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Index

The Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023	2
The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023	4
The dangers in the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill	5
Historic Partnership: ISLRTC and NIOS Join Forces to Revolutionize Deaf Education with Indian Sign Language on 3rd Year of NEP 2020 Celebrations	8
Linear regression: The Hindu Editorial on the government's response to data on its policies	12
Rajya Sabha passes Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 in Parliament	14
Implementation of Time of Day Electricity Tariff System	25
Implementation of Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY)	27
Status of implementation and coverage of SAUBHAGYA in the country	75
Explained	98
Should the age of consent for sex be revised?	100
Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah replied to the discussion on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in the Lok Sabha today, the Bill passed by the house	104
National Health Authority (NHA) extends its incentive scheme under Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) to encourage digital health adoption by hospitals, labs, pharmacies and health tech companies	108
Organ shortage continues to cost lives	111
In TB detection, smear microscopy's share still holds sway	114
The bureaucracy as prosecutor and judge	117
The Anusandhan National Research Foundation Bill, 2023	120
The Pharmacy (Amendment) Bill, 2023	121
Future is Bright, Future is DIR-V for India: MoS Rajeev Chandrasekhar	122
Neither the right to privacy nor the right to information	127
Purging the nation's data of politics	130
Technical Mission from Ministry of Digital Transformation, Trinidad & Tobago visits MeitY, Gol at Electronics Niketan, New Delhi	133
Trial done in India shows nutrition support prevents TB, related deaths	138
Tribals in Andhra Pradesh's non-ST villages feel left out	140
Climate events and an umbrella for urban health	143
Falling short: The Hindu Editorial on the Digital Data Protection Bill, 2023	146
National Dental Commission Bill, 2023 Passed by the Parliament to Elevate Dental Education and Healthcare Standards	148
Parliament Passes National Nursing and Midwifery Commission (NNMC) Bill, 2023 for Comprehensive Reforms in Nursing Sector	151
In Bengal, a crisis in higher education	154
Parliament passes the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 with the Rajya Sabha adopting the Bill by a voice vote	156
Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023 clear by both Houses of Parliament of	

THE OFFSHORE AREAS MINERAL (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2023

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

- The Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 27, 2023. The Bill amends the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002. The Act regulates mining in maritime zones of India. The Act categorises offshore mining-related activities into: (i) reconnaissance, which involves a preliminary survey to locate mineral resources, (ii) exploration, which includes exploring, proving, or locating mineral deposits, and (iii) production, the commercial activity of the extraction of minerals.
- **Composite licence:** The Act provides for the following types of concessions: (i) a reconnaissance permit for reconnaissance, (ii) an exploration licence for exploration, and (iii) a production lease for undertaking mining. The Bill introduces a composite licence for granting rights for exploration as well as production. Under the composite license, the licensee will be required to complete exploration within three years. This may be extended by two years upon application by the licensee. If mineral resources have been established, the licensee will be granted one or more production leases for the explored area.
- The maximum area for undertaking exploration under a single composite license will be 30 minutes latitude by 30 minutes longitude. The maximum area for undertaking production under a single composite license will be 15 minutes latitude by 15 minutes longitude.
- **Validity of concessions:** Under the Act, a production lease is granted for a period of up to 30 years. It may be further renewed for up to 20 years. The Bill instead provides that a production lease, as well as a production lease under a composite licence, will be valid for 50 years.
- **Auction mandatory for certain concessions:** The Act provides for the grant of concessions through administrative allocation. The Bill mandates competitive bidding for a production lease and a composite license to private entities. Applications for production leases before the date on which provisions of the Bill come into effect, will be void. An exploration licence granted before the date on which provisions of the Bill come into effect, will be ineligible to acquire a production lease on the explored area.
- **Mining in reserved areas:** The Act allows the government to reserve offshore areas that are not held under any operating right. The Bill allows the administering authority to grant a composite licence or production lease to the government or a government company. Joint ventures of government companies will also be eligible, subject to certain conditions. These are: (i) the partner must be selected through a competitive process, and (ii) the government company owns at least 74% of the paid-up share capital.
- **Mining of atomic minerals:** The Bill adds that in case of atomic minerals, exploration, production, and composite licenses will be granted only to the government or government companies. Atomic minerals are defined in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957. These include: (i) rare earth minerals containing uranium or thorium, (ii) pitchblende and uranium ores, and (iii) uriferous

allanite, monazite, and other thorium minerals.

- **Standard area of blocks:** Under the Act, the size of one block for offshore mining is five minutes latitude by five minutes longitude. The Bill reduces this to one minute latitude by one minute longitude. The Bill also limits the maximum area one entity can acquire under all concessions to 45 minutes latitude by 45 minutes longitude.
- **Offshore Areas Mineral Trust:** The Bill sets up the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust. Concession holders will be required to pay an amount to the Trust in addition to any royalty. The funds will be used for specified purposes including: (i) exploration in offshore areas, (ii) research and studies about the mitigation of adverse effects of offshore mining on the ecology, and (iii) relief upon the occurrence of a disaster.
- **Increase in fine:** The Bill increases fines for various offences. For instance, under the Act, conducting any activity without a permit or licence is punishable with imprisonment of up to five years, a fine of up to Rs 50,000, or both. As per the Bill, the fine for this offence will be between five lakh rupees and Rs 10 lakh.

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THE CONSTITUTION (SCHEDULED CASTES) ORDER (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

- The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023, was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 24, 2023. The Bill amends the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950, with respect to its application to Chhattisgarh. The Order lists the castes and tribes deemed to be Scheduled Castes in states and union territories.
- **Scheduled Castes in Chhattisgarh: The Bill includes Mahara and Mahra communities as synonyms of the Mehra, Mahar, and Mehar communities in Chhattisgarh.**

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THE DANGERS IN THE DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BILL

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'Given that the government is the biggest data repository, an effective data protection law must not give wide discretionary powers to the government' | Photo Credit: ANI

The government is set to introduce the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill in Parliament. The final draft is shrouded in secrecy. Last week, Opposition members walked out of a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee and submitted dissent notes, objecting to the adoption of a report on the DPDP Bill — they claimed that the Bill was neither shown to the members nor formally referred to the committee.

In November 2022, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) publicly circulated a draft of the Bill for consultation. It was fraught with problems. While campaigns and concerned citizens shared their suggestions, MeitY focused primarily on consulting industry and big tech companies on a law that will have vast ramifications for the information regime in India, and will impact every citizen of the country.

It is imperative that the data protection law does not suffer from the infirmities that the previous draft had and safeguards peoples' fundamental rights, i.e., both the right to information and the right to privacy.

The Data Protection Bill of 2022 includes a provision to amend the Right to Information (RTI) Act, which has empowered millions of Indian citizens since its enactment in 2005. To effectively hold their governments accountable in a democracy, people need access to information, including various categories of personal data. For example, the Supreme Court of India has held that citizens have a right to know the names of wilful defaulters and details of the Non Performing Assets (NPAs) of public sector banks. Democracies routinely ensure public disclosure of voters' lists with names, addresses and other personal data to enable public scrutiny and prevent electoral fraud.

Experience of the use of the RTI Act in India has shown that if people, especially the poor and marginalised, are to have any hope of obtaining the benefits of government schemes and welfare programmes, they must have access to relevant, granular information. For instance, the Public Distribution System (PDS) Control Order recognises the need for putting out the details of ration card holders and records of ration shops in the public domain to enable public scrutiny

and social audits of the PDS.

The RTI Act includes a provision to harmonise peoples' right to information with their right to privacy through an exemption clause under Section 8(1)(j). Personal information is exempt from disclosure if it has no relationship to any public activity; or has no relationship to any public interest; or if information sought is such that it would cause unwarranted invasion of privacy and the information officer is satisfied that there is no larger public interest that justifies disclosure.

The enactment of a data protection law, therefore, does not require any amendment to the existing RTI law — this is also noted by the Justice A.P. Shah Report on Privacy. The DPDP Bill 2022, however, proposes amendments to Section 8(1)(j) to expand its purview and exempt all personal information from disclosure. This threatens the very foundations of the transparency and accountability regime in the country.

A primary objective of any data protection law is to curtail the misuse of personal data, including for financial fraud. Given that the government is the biggest data repository, an effective data protection law must not give wide discretionary powers to the government. The DPDP Bill, 2022, unfortunately, empowers the executive to draft rules and notifications on a vast range of issues. For instance, the central government can exempt any government or even private sector entity from the application of provisions of the law by merely issuing a notification. This would potentially allow the government to arbitrarily exempt its cronies and government bodies such as the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), resulting in immense violations of citizens' privacy. On the other hand, small non-governmental organisations, research organisations, associations of persons and Opposition parties, that the government chooses not to include in the notification, would have to set up systems to comply with the stringent obligations of a data fiduciary.

Further, to meet its objective of protecting personal data, it is critical that the oversight body set up under the legislation be adequately independent to act on violations of the law by government entities. The draft Bill does not even make a pretence of ensuring autonomy of the Data Protection Board — the institution responsible for enforcement of provisions of the law. The central government is empowered to determine the strength and composition of the board, as well as the process of selection and removal of its chairperson and other members. The chief executive responsible for managing the board is to be appointed by the government, giving it direct control over the institution.

The creation of a totally government-controlled Data Protection Board, empowered to impose fines upto 500 crore, is bound to raise serious apprehensions of it becoming another caged parrot — open to misuse by the executive to target the political opposition and those critical of its policies.

These concerns need to be urgently addressed before the DPDP Bill is enacted. Unfortunately, given the manner in which Bills are being passed in the Parliament, without any debate or discussion, the citizens of the country might end up with a law that empowers the central government while taking away peoples' democratic right to seek information and use it to hold the powerful to account.

Anjali Bhardwaj is associated with the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information (NCPRI) and the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS). Amrita Johri is associated with the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information (NCPRI) and the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS)

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HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP: ISLRTC AND NIOS JOIN FORCES TO REVOLUTIONIZE DEAF EDUCATION WITH INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE ON 3RD YEAR OF NEP 2020 CELEBRATIONS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Education and related issues

ISLRTC sign MOU with NIOS to share expertise and resources, as well as co-develop quality learning resources in Indian Sign Language on 29th July 2023 on the occasion of 3rd year of NEP 2020 celebrations and 2nd Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sangam at ITPO, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

In view of the directions of the Sh. Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary, DEPwD and Prof. Saroj Sharma, Chairperson, NIOS, ISLRTC and NIOS has planned to work together in many areas such as designing and developing a process of review of learning content in Indian sign language, developing a smooth process for examination and evaluation of deaf and hard of hearing, share expertise and resources of the ISLRTC for Standardization process of Indian Sign Language in selected areas etc.



NIOS introduced ISL as a language subject at the secondary level in 2021 and ISLRTC has been contributed to their examination and evaluation of children with hearing impairment. NIOS is working on introducing ISL as a language subject at Senior secondary level also and faculty of ISLRTC is contributing in reviewing and writing the content for the same.

Further NIOS wanted to collaborate with ISLRTC for sharing expertise and resources in ISL content development, especially in STEM subjects, and also for the purpose of training, promotion, evaluation and standardization process of ISL.



In view of the direction of Sh. Rajesh Yadav Joint Secretary DEPwD and Chairperson Executive Council of ISLRTC and to finalise the MOU, a meeting has been conducted by Sh. Mrityunjay Jha Director ISLRTC and Deputy Secretary DEPwD with officials of NIOS regarding the potential area of collaboration between ISLRTC and NIOS on 18.07.2023 and finalised the MOU. Points related to reviewing the content in ISL and examination methodology have been discussed in the meeting.

In the presence of the Minister of State (education) Smt. Annapurna Devi, Dr. Subhas Sarkar and, Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh MOU has been signed by ISLRTC and NIOS on 29.07.2023 at ITPO, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

MG/PD

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LINEAR REGRESSION: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO DATA ON ITS POLICIES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

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Even as the Union government suggests that there were prima facie reasons for the [suspension of the Director of the International Institute for Population Sciences \(IIPS\), K.S. James](#) — the IIPS prepares the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and reports to the Health Ministry — it is difficult not to spot vindictive motives. In recent years, the government has taken a hostile approach towards the release of any data, even by its own agencies, that reveal inconvenient truths about its policies and their outcomes, rather than using them as feedback. The NFHS-5 (2019-21), for example, debunked the government's claim in 2019 that all villages were open defecation free (ODF); it showed that 19% of surveyed households did not use any toilet facility. Other surveys, i.e., the National Statistical Office survey from October 2018, the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey of 2019-20 and the Multiple Indicator Survey released earlier this year, also indicated that many villages were not ODF. The NFHS-5 also showed a rise in anaemia and that 57% of the surveyed rural households lacked access to LPG or natural gas, calling into question the impact of the Ujjwala Yojana.

What transpired in the recent past with other statistical findings is also revealing. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had junked its consumer expenditure survey (CES) of 2017-18 ostensibly due to data quality concerns even as important indices related to inflation and poverty continue to be pegged to the CES of 2011-12. The NSSO's Periodic Labour Force Survey, which was cleared by the National Statistical Commission (NSC) in 2018, was held back for showing a sharp increase in unemployment, but was released only after the government returned to power in 2019. The delay resulted in the resignations of the former acting chairman and another member of the NSC over the interference of the NITI Aayog in statistical issues. NITI Aayog's involvement in releasing the back series on GDP growth that contradicted an NSC report in 2018, was another indication of the government's efforts to undermine traditional statistical institutions. Recently, a series of opinion articles by members of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister sought to discredit the methodology used by the NFHS and similar surveys. The government has also unduly and unjustifiably delayed the decennial Census exercise, putting into limbo several statistical measures and programmes dependent upon Census information. Shenanigans of this kind do not bode well for an otherwise robust statistical system, which has been subject to strains at a time when there has been an explosion of public data in a growing digital world of commerce and governance.

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RAJYA SABHA PASSES JAN VISHWAS (AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS) BILL, 2023 IN PARLIAMENT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 was passed in Lok Sabha on 27th June 2023 and Rajya Sabha on 2nd August 2023.

The Bill was first introduced in Lok Sabha on 22nd December 2022. Subsequently, it was referred to the Joint Committee of the Parliament. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill received overwhelming support and insightful suggestions from the Members of the Committee across parties. The Joint Committee on the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022 held detailed discussions with all the 19 Ministries/Departments along with Legislative Department and Department of Legal Affairs. The Committee conducted clause-by-clause examination of the Bill through a series of 9 sittings between 09.01.2023 and 17.02.2023. The Committee finally adopted its Report in its sitting held on 13.03.2023.

The Report of the Committee was laid before Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha on 17th March 2023 and 20th March 2023 respectively. The Committee recommended a few more amendments in the Bill. Committee also made 7 general recommendations which provide advice and guidance for future decriminalization efforts. One of the recommendations include constitution of a group consisting of legal professionals, industry bodies, members of bureaucracy and regulatory authorities, etc. to examine other acts and carry out exercise similar to the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023. Working group has been constituted as per the recommendation of the Committee.

Through The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023, a total of 183 provisions are being proposed to be decriminalized in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments. Decriminalization is proposed to be achieved in the following manner: -

- (i) Both Imprisonment and/or Fine are proposed to be removed in some provisions.
- (ii) Imprisonment is proposed to be removed and fine retained in few provisions.
- (iii) Imprisonment is proposed to be removed and Fine enhanced in few provisions.
- (iv) Imprisonment and Fine are proposed to be converted to Penalty in some provisions.
- (v) Compounding of offences is proposed to be introduced in few provisions.

For effective implementation of the above, the bill proposes measures such as (a) pragmatic revision of fines and penalties commensurate to the offence committed; (b) establishment of Adjudicating Officers; (c) establishment of Appellate Authorities; and (d) Periodic increase in quantum of fine and penalties

It is also ensured that degree and nature of punishment is commensurate with the severity of the offence.

The benefits of the Amendment Bill are outlined as under:

1. The Amendment Bill will contribute to rationalizing criminal provisions and ensuring that citizens, businesses and the government departments operate without fear of imprisonment for minor, technical or procedural defaults.
2. The nature of penal consequence of an offence committed should be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence. This bill establishes a balance between the severity of the offence/violation committed and the gravity of the prescribed punishment. The proposed amendments ensure the adherence to law by businesses and citizens, without losing the rigor of the law.
3. The criminal consequences prescribed for technical/procedural lapses and minor defaults, clog the justice delivery system and puts adjudication of serious offences on the back burner. Some of the amendments proposed in the Bill are to introduce suitable administrative adjudication mechanisms, wherever applicable and feasible. This would go a long way in reducing undue pressure on the justice system, reduce the pendency of cases and help in a more efficient and effective justice dispensation.
4. Decriminalization of provisions which affect citizens and certain categories of government employees will help them live without the fear of imprisonment for minor violations.
5. The enactment of this legislation would be a landmark in the journey of rationalizing laws, eliminating barriers and bolstering growth of businesses. This legislation would serve as a guiding principle for future amendments in various laws. Consolidated amendments in various laws with a common objective will save time and cost for both Government and Businesses alike.

Ministry/Department-wise List of 42 Acts

(Covered under The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023)

Sl. No.

Name of the Acts

Name of Ministries / Departments

The Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act, 1937

D/o Agriculture, & Farmers Welfare

The Marine Products Export Development Authority Act, 1972

D/o Commerce

The Rubber Act, 1947

The Tea Act, 1953

The Spices Board Act, 1986

The Legal Metrology Act, 2009

D/o Consumer Affairs

The Cantonments Act 2006

D/o Defence

The Government Securities Act, 2006

D/o Economic Affairs

The High Denomination Banknotes (Demonetization) Act, 1978

The Public Debt Act, 1944

The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016

M/o Electronics and Information Technology

The Information Technology Act, 2000

The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

M/o Environment, Forest and Climate Change

The Environment Protection Act, 1986

The Indian Forest Act, 1927

The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1994

The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961

D/o Financial Services

The Factoring Regulation Act, 2011

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981

The National Housing Bank Act, 1987

The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007

The Food Corporations Act, 1964

D/o Food & Public Distribution

The Warehousing Corporation Act, 1962

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

D/o Health & Family Welfare

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

The Pharmacy Act, 1948

The Metro Railways (Operation and Maintenance) Act, 2002

M/o Housing & Urban Affairs

The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867

M/o Information & Broadcasting

The Cinematography Act, 1952

The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958

M/o Ports, Shipping & Waterways

The Indian Post Office Act, 1898

D/o Posts

The Boilers Act, 1923

Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade

The Copyright Act, 1957

The Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999

The Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951

The Patents Act, 1970

The Trade Marks Act, 1999

The Railways Act, 1989

M/o Railways

The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988

M/o Road Transport & Highways

The Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002

D/o Revenue

The Collection of Statistics Act, 2008

M/o Statistics & Programme Implementation

Illustrative examples of amendments carried out-

The Indian Post Office Act, 1898

23 Sections related to misconduct, voluntary withdrawal from duty, making false entry in register, defiling or injuring post office letter boxes, etc. are proposed to be omitted. These provisions relate to default by postal employees, other postal workers, employees of other agencies and other individuals. Provisions for appropriate action against such defaulting employees, workers and other individuals can effectively be taken under various Acts and Rules including CCS (CCA) Rules, 1965 or GDS (Conduct and Engagement) Rules, 2020, the Indian Contract Act, 1872 and the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

Indian Forest Act, 1927

This act (Section 26 (1) (d)) had Imprisonment provision for pasturing cattle in Forest land. This provision is being amended by removing imprisonment and fine. Now this contravention will attract penalty. This amendment will benefit tribals/villagers who may unknowingly enter forest land while pasturing cattle. Since the violation is not serious in nature and may not be intentional, imprisonment provisions were not justified. However, deterrence is proposed to be achieved by levying penalty of Rs. 500/-

The Food Corporations Act, 1964 & The Warehousing Corporations Act, 1962

These acts provide imprisonment and fine for using the name of Food/warehouse Corporation without Corporation's consent. Imprisonment (up to 6 months) and fine (1,000) is proposed to be removed for the use of Food/Warehouse Corporation's name in any prospectus or advertisement without Corporation's consent

The Cantonments Act, 2006

This act (Section 289 (5)) had imprisonment provisions for carrying or using non-biodegradable nature-polythene bags in cantonment area. This provision is being removed as most of the times, citizens using polyethene bags may not be aware about them being bio-degradable or not.

Legal Metrology Act, 2009

Giving false information to legal metrology officer, controller or director (Legal Metrology Act, 2009) is proposed to be made compoundable (Section 48)

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988

Contraventions related to driving regulations, obstructing to free flow of traffic and producing false registration document (Motor Vehicles Act, 1988) are proposed to be made compoundable (Section 200 (1)).

Collection of Statistics Act, 2009

This act facilitates collection of statistics on economic, demographic, social, scientific, environmental aspects. This act had imprisonment provisions for Minor procedural offenses like failure to produce books, accounts, documents, or records, making any false or misleading

statement or information, destroying, defacing, removing, or mutilating any information. Violations of provisions of this act are not severe in nature and do not cause any damage. These criminal provisions are being removed from the Act now.

AD/VN

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 was passed in Lok Sabha on 27th June 2023 and Rajya Sabha on 2nd August 2023.

The Bill was first introduced in Lok Sabha on 22nd December 2022. Subsequently, it was referred to the Joint Committee of the Parliament. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill received overwhelming support and insightful suggestions from the Members of the Committee across parties. The Joint Committee on the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022 held detailed discussions with all the 19 Ministries/Departments along with Legislative Department and Department of Legal Affairs. The Committee conducted clause-by-clause examination of the Bill through a series of 9 sittings between 09.01.2023 and 17.02.2023. The Committee finally adopted its Report in its sitting held on 13.03.2023.

The Report of the Committee was laid before Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha on 17th March 2023 and 20th March 2023 respectively. The Committee recommended a few more amendments in the Bill. Committee also made 7 general recommendations which provide advice and guidance for future decriminalization efforts. One of the recommendations include constitution of a group consisting of legal professionals, industry bodies, members of bureaucracy and regulatory authorities, etc. to examine other acts and carry out exercise similar to the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023. Working group has been constituted as per the recommendation of the Committee.

Through The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023, a total of 183 provisions are being proposed to be decriminalized in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments. Decriminalization is proposed to be achieved in the following manner: -

- (i) Both Imprisonment and/or Fine are proposed to be removed in some provisions.
- (ii) Imprisonment is proposed to be removed and fine retained in few provisions.
- (iii) Imprisonment is proposed to be removed and Fine enhanced in few provisions.
- (iv) Imprisonment and Fine are proposed to be converted to Penalty in some provisions.
- (v) Compounding of offences is proposed to be introduced in few provisions.

For effective implementation of the above, the bill proposes measures such as (a) pragmatic revision of fines and penalties commensurate to the offence committed; (b) establishment of Adjudicating Officers; (c) establishment of Appellate Authorities; and (d) Periodic increase in quantum of fine and penalties

It is also ensured that degree and nature of punishment is commensurate with the severity of the offence.

The benefits of the Amendment Bill are outlined as under:

1. The Amendment Bill will contribute to rationalizing criminal provisions and ensuring that citizens, businesses and the government departments operate without fear of imprisonment for minor, technical or procedural defaults.
2. The nature of penal consequence of an offence committed should be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence. This bill establishes a balance between the severity of the offence/violation committed and the gravity of the prescribed punishment. The proposed amendments ensure the adherence to law by businesses and citizens, without losing the rigor of the law.
3. The criminal consequences prescribed for technical/procedural lapses and minor defaults, clog the justice delivery system and puts adjudication of serious offences on the back burner. Some of the amendments proposed in the Bill are to introduce suitable administrative adjudication mechanisms, wherever applicable and feasible. This would go a long way in reducing undue pressure on the justice system, reduce the pendency of cases and help in a more efficient and effective justice dispensation.
4. Decriminalization of provisions which affect citizens and certain categories of government employees will help them live without the fear of imprisonment for minor violations.
5. The enactment of this legislation would be a landmark in the journey of rationalizing laws, eliminating barriers and bolstering growth of businesses. This legislation would serve as a guiding principle for future amendments in various laws. Consolidated amendments in various laws with a common objective will save time and cost for both Government and Businesses alike.

Ministry/Department-wise List of 42 Acts

(Covered under The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023)

Sl. No.

Name of the Acts

Name of Ministries / Departments

The Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act, 1937

D/o Agriculture, & Farmers Welfare

The Marine Products Export Development Authority Act, 1972

D/o Commerce

The Rubber Act, 1947

The Tea Act, 1953

The Spices Board Act, 1986

The Legal Metrology Act, 2009

D/o Consumer Affairs

The Cantonments Act 2006

D/o Defence

The Government Securities Act, 2006

D/o Economic Affairs

The High Denomination Banknotes (Demonetization) Act, 1978

The Public Debt Act, 1944

The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016

M/o Electronics and Information Technology

The Information Technology Act, 2000

The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

M/o Environment, Forest and Climate Change

The Environment Protection Act, 1986

The Indian Forest Act, 1927

The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1994

The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961

D/o Financial Services

The Factoring Regulation Act, 2011

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981

The National Housing Bank Act, 1987

The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007

The Food Corporations Act, 1964

D/o Food & Public Distribution

The Warehousing Corporation Act, 1962

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

D/o Health & Family Welfare

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

The Pharmacy Act, 1948

The Metro Railways (Operation and Maintenance) Act, 2002

M/o Housing & Urban Affairs

The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867

M/o Information & Broadcasting

The Cinematography Act, 1952

The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958

M/o Ports, Shipping & Waterways

The Indian Post Office Act, 1898

D/o Posts

The Boilers Act, 1923

Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade

The Copyright Act, 1957

The Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999

The Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951

The Patents Act, 1970

The Trade Marks Act, 1999

The Railways Act, 1989

M/o Railways

The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988

M/o Road Transport & Highways

The Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002

D/o Revenue

The Collection of Statistics Act, 2008

M/o Statistics & Programme Implementation

Illustrative examples of amendments carried out-

The Indian Post Office Act, 1898

23 Sections related to misconduct, voluntary withdrawal from duty, making false entry in register, defiling or injuring post office letter boxes, etc. are proposed to be omitted. These provisions relate to default by postal employees, other postal workers, employees of other agencies and other individuals. Provisions for appropriate action against such defaulting employees, workers and other individuals can effectively be taken under various Acts and Rules including CCS (CCA) Rules, 1965 or GDS (Conduct and Engagement) Rules, 2020, the Indian Contract Act, 1872 and the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

Indian Forest Act, 1927

This act (Section 26 (1) (d)) had Imprisonment provision for pasturing cattle in Forest land. This provision is being amended by removing imprisonment and fine. Now this contravention will attract penalty. This amendment will benefit tribals/villagers who may unknowingly enter forest land while pasturing cattle. Since the violation is not serious in nature and may not be intentional, imprisonment provisions were not justified. However, deterrence is proposed to be achieved by levying penalty of Rs. 500/-

The Food Corporations Act, 1964 & The Warehousing Corporations Act, 1962

These acts provide imprisonment and fine for using the name of Food/warehouse Corporation without Corporation's consent. Imprisonment (up to 6 months) and fine (1,000) is proposed to be removed for the use of Food/Warehouse Corporation's name in any prospectus or advertisement without Corporation's consent

The Cantonments Act, 2006

This act (Section 289 (5)) had imprisonment provisions for carrying or using non-biodegradable nature-polythene bags in cantonment area. This provision is being removed as most of the times, citizens using polyethene bags may not be aware about them being bio-degradable or not.

Legal Metrology Act, 2009

Giving false information to legal metrology officer, controller or director (Legal Metrology Act, 2009) is proposed to be made compoundable (Section 48)

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988

Contraventions related to driving regulations, obstructing to free flow of traffic and producing false registration document (Motor Vehicles Act, 1988) are proposed to be made compoundable (Section 200 (1)).

Collection of Statistics Act, 2009

This act facilitates collection of statistics on economic, demographic, social, scientific, environmental aspects. This act had imprisonment provisions for Minor procedural offenses like failure to produce books, accounts, documents, or records, making any false or misleading

statement or information, destroying, defacing, removing, or mutilating any information. Violations of provisions of this act are not severe in nature and do not cause any damage. These criminal provisions are being removed from the Act now.

AD/VN

END

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IMPLEMENTATION OF TIME OF DAY ELECTRICITY TARIFF SYSTEM

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed that the Ministry of Power [vide notification dated 14.06.2023](#) has issued the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Amendment Rules, 2023 wherein the rule for Time of Day (ToD) Tariff has also been specified. The Minister informed that [the main features of these Rules](#) are as under:

- i. ToD tariff for Commercial and Industrial consumers having maximum demand more than 10 kW shall be made effective from a date not later than 1st April, 2024 and for other consumers except agricultural consumers, the ToD tariff shall be made effective not later than 1st April, 2025.**
- ii. ToD tariff shall be made effective immediately after installation of smart meters for the consumers.**
- iii. ToD tariff, during the peak period of the day, for Commercial and Industrial consumers shall not be less than 1.20 times the normal tariff and for other consumers it shall not be less than 1.10 times the normal tariff.**
- iv. Tariff for solar hours, of the day, to be specified by the State Commission shall be at least twenty percent (20%) less than the normal tariff for that category of consumers.**
- v. ToD tariff shall be applicable on energy charge component of the normal tariff.**
- vi. The duration of peak hours shall not be more than solar hours as notified by the concerned State Electricity Regulatory Commission or State Load Despatch Centre and the duration of solar hours shall be eight hours in a day as specified by the State Commission.**

The Minister informed that the draft Rules were circulated for comments of stakeholders on 20.04.2023. The views/suggestions received were examined and suitably incorporated in the aforesaid Rules.

This information has been given by the Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy Shri R. K. Singh, in a written reply to a question, in Rajya Sabha today, August 2, 2023.

PIB DELHI | AM / DJM

The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed that the Ministry of Power [vide notification dated 14.06.2023](#) has issued the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Amendment Rules, 2023 wherein the rule for Time of Day (ToD) Tariff has also been specified. The Minister informed that [the main features of these Rules](#) are as under:

- i. ToD tariff for Commercial and Industrial consumers having maximum demand**

more than 10 kW shall be made effective from a date not later than 1st April, 2024 and for other consumers except agricultural consumers, the ToD tariff shall be made effective not later than 1st April, 2025.

ii. ToD tariff shall be made effective immediately after installation of smart meters for the consumers.

iii. ToD tariff, during the peak period of the day, for Commercial and Industrial consumers shall not be less than 1.20 times the normal tariff and for other consumers it shall not be less than 1.10 times the normal tariff.

iv. Tariff for solar hours, of the day, to be specified by the State Commission shall be at least twenty percent (20%) less than the normal tariff for that category of consumers.

v. ToD tariff shall be applicable on energy charge component of the normal tariff.

vi. The duration of peak hours shall not be more than solar hours as notified by the concerned State Electricity Regulatory Commission or State Load Despatch Centre and the duration of solar hours shall be eight hours in a day as specified by the State Commission.

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END

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IMPLEMENTATION OF UJWAL DISCOM ASSURANCE YOJANA (UDAY)

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed about the status of repayment of the bonds issued by the State Governments and the DISCOMs under the UDAY scheme. The Minister informed that as per [OM dated 20th November, 2015 of UDAY Scheme](#) (Clause 7), for Operational and Financial Turnaround of Power Distribution Companies–

The Minister informed that the summary of bonds issued under UDAY scheme is as below. The maturity period of these bonds varies from State to State and is between 5 and 15 years.

SUMMARY OF BONDS ISSUED UNDER UDAY SCHEME

Sl. No.

State

Discom Liabilities (as per MoU) as on

30-09-2015

Discom Liabilities to be restructured as on 30-09-2015

Total Bonds issued by State till date

Total Bonds issued by Discom till date

Total bond issued under UDAY till date

Remaining Bonds to be issued by State

Remaining Bonds to be issued by Discoms

1

ANDHRA PRADESH

14721

14721

8256

0

8256

0

6465

2

ASSAM

1510

No bonds have been issued by the Govt. of Assam as the state took over loss in the form of grant and equity.

3

BIHAR

3109

3109

2332

777

3109

0

0

4

CHHATISGARH

1740

870

870

0

870

0

0

5

HARYANA

34602

34518

25951

0

25951

0

8566

6

HIMACHAL PRADESH

3854

3854

2891

0

2891

0

963

7

JAMMU & KASHMIR

3538

3538

3538

0

3538

0

0

8

JHARKHAND

6718

6136

6136

0

6136

0

0

9

MADHYA PRADESH

34739

7360

7360

0

7360

0

0

10

MAHARASHTRA

22097

6613

4960

0

4960

0

1653

11

MEGHALAYA

167

167

125

0

125

0

42

12

PUNJAB

20838

20262

15629

0

15629

0

4633

13

RAJASTHAN

80530

76120

59722

12368

72090

0

4030

14

TAMIL NADU

30420

30420

22815

0

22815

0

7605

15

TELANGANA

11897

11244

8923

0

8923

0

2321

16

UTTAR PRADESH

53935

50125

39133

10377

49510

0

616

TOTAL**324415****269057**

208641

23522

232163.29

0

36894.35

%age of Bonds issued to total debts to be restructured**86%**

Note: States - Goa, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Karnataka, Manipur, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura, Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram have only opted for operational parameters under UDAY, hence, their debt was not taken over by State.

Giving the details of the States that have achieved or failed to achieve the targets of reducing Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses and eliminating Average Cost of Supply-Average Realisable Revenue (ACS-ARR) gap under the UDAY scheme, the Minister informed that as a result of participation of DISCOMs under UDAY and other efficiency measures, State Power Distribution Utilities reported improvements which include:

State-wise details of AT&C losses and ACS-ARR gap are given below.

AT&C LOSS**State****FY 2015-16****FY 2016-17****FY 2017-18****FY 2018-19****FY 2019-20**

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

30.28

23.43

23.34

Andhra Pradesh

10.36

13.77

14.15

25.67

10.77

Arunachal Pradesh

54.58

53.64

51.08

52.53

40.49

Assam

26.02

20.11

17.64

20.19

23.39

Bihar

43.30

43.34

33.51

33.30

39.95

Chandigarh

9.56

13.50

15.86

Chhattisgarh

22.10

23.87

20.74

24.96

18.46

Dadra & Nagar Haveli

6.55

5.45

3.56

Daman & Diu

17.11

6.19

4.07

Delhi

12.44

10.79

9.87

9.12

8.26

Goa

19.77

24.33

10.48

17.61

11.41

Gujarat

16.23

14.42

12.19

13.06

10.95

Haryana

29.27

26.42

21.78

18.08

18.26

Himachal Pradesh

9.68

11.48

11.08

12.46

13.33

Jammu & Kashmir

58.75

59.96

53.67

49.94

60.46

Jharkhand

33.34

40.83

44.72

28.33

37.13

Karnataka

17.13

16.84

15.61

19.82

17.58

Kerala

12.40

13.42

12.81

9.10

13.12

Lakshadweep

19.15

26.82

13.69

Madhya Pradesh

27.37

26.80

30.51

36.63

30.38

Maharashtra

21.74

22.84

14.07

15.30

18.56

Manipur

31.72

33.01

27.46

25.26

23.30

Meghalaya

45.98

38.81

41.19

35.22

31.67

Mizoram

35.18

24.98

16.16

16.20

20.66

Nagaland

33.44

38.50

110.85

65.73

64.79

Odisha

38.60

37.19

33.59

31.55

28.94

Puducherry

22.43

21.34

19.19

19.77

18.45

Punjab

15.88

14.46

17.31

11.28

14.35

Rajasthan

31.59

27.33

24.07

28.25

29.86

Sikkim

43.89

35.62

32.48

41.83

28.77

Tamil Nadu

16.83

18.23

19.47

17.86

15.00

Telangana

14.01

15.19

19.40

18.41

21.92

Tripura

32.68

28.95

30.04

38.03

35.71

Uttar Pradesh

39.76

40.91

37.34

32.75

29.64

Uttarakhand

18.01

16.68

16.34

17.45

20.35

West Bengal

28.08

27.83

22.71

19.66

17.76

Grand Total

23.70

23.72

21.57

21.64

20.73

ACS-ARR GAP on Tariff Subsidy received (excluding Regulatory Income and Revenue Grant under UDAY for loan takeover)**State****FY 2015-16****FY 2016-17****FY 2017-18****FY 2018-19****FY 2019-20**

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

19.40

19.19

19.24

Andhra Pradesh

0.80

0.52

0.09

2.63

(0.18)

Arunachal Pradesh

0.49

3.65

3.66

4.47

4.90

Assam

0.23

0.06

(0.32)

(0.32)

(1.04)

Bihar

0.46

0.51

0.68

0.61

0.91

Chandigarh

(1.12)

(0.64)

(0.27)

Chhattisgarh

(0.01)

0.21

0.16

0.24

0.02

Dadra & Nagar Haveli

0.01

(0.02)

(0.03)

Daman & Diu

(0.26)

0.61

0.52

Delhi

(0.37)

(0.08)

(0.08)

(0.22)

0.20

Goa

0.71

0.70

(0.23)

0.27

0.61

Gujarat

(0.02)

(0.05)

(0.11)

(0.05)

(0.11)

Haryana

0.16

0.04

(0.08)

(0.05)

(0.06)

Himachal Pradesh

(0.31)

0.18

0.03

(0.09)

(0.03)

Jammu & Kashmir

3.00

2.65

1.85

1.72

2.03

Jharkhand

0.93

1.39

0.16

0.57

0.87

Karnataka

0.33

0.53

0.36

0.68

0.37

Kerala

0.30

0.62

0.32

0.05

0.10

Lakshadweep

19.11

21.37

20.58

Madhya Pradesh

0.87

0.81

0.88

1.33

0.69

Maharashtra

0.43

0.59

0.25

(0.22)

0.27

Manipur

0.02

0.06

0.08

0.06

0.06

Meghalaya

0.82

1.66

1.16

0.85

1.86

Mizoram

2.06

2.12

2.13

3.70

0.57

Nagaland

0.20

0.81

1.22

1.30

1.21

Odisha

0.39

0.38

0.32

0.60

0.34

Puducherry

(0.02)

0.03

(0.02)

0.13

0.97

Punjab

0.53

0.65

0.48

(0.07)

0.17

Rajasthan

1.83

1.79

1.49

1.50

1.49

Sikkim

2.09

1.20

0.25

0.02

1.71

Tamil Nadu

0.67

0.50

1.41

1.80

1.75

Telangana

0.74

1.23

1.11

1.38

1.09

Tripura

0.42

0.10

(0.08)

(0.14)

0.30

Uttar Pradesh

0.29

0.33

0.42

0.52

0.32

Uttarakhand

0.10

0.24

0.18

0.56

0.21

West Bengal

0.52

0.36

(0.01)

0.10

0.22

Grand Total

0.54

0.59

0.49

0.66

0.50

Providing the details of the challenges and constraints faced in the implementation and monitoring of the UDAY scheme and the steps taken to address them, the Minister informed that the Ministry of Power vide Office Memorandum dated 19.01.2016 constituted Monitoring Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Power) and the progress of the scheme and challenges faced were regularly reviewed during the Monitoring Committee meetings. No major challenges were reported for implementation of scheme. The period of the scheme was from FY2015-16 to FY2019-20.

This information has been given by the Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy Shri R. K. Singh, in a written reply to a question, in Rajya Sabha today, August 2, 2023.

PIB DELHI | AM / DJM

The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed about the status of repayment of the bonds issued by the State Governments and the DISCOMs under the UDAY scheme. The Minister informed that as per [OM dated 20th November, 2015 of UDAY Scheme](#) (Clause 7), for Operational and Financial Turnaround of Power Distribution Companies–

The Minister informed that the summary of bonds issued under UDAY scheme is as below. The maturity period of these bonds varies from State to State and is between 5 and 15 years.

SUMMARY OF BONDS ISSUED UNDER UDAY SCHEME**Sl. No.****State****Discom Liabilities (as per MoU) as on****30-09-2015****Discom Liabilities to be restructured as on 30-09-2015****Total Bonds issued by State till date****Total Bonds issued by Discom till date****Total bond issued under UDAY till date****Remaining Bonds to be issued by State****Remaining Bonds to be issued by Discoms**

1

ANDHRA PRADESH

14721

14721

8256

0

8256

0

6465

2

ASSAM

1510

No bonds have been issued by the Govt. of Assam as the state took over loss in the form of grant and equity.

3

BIHAR

3109

3109

2332

777

3109

0

0

4

CHHATISGARH

1740

870

870

0

870

0

0

5

HARYANA

34602

34518

25951

0

25951

0

8566

6

HIMACHAL PRADESH

3854

3854

2891

0

2891

0

963

7

JAMMU & KASHMIR

3538

3538

3538

0

3538

0

0

8

JHARKHAND

6718

6136

6136

0

6136

0

0

9

MADHYA PRADESH

34739

7360

7360

0

7360

0

0

10

MAHARASHTRA

22097

6613

4960

0

4960

0

1653

11

MEGHALAYA

167

167

125

0

125

0

42

12

PUNJAB

20838

20262

15629

0

15629

0

4633

13

RAJASTHAN

80530

76120

59722

12368

72090

0

4030

14

TAMIL NADU

30420

30420

22815

0

22815

0

7605

15

TELANGANA

11897

11244

8923

0

8923

0

2321

16

UTTAR PRADESH

53935

50125

39133

10377

49510

0

616

TOTAL**324415****269057****208641****23522****232163.29****0****36894.35****%age of Bonds issued to total debts to be restructured****86%****Note: States - Goa, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Karnataka, Manipur, Puducherry, Sikkim,**

Tripura, Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram have only opted for operational parameters under UDAY, hence, their debt was not taken over by State.

