athletes in collaboration with private partners will help in developing sports in the state. Union Minister of State for YAS and Home Shri Nisith Pramanik in his address to the gathering said that government is setting and formulating new schemes for the promotion of sports in the country. He also said that Manipur is befitting place to host the conference and a place for inspiration among the states to encourage each other and work together for promotion of sports.

A photo Exhibition organized by Central Bureau of Communication, Regional Office, Imphal of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was also inaugurated by Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports(YAS) and Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur along with Union Minister of State for YAS and Home Nisith Pramanik .The photo-exhibition was on Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Mission LIFE, 9 Saal Seva, Sushasan and Garib Kalyan as part of the Chintan Shivir at the City Convention Centre, Imphal.

Presentation and interactive sessions on the topics Yuva Portal, Restructuring the National Youth Festival, Overview of Khelo India and other Schemes of Government of India, Innovation in Sport Sector were deliberated in the technical sessions of the Chintan Shivir.

TELEGRAPH,APRIL26,2023

Potential turbulence

The challenges faced by a ‘democratic’ BJP

Hilal Ahmed

The electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party in post-2014 India cannot be disassociated from the multifaceted story of Indian democracy. The BJP, like any other party, follows the unwritten norms of electoral politics to persuade, attract and manage voters to its advantage. This professional attitude has helped the party establish Hindutva-driven nationalism as the dominant narrative in contemporary Indian politics. In fact, the party has given a significant conceptual shift to the idea of democracy itself in recent years by describing India as the ‘Mother of democracy’.

This portrayal of the BJP’s electoral triumph, however, is almost one-sided. Pro-BJP commentators celebrate the achievements of the Narendra Modi regime. They intentionally avoid any meaningful debate on the problems, challenges and possible crises the party might face in the future. There is also a serious and engaging discussion on democratic backsliding, which looks at the decline of institutional autonomy and the growing authoritarian tendencies. This well-informed critique, interestingly, does not give adequate attention to the BJP’s structural configuration and its political dynamics. As a result, there is no discussion on the BJP’s institutional capability as a political party within the given framework of liberal democracy, especially when it is getting ready for the 2024 election under Modi’s leadership. There is a need to engage with the BJP’s internal problems for a better understanding of the present moment of democracy in India precisely for this reason. I find four critical issues in this regard.

It is important to remember that electoral success in a democracy does not always produce favourable political outcomes. The winning party has to manage its electoral dominance in such a way that it does not have any adverse effects on its internal organisational structure. At the same time, it has to work out future political adventures in a positive language. The rise of Modi as ‘the leader’ of the BJP has certainly helped the party manage its electoral victories. In fact, the party has cultivated the image of Modi not merely as a charismatic leader but also as a political symbol. In a way, the party has given Modi a two-fold responsibility: he has to

invent politically suitable images to maintain himself as the prime political symbol of the BJP. At the same time, he has to perform the task of an effective communicator to offer meanings to his own image. This over-reliance on Modi has the potential of creating an imbalance in the party organisation. On the one hand, there is an extraordinary burden on Modi to become the permanent performer for the party; while on the other, there is no institutional effort to nurture a second-level leadership. This problem does not entirely stem from what is termed as 'centralisation'. The party, it seems, is not invested in exploring the possibilities of an alternative political package or strategy.

The marginalisation of intellectuals inside the party is the second critical issue. It is worth noting that the BJP always presents its ideology of cultural nationalism and integral humanism with great intellectual pride. Leaders like Deendayal Upadhyaya, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Balraj Madhok, L.K. Advani, and Arun Shourie were public intellectuals. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has been instrumental in providing intellectual support to the Jana Sangh as well as to the BJP. However, the intellectual class inside the party is not as vibrant as it used to be. Except scholars like Rakesh Sinha or Ram Madhav, the BJP does not have serious intellectuals at the decision-making level. This evident demotion of the intelligentsia, it appears, will affect the institutionalised thinking culture of the party. The third critical issue is related to the BJP's attitude towards the autonomy of established institutions. The debate on the appointment of judges, the use of investigative agencies against Opposition leaders, and even the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi create a strong impression that the BJP leadership wants to control the entire system in its favour. There is certainly an element of truth in this criticism. However, the problem is much more complicated. We should not forget that the BJP is an institution in itself. It is an inseparable constituent of two very powerful coalitions: the ideological coalition of the sangh parivar and the electoral coalition called the National Democratic Alliance. For the effective functioning of these coalitions, the BJP has to abide by institutional ethics of some kind. The growing tendency to disrespect or eventually ignore the autonomy of institutions, in this sense, will be counter-productive for the BJP in the long run. The party has a decisive legislative majority in Parliament and in state assemblies.

Modi's popularity has not gone down yet. In such a context, there is no need to neglect the independence of institutions. The induction of professional politicians from other political parties is the BJP's fourth problem. The party has emerged as the most powerful political entity in India in the last nine years. It was natural for Opposition leaders to embrace the BJP for a better and secured political future. Consequently, a large number of leaders from different parties joined the BJP. The overwhelming enthusiasm of these professional politicians helped the BJP expand its mass base across regions. The arrangement was also beneficial for these leaders. They were able to protect their own constituency of voters without disrupting the BJP's aggressive electoral strategies. However, this balance of power is not going to produce desired results in the long run. Professional politicians often prefer to associate themselves with the winning party. They have joined the BJP because they want to take maximum advantage of the Modi phenomenon. These professional politicians will not stay with the BJP if the party fails to retain power. Karnataka and West Bengal are two very revealing examples of this tendency.

The BJP, we must remember, does not merely represent a political ideology; it is very much part of the democratic ecosystem of the country. The challenges faced by the BJP, in any case, are linked to the practicalities of our democracy. The survival of the BJP as a democratic party, in this sense, is politically crucial and democratically desirable.

PIB, APRIL 28, 2023

“Bankers’ key to Regional Economic Development and Successful Implementation of Central Government Schemes” – Shri G Kishan Reddy, Minister of Development for the North Eastern Region at the North East Banking Conclave

Conclave served as a platform to bring together some of the distinguished stakeholders as panelists and participants. The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) in collaboration with the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi) on 28th April 2023 organized “The North East Bankers’ Conclave 2023” at the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi supported by the State Bank of India and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) as Industry Partner.

The conclave marked first of its kind leadership event, bringing together various stake holders from the banking and finance sector, policy makers, and regulators to brainstorm the challenges faced by the banking sector in North-East India and to deliberate and come up with some immediate and long-term actionable strategies to address issues at various levels, from the policy planning and up to the grass-roots level of implementation, thereby promoting equality and economic growth in the region. Inaugurating the conclave, Shri G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Development for the North Eastern Region (DoNER), said that the North Eastern Region (NER) has unique challenges which require innovative practical solutions. He further stated that, MSMEs are the backbone of the NE economy and are rooted in the greater vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Banks should prioritize support and promote Agri-Horti Sector, MSMEs, and Start-Ups in the North East. He further added that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji, Northeast Region is set to become the new growth Engine of India, He added that the connectivity and transport infrastructure improved in the region, including connectivity by Railways. There has been an increase of 113% in air traffic through 17 airports in the region including 3, which are international airports. The Minister also emphasized the seven strategic priorities, the ‘Saptarishis’ i.e., inclusive development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure & investment, unleashing the potential of green growth, youth power, and financial sector for holistic development of NER, and said that the banking community has a vital role to play on each of the seven priorities.

The conclave was also graced by Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad, Minister of State (Finance), and Shri B. L. Verma, Minister of State (DoNER) besides senior bureaucrats from the Government of India, NE States, various leaders from the banking and financial sector, regulators, industry experts, policy-making organizations and other stake holders.

Shri G Kishan Reddy further said that with massive development unfolding in the region, peace, and stability have been ensured, and there is unprecedented political focus on the region. He said that in the last 9 years PM, Shri Modi ji has himself visited the region over 60 times and every fortnight Union ministers visit different backward regions of the North East. He said that now is the opportune time to hold such progressive discussions and find lasting solutions. He said that the North East Region has a huge potential in various sectors like Agri-Horti culture, Tourism, Hospitality, Manufacturing, etc along with a hugely talented workforce. He said that this potential needs to be leveraged and the banking fraternity needs to step up their support in building a robust Start Up ecosystem in the region and generate employment opportunities. There is a need and opportunity for the banking sector to promote industrialization, financial inclusion, and promoting entrepreneurship across the emerging sectors by increasing credit flow, he added. Shri G Kishan Reddy also stressed the need to support the entrepreneurs in developing market linkages and value-added support to the entrepreneurs to ensure the success of the MSMEs and startups in the region. He also added that close coordination with State governments is being ensured to maximize the potential of the banking fraternity in the region. The Conclave served as an opportune platform to bring together some of the distinguished stakeholders as panelists and participants from various commercial banks, development banks, startups, policymakers, think-tank organizations, micro-lending organizations, regulatory authorities, and entrepreneurs to discuss, debate, and develop ideas on how the Banking Sector in the NER can catalyze accelerating development in the NER.

