NEWS D.A.D.

100% COVERAGE OF EACH & EVERY RELEVANT NEWS

◄ SOURCES ►

PIB » The Hindu » Live Mint » HT » TOI
RBI » ET » Indian Express » PRS Blog and more.....

14 leading sources for **CURRENT AFFAIRS** covered on Daily basis.

Topic-wise
Daily News

For all those who don't want to be left out

" Every News counts and we make sure that you don't miss any relevant News. "

CRACKACADEMY

Index

PRIME MINISTER PAYS HOMAGE TO LOKMANYA TILAK ON HIS PUNYA TITHI

Relevant for: Others | Topic: Important Personalities (World & India)

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Lokmanya Tilak on his Punya Tithi.

Shri Modi will accept the Lokmanya Tilak National Award in Pune today. Prime Minister Modi will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for key development projects in Pune.

The Prime Minister tweeted;

"I pay homage to Lokmanya Tilak on his Punya Tithi. I will be Pune today, where I will accept the Lokmanya Tilak National Award. I am indeed humbled that I have been conferred this award which is closely associated with the work of such a great personality of our history."

"I will also be inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for key development projects."

I pay homage to Lokmanya Tilak on his Punya Tithi. I will be in Pune today, where I will accept the Lokmanya Tilak National Award. I am indeed humbled that I have been conferred this award which is closely associated with the work of such a great personality of our history.

***

DS/ST

***

DS/ST

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) uriniferous**

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.

END

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.**

END

SUPREME INDICTMENT: ON MANIPUR CRISIS AND THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA'S CENSURE

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 02, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:20 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

The Supreme Court has pulled up the Manipur government for its "lethargic" investigations into the ethnic violence in the sensitive border State that began on May 3 and which has still not been doused. Pointing out that arrests have been "few and far between", in the context of around 6,500 first information reports filed in relation to the violence, the apex court has asked for more details of the progress in police action, and ordered the personal presence of the Manipur Director General of Police during the next hearing on August 7. Questioning the State police's capability to investigate these cases, the Court noted that there was a complete breakdown of law and constitutional machinery in the face of mob violence. Two women who were paraded naked and raped by a mob have pleaded their lack of trust in the investigation by the police and the Central Bureau of Investigation. It was the circulation of a video clip that captured the horrific violence these women were subjected to that prompted the Court's intervention after weeks of unabated violence and the brazen partisanship of the Manipur government. More such cases have surfaced, and the Court has now proposed a Court-constituted investigation. Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has no leg to stand on after this censure by the highest court in the land, but continues to remain in office with a total lack of accountability because the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is determined to protect him for political reasons.

The history of communal clashes in India suggests that mob violence for a prolonged period is possible only with the connivance of the state. In the case of Manipur, it is more than evident. Bringing perpetrators to book is far more tedious and often a frustrating process compared to taking swift preventive police action at the first sign of trouble. In Manipur, far from a swift response to prevent escalation, the police allegedly facilitated the mob violence. Police personnel who failed in their duty or connived with mobs should face the full force of the law. Also, there must be a strong message from the country's political leadership. Sadly, the attempt by the ruling BJP has been to deny the gravity of the Manipur situation by comparing it with isolated crimes in Opposition-ruled States. The Court has denounced that claim while underscoring the gravity of the situation in Manipur. A team of 21 leaders of the Opposition grouping, INDIA, that visited the State is scheduled to meet President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday. The grouping should also agree to a discussion in the Rajya Sabha even if its demand for a prior statement by the Prime Minister is not met. That will be an opportunity for INDIA to present its findings to the country.

COMMents

SHARE

Manipur / judiciary (system of justice) / Bharatiya Janata Party / unrest, conflicts and war / police / investigation / politics / Rajya Sabha / parliament / arrest

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

THE DANGERS IN THE DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BILL

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 02, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 07:31 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'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)

COMMents

SHARE

laws / parliament / politics / executive (government) / data protection / Right to Information /
Right to Privacy / democracy / Aadhaar / personal data collection

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal.
Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The
Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an
account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by
logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

BUS RIDE TO EQUALITY, THE WHEELS OF CHANGE IN KARNATAKA

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 02, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 12:08 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

"The labelling of the policy as a 'freebie' mischaracterises the measure and overlooks the socio-political framework where it operates" | Photo Credit: K. MURALI KUMAR

"Imagine an Indian city with street corners full of women: chatting, laughing, breast-feeding, exchanging corporate notes or planning protest meetings. Imagine footpaths spilling over with old and young women watching the world go by as they sip tea, discuss love, cricket and the latest blockbuster." In the book, Why Loiter?, Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade remind us that this imagined city is far remote to the known Indian reality. Most public spaces in India are traditionally occupied by men. Be it public streets, railway stations, markets, shops, or long queues, women are often either absent or in the minority. Why is this so? One part of the reason is the traditional gender roles which require women to engage in household work. The other part has to do with concerns of safety or simply the impression that so-called public spaces are unwelcome to women. The Shakti scheme launched by the Congress government in Karnataka seeks to change this.

Under this scheme, where women can travel for free on State buses, the aim is to make transport more accessible and safer for women. Removing even small cost barriers can have a big impact. This is especially the case for women who do not earn and who are financially dependent on their spouses for transport costs. But it is also beneficial to working women. It makes working outside the home more attractive. They save on the commute, making it more viable for women to seek out work. In this way the policy helps challenge gender stereotypes that women belong to the household.

There are also benefits to all women regardless of whether they use buses or not. Public spaces often become more women-friendly if more women are using it. The Shakti scheme brings women into public life and makes public space 'less male'. There are many steps needed to shape cities along the vision Phadke, Khan, and Ranade outline. The Shakti scheme is one such step. As its name suggests, it empowers women to claim and reclaim public spaces. We have seen daily wage labourers, sanitation workers and house maids availing the scheme, in turn demonstrating how a well-thought-out policy can be truly empowering for womenfolk. Like several welfare schemes for women, this policy too has feminist politics to it.

Similar schemes in other States have proved to be successful. In 2019, the Government of Delhi

initiated a policy of enabling free travel for women passengers in government buses. In 2021, the Governments of Punjab and Tamil Nadu introduced a similar policy. The initial response from Karnataka indicates that it is working. In the initial three days, around 98,58,518 women availed the scheme.

Despite the popularity with women and its principled rationale, critics frequently raise two objections. The first is rooted on the ground that the policy is a 'freebie' or government handout which is not even targeted towards those who need it. The second objection is that the policy is discriminatory. However, neither stands up to scrutiny.

The labelling of the policy as a 'freebie' mischaracterises the measure and overlooks the socio-political framework where it operates. First, there are several State-funded goods that are free of cost. Public schools educate children free of cost. Public hospitals treat patients free of cost. Public parks are free of cost. Most of the roads which private vehicles drive on are free of cost. Of course, none of these things is literally for free. They are paid out of taxpayer money. But if taxpayers are paying for schools, hospitals, parks, and roads, then why not pay for bus travel as well? Why should a free use of a bus be a "freebie" but the free use of a road not? It turns out that there is no good answer.

The reason why governments pay for schools, hospitals or the like is that taxpayer funding achieves better and fairer outcomes than private payment. The Shakti scheme aims for a fairer outcome of more gender equal public spaces. Only free bus travel achieves this outcome.

If this is the key objective of the scheme, then it is irrelevant that the scheme also includes women who can afford travel. The benefit does not lie alone in the direct effect, but in what economists would call "positive externalities".

Other critics have focused on the idea that it is discriminatory to have tickets for men and not for women. Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on specified grounds, including sex. It is true that prices are set at different rates for men than for women. However, not every case of differential treatment is wrongful discrimination. We often treat men and women differently. Special scholarships exist for female students to encourage and support women who seek out education. There are women-specific employment and livelihood programmes initiated by the State. There are already seats reserved for women in various means of public transport.

The reason behind these measures is that, very often, we need to confront the realities of a deeply patriarchal society. The Shakti scheme is a direct response to this. It challenges the maleness of public spaces. The framers of India's Constitution were aware of these necessities. This is why they included Article 15(3) which allows the state to make special provisions for women and children. The overarching nature of 'special provision' allows the state to include measures that range from free bus travel to reservation for women in employment, education or politics. The Shakti scheme squarely falls within this category. Legal challenges to similar schemes in other regions such as Delhi have failed due to the same reason. As the Supreme Court held in the case of P.B Vijayakumar: "The insertion of clause (3) of Article 15 in relation to women is a recognition of the fact that for centuries, women of this country have been socially and economically handicapped. As a result, they are unable to participate in the socio-economic activities of the nation on a footing of equality."

None of this is to say that free bus rides for women are enough. Concerns about sexual harassment, women-friendly infrastructure, and the like remain. But the scheme is a step in the right direction in guaranteeing equal citizenship of women. Hopefully, one day, the scheme will no longer be necessary because women, just like men, can loiter in the street and equally share our public spaces.

Thulasi K. Raj is a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India. Bastian Steuwer is an Assistant Professor of Political Science, Ashoka University

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 03, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:38 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

[government](#) / [population and census](#) / [personal data collection](#) / [welfare](#) / [health](#) / [consumer issue](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

THE TRAJECTORY OF PROGRESS MUST CHANGE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 03, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 01:23 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'People experience realities which statisticians' numbers cannot reveal' | Photo Credit: The Hindu

The G-20 has provided Prime Minister Narendra Modi an opportune stage before the next general election in 2024. Promotions of the G-20, with Mr. Modi's picture a part of them, are everywhere. Of greater significance to the world is that the G-20 is being led by India, the world's most populous country. Global financial crises in the last 30 years compelled the G-7, the United States-led cabal of western countries (and Japan) that controls global financial institutions, to expand the G-20 by adding China, India, Russia, Brazil, and a few other countries for solutions to global problems. The G-20 is at an impasse because the U.S. wants its members to shut out Russia and China who it sees as threats to its global hegemony. India is not easily swayed by pressure from the G-7. It wants the G-20 to concentrate on the agenda of 90% of humanity outside the G-7.

Global governance is in bad shape. The trajectory of progress must change. The world is being divided by wars amongst nations, and strife within them — wars with military weapons and with financial and trade weapons. Desperate millions are being pushed back to their deaths while trying to cross borders and oceans in search of better lives and safety, while three multi-billionaires are competing to create commercial space ventures to take a handful of wealthy people (paying hundreds of thousands of dollars each), for a brief joyride in borderless space.

Humanity cannot carry on the way it is. The trajectory of progress must be changed to make economic growth more equitable and sustainable. Economists try to prove with numbers that poverty is reducing, and incomes are increasing for everyone. They should look around and listen to real people struggling in precarious livelihoods. People experience realities which statisticians' numbers cannot reveal. The planet is heating up inexorably. It cannot take the pressure of the present consumptive model of economic growth any longer. More economic growth will not solve the world's problems. It must be sustainable and equitable too.

India, as chair of the G-20, has offered a vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (One Earth, One Family, One Future) to bring all citizens of the world together and make the world better for everyone.

To continue to solve systemic problems with the same approach that caused them is madness, Einstein declared. A new paradigm is required for global governance. In 2015, all countries adopted the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be achieved by 2030. Time is

running out. Climate change is racing ahead. Rich countries are unwilling to find equitable solutions. Precarity of employment is increasing even in rich countries.

The SDGs describe 17 complex combinations of environmental, social, and economic problems. All 17 problems do not appear in every country, and when they do, they do not appear in the same form. For example, problems of the oceans are immediately life-threatening to island countries but not to land-locked countries as yet. Environmental problems are not the same in Canada and Barbados. Opportunities for decent work (SDG 8) are inadequate everywhere, but much fewer in countries in the Global South than in the rich North.

No country has only one of the SDG problems; every country has at least six or seven. Calculations show that even seven problems (out of a possible 17) can combine in 98 million different ways. Clearly, one global solution for the environment, society, or economy, cannot apply everywhere. People on the ground know where their shoes pinch. Standard solutions cannot fit all.

The McKinsey Global Institute has produced a detailed map of realities on the ground, in its report, "Pixels of Progress: A granular look at human development around the world" (December 7, 2022). It divides the world into 40,000 micro-regions. Using advanced statistical techniques, it zooms in to examine actual progress on the ground which statistical averages at country level and growth of GDP cannot reveal. It applies the yardsticks of life expectancy and incomes to compare the well-being of people in these regions. The report concludes that growth of GDP at a country level explains only 20% of the progress on the ground. The remaining 80% is local and specific.

The present theory-in-use of top-down problem-solving is conceptually flawed. It does not matter how smart the expert or manager on top of the system is. Complex systemic problems that appear in many places require local systems solutions that are found using cooperation and implemented by communities that combine solutions to economic, environment, and social problems.

India has proposed an approach of LiFE (lifestyles for sustainable development) to the G-20. It requires "coherent actions amongst stakeholders at all levels rooted in collective actions across society". Principle 7 of LiFE also requires the world's leaders to "recognize and amplify the role of local communities, local and regional governments and traditional knowledge in supporting sustainable lifestyles".

Democracy is government of, for, and by people. A government elected by the people that provides benefits top-down to people is not a complete democracy. Government must be by the people themselves too. India has elections, but its citizens do not have "poorna swaraj" yet. Its political leaders since Independence have paid only lip service to the vision of local governance in its Constitution which is required for Poorna Swaraj (full political, social, and economic freedom) for all citizens.

The Prime Minister has inaugurated a world-class venue for the G-20 Summit at Pragati Maidan ("field of progress") in Delhi. The text of the resolutions adopted at the Summit will not matter. Paradigms are hardly ever changed from their centres because people in power do not want to let go of power. It will not matter who wins the Indian elections in 2024, and whose pictures are on billboards thereafter, if the system of governance remains a top-down, expert-driven, centralised system. Pressure to change and new solutions must come from the peripheries of power systems, with movements on the ground in India and around the world.

Arun Maira is the author of **Transforming Systems: Why the World Needs a New Ethical**

Toolkit

COMMents

SHARE

[economy (general)](#) / [G20](#) / [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) / [development](#) / [war](#) / [public finance](#) / [defence equipment](#) / [climate change](#) / [global warming](#) / [environmental issues](#) / [United Nations](#) / [democracy](#) / [local authority](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

STEPS TAKEN TO ENCOURAGE ELECTRIC COOKING IN RURAL AREAS

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

The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed that the following actions are being taken through State Designated Agencies (SDAs), by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), a statutory Body under the Ministry of Power, to promote electric cooking in rural areas:

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture company of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) under the Ministry of Power is dedicated to make clean cooking solutions more affordable for end beneficiaries and to promote their widespread adoption by employing the demand aggregation approach. EESL is preparing three distinct models to encourage the adoption of clean cooking solutions. The initial model involves introducing Induction Cook-Stoves in urban areas. In Tier-2 Cities and Semi-urban regions, the focus is on deploying Grid-connected Solar-based Induction Cook-Stoves. In rural areas, the plan is to introduce Solar-based Induction Cook-Stoves with battery storage.

With an aim to reduce dependency on LPG and to create an environmentally sustainable cooking solution, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has developed 3 models of solar based cooktop, namely, "Surya Nutan" which can be of great utility in rural areas against the backdrop of increasing LPG adoption and ensuing domestic availability in Indian market. To cater to exigency of need, all models have been equipped with hybridization option so that grid electricity can also be used for charging and cooking through Surya Nutan. IOC has empanelled 10 Indian vendors for manufacturing, marketing, installation & providing after sales service for commercial launch of the product.

Ministry of Power, through BEE, has also launched the voluntary Star Labelling programme for Induction Stove on 1st March 2023. The objective of this initiative is to encourage the adoption of Electric Cooking by promoting use of Energy Efficient Induction hob among the consumers.

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

based Induction Cook-Stoves with battery storage.

With an aim to reduce dependency on LPG and to create an environmentally sustainable cooking solution, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has developed 3 models of solar based cooktop, namely, "Surya Nutan" which can be of great utility in rural areas against the backdrop of increasing LPG adoption and ensuing domestic availability in Indian market. To cater to exigency of need, all models have been equipped with hybridization option so that grid electricity can also be used for charging and cooking through Surya Nutan. IOC has empanelled 10 Indian vendors for manufacturing, marketing, installation & providing after sales service for commercial launch of the product.

Ministry of Power, through BEE, has also launched the voluntary Star Labelling programme for Induction Stove on 1st March 2023. The objective of this initiative is to encourage the adoption of Electric Cooking by promoting use of Energy Efficient Induction hob among the consumers.

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

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

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

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 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

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

MAKING A RIOT: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE COMMUNAL CLASHES IN HARYANA

Relevant for: Modern India | Topic: Communalism and Trends

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 04, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 08:36 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

At a time when the tremors of ethnic clashes in Manipur have not yet settled, communal clashes in Haryana, in regions abutting the national capital, claimed six lives this week. Two Home Guards and four civilians were killed and 70 injured in clashes in Gurugram, Sohna and Nuh. Property worth crores has been destroyed, and hundreds have fled their workplaces. The trigger for the mayhem, when local Muslims pelted stones at a Hindu religious procession on July 31 in Nuh, was in the making for a long time. The day-long yatra between two temples in this Muslim-majority district used to be a local affair and has been held without incidents. But in recent years, the yatra has become a political event, with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad mobilising participants from neighbouring Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In the procession this year, participants raised slogans and carried firearms and other weapons, according to reports. Facing attack, the pilgrims returned to the first temple and had to wait until police reinforcements arrived from neighbouring districts. The administration was caught off-guard and unprepared. Following the violence, 176 people have been arrested and 93 FIRs registered. The Haryana Chief Minister, M.L. Khattar, has said the violence was premeditated — it appears to be so.

Tension had been building up for days, beginning with a Bajrang Dal member and self-styled cow vigilante uploading videos on social media platforms, announcing that he and his team would be part of the yatra this year. The fresh threats from a person who is accused in the kidnapping and murder of two Muslim youth from Rajasthan's Bharatpur in February this year, evoked strong resentment among the Muslim population. Local social and political leaders had alerted the administration that there could be violence. On the day of the yatra, another Bajrang Dal activist uploaded videos that used provocative language, asking Nuh's residents to be prepared for their arrival. The violence spread to the Sohna sub-division of Gurugram; a mosque was also vandalised. An Imam at the Anjuman Jama Masjid in Sector 57 was killed by an armed mob around midnight on Monday, a staff member seriously injured, and the shrine set ablaze. The police at the mosque, who were outnumbered by the rioters, remained mute spectators. Policing in Haryana has been shown up to be inadequate in the face of communal incitement by groups associated with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. The Haryana administration must take strict action against the perpetrators of the violence, and be vigilant and impartial to ensure peace.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

END

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

Comment | **Judging a decade of the POCSO Act**

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

COMMents

SHARE

[marriage](#) / [sex](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

NUCLEAR SIGNALLING, THE NEED FOR NEW GUARD RAILS

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Nuclear science

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 04, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 01:05 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'Today, there is no Warsaw Pact, and NATO has expanded to include a number of former Warsaw Pact members' | Photo Credit: AP

The conflict in Ukraine and the recourse to nuclear rhetoric have revived concerns about nuclear escalation management between the major nuclear powers. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States-Russia nuclear rivalry had taken a back seat. Instead, North Korea, Iran and India-Pakistan got attention, with many analysts getting nostalgic about 'nuclear stability' during the Cold War. But, as it is becoming clear now, in today's changed political environment the escalation management lessons of the Cold War no longer seem to work for the U.S. and Russia.

In June 2021, U.S. and Russian Presidents, Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin, met in Geneva. Nuclear arms control was a high priority item on the agenda but no progress proved possible. As concerns grew about the Russian troop presence in Belarus on the Ukrainian border, Central Intelligence Agency Director Bill Burns flew to Moscow in November to spell out the consequences of aggression. In January 2022, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Geneva to reiterate the message. On February 24, Russia began its "special military operation" in Ukraine. U.S. attempts to deter Russian aggression had failed.

Even as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders met to decide their response, Mr. Biden made it clear that the U.S. was determined to avoid a Third World War or allowing the conflict to escalate into a NATO-Russia conflict. After the freezing of Russian reserves and a slew of financial, energy-related and political sanctions, other elements of military assistance, lethal and non-lethal, began to take shape. Intelligence sharing and restoring Internet connectivity was the first step. The second was the supply of ammunition and some weapon systems which the Ukrainian forces were familiar with. NATO deepened its military involvement by providing gradually more and more sophisticated weapon systems, beginning with the Javelin and Stinger missiles, and moving on to Patriot missile defence batteries, long-range Himars, Storm Shadow and Scalp long-range missiles, and now F-16s. Russian attempts to deter NATO involvement had failed.

On February 7, 2022, Mr. Putin warned that "if Ukraine attempts to take back Crimea, European countries will be in conflict with Russia, which is a leading nuclear power superior to many

NATO countries in terms of nuclear force". Annual nuclear exercises, normally scheduled for autumn, were announced for February 17, with Mr. Putin personally witnessing them. Announcing the launch of "special military operations", his words of caution were, "whoever tries to hinder Russia will face consequences never seen in history". To drive home the threat, on February 27, Russian nuclear forces were placed on a "special combat readiness" with leave for all personnel cancelled.

Even as the U.S. issued blunt warnings to Russia against using tactical nuclear weapons, in the first week of March, NATO decided against a no-fly-zone and Poland, Slovakia and Bulgaria announced that they would not be sending MiG aircraft to Ukraine on account of Russian threats against their airfields from where these aircraft were to take off. Russian officials tried to downplay the nuclear threat by pointing out that Russia would resort to nuclear use only if faced with an existential threat, while U.S. officials tried to convey reassurance to their European allies that while Mr. Putin's threats were to be taken seriously, there were no indications of unusual activity at nuclear sites.

Mr. Biden declared on April 24, "We are neither encouraging nor enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders," adding that the "U.S. was not seeking regime change in Russia." In short, the U.S. objectives were to support Ukraine, bolster NATO unity and avoid any direct conflict with Russia. Ukraine is not a NATO member and so does not have the security of the nuclear umbrella provided by U.S. policy of 'extended deterrence'. Russia's resort to nuclear rhetoric failed to deter NATO involvement though it influenced its pace and timing. Therefore, both Russia and the U.S. are operating in a grey zone, taking turns at escalatory rhetoric even as they probe each other's red lines. During the Cold War, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union engaged in multiple proxy wars, Vietnam in the 1960s and Afghanistan in the 1980s, but these were in distant theatres.

Deterrence is fundamentally based on the assumption that both adversaries are rational enough to judge when costs outweigh the benefits of the act. Nuclear deterrence adds a conundrum. With their huge arsenals that provided for assured second strike capability, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union had an incentive to try a surprise first strike. This realisation was crucial in shaping nuclear deterrence theory.

Thomas Schelling, whose writings during the 1960s and 1970s shaped nuclear deterrence thinking (he won the Economics Nobel in 2005), concluded that nuclear weapons were not usable but had political utility in terms of preventing a war with another nuclear power. Clearly, Schelling was looking at the situation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union which had no territorial dispute. Schelling also concluded that even though any use was "irrational", the nuclear threat had to be "credible" in order to deter. This introduced a degree of uncertainty into the equation. Using his economics training, he interpreted the uncertainty as risk that could be analysed in terms of probabilities. Risk was intended to induce rationality in the adversaries. Realising the conundrum, he concluded that the key to making nuclear deterrence credible is through escalation and raising the risk, that in the final analysis, "leaves something to chance".

This, along with the lessons of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis kept the U.S. and Soviet rhetoric in check during the Cold War even as they engaged in proxy wars outside Europe, and away from NATO and Warsaw pact territories. Today, there is no Warsaw Pact, and NATO has expanded to include a number of former Warsaw Pact members. The Ukraine conflict has persuaded Sweden and Finland to give up their long-standing neutrality and seek security under NATO's nuclear umbrella.

Russia's nuclear doctrine issued on June 2, 2020 specifies two conditions under which Russia would use nuclear weapons: "…in response to the use of nuclear weapons and other types of

weapons of mass destruction against it/or its allies" and "in the case of aggression against the Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons, when the very existence of the state is put under threat". Mr. Putin has declared more than once that Ukrainians and Russians are one people with a shared history. Russia, therefore, does not see Ukraine as entirely 'sovereign'.

Second, there is the oft-cited escalate-to-deescalate approach, that implies using tactical nuclear weapons to overcome a stalemate on the battlefield, thus forcing a termination of hostilities on favourable terms. In its 2022 National Security Strategy, the U.S. rejected this by declaring that first use would not lead to de-escalation on Russian terms, "but alter the nature of conflict creating potential for uncontrolled escalation".

U.S. caution is reflected in calibrating the supply of more sophisticated weapons by continuously probing Russian red lines even though Ukrainian demands continue to grow. Meanwhile, it suits Russia to increase ambiguity. It is also likely that since Russia failed to achieve its military objectives, its thresholds are evolving.

The path-breaking studies of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky in economics showed that humans often tend to double down on bad bets because of 'loss aversion'. The Cold War escalation management lessons applied to a different world; today, the U.S. and Russia no longer enjoy parity and Russia's red lines are fuzzy.

Nuclear signalling today is taking place in uncharted political territory. New guard rails are necessary if the nuclear taboo has to be preserved.

Rakesh Sood is a former diplomat who served as India's first Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and also as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation in 2013-14

COMMents

SHARE

USA / Russia / Russia-Ukraine Crisis / nuclear policy / nuclear weapons / war / history / NATO / Ukraine / Vietnam / Afghanistan / history

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

THE LESSONS OF HIROSHIMA MUST NOT DRIFT AWAY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 05, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 01:58 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'There are people in Japan still living with the consequences of August 1945' Photo: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum via AFP

The morning of August 6, 1945, dawned clear and sunny as the Enola Gay wheeled over Hiroshima and dropped its payload on the city centre. The 15kt uranium bomb exploded 600 metres above the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, instantly flattening everything and everyone below. Only the skeletal structure of the hall remained, bearing witness to the moment when our beliefs about weapons and wars changed.

In the intervening 78 years, we have witnessed the rise and fall of nuclear threats. The concept of nuclear deterrence attracted the sharpest minds in countries that both possessed nuclear weapons and abjured them. Especially as nuclear weapons became more powerful, it became clear that any nuclear use would be a global problem. This allowed a parallel development to occur: even as nuclear weapons states developed ever more destructive nukes, a taboo against their actual use began to develop. The political scientist Nina Tannenwald has defined the nuclear taboo as a coalescing norm against using nuclear weapons because these weapons are seen as so beyond the pale that there are almost no circumstances in which their use can be justified. Crucially, this taboo extends across the whole class of weapons, regardless of their yield, leading to a blanket prohibition of use that each passing year reinforces. However, this taboo has no legal basis; it rests on ideas of morality, proportionality and responsibility.

The taboo is grounded firmly in our treating nuclear weapons as different: nuclear weapons, in Bernard Brodie's celebrated phrase, are the 'absolute weapon'. This special treatment is grounded not so much in the power of the atomic bomb — we are able to dial up or down the destructive capability of modern nukes, and we have developed conventional munitions that rival some nuclear destructiveness; or even in the ability to flatten a city in moments. The special status of nuclear weapons rests on the continually reaffirmed knowledge gained from the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that nuclear weapons are indiscriminate and do not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants; they contaminate the environment for decades; and the effects of the radiation are felt for generations. There are people in Japan still living with the consequences of August 1945.

Events since Russia's invasion of Ukraine have tested our notions of deterrence and the taboo. Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued several veiled and not-so-veiled nuclear threats, ranging from reminding the world of Russia's nuclear weapons status at the start of the war

against Ukraine on February 24, 2022 to ordering Russia's nuclear forces into a 'special regime of combat duty' a few days later (which left analysts scrambling to decode what that formulation might mean), to declaring in September 2022 that Russia was prepared to 'make use of all weapon systems available to [them]. This is not a bluff.' Dmitry Medvedev, currently deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia and others have echoed Mr. Putin's threats.

Thirty-eight years after the leaders Ronald Reagan of the United States and Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union declared that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought' (and less than a year after Mr. Putin and President Joe Biden reaffirmed this pledge in June 2021), Russia was raising the spectre of nuclear Armageddon in Europe.

Future historians will decide how credible these threats were. Potentially, September and October 2022 might come to be regarded as a time when the nuclear taboo was tested almost to breaking point. Following battlefield reversals in late summer and Mr. Putin's declaration that Russia was prepared to use 'all weapons systems available', speculation arose about whether Russia might use a tactical nuclear weapon and if so, where and how.

This was dangerous on multiple counts. To begin with, this conjecture risked creating expectations of its own that might have pushed the Russian leadership to behave in a certain way. Loose talk about what sort of nuclear weapons might be acceptable to 'send a message' also risked undermining the nuclear taboo. And finally, there is still no consensus on what constitutes a tactical nuclear weapon. Battlefield or tactical weapons (as opposed to strategic weapons) are delivered over shorter distances and are smaller than strategic weapons, but beyond that, there is significant variability in yield, depending on the delivery method. The U.S., for example, has tactical weapons ranging from a fraction of 1kt to 170kt. The bomb that fell on Hiroshima was 15kt. It would be beyond insulting to the memory of the estimated 70,000 people who died immediately and the many tens of thousands of hibakusha who have lived with the consequences of that bomb to suggest that this was just a small, tactical weapon.

There is, however, room for hope in the official responses by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other nuclear weapons states to Mr. Putin's sabre-rattling and the subsequent speculation. The U.S. was at the forefront on this, and what it did do is as important as what it did not do. Washington made it abundantly clear that any nuclear use would be met with a very strong and commensurate response. However, it did not specify that that response would be nuclear: quite the opposite, as it emphasised a calibrated, conventional response to any nuclear adventurism at NATO's doorstep.

The U.S. also did not change its nuclear preparedness, thereby not fuelling the nuclear speculation building up in Europe. Crucially, in November, even China's President Xi Jinping called on the international community to 'jointly oppose the use of, or threats to use, nuclear weapons'.

That nuclear crisis passed, but the world could still be held hostage to Russia's movement of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, at Minsk's invitation. Like Ukraine, Belarus gave up its nuclear weapons in the 1990s in return for security guarantees from Russia, the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Reversing that agreement now seems a pointless provocation — high on symbolism and risk.

At the height of the Cold War, there were almost 70,000 nuclear weapons scattered around the globe, either in storage or deployed, some on hair trigger warnings. That we avoided a nuclear exchange is down in part to the lessons of Hiroshima, and in part to sheer, dumb luck, as the history of near misses throughout the Cold War demonstrates.

As an insurance policy, it is not much.

Priyanjali Malik is the author of **India's Nuclear Debate: Exceptionalism and the Bomb**

COMMents

SHARE

nuclear radiation victims / nuclear weapons / Japan / USA / Russia / NATO / Russia-Ukraine Crisis / war / United Kingdom / history

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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 Hubbali 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

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

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 Hubbali 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

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

END

ORGAN SHORTAGE CONTINUES TO COST LIVES

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

health

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

IS THE CURRENT CLIMATE SUBSTANTIALLY WARMER THAN DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD?

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Climate and Weather & Changes in Climate

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 05, 2023 09:20 pm | Updated 09:20 pm IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

An analysis of tree-ring records from Fennoscandia, a region in northern Europe, from the past 1,170 years suggests that the current climate may be substantially warmer than during the medieval period, contrary to previous research. Large uncertainties persist in climate models and proxies at regional scales, particularly prior to AD 1400. Tree-rings can be used to reflect climate change over many centuries and track the amplitude of climate extremes. However, there is currently a discrepancy between tree-ring data and climate models during the medieval climate. Models have suggested it was cooler during this period compared to now, whereas tree-ring data often suggest the opposite. To address this discrepancy and provide a more precise record of the past climate between AD 850 and 2019 in Fennoscandia, researchers analysed 1,170 years of tree ring data, based on around 50 million wood cell measurements from 188 living and dead Scots pine trees. By measuring individual wood cells, called tracheid cells, the researchers were able to collect more accurate data compared to conventional tree-ring data. The authors found that the Fennoscandian climate is substantially warmer today than during the medieval period, supporting the argument that anthropogenic climate change is increasing temperatures in this region.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

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

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 05, 2023 09:00 pm | Updated 09:01 pm IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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?