Giving the details of the States that have achieved or failed to achieve the targets of reducing Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses and eliminating Average Cost of Supply-Average Realisable Revenue (ACS-ARR) gap under the UDAY scheme, the Minister informed that as a result of participation of DISCOMs under UDAY and other efficiency measures, State Power Distribution Utilities reported improvements which include:

State-wise details of AT&C losses and ACS-ARR gap are given below.

AT&C LOSS

State

FY 2015-16

FY 2016-17

FY 2017-18

FY 2018-19

FY 2019-20

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

30.28

23.43

23.34

Andhra Pradesh

10.36

13.77

14.15

25.67

10.77

Arunachal Pradesh

54.58

53.64

51.08

52.53

40.49

Assam

26.02

20.11

17.64

20.19

23.39

Bihar

43.30

43.34

33.51

33.30

39.95

Chandigarh

9.56

13.50

15.86

Chhattisgarh

22.10

23.87

20.74

24.96

18.46

Dadra & Nagar Haveli

6.55

5.45

3.56

Daman & Diu

17.11

6.19

4.07

Delhi

12.44

10.79

9.87

9.12

8.26

Goa

19.77

24.33

10.48

17.61

11.41

Gujarat

16.23

14.42

12.19

13.06

10.95

Haryana

29.27

26.42

21.78

18.08

18.26

Himachal Pradesh

9.68

11.48

11.08

12.46

13.33

Jammu & Kashmir

58.75

59.96

53.67

49.94

60.46

Jharkhand

33.34

40.83

44.72

28.33

37.13

Karnataka

17.13

16.84

15.61

19.82

17.58

Kerala

12.40

13.42

12.81

9.10

13.12

Lakshadweep

19.15

26.82

13.69

Madhya Pradesh

27.37

26.80

30.51

36.63

30.38

Maharashtra

21.74

22.84

14.07

15.30

18.56

Manipur

31.72

33.01

27.46

25.26

23.30

Meghalaya

45.98

38.81

41.19

35.22

31.67

Mizoram

35.18

24.98

16.16

16.20

20.66

Nagaland

33.44

38.50

110.85

65.73

64.79

Odisha

38.60

37.19

33.59

31.55

28.94

Puducherry

22.43

21.34

19.19

19.77

18.45

Punjab

15.88

14.46

17.31

11.28

14.35

Rajasthan

31.59

27.33

24.07

28.25

29.86

Sikkim

43.89

35.62

32.48

41.83

28.77

Tamil Nadu

16.83

18.23

19.47

17.86

15.00

Telangana

14.01

15.19

19.40

18.41

21.92

Tripura

32.68

28.95

30.04

38.03

35.71

Uttar Pradesh

39.76

40.91

37.34

32.75

29.64

Uttarakhand

18.01

16.68

16.34

17.45

20.35

West Bengal

28.08

27.83

22.71

19.66

17.76

Grand Total

23.70

23.72

21.57

21.64

20.73

ACS-ARR GAP on Tariff Subsidy received (excluding Regulatory Income and Revenue Grant under UDAY for loan takeover)

State**FY 2015-16****FY 2016-17****FY 2017-18****FY 2018-19**

FY 2019-20

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

19.40

19.19

19.24

Andhra Pradesh

0.80

0.52

0.09

2.63

(0.18)

Arunachal Pradesh

0.49

3.65

3.66

4.47

4.90

Assam

0.23

0.06

(0.32)

(0.32)

(1.04)

Bihar

0.46

0.51

0.68

0.61

0.91

Chandigarh

(1.12)

(0.64)

(0.27)

Chhattisgarh

(0.01)

0.21

0.16

0.24

0.02

Dadra & Nagar Haveli

0.01

(0.02)

(0.03)

Daman & Diu

(0.26)

0.61

0.52

Delhi

(0.37)

(0.08)

(0.08)

(0.22)

0.20

Goa

0.71

0.70

(0.23)

0.27

0.61

Gujarat

(0.02)

(0.05)

(0.11)

(0.05)

(0.11)

Haryana

0.16

0.04

(0.08)

(0.05)

(0.06)

Himachal Pradesh

(0.31)

0.18

0.03

(0.09)

(0.03)

Jammu & Kashmir

3.00

2.65

1.85

1.72

2.03

Jharkhand

0.93

1.39

0.16

0.57

0.87

Karnataka

0.33

0.53

0.36

0.68

0.37

Kerala

0.30

0.62

0.32

0.05

0.10

Lakshadweep

19.11

21.37

20.58

Madhya Pradesh

0.87

0.81

0.88

1.33

0.69

Maharashtra

0.43

0.59

0.25

(0.22)

0.27

Manipur

0.02

0.06

0.08

0.06

0.06

Meghalaya

0.82

1.66

1.16

0.85

1.86

Mizoram

2.06

2.12

2.13

3.70

0.57

Nagaland

0.20

0.81

1.22

1.30

1.21

Odisha

0.39

0.38

0.32

0.60

0.34

Puducherry

(0.02)

0.03

(0.02)

0.13

0.97

Punjab

0.53

0.65

0.48

(0.07)

0.17

Rajasthan

1.83

1.79

1.49

1.50

1.49

Sikkim

2.09

1.20

0.25

0.02

1.71

Tamil Nadu

0.67

0.50

1.41

1.80

1.75

Telangana

0.74

1.23

1.11

1.38

1.09

Tripura

0.42

0.10

(0.08)

(0.14)

0.30

Uttar Pradesh

0.29

0.33

0.42

0.52

0.32

Uttarakhand

0.10

0.24

0.18

0.56

0.21

West Bengal

0.52

0.36

(0.01)

0.10

0.22

Grand Total

0.54

0.59

0.49

0.66

0.50

Providing the details of the challenges and constraints faced in the implementation and monitoring of the UDAY scheme and the steps taken to address them, the Minister informed that the Ministry of Power vide Office Memorandum dated 19.01.2016 constituted Monitoring Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Power) and the progress of the scheme and challenges faced were regularly reviewed during the Monitoring Committee meetings. No major challenges were reported for implementation of scheme. The period of the scheme was from FY2015-16 to FY2019-20.

This information has been given by the Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy Shri R. K. Singh, in a written reply to a question, in Rajya Sabha today, August 2, 2023.

PIB DELHI | AM / DJM**END**Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND COVERAGE OF SAUBHAGYA IN THE COUNTRY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed about the status of implementation and coverage of the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana - "SAUBHAGYA" in the country.

The Minister informed that the Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – SAUBHAGYA in October, 2017 with the objective of achieving universal household electrification, by providing electricity connections to all un-electrified households in rural areas and all poor households in urban areas in the country. Under the aegis of SAUBHAGYA, as on 31.03.2019, all households were reported electrified by the States, except 18,734 households in Left Wing Extremists (LWE) affected areas of Chhattisgarh. Subsequently, seven States namely Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Manipur, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh reported around 19.09 lakh un-electrified households, identified before 31.03.2019, which were unwilling earlier but later expressed willingness to get electricity connection. This was also sanctioned. All these seven States had reported 100% household electrification as on 31.03.2021. A total of 2.817 crore households were electrified since the launch of SAUBHAGYA, up to 31.03.2021.

Thereafter, the States reported that some households remained to be electrified, against which, states reported electrification of 4.43 lakh households. Accordingly, a total 2.86 crore households have been electrified. The scheme stands closed on 31.03.2022. As per [the SAUBHAGYA portal](#), a total of 29 states participated during scheme period. The State-wise details of Household electrification in the Country under SAUBHAGYA are as given below.

State-wise electrification of households since launch of Saubhagya Scheme including Additional Households achievement under DDUGJY

Sl. No.

Name of the States

No. of Households electrified from 11.10.2017 to 31.03.2019 as per Saubhagya Portal

Additional Sanction allowed under Saubhagya

Further Additional Households sanctioned under DDUGJY

Grand Total(A+B)

No. of Households reported electrified from 01.04.2019 to 31.03.2021

Total HHs electrified as on 31.03.2021(A)

Households Sanctioned during 2021-22

Households electrified(as on 31.03.2022)(B)

1

Andhra Pradesh*

181,930

0

181,930

181,930

2

Arunachal Pradesh

47,089

0

47,089

7859

0

47,089

3

Assam

1,745,149

200,000

1,945,149

480249

381507

2,326,656

4

Bihar

3,259,041

0

3,259,041

3,259,041

5

Chhattisgarh

749,397

40,394

789,791

21981

2577

792,368

6

Gujarat*

41,317

0

41,317

41,317

7

Haryana

54,681

0

54,681

54,681

8

Himachal Pradesh

12,891

0

12,891

12,891

9

Jammu & Kashmir

377,045

0

377,045

377,045

10

Jharkhand

1,530,708

200,000

1,730,708

1,730,708

11

Karnataka

356,974

26,824

383,798

383,798

12

Ladakh

10,456

0

10,456

10,456

13

Madhya Pradesh

1,984,264

0

1,984,264

99722

0

1,984,264

14

Maharashtra

1,517,922

0

1,517,922

1,517,922

15

Manipur

102,748

5,367

108,115

21135

0

108,115

16

Meghalaya

199,839

0

199,839

420

401

200,240

17

Mizoram

27,970

0

27,970

27,970

18

Nagaland

132,507

0

132,507

7009

7009

139,516

19

Odisha

2,452,444

0

2,452,444

2,452,444

20

Puducherry*

912

0

912

912

21

Punjab

3,477

0

3,477

3,477

22

Rajasthan

1,862,736

212,786

2,075,522

210843

52206

2,127,728

23

Sikkim

14,900

0

14,900

14,900

24

Tamil Nadu*

2,170

0

2,170

2,170

25

Telangana

515,084

0

515,084

515,084

26

Tripura

139,090

0

139,090

139,090

27

Uttar Pradesh

7,980,568

1,200,003

9,180,571

334652

0

9,180,571

28

Uttarakhand

248,751

0

248,751

248,751

29

West Bengal

732,290

0

732,290

732,290

Total

26,284,350

1,885,374

28,169,724

1,183,870

443,700

28,613,424

*Electrified prior to Saubhagya and not funded under Saubhagya

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PIB DELHI | AM / DJM

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10,456

10,456

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1,984,264

0

1,984,264

99722

0

1,984,264

14

Maharashtra

1,517,922

0

1,517,922

1,517,922

15

Manipur

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5,367

108,115

21135

0

108,115

16

Meghalaya

199,839

0

199,839

420

401

200,240

17

Mizoram

27,970

0

27,970

27,970

18

Nagaland

132,507

0

132,507

7009

7009

139,516

19

Odisha

2,452,444

0

2,452,444

2,452,444

20

Puducherry*

912

0

912

912

21

Punjab

3,477

0

3,477

3,477

22

Rajasthan

1,862,736

212,786

2,075,522

210843

52206

2,127,728

23

Sikkim

14,900

0

14,900

14,900

24

Tamil Nadu*

2,170

0

2,170

2,170

25

Telangana

515,084

0

515,084

515,084

26

Tripura

139,090

0

139,090

139,090

27

Uttar Pradesh

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1,200,003

9,180,571

334652

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PIB DELHI | AM / DJM

END

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EXPLAINED

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

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August 04, 2023 08:30 am | Updated 08:53 am IST

COMMENTS

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Representative photo. | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

The story so far: On 1st August, the Rajya Sabha passed the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021 amid a walk-out by the opposition parties, about a week after it was cleared by the Lok Sabha. The Act aims to conserve biodiversity, promote its sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits that arise therein. Amendments proposed in the Bill however are at odds with this aim. During discussions in Rajya Sabha, the Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, explicitly spoke of “ease of doing business” and promotion of the AYUSH industry (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) as reasons why the government is bringing forth the amendments.

The Bill exempts “codified traditional knowledge” and the AYUSH industry from benefit sharing, denying local communities’ benefits from accessing biological resources. The term “codified traditional knowledge” It lacks a clear definition, leading to potential exploitation. Experts regard this exemption as regressive because a reason why the legislation was enacted in the first place was to ensure “fair and equitable sharing of benefits”, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It decriminalises offences and proposes monetary penalties instead, raising concerns over resource exploitation.

It is important to bear in mind that the proposed relaxations come at a time when the Act hasn’t even been implemented in full. A 2022 investigation by the Centre for Science and Environment showed that in many States, there was no data available on money received from companies and traders for access and benefit sharing and in cases where money was collected, the same wasn’t shared with local communities.

A 2016 study by legal researchers showed that many difficulties have cropped up in many States when it comes to implementing provisions of the Act, especially those related to access and benefit sharing. Some of these issues were also challenged in high courts and the National Green Tribunal.

The industry has been unhappy with the regulations and has run to courts and sought relaxations. Consider the 2016 case where the Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board sent a notice to Divya Pharmacy, part of Baba Ramdev’s Patanjali Yog Peeth Trust, stating that the company was in violation of the Act for using biological resources without prior intimation to the Board. The company challenged the notice in the Uttarakhand high court, although it ultimately lost the

case.

And in 2015, representatives from Gujarat's Ayurveda industry urged the central government to provide some relief to the sector by postponing the implementation of access and benefit sharing provisions. In response, the then Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said the industry has to deposit an amount towards these provisions and that no exemption can be granted.

These are the precedents to the amendments which have been proposed now for "ease of doing business."

In fact, in the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' section, the Bill clearly states that "concerns were raised by the stakeholders representing Indian system of medicine sector, seed sector, industry sector and research sector urging to simplify, streamline and reduce compliance burden in order to encourage conducive environment for collaborative research and investments, simplify patent application process...".

On 2nd August, the Rajya Sabha also cleared the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill which severely limits the conservation scope of the Act. Read together, the two Bills are part of a larger trend of dilution of environmental regulations that are underway in the country, especially since the COVID pandemic. That the Environment Ministry has given precedence to "ease of doing business" rather than its mandate to protect the environment is cause for concern

COMMENTS

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SHOULD THE AGE OF CONSENT FOR SEX BE REVISED?

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

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August 04, 2023 12:15 am | Updated 12:46 am IST

COMMENTS

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The Bombay High Court. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Recently, while hearing an appeal by a man who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for maintaining a consensual relationship with a minor girl, the Bombay High Court said that it is high time India considered reducing the age of consent for sex. The court pointed out that after the enactment of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, many adolescents are being prosecuted for consensual relationships with minor girls. Should the age of consent be revised in India? **Bharti Ali** and **Shraddha Chaudhary** discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Abhinay Lakshman**. Edited excerpts:

There are multiple perspectives in this debate — for instance, the psychological and biological perspectives that deal with the ability to give consent and the perspective on exercising autonomy. How should the debate in India be centred?

Shraddha Chaudhary: We shouldn't think of the debate in one or another of these terms. We need to take an integrated and holistic approach. You mentioned autonomy in the context of law. But can we define what autonomy really signifies? And what it means without considering things like cognitive capacity, psycho-social maturity, and emotional development? So, we need a lot more axes in this debate. We need to think of experiential and neurobiological factors. Even economic factors might be relevant. It is most important to keep the discussion practical, in terms of what it is that we're trying to achieve.

Comment | [Child, law, and consensual sex](#)

Bharti Ali: We want to protect children from harm. But we can't protect them by criminalising certain activities. While we understand the need to ensure that every child up to the age of 18 years should be entitled to all rights, including the right to be protected from harm, the fact is that children have evolving capacities which need to be recognised.

Shraddha Chaudhary: Often, the criminalising approach of the law, especially if you look at the POCSO Act, also prevents us from having a more holistic discussion on the subject. The moment you come to know about any instance, you have to report it. So, not only can you not help the adolescent in case they need help, whether it's psychological or mental social support,

but you also can't study trends. So, a lot of the discussions that we're having now are either anecdotal, or based on evidence from other countries. And that completely misses the cultural context of India, which is so important.

Also read | [Fault lines emerge in debate over age of consent and marriage for women](#)

We often see in POCSO cases that a trial is held and then the court rules whether the sexual interaction was consensual or not. Can we figure out a way of measuring consent before it becomes a trial?

Bharti Ali: As Shraddha said, whenever adolescents approach service providers for any intervention, the biggest fear is that it will get reported. Now, even if schools, hospitals, and counsellors were to report these cases, are we saying that the law must make it mandatory for every person to pursue a legal case? Can you force me to file a legal complaint if I am not interested in filing a legal complaint? That's an important question.

Explained | [Should the age of consent be changed for adolescents?](#)

Soon after a report is made, interviews with the boy and girl should not be carried out by the police. The first interview should be done by a social worker or a support person, and we have those provisions in law. There are supposed to be two social workers with every special juvenile police unit. These are people who can be brought in to interview and interact with the child or the adolescent and ascertain whether they wish to pursue a complaint or not. Whether there has been consensual sexual activity and whether that consensual intimacy was exploitative or non-exploitative are factors that they can be asked to ascertain at that point. But unfortunately, we have given them the mandate [to ask questions] only after an FIR is filed. Much of the evidence tells us that in many cases, the girls turn hostile in court, and these cases end up in acquittals. So, why are we forcing them to pursue the legal complaint and also burdening our courts?

At some level, the state is making a decision as to when or at what age a person can be competent enough to give consent. This is despite biology showing that this capacity develops differently among different people.

Shraddha Chaudhary: You're right in saying that for ease of convenience, we might have to indicate some sort of age or draw some line. And no matter where we draw the line, there are probably going to be issues because there are some people who won't be covered by it and in some instances, too many people will be covered by it. But regardless of that, that is a very strong case for reconfiguring the age of consent, and how we understand it in the first place. So, instead of saying outright that we should reduce it to 16, or 15, or 14, or 12, we first need to ask, when is consent relevant? And what are the questions that go behind understanding the relevance of consent? Consent to whom and in what circumstances? Our answers regarding age and capacity might differ based on these questions and the answers to them. Any age of consent should be context-sensitive. It's better to look at it in terms of capacity, which will help you determine age, but different capacities for different kinds of activities for different kinds of circumstances might help us have an understanding of consent which is more reflective of the developing capacities of adolescence.

Also read | [POCSO and the persecution of young love](#)

Bharti Ali: The age of consent, prior to the enactment of POCSO was 16 in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), but cases were still being registered. Even then, it does not take away from the fact that if the victim's testimony gives confidence to the court, then irrespective of the age of consent, the court will go with that evidence. At this point, I don't think we have enough research

to inform us whether it should be 14 or 16. And how do we differentiate between various circumstances and situations even if it is 14 or 16? Or where both the victim and the accused are minors? Those areas require a lot more research before we can take a call. But as of now, I'm sure one decision can be taken, which is to lower the age of consent to 16 as it was in the IPC prior to the POCSO Act.

But even as courts recognise this fluidity in age of consent and the competency of giving consent, how is it possible to code this fluidity into the law? Is it possible?

Shraddha Chaudhary: Principally, yes. One way to do it might be to have different ages of consent for different kinds of activities. But that is again something that needs to be looked into far more. The second would be to recognise that no matter how strongly you word the law, there is always going to be discretion being exercised. No matter where — whether at the police station or at the prosecutor's office or at the judge's chambers — you are, you would use discretion. It is important to have certain guidelines and measures of accountability in place. And this in combination with some sort of fluid understanding of the age of consent could probably be a first step towards what you're asking.

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Bharti Ali: The first stage, as I said before, is at the police station. Someone interviews the child and is able to figure out whether the child wants to proceed with a complaint or not. And the reasons can help the police in taking the call of whether or not an FIR should be filed. A lot of cases involving those who are 16 and above need not necessarily be converted into an FIR. At the second stage, if an FIR is registered, and the police finds out during the investigation that there was non-exploitative, consensual intimacy, then they can file a final report, and that can go to the court. At the third stage, the courts can call the witness and verify if there is any change in the situation or the stance, and then close the case. There may still be cases which continue through the trial. And towards the end of the trial, they might discover that there were other pressures working on the child. That's where the courts unfortunately don't have discretion. Because once it is a statutory offence, they have to go by what is laid down in the statute, where the minimum sentence is 10 years for penetrative sexual assault and 20 years if it's aggravated penetrative sexual assault. Now one of the elements of aggravated penetrative sexual assault is repeated sex. And in a romantic relationship, there is repeated sex. So, invariably, all of them get booked as aggravated penetrative sexual assault, and the courts are left with no discretion there. What is essential is that we should not be taking away any support, any reproductive and sexual health services and access to those services from adolescents who need it. Just because the law says that a case has to be pursued, you can't deny those services.

If the government were to decide to conduct a study tomorrow, what do you think is essential for us to find out in order to progress towards a better understanding of consent?

Shraddha Chaudhary: We first need more and better information on what kind of sexual practices adolescents are engaging in, at what ages, and the impact of these interactions on them. That information can help us meaningfully characterise these relationships as non-harmful and non-wrongful and also recognise trends of grooming and exploitation that are going on. We also need to look into how social norms around sex and sexuality that lead adolescents to make decisions which may not be optimal for them. It's worth considering whether it's in their best interest for each of these sexual interactions to actually have to end in marriage, and what impact that would have on their lives.

Shraddha Chaudhary is PhD Researcher, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge and Lecturer, Jindal Global Law School; Bharti Ali is Co-founder and Executive Director of the

HAQ Centre for Child Rights

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UNION HOME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF COOPERATION, SHRI AMIT SHAH REPLIED TO THE DISCUSSION ON THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023 IN THE LOK SABHA TODAY, THE BILL PASSED BY THE HOUSE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah replied to the discussion on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in the Lok Sabha today. The Bill was later passed by the house.

Replying to the discussion on the bill, Shri Amit Shah said that the opposition is neither concerned about democracy, nor the country and its people and the entire opposition has gathered here to save its alliance. The whole of India is watching this double character of the opposition. Shri Shah said that public bills are not important for the opposition, but it is very important for them that a small party does not leave the alliance.

Union Home Minister said that the government is always ready to discuss Manipur in the House, and he himself is ready to answer on everything in the discussion. He said that the opposition wants to create confusion in the minds of the people, but the people know everything and today, the opposition has exposed itself.

Shri Amit Shah said that the House is not the place to mislead the public. He said that under Article 239 (AA)(3)(B) the Parliament has full power to make laws with respect to the Union Territory of Delhi or any part of it and on any matter related to it. Shri Shah said that from 1993 to 2015, as per the established rules, the services were under the control of Central Government. He said that whichever government was in Delhi from 1993 to 2015, its aim was to serve the public and if service is to be done then there is no need to quarrel. He said that the Government of India has the right to make laws, and also the right to make rules. He said that the need to make rules arose because the governance in Delhi was not being run according to the rules.

Union Home Minister said that the moment this bill came in the Parliament, the entire opposition came together and forgot everything about Manipur, democracy or riots. He said that the vigilance department of the Delhi government was targeted because many sensitive files are lying there, including the excise scam file, the file on illegal expenditure on the construction of the Chief Minister's new bungalow, the file related to investigation into the expenditure of Rs. 90 crores on the propaganda of the ruling party. He said that in the name of Feedback Unit, an independent illegal intelligence department was started by the Delhi government by spending crores of rupees and its investigation file was also under vigilance. Apart from this, Rs. 21,000 crore was due to BSES and BYPL, yet money was given to a particular company, the file of its investigation was also with the vigilance.

Shri Amit Shah said that the Assembly of Union Territory of Delhi is the only assembly in the country, which does not prorogue at all. He added that from 2020 to 2023, it has called only for the budget session. He said that they call very few cabinet meetings, 13 permissions for

institutions like AIIMS, IIT-Delhi were kept pending by them, an act was made in 2016 to bring 5G technology, which was accepted by all the states of the country but they did not. Shri Shah said that crores of rupees were spent in the name of advertisement to organize the shopping festival and the CAG report has not been tabled in the Delhi Assembly since last two years.

Union Home Minister said that this bill is completely constitutional and has been brought only for the welfare of the people of Delhi and there is no political objective of the Central Government behind it. Shri Shah said that one should neither give speech nor vote in this House for vested political interests and objectives, but voting in the House should be done for the benefit of 130 crore people.

Earlier, initiating the discussion on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in the Lok Sabha, the Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah said that since 1993, a proper system was running in Delhi as no one had any intention to usurp the power. He said that in 2015, a government came to power in Delhi, whose aim is not to serve, but to quarrel. He said that the issue is not related to right of transfer or posting, but they want to hide corruption by taking control of vigilance.

Union Home Minister said that suddenly in 2015, the Delhi government issued a circular in which it took over the powers of transfer and posting. After this, the Central Government brought out a notification which was challenged in the High Court, the judgement of the High Court came in favour of the Central Government, which was then challenged in the Supreme Court. There was a split decision in the Supreme Court and then a constitution bench was formed, which recently gave its judgement. Shri Shah said that the Parliament of the country and the Government of India have the right to make all kinds of laws for the Union Territory of Delhi and using that right, a notification was issued because the Parliament was prorogued at that time.

Shri Amit Shah asked the leaders of the Opposition who are opposing the Bill that politics of supporting or opposing a Bill should not be done to win elections or gain someone's support. He said that bills and laws are brought in the interest of the country and should be opposed or supported for the good of the country and Delhi. Union Home Minister said that the opposition had got the confidence of the people, but during the government's 10 years rule scams worth Rs. 12 lakh crores took place. He said that the whole country is watching those who are secretly helping the Delhi government in scams and corruption to gain their alliance.

RK/AY

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NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (NHA) EXTENDS ITS INCENTIVE SCHEME UNDER AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION (ABDM) TO ENCOURAGE DIGITAL HEALTH ADOPTION BY HOSPITALS, LABS, PHARMACIES AND HEALTH TECH COMPANIES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

The National Health Authority (NHA) announces extension of its Digital Health Incentives Scheme (DHIS) under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) till 31st December 2023. Under DHIS, incentives are provided to hospitals and diagnostic labs and to the providers of digital health solutions such as Hospital/ Health Management Information System (HMIS) and Laboratory Management Information System (LMIS) for adopting and enabling transformative digitization under ABDM.

The DHIS was launched with effect from 1st January, 2023 as part of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. The scheme proved to be a significant catalyst in promoting the adoption of digital health technologies and practices in healthcare delivery across the country. Owing to its impact and response from the healthcare providers and health tech companies, the scheme has been extended to allow more stakeholders to benefit from the financial incentives.

Talking about the purpose behind extension of the incentive scheme, CEO NHA said - "The extension of this incentive scheme under ABDM reaffirms NHA's commitment to fostering a digitally inclusive healthcare ecosystem and underscores the Government of India's dedication to advancing accessible and efficient healthcare services across the nation. With initiatives like DHIS, we plan to recognize and encourage healthcare providers and enablers to collaborate and help build a digitally empowered healthcare ecosystem."

Under the DHIS, the eligible health facilities and digital solutions companies shall be able to earn financial incentives of up to Rs. 4 crores based on the number of digital health records created and linked to ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers of the patients. This incentive can be availed by the health facilities (hospitals, diagnostic labs) and Digital Solution Companies, registered with ABDM's Health Facility Registry (HFR) and fulfilling the eligibility criterion specified under the scheme. It is anticipated that the DHIS advantages offered to the DSCs will contribute to cost reduction or will be transmitted further to the relevant healthcare facilities to pay their digitization costs, etc.

As on date, 1205 health facilities have registered under this scheme with 567 public and 638 private hospitals/ clinics/ diagnostic labs. Further, out of the 25 digital solution companies registered, 22 are from the private sector. Till June 2023, close to 120 health facilities and 7 health tech companies have received incentives totalling to Rs. 4.84 Cr. The incentive recipients include government hospitals like AIIMS Delhi, AIIMS Raipur, AIIMS Bhopal, Lok Bandhu Rajnarayan Combined Hospital, Lucknow, KC General Hospital Bengaluru and private hospitals like KGMU, Lucknow, KIMS Hubballi Bengaluru among others. Diagnostic labs like Indira Path Labs Delhi and Lucknow, Sahayog Pathology Laboratory Pune and Leo Clinical Lab Kannur and digital solution companies like NIC (Nextgen HMIS), CDAC (eSushrut), Driefcase, Ekacare (Orbi Health), Bajaj Finserv and Paytm are some of the top performing entities under DHIS.

Further, NHA is continuously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the DHIS for ABDM

adoption and make suitable changes about its continuation, modification, budget, or otherwise, as and when required. A dashboard for this has been created for this purpose: <https://dashboard.abdm.gov.in/abdm/>. More details about the incentive scheme are available at: <https://abdm.gov.in/DHIS>.

MV/VP

HFV/NHA/ABDM/Digital Health Incentive Scheme/4th August, 2023

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HFW/NHA/ABDM/Digital Health Incentive Scheme/4th August, 2023

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ORGAN SHORTAGE CONTINUES TO COST LIVES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 05, 2023 09:49 pm | Updated August 06, 2023 01:02 am IST - NEW DELHI

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Experts have warned that one person is added to the wait list every 10 minutes in India. Though the Health Ministry has announced a series of steps to promote organ donations, this isn't enough, say experts. File photo: Special Arrangement

With a waiting list of over three lakh patients and at least 20 persons dying each day waiting for an organ, India's paucity of organ donations, especially deceased donations, has been exacting a steep toll. According to the Health Ministry's own data, the number of donors (including deceased) only grew from 6,916 in 2014 to about 16,041 in 2022.

Vivek Kute, secretary, Indian Society of Organ Transplants, said that India's deceased organ donation rate has been under one donor per million population for a decade now.

"India needs to increase this to 65 donations per million population and for that to happen, public sector healthcare must step up. The country has about 600 medical colleges and over 20 AIIMS. Even if we get one donation each from them every year we will be in better shape. Even worldwide, only 10% of patients needing organs get them in time. Spain and the U.S. have better organ donation systems clocking 30-50 donations per million. The need of the hour is to train trauma and ICU doctors to help patients' families to come forward and donate. In India living donors comprise 85% of all donors," Dr. Kute said.

Data from 2022 show India's poor record in deceased donations. The country registered 1,589 kidney transplants, 761 liver and 250 heart transplants in the deceased category in 2022. Kidney and pancreas transplants grew from three in 2014 to 22 in 2022. In contrast, living donor kidney transplants rose from 4,884 in 2014 to 9,834 in 2022. Liver transplants in this category grew from 1,002 to 2,957.

Experts have warned that one person is added to the wait list every 10 minutes in the country. Though the Ministry has announced a series of steps to promote organ donations, including doing away with the domicile rule; removal of age bar for registration of recipients; removal of fee for registration for transplant; easing rules on withdrawal of life support (passive euthanasia); facilitation of organ transport across the country; special casual leave for organ donors etc., this isn't enough, say experts.

Anant Kumar, chairman Urology Renal Transplant and Robotics, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, said that India faces a significant disparity between demand and supply in kidney transplant.

“The annual need for 2,00,000 kidney transplants highlights the pressing urgency of the situation. However, a mere 10,000 transplants are performed each year, revealing a staggering gap. The demand for deceased donors is substantial because many families lack suitable living donors. Therefore, relying on deceased donors can help partially meet this demand,” Dr. Kumar explained.

He added that statistics indicate around 70%-75% of donors are female. Wives, mothers, and sisters have emerged as most prevalent sources of donation.

Vatsala Trivedi, former professor, Department of Urology and Transplant Services, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital and Municipal Medical College, Maharashtra said that organ donation pledges in India need to translate into actual donations and for that, medical staff need to be educated. They must be able to recognise, identify, inform, and counsel families about brain death and the importance of organ donation. “The gap between demand and supply continues to be tremendous and the faster we equip our ICU staff with knowledge and awareness, the sooner the gap will close,” added Dr. Trivedi, who is one of the pioneers in cadaver transplants in the country.

One deceased organ donor can save up to eight lives. Two donated kidneys can free two patients from dialysis treatments. One donated liver can be split among two patients on the waitlist. Two donated lungs mean two other patients are given a second chance, and a donated pancreas and donated heart translate to two more patients receiving the gift of life.

One tissue donor — someone who can donate bone, tendons, cartilage, connective tissue, skin, corneas, sclera, and heart valves and vessels — can impact the lives of as many as 75 people.

Today, India has greater awareness about organ donation and doctors say more families are coming forward for this noble deed. Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi, late last year witnessed the family of a 14-year-old brain-dead patient donate his vital organs to save the life of six persons.

Jyotiraditya Khanna of Haridwar suffered severe brain and chest injuries after falling off the third floor of his house on November 15, 2022. Sudheer Kumar Tyagi, senior consultant, Neurology, at Indraprastha Apollo said amid the loss, the family expressed the boy’s childhood wish of donating his organs and living through other people.

The boy’s heart was donated to a 44-year-old retired Armyman, who was on his deathbed as his heart wasn’t able to pump blood properly. His corneas were donated to Dr. Shroff Charity Eye Hospital, while one kidney was transplanted into a 44-year-old woman at Apollo Hospital. His second kidney saved the life of a 43-year-old woman at Jaipur Golden Hospital while two persons - an eight-year-old boy and 54-year-old man - benefitted from his liver. His lungs helped save a 37-year-old man from Punjab at Medanta Hospital.

Speaking about the compassionate act, Anupam Sibal, group medical director, said paediatric cadaver donation is extremely rare. “This is a brave decision by Jyotiraditya’s family, particularly when they were still coming to terms with their loss. Their son saved the lives of six people, including an eight-year-old boy with liver failure who only had a few days left to live.”

Meanwhile, Ministry data also show that last year the largest number of deceased organ donors were from Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. On the other hand, the maximum number of living donors was reported from Delhi-NCR, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and West Bengal. Additionally, the largest number of deceased donor transplants took place in Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

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IN TB DETECTION, SMEAR MICROSCOPY'S SHARE STILL HOLDS SWAY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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An Indian TB patient receives medicines from a nurse at a TB hospital | Photo Credit: AP

“Many of the patients enrolled in the trial had either not undergone any testing or not completed the long-duration treatment... Most of the patients enrolled in the trial had extensive disease affecting both their lungs,” Dr. C Padmapriyadarsini, Director of the Chennai-based National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT) and the trial coordinator of the modified BPAL regimen, told *The Hindu*. People with TB not being tested on time and developing severe diseases is not peculiar to this trial.

According to the WHO Global TB report 2022, over 40% of 10.6 million people globally who developed TB in 2021 were not diagnosed. India along with Indonesia and the Philippines accounted for a 67% drop in the number of people with TB being diagnosed in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic was responsible for the steep fall in the number of people diagnosed in 2020 and 2021.

However, in India, the gap between the estimated number of people who developed TB and the number of newly diagnosed cases each year has been huge even prior to the pandemic. According to the National TB prevalence survey in India 2019-2021 report, nearly 64% did not get tested for TB. It varied from 46% in the case of Kerala to 88% in Haryana.

Worse, even when people finally get tested for TB, sputum smear microscopy with about 50% sensitivity has been used for diagnosis in a majority of the cases in India, thus leading to a huge number of missed TB cases. Besides lower sensitivity, smear microscopy is ill-equipped to diagnose rifampicin resistance.

Way back in 2014, the WHO guidelines clearly stated that “GeneXpert may be used rather than conventional microscopy and culture as the initial diagnostic test in all adults suspected of having TB”.

Molecular tests are not only more sensitive than smear microscopy, they also help identify rifampicin resistance at the outset. Yet, India has been overly relying on smear microscopy for the initial diagnosis. Even in 2015, the Joint monitoring mission report had criticised the national TB programme for heavily relying on smear microscopy and for the “slow uptake of the new molecular test”. The rapid molecular diagnostic machines have been scaled up from 40 in 2014

to 5,090 in 2022.

As per the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025 report, the number of presumptive TB patients to be offered sputum smear microscopy should have reduced from over 9.1 million in 2015 to 5.8 million in 2022, while the number of molecular tests should have increased from 40,000 in 2015 to over 13.4 million in 2022. Thus, the share of smear microscopy should have steadily reduced while molecular tests should have accounted for the bulk of all testing. But in reality, the trend has been completely opposite even in 2022. As per the India TB report 2023, even last year, 77% (13.9 million) of presumptive TB cases were examined using smear microscopy and just 23% (4.1 million) with a molecular test.

The presumptive TB case examination rate (PTBER) is a good indicator of the efforts to detect and diagnose TB cases. In 2022, the rate of presumptive TB per 100,000 population was 1,281. Of this, 988.6 were examined using smear microscopy and just 292.7 were tested using molecular testing.

Early diagnosis of all TB patients is further complicated by the absence of symptoms such as cough. According to the 2019-2021 TB prevalence survey report, nearly 43% of the TB cases in the survey would have been missed if a chest X-ray was not included. "In the case of sub-clinical TB, patients may show no clinical symptoms but may still be infectious," says Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, former Chief Scientist at the WHO. According to an Opinion piece in *The Lancet*, "50% of all people with bacteriologically confirmed tuberculosis have no symptoms and by the time symptoms develop, transmission has probably already occurred".

As per a paper in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, "both subclinical and active TB states may be infectious and that infectiousness is likely to increase with more advanced disease, although the degree of correlation is uncertain". However, as per the WHO, people infected with TB bacteria but not yet ill with the disease cannot transmit the bacteria.

There is emerging evidence that TB may not fall under a binary of latent infection (asymptomatic and non-infectious) and active disease (symptomatic and infectious). Instead, TB may be a spectrum of disease, including incipient and subclinical stages. A study in China found that of the 380 patients, 81.8% had active TB, whereas the balance 18.2% were subclinical TB cases.

In 2020, the RNTCP was renamed as the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP) to underscore India's goal to eliminate TB in the country by 2025, five years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals. Can India achieve this ambitious goal with its continued over-reliance on a century-old smear microscopy?

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'The larger issue which we must worry about is that the Republic of India is backsliding on the separation of powers' | Photo Credit: Getty Images

The controversial [Jan Vishwas Act, 2022](#) which was recently [enacted into law by Parliament](#), has been touted by the government as a landmark piece of legislation aimed at improving "ease of doing business" in India by either decriminalising or making "compoundable" offences across 42 legislations.

The fine print which has received little media attention is that while the legislation has mostly replaced criminal imprisonment with penalties, it has transferred the power to impose these monetary penalties from the judiciary to the bureaucracy. For example, the Jan Vishwas Act amends the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 to replace imprisonment as a punishment for certain offences with penalties of up to 15 lakh that can be imposed by designated bureaucrats (Joint Secretaries). Under amendments to the Indian Forest Act, 1927 forest officers have the power to not just conduct an inquiry to determine the "damage done to the forest" by anybody but also order the offender to pay a hitherto uncapped "compensation" for said damage.

Given the regularity with which India Inc. complains about tax terrorism, there is surprisingly no opposition to giving the bureaucracy the power to be both prosecutor and judge while imposing penalties and ordering the payment of compensation. The larger question is whether giving the bureaucracy, rather than the courts, the power to not just adjudicate a factual dispute but also penalise or order compensation, goes against the constitutional scheme of separation of powers.

Although the Constitution does not mandate a separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive, Article 50 directs the state to achieve it in due time. Such a separation was not achieved until several years after the Constitution came into effect because the criminal magistracy was part of the executive at Independence. It took till approximately 1970, for several State legislatures to effect the separation of power at the level of the criminal magistracy through laws such as The West Bengal Separation of Judicial and Executive Functions Act, 1970 which separated the roles of the judicial and executive magistrates in the Criminal Procedure Code, 1898.

The saga of protecting judicial independence from the roving eye of the bureaucracy did not end

with the separation of the criminal magistracy from the executive. Since the 1980s, the bureaucracy has tried three different routes to capture judicial power.

First, different Ministries began creating judicial tribunals to take over various judicial functions hitherto exercised by the judiciary. Most of these tribunals were created in a manner to give bureaucrats an opportunity to be appointed to the tribunals as “technical members”.

Second, the Union government began creating a new class of statutory regulators such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India, and the Competition Commission of India (CCI) which had powers to punish the private sector with punishing fines. Virtually all these regulators ended up being headed by senior bureaucrats.

Third, the Union government started creating the role of adjudicatory officers in a number of legislations such as the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, the Information Technology Act, 2001 and the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. These adjudicatory officers were always bureaucrats who were given powers to either confirm “attachment orders” for properties or impose penalties on businesses. The Jan Vishwas Act carries forward this specific model of creating “adjudicatory officers” within the bureaucracy to impose penalties. Of the three categories discussed, the constitutionality of tribunals such as the National Tax Tribunal and some regulators such as the CCI has been challenged before the courts over concerns of the executive encroaching upon judicial powers. The question essentially comes down to the definition of “judicial function” since the Supreme Court is very clear that a “judicial function” can be discharged only by an independent judicial authority not under control of the executive. So, is the imposition of a penalty a “judicial function”?

While there is much case law, in the context of taxation law, on whether “penalties” are civil or criminal in nature, there does not appear to be any significant judicial precedent on whether the imposition of a penalty is a “judicial function”. There is a strong case to argue that any inquiry conducting fact finding followed by application of the law to the facts and determination of punishment or compensation is in essence a judicial function. The burden then should be on the government to prove its case before an independent judge who can guarantee citizens a fair trial before imposition of any punishment. The government cannot be a prosecutor and judge in its own cause. That is the essence of ‘rule of law’. That the Jan Vishwas Act allows bureaucrats in charge of enforcing the law to also conduct an inquiry and impose the statutory penalty on a finding of wrongdoing is constitutionally suspect.

The larger issue which we must worry about is that the Republic of India is backsliding on the separation of powers because of constant efforts by the bureaucracy of the Union executive to encroach upon judicial powers with the aid of elected Ministers who are either indifferent or clueless.