The four specifically themed panel discussions on credit flow to Agri & Allied Sector, MSMEs & Startups, Implementation of Central Schemes by Banks, and Issues in Banking in the North East minutely assessed the performance, prospects, and challenges faced by the banking and financial services industry in the North Eastern Region. It was acknowledged that much has already been achieved in the last 9 years and there is a potential to achieve a lot more. Stake holders further highlighted that new initiatives should focus on enhancing the access to credit and financing by the banks, which in turn will help increase the CD ratio in NER and contribute to the overall growth of the local economy. Future strategies and plans will focus on improving agri-credit, MSME credit, and financial inclusion in all 2200 border villages.

Concluding the deliberations, it was highlighted that the government in collaboration with the banking fraternity will focus on developing a strong banking infrastructure, enhancing financial literacy, and creating a digital ecosystem in NER, for improving financial inclusion. Proactive collaboration of all stakeholders – Policy makers, Bankers, Regulators, Industry experts, entrepreneurs, and the wider business community – was emphasized for implementing the transformational strategies.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PIB, APRIL 24, 2023

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh announces special drive for promoting StartUps and R&D activities in new and emerging areas in the universities of NE, J&K

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh announced a special drive for StartUps and R&D activities in the new and emerging areas in the University ecosystems of North Eastern region, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, in addition to Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana, and Rajasthan by providing basic infrastructure and enabling scientific facilities, at the “Vishwavidyalaya Anusandhan Utsav 2023” organised today at Dr Ambedkar International Centre here. “In India’s quest for competitive advantage, our universities and related institutions need to play a major role towards generating high calibre human resources as repositories of national intellectual wealth in the S&T sector. In light of the vision by our Hon’ble PM that India’s self-reliance will be based on five pillars -- economy, infrastructure, technology-driven system, vibrant demography, and demand it is prudent to strengthen the foundation of relevant R&D infrastructure across the Nation to contribute to the development of a self-reliant India,” Dr. Singh said at the inauguration of the Utsav.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that in order to meet these diverse challenges and strengthen the S&T infrastructure support system in the universities and other related academic institutions, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) nurtures and supports a variety of infrastructure related schemes like FIST, PURSE, SAIF, etc. towards augmenting/ facilitating the R&D equipment for research activities at various Universities/ Institutes and other Academic organizations as well as promote industry-academia linkages. It’s our endeavour that the youth of our country have access to quality R&D infrastructure to pursue research in all areas of S&T,”

Dr. Singh added while speaking at the Utsav organised to showcase the achievements of the PURSE supported Universities. Dr Jitendra Singh said that the Honourable Prime Minister's vision is to step up the efforts in various fields to make the country 'the most advanced laboratory for modern science' in the 'Amrit Kaal' -the next 25 years leading to the centenary of India's Independence. Working towards this vision, the Government has committed to invest heavily on building research infrastructure in the country. Under FIST Program, DST has supported 3074 Departments and PG Colleges at a total budget of about Rs. 3130.82 crores for Scientific Infrastructure Building in various STEM Departments in Universities and academic institutions.



Dr. Singh pointed out that flexible infrastructure grants are being provided to universities nationwide to keep up the vigour of conducting highly challenging R&D activities with an investment of Rs 950 Crores till date. The Promotion of University Research and Scientific Excellence (PURSE) with a nationwide reach supports the university's research ecosystem by making high-end research equipment available to our academicians/scientists, enabling our universities to compete with global standards. The Union Minister launched a new scheme, SUPREME, a first-of-its-kind program by the Government of India, to provide financial support for repair/ upgradation/ maintenance/ retrofitting or acquiring additional attachments to increase functional capabilities of existing analytical instrumentation facilities (AIFs) during the programme.

Dr. S Chandrasekhar, DST Secretary said that the future of scientific research will call for deeper and more widespread multidisciplinary collaboration among countries which will enable researchers to optimize the precondition of securing sustainable scientific collaboration. India can escalate this through deeper collaborations while hosting the G20 nations. Department of Science and Technology has supported numerous Universities to augment their research infrastructure as they are striving towards potentially high-impact, interdisciplinary research (both basic and applied) aligned to national priorities and missions. Universities supported under the various programmes showcased their research accomplishments, novel findings, and technologies under the common platform for knowledge sharing provided by Vishwavidyalaya Anusandhan Utsav. A Book on the achievements of various universities supported under PURSE was also released.

PIB, APRIL 26, 2023

Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan-MoU signed between Department of Social Justice & Empowerment and Art of Living today to make NMBA more effective and widespread. Ambitious Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan currently operational in 372 districts of the country

A special initiative under the NMBA is association of religious/spiritual organizations for carrying out various activities Emphasis on “Nasha Mukh Bharat & Nasha Mukh world” - the Minister

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Signed Memorandum of Understanding between Art of Living today at Dr. B.R Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi in the presence of Dr. Virendra Kumar, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment and Gurudev Shri Shri Ravi Shankar ji and other senior members of the Art of Living management. Shri Saurabh Garg, Secretary, Shri Surendra Singh Additional Secretary, Smt. Radhika Chakravarthy Joint Secretary and other Senior officers of the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment also attended the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar said Department of Social Justice & Empowerment signed an MoU with the Art of Living for spreading the message of Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan among the youth, women, students etc. With the signing of this MoU, Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan will get a boost towards achieving drug sensitized India. To curb the menace of drug demand, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), Government of India has been implementing National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR). The Minister said this is an umbrella scheme under which financial assistance is provided to State Governments/ Union Territory (UT) Administrations for Preventive Education and Awareness Generation, Capacity Building, Skill development, vocational training and livelihood support of ex-drug addicts.

The Ministry has initiated ambitious Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) currently operational in 8,000 Master Volunteers have been selected and trained to lead the Abhiyaan activities in the 372 identified districts More than 3.13+ crore youth have actively participated in the activities of the Abhiyaan and spreading on-ground the message against substance use. Around 4,000+ YuvaMandals, NYKS & NSS Volunteers, Youth Clubs have also been associated with the Abhiyaan. The contribution of 2.09+ Crore women have also been vital in reaching out to a larger community through the Anganwadi & ASHA Workers, ANMs, Mahila Mandals & Women SHGs.

STATESMAN, APRIL 26, 2023

Boon or Bane

In the absence of proper planning, India's demographic dividend has turned into a bane. We will have one hundred crore people in the working age group (15-64) by 2030, but with an employment rate (percentage of persons employed in working age population) of less than 37 per cent, we may see an increase in the number of unemployed. The comparison with China, which claims to have 90 crore skilled workers, is inescapable; while China has put its population to work, our population hangs like an albatross around our neck

DEVENDRA SAKSENA

State of World Population Report 2023, published by UN Population Fund (UNFPA), postulates that very soon, in 2023 itself, we will achieve the dubious distinction of being the most populous nation on earth. According to the Report, the rising population was a sign that people were living longer, healthier lives and enjoying more rights and greater choices than ever before. The Report stated: "... many headlines warned of a world teetering into overpopulation, or that whole countries and regions were ageing into obsolescence... Over and over, we see birth rates identified as a problem ~ and a solution ~ with little acknowledgement of the agency of the people doing the birthing."

The Report suggested that “advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and ensuring women’s ability to control their own fertility must be at the heart of population and development related programmes.” UNFPA India Representative, Andrea Wojnar, termed India’s 140 crore people as 140 crore opportunities. Such bland platitudes are poor consolation for us, reeling as we are under serious ill-effects of an unmanageably increasing population ~ poverty, unemployment and pollution, to name a few. Yet, after the disastrous electoral consequences of Sanjay Gandhi’s infamous population control experiments of the Emergency era, politicians rarely talk about population issues, let alone take measures to control our burgeoning population.

Therefore, not surprisingly, there has been no official reaction to the UNFPA Report ~ not even the Government’s mandatory debunking of reports published by Western agencies. In what could be taken as the Government’s thinking, Amitabh Kant, former CEO of Niti Aayog, and currently a G-20 Sherpa, has listed out the opportunities that our rising population will open up for us. According to Mr. Kant, India will become ‘a powerhouse of human capital and the largest producer of human resources in the world.’ He has suggested that we should invest in the overall well-being of our youth in areas like ‘health, nutrition, education, skill development and financial inclusion,’ which appears a tall order, given the abysmal expenditure of the Government on healthcare and education. Mr Kant has further averred that our Total Fertility Rate is now 2.0 ~ below the replacement level of 2.1, which is hard to digest because India’s population is projected to grow for the next forty years, reaching a peak of 166.8 crores in the mid 2060s.