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

IREDA IS COMMITTED TO ENHANCE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF GREEN HYDROGEN AND GREEN AMMONIA PROJECTS: CMD, IREDA, AT GREEN HYDROGEN CONVENTION 2023

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

Chairman and Managing Director of the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) has said that just as IREDA previously demonstrated its pioneering role in making new and emerging renewable energy technologies bankable, the company is now well-prepared to play a crucial role in fulfilling the substantial financial needs of the Green Hydrogen sector. The CMD said that IREDA aims to enhance the financial viability of Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia projects, making them attractive to potential investors. The CMD Shri Pradip Kumar Das said this, while addressing the inaugural session of the "Green Hydrogen Convention 2023", organized by the Government of Odisha and CII Eastern Region, in Bhubaneshwar today, August 5, 2023.

Principal Secretary of the Industries Department, Govt. of Odisha, Shri Hemant Sharma; and Deputy Advisor - Energy, NITI Aayog, Shri Manoj Kumar Upadhyay also shared their valuable insights at the convention. The convention participants comprised industry leaders, policy makers and experts from the energy sector.

In line with the Government of India's vision as outlined in the National Green Hydrogen Mission, the CMD reaffirmed IREDA's commitment to financing the entire value chain of Green Hydrogen sector. He pointed out that the government can extend handholding and support to the emerging Green Hydrogen sector only when the sector is in the stage of infancy. "Once the sector becomes stable, stakeholders should not expect continued handholding, and the market should be allowed for a fair competition. Ultimately, the progress of the sector will rely on serious and

committed developers with a genuine interest in taking it forward."

The CMD said that policy makers, regulators, bankers, and developers must collaborate effectively to achieve ambitious targets set by India, of achieving 500 GW power from Non-Fossil sources by the year 2030, of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2027, a Developed Economy by 2047, and of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2070.

"Transition from Grey Ammonia to Green Ammonia is the next needed step for Odisha"

Speaking of the green hydrogen sector in Odisha, the CMD emphasized that Odisha already has a substantial capacity for producing Steel, Aluminum, Cement, and Fertilizers. "The state has existing Hydrogen infrastructure in these sectors, and the transition from Grey Ammonia to Green Ammonia is the next step needed. With a well-established market for conversion, new manufacturing sectors like electrolysers, etc. are likely to emerge. Leveraging its three Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and three major ports, Odisha is in an ideal position to develop a robust manufacturing base for Green Hydrogen and capitalize on significant export opportunities."

***

PIB DELHI | AM / DJM

Chairman and Managing Director of [the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)](#) has said that just as IREDA previously demonstrated its pioneering role in making new and emerging renewable energy technologies bankable, the company is now well-prepared to play a crucial role in fulfilling the substantial financial needs of the Green Hydrogen sector. The CMD said that IREDA aims to enhance the financial viability of Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia projects, making them attractive to potential investors. The CMD Shri Pradip Kumar Das said this, while addressing the inaugural session of the "Green Hydrogen Convention 2023", organized by the Government of Odisha and CII Eastern Region, in Bhubaneshwar today, August 5, 2023.

Principal Secretary of the Industries Department, Govt. of Odisha, Shri Hemant Sharma; and Deputy Advisor - Energy, NITI Aayog, Shri Manoj Kumar Upadhyay also shared their valuable insights at the convention. The convention participants comprised industry leaders, policy makers and experts from the energy sector.

In line with the Government of India's vision as outlined in the National Green Hydrogen Mission, the CMD reaffirmed IREDA's commitment to financing the entire value chain of Green Hydrogen sector. He pointed out that the government can extend handholding and support to the emerging Green Hydrogen sector only when the sector is in the stage of infancy. "Once the sector becomes stable, stakeholders should not expect continued handholding, and the market should be allowed for a fair competition. Ultimately, the progress of the sector will rely on serious and committed developers with a genuine interest in taking it forward."

The CMD said that policy makers, regulators, bankers, and developers must collaborate effectively to achieve ambitious targets set by India, of achieving 500 GW power from Non-Fossil sources by the year 2030, of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2027, a Developed Economy by 2047, and of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2070.

"Transition from Grey Ammonia to Green Ammonia is the next needed step for Odisha"

Speaking of the green hydrogen sector in Odisha, the CMD emphasized that Odisha already has a substantial capacity for producing Steel, Aluminum, Cement, and Fertilizers. "The state has existing Hydrogen infrastructure in these sectors, and the transition from Grey Ammonia to Green Ammonia is the next step needed. With a well-established market for conversion, new manufacturing sectors like electrolysers, etc. are likely to emerge. Leveraging its three Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and three major ports, Odisha is in an ideal position to develop a robust manufacturing base for Green Hydrogen and capitalize on significant export opportunities."

***

PIB DELHI | AM / DJM

END

THE BUREAUCRACY AS PROSEUCTOR AND JUDGE

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 07, 2023 12:40 am | Updated 08:29 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'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

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal.

Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

NUH-MEWAT — OLD TEMPLATE, NEW BATTLEGROUND

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Challenges to internal security through Communication Networks

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 07, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 01:01 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'Nuh, and the Mewat region more generally, are an unlikely terrain for this display of aggression' | Photo Credit: The Hindu

The recent violence in Nuh district of Haryana, not far from the national capital, has followed a familiar template. Religious events may once have been occasion for affirming a sense of community through shared piety. They are now incomplete without a brazen display of aggression.

Early this year, a group of independent professionals published a report with a self-explanatory title, "Routes of Wrath, Weaponising Religious Processions". With a wealth of documentation, it put in context the violence that spread across nine States like a contagion during Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti last year. Neither the first spark, nor the means through which the flames were fanned, were obscure.

Indeed, as senior advocate Chander Uday Singh put it, the "catalysts" of the violence were the same across the geography of India: "religious processions ... followed by targeted attacks on Muslim-owned properties, businesses and places of worship."

"Culpable amnesia" is the term of art invoked, derived from a judicial commission of inquiry into the Bhagalpur riots which claimed up to a thousand lives in 1989. What is different now is that incompetence is not required as alibi. Where "plausible deniability" was once maintained, local administrations are now in open collusion with riotous mobs.

Violence is the overt intent as processionists carry exposed weapons, and march to the accompaniment of high-decibel music and provocative slogans. Yet, violence is not inevitable since extreme restraint is usually maintained by the other side.

Two incident-free years have passed in Nuh, which has witnessed the birth of an entirely novel religious observance called the Brajmandal Jalabhishek Yatra. This year was different because of the declared participation of a notorious cow vigilante, wanted in neighbouring Rajasthan since February for the murder of two cattle-traders, but moving around with impunity under the active protection of Haryana's police.

In May 1924, close to a century ago, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a pamphlet on Hindu-Muslim

tensions, an issue that for him was gaining almost obsessive importance. He was focused as always on inner essences, but devoted great attention to their overt expressions. Just as cow slaughter had become something of a "sore point" for Hindus, music before mosques had become one for Muslims. Neither side could reasonably expect to coerce the other into compliance, though deliberate provocations could cease. "I have heard," he continued, "that in some places, Hindus purposely, and with the deliberate intention of irritating Mussalmans, perform arati just when the Mussalman prayers commence."

The nature of that cycle of mutual provocation has since changed dramatically. A cow slaughter ban is now a legislative fait accompli in most States. In States ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), these laws are enforced mainly by vigilantes granted the licence to kill on mere suspicion. And to underline the utter disempowerment of the religious minority, their places of worship are becoming focal points for a newly aggressive display of cultural disdain.

Nuh, and the Mewat region more generally, are an unlikely terrain for this display of aggression. Muslims in the region, referred to as the Meo, are a community that draws heavily from the lore of the Brindavan region, with traditions of veneration of a heterodox pantheon of gods. As India's Independence approached last century and bitter communal antagonisms flared elsewhere, the Meo remained ecumenical in their identity and indifferent to the effort at mobilising numbers behind each faith. Dairying is a way of life for the Meo and cattle a revered source of livelihood.

Also read | **FIR against AAP leader in Nuh clashes; demolition drive continues**

Administratively, the Mewat region was once part of the princely States of Alwar and Bharatpur, and became during the 1930s, the focus of the Congress party's "Muslim mass contact" programme. Jawaharlal Nehru and his associates within the left-wing of the Congress sought a strategy to deal with the embitterment between faiths, by creating identities of shared material interests between peasants, workers and the poor.

Editorial | **Making a riot: On the communal clashes in Haryana**

Numerous other demands surfaced in this atmosphere of ferment, including better representation for the Meo in the administration, equity in land ownership, and decentralised governance. Though far from the epicentres of Partition, the Meo region witnessed a harsh retribution from its rulers, little else than a "mass extermination campaign", as the social scientist Shail Mayaram has documented.

The statistics about these campaigns have long since sunk into the memory hole. In her book, Resisting Regimes, Professor Mayaram attempts a retrieval and finds numbers that are staggering, though the greater significance is in the suppression of memories themselves. The consolidation of a nationalist sentiment required a sense of "sociability" and after violence on the scale the Meo witnessed, it imposed "silences from the victim".

Mewat lies in an arc southwards of the national capital, though the spillovers of modernity halt at its borders. Millennium city was the appellation that Gurgaon bestowed upon itself when both the millennium and the India growth story were relative novelties. In 2007, Gurgaon rid itself of an unwanted appendage with the formation of Mewat district, subsequently renamed Nuh. Since then, Gurgaon has flourished from a real estate boom, while Nuh has stagnated.

The fifth round of the National Family Health Survey, carried out 2019-21, presents the essential figures. To take just two rather telling indicators: of the female population above age six, only 51.2% in Nuh district have ever been to school, against 80.9% in Gurgaon and 73.8% in the State as a whole. Female literacy in Mewat is 41.9% of the relevant age group of 15 to 49 years,

against 85.4% in Gurgaon and 79.7% in the State.

Nuh is Haryana's only Muslim-majority district, with close to 80% of its 1.08 million population in 2011 identifying with the faith. Perhaps that is sufficient reason why it is likely to languish forever in the backwaters of official inattention.

Why would such unpromising terrain become the battleground of faiths today? Partly because the emboldened Hindutva forces think they can do what they want. Even where numbers are not in their favour, it is about establishing the authority of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), as spearhead of Hindutva, to legislate on religious practice all over the country. If the VHP should now pronounce it an essential element of Hindu belief that Nuh is where Lord Krishna grazed his cows, that the region is home to three Shaivite shrines from the Mahabharata era, all others in the Hindu Rashtra have no option but to accept these as undisputed truth.

Hindutva as ideology expresses its expansionist intent in the religious procession, adorned with a symbolism that is under constant invention. State power is now an accessory to its programme, rather than a countervailing force that upholds constitutional principles.

Vigilantism in the scholarly understanding is an ensemble of coercive practices that seek to impose a moral order, an alternate system of legitimacy. This could work in defiance of the writ of the state, but the situation in India is ominously different. Hindutva vigilantism here appropriates and subverts the state's monopoly of legitimate coercion. And in that lies great danger for the constitutional order.

Sukumar Muralidharan is an independent writer and researcher based in the Delhi region

COMMents

SHARE

[Haryana](#) / [unrest, conflicts and war](#) / [religion and belief](#) / [national or ethnic minority](#) / [history](#) / [Bharatiya Janata Party](#) / [Indian National Congress](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

THE ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION 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

END

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.**

END

NEITHER THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY NOR THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'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

COMMents

SHARE

data protection / personal data collection / laws / parliament / judiciary (system of justice) / Right

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

PURGING THE NATION'S DATA OF POLITICS

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 08, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 09:06 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'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.

COMMents

SHARE

personal data collection / family / survey / economy (general) / labour / health / inflation and deflation / Coronavirus / government / Mumbai

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by

logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

IMPROVEMENT IN GROUNDWATER LEVEL

Relevant for: null | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) monitors groundwater levels throughout the country on a regional scale, four times every year during the months of March to May, August, November and January.

During the November 2022, about 67.2% of the wells monitored in the country have registered the water level upto 5 mbgl. State-wise Depth to water level and distribution of percentage of wells for November 2022 is given **at Annexure**. Further, in order to assess the long-term fluctuation in ground water level, the water level data collected by CGWB during November 2022 has been compared with the decadal mean of November (2012-2021). Analysis of water level data indicates that about 61.1% of the wells monitored have registered rise in ground water level**.**

Water being a State subject effective rainwater harvesting/recharge of groundwater for increasing its levels in the country falls under States' mandate however, a number of steps have been taken by Central government which can be accessed through web-link:

https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3a70dc40477bc2adceef4d2c90f47eb82/uploads/2023/02/2023021742.pdf

 Some of them are listed as under:

Government of India is implementing Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) in the country. First JSA was launched in 2019 in water stressed blocks of 256 districts which continued during the years 2021 and , 2022(across entire country both rural and urban areas) with the primary aim to effectively harvest the monsoon rainfall through creation of artificial recharge structures, watershed management, recharge and reuse structures, intensive afforestation and awareness generation etc. JSA for the year 2023 have been launched by President of India on 04   March 2023 with the theme "Source Sustainability for Drinking Water".

Prime Minister has launched Amrit Sarovar Mission on 24th April 2022. The Mission is aimed at developing and rejuvenating 75 water bodies in each district of the country as a part of celebration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The Central Government is implementing Atal Bhujal Yojana with an outlay of Rs. 6,000 crore, in collaboration with States, in certain water stressed areas of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The primary aim of the scheme is demand side management through scientific means involving the local communities at village levels leading to sustainable groundwater management in the targeted areas.

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) has been constituted under Section 3(3) of the "Environment (Protection) Act, 1986" for the purpose of regulation and control of ground water by industries, mining projects, infrastructure projects etc in the country. The latest guideline in this regard with pan-India applicability was notified by the Ministry on 24 September 2020 with subsequent amendment on 29 March 2023. CGWA and States issue No Objection Certificate (NOC) for extraction of groundwater to various industries/project proponents as per their jurisdiction and as per the extant guidelines.

CGWB is implementing National Aquifer Mapping Program (NAQUIM) in the country and an

area of 25.15 lakh sq km (the available mappable area) has been covered under the NAQUIM studies. The NAQUIM study report along-with management plans are shared with States/UTs for suitable interventions.

Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater- 2020 has been prepared by the CGWB with States/UTs providing a broad outline of the project and expected investments. The Master Plan envisages construction of about 1.42 crore Rain water harvesting and artificial recharge structures in the country to harness 185 Billion Cubic Metre (BCM) of water. The Master plan has been shared with States/UTs for suitable interventions.

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has formulated Model Building Bye Laws (MBBL), 2016 for the States/UTs, wherein adequate focus has been given on requirement of rainwater harvesting and water conservation measures. As per MBBL, all buildings having a plot size of 100 Sq.m. or, more shall mandatorily include the complete proposal of rainwater harvesting. 35 States/ UTs have adopted the features of the Bye Laws.

Ministry has constituted Central Level Expert Group with Members from various stakeholder Ministries/Organisations to supervise the assessment of groundwater resources in the country periodically which includes monitoring of Groundwater level as well.

Groundwater (GW) level data collected by the CGWB for the entire country as on Nov 2018 indicates that around 81.10 % of monitored wells have depth to water level upto 10 m whereas, the GW level data of Nov 2022 shows around 88.7 % of monitored wells have water level upto 10m. With respect to Punjab, the GW level data for the years 2018 and 2022 indicate that 43.68 % and 39.7% of monitored wells respectively have depth to water level upto 10m.

Further, groundwater level data of Nov 2022 indicate that certain monitoring wells of Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand have depth to water level beyond 40m.

As per 2017 assessment, 1186 (17%) assessment units out of 6881 assessment units falling in 17 States/UTs were over-exploited. As per 2022 assessment, 1006 (14%) assessment units (Mandals/Blocks/ Firkas/ Taluks etc) out of 7089 assessment units falling in 16 States/UTs are over-exploited where groundwater extraction is more than groundwater recharge. Further, some of the major states like Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu have more than 25 % of assessment units as over-exploited. Punjab has 76.47 % over-exploited units.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Shri Bishweswar Tudu in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

*****

PK/AS

ANNEXURE

State-wise Depth to water Level and Distribution of Percentage of Wells for the Period of November, 2022

S. No.

Name of State

No. of wells Analysed

Number & Percentage of Wells Showing Depth to Water Level (mbgl) in the Range of

Min

Max

0-2

2-5

5-10

10-20

20-40

> 40

No

%

No

%

No

%

No

%

No

%

No

%

1

Andaman and Nicobar

99

0.05

4.45

87

87.9

12

12.1

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

2

Andhra Pradesh

730

GL

37.62

370

50.7

226

31.0

97

13.3

29

4.0

7

1.0

1

0.1

3

Arunachal Pradesh

9

2.67

7.30

0

0.0

4

44.4

5

55.6

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

4

Assam

173

0.10

18.32

74

42.8

82

47.4

13

7.5

4

2.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

5

Bihar

638

0.33

11.30

105

16.5

434

68.0

96

15.0

3

0.5

0

0.0

0

0.0

6

Chandigarh

14

2.51

53.80

0

0.0

4

28.6

2

14.3

3

21.4

3

21.4

2

14.3

7

Chhattisgarh

774

0.65

22.95

157

20.3

437

56.5

142

18.3

36

4.7

2

0.3

0

0.0

8

Dadra & Nagar Haveli

15

1.98

7.80

1

6.7

12

80.0

2

13.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

9

Daman & Diu

7

1.45

6.37

1

14.3

4

57.1

2

28.6

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

10

Delhi

84

0.62

66.75

8

9.5

16

19.0

26

31.0

19

22.6

10

11.9

5

6.0

11

Goa

63

1.22

12.93

5

7.9

28

44.4

26

41.3

4

6.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

12

Gujarat

709

0.12

61.42

125

17.6

271

38.2

198

27.9

82

11.6

29

4.1

4

0.6

13

Haryana

268

0.11

77.95

36

13.4

68

25.4

37

13.8

59

22.0

56

20.9

12

4.5

14

Himachal Pradesh

84

0.54

36.25

16

19.0

29

34.5

15

17.9

19

22.6

5

6.0

0

0.0

15

Jammu and Kashmir

273

0.30

32.86

75

27.5

138

50.5

39

14.3

14

5.1

7

2.6

0

0.0

16

Jharkhand

178

0.26

12.80

19

10.7

109

61.2

48

27.0

2

1.1

0

0.0

0

0.0

17

Karnataka

1327

GL

27.30

467

35.2

495

37.3

320

24.1

43

3.2

2

0.2

0

0.0

18

Kerala

1412

0.05

52.82

281

19.9

454

32.2

539

38.2

125

8.9

12

0.8

1

0.1

19

Madhya Pradesh

1259

GL

37.67

239

19.0

608

48.3

326

25.9

76

6.0

10

0.8

0

0.0

20

Maharashtra

1472

0.10

40.00

358

24.3

732

49.7

320

21.7

52

3.5

10

0.7

0

0.0

21

Meghalaya

24

0.15

4.93

13

54.2

11

45.8

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

22

Nagaland

4

0.63

6.73

1

25.0

0

0.0

3

75.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

23

Orissa

1212

0.03

11.16

491

40.5

601

49.6

116

9.6

4

0.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

24

Pondicherry

4

1.06

3.45

2

50.0

2

50.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

25

Punjab

232

0.79

49.14

18

7.8

40

17.2

34

14.7

60

25.9

63

27.2

17

7.3

26

Rajasthan

890

0.06

121.55

71

8.0

226

25.4

150

16.9

158

17.8

134

15.1

151

17.0

27

Tamil Nadu

621

0.03

52.83

216

34.8

252

40.6

110

17.7

33

5.3

5

0.8

5

0.8

28

Telangana

529

GL

49.55

187

35.3

218

41.2

94

17.8

27

5.1

1

0.2

2

0.4

29

Tripura

20

0.98

6.81

5

25.0

12

60.0

3

15.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

30

Uttar Pradesh

634

0.15

44.14

158

24.9

250

39.4

132

20.8

72

11.4

18

2.8

4

0.6

31

Uttaranchal

45

0.20

55.20

9

20.0

11

24.4

16

35.6

6

13.3

2

4.4

1

2.2

32

West Bengal

774

0.40

30.49

102

13.2

309

39.9

216

27.9

109

14.1

38

4.9

0

0.0

Total

14577

GL*

121.55

3697

25.4

6095

41.8

3127

21.5

1039

7.1

414

2.8

205

1.4

***GL = Ground level**

*****

Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) monitors groundwater levels throughout the country on a regional scale, four times every year during the months of March to May, August, November and January.

During the November 2022, about 67.2% of the wells monitored in the country have registered the water level upto 5 mbgl. State-wise Depth to water level and distribution of percentage of wells for November 2022 is given **at Annexure**. Further, in order to assess the long-term fluctuation in ground water level, the water level data collected by CGWB during November 2022 has been compared with the decadal mean of November (2012-2021). Analysis of water level data indicates that about 61.1% of the wells monitored have registered rise in ground water level**.**

Water being a State subject effective rainwater harvesting/recharge of groundwater for increasing its levels in the country falls under States' mandate however, a number of steps have been taken by Central government which can be accessed through web-link:

https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3a70dc40477bc2adceef4d2c90f47eb82/uploads/2023/02/2023021742.pdf

Some of them are listed as under:

Government of India is implementing Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) in the country. First JSA was launched in 2019 in water stressed blocks of 256 districts which continued during the years 2021 and , 2022(across entire country both rural and urban areas) with the primary aim to effectively harvest the monsoon rainfall through creation of artificial recharge structures, watershed management, recharge and reuse structures, intensive afforestation and awareness generation etc. JSA for the year 2023 have been launched by President of India on 04   March 2023 with the theme "Source Sustainability for Drinking Water".

Prime Minister has launched Amrit Sarovar Mission on 24th April 2022. The Mission is aimed at developing and rejuvenating 75 water bodies in each district of the country as a part of celebration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The Central Government is implementing Atal Bhujal Yojana with an outlay of Rs. 6,000 crore, in collaboration with States, in certain water stressed areas of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The primary aim of the scheme is demand side management through scientific means involving the local communities at village levels leading to sustainable groundwater management in the targeted areas.

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) has been constituted under Section 3(3) of the "Environment (Protection) Act, 1986" for the purpose of regulation and control of ground water by industries, mining projects, infrastructure projects etc in the country. The latest guideline in this regard with pan-India applicability was notified by the Ministry on 24 September 2020 with subsequent amendment on 29 March 2023. CGWA and States issue No Objection Certificate (NOC) for extraction of groundwater to various industries/project proponents as per their jurisdiction and as per the extant guidelines.

CGWB is implementing National Aquifer Mapping Program (NAQUIM) in the country and an area of 25.15 lakh sq km (the available mappable area) has been covered under the NAQUIM studies. The NAQUIM study report along-with management plans are shared with States/UTs for suitable interventions.

Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater- 2020 has been prepared by the CGWB with States/UTs providing a broad outline of the project and expected investments. The Master Plan envisages construction of about 1.42 crore Rain water harvesting and artificial recharge structures in the country to harness 185 Billion Cubic Metre (BCM) of water. The Master plan has been shared with States/UTs for suitable interventions.

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has formulated Model Building Bye Laws (MBBL), 2016 for the States/UTs, wherein adequate focus has been given on requirement of rainwater harvesting and water conservation measures. As per MBBL, all buildings having a plot size of 100 Sq.m. or, more shall mandatorily include the complete proposal of rainwater harvesting. 35 States/ UTs have adopted the features of the Bye Laws.

Ministry has constituted Central Level Expert Group with Members from various stakeholder Ministries/Organisations to supervise the assessment of groundwater resources in the country periodically which includes monitoring of Groundwater level as well.

Groundwater (GW) level data collected by the CGWB for the entire country as on Nov 2018

indicates that around 81.10 % of monitored wells have depth to water level upto 10 m whereas, the GW level data of Nov 2022 shows around 88.7 % of monitored wells have water level upto 10m. With respect to Punjab, the GW level data for the years 2018 and 2022 indicate that 43.68 % and 39.7% of monitored wells respectively have depth to water level upto 10m.

Further, groundwater level data of Nov 2022 indicate that certain monitoring wells of Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand have depth to water level beyond 40m.

As per 2017 assessment, 1186 (17%) assessment units out of 6881 assessment units falling in 17 States/UTs were over-exploited. As per 2022 assessment, 1006 (14%) assessment units (Mandals/Blocks/ Firkas/ Taluks etc) out of 7089 assessment units falling in 16 States/UTs are over-exploited where groundwater extraction is more than groundwater recharge. Further, some of the major states like Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu have more than 25 % of assessment units as over-exploited. Punjab has 76.47 % over-exploited units.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Shri Bishweswar Tudu in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

<center>*****</center>

PK/AS

<div align="right"><u>**ANNEXURE**</u></div>

State-wise Depth to water Level and Distribution of Percentage of Wells for the Period of November, 2022

S. No.

Name of State

No. of wells Analysed

Number & Percentage of Wells Showing Depth to Water Level (mbgl) in the Range of

Min

Max

0-2

2-5

5-10

10-20

20-40

> 40

No

%

No

%

No

%

No

%

No

%

1

Andaman and Nicobar

99

0.05

4.45

87

87.9

12

12.1

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

2

Andhra Pradesh

730

GL

37.62

370

50.7

226

31.0

97

13.3

29

4.0

7

1.0

1

0.1

3

Arunachal Pradesh

9

2.67

7.30

0

0.0

4

44.4

5

55.6

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

4

Assam

173

0.10

18.32

74

42.8

82

47.4

13

7.5

4

2.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

5

Bihar

638

0.33

11.30

105

16.5

434

68.0

96

15.0

3

0.5

0

0.0

0

0.0

6

Chandigarh

14

2.51

53.80

0

0.0

4

28.6

2

14.3

3

21.4

3

21.4

2

14.3

7

Chhattisgarh

774

0.65

22.95

157

20.3

437

56.5

142

18.3

36

4.7

2

0.3

0

0.0

8

Dadra & Nagar Haveli

15

1.98

7.80

1

6.7

12

80.0

2

13.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

9

Daman & Diu

7

1.45

6.37

1

14.3

4

57.1

2

28.6

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

10

Delhi

84

0.62

66.75

8

9.5

16

19.0

26

31.0

19

22.6

10

11.9

5

6.0

11

Goa

63

1.22

12.93

5

7.9

28

44.4

26

41.3

4

6.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

12

Gujarat

709

0.12

61.42

125

17.6

271

38.2

198

27.9

82

11.6

29

4.1

4

0.6

13

Haryana

268

0.11

77.95

36

13.4

68

25.4

37

13.8

59

22.0

56

20.9

12

4.5

14

Himachal Pradesh

84

0.54

36.25

16

19.0

29

34.5

15

17.9

19

22.6

5

6.0

0

0.0

15

Jammu and Kashmir

273

0.30

32.86

75

27.5

138

50.5

39

14.3

14

5.1

7

2.6

0

0.0

16

Jharkhand

178

0.26

12.80

19

10.7

109

61.2

48

27.0

2

1.1

0

0.0

0

0.0

17

Karnataka

1327

GL

27.30

467

35.2

495

37.3

320

24.1

43

3.2

2

0.2

0

0.0

18

Kerala

1412

0.05

52.82

281

19.9

454

32.2

539

38.2

125

8.9

12

0.8

1

0.1

19

Madhya Pradesh

1259

GL

37.67

239

19.0

608

48.3

326

25.9

76

6.0

10

0.8

0

0.0

20

Maharashtra

1472

0.10

40.00

358

24.3

732

49.7

320

21.7

52

3.5

10

0.7

0

0.0

21

Meghalaya

24

0.15

4.93

13

54.2

11

45.8

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

22

Nagaland

4

0.63

6.73

1

25.0

0

0.0

3

75.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

23

Orissa

1212

0.03

11.16

491

40.5

601

49.6

116

9.6

4

0.3

0

0.0

0

0.0

24

Pondicherry

4

1.06

3.45

2

50.0

2

50.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

25

Punjab

232

0.79

49.14

18

7.8

40

17.2

34

14.7

60

25.9

63

27.2

17

7.3

26

Rajasthan

890

0.06

121.55

71

8.0

226

25.4

150

16.9

158

17.8

134

15.1

151

17.0

27

Tamil Nadu

621

0.03

52.83

216

34.8

252

40.6

110

17.7

33

5.3

5

0.8

5

0.8

28

Telangana

529

GL

49.55

187

35.3

218

41.2

94

17.8

27

5.1

1

0.2

2

0.4

29

Tripura

20

0.98

6.81

5

25.0

12

60.0

3

15.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

0

0.0

30

Uttar Pradesh

634

0.15

44.14

158

24.9

250

39.4

132

20.8

72

11.4

18

2.8

4

0.6

31

Uttaranchal

45

0.20

55.20

9

20.0

11

24.4

16

35.6

6

13.3

2

4.4

1

2.2

32

West Bengal

774

0.40

30.49

102

13.2

309

39.9

216

27.9

109

14.1

38

4.9

0

0.0

Total

14577

GL*

121.55

3697

25.4

6095

41.8

3127

21.5

1039

7.1

414

2.8

205

1.4

*GL = Ground level

*****

END

FLOOD FORECASTING AND MANAGEMENT

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

Floods are natural calamity that India faces almost every year, in varying degrees of magnitude. The frequent occurrence of floods can be attributed to various factors, including wide variations in rainfall both in time and space with frequent departures from the normal pattern, inadequate carrying capacities of rivers, river bank erosion and silting of river beds, landslides, poor natural drainage in flood prone areas, glacial lake outbursts, etc.

The state-wise data on damages due to heavy rain and floods is compiled by Central Water Commission (CWC) after receipt of confirmation from respective States. The statement showing damage due to floods/heavy rain in the country during the last five years (2017-2021), State/UT-wise is at **Annexure – I**.

Flood management falls within the purview of the States. Flood management and erosion control projects are formulated and implemented by concerned State Governments from own resources as per their priority. The Union Government supplements the efforts of the States by providing technical guidance and also promotional financial assistance for management of floods in critical areas. Integrated flood approach aims at adopting judicious mix of structural and non-structural measures to provide a reasonable degree of protection against flood damages at economic cost.

To strengthen the structural measures of flood management, Union Government had implemented Flood Management Programme (FMP) during XI & XII Plans for providing central assistance to States for works related to flood control, anti-erosion, drainage development, anti-sea erosion, etc. which subsequently continued as a component of "Flood Management and Border Areas Programme" (FMBAP) for the period from 2017-18 to 2020-21 and was further extended up to September 2022 with limited outlay. 427 completed projects under FMP component of FMBAP have given protection to an area of around 4.994 million hectares (mha) and protected a population of about 53.57 million.

Central Water Commission (CWC) is the nodal Organisation entrusted with the task of flood forecasting & early flood warnings in the country. Presently, CWC issues flood forecasts for 338 forecasting stations (138 Inflow Forecast Stations & 200 Level Forecast Stations) which include 25 States and UTs. The network has been established in consultation with the State Governments and UTs. In order to provide more lead time to the local authorities to plan evacuation of people & take other remedial measures, CWC has developed basin wise flood forecasting model based on rainfall-runoff mathematical modelling for 5 days' advance advisory at its forecasting stations.