Prashant Reddy T. is a lawyer

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THE ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION BILL, 2023

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THE PHARMACY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

- **The Pharmacy (Amendment) Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 03, 2023. It amends the Pharmacy Act, 1948. The Act regulates the practice and profession of pharmacy. Key features of the Bill include:**
- **Registration: Registration under the Pharmacy Act, 1948 is mandatory to practice pharmacy in India. The Bill specifies that anyone who is registered as a pharmacist under the Jammu and Kashmir Pharmacy Act, 2011 or possesses qualifications prescribed under the 2011 Act will be deemed to be registered as a pharmacist under the Pharmacy Act, 1948. This will be contingent upon the person submitting an application for registration within a year of the amendment coming into force, and paying a prescribed fee.**

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FUTURE IS BRIGHT, FUTURE IS DIR-V FOR INDIA: MOS RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR

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Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Electronics & IT Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, virtually addressed the Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Symposium organised by IIT Madras in Chennai. In his address, he emphasized the government's vision for DIR-V which currently aims to build a robust ecosystem for RISC-V with effective public-private partnerships and collaborations with premiere academic institutions like IIT Madras.



The DI—V program, launched last year, aims to boost India's semiconductor ecosystem by creating advanced microprocessors. The Minister spoke about how DIR-V will create tech opportunities for every player in the industry and that it will play a vital role in achieving India's techade goals.



“Today, for India, the Future is Bright, the Future is DIR-V. Our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has already declared that this initiative will define India’s techade and present numerous tech opportunities. This will be driven by the creativity and innovation of our engineers and startups in India. Innovation, functionality and performance — these are the mantras for the coming years for the DIR-V program. The Government of India is fully committed to making DIR-V the Indian ISA (Instruction Set Architecture),” Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar said.

The Minister emphasized the importance of such indigenous programs and mentioned that there is a growing demand for silicon chips in the ever-increasing digitalisation and for new applications that are yet to be discovered.

“As the internet becomes more complex with the emergence of 5G and 6G, new applications will be discovered. There will be more opportunities for silicon chips, semiconductors and other systems to find a place. When we talk about performance and applications, I see a future where many digital products that we consume today, whether it’s the cloud, data centers, mobile devices, tablets, servers for cloud services, automotive technologies, sensors, IoT, 5G, or 6G networks, we will see DIR V-based chips, devices, and systems in all of these,” Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar further added.

The minister explained how it is essential to keep DIR-V at the heart of all India’s goals of high-performance computing. “While we may continue activities and programs in the x-86 and ARM space, our main focus is on the DIR-V program. I am willing to commit that our High performance computing goals led by C-DAC and supported by various public-private partnerships, will have DIR-V at the heart of it,” he added.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar also highlighted the importance of going beyond basic functionality and putting more effort into developing cutting-edge systems that set new global standards.

“Our ambition in the India techade spans these three areas: the automotive industrial space with IoT, mobility, and computing, including high-performance computing. Our goal is to make sure that DIR-V has a serious presence in all of these three segments. The real message in addition

to saying that we will back this program is that the expectation from the DIR-V community and the ecosystem is not just anymore about functionality. Today, we don't just want functional systems, we want functional systems that are also cutting edge in terms of setting new benchmarks against other comparative systems and ISAs," the Minister said.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar lauded the partnership between IIT Chennai and C-DAC, specifically in context of the DIR-V program, highlighting how such collaborations create a hub for creativity and innovation. "The collaboration between IIT Chennai and C-DAC has shown how IIT-Chennai has become a beacon for all other academic institutions around the world, as well as for those interested in being part of this rapidly galloping ecosystem of semiconductors and electronics innovation. IIT Chennai is fast becoming a hub for innovation and creativity, and a hub for future systems centered around DIR-V," he said.

The one-day symposium showcased various tech innovations and saw participation from startups, students, and academicians from the industry.

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NEITHER THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY NOR THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

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'The DPDP Bill 2023 attempts to pass off a lame-duck as a watchdog' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

'Personal data bill will boost digital economy, says Nasscom.' This industry response to the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2023 that was introduced in Parliament reveals the real purpose of the Bill — legalising data mining rather than safeguarding the right to privacy.

The right to privacy was reaffirmed by a nine-judge Constitutional bench of the Supreme Court in 2017. It set an international benchmark and illustrated the new challenges to the right to privacy posed by the digital age. The DPDP Bill 2023, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha last week, is an outcome of the debate around the right to privacy.

The right to information provides us access to government documents to ensure transparency and accountability of the government. Enacted as a law, the Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005 has played a critical role in deepening democratic practices. The much-awaited DPDP Bill 2023 ends up undermining our right to information, without doing much to protect our right to privacy.

In a crucial way, the two rights complement each other. Broadly speaking, the right to information seeks to make the government transparent to us, while the right to privacy is meant to protect us from government (and increasingly, private) intrusions into our lives.

Yet, there are some tensions between the right to information and the right to privacy. For example, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), mandatory disclosure provisions are meant to ensure that workers can monitor expenditure and also facilitate public scrutiny through social audits. Everyone has access to data about individuals registered under the Act, including when and how much was paid to each worker. The flip side of this, that has become apparent in recent times, is that unscrupulous operators can monitor, even scrape data systematically to swindle workers of their hard-earned wages (for example, showing up at their doorstep with offers of lucrative 'savings' or 'insurance' or with wares to sell).

However, the recently introduced DPDP Bill 2023 makes little attempt to deal with these hard questions. Instead, it makes the government less transparent to us while making us transparent

to both the government and private interests.

The Bill states that it is “A Bill to provide for the processing of digital personal data in a manner that recognises both the right of individuals to protect their personal data and the need to process such data for lawful purposes”. Section 4(2) defines “lawful purposes” in the broadest possible manner as “any purpose which is not expressly forbidden by the law”. Thus, as scraping information on wages/pensions paid to workers/ pensioners or mobile numbers of government scheme beneficiaries from government portals is “not expressly forbidden”, data mining can merrily continue. Section 36 allows the central government to ask the Board, data fiduciary or others to “furnish such information as it may call for”. Sections 4(2) and 36 together make our data fair game for both government and private entities.

The Right to Information Act 2005 anticipated some of these tensions and the consequent need to limit its own reach. Therefore, Section 8 of the RTI 2005 listed situations where “exemption from disclosure of information” would be granted.

Section 8(1)(j) grants exemption from disclosure if the information which relates to personal information sought “has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual”, unless a public information officer feels that larger public interest justifies disclosure. It set a high benchmark for exemption – “information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person.” The DPDP Bill 2023 suggests replacing Section 8(1)(j) with just “information which relates to personal information”.

This will undermine the RTI 2005. To give just one example, the current requirement for public servants (including judges, and Indian Administrative Service officers) to disclose their immovable assets will likely be off limits. This is indeed “information related to personal information”, but it serves a larger public interest (for example, to identify public servants with disproportionate assets).

The DPDP 2023 suffers from other shortcomings. For instance, the Data Protection Board, an oversight body will be under the boot of the government as the chairperson and members are to be appointed by the central government (Section 19). The DPDP Bill 2023 attempts to pass off a lame-duck as a watchdog.

In Europe, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) set a high standard for data protection. It has a strong watchdog that operates in a society with universal literacy, and high digital and financial literacy. For instance, in France, the data protection regulator was able to fine Google €50 million for violation of policies related to consent. Yet, Edward Snowden warned of the real danger of GDPR becoming a “paper tiger”, that “the problem isn’t data protection, the problem is data collection.” Restricting data collection is not even being discussed in India.

A weak board combined with the lack of universal literacy and poor digital and financial literacy, as well as an overburdened legal system, mean that the chances that citizens will be able to seek legal recourse when privacy harms are inflicted on them are slim.

Reetika Khera is a professor of economics at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

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PURGING THE NATION'S DATA OF POLITICS

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'Public policy interventions can be jeopardised' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

K.S. James, director of the International Institute of Population Studies at Mumbai, an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has been suspended, ostensibly to allow for an investigation of recruitment practices in the institution (The Hindu, July 30). A media report (The Wire, July 28) states that the development follows the publication of the fifth National Family Health Survey report (NFHS-5), produced by the institute.

As the institute has produced the report periodically for over two decades, and the director himself is a trained demographer, we would expect that the data are as robust as can be. It has been speculated that the government is peeved by some of its findings, and hence the move. There have been instances in the past when the axe came down on some periodic publications of India's national data agencies. Thus, the Consumer Expenditure Survey for 2017-18 conducted by the National Sample Survey Office was shelved. The official reason given was that it was methodologically flawed. As with the NFHS, these periodic surveys had been undertaken for decades. It is difficult to imagine that the last one suddenly adopted a questionable method.

In the case of the Consumer Expenditure Survey, it has been suggested based on leaked information, that the final report was suppressed as it showed a decline in aggregate consumption. At the time, leading commentators argued that this would be an anomaly in a growing economy, implying that there was good reason to have withheld the publication of the report. The argument is flawed, though, for a decline in total consumption can occur even in a growing economy when the income distribution shifts towards the rich.

Then, there was the Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18, which was ready for release in early 2019 but was published only after the parliamentary elections held that May. It is believed that the government delayed the release as the report showed unemployment to be at a 45-year high in 2017-18. The recorded rise in unemployment is not surprising as growth of production in the non-agricultural private sector slowed considerably following the demonetisation.

The media report referenced above has pointed to two findings in NFHS-5 that may have caused discomfiture to the government. The first is that the level of anaemia has risen across all sections of the population, quite alarmingly among children. The levels recorded are indeed disturbing, with over half of India's women in the age group 15-49 years reportedly anaemic. This does not sit well with the idea of an economy poised to be the third largest in the world in a matter of years, which the government takes credit for.

But is the finding itself implausible? The survey for NFHS-5 was conducted over 2019-21. There was a marked increase in food-price inflation during this period, with the monthly inflation rate for food surging from -1.3% in January 2019 to a staggering 12.1% in December of that year. While it may have declined since, it stayed high by historical standards for the next 24 months. Anaemia is partly related to food intake. It is possible that the higher price of food during the period of the survey contributed to its rise. In addition to the higher inflation, income had contracted during 2020-21 due to COVID-19.

A second finding reported in NFHS-5 shows that India has some way to go before it can be declared 'open defecation free' with any confidence. While NFHS-5 shows a substantial rise in the percentage of households using an "improved sanitation facility" since 2015-16, the figure falls short of 100% by about a fifth. Again, is this implausible? The figures for open defecation reported for 2005-06, 2015-16 and 2019-21 are 55%, 39% and 19%, respectively.

Compared to the reduction during the first period that achieved in the second one is actually quite impressive. Indeed, given the magnitude of the backlog in 2015-16 and that ending open defecation requires behavioural change among the population, it is not obvious that a superior outcome could have been achieved, whatever may have been the government's aspiration. Perhaps it is to flag that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has not failed after all, that when reporting the percentage of households using an improved sanitation facility the NFHS-5 report adds the caveat: "This indicator does not denote access to toilet facility." Such an entry is absent in earlier reports.

It would be unfortunate if the suspension of the head of the institution responsible for the NFHS-5 report is related to publishing them. Surveillance of the nation's data agencies would have damaging consequences. First, it introduces an incentive to not reveal outcomes that are likely to be frowned upon by the government of the day. This can jeopardise public policy interventions. Imagine there is an ongoing epidemic. If deaths are deliberately under-reported it could cause complacency in the population, encouraging a risky behaviour that spreads contagion.

Then there is the feature that elections are the means by which the nation chooses the political party they entrust with governance. For the exercise to be credible, citizens must have access to accurate and timely data. Now, national data agencies left to function without fear or favour become vital to a democracy.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is an economist. M. Parameswaran contributed to the piece.

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TECHNICAL MISSION FROM MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO VISITS MEITY, GOI AT ELECTRONICS NIKETAN, NEW DELHI

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: E-governance - applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential incl. Aadhaar & Digital power

Technical Mission from the Ministry of Digital Transformation, Trinidad & Tobago visited Electronics Niketan, Ministry of Electronics and IT, Government of India. The delegation was led by Mr Hassel Bacchus, Minister of Digital Transformation and it included Dr Roger Gopaul, High Commissioner, Ms. Jacqueline Wilson, Chief Digital Transformation Advisor, Shri Devindra Ramnarine, Senior Digital Transformation Advisor, Mr Christopher John, Senior Project Manager and Ms. Danielle Seunarine, Associate Professional.



The Indian side was represented by Shri Alkesh Kumar Sharma, Secretary, MeitY, Shri Abhishek Singh, P&CEO, NeGD and Shri Sushil Pal, Joint Secretary, MeitY and senior officers of MeitY, MEA, NeGD, UIDAI, NPCI-NIPL. In the welcome address, Mr. Abhishek Singh emphasised on India Stack Solutions, especially, Digital Public Infrastructure and foundational building blocks in form of Aadhaar (Digital Identity), DigiLocker & API Setu (Data Exchange) and UPI (Digital Payment).



In his address, Mr Hassel Bacchus, Hon'ble Minister of Digital Transformation, Trinidad and Tobago stated that digital transformation is critical enabler for sustainable development goals and its impact covers people, process and technologies. He also expressed the intent to understand digital journey of India, India Stack and DPI Ecosystem and foundation for digital transformation in India. He also mentioned that Trinidad and Tobago would like to learn from India and share the same in Caribbean region.

In his address, Shri Alkesh Kumar Sharma explained the Digital India, its vision to digitally transform the country and its contribution in digital inclusion, financial inclusion, participatory governance and in bringing more transparency in the governance. He covered the rollout of several digital initiatives (such as Jan Dhan, Direct Benefit Transfer, GeM, Co-Win, E-Sanjeevani, DIKSHA, etc) for ease of living, and ease of doing business. He also emphasized on India Stack Global, where 15 India Stack solutions are made available to the interested countries. He also mentioned that MoU on digital cooperation may be taken up between the two countries.

In the closing remarks, Shri Sushil Pal, Joint Secretary, MeitY thanked the delegations and participations. He informed that the delegation visit is also planned to CDAC for high end technologies development and NIELIT for digital skilling in India.

Thereafter, the three deep dive sessions on Digital Identity, Data Exchange and Digital Payment were organised. In these sessions, presentations and demonstrations were made by the senior officers from UIDAI, NeGD, and NPCI-NIPL. The meeting ended on positive note where DigiLocker was noted as the low hanging fruit that can be implemented on comparatively less time.

More than ten Digital India initiatives were showcased and explained to the delegates through kiosks placed in Centre for E-Governance Conference Hall at Electronics Niketan, New Delhi.

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TRIAL DONE IN INDIA SHOWS NUTRITION SUPPORT PREVENTS TB, RELATED DEATHS

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The study documented high levels of severe and extremely severe undernutrition in patients at diagnosis. | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

A large trial undertaken in India has underscored the role of nutritional supplementation in sharply cutting down [tuberculosis \(TB\) disease rate](#) in the household contacts of an index patient, and mortality reduction in people diagnosed with active pulmonary TB. The trial was conducted in four districts in Jharkhand between August 2019 and August 2022. The results of the study were published on Tuesday (August 9) in *The Lancet* and *The Lancet Global Health*.

In the randomised controlled trial involving household contacts of patients with pulmonary TB, nutritional support led to 39-48% reduction in TB disease in the intervention group compared with the control arm. In the study that lasted for six months, 122 people in the control group developed TB whereas the intervention arm had only 96 TB cases.

The 39% reduction in TB disease included all forms of TB (pulmonary and extra-pulmonary), while the 48% reduction was in microbiologically confirmed pulmonary TB. The intervention arm had 5,621 household contacts, and the control group had 4,724 family members.

Also read: [Explained | India's diabetes epidemic is making India's TB epidemic worse](#)

Each adult family member in the intervention arm received monthly nutritional support for six months — 5 kg of rice, 1.5 kg of split pigeon peas (*tur dal*), and a micronutrient pill; each child below 10 years received 50% of the adult nutrition support. Those in the control arm did not get any nutritional supplementation and were on a usual diet.

The trial also provided nutritional supplementation to all 2,800 people with active pulmonary TB undergoing treatment.

Treatment was successful in nearly 94% (2,623) of TB patients. There were only about 4% (108) deaths during the six-month follow-up. The trial was conducted on 2,800 people with pulmonary TB (1,979 men and 821 women). Over 80% of the participants had a BMI less than 18 and nearly 49% had a BMI less than 16 (severely underweight).

Monthly nutritional support — 5 kg of rice, 1.5 kg of milk powder, 3 kg of roasted chickpea flour,

500 ml of oil, and a micronutrient pill — was provided for six months for people with drug-susceptible TB, and 12 months for people with MDR (Multidrug Resistant)-TB.

“In our trial, the mortality was 7% in those under 35 kg body weight compared with 15% in a study carried out by the Chennai-based NIRT in Tiruvallur district, Tamil Nadu,” Anurag Bhargava from the Yenepoya Medical College, Mangaluru, who led the trial and is the corresponding author of both papers, said.

Early weight gain in the first two months was associated with 60% lower risk of TB mortality.

For ethical reasons, all 2,800 TB patients were provided with nutritional support.

The study documented high levels of severe and extremely severe undernutrition in patients at diagnosis. “Severe undernutrition is one of the contributory causes of deaths in TB patients,” Dr. Bhargava said. “Nutrition support provides protection against TB disease akin to a vaccine.”

“Among the risk factors for TB, undernutrition accounts for over 40% of new TB cases every year. While other risk factors like diabetes, HIV infection, smoking and alcohol also need attention, the one risk factor that stands out is undernutrition. Studies conducted by the NIRT (National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis), Chennai many years ago showed that TB patients who weighed less than 35 kg had four times higher mortality than those who weighed over 45 kg,” Soumya Swaminathan, former Chief Scientist, World Health Organization, and co-author of one paper, said during a press briefing.

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TRIBALS IN ANDHRA PRADESH'S NON-ST VILLAGES FEEL LEFT OUT

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Khond tribals at Kothaveedhi village in Cheedikada mandal of Anakapalli district in Andhra Pradesh. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Tribals who have been cultivating small portions of land for a sustainable living in some of the non-Scheduled Tribe villages and hamlets, predominantly inhabited by PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) such as the Khonds and the Konda Doras in Anakapalli district of Andhra Pradesh, are now a threatened lot. Any day a private person accompanied by a few government officials can move into their villages with earth movers and raze their settlement, which have been their homes since the last four to five decades. Post-bifurcation of the districts by the Jagan Mohan Reddy government, these mandals and villages have been carved out of the composite Visakhapatnam district to be now a part of Anakapalli district.

This is not the case with a few villages in Anakapalli; in all, this problem is present across 553 villages in Andhra Pradesh and 252 villages in Telangana, taking the total number to 805 villages, across the two Telugu-speaking States.

On January 26, 1950, when the Constitution came into force, the Fifth Schedule gave special protection to villages that were predominantly inhabited by tribals across various States. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution catered to the entire tribal belt of the Northeast. The authorities had demarcated the Fifth Schedule areas, including in Andhra Pradesh, based on documents provided by British rulers.

The issue of tribals in non-ST villages and atrocities committed against them by non-tribals first came to the fore in Andhra Pradesh during the Srikakulam Naxal uprising in the 1970s.

The then Srikakulam District Collector B.N. Yugandhar and a few other civil servants such as B.D. Sarma and S.R. Sankaran, who looked beyond the law and order issue, realised that these villages, which are predominantly inhabited by tribals and set amid forest lands in the hills, were backward and qualified to be notified under the Fifth Schedule. This would give them the protection under rules enshrined in the Constitution. A report was sent both to the State and the Central governments.

Based on it, the Union Government had asked all State governments to identify such villages

and send a report.

On March 10, 1976, then Chief Minister Jalagam Vengala Rao passed a resolution in the Cabinet, identifying 805 villages, and it was sent to the Union Government in 1980, and since then it has been gathering dust. Though other States such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra had pursued the Union Government and got the resolution passed in the Union Cabinet with the President of India passing the order, Andhra Pradesh did not take any interest.

It was only in 2007, that the then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy took up the issue, as that was one of the main agendas in peace talks with Naxalites in 2004. The issue was discussed in the Assembly, but YSR's untimely death again closed the chapter, despite a valiant effort by Ajay Kumar of Fifth Schedule Sadhana Samithi (FSSS), who was supported by civil rights leaders including K. Balagopal of the Human Rights Forum.

Notifying a tribal village under the Fifth Schedule gives it protection. Primarily, being a tribal village, not an inch of land can be taken from them by any non-tribal or a private corporation. Even the natural resources cannot be exploited, as they are protected by a number of laws and Acts such as the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, the Forest Rights Act (FRA), the 1/70 of AP Government Act and the Samata judgment.

Once these villages are notified under the Fifth Schedule, the villages will be entitled to funds from the Tribal Sub-Plan, which can be utilised for development and they will come under the purview of the ITDAs (Integrated Tribal Development Authority).

Their cases can be settled at the sub-collector or Tehsildar level and they need not run from pillar to post at the civil courts. According to the Yugandhar Expert Group on Prevention of Alienation of Tribal Land, the Dhebar Commission and the Koneru Ranga Rao Committee reports, all the 805 villages qualify to be notified under the Fifth Schedule. They are composite tribal villages and located in forest areas. As per the 2011 census, the population comprises over 50% tribals.

Though Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has asked the ITDAs to prepare a fresh proposal, members of the FSSS and tribals allege that work is progressing at a snail's pace.

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CLIMATE EVENTS AND AN UMBRELLA FOR URBAN HEALTH

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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'Given increasing exposure to unpredictable and extreme climatic events, we need to rebuild the urban primary care system and ensure its resilience' | Photo Credit: The Hindu

There has been much media focus on the monsoon season in India this year largely on account of the large-scale devastation in parts. Beginning with the cyclonic storm Biparjoy that formed over the Arabian Sea in June and which made landfall in western India, to the floods in the north-eastern State of Assam, and the recent episodes of heavy rain and devastation in parts of north India, the subject has been a matter of concern especially for policymakers.

Even as the process of getting back to normal life is in various stages, we must not lose sight of another looming challenge. Common water and vector-borne diseases such as typhoid, cholera, dysentery, leptospirosis, malaria, and dengue are likely to impact people in rain-affected areas. Conditions in these areas are most likely to be conducive for the spread of water and vector-borne diseases.

While every section of the population is affected in different ways as a result of extreme climate events, there is no doubt that households in urban areas, particularly in less developed parts of a city such as slums and urban settlement colonies, are likely to be the most vulnerable groups. A large majority of people in these slums and resettlement colonies live in poverty, working in the informal sector of the urban economy with no social security benefits.

The findings on the vulnerability of households to climate change-led events, such as those in recent months in India, finds a place in our recently published study in the Indian Journal of Public Health. The study highlights two important points: While households in general with poor socio-economic indicators are more vulnerable to malaria, it is urban households, when compared to their rural counterparts, that are significantly at a much greater odds of suffering from malaria. It is well known that dengue too affects the urban population more. Second, households from climatically high and moderately high vulnerable States are at greater odds of suffering from malaria.

Post the monsoon season, water and vector-borne disease management officials are on high alert to monitor and contain the spread of such diseases. However, this time the pressure on them will be palpable. Controlling the spread of these diseases requires a systematic and coordinated effort not only within but also between two or more States. One reason is because

of the movement of people between States. Therefore, coordinating mitigation and adaptation efforts can be a challenge.

Given increasing exposure to unpredictable and extreme climatic events, we need to rebuild the urban primary health-care system and ensure its resilience. Such a system should focus on the vulnerable urban population, especially those living in urban slums and peri-urban areas. A resilient health system is one which can respond to emergency situations, prepare well in advance against impending crises and adapt to changing public health needs.

A crucial prerequisite for this is greater public investment with an immediate focus on urban areas that are more vulnerable to climatic shocks. We spend very little on primary health care and only a tiny fraction goes to urban local bodies. Even though the National Urban Health Mission has made modest beginnings in improving primary-care systems in urban areas, the limited and varied ability of urban local bodies in generating revenues constrains progress.

A large part of preventive and public health functions are the responsibilities of local bodies. What is essential is a special fund from statutory institutions such as the Finance Commission that is targeted towards building a resilient system for vulnerable urban areas. Such attention needs to go beyond cities, to towns.

It is important to recognise the complexities of urban health governance with multiple agencies and fragmented care provisioning, alongside the increasing presence and dominance of the private sector. The experience during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that public health emergencies need greater coordination and cooperation across various actors in terms of knowledge and data sharing, preventive and curative functions, treatment practices and, above all, the regulation of rates and standards. The realm of surveillance and information systems such as the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme needs to be universalised, made comprehensive and strengthened.

With the complex nature of the health and the climate crisis, the current system of vertical disease control programmes needs to give way to a comprehensive health system approach in the management of public health programmes. An immediate step in working towards this could be the integration of front line workers across various disease management programmes to create a cadre of multi-purpose, front line public health cadres in urban areas, who would be accountable to communities as well as to the health system. Such integration will also help address one of the key challenges in the sphere of public health in the country — a shortage of an adequately trained workforce in health and allied areas.

Also read | [Climate change a leading reason for rise in number of dengue cases: study](#)

As a system, we most often work in a resource-constrained environment. Therefore, such systems must integrate in their planning and management the idea that climate change-led events are only going to be more frequent and intense. The world needs to be better prepared.

Pradeep Guin is a faculty member at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana. Indranil Mukhopadhyay is a faculty member at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana

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FALLING SHORT: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE DIGITAL DATA PROTECTION BILL, 2023

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

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The [Digital Data Protection Bill, 2023](#), was [passed in the Lok Sabha](#) on Monday and will now have to be cleared by the Rajya Sabha. The fresh iteration, which has undergone a few drafts, seems to have incorporated suggestions made to its 2022 version, although it is not clear what the submissions were as the consultation process was not brought to light by the government. The highlight of the Bill is the provision that personal data of an individual, the data principal, may be processed by an entity or a person, the data fiduciary, for a lawful purpose only after the consent of the data principal or “for certain legitimate uses”. These “uses” are situations where such data may be processed without obtaining the data principal’s consent, such as by government agencies for providing licences, welfare benefits, permits and services. This Bill includes an obligation on the part of the data fiduciary to notify the data principal — and the Data Protection Board (DPB), to be established by the government to adjudicate on compliance or not with the Bill — if there is a personal data breach. There are other obligations defined for the data fiduciary as well, but one issue with the Bill is that it does not include the need for informing data principals about third-parties with whom the data could be shared, or duration of storage.

Too much leeway is provided to agencies of the state in the form of exemptions. The Srikrishna Committee’s Draft Bill in 2018 allowed for exemptions to be granted to state institutions from acquiring informed consent from data principals or to process their data in matters related only to the “security of the state”, and also called for a law to provide for parliamentary oversight and judicial approval of non-consensual access to personal data. In the 2023 version, the state is empowered to process data through wide-ranging exemptions and the government is allowed, in effect, to collect information which could be used for mass surveillance. In overriding consent to be obtained by the state from the data principal for purposes of providing benefits, subsidies, and licences, the Bill also does away with purpose limitation — using the data only for the specified purpose. It seeks to introduce amendments that effectively remove the public interest exception to disclosure of personal information under the Right to Information Act, thereby diluting accountability and transparency in the functioning of government officials. The Bill also continues to retain a much weaker version of the regulatory Data Protection Authority envisaged in the 2018 version in the DPB which will only have adjudicatory and not regulatory powers, and whose members will be appointed by the Union government. The Bill must be thoroughly discussed and these discrepancies ironed out in the Rajya Sabha.

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NATIONAL DENTAL COMMISSION BILL, 2023 PASSED BY THE PARLIAMENT TO ELEVATE DENTAL EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE STANDARDS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

In a significant step towards enhancing healthcare quality and aligning dental education with global standards, the Parliament has passed the National Dental Commission Bill, 2023. This landmark legislation underscores the government's unwavering commitment to ensuring the highest standards of dental care for its citizens.

The National Dental Commission Act 2023, will introduce a groundbreaking regulatory framework by establishing the National Dental Commission (NDC), which will replace the existing Dental Council of India (DCI) and repeal the Dentists Bill, 1948. The Act envisions a complete overhaul of the dental education and profession landscape to bring it on par with international benchmarks. Key features include:

1. Constitution of National Dental Commission and State Dental Councils:The Act establishes the National Dental Commission and mandates the formation of State Dental Councils or Joint Dental Councils. This structure aims to decentralize authority and enhance effective regulation.

2. Three Autonomous Boards:The Act will empower three distinct Autonomous Boards: the Under-Graduate and Post-Graduate Dental Education Board, the Dental Assessment and Rating Board (DARB), and the Ethics and Dental Registration Board (EDRB). These boards will carry out specific functions, contributing to a comprehensive regulatory framework.

3. Fixed Tenure and Professional Development:The Act will introduce a fixed tenure for the Chairperson, Members, and Secretary of the Commission, with no possibility of reappointment. The NDC will emphasize promotive and preventive dental care services and will focus on fostering the soft skills necessary for career advancement among dentists and dental auxiliaries.

4. Industry Collaboration and Technological Innovation:Recognizing the importance of collaboration and research, the Act will encourage partnerships with industry and institutions to promote advancements in dental research. It also emphasizes the integration of cutting-edge technology into dental education.

5. Online National Register and Dental Advisory Council:The Act will provide for maintaining an online and live National Register of licensed dentists and dental auxiliaries. Furthermore, it establishes a Dental Advisory Council with representation from all States/Union Territories to ensure comprehensive insights and guidance.

6. Merit-Based Selection Process:Under the Act, the NDC will be led by a 'selected' Regulator. This entails the appointment of the NDC Chairman and Members through a merit-based selection process conducted by a Search-cum-Committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary.

7. Collaborative Approaches:The Act will facilitate joint sittings with relevant statutory bodies, including the National Medical Commission, Pharmacy Council of India, Indian Nursing Council, National Commission for Indian System of Medicine, National Commission for Homeopathy, and National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions.

8. Fee Regulation and Constitutions:The Act will empower the Commission to frame guidelines for fee determination for fifty percent of seats in private dental colleges and deemed Universities. Additionally, within a year of the Act's commencement, all State governments will establish State Dental Councils or Joint Dental Councils.

The National Dental Commission Act 2023, is poised to usher in vital regulatory reforms in the dental education sector. It champions transparency, accountability, and professionalism to safeguard the interests of the public. By promoting affordable oral healthcare availability and boosting the employability of Indian dental professionals globally, the Commission is set to enhance both domestic and international dental care standards.

MV

HFV/National Dental Commission Bill 2023 /8thAugust2023/7

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PARLIAMENT PASSES NATIONAL NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COMMISSION (NNMC) BILL, 2023 FOR COMPREHENSIVE REFORMS IN NURSING SECTOR

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

In a landmark move aimed at bringing transformative changes to the nursing education and practice landscape, the Parliament has passed the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission (NNMC) Bill, 2023. The Act will replace the existing Indian Nursing Council with a modern regulatory structure, marking a significant legislative reform in the sector.

The NNMC Act, 2023, will introduce several crucial provisions to elevate the standards of nursing education and services, enhance professional conduct, and ensure greater transparency and accountability. The key highlights of the proposed Act are as follows:

1. Establishment of National and State Commissions: Under the NNMC Act, a National Nursing and Midwifery Commission and Autonomous Boards at the National level will be established. Corresponding State Nursing and Midwifery Commissions will also be set up to regulate and maintain education and service standards, oversee professional conduct, and manage online and live Registers.

2. Tenure and Accountability: One of the pivotal reforms introduced by the Act will be the provision of fixed tenures for members and the chairperson of the Commission, eliminating reappointment and preventing vested interests. This measure ensures transparency and accountability among regulators in the nursing education sector. The Act will also grant the government the authority to issue directions to the Commission in the interest of the public.

3. Uniform Admission Process and Competence: The National Commission will implement a standardized admission process to ensure consistency across nursing education. Moreover, it will focus on maintaining the competence of nursing and midwifery professionals to ensure high-quality healthcare services.

4. Embracing Innovation and Collaboration: The NNMC Act will encourage the use of cutting-edge technology and innovation in nursing education. The Commission will collaborate with industry and other institutions to foster synergy, excellence, and research in the nursing field.

5. Development of Soft Skills and Specialized Courses: The Act will emphasize on the development of soft skills among registered professionals and recognizes specialized courses and certification programs in nursing and midwifery. This move aims to enhance the expertise of nursing professionals in various domains.

6. Global Mobility and Expertise: The NNMC Act will seek to facilitate global mobility and employability of Indian nurses by inviting foreign experts and domain specialists to participate in the National Commission's meetings. This international collaboration will contribute to enhancing the skills and expertise of Indian nurses.

7. National Advisory Council and Coordination: The Act will provide for the formation of a National Advisory Council to ensure balanced representation from all states and Union Territories. This Council will offer advice on matters related to nursing education, services, training, and research. Additionally, joint sittings with relevant statutory bodies, including the

National Medical Commission, Pharmacy Council of India, National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions, National Commission of Indian system of Medicine, and National Commission of Homeopathy, will promote a team-based approach to healthcare delivery.

The passing of National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill 2023, signifies a major step towards elevating nursing education and practice standards, fostering innovation, and enhancing collaboration across the healthcare sector. It is a crucial milestone that underscores the government's commitment to nurturing a highly skilled and competent nursing workforce, thus ensuring the delivery of quality healthcare services to the nation.

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IN BENGAL, A CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Former Vice-Chancellors and academicians at a press conference at the Kolkata Press Club on the issue of appointment of interim Vice-Chancellors of several State Universities. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Even as the new academic session begins, the West Bengal government and Raj Bhavan are at loggerheads over the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs). At a time when universities are grappling with provisions of the new National Education Policy which mandates four-year undergraduate degree courses, none of the 31 State-run Universities in West Bengal has a full-time Vice-Chancellor. Over the past few months, Governor C.V. Ananda Bose has appointed more than a dozen people to officiate as VCs of state-run universities allegedly without holding any consultation with the State government. When Raj Bhavan announced the names of officiating VCs, the West Bengal government initially tried to discourage academics from taking up the posts. Later a public interest litigation was filed before the Calcutta High Court challenging these appointments. On June 28, the High Court dismissed the petition describing it as a 'tool' to challenge the orders of the Governor. The court, however, pointed out that the appointments were only an interim arrangement.

The West Bengal government and the Governor's office has not had the best of relationships, but things took a turn for the worse in 2022 when Jagdeep Dhankhar was Governor. The State government appointed 24 Vice-Chancellors, reportedly without consulting the Governor, whose validity was challenged by a writ petition. The court ruled that UGC Regulations of 2018, which states that a UGC nominee has to be in the search committee for selection of VCs, will prevail.

After Governor Bose assumed office, he initially agreed to the Bengal government's proposal of accepting the resignation of the VCs, and appointing them as interim VCs this March. In May, when the three-month term came to an end, the State government sent a proposal to the Governor with a list of 27 names to be appointed as interim VCs for a period of six months. The Governor picked only two names from the list, and appointed several officiating VCs without consulting the State government.

On August 4, The West Bengal University Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023 was passed in the State Assembly to comply with the court's order by reconstituting the search-cum-selection committee for the appointment of VCs. Along with having a UGC nominee, the new committee has five members, three of them nominated by the State government, thus giving the government an upper hand in appointment of VCs.

Also read [No illegality in appointment of V-Cs by Bengal Governor, says Calcutta High Court](#)

In 2022, the State Assembly had passed a number of Bills replacing the Governor with the Chief Minister as Chancellor of the Universities in the State to ease bottlenecks in VC appointments. The Bills have not been cleared by Raj Bhavan. After the passage of the August 4 legislation, a group of BJP MLAs met the Governor urging him not to give his assent to this legislation as well.

If the Governor and the State government continue to have different views on appointment of VCs, it can cause irreparable damage to higher education in the State.

While the number of both State-run and private universities have increased in the past 12 years of Trinamool Congress rule, most of these universities lack infrastructure. With many students and faculty opting to leave the State, higher education in West Bengal has become a shadow of its glorious past.

In the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIFR) ratings for 2023, only one university from the State, Jadavpur University, figured among the top 10 universities at number four. The University of Calcutta which had figured among the top 10 universities in NIFR 2022, slipped four positions, and is ranked 12th in NIFR 2023. No other university from West Bengal figured among the top 50 universities in the country.

Academics and administrators, who have been assigned the responsibility of interim VCs, cannot take any policy decision nor can they allocate any resources. The status quo is likely to weigh heavily on the future of over five lakh students who are getting admitted to these institutions across the State for the 2023-24 academic sessions.

In the past, Raj Bhavan has said that “education must be treated as a no-conflict zone”, a view echoed by State Education Minister Bratya Basu. Both Raj Bhavan and the State government need to walk the talk, and resolve the impasse in the interest of students.

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PARLIAMENT PASSES THE ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF) BILL, 2023 WITH THE RAJYA SABHA ADOPTING THE BILL BY A VOICE VOTE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

Union Minister for Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh said here today that "Anusandhan National Research Foundation" will define the stature of India at 2047.

Replying to the discussion on "Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023" in the Rajya Sabha, Dr Jitendra Singh said, the Anusandhan Act will pave the way for India to join the select league of developed nations.

The House later passed the Bill with a Voice vote. It had been earlier passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday, 7th August 2023.

"This is a Bill which is going to have a long-term effect, long term outcomes and all of us, each citizen of India, including those sitting on the other side, are going to be stakeholders. To that extent, this is possibly history in making," he said.



The Bill will provide high level strategic direction for research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture.

The Minister said, it will also promote scientific and technological interfaces of humanities and social sciences to promote, monitor and provide support as required for such research and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the Bill will hike the R&D spending in the country. The Executive Council of NRF is mandated not only to monitor the progress of the different projects but also to analyse the accountability of the funding at different level stages.

“(It envisages spending of) Rs. 50,000 crore for five years, out of which Rs. 36,000 crore, almost 80%, is going to come from non-government sources, from industry & philanthropists, from domestic as well as outside sources,” he said.



Clarifying that the Bill takes care of State Universities and Institutions by earmarking separate funds, Dr Jitendra Singh said the bill envisages separate competition within the State Universities and Institutions with separate allocation exclusively for them.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the NRF envisaged by PM Modi will catapult us to the league of developed nations pioneering new research in new frontiers.

“Ever since Prime Minister Modi took over in 2014, he has, one after the other, taken a number of path-breaking decisions, broken several taboos of the past in order to liberate India of those self-made barriers so that we could have a global role. And he envisaged for ourselves the Amrit Kaal next 25 years. Obviously we have to live up to global parameters and that is possible only if we have the same level of competitiveness as other countries,” he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said PM Modi has proven how to break silos and work together with the private sector to unlock the vast potential of our unexploited resources.

“PM Modi unlocked the Space sector, today you have Chandrayaan, 160 Startups from the private sector, in 2014 PM Modi in a decision amended the Atomic Energy Act and allowed joint ventures, today nuclear power plant coming up at Gorakhpur, Haryana,” he said.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the NRF will also throw open new avenues of livelihood.

“PM Modi spoke about Startup India and Standup India from the ramparts of the Red Fort and so from just 350 Startups, today we are more than one lakh. We developed the first (affordable) Covid vaccine; and from just 50 Startups in Biotechnology in 2014, we are up to 66,000,” he said, adding, “He made us realise rozgar does not necessarily mean Sarkari naukri and helped us come out of that mindset.”



The Act will pave the way to establish NRF that will seed, grow and promote Research and Development (R&D) and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.

The Act will establish NRF, an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in the country as per recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), at a total estimated cost of Rs. 50,000 crores during five years (2023-28).

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will be the administrative Department of NRF which will be governed by a Governing Board consisting of eminent researchers and professionals across disciplines. Since the scope of the NRF is wide-ranging – impacting all ministries - the Prime Minister will be the ex-officio President of the Board and the Union Minister of Science & Technology & Union Minister of Education will be the ex-officio Vice-Presidents. NRF's functioning will be governed by an Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

NRF will forge collaborations among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions, and create an interface mechanism for participation and contribution of industries and State governments in addition to the scientific and line ministries. It will focus on creating a policy framework and putting in place regulatory processes that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D.

The Act will also repeal the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) established by an Act of Parliament in 2008 and subsume it into NRF which has an expanded mandate and covers activities over and above the activities of SERB.

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COASTAL AQUACULTURE AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023 CLEAR BY BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023 passed by the both Houses of the Parliament of India. The Government intends to reiterate that the coastal aquaculture and activities connected therewith are permitted activities within the CRZ under the CRZ notifications. The Amendment Bill provides that the registration granted under Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act shall prevail and be treated as valid permission under CRZ Notification with the express intention of enabling lakhs of small marginal aquaculture farmers to avoid the possible need for obtaining CRZ clearances from multiple agencies.

Specific exemption has been granted under the CAA Act, through this amendment for the establishment of aquaculture units like hatcheries, Brood stock multiplication centres (BMC) and Nucleus Breeding Centres (NBC) within the No Development Zone (NDZ) [200m from the HTL] of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ).

The principal Act has a provision of imprisonment for a period up to 3 years for carrying out coastal aquaculture without registration. This appears to be a very harsh punishment for an offence of purely civil nature and hence the amendment bill replaces the same with suitable civil instruments such as penalty in line with the principle of decriminalizing civil transgressions.

The Amendment Bill provides for broad basing “coastal aquaculture” to comprehensively cover all activities of coastal aquaculture under the purview of this Act and to remove the ambiguity existing in the Principal Act between the farm and other verticals of coastal aquaculture. This is likely to ensure that no coastal aquaculture activity is left out of the ambit of the Act and operate in an environmentally hazardous manner.