This also brings up an interesting question: What is the optimum level of population? Much before the Christian Era, Plato, observing the growing population of Athens, concluded that the ideal city should have no more than 5,040 citizens, which is the population of a large condominium in Mumbai. Plato said: “What is left now is like the skeleton of a body wasted by disease; the rich soil has been carried off and only the bare framework of the district is left.” Not surprisingly, Plato believed in strict population control, and also in moderating consumption ~ both pressing concerns even in the twenty-first century. In what could be a tale of contemporary times, Plato’s epic ‘The Republic’ tells the story of two mythical city-states: one believes in moderation while the other believes in consumerism. Unable to sustain its large population, the second city-state casts avaricious eyes on its neighbouring territories, plunging the country into war. Read US and China for the second city-state, and the analogy is complete. The question Plato raised is the essence of the population debate of today: Is human population the issue, or is it the resources it consumes? Many thinkers ~ ancient and medieval ~ raised similar concerns, but it fell on Thomas Malthus, an 18th century English clergyman, to explain the relation between population and resources mathematically. Malthus wrote: “Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio.

A slight acquaintance with numbers will show the immensity of the first power in comparison of the second” (An Essay on the Principle of Population, 1798). Pessimistic Malthusian predictions have not come true so far, because continuous technological progress has made sufficient resources available for our ever-growing population. Sadly, we seem to be fast approaching the tipping point; consumerism fuelled by technological progress has led to a plunder of natural resources, a degraded environment, high GHG emissions, and massive pollution ~ all leading to climate change. Moreover, unequal distribution of resources ensures that even today, millions in the Horn of Africa are starving and many in Asia and Africa live in want, while people in Europe and US, live lives of extravagance.

In fact, Western interest in curtailing population growth in less developed countries has racist undertones, what with Europe and North America being more densely populated than many poor countries whose population they seek to limit. No wonder, to escape the charge of bias, world bodies decry the use of family planning as a tool for population control. Rather, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development expressly acknowledges that sexual and reproductive health and gender equality are essential for unlocking a more prosperous and sustainable future. In the absence of proper planning, India's demographic dividend has turned into a bane. We will have one hundred crore people in the working age group (15 – 64) by 2030, but with an employment rate (percentage of persons employed in the working age population) of less than 37 per cent, we may see an increase in the number of unemployed, in coming years. The comparison with China, which claims to have 90 crore skilled workers, is inescapable. One can readily infer that while China has put its population to work, our population hangs like an albatross around our neck. According to National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS5), safe motherhood eludes a significant proportion of Indian women; 38 per cent got married before 18 years of age, and in 27 per cent of births, spacing between two child births was less than 2 years. A friend who runs an NGO that provides milk to poor pregnant and lactating women at Aanganwadis was surprised to find girls as young as 20 on their second or third pregnancies. Most of these women were malnourished also. It appears that the National Population Policy 2000 which brought about a holistic and target-free approach, has taken the urgency out of the Government's efforts for population control. At present, the role of the Government in family planning is limited to making contraceptive facilities available at Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Sub Centres (SCs), in rural areas, and at Urban Family Welfare Centres and Postpartum Centres, in urban areas.

Volunteers called Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) distribute contraceptives and pregnancy testing kits to beneficiaries at their doorsteps. On paper, this may appear sufficient, but looking at the way PHCs are

run, one can well imagine the services that would really be available there. As regards, ASHA workers, they are unqualified and minimally trained health workers, who are paid a pittance as an incentive for certain tasks they perform. Statistics about children compiled in the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 are equally alarming. Eighteen per cent children had a low birth weight (less than 2.5 kg), 36 per cent of children under five years were stunted (too short for their age), a sign of chronic undernutrition. Nineteen per cent of children under five years were wasted (too thin for their height), a sign of acute undernutrition, while 32 per cent of children under age five years were underweight. Female empowerment by education and gender parity will help in population management but people would hardly follow the two-child norm if the female population is not healthy, and if couples are not assured of having two healthy children, who have a fair chance of reaching adulthood. To achieve this, the Government has to provide good healthcare to all, by ensuring that every district has an adequate number of PHCs and CHCs which are properly manned, and have an adequate stock of medicines. This would be possible only if we increase expenditure on healthcare (which currently stands at 1.28 per cent of our GDP), upgrade our primary health infrastructure and provide nutritional supplementation to poor children. Once a proper health and nutrition infrastructure is in place, a Family Planning Mission can be launched on the lines of Swachh Bharat Mission. By providing incentives and better public healthcare, the Government would be able to persuade people to have only two children, which would spare us the ill effects of the ticking population bomb, which is sure to explode ~ should we continue on our wayward trajectory

PIB, APRIL 27, 2023

Enrolments under Atal Pension Yojana (APY) cross 5.20 crore mark

Total enrolment under Atal Pension Yojana crossed 5.20 crore mark as on 31 March 2023. The scheme enrolled more than 1.19 crore new subscribers in FY 2022-23 as compared to 99 lakh in the last financial year, depicting a growth of more than 20%. As on date, the total assets under management (AUM) in APY is more than Rs. 27,200 crore and the scheme has generated investment return of 8.69% since inception of the scheme.

In the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) category, 9 banks achieved the annual target while Bank of India, State Bank of India, and Indian Bank sourced more than 100 APY accounts per branch. Under the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) category, 32 banks achieved the annual target while Jharkhand Rajya Gramin Bank, Vidharbha Konkan Gramin Bank, Tripura Gramin Bank and Baroda Uttar Pradesh Gramin Bank sourced more than 160 APY accounts per branch. Also, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank, Dhanlaxmi Bank and Airtel Payments Bank achieved annual target allocated by Ministry of Finance. Further, 12 states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Uttarakhand also achieved their annual targets with the help and support of their respective State Level Banker's Committee (SLBCs). PFRDA conducted 47 APY Outreach programmes and Town Hall meetings pan India at various locations, in coordination with SLBCs and RRBs. Many initiatives were taken such as the launch of a digital onboarding facility using Aadhaar, the launch of revamped APY app, 17 podcasts for creating awareness on the benefits of APY, the launch of a Chatbot facility for seeking basic information on APY, etc. Under APY, a subscriber would receive a lifelong minimum guaranteed pension of Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 5,000 per month from the age of 60 years, depending on their contributions, which itself would vary based on the age of joining the APY. The same pension would be paid to the spouse of the subscriber after the demise of the subscriber and on the demise of both the subscriber and spouse, the pension wealth as accumulated till age 60 of the subscriber would be returned back to the nominee. PFRDA is always committed to contributing towards Pension Saturation in the country and shall continuously undertake proactive initiatives for achieving it.

ECONOMIC TIMES, APRIL 29, 2023

Roti, Kapada aur Makaan: Most Indians fight for staples, others lap up luxury items

A media report claiming Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led administration was planning to overhaul India's byzantine direct tax laws by raising the capital gains tax on the high-income group had ruffled some feathers. This was said to be a work in progress to reduce income inequality in the world's fifth largest economy, where 813.5 million poor are still needed to be fed for free in the post-pandemic era. The finance ministry had immediately denied any such move, saying there were no plans to raise taxes on the richie rich citizens of the land. However, what may not be ignored is the widening chasm in demand for luxury items and other basic consumer goods amid elevated inflation and high unemployment rate. India remains on course to be the fastest growing major economy in this fiscal year. However, some economists opine that concerns on inequality tend to be negated when the economy is doing well. The yawning gap and inequality are not tailwinds for a country, particularly for one that relies on private consumption for some 60% of its growth.

According to data from World Inequality Report 2022, where the United Nations Development Programme was a scientific partner, India is among the most unequal countries in the world, with rising poverty and an 'affluent elite.' The report said that the top 10% and 1% in India hold 57% and 22% of the total national income.

Priorities for Indians

Amid the hullabaloo of Apple opening their first retail stores in India and people queuing up to lap up phones costing upwards of Rs 1 lakh each, a grim fact is the Asian nation's per capita income is the lowest among 26 countries where the iPhone maker has retail stores.

Luxury car sales accelerated in 2022 from its previous year, whereas sales at Bajaj Auto, one of the country's biggest makers of two-wheelers, seen as a utility vehicle, dropped 10%. Mercedes-Benz expects India to be the fastest growing market this year as well. In contrast, the 2023 PwC Global Consumer Insights Pulse Survey said, 63% of Indian consumers are tightening expenditure on non-essential goods and services, while 74% of the Indian respondents said they were worried about their personal financial situation. India's essential medicines including painkillers, antibiotics and anti-infectives became costlier by more than 12% from April, the highest annual increase on record in the prices of these medicines.