The primary responsibility of disaster management rests with the State Government concerned. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Government and provides requisite logistics and financial support. The State Government undertakes assessment of damages caused due to 12 notified natural calamities including rain and floods and provide relief assistance from State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) already placed at their disposal as per Government of India's approved norms. Additional financial assistance is provided from National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), as per laid down procedure in case of disaster of 'severe nature' which includes an assessment based on the visit of an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT). Total funds released to different States under SDRF and NDRF during last five years is at **Annexure-II**.

Delhi faced extreme flood situation in the river Yamuna during second week of July 2023 due to very heavy rainfall in the Himalayan region upstream of Hathnikund Barrage. Very high discharge passed downstream of Hathnikund Barrage, resulting in a highest ever recorded water level of 208.66 meters at Old Railway Bridge in Delhi at 18:00 hrs on 13th July, 2023, surpassing the earlier Highest Flood Level of 207.49 m recorded in September, 1978.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Shri Bishweswar Tudu in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

<div align="center">*****</div>

PK/AS

<div align="right">

ANNEXURE-I

</div>

<div align="center">

State-wise Total Damages due to Heavy Rains and Floods (2017-2021)

</div>

<div align="right">

(in Rs. crore)

</div>

States/UT's

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

ANDHRA PRADESH

-

3687.171

698.05

917.66

6320.46

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

1574.68

1913.82728

1390.08

567.9

ASSAM

4164.81

2480.98

3121.98

2439.73

1072.43

BIHAR

-

5.5598

-

810.19

6444.86

CHATTISGARH

-

41.689

-

31.34

1.24

GOA

-

-

-

-

218.62

GUJARAT

3555.87

118.048

2.79

2915.31

1259.98

HARYANA

18.007

89.026

0.6

-

614.63

HIMACHAL PRADESH

51.3667

65.9

229.11

60.55

1127.47

JHARKHAND

0.667

0.2

13.25

0.89

1.49

KARNATAKA

-

4620.78

-

9833

1975.81

KERALA

-

3320.76

-

-

NR

MADHYA PRAADESH

-

1.67

-

-

NR

MAHARASHTRA

-

-

-

-

NR

MANIPUR

-

-

-

-

NR

MEGHALAYA

0.14

0.0663

3.66

-

NR

MIZORAM

104.02

-

-

0.05

0.4

NAGALAND

551.59

-

-

-

NR

ODISHA

334.315

299.84

454.82

1509.33

379.51

PUNJAB

18.64

124.52

-

-

46.61

RAJASTHAN

1876.8578

31.7275

8820.91

191.17

5477.18

SIKKIM

245.44

-

-

349

92.43

TAMILNADU

-

-

1.21

-

7039.56

TELENGANA

-

-

-

-

NR

TRIPURA

132.824

946.1775

437.65

137.92

38.12

UTTAR PRADESH

308.053

547.4233

809.63

602.96

825.26

UTTARAKHAND

-

-

-

-

NR

WEST BENGAL

17727.94

54.006

1269.83

-

16079.45

A & N ISLAND

-

-

-

-

0.11

CHANDIGARH

-

-

-

-

Nil

D & N HAVELI

0.1

-

0.03

-

Nil

LADAKH

-

-

-

-

NR

DELHI

-

-

-

-

18.39

JAMMU & KASHMIR

-

-

-

-

NR

LAKSHADWEEP

-

-

5

5

NR

PUDUCHCHERRY

-

0.6

-

-

15.71

DAMAN & DIU

0.525

-

-

-

-

TOTAL

30665.8455

18349.97168

15868.52

21194.18

49617.62

NR- Not Reported

STATEMENT SHOWING STATE-WISE DETAILS OF ALLOCATION AND RELEASE OF FUNDS UNDER SDRF AND NDRF DURING THE YEAR 201&19 TO 2022-23 (AS ON 31-03-2023)

(Rs. in crore)

SI. NO.

State

Allocation under SDRF including Centre and State share

Centre's Share of SDRF Released

Release from NDRF (For all calamities)

2018-19

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2018-19

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2018-19

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

1.

Andhra Pradesh

509.00

534.00

1192.80

1192.80

1252.80

458.10

324.15

895.20

895.20

940.00

1004.88

570.91

657.029

351.43

2.

Arunachal Pradesh

60.00

63.00

222.40

222.40

233.60

54.00

56.70

200.00

200.00

210.40

132.49

59.34

3.

Assam

532.00

559.00

686.40

686.40

720.80

478.80

503.10

617.60

617.60

648.80

44.37

250.00

4.

Bihar

543.00

570.00

1510.40

1510.40

1586.40

101.815

631.12

1132.80

1132.80

1189.60

--

953.17

1255.27

1038.96

5.

Chhattisgarh

278.00

292.00

460.80

460.80

484.00

349.575

177.30

345.60

345.60

181.60

6.

Goa

4.00

4.00

12.00

12.00

12.80

1.80

4.20

9.60

9.60

9.60

7.

Gujarat

816.00

856.00

1412.00

1412.00

1482.40

449.95

886.80

1059.20

1059.20

556.00

1000.00

8.

Haryana

356.00

374.00

524.00

524.00

550.40

320.40

227.10

392.80

392.80

412.80

9.

Himachal Pradesh

273.00

287.00

363.20

363.20

380.80

245.70

197.23

327.20

327.20

342.40

227.29

518.06

290

214.26

10.

Jammu & Kashmir *

295.00

310.00

252.90

405.00

11

Jharkhand

421.00

442 00

605.60

605.60

63520

315.75

331.50

454.40

454.40

200.00

12.

Karnataka

320.00

336.00

843.20

843.20

885.60

288.00

204.00

632.80

632.80

664.00

959.84

3208.28

689.27

1623 30

939.83

13.

Keraia

214.00

225.00

335.20

335.20

352.00

192.60

136.65

251.20

251.20

264.00

2904.85

14

Madhya Pradesh

1016.00

1066 00

1941.60

1941.60

2038.40

914.40

647.10

1456.00

1456.00

1528.80

334.00

1712.14

1891.79

600.50

15.

Maharashtra

1717.00

1803.00

3436.80

3436.80

3608.80

1287.75

1352.25

2577.60

2577.60

2706.40

2088.59

5189.40

420.12

1056.39

16.

Manipur

22.00

23.00

37.60

37.60

39.20

9.90

30.60

33.60

33.60

35.20

26.53

17.

Meghalaya

28.00

29.00

58.40

58.40

60.80

38.70

52.80

52.80

27.20

--

16.52

18.

Mizoram

20.00

20.00

41.60

41.60

43.20

18.00

18.00

37.60

37.60

39.20

19.

Nagaland

11.00

12.00

36.80

36.80

38.40

9.90

10.80

32.80

32.80

34.40

195.99

176.52

1.335

--

107.304

20.

Odisha

865.00

909.00

1711.20

1711.20

1796.80

778.50

552.00

1283.20

1283.20

1348.00

341.72

3294.10

500.00

500.00

21.

Punjab

451.00

474.00

528.00

528.00

554.40

321.99

412.37

474.43

396.00

416.00

-

22.

Rajasthan

1277.00

1340.00

1580.00

1580.00

1659.20

957.75

1005.00

1184.80

1184.80

1244.80

526.14

1949.59

68.65

--

13.46

23.

Sikkim

36.00

36.00

44.80

44.80

47.20

32.40

34.20

40.00

40.00

42.40

54.93

--

73.86

55.23

24.

Tamil Nadu

786.00

825.00

1088.00

1088.00

1142.40

707.40

500.85

816.00

816.00

856.80

900.31

286.91

566.36

25.

Telangana

317.00

333.00

479.20

478.20

503.20

226.50

487.50

359.20

359.20

188.80

--

26.

Tnpura

36.00

38.00

60.80

60.80

63.20

32.40

34.20

54.40

54.40

56.80

171.74

--

12.93

27.

Uttar Pradesh

781.00

2062.40

2062.40

2165.60

351.45

849.30

1546.40

1546.40

812.00

157.23

28.

Uttarakhand

243.00

255.00

832.80

832.80

874.40

218.70

229.50

749.60

749.60

787.20

29.

West Bengal

598.00

628.00

1078.40

1078.40

1132.80

269.10

650.40

808.80

808.80

849.60

--

958.33

2250.28

350.13

TOTAL

12825.00

13465.00

23186.40

23186.40

24344.80

9658.13

10937.62

17825.63

17747.20

16392.80

10000.00

18530.50

8257.11

7542.30

1524.854

* **Now UT of Jammu and Kashmir and UT of Ladakh.**

*****

Floods are natural calamity that India faces almost every year, in varying degrees of magnitude. The frequent occurrence of floods can be attributed to various factors, including wide variations in rainfall both in time and space with frequent departures from the normal pattern, inadequate carrying capacities of rivers, river bank erosion and silting of river beds, landslides, poor natural drainage in flood prone areas, glacial lake outbursts, etc.

The state-wise data on damages due to heavy rain and floods is compiled by Central Water Commission (CWC) after receipt of confirmation from respective States. The statement showing damage due to floods/heavy rain in the country during the last five years (2017-2021), State/UT-wise is at **Annexure – I**.

Flood management falls within the purview of the States. Flood management and erosion control projects are formulated and implemented by concerned State Governments from own resources as per their priority. The Union Government supplements the efforts of the States by providing technical guidance and also promotional financial assistance for management of floods in critical areas. Integrated flood approach aims at adopting judicious mix of structural and non-structural measures to provide a reasonable degree of protection against flood damages at economic cost.

To strengthen the structural measures of flood management, Union Government had implemented Flood Management Programme (FMP) during XI & XII Plans for providing central assistance to States for works related to flood control, anti-erosion, drainage development, anti-sea erosion, etc. which subsequently continued as a component of "Flood Management and Border Areas Programme" (FMBAP) for the period from 2017-18 to 2020-21 and was further extended up to September 2022 with limited outlay. 427 completed projects under FMP component of FMBAP have given protection to an area of around 4.994 million hectares (mha) and protected a population of about 53.57 million.

Central Water Commission (CWC) is the nodal Organisation entrusted with the task of flood forecasting & early flood warnings in the country. Presently, CWC issues flood forecasts for 338 forecasting stations (138 Inflow Forecast Stations & 200 Level Forecast Stations) which include 25 States and UTs. The network has been established in consultation with the State Governments and UTs. In order to provide more lead time to the local authorities to plan evacuation of people & take other remedial measures, CWC has developed basin wise flood forecasting model based on rainfall-runoff mathematical modelling for 5 days' advance advisory at its forecasting stations.

The primary responsibility of disaster management rests with the State Government concerned. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Government and provides requisite logistics and financial support. The State Government undertakes assessment of damages caused due to 12 notified natural calamities including rain and floods and provide relief assistance from State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) already placed at their disposal as per Government of India's approved norms. Additional financial assistance is provided from National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), as per laid down procedure in case of disaster of 'severe nature' which includes an assessment based on the visit of an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT). Total funds released to different States under SDRF and NDRF during last five years is at **Annexure-II**.

Delhi faced extreme flood situation in the river Yamuna during second week of July 2023 due to very heavy rainfall in the Himalayan region upstream of Hathnikund Barrage. Very high discharge passed downstream of Hathnikund Barrage, resulting in a highest ever recorded water level of 208.66 meters at Old Railway Bridge in Delhi at 18:00 hrs on 13th July, 2023, surpassing the earlier Highest Flood Level of 207.49 m recorded in September,

1978.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Shri Bishweswar Tudu in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

*****

PK/AS

State-wise Total Damages due to Heavy Rains and Floods (2017-2021)

(in Rs. crore)

States/UT's	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
ANDHRA PRADESH	-	3687.171	698.05	917.66	6320.46
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	1574.68	1913.82728		1390.08	567.9

ASSAM

4164.81

2480.98

3121.98

2439.73

1072.43

BIHAR

-

5.5598

-

810.19

6444.86

CHATTISGARH

-

41.689

-

31.34

1.24

GOA

-

-

-

-

218.62

GUJARAT

3555.87

118.048

2.79

2915.31

1259.98

HARYANA

18.007

89.026

0.6

-

614.63

HIMACHAL PRADESH

51.3667

65.9

229.11

60.55

1127.47

JHARKHAND

0.667

0.2

13.25

0.89

1.49

KARNATAKA

-

4620.78

-

9833

1975.81

KERALA

-

3320.76

-

-

NR

MADHYA PRAADESH

-

1.67

-

-

NR

MAHARASHTRA

-

-

-

-

NR

MANIPUR

-

-

-

-

NR

MEGHALAYA

0.14

0.0663

3.66

-

NR

MIZORAM

104.02

-

-

0.05

0.4

NAGALAND

551.59

-

-

-

NR

ODISHA

334.315

299.84

454.82

1509.33

379.51

PUNJAB

18.64

124.52

-

-

46.61

RAJASTHAN

1876.8578

31.7275

8820.91

191.17

5477.18

SIKKIM

245.44

-

-

349

92.43

TAMILNADU

-

-

1.21

-

7039.56

TELENGANA

-

-

-

-

NR

TRIPURA

132.824

946.1775

437.65

137.92

38.12

UTTAR PRADESH

308.053

547.4233

809.63

602.96

825.26

UTTARAKHAND

-

-

-

-

NR

WEST BENGAL

17727.94

54.006

1269.83

-

16079.45

A & N ISLAND

-

-

-

-

0.11

CHANDIGARH

-

-

-

-

Nil

D & N HAVELI

0.1

-

0.03

-

Nil

LADAKH

-

-

-

-

NR

DELHI

-

-

-

-

18.39

JAMMU & KASHMIR

-

-

-

-

NR

LAKSHADWEEP

-

-

5

5

NR

PUDUCHCHERRY

-

0.6

-

-

15.71

DAMAN & DIU

0.525

-

-

-

-

TOTAL

30665.8455

18349.97168

15868.52

21194.18

49617.62

NR- Not Reported

STATEMENT SHOWING STATE-WISE DETAILS OF ALLOCATION AND RELEASE OF FUNDS UNDER SDRF AND NDRF DURING THE YEAR 201&19 TO 2022-23 (AS ON 31-03-2023)

(Rs. in crore)

Sl. NO.

State

Allocation under SDRF including Centre and State share

Centre's Share of SDRF Released

Release from NDRF (For all calamities)

2018-19

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2018-19

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2018-19

2019-20

2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

1.

Andhra Pradesh

509.00

534.00

1192.80

1192.80

1252.80

458.10

324.15

895.20

895.20

940.00

1004.88

570.91

657.029

351.43

2.

Arunachal Pradesh

60.00

63.00

222.40

222.40

233.60

54.00

56.70

200.00

200.00

210.40

132.49

59.34

3.

Assam

532.00

559.00

686.40

686.40

720.80

478.80

503.10

617.60

617.60

648.80

44.37

250.00

4.

Bihar

543.00

570.00

1510.40

1510.40

1586.40

101.815

631.12

1132.80

1132.80

1189.60

--

953.17

1255.27

1038.96

5.

Chhattisgarh

278.00

292.00

460.80

460.80

484.00

349.575

177.30

345.60

345.60

181.60

6.

Goa

4.00

4.00

12.00

12.00

12.80

1.80

4.20

9.60

9.60

9.60

7.

Gujarat

816.00

856.00

1412.00

1412.00

1482.40

449.95

886.80

1059.20

1059.20

556.00

1000.00

8.

Haryana

356.00

374.00

524.00

524.00

550.40

320.40

227.10

392.80

392.80

412.80

9.

Himachal Pradesh

273.00

287.00

363.20

363.20

380.80

245.70

197.23

327.20

327.20

342.40

227.29

518.06

290

214.26

10.

Jammu & Kashmir *

295.00

310.00

252.90

405.00

11

Jharkhand

421.00

442 00

605.60

605.60

63520

315.75

331.50

454.40

454.40

200.00

12.

Karnataka

320.00

336.00

843.20

843.20

885.60

288.00

204.00

632.80

632.80

664.00

959.84

3208.28

689.27

1623 30

939.83

13.

Keraia

214.00

225.00

335.20

335.20

352.00

192.60

136.65

251.20

251.20

264.00

2904.85

14

Madhya Pradesh

1016.00

1066 00

1941.60

1941.60

2038.40

914.40

647.10

1456.00

1456.00

1528.80

334.00

1712.14

1891.79

600.50

15.

Maharashtra

1717.00

1803.00

3436.80

3436.80

3608.80

1287.75

1352.25

2577.60

2577.60

2706.40

2088.59

5189.40

420.12

1056.39

16.

Manipur

22.00

23.00

37.60

37.60

39.20

9.90

30.60

33.60

33.60

35.20

26.53

17.

Meghalaya

28.00

29.00

58.40

58.40

60.80

38.70

52.80

52.80

27.20

--

16.52

18.

Mizoram

20.00

20.00

41.60

41.60

43.20

18.00

18.00

37.60

37.60

39.20

19.

Nagaland

11.00

12.00

36.80

36.80

38.40

9.90

10.80

32.80

32.80

34.40

195.99

176.52

1.335

--

107.304

20.

Odisha

865.00

909.00

1711.20

1711.20

1796.80

778.50

552.00

1283.20

1283.20

1348.00

341.72

3294.10

500.00

500.00

21.

Punjab

451.00

474.00

528.00

528.00

554.40

321.99

412.37

474.43

396.00

416.00

-

22.

Rajasthan

1277.00

1340.00

1580.00

1580.00

1659.20

957.75

1005.00

1184.80

1184.80

1244.80

526.14

1949.59

68.65

--

13.46

23.

Sikkim

36.00

36.00

44.80

44.80

47.20

32.40

34.20

40.00

40.00

42.40

54.93

--

73.86

55.23

24.

Tamil Nadu

786.00

825.00

1088.00

1088.00

1142.40

707.40

500.85

816.00

816.00

856.80

900.31

286.91

566.36

25.

Telangana

317.00

333.00

479.20

478.20

503.20

226.50

487.50

359.20

359.20

188.80

--

26.

Tnpura

36.00

38.00

60.80

60.80

63.20

32.40

34.20

54.40

54.40

56.80

171.74

--

12.93

27.

Uttar Pradesh

781.00

2062.40

2062.40

2165.60

351.45

849.30

1546.40

1546.40

812.00

157.23

28.

Uttarakhand

243.00

255.00

832.80

832.80

874.40

218.70

229.50

749.60

749.60

787.20

29.

West Bengal

598.00

628.00

1078.40

1078.40

1132.80

269.10

650.40

808.80

808.80

849.60

--

958.33

2250.28

350.13

TOTAL

12825.00

13465.00

23186.40

23186.40

24344.80

9658.13

10937.62

17825.63

17747.20

16392.80

10000.00

18530.50

8257.11

7542.30

1524.854

* **Now UT of Jammu and Kashmir and UT of Ladakh.**

*****

END

THE COASTAL AQUACULTURE AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Highlights of the Bill

■ The Bill amends the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005. The Act defines coastal aquaculture as farming, under controlled conditions, of: (i) shrimp, (ii) prawn, (iii) fish or (iv) any other aquatic life in saline or brackish water. The Bill expands the scope of coastal aquaculture to include allied activities such as hatcheries and nucleus breeding centres.

Key Issues and Analysis

■ The mandate of the Fisheries Ministry to promote coastal aquaculture may lead it to prioritise industry growth over environmental protection.

■ The CAG noted that the Coastal Aquaculture Authority lacks capacity to carry out existing functions under the Act. The Bill adds more functions.

PART A: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

Context

Coastal aquaculture includes the farming of marine life such as shrimp, prawn or fish in controlled conditions. It is carried out in saline and brackish water. The Supreme Court (1996) had highlighted several risks and adverse environmental impacts of unregulated shrimp farming and semi-intensive coastal aquaculture.[1] It held that: (i) shrimp farming is a prohibited activity in the coastal regulation zone (CRZ) and (ii) an authority must be established under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986 to protect coastal environment from the adverse effects of shrimp farming. Following such orders, the central government had established the Aquaculture Authority under the EPA.[2] However, in 2005, Parliament passed the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005 which retrospectively amended the CRZ Notification, 1991 to exclude coastal aquaculture from the list of prohibited activities. It also constituted the Coastal Aquaculture Authority.[3]

As of 2022, 42,975 coastal aquaculture farms are registered across 12 states/UTs.[4] In 2021-22, India exported 13.7 lakh tonne of marine products such as shrimp and cuttlefish worth USD 7.8 billion.[5] Frozen shrimp accounts for 53% of marine product exports in terms of quantity and 75% in terms of value. The Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on April 5, 2023. The Bill has been referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Key Features

■ **Regulation of allied activities: The Act regulates coastal aquaculture farms. This includes culturing shrimp, prawn fish or other aquatic life in a controlled environment along coastal areas in saline or brackish water. The Bill allows regulation of allied activities such as nucleus breeding centres and hatcheries. The Act prohibits coastal aquaculture in certain areas, such as 200 metres within the High Tide Line and in creeks/backwaters within the CRZ.   The Bill amends this to**

allow some allied activities in protected areas. For instance: (i) activities like nucleus breeding centres will be permitted to operate in no development zones, and (ii) activities like sea weed culture will be permitted in creeks/backwaters within the CRZ. Nucleus breeding centres are those where fish/shrimp are cultivated at the larvae stage of their life cycle.

- **Coastal Aquaculture Authority:** Under the Act, functions of the Authority include: (i) regulating construction and operation of aquaculture farms, (ii) registering coastal aquaculture farms, and (iii) demolishing polluting farms. The Bill adds that the Authority shall: (i) fix standards for inputs and discharge of effluents from aquaculture units, (ii) prohibit the use of certain inputs to prevent harm to the environment, and (iii) monitor and regulate units, inputs, and emissions.

- **Penalties:** The Act penalises unregistered farms or farms in prohibited areas, with imprisonment up to three years and/or a fine of one lakh rupees. The Bill replaces this and specifies that if coastal aquaculture is carried out illegally: (i) the activity may be suspended, (ii) structure may be removed, (iii) crop may be destroyed, (iv) the registration may be cancelled, and/or (v) a penalty may be imposed.

PART B: KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

Regulating environmental impact of coastal aquaculture

The Act regulates the environmental impact of coastal aquaculture. It allows various aquaculture activities to be undertaken in Coastal Regulation Zones, which are regulated under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986. These activities help increase production of marine products leading to value generation through exports. However, intensive coastal aquaculture activities may have adverse impacts on the environment such as salinisation of land/wells and obstruction of natural flood water drainage.[1],[6],[7] Hence, there may be a need to find a balance between promoting aquaculture activities and minimising the environmental damage from such activities. In light of this, the question is whether the Ministry of Fisheries is the most appropriate Ministry to administer the law regulating the environmental aspects of coastal aquaculture. The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is responsible for promoting and developing inland and marine fisheries. Such objectives may lead the Ministry to prioritise the aquaculture industry over protecting the coastal environment.

Note that the Supreme Court (1996) had held that an authority must be established under the Environment Protection Act, 1986 to protect the coastal environment from adverse effects of shrimp farming. Following such orders, the central government had established the Aquaculture Authority under the EPA.[2] However, the Coastal Aquaculture Authority set up later under the 2005 Act comes under the Fisheries Ministry.[3]

A similar issue arose when the Food Safety and Standards Bill, 2005 was introduced to constitute the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) under the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.[8] The Standing Committee examining the Bill observed that the Food Processing Ministry is a promotional Ministry, and that the Ministry of Health would be more appropriate to regulate food standards.[9] Later, the administration of FSSAI was changed from the Food Processing Ministry to the Ministry of Health.

Implementation issues

Under the Act and Rules, the Coastal Aquaculture Authority is required to carry out several functions such as: (i) registering and inspecting farms, (ii) testing water samples, (iii) fixing input standards, and (iv) surveying coastal areas. The Bill adds functions such as fixing emission

standards, and monitoring/regulating such standards. In 2020, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) noted that since 2016, the Authority has not carried out most of its functions adequately. It could not carry out these functions due to a deficiency in skilled manpower and infrastructure facilities.[10]   This raises the question whether the Authority has the capacity to carry out the additional functions. Key findings of the CAG include:

Inspection: Only four technical posts have been sanctioned to inspect all farms across the Indian coastline. The Authority has no regional/branch offices for this purpose. Between April 2013 and March 2018, the Authority inspected 246 of the 35,395 registered farms, and 213 of the 298 registered hatcheries.[11] The Rules also do not provide for a periodic inspection plan, nor set any annual inspection targets.[11]

Waste water testing: Waste water from shrimp farms contains solid and dissolved materials, which must be treated. In 2011, the Authority established its own laboratory to test waste water samples collected from farms. CAG noted that as of 2019, the Authority had not drawn plans for collecting and testing the number of samples. Between March 2011 and April 2016, 275 samples were tested, of which 30% had particulate matter beyond permissible limits. Between May 2016 and July 2019, no samples were tested.

Input standards: As of July 2018, no input standards were fixed. In 2008, the Authority formed a sub-committee to fix standards, however it has not published its report yet.

[1]. S. Jagannath vs The Union of India, Supreme Court of India, December 11, 1996.

[2]. S.O. 88 (E), Ministry of Environment and Forests, eGazette, February 6, 1996.

[3]. The Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005.

[4]. Annual Report 2021-22, Coastal Aquaculture Authority, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

[5]. Annual Report 2021-22, Marine Products Export Development Authority, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

[6]. Reducing Environmental Impacts of Coastal Aquaculture, Food & Agriculture Organization United Nations, June 4, 2002.

[7]. 'The Environmental Impact of Aquaculture and the Effects of Pollution on Coastal Aquaculture Development in Southeast Asia', Science Direct, Marine Pollution Bulletin, Volume 20, Issue 7, July 1989.

[8]. The Food Safety and Standards Bill, 2005.

[9]. Report No. 17, 'The Food Safety and Standards Bill, 2005', Standing Committee on Agriculture, February 21, 2006.

[10]. Union Government Compliance Audit Observations, Comptroller & Auditor General of India, September 23, 2020.

[11]. Annual Report 2017-18, Coastal Aquaculture Authority Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

represent that the contents of the report are accurate or complete. PRS is an independent, not-for-profit group.   This document has been prepared without regard to the objectives or opinions of those who may receive it.

END

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

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 09, 2023 04:27 am | Updated 04:27 am IST - CHENNAI

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

tuberculosis

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Minorities Incl. Linguistic Minorities - Schemes & their performance; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 09, 2023 12:46 am | Updated 12:47 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

[Andhra Pradesh](#) / [tribals](#) / [Reservation](#) / [history](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

CLIMATE EVENTS AND AN UMBRELLA FOR URBAN HEALTH

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 09, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 12:59 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'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

COMMents

SHARE

climate change / Monsoon / cyclones / disease / viral diseases / malaria / water / health / rains / urban planning / medical staff / medical service / journals and diaries / primary care physician / Coronavirus / India

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 09, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:20 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

laws / data protection

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

COMMUNAL PUNISHMENT: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON RIOTS AND DEMOLITIONS

Relevant for: World History | Topic: Political Philosophies- Communism, Capitalism, and Socialism

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 09, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:10 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

The idea of inflicting collective punishment on the Muslim community soon after any riot or communal disturbance seems to be an ingrained part of governance in Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled States. The use of excavators to demolish houses, shops and other establishments has now spread to Haryana, after it was practised with impunity in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi last year. The Punjab and Haryana High Court has done well to stop authorities from continuing with their demolition drive in Gurugram and Nuh, that witnessed communal clashes, leaving six dead. Taking suo motu cognisance of reports about the demolition activity, the Bench has minced no words in raising the question whether the action is a sort of "ethnic cleansing", as buildings belonging to a particular community were being brought down "under the guise of a law and order problem". It has observed that there appears to be no order to demolish the buildings or prior notice to its occupants and that the law and order situation was just a ruse. Few would disagree with the court's characterisation of the action in Haryana. The same dubious and ambivalent messaging about the demolitions that one saw in other States is being witnessed in Haryana too. For legal purposes, officials will say the buildings are encroachments and are being removed as per law. For political purposes, it is made very clear that rioters are getting the treatment they deserve.

It requires no special knowledge of the law to say the demolitions are inherently illegal in the absence of any process. It is not clear what evidence is being used to identify buildings belonging to alleged rioters or to ascertain whether those not involved are also using the premises. Reports suggest that personal belongings and inventory are not allowed to be removed before a building is razed. There is one example of a house that provided refuge to a family during the violence being demolished. Using communal violence as a pretext to impose extra-legal punitive measures will invariably lead to bias, as officials implementing such orders will have no choice except to portray the occupants of the buildings to be razed as encroachers to retain the fig-leaf of legal justification and as anti-social elements for moral justification. In any case, to escape the charge of ignoring encroachments all this while and waiting for a riot to take action, they will have to provide evidence of serving notices on the occupants and, if needed, backdate such notices. The judicial intervention should put an end to the pattern of using the state machinery to inflict misery on a section of the population.

COMMents

SHARE

Haryana / unrest, conflicts and war / human rights / minority group

BACK TO TOP

END

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

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

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.

****

MV
HFW/E-Pharmacy/8thAugust2023/1

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.

****

MV
HFW/E-Pharmacy/8thAugust2023/1

END

STOP THE FENCE-SITTING IN CLUSTER BOMB USE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 10, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 12:46 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

Cluster bomb units at a Lebanese military base in 2011. File | Photo Credit: AP

The decision by the United States to send cluster munitions to Ukraine, as part of a new military aid package to bolster Kyiv's war efforts against Russia, has raked up controversy. Cluster munitions, or cluster bombs, are weapons that release multiple explosive submunitions, also called bomblets, into the air. These submunitions explode as soon as they hit the ground, killing and maiming people in the area. Many bomblets do not blow up instantly and remain dormant for years (also known as the dud rate). These inactive bomblets act as precarious landmines, posing a grave threat to the civilian population, including women and children, for a long time. According to the Human Rights Watch, which is a civil society organisation, Russia, since launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, has used cluster bombs against Ukraine in cities such as Kharkiv, resulting in hundreds of civilian deaths and damaging civilian objects such as homes, hospitals, and schools. Now, Ukraine using these dangerous weapons will worsen the situation.

Cluster bombs have a notorious history. They were used in the Second World War. Since then, cluster bombs have been used on multiple occasions including by the U.S. in the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. According to the Cluster Munition Monitor, anywhere between 56,000 to 86,000 people have died in cluster munition-affected countries, since the 1960s.

Along with its increasing use, the international campaign against cluster bombs led by the civil society organisations such as Human Rights Watch also gathered momentum. This resulted in an international treaty called the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) being enacted in May 2008. The enactment of the CCM has been a major step in eradicating cluster bombs. However, the treaty is not universal — 112 countries have acceded to the CCM including many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members such as Canada, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. But important countries such as the U.S., Russia, China, Israel, and India have not signed the CCM. Ukraine is not a member.

Article 1 of the CCM bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of cluster bombs. The convention further obligates countries to destroy existing stockpile of cluster munitions in their possession. Countries are also legally bound to develop a victim assistance programme to provide support and rehabilitation to the cluster bomb victims in their jurisdiction.

Given that there is such an international treaty, are Russia and Ukraine violating international

law by using cluster bombs? Since these countries are not signatories to the CCM, it is argued that they are not bound by international law banning cluster bombs. This is not correct.

Editorial | [Blurred lines: On the U.S.'s new move in the Ukraine war](#)

International law on armed conflicts has always drawn a distinction between combatants and civilian populations and between civilian objects and military objectives. In this regard, a fundamental customary international law (CIL) norm applicable to armed conflicts is the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. In other words, an essential canon of international law is that the use of force must be discriminate, that is, the force should target specific military objectives and not civilians. This CIL norm is codified in Article 51(4) of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to which both Russia and Ukraine are parties. Given the nature of cluster bombs, their usage is a classic example of indiscriminate use of force that fails to differentiate between combatants and civilians, or between civilian objects and military objectives, and is thus illegal.

