

Judicial safe zones: on special deposition centres in courts

It has long been recognised that children testifying as witnesses find the courtroom experience intimidating. In many cases, they are victims themselves, and may be deterred from deposing fully and confidently in the formal atmosphere. The [Supreme Court's direction](#) that within three months there should be at least two special deposition centres under every high court's jurisdiction is a positive step towards ensuring a conducive and protective atmosphere for vulnerable witnesses. This takes forward the principle already contained in laws relating to children. For instance, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act provides for child-friendly procedures during a trial. Under this law, the officer recording a child's statement should not be in uniform; also, during court proceedings steps must be taken to ensure that the child is not exposed to the accused. The court is allowed to record a child's statement through video conferencing, or using one-way mirrors or curtains. At present, Delhi has four such deposition centres, backed by guidelines framed by the Delhi High Court. The *amicus curiae* in a criminal appeal before the Supreme Court had suggested that such special centres are needed in criminal cases that involve vulnerable witnesses. The Bench, setting aside a high court's acquittal of a man accused of raping a hearing and speech impaired girl and restoring the trial court's conviction, agreed such centres are needed with safeguards.

The Delhi High Court's guidelines are inspired by the UN Model Law on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime. The main objectives include eliciting complete, accurate and reliable testimony from child witnesses, minimising harm, and preventing 'secondary victimisation'. Secondary victimisation, or the harm that occurs not due to a criminal act but through the insensitive response of institutions, systems and individuals, is something that vulnerable witnesses often experience in cases of sexual violence. The creation of special centres would have to imply much more than a safe space for recording the testimony of vulnerable witnesses. It should also mean that multiple depositions and hearings at which they have to be present are avoided. In particular, they should not have to needlessly wait for their turn or be subjected to procedural delays. For now, the term 'vulnerable witnesses' is limited to children, but the principle may have to be expanded to include adults who may be equally vulnerable to threats and an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Victims of sexual violence and whistle-blowers whose testimony against powerful adversaries may endanger their lives require a conducive atmosphere to depose. Ideally, every district in the country would need a special deposition centre. The infrastructural and financial burden may be huge, but the state will have to provide for it to abide by the overarching principle of protecting vulnerable witnesses.

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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Ministry of HUA ropes in private online service aggregator to promote jobs for urban poor

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Signs MoU with UrbanClap to enhance job chances with assured incomes for urban poor skilled under DAY-NULM

Minimum guarantee of Rs.15,000-25,000 per month

Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad among 16 cities covered initially

Minister of HUA Shri Hardeep Singh Puri wants all 5 lakh plus population cities to be covered

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs today roped in a private online service aggregator, UrbanClap, to ensure employment opportunities with minimum assured monthly wages for urban poor skilled under Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard was today signed between the Ministry and UrbanClap in the presence of Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri.

Under the MoU signed for five years and effective from today, UrbanClap will bring together demand for domestic services and the urban poor skilled under DAY-NULM in 16 cities viz., Delhi, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad.

UrbanClap assures a minimum monthly earning of Rs.15,000 for plumbers, electricians and carpenters and Rs.25,000 for appliance repair technicians, beauty therapists and Spa therapists.

The three year old UrbanClap has become successful offering follow up customer support through online and insurance against any damage of the skilled service provider is contacted through its app.

Shri Puri, while lauding the initiative urged the UrbanClap to scale up the services to all the 106 cities that have a population of five lakhs and above and State Capitals. He said that the MoU will lead to enhancing the employment of those being skilled in high demand services under DAY-NULM. At present over 35% of those skilled under DAY-NULM have found employment.

Under the MoU, the Ministry of HUA will share details of those imparted skill training under DAY-NULM with UrbanClap. During 2016-17, 4,01,654 were given skill training while 1,39,970 have so far been skilled during the current financial year.

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'All unwelcome physical contact not sexual harassment'

All unwelcome physical contact cannot be called sexual harassment unless it is in the nature of a sexually-oriented behaviour, the Delhi High Court has said.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru, who made the observation, also said that even an accidental physical contact, though unwelcome, would not amount to sexual harassment.

"Similarly, a physical contact which has no undertone of a sexual nature and is not occasioned by the gender of the complainant may not necessarily amount to sexual harassment," the court said.

Clean chit challenged

The observations by the Bench came during the hearing of an appeal by a Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) scientist challenging the clean chit given by the complaints committee and disciplinary authority to her former senior colleague, whom she had accused of sexual harassment.

Both of them were working in the CRRI, which is part of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

The allegation pertained to an incident on April 2005 when the man had entered the laboratory where the woman was working and had snatched samples from her hand, thrown the materials and pushed her out of the room.

The woman had contended that any unwelcome physical contact amounted to sexual harassment.

The Complaints Committee had after examining her complaint concluded that "it was a case of altercation in the background of the uncongenial environment prevailing in the division".

'Deplorable conduct'

Terming the man's conduct as deplorable, the Complaints Committee had also said that while there was evidence of physical contact by the man, "the same was not a sexually determined behaviour but was in the nature of an altercation".

The disciplinary authority had accepted the committee's report and passed an order in October 2009 giving clean chit to the man accused of sexual harassment.

Agreeing with the committee's finding, the high court said, "Undoubtedly, physical contact or advances would constitute sexual harassment provided such physical contact is a part of the sexually determined behaviour. Such physical contact must be in the context of a behaviour which is sexually oriented."

The court also rejected the woman's challenge to the constitution of the committee and the disciplinary authority, saying that it finds no infirmity in their set up.

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DOPT-SEXUAL-HARASSMENT

Women employees working in government departments can lodge complaints of sexual abuse at workplace online and can monitor the action being taken on them too.

SHe-box

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has written to all Central government departments asking them to inform the women employees about the Sexual Harassment electronic-box (SHe-box), launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on July 24.

“Once a complaint is submitted to the SHe-box, it will be directly sent to the Internal Complaints Committee concerned of the Ministry, Department, public sector undertakings, autonomous body, etc., having the jurisdiction to inquire into the complaints,” the DoPT said.

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Feeding India

India's ranking in the International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI's) 2017 Global Hunger Index has invited much comment and criticism among India's intellectual elite. India has slipped to 100 among 119 countries in the 2017 Global Hunger Index, down from 97 among the 118 countries in 2016. Fortunately, the Government of India's National Nutrition Strategy announced in September 2017 provides the much needed comprehensive approach with a National Nutrition Mission combined with strengthening decentralised delivery. The challenge will be implementation with a focus on results, credibly monitored.

Surjit Bhalla (['Hungry for publicity'](#), IE, October 21) accuses the IFPRI of being hungry for publicity and of misinformed and faulty analysis, in the name of the poor. He argues that "hunger" in the title of the index is inappropriate, and the IFPRI index should be called a Malnutrition Index.

Notwithstanding these initial comments, Bhalla acknowledges a "genuine" nutrition "absorption problem" in India and rightly applauds the priority to sanitation given by Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#). On the same subject, Swaminathan Aiyar (The Times of India, October 22) addressing the PM directly, also questions the title, suggesting "a more accurate title might be World Child Nutrition Report", but, like Bhalla, argues the IFPRI prefers "hunger" as a sexier sales pitch. He cites NSSO surveys to argue that hunger declined from 16 per cent of the population in 1983 to an incredible 1.9 per cent in 2004-05 without mentioning the measurement issue. Instead of trumpeting this as a success, he argues, "you, (the prime minister), have stopped asking questions about hunger altogether in your surveys!"

He urges the need to show that India is far less hungry than critics allege and that the PM is remedying problems that are real. He also gives PM Modi more practical advice to keep critics at bay, asking to take five steps: One, restart measuring hunger in National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) surveys: International organisations will find that difficult to ignore. As an aside, Nobel laureate Angus Deaton has lamented the declining quality of national household surveys in India observed by well-known Indian scholars such as Minhas. Two, revise Indian calorie norms (downwards?) in view of widespread mechanisation and urge world bodies to follow suit. FAO's norms are already substantially lower than Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMRNIN) norms. Indian norms of 2,400 kcal per-person per-day for rural and 2,100 kcal per-person per-day for urban areas imply a much higher incidence of undernourishment (Chand and Jumrani 2013). His third, more cynical, advice is "combat critics spinning data with counter-spin. Spin your own emphasis on gender equality to say it also attacks maternal mortality and child stunting." Four, spin the Swachh Bharat scheme to boast that, as the first politician to aim for an open-defecation-free India, the PM targets not just cleanliness but malnutrition. And finally, implement the Food Security Act's promised cash benefit to pregnant and lactating women.

Here are some "facts" to consider generating an informed debate. The World Bank says the poverty rate in India is 21.2 per cent. That rate is similar to the Gallup hunger estimates, which Bhalla likes, of 22.4 per cent. The malnutrition rate (stunting among children below five years) is 38.4 per cent according to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS 4) — there are 47.5 million stunted children in India out of 154.8 million globally. This is because of poor diet, poor healthcare and poor sanitation.

Sanitation improvement is key, but so too are improving diets, and we know that especially for very young children (6-23 months), diets (meaning actual food intake) are terrible, but only about one in 10 meet diet adequacy (NFHS 4).

A recent paper by Srivastava and Chand (2017) based on household level Consumer Survey Data

of NSSO covering several years (1993-94, 2004-05, 2009-10 and 2011-12), suggests that the decline in calorie consumption noted in several earlier studies was reversed in 2011-12. More importantly, the paper found the disparity in calorie consumption among income classes in rural and urban areas declined and that access to PDS had a greater impact in explaining the increase in calorie consumption per rupee compared to cash transfers, a smaller portion of which was spent on calories. They suggest a need for more such research on increasing the efficiency of public distribution, or to consider conditional cash transfers than to discard them as tools if the objective is to increase food consumption rather than simply cash transfers as a means of income transfer.

The Srivastava-Chand study's (2017) results are at odds with the IFPRI study on pulses which suggests increased access to pulses through public distribution had only a marginal impact on households' pulse consumption.

To summarise, nutrition is a challenge full of complexity. There is plenty of evidence globally and in India suggesting that poor nutrition affects early childhood development, learning and earning potential with life-cycle effects on national health and economic growth. For an emerging country with one of the fastest economic growth rates, India needs to implement its announced strategy with a focus on evidence, results and learning, not just spin. That calls for a true commitment at the level of the states and communities with a focus on improved outcomes for the poor and accountability for those in governance, and the solutions need to go far beyond the expansion of sanitation, important as that is.

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The missing women

The World Economic Forum's just-released report — the Global Gender Gap Index, 2017 — shows that India's poor showing on gender equity has hit rock-bottom. It has been ranked 108 out of 144 countries, a fall of 21 places from last year's 87 — and its lowest since the index was developed in 2006. It would be safe to say that, at this rate, it would take centuries to close the wide gap between Indian men and women. The report flags two indicators as being particularly guilty. The first is "health and survival", where India is in the bottom four, largely as a result of its losing battle against a falling sex ratio at birth and the lack of access to healthcare. The second is "economic participation and opportunities for women". Despite gains in education, women's work participation rate stands at an abysmal 27 per cent. According to a World Bank report, about 19.6 million women have dropped out of the workforce between 2004-05 and 2011-12. Even when women earn, says the WEF report, they are paid 60 per cent less than men for similar work done. Most of the work they do is unpaid labour — at home, in the fields and in childcare. Thus, on every point in the spectrum of human development, from sheer survival and basic health to the opportunities available to realise one's human potential, Indian women are precariously placed. The data needs to be parsed to see if the precipitous fall this year is a result of the larger crisis in agriculture, or the blow to women's finances from demonetisation. But the report raises serious questions about why two decades of economic progress have not led to commensurate strides in women's lives. It certainly ought to send the central and state governments back to the drawing boards to re-assess ongoing schemes, and to reinvest more heavily in the nutrition and health of women. Economists are agreed that for a society to be gender-just, there is no substitute for a greater participation of women in the workforce — and more women in leadership roles. Bangladesh, at the 47th spot, is an example of how political empowerment — 20 per cent of its legislators in parliament are women, 45 per cent of women are in the workforce — has levelled the field considerably for its women. In contrast, only 12 per cent of legislators in India are women. The time for change is now, and it ought to start at the top — with the political class.

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A welfare test for Aadhaar

The news last month of the starvation death of an 11-year-old girl in the Simdega district in Jharkhand, allegedly because of denial of PDS ration due to [Aadhaar](#) linking problems, is appalling. The Aadhaar ecosystem definitely needs to pass a stringent welfare test much more crucially than the privacy test.

Aadhaar undeniably has potential, and can perhaps even be a “game changer”. But the way it has been used to design public policies, especially in welfare, seems to have caused havoc. The relentless push of Aadhaar without adequate justification or calibration, with complete disregard of the distress it may be causing to the poor and the under-privileged, is symptomatic of high-handed decision-making and technological muscle-flexing. It is rapidly setting an example of how not to do public policy interventions. Both the last UPA and the current NDA governments must share the blame for these faults of Aadhaar — UPA for its careless introduction, and NDA for pushing it so thoughtlessly.

Independent researchers and civil society activists have long been alerting us to the possibilities of such tragedies. There have been reports of widespread exclusion and disruption that Aadhaar may be causing in welfare schemes. While it is true these are based on anecdotal evidence, they do point to crucial problems with the Aadhaar deployment.

Irrespective of what may have been happening before Aadhaar was introduced, it is imperative to ensure that nobody who needs welfare is ever denied. After all, the rights derived from the NFSA and MGNREGA are unconditional.

The narrative from the government and the UIDAI in response to the reports of exclusion and disruption has often been callous. It has primarily been based on denial, on dubious savings claims, and on the lame quoting of the Aadhaar Act to say that nobody should be denied their entitlements because of Aadhaar.

It is the UIDAI which has been at the receiving end of much of the public flak, but whose responsibility is it to ensure that no deserving person is denied their due benefit? Shouldn't the Central and the state government functionaries be at the forefront to ensure fair and efficient disbursement of PDS ration? Where are the ground reports from the district administrations about the PDS denials because of Aadhaar? Who has designed and deployed the Aadhaar-based PDS? Is there any standardisation across the country and are the designs available for public scrutiny? There may indeed be leakages in PDS, but where is the policy analysis that biometric-based identity verification is necessary for every transaction and that a periodic KYC, as is common with more privileged citizens, will not suffice? And, does the UIDAI have no responsibility towards standardisation and audit?

What is immediately required is a thorough analysis of the denials in PDS. What is the exclusion rate due to targeting errors independent of Aadhaar and how many are excluded only due to Aadhaar? What is the biometric failure rate across the population, sorted according to age, gender, occupation and region? Are the failures inherent to the technology or are they avoidable process errors? What exactly are the problems with the Aadhaar linking processes and can they be rectified? To what extent is the problem due to connectivity failures?

Despite the fact that some of the state governments, like Andhra Pradesh and Delhi, do make the data publicly available on their websites, the presentation is not comprehensive enough to enable an exact determination of the above. It is incredible that there appears to be no publicly available peer-reviewed report that provides a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the above issues.

Mandating a biometric-based digital identity for PDS for a population that may lack the cultural capital required for a smooth adoption was bound to be challenging, and the designers needed to be much more thoughtful. Rather than the rhetoric on whether Aadhaar empowers the citizen or the state, what is urgently required is a precise statement on how exactly Aadhaar may help targeting by reducing both false negatives and false positives. It is also necessary to precisely spell out how exactly and to what extent Aadhaar and the associated digitisation may help to prevent leakages by curbing corruption.

An effective design of using digital identity in PDS is not possible without a thorough understanding of the ground realities. However, it does appear from reading of public accounts that the elements of such a design must be based on an offline identity verification system with opportunistic uploading of cached records; on an error-free linking process; on deployment of tamper-proof digital weighing machines and end-to-end recording at the supply chain and at the ration shops; on effective online receipt systems and online audits; and, most importantly, on user education and a quick and effective grievance redress system.

The offline identity verification may simply be based on digital reading of an encrypted and digitally signed photograph of the beneficiary encoded on the ration card, followed by physical comparison and storing for records along with a time-stamped photograph acquired on the spot with a tamper-proof device. And, it will be crucial to discuss and debate any such design with all stakeholders and not push anything down from the top.

We have to ensure, with or without Aadhaar, that people do not go hungry in this country. Otherwise all claims to development are bound to sound hollow.

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Need to extend reservations for women in Parliament and Assemblies on lines of Panchayats: Vice President

Need to extend reservations for women in Parliament and Assemblies on lines of Panchayats: Vice President

Addresses function 'Building a New India' organized by FICCI Ladies Organization

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that we need to extend reservations for women in Parliament and Assemblies on the lines of Panchayats. He was addressing the function 'Building a New India' being organized by the FICCI Ladies Organization, in Hyderabad today. The Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Shri Shri Mohammad Mahmood Ali and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that India today is on the threshold of transforming into a major economic power. For this all Indians will have to work with renewed passion and commitment towards building the New India and the India of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay and several other freedom fighters, he added.

The Vice President said that the New India will be fully literate, free of corruption with shelter to every family, provide power on demand, best healthcare, meet the employment aspirations of the youth, empower women, double farmers' income and convert India into an economic powerhouse with IT, Agriculture and Industrial sectors contributing significantly to its economic growth.

The Vice President said that our ethos and values always respected women and it is unfortunate that abhorrent tendencies of atrocities are taking place in modern times. It needs no reiteration that the most stringent action has to be taken against perpetrators of atrocities on women, he added.

The Vice President said that educating a woman means educating an entire family. He further said that ending gender disparity, ensuring safety, healthcare, imparting job skills, creating more job opportunities and ensuring safe work places are all aimed at empowering women. The Vice President quoted UN report, saying for every one additional year of education for women in reproductive age, child mortality is reduced by a huge 9.50 per cent. The Government has launched various schemes, including 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' which seeks to reverse the trend of decline in Child Sex Ratio, he added.

The Vice President also interacted with the Members of the FICCI Ladies Organization. Responding to a question on what needs to be done for the women empowerment, the Vice President said that education is very important for the empowerment of women. He further said that financial security is also an important factor for women empowerment. They should be given equal opportunities, equal rights and health facilities, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am happy to share my thoughts on the building of a 'New India' with you all, who are working towards women's empowerment and trying to be change agents. I am glad to know that FICCI Ladies Organization is working on its own and also partnering with the Government of Telangana on various initiatives to empower women, especially those from the marginalized sections.

India today is on the threshold of transforming into a major economic power. For quickening this process of transformation, all Indians will have to work with renewed passion and commitment towards building the New India and the India of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay and several other freedom fighters.

Friends, we cannot any longer adopt a "chaltha hai" attitude or accept things with a 'destined-to-happen' shrug and remain indifferent to the happenings around us. As the Father of the Nation famously said: "Be the change you wish to see"—to start with let everyone work at his/ her own individual level—be it a housewife, a budding entrepreneur or an employee must actively fight against social evils like gender discrimination, atrocities on women, infanticide, malnourishment, corruption, casteism, communalism and illiteracy. Terrorism is the biggest threat to India's unity and integrity

Somehow over the years, we Indians have developed a rather strange attitude or belief that every problem has to be solved by the Government and the individual or the society at large need not do anything. "Sab kuch sarkaar karega, hum bekar baitega" - this premise must change and every citizen must contribute in making India unleash its full potential.

For this to happen and the envisioned New India to take shape, all sections, particularly youth and women, who constitute almost half the country's population will have to be in the forefront.

The New India will be fully literate, free of corruption with shelter to every family, provide power on demand, best healthcare, meet the employment aspirations of the youth, empower women, double farmers' income and convert India into an economic powerhouse with IT, Agriculture and Industrial sectors contributing significantly to its economic growth. Of course, politicians and political parties need to be exemplary in their conduct.

From times immemorial and in our scriptures women have been accorded positions of power and leadership. Our ethos and values always respected women and it is unfortunate that abhorrent tendencies of atrocities are taking place in modern times. It needs no reiteration that the most stringent action has to be taken against perpetrators of atrocities on women. Here I would like to recall what Swami Vivekananda had said: "The best thermometer to the progress of nation is its treatment of women". Our scriptures have said "Yatra Naryastu Pujyante, Ramanta Tatra Devata", meaning where women are respected, Gods will dwell there.

While women achieved tremendous success in different fields from space to sports, political empowerment is the most critical aspect in the overall empowerment of women. I hope that more and more women would be seen in various bodies—from panchayats to Parliament in the years ahead. It is also necessary to remove all hurdles that come in the way of socio-economic empowerment of women. We need to extend reservations for women in Parliament and Assemblies on the lines of Panchayats.

Needless to say that education forms the foundation for empowering girls and women. As had

been most aptly said educating a woman means educating an entire family. Ending gender disparity, ensuring safety, healthcare, imparting job skills, creating more job opportunities and ensuring safe work places are all aimed at empowering women. On the advantages of educating women, a UN report based on data from 219 countries, said that for every one additional year of education for women in reproductive age, child mortality is reduced by a huge 9.50 per cent.

The Government has launched various schemes, including 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' which seeks to reverse the trend of decline in Child Sex Ratio.

I am happy to know that FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO), Hyderabad chapter has taken up various programmes to empower and uplift women, particularly from the weaker sections. I compliment FLO for acting as a facilitator to impart training for women to become drivers, tailors and security personnel in schools.

FLO's Swayam, a consultancy and mentorship cell for women entrepreneurs is also a laudable initiative.

Finally, I would like to conclude by calling upon every citizen to strive for building New India where the aspirations and dreams of every Indian are fulfilled and where nobody is left behind.

Thank You and Jai Hind!"

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It's a national shame that bonded labour still exists in India

Last week, 25 bonded labourers, including children, were rescued from farmlands in Rajasthan's Baran district. The rescued workers said they were lured from Madhya Pradesh with loans between Rs 500 to Rs 20,000 and the promise of work. But they were made to work on the fields without pay. Bonded and forced labour - where a person is made to work through the use of violence or intimidation or more subtle means such as accumulated debt - are some of the oldest forms of slavery in the world. According to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, India has the most slaves in the world. There are an estimated 46 million people enslaved worldwide with more than 18 million of them in India, the survey added. Unfortunately, the Indian government cannot verify these figures. But the labour ministry has drawn up plans to identify, rescue and help bonded labourers by 2030.