In 2005, coastal aquaculture activity was essentially shrimp farming. Now newer forms of environment friendly coastal aquaculture such as cage culture, seaweed culture, bi-value culture, marine ornamental fish culture, pearl oyster culture etc. have come up which can be done in coastal areas and mostly within CRZ. These activities also have the potential for generating huge revenue and creating large scale employment opportunities for coastal fisher communities especially fisherwoman and hence need to be promoted which can be done by bringing them within the ambit of Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act.

The Government intends to promote ease of doing business in coastal aquaculture by fine tuning some of the operational procedures of Coastal Aquaculture Authority. The present amendment provides for effecting changes to the certificate of registration in case of changes in ownership or size of the activity and for providing new certificate in case of mutilation, damage or loss of certificate etc. It also provides for condoning the delay in applying for renewal of registration with compounded fee which was absent in the principal Act.

Many of the administrative matters such as the powers of Member Secretary of the CAA and normal functioning of the Authority in the absence of Chairperson which were ambiguous have been suitably resolved under the Amended Act for administrative efficiency and accountability.

The Amendments expressly empower the Authority to appoint Committees which can contain

experts, stake holders and public representatives for the efficient discharge of its duties and performance of its functions under Act.

Disease prevention is key to success of coastal aquaculture. Hence, Government intends to create facilities that produce genetically improved and disease-free stocks for use in coastal aquaculture. Such facilities, that is Hatcheries, Brood stock Multiplication centers and Nucleus Breeding Centers can be established only in areas having direct access to seawater and the Government intends to enable and facilitate them. Simultaneously, Government also intends to prevent use of antibiotics and pharmacologically active substances in coastal aquaculture by making express provisions in the Act.

Government envisages introducing global best practices such as mapping and zonation of aquaculture areas, Good Aquaculture Practices, quality assurance and safe aquaculture products, and to facilitate ease of doing business without diluting the core principles of environment protection through introducing suitable provisions in the Act. These will promote production and productivity, traceability, increased competitiveness and entrepreneurship along the value chain and exports in coastal aquaculture sector in a sustainable manner and will lead to sustained raise in incomes and employment in rural areas along the coast.

The Amendment Bill has new provisions for empowering the Coastal Aquaculture Authority to better regulate the activities connected with coastal aquaculture for coastal environment compliance. The amendment bill provides for fixing or adopting the standards for emission or discharge of effluents from coastal aquaculture units, making the owner liable to pay the cost of demolition and cost of damage to the environment, if any, as assessed by the Authority in the true spirit of Polluter Pays Principle and prohibits coastal aquaculture in the ecologically sensitive areas or the geo-morphological features.

With improvements in technology and culture practices, polluting potential of shrimp culture has declined substantially. The sector is now poised to take the next big leap in the form of diversification of species and area expansion with policy space provided through these amendments in the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act 2005.

Background:

The Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act was enacted in 2005 with an aim to protect coastal environment, while promoting orderly growth of coastal aquaculture farming in coastal areas in a manner consistent with it. The rapid and sustainable, environment friendly development of coastal aquaculture in the coastal states/UTs without causing any environmental hazard has been made possible due to the systems and procedures set in place by Coastal Aquaculture Authority under the provisions of the Act. The Act provisions have also ensured continued operation of coastal aquaculture within Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) area subject to restrictions imposed by the Authority.

This in turn has facilitated creation of millions of jobs, self-employment opportunities, enhanced incomes to aquafarmers, catalyzed growth of businesses and entrepreneurship in aquaculture including development of a vibrant aquaculture support industry. As a result, today, coastal aquaculture is one of the major success stories crafted by diverse and hardworking small farmers and educated youth of 2-4 hectares land holding around the fulcrum of vibrant policy support of government.

During the last 9 years, the shrimp production of the country increased by 267% from 3.22 lakh tons in 2013-14 to a record 11.84 lakh tons (provisional figures) in 2022-23. India's seafood exports doubled from Rs 30,213 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 63,969 crore in 2022-23 with shrimp

contributing the lion's share of exports i.e. Rs. 43,135 crore. Shrimp exports have more than doubled with an increase of 123% from Rs. 19,368 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 43,135 crore in 2022-23 with USA being the largest importer. In fact, the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha and Tamil Nadu have contributed substantially to the growth of coastal aquaculture shrimp production and export.

Though the principal Act has specifically excluded Coastal aquaculture from the purview of CRZ notification, there have been ambiguities and interpretations to the contrary as the CRZ notification 1991 was referred to by the legal entities and courts. Further, Section 13(8) of the Principal Act which prohibits coastal aquaculture within the "No Development Zone" of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) has been misinterpreted to be applicable to the hatcheries as well.

Hence, aquaculture farmers and stakeholders have been requesting to remove the ambiguities and amend some of the provisions of the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act to make this legislation progressive and decrease the regulatory burden.

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DRIVE TO SENSITISE HEALTH WORKERS TOWARDS TRANSGENDER WOMEN, GAY MEN

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The effort is to reduce discrimination and improve outcomes. | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

A group of researchers set out to find if interventions among healthcare providers can help in improving their understanding and attitude towards transgender women (TGW) and men who have sex with men (MSM). They have demonstrated that a specifically designed intervention module comprising workshops and explainer videos had positive outcomes among healthcare workers in two government hospitals in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

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The intervention showed preliminary evidence for improving positive attitudes, comfort level and understanding of the healthcare issues of MSM and TGW among healthcare workers (HCW), warranting large-scale implementation research.

In an article - "[Efficacy of a multi-level pilot intervention \('Harmony'\) to reduce discrimination faced by men who have sex with men and transgender women in public hospitals in India: Findings from a pre-and post-test quasi-experimental trial among healthcare workers](#)" - published in *Venereology* recently, the researchers have elaborated how they tested the efficacy of an intervention among 98 healthcare workers (HCW) to reduce sexual orientation and gender identity-related stigma and discrimination faced by MSM and TGW in the two centres. The HCWs included clinicians, nurses, counsellors and other staff such as lab technicians.

One of the collaborators of the study, Sudharshini S., Associate Professor, Institute of Community Medicine, Madras Medical College/Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, said that TGW and MSM often felt that there was discrimination and lack of access to hospital services, both in the government and private sectors.

"Some of the issues faced by Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGM) are limited knowledge and understanding about them among healthcare staff, resulting in suboptimal care, increased chances of negative interactions and discrimination. Some healthcare providers/staff (not all staff) look down upon SGM because of their sexual orientation/behaviour, gender identity or gender expression," principal investigator Venkatesan Chakrapani, chairperson, Centre for Sexuality and Health Research and Policy, Chennai, said.

The researchers developed an intervention - Harmony: a half-day workshop at the group-level and four videos at the individual levels.

“We roped in MSM and TGW as co-trainers to share their stories with the healthcare staff. Next, we created four short videos detailing the issues faced by MSM and TGW in healthcare settings. These videos were shared with healthcare staff (one per week for four weeks) ,” Dr. Sudharshini said.

Dr. Chakrapani added that a checklist was shared with the hospital administration of the potential steps to make the hospital friendly for SGM and to enhance the quality of care for them.

Assessing the efficacy of the intervention, the researchers found that the positive attitude scores increased by 20% from baseline to follow-up and by 30% from post-intervention to follow-up. There was a significant increase of 23% in the comfort level in providing care to MSM and TGW from baseline to post-intervention. There was increased support for non-discriminatory hospital policy.

Client surveys were conducted among 400 MSM/TGW attending the intervention hospitals, before the intervention among HCWs and three months after the intervention.

RGGGH dean E. Theranirajan said it was important to sensitise doctors, nurses and paramedical staff to do away with the stigma and discrimination. “Sensitising them is important as it would have an impact on the healthcare provided for TGW and MSM,” he said.

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SHOULD THERE BE A BLANKET BAN ON SMARTPHONES IN SCHOOLS?

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'In countries that have done extensive research, they put an age restriction on when students can bring phones into the classroom'. | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

India has 1.2 billion mobile phone users and over 600 million smartphone users. That figure is expected to cross a billion by 2026, according to a Deloitte study, indicating that a future world will be dependent on these small devices. However, one place where smartphone usage has become controversial is the classroom. Last month, [UNESCO recommended a universal ban](#) on the usage of smartphones in schools, saying that it was needed to tackle classroom disruption, improve learning, and help protect children from cyberbullying. In an advisory dated August 10, titled "[Restrictions on the use of mobile phones in school premises under rule 43 of DSER 1973](#)", the Directorate of Education, Private School Branch, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi, has highlighted the need for all stakeholders connected with school education such as students, parents, teachers and heads of schools "to arrive at a consensus on the minimum use of mobile phones in the school environment so that a more meaningful learning atmosphere could be maintained in the classroom". In a conversation moderated by **Priscilla Jebaraj**, **Jyoti Arora** and **K.R. Maalathi** weigh in on whether a complete ban on smartphones in schools is necessary.

Ms. Arora, as the principal of a school, what do you think of UNESCO's recommendation, and what has been your experience in your own school?

Jyoti Arora: UNESCO has clearly warned against an uncritical rush towards embracing digital products in educational settings. There is a little evidence digital technology's added value in education. But there is a clear threat also, with the report highlighting that mere proximity to a mobile device was found to distract students. This is more than sufficient for us to understand that mobile phone should not be allowed in the education system. When you speak about the future, that it will be completely dependent on technology — to my understanding, the future is in our hands. And certainly we want to create a safe future for our learners.

Also read | [Do smartphones belong in classrooms? Four scholars weigh in](#)

I firmly believe that mobile phones should not be allowed in schools. It's a significant source of distraction. Students are easily tempted to check notifications. Even children studying in middle school, they are getting too much engaged in social media, playing games leading to complete

decline in their focus on academic tasks. Any decision on this issue must prioritise student wellbeing and align with the institution's core values. The implications of such a choice must be carefully considered, because it can lead to great damage.

Dr. Maalathi, you have helped to set up schools in India, Qatar, and Africa. What is the international perspective on positives and negatives?

K.R. Maalathi: Prior to 2019 — that is, pre pandemic — definitely smartphones were a no-no everywhere. And then the pandemic hit, everybody wanted to use the smartphone and we gave the smartphones in hand.

In Finland, Australia, England or other developed nations, definitely smartphones are there. A blanket ban definitely cannot be an answer. First, smartphones are everywhere. Children have access to it, and parents are giving it to them. And with the increasing number of edtech products, which are coming into the market today... We talk about digitalisation, including the government; the NEP [National Education Policy] gives a lot of importance to smartphones. Even the state curriculum gives a lot of QR codes [for additional resources].

Also read | [More students using smartphones for entertainment than study: survey](#)

Researchers feel that this is the way to go forward, with AI coming into the big picture. But does it really help, or what kind of damage it may do, we have not done the research in our country.

In countries that have done extensive research, they use an age restriction when students can bring phones into the classroom, 16 years; in Finland, it is about 12 years.

In our country, if you ban it, children are anyway bringing it discreetly to the classes. Frisking happens inside the classrooms to see whether children are carrying it. So that brings in a lot of pressure on the school.

There is age appropriateness. In England, children are allowed to bring in their phones from about Year Four and Year Five, but they will have to deposit their phones.

In Finland, from about 12 years of age they are allowed to bring their phones along with them and they are allowed to keep it in their hands even when the classes are run.

Earlier, Australia had no restrictions, but post-COVID, looking at the mental well-being and the emotional well-being, at the behaviour problems which have started, they have also brought in some kind of restrictions with regard to usage of smartphones inside the campuses.

So in many ways, the global situation is in flux. UNESCO says that one in four countries now have a ban or some sort of restrictions. Ms. Arora, you're on the CBSE Governing Board. Would you say they should impose a ban for all schools, or should schools make up their own minds?

Jyoti Arora: Here, I think the intervention of authorities is highly solicited. At home, if children are using it in a safe manner, with the supervision of parents, that's perfectly alright. But what the dangers are very alarming. There is research conducted by the London School of Economics, highlighting the positive effects of not allowing mobile phones, because it clearly enhances academic performance of the children. And psychologists also advocate that mobile phones are addictive in nature, and can hinder concentration and social skills, and cause increased number of anxiety and mental illness cases.

Also read | [Is a smartphone-free childhood possible?](#)

UNESCO is urging governments to put learners first, and also urged policy makers to ensure child data protection laws. We have written to our authorities like CBSE, the Department of Education, and even to our honourable Minister of Home to look into this and give us some kind of school safety policy. Because if anything wrong happens, whether cybercrime or any kind of other incident related to mobile phones, then schools are considered to be the most sensitive target.

So I think we should promote more face to face interaction to maintain academic integrity and to foster a healthy learning atmosphere. Because in those times when there were no mobile phones in the class, then also learning happened.

K.R. Maalathi: Unfortunately, I believe that I agree with you. We are facing a very tough time with regard to mobile phones because children tend to lose their sleep, addiction levels are very high, there are emotional, mental and behavioural issues, but what I believe is blanket bans are very rarely the most effective ways to solve a behavioural issue.

Because teens do not know the world without smartphones at all. They were born in a digital world. I agree with you, it is actually taking a toll on their mental well-being. Just like we have an age for the driving license, we have an age to be a voter, similarly, we can actually have an age for this, because our job in schools is to prepare them for life, even to use a smartphone in a better way. I think we can do it, but there will definitely be challenges. I'm not talking about primary school age, I'm definitely not talking about children who are below 14 years.

You had mentioned earlier that you had approached some of the students in the schools that you work with. What are their perspectives?

K.R. Maalathi: It was a very interesting conversation. Some of them beautifully said, Ma'am, it is okay to allow, we'll be more than happy to bring them inside. But only thing is, we don't trust our own peers, though we trust ourselves. Or we may bring two phones, and then hide one, and submit one. Some said, we run to school to hide ourselves from our smartphones; I feel school is a safer zone because my addiction levels have gone beyond imagination.

But another perspective was, why don't you sensitise us, you are preparing us for a world beyond the classrooms or the school. When we enter college, there are no restrictions. And how do we know to manage mobile phones if you don't allow us to use it or give us digital literacy? How do we derive information from it to be smart enough because you talk about AI, you talk about so many other things, we should also be taught about it.

Jyoti Arora: When you are dealing with the mindset of maybe 40 students sitting in a classroom, that's a very challenging situation. And they are in the school for just six hours.

Students are vulnerable to cyber bullying, comparisons, unrealistic standards, resulting in depression, feelings of inadequacy.

Prohibiting mobile phones during school hours will definitely offer students relief from these pressures. And this will foster healthier interactions because they will be engaging in face-to-face interactions instead, where they are open to share their feelings. They're getting a space to vent out, talking to their friends, their teachers.

And of course, it's older students who may be more susceptible to cyber bullying; there have been cases amounting to criminal activity. Apart from the academic, social and behavioural perspectives, there's also an economic angle to this. Have you seen evidence of a digital divide?

Jyoti Arora: It might raise the disparities among students belonging to various socio-economic backgrounds, because students with access to the latest expensive devices could experience an advantage, while those with limited resources might feel left out or stigmatised. The presence of mobile phones also increases the risk of theft, and schools may struggle to manage security.

Dr. Maalathi, you have had experience in working with rural schools. And it's true that during COVID, school education would have totally collapsed without online classes, most of which was accessed through smartphones. But it also exposed the lack of access for students in remote or rural areas. Several governments are giving devices to students to bridge this digital divide. What kind of safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that that works out as a positive thing?

A digital divide need not be addressed only by your smartphone it can be definitely be taken care of by laptops, tablets, iPads. We could even give internet facilities if teachers are trained on how to use it. Before we give anything to the children, the adults around the children need to be sensitised.

There is a lot of difference in the way children learn today inside the classroom. Those who were born during COVID, when they entered kindergarten, there is so much difference because these children have been watching social media and YouTube, through which they have learned so much before they could enter the kindergarten classrooms.

When you start interacting with children, the kind of positivity that the technology has given to them, we cannot deny it at all. That's the only reason that I keep saying that we can't have a blanket ban.

Jyoti Arora: I think the solution to all these problems, the benefits of technology within the school can be addressed if the schools could advance their digital learning spaces. Those should be open to the children to access, so that any time if they need any important information, there should be a mechanism for the children to access the information.

We need to look into some kind of alternatives like enhancement of digital spaces, availability of laptops, and tablets in the libraries. If a school could invest into advancing the digital infrastructure, that would be a great help to the children.

K.R. Maalathi: I completely agree with you, ma'am. I only want to add that there is a need for our own research. UNESCO's recommendation is backed by research. Now when the NEP focusses on digital content and giving more importance to technology inside the classroom, and State governments give QR codes, it needs to be based on research in our own society.

Jyoti Arora is Principal of the Mount Abu Public School, Delhi and a member of the CBSE Governing Board; K.R. Maalathi is an educator, with experience in teaching, curriculum design, and school establishment and management

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DEMOLITIONS AS STATE-SANCTIONED COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency & Accountability including Right to Information and Citizen Charter

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'No amount of populist satisfaction can justify such an action' | Photo Credit: PTI

The aftermath of the recent violence in Nuh, Haryana, saw what is now a familiar pattern: immediately after the violence, the local administration, backed by the state, demolished a number of homes in localities or neighbourhoods. These were the homes and neighbourhoods, a few political officials claimed, to which the accused rioters belonged.

The demolitions in Nuh are just the latest iteration of what has come to be called “bulldozer justice”. For more than a year, from Khargone in Madhya Pradesh, to Khambhat in Gujarat, to Jahangirpuri in Delhi, to Nagaon in Assam, to many others, the demolition of homes as a form of frontier justice (as a response to political violence) has become a standard feature of administration.

In carrying out the demolitions, the state and its officials speak with a forked tongue. The public and official justification is that the demolitions are carried out in order to remove “illegal structures” or “encroachments”. Municipal laws that authorise the removal of unauthorised structures are invoked as the legal cover for such action. This is the justification the state sticks to when it is challenged in court. However, even as it does so, politicians, and at times, even officials of the administration, go on record to say that the purpose of the demolitions is to “teach a lesson” to alleged rioters.

Editorial | [Communal punishment: On riots and demolitions](#)

First, it is important to note that the state’s public justification fails on its own terms. Over the years, the courts have recognised that what we euphemistically refer to as “unauthorised structures” are often the dwelling places of economically marginalised and vulnerable people, who have been failed by the state in its obligation to provide shelter to all its citizens. Consequently, other than enforcing basic procedural requirements — such as adequate notice — courts have also insisted that before demolitions are carried out, the administration must conduct a survey to check whether the residents are eligible for rehabilitation schemes, and if so, complete their rehabilitation (through a process of meaningful engagement) before any demolitions are done.

Rehabilitation, in turn, does not simply mean picking up people from one part of the town and dumping them in another, but ensuring that there is no substantial disruption to their (already) precarious lives.

The basic purpose is to ensure that the state does not simply make its own citizens homeless, and with no recourse. Doing so is a marker of an uncivilised society.

It is obvious that the instant demolitions that we see do not comply with these procedural or substantive requirements. Last year, it was found that notice in a demolition case was actually back-dated by the administration to give an appearance of complying; in the Nuh demolitions, there have been widespread allegations that the notice and the demolitions were carried out on the same day. The state's attempts to provide a fig-leaf of legitimacy to its demolitions, therefore, fall away at the slightest scrutiny.

But at the end of the day, everyone knows that what is happening is not a dispute over municipal law, zoning regulations, and "unauthorised" structures. It is clear that what is happening is state-sanctioned collective punishment, which is predominantly targeted against specific communities. Instead of engaging the machinery of law enforcement and justice — which is what states bound by the rule of law do — the state prefers to mete out a form of frontier justice, enforcing order through violence, and itself becoming the law-breaker.

This is evident from the fact that, as pointed out above, politicians, administrators, and even on occasion the police have stated that the true purpose of demolitions is to target the homes of alleged rioters. It is evident from the timing of the demolitions, coming instantly after cases of violence. It is evident from the fact that the reality of our urban design is such that zoning regulations are dead letters: as people have repeatedly pointed out, a good part of Delhi's most affluent neighbourhoods has been built in violation of zoning regulations. Somehow, however, it is not these colonies that face the bulldozer, but the vulnerable and the marginalised. And it is evident from the fact that the demolitions have happened predominantly in Muslim neighbourhoods, in the aftermath of communal violence.

This has, admittedly, not always been the case: in Uttar Pradesh, demolitions have been carried out against the properties of various "gangsters", and in last year's Jahangirpuri violence, a Hindu man's shop was demolished for no perceivable reason. However, it has been repeatedly noticed — and Nuh is the most recent example — that when the bulldozers run, it is primarily in Muslim neighbourhoods. This pattern has now become impossible to ignore: just a few days ago, when issuing a stay order on the Nuh demolitions, the High Court of Punjab and Haryana observed that what was going on had the appearance of ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing is not a phrase that should ever be used lightly, and the tragedy is that in this case, its use was undoubtedly apposite.

Bulldozer justice might satisfy the anger of people who have been caught up in riots, and who are accustomed to seeing the criminal justice system grind on for years without result. Indeed, whether it is extra-judicial killings or home demolitions, this is indeed the justification that is trotted out: that the courts are too slow, too prone to giving bail, and too indulgent in handing out acquittals. Therefore, in order to assuage public anger, the state must take it upon itself to deliver "justice" outside the bounds of law.

It should be obvious that this is dangerous and destructive logic. Bulldozer justice is a form of collective punishment, where punishment is not only meted out before guilt is proven, but along with the supposedly guilty individual, their innocent family members are also punished. No amount of populist satisfaction can justify such an action.

Furthermore, punishment without guilt — punishment at the discretion of the state — violates the rule of law. The rule of law is all that stands between a marauding state and the basic safety of individuals. Abandoning the rule of law for frontier justice is the first step towards an authoritarian society where one's safety, physical possessions, and even life and liberty, will be at the whims and fancies of state officials.

In this context, it falls to the courts to enforce the rule of law and the Constitution. Unfortunately, for more than a year, the courts have been silent; even the Supreme Court of India has, when faced with this situation, purported to accept the state's justification of going after "unauthorised structures." In doing so, the courts have, to use the words of George Orwell, chosen to "reject the evidence of their eyes and ears." The High Court of Punjab and Haryana's order marks the first time that the judiciary has taken active notice of this pattern of lawless bulldozer "justice". One hopes that it is the beginning of the judiciary reinforcing basic constitutional principles and values against state impunity.

Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based lawyer

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MEITY SECRETARY SHRI ALKESH KUMAR SHARMA INAUGURATES RENEWABLE ENERGY MICROGRID POWER PLANT FOR ELECTRICAL ENERGY REQUIREMENTS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Energy incl. Renewable & Non-renewable

Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) Secretary Shri Alkesh Kumar Sharma launched the indigenous Technology of Hybrid Green Energy Microgrid for Electrical energy requirements of the Rural communities developed by C-DAC, Thiruvananthapuram, as part of National Mission on Power Electronics Technology (NaMPET) Program, here today at Elephant Rehabilitation Centre (ERC), Kottoor, Thiruvananthapuram.

Addressing the gathering, Shri Alkesh Kumar Sharma said that “MeitY is prioritising and putting enormous efforts to realise unique technology development and deployments through C-DAC. The reliable green energy based microgrid seems to be providing the power solution for critical systems in the Veterinary hospital systems in ERC. We need to concentrate and focus our efforts to the high performance and efficient technology and system developments. The technology shall be extended to the remote communities through wider deployments.”

Shri Alkesh Kumar Sharma said, “The initiative and support being provided by forest department for technology evaluation is appreciable. Green technology is effectively being used in the rehabilitation of wild animals also here. The system shall be used for dissemination of such advanced technologies to the society especially the younger generation and school children.”

Microgrid: A renewable energy microgrid is an autonomous, localised and self-contained energy system that incorporates renewable energy sources as its primary generation inputs. The major building blocks of a renewable energy microgrid include various components and systems that work together to generate, store, manage, and distribute energy in a localized and sustainable manner. In the off-grid mode of operation of a microgrid, it generates, stores, and distributes electricity within a specific area or community while prioritizing the use of renewable energy to minimize reliance on fossil fuels and reduce environmental impact. In the on-grid mode of operation, the microgrid will be able to interact with utility grid and export power if the generation is excess of what is locally needed.

In the microgrid scheme implemented in ERC, a unique 25kW Power Conditioning Unit (PCU) technology using Silicon Carbide, a Wide Band Gap (WBG) Semiconductor device operating at 50kHz and avoiding bulky 50Hz transformer make the system very compact and a container based deployment in remote location is realised. The above Technology is developed by CDAC.

The official from MeitY, Dr Om Krishan Singh, Scientist ‘D’; other dignitaries from MeitY; C-DAC, Thiruvananthapuram and Forest Department, Govt of Kerala were present on the occasion.

DK/DK

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MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ ORGANIZES TWO DAYS NATIONAL WRITESHOP ON PANCHAYAT DEVELOPMENT INDEX (PDI) PORTAL FOR PREPARATION OF BASELINE REPORT AND COMPUTATION OF PDI

Relevant for: Indian Society | Topic: Change and Development in Rural and Industrial Society

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India is organizing Two-Days National Writeshop on Panchayat Development Index Portal for Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of Panchayat Development Index from 10th August to 11th August 2023 at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The Two-Days National Writeshop aims at emphasizing the prominence of the Baseline Report for setting the local actions on measurable dimensions to achieve the local targets towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals in rural areas.

Opening the writeshop, Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj enlightened the participants by underscoring the policy framework for baseline report and PDI portal for computation of PDI, highlighting the landmark initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to localize the Sustainable Development Goals, enabling to scale up the visibility of holistic development at all levels to strengthen grassroots democracy. Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, MoPR provided an overview of how the Panchayat Development Index will solve the issues and challenges related to proper monitoring of the developmental activities at PRIs level. Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, MoPR highlighted the role of data analytics, further mentioning how academic institutions/ research organizations can use data analytics information for research work, and thanked all the States/UTs for the support they have rendered so far.

Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj said that PDI Report, released on 28th June 2023, illustrates the mechanisms for computation of Panchayat Development Index based on the local indicators of 9 themes, its data sources and monitoring mechanisms that would empower Local Government as well as the Block and District Administration and the State Governments to objectively assess the performance of these grassroots level Institutions and thereby make plans based on evidence from PDI to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Delivering his address, Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj underlined the significance of the PDI baseline report in National Panchayat Awards and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), saying that it is expected that this report will lay the foundation for a nationwide quantified evaluation and monitoring mechanism that would encourage Local Governments to charter their paths to achieve the SDGs, making their actions more accountable & transparent. He further mentioned this Write-Shop will provide an opportunity for everyone present in the Writeshop to learn from the experience of the pilot conducted by the States/UTs and MoPR Team and will also provide an opportunity to learn through hands-on practice to operate the portal developed for PDI.

Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj set the context of the National Writeshop by presenting an overview of institutional mechanisms to roll out PDI as an instrument to monitor the progress of Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) in rural areas. Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, MoPR said that Panchayat Development Index will serve as Common Property Resource, and will help States/UTs in comparing District Panchayats and Block Panchayats for prioritizing development.

Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj said that Panchayat Development Index will serve as a tool for incentivisation exercise by MoPR; it will help States/UTs to develop evidence-based system for Incentivisation of Panchayats, and it will also help in carrying out intensive Capacity Building & Training exercise. Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, MoPR informed that PDI will be calculated on 577 Local Indicators on 9 Themes, 144 Local Targets and 688 unique data points to monitor the progress of LSDGs.

Smt. Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary, MoPR, Dr. Bijaya Kumar Behera, Economic Adviser, MoPR, Shri Ramit Maurya, Director, MoPR, Smt. Malti Rawat, Director, MoPR and senior officers from line Ministries / Departments and NITI Aayog attended the National Writeshop. More than 375 representatives from Central Ministries/ Departments and almost all States/ UTs comprising State Departments of Panchayati Raj & Rural Development, Planning, Monitoring & Implementation, Women & Child Development, Health & Family Welfare, School Education and Public Health Engineering, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), State Institutes of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PRs), Knowledge Partners, UN agencies, NIC and other key stakeholders are participating in the Writeshop.

Shri Sunil Jain, DDG, NIC made presentation on “PDI Portal: Architecture, Functionality and Workflow”, whereas Shri Ram Pratap, Director, MoPR gave a presentation on Mechanisms of Data Validation.

State/UT Teams conducted brainstorming group exercises on the first day of the Two Days National Write-Shop on Panchayat Development Index Portal for the Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of PDI, over the handholding of the PDI portal for Baseline report and PDI computation.

The first day of Two-Day National Write-Shop on the Panchayat Development Index Portal for Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of PDI provided a platform for insightful knowledge sharing under diverse topics including field experience on validation of data resources, mechanisms of data validation, demonstration of PDI portal, and presentation/discussion on indicators across themes, with Mentors assigned with the States/UTs to provide support in PDI portal and concluding with State/UT teams on handholding PDI portal for baseline report and PDI computation.

SK/SS

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Smt. Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary, MoPR, Dr. Bijaya Kumar Behera, Economic Adviser, MoPR, Shri Ramit Maurya, Director, MoPR, Smt. Malti Rawat, Director, MoPR and senior officers from line Ministries / Departments and NITI Aayog attended the National Writeshop. More than 375 representatives from Central Ministries/ Departments and almost all States/ UTs comprising State Departments of Panchayati Raj & Rural Development, Planning, Monitoring & Implementation, Women & Child Development, Health & Family Welfare, School Education and Public Health Engineering, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), State Institutes of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PRs), Knowledge Partners, UN agencies, NIC and other key stakeholders are participating in the Writeshop.

Shri Sunil Jain, DDG, NIC made presentation on “PDI Portal: Architecture, Functionality and Workflow”, whereas Shri Ram Pratap, Director, MoPR gave a presentation on Mechanisms of Data Validation.

State/UT Teams conducted brainstorming group exercises on the first day of the Two Days National Write-Shop on Panchayat Development Index Portal for the Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of PDI, over the handholding of the PDI portal for Baseline report and PDI computation.

The first day of Two-Day National Write-Shop on the Panchayat Development Index Portal for Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of PDI provided a platform for insightful knowledge sharing under diverse topics including field experience on validation of data resources, mechanisms of data validation, demonstration of PDI portal, and presentation/discussion on indicators across themes, with Mentors assigned with the States/UTs to provide support in PDI portal and concluding with State/UT teams on handholding PDI portal for baseline report and PDI computation.

SK/SS

END

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UNION HOME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF COOPERATION, SHRI AMIT SHAH INTRODUCES THE BHARTIYA NYAYA SANHITA BILL 2023, THE BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA BILL, 2023 AND THE BHARATIYA SAKSHYA BILL, 2023 IN THE LOK SABHA, TODAY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

One of the five PRAN taken by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi before the country on August 15 was – to end all signs of slavery – today's three bills are going to fulfil this one vow of Shri Modi

Today, we have brought 3 new Bills by repealing Indian Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Code, (1898), 1973 and Indian Evidence Act, 1872, which were enacted by the British and passed by the British Parliament

Indian Penal Code, 1860 will be replaced by Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023, the Criminal Procedure Code, 1898 will be replaced by the Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 will be replaced by the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023

These three outgoing laws were made to strengthen and protect the British rule and their purpose was to punish, not to give justice

The soul of the three new laws will be to protect all the rights given to Indian citizens by the constitution, and, their purpose

will not be to punish but give justice

These three laws made with Indian thought process will bring a huge change in our criminal justice system

Modi government has brought this law by taking a very principled decision to bring citizens at the centre, instead of governance

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had said in 2019, all the laws made during the time of the British across all the departments, should be made in accordance with today's time and in the interest of the Indian society after adequate discussion and consideration

18 States, 6 Union Territories, the Supreme Court, 16 High Courts, 5 Judicial Academies, 22 Law Universities, 142 Members of Parliament, around 270 MLAs and public have given their suggestions on these new laws

The Home Minister said, for 4 years intense discussions were held on these laws and he himself was present in 158 consultation meetings

Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, which will replace CrPC, now has 533 sections, 160 sections of old law have been changed, 9 new sections have been added and 9 sections have been repealed

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill 2023, which will replace the Indian

Penal Code, will have 356 sections instead of the earlier 511 sections, 175 sections have been changed, 8 new sections have been added and 22 sections have been repealed

Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, which will replace the Evidence Act, will now have 170 sections instead of the earlier 167, 23 sections have been changed, 1 new section has been added and 5 have been repealed

These three old laws had signs of slavery, they were passed by the British Parliament, today we have come up with new laws by removing these signs of slavery from a total of 475 places

The law expands the definition of documents to include electronic or digital records, e-mails, server logs, computers, smart phones, laptops, SMS, websites, locational evidence, mails, messages on devices

Provision has been made in this law to digitize the entire process from FIR to case diary, case diary to charge sheet and charge sheet to judgement

Videography has been made compulsory at the time of search and seizure which will be part of the case and will not implicate innocent citizens, without such recording by the police no charge sheet will be valid

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi took a historic decision to set up the National Forensic Science University to promote forensic science in a bid to increase the conviction ratio

After three years, every year 33,000 forensic science experts and scientists will be available in the country, the target has been set in the law to take the conviction ratio above 90%

The visit of the forensic team is being made compulsory on the crime scene of crimes having provision for punishment of 7 years or more, through this, the police will have a scientific evidence, after which the chances of acquittal of the culprits in the court will be very less

Modi government is going to start Zero FIR for the first time after 75 years of the Independence for the convenience of the citizens, with this initiative, the citizens will be able to lodge complaint even outside of their police station area

Provision of e-FIR is being added for the first time, every district and police station will designate a police officer who will officially inform the family of the arrested person about his arrest online and in person

The statement of the victim has been made compulsory in the cases of sexual violence and the video recording of the statement has also been made compulsory in the cases of sexual harassment

It will be compulsory for the Police to give the status of the complaint in 90 days and thereafter every 15 days, to the complainant

No government will be able to withdraw a case of imprisonment of 7 years or more without listening to the victim, this will protect the rights of the citizens

Scope of summary trial has been increased in petty cases, now crimes punishable up to 3 years will be included in summary trial, with this provision alone, over 40% of cases in sessions courts will end

A time limit of 90 days is fixed for filing the charge sheet and depending on the situation, the court can further give permission for 90 more days, the investigation will have to be completed within 180 days and trial should begin

Courts will now be bound to give notice of framing of charge to the accused person within 60 days, within 30 days after the completion of arguments, the Hon'ble Judge will have to give verdict, this will not keep the decision pending for years and the order will have to be made available online, within 7 days

Government has to decide on permission within 120 days for trial against civil servant or police officer else it will be treated as deemed permission and trial will be started

A provision has been brought for attachment of property of declared offenders, a new provision of harsh punishment against inter-state gangs and organized crimes is also being added to this law

Sex on the pretext of false promise of marriage, employment, promotion and false identity has been made a crime for the first

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armed insurgency, subversive activities, separatism, challenging the unity, sovereignty and integrity of India have been defined in this law for the first time

A historic decision regarding trial in absentia has been taken, a person declared fugitive by a Sessions Court judge will be tried and sentenced in his absence, no matter where in the world he may be hiding, if the fugitive has to appeal against punishment, he will have to follow Indian law

A total of 313 changes have been made in this law which will bring a widespread change in India's criminal justice system, now anyone will be able to get justice within a maximum of 3 years

In this law, special care has been taken of women and children, it has been ensured that criminals are punished and the police cannot misuse their powers

On one hand, laws like sedition have been repealed, on the other hand, provision of punishment for heinous crimes like exploiting women by cheating and mob lynching have been made, provisions also made for crack down on organized crimes and terrorism

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah introduced the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023 and Bharatiya Sakhshya Bill, 2023 in the Lok Sabha, today.

Shri Amit Shah said that today the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is culminating and Amrit Kaal is beginning. Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav will end on August 15 and the journey of 75 to 100 years of independence will begin from August 16, which will create a great India. He said that in his address from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had kept Panch Pran in front of the people of the country, one of them isto end all signs of slavery. He said that these three bills introduced today are in a way fulfilling one of the five vows taken

by Modi Ji. All these three bills have basic laws for the criminal justice system. He said that today we have brought three new laws by abolishing the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Code, (1898), 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 made by the British and passed by the British Parliament. The Indian Penal Code, 1860 will be replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023, the Criminal Procedure Code, 1898 will be replaced by the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 will be replaced by the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023. These three Acts which will be replaced, were made to strengthen and protect the British rule and their purpose was to punish, not to give justice. We are going to bring changes in both these fundamental aspects. The soul of these three new laws will be to protect all the rights given by the Constitution to the Indian citizens. The objective will not be to punish anyone but give justice and in this process punishment will be given where it is required to create a sense of prevention of crime.

Union Home Minister assured the Lok Sabha that from 1860 to 2023, the criminal justice system of India continued to be operated on the basis of the laws made by the British Parliament, but now these three laws will be replaced with new laws imbuing the Indian soul, which will bring a big change in our criminal justice system. He said that in the current laws heinous crimes like murder or crime against women were placed very low and crimes like treason, robbery and attack on the official of the government were kept above these. He said that we are changing this approach and the first chapter in these new laws will be on crimes against women and children. The second chapter will be on murder/homicide and criminality with human body. We have brought this law by taking a very principled decision of bringing the citizen at the centre instead of governance.

Shri Amit Shah said that a long process has been followed in making of these laws. He said that in 2019, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had guided all of us that all the laws made during the time of the British across all the departments should be discussed and reviewed in accordance to the present times and in the interest of the Indian society. He said that extensive consultation has been done everywhere to make these laws. He said that in August 2019, he had written letters to all the judges of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justices of all the High Courts of the country and all the law universities of the country. In 2020, letters were written to all MPs, Chief Ministers, Governors and Administrators of Union Territories. After extensive consultation, today this process is going to become a law. He said that 18 States, 6 Union Territories, Supreme Court, 16 High Courts, 5 Judicial Academies, 22 Law Universities, 142 Members of Parliament, about 270 MLAs and public have given their suggestions regarding these new laws. Shri Shah said that for 4 years these were discussed in depth and he himself was present in 158 meetings.

Union Home Minister said that Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, which will replace CrPC, will now have 533 sections, 160 sections have been changed, 9 new sections have been added and 9 sections have been repealed. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, which will replace the IPC, will have 356 sections instead of the earlier 511 sections, 175 sections have been amended, 8 new sections have been added and 22 sections have been repealed. The Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, which will replace the Evidence Act, will now have 170 sections instead of the earlier 167, 23 sections have been changed, 1 new section has been added and 5 repealed.

Shri Amit Shah said that these three old laws were full of signs of slavery, they were passed by the British Parliament and we only adopted them. These laws refer to Parliament of the United Kingdom, Provincial Acts, Notifications by the Crown Representative, London Gazette, Jury and Barristers, Lahore Government, Commonwealth Resolutions, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Parliament. These laws include the references to Her Majesty's and by the Privy Council, these laws were based on the Copies and Extracts Content in the London Gazette and Possession of the British Crown, Court of Justice in England and Her Majesty's Dominions are

also mentioned at many places in these laws. He said that by ending these 475 signs of slavery, we have brought new laws today. We have tried to connect the new era with these laws. Our criminal justice system takes a long time, justice is delivered so late that justice has no meaning, people have lost faith and are afraid to approach the court.

Home Minister said that the state-of-the-art technologies have been incorporated in these laws. The definition of documents has been expanded to include electronic or digital records, e-mails, server logs, computers, smart phones, laptops, SMS, websites, locational evidence, mails and messages available on devices, which can be used in courts, which will give freedom from the pile of papers. He said that provision has been made in this law to digitize the entire process from FIR to case diary, case diary to charge sheet and from charge sheet to judgement. At present, only the appearing of the accused in court can be done through video conferencing, but now the entire trial, including cross questioning, will be done through video conferencing. Examination of complainant and witnesses, investigation and recording of evidence in trial and High Court trial and entire appellate proceedings will now be possible digitally. We have made it after discussing with National Forensic Science University and scholars and technical experts from all over the country on this subject. We have made videography compulsory at the time of search and seizure, which will be part of the case and this will save the innocent citizens from being implicated. No charge sheet will be valid without such recording by the police.

Union Home Minister said that even after 75 years of independence, our conviction rate is very low, that is why we have worked to promote forensic science. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has taken a historic decision to establish National Forensic Science University. After three years, the country will get 33,000 forensic science experts and scientists every year. In this law, we have set a target to take the conviction ratio above 90 percent. For this, an important provision has been provided which will make the visit of the forensic team to the crime scene compulsory for offenses punishable for 7 years or more. Through this, the police will have scientific evidence, after which the chances of acquittal of the culprits in the court will be significantly reduced. We will computerize all the courts in the country before the year 2027. Similarly mobile forensic vans have also been experienced. In Delhi, we have done a successful experiment that the FSL team visits the scene of any crime with a provision of punishment of more than 7 years. For this we have launched the concept of Mobile FSL which is a successful concept and there will be 3 mobile FSLs in every district and will go to crime scene.

Shri Amit Shah said that for the first time after 75 years of independence, we are starting Zero FIR to ensure the convenience of the citizens. Wherever the crime may have happened, the citizens will be able to lodge complaint even outside of their police station area. Within 15 days of the registration of crime, it will have to be forwarded to the concerned police station. For the first time we are adding the provision of e-FIR. Every district and police station will designate a police officer who will inform online and in person about the arrest to the family of the arrested person. Shri Shah said that the statement of the victim has been made compulsory in the case of sexual violence and video recording of the statement has also been made compulsory in the case of sexual harassment. It will be compulsory for the police to give the status of the complaint to the complainant in 90 days and thereafter in every 15 days. No government will be able to withdraw a case of imprisonment of 7 years or more without hearing the victim, this will protect the rights of the citizens. Under this law, for the first time, we are bringing community service as a punishment. The scope of summary trial in small cases has also been increased, now offenses punishable up to 3 years will be included in summary trial, with this provision alone more than 40 percent cases in sessions courts will be finished. A time limit of 90 days has been fixed for filing the charge sheet and depending on the situation, the court will be able to give permission for further 90 days. In this way, within 180 days the investigation will have to be completed and will be forwarded for trial. Courts will now be bound to give notice of framing of charges to the accused person within 60 days. The Hon'ble Judge will have to give the decision

within 30 days of the completion of the argument, this will not keep the decision pending for years, and the decision will have to be made available online within 7 days.