Another fundamental international humanitarian law norm relevant here is proportionality. Codified in Article 51(5) of the Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, this rule prohibits excessive use of force that causes incidental damage to the civilian population or civilian objects, when compared to military benefits anticipated. Given the fact that the use of cluster bombs is inherently indiscriminate, harming civilians, their use will amount to disproportionate use of force and is thus illegal. In sum, even if Russia and Ukraine are not signatories to the CCM, their use of cluster bombs violates international law.

But what about the U.S.? Arguably supplying cluster bombs to Ukraine outside of the CCM, that Washington has not signed, is not a violation of international law. Moreover, it is claimed that the U.S.-made cluster bombs, unlike the Russian ones, have a low dud rate, that is, the prospects of unexploded bomblets are slim. Thus, questionably, they meet the requirements of the use of force being proportional and discriminate. Nonetheless, supplying cluster bombs to any country is an irresponsible act. The usage and the possession and transfer or supply of cluster bombs should be banned universally, as envisaged in the CCM. For this to happen, all United Nations member-countries should accede to the CCM and eradicate cluster bombs from the face of the earth.

Prabhash Ranjan teaches at the Faculty of Legal Studies, South Asian University. The views expressed are personal

COMMents

SHARE

[Russia-Ukraine Crisis](#) / [international law](#) / [USA](#) / [Russia](#) / [defence equipment](#) / [China](#) / [Israel](#) / [India](#) / [NATO](#) / [Canada](#) / [Germany](#) / [France](#) / [United Kingdom](#) / [human rights](#) / [war](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

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 noukri 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.

<><><><><>

SNC/PK

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 noukri 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.

<><><><><>

SNC/PK

END

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 costal 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.

*****

SK/SS

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 costal 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.

*****

SK/SS

END

DRIVE TO SENSITISE HEALTH WORKERS TOWARDS TRANSGENDER WOMEN, GAY MEN

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 11, 2023 09:14 am | Updated 09:14 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

(For top health news of the day, subscribe to our newsletter Health Matters)

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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / health treatment / medicine / hospital and clinic

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

SHOULD THERE BE A BLANKET BAN ON SMARTPHONES IN SCHOOLS?

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 11, 2023 12:42 am | Updated 12:59 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'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

COMMents

SHARE

The Hindu Parley Podcast / education / school / mobile phones / technology (general) / United Nations / teachers / India / Qatar / African Union / Australia / Finland / Coronavirus / psychology / teaching and learning

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

CARTEL POLITICS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON AN ASSASSINATION AND ECUADOR'S FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 12, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:33 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

The [assassination of a presidential candidate in Ecuador](#), just 11 days ahead of voting, shows that even its top politicians are not safe from organised gangs that have, in recent years, turned this South American nation into a hub of narco-trafficking. Fernando Villavicencio, a former journalist and lawmaker, was one of the most outspoken critics of what he called "narco-politics". During the election campaign, he had promised measures to tackle gang violence such as building a maximum-security prison in the Amazon for gang leaders, enhancing anti-drug cooperation with the U.S., cracking down on cocaine exports from Ecuador and rooting out corruption in the government, police and judiciary. He rose to fame during the presidency of leftist leader Rafael Correa. In 2014, when Mr. Correa, now in exile, was the President, Villavicencio had to flee fearing a government crackdown; he briefly sought asylum in Peru. He returned after Mr. Correa's presidency ended and was elected to the National Assembly where he made a name for himself as an enemy of drug cartels. It is this relentless fight against organised crime that seemed to have cost him his life. Officials say criminal gangs are behind his murder, and police have arrested six Colombian nationals who they say have ties with a drug trafficking cartel.

Ecuador, a relatively peaceful country of 18 million people until 2017-18, is now one of the most dangerous countries in Latin America. Situated between Colombia and Peru, both major producers of cocaine, it has seen a spurt in violent crimes with drug cartels shifting their focus to the country in order to get drugs shipped to North America and Europe. Murders have quadrupled since 2019, with 4,800 recorded last year. Officials say two international crime organisations, a Mexican cartel and a Balkan one (known as the Albanian mafia), have recruited local gangs to build drug networks, and their fight to take control of the supply routes has led to rising gang violence. The gangs have turned prisons into operating bases and ports into fighting zones, while extortion networks flourish across the country. The government of President Guillermo Lasso, a conservative who is facing serious allegations of corruption, has remained largely helpless when cartels built a parallel system. It is this impunity that led to the assassination of Villavicencio. If Ecuador's politicians and state institutions continue to let criminal gangs have their way, it is only a matter of time before the country becomes a failed state. Investigators have to find out how and why Villavicencio's security broke down, and bring the perpetrators to justice. But a bigger message of the murder is that Ecuador should start an uncompromising war against organised crimes. Other countries in the Americas should offer a

helping hand to Quito in this battle.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

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 MantriPoshan 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 Bal vatika (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 MantriMatruVandanaYojana (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 PoshanAbhiyaan have been re-aligned under 'SakshamAnganwadi 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 eco-system 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

46558.29

6

CHANDIGARH

880.37

7

CHHATTISGARH

10502.09

8

D&N HAVELI And DAMAN& DIU

1105.5

9

DELHI

2395.48

10

GOA

219.62

11

GUJARAT

27433.24

12

HARYANA

6430.05

13

HIMACHALPRADESH

5379.38

14

JAMMU&KASHMIR

9027.79

15

JHARKHAND

5144.05

16

KARNATAKA

16023.12

17

KERALA

11229.22

18

LADAKH

20.71

19

LAKSHADWEEP

367

20

MADHYAPRADESH

37515.12

21

MAHARASHTRA

55901.99

22

MANIPUR

4055.98

23

MEGHALAYA

5041.06

24

MIZORAM

3209.13

25

NAGALAND

7800.93

26

ODISHA

23464.7

27

PUDUCHERRY

905.13

28

PUNJAB

6113.58

29

RAJASTHAN

19686.27

30

SIKKIM

1272.39

31

TAMILNADU

35507.53

32

TELANGANA

17905.85

33

TRIPURA

3955.36

34

UTTARPRADESH

48662.91

35

UTTARAKHAND

12651.73

36

WEST BENGAL

21292.21

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

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 MantriPoshan 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 Bal vatika (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 MantriMatruVandanaYojana (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 PoshanAbhiyaan have been re-aligned under 'SakshamAnganwadi 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 eco-system 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	46558.29
6	CHANDIGARH	880.37
7		

CHHATTISGARH

10502.09

8

D&N HAVELI And DAMAN& DIU

1105.5

9

DELHI

2395.48

10

GOA

219.62

11

GUJARAT

27433.24

12

HARYANA

6430.05

13

HIMACHALPRADESH

5379.38

14

JAMMU&KASHMIR

9027.79

15

JHARKHAND

5144.05

16

KARNATAKA

16023.12

17

KERALA

11229.22

18

LADAKH

20.71

19

LAKSHADWEEP

367

20

MADHYAPRADESH

37515.12

21

MAHARASHTRA

55901.99

22

MANIPUR

4055.98

23

MEGHALAYA

5041.06

24

MIZORAM

3209.13

25

NAGALAND

7800.93

26

ODISHA

23464.7

27

PUDUCHERRY

905.13

28

PUNJAB

6113.58

29

RAJASTHAN

19686.27

30

SIKKIM

1272.39

31

TAMILNADU

35507.53

32

TELANGANA

17905.85

33

TRIPURA

3955.36

34

UTTARPRADESH

48662.91

35

UTTARAKHAND

12651.73

36

WEST BENGAL

21292.21

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

END

NEW SOIL HEALTH CARD SCHEME

Relevant for: null | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

Under Soil Health Cards (SHCs) Scheme introduced in the year 2014-15, a massive programme of soil sampling, testing and generation of SHCs was launched to assist State Governments to issue soil health cards to all farmers in the country. Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.

Now, Government of India has made some technological interventions in New Soil Health Card Scheme. The Soil Health Card portal has been revamped and integrated with a Geographic Information System (GIS) system so that all the test results are captured and seen on a map. To make the implementation/monitoring of the scheme smooth and to facilitate farmers an easy access to his soil health card, the mobile application has been made robust with the additional features i.e. restrict the sample collection region for the Village Level Entrepreneur/Operator collecting the soil samples, auto selection of the latitude and longitude of the location, generation of a QR code to link with the sample and test results of all samples directly on the portal from the geo-mapped labs, without any manual intervention. The new system has already been rolled out from April, 2023 and Samples are collected through mobile application. Soil Health Cards are generated on revamped portal. 56 Training sessions to States have been arranged for the new system.

Soil Health Card scheme has been merged in Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) cafeteria scheme as its one component under name 'Soil Health & Fertility' from the year 2022-23.

The Guideline of Village Level Soil Testing Labs (VLSTLs) has been issued on 22.06.2023. VLSTLs can be set up by individual entrepreneurs i.e. rural youth and community based entrepreneurs i.e. Self Help Groups (SHGs), Schools, Agriculture Universities etc. The beneficiary/village level entrepreneur should be a youth whose age should not be below 18 years and should not be more than 27 years. Self Help Groups, Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO) can also be enrolled as VLSTL. Eligibility of enrollment of these groups is decided by District Level Executive Committee (DLEC).

As per the procedure, an entrepreneur can submit the application along with requisite qualification certificate, PAN Card, Aadhar Card to the office of Deputy Director/District Agriculture Officer. Training of VLSTLs on soil sampling, testing, generation of soil health card is organized by manufacturers and state government. VLSTLs further educate farmers about fertilizer recommendation and crop recommendation.

Detail Soil Mapping at 1:10000 scale is undertaken using high resolution satellite data and field survey/ ground data in the priority areas of the country by Soil & Land Use Survey of India, DA&FW. This Soil Resource Information is a geo-spatial data in digital format and generated separately from SHC.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

*****

SK/SS/2575

Under Soil Health Cards (SHCs) Scheme introduced in the year 2014-15, a massive programme of soil sampling, testing and generation of SHCs was launched to assist State Governments to issue soil health cards to all farmers in the country. Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.

Now, Government of India has made some technological interventions in New Soil Health Card Scheme. The Soil Health Card portal has been revamped and integrated with a Geographic Information System (GIS) system so that all the test results are captured and seen on a map. To make the implementation/monitoring of the scheme smooth and to facilitate farmers an easy access to his soil health card, the mobile application has been made robust with the additional features i.e. restrict the sample collection region for the Village Level Entrepreneur/Operator collecting the soil samples, auto selection of the latitude and longitude of the location, generation of a QR code to link with the sample and test results of all samples directly on the portal from the geo-mapped labs, without any manual intervention. The new system has already been rolled out from April, 2023 and Samples are collected through mobile application. Soil Health Cards are generated on revamped portal. 56 Training sessions to States have been arranged for the new system.

Soil Health Card scheme has been merged in Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) cafeteria scheme as its one component under name 'Soil Health & Fertility' from the year 2022-23.

The Guideline of Village Level Soil Testing Labs (VLSTLs) has been issued on 22.06.2023. VLSTLs can be set up by individual entrepreneurs i.e. rural youth and community based entrepreneurs i.e. Self Help Groups (SHGs), Schools, Agriculture Universities etc. The beneficiary/village level entrepreneur should be a youth whose age should not be below 18 years and should not be more than 27 years. Self Help Groups, Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO) can also be enrolled as VLSTL. Eligibility of enrollment of these groups is decided by District Level Executive Committee (DLEC).

As per the procedure, an entrepreneur can submit the application along with requisite qualification certificate, PAN Card, Aadhar Card to the office of Deputy Director/District Agriculture Officer. Training of VLSTLs on soil sampling, testing, generation of soil health card is organized by manufacturers and state government. VLSTLs further educate farmers about fertilizer recommendation and crop recommendation.

Detail Soil Mapping at 1:10000 scale is undertaken using high resolution satellite data and field survey/ ground data in the priority areas of the country by Soil & Land Use Survey of India, DA&FW. This Soil Resource Information is a geo-spatial data in digital format and generated separately from SHC.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

*****

SK/SS/2575

END

EXPLAINED

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / tuberculosis / nutrition and diet / The Hindu Explains

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION LISTS DRUGS WHICH CAN BE SOLD WITHOUT PRESCRIPTION

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / medicine

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

IN TB DETECTION, INDIA FAR FROM MEETING THE 2025 GOAL

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

END

A SCIENTIFIC SURVEY AT GYANVAPI, ITS LIMITS

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Judiciary in India: its Structure, Organization & Functioning, Judges of SC & High Courts, Judgments and related Issues

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 14, 2023 12:42 am | Updated 01:07 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

Members of the Archaeological Survey of India's team at the Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi on August 8, 2023. | Photo Credit: PTI

On August 4, the Supreme Court of India directed the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a detailed non-invasive survey of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh to determine if the mosque was built atop a temple. As the matter has significant political implications, it is important to understand the working principles of the scientific methods used in such surveys, their abilities, and their limitations.

Archaeology has, due to the ever-increasing social and legal complexities that it found itself confronting, embraced modern scientific methods, including from physics, molecular biology, geology, and anthropology. Archaeological investigations are normally performed in open spaces, along with excavation, where scientists have the option to use both ground and airborne systems to identify and test targets.

In the present case, since the investigation is being undertaken inside a built structure, and no excavation is permitted, experts — geophysicists in particular — must depend on non-invasive methods of earth-scanning.

Editorial | Incremental injustice: On the Gyanvapi mosque survey

The methods routinely used in archaeological prospecting are adapted from those applied in geophysical mapping. They may be active or passive. Active methods inject energy into the ground and measure the response of the buried target at the surface. They include seismic and electromagnetic techniques. Passive methods, such as magnetometry and gravity surveying, simply measure existing physical properties.

In both cases, the methods provide an estimate of the ground's material properties, such as density, electrical resistance, and wave velocity. They are then interpreted in terms of the possible nature and geometry of the target. In the case of Gyanvapi, the scientists could be looking for the distinct physical properties of subsurface material constituting the structure.

Many earth materials could have the same physical property and generate the same response on the surface, leading to ambiguity in interpretation. In response, geophysicists use multiple methods and different physical properties of the earth's materials to arrive at a reasonable

characterisation of the target. It is expected of those involved in the survey to have considered this.

Media reports have suggested that the ASI will use ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to produce a 3-D model of buried archaeological features. GPR operates by introducing a short radar impulse from a surface antenna and recording both the time and magnitude of return signals reflected by the property contrasts in the subsoil. Significant improvements in instrumentation have allowed large amounts of digital data to be collected along closely spaced parallel paths for detailed analysis and imaging.

Because the radar beam spreads out in a cone from the transmitter — similar to a smoke ring — the buried object will reflect part of the beam before the antenna passes directly over it. In such a situation, a part of the signal may bear little relation to the physical dimensions of the subsurface target and create false images.

An important aspect of the geophysical survey is to infer physical parameters from the complex and voluminous data acquired. This requires a good understanding of physical processes and powerful data analyses and modelling programs to generate reliable 3D images.

Since the archaeological object under investigation is made of heterogeneous materials with complex geometry, this object is simplified in the form of a representative model with well-defined and finite parameters.

In general, the laws of physics provide the means to compute some data given a computational model. Only in the ideal case does an exact theory exist that prescribes how the data should be transformed in order to reproduce the model. In most cases, including the survey being conducted by ASI, the mathematical framework assumes that infinite and noise-free data will be available.

However, as the data will always be limited and have measurement errors, it may not be possible to estimate, in a unique and stable manner, the spatial distribution of physical property in the subsurface. As a result, supplementary information needs to be incorporated. This has the potential to produce meaningless results. This is well-recorded in the geophysical literature and graduate–level textbooks. Even data from sophisticated lunar penetrating radar systems analysed by different authors and published in different journals, have reported contradictory interpretations.

Despite its inability to reconstruct the images of targets in the best possible manner, geophysical tools have a high success rate in resource exploration. But in the case of a failure or partial success during the exploration of natural resources, the loss is merely financial. On the other hand, a 'temple versus mosque' problem is another matter entirely, involving emotional and sentimental issues and with long-term societal and political implications.

In such cases, nothing should be left to chance. GPR or any other geophysical method has limited abilities, and its findings must be interpreted within these contours. During data analysis, interpreting, and decision-making, experts as well as the people need to bear this in mind.

Shyam S. Rai is a former Professor and Chair in the Department of Earth and Climate Science, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune, where he continues to serve as an emeritus professor

COMMents

SHARE

judiciary (system of justice) / religion and belief / archaeology / science and technology / Uttar Pradesh / Varanasi

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

GLARING OMISSION: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE IMPORT OF EXECUTIVE MAJORITY IN ECI SELECTION PROCESS

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Elections, Election Commission and the Electoral Reforms in India Incl. Political Parties

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 14, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:19 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

The Union government's proposal to have a three-member selection panel with a majority for the executive for the appointment of members of the Election Commission may not subserve the objective of protecting the poll watchdog's independence. A Bill introduced in the Rajya Sabha says the committee will consist of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and a Union Cabinet Minister. This runs counter to a recent judgment of a Constitution Bench that envisaged an independent selection committee that included the Chief Justice of India. The judgment was also in line with the recommendations of the Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990 and the Justice Tarkunde Committee in 1975. It is true that the Court said that its order would hold good only until Parliament made a law as envisaged in the Constitution. However, for the government to retain an executive majority in the selection process amounts to disregarding the spirit of the Court's recommendations. An argument could be made that the CJI's presence in the process could provide pre-emptive legitimacy to appointments and affect judicial scrutiny of errors or infirmity in the selections. Yet, when weighed against the fact that the ECI is a constitutional body that not only conducts elections but also renders a quasi-judicial role, the need for a selection process that embodies insulation from executive preponderance makes sense.

A non-partisan and independent ECI is a sine qua non for the robustness of electoral democracy. The Election Commission of India has played a seminal role in the periodic conduct of elections, which have only seen greater participation from the electorate because of the largely free, fair and convenient nature of the process. Yet, there are misgivings. In the run-up to the 2019 general election, for example, the announcement of elections was delayed for a month between February and March, allowing the government to inaugurate many projects. The Model Code of Conduct was unevenly implemented, with the ruling party receiving favourable treatment by the ECI, leading to dissent by one of the commissioners. The independent V-Dem Institute in Sweden, which compares democracies worldwide, has downgraded India to an "electoral autocracy", citing the loss in autonomy of the ECI. With the next Lok Sabha election just months away, it should have been incumbent on the government to stay true to the Constitution Bench's judgment and retain its recommendations in the Bill. It is for the Opposition now to ensure that the Bill is discussed and modified.

COMMents

SHARE

laws / Rajya Sabha / judiciary (system of justice)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

laws / Rajya Sabha / judiciary (system of justice)

BACK TO TOP

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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

COMMents

SHARE

Reservation / religion and belief / christianity / dalits / social issue / constitution / laws / judiciary (system of justice) / human rights / democracy / Tamil Nadu

BACK TO TOP

END

CONTENTIOUS CRITERIA: ON PM-USHA AND COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM

Relevant for: null | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 15, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:20 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

By mandating States and Union Territories to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and adopt contentious academic criteria in order to avail funds under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA), the Ministry of Education (MoE) appears to have made the central scheme exclusivist. The guidelines for the scheme — an improvised version of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA 1 and 2) to ensure increased access, equity and excellence in the State higher education system with central funding — were released in June. Only 22 States and Union Territories have joined the PM-USHA, which requires a memorandum of understanding to be signed between the State and the Department of Higher Education (MoE). West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are among 14 States and Union Territories which have refused to get on board. Apart from embracing the NEP 2020, the memorandum of understanding, includes, inter alia, commitment from States on adopting guidelines for the National Credit Framework and Choice Based Credit System for Four Year Undergraduate Programme. Without agreeing to these conditions, States cannot avail of a share in the funds, an outlay of 12,926.10 crore between 2023-24 and 2025-26, earmarked to improve State-run higher education. This despite the fact that 40% of funding has to be borne by the respective State governments.

Over the past several years, a few States have strongly opposed NEP 2020, both at the draft and implementation stages. Some such as Tamil Nadu have initiated measures to draft their own State Education Policy. There are demands to restore 'education' to the State List from the Concurrent List, where it was moved without debate during the Emergency. Against this backdrop, it would appear that the conditions for the PM-USHA have been tailored to impose NEP 2020 through the backdoor. The scheme also requires adoption of the multiple entry and exit options in degree programmes and National Higher Education Qualifications Framework guidelines. This, when academic stakeholders and administrators have expressed serious concerns about the multiple entry and exit options possibly triggering more dropouts from the higher education system. The emphasis on a four-year undergraduate programme has also evoked concerns as to whether socially and economically backward students could afford the money and the time, to pursue an extra year in college to acquire a degree. Besides, even a State supporting the NEP 2020, Meghalaya, has called for a revisit of the funding criteria and an increase in the number of beneficiary units, since its State university is in the initial stage of being operational. Under these circumstances, it would be prudent for the Ministry of Education to negotiate better terms with the dissenting States, respecting the essence of cooperative federalism.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIA'S PRESENT

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, and the Centre-State Relations

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 15, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 12:16 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'Although the ordinary Indian is putting up a brave fight to douse these fires of hate, it seems akin to throwing a bucket of water at a wildfire' | Photo Credit: Getty Images

Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Bengal (1947). Calcutta (1964). Ahmedabad (1969). Bhiwandi (1970). Delhi (1976). Assam (1983). Delhi and Bhiwandi (1984). Meerut (1987). Bhagalpur (1989). Somnath–Ayodhya–Bombay (1990-1993). Gujarat (2002). Muzaffarnagar (2013). Delhi (2020). Manipur and Gurugram (2023). Here is a cursory list of the big ticket #riots, the ones that get column space on the front page of newspapers; the ones that make the 9 p.m. headlines night after night, even if the victims are not always remembered.

Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code dutifully imposes a curfew; Sections 153A and 295A are used to arrest those who hurt religious sentiments, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 is to punish those who commit crimes against castes. The Model Code of Conduct is supposed to penalise those who violate a "model code of conduct" during election time. All laws (journalists, historians and political scientists have documented in painstaking detail) have been deployed selectively, politically. The suspension of the Internet is a new device, used with equal facility to curb the spread of information and misinformation (and cheating during examinations).

Old colonial laws, new independent-India-laws, newly renamed, wannabe laws. Seventy-five years of artfully maintaining "law and order", rinsing, repeating, and normalising an increasingly Hindu majoritarian status quo.

Every student of the Partition violence of 1947 has come across news reports of a physically brave Jawaharlal Nehru stepping into a mob of rioters and rescuing Muslims from being beaten to death. In 2023, we wait, count the days, weeks, months it takes for the Prime Minister to break his silence and tweet a message of condemnation over a death caused by Hindu vigilantes, or expend three minutes of time in Parliament to refer to the state of collapse in Manipur. Seventy-five years of riots have reduced our expectations so spectacularly, even of our political leadership. How did we come to such a pass? Perhaps we should reckon with a founding act of violence, and its long shadow over our polity.

Nathuram Godse was a journalist, an editor of newspapers, and a co-founder of rifle clubs across the Bombay Presidency during the Second World War.

He was a devotee of V.D. Savarkar, the long-time leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, and fully internalised his slogan to "Militarise Hinduism and Hinduise the Military". Godse's newspapers, Agrani, and later Hindu Rashtra, had to deposit security for hate-filled writings that were deemed to breach public security in 1947. Godse killed Gandhi because he held him responsible for Partition; he wanted to create a purely Hindu Rashtra and opposed the return of Muslims to civil-war-torn-Delhi.

Godse used his defence during the Gandhi murder trial as an opportunity to narrate his version of the recent past. He spoke so persuasively that High Court judge G.D. Khosla recorded in his memoirs that had he faced a jury trial, Godse would have earned a verdict of not guilty. Godse was photogenic and articulate; in today's India, he would have worked as a journalist on television, narrating his version of events on prime time, and possibly raking in high ratings.

Godse's demand for a nation where Muslims should be rendered invisible, or forced to leave India, appears to be coming true. At least the first half of Savarkar's popular slogan — "militarise Hinduism" — has been on display in recent marches and rallies of the Bajrang Dal and allied organisations across north India.

What will the historian of the future, if we can conceive of a future for our planet, write in a history of this time 200 years from now? First, they will not be able to read parliamentary debates. Instead, they will confront endless "interruptions" and "comments expunged" from the record. Less than one handful of Members of Parliament from regional parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Trinamool Congress have been able to and permitted to speak and finish their speeches in the last decade.

Second, our historian of the future will despair at tracing the outlines of an argument as key interlocutors shift political allegiances for immediate political gains. Who said what in 2013 will hardly matter if the ground shifts so dramatically two years later. What context and set of ideological principles will explain the 180-degree about-turn of a political opponent-turned ally in record time?

Third, if equipped with an archaeologist's tools, our historian will wonder why our monuments were all suddenly being dug up... but only up to a certain stratum. Why were they not dug up to reveal an older history, a possibly Buddhist era?

Fourth, our historian will ask if we have been too slow to name this age of extreme hate, to recognise the significance of ideology in reshaping India into a Hindu Rashtra. With leaders gaining notoriety for inventing catchy hate slogans and fuelling violence and being rewarded with political office, with what credibility can political leaders request the public to pay regard to norms of civility and propriety? Hate is the new normal, the speech that is politically correct, the speech that is politically rewarded.

While we do not have an elaborate description of the Hindu Rashtra of Godse's desire, it is now possible to outline what such a state might look like and feel like for its citizens. A Hindu Rashtra will be a state that imposes a particular set of upper-caste Hindu norms on the entire country in the name of uniformity and homogeneity: where Muslims are afraid to "look Muslim" in public places such as trains, and in protected spaces such as schools and colleges; where Muslim homes are raided for "forensic" analysis of their refrigerator; where Muslims are prohibited from renting or buying in gated communities and neighbourhoods that are "vegetarian-only"; where Hindu festivals are celebrated in some parts of India with anti-Muslim hate speech blaring out of loudspeakers in the guise of rap music; where all Hindus are expected to provide donations for a temple regardless of their particular religious sympathies; where bulldozers target and destroy Muslim homes; where Muslim trades and businesses are boycotted (this tactic is listed in

Godse's articles); where the token (assimilable) Muslim film star is feted at the same time that a Muslim cricketer abused when a match is lost and a Muslim comedian imprisoned for a joke he did not crack; where textbooks are "rationalised" to brainwash a new generation of students into believing in authoritarian leaders and a simplistic past; where the voice of justice is soft, routinely late, and ignored by the political class.

And where upper caste Hindu norms of women's subservience and seclusion are imposed on and imbibed by half a billion women, quietly. Where the plummeting rate of women in the workforce, despite increasing educational qualifications and declining fertility, leaves India in the bottom five nations of the world along with Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen, according to the 2020 World Economic Forum Report on gender gaps in economic participation. This increasing gender gap, unique for a middle-income country, has been analysed by generations of economists including, most recently, Shrayana Bhattacharya.

A Hindu Rashtra will be a state whose fires will consume us all — Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Dalit, Buddhist, and those not deemed sufficiently Hindu. And although the ordinary Indian is putting up a brave fight to douse these fires of hate, it seems akin to throwing a bucket of water at a wildfire. We, the people of India, will have to choose between Godse's Hindu Rashtra, and the idea of India in the Constitution.

Neeti Nair is the author of 'Hurt Sentiments: Secularism and Belonging in South Asia', 2023 and 'Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India', 2011. She is Professor of History at the University of Virginia, U.S., and Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

COMMents

SHARE

riots / Punjab / Uttar Pradesh / Delhi / West Bengal / Ahmedabad / Assam / Ayodhya / Gujarat / Manipur / laws / history / Mahatma Gandhi / political parties / parliament / buddhism / minority group / Iraq / Pakistan / Syria / Yemen / constitution / Independence Day / Prime Minister Narendra Modi / All India Trinamool Congress / hate crimes

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

DEMOCRACY IN INDIA, A GIFT AND A WARNING

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Indian Diaspora

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

Pali scripture. Photo: Wikipedia Commons

In the 76th year of our Independence, the Prime Minister's statement welcoming G-20 delegates to "the mother of democracy" is plastered on billboards across the nation's capital. Is this claim a boast without substance? Haven't we all learned at school that Greece is where democracy originated?

With all due respect to the Greeks, both countries may have a point. Contrary to the linear narrative that democracy was invented in ancient Athens before being rediscovered and spreading around the globe in modern times, we must accept that democratic government was more common in the ancient world than many believe, even if the proportion of the population participating in Athenian democracy may have been more extensive than other places.

India's claims are shrouded in antiquity. Some see allusions to democratic forms of government in the Rig Veda, for that most ancient of sacred texts does mention something very similar to popular government (with references to equitable resource distribution, amicable discussion, and resolution of disputes). The Rig Veda has mentioned Gramini, the village head employed by the king for civil and military purposes; while the Atharva Veda refers to the institutions of sabha, samiti, babhapati and a sabkasad (primarily performing judicial functions). Nonetheless, there is really no corroborating material evidence to authenticate a claim of "democracy". On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar's arguments in favour of such practices flourishing in the Buddhist era, a period contemporary to the Greek city-states and their republics, stand up rather better.

Whereas some saw Ambedkar, with his three-piece suit and formal English, as a Westernised exponent of Occidental constitutional systems, he was inspired far more by the democratic practices of ancient India, in particular the Buddhist sanghas. As chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar argued that the constitutional roots of Indian republicanism ran deep. He remarked that some ancient Indian states were republics, notably those of the Lichhavis who ruled northern Bihar and lower Nepal in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE (around the Buddha's time), the Mallas, centred in the city of Kusinagara, and the Vajji (or Vriji) confederation, based in the city of Vaishali. Early Indian republicanism can be traced back to the independent gana sanghas, which appear to have existed between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE.

Ambedkar referred to the Vinay–pitaka, a Theravada Buddhist scripture, as evidence of existing democratic procedures in India. The scripture regulated meetings of the Bhikkhus (monks) and

included rules for debates, motions, and voting through a secret ballot system in their sanghas.

The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, describing India at the time of Alexander the Great's invasion in 326 BCE (though he was writing two centuries later), recorded that independent and democratic republics existed in India. They seemed, however, to include a monarch or a raja, and a deliberative assembly that met regularly and discussed all major state decisions. The gana sanghas had full financial, administrative, and judicial authority and elected the raja, who therefore was not a hereditary monarch. The raja reported to the assembly and in some states, was assisted by a council of other nobles.

The Buddhist scriptures in Pali provide a vivid depiction of the city-state of Vaishali during the fifth century BCE and describe the different groups that managed their own affairs. Some of these groups were probably warrior formations; others were groups with avowed economic aims; some were religious fraternities. These organisations, of whatever type, were usually designated as gana or sangha, while less important political structures were known by such terms as sreni (guilds).

The terms gana and sangha initially meant "multitude", but by the sixth century BCE, these words came to mean a self-governing multitude. In this system, all decisions were taken by the sangha members themselves, and the governing style was stabilised by conventions applicable to such groups. The strongest of these groups functioned as sovereign governments, very similar to republics.

While hailing all this, Ambedkar was somewhat more sceptical of the Gandhian ideal of the self-governing village republic. He saw villages as 'cesspools' of caste oppression and social and economic backwardness, considering, from a Dalit point of view, the Indian village to be 'a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism'. It is true that a sort of democracy prevailed in ancient Indian villages: Kautilya's Arthashastra gives a comprehensive account of the system of village administration prevailing in antiquity, and evidence of the village panchayats is also discerned in the Mauryan and Chola dynasties and during the golden era of the Gupta period.