In reply to a [Lok Sabha question](#), minister of state (independent charge) for labour and employment Bandaru Dattatreya, said that the Centre has adopted a three-pronged strategy for the abolition of the bonded labour system: First, the Constitution prohibits forced labour. It enacted the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, which empowers executive magistrates to exercise powers of judicial magistrate of first or second class for trial of offences. Vigilance committees at the district and sub-divisional levels have been prescribed to identify and rehabilitate bonded labourers. A centrally-sponsored plan --- Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour --- is under implementation since 1978 under which the Centre and states contribute Rs 10,000 each for cases of rehabilitation.

Unfortunately, despite these measures, India has such large numbers of bonded labourers, thanks to poor enforcement of the four-decade-old bonded labour law, its under-resourced police and judiciary, and deep societal and economic inequities that still exist. The only way to reduce bonded labour is taking a preventive approach, by reducing the conditions that perpetuate bondage-like conditions by promoting decent work, and by removing possible elements of bondage and coercion in the worker-employer relationship. It also involves inter-state coordination mechanisms for migrant workers, including workplace improvements and linking them to social security schemes. Above all, efforts must be made to create a database of bonded labourers. It is not an easy task but would be first step towards their liberation and rehabilitation.

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Unplanned urbanisation blamed as dengue claims 40 lives in Bengal

Rapid, unplanned urbanisation is the main reason behind the current outbreak of dengue in West Bengal, medical professionals have said. They are of the opinion that large-scale construction work in Kolkata as well as semi-urban areas provide ample breeding grounds to the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the vector of the disease which breeds in clean, stagnant water. As per the latest government estimates, 40 people have died due to dengue while at least 20,500 have been diagnosed with the disease.

Elaborating on the urban nature of dengue, virologist Amitava Nandi said the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito mostly breeds in stagnated water in containers. "Social change due to urbanisation has triggered a sharp increase in the use of artificial containers in cities. Products which were earlier sold in paper bags are sold in plastic packets and containers, providing more breeding space to the mosquito," Dr. Nandi told *The Hindu*.

With container use becoming popular in semi-urban and rural areas, dengue is no longer confined to large cities, he added.

The medical professionals also pointed out that unplanned building construction without a proper drainage system in the semi-urban and rural areas contributed to the spread of dengue.

"Even in the rural areas of North 24 Paraganas district [which, according to the State government, is the worst affected by dengue], unplanned building construction has increased over the last decade," said Shanta Dutta, director of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED).

Till September this year, about 15% of the blood samples at NICED tested positive for dengue, she said. "Since late September, it has gone up to 40 to 45%," she added.

The severity of the situation can be seen from the fact that 108 dengue patients are admitted in the State run Beliaghata Infectious Diseases (ID) hospital. "Apart from these 108 patients, 214 have been admitted with fever. If they are diagnosed with dengue, the number of such patients will increase," said U.K. Bhadra, principal of the hospital.

They also point out that no curative medicine is available for dengue — only supportive treatment can be provided.

"Dengue deaths can be avoided with early detection and proper treatment. Increasing public awareness on the disease is the key," said Dr. Dutta.

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Plotting social progress

The accomplishments of modern India are recognised around the world. A country that was a symbol of hunger and poverty at the time of Independence and admonished for its Hindu rate of growth during the initial decades has now transformed itself into one of the the fastest growing major economies.

These economic achievements are extensive, especially when considering the challenges that arose from following democratic governance after decades of oppressive colonial rule and being a multi-religious secular entity. But the potential for growth remains strong despite some slackening.

The societal reach of this economic growth still remains unquantified. There have been efforts to track individual social outcomes such as health, education and safety. For instance, the National University of Educational Planning and Administration and the Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy) compute an Educational Development Index for primary and upper primary levels of education that compare States on different aspects on education universalisation. Similarly, NITI Aayog has rolled out the health, education and water index. Apart from these individual indices, there have also been efforts to look at progress through the lens of a human development index but that does not isolate the impact of economic growth. A common measure to quantify the social progress of Indian States that can pinpoint the achievements and the challenges is still missing.

A Social Progress Index could bridge this gap. We ranked States using social and environmental indicators on the basis of their capability to provide for basic needs such as shelter, water, and sanitation; a foundation for well-being with education, health, and communication facilities; analysing the prejudices that prevail in a region prohibiting people from making their personal decisions; and evaluating whether citizens have personal rights and freedom or whether they are susceptible to child labour, human trafficking, corruption, etc.

The study (2005-2016) helps analyse whether States, especially using social and environmental indicators, are heading in the right direction. It is also essential to help adjust policies as well as public and private investments.

First, the overall social progress score for the country now stands at 57.03 (on a 0-100 scale), approximately eight points higher than in 2005. The country performs better in the provision of basic human needs rather than opportunities for its citizens. Therefore, creation of a society with equal opportunities for all still remains an elusive dream. But it is encouraging to note that the scores for opportunity have increased over the years followed by smaller, but important improvements in the areas of basic human needs and foundations of well-being.

Second, all the States have climbed the social progress ladder, with the group of States that had the worst performance in 2005 — Tripura, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Bihar — now showing improvement. This suggests that States with a relatively low level of social progress can improve rapidly. Similarly, in States that have achieved a threshold level of social progress, driving improvements becomes more difficult. This is backed by the fact that average improvement is the lowest among the group of States that were categorised as “Very High Social Progress” in 2005.

The third major finding is that the greatest improvements have been in areas where social progress most often accompanies economic prosperity. On the other hand, areas where performance has declined or stagnated is where the correlation with economic development is weak. For instance, “Access to Information & Communication and Inclusion” depicts a strong

relationship with per capita GDP and are the ones that have improved the most over the years. And “Health and Wellness & Environmental Quality”, that are least correlated with economic development, have eroded. This suggests that States should focus on policies that target social issues. The focus on economic parameters will result in unbalanced social development.

The overall findings show that while the economy is on the right track, there is an urgent need to identify and focus on social parameters. The reliance on the idea that economic development will automatically transform social conditions will hamper further improvements in social progress. Social progress needs to be stimulated by focussing on policies directly targeting social issues.

Amit Kapoor is chair, Institute for Competitiveness, India. Manisha Kapoor is a senior researcher at the same institute

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Aiming high, looking far

A young person at a recent job fair in Uttar Pradesh told me “Paanch hazaar ki naukri toh hum sab ke paas hai; hum barah hazaar ki naukri ke liye aaye hain” (we all have jobs at Rs 5,000; all of us came for jobs that pay Rs 12,000). This person clearly understood India doesn't have a jobs problem — our unemployment rate of 4.9 per cent is not a fudge — but a wages problem. This diagnosis is important. If the problem is jobs, we should throw money from helicopters and bust the government budget. But if our problem is wages then India needs the higher productivity that comes from structural change: Formalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, skilling and deep financial markets.

I'd like to make the case that demonetisation made India a better habitat for formal job creation for five reasons: Rs 18 lakh crore new lending capacity, 7.9 crore new monthly digital transactions, 3 lakh crore new financial savings, 2 per cent lower interest rates, and permanent damage to our sense of humour about the rule of law (1.5 lakh people deposited Rs 5 lakh crore, that is, 0.00011 per cent of India's population deposited 33 per cent of total cash demonetised). Let's look at each in more detail.

First, Rs 18 lakh crore new lending capacity. Demonetisation has reduced cash with citizens; bank deposits have increased by somewhere between Rs 2.8-4.3 lakh crore (detailed logic in Mint Street Memo #1 on the RBI website). Assuming Rs 3 lakh crore and applying an accepted 6 multiplier, demonetisation has created new lending capacity of Rs 18 lakh crore (36 times India's Central government allocation to primary education). Today banks are lazily lending this liquidity to the RBI but when they start doing their jobs well, this dry powder will boost investment and formal job creation.

Second, 7.6 crore new monthly digital transactions. Demonetisation exploded the number of digital payments on UPI/Bhim from 1 lakh in October 2016 to 7.7 crore in October 2017. Prohibiting salary payments by cash and 50 lakh new bank accounts for labourers will fuel further adoption; digitisation is important for formalisation because it makes regulatory arbitrage and tax evasion difficult. But the bigger upside of payment digitisation lies in its creation of the information infrastructure for cash-flow based lending; economist Ridham Desai estimates that over 10 years digitisation could grow lending by Rs 243 lakh crore (largely to consumers and MSMEs) and e-commerce sales from \$15 billion to \$200 billion.

Third, 3 lakh crore new financial savings. Demonetisation has catalysed a savings shift away from gold (imports are down 20 per cent over the last year) and real estate (the toxic gap between rental yields and borrowing rates is finally narrowing). The eight months after demonetisation saw mutual fund inflows of Rs 1.69 lakh crore (up 1700 per cent) and the three months after demonetisation saw Life Insurance Premiums rising by 46 per cent (details in Mint Street Memo #2). Greater financialisation of savings creates a virtuous cycle for formal job creation because they deepen and broaden domestic capital markets whose institutions are more likely to fund entrepreneurs who create babies (companies that are small but will grow) rather than dwarfs (companies that are small and will stay small).

Fourth, 2 per cent lower interest rates. Expensive loans are better than no loans but the cost of money has been crippling for India's entrepreneurs. Lowering interest rates is a policy priority and banks had been only passing on 50 per cent of lower policy rates to customers; in the year after demonetisation this has risen to 100 per cent. India's economic trajectory suggests interest rates could reduce another 3 per cent over time; sustained formal job creation needs the lower interest rates that come from macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline, muted inflation expectations and

an Independent Monetary Policy Committee.

Fifth, permanent damage to our sense of humour about the rule of law. Demonetisation targeted a less-cash society because cash is the primary tool of corruption. Corruption enables transmission losses between how the law is written, interpreted, practised and enforced while India's move to high productivity enterprises needs moving from deals to rules. First generation entrepreneurs don't have connections or money; they only offer the sweat of their brow, the courage in their hearts and the strength of their back. A less corrupt India is a more meritocratic India.

Demonetisation did not end corruption but raised its costs. And ending our sense of humour about the rule of law that bred a riskless view of cash is an important pre-condition for sustained, formal, high-wage job creation.

In 1942 Pandit [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) wrote from Ahmednagar jail "Whether we are successful or not, historians of the future will judge. But we aimed high and looked far". India was a risky political experiment in 1947 — poor countries were not supposed to give everybody the right to vote at birth — but that experiment has worked out spectacularly.

But India was a nutty economic experiment after the 1955 Avadi Resolution; we became a hostile habitat for formal non-farm job creation because of regulatory cholesterol, primitive finance, foreigner hostility, confiscatory taxation, and much else. Demonetisation is one of 20 arrows in a quiver of reforms — GST, bankruptcy code, RERA, FDI liberalisation, ease-of-doing business, competitive federalism, etc — that are restoring the romance of policy by making India a fertile habitat for formal, non-farm, job creation. The problem for India's youth is not jobs but wages and that's why a 10-year plan cannot be 10 one-year plans (the last time we tried to raise wages by rigging them — NREGS — we converted a high growth low inflation economy into a low growth high inflation economy).

As India completes a year of demonetisation, it's early for conclusions but the early results are encouraging. As Karl Marx said "Philosophers have tried to describe the world in thousands of ways. The point, however, is to change it".

The writer is chairman, Teamlease Services. He serves as a director on the Board of RBI. Views are personal

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Demonetisation, inequality and informal sector

It was on 8 November 2016 that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation of Rs500 and Rs1,000 banknotes. One year on, the after-effects of the exercise are still being felt in the economy. But the real question is, did the exercise achieve the objectives for which it was undertaken?

Given that most economic indicators today suggest a worsening of the situation compared to a year ago, it is easy to conclude that demonetisation was the primary cause of the slowdown. While it is tempting to come to such a conclusion, the fact of the matter is that the economic slowdown predates demonetisation. This is now public knowledge, but that does not imply that demonetisation did not contribute to the slowdown, as many in the government would like to believe.

The impact on the economy certainly deserves attention and the consensus is clearly that demonetisation may not have caused it but it certainly contributed to the worsening of the economic slowdown.

However, the real benchmark on which demonetisation needs to be evaluated is the stated objective of the exercise: to eradicate black money. Other objectives spelt out were incidental and certainly did not require an extreme step such as demonetisation to be achieved.

Recent evidence on digitisation and the incidence of casualties in civil and terrorist strikes also undermines any argument that demonetisation was a serious effort in the direction of promoting a less-cash economy and clamping down on terror finance. Similarly, there is no credible information that counterfeit currency has disappeared from the economy.

However, even on black money, there is no evidence whatsoever to believe that demonetisation managed to eradicate the stock of black money held in the form of cash. The government's own study by the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) pegged the extent of cash at less than 5% of the black economy. Other estimates are even lower. Even this minuscule stock of black money did not get extinguished as was expected. It is also clear that most of the post-facto hopes that tax enquiries and investigations will yield the expected gains are not going to materialize any time soon.

In hindsight, it is safe to say that not only was the implementation bad in design but even the concept of demonetisation weeding out black money was unrealistic. But the fact that it was a one-shot affair, without any accompanying efforts to root out the system which generates black money, also raises serious questions on the intent of the government to eliminate black money in the economy. A good example of this is the exemption that the government provided to political parties.

On growth rates, demonetisation only played a role of accelerator of the slowdown that was already there. While the National Democratic Alliance government's move did not yield any dividends to the government in monetary terms or in terms of the efficacy of the system to curb the black economy, it did contribute to reversing the revival of the rural economy, which was showing signs of recovery after two years of back-to-back droughts. The revival of the rural economy in 2016, which saw a good monsoon after being hit by low commodity prices and drought, was reversed by demonetisation. The impact on the rural economy was not only limited to agriculture but also the informal economy which was suffering from demand deflation.

While the debate on the impact of demonetisation on the black economy and growth rates will continue and will be subject to interpretations, there are some impacts which will take time to show

up or may even be invisible. And in this case, even the goods and services tax (GST) is as much responsible as demonetisation. The outcome is unintended but it needs to be highlighted. One of these is the impact on inequality.

Given that a large majority of the informal or unorganized sector has borne the impact of these two shocks, it has also led to a shift of incomes away from the informal sector to the formal sector. The formal sector was already well-equipped to deal with these changes, whether in terms of digitisation or tax compliance.

Over a period of time it is likely that the share of the formal sector will increase. But it will be at the cost of the informal sector. While this may exacerbate the level of inequality in the economy, it will also contribute to rising inequality through a lack of employment. And this is the second aspect which assumes importance given the concerns on job creation in the economy.

These are important issues not only in the context of demonetisation but also in general on how policymakers view the informal sector. The general perception is that these are entities who evade paying taxes and, therefore, are part of the black economy.

The informal sector, however, is not an aberration in our growth process. It is an integral part of the process of transition from a traditional economy to a modern economy. While it may not pay taxes and is largely dependent on cash, it plays an important role in providing jobs to millions of first-time workers and to millions of others who are moving out of agriculture to the non-agricultural sector. It provides the first exposure to many of these illiterate and low-skilled workers to the new economy. At the same time, it is also the biggest agency which does the painful task of re-skilling the majority of these workers—much more than any government scheme. Any attempt to reduce the role of the informal sector is only going to make the transition arduous and difficult for the economy.

But in the rhetoric of 'everybody is a thief', the real casualty are the informal enterprises. Attempts at forcing informal enterprises to become formal may kill the golden goose which has been taking care of the transitional pains of the economy by providing jobs. It has also acted as a sponge, creating incomes and demand when the agricultural sector was in stress. The short-term benefit of formalisation of the economy is at the cost of long-term loss of the crucial agency of the informal sector. The net benefits to the economy through income generation, employment creation and re-skilling of labour by the informal sector far outweighs any short-term benefits of tax collection through a process of forced formalisation.

The need of the hour is to protect and nurture the informal sector and handhold it to become formal in the process of growth rather than through surgical strikes a la demonetisation.

The lesson from demonetisation is the need for not only a better understanding of the black economy but also a better understanding of how the economy works, particularly the informal sector.

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Growth minus development

In rapid-fire, the country was recently hit by three global rankings. The first was the ease of doing business and India improved its global rank, according to the Brettenwoods experts. Now this is happiness. As an economist I believe the turnaround to the higher growth path will come if we do a bit of pump priming and then private investment will be sucked in. While some sarkari economists agree with me, this is still not the dominant view. So improving the ease of doing business is obviously good news. Of the three rankings this was the only one the chambers of commerce and corporate honchos went ga ga over. The Purchasing Managers' Index improved. This was somewhat effervescent, since even in the past an improved PMI has always not led to better outcomes, but the sentiment was understandable.

The second was bad news. The gender disparity gap has gone up in India and its already poor ranking worsened. Women hold up half the sky, the UN poster says. Women are half the country: Somewhat less in India because of the shameful sex ratio, but still a large number. If growth is not just corporate GDP but human welfare, then this is worrisome. I mean the world over women are liberating themselves, and in civilised India we think so too, and want it to be more so. But it is not so. The statistics used are pretty robust and so even Indian economists who never agree on anything will find it difficult to quibble on this gap.

Women and the girl child also star in the next global ranking. That's the malnutrition and hunger index. The absolute numbers are frightening. Forty per cent of the world's hungry and malnourished children are in India. Now poverty and hunger cut offs are always controversial and can make a marginal difference — poverty more so and malnutrition less as it's based on biological measurements. Having defined a poverty line in the seventies of the last century, which I have wanted revised but which kept on resurfacing like a rabbit out of a hat, I am not surprised at the debate. But there was a sensible suggestion in these columns. Uma Lele ('Feeding India', IE, November 3), who has a lot of global experience in these matters, in a mature tone admonished us for being clever on a substantial issue where marginal changes were not the big issue but the big problem whichever way you looked at it was. This needed remedying and when you do so the information base improves. Nothing works more than questions from senior policymakers to improve the statistical base of a decision.

I am impressed by the argument that for hunger use anthropomorphic rather than survey-based calorie norms because biometric measures give you the physical reality as it were rather than expenditure converted to food and then to calories. Strangely, there is a connection between the worsening gender disparity and the hunger numbers. Weak mothers will give birth to weak children. The baby will not get enough nourishment in the womb. Again, in the early years of childhood, the limits to which he or she will grow are being set. It is not that life is a matter of precise paths. But the boundaries in which outcomes will work out are set in early years.

A couple of decades ago, I had to make some tax-free money to fund my daughter's second year in college in the US and decided in the vacations to work on food security UN consultancies. In Egypt, I discovered that in the desert provinces of Upper Egypt — actually Lower Egypt if you are in Cairo or Alexandria, but they look at everything from the perspective of the Nile — malnutrition in women was high. When I was presenting my results a top official, a retired general, went at me and said they are alright, my soldiers come from there. I had to tell him that weak and anaemic mothers will never give birth to strong soldiers.

So let's get this straight. Even if your concern is not like mine on human welfare, but security in the narrowest military sense of the term, let's get rid of the problem of hunger rather than be smart on statistics to wish it all away. The link between the gender gap and malnutrition is much too obvious

to ignore. So let's get back to the three rankings of last week: Ease of doing business is good while gender gap and hunger are not so. Policy-wise let's travel from growth to development.

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'SHe-box' in private sector too

Women who are sexually harassed at their workplaces in the private sector can now lodge their complaints on a government portal, Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi said on Tuesday. Launching the portal, she said the system — 'SHe-box' (sexual harassment electronic box) — would be hosted on the WCD's website. Harassment could include the use of foul language or cracking lewd jokes, she said.

The complaint mechanism was initiated for government employees in July.

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SHe-Box Online Complaint Management System for working women to lodge complaints of sexual harassment at workplace launched by Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi**SHe-Box Online Complaint Management System for working women to lodge complaints of sexual harassment at workplace launched by Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi**

WCD Minister Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi today launched a comprehensive SHe-Box online complaint Management System for women working in both public and private organizations to lodge complaints of sexual harassment at workplace. The SHe-Box was launched in New Delhi today to ensure the effective implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (the SH Act), 2013.

The new SHe-Box portal offers the facility of making online complaints of sexual harassment at workplace to all women employees in the country including government and private employees. Those who have already filed a written complaint with the concerned Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) or Local Complaint Committee (LCC) constituted under the SH Act are also eligible to file their complaint through this portal.

Launching the online facility, the WCD Minister, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi said that this is a historic step since it is probably the first ever time that the government of any country has launched an online portal to receive complaints of sexual harassment at workplace. The government is completely committed to provide a safe and fair environment to working women. It is for this reason that the WCD Ministry has made efforts to make the setting up of Internal Complaint Committees mandatory at all workplaces, the Minister explained. She said that the WCD Ministry has also produced a manual and has organized training programmes for Internal Complaint Committees and in the next significant step, the SHe-Box has been launched to provide platform to aggrieved women to make their complaints directly so that suitable action is taken to redress their grievances. These complaints will be monitored by the WCD Ministry, Smt Maneka Gandhi assured.

SHe-Box portal is an effort to provide speedier remedy to women facing sexual harassment at workplace. Once a complaint is submitted to the portal, it will be directly sent to the ICC/LCC of the concerned employer. Through this portal, WCD as well as complainant can monitor the progress of inquiry conducted by the ICC/LCC. This is a proactive step taken by MWCD in the wake of the worldwide social media campaign #MeToo, where women have related their experience of facing sexual harassment and abuse. The portal can be accessed at the link given below:

Link to the SHe-Box portal: <http://shebox.nic.in/>

Users of SHe-Box also have the option of interacting with Ministry of WCD through this portal, with an assured time-bound response. The portal also provides information on 112 institutions empaneled by MWCD to conduct training/workshops on the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace. It also has the option for resource persons and institutions willing to contribute to training on this subject in various organisations to submit their applications. SHe-Box will provide a platform to these empanelled institutes/organisations to share their capacity building activities with the Ministry which in turn will be able to monitor the activities of these institutes/organizations so empanelled from across the country.

The Ministry has published a Handbook and Training Module on the SH Act to provide information about the provisions of the Act in easy to use practical manner. The private organizations are encouraged to customize the Training Module as per their extant service rules and disciplinary procedures prescribed therein.