While the bulk of citizens in the most populous country have to struggle to get beds in government hospitals for free treatment, some Indians are also insuring luxury items and even their pets. "We are finding that there is a trend of people investing in luxury products, especially post the pandemic, along with insuring the same. People appear to have started buying luxury products ranging from cars, two-wheelers, yachts, holiday homes to watches, branded jewellery and pens, and they need insurance protection," said Raghavendra Rao, Chief Distribution Officer, Future Generali India Insurance. Pet adoptions are also growing at a fast pace and more and more people are adopting pets at their homes. "As pets are now considered to be a part of the family, the pet parents are going all out to treat them the same way as one would treat their own family member. Pets are also being insured for medical treatments, OPD treatments, funeral cost, third party liability etc.," Rao added.

The shape of recovery & inflation

Krishnamurthy Subramanian, former chief economic adviser of India who held the post during the peak pandemic days, has often vouched for India's recovery to be V-shaped and rebutted 'tenuous claims of K-shaped recovery'.

However, many experts and economists had referred to India's recovery to be K-shaped, which portends inequality and diverging economic scenarios."There has been a K-shaped recovery across the world and India is also not an exception. The depletion of savings during Covid was more in the low-income households, while the same was much lesser in higher income households given the share of essential expenses in the household budget being higher at the lower income levels," said Ranen Banerjee. Partner and Leader Economic Advisory Services, PwC India. A galloping inflation rate has been another big evil adding to the problems of not just Indians but for all across the globe, thanks to the Russia-Ukraine war that came soon after the world hoped to set free from the clutches of the fatal pandemic which ravaged economic activities and rendered millions jobless in India alone. For the first time in six years, rural inflation in India was higher than urban inflation in fiscal 2023. The average inflation in FY23 was 6.7%, prices in rural areas increased 6.8% from a year earlier. The urban retail inflation averaged 6.4% in FY23. Food and clothing inflation was higher in rural areas, whereas urban centres saw sharper services inflation. India's retail inflation had hit an eight-year high in April last year and mostly stayed above the Reserve Bank of India's 6% tolerance ceiling. This forced policymakers to sharply raise rates, eventually leading to high retail loan rates including that for homes. The economic headwinds are having quite a detrimental impact on merchandise exports that are labour intensive. This is likely to impact jobs and household incomes. The impact of high core inflation and food inflation is more at the lower end of the income spectrum," PwC's Banerjee said. Moreover, if we have a downward growth trajectory and high price levels, it will put more pressure on the low-income household budgets, he added.

However, to draw some comfort, India's inflation rate in March had eased to a 16-month low.

Base effects are expected to turn favourable over the quarter ahead, pushing inflation below 5% and providing relief across income groups especially as incremental pressure on sub-segments like cereals, vegetables etc are expected to ease, said Radhika Rao, Senior Economist and Executive Director at DBS Bank, Singapore.

Basic Necessities: Roti, Kapada aur Makaan

The basic necessities - roti, kapada aur makaan, or food, clothing and shelter, ironically are what many Indians are struggling to afford, and the staples may become luxuries.

Food

A clear indicator for this is that though FMCG revenues have trended higher, volumes took a hit. In fact, the revenue rise for the FMCGs largely came on the back of price hikes, making it more difficult for the lower income households to buy groceries. Small packs of grocery or other FMCG items, ranging from soaps to coffee, are typically pushed in rural markets. However, they are now also seeing demand in urban areas. The contribution of smaller packs of Rs 5, Rs 10 and Rs 20 in urban markets to overall sales has increased by almost 5% in the past two months, FMCG executives told ET in February. Almost all FMCG firms had resorted to reducing the grammage of multiple packs while keeping price points intact, as prices of commodities such as palm oil, wheat, sugar and coffee hit record highs. Nestle India's Chairman Suresh Narayanan had flagged "storm clouds of food inflation" to have continued in 2023, while Unilever global chief executive Alan Jope said that high inflation impacted demand from low income consumers in Indian villages. Cereals, the largest component of the food basket and a staple food item, have been a key concern over the past few months as its annual inflation rate of 16% in January was the fastest pace since June 2013. Wheat prices in January surged 25% on year. Data for March showed cereals and products' inflation rate was at 15.3%. Milk inflation was 9.3% last month. Organised dairy players, including Mother Dairy and Amul, have increased milk prices multiple times since last year. Prices of milk, seen to be a nourisher for kids, are expected to rise more, according to industry executives.

Clothing

Retail prices of clothing and footwear surged 8.2% on year in March.

India's apparel market grew by 15% in fiscal 2023, according to data released by the Clothing Manufacturers Association of India. However, it was driven by price hikes and not sales. In fact, sales dropped 3%. Cotton has increased by 50% over the last couple of years and most of the manufacturers have hiked prices by 15-20%, the report said

K. Selvaraj, president of the Gani market weekly textile traders' association told The Hindu that wholesale price of basic garments, like vest, has increased to Rs 140 from Rs 90 per piece. The textile industry too has taken a hit due to falling demand and manufacturers have warned about looming layoffs.

Housing

According to recent reports, residential rentals in Bengaluru have experienced a significant uptick in the past year and corporate employees are struggling to secure housing. Property brokers claim that housing prices and rental yields have experienced a significant rise across seven major cities in India over the past five years. In March, realty major DLF said it has sold 1,137 luxury apartments, priced Rs 7 crore and above, for over Rs 8,000 crore within three days, in its housing project in Gurugram. This is in contrast to housing prices going out of affordability range for many lower and middle-income groups, while they also feel the pinch from high loan interest rates. "There is no denying that demand for affordable housing does remain high but the target audience of the affordable segment (many employed in MSMEs) were severely impacted by the pandemic in contrast to premium and luxury category buyers. These affordable housing buyers thus deferred their purchase decisions and we saw a dip in the number of homes sold in the affordable category (homes priced below Rs 40 lakh)," said Prashant Thakur, Senior Director & Head – Research, ANAROCK Group.

Thakur said affordable housing developers' profit margins were already wafer-thin, and amid rising inflationary trends of basic input costs (cement, steel, labour, etc.), it became even more difficult for them to launch budget homes since increasing prices in this highly cost-sensitive segment defeats the purpose. Thus, even while the notional demand for affordable housing is high, the actual affordability is limited, given the loan rate hikes and price rise by developers in the last one year, he added.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PIB, APRIL 25, 2023

A newly fabricated bio-electronic uric acid detecting device can be used for wearable sensors and point-of-care diagnostics

A new flexible bio-electronic uric acid detecting device has been fabricated that can be used for various applications such as wearable sensors and point-of-care diagnostics. Uric acid is one of the most important antioxidants that maintain blood pressure stability and reduce oxidative stress in living beings. The usual range of uric acid in blood ranges from 0.14 to 0.4 mmol dm⁻³, and for urine, 1.5 to 4.5 mmol dm⁻³. However, the fluctuation of uric acid levels due to the lack of balancing between the production and excretion causes several diseases like hyperuricemia, which in turn may lead to gout disease, type 2 diabetes, increase risk of cardiovascular diseases, Lesch–Nyhan syndrome, hypertension, and renal disorders. Researchers from the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), fabricated this device made up of reduced phosphorene quantum dots -- a new class of zero-dimensional functional nanostructures with unique physicochemical and surface properties. The quantum dots show distinctive electrical performance in biomedical applications and so can be used in fabricating high-performance electrical biosensors. The current-voltage and the impedance (opposition electron flow) responses for the fabricated device have been studied with increased uric acid concentration. With the increase in uric acid concentration, the current density increases and shows a maximum current of about 1.35×10^{-6} A. The fabricated device shows reversibility in interaction with the uric acid, which repeatedly enables the use of the device for sensing experiments. It outperforms all currently available ones in terms of effectiveness and cost because it doesn't need any enzymes. The response of the fabricated device was investigated with real samples like human blood serum and artificial urine. The device so developed is simple, portable, cost-effective, and easy to fabricate for detecting uric acid with a limit of about 0.809 μ M.

This work, led by Prof. Neelotpal Sen Sarma and his Ph. D student Nasrin Sultana was recently published in the journal ACS Applied Electronic Materials.