But Ambedkar was right to point to a major flaw in ancient India's democratic practice, the omission of an entire class of people. As he explained it: 'Indian villages represent a kind of colonialism of the Hindus designed to exploit the Untouchables. The Untouchables have no rights. They are there only to wait, serve and submit. They are there to do or to die. They have no rights because they are outside the village republic and because they are outside the so-called republic, they are outside the Hindu fold.'

However, such omissions also existed in Greece, where people classified as slaves and barbarians exercised no rights; and till well into the 20th century, an even larger community of people was excluded from all forms of democratic practice everywhere – women. Within the restricted category of male citizens, therefore, the ancient Indian village republics were just as democratic as the city-states of ancient Greece.

American political scientist David Stasavage has persuasively argued that efforts to create institutions that limited the power of any one actor in the political system are to be found in many parts of the world in the remote and the recent past; no single society can claim credit for it. As a corollary to Stasavage's argument, Indian democracy is as ancient as Greek democracy and both evolved independently, as did other states with assemblies throughout the rest of the world. Instead of conceiving of democracy as something that was invented, it is better to think of it as one of the elemental forms of government common to all of humanity. Democracy is our gift to ourselves – though of course, we must protect it, since like all gifts, it can also be snatched

away.

Ambedkar constantly expressed fear that the democracy he had helped create in the Constitution could be undemocratically transformed: 'It is quite possible for this new-born democracy to retain its form, but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there was a landslide of popular support, the danger of that possibility becoming an actuality is much greater.' Amid all the self-congratulation, it is fair to say that we have been warned.

Shashi Tharoor is third-term MP (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram and the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author of 24 books, including 'The Battle of Belonging: Patriotism, Nationalism and What It Means to Be Indian' and most recently, 'Ambedkar: A Life'

(Armaan Mathur assisted in the preparation of this article.)

COMMents

SHARE

Indian National Congress / Independence Day

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

Photo used for representation purpose only.

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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / generic drugs

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

KARNATAKA'S 'KOOSINA MANE' CRECHES

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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

COMMents

SHARE

children / Karnataka

BACK TO TOP

END

ELECTION COMMISSIONER, ARUN GOEL ATTENDS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON 'PRESERVING INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND PUBLIC TRUST IN ELECTIONS' IN BRASILIA, BRAZIL

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Elections, Election Commission and the Electoral Reforms in India Incl. Political Parties

The Election Commissioner of India, Shri Arun Goel, has participated in a significant international conference focused on "Preserving Information Integrity and Public Trust in Elections." The conference held in Brasilia, Brazil during August 14-15, 2023 was hosted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, Brazil.

Shri Arun Goel addressed the participants on "Mapping EMB Coordination and Communication with Technology and Social Media Companies'. Shri Goel shared insights, experiences and the measures taken by ECI to preserve information integrity in the digital age for conduct of free and fair elections including the Voluntary Code of Ethics for Social Media companies, that is operational since 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. While elaborating on the challenges of fake news during elections in the fast evolving communication and technology landscape, Shri Goel urged the EMBs to come together to devise Global Guidelines/Code for social media companies to safeguard the sanctity of elections.

The two day conference witnessed participation from Election Management bodies, experts, and stakeholders from different countries to engage in thoughtful discussions and exchange of ideas on critical issues related to maintaining the integrity of information in the context of elections and upholding public trust. As technology and communication channels evolve, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information becomes increasingly crucial to the democratic process.
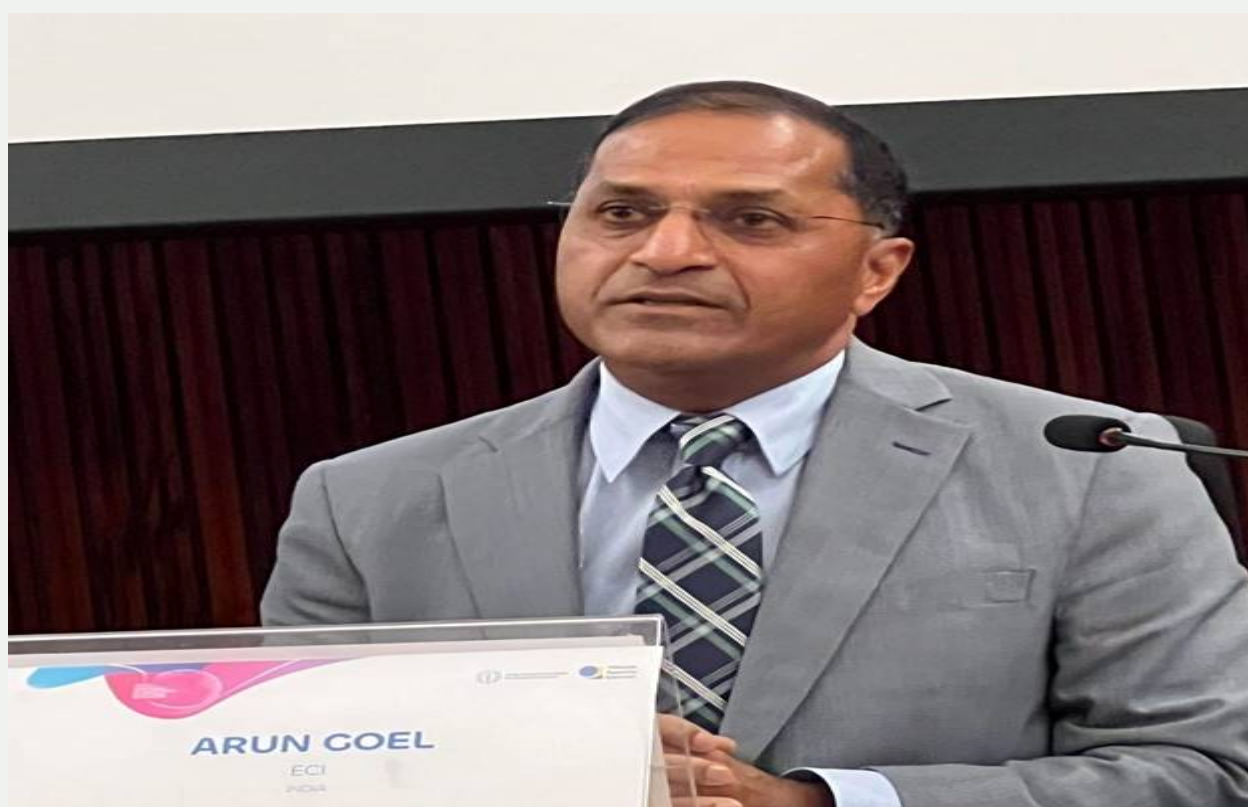
The conference provided a platform for participants to explore innovative strategies, best practices, and lessons learned from various countries. Discussions revolved around topics such as Institutional Strategic Planning for Information Integrity Threats; Strategic Communication and Voter Education; Crisis Communication Planning for Disinformation Threats; Coordination and Communication with Civil Society, Academia, Media, Political Parties and anticipating future threats and coordination with technology and social media companies. The exchange of knowledge and experiences will contribute to strengthening global cooperation in safeguarding democratic processes.

****

RP

The Election Commissioner of India, Shri Arun Goel, has participated in a significant international conference focused on "Preserving Information Integrity and Public Trust in Elections." The conference held in Brasilia, Brazil during August 14-15, 2023 was hosted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, Brazil.

Shri Arun Goel addressed the participants on "Mapping EMB Coordination and Communication with Technology and Social Media Companies'. Shri Goel shared insights, experiences and the measures taken by ECI to preserve information integrity in the digital age for conduct of free and fair elections including the Voluntary Code of Ethics for Social Media companies, that is operational since 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. While elaborating on the challenges of fake news during elections in the fast evolving communication and technology landscape, Shri Goel urged the EMBs to come together to devise Global Guidelines/Code for social media companies to safeguard the sanctity of elections.

The two day conference witnessed participation from Election Management bodies, experts, and stakeholders from different countries to engage in thoughtful discussions and exchange of ideas on critical issues related to maintaining the integrity of information in the context of elections and upholding public trust. As technology and communication channels evolve, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information becomes increasingly crucial to the democratic process.

The conference provided a platform for participants to explore innovative strategies, best practices, and lessons learned from various countries. Discussions revolved around topics such as Institutional Strategic Planning for Information Integrity Threats; Strategic Communication and Voter Education; Crisis Communication Planning for Disinformation Threats; Coordination and Communication with Civil Society, Academia, Media, Political Parties and anticipating future threats and coordination with technology and social media companies. The exchange of knowledge and experiences will contribute to strengthening global cooperation in safeguarding democratic processes.

****

RP

END

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

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

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

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

Healthcare workers collect the swa 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.

COMMents

SHARE

Coronavirus / G20

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH TO BE LAUNCHED UNDER INDIA'S G-20 PRESIDENCY

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 16, 2023 08:13 pm | Updated 10:21 pm IST - Gujarat

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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-it's-kind global initiate is aimed at data converge, 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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / G20

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

SCARCE NEWS, FAKE NEWS

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in internal security challenges

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 18, 2023 12:48 am | Updated 12:50 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

A placard is pictured at the site of a protest in Manipur's Churachandpur district on July 22, 2023. | Photo Credit: Reuters

The legwork for every ground report involves a fair deal of planning by the reporter in coordination with the local chauffeur. However, in the middle of a civil war in Manipur, one had to be extra cautious with the planning — every commute between the hills and the valley had to happen during daytime to ensure that the press/media tag on the car was visible from afar.

Discussing the next day's plan after wrapping up reporting the developments in Churachandpur, my Kuki-Zo driver said we will not be able to start early the next day. On enquiring, he said his Internet was no longer working. He had to travel for two hours to 'store some Internet'.

Shocked and intrigued in equal parts, I asked him how, even during an Internet ban, he was able to access the Internet. He then explained that every few days, his family and friends would travel in the car for two hours to the Manipur-Mizoram border. They would switch off their locations, turn on the data in their smartphones and access the Internet.

Before heading back they would spend a considerable amount of time browsing the Internet and downloading videos of the protests and atrocities.

These videos would then be sent through Bluetooth or transferred while accessing the Wi-Fi from the camps of the leaders. This would happen on both sides. In the valley, common folks could be seen visiting the locations of Meitei leaders or centres where the Wi-Fi was working. They would download videos from there, go back to camps, and share them with others. In both relief camps, displaced Meiteis and Kuki-Zos had access to videos of violence, but very few had access to non-partisan sources of news.

While speaking to these groups about the events that followed the May 3 violence, they showed pictures of deformed bodies and videos of houses being burnt. But none of these were captured by them. They would often struggle to point out the sources of these videos.

Some of these videos and photographs were later proved to be fake by media outlets outside the State.

Noises from smartphones would only convey partisan updates. For example, a displaced Meitei

in Imphal Valley pointed to the news of Meitei women who were assaulted at the Churachandpur Medical College. The fact that this turned out to be fake news never reached him.

There has been very little choice in terms of what news people have had access to since a blanket ban on the Internet came into effect. The common man is privy to information that is shared with him by the higher-ups. The reality is that news and updates of events were often distorted. Information was distributed by those in positions of power, to shape a narrative that suited their convenience.

A Kuki student, who I met at one of the camps as I was filing my story, was watching a video of a Meitei influencer saying that there will be fireworks in August. The student, who had to set aside his books to monitor social media since the start of the violence, was visibly stressed. He spoke of how such videos from the opposing camp helped his community understand the possible places and time frames of attacks.

Between downloading the online versions of his college text and monitoring social media, the Kuki student expressed concerns about his academic future. The 21-year-old, who wanted to pursue his Masters degree from one of the universities in Delhi, had missed the deadline because of the ethnic clashes followed by the Statewide Internet ban.

If people continue to spread videos of violence — sometimes that of real events and many times fabricated ones, what purpose does an Internet ban really serve in the State?

alisha.d@thehindu.co.in

COMMents

SHARE

[Manipur](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

WORD CHOICE IN INDIA'S DATA PROTECTION LAW AND A DILUTION OF RIGHTS

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Indian Constitution - Features & Significant Provisions related to Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles and Fundamental Duties

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 18, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 01:11 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'We need to look at two basic features of any data protection law: the use of personal data with consent and without it' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

After years of going back and forth on its contents, India finally has a data protection law, i.e., the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023. While small steps forward may be better than inertia or taking giant and hasty leaps, figuring out how far this law will take us requires that we understand how it protects our privacy in everyday situations and routinely touches our lives. In the search for an answer to this question, we need to look at two basic features of any data protection law: the use of personal data with consent and without it.

The classic problem in data protection is the standard for consent. When your data is being used, do you have a choice in the matter? For example, your Internet activity can be used to study you. An app could find out your religion from what you eat, your health status from your physical activity, or your sexuality from your movie preferences. Maybe you have given your phone number to a business while making a purchase, but do not want to be bombarded with marketing calls.

As decades of experience in India and other jurisdictions tell us, these are standard situations that even the most minimal data protection law must address. How does India's new law deal with such problems? There are two relevant provisions in the Act. One says that you should be properly informed about what you are agreeing to and only clear positive actions by you (as opposed to silence) will be taken to indicate consent. But this strict provision is undercut by a second provision permitting use of your data if you have "voluntarily provided" it and "have not indicated" that you do not consent. The choice of words is telling. If you "have not indicated" refusal, governments and businesses can assume your consent for various uses without notifying you. And who is to say you do not "provide" your data simply by visiting a public place or website, or making an online account? After all, "provide" is not the same as "share" or "transfer". This ambiguity will result in confusion in courts as well as business uncertainty about the correct standard for consent. In all likelihood, the weak standard will gobble up the strong one.

It should be apparent, however, that personal data cannot always be used with consent. For instance, a person's choices regarding their data can get in the way of various public functions

involving verification of identity, targeting of welfare benefits and implementation of laws. These functions can be thwarted by misrepresenting or withholding information. But does that mean there is no protection for such data? In previous drafts of the new law, your personal data could be used without consent only if it was "necessary" for a specified purpose in carrying out certain legitimate state functions, meeting legal requirements, and dealing with emergencies. The data fiduciary needed to demonstrate that they had no feasible alternatives to collecting and using the information in the manner that they had.

It is important to understand the significance of this: sometimes, consensual processing of data is very much feasible, if inconvenient. Even if consent is not feasible, specific methods of identity verification, or the use of sensitive data on health, religion, political affiliation, and sexuality may not be strictly necessary when designing and implementing many kinds of public programmes. For example, information on membership in a trade union is not necessary in assessing a job application, even if the employer thinks it is relevant for their purposes. If data is allowed to be processed even when it is not necessary, those doing so will always choose the more convenient route. Privacy will always be low priority. This is exactly what the 2023 law does — it allows processing without consent when it is "for" (and not "necessary for") certain legitimate uses. This small change in wording will make a huge difference in the actual level of protection provided.

What is more, when your data is processed without consent, you will neither be notified of this nor subsequently be able to confirm it. If you somehow find out that your data is being used, you will not have the right to get incorrect data corrected or unnecessary data erased. Data taken for one non-consensual purpose can be freely used for others. This is despite the fact that the Supreme Court of India has held principles such as necessity and purpose limitation to be a part of the right to informational privacy.

Editorial | [Falling short: On the Digital Data Protection law](#)

Others elsewhere have raised serious concerns about the way the new law deals with the rights to information and free speech, surveillance reform, and the regulatory structure. On the other hand, while the issues described in this article may seem like legal technicalities, they are in fact conscious policy choices substantially diluting rights that could otherwise have been provided for.

If we want this law to meaningfully protect personal data, it is essential that we find ways to tackle these shortcomings.

Sunetra Ravindran is a Team Lead at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Lalit Panda is a Senior Resident Fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. The views expressed are personal

COMMents

SHARE

[data protection](#) / [laws](#) / [India](#) / [judiciary (system of justice)](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

NOBLE INTENTIONS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE PM VISHWAKARMA SCHEME FOR TRADITIONAL WORKERS

Relevant for: null | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 18, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:10 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

The PM Vishwakarma scheme approved by the Cabinet on Wednesday to help traditional craftspeople and artisans can provide an economic boost to these professionals. Announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day speech, the scheme, with an outlay of 13,000 crore, provides loans of up to a total of 3 lakh (in two tranches) at a concessional interest rate of 5%. It covers individuals from 18 trades such as cobblers, toy makers, laundrymen, barbers, masons and coir weavers. The government expects about five lakh families to be covered in the first year and 30 lakh families to benefit from the scheme over five years. But the scheme can help craftspeople and artisans only to the extent of freeing them from the difficulties they now face in accessing affordable credit from the formal banking system. However, the support extended to these struggling artisanal communities could come with its own risks in the way of unintended consequences. The challenges they face are far deeper than just the availability of cheap credit. By far the biggest of these that traditional art and craft professionals face is either the lack of patronage for their goods and services in the wider marketplace, or in the case of other trades, a skewed undervaluation of their economic output.

Crucially, the lack of access to formal credit may simply be a symptom rather than the cause of the underlying problem these communities face. No government scheme can help these communities in the long run unless it helps them overcome the fundamental problem of a lack of economic viability for their output. More seriously, if the scheme fails to open up new markets and simply extends loans to these communities in the name of promoting their welfare, it runs the risk of leaving not only the intended beneficiaries but also their families deeper in debt. Also, by laying stress on the intergenerational nature of knowledge dissemination in these communities, the scheme could end up leaving the next generation willy-nilly stuck for perpetuity in these traditional low-paying trades, many of which are practised in a caste straitjacket. The Vishwakarma scheme includes skilling programmes that offer a nominal stipend as well as financial help to purchase modern tools. Ultimately, the success of this well-intentioned scheme will hinge on its implementation, an area where the government would do well to rope in professionals with the know-how and entrepreneurial flair to help the craftspeople and artisans upgrade their offerings to cater to new markets and tap fresh opportunities.

COMMents

SHARE

employment / government / welfare / banking / Independence Day

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 18, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:20 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

WHO ASKS COUNTRIES TO WORK TOWARDS UNLOCKING THE POWER OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 17, 2023 06:46 pm | Updated 06:46 pm IST - GANDHINAGAR

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / medicine

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

INDIA PHARMA ALLY, BUT MUST MEET U.S. STANDARDS: U.S. HEALTH SECRETARY

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 18, 2023 08:40 pm | Updated August 19, 2023 12:47 am IST - GANDHINAGAR

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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 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.

COMMents

SHARE

health / G20

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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@trai.gov.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

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@trai.gov.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

EXPLAINED

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 20, 2023 03:56 am | Updated 03:56 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

The Hindu Explains / medicine / health

BACK TO TOP

END

G20 INDIA PRESIDENCY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

In line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of an inclusive, ambitious, and action oriented G20 Presidency, the G20 Health Minister's Meeting concluded with the adoption of an Outcome Document, as well as the launch of the Global Initiative of Digital Health which aims to consolidate and amplify recent and past gains in global digital health for health systems while strengthening mutual accountability to enhance the impact of future investments in healthcare.

As the G20 Health Minister's Meeting drew to a close in Gandhinagar, Gujarat today, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare said "Let us continue working together, fostering collaborations, and leveraging the potential of digital health, research, and innovation to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for all. We must continue to ensure multilateral cooperation and, nurture partnerships in the field of health. It is vital to share expertise, resources, and strategies, to address global health challenges effectively." He was joined by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization (WHO), Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar, and Prof S.P. Singh Baghel.

The second day of the Health Minister's Meeting saw sessions on India's two G20 Health Priorities- Strengthening Cooperation in Pharmaceutical Sector with focus on Availability & Access to Safe, Effective, Quality and Affordable Medical Countermeasures- Vaccine, Therapeutics & Diagnostics, and Digital Health Innovation & Solutions to aid Universal Health Coverage & Improve Healthcare Service Delivery. The last day of the G20 Health Minister's Meeting also saw the 1st Joint Finance and Health Ministerial under the Indian Presidency.

Dr. Mandaviya while speaking about medical countermeasures said, "We as G20 countries need

to work towards strengthening global collaboration to ensure accessibility and availability of equitable medical countermeasures particularly focusing on LMICs and LICs."

Underlining the importance of global collaboration and partnerships, the Union Health Minister stated "As G20 members it is our collective responsibility to create a "minimum viable product" by leveraging the lowest common denominator." He further added "India's G20 presidency prioritised this agenda in alignment with other forums including G7, WHO, and Johannesburg processes to create a Global medical countermeasure coordination mechanism adopting a "Network of Networks" approach."

Dr. Mandaviya reiterated, "The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted that the world needs a coordinated strategy to manage any health emergency, and to facilitate accessibility and availability of equitable medical countermeasures, specifically to those in need in an equitable manner." He further stated "The effects of Climate Change is the biggest threat that humanity is currently facing and it is having an immense impact on health systems. I'm heartened to learn that the Asian Development Bank will be establishing the Climate and Health Initiative to work on mitigating this impact as well as building climate resilience within global health system architecture."

Dr Ghebreyesus, stated that vaccines, treatments and other products, play a central role in combating the Covid-19 pandemic. He emphasized that it is imperative to bridge the existing gaps, hence there is a need of a mechanism that enables accessibility to life-saving tools and stated "We are stronger when we work together."

During the second session of the day, a World Bank Report titled Digital-in-Health: Unlocking the Value for Everyone, was launched. It presents a new way of thinking from simple digitization of health data to fully integrating digital technology in health systems. It focuses on infusing digital technologies in health financing, service delivery, diagnostics, medical education, pandemic preparedness, climate and health efforts, nutrition, and aging.

The first Joint Finance and Health Ministerial was chaired by Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Union Finance Minister, and Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya. In the course of discussions in the Meeting, the Finance and Health Ministers expressed their commitment to continue strengthening the global health architecture for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPR) through enhanced collaboration between Finance and Health Ministries under the Joint Finance and Health Task Force (JFHTF). At the Task Force meeting, Dr. Mandaviya announced the First Call for proposals by the Pandemic Fund. He further said, "It's worth noting that more than 75% of the projects, that will receive support from this initial Call are located within LICs/LMICs Countries. He further acknowledged the need for Day Zero Financing as a crucial lesson for future health crises. In this regard, he said, "There is a need to converge the ongoing efforts to build a mechanism, to address this issue in G20 and G7 along with WHO & World Bank. Sustaining this collaboration beyond the emergency phase and exploring various coordination arrangements will aid G20 countries and the wider international community in developing critical strategies and approaches, for finance and health institutional coordination."

At the meeting Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman said "The Task Force under Indian Presidency has adopted a multi-year work plan for the first time and has also invited selected key regional organizations, thereby enhancing the voice of low-income countries." The Ministers welcomed the outputs delivered by the JFHTF during the course of the Indian Presidency which include the following:

The Framework for Economic Vulnerabilities and Risks (FEVR) created through collaboration between World Health Organization, World Bank, IMF, and European Investment Bank.

The Report on Mapping Pandemic Response Financing Options and Gaps developed by the WHO and the World Bank.

The Report on Best Practices on Finance Health Institutional Arrangements during Covid-19.

Shri VK Paul (Member) Health, NITI Aayog, Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Shri Rajeev Bahl, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, Shri Lav Aggarwal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and other senior officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare participated in the event. Health Ministers and delegates of the G20 member countries and invitee countries, as well as representatives of various international organization also joined the meeting.

****

MV/JJ

HFW/HMM Day 2 /19th Aug2023/3

In line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of an inclusive, ambitious, and action oriented G20 Presidency, the G20 Health Minister's Meeting concluded with the adoption of an Outcome Document, as well as the launch of the Global Initiative of Digital Health which aims to consolidate and amplify recent and past gains in global digital health for health systems while strengthening mutual accountability to enhance the impact of future investments in healthcare.

As the G20 Health Minister's Meeting drew to a close in Gandhinagar, Gujarat today, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare said "Let us continue working together, fostering collaborations, and leveraging the potential of digital health, research, and innovation to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for all. We must continue to ensure multilateral cooperation and, nurture partnerships in the field of health. It is vital to share expertise, resources, and strategies, to address global health challenges effectively." He was joined by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, World Health Organization (WHO), Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar, and Prof S.P. Singh Baghel.

The second day of the Health Minister's Meeting saw sessions on India's two G20 Health Priorities- Strengthening Cooperation in Pharmaceutical Sector with focus on Availability & Access to Safe, Effective, Quality and Affordable Medical Countermeasures- Vaccine, Therapeutics & Diagnostics, and Digital Health Innovation & Solutions to aid Universal Health Coverage & Improve Healthcare Service Delivery. The last day of the G20 Health Minister's Meeting also saw the 1st Joint Finance and Health Ministerial under the Indian Presidency.

Dr. Mandaviya while speaking about medical countermeasures said, "We as G20 countries need to work towards strengthening global collaboration to ensure accessibility and availability of equitable medical countermeasures particularly focusing on LMICs and LICs."

Underlining the importance of global collaboration and partnerships, the Union Health Minister stated "As G20 members it is our collective responsibility to create a "minimum viable product"

by leveraging the lowest common denominator." He further added "India's G20 presidency prioritised this agenda in alignment with other forums including G7, WHO, and Johannesburg processes to create a Global medical countermeasure coordination mechanism adopting a "Network of Networks" approach."

Dr. Mandaviya reiterated, "The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted that the world needs a coordinated strategy to manage any health emergency, and to facilitate accessibility and availability of equitable medical countermeasures, specifically to those in need in an equitable manner." He further stated "The effects of Climate Change is the biggest threat that humanity is currently facing and it is having an immense impact on health systems. I'm heartened to learn that the Asian Development Bank will be establishing the Climate and Health Initiative to work on mitigating this impact as well as building climate resilience within global health system architecture."

Dr Ghebreyesus, stated that vaccines, treatments and other products, play a central role in combating the Covid-19 pandemic. He emphasized that it is imperative to bridge the existing gaps, hence there is a need of a mechanism that enables accessibility to life-saving tools and stated "We are stronger when we work together."

During the second session of the day, a World Bank Report titled Digital-in-Health: Unlocking the Value for Everyone, was launched. It presents a new way of thinking from simple digitization of health data to fully integrating digital technology in health systems. It focuses on infusing digital technologies in health financing, service delivery, diagnostics, medical education, pandemic preparedness, climate and health efforts, nutrition, and aging.

The first Joint Finance and Health Ministerial was chaired by Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Union Finance Minister, and Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya. In the course of discussions in the Meeting, the Finance and Health Ministers expressed their commitment to continue strengthening the global health architecture for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPR) through enhanced collaboration between Finance and Health Ministries under the Joint Finance and Health Task Force (JFHTF). At the Task Force meeting, Dr. Mandaviya announced the First Call for proposals by the Pandemic Fund. He further said, "It's worth noting that more than 75% of the projects, that will receive support from this initial Call are located within LICs/LMICs Countries. He further acknowledged the need for Day Zero Financing as a crucial lesson for future health crises. In this regard, he said, "There is a need to converge the ongoing efforts to build a mechanism, to address this issue in G20 and G7 along with WHO & World Bank. Sustaining this collaboration beyond the emergency phase and exploring various coordination arrangements will aid G20 countries and the wider international community in developing critical strategies and approaches, for finance and health institutional coordination."

At the meeting Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman said "The Task Force under Indian Presidency has adopted a multi-year work plan for the first time and has also invited selected key regional organizations, thereby enhancing the voice of low-income countries." The Ministers welcomed the outputs delivered by the JFHTF during the course of the Indian Presidency which include the following:

The Framework for Economic Vulnerabilities and Risks (FEVR) created through collaboration between World Health Organization, World Bank, IMF, and European Investment Bank.

The Report on Mapping Pandemic Response Financing Options and Gaps developed by the WHO and the World Bank.

The Report on Best Practices on Finance Health Institutional Arrangements during Covid-19.

Shri VK Paul (Member) Health, NITI Aayog, Shri Sudhansh Pant, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Shri Rajeev Bahl, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, Shri Lav Aggarwal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and other senior officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare participated in the event. Health Ministers and delegates of the G20 member countries and invitee countries, as well as representatives of various international organization also joined the meeting.

****

MV/JJ

HFW/HMM Day 2 /19th Aug2023/3

END

WHY SHIMLA IS CRUMBLING

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 21, 2023 12:35 am | Updated 12:35 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

A landslide-affected area in Shimla. | Photo Credit: PTI

Rains have recently [wreaked havoc in Himachal Pradesh](), particularly Shimla. Heavy precipitation in the Summer Hill area of the State capital resulted in flash floods and the [collapse of a temple]() which claimed over 15 lives. A landslide led to the destruction of many buildings in Krishnanagar area and left two dead. Landslides around Shimla have damaged roads and brought life to a standstill.

This is not unprecedented. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states that the coastal areas and the Himalayas are poised to experience a rise in extreme climate events and a shift in rainfall patterns. Consequently, the developmental strategies for the Himalayan region should prioritise climate resilience instead of solely pursuing unguided infrastructure expansion.

Regrettably, in Shimla, infrastructure development has not been climate smart. An analysis of several incidents reveals a pattern. In Summer Hill, the temple was constructed within a gorge. This was also the location of a water supply system for Totu, a suburb of Shimla. In Krishnanagar, houses were erected atop water *bauris* (natural water springs). When structures come up in areas closely linked to a water source, they become susceptible to disasters. There are around 25 major springs and over 100 water *bauris* in Shimla.

Editorial | [A necessary brake: On altered weather patterns and infrastructure development]()

The shift in building strategies began after the 1990s, facilitated by the advent of reinforced cement concrete. A prime example of this transformation is the New Shimla region, which was known for paddy cultivation. This area spans numerous water bodies. Empowered by the strength of reinforced cement concrete, people believed that water flow could be controlled and directed, leading to deliberate human settlements in water spaces, including ravines. Two significant development projects have been established directly atop substantial water springs and *nallahs* (water channels): the Himachal Pradesh High Court Lawyers Chambers and the new Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital building. They have been constructed on waterways that remain perennial, but can become tumultuous during the monsoon season.

The recent heavy precipitation at Summer Hill raises concerns about the fate of such substantial infrastructure funded by public resources. Typically, matters related to land use should be

addressed within a comprehensive development plan, often referred to as the city's master plan. However, Shimla has been run with an interim development plan since 1979. Adding to this complexity, the planning for Shimla is not overseen by the elected city government. Instead, it falls under the jurisdiction of a parastatal, namely the town and country planning department, which operates without any democratic oversight and relies heavily on computer-simulated plans, often guided by inputs from large technological consultancy firms.

Currently, the Shimla Development Plan (SDP) is pending before the Supreme Court. One critical oversight of the current SDP is the absence of a climate action plan that should ideally precede it. The existing SDP appears to be primarily focused on creating urban spaces with designations like 'core' and 'open heritage'; yet it lacks the necessary emphasis on addressing climate-related challenges.

What the SDP does necessitate is a zonal and sub-zonal planning approach, which is important in Shimla, a region with unique geographical features. It is imperative that zones and sub-zones are meticulously defined based on comprehensive geological data and thorough studies. Subsequently, this information should guide the determination of the floor area ratio. The zoning strategy should dictate the regions where the city cannot support further settlements. Conversely, areas with robust rock foundations should be permitted to undergo vertical expansion, but all decisions should be rooted in solid geological and structural foundations. This approach aims to strike a balance between urban development and the preservation of the city's unique geological features.

The priority now should be to initiate comprehensive water contouring, which can be accomplished through a combination of satellite imagery and active participation from the community. Upon achieving this, the rallying cry of Shimla's citizens should resonate with the 'no means no' slogan, which is prevalent in the Sutlej valley.