Ensuring the dignity and safety of women must be first priority for any digital society. Towards realisation of the vision of the Digital India programme, the Ministry is promoting

utilisation of information and communication technology to achieve the goal of gender equality and women empowerment. It is an effort to utilise the digital space to enable speedier response to the complaints of women against sexual harassment at workplace.

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Rajasthan cannot raise OBC quota, orders HC

The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday restrained the BJP government from implementing the provisions of a Bill passed in the State Assembly last month, by which it increased reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) from 21% to 26%.

This is a setback to the government's effort to give quota benefits to Gujjars.

The Bill, passed on October 26, created the "most backward" category within the OBCs for providing reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities in government employment and educational institutions.

With its passage, reservation in Rajasthan stood at 54%, exceeding the 50% ceiling mandated by the Supreme Court.

A Division Bench at the High Court's Jaipur Bench said the State government should obtain permission from the Supreme Court before going ahead with the new arrangement.

"Instead of bringing piecemeal legislation, why doesn't the government get the Constitution amended," observed the Bench, comprising Justices K.S. Jhaveri and V.K. Vyas.

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'Rural youth need support'

Venkaiah Naidu

Rural youth with limited education are also well informed and harbour entrepreneurial hopes, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu said on Thursday. He mooted greater support for them in areas such as access to credit, technology and marketing to help them emerge from poverty.

"The challenge is to encourage more youth to make the choice of becoming entrepreneurs, rather than job-seekers. Many more opportunities for decent livelihoods must be created in the rural areas," he said.

"Creating a facilitative eco-system for rural entrepreneurship is very important. Mentoring is a crucial part of this eco-system," said Mr. Naidu at an international mentoring summit.

While the government is promoting inclusive growth through programs like Start Up India and skill development, Mr. Naidu said that both the public and private sectors had to work hard to create an enabling ecosystem for budding entrepreneurs.

"I see immense scope and possible intervention of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding to support the unique mentor movement for creating successful entrepreneurs," he said, suggesting that profitable larger companies can help lakhs of youth.

Youth needed sustained support, guidance, counselling and timely advice to apply their skills, he said.

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A responsibility to care

Alzheimer's disease, which accounts for 60 to 80 per cent of dementia cases, is a progressive, degenerative brain disease affecting a person's memory, thinking, and the ability to interact socially. Unfortunately, there is yet no cure for it and scientists are still searching for causes of this disease which affects about one in 10 people over the age of 65 and almost one in four over 85 years. People under the age of 65 years also are prone to the disease which is known as early onset of Alzheimer's.

Certain estimates indicate there are over four million affected by dementia in India and as per the India Dementia Report 2010 about Rs 43,000 annually per family is spent to take care of a person affected by dementia. The cost is high for many. As the ageing of the population is rapidly increasing, the economic and social burden of the disease is going to rise in the coming years. Ways to reduce the burden of the disease need urgent attention particularly in countries like India, which along with China, has the highest number of older people and where geriatric services are under-developed and talking of mental health issues carries stigma.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) global plan on dementia adopted at the 70th World Health Assembly in May this year prompts nations to take action now. It calls on governments to meet targets for the advancement of dementia awareness, risk reduction, diagnosis, care and treatment, support for care partners and research. Only 29 out of 194 WHO member countries have a plan of action on dementia, with India not having taken the initiative yet. Critically, countries need to take immediate steps to fight the disease as the treatment gap in most countries is huge and particularly in developing nations where the WHO estimates that only about 10 per cent of individuals are diagnosed

Current treatments merely address the symptoms and not the underlying biological cause of the disease. Next year, dementia is projected to become a trillion-dollar disease and Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) recommends spending at least 1 per cent of the global cost of dementia on public funding for dementia research. In India too, Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) calls for the government to have its plan or policy on dementia which must be implemented in all states and funded and monitored by the health ministry.

ARDSI has been successful at initiating a Kerala State Initiative on Dementia which is the first public-private partnership for dementia care and awareness. Kerala has the highest proportion of older persons in the country. It is also a state where many young people migrate leaving older parents behind to fend for themselves. Residential care centres for dementia-affected people are limited.

There is an urgent need to include dementia as a national health and social priority with provisions to identify dementia as early as possible and have adequate services for its treatment with sensitivity towards the care-givers, who are mostly from the family and ageing themselves.

Garnering support from the corporate sector to fund programmes, especially training of care givers and initiatives for research on the disease, is the need of the hour. Support from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment becomes crucial in India as the disease has many social aspects which need awareness and service facilities at the community level.

Action on dealing with dementia calls for public health approach where social, health, legal and economic components for facing the various aspects of the disease need to be integrated. Legal provisions to safeguard and protect the rights, dignity and respect of those affected and in minimising economic costs and the burden of the disease, building public campaigns and

dementia-friendly initiatives are necessary in the next few years as the number of those affected by dementia will reach alarming proportions — from 50 million people worldwide currently to three times the number by 2050.

The Global Plan of Action on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017-2025, adopted by 194 countries of the WHO, calls for a national dementia policy, recognition of human rights of people with dementia and the potential of dementia friendly-communities to give those rights practical effect. It is pertinent for India that the framework provided by the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is monitored with regard to guaranteeing the rights of people with dementia. Living well with dementia is a health and social goal which should be maintained as part of the national response to the disease.

An important aspect of action in dealing with dementia is to work towards risk reduction of the disease. The non-communicable diseases plan of action should include building resources for strengthening brain health by associating it with physical and spiritual health. Above all, it is important that there be focus on supporting people with dementia to maintain their independence as much as they can and retain their inclusion in families, community and society. Stop discrimination against them.

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Ignoring the role of women is dismal economics

Irony abounds as sexual predation among powerful men from Hollywood's Harvey Weinstein to Donald Trump makes headlines just as data show women globally falling further and further behind.

The World Economic Forum's (WEF's) annual gender report is a great reality check. Governments from New Delhi to Tokyo talk a good game of better utilizing the other half of populations, but progress is underwhelming.

It's not just about human rights, but economics. Nations that do best on gender parity are more innovative, productive and prosperous. The stronger and more diverse the labour pool, the better the economy.

Viewed through this window, WEF's 2017 report makes for sober reading.

India plunged 21 places—and that's not a typo. Granted, "womenomics" wasn't a core plank of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's structural reform push. But India trailing Liberia, Maldives and Swaziland is a wake-up call for Modinomics. India is now 10 notches lower than in 2006, when WEF began its annual exercise in naming and shaming governments.

Japan is doing even worse. Sure, Tokyo only fell three rungs to 114th, but that puts a Group of Seven (G-7) nation behind Guinea, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and six places behind India.

What makes Japan's performance so damning is that gender is supposedly a central element of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's revival scheme. Awkwardly, the latest WEF downgrade dropped the same day Abenomics hosted its latest World Assembly for Women, with Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump as the keynote speaker.

It's high time Asia internalised how much gender disparities hurt growth. In 2015, the United Nations estimated that failure to utilise female talent costs Asia about \$90 billion in annual output.

That's a terribly conservative guestimate, especially considering the backsliding in the Asian nations thought to be most successful on gender parity.

The Philippines, for example, worsened to 10th place from seventh. Laos went from 43rd to 64th, Singapore from 55th to 65th, Vietnam from 65th to 69th, Thailand from 71st to 75th, China from 99th to 100th and South Korea from 116th to 118th.

Credit where it's due: Indonesia improved to 84th from 88th, Malaysia to 104th from 106th, Cambodia to 99th from 112th. Overall, though, this hasn't been a particularly stellar year for Asian women.

"Gender equality and GDP (gross domestic product) per capita are strongly correlated," says Koh Miyaoui, gender advisor to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangkok. "The more equality there is among the sexes in a society, the more likely it is that the society is also prosperous, educated and healthy."

The #MeToo hashtag movement is spreading across the globe, as some South Asian academics facing questions can attest.

While social media confronts men who disrespect women, why isn't Asia doing more to level the

playing field?

It's a global question, of course. This is the first year since 2006 that the generalized gender gap widened. Still, Asia is a discrimination paradox.

Despite Asia's disparities, it's empowered more female leaders than any other region.

President Trump's 2016 election opponent Hillary Clinton is on her "What Happened?" book tour, a reminder America has yet to break the ultimate glass ceiling.

Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and even China—Soong Ching Ling briefly was honorary president in the early 1980s—achieved what the most advanced economy hasn't.

Even here, Asterisks are required. Women leaders in Asia mostly hail from dynastic families: Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi of India, Megawati Soekarnoputri of Indonesia, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Corazon Aquino and Gloria Arroyo of the Philippines, Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, Yingluck Shinawatra of Thailand, Park Geun-hye of South Korea and so on.

The Asia region is struggling to raise incomes for many of its 3 billion people.

How dumb is it to squander roughly the annual GDP of Ukraine to protect the male-led status quo?

Governments should strengthen human capital: greater investments in education and training and laws protecting women's rights. UNDP says that three out of every four hours of unpaid work is done by women.

The key for more developed economies like Japan and South Korea is policies that prod patriarchal power structures to embrace the 21st century.

Lawmakers should encourage more women to run for public office, pressure boardrooms to diversify and perhaps impose quotas.

If governments won't do the right thing out of fairness, hit them with the money angle. "The economic opportunity in getting more women involved in the workforce is staggering," says McKinsey's Dominic Barton. "At the micro level, we continue to find a strong positive correlation between the representation of women in leadership roles and the financial performance of businesses."

Doing so, McKinsey estimates, could add \$12 trillion to global GDP. Asia should gun for a bigger piece of that windfall, giving an economic dimension to the #MeToo zeitgeist.

William Pesek, based in Tokyo, is a former columnist for Barron's and Bloomberg and author of Japanization: What the World Can Learn from Japan's Lost Decades.

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The bias against transgender people runs deep

The Supreme Court recently issued a notice to the ministry of civil aviation and Air India after the public carrier denied a job to a transgender person allegedly on the basis of gender. Shanavi Ponnusamy, 26, an engineering graduate from Thoothukuddi in Tamil Nadu, underwent gender reassignment surgery in 2014 and subsequently trained to become a member of the cabin crew of an airline. But she was rejected since the ministry of civil aviation hasn't yet created a category for transgender persons.

Ponnusamy isn't the only one fighting such obstacles and prejudices. A sailor from Visakhapatnam was sacked by the Indian Navy on October 9 after a sex-change surgery. Sabi Giri, born Manish Kumar Giri, was pink-slipped ostensibly for breaching recruitment regulations and eligibility criteria. The Navy restricts recruitment of women to certain departments. Last week, the Delhi High Court asked the Navy if Giri could get another posting.

Batting for affirmative action, it is the judiciary which has repeatedly come to the rescue of transgender people facing discrimination. In 2014, a landmark Supreme Court judgment recognised that they should enjoy all the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. Acknowledging the inherent biases that kept trans-people on the fringes of educational institutions and workplaces for reasons other than their ability, the apex court ordered setting aside quotas for them in jobs and education for the first time. But a bill tabled in the Parliament last year to formalise the rights of transgender people is yet to become law.

Clearly, just legislation or affirmative action by employers cannot be enough to change the people's attitude. The highly publicised appointment of 23 transgenders by the Kochi Metro Rail Limited hit a speed-bump when 11 of them quit in the first fortnight itself. Most of them cited difficulties in finding accommodation, prohibitively high rentals and the jibes from co-workers as the reasons that drove them to this decision. They said they were abused and ridiculed whenever they ventured out for work or otherwise.

Now, the Union social justice ministry is examining whether to do away with a contentious definition in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 which focuses on biological features rather than an individual's freedom to choose his or her gender. A change in definition will be a step towards undoing some of the discrimination meted out to transgender people. It can empower transgender persons with an option to choose their gender independent of surgery or hormones. Clearly, it needs to be accompanied by systemic changes and greater sensitivity from employers. Ms Ponnuswamy shouldn't be discriminated against for dreaming of soaring above society's biases and asserting her gender identity.

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Reservation in the private sector is not the answer to caste-based discrimination

One of the most shameful realities of life in India today is caste-based discrimination. Affirmative action, in the form of reservations for marginalised castes, has existed since independence in government institutions. It was intended to give people a leg up, not be an entitlement that they and theirs could enjoy in perpetuity. And it was certainly not intended as an election sop to be handed out to affluent communities. Nitish Kumar's proposal for reservation in the private sector has once again revived the debate of whether reservation is a good idea at all. There can be no disagreement with the fact that caste-based discrimination is prevalent in India. The fact that inter-caste marriages are still seen as worthy of comment, the spate of killings of Dalits in many states in India, and the visible lack of members of the marginalised communities in positions of authority clearly indicate that there is a problem.

Seventy years after independence, despite reservations of all hues, this scenario has not improved drastically. This suggests that the problem needs different solutions. Simply extending the existing framework to the private sector cannot be that solution. The problem of discrimination is not something that arises only at the level of employment or higher education. The problem is endemic and must be addressed at the grassroots. Ensuring that students of marginalised communities are provided the requisite education at the primary and secondary levels – at par with their upper caste colleagues – is one of the most effective means of eliminating discrimination. Given that many schools in rural India have been known to make Dalit children sit separately even at the government-mandated mid-day meal; it is clear that this problem is deep rooted.

To transfer the burden of a failed system to the private sector, with its pressures of profit-making, bottom-lines and competition is unfair. The best way to ensure that companies hire people from all communities, genders, and backgrounds is to make sure that people of all classes, genders and castes acquire the skills needed to be competitive. A problem bigger than caste is poverty; and ensuring that debilitating poverty does not get in the way of education is the responsibility of the government. This will need a large commitment – both financially and socially – in the education sector. Improving the state of our rural schools, and the universal education programme, and ensuring that teachers are trained and meet quality criteria, are some of the crucial steps needed to make not merely the educational standards of the country better, but also in creating awareness and fighting ills such as caste, religion and gender-based discrimination.

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WCD Ministry to celebrate Child Rights Week by hosting an inter CCI Festival “Hausala 2017” between 16th to 20th November**WCD Ministry to celebrate Child Rights Week by hosting an inter CCI Festival “Hausala 2017” between 16th to 20th November**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development will celebrate the Child Rights Week (Hausla 2017) from 16th to 20th November, 2017. The country celebrates the Children’s Day on 14th November and the International Child Rights Day is celebrated on 20th November every year. The period between the two important events will be celebrated as Child Rights Week by WCD Ministry by hosting an Inter CCI Festival for the children who reside in Child Care Institutions (CCIs).

The commemoration of the festival “Hausala 2017” will provide an occasion to showcase the talents of children from CCIs from various child care institutions across the country and provide them with a space to express their dreams and aspiration. Children will be participating in various events like Bal Sansad, painting competition, athletics meet, football, chess competition and speech writing. The following events are proposed to be organized:

- 1. Bal Sandad on 16th November 2017:** The National Policy for Children 2013 and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 endorse the rights of the children to participate in issues that affect them. Children have the right to express their views and be involved actively in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them. They are today’s citizens, can act as leaders now and in the future. Keeping the above in mind, a Bal Sansad will be organized in which children from CCIs from all States/UTs will participate. A total of 36 children in the age group of 14-18 years have been invited from States/UTs to participate in the programme. An orientation workshop will be organized at NIPCCD with children in the afternoon of 15th November, 2017 on needs and rights of children. Children will be prepared to identify the issues pertaining to their rights which affects them and also give their suggestions. The Bal Sansad will be held on 16th November, 2017 at CSOI, New Delhi.

A Summary of discussions and suggestions given by children may to be forwarded to relevant Ministries and Departments of Gol later on.

- 2. Painting Competition on 16th November 2017:** Children, generally use different ways of expressing themselves and make meaning out of the world around them. Drawing and painting are powerful tools used to enhance children’s communication skills. With this background in consideration, a painting competition is being organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on 17th November, 2017 for selected children (36) from all the Child Care Institutions across the country at CSOI. Before the painting competition, an explorative orientation workshop will be organized for the children facilitated by artists who have agreed to volunteer for this event. The workshop will be organized to sensitize the children that drawing can be used as a medium to express feelings and emotions. The facilitators will help children and make it an enjoyable experience for them. The paintings will be judged by a panel of three judges.

- 3. Athletics Meet, Chess Competition and Football Matches on 19-20th November 2017:** A happy childhood is synonymous with right to play. Sports activities not only bring out the physical abilities in children, it also encourages their spirit to win over challenges and even be prepared to accept defeat with grace. The ministry is organising athletics meet (100 meters race, 100 x 4 meter relay race, long jump, high jump), chess competition and football matches for boys and girls from CCIs. The events will be organized at Thyagaraj Stadium, New Delhi.

To encourage children, Mr. Virendra Sahwag (Cricketer), Mr. Gautam Gambhir (Cricketer) and Ms. Mithali Raj (Cricketer) have been invited on 20th November 2017 to take part in the prize distribution function.

- 4. Speech Writing:** All States/UTs have been requested to hold speech writing competitions within children of CCIs. The first three speeches will be forwarded to the Ministry and the compilation of speeches will be published as a booklet by the Ministry, supported by UNICEF. The booklet will be released on 20th November 2017 during the concluding ceremony.

- 5. The Concluding Ceremony on 20th November 2017:** The week-long celebration of child rights will culminate through the concluding ceremony which will be organized on 20th November (evening) at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. The programme will include release of compilation of speeches and guidelines of UNNATI scheme and presentation of Best State Team Award based on performance during Hausla 2017 as well as cultural programme presented by children of CCIs.

Child Reporters from street children's news magazine "Balaknama" will cover the entire event and publish it in their magazine, with due approval of the content from Ministry.

CIF, CARA and NIPCCD are assisting the Ministry in organising the events. UNICEF will be supporting the Ministry in publishing the compiled speeches in the form of a booklet.

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Nonviolence is path to which a healthy society can be created: Vice President

Nonviolence is path to which a healthy society can be created: Vice President

Addresses Ahimsa Diwas Function

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that nonviolence is the path to which a healthy society can be created. He was addressing the Ahimsa Diwas Function organized by Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti on its 13th Foundation Day, in New Delhi today. The Founder of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti, Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that establishing nonviolence, peace and goodwill in society, nation and all over the world has been the purpose behind the establishment of Vishwa Bharti Institute. He further said that by associating religion with social service, we can make it a means of eradicating social evils and linking religion to spirituality.

The Vice President said that there is a need for peace and a harmonious environment in the society for development. He further said that nonviolence is also important because violence does not solve any problem and violence leads to repetition of violence. Through dialogue, every problem can be solved through nonviolent style, by negotiation, he added.

The Vice President said that many great men in our country like Lord Mahavir, Lord Buddha gave a lot of emphasis on nonviolence. He further said that Mahatma Gandhi had liberated India with the weapons of nonviolence. Nonviolence does not mean cowardice, he added.

The Vice President said that Indian culture is pluralistic and unity in diversity is its fundamental characteristic. Sarvadharm harmony is its original mantra and this is where the nonviolence, peace and goodwill start, he added.

The Vice President expressed his hope that the Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti Institution will play an important role in building society and nation building by connecting the work of service in the society, especially by connecting the younger generation to the path of nonviolence.

Following is the text of Vice President's address in Hindi:

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On maternity benefits

The [amendments to the Maternity Benefit Act](#), which were introduced this year, in particular the provision of 26 weeks of paid maternity leave and the mandatory crèche facility, are path-breaking, but there are concerns over their feasibility. Recently, the Labour Ministry placed the financial burden of implementing these measures squarely on the employers; this legitimises these concerns.

The amendments seek to improve infant mortality rate (34 per 1,000 live births) and maternal mortality rate (167 per 100,000 live births), but the challenge lies in their implementation. The measures introduced, particularly the crèche facility, are cost-intensive and may deter employers from hiring or retaining pregnant women. A 2014 International Labour Organisation report specifically cautions against making employers solely liable for the cost of maternity benefits for this reason. It advocates that maternity benefits should be provided either through compulsory social insurance or public funds. In fact, the Standing Committee on Labour in 2007 had suggested that the government should create a corpus fund to partially sponsor the costs to be incurred by the employer to provide maternity benefits. However, no government has shown the will to change this status quo even though the state and society have much to gain from ensuring effective implementation of maternity benefits.

A lost opportunity

To illustrate, one of the key goals of any maternity benefit policy is to facilitate breastfeeding by working mothers. Studies have shown that health benefits that accrue to both the mother and her child by breastfeeding are more than matched by economic returns at family, enterprise and national levels. A 2017 report released by the Global Breastfeeding Collective, led by UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, has termed breastfeeding the “best investment in global health” generating \$35 in global return for every dollar invested. A ‘Global Breastfeeding Scorecard, 2017’ released by the Collective shows that India spends an abysmal \$0.15 (less than 10) per child to ensure that it meets the breastfeeding guidelines. The report suggests that as things stand, India is poised to lose an estimated \$14 billion in its economy, or 0.70% of its Gross National Income, due to a high level of child mortality and growing number of deaths in women from cancers and Type II diabetes, directly attributable to inadequate breastfeeding.

It is time for the government to shoulder the financial responsibility of providing maternity benefits. This could be implemented by enabling employers to seek reimbursement of the expenses incurred by them in this respect. In addition, the government must find innovative and cost-effective ways to ensure that working women are not forced to discontinue breastfeeding. A simple method is to express breast milk and store it to be given to their children while they are away. The only provision that needs to be provided by employers to facilitate this would be a clean and private pumping room.

Deepika Kinhal is a practicing advocate based in Bengaluru and a Senior Resident Fellow at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Rajasthan's Gujjar quota bid stalled

Effectively freezing the Rajasthan government's bid to provide quotas for Gujjars in jobs and education, the Supreme Court has restrained the State from taking any action which will have the result of pushing the total reservation beyond the 50% ceiling limit set by the apex court.

"We are inclined to restrain the State government from taking any action or decision on the administrative side or in any manner conferring the benefit of reservation, which will have the result of crossing the total reservation beyond 50%," a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra ordered on Wednesday.