Union Home Minister said that the government will have to decide on the permission for trial against a civil servant or police officer within 120 days, otherwise it will be treated as deemed permission and the trial will be started. We have made another big revolutionary change, the SP who is currently working, will testify after seeing the same file, the earlier concerned officer was not required to come, which will provide quick testimony and justice will also be delivered soon. Apart from this, we have also brought a provision for attachment of the property of declared criminals. We are also adding a new provision of different type of harsh punishment against inter-state gangs and organized crimes in this law. We have also made many provisions to deal with crime and social problems against women. For the first time, a provision has been made to criminalize sexual intercourse on the basis of false promises of marriage, employment and promotion and on the basis of false identity. In all cases of gang rape, a provision of 20 years of punishment or life imprisonment has been made, which is not being implemented today. In the case of girls below 18 years of age, a provision of death penalty has also been kept. For mob lynching all three provisions of 7 years, life imprisonment and death penalty have been kept. There was no provision for mobile phone or chain snatching from women, but now provision has been kept for the same.

Shri Amit Shah said that there was a provision of punishment of 7 years in both the cases of grave injury and in case of minor injury, we have separated both. He said that in case of permanent disability or brain dead, a provision has been made for punishment of 10 years or life imprisonment. The punishment for offenses against children has been increased from 7 years to 10 years. Provision has also been made to increase the amount of fine in many crimes. There is also a provision of 10 years of imprisonment for criminals who run away from custody. There were many cases of using pardon from sentences for political gains, now the death penalty can be changed to life imprisonment, life imprisonment to a minimum of 7 years and 7 years to a minimum of 3 years, no culprit will be spared.

Union Home Minister said that the Modi government is going to end sedition completely because India has a democracy and everyone has the right to speak. Earlier there was no definition of terrorism, but now crimes like secession, armed insurgency, subversive activities, separatism, crimes like challenging the unity, sovereignty and integrity of India have been defined in this law for the first time and the rights have been given to confiscate the properties of those related to these crimes. The court will order this on the cognizance of the investigating police officer. Shri Shah said that the Modi government has taken a historic decision regarding trial in absentia. The Sessions Court Judge, after due process, will try and sentence a person declared a fugitive in absentia, no matter where in the world he may be hiding. He will have recourse to Indian law and court to appeal against the sentence.

Shri Amit Shah said that a large number of case properties are lying in police stations across the country, these can be disposed of by videography and submitting the verified copy to the court. He said that a total of 313 changes have been made in this law which will bring a widespread change in our criminal justice system and anyone will be able to get justice within a maximum of 3 years. Shri Shah said that special care has been taken of women and children in this law, it has been ensured that the criminals are punished and such provisions have also been made to prevent the police from misusing their powers. On the one hand, laws like sedition have been repealed, on the other hand, provision of punishment for exploiting women by cheating and heinous crimes like mob lynching, and cracking down on organized crimes and terrorism has also been done.

RK/AY/AKS/RR

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Union Home Minister assured the Lok Sabha that from 1860 to 2023, the criminal justice system of India continued to be operated on the basis of the laws made by the British Parliament, but now these three laws will be replaced with new laws imbuing the Indian soul, which will bring a big change in our criminal justice system. He said that in the current laws heinous crimes like murder or crime against women were placed very low and crimes like treason, robbery and attack on the official of the government were kept above these. He said that we are changing this approach and the first chapter in these new laws will be on crimes against women and children. The second chapter will be on murder/homicide and criminality with human body. We have brought this law by taking a very principled decision of bringing the citizen at the centre instead of governance.

Shri Amit Shah said that a long process has been followed in making of these laws. He said that in 2019, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had guided all of us that all the laws made during the time of the British across all the departments should be discussed and reviewed in accordance to the present times and in the interest of the Indian society. He said that extensive consultation has been done everywhere to make these laws. He said that in August 2019, he had written letters to all the judges of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justices of all the High Courts of the country and all the law universities of the country. In 2020, letters were written to all MPs, Chief Ministers, Governors and Administrators of Union Territories. After extensive consultation, today this process is going to become a law. He said that 18 States, 6 Union Territories, Supreme Court, 16 High Courts, 5 Judicial Academies, 22 Law Universities, 142 Members of Parliament, about 270 MLAs and public have given their suggestions regarding these new laws. Shri Shah said that for 4 years these were discussed in depth and he himself was present in 158 meetings.

Union Home Minister said that Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, which will replace CrPC, will now have 533 sections, 160 sections have been changed, 9 new sections have been added and 9 sections have been repealed. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, which will replace the IPC, will have 356 sections instead of the earlier 511 sections, 175 sections have been amended, 8 new sections have been added and 22 sections have been repealed. The Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, which will replace the Evidence Act, will now have 170 sections instead of the earlier 167, 23 sections have been changed, 1 new section has been added and 5 repealed.

Shri Amit Shah said that these three old laws were full of signs of slavery, they were passed by the British Parliament and we only adopted them. These laws refer to Parliament of the United Kingdom, Provincial Acts, Notifications by the Crown Representative, London Gazette, Jury and Barristers, Lahore Government, Commonwealth Resolutions, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Parliament. These laws include the references to Her Majesty's and by the Privy Council, these laws were based on the Copies and Extracts Content in the London Gazette and Possession of the British Crown, Court of Justice in England and Her Majesty's Dominions are also mentioned at many places in these laws. He said that by ending these 475 signs of slavery, we have brought new laws today. We have tried to connect the new era with these laws. Our criminal justice system takes a long time, justice is delivered so late that justice has no meaning, people have lost faith and are afraid to approach the court.

Home Minister said that the state-of-the-art technologies have been incorporated in these laws. The definition of documents has been expanded to include electronic or digital records, e-mails, server logs, computers, smart phones, laptops, SMS, websites, locational evidence, mails and messages available on devices, which can be used in courts, which will give freedom from the pile of papers. He said that provision has been made in this law to digitize the entire process from FIR to case diary, case diary to charge sheet and from charge sheet to judgement. At

present, only the appearing of the accused in court can be done through video conferencing, but now the entire trial, including cross questioning, will be done through video conferencing. Examination of complainant and witnesses, investigation and recording of evidence in trial and High Court trial and entire appellate proceedings will now be possible digitally. We have made it after discussing with National Forensic Science University and scholars and technical experts from all over the country on this subject. We have made videography compulsory at the time of search and seizure, which will be part of the case and this will save the innocent citizens from being implicated. No charge sheet will be valid without such recording by the police.

Union Home Minister said that even after 75 years of independence, our conviction rate is very low, that is why we have worked to promote forensic science. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has taken a historic decision to establish National Forensic Science University. After three years, the country will get 33,000 forensic science experts and scientists every year. In this law, we have set a target to take the conviction ratio above 90 percent. For this, an important provision has been provided which will make the visit of the forensic team to the crime scene compulsory for offenses punishable for 7 years or more. Through this, the police will have scientific evidence, after which the chances of acquittal of the culprits in the court will be significantly reduced. We will computerize all the courts in the country before the year 2027. Similarly mobile forensic vans have also been experienced. In Delhi, we have done a successful experiment that the FSL team visits the scene of any crime with a provision of punishment of more than 7 years. For this we have launched the concept of Mobile FSL which is a successful concept and there will be 3 mobile FSLs in every district and will go to crime scene.

Shri Amit Shah said that for the first time after 75 years of independence, we are starting Zero FIR to ensure the convenience of the citizens. Wherever the crime may have happened, the citizens will be able to lodge complaint even outside of their police station area. Within 15 days of the registration of crime, it will have to be forwarded to the concerned police station. For the first time we are adding the provision of e-FIR. Every district and police station will designate a police officer who will inform online and in person about the arrest to the family of the arrested person. Shri Shah said that the statement of the victim has been made compulsory in the case of sexual violence and video recording of the statement has also been made compulsory in the case of sexual harassment. It will be compulsory for the police to give the status of the complaint to the complainant in 90 days and thereafter in every 15 days. No government will be able to withdraw a case of imprisonment of 7 years or more without hearing the victim, this will protect the rights of the citizens. Under this law, for the first time, we are bringing community service as a punishment. The scope of summary trial in small cases has also been increased, now offenses punishable up to 3 years will be included in summary trial, with this provision alone more than 40 percent cases in sessions courts will be finished. A time limit of 90 days has been fixed for filing the charge sheet and depending on the situation, the court will be able to give permission for further 90 days. In this way, within 180 days the investigation will have to be completed and will be forwarded for trial. Courts will now be bound to give notice of framing of charges to the accused person within 60 days. The Hon'ble Judge will have to give the decision within 30 days of the completion of the argument, this will not keep the decision pending for years, and the decision will have to be made available online within 7 days.

Union Home Minister said that the government will have to decide on the permission for trial against a civil servant or police officer within 120 days, otherwise it will be treated as deemed permission and the trial will be started. We have made another big revolutionary change, the SP who is currently working, will testify after seeing the same file, the earlier concerned officer was not required to come, which will provide quick testimony and justice will also be delivered soon. Apart from this, we have also brought a provision for attachment of the property of declared criminals. We are also adding a new provision of different type of harsh punishment against inter-state gangs and organized crimes in this law. We have also made many provisions to deal

with crime and social problems against women. For the first time, a provision has been made to criminalize sexual intercourse on the basis of false promises of marriage, employment and promotion and on the basis of false identity. In all cases of gang rape, a provision of 20 years of punishment or life imprisonment has been made, which is not being implemented today. In the case of girls below 18 years of age, a provision of death penalty has also been kept. For mob lynching all three provisions of 7 years, life imprisonment and death penalty have been kept. There was no provision for mobile phone or chain snatching from women, but now provision has been kept for the same.

Shri Amit Shah said that there was a provision of punishment of 7 years in both the cases of grave injury and in case of minor injury, we have separated both. He said that in case of permanent disability or brain dead, a provision has been made for punishment of 10 years or life imprisonment. The punishment for offenses against children has been increased from 7 years to 10 years. Provision has also been made to increase the amount of fine in many crimes. There is also a provision of 10 years of imprisonment for criminals who run away from custody. There were many cases of using pardon from sentences for political gains, now the death penalty can be changed to life imprisonment, life imprisonment to a minimum of 7 years and 7 years to a minimum of 3 years, no culprit will be spared.

Union Home Minister said that the Modi government is going to end sedition completely because India has a democracy and everyone has the right to speak. Earlier there was no definition of terrorism, but now crimes like secession, armed insurgency, subversive activities, separatism, crimes like challenging the unity, sovereignty and integrity of India have been defined in this law for the first time and the rights have been given to confiscate the properties of those related to these crimes. The court will order this on the cognizance of the investigating police officer. Shri Shah said that the Modi government has taken a historic decision regarding trial in absentia. The Sessions Court Judge, after due process, will try and sentence a person declared a fugitive in absentia, no matter where in the world he may be hiding. He will have recourse to Indian law and court to appeal against the sentence.

Shri Amit Shah said that a large number of case properties are lying in police stations across the country, these can be disposed of by videography and submitting the verified copy to the court. He said that a total of 313 changes have been made in this law which will bring a widespread change in our criminal justice system and anyone will be able to get justice within a maximum of 3 years. Shri Shah said that special care has been taken of women and children in this law, it has been ensured that the criminals are punished and such provisions have also been made to prevent the police from misusing their powers. On the one hand, laws like sedition have been repealed, on the other hand, provision of punishment for exploiting women by cheating and heinous crimes like mob lynching, and cracking down on organized crimes and terrorism has also been done.

RK/AY/AKS/RR

END

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IMPROVEMENT IN NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF GIRLS AND MOTHERS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

POSHAN Abhiyaan (erstwhile National Nutrition Mission) was launched on 8th March 2018, with an aim to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers in a time bound manner by adopting a synergised and result oriented approach. The Abhiyaan has been rolled out in all the States/UTs.

The details of funds released under the scheme, in the last three years State/UT-wise including Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, are annexed.

PM-POSHAN scheme (mid-day meal scheme) is being implemented by Ministry of Education. As per the provisions of National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, children studying in classes I-VIII or within the age group of 6-14 years are entitled to one mid day meal free of charge, every day except on school holidays, in all Government and Government aided schools so as to meet nutritional standards specified in the Act. Accordingly, Government is implementing Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme. As per information received from Ministry of Education, this Scheme is implemented across the country and covers 12.16 crore children of Balvatika (just before class I) and Classes I-VIII studying in 10.84 lakhs Government and Government-Aided Schools.

The Primary objectives of the Scheme are to improve the nutritional status of the students, to encourage them to attend classes more regularly and to help them concentrate better on learning activities.

Further, Government has accorded high priority to the issue of malnutrition among children under five years of age, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers and is implementing several schemes like POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anganwadi Services, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, under Mission Poshan 2.0 and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) under Mission Shakti, as direct targeted interventions to address the issue.

In order to maximize nutritional outcomes, recently the Anganwadi Services (erstwhile ICDS Scheme), Scheme for Adolescent Girls and Poshan Abhiyaan have been re-aligned under 'Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0' (Mission Poshan 2.0). It seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers through a strategic shift in nutrition content and delivery and by creation of a convergent ecosystem to develop and promote practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity. Poshan 2.0 focuses on Maternal Nutrition, Infant and Young Child Feeding Norms, Treatment of MAM/SAM and Wellness through AYUSH. Technology is being leveraged under the 'Poshan Tracker', a robust ICT enabled platform to improve governance with regard to monitoring of provisioning of supplementary nutrition for prompt supervision and management of services.

Under Poshan 2.0, focus is on diet diversity, leveraging traditional systems of knowledge and popularizing use of millets. Nutrition awareness strategies under Poshan 2.0 aim to develop sustainable health and well-being through regional meal plans to bridge dietary gaps. Further, greater emphasis is being given on the use of millets (coarse grains) for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal and Take Home rations (not raw ration) at Anganwadi centres for Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Children below 6 years of age, as millets have high nutrient content to address anemia and other micro-nutrient deficiencies in women and children. Under

Supplementary Nutrition Programme of Mission Poshan 2.0, only fortified rice is being allocated to States/UTs.

As per the report of National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) conducted by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the nutrition indicators for children under 5 years and women have improved between the two rounds of the survey conducted in year 2015-16 (NFHS-4) and 2019-21 (NFHS-5). The prevalence of stunting has reduced from 38.4% in NFHS-4 to 35.5% in NFHS-5, wasting from 21.0% to 19.3% and underweight from 35.8% to 32.1%. Further, the prevalence of underweight among women (15-49 years) has reduced from 22.9% in NFHS-4 to 18.7% in NFHS-5.

Further, as per data recorded in Poshan Tracker, ICT application for Mission Poshan 2.0, close to 7 crore children were measured in the country in June 2023 as per which, 7% were wasted and 19% underweight, which is significantly lower than NFHS indicators.

Annexure

State-wise statement of funds released under POSHAN Abhiyaan from F.Y. 2018-19 to F.Y.2022-23 (as on 31.03.2023)

Amount in lakhs

Sl.

States/Uts

Total Central Funds Released

1

A&NISLANDS

1290.71

2

ANDHRAPRADESH

25498.6

3

ARUNACHALPRADESH

2777.65

4

ASSAM

30684.9

5

BIHAR

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35

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36

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Total**507909.64**

This information was given by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

SS/TFK

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SS/TFK

END

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AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND POCSO ACT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

As per the information received from National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), NCPCR has developed information, education and communication (IEC) material to support the Centre and State Governments for dissemination of information and awareness on POCSO Act 2012. The following IEC material is available on the NCPCR's website www.ncpcr.gov.in.

Since March 2020, NCPCR organized different online programs for awareness generation on various aspects of Child sexual abuse and POCSO Act on its official social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), which are as follows:

- Safe Online Learning in Times of COVID -19
- Cyber Bullying
- How to stay safe online
- How to prevent and counter bullying

NCPCR has also developed Cyber Safety Guidelines and included these as a separate section in the 'Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools' which was developed in 2017. The updated Manual including the section on Cyber Safety is available on NCPCR's website at the following Link –

[https://ncpcr.gov.in/uploads/165650391762bc3e6d27f93_Manual%20on%20Safety%20and%20Security%20of%20Children%20in%20Schools%20\(Sep%202021\).pdf](https://ncpcr.gov.in/uploads/165650391762bc3e6d27f93_Manual%20on%20Safety%20and%20Security%20of%20Children%20in%20Schools%20(Sep%202021).pdf)

Further, as per the information received from Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring a Safe and Trusted and Accountable Internet for all its users. Publication or transmission of obscene material in electronic form, is cybercrime. The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021"), provides for penalty and punishment for such act and also casts an obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence as per rule 3(1)(b). In case of failure to follow diligence as provided in the IT Rules, 2021, by intermediaries, they shall lose their safe harbour protection under section 79 of the IT Act and shall be liable for consequential action as provided in such law.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") penalises publishing or transmission of material

containing sexually explicit act in electronic form (section 67A and 67B) and publishing or transmitting of obscene material in electronic form (section 67), and makes them punishable with imprisonment for a period that may extend to three and five years respectively, and as per section 77B such cybercrimes are cognizable offences. As per the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, prevention and investigation of cognizable offences is to be done by the police, and as per the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, 'Police' is a State subject. As such, States are primarily responsible for the prevention, investigation etc. of such cybercrimes through the State police departments, which take preventive and penal action as per law, including in respect of the said cybercrimes pertaining to publishing or transmitting of material containing sexually explicit act or obscene material in electronic form.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021"), together, have made a framework which cast obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence and provide that if they fail to observe such due diligence, they shall no longer be exempt from their liability under law for third-party information or data or communication link hosted by them. Such due diligence includes the following:

Keeping in view complaints regarding action or inaction, on the part of the social media intermediaries and other intermediaries on user grievances regarding objectionable content or suspension of their accounts, the Central Government has also established three Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs), as provided for in the said IT Rules, 2021 to enable users to appeal against the decisions taken by Grievance Officer of intermediaries on user complaints.

In addition, under the Code of Ethics prescribed in the Part III of IT Rules, 2021, publishers of an online content curator are required to classify all content transmitted or published or exhibited by them, based on the nature and type of content, into various rating categories, including content suitable for children, content suitable for persons aged 7 years or 13 years or 16 years and above or persons under the said ages with parental guidance, and to display such classification. They are further required to restrict access to certain curated content by a child through implementation of appropriate access control measures.

Further, The Government of India (GoI) had enacted Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to protect the Children from Offences of Sexual Assault, Sexual harassment and pornography with due regard for safeguarding the interest and well being of children. The Act is gender neutral and defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It regards the best interest and welfare of the child as the matter of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child. Mandatory reporting of the crime by any one aware of such crime has also been

stipulated under the Act, to challenge the culture of silence often noticed around such crimes.

Gol, further made the provisions of the Act stringent through amendment of Section-14, Section-15 and introducing the definition of Child Pornography under section-2(da) of the POCSO Act, 2012 to curb the child pornography and to stop child exploitation. The provisions available under POCSO Act to curb the child pornography are as follows:-

i.) Section-2(da) of the POCSO Act explicitly defines the term child pornography - Definition of Child Pornography: “Child Pornography means any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a child, which include photograph, video, digital or computer generated images indistinguishable from an actual child, and image created, adapted, or modified, but appear to depict a child”

ii.) Section-14 of the Act prescribes Punishment for using a child for *pornographic purposes*

Section 14(1)- “Whoever, uses a child or children for pornographic purposes shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years and shall also be liable to fine, and in the event of second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than seven years and also be liable to fine”.

Section-14(2)-“ whoever using a child or children for pornographic purposes under sub-section(1), commits an offence referred to in section 3 or Section-5 or Section-7 or Section-9 by directly participating in such pornographic acts, shall be punished for the said offences also under Section-4, section-6, section-8, section-10, respectively, in addition to the punishment provided in sub- Section(1)”.

Section-15(1)- Any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child, but fails to delete or destroy or report the same to the designated authority, as may be prescribed, with an intention to share or transmit child pornography, shall be liable to fine not less than Rs. 5000/-, and in the event of second or subsequent offence, with fine which shall not be less than Rs. 10,000/-.

Section-15(2)- Any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child for transmitting or propagating or displaying or distributing in any manner at any time except for the purpose of reporting as may be prescribed, or for use as evidence in court, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

Section-15(3)- Any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child for commercial purpose shall be punished on the first conviction with imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than three years which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both, and in the event of second or subsequent conviction, with imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than five years which may extend to seven years and shall also liable to be fine.

This information was given by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

SS/TFK

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- How to prevent and counter bullying

NCPCR has also developed Cyber Safety Guidelines and included these as a separate section in the 'Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools' which was developed in 2017. The updated Manual including the section on Cyber Safety is available on NCPCR's website at the following Link –

[https://ncpcr.gov.in/uploads/165650391762bc3e6d27f93_Manual%20on%20Safety%20and%20Security%20of%20Children%20in%20Schools%20\(Sep%202021\).pdf](https://ncpcr.gov.in/uploads/165650391762bc3e6d27f93_Manual%20on%20Safety%20and%20Security%20of%20Children%20in%20Schools%20(Sep%202021).pdf)

Further, as per the information received from Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the policies of the Government are aimed at ensuring a Safe and Trusted and Accountable Internet for all its users. Publication or transmission of obscene material in electronic form, is cybercrime. The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021"), provides for penalty and punishment for such act and also casts an obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence as per rule 3(1)(b). In case of failure to follow diligence as provided in the IT Rules, 2021, by intermediaries, they shall lose their safe harbour protection under section 79 of the IT Act and shall be liable for consequential action as provided in such law.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") penalises publishing or transmission of material

containing sexually explicit act in electronic form (section 67A and 67B) and publishing or transmitting of obscene material in electronic form (section 67), and makes them punishable with imprisonment for a period that may extend to three and five years respectively, and as per section 77B such cybercrimes are cognizable offences. As per the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, prevention and investigation of cognizable offences is to be done by the police, and as per the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, 'Police' is a State subject. As such, States are primarily responsible for the prevention, investigation etc. of such cybercrimes through the State police departments, which take preventive and penal action as per law, including in respect of the said cybercrimes pertaining to publishing or transmitting of material containing sexually explicit act or obscene material in electronic form.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021"), together, have made a framework which cast obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence and provide that if they fail to observe such due diligence, they shall no longer be exempt from their liability under law for third-party information or data or communication link hosted by them. Such due diligence includes the following:

Keeping in view complaints regarding action or inaction, on the part of the social media intermediaries and other intermediaries on user grievances regarding objectionable content or suspension of their accounts, the Central Government has also established three Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs), as provided for in the said IT Rules, 2021 to enable users to appeal against the decisions taken by Grievance Officer of intermediaries on user complaints.

In addition, under the Code of Ethics prescribed in the Part III of IT Rules, 2021, publishers of an online content curator are required to classify all content transmitted or published or exhibited by them, based on the nature and type of content, into various rating categories, including content suitable for children, content suitable for persons aged 7 years or 13 years or 16 years and above or persons under the said ages with parental guidance, and to display such classification. They are further required to restrict access to certain curated content by a child through implementation of appropriate access control measures.

Further, The Government of India (GoI) had enacted Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to protect the Children from Offences of Sexual Assault, Sexual harassment and pornography with due regard for safeguarding the interest and well being of children. The Act is gender neutral and defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It regards the best interest and welfare of the child as the matter of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child. Mandatory reporting of the crime by any one aware of such crime has also been

stipulated under the Act, to challenge the culture of silence often noticed around such crimes.

Gol, further made the provisions of the Act stringent through amendment of Section-14, Section-15 and introducing the definition of Child Pornography under section-2(da) of the POCSO Act, 2012 to curb the child pornography and to stop child exploitation. The provisions available under POCSO Act to curb the child pornography are as follows:-

i.) Section-2(da) of the POCSO Act explicitly defines the term child pornography - Definition of Child Pornography: “*Child Pornography means any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a child, which include photograph, video, digital or computer generated images indistinguishable from an actual child, and image created, adapted, or modified, but appear to depict a child*”

ii.) Section-14 of the Act prescribes Punishment for using a child for *pornographic purposes*

Section 14(1)- “*Whoever, uses a child or children for pornographic purposes shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years and shall also be liable to fine, and in the event of second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than seven years and also be liable to fine*”.

Section-14(2)-“*whoever using a child or children for pornographic purposes under sub-section(1), commits an offence referred to in section 3 or Section-5 or Section-7 or Section-9 by directly participating in such pornographic acts, shall be punished for the said offences also under Section-4, section-6, section-8, section-10, respectively, in addition to the punishment provided in sub- Section(1)*”.

Section-15(1)- Any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child, but fails to delete or destroy or report the same to the designated authority, as may be prescribed, with an intention to share or transmit child pornography, shall be liable to fine not less than Rs. 5000/-, and in the event of second or subsequent offence, with fine which shall not be less than Rs. 10,000/-.

Section-15(2)- Any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child for transmitting or propagating or displaying or distributing in any manner at any time except for the purpose of reporting as may be prescribed, or for use as evidence in court, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

Section-15(3)- Any person, who stores or possesses pornographic material in any form involving a child for commercial purpose shall be punished on the first conviction with imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than three years which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both, and in the event of second or subsequent conviction, with imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than five years which may extend to seven years and shall also liable to be fine.

This information was given by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

SS/TFK

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August 13, 2023 03:59 am | Updated 03:59 am IST

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Healthcare workers at a TB awareness rally in Vijayawada. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

The story so far: According to recent reports in *The Lancet* and *The Lancet Global Health*, [nutritional support has helped prevent](#) both tuberculosis (TB) among household contacts and mortality among TB patients in a trial in Jharkhand. In 2017, the World Health Organization had estimated that undernutrition is responsible for twice the number of TB cases than HIV globally. Any attempt to end/eliminate TB in India by 2025 will become possible only if undernutrition among people is addressed. As per conservative estimates, 40% of new TB cases annually in India are due to undernutrition.

A large field-based trial was undertaken between August 2019 and August 2022 in four districts of Jharkhand by a team led by Dr. Anurag Bhargava and Dr. Madhavi Bhargava from the Yenepoya Medical College, Mangaluru in collaboration with the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) and the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis-Indian Council of Medical Research (NIRT-ICMR).

The RATIONS (Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement of Nutritional Status) trial enrolled 2,800 people with pulmonary TB disease and 10,345 household contacts of TB patients. While all the TB patients received nutritional support, household contacts were randomly assigned to receive either nutritional support or usual diet alone. There were 5,621 household contacts in the intervention arm and 4,724 contacts in the control group.

While there were 108 (4%) deaths among TB patients across all body weights, mortality among those under 35 kg body weight (severely underweight) was 7%. In comparison, in a study carried out by the Chennai-based NIRT in Tiruvallur district, Tamil Nadu, which did not provide any nutrition support to the TB patients, mortality was 14% in those weighing under 35 kg; mortality dropped to 4% among those weighing over 35 kg. Incidence of TB deaths reduced by 12% with a one-unit increase in BMI and by 23% for a two-unit increase in BMI. With the nutritional support, at six months, the proportion of those with normal BMI increased from 16.5% to 43.5%. In general, extreme undernutrition — BMI less than 13 in men and BMI less than 11 in women — can often be fatal. However, in the current trial, more than 85% of such TB patients survived with nutritional support. Over 80% of TB patients had a BMI less than 18.5 and nearly 49% had a BMI less than 16 (severely underweight). There was 5% weight gain in the first two months which was associated with 60% lower risk of TB mortality. As per a 2022 study undertaken in India, the absence of weight gain during treatment in patients with severe undernutrition was associated with a five-fold higher death rate.

Among the household contacts, nutritional support led to a 39%-48% reduction in TB disease in the intervention group compared with the control arm. In the study that lasted for six months, 122 people in the control group developed TB whereas the intervention arm had only 96 TB cases. There was a 39% reduction in TB incidence — pulmonary and extra-pulmonary — while there was 48% reduction in pulmonary TB. The 39%-48% reduction in TB disease in the household contact intervention arm was after adjusting for confounding factors such as TB preventive treatment to children below five years, diabetes, smoking, and alcohol use.

Each adult household contact in the intervention arm received 5 kg of rice, 1.5 kg of split pigeon peas (tur dal), and micronutrient pills every month for six months. Each child (below 10 years) household contact received 50% of the adult nutrition support. Those in the control arm did not get any nutritional supplementation.

For TB patients, monthly nutritional support included 5 kg of rice, 1.5 kg of milk powder, 3 kg of roasted chickpea flour, 500 ml of oil, and micronutrient pills for a period of six months for people with drug-susceptible TB, and 12 months for people with MDR-TB.

Many new cases of TB are attributable to five risk factors — undernourishment, HIV infection, alcohol use disorders, smoking (especially among men) and diabetes, says the WHO Global TB report 2022. In TB-endemic countries such as India, undernutrition is the most widely prevalent risk factor, accounting for the “highest population attributable risk for TB in India”. It is also responsible for increased TB disease severity, higher mortality and poor treatment outcomes. As per the SDG 2 goal 2030 to end hunger and ensure access to nutritious food by all people year-round, the rationale is that undernutrition weakens the body’s defence against infections and is a strong risk factor for TB disease.

A study in India found that severe undernutrition at diagnosis was associated with a two-fold higher risk of death. As per a 2016 paper by NIRT researchers, undernutrition is an important risk factor for progression of latent TB infection to TB disease. It increases the risk of drug toxicity, TB relapse and mortality. For each unit reduction in BMI, the risk of TB increases by about 14%. Undernourished patients also tend to have poor bioavailability of drugs such as rifampicin, leading to treatment failure and development of multidrug resistance.

Nikshay Poshan Yojana is a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme for nutritional support to TB patients. It was launched in April 2018. All notified TB cases are provided with a financial incentive of 500 per month. According to the 2022 India TB report, seven million TB patients have benefited between 2018 and 2022, and 2,089 crore has been disbursed during this period.

Also read | [In TB detection, smear microscopy’s share still holds sway](#)

Late last year, India introduced Ni-kshay Mitras — volunteers adopting and caring for TB patients by providing nutritional support, nutritional supplements, among other things. As of March 9, 2023, 9.55 lakh consented TB patients across the country have been adopted by Ni-kshay Mitras. But in 2022, 2.4 million fresh TB cases were notified.

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NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION LISTS DRUGS WHICH CAN BE SOLD WITHOUT PRESCRIPTION

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 12, 2023 10:40 pm | Updated August 13, 2023 01:05 am IST - New Delhi

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In its 'Regulations relating to Professional Conduct of Registered Medical Practitioners', the National Medical Commission stated that over-the-counter drugs are legally allowed to be sold without a doctor's prescription. [File](#) | [Photo Credit: AP](#)

The National Medical Commission (NMC), in its newly notified regulations, has for the first time provided a list of therapeutic categories of drugs which can be dispensed over the counter without any prescription. However, the list does not provide names of specific drugs.

In its 'Regulations relating to Professional Conduct of Registered Medical Practitioners' issued on August 2, the NMC stated that over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are legally allowed to be sold without a doctor's prescription.

The list of OTC therapeutic categories that have been mentioned by the NMC regulation include anti-hemorrhoid drugs, topical antibiotics, cough-suppressants, anti-acne drugs and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines.

It also includes antiseptics, analgesics, decongestants, aspirin, vasodilators, antacids, expectorants, anti-fungal drugs, anti-histamines, anti-flatulence agents and smoking cessation drugs.

The NMC defined OTC drugs as medicines for common ailments that are available over the counter and are safe and effective for use by the public without seeking treatment from a health professional. All drugs that are not included in the list of 'prescription drugs' are considered non-prescription or OTC drugs, the NMC said.

There is no definition of OTC medicines in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and the Rules thereunder. Also, there are no specific provisions to regulate OTC drugs, an official source said.

However, schedule H of the Drugs Rules mentions a list of drugs that are required to be dispensed only through prescription, the source said. This list is updated from time to time and the last time it was done was in 2019. "Due to the lack of clearly defined regulations for OTC medicines, these drugs are not easily available. But the NMC in its latest regulations prescribed a wide range of therapeutic categories of drugs without mentioning or specifying any drug name which may lead to misuse of habit-forming drugs such cough suppressant Codeine," a source

explained.

Also, self-medication of some of these drugs may lead to toxicity. Also, when available as OTC, there is no medical advice regarding the number of doses, how to take the medicine, the contraindications and what precautions should be taken, the source said.

The Drugs Consultative Committee under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act constituted a sub-committee to define OTC drugs and identify a list of such medicine a few years ago. The panel submitted its report to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation in 2019.

The government is yet to accept the recommendations of the sub-committee.

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IN TB DETECTION, INDIA FAR FROM MEETING THE 2025 GOAL

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 12, 2023 09:00 pm | Updated 09:00 pm IST

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In March 2016, in his Mann Ki Baat address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to make India TB-free; in 2018 he set the target to “eliminate TB by 2025”. To fulfil this goal, the Health Ministry rolled out the National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2017-2025 to “eliminate” TB by 2025. Though the Plan outlined a paradigm shift in approach and strategy to achieve the ambitious goal, by 2020, it became clear that the NSP will not be able to meet these objectives. A new National Strategic Plan 2020-2025 to end TB was launched.

On the diagnostics front, NSP 2017-2025 wanted to reduce the number of presumptive TB patients who are offered sputum smear microscopy from over 9.1 million in 2015 to 5.8 million in 2022, while increasing the number of molecular tests from 40,000 in 2015 to over 13.4 million in 2022. As per the India TB report, in 2022, India was far from reaching the ambitious target set by the NSP 2017-2025 — smear microscopy was used for detecting 77% (13.9 million) of presumptive TB cases and just 23% (4.1 million) cases were detected using a molecular test.

If India failed to meet the diagnostic goals set out by NSP 2017-2025, the revised National Strategic Plan 2020-2025 has raised the bar even higher for precision tests to be used for initial diagnosis. Three years after the launch of the revised NSP, India is nowhere near meeting this target.

One of the main objectives of the revised NSP is the early detection of presumptive TB cases. It says there should be “prompt diagnosis” using highly sensitive diagnostic tests for detecting presumptive TB cases “at the first point of contact” both in the private and public sectors. Also, there should be universal access to high quality TB diagnosis including drug resistant TB in the country.

Under the prioritised set of actions to be taken over the NSP period 2020-2025, the revised plan underlines the need to “scale-up advanced diagnostics services and TB surveillance capacity by replacing sputum microscopy services with new precision diagnostic tools”. And it clearly states that smear microscopy services should be replaced with precision diagnostic tools, which is molecular tests, “in all TB diagnostic centres in the country”. Three years after the revised NSP was chalked out and just two more years left for meeting the 2025 target of “eliminating” TB from the country, replacing smear microscopy services with molecular tests is yet to become a reality. This when the revised NSP insists on “rapid/prioritised transition of TB diagnosis from smear microscopy to molecular testing using NAAT right up to the block level”.

Of bigger concern is that in 2022, bacteriologically confirmed cases among notified TB patients in the public sector was just 59% (1.07 million) and a meagre 28% (nearly 0.16 million) in the private sector. This could mean a sizable number of diagnoses are based on X-rays and clinical evaluation without bacteriological confirmation.

Grimmer still is that results for at least rifampicin resistance among the bacteriologically confirmed TB patients was just 77% (0.82 million). Universal drug-susceptibility testing in all drug-sensitive TB cases is crucial for early identification of drug-resistant TB. The revised NSP clearly states that NTEP should provide “universal access” to drug resistance testing, which is yet to happen.

In November 2019, WHO and the Joint Monitoring Mission undertook an intensive review of the TB programme. Among the set of recommendations listed out by the team that represent the “minimum required” to fulfil the Prime Minister’s 2025 goal is the urgent need to replace smear microscopy with molecular tests across the country.

In order to further increase the availability of advanced molecular tests across the country and at double-quick time to meet the 2025 goal, the WHO-JMM team has recommended that NTEP should utilise the molecular testing capacity available in the private sector to get 20 million molecular tests done annually.

Besides limited availability of 5,090 machines to undertake molecular tests, there are additional challenges in terms of availability of trained personnel to run these advanced tests and shortage of molecular tests. With molecular test stocks being limited, there is huge compulsion to use the scarce resource to first test the most vulnerable groups with presumptive TB such as paediatric population, people with extrapulmonary TB, people who are HIV positive, and previously treated patients. Besides digital chest X-ray screening, the revised NSP too emphasises the need for replacing smear microscopy with rapid molecular diagnostic tests for active case finding. The revised NSP has highlighted the challenge of lack of access to the latest NAAT-based molecular tests at the peripheral health institutions for active case finding. Finally, all presumptive TB cases detected using smear microscopy need to be tested for drug resistance using molecular tests. All these challenges underline the compulsion to outsource molecular tests to the private sector to improve case detection at the first point of contact till such time universal access to molecular tests in the public sector becomes a reality.

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DALIT CHRISTIANS — EXCLUSION BY SOCIETY, CHURCH, STATE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of STs, SCs, and OBCs - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

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August 14, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 01:19 am IST

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Dalit Christians staging a demonstration, in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu | Photo Credit: KARTHIKEYAN G.

Last year, the [Union Government constituted a commission](#), headed by the former Chief Justice of India, K.G. Balakrishnan, to study the possibility of granting Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians. Recently, a resolution was adopted by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to amend the 1950 Presidential (SC) order in this regard. The Justice Ranganath Misra Commission (2007) recommended 'permitting Dalits who converted to Christianity to avail of reservation benefits under the SC quota'. The findings arrived at by Deshpande and Bapna (2008) appointed by the National Commission for Minorities, stated that 'there is no compelling evidence to justify denying them of SC status'.

It was B.R. Ambedkar who said, "[To the 'Untouchables', Hinduism is a veritable chamber of horror \(Writings and Speeches, Volume 9, p.296\)](#)". It was to escape this horror of discrimination that millions of Hindu Dalits converted to more egalitarian religions including Christianity, in the hope of escaping the clutches of casteism and experiencing the equality promised by such religions. The basic argument of this article is that the fundamental hope of equality — the reason why Hindu Dalits converted to Christianity — has not been realised to a large extent. This has resulted in contradictions and ambiguities with regard to their identity, and has not led to their expected upward social mobility. This is also because of the unwillingness of their co-religionists, non-Dalit converts to Christianity, to shed their age-old practice of untouchability in society and bring this into the church.

The 'Theory of Intersectionality' shows the bigger picture of the Dalit Christian conundrum as it allows an understanding of caste with religion and a composite understanding of Dalit Christians as 'Dalits' and as a 'religious minority group'. It also extrapolates an understanding of the inadequacy of the 'single-axis framework' of the laws of the state of India that provides legal protection to isolated categories and discriminates against groups where categories overlap, such as Dalit Christians.

It shows that various oppressing systems such as race, gender, sexuality and ability cannot be understood in isolation from the other. Such systems of power intersect with one another to result in distinctive individual social experiences. The consequence of such intersectional

discrimination is the specificity of discrimination that has been introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who is the pioneer of the Theory of Intersectionality.

In her seminal article, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”, she writes, ‘because of their intersectional identity as both women, women of colour are marginalised within both’. This description helps form the basis of understanding of intersectionality as a framework to study Dalits and Christians as ‘Dalit Christians’ who are subjected to structural intersectional discrimination, thereby experiencing exclusion by society, the church and the state.

‘Identity’ is an individual’s claim of membership with particular social categories and social identities relating to various social categories that exist societally, that are in effect ‘inputs’ into self-identities.

It must be stated that like in the case of ‘black women’, the term ‘Dalit Christian’ cannot be understood as a mere addition of two words but rather as a distinctive category, as this intersection is a unique hybrid creation of multiple social identities. The term ‘Dalit Christians’ in popular discourse, is construed as an oxymoron, an effect of an erroneous logic that Christianity does not recognise casteism, and hence a Hindu Dalit on conversion to Christianity, ceases to be a Dalit. This is the exact view that the state of India holds on Dalit Christians, even while the disabilities of Dalit Christians continue after conversion and the state views them as just ‘Christians’, eventually pushing them into an ‘intersectional invisibility’. Amartya Sen explains this as a ‘collectivities’ of identities to which a person can belong to, providing a particular identity that becomes variously relevant in different contexts. He points out that ‘the priorities over these identities must be relative to the issue at hand’, adding that a person can choose a dominant one from such a plurality of identities to avail of a benefit.

In the Soosai Etc vs Union Of India And Others case (1985), Soosai, a Dalit Catholic shoemaker, moved the Supreme Court of India for an extension in setting up a kiosk on a platform in Madras, provided by the State government, so that he was on a par with Hindu shoemakers. The Court dismissed the case, stating that ‘It is necessary to establish further that the disabilities and handicaps suffered from such caste membership in the social order of its origin Hinduism — continue in their oppressive severity in the new environment of a different religions community’. This means that the ‘Dalitness’ of Soosai was completely ignored on the use of ‘single-axis frame work’ approach.

Ashish Nandy argues that the Constitution of India subscribes to the idea that caste-based discrimination exists in Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism and extends benefits to its Dalits, but excludes Dalit Christians on the basis of an assumption that Christianity is of ‘foreign import’, making their very democratic citizenship questionable.