Tikender Singh Panwar is an author, former directly elected Deputy Mayor of Shimla, and an urban practitioner. He is also a senior Fellow with the Impact and Policy Research Institute (IMPRI), Delhi

COMMents

SHARE

Himachal Pradesh / Shimla / environmental issues / natural disasters

BACK TO TOP

END

THE YOUTH 20 (Y20) SUMMIT CONCLUDES SUCCESSFULLY TODAY IN VARANASI, UTTAR PRADESH

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

Under the overall framework of G20 Presidency, the Y20 India engagement Group meeting concluded successfully in Varanasi today (20th August, 2023).

Y20, as part of overall framework of G20 under Presidency of India has set new milestones for the world. During the summit, Y20 Communiqué was discussed and negotiated, thereafter, it has been signed successfully with unanimous consent.

The major recommendations included in the Communique are -

A plenary session was held on the last day in Rudraksh International Cooperation and Convention Centre (RICCC). Sh. Sharad Vivek Sagar, Sh. Anmol Sovit, Y20 India; Sh. Pathikrit Payne, Coordination Head, Y20 India; Sh. Falit Sijariya, Head of Delegation, Y20 India and Smt. Aditi Narayani Paswan, Track Chair, Y20 India led the session. The Y20 2023 communiqué was released by the troika countries comprising of Chair Y20 India, Indonesia Organising Committee Representative and Brazil Organising Committee Representative. The Flag was officially handed over by Y20 India Chair to the Brazilian Head of Delegation.

Outcome of the Summit in form of the Y20 Communiqué was signed by Heads of Delegation, which marked the conclusion of the various discussions held during the last few months. It is a testament to the collective common vision across the five identified themes of Y20, which will ensure that the voices of young people are heard by the highest-level decision-makers on global platform.

During the 4 day summit, delegates visited Sarnath, the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Ganga ghat during a river cruise. India's rich art, culture and heritage left a long-lasting impression on the delegates from across the world. Rich and diverse cultural heritage of the holy city of Varanasi; its spirituality, literature, art, and music also mesmerized the delegates from G20 countries, guest countries and international organisations.

The Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India were entrusted with the responsibility to organize Youth20 (Y20) Summit-2023. A number of events were organised including the Y20 Curtain Raiser in New Delhi, Inception meeting in Guwahati, Y20 Pre-Summit at Leh, Ladakh, 14 Y20 Consultations at various universities across the country and 50 brainstorming sessions each by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).

*****

NB/SK

has been signed successfully with unanimous consent.

The major recommendations included in the Communique are -

A plenary session was held on the last day in Rudraksh International Cooperation and Convention Centre (RICCC). Sh. Sharad Vivek Sagar, Sh. Anmol Sovit, Y20 India; Sh. Pathikrit Payne, Coordination Head, Y20 India; Sh. Falit Sijariya, Head of Delegation, Y20 India and Smt. Aditi Narayani Paswan, Track Chair, Y20 India led the session. The Y20 2023 communiqué was released by the troika countries comprising of Chair Y20 India, Indonesia Organising Committee Representative and Brazil Organising Committee Representative. The Flag was officially handed over by Y20 India Chair to the Brazilian Head of Delegation.

Outcome of the Summit in form of the Y20 Communiqué was signed by Heads of Delegation, which marked the conclusion of the various discussions held during the last few months. It is a testament to the collective common vision across the five identified themes of Y20, which will ensure that the voices of young people are heard by the highest-level decision-makers on global platform.

During the 4 day summit, delegates visited Sarnath, the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Ganga ghat during a river cruise. India's rich art, culture and heritage left a long-lasting impression on the delegates from across the world. Rich and diverse cultural heritage of the holy city of Varanasi; its spirituality, literature, art, and music also mesmerized the delegates from G20 countries, guest countries and international organisations.

The Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India were entrusted with the responsibility to organize Youth20 (Y20) Summit-2023. A number of events were organised including the Y20 Curtain Raiser in New Delhi, Inception meeting in Guwahati, Y20 Pre-Summit at Leh, Ladakh, 14 Y20 Consultations at various universities across the country and 50 brainstorming sessions each by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).

*****

NB/SK

END

G20 INDIA PRESIDENCY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

"Our vision is clear, our goals are ambitious, and our determination is unyielding." This was stated by Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers in his keynote address to the Indian Industry leaders in pharmaceuticals, and G20 Ministers and Delegates, on the sidelines of the G20 Health Minister's Meeting in Gandhinagar.

Dr. Mandaviya proudly acknowledged India's prowess in the pharmaceuticals and medical devices field, emphasizing its role as a global hub for pharmaceutical excellence. "India is recognized as a cornerstone in the global pharmaceutical landscape," he stated. The country's dedication to providing affordable, high-quality drugs and its significant contribution to global accessibility were underscored, with India supplying around 60% of the world's vaccine needs and 20-22% of generic exports.

Dr. Mandaviya underscored India's unwavering commitment to the well-being of humanity, particularly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. "In the battle against the pandemic, India supplied essential drugs to approximately 185 countries," he proudly shared, emphasizing India's role as a global leader.

The keynote address focused on India's vision for the future of healthcare, centered around a transition from volume-based approaches to a value-based leadership model. "Our commitment to quality, accessibility, and affordability in healthcare is unwavering," he added. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's government is resolute in driving meaningful change in the healthcare sector.

Acknowledging the paramount importance of research and development in healthcare advancement, Dr. Mandaviya announced India's strides in fostering an innovative environment. He stated that India is in the final stages of introducing a national policy to promoting research and development and innovation in the pharma-medical devices sectors.

Dr. Mandaviya's call to action resonated throughout his address, inviting countries, government bodies, industry leaders, healthcare professionals, and researchers to join forces in a united effort. "Our collective strength has the potential to elevate the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors to unprecedented heights," he proclaimed. Dr. Mandaviya emphasized, "Healthcare is not just a sector, but a mission, one that aligns with India's commitment to providing the highest quality healthcare to every citizen. Our pharmaceutical and medical devices industry stands as a vital partner in this mission," he reaffirmed.

Mr. Budi G Sadikin, Minister of Health for the Republic of Indonesia, and Dr. Ernst Kuipers, Minister of Netherlands in their opening remarks highlighted India' success in health, and pharmacology, and stressed the need for collaboration between nations. "The medicines manufactured in India saves lives- in Netherlands, in Europe and across the world. I look forward to intensified collaboration with India. There are tremendous opportunities for partnership in innovative medicines. With the capacity and knowledge that India has in generic and specific drugs, we look forward to more integrated collaboration with India." Dr. Kuipers said.

Dr. Mandaviya also had a successful bilateral meeting with the Indonesian Health Minister today. They discussed several issues of cooperation and collaboration in the health sector.

Ms. S Aparna, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, at the event, highlighted that a platform like this provides an opportunity for industry, and governments across the global to learn from each other, and to support each other towards a common goal of Universal Health Coverage.

She also stressed on the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic, and said, "The pandemic has taught us that the response to health emergencies cannot be created at will, they require long term development and investment."

Dr. Mandaviya also led a delegation of G20 delegates and ministers, including the Indonesian Health Minister, Mr. Budi G Sadikin to a Jan Aushadhi Kendra to share with them India's success in providing, accessible, affordable, and quality medicines to it's citizens.

Mr. Budi Gunadi Sadikin after the visit said, "I want to give the best medicines to my people in Indonesia. I have seen many models of different countries, and India 's Jan Aushadhi Kendra model the best in the world in terms of providing quality, accessibility and affordability of medicines to the people. "

****

MV/JJ

C&F/Industry-G2O Minister interaction /20th Aug2023/1

"Our vision is clear, our goals are ambitious, and our determination is unyielding." This was stated by Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers in his keynote address to the Indian Industry leaders in pharmaceuticals, and G20 Ministers and Delegates, on the sidelines of the G20 Health Minister's Meeting in Gandhinagar.

Dr. Mandaviya proudly acknowledged India's prowess in the pharmaceuticals and medical devices field, emphasizing its role as a global hub for pharmaceutical excellence. "India is recognized as a cornerstone in the global pharmaceutical landscape," he stated. The country's dedication to providing affordable, high-quality drugs and its significant contribution to global accessibility were underscored, with India supplying around 60% of the world's vaccine needs and 20-22% of generic exports.

Dr. Mandaviya underscored India's unwavering commitment to the well-being of humanity, particularly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. "In the battle against the pandemic, India supplied essential drugs to approximately 185 countries," he proudly shared, emphasizing India's role as a global leader.

The keynote address focused on India's vision for the future of healthcare, centered around a transition from volume-based approaches to a value-based leadership model. "Our commitment to quality, accessibility, and affordability in healthcare is unwavering," he added. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's government is resolute in driving meaningful change in the healthcare sector.

Acknowledging the paramount importance of research and development in healthcare advancement, Dr. Mandaviya announced India's strides in fostering an innovative environment. He stated that India is in the final stages of introducing a national policy to promoting research and development and innovation in the pharma-medical devices sectors.

Dr. Mandaviya's call to action resonated throughout his address, inviting countries, government bodies, industry leaders, healthcare professionals, and researchers to join forces in a united effort. "Our collective strength has the potential to elevate the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors to unprecedented heights," he proclaimed. Dr. Mandaviya emphasized, "Healthcare is not just a sector, but a mission, one that aligns with India's commitment to providing the highest quality healthcare to every citizen. Our pharmaceutical and medical devices industry stands as a vital partner in this mission," he reaffirmed.

Mr. Budi G Sadikin, Minister of Health for the Republic of Indonesia, and Dr. Ernst Kuipers, Minister of Netherlands in their opening remarks highlighted India' success in health, and pharmacology, and stressed the need for collaboration between nations. "The medicines manufactured in India saves lives- in Netherlands, in Europe and across the world. I look forward to intensified collaboration with India. There are tremendous opportunities for partnership in innovative medicines. With the capacity and knowledge that India has in generic and specific drugs, we look forward to more integrated collaboration with India." Dr. Kuipers said.

Dr. Mandaviya also had a successful bilateral meeting with the Indonesian Health Minister today. They discussed several issues of cooperation and collaboration in the health sector.

Ms. S Aparna, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, at the event, highlighted that a platform like this provides an opportunity for industry, and governments across the global to learn from each other, and to support each other towards a common goal of Universal Health Coverage.

She also stressed on the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic, and said, "The pandemic has taught us that the response to health emergencies cannot be created at will, they require long term development and investment."

Dr. Mandaviya also led a delegation of G20 delegates and ministers, including the Indonesian Health Minister, Mr. Budi G Sadikin to a Jan Aushadhi Kendra to share with them India's success in providing, accessible, affordable, and quality medicines to it's citizens.

Mr. Budi Gunadi Sadikin after the visit said, "I want to give the best medicines to my people in Indonesia. I have seen many models of different countries, and India 's Jan Aushadhi Kendra model the best in the world in terms of providing quality, accessibility and affordability of medicines to the people. "

****

MV/JJ

C&F/Industry-G2O Minister interaction /20th Aug2023/1

END

WINS AND WINNINGS: ON FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP AND SPAIN'S MAIDEN WIN

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 22, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:10 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

soccer / Spain / Australia / New Zealand / Japan

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

soccer / Spain / Australia / New Zealand / Japan

BACK TO TOP

THE OPAQUENESS OF TANSCHE

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 22, 2023 12:15 am | Updated 12:15 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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 (TANSCHE), 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.

TANSCHE 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 TANSCHE. 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 TANSCHE 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 TANSCHE 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 TANSCHE 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 TANSCHE 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 TANSCHE.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

DEEP IN DISARRAY: ON THE LARGER MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANIPUR NOT BEING CONVENED

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 22, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 07:40 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

That the Legislative Assembly of Manipur was not convened on Monday, as recommended by the Council of Ministers, is an indication of how grave the crisis gripping the State is. Governor Anusuiya Uikey did not issue the notification summoning the House, even though the Cabinet had advised her on August 4 itself to call for the session on August 21. The delay on the part of Raj Bhavan in issuing the notification is presumably due to the political and law and order situation in the State. Legislators of Kuki ethnicity, across party affiliations, have expressed their inability to attend the Assembly session due to the prevailing atmosphere, as violence continues in parts of the State. It is unlikely that the Governor is unaware of the constitutional position that she is bound by the advice of the government with regard to summoning the Assembly. A Constitution Bench had made this clear in Nabam Rebia (2016). Whether the Governor is guided by her own wisdom or the Union government's assessment of the situation, it is difficult to justify the failure to hold the Assembly session as sought by the Council of Ministers. The last session of the Manipur Assembly was held in March, and the House has to meet again before the expiry of six months from its previous sitting. The period ends on September 2.

There have been both political and civil society demands for the Assembly to meet and discuss the violence that broke out early in May over a High Court order that directed the Manipur government to respond to a communication from the Union Ministry for Tribal Affairs on recommending the grant of Scheduled Tribe status to the Meitei community. The delay on the Governor's part in notifying the session casts a shadow on the legitimacy and authority of the government headed by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh. The Governor would be well-advised to act on the Cabinet's recommendation. On another issue, there appears to be an unusual delay in the appointment of Justice Siddharth Mridul, a judge of the Delhi High Court, as the Manipur High Court's Chief Justice. The court has been under an Acting Chief Justice for several months now. Reports suggest that the Centre has forwarded the Collegium's recommendation to the State government for its consent. The question arises whether any constitutional functionary in the State is holding back the process. The chain of events set off by an order passed by the Acting Chief Justice has already witnessed much violence and disorder, and the State should not lapse into further constitutional disarray.

COMMents

SHARE

[Manipur](#) / [politics](#) / [Governor](#) / [Reservation](#) / [tribals](#) / [judiciary (system of justice)](#) / [unrest, conflicts and war](#) / [constitution](#)

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our [community guidelines](#) for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

PRIME MINISTER'S DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE FOR NORTH EASTERN REGION (PM-DEVINE)-ISSUE OF REVISED GUIDELINES

Relevant for: null | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

The Government's fully funded PM-DevINE scheme, announced in the 2022-23 Union Budget, supports North-East infrastructure and social projects aligned with PM GatiShakti, generating youth and women's livelihoods while addressing sector gaps. Union Cabinet approved the scheme on 12.10.2022. Revised guidelines are essential due to restructuring MDoNER's schemes and aligning with recent Department of Expenditure directives. Earlier guidelines circulated on 29.08.2022.

Effective from 12.10.2022, these guidelines govern all PM-DevINE projects. Actions under previous guidelines (29.08.2022) also subject to the new guidelines from 12.10.2022, pending Competent Authority's approval for resolving any issues."

Under 'PM-DevINE', all eight North Eastern Indian states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura will be covered. This scheme will complement existing Government of India and State Government initiatives, avoiding duplication by supporting projects not covered elsewhere. MDoNER will oversee project selection, approval, and monitoring in consultation with State Governments, NEC, and concerned Central Ministries, with implementation through NEC or Central Ministries/agencies. The guidelines outline the process, including project identification, selection, DPR preparation, sanction, fund release, monitoring, and completion. The scheme's 'Competent Authority' is the Minister, MDoNER, unless specified otherwise.

The objectives of "PM-DevINE" align with the Ministry of DoNER's vision of accelerating sustainable development in the North Eastern Region to ensure improved living standards for its citizens. These goals encompass rapid and comprehensive growth through infrastructure and social projects, promoting youth and women's livelihoods, and addressing developmental gaps across sectors.

An Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee (EIMC) will be established, chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. This committee will include representatives from pertinent line Ministries, the North Eastern Council, and other relevant entities.

The Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee (EIMC) is tasked with various functions within the scope of PM-DevINE:

Firstly, it assesses initial project proposals based on quality, viability, and socio-economic impact, working alongside representatives from relevant Indian Government Ministries/Departments and State Governments. It then recommends project selection from among these proposals.

Secondly, it evaluates final project proposals received from State Level Empowered Committees (SLECs), incorporating feedback from central line Ministries/Departments. It provides suitable recommendations for approval by the Competent Authority.

Additionally, the EIMC proposes effective monitoring and evaluation methods, which may

involve on-site inspections through third-party agencies. It oversees project progress through NEC/SLEC/Central Agencies, ensuring accountability.

The committee also devises mechanisms for the operation and maintenance of PM-DevINE projects, aiming to ensure their sustainability.

Lastly, the EIMC addresses any issues forwarded by NEC or SLEC regarding project implementation challenges or guideline clarifications. It offers recommendations, potentially suggesting minor adjustments to Scheme provisions to alleviate difficulties.

EIMC will meet as frequently as needed, but at least once in three months. EIMC can meet physically, virtually or in hybrid mode, at New Delhi or at any other place in the NER.

State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC)

The State Governments will establish a State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC) led by the Chief Secretary, with the Secretary of Planning as the Convenor. It will include Finance and relevant Secretaries from State Government Departments, as well as necessary technical experts. The NEC will have representation through its Planning Adviser or delegate. The Ministry of DoNER will be represented by the Senior Economic Adviser/Economic Adviser/Joint Secretary responsible for PM-DevINE, along with the Financial Adviser or their representative. External representatives from reputable institutions may also be invited to SLEC meetings.

The functions of the SLEC encompass several aspects, including reviewing and prioritizing preliminary project proposals for PM-DevINE, ensuring alignment with guidelines, approving DPRs/techno-economic evaluations, monitoring project implementation, enhancing project management systems, establishing effective Operation and Maintenance mechanisms, addressing implementation issues, and proposing modifications if required.

SLEC meetings will be held as necessary, at least once every three months, and can be conducted in physical, virtual, or hybrid formats.

The PM-DEVINE scheme's approved expenditure for the designated period follows recommendations from the EFC and Union Cabinet approval. The 2022-23 to 2025-26 period has an approved outlay of Rs. 6,600 crore, with an initial allocation of Rs. 1,500 crore for FY 2022-23. The aim is to expedite project completion by 2025-26 to minimize liabilities beyond this period, potentially necessitating early sanctions.

Regarding project selection, North Eastern States must establish Gati Shakti implementation mechanisms like Empowered Group of Secretaries, Network Planning Group, and Technical Support Unit, along with notifying a State Logistics Policy and updating Gati Shakti National Master Plan data layers, including land revenue maps. States not meeting these criteria won't receive new PM-DevINE project sanctions from 2023-24 onwards. Project selection will be based on alignment with scheme guidelines and project quality, ensuring viability and socio-economic impact. While a fixed allocation isn't set, efforts will ensure all North Eastern States can benefit from the scheme.

The Budget 2022-23 introduced seven PM-DevINE projects (Annexure A). Relevant State or Central Government Departments should create additional project proposals aligned with scheme objectives, avoiding the Negative List. Focus sectors include economic and social infrastructure, livelihood activities, and gap filling (2.1.1). Proposals may come from North Eastern States recommended by SLEC, or Central Ministries/Departments through their respective recommendations, with priority for State-posed projects (2.1.2). Planning and

selection should align with State-wise GatiShakti Master Plans, converging with the National GatiShakti approach.

Under PM-DEVINE, certain project types/components are ineligible, including those that provide long-term individual benefits or "Direct Benefit Transfer" elements. Additionally, projects already funded or planned by relevant line Ministries (to avoid duplication), land/site acquisition, and staff expenses are not covered. The scheme excludes projects for administrative buildings of government offices/agencies or institutional needs. Sectors already covered by other MDoNER schemes are also ineligible. Furthermore, any sector-specific projects specified in the Negative List by the Ministry of DoNER are not considered under PM-DEVINE.

The PM-DEVINE scheme outlines project size and support details. Projects should range from a minimum of Rs. 20 crore to a maximum of Rs. 500 crore in cost, using the latest Schedule of Rates (SOR) of the relevant central line department/State Government for cost estimation. In cases without available SORs, estimates can be prepared by concerned departments adhering to existing rules and practices of the relevant Indian Government line Ministry, followed by techno-economic vetting by reputable institutions or NEC.

Around 1% of the approved outlay can be allocated for "administrative expenses," including a tech-driven monitoring architecture spanning project phases, Project Management Unit setup, capacity building, etc. The total project cost must incorporate applicable GST, specifying CGST and SGST during project DPR submission for sanction.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs for the initial four years after project completion should be part of the project cost. Proposed mechanisms for O&M support beyond four years must be indicated in the DPR and highlighted in EIMC meetings. Except when specified otherwise, O&M costs beyond the first four years of project completion will be borne by the respective State Government.

Project Selection at MDoNER

Upon receiving project proposals or concept notes, MDoNER will promptly share them with concerned Central line Ministries/Departments, NITI Aayog, and IFD MDoNER (where applicable) for preliminary comments, to be received within 2 weeks. For projects in regulated sectors like power and water, input from relevant authorities may be sought. The preliminary comments are expected to address key aspects, including the possibility of funding under existing schemes, technology options, cost norms, convergence considerations for DPR preparation, and a general project recommendation for inclusion in PM-DevINE.

Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanism

The implementation of PM-DEVINE will adhere to Ministry of Finance's concurrent monitoring and mid-term evaluation directives. Monitoring responsibilities for sanctioned projects rest with the State Government, managed by designated officers of the Implementing Agency, State Planning Department, and SLEC. The aim is to achieve projects within scheduled time, cost, and quality standards.

A robust State Government mechanism for project monitoring is essential. Department heads will serve as Nodal Officers, with the Secretary (Planning) as Chief Nodal Officer for oversight. SLEC meetings must include monitoring of previously sanctioned projects, with Implementing Agencies providing quarterly progress reports within three weeks of each quarter's end. Periodic inspections, especially for projects over Rs. 100 crore, should occur at defined milestones, ensuring 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% physical progress.

Field Technical Support Units (FTSUs) will report monthly progress to NEC and MDoNER until their operationalization, and these reports should be countersigned by the Project Implementing Agency for consistency. NEC will review projects through its Sectors, with observations submitted to respective SLEC and EIMC prior to review meetings. MDoNER may conduct sample-based inspections. Information Technology and Space Technology (geo-tagging, NeSDR) adoption by Implementing Agencies is encouraged, facilitated by NEC's technology platform and guidance. Third-party monitors may be employed for concurrent monitoring, particularly for projects exceeding Rs. 100 crore, as recommended by EIMC.

***

MG/PD

The Government's fully funded PM-DevINE scheme, announced in the 2022-23 Union Budget, supports North-East infrastructure and social projects aligned with PM GatiShakti, generating youth and women's livelihoods while addressing sector gaps. Union Cabinet approved the scheme on 12.10.2022. Revised guidelines are essential due to restructuring MDoNER's schemes and aligning with recent Department of Expenditure directives. Earlier guidelines circulated on 29.08.2022.

Effective from 12.10.2022, these guidelines govern all PM-DevINE projects. Actions under previous guidelines (29.08.2022) also subject to the new guidelines from 12.10.2022, pending Competent Authority's approval for resolving any issues."

Under 'PM-DevINE', all eight North Eastern Indian states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura will be covered. This scheme will complement existing Government of India and State Government initiatives, avoiding duplication by supporting projects not covered elsewhere. MDoNER will oversee project selection, approval, and monitoring in consultation with State Governments, NEC, and concerned Central Ministries, with implementation through NEC or Central Ministries/agencies. The guidelines outline the process, including project identification, selection, DPR preparation, sanction, fund release, monitoring, and completion. The scheme's 'Competent Authority' is the Minister, MDoNER, unless specified otherwise.

The objectives of "PM-DevINE" align with the Ministry of DoNER's vision of accelerating sustainable development in the North Eastern Region to ensure improved living standards for its citizens. These goals encompass rapid and comprehensive growth through infrastructure and social projects, promoting youth and women's livelihoods, and addressing developmental gaps across sectors.

An Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee (EIMC) will be established, chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. This committee will include representatives from pertinent line Ministries, the North Eastern Council, and other relevant entities.

The Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee (EIMC) is tasked with various functions within the scope of PM-DevINE:

Firstly, it assesses initial project proposals based on quality, viability, and socio-economic impact, working alongside representatives from relevant Indian Government Ministries/Departments and State Governments. It then recommends project selection from among these proposals.

Secondly, it evaluates final project proposals received from State Level Empowered Committees (SLECs), incorporating feedback from central line Ministries/Departments. It provides suitable recommendations for approval by the Competent Authority.

Additionally, the EIMC proposes effective monitoring and evaluation methods, which may involve on-site inspections through third-party agencies. It oversees project progress through NEC/SLEC/Central Agencies, ensuring accountability.

The committee also devises mechanisms for the operation and maintenance of PM-DevINE projects, aiming to ensure their sustainability.

Lastly, the EIMC addresses any issues forwarded by NEC or SLEC regarding project implementation challenges or guideline clarifications. It offers recommendations, potentially suggesting minor adjustments to Scheme provisions to alleviate difficulties.

EIMC will meet as frequently as needed, but at least once in three months. EIMC can meet physically, virtually or in hybrid mode, at New Delhi or at any other place in the NER.

State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC)

The State Governments will establish a State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC) led by the Chief Secretary, with the Secretary of Planning as the Convenor. It will include Finance and relevant Secretaries from State Government Departments, as well as necessary technical experts. The NEC will have representation through its Planning Adviser or delegate. The Ministry of DoNER will be represented by the Senior Economic Adviser/Economic Adviser/Joint Secretary responsible for PM-DevINE, along with the Financial Adviser or their representative. External representatives from reputable institutions may also be invited to SLEC meetings.

The functions of the SLEC encompass several aspects, including reviewing and prioritizing preliminary project proposals for PM-DevINE, ensuring alignment with guidelines, approving DPRs/techno-economic evaluations, monitoring project implementation, enhancing project management systems, establishing effective Operation and Maintenance mechanisms, addressing implementation issues, and proposing modifications if required.

SLEC meetings will be held as necessary, at least once every three months, and can be conducted in physical, virtual, or hybrid formats.

The PM-DEVINE scheme's approved expenditure for the designated period follows recommendations from the EFC and Union Cabinet approval. The 2022-23 to 2025-26 period has an approved outlay of Rs. 6,600 crore, with an initial allocation of Rs. 1,500 crore for FY 2022-23. The aim is to expedite project completion by 2025-26 to minimize liabilities beyond this period, potentially necessitating early sanctions.

Regarding project selection, North Eastern States must establish Gati Shakti implementation mechanisms like Empowered Group of Secretaries, Network Planning Group, and Technical Support Unit, along with notifying a State Logistics Policy and updating Gati Shakti National Master Plan data layers, including land revenue maps. States not meeting these criteria won't receive new PM-DevINE project sanctions from 2023-24 onwards. Project selection will be based on alignment with scheme guidelines and project quality, ensuring viability and socio-economic impact. While a fixed allocation isn't set, efforts will ensure all North Eastern States can benefit from the scheme.

The Budget 2022-23 introduced seven PM-DevINE projects (Annexure A). Relevant State or

Central Government Departments should create additional project proposals aligned with scheme objectives, avoiding the Negative List. Focus sectors include economic and social infrastructure, livelihood activities, and gap filling (2.1.1). Proposals may come from North Eastern States recommended by SLEC, or Central Ministries/Departments through their respective recommendations, with priority for State-posed projects (2.1.2). Planning and selection should align with State-wise GatiShakti Master Plans, converging with the National GatiShakti approach.

Under PM-DEVINE, certain project types/components are ineligible, including those that provide long-term individual benefits or "Direct Benefit Transfer" elements. Additionally, projects already funded or planned by relevant line Ministries (to avoid duplication), land/site acquisition, and staff expenses are not covered. The scheme excludes projects for administrative buildings of government offices/agencies or institutional needs. Sectors already covered by other MDoNER schemes are also ineligible. Furthermore, any sector-specific projects specified in the Negative List by the Ministry of DoNER are not considered under PM-DEVINE.

The PM-DEVINE scheme outlines project size and support details. Projects should range from a minimum of Rs. 20 crore to a maximum of Rs. 500 crore in cost, using the latest Schedule of Rates (SOR) of the relevant central line department/State Government for cost estimation. In cases without available SORs, estimates can be prepared by concerned departments adhering to existing rules and practices of the relevant Indian Government line Ministry, followed by techno-economic vetting by reputable institutions or NEC.

Around 1% of the approved outlay can be allocated for "administrative expenses," including a tech-driven monitoring architecture spanning project phases, Project Management Unit setup, capacity building, etc. The total project cost must incorporate applicable GST, specifying CGST and SGST during project DPR submission for sanction.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs for the initial four years after project completion should be part of the project cost. Proposed mechanisms for O&M support beyond four years must be indicated in the DPR and highlighted in EIMC meetings. Except when specified otherwise, O&M costs beyond the first four years of project completion will be borne by the respective State Government.

Project Selection at MDoNER

Upon receiving project proposals or concept notes, MDoNER will promptly share them with concerned Central line Ministries/Departments, NITI Aayog, and IFD MDoNER (where applicable) for preliminary comments, to be received within 2 weeks. For projects in regulated sectors like power and water, input from relevant authorities may be sought. The preliminary comments are expected to address key aspects, including the possibility of funding under existing schemes, technology options, cost norms, convergence considerations for DPR preparation, and a general project recommendation for inclusion in PM-DevINE.

Monitoring & Evaluation Mechanism

The implementation of PM-DEVINE will adhere to Ministry of Finance's concurrent monitoring and mid-term evaluation directives. Monitoring responsibilities for sanctioned projects rest with the State Government, managed by designated officers of the Implementing Agency, State Planning Department, and SLEC. The aim is to achieve projects within scheduled time, cost, and quality standards.

A robust State Government mechanism for project monitoring is essential. Department heads

will serve as Nodal Officers, with the Secretary (Planning) as Chief Nodal Officer for oversight. SLEC meetings must include monitoring of previously sanctioned projects, with Implementing Agencies providing quarterly progress reports within three weeks of each quarter's end. Periodic inspections, especially for projects over Rs. 100 crore, should occur at defined milestones, ensuring 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% physical progress.

Field Technical Support Units (FTSUs) will report monthly progress to NEC and MDoNER until their operationalization, and these reports should be countersigned by the Project Implementing Agency for consistency. NEC will review projects through its Sectors, with observations submitted to respective SLEC and EIMC prior to review meetings. MDoNER may conduct sample-based inspections. Information Technology and Space Technology (geo-tagging, NeSDR) adoption by Implementing Agencies is encouraged, facilitated by NEC's technology platform and guidance. Third-party monitors may be employed for concurrent monitoring, particularly for projects exceeding Rs. 100 crore, as recommended by EIMC.

***

MG/PD

END

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 21, 2023 08:36 pm | Updated August 22, 2023 04:11 am IST - NEW DELHI

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

Coronavirus / vaccines

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

INDIA PARTICIPATES IN 20TH ASEAN-INDIA ECONOMIC MINISTERS' MEETING IN SEMARANG, INDONESIA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: South-East Asia, ASEAN and India

Shri Rajesh Agrawal, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry represented India in the 20th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers' meeting held on 21st August 2023 in Semarang, Indonesia and co-chaired the meeting with Dr. Zulkifli Hasan, Minister of Trade, Indonesia. The Economic Ministers or their representatives from all the 10 ASEAN countries viz. Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the meeting. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste also joined the Meeting as an observer.

The Ministers reviewed the bilateral trade and investment relations between India and ASEAN and underscored their commitment to strengthen and enhance the economic partnership between India and ASEAN to ensure that the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership delivers meaningful benefits for both sides, particularly in the post-pandemic era. India and ASEAN registered a bilateral trade of USD 131.5 billion in 2022-23. The trade with ASEAN accounted for 11.3% of India's global trade in 2022-23.

The Ministers also interacted with the ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC) and took note of the activities undertaken by AIBC in 2023, including the 5th ASEAN-India Business Summit held on 6th March 2023 in Kuala Lumpur. The Ministers noted the Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) flagged by the businesses and appreciated the growing exchanges between the stakeholders from both sides.