INDIAN EXPRESS, APRIL 26, 2023

Welcome to the brain economy: Technology will change the way we look at labour, capital and skills

Aditya Nath Jha writes: Employees will question the company's impact on the environment, gender parity, wealth sharing and other social issues. The business of business will no longer be limited to business

Aditya Nath Jha If Marx were alive today and playing with GPT4, he would have been the first to notice that the nature of labour has morphed drastically since the mid-19th century — from body to skill to brain. Physical labour required no education, skill-based labour required higher education, training and expertise, and, now, brain-based labour is about rapid innovation and creation, driven by technology. Welcome to the brain economy. No industry will be immune from technology in the global brain economy. Retail, agriculture, automobile, finance, energy, manufacturing, healthcare, education, sports and entertainment will be driven and reshaped by technology and brain power. Technology will not be limited to software, artificial intelligence and data analytics — it will spread rapidly across brain sciences, quantum computing, genetic engineering, 3D printing, nanotechnology and combinations thereof. We need to internalise the discomfoting reality that the search for perfection in technology and its related issues is an illusion. Automobiles changed our lives vastly for the better, but have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths due to accidents and have hurt the environment due to emissions.

The answer, obviously, is not to ban automobiles but to make them safer and cleaner. Technology will keep evolving and the new generation of technology will solve the problems of earlier generations. First generation

vaccines saved billions of lives from Covid. To facilitate a meaningful dialogue around the trade-offs in the brain economy, we need to first abandon outdated stereotypes of evil corporations, sinful profits and inhuman technology. The accompanying myth of man vs machine, created when labour meant the human body, needs to be laid to rest. Technology doesn't destroy jobs — it creates jobs, liberates people and drives social progress. Whether we like it or not, advances in technology in the brain economy will always be a couple of steps ahead of politicians, bureaucrats, policies and laws. We will have to learn to deal with it. Naturally, there will be issues of concern like greedy corporations with an urge to dominate the marketplace and exploit legal loopholes. There will be ethical dilemmas regarding technology choices. Regulation and oversight are essential, but these need to be pragmatic, not dogmatic. To do this, we need to widen the definitions of progressives, intellectuals and civil society. These definitions can't remain confined to a closed group of liberal arts professors, activists and NGOs.

Technology illiteracy impedes understanding, perpetrates falsehoods and obstructs progress. A clear understanding of technology is as important an issue as those of privacy, inclusivity, fairness and ethics. Scientists, technologists, businessmen, entrepreneurs and corporations must also be present at the discussion table. Collaboration is the key. Adversarial positions will lead to extreme polarisation and decision gridlock resulting in economic stagnation and regression. Starting now, the education architecture of the country needs to be revamped. Students and teachers in primary and secondary education need to be equipped with technology. Failures in experimentation and creation in schools should be celebrated, not ridiculed. If one is not failing it means that one is not trying new things. Multidisciplinary research universities should be created on a war footing. Courses in different aspects of technology must be made mandatory for all liberal arts programmes, just like liberal arts courses should be made mandatory in all science and technology departments.

From the archives | ChatGPT and the AI challenge

The concerns of the employees in the body economy revolved around low wages, job tenure and exploitation. The concerns of the employees in the skill economy are skill relevance, flexibility and work-life balance. In the brain economy, they will question the company's impact on the environment, gender parity, wealth sharing and other social issues. The business of business, consequently, will no longer be limited to business. There could be many failures. Every successful innovation is built on a graveyard of failures. We will have to get used to it, factor it into resource allocation and not allow failures to stop us from moving ahead. Many corporations will be a combination of brain, skill and body. Amazon, for example, has brains that create new offerings, skills that maintain their vast data centres and bodies that deliver packages to homes. The focus will be on the complete elimination of the body and the gradual replacement of skills through technology. The holy grail will be a pure brain corporation. The accompanying job losses will have to be offset by the creation of new types of jobs that we can scarcely imagine now but will have to anticipate and be prepared for.

Many brains will operate outside the ambit of corporations. The scale and scope of open-source innovation will continue to expand, giving rise to a “societal brain”. India's digital public goods revolution is an example of this. Corporations will also realise that not all the best brains work on their payroll. The relationship between capital and labour will change. Capital exploited physical labour and invested in skills. It will now chase and partner with the brains. The balance of power between capital and labour will become more symmetric. But markets will create inequality by assigning exponentially differential values to body, skill and brain. In a country the size of India, it's impossible to transition everyone to the brain economy overnight. The biggest component of the body economy in India is agriculture. We need our agriculture to be technology-enabled, not body driven. Inequality will remain, but it's better to be unequally well off than to be equally poor.

But the bigger issue of inequality is the inequality between nations. In the brain economy, the alternative to technology and innovation is total irrelevance. To be a globally relevant player, India needs to embrace the concept of this new world of the brain economy, adapt its mindset and appropriate its resources accordingly.

PIB, APRIL 27, 2023

MoS Rajeev Chandrasekhar Inaugurates Pratap Subrahmanyam Centre for Digital Intelligence, Security Hardware and Architecture Centre at IIT, Madras

Young Indians will shape the future of tech design, create new products, new devices and new solutions that will have global markets & global solutions: MoS Rajeev Chandrasekhar

Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Electronics & IT Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar today said that in the next five years, centres of gravity in the technology space will be rebuilt around newer geopolitics and newer talent pools for which India is strongly positioned.

“We are living in extremely interesting times for technology space and in the next five years, centres of gravity will be rebuilt around newer geopolitics and newer talent pools for which New India is strongly positioned,” Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, while delivering the presidential address virtually at the inauguration of Pratap Subrahmanyam Centre for Digital Intelligence, Security Hardware and Architecture Centre (PS CDISHA) at IIT, Madras. The Centre has been created through contribution of one of IIT-M alumni from the class of 1985, Shri Pratap Subrahmanyam. As part of the Computer Science Engineering Department, it will work in the areas of Computer Architecture, Security, Machine Learning and VLSI Design. In his address, the Minister said the three trends that are shaping the future of the world economy are acceleration of digitalisation of the world at a blistering pace, the need increasingly for countries and enterprises to have a network or coalition of trusted sources of technology, safe and trusted partners in technology solution, devices and products and thirdly having more and more digital talent that is in demand all around the world.

“India sits at the intersection at these three trends. Our technologically empowered young Indians are going to shape the future of tech design and build and create new products, new devices and new solutions that will have global markets and global solutions” Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar added. Highlighting the initiatives taken by the Government under the Semicon India Programme and Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Program, the Minister said, “Our focus is on creating manufacturing capacity, packaging and verification capacity and capabilities, design research and skills. We have unprecedented opportunities to capitalise and achieve our trillion-dollar digital goal set by our Prime Minister.” Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar also praised the efforts of IIT, Madras Director Prof V Kamakoti, who is the chief architect of Digital India RISC-V Microprocessor programme (DIR-V), for giving impetus to start-ups working in RISC-V area and providing them global visibility. The aim of DIR-V is to make India not only a RISC-V Talent Hub for the world but also be the supplier of RISC-V SoC (System on Chips) for Servers, Mobile devices, Automotive, IoT & Microcontrollers across the globe. Apart from Prof V Kamakoti, faculty members of IIT, Madras and researchers of were also present on the occasion.

PIB, APRIL 29, 2023

Newly developed modern analogue dataset based on biotic and abiotic proxy records could be accurate reference tool for the palaeo-ecological studies in the CGP

Scientists have developed a modern analogue dataset based on biotic and abiotic proxy records from different depositional settings like lakebeds, river beds, forest floors, and croplands across two interfluves of the Central Ganga Plain (CGP) that would be an accurate reference tool for the palaeo-ecological studies in the CGP.

The Central Ganga Plain serves as a food basket for thickly populated India and is undergoing significant upheavals in terms of climatic (monsoonal) variability in recent decades. Future scenario assessment requires rigorous climate models which are built utilizing key data inputs (of this eco-system) emerged from well-dated palaeo-reconstructions. A considerable number of records are available from the Central Ganga Plain with restricted information on palaeo-environmental reconstruction. Modern proxies to distinguish different ecology and depositional environment at the appropriate spatial scale are limited, and generation of such proxies is vital for decoding the past environment in the CGP. Furthermore, the Ghaghara-Gandak and Ganga-Ghaghara interfluvial regions are areas where several meter-thick sediments have been deposited during the Late Quaternary. The interfluvial regions are comprised of different depositional environments, such as fluvial, lacustrine, forest, and croplands, so they are important for past environmental and modern analogue studies. The soil/sediment samples can be complemented with biotic (pollen, diatoms, and phytoliths) and abiotic proxies (sediment texture, stable carbon and nitrogen isotopes, XRD/ XRF elements, and magnetic susceptibility parameters). The BSIP, an autonomous institute of DST, evaluated the strength and weaknesses of biotic and abiotic proxy records of the Ghaghara-Gandak and Ganga-Ghaghara interfluvial regions of CGP.