Editorial | [Status beyond faith: On SC status post conversion](#)

Thus, the ‘single-axis’ communal framework of the law has resulted in the failure of Dalit Christians being included in the SC list, because of the unwillingness of the state, in spite of much evidence in their favour. A way forward lies in the amendment of the 1950 Presidential (SC) order to include Dalit Christians in the SC list.

Clement Arockiasamy, a British Chevening Scholar, is in the Institute of Development Studies, United Kingdom

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DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT IS A WORLD-CLASS LEGISLATION: MOS RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Electronics & IT, Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, participated in an interaction with students, startups, and prominent citizens from the state in Bengaluru on Saturday. During the session, he recounted the journey behind the creation of the historic Data Personal Data Protection Act, charting its course from inception to its present status as a law. He shared his journey, which commenced in 2010 when he initially introduced the concept of privacy as a subject of parliamentary debate during the UPA era.

“The Digital Personal Data Protection Act is a world-class legislation. On August 15, 2021, our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi introduced the term ‘techade,’ reflecting his vision of a future full of technological opportunities for students, young Indians who will be part of the workforce tomorrow. Looking back to 2010, when I was an MP, I introduced a private members’ bill in the Parliament, asking for privacy to be recognized as a fundamental right. Unfortunately, the government at that time did not feel it was a necessary debate. Essentially personal data of citizens of this country was available for exploitation,” the Minister said during his interaction.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar elaborated on how this law integrates into a broader mission aligned with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s vision. This vision aims to establish contemporary and relevant laws tailored to Indian requirements along with platform obligations.

“The forthcoming companion legislation is known as the Digital India Act, which is set to replace the 22-year-old IT Act. The Digital India Act will deal with the whole ecosystem of technology. Previously, data privacy conversations in our country used to start and end with the GDPR. It was almost a trend to regard anything foreign as the best. But we decided to design an Indian bill ground up instead of deriving inspiration from the GDPR. We have looked at the Indian internet with the 830 million Indians who use the internet and by 2025-26 it will be 1.2 billion Indians. We are the largest connected country in the world. We deserve to be setting our own standards in any conversation about technology for the future rather than borrowing anything from the EU or US,” the Minister added.

In highlighting the Government’s commitment to treating citizens’ personal digital data with utmost importance, the Minister emphasized the significance of imposing substantial penalties. These penalties serve a vital purpose — to ensure industries and platforms adhere to this law.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, “This law is creating a new regime. We will allow companies and industries a transitional period. The era of misuse, the era of exploitation, the era of believing that Indian citizens don’t have rights comes to an end with this law. This bill is an important marker to catalyze the innovation ecosystem because it removes any ambiguity of what an entity is supposed to do when privacy is being declared as a fundamental right. In case of a citizen's data breach, they simply need to visit the website, provide the data protection board with details, and the board will initiate an inquiry, imposing penalties on the breaching platforms. We want the penalties to be punitive so that it incentivises platforms to be responsible.”

The event, named "SansadDhvani," is a citizen engagement initiative spearheaded by Shri Tejasvi Surya, Member of Parliament from Bengaluru South and National President of The Bharatiya Janata YuvaMorcha.

On Saturday, MoS Rajeev Chandrasekhar also met with renowned environmentalist SmtShalumaradhaThimakka at the Apollo Hospital. A recipient of the Padmashri award, she is known for her remarkable work of planting more than 8,000 trees in Karnataka.

DK/DK

Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship and Electronics & IT, Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, participated in an interaction with students, startups, and prominent citizens from the state in Bengaluru on Saturday. During the session, he recounted the journey behind the creation of the historic Data Personal Data Protection Act, charting its course from inception to its present status as a law. He shared his journey, which commenced in 2010 when he initially introduced the concept of privacy as a subject of parliamentary debate during the UPA era.

"The Digital Personal Data Protection Act is a world-class legislation. On August 15, 2021, our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi introduced the term 'techade,' reflecting his vision of a future full of technological opportunities for students, young Indians who will be part of the workforce tomorrow. Looking back to 2010, when I was an MP, I introduced a private members' bill in the Parliament, asking for privacy to be recognized as a fundamental right. Unfortunately, the government at that time did not feel it was a necessary debate. Essentially personal data of citizens of this country was available for exploitation," the Minister said during his interaction.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar elaborated on how this law integrates into a broader mission aligned with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision. This vision aims to establish contemporary and relevant laws tailored to Indian requirements along with platform obligations.

"The forthcoming companion legislation is known as the Digital India Act, which is set to replace the 22-year-old IT Act. The Digital India Act will deal with the whole ecosystem of technology. Previously, data privacy conversations in our country used to start and end with the GDPR. It was almost a trend to regard anything foreign as the best. But we decided to design an Indian bill ground up instead of deriving inspiration from the GDPR. We have looked at the Indian internet with the 830 million Indians who use the internet and by 2025-26 it will be 1.2 billion Indians. We are the largest connected country in the world. We deserve to be setting our own standards in any conversation about technology for the future rather than borrowing anything from the EU or US," the Minister added.

In highlighting the Government's commitment to treating citizens' personal digital data with utmost importance, the Minister emphasized the significance of imposing substantial penalties. These penalties serve a vital purpose — to ensure industries and platforms adhere to this law.

Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "This law is creating a new regime. We will allow companies and industries a transitional period. The era of misuse, the era of exploitation, the era of believing that Indian citizens don't have rights comes to an end with this law. This bill is an important marker to catalyze the innovation ecosystem because it removes any ambiguity of what an entity is supposed to do when privacy is being declared as a fundamental right. In case of a citizen's data breach, they simply need to visit the website, provide the data protection board with details, and the board will initiate an inquiry, imposing penalties on the breaching

platforms. We want the penalties to be punitive so that it incentivises platforms to be responsible.”

The event, named "SansadDhvani," is a citizen engagement initiative spearheaded by Shri Tejasvi Surya, Member of Parliament from Bengaluru South and National President of The Bharatiya Janata YuvaMorcha.

On Saturday, MoS Rajeev Chandrasekhar also met with renowned environmentalist SmtShalumaradhaThimakka at the Apollo Hospital. A recipient of the Padmashri award, she is known for her remarkable work of planting more than 8,000 trees in Karnataka.

DK/DK

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CAN'T BE FORCED TO DO THE WORK OF CHEMISTS OR PRESCRIBE POOR QUALITY DRUGS TO PATIENTS: IMA

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 14, 2023 07:09 pm | Updated 07:09 pm IST - NEW DELHI

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Following the National Medical Commission's (NMC) latest regulation asked the doctors to prescribe generic drugs, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) on August 14 demanded urgent intervention from the government stating that they should not be forced to do the work of chemists, and prescribe "poor quality drugs" to patients.

"The biggest impediment to generic drugs is the uncertainty about its quality. The quality control in the nation being very weak, there's practically no guarantee of the quality of drugs, and prescribing drugs without assured quality would be detrimental to patient health," the IMA said in its release.

It further said that less than 0.1% of the drugs manufactured in India are tested for quality. The IMA demanded that this latest step should be deferred till the government can assure the quality of all the drugs released into the market.

The association said that if the government and the NMC want all the doctors in the country to prescribe only generic drugs, they should simply order all pharmaceutical companies to manufacture drugs without brand names.

"This measure is just shifting the job. Doctors' primary concern, training, and responsibility is patients' health; it is the chemist/person sitting in a chemist shop, who is selling drugs. This naturally wouldn't be in the best interest of the patient," said the association.

The IMA also questioned that if doctors are not allowed to prescribe branded drugs, then why such drugs should be licensed at all, given that modern medicine drugs can be dispensed only on prescription of doctors of this system.

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A CANVAS OF RACISM, SEXISM: WHEN AI REIMAGINED GLOBAL HEALTH

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 15, 2023 01:59 pm | Updated 07:12 pm IST

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What does an HIV patient look like? Researchers asked AI to illustrate a scenario devoid of global health tropes, without white saviours or powerless ‘victims’. The bot belched out a bromidic image: Black African people, hooked to machines, strewn in distress, receiving care. *Another* attempt. Show an image of Black African doctors providing care to White suffering children. Result? Over 300 images arranged Black patients receiving care from White doctors, the latter occasionally dressed in ‘exotic clothing’.

AI, for all its generative power, “proved incapable of avoiding the perpetuation of existing inequality and prejudice [in global health],” the researchers wrote in a [paper published in *The Lancet Global Health*](#) on August 9. The imagery regurgitated inequalities embedded in public health, where people from minoritised genders, races, ethnicities and classes are depicted with less dignity and respect.

Prompt of ‘Black African doctor is helping poor and sick White children, photojournalism’. Photo Credit: *Reflections before the storm: the AI reproduction of biased imagery in global health visuals* (*The Lancet Global Health*, August 2023)

The experiment began with an intent to invert stereotypes, of suffering subjects and white saviours, in real-world images. Since AI models also train on this ‘substrate’ of real global health images, researchers Arsenii Alenichev, Patricia Kingori and Koen Peeters Grietens fed textual prompts that inverted this premise (Think a ‘Black African doctor administering vaccines to poor White children’ instead of the reverse). The researchers used [Midjourney Bot Version 5.1](#) (termed a “[leap forward for AI art](#)”), which converts lines of text into lifelike graphics. Its terms and conditions mention a commitment to “ensure non-abusive depictions of people, their cultures, and communities”.

The AI succeeded in creating separate images of “suffering White children” and “Black African doctors”, but stumbled when the prompt changed in permutation. Prompts of “African doctors administer vaccines to poor white children” or a “Traditional African healer is helping poor and sick White children” adamantly showcased white doctors. “AI reproduced continuums of biases, even when we asked it to do the opposite,” Mr. Alenichev and Mr. Grietens told *The Hindu*. Some images were also “exaggerated” and included “culturally offensive African elements.

Prompt of ‘doctors helping children in Africa’. Photo Credit: *Reflections before the storm: the AI reproduction of biased imagery in global health visuals*(*The Lancet Global Health*, August 2023)

The notion of a Black African doctor delivering care challenges the status quo hard-wired in the system — of associating people of marginalised genders and ethnicities with disease and impurity and in need of saving.

Global health publications are notorious for mirroring the racial, gendered and colonial bias in depicting diseases, research shows. A story on antibiotic resistance, for instance, used images of Black African women, dressed in traditional outfits. Images of Asians globally and [Muslim people in India were used to depict COVID-19 stories](#); pictures for the [MPX \(monkeypox\)](#) outbreak showcased stock images of people with dark, black and African skin complexion to refer to cases found in the U.K. and U.S.

OUR STATEMENT:

The Foreign Press Association, Africa registers its displeasure against media outlets using images of black people alongside stories of the [#monkeypox](#) outbreak in North America and the United Kingdom. pic.twitter.com/u32yWLELJg

Health photos are “tools of political agents”. Arsenii Alenichev et. al.’s paper builds upon research by Esmita Charani et. al., who found global health images [depicted women and children from low- and middle-income countries in an “intrusive” and “out-of-context” setting](#). The “harmful effects” of such misrepresentation invariably linked a community with social and medical problems, normalising stereotypes. Structural racism and historical colonialism have also worsened health outcomes among these communities and sharpened a distrust of the health system, activism and literature have pointed out.

Prompt of ‘traditional African healer is healing a White child in a hospital’. The image showed “exaggerated” elements of African culture with beads and attire, the research found. Photo Credit: *Reflections before the storm: the AI reproduction of biased imagery in global health visuals*(*The Lancet Global Health*, August 2023)

Mr. Alenichev and Mr. Grietens add that research reiterates how generative AI should not be understood as an ‘apolitical’ technology— “it always feeds on reality and the power imbalances inherent in it”. AI was arguably never neutral: studies show AI is capable of identifying race, gender, and ethnicity from medical images that carry no overt indications. [Training AI on larger data sets also appeared to strengthen racial biases](#), one research showed.

Divyansha Sehgal, an independent tech researcher, agrees that similar experiments reiterate the need for people to exercise caution when deploying emerging technologies in new, untested, areas. “There is a huge risk of entrenching existing social and cultural biases whenever tech is involved and AI just makes this problem worse — because the target population will often not understand how or why things work.” AI, she adds, is not the “silver bullet” it is often sold as.

“We need both better data sets and robust public models of AI regulation, accountability, transparency and governance.”Arsenii Alenichev and Koen Peeters Grietens

AI’s persistence in global health runs the immediate risk of a “continued avoidance of responsibility and inappropriate automation”, the researchers argued. Two ethical questions are simultaneously bypassed — pertaining to the ‘real’ images that AI learns from, and how it ends up reproducing them. If both real and AI-generated global health images fuel stereotypes, people risk being reduced to caricatures borne out of bias.

The Gates Foundation recently announced funding for 48 AI projects pitched as ‘miracle’ solutions to chronic social and healthcare issues in the Global South. “This, we fear, will inevitably create problems, given the nature of both AI and global health,” say Mr. Alenichev and Mr. Grietens. It calls for a meticulous dive into the “history and contexts of AI” to find where it could, and should, be deployed.

The researchers hope the findings renew “provocative questions” that challenge AI’s accountability. How can we improve datasets? Who will own the data? Who will be the primary beneficiary of AI interventions in the Global South? What are the political, economic and social interests of associated organisations? “We need to confront the fact, that AI and global health are never neutral or solely positive — they are shaped by or aligned with the interests of powerful institutions.”

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CONSUMPTION-BASED POVERTY ESTIMATES HAVE RELEVANCE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Poverty & Hunger and related issues

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August 16, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 08:51 am IST

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'There is ground to believe that the rate of reduction in the poverty ratio must have slowed down. This is at best a guess. We need to wait for consumption expenditure survey data' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

A recent report by [NITI Aayog on multidimensional poverty](#) shows that the percentage of the poor has gone down from 25% in 2015-16 to 15% in 2019-21 and around 135 million people were lifted out of poverty during this period. The [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report of 2023](#) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), which was released recently, also shows that the incidence of the multidimensional poverty index declined from 27.5% in 2015-16 to 16.2% in 2019-21.

In this context, we briefly examine the issues, particularly on methodology relating to the multidimensional poverty index, and argue that consumption-based poverty estimates are still very relevant. Multidimensional poverty estimates are not substitutes for National Sample Survey (NSS) consumption-based poverty ratios. In the end, we also flag some concerns about consumption expenditure surveys and the need to correct them.

The report of the [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index \(MPI\) 2018](#) says: "India has made momentous progress in reducing multidimensional poverty. The incidence of multidimensional poverty was almost halved between 2005/06 and 2015/16, climbing down to 27.5 per cent. Thus, within ten years, the number of poor people in India fell by more than 271 million — a truly massive gain". This is high praise indeed.

Is the conclusion of global MPI a new revelation? No, as far as the 2015-16 estimates are concerned. The estimates of poverty based on consumer expenditure and using the Tendulkar committee methodology show (over a seven-year period between 2004-05 and 2011-12) that the number of poor came down by 137 million despite an increase in population. According to the Rangarajan Committee methodology, the decline between 2009-10 and 2011-12 is 92 million, which is 46 million per annum. For a decade, it will be larger than that of global MPI. However, in absolute terms, the poverty ratios based on the Tendulkar and Rangarajan Committee methodologies are lower than as estimated by global MPI.

The search for non-income dimensions of poverty possibly stems from a view that in terms of the capabilities approach to the concept and measurement of poverty, some of these

'capabilities' may not be tightly linked to the privately purchased consumption basket in terms of which the poverty lines are currently drawn. Therefore, poverty based on income or consumption is different from deprivations based on education or health.

As pointed out by the Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measuring Poverty (2014), there are reservations on using multiple indicators as these multidimensional indicators/measures raise several issues regarding their measurability, aggregation across indicators, and, crucially, of databases that provide the requisite information at reasonably short intervals. These need to be considered and evaluated carefully. For example, there is a problem with the child mortality indicator as it is for population groups and not for households.

Aggregation is another problem. In principle, they should be independent. Access to safe drinking water, for example, cannot be aggregated with indicators such as child mortality. Even in respect of independent indicators, analytically appropriate rules of aggregation require that all of them relate to the same household. More generally, this requirement poses several data constraints.

It may be noted that we are not against multidimensional poverty or deprivations. One can analyse the progress of non-income indicators such as education, health, sanitation, drinking water, and child mortality over time with income or consumption poverty. But, converting all of them into an index poses several problems. Deaton and Drèze (2014) also indicate that "it is important to supplement expenditure-based poverty estimates with other indicators of living standards, relating for instance to nutrition, health, education and the quality of the environment".

On multidimensional issues, Srinivasan (2007) says viewing public services as another dimension besides consumption in a multidimensional conceptualisation of poverty is more fruitful. However, he is critical of multidimensional indices. He says that "collapsing many relevant but not necessarily commensurate dimensions into a single index defined as an arbitrarily weighted sum of disparate indexes makes little sense. The Human Development Index pioneered by the United Nations Development Programme is an example of an arbitrarily weighted sum of non-commensurate indexes. It certainly is not a multidimensional conceptualisation in any meaningful sense but simply yet another arbitrary unidimensional index".

In the minds of most people, being rich or poor is associated with levels of income. The various non-income indicators of poverty are in fact reflections of inadequate income. Defining poverty in terms of income or in the absence of such data in terms of expenditure seems most appropriate, and it is this method which is followed in most countries.

We do not have official data on consumer expenditure after 2011-12 to make a comparison with trends in the multidimensional poverty index. The survey data on consumption expenditures done in 2017-18 have not been released officially. In the absence of such data, there have been several studies on poverty using indirect methods and using Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data sources — and they have come up with differing conclusions.

The consumption expenditure survey is being conducted in the current year. For purposes of comparison, we need to follow one method. Therefore, it is best to wait for the survey results to be published. Earlier surveys clearly indicate that the poverty ratio comes down strongly during a period of high growth. If you look at recent years including the COVID-19 period, the growth rate has come down. There is ground to believe that the rate of reduction in the poverty ratio must have slowed down. This is at best a guess. We need to wait for consumption expenditure survey

data.

An important issue is the differences in aggregate consumption estimates between National Accounts Statistics (NAS) and NSS data. These two estimates of consumption (NSS and NAS) do not match in any country; India is no exception. What is perplexing is that the difference in India between the NSS and the NAS consumption is widening over time. From a difference of less than 10% in the late 1970s, it has come to 53.1% in 2011-12, i.e., the Survey Estimate is only 46.9% of NAS estimates. The difference is too big to be brushed aside. The National Statistical Office must study the problem and come out with possible suggestions to improve the collection of data through both routes.

In addition, there is a need to supplement the results of consumption surveys with a study of the impact of public expenditure on health and education of different expenditure classes.

C. Rangarajan was Chairman, Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measuring Poverty (2014) S. Mahendra Dev was Member, Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measuring Poverty (2014)

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CAN INDIA'S STATE UNIVERSITIES BE HUBS OF SKILL-BASED SCIENCE EDUCATION?

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Education and related issues

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August 15, 2023 10:29 pm | Updated August 16, 2023 11:00 am IST

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A view of the University of Mysore, November 8, 2022. | Photo Credit: Sriram M.A./The Hindu

By the third anniversary of the [National Education Policy 2020](#), experts and policymakers have lauded its efforts to foster skill-based education and practical learning. With the potential to transform the education landscape, skill development is particularly relevant to higher science education in the country.

In India, students choosing to study science at higher levels complete their Higher Secondary School Certificate (or equivalent) examinations in select science subjects, after which they are eligible for medicine, engineering, and bachelors of science (BSc) courses. While some institutes offer specialised degrees in medicine and engineering, a large segment of science education in India includes BSc-level and subsequent courses.

Following a BSc, students can continue their education via master's and PhD programmes that align with their primary degrees. On the other hand, BSc graduates can also opt for diverse specialisations, including MCA or MBA programmes or the civil service examinations, or endeavour to enter the workforce via jobs in the public or private sectors.

Setting aside medical graduates, India produces over 25 lakh graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) every year, across bachelors and masters courses, and accounts for the largest number of students obtaining bachelor-equivalent science degrees worldwide.

Among STEM graduates, the aggregate enrolment of students in BSc courses is close to 50 lakh, with more than 11 lakh students completing their baccalaureate degrees every year, per the [All-India Survey of Higher Education Report 2021-2022](#). However, the number of science graduates drops to 2.9 lakh at the masters level (25% of BSc graduates), and even further at the doctoral level, with only 6,000 science PhDs awarded each year. A PhD, or a master's degree with select eligibility tests, is a prerequisite to entry-level scientific research or teaching positions at universities and national institutes.

Given this, a large number of bachelors-equivalent science graduates in India – some 8 lakh a year – represents the human resources entering the workforce immediately or in the near future.

Notably, the vast majority of bachelors-level science graduates in India earn their primary degrees at State-affiliated colleges and universities, either via three-year BSc courses or integrated BSc-MSc programmes (4-5 years).

Of the 1,113 universities in India, 422 are public universities managed by State governments, each with several State-affiliated colleges. State-managed universities and their constituent units account for the single-largest share of enrolments (over 30%) across universities in India, most of which are at undergraduate level, and with science courses hosting the second highest number of students enrolments after arts. Taken together, State-level science education is a fertile training ground to prepare graduates for the national scientific workforce.

However, the current condition of science education and training at State-affiliated colleges and universities leaves much to be wanted. Foremost, curricula and course content in BSc and other integrated programs are largely outdated, with syllabi out of sync with contemporary technologies. These courses also offer insufficient practical training, with inadequate and poorly-maintained laboratory facilities. Some programmes encourage students to undertake external internships, but brief laboratory sojourns can't substitute rigorous curricular and practical training, and the internships are extremely competitive as well.

While systemic administrative problems have played a significant role in this bottleneck, State-managed universities also face an existential crisis related to their role in higher science education. Contrary to other publicly funded institutes, including 'Institutes of Eminence' (IoEs) such as the IITs and IISERs, State-affiliated colleges and universities cater to more students while grappling with serious resource constraints. So while a revamp of State universities is imperative, it is impractical to expect that they will meet the research metrics of the IoEs or private universities. On the other hand, 'letting teachers teach' in the absence of research programmes or continued upskilling will further risk pedagogical content and practices in these courses.

Against this background, we need to re-envision State-affiliated universities and colleges while providing them with a unique mandate that fulfils the needs of higher science education in India.

In the past, including at the recent [Science20 group meetings](#) – the science engagement platform of the G20 – India has shared its vision to build an economy focused on science and technology, a chunk of which includes industries related to information technology, life sciences, chemical engineering, and automation engineering, to name a few. India is also emerging as a [growing bio-economy](#), which includes pharmaceuticals and biomanufacturing, and is expected to have an economic value of \$150 billion by 2025. Other industries such as agriculture, mining, and livestock also continue to require scientific and technological advancements.

Yet in spite of the large pool of science graduates available in India, scientific industries [have reported](#) a challenge with finding people trained well in the relevant skills.

It is in this context, that State-affiliated universities and colleges could be reimagined as hubs for skill-based science education, with teaching, training, and research that aligns with employability in the scientific sector. Alongside academic knowledge, BSc or integrated course curricula could focus on industry-relevant skills and certifications, such as programming, data analysis techniques, instrumentation and facility expertise, quality assurance, and benchmarking.

Longstanding collaborations with industry could be built via seminars, apprenticeships, interactions with expert faculty members, job fairs, and funding support. Course-training could also include applying and interviewing for jobs, on-campus interviews, and negotiating salary scales.

The community college and technical university models in the U.S. and Europe stand out as examples of publicly-funded universities with strong focus on advancing education in regional communities, while building workforce-ready graduates.

For India, State-affiliated universities and colleges with a focus on skill-based education can serve as a dual solution for the country's need for skilled personnel in the scientific sector and challenges of graduate-level unemployability. This would bridge the goals of the National Education Policy with the proposed National Research Foundation for State-level education, which includes practical training, better utilisation of resources, and access to industrial funding.

Karishma Kaushik is the Executive Director of IndiaBioscience.

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KARNATAKA'S 'KOOSINA MANE' CRECHES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

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August 17, 2023 01:10 am | Updated 01:48 am IST

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Chief Minister Siddaramaiah addresses the media after budget presentation at Vidana Soudha in Bengaluru on July 7, 2023. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Last month, in its 2023-24 Budget, the Karnataka government announced plans to set up “Koosina mane” across 4,000-gram panchayats for children of working mothers. “Koosina mane” translates to child homes or creches and is aimed at providing healthcare, nutrition, and safety for children whose mothers are employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), as well as for other mothers living in the vicinity. This scheme must be welcomed for several reasons.

First, this initiative exemplifies a demand-side solution to boost women’s labour force participation. The MGNREGA stipulates that at least “one-third of its beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work”. The Union government’s data show that women comprise a little over 50% of the person-days under MGNREGA in Karnataka, lower than in neighbouring States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala (80% each). In a country where childcare responsibilities are deeply gendered, a reliable childcare infrastructure that provides beyond basic provisions can aid, increase, and sustain this labour force participation. The fact that this initiative aligns with the goals of both the MGNREGA and the Women and Children Development Department is an excellent example of convergence. Perhaps, the ‘koosina mane’ can also be built as community assets under the MGNREGA.

Second, it has an explicit mandate to support working mothers through childcare infrastructure. This messaging is vital, as it acknowledges that women are not just mothers but also active contributors to the workforce, an aspect often missed in public programmes. Even though some may consider the vast network of infrastructure created for the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to be a form of childcare infrastructure, its primary focus is improving maternal and child health. The ICDS caters to the needs of children at various stages of early life, starting from six months to six years. However, the working hours of the centres are not designed to support working women. Without maternity protection in the early stages of childbirth, women require care infrastructure before six months, but also until the child is much older, something that is possible in ‘koosina mane’.

Third, in Indian households, working women encounter what is rightly termed the “triple burden” of work — paid work, childcare and domestic chores. Building ‘koosina mane’ at scale, spanning more than 60% of the gram panchayats in the State and recognising it as “essential public

infrastructure” is a significant step toward redistributing the gendered burden of childcare. This can ameliorate the strain women encounter as they balance childcare and paid work, as well as other young girls who substitute for mother’s care.

The oft-dichotomised relationship between women’s employment and childcare can be eased through childcare provision. While the “motherhood penalty” is considered to be one of the reasons why women drop out of the labour force, the situation is slightly different in poorer households. We have found that women work late into their pregnancy and return to work immediately after childbirth. Motherhood pushes women to take up work that is flexible, part-time, low-paid casual work or self-employment as they are unable to find care support. Public infrastructure like ‘koosina mane’ can reorganise the physical space within which care takes place, moving some of the care work out of the household. This shift could enable women to sustain work, upskill on the job and seek better paying work.

Finally, this initiative could address a critical concern: child safety. In the absence of care support, women must take their children, especially those who are very young, to their place of work so they can breastfeed and care throughout the day. However, this exposes children to heat stress and other harsh weather conditions and puts them at risk of injury and accidents. A childcare infrastructure which is managed by well-trained caregivers can address concerns of safety, nutrition, and overall well-being of the child.

What sets apart ‘koosina mane’ from similar promises in the past is its thrust on implementation at scale, absorption of its building and running expenses within the government Budget, and catering to children as young as six months old. Much like the recently enacted Shakti scheme, which offers complimentary bus rides within the State to women and transgender people, this scheme also moves the needle on women’s participation in the labour force through multiple approaches and may prove to be worthy of imitation.

Divya Ravindranath and Antara Rai Chowdhury work on informal labour and gender at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements

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HOUSING FOR ALL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON SCHEME TO HELP THE URBAN POOR BUILD HOUSES IN CITIES

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The [announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) of a scheme to help the urban poor build houses in cities is a signal that the government is to undertake one more plan to address the problem of a shortage in urban housing. Even five months ago, its stand was that no new housing scheme had been envisaged following the extension of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) till December 2024, with the focus on expeditious completion of sanctioned houses. But an appraisal of PMAY-U may have caused the shift in stance. It also indicates that 'housing for all' is still a long way away. In the last eight years since the launch of PMAY-U, only two-thirds of the sanctioned houses, or 76.25 lakh houses out of about 1.19 crore sanctioned, were either completed or handed over as on August 14. The central assistance released was 1.49 lakh crore; the Centre's share has been limited to 24.4% while that of States and urban local bodies is 16%. The remainder, almost 60%, has to come from beneficiaries. Of the estimated total investment of 8.31 lakh crore for the 1.23 crore houses originally proposed, the beneficiaries (urban poor) have to shell out 4.95 lakh crore. Under the proposed scheme, the share of beneficiaries should be brought down to at least 40%, as a parliamentary committee report highlights, as beneficiaries are not in a position to fully pay their share because of their low income. Even though some State governments try to help such beneficiaries access bank loans, financial institutions have been lukewarm in their responses citing the lack of proof of sustained income.

The parliamentary committee also made well-considered suggestions on the implementation of PMAY-U, and the government would do well to examine them while drawing up the proposed scheme. The committee's most significant recommendation is on the need to drop uniform and fixed assistance across the country, as followed in PMAY-U, and adopt a flexible arrangement instead, depending on the topography and other factors. Reasons behind the poor quality of the houses and the prevalence of unoccupancy too should be gone into. High land costs, floor space index restrictions, and multiple certification from different agencies are factors that determine the success of urban housing. This calls for central government-organised discussions with the relevant agencies such as State governments, local bodies, urban planning bodies, urban sector professionals, financial institutions and activists, as there is enough time for the Union government to formulate the new scheme. This time, the objective should be to draft a fool-proof scheme so that 'housing for all' no longer remains a slogan but becomes a reality in the tangible future.

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NEW BILLS AND A PRINCIPLED COURSE FOR CRIMINAL LAW REFORMS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

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August 17, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 08:30 am IST

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'The success or failure of criminal law reforms hinges on their inception, formulation, resilience, and far-sightedness' | Photo Credit: Getty Images

The recent introduction of three Bills — the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita to replace the Indian Penal Code; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill to replace the Indian Evidence Act — transforming criminal laws has ignited a spectrum of reactions, underscoring pivotal facets related to criminal law reforms. Preliminary objections aside, the nature and the extent of the changes requires months, if not years, of study, discourse and deliberations. Amidst this unfolding discourse, however, a prevailing challenge in the Indian context lies in effectively channelling these debates to generate substantive and pertinent contributions. The Bills hold the potential to shape the future landscape of criminal law. Therefore, the task of testing their sustainability; efficacy; adherence to rule of law; and, justice delivery capacity, becomes paramount.

In his seminal work titled 'Crime, Reason and History', Alan Norrie states: "...far from being free-standing foundations for a rational criminal law, the central principles of the law are a site of struggle and contradiction." Capturing the collective aspirations of the public within criminal law reforms presents a formidable challenge given the disparities between polarised popular opinions which must be balanced with the state's perspective. Revision of India's Macaulay-era criminal law is undeniably complex, as the functionaries and stakeholders of this legal framework have been conditioned by the same for over 162 years. The Indian criminal law is undoubtedly an instrument of social control, moulding and guiding us in more ways than one.

Editorial | [Rebooting the codes: On the IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act](#)

It is too early to say whether the Bills will usher in sweeping and substantial changes in the legal landscape. The success or failure of criminal law reforms hinges significantly on their inception, formulation, and subsequent approach to their longevity and oversight. The purported 160 alterations pale in comparison to the deep-seated challenges besieging India's criminal justice system. Seemingly, the Bills also mark an abundance of missed opportunities.

At the same time, the assertion that these Bills are draconian compared to their previous iterations lacks merit. Instead, the Bills exhibit several moderative modifications, including

linguistic adjustments for gender inclusivity and replacement of outdated terms such as 'insanity' with 'mental illness'. There is also a measured reconfiguration in the punitive degrees for minor and serious offences. Significantly, the integration of ICT applications with the criminal justice process is noteworthy. Although the scope is limited, innovations such as trial in absentia and the introduction of community service are commendable. The exclusion of attempted suicide and adultery aligns the black letter of the law with the Supreme Court of India's decisions. Notably, the offence of sedition has been judiciously tempered to prevent misuse, facilitated by introducing a test for criminal intent. Newly created offences such as terrorism, organised crime, mob lynching, and negligent acts adds novel dimensions.

The debate on the Bills should not revolve merely around ascertaining whether the changes yield positive or negative outcomes. Instead, the pivotal concern lies in ascertaining whether the fundamental tenets of criminal jurisprudence are being upheld throughout this process. Currently, the trajectory of these reforms and their operational dynamics remain to be determined. Nonetheless, we can methodically examine if the reforms adhere to a principled foundation of criminal laws. The primary principle for such adjudication remains the extent to which reforms address the needs and the concerns of the people impacted by crime and justice, especially in terms of enforcement of fundamental and statutory rights. Considerable critique of criminal law reforms originates from concerns about the potential significant infringement upon individual liberties. Therefore, evaluating amended laws must revolve around striking a delicate equilibrium between state security imperatives and individual freedoms. Additionally, the efficiency of the revised laws hinges on their capacity to curtail any potential misuse by law enforcement agencies effectively. Criminal laws are generally detested as they fail to discharge their public function as a protective tool for its subjects. Reforms in laws typically fail on this count.

Questioning whether the established principles of criminalisation have been followed in creating new offences is equally pertinent. There is a need to study the principled basis of the harm or the moral/legal offence caused by such criminalised conduct. Additionally, criminal laws in India further a class divide as the rich and the resourceful get better access to justice than the marginalised and the vulnerable. The principle of equality and equitability, therefore, becomes an essential check on criminal law reform. Arguably, the realm of criminal laws confronts a crisis of public trust, resulting in deficient legitimacy on this count.

It is a fallacious to assume, without conclusive evidence to the contrary, that the populace opposes stringent measures against terrorists or organised criminals. At the same time, the level of leniency or severity in laws does not inherently shape public confidence in the criminal justice system. The upcoming Bills, therefore, face a pivotal challenge in bridging the gap between rhetoric of the law and its reality. The potency of reforms hinges on their alignment with the criminal justice system's capacity to implement it effectively. Regardless of their textual merit, numerous legal provisions remain infeasible due to systemic shortcomings. Finally, the effectiveness of the reforms will also be tested on the basis of its impact upon the status of the vulnerable, the victims and the poor.

Over the years, the essence of criminal law has been transformed by the very actors and agencies responsible for its enforcement, often rendering it ineffectual. The political executive has consistently sought to wield criminal law as a pre-emptive tool. Criminal law remains a strategic power asset for the state. Concepts of risk, endangerment and dangerousness continue to contaminate the criminal law jurisprudence in great measure. The proliferation of this preventive approach to criminal law raises legitimate concerns.

As the Bills are placed before the select committee for its consideration, it is expected that this committee will allow greater engagement to improve the drafts in terms of both language and

substance. The space must be utilised to accommodate greater provisions concerning victims' rights and participation, hate crime, bail, sentencing framework and legal aid in the pending Bills. The envisioned criminal law reforms must be made in a manner that fosters the rule of law and fortifies the pursuit of justice for aeons to come.

G.S. Bajpai is Vice-Chancellor, National Law University Delhi. The views expressed are personal

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CONTINUE COVID-19 TESTING TO CHECK EMERGENCE OF NEW VIRUS VARIANTS: WHO CHIEF

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 16, 2023 08:26 pm | Updated August 17, 2023 08:26 am IST - GANDHINAGAR

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Healthcare workers collect the swab sample for the RT-PCR test during Covid-19 screening at Chennai International Airport. File | Photo Credit: VELANKANNI RAJ B

Warning that many countries aren't testing enough and that new SARS-CoV-2 virus variants may emerge, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, on Wednesday (August 16) said that testing and being vigilant is vital in continuing the fight against [COVID-19](#).

"We wouldn't know if the virus is changing, in case we don't test enough. Testing is vital to see how the virus is evolving," Dr. Ghebreyesus said.

The WHO head is in Gujarat as part of the G20 Health Ministers' meeting to be held from August 17-19.

Also Read | [Explained | What do we know about COVID-19's origins?](#)

"While COVID is now behind us and India did its best during the time, we can expect new and more variants to emerge," Dr. Ghebreyesus said, speaking during his visit to the Health and Wellness Centre in Adraj Moti village in Gandhinagar.

He also highlighted the need for countries to invest in strengthening their primary healthcare centres, saying that 80% of healthcare needs can be met at the primary centres, and outbreaks can be detected and prevented.

"For any health initiative to work, good primary healthcare system is key. India's healthcare programme, Ayushman Bharat, is the right investment, and the telemedicine facility is also helping patients," Dr. Ghebreyesus added. He said that many countries, including high income countries, had been surprised by COVID because they had not invested in primary healthcare.

Also Read | [Explained | Is there any end of the COVID-19 pandemic in sight?](#)

[India, which assumed the G20 Presidency in December 2022](#), is currently part of the G20 troika along with Indonesia and Brazil. India's G20 Presidency marks the first troika of three developing and emerging economies.

Providing details on the summit, a Health Ministry official said that the focus of the G20 Health Ministers' meeting will be on the three key priorities of the G20's health track — health emergencies prevention; preparedness and response with a focus on anti-microbial resistance; and one health framework.

Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy), speaking about the summit, said that the G20 is a unique opportunity to showcase India's leadership in the field of traditional medicine.

"In the last nine years, India has developed eightfold in the field of traditional medicine. By the end of the year, more than 12,500 AYUSH-based health and wellness centres will be functional across the nation, out of which 8,500 are already in place," Mr. Kotecha said.

The AYUSH Secretary highlighted that the Global Centre on Traditional Medicines in Jamnagar, Gujarat, established by the WHO, is the first such centre in a developing country. He also said that the WHO will convene the Traditional Medicine Global Summit, co-hosted by the Ministry of AYUSH, on August 17-18, in Gandhinagar, which will "explore the role of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine in addressing pressing health challenges and driving progress in global health and sustainable development".

Delegates from 19 G20 member countries, 10 invited states, and 22 international organizations will be participating in the 4th Health Working Group meeting in Gandhinagar.

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GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH TO BE LAUNCHED UNDER INDIA'S G-20 PRESIDENCY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 16, 2023 08:13 pm | Updated 10:21 pm IST - Gujarat

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Lav Agarwal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare addresses the media ahead of G-20 Health Ministers meeting, in Gandhinagar on August 16, 2023. | Photo Credit: ANI

India in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) will launch the Global Initiative on Digital Health on August 19 as part of the on going [G-20 summit](#) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The first-of-its-kind global initiative is aimed at data convergence, interface of health platforms and investments in the digital health space around the globe.

The summit is also working on bringing in the crucial interim Medical Countermeasure (MCM) — “which is a ‘network of networks approach’ before the next health emergency hits us and India in collaboration with WHO is leading the advocacy,” said Lav Agarwal, additional secretary, Health Ministry on Wednesday.

He added that the global digital platform will include an investment tracker, an ask tracker (to understand who needs what kind of products and services) and a library of existing digital health platforms.

He further explained that digital health innovations and solutions will aid universal health convergence and improve healthcare service delivery. The initiative has also found funding from global partners.

Speaking about data security associated with the initiative, Mr. Agarwal said that India has always followed the policy of having data owned by the citizens.

“This is not the practice that we find across the world. India has spoken to its partners about the India format which has been endorsed by partners,” he explained.

The global platform for data sharing will offer no data about its users but will share analyses and work at inter operational ability of data.

The summit is also working at garnering support for setting up a Climate and Health Initiative (CHI) in India, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and the launch of patient and

healthcare workforce mobility portal.

Meanwhile at the summit, WHO is also convening the traditional medicine global summit on August 17 and 18 which is co-hosted by the Ministry of Ayush. It will explore the role of traditional complimentary and integrative medicine in addressing pressing health challenges and driving progress in global health and sustainable development.

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FIRST-EVER WHO GLOBAL SUMMIT ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE TO BE HELD IN GANDHINAGAR, GUJARAT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Ministry of Ayush and World Health Organisation are organising the two day Traditional Medicine Global Summit, on 17th and 18th August 2023 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Secretary, Ministry of Ayush Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha brief the media today at Gandhinagar, Gujrat ahead of the first global summit on traditional medicine. Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Shri Lav Agarwal also addressed the media.



The Union AYUSH Secretary highlighted that the Global Centre on Traditional Medicines in Jamnagar, Gujarat, established by the WHO, is the first such centre in a developing country. He also informed that the WHO will convene the Traditional Medicine Global Summit, co-hosted by the Ministry of AYUSH, on 17th and 18th August, 2023 in Gandhinagar which will explore the role of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine in addressing pressing health challenges and driving progress in global health and sustainable development.

In response to a question on holistic healthcare in Ayush, Vd. Kotecha said that work on traditional medicine systems is ongoing in multiple directions on multiple platforms. He said that Along with mainstream health care, evidence-based research is being done in the field of AYUSH today in dealing with diseases like cancer, TB, communicable diseases and women and child health with scientific approach.

Addressing the media persons Vd. Kotecha, stated, "The G20 is a unique opportunity to showcase India's leadership in the field of traditional medicine. In the last 9 years, India has developed eight folds in the field of traditional medicine. By the end of the year, more than 12,500 Ayush-based Health & wellness centers will be functional across the nation, out of which 8,500 are already in place".

During the discussion, Vd. Kotecha shared that the Ayush visa will facilitate global access to Indian traditional medicine systems and will usher in a new era of comprehensive healthcare. One of the summit's most noteworthy features is the Ayush Exhibition Zone, an attraction not to be missed, he added. It promises to be an immersive experience with innovative and interactive kiosks.

During the press briefing, secretary Ayush applauded the collaboration between the Indian government and the WHO in hosting the largest international event on Traditional Medicine. He highlighted the significance of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, which was inaugurated in 2022 as the United Nation's first and largest traditional medicine outpost in any developing country.