The Bench ordered the Rajasthan government to maintain status quo till the High Court finally decides a pending case before it against the Rajasthan Backward Classes Bill which proposes to raise the reservation for OBC category from 21% to 26%.

If the Bill comes into effect, the total OBC quota in the State for government jobs and seats in educational institutions would have increased to 54%.

The Bill provides 5% reservation to Gujjars and four other communities.

The other five castes include Gujjar/Gurjar, Banjara/Baldia/Labana, Gadia-Lohar/Gadalia, Raika/Rebari and Gadaria.

In December 2016, the Rajasthan High Court had struck down the State's proposal to include these five under the Special Backward Class Reservation Act, 2015.

The State government had moved the SC against a November 9 decision of the HC to stay the Bill.

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Rajasthan conversion Bill sent back

The State government has said that it reminded the Centre in June to clear the Bill, which defined “conversion” as “renouncing one’s own religion and adopting another” through “fraudulent means.”

The Rajasthan government is making attempts to get the President’s nod for the Bill that has been pending since 2008, the year it was passed.

The State government recently filed an affidavit in the court in response to a notice on a *habeas corpus* writ petition seeking production of 22-year-old Aarifa, who has converted from her religion and married a Muslim man. The court had asked whether there was any law or procedure in force in Rajasthan that governed conversions. The MHA examines Bills passed by the Assemblies that are repugnant to Central laws before they get the President’s assent to become a law. BJP president Amit Shah and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat have battled for “anti-conversion” laws at the national level, but the subject is on the State List of the Constitution and the Centre has no jurisdiction in the matter.

The Rajasthan Dharma Swatantraya Vidheyak was passed by the Assembly in 2008 during the previous stint of Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. The Bill has provision for prison terms of up to five years. It also contains a clause for cancellation of registration of organisations held guilty of abetting conversions.

The Bill, which was sent for the President’s approval in 2006 too, was returned by Pratibha Patil.

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The Tripura model

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Tripura embarked on a unique path to peace, one that was not dependent solely on security measures but involved investment in human development and people's participation in the implementation of socio-political and economic policy as well. More than a decade later, the human development consequences of peace have been remarkable.

In 2005 and 2006, we spent some months in rural Tripura as part of work on the Tripura Human Development Report (the Government of Tripura and the United Nations Development Programme had commissioned the Foundation for Agrarian Studies to write the report). The threat of violence was ever present, and elaborate arrangements had to be made to ensure the safety of the members of our team, mainly students and youth. Although insurgency was on the decline by the time the Tripura Human Development Report 2007 was published, acts of insurgent violence still continued. Indeed, the idea that the people had to be free from threats to life and limb in order to achieve their full potential was an important part of the Report.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar has often said that economic and social investments and people's involvement are essential components of the peace process in the State. The landmark repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, or AFSPA, in 2015 in the State was an outstanding symbol of the success of this policy.

We returned to Tripura in the summer of 2016 to resurvey three villages we had first surveyed in 2005. The principal change was a palpable atmosphere of peace and personal safety in the State, even in its most remote reserved-forest settlements. The progress achieved over the last 10 years in several indicators of human development — especially in education, health, and employment — is the State's peace dividend, and is worthy of public attention.

Let us examine some of these achievements.

Literacy has been described as being "the basic personal skill that underlies the whole modernising sequence." Separatist militancy in Tripura was an obstacle to the spread of literacy and schooling. Progress in literacy has been particularly rapid in Tripura over two decades. According to the Census, the share of literate persons above the age of seven years rose from 73% to 87% between 2001 and 2011. We now have data from surveys conducted in 2005 and 2016 in Khakchang, a fully Scheduled Tribe village in North district, Mainama, a village in Dhalai district whose population is 67% Scheduled Tribe, and Muhuripur, a village in South district.

A measure of progress in schooling of the population in these villages is the number of years of completed schooling among women in the age group 18 to 45 years. In Khakchang in 2005, more than 50% of women in the age group had not completed a year of schooling. By 2016, the median number of completed years of schooling among women in the age group was seven — outstanding progress for a decade. The corresponding figure for Mainama, also a Scheduled Tribe dominated village, was six years in 2005 and nine years in 2016.

Data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) indicate that the infant mortality rate (IMR) in Tripura almost halved between 2005-6 and 2014-15, declining from 51 per thousand live births to 27 per thousand. According to data from the most recent Sample Registration Bulletin, IMR further declined to 20 per thousand in 2015.

Peace and security enable the expansion of employment and livelihoods.

The growth rate of per capita State Domestic Product (SDP) has been over 8% per annum in eight

out of the last 10 years (2005-6 to 2014-15). In the last four years, when per capita Net Domestic Product of India was growing only at around 5% per annum, per capita SDP in Tripura grew at 9 to 10% a year.

For the last five to six years, Tripura has ranked first among the States of India with respect to the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Over this period, the average number of days of employment obtained per household in India ranged between 40 and 50 days. In Tripura, from 2011-12 to 2014-15, the corresponding figure was about 80 days a year. In 2015-16, the number rose to 94 days. The unilateral decision of the Government of India to reduce the allocation of resources for the rural employment guarantee scheme has hit the State Government hard. According to Gautam Das, editor of the Agartala-based daily, *Desher Katha*, the present allocation will be adequate only to create 42 days of employment per household in the current year.

An important feature of Tripura's economy over the last decade has been a rise in labour force participation and work force participation, particularly among women. This is in marked contrast to India as a whole, where data show a decline in female labour force participation and work force participation over time. National Sample Survey (NSS) data show that in rural India, female labour force participation fell from 49% in 2004-5 to 36% in 2011-12. In Tripura, however, over the same period, female labour force participation rose from 17% to 38% (urban areas showed a slightly lower rate of growth than rural areas).

A labour force, by definition, includes those in work and seeking work. The work participation rate (WPR) rose among men and women, rural and urban, over the seven year period. According to NSS data, the female work participation rate in rural Tripura rose from 12% in 2004-5 to 31% in 2011-12. In rural India, it fell from 49% to 35% over the same period. In Tripura, work participation rates rose among males, urban and rural, and among urban females as well.

An important factor in the dramatic rise in work participation rates, especially among women, has been the improvement in the security environment, which encouraged women to enter the labour force in much larger numbers than before. The rise in work and labour force participation rates, particularly among women, is both a positive achievement and a challenge. The challenge is to generate adequate employment opportunities to absorb the increasing number of women who will join the work force. Tripura's path of development is one that respects administrative autonomy for regions where people of the Scheduled Tribes are predominant in the population, and the principle of unity of its diverse people. An inclusive path of development, one that encompasses the poorest in the population and the most far-flung of forest-based human settlements, is a precious legacy. It would be great unwisdom to reverse or disrupt such a path.

V.K. Ramachandran and Madhura Swaminathan are Professors at the Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute. Dr. Ramachandran is a member of the Tripura State Planning Board.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Stalking contains within it the seeds of a bigger and more violent crime

Stalking is not an innocent past time; it is a dangerous form of sexual harassment. This was made clear yet again when a stalker burnt to death an engineer in Chennai after pursuing her against her wishes for nearly a month. The unemployed man attacked the victim, her mother and sister, an assault that led to Induja's death. While strong anti-stalking laws in the Indian Penal Code make following, making contact with, trying to foster an interaction or monitoring the movements of a woman a punishable offence, these have not helped women as much as they should have. Unfortunately, a first-time stalking offence is bailable; subsequent offences are deemed non-bailable. Though there has been a 50% rise in stalking over the last three years, the conviction rate is very low. But the truth is that stalking contains within it the seeds of a bigger and more violent crime which can take the form of acid attacks or murder. Some blame for this must go to mainstream cinema, especially from the south. In these movies, stalking is seen as part of the process of courtship. The notion is that the woman, after initially rebuffing the man, will yield in the end. Many men do not think that forcing their unwanted attentions on a woman is wrong. The police, too, must share the blame. Popular culture and social mores have conditioned them in such a manner that they do not take seriously allegations of stalking. The stalker is often emboldened by this and rejection tends to result in violent responses as seen in Chennai. Targets are picked for their vulnerability and on the assumption that the woman in question is unlikely to come forward and report the harassment. According to the law, a single incident of stalking can result in the offender being charged under section 354D of the IPC. But this has not proved to be deterrent enough. In the first six months of this year alone, 259 cases of stalking were registered in Delhi. Stalking is traumatic to the victim even if she is not physically harmed. It often prevents women going to college or work. The police must speed up filing charges and the offence be made non-bailable in the first instance. Once out after a first transgression, stalkers have been known to intensify their efforts at harassment. And popular culture must stop portraying what is a crime against women as being nothing more than a harmless rite of romance.

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Vice President to inaugurate Aadi Mahotsav - a fortnight long Tribal Festival with the theme of 'A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce'

Vice President to inaugurate Aadi Mahotsav - a fortnight long Tribal Festival with the theme of 'A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce'

Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram to preside over the Tribal Festival Inauguration

The festival will feature exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more through about 200 stalls

Over 750 tribal artisans from over 25 States will be participating in the festival

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate 'Aadi Mahotsav' - a fortnight long Tribal Festival with the theme of 'A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce' tomorrow i.e 16 Nov 2017 at Dilli Haat, INA, New Delhi. The inaugural function will be presided over by Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram. Ministers of State for Tribal Affairs Shri Jaswantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor and Shri Sudarshan Bhagat will be specially present to grace the occasion. Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs Ms. Leena Nair, Managing Director, TRIFED Shri Pravir Krishna and other senior officials will also be present on the occasion.

Over 750 tribal artisans from over 25 States will be participating in the festival. Aadi Mahotsav is scheduled to be organized at four venues throughout Delhi. The details of the venues and dates of the festival are as under.

Dilli Haat, INA	-	16-30 November, 2017
Dilli Haat, Janakpuri	-	16-19 November, 2017
Central Park, Rajiv Chowk	-	16-17 November, 2017
Handicraft Bhawan, Baba Kharak Singh Marg	-	16-19 November, 2017

The Mahotsav : Showcasing Tribal Culture, Commerce & Cuisine:

The festival will run for a fortnight through 30th November 2017. The theme of the festival is: A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce. The festival will feature exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more through about 200 stalls.

Over 750 tribal artisans and artists from over 25 States will be participating in the festival. A

special feature of the festival is Tribal India cuisine, recreated and presented in delectable forms to suit urban tastes by special tribal chefs.

An attractive stage has been raised at the venue to showcase tribal music and dance every evening from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm. Nearly 350 artists from 20 States are expected to perform during the festival.

Shopping, Dining & Fine Music

The 15 days Mahotsav is expected have a footfall of over one lakh Delhiites. It promises to be a feast of shopping, exotic dining and fine music from Artists from all over the Country. The tribal textiles manufactured by Master tribal Craftsmen from Jammu & Kashmir in the North to Tamil Nadu in the South and from Gujarat in the East to Nagaland/Sikkim in the West will win the heart of Delhiites.

The Traditional tribal jewelry, bamboo cane also promise to be the items of attraction. The Tribal handicrafts would be sold through about 200 Stalls in the Dilli Haat, INA by tribal Artisans. Twenty five special tribal cuisines would be on display and sale during the fortnight and Delhiites are welcome to sample the exotic Adi Vyanjan.

A team of 350 tribal artists from all over the country will present excellent and choreographed dances, vocal and instrumental music. Four rock bands from North East would be giving enthralling performances everyday in the evening from 5.30 P.M. to 8.30 P.M.

In line with the national aspiration to go cashless, the tribal artisans will be accepting payment through credit/debit cards for which Point of Sale (POS) machines have been provided in each stall. A special training has been conducted by State Bank of India for smooth operation of this. The Mahotsav will display the rich digital commerce and e-commerce being promoted by Tribes India. All the stalls will prefer and promote payments through credit cards.

Background :

The tribes constitute over 8% of the country's population. This is a very significant number. In real terms it corresponds to over 10 crore Indians. The national object of inclusive development (*sabka vikas*) includes the development of tribes as an important component. Our constitution enjoins upon the Government the responsibility of addressing the special needs of the tribals.

As the name of this event Aadi Mahotsav suggests, it is the '*adi*' factor that is important about

them. The Adivasi way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity. The greatness of the tribes lies in this that they have managed to retain the primal skills, the natural simplicity. Their creations issue from the depths of time. This quality gives their arts and crafts a timeless appeal. The crudest tribal handicraft instantly touches a primal instinct in all of us. This is particularly true of tribal music and dance.

The tribes of India have a wide range of handicrafts. These include handwoven cotton, wool and silk fabrics, woodcrafts, metal craft, terracotta, bead-work, masques and other objects. They also produce compelling paintings. It is true that the tribes did not develop these arts and handicrafts for the market. They developed them for their own captive use. But we all live in a changing world. Nobody can remain unaffected by these changes. Not even the tribes. Like all of us, the tribes too now need cash for sundry purposes. It is therefore important that their natural skills must be channelled to promote their sources of income. It is for this reason that the Government seeks to promote interaction between the tribal artisans and the mainstream designers from reputed design organizations. The idea is to expand the product range and designs. The synergy between these two can generate marketable products of art and handicraft for the top-end global market. Single items of bell-metal produced by the late Jaideo Baghel of Kondagaon in Bastar sold for as much as five lacs of rupees! This only points to the fact that on the one hand there are skills in the tribal pockets of India, and on the other hand there is high-end demand in our cities and in the international market.

The need is to put two and two together for a win-win result. Events such as this **Adi Mahotsav** are very important in this regard. The Government has formed the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (Trifed) for achieving this. Trifed is doing significant work in this direction and have now embraced e-commerce and digital platforms to take the business forward.

TRIBES India proudly announces the signing of MOUs with Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, PayTM and GEM, a Government of India Portal for e-commerce of the tribal products. Besides TRIBES India has also has its own e-com portal www.eshop.tribesindia.com.

The Mahotsav is an effort to take tribal commerce to the next level of digital and electronic transactions. The Mahotsav apart from exotic handicrafts will also showcase the electronic and digital skills of the tribals as a special attraction.

MKV/AK

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WCD Minister Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi makes country statement at the plenary session of 4th Global Conference on Sustained Eradication of Child Labour at Buenos Aires, Argentina

WCD Minister Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi makes country statement at the plenary session of 4th Global Conference on Sustained Eradication of Child Labour at Buenos Aires, Argentina

India fully committed to continue working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals to eliminate child labour: Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

The Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi has said that the Government of India is fully committed to continue working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 to eliminate child labour. The Minister was making the country statement at the plenary session of the 4th Global Conference on Sustained Eradication of Child Labour at Buenos Aires in Argentina today. The conference has been organized jointly by Government of Argentina and International Labour Organization (ILO). The country statement brings out the government and national position on the subject of child rights and child labour.

Giving details, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi said that India is fully committed towards the prevention, reduction and eventual elimination of child labour through policy & legislation reforms, stable economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection initiatives.

The most comprehensive step taken by the Government of India is the amendment in the Child Labour Act of 1986, the Minister said. This amendment prohibits employment of children below the age of 14 in any occupation whatsoever. It also prohibits the employment of children in the age group of 14 - 18 years in any hazardous occupation. Smt Maneka Gandhi further explained that the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 treats child labourers as "children in need of care and protection" and empowers the district level Child Welfare Committees to ensure their overall welfare.

The WCD Minister said that the National Food Security Act 2013 and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 are two other critical legislations which provide a safety network to vulnerable communities and play a pivotal role in the prevention of child labour and are world's biggest social protection measures ever taken by any nation. The WCD Minister also highlighted the role played by Child helpline (Childline-1098) which is the world's biggest facility for rescue of children in distressed situation.

Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi disclosed that to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of children, the government of India is in the process of bringing a new legislation on trafficking which focuses not only on the punitive measures but also on prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked person. She congratulated the Government of Argentina and ILO for organizing the conference successfully.

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In the database: on registration of marriages

In October, the Supreme Court held that that [sexual intercourse by a man with his wife who is below 18 years of age is rape](#). The judgment was interpreted as a strong warning against child marriage. Similarly, in July 2017, the Law Commission of India suggested amendments in the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 to make registration of marriages compulsory, like births and deaths, as an effective antidote to social evils like child marriage, bigamy and gender violence.

Instead of a standalone legislation to make marriages compulsory, the Commission recommended changes in the 1969 Act which would act as a “guiding principle” for States to legislate under Entry 5 of the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution taking into consideration the size of the population and sheer diversity of customary forms of marriage. However, State laws on the subject should be confined to the procedural, and not substantive.

The inclusion of marriages in the Births and Deaths Act would supplement the domain of family laws that already exist. It would not aim to remove, abolish or amend specific religious/cultural practices and laws that are accepted under personal laws prevailing in India.

The wedding certificate

The Commission suggested that the Registrar who is responsible for the registration of births and deaths be responsible for the registration of marriages as well. The Amendment Bill should provide that if the birth or marriage or death is not registered within the specified time limit, then the Registrar shall, on the payment of a late fee, register the death or birth (a) within a period of 30 days; (b) within one year, only with the written permission of the prescribed authority; and (c) after one year, only on an order of a First Class Magistrate. It provides for a penalty of 5 per day in case of delay in registration of “marriage without a reasonable cause”.

If the Registrar finds that any entry of a marriage in the register kept by him is erroneous or fraudulent or improper, he may correct or cancel the entries after hearing the parties concerned, subject to State government rules.

In a marriage solemnised abroad, and in which one of the parties is Indian, the Registrar shall verify it was conducted as per the laws of that country and the marriage satisfies conditions laid down in Section 4 of the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969.

The Commission called for village panchayats, local civil bodies and municipalities to create awareness about compulsory registration of marriages and to make marriage certificates mandatory for getting benefits or welfare like agricultural loans.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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About dignity

Bonanzas under the Seventh Pay Commission Recommendations are being distributed. The lucky ones are getting luckier, if not happier. We see them; for they have a knack of remaining visible and audible. It takes no greatness, Gandhiji would say, to see them or hear their clamour. What proves who we are is whether or not we have eyes to see those who otherwise go unseen. Gandhi called them God's people, Harijan, because only God sees their misery. God is the only refuge for those who are unwanted by all else.

Maybe it is not our blindness but our cowardice. We lack the gumption to look at the 500-odd million of our fellow Indians who languish in what is euphemistically called the "unorganised sector". It is not that we don't want them to eat two square meals a day. But if they do, the abundance on our banquet tables could be compromised. Will we be able to graduate from mid-segment cars to their luxury variants, if the needs of these lesser mortals are hitched on to "India Shining"? Will we imperil our dreams by providing for the bottom-line needs of our work-force, and opening the doors of the future to their children?

Euphemisms are like Madame Tussaud's wax models — they are fixed and formulated in waxen serenity. They showcase a world sans hunger and deprivation, common cold and untold suffering. So, let's ask, "What, for God's sake, is this 'unorganised sector'?"

Strange, it is made up of human beings. "Sector" could make you think otherwise. A disconcertingly large portion of our fellow citizens remains forever vulnerable to the vagaries of unemployment, exploitation, insecurity, poverty, social degradation, cultural exclusion and developmental disenfranchisement within the ambit of this sanitised expression. This "sector", by the way, is wholly human-made, though we have come to think of it as willed by fate. The lesser mortals who inhabit this no-man's land are capable of improvement, given a ghost of a chance. This should be so because they contribute 45 per cent of the wealth of our country — though we think of them as a national liability.

Look closer, if you don't mind, to the "Pay Commission". How easily we forget, in the massive consultations and microscopic fine-tuning of pay revisions in our country, that "wage" needs to be deemed as honourable and dignified as "pay" is, in a society with even a rudimentary notion of justice and fair-play. Salaries have undergone astronomical enhancements in our country. Government and private sector salaries have gone through the roof, while corporate emoluments have shot right through the sky. Wages remain, in real terms, where we left them before we began our growth story.

Wages, let us say, of the so-called "unskilled workers" vary wildly from Rs 850 per day in Kerala to a third of it in most other parts of the country. How any work done by anyone can be insulted as "unskilled" is a question that we rarely ask. Skill is involved in sweeping the floor, washing utensils, baking bricks or working in quarries. Only those who have done no manual work will continue to harbour the insensitivity of belittling the "skill" involved in doing any kind of work. Since Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s Swachh Bharat Abhiyan forced soft and delicate hands to wield brooms — with what order of skills and to what effect we know — this argument need not be pressed any further.

We did hope when the PM announced his Clean India Mission, that valuing and adequately rewarding the vast army of wage-earners in India would be its most significant spin-off. PM Modi, on his part, did speak knowledgeably on the nexus between hygiene and health, with particular reference to the poor. It cannot be that the PM does not know the connection between our poverty and the systemic injustice done to those bracketed in the "un-organised" sector. Surely, health and

hygiene make no sense in the dens of destitution. It is our hope that the PM will turn his attention to bringing a modicum of justice to the long-neglected and much-wronged “unorganised sector”. Our main hope in this regard is the political acumen of the PM. He knows how grateful the poor are — or, for that matter, that only the poor are grateful.

We, therefore, await the PM to take bold steps to evolve a national and rational minimum wage policy.

What is “rational” involves a standardisation of sorts. The counterpart to those maligned as “unskilled” labour in the unorganised sector are, say, the peons/attendants in the organised sector. In the wake of the Seventh Pay Commission, they will carry home monthly salaries in excess of Rs 25,000 per month, besides enjoying 30 years of assured employment and other benefits, including medical reimbursement and life-long retirement benefits. We insult ourselves if we recompense the back-breaking, daylong work done by our fellow citizens below this level. Such a policy needs to be given effect urgently as it has a bearing on the education and health of millions of our children who, otherwise, are blighted by malnutrition and illiteracy. The correlation between the sub-human conditions under which workers in the unorganised sector live and school drop-out rates of their children is too well-known to need any argument.

We make this appeal not only to the government but also to our fellow citizens. Rather than relish the fleeting euphoria of hikes in incomes, it behooves us to embrace a voluntary salary freeze for a period, until minimum justice is done to those who toil and sweat to make the wheels of development move in this land. As the Father of the Nation said — with a larger frame of reference — we have enough to meet everyone’s needs, but not enough to quench anyone’s greed.