The Ministers exchanged views on the regional and global challenges, such as the multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, heightened volatility in the global financial market, inflationary pressures, and geopolitical tensions. Both sides identified resilient supply chains, food security, energy security, health and financial stability as priority areas of cooperation.

The main agenda of this year's meeting was the timely review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) which was signed in 2009. The Economic Ministers' meeting was preceded by AITIGA Joint Committee meeting, which deliberated the roadmap for the review and finalised the Term of Reference and the Work Plan of the AITIGA Review Negotiations. After constructive discussions, the Ministers endorsed the above review documents, which would pave way for the formal commencement of negotiations with defined modalities. The review of the AITIGA was a long-standing demand of Indian businesses and the early commencement of the review would help in making the FTA trade facilitative and mutually beneficial. The Ministers agreed to follow a quarterly schedule of negotiations and conclude the review in 2025. The review of AITIGA is expected to enhance and diversify trade while addressing the current asymmetry in the bilateral trade. The decision for review of AITIGA will now be placed in the forthcoming India-ASEAN Leaders' Summit scheduled in early September for further guidance.

***

AD/VN

Shri Rajesh Agrawal, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry represented India in the 20th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers' meeting held on 21st August 2023 in Semarang, Indonesia and co-chaired the meeting with Dr. Zulkifli Hasan, Minister of Trade, Indonesia. The Economic Ministers or their representatives from all the 10 ASEAN countries viz. Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the meeting. Democratic Republic of Timor-

Leste also joined the Meeting as an observer.

The Ministers reviewed the bilateral trade and investment relations between India and ASEAN and underscored their commitment to strengthen and enhance the economic partnership between India and ASEAN to ensure that the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership delivers meaningful benefits for both sides, particularly in the post-pandemic era. India and ASEAN registered a bilateral trade of USD 131.5 billion in 2022-23. The trade with ASEAN accounted for 11.3% of India's global trade in 2022-23.

The Ministers also interacted with the ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC) and took note of the activities undertaken by AIBC in 2023, including the 5th ASEAN-India Business Summit held on 6th March 2023 in Kuala Lumpur. The Ministers noted the Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) flagged by the businesses and appreciated the growing exchanges between the stakeholders from both sides.

The Ministers exchanged views on the regional and global challenges, such as the multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, heightened volatility in the global financial market, inflationary pressures, and geopolitical tensions. Both sides identified resilient supply chains, food security, energy security, health and financial stability as priority areas of cooperation.

The main agenda of this year's meeting was the timely review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) which was signed in 2009. The Economic Ministers' meeting was preceded by AITIGA Joint Committee meeting, which deliberated the roadmap for the review and finalised the Term of Reference and the Work Plan of the AITIGA Review Negotiations. After constructive discussions, the Ministers endorsed the above review documents, which would pave way for the formal commencement of negotiations with defined modalities. The review of the AITIGA was a long-standing demand of Indian businesses and the early commencement of the review would help in making the FTA trade facilitative and mutually beneficial. The Ministers agreed to follow a quarterly schedule of negotiations and conclude the review in 2025. The review of AITIGA is expected to enhance and diversify trade while addressing the current asymmetry in the bilateral trade. The decision for review of AITIGA will now be placed in the forthcoming India-ASEAN Leaders' Summit scheduled in early September for further guidance.

***

AD/VN

FESTERING WOUNDS: ON MANIPUR'S ELUSIVE PEACE

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 23, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:20 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

More than three months since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur, there are still little or no signs of lasting peace. From competing groups imposing blockades of arterial roads to sporadic attacks resulting in deaths, the conflict is rife with incidents suggesting the breakdown of law and order. Another indication of the state of affairs is the difference in perceptions between the police and the paramilitary Assam Rifles with unedifying acts such as an FIR being lodged by the police against the latter for "obstructing" it from discharging its duties. Far from moving away from the ethnic quagmire and in search of a détente, the situation is more like a powder keg. That people are still in relief camps and many houses have been destroyed, and anyone seeking peace has been subjected to violence or threats also attest to this unfortunate fact. India's mainstream polity had an opportunity to use the monsoon session of Parliament to nudge key stakeholders to work towards reconciliation. But that opportunity was seemingly lost, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had little to say beyond homilies on what needs to be done even as the Opposition only sought to pin down the government for its failures as a means to score a political point in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

The events in Manipur so far suggest that the ethnic conflict festers because of the intractable positions by the Meitei and Kuki-Zo leaders. The Meitei refuse to acknowledge the sense of bias in the State government's actions — especially by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh — that have alienated the Kuki-Zo and its representatives, cutting across party lines. The latter seeks to harp on the idea of a "separate administration", complicating the fragile co-existence of ethnic identities in the State which include others such as the Naga community. The refusal of civil society representatives to rise above their ethnic differences has also exacerbated the conflict, which has worsened due to the lack of accountability of the State government and its refusal to change its leadership — a step that seems to be the only clear possibility of bringing forward reconciliation. Manipur is a vital border State and the continuing distrust between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo will have a lasting impact on future generations, severely hampering progress. The Union government's choices are clear: it can either continue the narrow-minded emphasis on not giving into any critique, even if constructive, and let the situation fester into an uneasy stasis, or take up the gauntlet and bring about substantive changes in the State leadership, heralding steps towards reconciliation.

COMMents

SHARE

Manipur / unrest, conflicts and war / politics / tribals / Prime Minister Narendra Modi

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR ON RICE FORTIFICATION

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Agriculture Issues and related constraints

The Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution organised a one-day National Seminar on Rice Fortification" here today.

While addressing the seminar, Secretary, DFPD, Shri Sanjeev Chopra mentioned, "We are on track to achieve the target of 100% distribution of fortified rice across all rice consuming districts in the country."

Government of India is committed to ensure the nutritional security of the country through fortified rice distribution across government food safety net schemes. The seminar served as a dynamic platform for multistakeholder discussions where besides government stakeholders, technical experts from institutions and academia provided meaningful insights on different aspects of rice fortification programme such as evidence, safety of consumption, operational challenges and quality assurance and quality control. The prevailing challenges and queries of states were addressed by the group of experts and deliberations were made to derive a roadmap to the programme for the coming year.

From Left to Right: Dr. Kapil Yadav (AIIMS), Shri Ashok K K Meena (CMD, FCI), Shri Sanjeev Chopra (Secretary, DFPD), Ms. Elisabeth Faure (Country Director WFP India), Sunil Bakshi (Advisor FSSAI) and Dr. Sirimavo Nair (MSU Baroda)

The seminar was divided into four technical sessions, each deliberating on discussions held in prior working group meetings focussing on key aspects of rice fortification. The first of these

sessions emphasised on concerns regarding safety of consumption of fortified rice for the general population as well as individuals with Haemoglobinopathies and SCD. Dr. Reena Das, Dept. of Haematology, PGIMER, Chandigarh recommended on behalf of the panel that fortified rice consumption is safe and addressed the prevailing myth regarding toxicity from its consumption. The second session led by Dr. Prashant T., Associate Professor at St. Johns Research Institute, Bangalore aimed at providing evidence-based insights from National and International experiences on rice fortification. He shared numerous studies which pointed out the effectiveness of iron fortification in the reduction of anaemia. In the third technical session, a group of experts from organisations like FSSAI, FCI, BIS, WFP, Microsave and IIT Kharagpur working at the national level as well as at the field, engaged in a discussion to explore strategies to address on-ground operational challenges to streamline the distribution process. Concluding the day's discussions, the last technical session led by Dr. Balasubramaniam, Joint Director, FSSAI focussed on providing insights into the quality aspects and recommended strategies that may be adopted to improve the quality of fortified rice being distributed.

The seminar witnessed the launch of a national IEC campaign developed by the Department for awareness generation at the beneficiary level and release of a guidance handbook on rice fortification which will act as a ready reckoner for all guidelines, notifications and orders related to rice fortification.

The event brought together technical experts, leaders from government ministries, research institutes and international organizations fostering an enriching dialogue to build a common understanding and leverage universal supply of fortified rice in food safety net schemes.

Food Secretaries from States/UTs across the country along with technical experts in the domain and development partners working on-ground participated in the Seminar jointly reflecting upon the challenges and opportunities together for achieving the transformation of food and nutrition security ecosystem in the country.

****

AD/NS

The Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution organised a one-day National Seminar on Rice Fortification" here today.

While addressing the seminar, Secretary, DFPD, Shri Sanjeev Chopra mentioned, "We are on track to achieve the target of 100% distribution of fortified rice across all rice consuming districts in the country."

Government of India is committed to ensure the nutritional security of the country through fortified rice distribution across government food safety net schemes. The seminar served as a dynamic platform for multistakeholder discussions where besides government stakeholders, technical experts from institutions and academia provided meaningful insights on different aspects of rice fortification programme such as evidence, safety of consumption, operational challenges and quality assurance and quality control. The prevailing challenges and queries of states were addressed by the group of experts and deliberations were made to derive a roadmap to the programme for the coming year.

From Left to Right: Dr. Kapil Yadav (AIIMS), Shri Ashok K K Meena (CMD, FCI), Shri Sanjeev Chopra (Secretary, DFPD), Ms. Elisabeth Faure (Country Director WFP India), Sunil Bakshi (Advisor FSSAI) and Dr. Sirimavo Nair (MSU Baroda)

The seminar was divided into four technical sessions, each deliberating on discussions held in prior working group meetings focussing on key aspects of rice fortification. The first of these sessions emphasised on concerns regarding safety of consumption of fortified rice for the general population as well as individuals with Haemoglobinopathies and SCD. Dr. Reena Das, Dept. of Haematology, PGIMER, Chandigarh recommended on behalf of the panel that fortified rice consumption is safe and addressed the prevailing myth regarding toxicity from its consumption. The second session led by Dr. Prashant T., Associate Professor at St. Johns Research Institute, Bangalore aimed at providing evidence-based insights from National and International experiences on rice fortification. He shared numerous studies which pointed out the effectiveness of iron fortification in the reduction of anaemia. In the third technical session, a group of experts from organisations like FSSAI, FCI, BIS, WFP, Microsave and IIT Kharagpur working at the national level as well as at the field, engaged in a discussion to explore strategies to address on-ground operational challenges to streamline the distribution process. Concluding the day's discussions, the last technical session led by Dr. Balasubramaniam, Joint Director, FSSAI focussed on providing insights into the quality aspects and recommended strategies that may be adopted to improve the quality of fortified rice being distributed.

The seminar witnessed the launch of a national IEC campaign developed by the Department for awareness generation at the beneficiary level and release of a guidance handbook on rice fortification which will act as a ready reckoner for all guidelines, notifications and orders related to rice fortification.

The event brought together technical experts, leaders from government ministries, research institutes and international organizations fostering an enriching dialogue to build a common understanding and leverage universal supply of fortified rice in food safety net schemes.

Food Secretaries from States/UTs across the country along with technical experts in the domain

and development partners working on-ground participated in the Seminar jointly reflecting upon the challenges and opportunities together for achieving the transformation of food and nutrition security ecosystem in the country.

****

AD/NS

END

NEEDED, A WELL-CRAFTED SOCIAL SECURITY NET FOR ALL

Relevant for: Indian Society | Topic: Social empowerment

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 24, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 02:24 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'India's policymakers have largely ignored social security' | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Around 53% of all of the salaried workforce does not have any social security benefits in India, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2021-22, and which has been cited in the media. In effect, this means that such employees have no access to a provident fund, pension, and health care and disability insurance. Another conclusion is that just 1.9% of the poorest 20% quintile of India's workforce has access to any benefits. Meanwhile, gig workers, or approximately 1.3% of India's active labour force, rarely have access to any social security benefit. India's social security system is also ranked poorly; Mercer CFS ranked it at 40 out of 43 countries in 2021.

India's policymakers have largely ignored social security. While policies are often announced, budgetary allocation has always been limited and utilisation even less so. In FY11, the National Social Security Fund was set up for unorganised sector workers, with an initial allocation of just 1,000 crore to support schemes for weavers, rickshaw pullers and bidi workers to name a few. The amount was a pittance when compared to a requirement of over 22,841 crore — as estimated by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability.

A Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit on the scheme in FY17 identified 1,927 crore (the entire amount accumulated since inception) had just not been utilised. Consequently, select social security schemes have been left moribund. Take the National Social Assistance Programme that was set up in the 1990s, with a focus on old-age poor individuals with no able-bodied earners in their household, who were eligible to earn a monthly pension of 75. Contribution by the Centre to old-age pension schemes has stagnated at 200 a month since 2006, i.e., below the minimum wage per day. Similarly, in July 2022, the CAG identified that the cess collected for the provision of social security to construction workers in Delhi was poorly utilised — approximately 94% of the money was not utilised. In Haryana, the CAG noted that the direct benefit scheme of the State's Social Justice and Empowerment Department had seen the transfer of 98.96 crore to the accounts of deceased beneficiaries. Meanwhile, budgetary cuts to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act continue.

How is it in other countries? Brazil's General Social Security Scheme is contribution-based, substituting income loss for a worker (and his family), whether in partial or full. This covers any situation due to an accident at work, a disability that prevents the worker from working, death, an

illness/medical treatment that leads to time away from work, family burdens, or the prospect of unemployment (Brazilian Good Practices in Social Security, International Labour Organization, or ILO, 2013). Even income loss that occurs due to a worker being imprisoned is covered by the low-income insured (ILO, 2013). Unemployment insurance is paid from worker support funds, and health care is covered through the Unified Health System. The Constitution itself has established that if there is a lack of funds, the National Treasury will step in (ILO, 2013). Social security benefits can be availed of with a simple phone call or a visit to a bank, with no requirement to submit endless documents, as highlighted in Brazilian Good Practices in Social Security.

Approximately 91% (or around 475 million) of India's workforce works in the informal sector. It lacks access to social security. In two decades, India will be an aging society — for such workers with limited savings, there will be no significant social protection. While the Code on Social Security (2020) merged existing social security legislation, it dealt fundamentally with formal enterprises and did not cover informal ones.

India should aspire to provide social security to all of its workforce, in a manner that is fiscally and administratively feasible. Three broad principles come to mind: we must expand employer and employee contribution under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) system for formal workers. For informal workers with meaningful income (whether self-employed or in an informal enterprise), partial contributions can be elicited, along with persuading informal enterprises to formalise and expand their total contribution. And for those who are unemployed or have stopped looking for work, or do not earn enough, the government should step in. It is estimated that the cost of providing social protection to the poorest 20% of the workforce would be 1.37 trillion (including those who are elderly, pregnant or disabled) — a cost of approximately 0.69% of GDP in FY20.

Additional reforms are needed. There has been some progress. It was heartening to see the government push for a Code on Social Security in 2020, which sought to provide a statutory framework to enable social security for the urban and rural poor, construction workers, those in the gig industry and informal sector workers — it proposed the provision of life insurance, disability insurance, accident insurance, as well as maternity and health-care benefits along with old-age protection and crèche facilities for gig workers. A push for greater digitisation under the e-Shram platform has enabled the enrolment of approximately 300 million workers while expanding coverage of accident insurance (of 2 lakh cover) and disability (of 1 lakh cover).

However, much more needs to be done; e-Shram puts the burden of registration on informal workers, who are required to furnish a self-declaration and share their Aadhaar card; there is no responsibility/incentive given to their employer (even temporary) to foster registration. Bringing employers into the process would have enabled the formalisation of employee-employer relationships. We could have done much more, pushing informal employers to make social security entitlements mandatory and not voluntary.

Greater support is required for financing social security for the majority of India's labour force, moving beyond construction and gig workers. There must be a push for a pan-India labour force card and an expansion of existing successful schemes such as the Building and Other Construction Workers Schemes to other categories of workers. Such expansion requires a loosening of existing restrictions on benefit portability, having a 90-day mandatory cooling period, as well as a more straightforward registration process.

Special attention is required for domestic workers (usually female), who are never sure when their employment may be terminated. Migrant workers often face discrimination and suspicion from authorities in their working area so coverage of social services such as child care can be

expanded. Domestic workers must also organise themselves across India's cities.

We may also strengthen existing schemes, for example the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), the Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI), and the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), with budgetary support and expansion of coverage. Administratively, there is much tinkering that can be done. For example, the existing social security framework for unorganised workers has become complex, with overlapping areas of authority between the State and Centre, and confusing definitions being used such as between a platform worker, an unorganised worker and someone who is self-employed.

We need a more significant push to raise awareness about social security to ensure that more workers are aware of the available benefits. Organisations such as the Self-Employed Women's Association which run Shakti Kendras (worker facilitation centres), may be funded to run campaigns (especially for women) to provide greater information on social security rights, along with services and schemes that the government offers.

The time has come for India to consolidate its existing social security schemes/ad hoc measures and provide universal social security to its entire labour workforce. With jobs becoming increasingly on-demand and hire/fire policies proliferating, India's workers are increasingly insecure on the job front. To have the fruits of growth trickle down while offering a sense of social security, policymakers must discard supply-side shibboleths to embrace policies that enable equitable growth.

Feroze Varun Gandhi is a Member of Parliament, representing the Sultanpur constituency for the Bharatiya Janata Party

COMMents

SHARE

social conditions / welfare / pension and welfare / labour / social security / Brazil / Aadhaar / Haryana

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 26, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:21 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

chess / World Cup

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

"SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE MUST BE EMBEDDED ACROSS THE LIFECYCLE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT."~SHRI HARDEEP S. PURI

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

Shri Hardeep S. Puri, Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs and Petroleum and Natural Gas stressed the need to view urban planning from the perspective of embedding sustainability and climate resilience across the lifecycle of built environment. Inaugurating the Conference on Adoption of New and Emerging Building Materials and Technologies in Construction Industry, the Minister said that the Modi government has viewed urbanisation as an opportunity for multifaceted growth and therefore India boasts one of the most comprehensive programmes for planned urbanisation. It is against this backdrop, that the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U), the flagship housing scheme of the Ministry, gains particular significance as it has addressed the issue of affordable housing for India's urban poor while creating sustainable and green infrastructure. Highlighting the use of green construction technologies in PMAY-U, Shri Puri informed the gathering that about 43.3 lakh houses are being constructed under the mission using sustainable building materials such as flyash bricks/blocks and AAC blocks. These houses will contribute to a reduction of 9 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions by the end of December 2024.

To bring a paradigm shift in the housing construction sector, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) shortlisted 54 innovative construction technologies from all over the world, under the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC). Further, 6,368 houses are being built under six light house projects currently being implemented in Chennai, Rajkot, Indore, Lucknow, Ranchi and Agartala. The Minister shared the multiple benefits of using these innovative construction technologies, including reduction in construction cost, time, cement used and waste generated apart from the enhanced thermal comfort and low lifecycle costs.

Shri Kaushal Kishore MoS, MoHUA, reiterated the need to provide quality housing to all strata of society, using latest and innovative technologies, as this would contribute to a better quality of life in the new and self reliant India. Shri Manoj Joshi, Secretary MohUA, also underscored the importance of promoting and mainstreaming the modern and green construction technologies which will help the country to address the rising housing demand. These building materials facilitate faster and better quality housing construction to suit different geo-climatic and hazard conditions of the country. The conference organised by CREDAI, in collaboration with CPWD and NBCC, brought together some of the brightest minds in the construction and real estate industries.

***

RJ

Shri Hardeep S. Puri, Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs and Petroleum and Natural Gas stressed the need to view urban planning from the perspective of embedding sustainability and climate resilience across the lifecycle of built environment. Inaugurating the Conference on Adoption of New and Emerging Building Materials and Technologies in Construction Industry, the Minister said that the Modi government has viewed urbanisation as an opportunity for multifaceted growth and therefore India boasts one of the most comprehensive programmes for planned urbanisation. It is against this backdrop, that the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U), the flagship housing scheme of the Ministry, gains particular significance as it has addressed the issue of affordable housing for India's urban poor while creating sustainable and green infrastructure. Highlighting the use of green construction technologies in PMAY-U, Shri Puri informed the gathering that about 43.3 lakh houses are being constructed under the mission using sustainable building materials such as flyash bricks/blocks and AAC blocks. These houses will contribute to a reduction of 9 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions by the end of December 2024.

To bring a paradigm shift in the housing construction sector, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) shortlisted 54 innovative construction technologies from all over the world, under the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC). Further, 6,368 houses are being built under six light house projects currently being implemented in Chennai, Rajkot, Indore, Lucknow, Ranchi and Agartala. The Minister shared the multiple benefits of using these innovative construction technologies, including reduction in construction cost, time, cement used and waste generated apart from the enhanced thermal comfort and low lifecycle costs.

Shri Kaushal Kishore MoS, MoHUA, reiterated the need to provide quality housing to all strata of society, using latest and innovative technologies, as this would contribute to a better quality of

life in the new and self reliant India. Shri Manoj Joshi, Secretary MohUA, also underscored the importance of promoting and mainstreaming the modern and green construction technologies which will help the country to address the rising housing demand. These building materials facilitate faster and better quality housing construction to suit different geo-climatic and hazard conditions of the country. The conference organised by CREDAI, in collaboration with CPWD and NBCC, brought together some of the brightest minds in the construction and real estate industries.

***

RJ

END

Source : www.thehindu.com   Date : 2023-08-27

HOLDING BACK NMC'S DIRECTIVE MANDATING GENERIC MEDICINE PRESCRIPTIONS WELCOMED BY DOCTORS

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 26, 2023 08:46 pm | Updated August 27, 2023 08:59 am IST - HYDERABAD

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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.

COMMents

SHARE

<u>health</u> / <u>science (general)</u> / <u>generic drugs</u> / <u>Hyderabad</u>

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our <u>community guidelines</u> for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

EXPLAINED

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 27, 2023 03:45 am | Updated 09:00 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

Representational file image. | Photo Credit: G. Ramakrishna

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.

(For top health news of the day, [subscribe](#) to our newsletter Health Matters)

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 internationals 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.

COMMents

SHARE

The Hindu Explains / health / government health care

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

---

revolutionised financial inclusion in India. It is heartening to note that more than 50 crore people have been brought into the formal banking system through the opening of Jan Dhan Accounts. Among these accounts, approximately 55.5% belong to women, and 67% have been opened in Rural / Semi-Urban areas. The cumulative deposits in these accounts surpass 2 lakh crore. Furthermore, about 34 crore RuPay cards have been issued to these accounts without charge, which also provides for a 2 lakh accident insurance cover."

"With the collaborative efforts of stakeholders, banks, insurance companies, and government officials, the PMJDY stands out as a pivotal initiative, changing the landscape of financial inclusion in the country as envisioned by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi," Smt. Sitharaman said.

Union Minister of State for Finance Dr. Bhagwat Kisanrao Karad also expressed his thoughts for PMJDY on this occasion. He said, "PMJDY scheme has reduced financial untouchability by bringing the marginalised sections of the society into the ambit of formal banking. By providing access to banking facilities to vulnerable sections of the society, facilitating access to availability of credit, providing insurance and pension coverage and creating financial awareness, the outcomes of the scheme are far reaching and have a multiplier effect on the economy. Further, Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile (JAM) architecture has enabled successful transfer of Government benefits in the accounts of common man seamlessly. PMJDY accounts have become fulcrum of people-centric initiatives like DBT and has contributed towards inclusive growth of all sections of the society, especially the underprivileged."

As we complete 9 years of successful implementation of this Scheme, we take a look at the major aspects and achievements of this Scheme so far.

Background

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

The scheme was launched based upon the following 6 pillars:

Universal access to banking services – Branch and BC

Accounts opened are online accounts in core banking system of banks, in place of earlier method of offline accounts opening with technology lock-in with the vendor
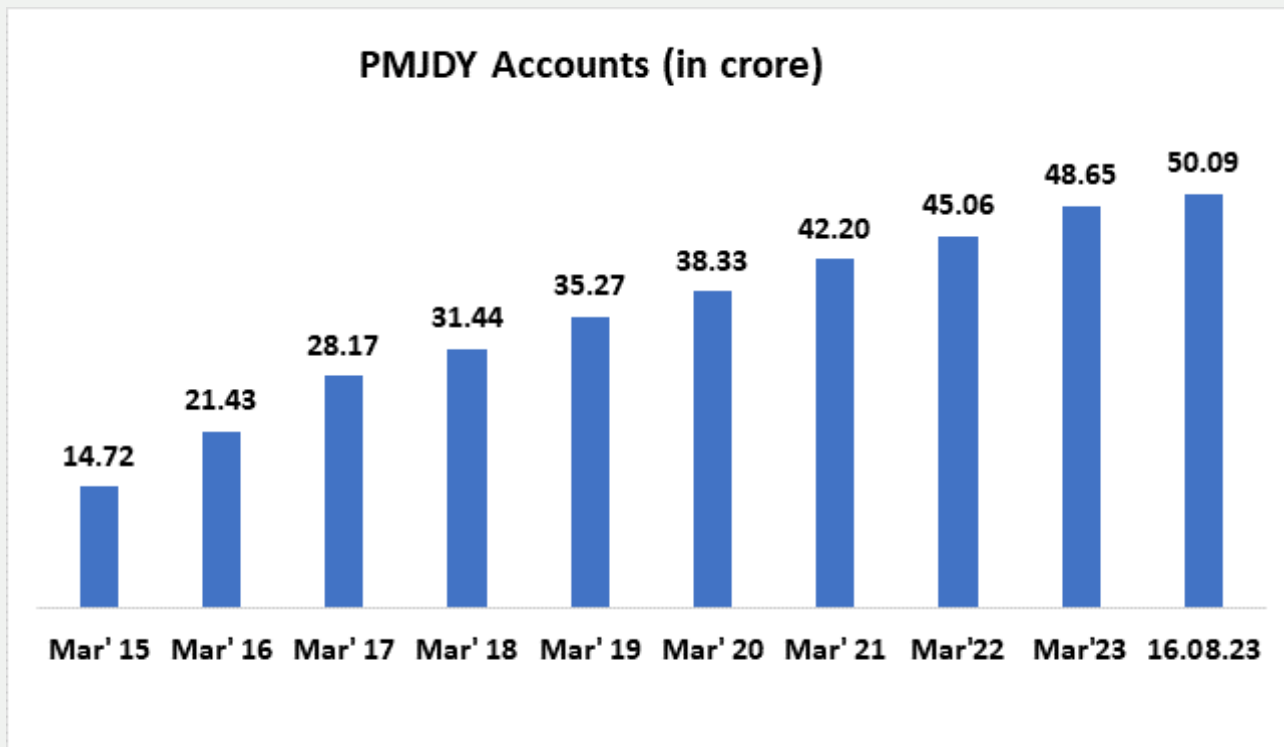
PMJDY has been the foundation stone for people-centric economic initiatives. Whether it is direct benefit transfers, COVID-19 financial assistance, PM-KISAN, increased wages under MGNREGA, life and health insurance cover, the first step of all these initiatives is to provide every adult with a bank account, which PMJDY has nearly completed.

One in 2 accounts opened between March 2014 to March 2020 was a PMJDY account. Within 10 days of nationwide lockdown more than about 20 crore women PMJDY accounts were credited with financial assistance of Rs 500 per month for three months through DBT in each women PMJDY account.

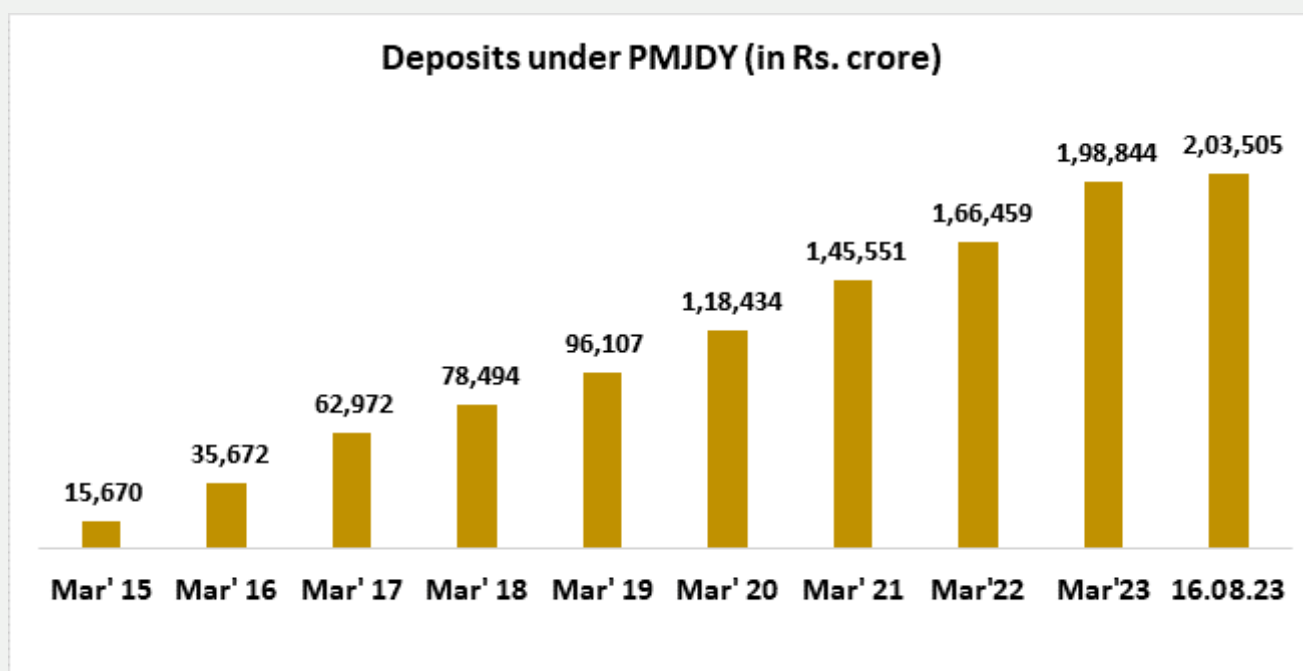During COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed the remarkable swiftness and

seamlessness with which Direct Benefit Transfer (DBTs) have empowered and provided financial security to the vulnerable sections of society. An important aspect is that DBTs via PMJDY accounts have ensured every rupee reaches its intended beneficiary and preventing systemic leakage.