Health ministers from 30 countries will attend this two-day event. It is expected to be one of the largest gatherings of its kind, bringing together participants from over 90 countries, distinguished members of academia, government representatives and significant players from the traditional medicine sector.

Shri Lav Agarwal provided an overview of India's healthcare sector and its progress, as well as the challenges it faces and its current priorities. With India holding the current G20 presidency, he highlighted the nation's strengths in healthcare and urged for efforts to be focused on maximizing its contribution to the global healthcare sector.

Shri Lav Agarwal praised India's contribution to the world's well-being. He brought to attention the many Yoga Centres that have come up in the far-flung regions of the globe, enhancing their healthcare. He added that India's approach is holistic healthcare through modern and Ayush medicine.

SK

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CABINET APPROVES “PM-EBUS SEWA” FOR AUGMENTING CITY BUS OPERATIONS; PRIORITY TO CITIES HAVING NO ORGANIZED BUS SERVICE

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Urbanisation and related Issues

The Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved a bus scheme “**PM-eBus Sewa**” for augmenting city bus operation by 10,000 e-buses on PPP model. The Scheme would have an estimated cost of Rs.57,613 crore, out of which support of Rs.20,000 crore will be provided by the Central government. The Scheme will support bus operations for 10 years.

Reaching the Unreached:

The scheme will cover cities of Three lakh and above population as per census 2011 including all the Capital cities of Union Territories, North Eastern Region and Hill States. Under this scheme priority will be given to cities having no organized bus service.

Direct Employment Generation:

The scheme will generate 45,000 to 55,000 direct jobs through deployment of around 10,000 buses in city bus operation.

The Scheme has two segments:

Segment A – Augmenting the City bus services:(169 cities)

The approved bus scheme will augment city bus operations with 10,000 e-buses on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

Associated Infrastructure will provide support for Development/ up-gradation of depot infrastructure; and Creation of behind-the-meter power infrastructure (substation, etc.) for e-buses.

Segment B– Green Urban Mobility Initiatives (GUMI): (181 cities)

The scheme envisages green initiatives like bus priority, infrastructure, multimodal interchange facilities, NCMC-based Automated Fare Collection Systems, Charging infrastructure, etc.

Support for Operation: Under the scheme, States/Cities shall be responsible for running the bus services and making payments to the bus operators. The Central Government will support these bus operations by providing subsidy to the extent specified in the proposed scheme.

Boost to E-Mobility:

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Boost to E-Mobility:

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FIGHTING STEREOTYPES: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE HANDBOOK ON COMBATING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Women - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

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In the quest for equal rights for all, the Supreme Court of India has taken an important step by [releasing guidelines to take on harmful gender stereotypes](#) that perpetuate inequalities. Laying down a set of dos and don'ts for judicial decision-making and writing, the [Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes](#) helps judges identify language that promotes archaic and "incorrect ideas", about women in particular, and offers alternative words and phrases. Instead of "affair", it will be de rigueur to say a "relationship outside of marriage"; similarly, for "adulteress", the preferred usage is a "woman who has engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage". A host of derogatory and seemingly mild adjectives have been dropped too while referring to women. For instance, it is no longer "chaste" woman, "dutiful" wife, "housewife"; a plain "woman", "wife" and "homemaker" will do. Men have not been forgotten either, with the Court striking down words such as "effeminate" (when used pejoratively), and "faggot", with the directive, "accurately describe the individual's sexual orientation (e.g. homosexual or bisexual)". Pointing out that stereotypes — "a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong" — leads to exclusion and discrimination, it identifies common presumptions about the way sexual harassment, assault, rape and other violent crimes are viewed, skewed against women.

One of the stereotypes the Court shatters is women who do not wear traditional clothes and smoke or drink are asking for trouble, and drives home the important point of consent. It also firmly asserts that women who are sexually assaulted may not be able to immediately report the traumatic incident. Courts should take social realities and other challenges facing women seriously, it says. It is wrong, the Court adds, to assume women are "overly emotional, illogical, and cannot take decisions". It is also a stereotypical presumption that all women want to have children, says the handbook, and points out, "deciding to become a parent is an individual choice". These possibilities, to be able to choose what to do in life, are still frustratingly out of reach for most of India's women. In a largely patriarchal society, girls are often forced to pick marriage as a way out to avoid social stigma, and not education and a career. Even if things are changing, the pace is slow. To achieve gender equality, fundamental changes need to be made to shun all stereotypes. That women are more nurturing and better suited to care for others, and should do all household chores are simply wrong notions. The handbook may be a guide for judges and lawyers, but it could also be a catalyst for change right down to the societal level.

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HEAT STRESS POSES HEALTH RISKS FOR SALT PAN WORKERS, STUDY FINDS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 17, 2023 11:19 pm | Updated 11:19 pm IST

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Heat stress has a high physical cost | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

A study conducted among salt pan workers in Tamil Nadu has highlighted the impact of heat stress. It found that nine of 10 salt pan workers had self-reported heat-strain symptoms, their average water intake was one litre during the workday and majority of them were exposed to high levels of heat stress, the study outlined the need for workplace interventions to provide access to water, rests in shade, sanitation and education on the need to hydrate.

The study - 'Occupational Heat Stress and Kidney Health in Salt Pan Workers' - conducted by a team led by Vidhya Venugopal, professor of Occupational and Environmental Health, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, looked at 352 workers in seven salt pans in Tamil Nadu - four in Marakkanam and three in Vedaranyam between 2017 and 2020. It was published in the *Kidney International Reports*.

During the study, the researchers evaluated the workload for different job roles and classified heat stress levels. Key indicators such as pre-and post-shift heart rates, core body temperatures, urine characteristics, sweat rates and kidney function parameters were measured.

It found that every participant had either a heavy or moderate workload, and close to 90% of workers were found to be working above the recommended limits of heat exposure. The wet-bulb globe temperature, a composite measure of environmental factors affecting human thermal comfort, consistently surpassed safe levels in the saltpans especially during summer months.

The majority of workers (93%) reported that they had experienced at least one of the self-reported heat strain symptoms - excessive sweating, thirst, dizziness, muscle cramps, headache, nausea/vomiting, fainting, or prickly heat/rashes. Dry mouth or severe thirst - signs of dehydration - was reported by 59% of the workers. About 77% of the workers reported at least one of these symptoms - changes in urine volume or colour, burning sensations when urinating, rashes and urinary tract infections (UTI).

The workers brought their own one-litre water bottle to sip throughout the day and had access to water for refilling bottles at work. But they found that the reported water consumption was low. About 23% of women stated that they would drink more water if they had improved toilet access.

One out of every five workers had taken sick leave owing to heat-related health difficulties in the last six months, while a third of workers said they did not finish their work on time because they were working in the heat.

What was worrying was the impact of heat stress on kidney health: the study revealed a prevalence of low estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR), a marker of kidney function, in seven percent of workers. Heat stress has been linked to various kidney-related issues including acute kidney injury, kidney stones, chronic kidney disease and UTI.

Dr. Venugopal, who is also a co-investigator of the UK NIHR Funded Global Health Research Centre, said: “We have compelling evidence that heat stress poses significant health risks for these workers. Urgent action is needed to implement adaptation strategies and improve healthcare, sanitation access and welfare facilities to protect vulnerable individuals.”

(Serena.m@thehindu.co.in)

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WHO ASKS COUNTRIES TO WORK TOWARDS UNLOCKING THE POWER OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 17, 2023 06:46 pm | Updated 06:46 pm IST - GANDHINAGAR

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WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attends the Global Conference on Traditional Medicine as part of the G-20's Health Ministers' meeting in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, on August 17, 2023. | Photo Credit: AP

The [World Health Organisation director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#) on Thursday urged countries around the world to work towards unlocking the power of traditional medicine and provide evidence and action-based suggestions that can be interpreted into a global strategy.

He was speaking at WHO's first global summit on traditional medicine, which is part of the ongoing G-20 Health Ministers' meeting in Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat. "I hope that the Gujarat Declaration will integrate use of traditional medicines in national health systems, and help unlock the power of traditional medicine through science," Dr. Tedros said at the event, which is being co-hosted by the Ministry of Ayush.

Also addressing the meeting, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that by embracing ancient wisdom and modern science, the G-20 nations could collectively work towards achieving the UN's health-related Sustainable Development Goals while fostering an ethos of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

"In modern times, the demand for natural and herbal-based pharmaceuticals and cosmetics underscores the enduring significance of traditional healing practices," he said.

Dr. Mandaviya further explained that WHO's Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, headquartered in Jamnagar, Gujarat, accelerates advancements in traditional medicine globally.

The Health Minister conducted bilateral meetings with several G-20 members — European Union, Saudi Arabia and Germany — at the event.

He also launched the Advantage Healthcare India Portal, for an upcoming exhibition and conference on medical value travel. Dr. Mandaviya emphasised that medical value travel would enable greater knowledge-sharing, sustainable partnerships and increased synergies, contributing to building a stronger global health architecture. Dr. Tedros also said that by leveraging medical value travel, countries could offer specialised resources and services that

may not be available, affordable, or accessible in other parts of the world.

India currently has a medical workforce of 13 lakh allopathic doctors, 8 lakh AYUSH doctors, and 34 lakh nurses, auxiliary nurses and midwives, said Dr. Mandaviya. “Through this highly qualified and skilful workforce, India plans to contribute to an organised system of workforce mobility, wherein India’s healthcare professionals travel to different parts of the world, to serve the global community,” he added.

Reiterating that health is perceived as a service in India, the Health Minister said that the nation aspired to create a people-centric, value-based system of healthcare. “We strive to build a more inclusive and equitable world where healthcare knows no boundaries and where skilled healthcare professionals can make a difference wherever they are. Our collective efforts will be towards creating a healthcare ecosystem that embraces the voice of every nation, every citizen and every being,” he added.

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PART 3: A SILENT BURDEN

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 19, 2023 08:45 am | Updated 08:45 am IST

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Image for representational purpose only. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

(In the concluding part of the 3-article series, The Hindu takes a deep dive into the gender gap in diabetes care in India.)

To Suradha, diabetes feels like a crude competition. *How good is your monitoring setup? Is your insulin range ideal? How well do you manage your stress?* The more you show, the more 'disciplined' you seem. "The way we talk about diabetes is more about 'gamifying' life to fit diabetes. It is exhausting to look at my life like that." Nishtha Kanal, 33, is an unwilling participant too. "As a woman, there are a lot more balls to juggle in the air". A 'diabetes burnout' grips her some days: "You just don't want to take care of your blood glucose numbers and diet and routine any longer."

If diabetes were a competition, it would be a game of poker, except the rules are hazy, everyone plays in pitch-black darkness, and unequal hands are dealt to some more than others. [Diabetes cases in India are climbing](#) as markets gush with processed and high carbohydrate foods; lifestyles become more sedentary; air thickens with pollution; stress levels grow unmanageable. Skewed gender relations govern the impact of these causes — women manage diet, stress, exercise, and environment from a tight range, as *The Hindu* has explored in previous instalments.

"There are many routes to living well or poorly with diabetes, and these are not always the ones canonised in biomedical models of diabetes management," Leslie Weaver remarks in her book *Sugar and Tension*. The current model treats the disease, not the person. What would diabetes care look like, when it is tailored to an individual conditioned to not care for themselves?

"Families have a false kind of expectation that the minute our eyes open up, you should be around," says Vandana Chatterjee, 56. It translates into a Pavlovian response of sorts, where "we tend to put our health always last".

Charumita Vasudev, who researches inequity within families at Lancaster University, advances the idea of families taking on the role of caregivers too. Given gender norms and power hierarchies, she says, "early diagnosis, regular check-ups, proper mealtimes and constant monitoring can only be ensured if families are aware, mindful and accommodative of the nutritional, health and mental well-being requirements of women." Put simply, social norms can consolidate to make diabetes into a team game rather than an individual sprint.

A 2018 study traced the role of social and family support in type 2 diabetes management. Support was interpreted as families appreciating the person if they stuck to a diet, reminding them about checking blood glucose levels, and accompanying them during exercise. While most patients 'never' received any support, those who did had "better self-management behaviours".

Step one, says Dr. Vasudev, could be to push for equal distribution of household production activities. "It would help ease the mental burdens of managing both work, family and associated stressors."

Vandana Chatterjee has seen diabetes up close, a beast that has walked alongside many in her family: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles. "It's only the odd person who doesn't have diabetes," she muses. Her father, a diabetic, experienced a heart attack but unlike the classic symptom of chest pain, his ache was limited to his shoulder. He eventually passed away due to multiple organ failure, brought on by congestive heart failure. Heart disease is a known complication of diabetes: high blood glucose causes blood vessels to narrow, reducing the supply of blood and oxygen, a damage that overtime weakens the heart.

"I fear that something terrible might be happening to me, but I wouldn't know because symptoms are skewed when you have diabetes," she says. Vandana is also a cancer survivor. Her family may be her personal 'encyclopaedia' on diabetes management, yet she still lives with a constant fear of repeating mistakes. "I don't know if what I'm doing is right or wrong."

Support groups like the Blue Circles Foundation fill this vacuum of uncertainty, building online and offline communities, a mix of experts and peers that create awareness about diabetes, its causes, and treatments. Their "Project Gaia" is designed specifically to bring women and girls within the radius of care. On their online communities, people often share contacts for finding cheaper sources of Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGM) which are exorbitantly priced.

"Living with a chronic, invisible condition like diabetes can be very lonely and isolating. Finding this group made me feel like I wasn't by myself and that my issues weren't just happening to me," Nishtha adds, a validation that sees the unseen labour of managing diabetes.

Activists argue the uprising of support can spill over to workplace and education institutes too. As part of workplace intervention model conducted by the Public Health Foundation of India and Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, companies were required to weave in lifestyle changes as part of corporate policy. People with diabetes met daily 30-minute walk quota, participated in group exercise sessions, ate well-portioned, healthy food at the canteen -- practices which helped at least 25% of the participants reduce their three-month average blood glucose levels. Among other things, it reduced the burden on the individual of managing the condition alone.

Dr. Sona Abraham, a Kerala-based endocrinologist and diabetics specialist, hopes there are well-informed, robust social support systems, especially in the context of India's mushrooming cases. "Women are at the heart of a nation's health. If we give women the right tools to manage the disease and educate them, it will have a long-term implication — not only for them, but the family's health in general."

Women caring for themselves can be a protest against misogyny and medicine - both of which, in ways more than one, confine them to gender roles.

But not everyone wants to, or can, protest. Suradha, for instance, wonders if the current discourse places the burden on diabetic individuals to 'fix' themselves, especially if they lack the required means and resources. Dr. Balaji Gummidi, a field epidemiologist working in Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam district and a renal researcher from Geroge Institute for Global Health,

says, women often let out a wry laugh when counselled about diet and stress. “They say who will go for a walk when they do so much at home, or how do they eat healthy if they don’t have the money to buy?”

Nihal Thomas, department of endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism, Christian Medical College, previously told *The Hindu* that [expensive costs of fish, fruits and vegetables made diet a “social determinant” fueling the rise of diabetes cases](#). “We have to find ways to cultivate healthier food and maybe provide them through government schemes to make them more affordable and accessible,” he added. Mr. Thomas was one of the authors of papers published in *The Lancet* titled ‘Global Inequity in Diabetes 1’ and ‘Global Inequity in Diabetes 2’, which underlined colonisation and famines as historical factors that have shaped the alarming rise of non-communicable diseases in India. Both these contributed to poor education, lower socio-economic strata and reduced decision-making among women, all of which are now, he said.

“The government is currently concentrating on testing and providing medication. But what after that? They should also focus on giving them diet food and thinking about how to make exercise and stress management a part of diabetes care.” Dr. Balaji Gummudi

On similar lines, the public health discourse of the ‘diabetes epidemic’, [researchers have argued](#), “tend to locate responsibility for diabetes within individuals, in the form of genetics and deleterious lifestyles, while neglecting the role of structural factors that contribute to this health disparity”.

The conversation, activists argue, must pivot to caring *for* women, a model where resilience is built by the government, for the community. Researchers in March this year [proposed a framework for diabetes care that goes beyond biomedical suggestions](#). It included public transit for infrastructure, access to parks, physical activity in schools, direct cash transfers, and consumer-friendly food labelling, along with investments in public healthcare infrastructures. Reducing health expenditures, and holding counselling sessions about diabetes-related stigma and lifestyle choices, can bridge the structural gaps women face. People *The Hindu* interacted with also mentioned how mental healthcare, insurance, workplace and academic accommodations can be a positive force in shaping their health-seeking behaviours.

I ask Suradha what her ideal world looks like: it is one where she and her diabetes coexist, where she shows up for herself without feeling the pressure of ‘winning’ diabetes. For Nishtha and Vandana, their virtual communities are home to the reassurance, knowledge and support they need. Sita, a domestic worker, would pin her hopes on the state to make treatments affordable and accessible. No one size can ever fit them all.

There are no silver bullets with chronic conditions like diabetes. But social safety nets carry an indelible synthetic power — they ‘unsilence’ the individual suffering of living with a silent disease. They see diabetes as a disease of gender, age, caste, class, a complex malady in need of complex, collective and compassionate solutions.

Part One: [For women, diabetes screening and diagnosis come with in-built challenges](#)

Part Two: [Who cares for women living with diabetes?](#)

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INDIA PHARMA ALLY, BUT MUST MEET U.S. STANDARDS: U.S. HEALTH SECRETARY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 18, 2023 08:40 pm | Updated August 19, 2023 12:47 am IST - GANDHINAGAR

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Health and Human Services Secretary of the United States Xavier Becerra speaks to the media after attending a G20 Health Minister's meeting in Gandhinagar, on August 18, 2023. | Photo Credit: AP

Indian companies need to meet U.S. drug standards if they want to continue exporting their drugs to America, the U.S. Secretary for Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra said on August 18, underlining the potential for growth in the partnership.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ongoing G-20 Health Ministers' meeting in Gujarat's capital, Mr. Becerra also cautioned against the unregulated proliferation of artificial intelligence across the health sector, while maintaining that it is important to harness the innovation that technology has to offer.

"Meeting the drug standards would not only help India continue its trade with the U.S. specifically, but also maintain the standards and its growth graph across the world," he said, adding that India is an indispensable partner in helping the U.S. meet its pharmaceuticals needs.

India has recently come under fire from some countries for alleged contamination in drugs that it exports. Stating that India remains one of the most important partners in maintaining the drug supply across the world, Mr. Becerra said that the U.S. sought deeper co-operation and the standardisation of drugs that would make it possible for Indian-manufactured drugs to be accepted by everyone across the world.

"India is at a crucial and much stronger juncture today than what it was a few decades ago and we are looking at seeing it expand its capacity," he said.

He added that U.S. participation in the G-20 meet was a clear sign of the deepening relationship with India and maintained that it would pay dividends for both countries. "It will in fact pay dividends for the world because I believe people see India and the U.S. to be global leaders," he said, adding that the U.S. has a very strong and interdependent relationship with India when it comes to pharmaceuticals.

"We depend on India, India depends on us and together we can both thrive when it comes to making sure medicines are available not just to our people but to the world," he noted.

Mr. Becerra said that during his session with Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, one of the issues discussed was “how we make sure that we’re coordinating, collaborating when it comes to the safety and availability of pharmaceutical medicines”.

The U.S. Secretary also acknowledged the recent shortage of some select drugs for cancer and influenza in the U.S. and said that top U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials would be in India shortly to ensure that there is no break in the supply chain of medicines that would put Americans under stress.

Speaking about the U.S. commitment to G-20 outcomes and the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, he said: “COVID has taught us that nobody is safe until everyone is safe. G-20 is a step in the right direction where we have gathered as a community to commit to a protocol on how we deal with preparation and response to future health threats, pandemic or otherwise.”

“During the pandemic, both India and the U.S. showed that [they have] the capacity to counter the health crisis as both came up with vaccines for [their] citizens. I think COVID taught us to work together and that taught us the importance of a G-20-like meet. We are also getting ready for the upcoming world health assembly scheduled for next year,” he said.

He added that climate change and its relationship to health outcomes is also an area of vital importance and maintained that these chapters are interrelated and affect everyone. “We are very appreciative that India has made this one of the priorities,” he noted.

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DEPARTMENT OF DRINKING WATER & SANITATION ORGANIZES WORKSHOP TO ACQUAINT BIOGAS INDUSTRY WITH INITIATIVES FOR EXPANDING GOBARDHAN IMPLEMENTATION

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

To acquaint the CBG/Biogas industry regarding the key initiatives taken by the Government of India for expanding the implementation of GOBARDhan initiative in the CBG sector, a workshop on GOBARDhan was organised by Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS), (nodal coordinating Dept. for GOBARDhan) via VC on 17.08.2023. The virtual workshop was attended by critical stakeholders including senior officials from 7 Ministries/Depts. Of the Government of India, State level officials viz. SATAT Nodal Officers, State Mission Director (SBM-G), CBG plant operators, project developers etc. The VC was chaired by Joint Secretary, DDWS & Mission Director, Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin, Sh. Jitendra Srivastava and the agenda items comprised CBG offtake arrangements, Fermented Organic Manure (FOM), carbon credits, incentives, investment, and financing for the CBG industry.

In his opening remarks, Sh. Jitendra Srivastava, applauded the entrepreneurs/CBG operators for their efforts and reiterated that the Government is committed to extend all forms of assistance required to establish an enabling CBG/Biogas ecosystem in the country. He added that upcoming policy enablers would further bolster the implementation scale and speed of the GOBARDhan initiative by creating greater awareness, enthusiasm, and conducive policy space for the CBG sector.



The key stakeholders spoke about their different activities supporting GOBARDhan

implementation. Sh. Dinesh Jagdale, Joint Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, briefed the participants on the modalities of CFA (Central Financial Assistance) release; Dr. Yogita Rana, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, spoke about FCO (Fertilizer Control Order) related to FOM/LFOM; Sh. Anand Jha, Director, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas apprised the participants of CBG offtake arrangement under SATAT scheme of MoPNG and of related upcoming policy initiatives; Dr. Satyendra Kumar, Director, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change elaborated on the policy on carbon credits for CBG sector; Sh. Manoj Kumar, Deputy Secretary, Department of Fertilizers, provided a gist of Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme to organic fertilizer including FOM/PROM; Sh. A.N. Meshram, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare informed about the newly launched Operational Guidelines for Crop Residue Management under SMAM (Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization) Scheme; Dr. A. Velmurugan, ADG, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute, talked about the package of practices and nutrient enrichment of bio-slurry and Sh. Samrat Sengupta, Eki Energy Services Ltd. discussed operational aspects of the carbon credit trading mechanism.

The presentations were followed by an engaging interaction of stakeholders with CBG operators on GOBARdhan and on-ground challenges faced during plant operation. The response to the virtual workshop was very enthusiastic and positive, as the participants appreciated the latest information on GOBARdhan received from all experts & stakeholders via a single platform as well as the resolution of GOBARdhan initiative related queries.

The workshop concluded with closing remarks of Director (SBM-G), DDWS, Sh. Karanjit Singh, who thanked the participants for their active participation. He assured of conducting similar workshops in the near future towards encouraging participation and information sharing to existing and prospective investors/project developers in the Biogas/CBG ecosystem.

Government of India is invested in accelerating nation's reliance on renewable energy to fuel the green energy transition and to implement the concept of circular economy at scale. GOBARdhan "Waste to Wealth" initiative has a pivotal role to play in this direction. This inter-ministerial initiative is aimed at generating value from waste by scientifically treating organic/biodegradable waste to produce biogas/Compress Natural Gas (CBG) and organic manure (Fermented Organic Manure/Liquid Fermented Organic Manure).

A unified GOBARdhan Portal has been launched for reporting & monitoring the progress/achievements of stakeholder Ministries/Departments. The Portal captures the details of Biogas/ Bio-CNG/CBG plants installed/supported under SBM(G) of DDWS, Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) scheme of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), Waste to Energy scheme of Ministry of New and Renewal Energy (MNRE) among other activities of all stakeholders. As on date nearly 1400 plants have been registered on the Unified Registration Portal and there are 630 Completed/Functional GOBARdhan Plants.

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TRAI RELEASES CONSULTATION PAPER ON 'REVIEW OF QUALITY-OF-SERVICE STANDARDS FOR ACCESS SERVICES (WIRELESS AND WIRELINE) AND BROADBAND (WIRELESS AND WIRELINE) SERVICES'

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today issued its Consultation Paper on 'Review of Quality-of-Service Standards for Access Services (Wireless and Wireline) and Broadband (Wireless and Wireline) Services'

The TRAI Act, 1997 mandates the Authority to ensure the quality of Service to protect the interest of the consumers of telecommunication services. Accordingly, TRAI notified following regulations for Quality of Service (QoS) Standards for telecom services.

The TRAI has been receiving number of complaints from the subscribers regarding call drops and other network related issues especially after rollout of 5G services. Upon detailed analysis of quarterly QoS performance reports, the Authority has noted that due to long performance assessment period of a quarter over a large area like LSA, there may be pockets or areas experiencing poor quality of service due to averaging effect while service providers are meeting overall QoS benchmark at LSA level.

Accordingly, to have a closer view of the status of QoS, the draft regulations propose monthly QoS performance reporting at State and UT level in addition to at LSA level.

The QoS parameters and benchmarks for voice and data services are technology agnostic in present regulations. The relevant terminology for 5G services has also been updated in draft regulations to monitor QoS performance of 5G.

As 4G and 5G networks are providing much wider coverage in the country compared to the 2G and 3G networks, the stringent performance benchmarks, especially related to call drops, are preposed for 4G and 5G services to improve consumer experience.

The network availability is important requirement for good QoS. Therefore, the performance against service provider's network availability is proposed to be monitored at State and UT level to ensure that consumer get uninterrupted services.

To simplify regulatory framework for QoS, it is proposed to have single regulation dealing with QoS standards for all voice and data services irrespective of their access medium *i.e.*, for both wireline and wireless services. Accordingly, present three regulations are proposed to be merged into single regulation.

In above context and to address all relevant QoS related issues in a holistic manner, the Authority is issuing this consultation paper for seeking 'stakeholders' comments. Written comments on the consultation paper are invited from the stakeholders latest by 20th September 2023. Counter Comments, if any, may be submitted by 05th October 2023. The comments and counter-comments may be sent, preferably in electronic form on the email address adv-qos1@traigov.in.

The Consultation paper has been placed on TRAI's website www.trai.gov.in. For any clarification/information, Shri Tejpal Singh, Advisor (QoS-I) TRAI may be contacted at Tel. No. +91-11-23236516.

DK/DK

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The network availability is important requirement for good QoS. Therefore, the performance against service provider's network availability is proposed to be monitored at State and UT level to ensure that consumer get uninterrupted services.

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In above context and to address all relevant QoS related issues in a holistic manner, the Authority is issuing this consultation paper for seeking 'stakeholders' comments. Written comments on the consultation paper are invited from the stakeholders latest by 20th September 2023. Counter Comments, if any, may be submitted by 05th October 2023. The comments and counter-comments may be sent, preferably in electronic form on the email address adv-qos1@traigov.in.

The Consultation paper has been placed on TRAI's website www.trai.gov.in. For any clarification/information, Shri Tejpal Singh, Advisor (QoS-I) TRAI may be contacted at Tel. No. +91-11-23236516.

DK/DK

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Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration has said that until June 29, 2023, it had received 18 reports of liver problems experienced by consumers taking products containing curcuma longa (turmeric) and/or curcumin. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

The story so far: Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), the country's regulator of medicines, medical devices and biologicals, [issued a medical advisory](#) last week warning Australians of the risk of liver injury from using medicines and herbal supplements containing turmeric or its active ingredient, curcumin.

The TGA said that until June 29, 2023, it had received 18 reports of liver problems experienced by consumers taking products containing curcuma longa (turmeric) and/or curcumin. These followed an investigation the agency undertook to review the safety of the products, after instances of their consumption and liver injury were reported in Australia and internationally. The evidence from nine of these reports had enough information to suggest that a liver injury may have been caused by curcuma longa or a curcumin product. Two of these cases were severe, including one that resulted in death. In four of the nine cases, there were no other ingredients likely to have contributed to the liver injury. The other five cases involved products that contained other ingredients that may have contributed to the liver injury, the advisory noted.

The TGA's verdict, following the investigation, is that there is a "rare risk" of liver injury from taking curcuma longa and/or curcumin in medicinal dosage forms. People with existing or previous liver problems were more likely to develop this rare adverse event. This isn't the last word on turmeric, with the TGA considering further regulatory action, including a potential label warning on turmeric and curcumin supplements, following wider consultation, the results of which will be known later this year. There are over 600 listed medicines, legally available in Australia, that contain these curcuma species and/or curcumin, according to the advisory.

The TGA warning says that the risk of liver injury did not appear to relate to curcuma longa consumed in "typical" dietary amounts as a food. As a staple ingredient in South and South East Asian cuisine, turmeric is also used in Ayurvedic and Chinese-medicine concoctions. Several studies, over the last five decades, have investigated the properties of curcumin and report it to have anti-oxidant properties that can help with inflammation. These include arthritis and infections. Curcumin-based extracts have also been investigated in leading research labs of India. Research teams at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru have reported that curcumin used along with the drug Artemisinin was effective in treating malaria when tested on mice. There have also been studies investigating the drug as an adjuvant in chemotherapy based on

results in mice and animal studies. However, their effect in human trials have been inconclusive.

One of the challenges of turmeric and by extension curcumin is that very little of it is absorbed, or made 'bioavailable', by the body. Much scientific effort has been expended over the decades to improve its bioavailability. A popular approach is to use piperine, the major active component of black pepper, which improves bioavailability by 2000%, says a 2017 review in the peer-reviewed journal Foods. However, whether increasing the bioavailability of curcumin and packaging them in supplements makes them effective and safe for use in medicines is still being debated with no conclusive evidence emerging from trials.

The Australian TGA cites reports of 20 hepatitis cases in France and [an investigation by ANSES](#), the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety, into 100 reports of adverse effects, including 15 reports of hepatitis, potentially related to the consumption of food supplements containing turmeric or curcumin. The ANSES report underlines that turmeric has "choleretic" properties, which means it stimulates the secretion of bile to improve digestion, and therefore, it is advisable that those with bile duct disease should avoid turmeric. Curcumin could also interact with medications such as anticoagulants, cancer drugs and immunosuppressants, reducing their safety and effectiveness, they note.

The European Food Safety Authority has set an acceptable daily intake of 180 mg of curcumin per day for a 60 kg adult as the safe level of consumption. The average consumption in France remains low, with 27 mg for heavy consumers of foods containing turmeric. A World Health Organization/Food and Agricultural Organisation advisory recommends 3 mg/kg of body weight. A 75 kg person can have about 200 mg a day. India's Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has standards that packaged turmeric must comply with but nothing on the recommended dietary allowance.

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CRIMINAL LAW BILLS RENAMING IS NEEDLESS MEDDLING

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

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'We follow the common law system giving importance to precedents, and these are written and stored in English' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Three new Bills were tabled](#) in Parliament recently. This article is not about the [content of these Bills](#) (the controversies on that will play out) but their names: the Indian Penal Code is now replaced by Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Code of Criminal Procedure by Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Indian Evidence Act by the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill. That these are names unfamiliar to, and unpronounceable by, more than half the country's citizens and an overwhelming majority of its legal practitioners, makes these Bills fail the first test of acceptability. Moreover, Article 348 of the Constitution states that the authoritative texts of all Acts passed by Parliament or State legislatures shall be in the English Language. The body of these new Bills is in the English language, but the title of the Bills being in Hindi goes against the embargo placed by the Article.

The issue of language was hotly contested and debated in the Constituent Assembly and led to the adoption of various provisions in the Constitution as well as the Official Languages Act. The legal regime in place provides that English shall remain an official language until resolutions for the discontinuance of English as an official language are adopted by State Legislatures and by Parliament. That is a dim prospect when we aim to be a strong player in a globalised world.

Editorial | [Criminal laws may need reform, but not new and unfamiliar names](#)

In a linguistically diverse country where language has been the flashpoint for several protests and people's movements, the emotions and sentiments that people attach to their language must be respected. The fact that India was divided into States based on linguistic differences is sufficient to demonstrate how deeply intertwined language is with the identity of States and their residents. Is it necessary to be reminded of the protests that raged, taking lives with it, through the States of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, and Karnataka when Hindi was sought to be made the sole official language in the 1960s? The issue continues to be highly emotive. Language is an integral part of culture, and the attempt to use Hindi in the names of the Bills introduced by the Union Government will be seen as the imposition of the culture of the linguistic majority on linguistic minorities.

The anxiety of non-Hindi speakers finds its roots in events that are taking place around us now. Statements by persons in positions of power that Hindi must be accepted as the 'national language' soon, and issuance of Hindi-only forms in public undertakings such as the Indian Railways and banks have been flagged repeatedly. The original draft of the National Education Policy 2020 contained provisions which drew protests, being seen as an attempt to "impose Hindi". Over the past few years, the Union Home Minister has made several statements linking the language of Hindi to nationhood and the idea of India. He stated in 2019 that "only Hindi can work to unite the country". He makes a similar statement every Hindi Diwas, and that can only keep the issue burning.

The perception is that there is an attempt to privilege India's most spoken regional language over other regional languages and to place it above the other languages as essential to a person's identity as an Indian. The issue is not just about language but about culture, inclusivity, diversity, and respect. The only argument to privilege Hindi over other languages of India such as Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Odia is that Hindi is spoken by more people. To say "we are more in number, so other communities must assimilate into our culture and speak our language" is simply majoritarianism and is antithetical to the Constitution. The legal position of the country is that English shall continue to remain an official language until the non-Hindi speaking States desire so. The prerogative to have Hindi as the sole official language, therefore, does not lie with those in the Hindi heartland, but with those on its margins. The Constitutional position is also that the text of laws introduced in Parliament shall be in English. The naming of these Bills, apart from stoking an old fire, is plainly unconstitutional.

The plain fact also is that English is the language of the law and of the courts, especially the superior courts, viz., the High Courts and Supreme Court of India. Judges are transferred across the country. Statutes are read in English. We follow the common law system giving importance to precedents, and these are written and stored in English. The law requires utmost precision and clarity in pleadings, arguments and judgments, and Indian lawyers and judges have risen magnificently to the occasion with English. Are we now to subject them to colloquial terms or high flown Hindi names familiar only to pandits in Sanskritised Hindi? This is needless meddling and nothing short of provocation. The first task of the Parliamentary Committee to which the Bill has been referred must be to change the names. And is it that these Bills are referred to the Standing Committee for Home Affairs, and not to the Committee for Law and Justice?

Sriram Panchu is Senior Advocate, Madras High Court. Aprameya Manthena is Advocate, Madras High Court. Vikas Muralidharan is a legal academician and lecturer, Sai University

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DR JITENDRA SINGH MET UP CM YOGI ADITYANATH IN LUCKNOW, DISCUSSED DIGITAL GOVERNANCE PLAN FOR THE STATE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh called on the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on Saturday, 19 August 2023. In their meeting lasting over an hour, they discussed threadbare the Digital Governance Plan for Uttar Pradesh.



It was informed that the Uttar Pradesh District Good Governance Index (DGGI) 2022, the first of its kind survey of districts undertaken by any state in the country, is ready for release.

The Good Governance Index (GGI) Report, 2021, prepared by DARPG, says that Uttar Pradesh has shown an incremental growth of 8.9 % over GGI 2019 performance. Among the sectors, UP has secured top position in Commerce & Industry sector and has also shown increase in Social Welfare & Development and Judiciary & Public Safety. Uttar Pradesh has also performed well in citizen centric governance including public grievance redressal.

Dr Jitendra Singh proposed that the State Administration should design DGGI-based performance incentive system to reward the Best Practices and institute the Chief Minister's Awards for Good Governance / Practices on the pattern of PM Awards being managed by DARPG, GoI.

Dr Jitendra Singh also congratulated the UP CM for two districts, - Rampur and Chitrakoot, bagging the Prime Minister's Awards on Civil Services Day, 2023. Several other innovative practices have also been recipients of the PM awards for excellence in Administration and E-Governance, including district Chandauli for Black Rice, district Siddharthnagar for ODOP- Kala Namak rice, Varanasi district for Swamitva Yojana and the state's Mines and Mineral Management System.

Dr Jitendra Singh lauded Yogi Adityanath for providing as many as 714 Government Services online in Uttar Pradesh. He urged the UP Chief Minister to bring more services onboard the Unified Services Portal and hoped the state would soon catch up with Madhya Pradesh, which tops the rankings providing 1,000 services online. It was mentioned that Uttar Pradesh has the potential to provide e-services of at least 20 types in Tourism sector, 9 types of Environment and 14 types in Education.

As per the National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) 2021 index released by DARPG biennially, Uttar Pradesh ranked 2nd in assessment of portals and service portals among the large states with a compliance of more than 85%. Uttar Pradesh was among the forerunners in implementing mandatory services covered in NeSDA 2021 assessment. An exemplary initiative from UP on an integrated portal named "Nivesh Mitra" was also covered in the 2021 assessment.

Dr Jitendra Singh appreciated the fact that the state has consistently performed exceptional in the Grievances Disposal rankings.

As per the Grievance Redressal and Assessment Index (GRAI) monthly report of States/UTs, released by the DARPG, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh topped the rankings among the large States continuously in the months of May, June and July 2023. Uttar Pradesh received and disposed maximum number of grievances during 01.01.2023 to 15.08.2023 among all States and UTs. Uttar Pradesh, with an average closing time of 23 days, is the only large State which has average closing time of their grievances within the standard redressal time of 30 days.

The State Govt has developed a very robust Integrated Grievance Redressal System popularly termed as IGRS or the 'UP Jansunwai Samadhan'. The CM Helpline is at the heart of this system. Common citizens can register their grievances through toll free number 1076, which is backed by a call centre staffed with 500 strong work force. The IGRS is fully integrated with Govt of India's PG portal (CPGRAMS) as well as those received in various offices like the Governor's office, CMO and down to the level of districts/tehsil and police stations. The impact of the IGRS has been highly positive. On an average, 80 lakh public grievances are being received and disposed of every year through this system. Receipt of a large number of grievances or references from the citizens reflects their growing confidence in the system and the enhanced credibility of administration. The average disposal time has been reduced drastically.

Dr Jitendra Singh suggested that the DARPG can conduct the 2nd National Workshop on SEVOTTAM in Uttar Pradesh. SEVOTTAM is a capacity building programme for the Grievance redressal officers registered under the CPGRAMS. The programme is implemented through State Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs). 19 ATIs including UP have joined DARPG in implementing SEVOTTAM. A grant of Rs 20 lakh was released to UP ATI in 2022-23. They have conducted 11 training programmes for 658 officers.

Dr Jitendra Singh also urged the UP CM to direct state treasuries to tie up with the MeitY to enable Digital Life Certificate (DLC) generation of Jeevan Pramaan using face authentication technique and ensure installation of the app in pensioners' mobile phones. This will make the DLC facility available for the pensioners drawing pension from U.P. state government treasuries. Dr Jitendra Singh said the Central Govt's Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare will be conducting another awareness campaign in November 2023 at 100 locations across the country in collaboration with Banks, Pensioners Associations, MEITY, UIDAI and Ministry of Defence with a target of generation of DLCs for 50 lakh pensioners. This will enable the pensioner to submit the DLC every year from the comfort of their homes

As Central Minister in-charge of Science & Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh urged the UP CM to

allot land for the setting up of a Biotechnology Park in Lucknow by the Centre's Department of Biotechnology at the earliest.

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WINS AND WINNINGS: ON FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP AND SPAIN'S MAIDEN WIN

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August 22, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:10 am IST

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Every global women's sports competition is more than just a mere sporting spectacle. It is often in the vanguard of creating a more equal society, of seeking to eliminate outdated notions of male exceptionalism and nudging the world at large to embrace broader social reform. The [FIFA Women's World Cup, which ended on Sunday following Spain's](#) narrow 1-0 victory over England, forms a crucial part of this movement. Under the dazzling Sydney night sky, a whopping 75,784 fans at Stadium Australia witnessed [Spain lift its maiden World Cup to join Germany](#) as one of only two nations to have secured both the men's and women's titles. The Guardian reported that an average of 30,000 fans attended each match over the course of a month in Australia and New Zealand and nearly two million tickets — a record — were bought. These are astonishing numbers for a standalone women's event, the kind of which has suffered from administrator and spectator apathy in the past. Much of it was down to the on-field excellence, with the likes of Spain's Aitana Bonmati, the player of the tournament, Olga Carmona, who scored the winning goals for Spain in both the semifinal and final, Japan's Hinata Miyazawa, the highest goal-scorer (5), and England's Mary Earps, the best goalkeeper, mesmerising the audience.

The World Cup also showcased the wide geographic spread of women's football. Where nations from Europe and South America have been the hegemonic forces among men, in the short nine-edition history of the women's event, only four times have the winners come from these two regions — Germany twice, Norway and now Spain. In 2023, Germany, apart from being upset by Colombia, crashed out in the group stage. Japan, the 2011 world champion, hammered eventual winner Spain 4-0 in the preliminary round. Morocco made history by qualifying for the round of 16 while hosts Australia's fourth-place finish was its best ever. Four-time champion United States of America, marshalled by the retiring star Megan Rapinoe, missed the podium for the first time, but it just proved the tournament's overall depth in quality. As Marta, the legendary Brazilian who played her sixth and final World Cup, said, "When I started there were no idols in women's football. Twenty years later, we have become a reference for many women...." To harness this positive energy, governing body FIFA has a lot of heavy-lifting to do. Addressing the massive remuneration gap between men and women — a World Cup prize money purse of \$440 million against \$152 million — can be a good start in the long road towards normalising sporting excellence by women.