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Tribal development is important to achieve object of inclusive development: Vice President

Tribal development is important to achieve object of inclusive development: Vice President

Vice President inaugurates Aadi Mahotsav - a fortnight long Tribal Festival with the theme of 'A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce'

Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram presides over the Tribal Festival Inauguration

The festival features exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more through about 200 stalls

Over 750 tribal artisans from over 25 States participated in the festival

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated 'Aadi Mahotsav' - a fortnight long Tribal Festival with the theme of 'A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce' today i.e 16 Nov 2017 at New Delhi. The inaugural function presided over by Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram. Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Shri Sudarshan Bhagat was specially present to grace the occasion. Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs Ms. Leena Nair, Managing Director, TRIFED Shri Pravir Krishna and other senior officials were also be present on the occasion.

Over 750 tribal artisans from over 25 States participated in the festival. Aadi Mahotsav is organized at four venues throughout Delhi. The details of the venues and dates of the festival are as under.

Dilli Haat, INA	-	16-30 November, 2017
Dilli Haat, Janakpuri	-	16-19 November, 2017
Central Park, Rajiv Chowk	-	16-17 November, 2017
Handicraft Bhawan, Baba Kharak Singh Marg	-	16-19 November, 2017



The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu at the inauguration of the "Aadi Mahotsav". The Union Minister for Tribal

Affairs, Shri Jual Oram, the Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Shri Sudarshan Bhagat are also seen.

Speaking on the occasion the The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that the tribal development is an important component to achieve the object of inclusive development (Sabka Vikas). He said that this festival will prove very useful to introduce this wonderful cultural heritage to all over India and the world. He further said that another advantage through this festival can be that the objects and artifacts made by tribals will have an opportunity to sell them and get financial benefits. Their efficiency will be rewarded in the form of economic prosperity, he added.

The Vice President said that our constitution enjoins upon the Government the responsibility of addressing the special needs of the tribals. He further said that the tribes must be drawn to the mainstream, but at the same time it is important to ensure that their culture remains intact. Adivasis are the aboriginals and their way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity, he added.

The Vice President said that Government seeks to promote interaction between the tribal artisans and the mainstream designers from reputed design organizations. He further said that events such as this Aadi Mahotsav are very important in this regard. The Government has formed the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (Trifed) for achieving this, he added.

The Vice President congratulated the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED organizers of this Aadi Mahotsav. He invited the tribal artisans to make the best use of this opportunity to forge links with other artisans and market drivers.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"Today, I extend my heartfelt greetings to the tribal brothers on the auspicious occasion of Aadi Mahotsav. Tribals are very dear, heartwarming people of Bharat Mata. Adivasi brothers and sisters have favored the life of our country with their melodious and joyful music, joy of pleasure, unique handicrafts.

This festival will prove very useful to introduce this wonderful cultural heritage to all over India and the world. Another advantage through this festival can be that the objects and artifacts you make will have an opportunity to sell them and you will also be able to get financial benefits. Your efficiency will be rewarded in the form of economic prosperity.

I hope that all of you will be able to take full advantage of this opportunity. I urge you to continue the effort that way so far you have preserved your cultural heritage. This is an invaluable heritage. It is very important to promote, disseminate and increase it. In this endeavor, the government is supporting and will give tribute to artistic creative enthusiasm, giving special attention to it.

The tribes constitute over 8% of the country's population. This is a very significant number. In real terms it corresponds to over 10 crore Indians. The national object of inclusive development (Sabka Vikas) includes the development of tribes as an important component. Our constitution enjoins upon the Government the responsibility of addressing the special needs of the tribals.

The Government has always treated the tribes with a special concern. However, there are unique challenges in the field of tribal development. This is because the tribes must be drawn to the mainstream, but at the same time it is important to ensure that their culture remains intact.

The attitude of urban mainstream towards the tribes is often characterized by a belief that we have a lot to teach the tribes to help them to develop. What we generally tend to forget is that in fact the tribes have a lot to teach urban India. When we deal with the tribes, we must always keep an open mind. We must maintain our humility.

What is special about the tribes? As the name of this event suggests, it is the 'adi' factor that is important about them. Adivasis are the aboriginals. Their way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity. The greatness of the tribes lies in this that they have managed to retain the primal skills and their natural simplicity. Their creations have a timeless appeal. The crudest tribal handicraft instantly touches a chord in all of us. This is also particularly true of tribal music and dance.

The tribes of India have a wide range of handicrafts. These include hand-woven cotton, wool and silk fabrics, woodcrafts, metal craft, terracotta, bead-work, masques and other objects. They also produce compelling paintings.

Government has rightly recognized the need to channel the artistic talents towards income generation. It is for this reason that the Government seeks to promote interaction between the tribal artisans and the mainstream designers from reputed design organizations. The idea is to expand the product range and designs. The synergy between these two can generate marketable products of art and handicraft for the top-end global market.

Single items of bell-metal produced by the late Jaideo Baghel of Kondagaon in Bastar sold for as much as five lacs of rupees! This only points to the fact that on the one hand there are skills in the tribal pockets of India, and on the other hand there is high-end demand in our cities and in the international market.

*The need is to put two and two together for a win-win result. Events such as this **Aadi Mahotsav***

are very important in this regard. The Government has formed the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (Trifed) for achieving this.

I am happy that Trifed is doing significant work in this direction and have now embraced e-commerce and digital platforms to take the business forward.

Apart from handicrafts, the tribes gather from the forests a range of forest produces. These include various tree-borne products like flowers, fruits, seeds, barks and leaves; and various insect produces like honey. All these are completely organic products.

We know that organic food products command a premium price. Trifed must tap this premium market which is a niche market. And, more importantly, Trifed must ensure that the benefit of higher prices accrues to the tribal. I understand that the scheme of minimum support price for forest produces has been expanded to cover all states and twenty four key products. The scheme now needs to be implemented in full earnestness.

I congratulate the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED organizers of this **Aadi Mahotsav**. I invite the tribal artisans gathered here to make the best use of this opportunity to forge links with other artisans and market drivers. I am happy to see the enthusiasm here and the colourful festive atmosphere. I hope in the times to come we will see more of such events.

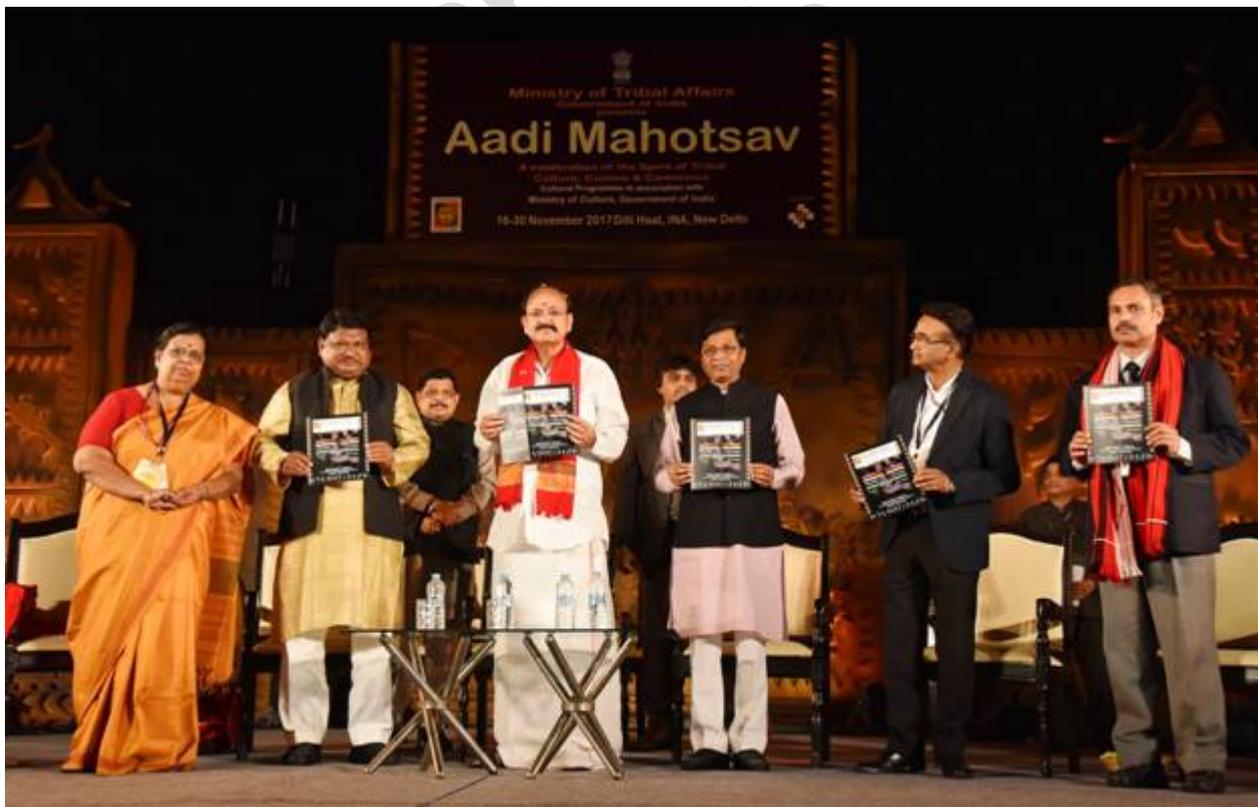


The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu lighting the lamp to inaugurate the "Aadi Mahotsav". The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Shri Jual Oram, the Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Shri Sudarshan Bhagat are also seen.

Shri Jual Oram, Minister for Tribal Affairs welcoming the Vice President stated that it was important to promote the trade of Tribal Artisans and to this effect the Ministry had launched a number of programmes including Friends of Tribes Cards, opening of Franchises outlets and given a big push to Retail Trade through exhibitions and opening of new retail outlets. He said that the Ministry was targeting to achieve a target of Rs. 100 crores in sales of tribal products to raise tribal incomes. TRIFED has achieved a turnover of Rs. 20 Crore in the sale of tribal products this year. TRIFED has also entered the Electronic and Digital era and signed MoUs with leading e-commerce portals including GeM, a Government of India portal for e-commerce. Tribes India outlets accept payments by credit card and swipe machines to promote digital transactions. Tribals in Aadi Mahotsav have been trained for use of modern retail machines.

Shri Sudarshan Bhagat, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs in his address stated that there was a need to promote MSP for MFP in the country so that the tribals get a fair price and the Ministry is making all out efforts for the same. He stated that there is a great potential for value addition in this scheme including in his own State, Jharkhand and in the rest of the Country. The scheme had the potential to double and triple the tribal incomes. He also said that every year we celebrate Birsa Munda's anniversary but this year we have celebrated it by organizing Aadi Mahotsav.

Ms. Leena Nair, Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs welcomed the guests and stated that it was a Red Letter Day for the Ministry and TRIFED. The Vice President of India's presence has invigorated us and we rededicated ourselves to the service of tribal brothers and sisters. Aadi Mahotsav, I am sure will prove to be a real celebration of the spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce. Pravir Krishna, MD, TRIFED thanked the guest.



The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu releasing a booklet, at the inauguration of the "Aadi Mahotsav". The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Shri Jual Oram, the Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Shri Sudarshan Bhagat are also seen.

The Maohotsava : Showcasing Tribal Culture, Commerce & Cuisine:

The festival will run for a fortnight through 30th November 2017. The theme of the festival is: A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Cuisine and Commerce. The festival will feature exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more through 204 stalls.

Over 750 tribal artisans and artists from over 25 States will be participating in the festival. A special feature of the festival is Tribal India cuisine, recreated and presented in delectable forms to suit urban tastes by special tribal chefs.

An attractive stage has been raised at the venue to showcase tribal music and dance every evening from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm. Nearly 350 artists from 20 States are expected to perform during the festival. Festivities and cultural programmes will also be organised at Central Park, Rajiv Chowk; Dilli Haat, Janakpuri and Handicrafts Bhawan, Baba Kharak Singh Marg between 16-19 November, 2017.

Shopping, Dining & Fine Music

The 15 days Mahotsav is expected have a footfall of over 1.00 lakh Delhiites. It promises to be a feast of shopping, exotic dining and fine music from Artists from all over the Country.

The tribal textiles manufactured by Master tribal Craftsmen from Jammu & Kashmir in the North to Tamil Nadu in the South and from Gujarat in the East to Nagaland/Sikkim in the West will win the heart of Delhiites. The Traditional tribal jewelry, bamboo cane also promise to be the items of attraction.

The Tribal handicrafts would be sold through 212 Stalls in the Dilli Haat, INA by tribal Artisans. 25 special tribal cuisines would be on display and sale during the fortnight and Delhiites are welcome to sample the exotic Adi Vyanjan.

A team of 350 tribal artists from all over the country will present excellent and choreographed dances, vocal and instrumental music. 4 rock bands from North East would be giving enthralling performances everyday in the evening from 5.30 P.M. to 8.30 P.M.

In line with the national aspiration to go cashless, the tribal artisans will be accepting payment through credit/debit cards for which Point of Sale (POS) machines have been provided in each stall. A special training has been conducted by State Bank of India for smooth operation of this.

The Mahotsav will display the rich digital commerce and e-commerce being promoted by Tribes India. All the 202 stalls will prefer and promote payments through credit cards.

Backgrounder:

As the name of this event Aadi Mahotsav suggests, it is the 'adi' factor that is important about them. The Adivasi way of life is guided by primal truths, eternal values and a natural simplicity. The greatness of the tribes lies in this that they have managed to retain the primal skills, the natural simplicity. Their creations issue from the depths of time. This quality gives their arts and crafts a timeless appeal. The crudest tribal handicraft instantly touches a primal instinct in all of us. This is particularly true of tribal music and dance.

The tribes of India have a wide range of handicrafts. These include handwoven cotton, wool and silk fabrics, woodcrafts, metal craft, terracotta, bead-work, masques and other objects. They also produce compelling paintings. It is true that the tribes did not develop these arts and handicrafts for the market. They developed them for their own captive use. But we all live in a changing world. Nobody can remain unaffected by these changes. Not even the tribes. Like all of us, the tribes too now need cash for sundry purposes. It is therefore important that their natural skills must be channelled to promote their sources of income. It is for this reason that the Government seeks to promote interaction between the tribal artisans and the mainstream designers from reputed design organizations. The idea is to expand the product range and designs. The synergy between these two can generate marketable products of art and handicraft for the top-end global market. Single items of bell-metal produced by the late Jaideo Baghel of Kondagaon in Bastar sold for as much as five lacs of rupees! This only points to the fact that on the one hand there are skills in the tribal pockets of India, and on the other hand there is high-end demand in our cities and in the international market.

The need is to put two and two together for a win-win result. Events such as this **Aadi Mahotsav** are very important in this regard. The Government has formed the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (Trifed) for achieving this. Trifed is doing significant work in this direction and have now embraced e-commerce and digital platforms to take the business forward.

TRIBES India proudly informs the signing of MOUs with Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, PayTM and GEM, a Government of India Portal for e-commerce of the tribal products. Besides TRIBES India has also has its own e-com portal www.eshop.tribesindia.com.

The Mahotsav is an effort to take tribal commerce to the next level of digital and electronic transactions. The Mahotsav apart from exotic handicrafts will also showcase the electronic and digital skills of the tribals as a special attraction.

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With not even one per cent being disabled-friendly, colleges are difficult to access for many

It is a testimony to how far we are from realising the dream of smart cities that not even 1% of India's 789 universities, 37,204 colleges and 11,443 stand-alone higher education institutions are disabled-friendly. This startling statistic was revealed by a forum for disabled students. Since 1995, when the government made it mandatory for educational institutions receiving aid from the State to reserve 4% seats for people with disability, there has been little improvement in the situation. Despite the enactment of the Right to Education Act in 2009, which promised free and compulsory primary education to every child in the country, less than 0.1% of India's 2.68 crore people with disabilities are enrolled in schools. As they move from primary to secondary and higher education, the figure drops to a dismal .01%.

The dearth of infrastructure that facilitates access for the physically challenged — ramps, railings and accessible wash rooms — is just one of the reasons which prevent them from pursuing their studies. There is the absence of trained staff and alternative teaching aides. In order to compete with their peers, the partially sighted, for instance, need specialised books and material in Braille. Those are seldom provided. In the last decade, since the non-profit Samarthyam's Centre for Accessible Environments began conducting access audits for educational institutions, co-founder Anjee Agarwal doesn't recall coming across even one college that can be termed disabled-friendly.

Despite the laws having acquired more teeth to deal with this issue, our planners and builders remain apathetic. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill passed in 2016 sets the government a two-year deadline to ensure that those with disability get barrier-free access in infrastructure and transport systems. Additionally, it holds the private sector — builders and developers — accountable for creating an accessible environment. This, experts say, is a departure from the 1995 act which was largely toothless. The punitive action for non-compliance can be a five-year prison term. So, in accordance with National Building Code announced in 2016, any new school and college being planned has to be 100 per cent accessible.

Since building by-laws are a state subject, implementation across the country is uneven. The few exceptions to this appear to be government-led initiatives in Odisha, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. Still, putting up a ramp here and a disabled-friendly toilet there doesn't really turn things around. One measure of a civilised society should be the sensitivity it displays towards the disabled. If a chunk of the 2.68 crore physically challenged people in the country cannot board a train, watch a movie or operate an ATM owing to lack of access, and if we make it difficult for many of them to attend college, all the talk of a demographic dividend amounts to little.

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Ministry of Health organizes National Workshop on Promotion of Male Participation in Family Planning

Ministry of Health organizes National Workshop on Promotion of Male Participation in Family Planning

Spreads awareness about Vasectomy Fortnight

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organized a one-day national workshop on the promotion of male participation in family planning, here today. Smt. Vandana Gurnani, Jt. Secretary inaugurated the workshop, which highlighted concrete strategies to understand and incorporate the male perspective and male needs in the same way as attention is given to women's perspectives and needs. The Health Ministry through its sustained family planning efforts, aims to increase male participation in family planning, with continued emphasis on delivering assured services, generating demand and bridging supply gaps.

The workshop also saw the launch of the Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS) manual. The FP-LMIS software was developed to facilitate the management and distribution of contraceptives and is designed to provide robust information on the demand and distribution of contraceptives to health facilities and ASHAs and strengthen supply chain management. It is intended to be a decision-making tool for policy makers, program managers and logistics personnel to monitor and manage the flow of contraceptive supplies, in order to reduce stockouts and overstocks, and improve the program's effectiveness and contraceptive security.

Male participation in improving the reproductive health of couples is crucial. While the permanent methods of contraception have traditionally found more acceptance in India, the maximum number of acceptors are women. The World Vasectomy Day is an event intended to raise global awareness on Vasectomy. The National Workshop today is also a precursor and curtain raiser to the upcoming Vasectomy Fortnight across States. All states/UTs across India will observe a dedicated 'Vasectomy Fortnight' from **21st November to 4th December 2017** with commensurate publicity whereby quality male sterilization services would be provided to clients at public health facilities.

The observation of a dedicated fortnight is intended to galvanize awareness on male sterilization and thereby improve its acceptance in the community. The Vasectomy Fortnight will be observed up to the block level with focus on Family Planning service delivery along with IEC & advocacy.

The theme of the workshop and the 'Vasectomy Fortnight 2017' is:

“जिम्मेदार पुरुष की यही है पहचान, परिवार नियोजन में जो दे योगदान”

“Zimmedar Purush ki yehi hai Pehchan, Parivar Niyojan mein jo de Yogdaan”

The observation of the Vasectomy Fortnight 2017 will be conducted in two phases:

1. **Mobilization phase (21st Nov – 27th Nov)** - This fortnight is utilised for awareness generation on the benefits of male contraception. IEC, especially on male participation in Family Planning and addressing various myths associated with it, will be available across public and accredited health care facilities.
2. **Service delivery phase (28th Nov – 4th Dec)** - In addition to awareness generation, all districts and blocks will organise for provision of male sterilization services in this dedicated fortnight.

Male participation in adoption of family planning has been a challenge along with other numerous challenges that must still be overcome, particularly in terms of raising public awareness around promoting and male engagement in family planning services. The promotion of male participation is vital to the success of the Family Planning programme. The theme of the workshop was in alignment with the theme of the Vasectomy Fortnight and discussions during the workshop revolved around a variety of topics such as:

- Concerted efforts to promote male involvement in Family Planning
- Bolstering young men's engagement in adopting reproductive decisions
- Bridging the gender gap
- Addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents

The eminent speakers at the workshop also included the pioneers of NSV in India who addressed the gathering on the global scenario and the role of technical agencies in promoting male participation. The state representatives highlighted the respective strategies for improving the uptake and arresting the decline of vasectomy services.

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Beyond Piketty: on income inequality

With the Gujarat State elections barely a few weeks away, the debate on the Indian economy has become increasingly polarised. While the official view of demonetisation unleashed in November 2016 elevates it to a moral and ethical imperative, the chaos caused by the goods and services tax ([GST launched on July 1, 2017](#)), is dismissed as a short-run transitional hiccup. Both policies, it is asserted, are guaranteed to yield long-term benefits, unmindful of large-scale hardships, loss of livelihoods, closure of small and medium enterprises and slowdown of agriculture. Critics of course reject these claims lock, stock and barrel. Lack of robust evidence is as much a problem for the official proponents of these policies as it is for the critics. Hence the debate continues unabated with frequent hostile overtones.

Tracking income inequality

Beneath the debate are deep questions of inequality and its association with poverty. Thomas Piketty produced a monumental treatise, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, demonstrating that rising income inequality is a by-product of growth in the developed world. More recently, [Lucas Chancel and Piketty \(2017\), in 'Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj'](#), offer a rich and unique description of evolution of income inequality in terms of income shares and incomes in the bottom 50%, the middle 40% and top 10% (as well as top 1%, 0.1%, and 0.001%), combining household survey data, tax returns and other specialised surveys.

Some of the principal findings are: one, the share of national income accruing to the top 1% income earners is now at its highest level since the launch of the Indian Income Tax Act in 1922. The top 1% of earners captured less than 21% of total income in the late 1930s, before dropping to 6% in the early 1980s and rising to 22% today. Two, over the 1951-1980 period, the bottom 50% captured 28% of total growth and incomes of this group grew faster than the average, while the top 0.1% incomes decreased. Three, over the 1980-2014 period, the situation was reversed; the top 0.1% of earners captured a higher share of total growth than the bottom 50% (12% v. 11%), while the top 1% received a higher share of total growth than the middle 40% (29% v. 23%).