For the first time, they adopted a holistic approach towards developing multiproxy modern analogues from the two interfluvial regions, which would be an accurate reference tool for the palaeo-ecological studies in the Central Ganga Plain and surrounding areas. The study published in the journal *Catena*, evaluated both the strength and weaknesses of these proxies and assessed how reliably multiproxy modern analogues can identify different ecological and depositional environments and could be used as a baseline in interpreting Late Quaternary palaeo-environmental and ecological changes more accurately in this region.

The study of biotic and abiotic interactions is important as they aid in building the forest community, food crops, agro-pastoral and human settlements in this region. Consequently, the palaeo-ecological data would

assist in better understanding the past and also the sustainable future projections in the Central Ganga Plain. For example, the inception of human settlement in this region could also be traced through the establishment of marker pollen, phytolith, and diatom taxa. The high/low occurrences of annual herbs like Euphorbiaceae and Convolvulaceae (marker pollen taxa) indicated the monsoonal fluctuation in the Central Ganga Plain. Besides, the different cultural pollen taxa apprised how human-associated changes have reduced the forest cover in the CGP, and hence those forest trees should be planted that can generate and sustain our life-supporting system by giving out oxygen and also combat the rising CO₂ levels by carbon sequestration.

The work stands out due to the fact that the fossil pollen represents the plant up to species level and hence could directly trace vegetation changes, and pollen could be an accurate tool for monitoring the large-scale variability in climate change scenarios. The study would help measure the dynamics of the natural vegetation and the shifts in human occupation over time for future scenario development. This modern comprehensive dataset could provide background information for the Late Quaternary palaeo-ecological reconstruction from the Central Ganga Plain along with the practices for preserving and conserving the endangered biodiversity that flourishes in forests, crops, lakes, and rivers system of this region. The lakes of the CGP, which were once proliferated with water and supported human settlement, are presently drying up and need to be preserved and cleaned so that the rich biodiversity flourishing in and around the lakes could be used for sustainable future development. Hence the various proxies used in this study helps in generating eco-environmental prospect of wetland and sediments status in this region. The multiparameter study could also be viewed as an important baseline for conserving different lakes and river systems, often treated as wastelands to be drained, filled, and converted for other purposes.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

CURRENT EVENTS

PIB, APRIL 24, 2023

PM addresses National Panchayati Raj Day Celebrations in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh

Lays foundation stone and dedicates to nation projects worth around Rs. 17,000 crores

Inaugurates integrated eGramSwaraj and GeM portal for public procurement at Panchayat level

Hands over around 35 lakh SVAMITVA Property Cards

Participates in 'Griha Pravesh' of more than 4 lakh beneficiaries under PMAY-G

Lays foundation stone and dedicates to nation various railway projects worth around Rs 2300 crores

Lays foundation stone of projects worth about Rs 7,000 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission

“Panchayati Raj institutions fulfill the development aspirations of our citizens while promoting the spirit of democracy”

“In Amrit Kaal, we have dreamed of a developed India and are working day and night to accomplish it”

“Since 2014, the country has taken up the cause of empowerment of its panchayats and the results are visible today” “In this era of digital revolution, Panchayats are also being made smart” “Every panchayat, every institution, every representative, every citizen of the country will have to unite for a developed India”

“Our panchayats should conduct public awareness campaign regarding natural farming” The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the National Panchayati Raj Day in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh today. He also laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation, projects worth around Rs. 17,000 crores. Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister started his speech by bowing to Maa Vidhyawasini and to the land of bravery. He recalled his visits earlier and the affection of the people here. The Prime Minister noted the virtual presence of more than 30 lakh Panchayat representatives from all over the country and said that it presents a bold picture of Indian democracy. He pointed out that the scope of work for each one present here might be different but everyone works for the common goal of serving the citizens through serving the country. The Prime Minister expressed happiness that the Panchayats are implementing the government’s schemes for Gaaon aur Gareeb - villages and the poor, with full dedication. Referring to eGramSwaraj and GeM portal for public procurement at the Panchayat level, the Prime Minister said that it will ease the working of the Panchayats. He also mentioned the distribution of 35 lakh SVAMITVA Property Cards and projects worth 17000 crores regarding railways, housing, water and employment for the development of Madhya Pradesh.

In the Amrit Kaal of Independence, the Prime Minister said, every citizen is working towards fulfilling the dream of a developed India with utmost dedication. He highlighted the importance of developing the social system, economy and Panchayati Raj system in the villages of India in order to create a developed nation and pointed out that the present government is working tirelessly to create a robust system in place and expanding its scope, unlike the previous governments that discriminated with the Panchayats. Throwing light on the lack of efforts made by the previous governments before 2014, the Prime Minister informed that the finance commission granted less than 70,000 crores which was a paltry amount when one considers the scale of the country, but after 2014, this grant was increased to more than 2 lakh crores. He also mentioned that merely 6,000 Panchayat Bhawans were constructed a decade before 2014, whereas the present government constructed more than 30,000 Panchayat Bhawans in the last 8 years. He also informed that less than 70 Gram Panchayats were connected with optical fiber compared to more than 2 lakh Gram Panchayats that got optical

fiber connectivity after the present government came to power. He also noted the lack of faith shown in the existing Panchayati Raj system by the previous governments after India's independence. Recalling the words of Mahatma Gandhi that 'India lives in its villages', the Prime Minister pointed out that the previous regime barely paid any heed to his ideology which resulted in the Panchayati Raj remaining neglected for decades. The Prime Minister said that today, Panchayats are coming up as the life force of India's development. "Gram Panchayat Vikas Yojana is helping Panchayats to work effectively", Shri Modi added.

The Prime Minister said that the government is working ceaselessly to bridge the gap between villages and cities. Panchayats are being made smart in this age of the digital revolution. Technology is being harnessed in the projects being undertaken by the Panchayats. The Prime Minister gave the example of Amrit Sarovar where issues like the selection of sites and completion of the project are being done with the help of technology. He said the GeM portal for public procurement at the Panchayat level will make procurement by the Panchayats easy and transparent. Local cottage industry will find a strong avenue for their sales, the Prime Minister said. The Prime Minister talked about the benefit of technology in the PM Svamitva scheme. He informed that the scheme is changing the scene of property rights in villages and reducing disputes and litigation. The use of drone technology is ensuring property documents for the people without any discrimination. He informed that work of Property Card is completed in 75 thousand villages of the country. He praised the Madhya Pradesh Government for good work in this direction.

Referring to the indifference to the development of Chhindwara, the Prime Minister blamed the thinking of certain political parties. He said that the ruling parties broke the trust of the rural poor by ignoring the basic needs of the rural areas after Independence. The Prime Minister emphasized that by discriminating against villages where half of the population of the country resides, the country can not progress. He said after 2014, the rural economy, facilities in villages and the interest of the villages were given the highest priority. He said

schemes like Ujjwala, and PM Awas have left a deep impact in villages. He said out of 4.5 crore houses, 3 crore houses of PMAY are in rural areas and that too mostly, in the name of the women. Highlighting that the cost of every house constructed under PM Awas Yojna is more than 1 lakh, the Prime Minister said that the government has transformed the lives of crores of women from the country by making them ‘Lakhpati Didi’ (millionaires). He informed that more than 4 lakh families have performed Grih Pravesh in pucca houses today and congratulated the sisters who have now become homeowners. The Prime Minister also touched upon the PM Saubhagya Yojna and informed that out of the 2.5 crore houses that received electricity, most of the houses belonged to the rural areas and the Har Ghar Jal Yojna that resulted in tapped water connections to more than 9 crore rural households. He pointed out that approximately 60 lakh houses in Madhya Pradesh now have tapped water connections compared to 13 lakhs previously.

Stressing the need for access to banks and bank accounts, the Prime Minister pointed out that most of the rural population neither had bank accounts nor availed of any services from banks. As a result, the Prime Minister continued, the monetary aid that was sent out to the beneficiaries got looted before it reached them. Throwing light on the Jan Dhan Yojna, the Prime Minister informed that bank accounts were opened for more than 40 crore residents from villages, and the reach of banks was widened through India Post Payments Bank via India Post Office. He also gave the example of Bank Mitras and trained Bank Sakhis that are helping the people of the villages in everything, be it farming or business.

Shedding light on the great injustice caused to the villages of India by previous governments, the Prime Minister noted that money spending on villages was avoided as villages were not considered to be vote banks. The Prime Minister highlighted that the present government opened the doors of development of the villages by spending more than 3.5 lakh crores on Har Ghar Jal Yojana, lakhs of crores of rupees are spent on PM Awas Yojana, 1 lakh crore rupees is being spent to complete the irrigation projects lying incomplete for

decades, and thousands of crores of rupees are being spent on PM Gramin Sadak Abhiyan. Even under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, the Prime Minister continued, the government has transferred about Rs 2.5 lakh crores directly to the bank accounts of the farmers where about 90 lakh farmers of Madhya Pradesh have received 18,500 crore rupees as part of this scheme. “The farmers of Rewa have also received about Rs 500 crore from this fund”, he added. The Prime Minister noted that thousands of crores of rupees have reached the villages in addition to the increase in MSP, while in the Corona period, the government has been giving free rations to the poor for the last three years at a cost of more than Rs 3 lakh crores.