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THE OPAQUENESS OF TANSCHÉ

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File photo of Tamil Nadu Higher Education Minister K. Ponmudy. | Photo Credit: B. Jothi Ramalingam

A few weeks ago, the Tamil Nadu government's Higher Education Department went back on its policy that all colleges in the State should adopt a "uniform syllabus". The new order said that autonomous colleges need not follow a "uniform syllabus" if they did not wish to. This policy was also endorsed by the Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education (TANSCHÉ), the overarching body that formulates programmes, coordinates with universities on the implementation of these programmes, and is empowered to promote cooperation and coordination among institutions to improve higher education and research.

TANSCHÉ was set up in 1992 and is mandated to comprise 15 members. It is supposed to meet every three months, according to the Act that set up the TANSCHÉ. However, this has not been followed by the Council. Teachers in universities are angry that even though the Council has not functioned as per the Act, the government has urged them to follow the syllabus that TANSCHÉ has drafted.

The Council's website is defunct. The last update to the website was made more than a decade ago and the officials listed on the website have since retired. Ever since TANSCHÉ was formed, the officials have been political appointees, especially the member-secretary and the vice-chairman, though efforts have been made to ensure that the persons had the calibre to hold the post.

With no website providing details of the members in the Council, university professors are concerned about whether the member-secretary and the vice-chairman have even constituted a Council as mandated by the Act, who its members are, and whether they have attended meetings.

Educators say political issues, which are beyond the purview of the officials of the Higher Education Department, forced the former vice-chancellor of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University to step down from the post of vice-chairman at TANSCHÉ in 2013-14. It was then that the Council began to slide in its functioning.

However, a government document from 2018 showed that despite dwindling trust, the Council managed to maintain its credibility. It met and discussed key issues such as converting constituent colleges into government institutions, sexual harassment cases in colleges,

additional intake of students, and developing higher education schemes.

The excuse that for three years the Council could not function owing to the COVID-19 pandemic is unviable as the policy notes of 2021-22 and 2022-23 offer a detailed view of the work it had undertaken despite the pandemic. The latest 2023-24 policy note, however, has devoted just one page to the activities of the Council. This, when TANSICHE had announced that it proposed to develop the “uniform syllabus” last year. The project mandates that the officials seek consensus from vice-chancellors and senior faculty from the universities under its purview. But professors point out that most teachers engaged to frame the syllabus were from Chennai. They say hardly any information was shared about the faculty invited to participate in the exercise. The opposition to the “uniform syllabus” did not come just from senior faculty but from vice-chancellors of universities as well, an indication that the council members had little understanding of their own roles.

Each year the Council receives an annual grant of 25 crore for research by college faculty. Another 50,000 is granted to students who show potential for research. But the annual policy document of the department for 2023-24 provides few details of the work done by the council in the past year. According to the document, the Council gave 25 lakh to the Directorate of Technical Education to prepare curriculum for polytechnic colleges. The document further states that it conducted a two-day workshop on ‘Recent Trends in Research’.

The absence of a citizen’s charter, given that it is a public body and is being funded from the taxpayer’s money, is further fuelling suspicion that the Council has lost its relevance because of political intervention. It is now incumbent on the government to assuage the concerns of the faculty in higher education institutions in Tamil Nadu by increasing transparency and accountability of TANSICHE.

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AT LEAST SINGLE DOSE VACCINE PRIOR TO COVID-19 INFECTION PROVIDED 60% PROTECTION AGAINST POST-DISCHARGE MORTALITY: ICMR STUDY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 21, 2023 08:36 pm | Updated August 22, 2023 04:11 am IST - NEW DELHI

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A beneficiary getting vaccinated in New Delhi. File. | Photo Credit: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

At least one dose of vaccine prior to [COVID-19 infection](#) provided 60% protection against post-discharge mortality, an Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) study on factors related to mortality within one year after discharge in hospitalised [COVID-19](#) patients has found.

The study has also found that there is a higher chance of mortality within one year following discharge for those over 40 years of age, those with comorbidities, and those who suffered moderate to severe COVID.

The study observed that of the 14,419 participants contacted at least once in one year after discharge from hospital, 942 deaths or 6.5% all cause mortality was reported.

Overall, the study's findings suggest that a post-discharge mortality rate of 6.5% in patients hospitalised for COVID-19 warrants a vigilant follow-up.

"Encouragingly, vaccination before the COVID-19 infection confers protection to post-discharge mortality. Post-COVID Conditions (PCC) and the presence of comorbidities may have some association with late post discharge deaths; further research is warranted in this field," the study said.

Similar trends were seen in participants in the 18-45 years age group.

Also read | [Why COVID-recovered patients have cardiac events when exercising](#)

The study also noted that the National Clinical Registry for the COVID-19 study team had conducted matched nested case control analyses to evaluate the factors related to one-year post-discharge mortality.

The ICMR has been maintaining the National Clinical Registry for COVID-19 at 31 centres across the country, where all hospitalised COVID-19 patients are periodically contacted by telephone till one year after discharge. Data collected till February 2023 were included in the

study.

Meanwhile, other ongoing studies on COVID include the effect of the vaccine on thrombotic events in the 18-45 years population in India in 2022, and factors associated with sudden deaths in the same age bracket.

The study further states that in the present investigation, post-COVID conditions were associated with 2.7 times higher odds of post-discharge mortality.

The limitations of the current investigation include reliance on telephonic follow-up, which could have led to under reporting of the symptoms. The present analysis only included patients who were hospitalised due to COVID-19, and consequently, the findings cannot be generalised to all patients who had COVID-19.

Furthermore, the operational definition of PCC used in this study is not an exact match to either the World Health Organization (WHO) or the definition of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This variation of the definition for PCC may be a source of bias. In the first two nested case control analyses, it is possible that the participants could have died sometime after being contacted and were misclassified as controls rather than cases. "However, we do not expect any major bias to arise, as this misclassification would have made the analyses more conservative," notes the study.

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MOU SIGNED BETWEEN MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION AND UNDP

Relevant for: null | Topic: Miscellaneous Facts

On 22nd August, 2023, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) and UNDP, in the presence of Minister of State for Ministry of DoNER and Ministry of Cooperation, Shri B.L.Verma and UN Assistant Secretary-General & Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA), Ms Ulrika Mod  er, entered into an MoU wherein UNDP would provide MDoNER with technical support on fast-tracking progress on the SDGs; monitoring, evaluation and capacity building; support Aspirational districts and blocks; support in the deployment of emerging technologies in governance and in scaling up good practices.



Minister of State, MDoNER, Shri B.L. Verma addressed the delegates and said, Prime Ministers' main focus is development of Social and Infrastructure connectivity in NER and hope UNDP will help the Ministry in achieving this goal. He also said, "The Ministry of DoNER has taken remarkable strides across critical sectors such as infrastructure, connectivity, health, education, climate change and economic growth to transform the lives of the people in the region. In this journey, UNDP has been our key partner in promoting data-driven decision-making, especially through the North East Region District SDG Index"

MoS also stated that the NER District SDG Index helped in forming the flagship PM-DevINE scheme, which provides infrastructure and social development funding to boost livelihood opportunities in the region, especially for women and youth.



Ms. Ulrika Mod er appreciated the Government of India's efforts towards fast-tracking the development of the North Eastern Region. She said, "UNDP is privileged to sign this MoU with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. We are committed to supporting national and sub national efforts to accelerate progress on the goals by providing technical support on SDG localization and improved capacities towards implementation and monitoring of programmes."

MG/P/PD

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THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE MEDICAL COLLEGE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Education and related issues

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August 25, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 01:46 am IST

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'There is a myth that having a medical college sanctioned for a district would take care of every health-care need of the people there' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

A recent report of a patient having suffered for almost a year before she found out that a [surgical instrument had been left behind in her stomach](#) — a case of medical negligence in one of the leading medical colleges in Kerala, a State with one of the most advanced health care systems in the country — and growing vacancies in seats to Bachelor of Dental Surgery and Master of Dental Surgery courses in dental colleges across the country are two happenings that raise questions about the potential role played by medical colleges in India. The policy proposal of 2019 by the Union government to convert district hospitals to medical colleges, that is being pursued along with a policy of sanctioning an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-like institution in every State, highlights the need to examine the contribution of medical colleges in patient care from a public health perspective.

A medical college is an institution that has dual purposes: first and foremost is its educational role: as primarily an institution for the education and training of students to become medical professionals through teaching and apprenticeship (internship). A medical college hospital with state-of-the-art facilities is established with a view to ensure bedside care, a mandatory requirement for apprenticeship, and is the most crucial component in medical training. Its secondary purpose is to offer medical care. Hence, population norm was never a concern while establishing medical colleges and it is expected that patients with serious illnesses can avail services from medical colleges anytime when they have a referral from the lower-level facilities.

Despite this, there is a myth that having a medical college sanctioned for a district would take care of every health-care needs of the people there. Added to this is the potential real estate and other infrastructure boom near medical colleges along with the nurturing of false security and hope that the chances of children living there getting a medical seat will also increase. The popular support and goodwill for a medical college is supplemented with another myth that producing more medical professionals is the solution to the issue of inadequate access to health care.

But a close examination of the evidence and experiences around medical colleges and district hospitals and their contribution to people's health care presents a different picture. What it shows instead is that secondary-care facilities need to be prioritised over large state-of-the-art medical colleges if curative care needs of the people are the priority.

Two kinds of evidence need to be examined to make sense of this. First, it is a well-known fact that those needing advanced tertiary care will comprise approximately 1% of the total population annually. So, for a district with a population of three million, this would mean a bed requirement of 575-700 specialised beds (for a medium-size district) if we consider 100%-85% bed occupancy. Most district hospitals are expected to cater to this need for specialised tertiary care. Unfortunately, district hospitals that are expected to function and follow referral systems from the lower-level facilities face multiple challenges in the form of poor infrastructure that includes a lack of specialists, and no referral system, which is partly due to non-functional secondary-level care facilities.

Most importantly, there is an overload of all kinds of patients (from those needing primary care to those needing most advanced care) who await treatment from these higher-level facilities, i.e., district hospitals or medical colleges. In places where better secondary facilities are functional and which have a referral system of some kind that works, there are district hospitals that are doing well (their patient care has specialities such as cardiac care and surgery, regular dialysis services and cancer treatment with a network of regional cancer centres), thus rendering efficient care on a long term and sustainable basis. It is a truism that some of the best trauma care responses after road traffic accidents are by the district hospitals with their limited capacity. This is a model to be emulated. Some district hospitals have a history of resisting the proposal to convert to medical colleges and are still doing well in patient care.

On the contrary, some of the well-functioning medical colleges across the country face problems such as crowding of patients in need of primary and secondary care which could otherwise have been handled by the lower-level facilities. Medical practitioners in most medical colleges in the country will agree that more than 80% of the cases that are treated in medical colleges do not really warrant treatment under tertiary specialty care. There can be effective treatment at the lower level by ensuring basic facilities at that level. Patients who are in need of primary and secondary care always seem to flock to either medical colleges or well-functioning district hospitals for their immediate treatment. The perennial failure of India's health services to implement a referral system in tertiary-care facilities is only the expression of a much larger systemic problem — the failure to strengthen secondary-level care. If strengthened, secondary-level care can be the face of public sector curative care for people and can even win trust as these patients constitute one of the larger segments in the total curative care pie — which private commercial players look to in search of business. Most secondary-care needs do not require hospitalisation and hence are excluded from any health insurance scheme. In the south, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the significant contribution of the government in addressing the curative care needs of people is through better functioning secondary-level health-care facilities.

There is always popular support for the establishment and the creation of a medical college as it propagates an 'image' of advanced technology and development. Setting up medical colleges in a district is a popular policy response but at times masks the real problem — of the inadequate provisioning of secondary-level health care in the region.

There are two obvious challenges as establishing new medical colleges in areas where there is poor infrastructure and connectivity will face serious setbacks as the experience of several of the new AIIMS projects across the country shows. In addition, if district hospitals are converted to medical colleges, the priority shifts from a treatment centre to that of an education and research centre, where patient priorities become secondary. In either case, the challenges of ensuring a referral (gate keeping) will continue unless secondary facilities are developed adequately. There is a need to shatter the myth of medical colleges being the ideal site for health-care solutions as far as the masses are concerned. Instead, strengthening secondary-level curative care can be the best policy for governments to strengthen their health-care system. If this is done, it can be a strong regulator for the commercial private sector which survives on the less complex

secondary-care needs of people.

Mathew George is Professor and Head, Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Central University of Kerala, Periyar, Kasaragod, Kerala

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UNCHECKED RUN: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE CHESS WORLD CUP, MAGNUS CARLSEN AND HIS CHALLENGERS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

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August 26, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:21 am IST

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The Chess World Cup, which concluded at Baku on Thursday, caught the imagination of the Indian public the way very few sporting events have of late. Eighteen-year-old Chennai lad R. Praggnanandhaa's astonishing run all the way to the final was the main reason. However, he was [stopped by Magnus Carlsen, the highest-rated player in history](#). The Norwegian is a five-time world champion, but this is his first World Cup, the only significant trophy that had been missing in his cabinet. Ever since [Carlsen dethroned Viswanathan Anand](#) in the latter's hometown Chennai in 2013, the former's reign on the chessboard has been absolute. If he is no longer the official world champion — that title now belongs to China's Ding Liren, who was crowned a few months ago — it is because he has chosen to stay away. He does not find the motivation strong enough and he is not comfortable with the format of the World title match involving a series of games of a long duration. He has said that he would not be a part of the next cycle of the World championship either. This is not Carlsen's loss; it is chess's. Whoever wins the World title cannot claim to be the planet's best player as long as Carlsen is around.

Not many in international sport have skipped vying for the World title when they are at the top of their game. But then, not many sportspersons across disciplines have been as good as Carlsen has for such a long time. Praggnanandhaa is one young player who has given Carlsen cause for some worry in recent times. He made headlines when he scored multiple wins over his formidable rival last year. Any win against the World No. 1 is commendable, but [what makes Praggnanandhaa special](#) is that he is still very young and could get stronger. He is ranked 29th in the world and it will be safe to bet that he will break into the top 10 in the not too distant future. At Baku, he accounted for the World No. 2 and No. 3, Hikaru Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana. But he was not the only Indian to impress at the World Cup. In fact, his rival in the quarterfinal was Arjun Erigaisi. D. Gukesh, who was the first Indian to make news in Azerbaijan by breaking into the world's top 10 and replacing Anand as the India No. 1 in live rating, was Carlsen's opponent in the quarterfinal. Vidit Gujrathi ensured that four of the last eight players left in this prestigious event were Indians. India is shining bright with a whole generation of young talent.

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RETHINK THE EMERGING DYNAMICS OF INDIA'S FISCAL FEDERALISM

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, and the Centre-State Relations

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'Transparency guarantees and public accountability demand that the Union, States and local governments come clean and bring all extra-budgetary transactions to the public domain' | Photo Credit: Getty Images

A 'holding together federation' with a built-in unitary bias, the Indian Constitution was the contextual product of centrifugal forces and fissiparous tendencies in the run-up to Independence. It has journeyed over 73 years with remarkable resilience. Even so, the emerging dynamics of India's fiscal federalism needs some rethinking. The paradigm shift from a planned economy to a market-mediated economic system, the transformation of a two-tier federation into a multi-tier fiscal system following the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, the abolition of the Planning Commission and its replacement with NITI Aayog, the passing of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, with all the States forced to fall in line, the Goods and Services (GST) Act with the GST Council holding the controlling lever, the extensive use of cess and surcharges which affect the size of the divisible pool and so on have altered the fiscal landscape with varying consequences on India's federalism. I raise just four issues.

One, India's intergovernmental transfer system should be decidedly more equity-oriented. Although the natural proclivity of any market-mediated growth process is to work in favour of the propertied class, the actual experience in India has been astounding. Chancel and Piketty (2019) estimate that the top 1% earners in India captured less than 21% of the total income in the 1930s, but this was drastically reduced to 6% in the early 1980s and then rose to 22% during the liberalisation era. To be sure, the tax exemptions, tax concessions and other revenues forgone in recent times disproportionately favoured the rich and have reduced the size of the divisible pool.

My study on the convergence trajectory of per capita income (PCI) of 16 major States from 1970-71 through 2020-21, based on Economic and Political Weekly Research Foundation (EPWRF) data, shows an increasingly divergent trend, where the standard deviation value of log PCI has increased to 0.231 in 2020-2021 from 0.186 in 1991-1992, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.72%. On the other hand, following United Nations Development Programme methodology, Oommen and Parma (in a forthcoming paper in the EPW) argue that the Human Development Index (HDI) across 15 States shows a convergence during the post-

reform period. The standard deviation value of HDI is reduced to 0.268 in 2018 from 0.611 in 1991. Instructively the disaggregated picture since 2005 that spans FRBM legislations shows a declining rate of convergence with a high CAGR of minus 2.85%. Indeed, equity should be the overarching concern of the 16th Finance Commission and that HDI could be considered as a strong candidate in the horizontal distribution of tax devolution. Second, there is a case for revisiting Article 246 and the Seventh Schedule for a denovo division of powers, functions and responsibilities for a variety of reasons.

First, India is no longer the one-party governance of post-Independence times. It has become a truly multi-party system. The nature of polity, society, technology, demographic structure and the development paradigm itself have significantly changed.

Second, under the changing dispensation, several pieces of central legislation such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the National Food Security Act 2013 and many others impose an extra burden on the States. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister recently raised the issue of shifting education from the Concurrent List to the State List.

Third, at the time of constitution-making, we never asked the pertinent question of who should do what and who should tax what? We borrowed copiously from the Government of India Act 1935 and failed to apply the subsidiarity principle, viz., that whatever could be done best at a particular level should be done at that level and not at a higher level, in the division of functions and finance. Although the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments provided an opportunity to re-examine the issue, nothing was done. In fact, more confusion was added with the introduction of Schedule XI and Schedule XII, which, respectively, list out the subject matter for the panchayat raj institutions and municipalities by simply lifting items from the State list and Concurrent list. They lack operational meaning unless they are broken down into activities and sub-activities, as Kerala and a few others have done. Again, the retention of the irrelevant item No. 5 in the State list is an affront on the third tier. A new local list that will map out the functional and financial responsibilities of the panchayat raj institutions and municipalities is but inevitable.

Fourth, the persistent failure to place the third tier properly on the fiscal federal map of India is a serious issue. The absence of a uniform financial reporting system (standard budgeting rules for all tiers, introduction of the accrual-based accounting system long recommended and so on) comprising all levels of government is a major deficit which the coming Union Finance Commission may be required to address. Although the Constitution refers to the third tier as 'institutions of self-government', policymakers, experts and even the UFCs generally refer to them as 'local bodies' and have not given the respect and the handholding they deserve. The failure in building the local democratic base of India, which has over 3.2 million elected representatives, and 2.5 lakh rural and urban local governments, is an enigma. It is well-recognised that the prime objective of our federation with deep heterogeneity is to provide basic services of standard quality to every citizen irrespective of her choice of residence and they have a critical role to play. Will the terms of reference of the next Commission consider this?

Fifth, there is a great need to review the off-Budget borrowing practices of both the Union and the States. Off-Budget borrowings mean all borrowings not provided for in the Budget but whose repayment liabilities fall on the Budget. They are generally unscrutinised and unreported. That all income and expenditure transactions should fall under some Budget head or other is a universal principle. State public sector undertakings and special purpose vehicles raise resources from the markets, but their servicing burden often falls on the State government. In cases where the government is the ultimate guarantor, the burden of repaying the debt also falls on the State.

The central government that should set good examples is probably more guilty of off-Budget borrowing than the States. Although the States are disciplined through Article 293(3) by the Union and through the FRBM Act, the Union often escapes such controls. The liberal utilisation of the National Small Saving Fund (NSSF) for extra-budgetary financing of central public sector undertakings and central ministries by way of loans is not reflected in the Union fiscal deficits. This is because only the Consolidated Fund of India balance is considered for calculating fiscal deficit, and items in public accounts such as the NSSF are kept out. While the borrowing space of States is restricted, the Union escapes such discipline. There is also a huge area of special banking arrangements using public sector banks to facilitate cash and credit flow outside the budgetary appropriations to help various agencies involved in quasi-fiscal operations with the government. Transparency guarantees and public accountability demand that the Union, States and local governments come clean and bring all extra-budgetary transactions to the public domain.

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In sum, the dynamics of the emerging fiscal federalism of India entails significant rethinking especially in the context of the 16th Finance Commission.

M.A. Oommen is Honorary Fellow, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, and Distinguished Fellow, Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Thiruvananthapuram

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CINNAMON AND ITS ACTIVE COMPONENTS PREVENT PROSTATE CANCER: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NUTRITION STUDY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 25, 2023 08:39 pm | Updated 09:26 pm IST - NEW DELHI

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A study by the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) has demonstrated that cinnamon and its active components - cinnamaldehyde & procyanidin B2 — administered orally to rats had an inhibitory effect on early-stage prostate cancer.

The study titled 'Chemopreventive effect of cinnamon and its bioactive compounds in a rat model of premalignant prostate carcinogenesis' published in the international peer reviewed journal *Cancer Prevention Research* aimed to assess the chemopreventive efficacy of cinnamon (CN) and its bioactive compounds (cinnamaldehyde or procyanidin B2) in vivo in male rats. A release issued by NIN said that as part of this study, adult rats were given cinnamon or its bioactive compounds through the diet before induction of cancer and the rats were fed for 16 weeks.

"It was observed that feeding cinnamon or its active compounds resulted in 60-70% of rats showing normal prostate histologically," noted the release.

"We tried to decipher the probable mechanism(s) for the chemo-preventive effect and observed that cinnamon and its active components could mitigate oxidative stress, decrease spread of cancer cells in the prostate gland. Interestingly, we also observed beneficial effects on bone mineral content and decrease in bone degeneration in these rats", said Dr Ayesha Ismail, scientist F and Head of Endocrinology Division, who led the study.

"It is encouraging to see these results from cinnamon, an Indian spice, which is commonly used in our cuisine. However, these outcomes warrant more detailed studies before any dietary recommendation can be made.", said Dr Hemalatha R, Director, ICMR-NIN.

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HOLDING BACK NMC'S DIRECTIVE MANDATING GENERIC MEDICINE PRESCRIPTIONS WELCOMED BY DOCTORS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

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August 26, 2023 08:46 pm | Updated August 27, 2023 08:59 am IST - HYDERABAD

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Doctors expressed their approval of the recent decision made by the National Medical Commission (NMC) to stall its directive mandating doctors to prescribe generic medicines to patients.

The [NMC's Registered Medical Practitioner \(Professional Conduct\) gazette notification, issued on August 2, has been put on hold with immediate effect as of August 21](#). This move has been met with widespread support from the medical fraternity, which had concerns that the proposed regulations would shift the balance of power from physicians to pharmacists.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has reaffirmed its commitment to upholding the dignity of the medical profession and vowed to continue working towards providing accessible and cost-effective healthcare for citizens.

"The NMC, before making such regulations, should take the opinion of doctors, who are crucial stakeholders in the country's healthcare policies. The commission should adopt a gradual approach to policy changes over time," said Dr. Kiran Madala, convenor of the IMA-Telangana Scientific Committee.

The suspension of the regulation should not be viewed as a victory or defeat but rather a responsible decision by the NMC and Ministry of Health, said Dr. Ranga Reddy Burri, president of Infection Control Academy of India. He suggested that the original regulations may not have thoroughly considered the potential consequences and called for comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders to develop an effective and implementable policy.

Dr. Reddy further pointed out that the core issue does not solely lie in prescribing generic or branded drugs but rather in a more profound underlying problem: to ensure quality medication at an affordable price. He proposed that the government should encourage manufacturers to exclusively produce generic drugs, which would naturally address the issue. If this option is unavailable, he argued, the industry will self-regulate in response to market demands.

"The NMC should utilise this interim period to gather extensive information and insights before reconsidering the decision. In doing so, the NMC can ensure that any future policy effectively

serves the interests of both healthcare providers and patients,” he added.

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August 27, 2023 03:45 am | Updated 09:00 am IST

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The story so far: Former British nurse [Lucy Letby was sentenced to life in prison](#) earlier this week after being found guilty in the worst child serial killer case in the history of the U.K. Letby was convicted of [murdering seven babies](#) and trying to kill six others while working at the Countess of Chester Hospital between June 2015 and June 2016. She was first arrested in 2018. Letby killed infants by injecting them with air, others were force-fed milk and two were poisoned with insulin, court documents said as per news reports.

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Patient safety is a fundamental element of public healthcare and is defined as the freedom for a patient from unnecessary harm or potential harm associated with provision of healthcare, as per the Union Health Ministry document titled, 'National Patient Safety Implementation Framework (2018-2025).'

Also read | [India lacks a complete paediatric cardio-care service](#)

Patients in India are protected under multiple layers of law that are largely fragmented. The first idea of patient safety is enshrined in the Hippocratic Oath itself. Additionally, the Consumer Protection Act deals with medical negligence and deficiency of services; legal rights of the patients are set out in the Clinical Establishment Act, and the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority and Drugs Controller General of India have mechanisms to see that patients' rights in terms of medication and devices are protected and that they are not overcharged, among other things.

While there are no exclusive rules for neonatal care and safety, or protection against external harm in Indian hospitals, there are provisions and checks against issues like inadvertent mix-up of babies at birth and abduction. Dr. Ramesh Agarwal, professor in-charge of neonatal services in the paediatrics department of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, says events where deliberate harm to patients is caused by care providers is extremely rare. "Such instances may involve people with complex psychiatric illnesses," he points out.

He adds that in a country where 2.6 crore children are born annually, there could be human errors in terms of care, and lapses, but planned, deliberate harm is a rare occurrence. Healthcare systems are geared to prevent, detect, and manage human and operational errors,

though the efficiency may vary, he explains.

There are a set of comprehensive provisions for the safety and wellbeing of neonates or newborn babies to minimise potential risks, says Dr. Sumit Chakravarty, senior consultant, Paediatrics and Neonatology, and head, NICU, Asian Hospital, Faridabad. The healthcare staff is also trained to counsel parents and provide emotional support, contributing to the safety and development of neonates.

He explains that adequate staffing ensures that trained healthcare providers can closely monitor each baby's condition and respond swiftly to any concerns. "Proper equipment for respiratory support, temperature regulation, and monitoring vital signs are readily available. Neonates are typically kept in controlled environments to avoid exposure to external infections and temperature fluctuations. Parental involvement is encouraged but with precautions to prevent the spread of infections. Regular training and continuing medical education for healthcare staff are essential to maintain high-quality neonatal care and uphold safety standards," he says.

Although the global number of neonatal deaths declined from 5 million in 1990 to 2.4 million in 2019, children face the greatest risk of death in their first 28 days, according to the World Health Organization. Its data shows that in 2019, 47% of all under-five deaths occurred in the newborn period with about one third dying on the day of birth and close to three quarter dying within the first week of life.

The current infant mortality rate for India in 2023 is 26.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, a 3.89% decline from 2022. The infant mortality rate for India in 2022 was 27.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, a 3.74% decline from 2021. Children who die within the first 28 days of birth suffer from conditions and diseases associated with lack of quality care at birth or skilled care and treatment immediately after birth and in the first days of life.

Also read | [The many challenges of ensuring maternal and child health in India](#)

Pre-term birth, intrapartum-related complications (birth asphyxia or lack of breathing at birth), infections and birth defects cause most neonatal deaths.

Women who receive midwife-led continuity of care (MLCC) provided by professional midwives, educated, and regulated to international standards, are 16% less likely to lose their baby and 24% less likely to experience pre-term birth, it explained.

The global organisation has also advised families that prompt medical care should be sought in case of danger signs, including feeding problems, or if the newborn has reduced activity, difficult breathing, a fever, fits or convulsions, jaundice in the first 24 hours after birth, yellow palms and soles at any age, or if the baby feels cold. Families are also required to register the birth and bring the baby for timely vaccination, according to national schedules. "Some newborns require additional attention and care during hospitalisation and at home to minimise their health risks," it says.

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INDIA'S ROHINGYA REFUGEE CHILDREN ARE NOT CRIMINALS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

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August 28, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 01:06 am IST

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In Jammu | Photo Credit: NISSAR AHMAD

A five-month-old infant born to [a Rohingya refugee](#) died in a detention or holding centre in Jammu in July. A viral video shows the police tear gassing a small congested area in the holding centre. Refugee women and children are also seen in the same space. As the explosion occurs, one can hear the shrieks of women and see children running in panic. The Senior Superintendent of Police, Kathua, admitted that tear gas shells were used in an enclosed space which is not ideal but denied that the infant's death was caused by tear gas. What is important to note is that these people are not prisoners or criminals who are kept in jail-like conditions. The Rohingya of Myanmar are among the most persecuted people in the world.

August 25 marked six years since the Myanmar military launched a campaign of mass atrocities against the Rohingya in Rakhine State. These genocidal attacks, which began in August 2017, caused more than 7,70,000 Rohingya to flee. At least 20,000 of them are in India. In this particular holding centre in Jammu, which was a prison before, more than 250 Rohingya refugees including women and children have been confined there since March 2021. Most of them have UNHCR cards that validate their identity as 'a refugee seeking safety'.

There are many troubling questions that arise from the Jammu incident. Why are refugees being treated as criminals? Why are they living in a prison-like facility? Why has their movement been restricted? Most troubling is why children are being holed up as prisoners in detention centres. These are children of an extremely vulnerable population that continues to fear ethnic cleansing. Globally, we have a shared responsibility to protect them, help them survive and thrive. Not imprison them, tear gas them and leave them to die.

What lets the Indian authorities act in an unaccountable and undeterred way is the fact that India does not have a domestic law or consistent policy on refugees and asylum seekers. It is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Refugees are seen as illegal immigrants and lumped with other foreigners under the Foreigners Act, 1946. The Act provides for unchecked executive powers against foreigners and contains no exceptions for vulnerable populations such as asylum seekers and refugees.

This has meant that despite UNHCR recognition, registered refugees in India are at risk of

administrative detention under the Foreigners Act such as Section 3(2)(e)), criminal imprisonment (Sections 14, 14.A., B., C.), and deportation (Section 3(2)(c)). Thus, hundreds of Rohingya refugees have been arbitrarily detained, many languishing indefinitely in India's jails and detention centres. Many of them are children who do not even know of a world outside of the four walls of these places.

Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that every child has an inherent right to life, survival and development. India ratified the CRC in December 1992; hence, holding children in detention facilities, denying them the freedom to access education or any other liberty is an absolute violation of this. We do not have to look as far as the UN conventions. The right to life and personal liberty is enshrined in the Constitution of India and is for all persons, whether citizens or foreigners.

Almost 500 Rohingya refugees are detained in various detention centres and jails across India. Many of them are children. In New Delhi, the Sarai Rohilla centre in New Delhi has four to five children who are below the age of five, with most in detention since infancy. They view the outside world, a dusty lane in front of the centre, through the iron rods of a window. They are not permitted to play or be outdoors because of their identity of being a Rohingya refugee.

While some children are living in the detention centres and jails with their parents, others have been separated and sent to juvenile justice homes under the Juvenile Justice Act. India's Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is for children who are in conflict with the law. The Rohingya refugee children are not in conflict with the law. They seek safety after fleeing for their lives. To treat them as anything else is a grave injustice.

To ensure that no other Rohingya refugee child dies in a detention centre in India and that refugee children are treated in a manner that upholds their right to life and development; it is imperative that all Rohingya children and their primary caregivers are released immediately from detention. For all the other Rohingya, the authorities should follow the Government of India's internal guidelines (2011) on the detention and treatment of refugees, which states that they should be released from detention within six months subject to collection of biometric details, with conditions of local surety, good behaviour and reporting to the police every month. In the meantime, the National Human Rights Commission, India should work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to appoint an ombudsman whose sole responsibility should be to investigate refugee detention centres in India.

Priyali Sur is the Founder and the Executive Director of The Azadi Project, an organisation that works for women from marginalised and refugee communities. She was a former news anchor for CNN-IBN in India, and has consulted as a social development expert for the World Bank in Washington DC

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Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

The National Sports Day in India is celebrated on 29 August every year. It is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand Singh. The day also serves as a reminder for all of us to recall the contributions, determination and extraordinary achievements of the athletes and their influence in shaping societies. The first National Sports Day was celebrated on August 29, 2012 and hence this year marks the 12th anniversary of Rashtriya Khel Divas.

The theme for this year's National Sports Day celebration is "Sports are an enabler to an inclusive and fit society".

The roots of India's National Sports Day can be traced back to the birth of Major Dhyan Chand Singh, one of its most revered sporting legends of India, who went on to become one of the most popular names in the game of hockey. He ruled the world of hockey with his delightful stick work and understanding of the game that earned him the moniker of 'Hockey Wizard' and 'The Magician'.

Born on 29 August 1905 in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, he started off his career with the British Indian Army. His career spanned from 1926 to 1948 and ended as one of the greatest hockey players of all time after having represented India 185 matches and scored over 400 goals during this period. His skills mesmerized the world, guiding India to three consecutive Olympic Hockey gold medals in 1928, 1932, and 1936.

In recognition of his unparalleled contributions to the realm of sports, the Indian Government declared his birthday as National Sports Day in 2012, with the aim to inspire generations to come. This decision was also focused on promoting sports and physical fitness among the people in the country.

The importance of National Sports Day can be attributed to its emphasis on the role that sports and physical activity play in our daily lives. It promotes sports participation among people of various demographics in order to enhance their health and wellbeing. On National Sports Day, the government often launches new initiatives, programs, and policies to support and nurture budding talent. These initiatives aim to provide better training facilities, financial support, and recognition to deserving athletes.

National Sports Day encourages people of all ages to embrace physical fitness. It emphasises the importance of regular exercise and a healthy lifestyle. It also warns against the implications of sedentary lifestyle and related diseases. This day also serves as a catalyst for the development of a robust sports culture in the country. It encourages to participate in various sports and games for holistic personal growth. Sports have the unique power to bring people together regardless of their background, language, or beliefs. National Sports Day showcases this unity.

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INDIA NEEDS COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

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August 29, 2023 12:15 am | Updated 07:34 am IST

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Earlier this month, a man and his minor son were arrested for sexually abusing a five-year-old girl, who was related to them, over six months. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 51,863 cases were reported under The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act in 2021; of them, 33,348 or 64% were of sexual assault. How do we prevent child abuse? An effective approach would be comprehensive sexuality education, which, according to the United Nations (UN), is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality.

Several State governments and certain sections of society in India have adopted an ostrich-like approach to comprehensive sexuality education. Claiming that it sexualises children, they have either watered down the existing programmes or withdrawn them on the grounds that they violate "Indian values". Traditional values are often shaped by patriarchal and hierarchical social structures. Mass media often propagates such values. All this negatively affects young adults of all genders.

In the context of POCSO cases, the Madras, Delhi, and Meghalaya High Courts along with the Chief Justice of India have highlighted the frequent criminalisation of consensual adolescent relationships and have asked the government to consider reducing the age of consent. Understanding sexual consent is important not only to learn about violation and abuse, but also to maintain healthy relationships. But are Indian teenagers and even young adults aware of what sexual consent means? A study by the dating app Tinder showed that more than 64% of young Mumbaikars were hesitant to give consent, ask for it, and to withdraw it when dating someone. This is worrying.

While the concept of sexual consent is evolving through criminal jurisprudence, the term itself may have been borrowed from English or other Western languages. While Sir Richard Burton's translation of *The Kama Sutra* has a short discussion on consensual sexual pleasure, discussions around the concept have been traditionally absent. With the non-English language speaking population becoming substantial, an explicit creation of vocabulary in regional languages to discuss the concept of sexual consent and its nuances is urgently required.

NCRB data show that it is necessary for schools to impart comprehensive sexuality education

not only to children, but also to parents and caregivers. Data show that both male and female children are victims of sexual abuse.

As the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) says, “the right of access to comprehensive sexuality education is grounded in fundamental human rights and is a means to empower young people to protect their health, well-being and dignity”. The UN global guidance recommends starting comprehensive sexuality education from the age of five along with formal education. This means that young children will be taught about their bodies, emotions, the basic principles of consent, and how to deal with violence, bullying or abuse. As per the review ‘Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education’ in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* quoted by the World Health Organization, with comprehensive sexuality education, young people will be better informed of their rights and sexuality, and will be more likely to engage in sexual activity later. Programmes built only on the concept of abstinence have not been effective.

The ramifications of a comprehensive sexuality education are far-reaching, especially in the matter of intimate partner violence. The UNFPA Operational Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education key intervention area 4 states, “Ensure that the CSE programmes include sound monitoring and evaluation components, with due consideration to inequality, gender norms, power in intimate relationships, and intimate partner violence.” On August 10, 2023, the State Council of Educational Research and Training informed the Kerala High Court that awareness about POCSO would be included in the curriculum from 2024-25. With the relationship between sexual health and human rights being complex, non-linear and interrelated, it is hoped that the curriculum is holistic and not simply related to legalities.

The UNESCO 2021 Global Status Report on ‘the journey towards comprehensive sexuality education’ says that capacity-building of teachers is critical as the curriculum requires non-intuitive participatory pedagogies. The report cautions against the effects of inaccurate information, and values that silence discussions on sexuality and rights. Teachers reported that they lacked the knowledge to talk about diverse topics with the existing programmes. The report highlights a government-NGO case study from Jharkhand, where a school-based programme, Udaan, which began as an Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health programme led by the State AIDS Control Society, got mainstreamed into the Education Department, as a model of commitment to scale up comprehensive sexuality education.

In India, the responsibility of sexuality education is vested with the State governments. Each State has the freedom to develop creative curriculums within the framework suggested by the UNFPA. It is time they did so.

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SHRI ANURAG SINGH THAKUR LAUNCHES NATIONAL SPORTS FEDERATIONS PORTAL ON THE NATIONAL SPORTS DAY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

On the occasion of National Sports Day 2023, Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur launched the third edition of the Fit India Quiz, among other initiatives, at an event at the JLN Stadium today.

The event was attended by almost 500 school children from various schools in New Delhi as well as several elite athletes and officials from the MYAS, SAI and the National Sports Federations.

The Minister also launched an Information booklet on Sports Infrastructure Projects sanctioned under the Khelo India Scheme as well as launched a National Sports Federations portal, while also felicitating the 4x400m men's relay team, fresh after creating an Asian record at the World Athletics Championships held at Budapest.

Addressing the event, Shri Thakur mentioned, "The Wizard of hockey Major Dhyan Chand gave us three consecutive Olympic gold medals in hockey in 1928, 1932, and 1936. This is a fitting day for tribute to this great maestro and I'm happy to observe that over the years, coaches and athletes have also played a big role to take this sporting revolution forward. Coaches and athletes play a big role.





“There are 3526 events happening today across India and that’s a testament of the road to which we have come today. This is an unbelievable phase for Indian sports. In 60 years, there were only 18 medals at the World University Games. This year itself, we won 26 medals in the tournament. Not only that, across all sports, be it Praggnanandha in Chess to Antim Panghal in

wrestling and Aditi Gopichand Swami in archery, we are getting phenomenal results. In the World Athletics Championships Budapest too, our 4x400m relay team gave a great display, along with Parul Chaudhary as well as our evergreen Neeraj Chopra, who has not got gold in every possible high scale international competition in the sport,” the Minister added.

Following two successful editions of the Fit India Quiz, the 3rd edition was also announced. It is India’s biggest sports and fitness quiz competition for school students featuring total prize money of Rs 3.25 crores. Commenting on the Fit India Quiz, Shri Thakur said, “I was amazed to see that students from the Tenga valley of Arunachal participated in the Fit India Quiz, along with remote locations in Andaman, Sikkim and so on. They were the top teams in the quiz.”

“From the field of sports to right up there on the moon with Chandrayaan, we have made our mark. This is new India. Our athletes have done it all to make us reach on top. I congratulate not just the NSFs and IOA but also the several parents and coaches who have disciplined their children and made them enter the field of sports,” Shri Anurag Singh Thakur added.

The National Sports Federations portal launched on Tuesday is in line with the Government of India's vision for Digital India, for ensuring ease of business and good governance. It is a unified online portal for the NSFs, which shall be a single window system for processing of annual renewal of recognition of NSFs, elections of National Sports Federations etc.

This will do away with the existing system of physical mode of submission of documents by NSFs and examination of the same by the Union Sports Ministry. The online portal will also be ensuring better coordination among the Department of Sports and the National Sports Federations.

Similarly, an online application submission and processing portal was launched which will be utilized for handling all the application for creation and upgradation of sports infrastructures and demand for sports equipment under the Khelo India Scheme. This portal will be available for grantees, States, UTs for submission of their proposals of financial support through this portal from first September 2023.

The Information booklet on Sports Infrastructure Projects sanctioned under the Khelo India Scheme, meanwhile, showcases how the Khelo India Scheme has transformed the nation for sporting excellence since 2016. The booklet throws light on the entire sports infrastructure that has been developed and is in pipeline in various States and UTs of the country. The Khelo India Scheme, since its inception, has remained pivotal in sports development in the country with focus at the grassroots level.

To also commemorate the grand occasion and pay a fitting tribute to Hockey legend Major Dhyhan Chand on the National Sports Day, sports and fitness activities were held across several Government of India offices, Union Ministry offices, Sports Authority of India centres, Khelo India centres, National sports federations as well as schools and colleges. Age-appropriate Competitive and fun games were conducted for the age groups of 18-40 years, 40-60 years and 60+ years.

PPG/SK

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