Entering the age of GST

True to its modest objective, it offers a rich and insightful description of how income distribution, especially in the upper tail, and inequality have evolved.

Sharp reduction in the top marginal tax rate, and transition to a more pro-business environment had a positive impact on top incomes, in line with rent-seeking behaviour.

India's wealth gain

According to Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report 2017, the number of millionaires in India is expected to reach 3,72,000 while the total household income is likely to grow by 7.5% annually to touch \$7.1 trillion by 2022. Since 2000, wealth in India has grown at 9.2% per annum, faster than the global average of 6% even after taking into account population growth of 2.2% annually. However, not everyone has shared the rapid growth of wealth.

Our research, based on the India Human Development Survey 2005-12, focusses on a detailed

disaggregation of income inequality, along the lines of Chancel and Piketty, recognising that incomes in the upper tail are under-reported; and examines the links between poverty and income inequality, especially in the upper tail, state affluence, and prices of cereals.

Equality for what?

Our analysis points to a rise in income inequality. A high Gini coefficient of per capita income distribution, a widely used measure of income inequality, in 2005 became higher in 2012. The share of the bottom 50% fell while those of the top 5% and top 1% rose. The gap between the share of the top 1% and the bottom 50% narrowed considerably.

More glaring is the disparity in ratios of per capita income of the top 1% and bottom 50%. The ratio shot up from 27 in 2005 to 39 in 2012. Far more glaring is the disparity in the highest incomes in these percentiles. The ratio of highest income in the top 1% to that of the bottom 50% nearly doubled, from a high of 175 to 346.

All poverty indices including the head-count ratio fell but slightly.

Poverty and inequality

Higher incomes reduced poverty substantially. Inequality measured in terms of share of income of the top 10% increased poverty sharply but only in the more affluent States. Somewhat surprisingly, higher cereal prices did not have a significant positive effect on poverty. Similar results are obtained if the share of the top 10% is replaced with the Gini coefficient as a measure of inequality.

The selfish way to combat inequality

It is plausible that poverty reduction slowed in 2016-17 because of deceleration of income growth; and huge shocks of demonetisation and the GST to the informal sector have aggravated income inequality. Indeed, depending on the magnitudes of these shocks, poverty could have risen during this period.

In sum, regardless of the longer-term outlook and presumed but dubious benefits of the policy shocks, the immiseration of large segments of the Indian population was avoidable.

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The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Asia's cities could save the planet

The world's cities will add 2.5 billion more residents by 2050, more than half of them in Asia. The effect of this great migration on climate change will depend in part on what kind of homes, factories and office buildings they live and work in.

It's a seemingly minor but significant issue that should attract attention from officials gathered at this week's United Nations-sponsored climate talks in Bonn. (Michael Bloomberg, the founder and owner of Bloomberg LP, is the UN special envoy for cities and climate change.) Buildings generate almost 20% of energy-related greenhouse-gas emissions — a proportion that's likely to rise as onetime farmers move into more energy-intensive modern homes. Yet less than 10% of the \$4.6 trillion spent on construction in 2015 went into energy-efficient "green" buildings.

The reasons are many: Some energy-saving technologies and designs have only recently become widely accessible. There is a widespread belief among many developers, especially in poorer countries, that building green costs considerably more than traditional methods. Officials in many countries are lax about enforcing building codes for energy efficiency.

But there is now software that can give architects and engineers access to the most efficient designs and quickly certify their work. As for cost, the International Finance Corporation estimates that building green raises construction costs less than 2% on average. And new business models, such as so-called energy savings companies, popular in China, can enable commercial developers to better afford energy-efficient technologies.

The challenge also presents rich countries, which are supposed to be contributing to a Green Climate Fund to assist poorer ones in reducing their carbon emissions, with a more politically palatable way to help. Europe, for instance, has plenty of knowledge to share on designing green certifications and building codes. More important, Western banks could play a critical role in marshaling new financial instruments, such as green construction bonds, to pay for all these new buildings.

Asian governments also need to do more to encourage homeowners and builders to make greener choices. Part of the task involves providing reliable certifications and educating the public about the virtues of energy-efficient buildings, so that property buyers choose and will pay a premium for them. At the same time, officials must do a far better job of getting local governments to adopt and enforce tougher building codes.

Asia's urban leaders need to worry about much more than buildings, of course. They'll have to map out cleaner and more efficient systems for public transportation, waste, water and so on. At the same time, if the world's fast-growing cities can make more of their new buildings more green, they will play a crucial role in fighting climate change. **Bloomberg Views**

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The power of shame

The better way: A social worker explains the importance of toilets to residents of Kabale, in Uganda, with posters. Special Arrangement

Twinomujni Enock's wife is 'more pleasant' with him, he says, and that makes him happy. The 45-year-old farmer grows Irish potatoes and pineapples in his one-acre farm in Kabale, in western Uganda. He sells his produce in the neighbouring sub-county, or if he's lucky, to tourists wandering by on their way to Lake Bunyonyi or to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park to spot mountain gorillas. He makes around 100,000 shillings (around Rs. 1,800; UGX 1 = around INR 0.02) a month. Nothing much has changed in his life or fortunes in the past few years to affect his spouse's equanimity. Except for one thing: "I built a latrine at home."

In Kabale, most residents didn't have modern toilets in their properties. The men would use the fields, while their families used the areas around their homes. To get rid of the smell, women traditionally burnt banana leaves and then cleaned up the area.

After Mr. Enock built the latrine — a tiny hole in the ground in a thin-walled cabin behind the house, which cost him UGX 1,50,000 — his wife doesn't have to do that any more. But, Mr. Enock confesses, love for his family wasn't his only motivation: he feared arrest or an UGX40,000 fine and worse, public shaming.

"Many other farmers were being shamed," he says. "I didn't want to be humiliated. In a way, I was left with no other choice."

He admits, though, that he now takes much less time off work, as his seven children fall sick much less often.

Uganda has a population of 42 million, almost as many as Odisha. The country loses 33 children every day to diarrhoea (similar all-India figures are 328). Kabale is mostly a rural district, over 400 kilometres away from the country's capital, Kampala.

Incomes aren't high — the average Ugandan rural household earns around UGX 3,03,000, less than half an urban household's UGX 7,03,000 (as per Uganda Bureau of Statistics figures for 2016–17).

But this little district, with a population of around 5,00,000 (less than that of the Mumbai suburb of Andheri East) in 1,18,878 households, has succeeded in getting 97% of them to build toilets, becoming the first in the country to declare itself open-defecation-free. Seven other districts now follow the same programme.

"The credit goes to the harsh measures we took," says Namanya Oliver, district health officer of Kabale. First, a field survey identified households which did not have latrines. Next, offending households were sensitised to the dangers of poor sanitation, then given around three months to build a toilet. If they didn't, the man of the house was arrested, and faced a choice between a fine, two weeks in jail, or community service. "We also put out their names in a 'list of shame,'" Mr. Oliver says. "We even go on radio shows to announce names of people found defecating in the open or who fail to have a latrine at home."

In the last two years, 64 households have been fined, and hundreds featured on the list.

Not everyone uses them

The battle hasn't been won yet, though. Ensuring that everyone uses their latrine is the next challenge: actual usage is just 54%.

Allen Saturday, 41 and a mother of six, is happy the family has had a toilet since 2016. "Who likes cleaning all that up," she asks. "I did it for so many years, then my daughters helped me." But she isn't sure about her husband; he's out in their fields all day, so he must be doing his business out there.

"We are now focussing on behavioural change," says Munduni Samuel, a government health assistant.

"We insist on making it a habit to defecate only twice, morning and night time. Our message emphasises that those who defecate more than twice are ill. We tell them to follow this for three days and the body will get used to it."

Officials are spreading awareness about diarrhoeal deaths among children, worm infestations, and other results of poor sanitation. They are also promoting simple hand-washing techniques, like a soap bottle and water can hanging from a wooden frame; the can tips over slightly when a stick, connected to it with string, is stepped on.

They teach school children to use this *jugaad* hands-free handwasher, and through them, the adults.

Mr. Oliver says the district aims to achieve 100% latrine usage in a couple of years.

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The tiny toilets miracle

A perfect fit: Building new infrastructure in slums is arduous. It needs strong support from municipal authorities and space to make basic improvements. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Yasin Shaikh runs a small tailoring shop in Balajinagar, a slum area near the Maharashtra Industrial Development Complex in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune's satellite city. Like many structures in the area, his residence is his workplace, and it has grown and morphed over time. His family used to live in a small room at the back; now it has shifted up to a new room on the first floor and rented it out.

The room at the back is small — barely 7 ft x15 ft — but miraculously, adjacent to one wall is a new addition: its own toilet. It's just big enough for an Indian-style commode, bucket and tap, but in pristine condition, with a proper door and blue tiling running half-way up the walls.

If you had told Mr. Shaikh two or three years ago that this room could hold an individual toilet, he would have scoffed, and not just because of the size constraints.

"There were no sewer lines here," he says. "We thought the only option was to use the public toilet blocks." Or, like many in the area tired of queueing up and the sub-standard sanitation of these blocks, simply defecate in the open.

Mr. Shaikh could be speaking for the residents of any of the 1,500 homes in Balajinagar — mostly all as small or smaller, and equally haphazardly built — which now have toilets in what would have seemed to be impossibly restricted spaces.

Additional investments

Each one seems like a highly innovative use of space, and like it could only fit that one home.

Not surprising: most of them were designed and constructed by local masons who know the lay of the houses and have a sense of where each one would best fit.

The initiative has been facilitated by Pune-based Shelter Associates, which gets the process started by providing residents with the basic materials, from cement and tiling to the door; As their part of the partnership, the residents take care of the rest.

"We've noted that over 50% of the beneficiaries have made additional investments, aside from the basic material that we provide," says Pratima Joshi, founder and Executive Director of Shelter.

Ms. Joshi founded Shelter in 1993, originally working on both housing and sanitation, but focussing on the latter in the last few years. Aside from the Pune area, it has implemented projects in cities across Maharashtra. The project funding now comes from corporate CSR.

The NGO starts each project by getting the lay of the land. This may not sound unique, but what makes it different is the extensive use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping.

Ms Joshi and her co-founders, all architects, found that much of the data on slums available with the local bodies was second-hand, and often entered manually on extensive spreadsheets, making it hard to understand and access.

In 1997-98, they started using GIS software, then used mostly by the Department of Defence and

Department of Forests, and began tweaking it to map poverty and public infrastructure. Next come household surveys, to understand how infrastructure connected homes and families.

Then, all the findings are integrated on to a GIS platform overlaid on a Google Earth map. (In 2009, Shelter was featured as a Google Earth Hero, an organisation that had made innovative use of the platform for urban development.)

“Once we finish the GIS mapping,” Ms. Joshi says, “we take this data to the government and to make a case for what needs to be done in terms of improving infrastructure.”

Building new infrastructure in slums is often arduous, needing huge support from the municipal authorities, and the space to make basic improvements. Shelter works with both elected municipal representatives and engineers from the municipal corporation to see where and how new lines can be laid.

The actual installation can take time, but once it’s done, the process speeds up. “Once materials are delivered to their doorsteps, the toilets usually get built in 10 days,” Ms. Joshi says.

When Shelter started working in Pimpri-Chinchwad, only 30% of its slums had sewerage infrastructure; now that is over 50%.

Shelter has recently begun to work with the Thane and Navi Mumbai municipal corporations, after officials, having seen its results, invited it to implement pilot projects.

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Shia Board submits 'settlement' before SC

Waseem Rizvi

Shia Waqf Board chairman Syed Waseem Rizvi has moved the Supreme Court for permission to place on record a "settlement" worked out by the Uttar Pradesh Shia Central Waqf Board with a majority of non-Muslim stakeholders in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute.

The application comes ahead of the scheduled hearing of the dispute in the Supreme Court on December 5.

Under the settlement, the Ram temple could be built on the Ayodhya site while a mosque would be constructed in Lucknow.

The application filed by Mr. Rizvi said the Shia Board has mooted the proposal for a "long-term settlement of this dispute which has resulted in a feeling of acrimony among these communities".

"The Uttar Pradesh Shia Central Board of Wakfs proposed a compromise before the Hindu brothers, who are fighting the cause of the Ram Mandir and majority of whom are parties in the litigation," the application said.

Mr. Rizvi, in the application filed through advocate M.C. Dhingra, said the settlement proposal was worked out after a series of meetings, discussions and deliberations with the concerned Hindu brothers and stakeholders," including the various mahants.

The application reinforced the right of the Shias to take a decision on the fate of the Babri Masjid, which it claimed is a "Shia wakf".

"The *mutawallis* of Babri Masjid have always been Shia Muslims and the last known/recorded *mutawalli* of the Babri Masjid was a Shia Muslim," it said.

Shia rights

The Shia Board has "all the rights to take a prudent decision on the issue which in fact relate to larger national interest", the application said.

It gave a list of mosques in Islamic countries which "have been removed". In connection with "the sanctity of mosques being constructed by unjust people", the application recounted an "incident recorded in the books of Islamic theology where a masjid named Masjid-al-Diirar was ordered to be demolished and burnt down by the Prophet of Islam".

In August, the Shia Board moved the Supreme Court claiming that the 15th century Babri Masjid was a Shia waqf (endowment) and the Sunnis, who have been at the frontlines of the 70-year-old Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title dispute, were mere interlopers led by "hardliners, fanatics and non-believers" who do not want an amicable settlement with the Hindu sects involved.

END

Making caste slur on SC/STs over phone an offence, says SC

The Supreme Court has ruled that using casteist remarks over phone in a public place against the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category amounts to criminal offence, warranting a jail of a maximum five years.

The apex court refused to stay criminal proceedings and quash an FIR against a person, who allegedly used derogatory casteist remarks over phone to a woman from the the SC/ST category.

A bench of Justices J. Chelameswar and S. Abdul Nazeer declined to interfere with the August 17 order of the Allahabad High Court, which rejected the plea of a Uttar Pradesh resident, seeking quashing of the FIR against him by the woman.

It dismissed his plea saying he has to prove during the trial that he had not talked to the woman over phone in a public place.

Advocate Vivek Vishnoi, appearing for the accused, said that at the time of the said conversation, both the woman and his client were in different cities and it could not be stated that it was in public view.

He said that section 3(1)(s) of SC/ST Act relates to a person, who abuses any member of a SC or ST by caste name in any place "within public view".

"In this case, both persons were in different cities and the conversation took place over the phone, which can't be said to be in a public view. This was a private conversation. The apex court had already settled what 'public view' means in its earlier verdict of 2008," he said.

Mr. Vishnoi said the issue involved in the petition was that whether a private conversation on mobile phone between two individuals can come within the ambit of expression "within public view".

'Defining public place'

He said that by no stretch of imagination, a private conversation between two individuals on mobile phone can come within the ambit of expression "within public view" and that the charges framed against the petitioner need to be quashed.

The lawyer further said that the complainant has made some vague allegations regarding land sale transactions but no specific averments were made which may prima facie show that offence of cheating and intimidation were made out.

The bench, however, refused to agree with the contention and said it was only in the trial that the accused could prove if he was talking on phone in public view or not.

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More than just a counting game

Yesterday, November 19, 2017, was World Toilet Day, with the theme 'Wastewater and Faecal Sludge Management'. In India, there is greater awareness about the importance of using toilets, largely due to the high profile, flagship programme Swachh Bharat Mission launched in 2014, so much so that even Bollywood capitalised on this topic in the recent film Akshay Kumar starrer, *Toilet — Ek Prem Katha*, where a marriage is saved thanks to toilets. However, in real life, the sanitation story only begins with toilets, something clearly stated by the targets under the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. These targets are not just about 'toilets' but also suggest improvements to the entire cycle of sanitation, which certainly begins with toilets but has to end with safe waste disposal.

Four stage cycle

Sanitation is intrinsically linked to health, and unless faecal waste is treated properly and disposed of safely, it will find its way back into our bodies and make us sick either by contaminating our sources of drinking water or getting into the food chain. The full cycle of sanitation has four stages: access to toilets; safe containment; conveyance either through the sewerage network or de-sludging trucks, and treatment and disposal. The faecal waste needs to be handled safely at each of these stages in order to gain public health benefits.

As recognised in the last decade, urban India faces considerable gaps along the full cycle of sanitation. One probable reason for these deficits was the belief that sewerage and sewage treatment systems could be built in all cities. Sewerage refers to fully sealed pipes, that are underground, and must not be confused with open storm water drains that are supposed to carry only rainwater. After decades of investment, India has managed to connect only a little more than a third of its urban households, most of which are located in metropolitan cities, to sewerage systems. This is because sewerage systems and sewage treatment plants (STPs) — a preferred system in most western countries — are not only expensive but are also complicated to maintain.

An alternative to sewerage systems is something known as on-site systems. Septic tanks and pit latrines, which are prevalent in many Indian households, fall into this category. If these systems are designed, constructed and managed properly, they can be perfectly safe options. Safe containment, collection and treatment is known as septage management or faecal sludge management (FSM), and is being increasingly recognised by the Government of India as a viable option.

Multi-stage challenges

Though viable, there are several challenges for FSM across all stages.

Emerging evidence from across the country indicates that on-site systems are not constructed properly. While the designs of 'septic' tanks and leach pits have been set out in standards issued in government documents, homeowners and masons are often not aware of these. The most severe consequence of these poorly designed pits is the potential contamination of groundwater. In addition, they are not de-sludged at regular intervals. Faecal waste needs to be transported using de-sludging vehicles (and not manually) but only some States, Tamil Nadu for example, have these vehicles. Once collected, the waste needs to be treated properly to ensure that it does not land up in our lakes and rivers. There aren't enough treatment facilities to guarantee proper treatment of the sludge.

A way forward

After the National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP) in 2008, a national policy on Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) was released earlier this year. Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Odisha have released State-wide septage management guidelines and taken concrete steps to execute these policies. While de-sludging vehicles and robust informal markets exist for de-sludging services in some States, others are either procuring vehicles for their urban local bodies or encouraging private players to get into this.

Tamil Nadu has decided to utilise existing infrastructure, namely STPs, and allowed the co-treatment of faecal sludge in these facilities. It has also put in additional infrastructure called decanting stations at some pumping stations to make it easier for de-sludging vehicles to deposit their waste. Devanahalli in Bengaluru has a dedicated Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) operational since 2015. Others of varying sizes are either under construction or already running in Kochi (Kerala), Tiruchi (Tamil Nadu) and as far as Leh. Thus, there are many promising steps being taken, but much more needs to be done if we are to truly become an open-defecation free nation.

Here are some suggestions that both the government and us, citizens, can work towards.

Raising awareness about correct design and construction practices of on-site systems (new and legacy) will perhaps remain the biggest hurdle in the years to come. But, urban local bodies and State governments could start by ensuring that the larger containment systems such as community toilets and public toilets are properly constructed and managed. In addition, permission could be granted to new buildings, especially large apartment complexes only when the applicants show proper septage construction designs. The safety of sanitary workers who clean tanks and pits must be ensured by enforcing occupational safety precautions and the use of personal protective equipment as set out in the law. The last two suggestions are actions for us as citizens. As home-owners and residents, our tanks and pits must be emptied regularly, thereby preventing leaks and overflow. We must ask our governments to invest in creating treatment facilities that our cities can afford.

Let us move beyond the cute poop emojis on our smartphones and make this an acceptable discussion topic in the drawing room. Maybe the biggest victory will come when citizens realise that the focus needs to be on more than just toilets.

Kavita Wankhade works at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bangalore, and is part of the Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Support Programme (TNUSSP) in Chennai. The views expressed are personal

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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WTO: India resolute on food security

Burden of negotiation:Prospects for a permanent solution on subsidies are not that bright, says Prof. Abhijit Das of the IIFT.

At the upcoming meeting of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) highest decision-making body, India will not agree to severe restrictions on its right to give price subsidies to farmers through the Minimum Support Price (MSP) to procure grains from them for food security purposes, according to highly-placed official sources.

The WTO's Ministerial Conference is slated to take place at Buenos Aires in Argentina next month.

"Food security and protection of low-income and resource-poor farmers are top priority items for India [at the WTO meet], and we will hold our ground to protect our interests to the maximum extent possible," an official privy to the developments said. Currently, an interim mechanism called the 'Peace Clause' is in place, per which WTO members had agreed not to challenge developing nations at the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism if they breached the cap of the product-specific domestic support (which is 10% of the value of production).

Peace clause

The 'Peace Clause' is available to developing nations, including India, till a permanent solution is found to public stockholding for food security purposes. Official sources said India would fight to ensure that at least the 'Peace Clause' is made the permanent solution, and will not accept any 'terribly stringent or onerous' conditions. However, the 'Peace Clause' is learnt to be difficult to invoke even in its current form because prior to using it, the country concerned will have to first admit that it 'is breaching' or 'is about to breach' the ceiling entitlement to give product-specific domestic support.

Difficult to invoke

Also, the 'Peace Clause' can be used only for public stockholding programmes that have been in existence on the date at which it was agreed upon at the Bali Ministerial Conference in December 2013, and not for new programmes on public stockholding for food security purposes.

According to Abhijit Das, head and professor, Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, the prospects of an agreement on a permanent solution are not that bright due to three roadblocks. "First, the U.S. has not been engaging actively on the matter till recently, and if the U.S. does not give its nod, it will be difficult to arrive at a decision.

"Second, the European Union has tried to link the permanent solution with outcomes including stringent disciplines on domestic support given by developing nations," he said.

Lastly, most WTO members are of the opinion that there should be a commitment on prohibition of exports from public stockholding saying such exports would be trade-distorting.

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Businesswomen score high in south: study

Powering women: Most schemes for women entrepreneurs enable financial aid, followed by training, the report said.

The southern States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, along with West Bengal, have the highest number of women entrepreneurs in the country with a majority in small and medium-sized businesses, according to a study.