Referring to the Mudra Yojna, the Prime Minister informed that the central government is creating employment and self-employment opportunities in the villages by providing assistance of Rs 24 lakh crore in the past years alone. Due to this, the Prime Minister said, crores of people have started their employment in the villages where women make for a huge number of beneficiaries. Shri Modi informed that in the last 9 years, 9 crore women have joined self-help groups including more than 50 lakh women from Madhya Pradesh, and the government is offering a loan of up to Rs 20 lakh without bank guarantee to every self-help group. “Women are now handling the command of many small-scale industries”, the Prime Minister remarked, referring to the ‘Didi Cafe’ set up by the state government in every district. Shri Modi congratulated the women power of Madhya Pradesh and informed that about 17,000 women associated with self-help groups have been elected as panchayat representatives in the last panchayat elections.

Referring to the ‘Samaveshi Abhiyan launched today, the Prime Minister said that this will be a strong initiative for achieving Viksit Bharat through Sabka Vikas. “Every panchayat, every institution, every representative, every citizen of the country will have to unite for a developed India. This is possible only when every basic facility reaches 100% beneficiaries quickly and without any discrimination”, he said. The Prime Minister emphasized that Panchayats will have to spread awareness about new systems of agriculture. He

especially stressed the need to propagate natural farming. He said Panchayats have a big role to play in the initiative for small farmers, fishermen, and animal husbandry. “When you get involved in every development-related activity, the collective efforts of the nation will get strengthened. This will become the energy for building a developed India in Amrit Kaal.”

Highlighting the projects of today, the Prime Minister mentioned the electrification of the Chhindwara-Nainpur-Mandla Fort rail line which will further ease the connectivity of the people of this region to Delhi-Chennai and Howrah-Mumbai while also benefiting the tribal population. He also mentioned the new trains that have also been flagged off today for Chhindwara-Nainpur and said that many towns and villages will be directly connected to their district headquarters in Chhindwara, Seoni, and going to Nagpur and Jabalpur will also become much easier. The Prime Minister noted the rich wildlife in the region and said that increasing connectivity will also boost tourism and create new employment opportunities. “This is the power of the double-engine government”, the Prime Minister said. Concluding the address, the Prime Minister thanked everyone for the love and support shown towards ‘Mann Ki Baat’ programme which is completing 100 episodes this Sunday. The Prime Minister highlighted the mentioning of various achievements of the people of Madhya Pradesh in Mann Ki Baat and urged everyone to tune in for the 100th episode. Governor of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Shri Giriraj Singh, Union Ministers of State, Shri Faggan Kulaste, Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti, Shri Kapil Moreshwar Patil, Members of Parliament and Ministers from Government of Madhya Pradesh were present on the occasion among others.

The Prime Minister participated in the celebration of National Panchayati Raj Day and addressed all the Gram Sabhas and Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country. During the event, the Prime Minister inaugurated an integrated eGramSwaraj and GeM portal for public procurement at Panchayat level. The objective of eGramSwaraj – Government eMarketplace integration is to enable the Panchayats to procure their goods and

services through GeM, leveraging the eGramSwaraj platform. With the aim of taking forward people's participation towards ensuring saturation of schemes of the government, Prime Minister unveiled a campaign named “विकास की ओर साझे कदम”. The theme of the campaign will be inclusive development, with a focus on reaching the last mile. The -Prime Minister also handed over around 35 lakh SVAMITVA Property Cards to beneficiaries. Post this programme, around 1.25 crore property cards were distributed under SVAMITVA Scheme in the country, including those distributed here. Taking a step towards fulfilling the vision of achieving 'Housing for All', the Prime Minister participated in a programme marking the ‘Griha Pravesh’ of more than 4 lakh beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana–Gramin. The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation various railway projects worth around Rs. 2,300 crores. The projects include 100 percent rail electrification in Madhya Pradesh, along with various doubling, gauge conversion and electrification projects. He also laid the foundation stone for the redevelopment of Gwalior station. The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone of projects worth about Rs.7,000 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

PIB, APRIL 26, 2023

‘Mann Ki Baat is the foundation to India @ 100’: Vice-President

Mann Ki Baat has generated a market space for local arts and artisans, popularised culture of North East and other States: VP

PM’s addresses through Mann Ki Baat are a beacon of positivity for the nation: VP

Vice President inaugurates conclave ‘Mann Ki Baat @100’, releases two books on the occasion

The Vice-President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar today said that as the programme ‘Mann Ki Baat’ completes its 100th episode, it will be the foundation to ‘India @ 100’. He said that India will be at the top of

the world when it will celebrate its Centenary Celebrations in 2047. Inaugurating the national conclave ‘Mann Ki Baat @ 100’ in New Delhi organised by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Shri Dhankhar said Mann Ki Baat reached every nook and corner of the country and is unparalleled in reach and popularity. He also credited the program for giving recognition and brand value to local art and artisans, and for generating a market space for them. The Vice-President observed that Mann Ki Baat gave a huge impetus to flagship initiatives of the government such as Swachh Bharat, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and turned them into mass movements. He added that the PM’s addresses on the show were a ‘beacon of positivity’ to the nation during the COVID pandemic. Noting that the 100th episode of the programme (scheduled to be aired on 30th April 2023) as a historic milestone, Shri Dhankhar lauded the program for serving as an effective platform to popularise and bring to the mainstream the culture and festivals of the North East and other states. ‘Mann Ki Baat, as a matter of fact, is a reflection of our sense of our civilisational ethos’, he observed.

Calling upon everyone to take pride in the achievements of the nation, the Vice-President stressed that one must ‘always keep nation first’. He said that India’s growth story is also underscored by ‘Nari Shakti’ exemplified in the election of a tribal woman as the President of India. He also noted various welfare initiatives such as the Direct Benefit Transfer, PM Ujjwala Yojana, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and others as indicative of the paradigm change in the socio-economic situation in the country.

During the event, Shri Dhankhar released the Coffee Table Book 'My Dear Fellow Citizens...'. The book, brought out by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, presents glimpses of over 100 inspiring stories, mentioned by Hon'ble PM in the radio programme. He also released a book “Collective Spirit, Concrete Action”, authored by Shri Shashi Shekhar Vempati, former CEO, Prasar Bharati, which describes the impact of the programme ‘Mann Ki Baat’ on the nation.

Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Minister of Information & Broadcasting and Youth Affairs & Sports, Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Shri Gaurav Dwivedi, Chief Executive Officer, Prasar Bharati accompanied the Vice-President in the inaugural. Eminent personalities such as Ms Kiran Bedi, Shri Aamir Khan, Ms Raveena Tandon, Shri Ricky Kej, Ms Nikhat Zareen and panelists of different sessions following the inaugural were also present. Around 100 esteemed citizens from various parts of the country who have been mentioned by the Prime Minister in various episodes of “Mann Ki Baat” also attended the event.

PIB, APRIL 28, 2023

Text of PM’s address at inauguration of 91 FM transmitters across 18 States and 2 Union Territories

नमस्कार जी,

कार्यक्रम में उपस्थित केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल के मेरे सहयोगीगण, विभिन्न राज्यों के माननीय मुख्यमंत्री साथी, सांसदगण, विधायकगण, अन्य महानुभाव, देवियों और सज्जनों,

आज के इस कार्यक्रम में पद्म सम्मान पाने वाले अनेक व्यक्तित्व भी हमारे साथ जुड़े हुए हैं। मैं उनका भी आदरपूर्वक स्वागत करता हूँ, अभिनंदन करता हूँ। आज ऑल इंडिया रेडियो की FM सर्विस का ये expansion ऑल इंडिया FM बनने की दिशा में एक बड़ा और महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। ऑल इंडिया रेडियो के 91 FM transmitters की ये शुरुआत देश के 85 जिलों के 2 करोड़ लोगों के लिए उपहार की तरह है। एक तरह से इस आयोजन में भारत की विविधता और अलग-अलग रंगों की एक झलक भी है। जिन जिलों को कवर किया जा

रहा है उसमें aspirational districts, Aspirational Blocks उनको भी सर्विसेज का लाभ मिल रहा है। मैं ऑल इंडिया रेडियो को इस उपलब्धि के लिए बहुत-बहुत बधाई देता हूँ। इसका काफी लाभ हमारे नॉर्थ ईस्ट के भाई-बहनों को होगा, युवा मित्रों को होगा। इसके लिए उन्हें मैं विशेष तौर पर बधाई देता हूँ।