The report on the State of Women Entrepreneurship in India by sheatwork, a knowledge hub for women entrepreneurs, attributes this to the high literacy rate, along with overall women's empowerment in these States.

However, in terms of offering the maximum number of schemes for women entrepreneurs, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Rajasthan and West Bengal have emerged as the top five States in the country.

The focus of schemes for women entrepreneurs is primarily on financial aid followed by training and skill building of such entrepreneurs, it said.

The education sector sees the maximum number of women entrepreneurs followed by financial services, insurance, livestock, forestry and lodging, the report said.

'Self-financing high'

Further, almost 80% of women entrepreneurs opt to self-finance their businesses with little utilisation of various government schemes that provide financial aid to women entrepreneurs.

Incidentally, the north eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland have lesser number of women entrepreneurs though the ratio of male to female entrepreneurs strongly favours women.

"Our objective behind the report is to understand where women entrepreneurship in India stands today, how the existing ecosystem and various government schemes for women entrepreneurs can be better utilised and enhanced to encourage more women to start their own ventures," said Ruby Sinha, founder, sheatwork.com.

"With the government's overall focus on women's development, the... environment is fast becoming one in which women entrepreneurship can grow and thrive."

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Bihar asks teachers to prevent open defecation

Teachers of government schools in two districts of Bihar have been asked to make rounds of their respective wards and panchayat committee areas to stop people from defecating in the open.

The State government order issued recently for Muzaffarpur and Aurangabad districts — which are to be declared as ODF (open defecation-free) by December 31 — said that teachers should make rounds of their areas in the mornings and evenings and take pictures on their mobiles to shame the offenders. The administration has created committees with four to five teachers in each of these districts to monitor the mission's progress.

“Teachers are known for their intellect and they could convince people for ODF in a much better way. Since Swachhta Abhiyan is a national mission everybody should take part in it. If teachers are being asked to play their role in it and if it doesn't hamper their school job, I think there is nothing wrong in it,” State Education Minister Krishnanadan Prasad Verma told reporters.

But teachers in both the districts have expressed their resentment against the government's decision. “It is an insult to our teaching job,” said Ramnandan Sharma, a school teacher in Aurangabad, over phone.

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Banking the unbanked: the Indian revolution

Financial inclusion—providing universal access to financial services and encouraging their use—is an important means for promoting economic development. As of 2014, the World Bank estimated that there were still two billion adults without a bank account, and many others with only a tenuous connection to the financial system.

Better access boosts the efficiency of the payments system, promotes household savings and access to credit, and improves people's ability to manage risk. And, as it does all of these things, financial inclusion will likely reduce inequality and increase economic growth. In other words, reducing the multitudes of those that are unbanked will improve the fate of the poorest of the poor.

India's unprecedented effort to "bank the unbanked" through the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), is by far the largest such undertaking in the world. Launched in 2014, the mission to provide no-frills, no-minimum-balance (hereafter, JDY) bank accounts to every adult—including the one-fifth of the population living below the poverty line as well as those living far from a bank branch—has been remarkably successful.

As recently as 2011, only 35% of Indian adults had a bank account. As of this writing, 306 million JDY accounts have been opened, roughly 60% in rural and semi-rural areas (see graphic). And, while initial readings suggested limited use, over time, JDY account holders appear to be learning about the benefits, so that use is rising toward levels observed for bank accounts of comparable individuals. Moreover, the average deposit now appears substantial relative to poverty-level income.

Put differently, by lowering bank transactions costs, hundreds of millions of people who lacked access to financial services are revealing a latent demand.

Many previous efforts to reduce the ranks of the unbanked have been far less effective. Consequently, a great deal of work is needed to determine which characteristics of the Indian programme have been key to its success. Is it the country's unique Aadhaar ID that facilitates account opening and limits fraud? Is it the government's effort to digitize payments, including benefits transfers that can be distributed through these accounts? Is it the willingness of a largely public-sector banking system to advance a possibly unprofitable national mission? Is it the thousands of new bank agents engaged to encourage account opening and use in rural villages? Is it added benefits (such as debit cards, insurance and overdraft privileges) associated with the accounts? Is it the national scale that creates a range of favourable network effects (such as facilitating remittances across long distances)?

And what about side effects? To what extent are new accounts duplicates? Will the lack of financial literacy lead to fraud or abuse of the new account holders? Will account use wither in the absence of government transfer remittances? Does the system require continuous subsidies to survive?

Most of these questions remain only partly answered. However, recent research, benefiting in part from using actual JDY account data, documents the following encouraging facts:

—JDY accounts show increasing activity with account age, suggesting that holders are learning with experience.

—JDY accounts—both that receive government transfers and those that do not—build balances over time that are economically meaningful for poor households.

—Districts with a larger unbanked share prior to the JDY programme display both greater account creation and a greater amount deposited, as well as a larger increase in the number and amount of loans granted.

—JDY narrowed the gender gap, with women more likely to obtain accounts.

—JDY narrowed the urban-rural gap, with people dwelling in rural areas more likely to obtain accounts.

—JDY improved account access for people below the poverty line.

Collectively, these results point to sizeable gains for India's poor. To be sure, the programme's overall impact on aggregate welfare is difficult to assess. A key reason is that the costs of establishing and maintaining JDY accounts are not yet observable. But these costs can be balanced against what could very well be large benefits for the society as a whole. Among other things, shifting from cash to electronic transfers reduces the opportunity for both cash-based black-market activity, and for "leakage"—the tendency for only a part of a government benefit payment to find its way to the intended recipient.

It is of key importance for policymakers both inside and outside of India to understand the sources of the JDY programme's success. The extraordinary features of this effort—including not only no-frills accounts, but also the extensive involvement of national leadership, the provision of unique biometric IDs, and the advent of digitized government transfer payments—would seem difficult to simulate in a small randomized control trial. And it is relatively easy to see how a programme of this size and scope—with associated network effects and large economies of scale and scope—might succeed where experimental trials fail. Consequently, while it is a sample of one, the Indian experiment deserves far more study and attention from researchers, policy think tanks and international organizations.

Oddly, while discussions of financial innovation are widespread, empirical research that tests hypotheses is far more limited. We hope that India's JDY programme, with its ability to give hundreds of millions of people access to the financial system, will change that.

Stephen G. Cecchetti and Kermit I. Schoenholtz are, respectively, professors at the Brandeis International Business School and the NYU Stern School of Business.

A longer version of this note appears on www.moneyandbanking.com

Comments are welcome at theirviews@livemint.com

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Gujjars for categorisation of OBC quota

Laying siege:Gujjar agitators sit on railway tracks to block trains near Bharatpur in Rajasthan.File photo: PTI

With the Supreme Court reiterating the 50% ceiling set on reservation in jobs and education and effectively freezing the Rajasthan government's bid to provide quota to Gujjars through a Bill passed in the State Assembly, the community here has demanded categorisation of the Other Backward Class reservation.

A Cabinet subcommittee, tasked with interacting with Gujjars to find a solution to the quota issue, has found the demand difficult to fulfil and suggested that the community be recognised as “most backward” and given 1% reservation for which there is still room. The subcommittee's members are Social Justice Minister Arun Chaturvedi and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Rajendra Rathore.

A Bill passed in the Assembly on October 26 had created the “most backward” category within the OBCs for Gujjars and four other nomadic communities and given 5% reservation to them, increasing the OBC quota from 21% to 26% and taking the overall quota in the State to 54%.

“Only solution”

Gujjar Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti general secretary Shailendra Singh, who was among the Gujjar leaders who met the subcommittee members here on Wednesday, said categorisation of OBC quota was the “only solution” available with regard to the issue.

Mr. Singh said while the advanced communities within the OBC category were mostly getting the reservation benefits, the “more backward” among the OBCs were lagging behind. He suggested that the State OBC Commission take up the task of quota categorisation on the lines of the mandate of the Justice G. Rohini Commission appointed by the Centre last month to examine OBC sub-categorisation in order to achieve greater social justice.

SC leash

The Supreme Court had last week restrained the Rajasthan government from taking any action or decision on the administrative side or in any manner conferring the benefit of reservation which will have the result of crossing the total reservation beyond 50%. The State government was asked to maintain status quo till the High Court finally decides a pending case against the impugned Bill.

The High Court had also on November 9 restrained the State government from implementing the provisions of the Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointment and Posts in Services under the State) Bill, 2017, passed in the Assembly.

Earlier attempts

Gujjars and others were earlier grouped as a special backward class and the State government had tried thrice to grant 5% reservation to them. However, the legislation was struck down every time by the High Court, which ruled that the quota had not only exceeded the 50% limit, but was also not supported by the quantifiable data supporting the claim of Gujjars' backwardness.

The State government has maintained that as per the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Indra Sawhney* case, special circumstances exist in Rajasthan for giving reservation to OBCs beyond the 50% ceiling. The State OBC Commission has recommended giving quota to the communities

classified as OBCs, which comprise 52% of the State's population.

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'Safe city' plan for women in eight cities

A comprehensive 'safe city' plan for women will soon be kicked off in eight cities where a robust emergency response system and police-verified public transport will come into place, the Home Ministry said on Wednesday.

Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba reviewed the plans which will be implemented in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Lucknow and Hyderabad.

The issues which have come up for discussions include 33% reservation for women in police, installation of CCTV cameras, deployment of women in police stations, prevention of cybercrime, infrastructure issues, mapping of dark spots and crime-prone areas and involvement of educational institutions, among others.

The initiatives taken by these cities were also discussed in detail. These include 'Himmat' app, all women patrol van, 'shishtachar' programme of the Delhi police; 'Hawkeye' mobile app and 'Bharosa' programme of the Hyderabad police; 'Suraksha' app of the Bengaluru police and Power Angels of Uttar Pradesh police.

The plan of action to be submitted by these cities within a month will be assessed by the Steering Committee headed by the Union Home Secretary, which will make suitable recommendations.

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Inclusive lessons

As Indian Muslim women live in a maze of stereotypes that perpetrate socioeconomic inequalities, a vision of 'new India' cannot be successful if the questions of their inclusion and equality are unattended. Such an equality cannot be secured without addressing the fundamental conditions of social justice: education and political participation.

Proponents of inclusion often lose sight of obvious divisions between Muslim men and women and between upper-class (Ashraf) and other (Ajlaf) Muslims. By equating the needs of poorer women with privileged Muslim women, a great disservice is done to Ajlaf women. This brings into focus the issue of educational under-representation and low political participation rates among disadvantaged Muslim women, particularly those belonging to the lower castes and classes, and a way to accommodate their aspirations in a new India.

As per the 2011 Census, 48.1% of Muslim women were illiterate; only 2.07% were graduates. Deliverance from ignorance and backwardness for Muslim women lies in their educational and economic advancement. Keeping pace with modernising India, many parents now consider it important to send their daughters to mainstream schools. However, this is largely limited to privileged, Ashraf Muslims. As highlighted by the Sachar Committee Report, lack of resources, discriminatory attitudes in schools, and the declining faith in the public schooling system have left Ajlaf women excluded from the mainstream. Such issues have brought girls closer to locally available, niche schooling options like nearby madrasas that are limited to a religious curriculum.

There is an emerging trend of private Islamic schools within less privileged Muslim society. Such schools not only offer training in Islamic subjects, such as value-oriented *adab* (discipline) literature, but also follow the CBSE curriculum. Lying at the intersection of modern and religious curriculum, these hybrid schools offer new educational opportunities for many marginalised adolescent Muslim girls. My research has noted that the rise of such schools in Bihar is reflective of the growth of educational aspirations in girls who come from poorer, more religiously conservative families compared to elite Muslims. In Bihar alone, there are around 50 State-recognised girls' hybrid schools.

The entry of girls into these schools is a bold step towards mainstreaming. Research suggests that graduates from these schools are opting for higher education in central universities like Jamia Millia Islamia. Education policy must account for such community efforts. To address the curriculum gap left by hybrid schools, universities could start bridge courses for such students, such as that offered by Aligarh Muslim University, thus offering a much-needed inclusiveness.

Education is a necessary, though insufficient, condition for Muslim women to become aware of and also change their sociopolitical circumstances. For this to happen, political representation and civil society participation is a must.

There has been an appreciable decline in active civil society engagement of Muslims post-Independence. Bodies like the All India Muslim Personal Law Board or the Ulema have stepped into this void as spokespersons for Muslim women, but the efforts of feminist groups like the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan have tended to get silenced in the largely undiscerning media coverage of issues that concern Muslim women.

The representation of Muslim women has been abysmal across political institutions. The Lok Sabha has had only 13 Muslim women MPs since Independence. There has been only one Muslim woman in the Union Council of Ministers in the last 25 years. To improve this situation, policy measures should aim at setting achievable goals for Muslim women and their improved

presence in deliberative bodies like the National Commission for Women and the National Commission for Minorities. The government commissioned a study in 2007 with an aim to frame a 'National Plan of Action for Advancement of Muslim Women's Education in India'. A decade on, it is yet to see the light of the day. Further, affirmative action can be brought through parliamentary laws on the lines of the now lapsed 110th and 112th Constitution Amendment Bills, 2009, which sought to reserve half the seats in rural and urban local bodies for women.

Agenda-driven interventions by the state could be a beginning in undoing the injustices of the last seven decades for Muslim women. Equality and social justice should not be hollow promises but articles of faith in a dream of 'new India'.

Shahana Munazir is pursuing an MPhil in Social Anthropology at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Cabinet approves Expansion of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for a Pan India coverage in all the 640 districts (as per census 2011) of the Country

Cabinet approves Expansion of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for a Pan India coverage in all the 640 districts (as per census 2011) of the Country

Proposed outlay of Rs.1132.5 Crore on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao expansion approved for the duration 2017-18 to 2019-20

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for expansion of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for a Pan India reach covering all the 640 districts (as per census 2011) of the Country to have a deeper positive impact on Child Sex Ratio. Expansion under BBBP has been approved based on the successful implementation in 161 districts.

The Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister on 22nd January, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana as a comprehensive programme to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. The CSR, defined as number of girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years, declined sharply from 976 in 1961 to 918 in Census 2011. However there was no systematic response or comprehensive advocacy strategy to arrest and curb this disturbing trend. The Government recognized the challenge of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR), as a telling indicator of gender discrimination towards girl child, requiring immediate attention and action and launched BBBP scheme in 2015.

Currently the scheme is being implemented as a tri-ministerial, convergent effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development with focus on awareness and advocacy campaign, multi-sectoral action in select 161 districts, enabling girls' education and effective enforcement of Pre-Conception & Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act. The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child. At the Central level, Ministry of Women and Child Development is the nodal ministry for the programme. At the State level, Chief Secretaries heads the State Task Force (STF) with representation of Department of WCD, Health and Education to monitor the implementation of the scheme. The District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners (DCs) lead and coordinate action of all departments for implementation of BBBP at the District level.

The programme will be completing 3 years shortly and in this short duration, BBBP has been well-received and favourable trends are visible in many of the districts. The latest reports as per HMIS data of MoHFW for 161 BBBP districts indicate that for the time period between April-March, 2015-16 & 2016-17, an improving trend in Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) is visible in 104 districts, 119 districts have reported progress in first trimester registration against the reported Anti Natal Care registrations and 146 districts have reported improvement in institutional deliveries.

Looking at the encouraging results of implementation in 161 districts and magnitude/criticality of the problem and its spread across the country, it has been realized that no district can be left out of BBBP ambit if a real dent is to be made on overall CSR. Accordingly, the Cabinet has approved the expansion for Pan India Coverage with a proposed outlay of Rs. 1132.5 Crore from 2017-18 to 2019-20, to be funded 100% by the Central Government. Out of 640 districts, BBBP is currently getting implemented in 161 districts. The expansion would include Multi sectoral intervention in 244 districts in addition to existing 161 districts. 235 districts are to be covered through Alert District Media, Advocacy and Outreach, thus covering all the 640 districts of the Country.

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Union Home Secretary chairs review meeting on women safety**Union Home Secretary chairs review meeting on women safety****Centre initiates Safe-City Plans for women in Eight Metropolitan Cities**

The Union Home Secretary chaired a meeting to kick start the process of formulating comprehensive safe city plans for women in eight metropolitan cities of the country – Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Lucknow and Hyderabad. Municipal Commissioners, Police Commissioners, senior State Government officials and Civil Society representatives attended the Steering Committee meeting constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Chairmanship of Union Home Secretary which was notified on October 31, 2017.

During the meeting, the Home Secretary took a comprehensive review of the progress made and steps taken by the police and civil administration of these eight metropolitan cities regarding women's safety. Various issues reviewed included 33% reservation of women in police, installation of CCTV cameras, deployment of women in police stations, emergency response system, police verified public transport, prevention of cyber crime, infrastructure issues, mapping of dark spots & crime-prone areas and involvement of educational institutions, among others. The initiatives taken by these cities for women's safety were also discussed in detail. These initiatives include Himmat App, All Women Patrol Van, Shishtachar programme of Delhi police; SHE teams, Hawkeye Mobile App & Bharosa programme of Hyderabad police; Suraksha App of Bengaluru police and Power Angels of UP police. The steps taken by other metro cities including mobile counselling vans for hearing the grievances of women, lighting in the sub-urban railway station areas, complaint boxes in the colleges, dedicated helpline for women, awareness programmes organised by the police, setting up of shelter homes for women and making provisions for street lighting were also discussed.

During the meeting, it was brought to the notice that police representatives are taking steps in the direction of implementing the target of 33% reservation of women in police and gradually moving towards the set target. It was informed that more than one lakh women are using Himmat App, which has been made bilingual by Delhi Police. The use of social media platforms for women's safety was also emphasised during the meeting. The representatives also discussed various measures which can reduce the response time and thus ensure better results. The setting up of norms for standardisation of luminosity for CCTV cameras was also discussed by the participants.

The Home Secretary said that independent analysis and feedback system should be institutionalised to assess the perception of women on ground regarding their safety issues. Their feedback and suggestions on various issues can also be incorporated after independent survey and our approach to women's safety can thus be fine tuned. Shri Rajiv Gauba emphasised on 'targeted intervention' by the police and civil administration, which will have larger impact on women's safety. Shri Gauba emphasised on Integrated Command and Control Centres and on collaborative monitoring by police and privately installed CCTV cameras. This integration should be in a time-bound and phased manner, he stressed.

It was decided that the police and municipal corporations of these eight cities will frame a plan of action. The plan will be forwarded by the respective State Level Committee headed by the Chief Secretary of the state. The plan of action to be submitted by these cities within a month will be assessed by the Steering Committee headed by the Union Home Secretary, which will make suitable recommendations.

The representatives of Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways were also present during the meeting.

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Cabinet approves expansion of umbrella scheme "Mission For Protection And Empowerment For Women" and introducing a new scheme ' Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra'

Cabinet approves expansion of umbrella scheme "Mission For Protection And Empowerment For Women" and introducing a new scheme ' Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra'

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for expansion of the schemes of Ministry of Women and Child Development under Umbrella Scheme "Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women" for a period 2017-18 to 2019-20. CCEA has also given approval to the new scheme called 'Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra', which will empower rural women through community participation to create an environment in which they realize their full potential. Expansion under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has also been approved based on the successful implementation in 161 districts.

The financial outlay during 2017-18 to 2019-20 will be Rs.3,636.85 crore with a Central Share of approximately Rs.3,084.96 crore.

Benefits of the Scheme:

The approved sub-schemes are social sector welfare schemes especially for care, protection and development of women. It will also aim at improvement in declining Child Sex Ratio; ensuring survival. & protection of the girl child; ensuring her education, and empowering her to fulfil her potential. It will provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through training and capacity building. Student volunteers will encourage the spirit of voluntary community service and gender equality. These students will serve "agents of change" and have a lasting impact on their communities and the nation.

Major activities of the Umbrella Scheme:

The new scheme "Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra (PMMSK)" is envisaged to work at various levels. While, National level (domain based knowledge support) and State level (State Resource Centre for Women) structures will provide technical support to the respective government on issues related to women, the District and Block level Centres will provide support to PMMSK and also give a foothold to BBBP in 640 districts to be covered in a phased manner.

Community engagement through Student Volunteers is envisioned in 115 most backward districts as part of the PMMSK Block level initiatives. Student volunteers will play an instrumental role in awareness generation regarding various important government schemes/ programmes as well as social issues. More than 3 lakh student volunteers from local colleges will be engaged in this process, while association with NSS/NCC cadre students will also be an option for contributing to nation building as responsible citizens. This will provide an opportunity to Student Volunteers to participate in the development process by bringing change in their own communities and ensuring that women are not left behind and are equal partners in India's progress.

The outcome based activities of student volunteers will be monitored through web based system. On completion, certificates for community service, will be displayed on national portal for verification and can also be used as resource /asset for the participating students in future.

Expansion and intensification of efforts have also been approved for Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) through sustained nation-wide Advocacy and Media Campaign in 640 districts and focused multi-sectoral action in selected 405 districts. All low CSR districts shall be taken up in the first year itself under BBBP. To provide support to working women 190 more Working Women Hostels to accommodate approximately 19,000 additional working women will be set up. Additional Swadhar Grehs have been approved to provide relief and rehabilitation of approximately 26,000 beneficiaries.

To provide comprehensive support to women affected by violence, One Stop Centres (OSCs) will be established in 150 additional districts during the period. These one stop Centres will be linked with women helpline and will provide 24 hour emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence both in public and private space across the country. A unique initiative involving engagement of Manila Police Volunteers (MPVs) on a voluntary basis in States/UTs will also be done to create public-police interface, which will be expanded to 65 districts covering all States /UTs.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Scheme:

One common Task Force shall be created at National, State and district level for planning, reviewing and monitoring all the sub-schemes in this Umbrella, with the objective of ensuring convergence of action and cost efficiency. Every scheme shall have a set of clear, focussed target set forth in the guidelines, aligned with SDGs. Mechanism

for monitoring of outcome based indicators for all the sub-schemes as suggested by NITI Aayog will be put in place. The schemes will be implemented through the States/UTs and Implementing Agencies. All the sub-schemes have inbuilt monitoring structure at the Central Level, State, District and Block level.

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The hungry nation

India's international financial rating was recently upgraded by Moody's — a decision which recognises the reforms and structural changes initiated by the present government. A recent survey of the Pew Research Center refers to the immense popularity of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) within the country — clearly indicating the high expectations citizens have of him. Both pieces of news have been rightly welcomed in the country.

However, the nation can't pick and choose. It can't say that all favourable reports are true, but deny the existence of unfavourable reports or claim that those are inimical to India. For instance, the Pew Research Center, some time back, had concluded that Indian school standards are among the worst in the world. Recently, the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) released the 2017 Global Hunger Index (GHI), in which India ranks 100 among the 119 countries studied. The country's rank, in fact, had fallen by three places compared to 2016. Though these significant bits of information were not discussed much in the media, some sections close to the authorities ridiculed the Hunger Index, referring to it as a "half-truth" and questioned the credentials of IFPRI. A few others said the index really measured levels of malnutrition, stunting etc, and not "hunger", clearly missing the essential point of the survey. In the 2017 Hunger Index, India falls behind war-ravaged Iraq, and the international "outcast", North Korea. Only two countries in Asia — Afghanistan and Pakistan — are below India in the ranking. India is now ahead of only countries such as Sierra Leone, Madagascar, Chad and Yemen, all "one-party" democracies otherwise seen as dictatorships.

In recent months, a number of international and Indian studies have corroborated the GHI report. A World Bank report referred to the illiteracy rates in India; Thomas Piketty wrote about the top 0.1 per cent of India's population having the same share of growth in income as the bottom 50 per cent; ASER has consistently referred to abysmal primary and secondary schooling standards; repeated studies on nutrition, and child mortality in India establish the critical situation in this regard. Clearly, there is no shortage of reminders of the terrible condition of the "common man". It is no coincidence that the countries at the top of every economic and social index in the world are closely identified with high-quality education, public health and nutrition. The nation should stop fooling itself. The delusion that India is an aspirant to be a "world power" is like a donkey dressing itself up, imagining that it is a race-horse.

The current precarious social and human conditions were not created in a day — these are the wages of a corrupt political system, where the spoils were appropriated by a select few who ran the country during the past five decades, pursuing disastrous policies, deliberately with poor implementation to suit the needs of the ruling classes. Major changes relating to human affairs, including in education, infrastructure, public health cannot take place in days or weeks, or even years. As it is now, no one in the country will miss the ministries of education, public health, environment, childcare and agriculture at the Centre or the states if they are abolished. Surely, it is early to blame the current government for the disastrous situation the country finds in, but the current inaction will force them to own up the situation in a couple of years.

Major economic policies have been ushered in in the recent past. Demonetisation symbolises the formal recognition of black money — no country can afford to have a parallel economy eating its vitals. The GST, with all its teething problems, can transform the economy within five years. The Digital India programme, despite its current tardy implementation, can turn the administration efficient. These are valuable and significant steps, and have withstood concerted opposition from vested interests. However, major reforms in the social sector are yet to be ushered in. As and when it happens, trust entrenched interests to attack them.

There is inadequate recognition that the common man's needs have to be the priority of a democratic government. Even a superpower will not remain stable if the bottom 25 per cent of its population lives in penury. There is not enough recognition of the power of the informal sector, currently numbering six crore, as a change agent, and the critical importance of making resources available to them at non-usurious rates. There is no awareness that primary and secondary education can be a major change agent in 10 years, if there is genuine reform. In short, with the technology available today, the country can be transformed in ten years — but this can't be done just by speeches, and with good intentions alone.

It is the social sectors — education, public health, nutrition etc — which need the direct attention of the highest manager of the country. Policies concerning these sectors need to be reformed and necessary resources have to be provisioned to usher in change.

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Transforming 115 backward districts across the country**Transforming 115 backward districts across the country****First Meeting of Prabhari Officers on 24th November**

In keeping with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a New India by 2022, Government has embarked upon a major policy initiative for the rapid transformation of 115 backward districts across the country. Senior Government officials in the rank of the rank of Additional Secretary and Joint Secretary have been designated as Prabhari Officers or the in-charge to coordinate the efforts of the Centre and the states in addressing the specific developmental needs of the districts.

The First meeting of the Prabhari Officers entrusted with the responsibility to co-ordinate the efforts of the Centre and the States towards rapid transformation of 115 backward districts across the country will be held tomorrow on Friday, the 24th November. Cabinet Secretary, PKSinha will chair the meeting with the CEO of the NITI Aayog, Amitabh Kant. Secretaries of key Ministries would also attend this session. Home Secretary will also brief the Prabhari Officers. Among the 115 backward districts, 35 are affected by Left Wing Violence. Shortly after this event, meeting of representatives of the State Governments and Prabhari officers is being organised to ensure that transformation of backward district in India is carried out by a dedicated team of Central and State governments.

Background:

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given a Vision for a new and vibrant India by 2022, the year when India celebrates its 75th year of Independence. Inclusive development and improving the liveability of all are integral part of this vision. One of the initiatives in this regard is to make a dramatic improvement in overall socio-economic development of backward districts. The strategy envisaged is to adopt a focussed approach, ensure convergence of efforts of the Central, State and local Government and establish a real time monitoring mechanism to focus on outcomes that matter to common people in these districts beside giving rise to a virtuous cycle of economic development.

A total of 115 districts have been identified for this purpose on the basis of objective criteria. Such criteria include education, health, nutrition basic infrastructure like rural road connectivity, rural household electrification, access to potable water and individual

toilets etc. These districts include 35 districts which are affected by violence by Left Wing Extremists. Besides, while selecting these districts, it has been ensured that Ministries of Government of India, implementing social sector Scheme would select at least one most backward districts in every State for extending the reach of the programme in different part of the country. Improvement in one district is likely to spur similar growth in neighbouring districts through demonstration effect.

Under this initiative, for all these 115 districts, senior level Government officers (Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary) have been nominated as Prabhari officers. It has been envisaged that using their experience, these officers would form a team with representatives of the State Governments and would also act as a bridge between Centre and the State. States have been accordingly requested to nominate senior level functionary for each district. States are the main drivers of this program.

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PM reviews steps taken to reduce under-nutrition**PM reviews steps taken to reduce under-nutrition**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on Friday reviewed the progress and efforts being made to prevent and reduce under-nutrition and related problems in India. The high level review meeting was attended by officials from PMO, NITI Aayog and other Ministries.

The current status of malnutrition, stunting and related problems was reviewed. Successful nutrition initiatives in some other developing countries came up for discussion.

The Prime Minister stressed on the need to work towards concrete objectives to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, low birth weight, and anaemia. He emphasized that visible and measurable results should be seen by 2022, the 75th anniversary of independence.

Towards this end, real-time monitoring towards progress of nutrition outcomes was discussed, especially in the worst performing districts.

Senior officials repeatedly emphasized that initiatives of the Union Government such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Mission Indradhanush, Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao, and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana etc, are having a positive impact on nutrition. In this context, the Prime Minister called for convergence among all schemes of Union and State Governments, which directly or indirectly have an impact on nutrition outcomes.

He said raising social awareness towards the importance of nutrition is necessary, to achieve the desired results. He stressed on the importance of using informal channels to generate this awareness.

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The bane of growing India?

In 2017, India ranked 100 out of 119 countries on the Global Hunger Index, performing worse than Myanmar, Bangladesh and Iraq. Among adults, malnutrition directly impacts adult productivity and hampers the cognitive development of children. Simply put, it is only natural that an individual who is unwell and undernourished is unable to function at her peak physical or mental capacities.

As a member of the Citizens Alliance against Malnutrition, I, along with a number of Members of Parliament cutting across party lines, have advocated solutions to help alleviate malnutrition, for over a decade. Various initiatives have been taken up by government and non-governmental organisations towards this effort. For instance, recently, rice fortified with iron has been introduced in the mid-day meal scheme in Gajapati, Odisha, to reduce anaemia among primary school students — from 73% to 5%. Although innovations such as rice fortification should be encouraged, they must be reinforced with proper monitoring and implementation. As we have seen in a study in another State, leakages from the government's Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, which provides food, pre-school education, and primary health care to mothers and children, have not only been costly but also compromised the effectiveness of the government scheme. To curb leakages, information and communications technology solutions that track last mile delivery to cover both top-down and bottom-up channels of information are essential for the timely delivery of services to beneficiaries.

Malnutrition is often a symptom of underlying problems such as poor maternal health which may lead to low weight at birth, stunting and susceptibility to diseases in childhood. Based on the fourth National Family Health Survey (NFHS) (2015-16), 38% children below 5 years are stunted and 58.4% are anaemic. Not surprisingly, we also found that 54% women between 15 and 49 years to be anaemic while 22.9% have a low maternal body mass index.

Returns are high

The economic returns to investing in health and nutrition can be very high. Introducing specific interventions to tackle malnutrition among children born in 2015 in India can lead to 20% reduction in stunting and a consequent increase in incomes by 11%. This is an incredibly high return on investment. The government can strengthen existing schemes and programmes such as the ICDS and the Public Distribution System (PDS) to make available diverse, nutritious and micro-nutrient fortified foods. Another option the government can explore is cash transfers supplemented with counselling to ensure behavioural change among people and to generate demand for such diverse dietary choices.

In Odisha, the State government has been implementing nutrition-specific interventions through the years; the number of Anganwadi centres in the State has been doubled, and self-help groups (SHG) developed under 'Mission Shakti', a women's empowerment initiative. These SHGs have also helped strengthen programmes such as ICDS. Between 2005-6 and 2011, stunting rates improved among vulnerable sections. Establishing nutrition rehabilitation centres, identifying children suffering from severely-acute malnutrition, and fixing a day for monitoring such children through Pustikar Divas were among other action steps that have been recognised and adopted.

These interventions have worked well; mobilising communities and SHGs can initiate change across the country. As a member of the Lok Sabha, I am working to improve the health status of the people in my constituency through the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, which aims to equip people with quality access to basic amenities and opportunities to help them shape their own destiny. Improving the health and nutrition status of people is fundamental to achieving this objective. A well-implemented mass media communication campaign, involving trained health

workers, will have a strong impact. In Madhya Pradesh, there is a nutrition project which aims to reduce severe malnutrition among by creating community awareness around these issues. It aims to strengthen governance, accountability and mutual responsibility of service providers and communities to foster the programme's success. Providing people quality health care and living conditions will empower them and complement their personal goals and development. No citizen deserves less than a shot at a healthy, prolonged and quality life in a prosperous economy. Moreover, no nation can achieve its true potential without it.

Baijayant 'Jay' Panda is a BJD Lok Sabha MP. The views expressed are personal

World Diabetes Day highlights the implications of neglecting women's health

The Cardiff University professor, who reported on the enzyme called New Delhi metallo beta lactamase, says China and Pakistan are more serious about anti-microbial resistance genes than India.

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WHO releases guidelines on responding to child sex abuse

Doctors in the country feel there is more than just guidelines required to tackle the issue. | Photo Credit: [NAGARA GOPAL](#)

In a first, the World Health Organisation has formulated clinical guidelines on responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused. The guidelines put forward recommendations for the frontline health care providers — general practitioners, gynaecologists, paediatricians, nurses and others — who may directly receive a victim of sexual abuse or may identify sexual abuse during the course of diagnosis and treatment.

While Indian doctors have welcomed the new guidelines, they feel that there is more than just guidelines required in the country.

“We welcome the WHO guidelines. These should be followed with ground training of all first line respondents,” said Dr. Samir Dalwai, president of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), Mumbai chapter.

However, Dr. Dalwai says guidelines and training is not the end of the issue. “The victims and their families face the worse in terms of investigation and its outcome. It is not adequate to pass on the burden on the healthcare sector. The government needs to adopt a policy that will streamline all the other aspects as well,” he said, adding that in 2010, the IAP released similar guidelines on ‘recommendations on recognition and response to child abuse and neglect in the Indian setting.

Disclosure by child

Like the IAP guidelines, the new WHO guidelines too focus on the recommendations and good practice suggestions in terms of disclosure made by the child, obtaining medical history, conducting physical examinations and forensic investigations, documenting findings, offering preventive treatment for HIV post exposure, pregnancy prevention, and other sexually transmitted diseases, psychological and mental health interventions among others.

The guidelines highlight that child sexual abuse has a short-term as well as long-term mental health impact like lifetime diagnosis of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, externalising symptoms, eating disorders, problems with relationships, sleep disorders and suicidal and self-harm ideation and behaviours. Health consequences of the abuse include the risk of pregnancy, gynaecological disorders such as chronic non-cyclical pelvic pain, menstrual irregularities, painful periods, genital infections and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Re-traumatisation

Forensic expert Dr. Shailesh Mohite, who heads the Multi-disciplinary Child Protection Centre (MCPC) in Nair Hospital, Mumbai Central, says the presence of guidelines and following them is extremely essential.

“One of the most commonly seen mistakes in handling child sexual abuse cases is re-traumatising the child as well as his parents with questions. Such mistakes can be avoided if those dealing with such cases are well trained,” Dr. Mohite said, adding that the staff at his centre undergoes regular trainings.

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Childhood foregone

Two years after governments set a 2025 target to end child labour, delegates from 100 nations at a recent conference in Buenos Aires were told that they will miss the deadline. The implication is also that realising the objective could take well over 20 years after the expiry of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that eight years from now, around 121 million boys and girls would still be engaged in various occupations. The present figure is around 152 million children aged 5-17. That is to say, only 31 million children are expected to be rescued between now and 2025 from conditions that deprive them for life of the fundamental ingredients of basic survival.

Should countries resolve to reinvigorate their efforts to reach the target, they would be looking at a reduction each year of 19 million. That is close to five times the prevalent pace of decline. That would be a stupendous record of eradicating a practice inconsistent with modern democratic norms.

That goal seems elusive at the moment on a number of indicators. Overall, there was a slowdown in the reduction of child labour, just one percentage point, during the four years until 2016. In contrast was the fall of three percentage points in the corresponding period up to 2012. More worrisome is that there was almost no progress with respect to the rescue of children under 12 years in the four years since 2012. Equally, the decline in child labour among girls was only half the proportion of that of boys during this period.

The ILO points to four systemic failures that underpin the lack of progress. Foremost is the absence of national legislation to give effect to global conventions on the employment of children in hazardous industries, as well as on the minimum age of work. The fact that the two instruments have received the largest number of ratifications brings into sharp focus the lack of harmony between global commitments and domestic priorities. Relevant here is the research on the incoherency between laws that prescribe a minimum age for employment and those for completion of compulsory school education. It also means that the expansion of quality universal basic education has to extend beyond the fulfilment of statutory provisions.

Complementing the legal inconsistencies is the lack of effective labour inspections in the informal economy. Around 71% of working children are concentrated in the agriculture sector, with 69% of them undertaking unpaid work in family units. A strong legal framework that mandates punitive action against errant firms and recruitment of youth and adults are important tools to guarantee the protection of children. Above all, it is inconceivable that these policies could be entrenched in the absence of strong collective bargaining mechanisms and effective social protection policies from the cradle to the end of their lives.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Empowering women through job creation

According to the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap Report 2017", India's ranking has fallen by 21 places from last year. Not only are we currently far below the global average but also behind our neighbours China and Bangladesh. One of the areas where we have fared poorly is in wages and participation of women in the economy where our rank is an abysmal 139. This is not the first report to highlight the plight of our women. In fact, as per the World Bank report, we have one of the lowest workforce female participation rates, ranking 120th among 131.

Even in terms of contribution to gross domestic product (GDP), women are currently under-represented. At 17%, India has a lower share of women's contribution to GDP than the global average of 37%. What is even more alarming is that the participation levels have been dropping in the last few years. The National Sample Survey found that while in 1999-2000, 25.9% of all women worked; by 2011-12 this proportion had dropped to 21.9%.

A possible and optimistic explanation could be that with rising household income, women now have the opportunity to choose leisure over work, especially in agricultural sectors and on construction sites, and focus on their families. However, research has shown that when women have access to more work opportunities, they gladly take them.

The India Human Development Survey highlighted that the provision of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) brought more rural women into wage labour. Among MGNREGA workers in 2011-12, a whopping 45% were not in wage labour before the scheme was initiated, which means that women do seek opportunities to earn a stable wage.

According to an International Labour Organization study, the participation of women in informal employment and non-standard forms of employment (for eg. part-time jobs or jobs in the informal sector) is higher than men. Jobs for Indian women, especially rural women, remain primarily in the agriculture sector. The share of women in services and industry is less than 20%.

Another point to note is that in India, nearly 100% of net job creation in the last two decades has happened in the informal sector in small and low-productivity enterprises. While pretty much every employee in the informal sector will have fewer skilling opportunities and lack of job security, the average Indian woman worker is at a dual disadvantage. Not only is she less likely to find stable job opportunities within the informal sectors but she will also have to deal with poor quality and even unsafe working conditions, low wages and denial of statutory benefits like social security. She will also have to cope with higher risks of discrimination as compared to her male colleagues. Her wages will not only be below the statutory minimum wage but will be much less than her male counterparts' and benefits like maternity leave or related facilities, which are meant to keep women in the workforce, will not be accessible to her in the informal sector.

The lack of safe working conditions, social security benefits, and a fair wage that can only be paid by formal sector employers with high productivity and output ratios, induces women to opt out of employment—unless critical for their basic sustenance—as the incremental economic and societal benefit for them to remain a part of the workforce is very suboptimal in most cases.

To take their rightful place within Indian workforce and society at large, our women need lot more formal sector employment opportunities with better wages. And this cannot happen till formal sector employment grows in its own right.

The existing complex and conflicting regulatory cholesterol and inconsistent legislation are

currently impeding formal job creation. The last three years may have set the regulatory reform agenda in motion, but to accelerate the formal job creation, we will need to see a far more concerted effort. Raising the labour force participation in formal sector requires a total revamp of the regulatory ecosystem.

Large-scale job creation in the formal sector will need sustained reforms in labour laws and skilling ecosystems. It is estimated that India can potentially boost its GDP by \$700 billion in 2025, translating to 1.4% per year of incremental GDP growth, by raising female labour-force participation rate by just 10 percentage points, from 31% to 41%. However, this requires us to bring in 68 million more women into the workforce.

Creating non-farm jobs to absorb this work force over the next decade will no doubt require a change in thought process about the role of women in society and the economy. Huge investments will be needed in upskilling and educating women and the girl child, financial inclusion of women, encouraging women entrepreneurs, strengthening legal provisions for safety and security of women. But more than anything else it will require creating an abundance of new jobs within the formal sector and lowering barriers to job creation.

Increased availability of stable-wage jobs for women is critical to preventing their socio-economic exploitation, improving their quality of life, enhancing a woman's control over household decision-making and enabling her to lead a life of dignity.

Formalization of India's job market is one the biggest gifts our policy makers can possibly give to the Indian woman.

Sonal Arora is the vice-president of TeamLease Services.

Comments are welcome at theirview@livemint.com

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India: a middle-class nation?

The British Labour Party politician John Prescott, who later became deputy prime minister to Tony Blair, had famously claimed during the campaign that preceded the 1997 election in his country: “We are all middle class now.” He was promoting the idea that the old social boundaries had blurred in the age of mass affluence. The type of work a British citizen did was no longer a predictor of his income or social status or voting preferences.

Is something similar happening in India? And that too at a much lower level of average income? Are the old social fissures healing with the balm of shared economic aspirations? The answers to these questions can have profound consequences for Indian politics—and the overall trajectory of the nation state.

Two very insightful academic studies on the Indian middle class were highlighted in a recent article by Soutik Biswas of the BBC. Economists Sandhya Krishnan and Neeraj Hatekar of the Mumbai School of Economics and Public Policy have concluded from their analysis of incomes that there are 600 million people in the Indian middle class. They have defined the middle class as anybody living on between \$2-10 a day, in terms of 1993 purchasing power parity dollars. The two Mumbai economists have used an objective measure to gauge the extent of the middle class, and their estimates are at the higher end of a bunch of similar estimates that analysts have made over the years.

The other study is by political scientists Devesh Kapur, Neelanjan Sircar and Milan Vaishnav, and their estimates are based on subjective considerations. Respondents in a large sample survey conducted in 2014 were asked whether they considered themselves to be middle class. Almost half the respondents said they did. The answers to the later questions are especially revealing. A large proportion of those who identify themselves as middle-class citizens believe that their children will have better lives than they did, that the social status of their family has improved in a generation and that India is prospering.

The potent mixture of economic optimism plus social aspiration that Kapur, Sircar and Vaishnav write about is the very foundation of the political platform that Narendra Modi crafted in 2014. Hatekar said in his interview to the BBC that the new middle class includes people in informal-sector work such as construction as well as from the disadvantaged castes that have traditionally been denied opportunities for upward mobility. These are good signs for Indian democracy.

However, there are certain harsh realities that need to be taken into account as well.

First, the relatively low-income threshold to measure the size of the Indian middle class means that there are millions who can be pushed back into poverty in the face of an income shock, especially since India does not have a social safety net.

Second, it is risky to underestimate the persistence of social divisions in a country with historical caste issues on the one hand and rising income inequality on the other.

Third, international experience shows that the middle class can suddenly veer towards either single-issue parties that have a contempt for the transactions of normal politics or the sort of maverick strongmen that are gaining popularity in Europe right now.

The combination of economic advancement, social mobility and rapid urbanization is bringing a new fluidity to Indian politics, as people loosen the tethers of caste, income and location. The Bharatiya Janata Party has done well to grab this narrative. But it is also important to remember

that such broad political coalitions can be more fragile than most people believe, especially when inequality increases while economic growth slumps. Europe is a living testimony to this.

So let us go back to Britain. The New Labour dream of a classless Britain has come apart in the past decade, as voters have swerved towards the Brexit gang on one side or the quasi-Leninism of Jeremy Corbyn on the other. The same can be seen in many other European countries. The lesson for India is that rapid economic growth that is also inclusive (in terms of job creation rather than handouts) is needed to meet growing aspirations as well as blunt the edge of the historical social divisions that are still very much around.

Will rapid and inclusive growth help reduce social friction in India? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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