साथियों,

जब बात रेडियो और FM की होती है, तो हम जिस पीढ़ी के लोग हैं, हम सबका रिश्ता एक भावुक श्रोता का भी है, और मेरे लिए तो ये भी खुशी है कि मेरा रिश्ता एक होस्ट का भी बन गया है। अभी कुछ दिन बाद ही मैं रेडियो पर 'मन की बात' का साँवा एपिसोड करने जा रहा हूँ। 'मन की बात' का ये अनुभव, देशवासियों से इस तरह का भावनात्मक जुड़ाव केवल रेडियो से ही संभव था। मैं इसके जरिए देशवासियों के सामर्थ्य से जुड़ा रहा, देश की सामूहिक कर्तव्यशक्ति से जुड़ा रहा। स्वच्छ भारत अभियान हो, बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ हो, या हर घर तिरंगा अभियान हो, 'मन की बात' ने इन अभियानों को जनआंदोलन बना दिया। इसलिए, एक तरह से मैं ऑल इंडिया रेडियो की आपकी टीम का भी हिस्सा हूँ।

साथियों,

आज के इस आयोजन की एक और खास बात है। ये वंचितों को वरीयता की सरकार की नीति को आगे बढ़ाता है। जो अब तक इस सुविधा से वंचित रहे, जिन्हें बहुत दूर-दराज में रहने वाला माना जाता था, वो अब हम सभी से और ज्यादा कनेक्ट होंगे। समय पर जरूरी जानकारी पहुंचाना हो, Community building का काम हो, Agriculture से जुड़ी मौसम की जानकारियां हों, किसानों को फसलों-फल-सब्जियों की कीमत की ताजा जानकारी हो, केमिकल खेती से होने वाले नुकसान की चर्चा हो, खेती के लिए आधुनिक मशीनों की पूलिंग हो, महिलाओं के सेल्फ हेल्प ग्रुप को नए बाजारों के बारे में बताना हो, या फिर किसी प्राकृतिक आपदा के समय पूरे क्षेत्र की मदद करना, इन FM transmitters की बहुत अहम भूमिका रहेगी। इसके अलावा FM की जो Infotainment Value है, वो तो होगी ही।

साथियों,

हमारी सरकार, निरंतर, इसी तरह, टेक्नोलॉजी के लोकतांत्रिकरण , Democratization इसके लिए काम कर रही है। भारत अपने सामर्थ्य का पूरा इस्तेमाल कर पाए, इसके लिए जरूरी है कि किसी भी भारतीय के पास अवसरों की कमी ना हो। आधुनिक टेक्नोलॉजी को सभी के लिए accessible बनाना, affordable बनाना, इसका बहुत बड़ा माध्यम है। आज भारत में जिस तरह गांव-गांव तक ऑप्टिकल फाइबर पहुंचाया जा रहा है, मोबाइल और मोबाइल डेटा, दोनों की कीमत इतनी कम हुई है, उसने access to information को बहुत आसान बना दिया है। आजकल हम देखते हैं, देश के कोने-कोने में, गांव-गांव में नए डिजिटल entrepreneurs बन रहे हैं। गांव के युवा, गांव में रहते हुए ही डिजिटल टेक्नोलॉजी का लाभ उठाकर कमाई कर रहे हैं। इसी तरह जब हमारे छोटे

दुकानदारों को, रेहड़ी-पटरी वाले साथियों को internet और UPI से मदद मिली, तो उन्होंने बैंकिंग सिस्टम का लाभ लेना भी शुरू कर दिया। आज टेक्नोलॉजी की मदद से हमारे मछुआरे साथियों को मौसम संबंधी सही जानकारी सही समय पर मिलती हैं। आज टेक्नोलॉजी की मदद हमारे लघु उद्यमी, अपने Products, देश के कोने-कोने में बेच पा रहे हैं। इसमें गवर्नमेंट-ई-मार्केट प्लेस यानि GeM से भी उन्हें मदद मिल रही है।

साथियों,

बीते वर्षों में देश में जो tech revolution हुआ है, उसने रेडियो और विशेषकर FM को भी नए अवतार में गढ़ा है। इंटरनेट के कारण रेडियो पिछड़ा नहीं, बल्कि ऑनलाइन FM के जरिए, podcasts के जरिए, इनोवेटिव तरीकों से सामने उभरकर के आया है। यानी, डिजिटल इंडिया ने रेडियो को नए listeners भी दिये हैं, और नई सोच भी दी है। यही revolution आप संचार के हर माध्यम में देख सकते हैं। जैसे आज देश के सबसे बड़े DTH platform, डीडी फ्री डिश की सेवा 4 करोड़ 30 लाख घरों में पहुंच रही है। देश के करोड़ों ग्रामीण घरों में, बॉर्डर के पास वाले इलाकों में, आज दुनिया की हर सूचना, रियल टाइम में पहुंच रही है। समाज का जो वर्ग दशकों तक कमजोर और वंचित रहा, उसे भी फ्री डिश से education और entertainment की सुविधा मिल रही है। इससे समाज के अलग-अलग वर्गों के बीच असमानता दूर करने और हर किसी तक quality information पहुंचाने में सफलता मिली है। आज DTH चैनलों पर विभिन्न प्रकार के educational courses उपलब्ध हैं। एक से बढ़कर एक universities का ज्ञान सीधे आपके घर तक पहुंच रहा है। कोरोनाकाल में इसने देश के करोड़ों विद्यार्थियों

की बहुत मदद की है। DTH हो या फिर FM रेडियो, इनकी ये ताकत हमें future India में झाँकने के लिए एक विंडो देती है। हमें इसी भविष्य के लिए खुद को तैयार करना है।

साथियों,

FM transmitters से बन रही इस कनेक्टिविटी का एक और आयाम है। देश की सभी भाषाओं और विशेष रूप से 27 बोलियों वाले इलाकों में इन FM transmitters से ब्रॉडकास्ट होगा। यानि ये कनेक्टिविटी सिर्फ कम्यूनिकेशन के साधनों को ही आपस में नहीं जोड़ती, बल्कि लोगों को भी जोड़ती है। ये हमारी सरकार के काम करने के तरीके की एक पहचान है। अक्सर जब हम कनेक्टिविटी की बात करते हैं तो हमारे सामने रोड, रेल, एयरपोर्ट की तस्वीर उभरती है। लेकिन हमारी सरकार ने फिजिकल कनेक्टिविटी के अलावा सोशल कनेक्टिविटी को बढ़ाने पर भी उतना ही जोर दिया है। हमारी सरकार, कल्चरल कनेक्टिविटी और Intellectual connectivity को भी लगातार मजबूत कर रही है। जैसे पिछले 9 वर्षों में हमने पद्म अवॉर्ड, साहित्य और कला अवॉर्ड के द्वारा देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों के real heroes को सामने सम्मानित किया है। पहले की तरह पद्म सम्मान सिफारिश के आधार पर नहीं, बल्कि देश और समाज की सेवा के आधार पर दिया जाता है। आज जो पद्म सम्मान पाने वाले साथी हमारे साथ जुड़े हैं, वो इसे भली-भांति जानते हैं। देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में तीर्थस्थलों, धार्मिक स्थानों का कायाकल्प होने के बाद एक राज्य का व्यक्ति दूसरे राज्य में जा रहा है। पर्यटन स्थलों पर लोगों की बढ़ती संख्या देश में Cultural connectivity बढ़ने का प्रमाण है। आदिवासी स्वतंत्रता सेनानियों से जुड़ा संग्रहालय हो, बाबासाहेब अंबेडकर के पंचतीर्थ का पुननिर्माण हों, पीएम म्यूजियम हो, या फिर

नेशनल वॉर मेमोरियल, ऐसी पहलों ने देश में Intellectual और Emotional connectivity को नया आयाम दिया है।

साथियों,

Connectivity चाहे किसी भी स्वरूप में क्यों न हो, उसका उद्देश्य होता है- देश को जोड़ना, 140 करोड़ देशवासियों को जोड़ना। ऑल इंडिया रेडियो जैसे सभी communication channels के लिए भी यही विज़न होना चाहिए, यही मिशन होना चाहिए। मुझे विश्वास है, आप इस विज़न को लेकर इसी तरह आगे बढ़ते रहेंगे, आपका ये विस्तार संवाद के जरिए देश को नई ताकत देता रहेगा। एक बार फिर आकाशवाणी को, देश के दूर दराज के क्षेत्र के मेरे प्यारे भाईयों-बहनों को मैं बहुत-बहुत शुभकामनाएं देता हूं, बहुत बधाई देता हूं। धन्यवाद।