PMJDY has brought the unbanked into the banking system, expanded the financial architecture of India and brought financial inclusion to almost every adult.
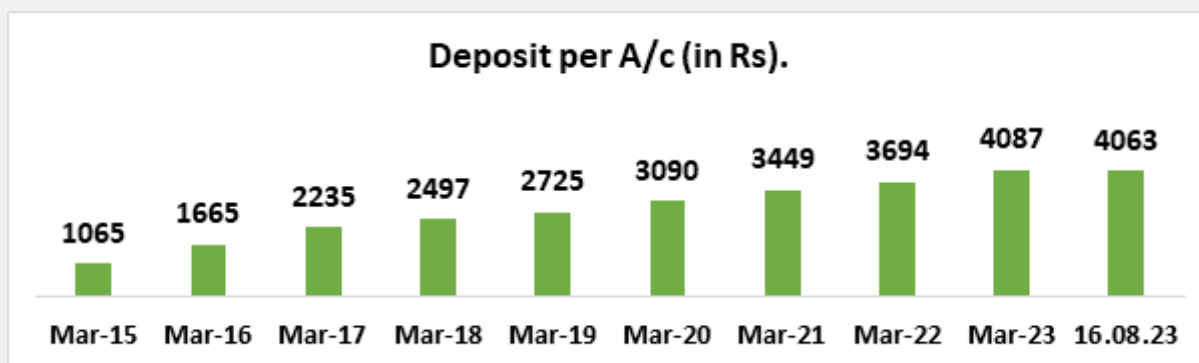
PMJDY Accounts (in crore)

Mar' 15	Mar' 16	Mar' 17	Mar' 18	Mar' 19	Mar' 20	Mar' 21	Mar'22	Mar'23	16.08.23
14.72	21.43	28.17	31.44	35.27	38.33	42.20	45.06	48.65	50.09

As on 9th August 23 number of total PMJDY Accounts: 50.09 crore; 55.6% (27.82 crore) Jan-Dhan account holders are women and 66.7% (33.45 crore) Jan Dhan accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas

[Deposits under PMJDY accounts –

Deposits under PMJDY (in Rs. crore)

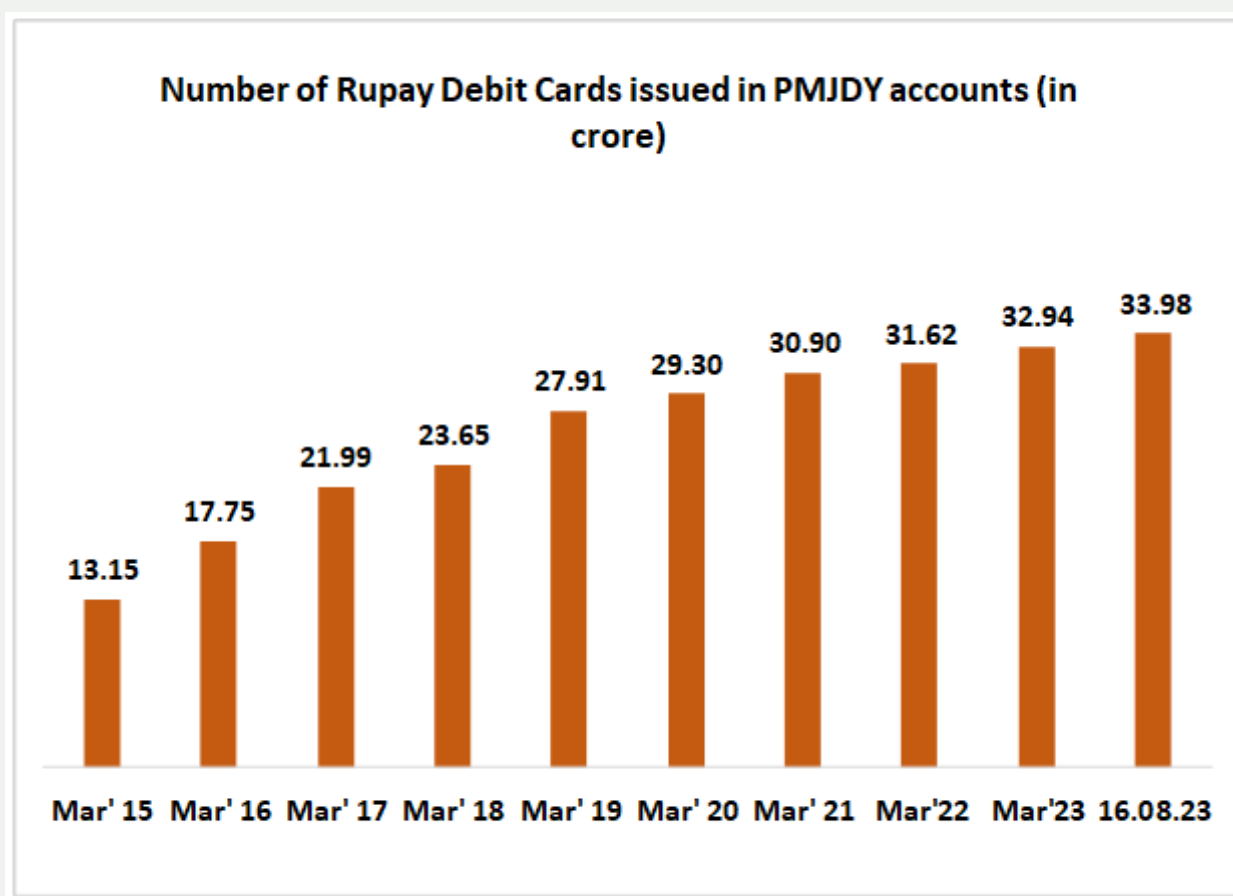| Mar' 15	Mar' 16	Mar' 17	Mar' 18	Mar' 19	Mar' 20	Mar' 21	Mar'22	Mar'23	16.08.23
15,670	35,672	62,972	78,494	96,107	1,18,434	1,45,551	1,66,459	1,98,844	2,03,505

Total deposit balances under PMJDY Accounts stand at Rs. 2,03,505 crore

Average Deposit per PMJDY account –

Average deposit per account is Rs. 4,063 as on 16.08.2023

Total RuPay cards issued to PMJDY accountholders: 33.98 crore

JDD App is a mobile application which provides a citizen centric platform for locating banking touch points such as bank branches, ATMs, Banking Correspondents (BCs), Indian Post Payment Banks etc. in the country. Over 13 lakh banking touchpoints have been mapped on the JDD App. The facilities under Jan Dhan Darshak App could be availed as per the need and convenience of common people. The web version of this application could be accessed at the link http://findmybank.gov.in.

This app is also being used for identification of villages which are yet to covered by banking outlets within 5 km radius. These identified villages are allocated to various banks by concerned SLBCs for opening of banking outlets. The efforts have resulted in a significant decrease in number of uncovered villages.

A total of 6.01 lakh villages are mapped on the JDD app as of July 2023. Out of these, 5,99,468 (99.7%) of total mapped villages are covered with banking outlets (Bank branch, Banking corner or Indian Post Payment Banks (IPPB) within 5 km radius).

As informed by banks, about 6.26 crore PMJDY accountholders receive direct benefit transfer (DBT) from the Government under various schemes. To ensure that the eligible beneficiaries receive their DBT in time, the Department takes active role in identification of avoidable reasons for DBT failures in consultation with DBT Mission, NPCI, banks and various other Ministries.

The road ahead

****

PPG/KMN

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) – the National Mission for Financial Inclusion - completes nine years of successful implementation today.

The PMJDY was announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address on 15th August 2014. While launching the programme on 28th August 2014, the Prime Minister had described the occasion as a festival to celebrate the liberation of the poor from a vicious cycle.
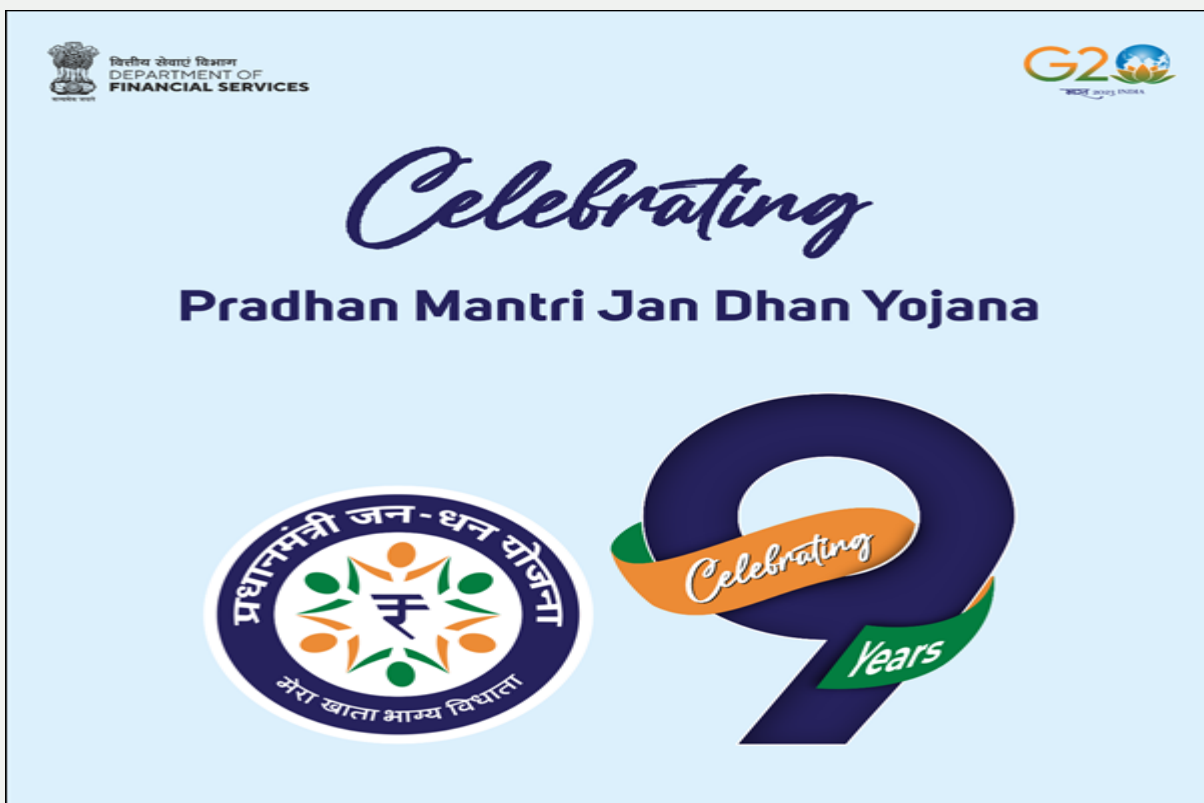
a

Being one of the biggest financial inclusion initiatives in the world, the Ministry of Finance continuously endeavours to provide financial inclusiveness and support to the marginalised and economically backward sections through its financial inclusion led interventions. Financial Inclusion (FI) promotes equitable and inclusive growth as well as delivery of financial services at an affordable cost to vulnerable groups such as low-income groups and weaker sections that lack access to basic banking services.

Financial Inclusion also brings savings of the poor into the formal financial system and provides an avenue to remit money to their families in villages besides taking them out of the clutches of the usurious money lenders.

On the 9th anniversary of PMJDY, **Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman**, in her message said, "The 9 years of PMJDY-led interventions and digital transformation have revolutionised financial inclusion in India. It is heartening to note that more than 50 crore people have been brought into the formal banking system through the opening of Jan Dhan Accounts. Among these accounts, approximately 55.5% belong to women, and 67% have been opened in Rural / Semi-Urban areas. The cumulative deposits in these accounts surpass 2 lakh crore. Furthermore, about 34 crore RuPay cards have been issued to these accounts without charge, which also provides for a 2 lakh accident insurance cover."

"With the collaborative efforts of stakeholders, banks, insurance companies, and government officials, the PMJDY stands out as a pivotal initiative, changing the landscape of financial inclusion in the country as envisioned by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi," Smt. Sitharaman said.

Union Minister of State for Finance Dr. Bhagwat Kisanrao Karad also expressed his thoughts for PMJDY on this occasion. He said, "PMJDY scheme has reduced financial untouchability by bringing the marginalised sections of the society into the ambit of formal banking. By providing access to banking facilities to vulnerable sections of the society, facilitating access to availability of credit, providing insurance and pension coverage and creating financial awareness, the outcomes of the scheme are far reaching and have a multiplier effect on the economy. Further, Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile (JAM) architecture has enabled successful transfer of Government benefits in the accounts of common man seamlessly. PMJDY accounts have become fulcrum of people-centric initiatives like DBT and has contributed towards inclusive growth of all sections of the society, especially the underprivileged."

As we complete 9 years of successful implementation of this Scheme, we take a look at the major aspects and achievements of this Scheme so far.

Background

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

The scheme was launched based upon the following 6 pillars:

Universal access to banking services – Branch and BC

Accounts opened are online accounts in core banking system of banks, in place of earlier
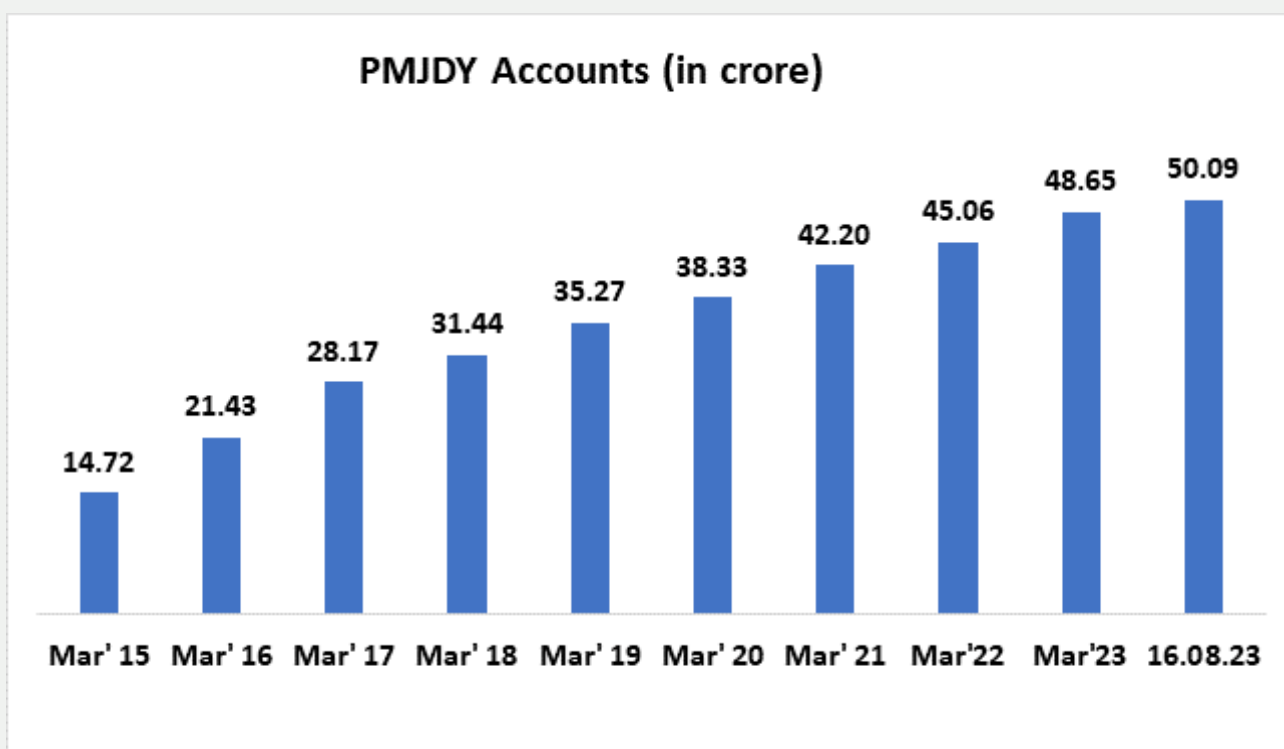
method of offline accounts opening with technology lock-in with the vendor

PMJDY has been the foundation stone for people-centric economic initiatives. Whether it is direct benefit transfers, COVID-19 financial assistance, PM-KISAN, increased wages under MGNREGA, life and health insurance cover, the first step of all these initiatives is to provide every adult with a bank account, which PMJDY has nearly completed.

One in 2 accounts opened between March 2014 to March 2020 was a PMJDY account. Within 10 days of nationwide lockdown more than about 20 crore women PMJDY accounts were credited with financial assistance of Rs 500 per month for three months through DBT in each women PMJDY account.

During COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed the remarkable swiftness and seamlessness with which Direct Benefit Transfer (DBTs) have empowered and provided financial security to the vulnerable sections of society. An important aspect is that DBTs via PMJDY accounts have ensured every rupee reaches its intended beneficiary and preventing systemic leakage.

PMJDY has brought the unbanked into the banking system, expanded the financial architecture of India and brought financial inclusion to almost every adult.

PMJDY Accounts (in crore)

Mar' 15	Mar' 16	Mar' 17	Mar' 18	Mar' 19	Mar' 20	Mar' 21	Mar'22	Mar'23	16.08.23
14.72	21.43	28.17	31.44	35.27	38.33	42.20	45.06	48.65	50.09

As on 9th August 23 number of total PMJDY Accounts: 50.09 crore; 55.6% (27.82 crore) Jan-Dhan account holders are women and 66.7% (33.45 crore) Jan Dhan accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas

[Deposits under PMJDY accounts –

Deposits under PMJDY (in Rs. crore)
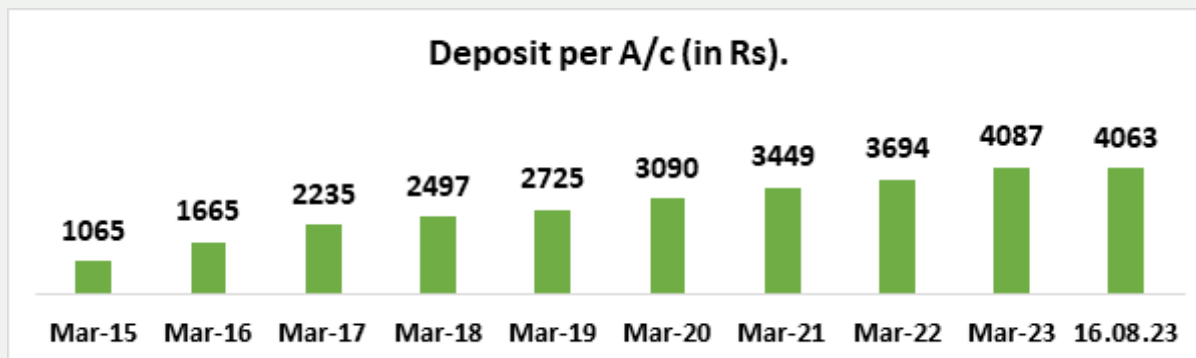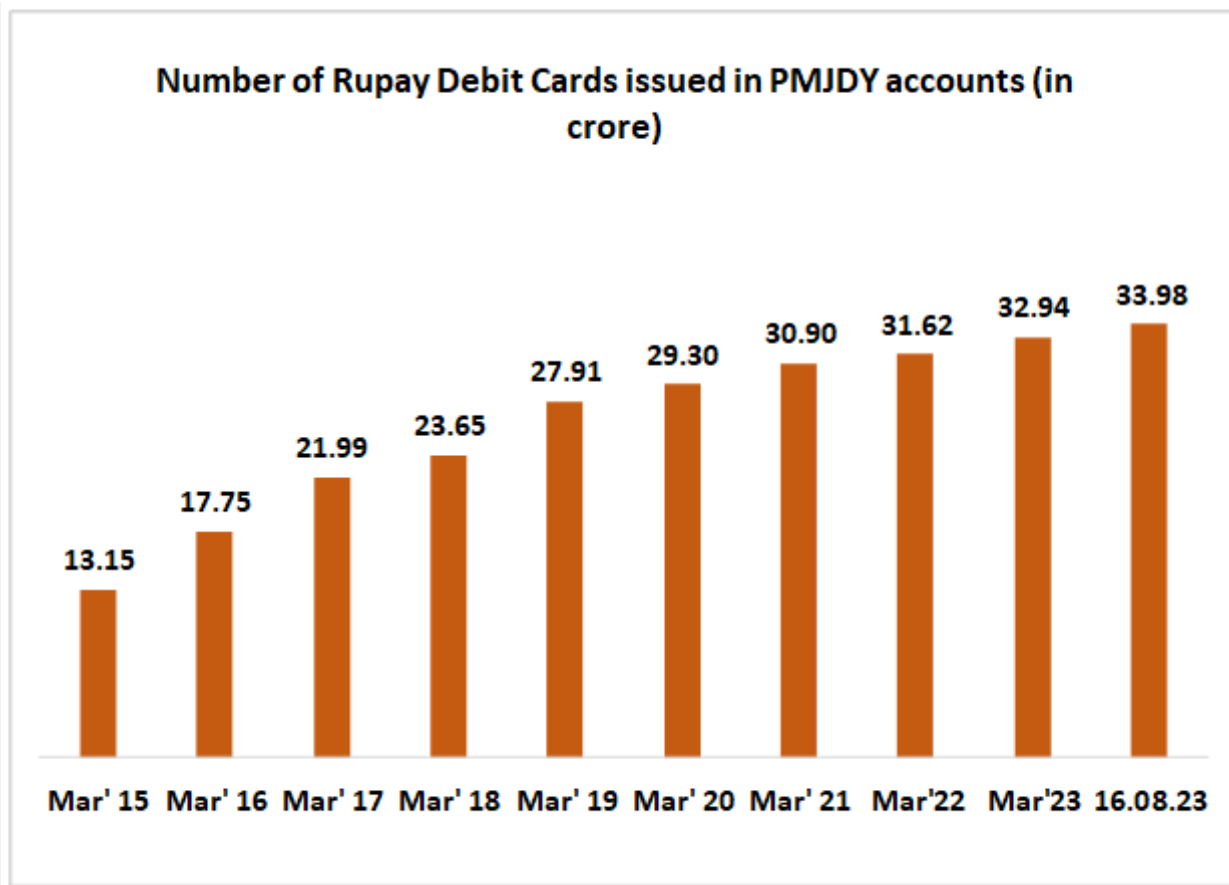

Mar' 15	Mar' 16	Mar' 17	Mar' 18	Mar' 19	Mar' 20	Mar' 21	Mar'22	Mar'23	16.08.23
15,670	35,672	62,972	78,494	96,107	1,18,434	1,45,551	1,66,459	1,98,844	2,03,505

Total deposit balances under PMJDY Accounts stand at Rs. 2,03,505 crore

Average Deposit per PMJDY account –

Deposit per A/c (in Rs).

Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18	Mar-19	Mar-20	Mar-21	Mar-22	Mar-23	16.08.23
1065	1665	2235	2497	2725	3090	3449	3694	4087	4063

Average deposit per account is Rs. 4,063 as on 16.08.2023

Number of Rupay Debit Cards issued in PMJDY accounts (in crore)

Total RuPay cards issued to PMJDY accountholders: 33.98 crore

JDD App is a mobile application which provides a citizen centric platform for locating banking touch points such as bank branches, ATMs, Banking Correspondents (BCs), Indian Post Payment Banks etc. in the country. Over 13 lakh banking touchpoints have been mapped on the JDD App. The facilities under Jan Dhan Darshak App could be availed as per the need and convenience of common people. The web version of this application could be accessed at the link http://findmybank.gov.in.

This app is also being used for identification of villages which are yet to covered by banking outlets within 5 km radius. These identified villages are allocated to various banks by concerned SLBCs for opening of banking outlets. The efforts have resulted in a significant decrease in number of uncovered villages.

A total of 6.01 lakh villages are mapped on the JDD app as of July 2023. Out of these, 5,99,468 (99.7%) of total mapped villages are covered with banking outlets (Bank branch, Banking corner or Indian Post Payment Banks (IPPB) within 5 km radius).

As informed by banks, about 6.26 crore PMJDY accountholders receive direct benefit transfer (DBT) from the Government under various schemes. To ensure that the eligible beneficiaries receive their DBT in time, the Department takes active role in identification of avoidable reasons for DBT failures in consultation with DBT Mission, NPCI, banks and various other Ministries.

The road ahead

****

PPG/KMN

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

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 28, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 01:06 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

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

COMMents

SHARE

Rohingya crisis / refugee / India / United Nations / human rights / Jammu / Myanmar / laws / constitution

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

MINT

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 of 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.

bookmark this image.

Your session has expired, please login again.

You are now subscribed to our newsletters. In case you can't find any email from our side, please check the spam folder.

This is a subscriber only feature Subscribe Now to get daily updates on WhatsApp

2ND MEETING OF G20-CHIEF SCIENCE ADVISERS' ROUNDTABLE UNDER INDIAN PRESIDENCY CONCLUDES, RELEASES OUTCOME DOCUMENT AND CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

The second meeting of the G20-Chief Science Adviser's Roundtable (G20-CSAR), held under the Sherpa Track of the Indian G20 Presidency, successfully concluded today in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The summit culminated into mutual consensus for an Outcome Document and a Chair's Summary by all G20 countries and invitee countries.

G20-CSAR is an attempt towards synergizing global science advice mechanism in an inclusive and action-oriented manner to enable evidence-informed policymaking, as well as strengthening science advice at national and international levels.

The key priorities areas that were discussed during the day-long deliberations were (a) leveraging opportunities in One Health, for better disease prevention, control, and pandemic preparedness; (b) synergizing global efforts to expand access to scholarly scientific knowledge; (c) ensuring equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in Science and Technology Ecosystem, as well as known and unknown emerging priorities; (d) and creating an Inclusive, Continuous and Action-Oriented Global Science Advice Mechanism.

The G20-CSAR meeting witnessed proactive engagements from representatives belonging to G20 member countries, invitee countries, and two international organisations; namely WHO and UNESCO. The meeting was led by Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India Professor Ajay Kumar Sood who appreciated the commitment fostered by the G20 nations and

invitee countries to deliberate on the ways to shape the G20-CSAR initiative as a sustained mechanism.

Addressing the G20-CSAR meeting, Prof. Sood said, "This initiative is based on the core principles of creating an inclusive and robust global science advice mechanism that would collectively benefit everyone equitably and reflect our shared vision. It is heartening to note the overwhelming support from national and international stakeholders for this initiative."

Under the theme '**Leveraging opportunities in One Health, for better disease prevention, control, and pandemic preparedness'**, the G20 countries established the importance of addressing the interdependent health threats to human, animal, plant, and environment collectively through the One Health approach. The countries also emphasised the need for exploring virtual spaces for collaborations and capacity development for knowledge and technologies related to disease control. Connections and continued engagements between 'One Health Institutes' for facilitating collaboration in this space were also recommended.

Under the theme '**Synergising global efforts to expand access to scholarly scientific knowledge',** the G20 countries deliberated on the need to enable immediate and universal access to appropriate publicly funded scholarly scientific knowledge to communities within and beyond G20 members. The importance of evolving approaches to offer immediate and free access to publicly funded research publications was acknowledged.

Under the theme '**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI&A) in Science and Technology Ecosystem**', the G20 nations acknowledged the contribution of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and recommended that these systems be considered with contemporary science to foster evidence-based innovations that are culturally inspired and locally relevant. The importance of recognizing the plurality of languages and knowledge systems in inclusion-related policy discourse was emphasised.

Discussing the way forward in the fourth theme '**Creating an inclusive, continuous, and**

action-oriented Global Science Advice mechanism', the G20 countries unanimously decided to work towards creating a robust, relevant, and effective mechanism for sustained engagement, bringing together the chief science advisers and their nominated equivalents to deliberate on contemporary issues demanding effective global science advice, and aiming to address existing knowledge asymmetries for equitable global societal benefit.

The G20 countries aim to use the G20-CSAR platform to pave the way for further discussions and deliberations wherein members and international organisations could converge on multidisciplinary issues, impart synergistic science advice and use Science Diplomacy to enhance synergies between various stakeholders.

The G20-CSAR initiative, newly launched under the Indian Presidency, aims to create a space for voluntary knowledge and resource sharing. The goal is to exchange best practices in the science advice process based upon inclusivity, heterogeneity, interdependency, transparency, plurality of expertise, and collective interest.

The inaugural G20-CSAR meeting was held from 28th-30th March, 2023 in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand. Since then, four intersessional meetings, six side events and several bilateral meetings have been organised to arrive at the agreement on the Outcome Document and Chair's Summary.

The baton was passed on to Brazil to take the G20-CSAR initiative forward.

Here is the link to the Outcome Document and Chair's Summary: https://www.g20.org/content/dam/

Here is the link to the Post-Event Press Conference: https://youtube.com/live/x0DJJ53iuHs?feature=share

***

DS/ST

The second meeting of the G20-Chief Science Adviser's Roundtable (G20-CSAR), held under the Sherpa Track of the Indian G20 Presidency, successfully concluded today in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The summit culminated into mutual consensus for an Outcome Document and a Chair's Summary by all G20 countries and invitee countries.

G20-CSAR is an attempt towards synergizing global science advice mechanism in an inclusive and action-oriented manner to enable evidence-informed policymaking, as well as strengthening science advice at national and international levels.

The key priorities areas that were discussed during the day-long deliberations were (a) leveraging opportunities in One Health, for better disease prevention, control, and pandemic preparedness; (b) synergizing global efforts to expand access to scholarly scientific knowledge; (c) ensuring equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in Science and Technology Ecosystem, as well as known and unknown emerging priorities; (d) and creating an Inclusive, Continuous and Action-Oriented Global Science Advice Mechanism.

The G20-CSAR meeting witnessed proactive engagements from representatives belonging to G20 member countries, invitee countries, and two international organisations; namely WHO and UNESCO. The meeting was led by Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India Professor Ajay Kumar Sood who appreciated the commitment fostered by the G20 nations and invitee countries to deliberate on the ways to shape the G20-CSAR initiative as a sustained mechanism.

Addressing the G20-CSAR meeting, Prof. Sood said, "This initiative is based on the core principles of creating an inclusive and robust global science advice mechanism that would collectively benefit everyone equitably and reflect our shared vision. It is heartening to note the overwhelming support from national and international stakeholders for this initiative."

Under the theme '**Leveraging opportunities in One Health, for better disease prevention, control, and pandemic preparedness'**, the G20 countries established the importance of addressing the interdependent health threats to human, animal, plant, and environment collectively through the One Health approach. The countries also emphasised the need for exploring virtual spaces for collaborations and capacity development for knowledge and technologies related to disease control. Connections and continued engagements between 'One Health Institutes' for facilitating collaboration in this space were also recommended.

Under the theme '**Synergising global efforts to expand access to scholarly scientific knowledge',** the G20 countries deliberated on the need to enable immediate and universal access to appropriate publicly funded scholarly scientific knowledge to communities within and beyond G20 members. The importance of evolving approaches to offer immediate and free access to publicly funded research publications was acknowledged.

Under the theme '**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI&A) in Science and Technology Ecosystem**', the G20 nations acknowledged the contribution of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and recommended that these systems be considered with contemporary science to foster evidence-based innovations that are culturally inspired and locally relevant. The importance of recognizing the plurality of languages and knowledge systems in inclusion-related policy discourse was emphasised.

Discussing the way forward in the fourth theme '**Creating an inclusive, continuous, and action-oriented Global Science Advice mechanism',** the G20 countries unanimously decided to work towards creating a robust, relevant, and effective mechanism for sustained engagement, bringing together the chief science advisers and their nominated equivalents to deliberate on contemporary issues demanding effective global science advice, and aiming to address existing knowledge asymmetries for equitable global societal benefit.

The G20 countries aim to use the G20-CSAR platform to pave the way for further discussions and deliberations wherein members and international organisations could converge on

multidisciplinary issues, impart synergistic science advice and use Science Diplomacy to enhance synergies between various stakeholders.

The G20-CSAR initiative, newly launched under the Indian Presidency, aims to create a space for voluntary knowledge and resource sharing. The goal is to exchange best practices in the science advice process based upon inclusivity, heterogeneity, interdependency, transparency, plurality of expertise, and collective interest.

The inaugural G20-CSAR meeting was held from 28th-30th March, 2023 in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand. Since then, four intersessional meetings, six side events and several bilateral meetings have been organised to arrive at the agreement on the Outcome Document and Chair's Summary.

The baton was passed on to Brazil to take the G20-CSAR initiative forward.

Here is the link to the Outcome Document and Chair's Summary: https://www.g20.org/content/dam/

Here is the link to the Post-Event Press Conference: https://youtube.com/live/x0DJJ53iuHs?feature=share

***

DS/ST

END

PM CONGRATULATES JAN DHAN YOJANA BENEFICIARIES ON COMPLETION OF 9 YEARS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE SCHEME

Relevant for: null | Topic: Important Schemes & Programmes of the Government

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today congratulated Jan Dhan Yojana beneficiaries on completion of 9 years of the scheme . PM Modi also lauded those who contributed towards the success of the scheme.

Replying to a thread by MyGov, the Prime Minister posted on X :

"As we mark 9 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana, I congratulate all those who benefitted from this scheme and laud everyone who worked to make it a success. It is a milestone effort in empowering our people. Through this initiative, we have brought millions into the financial mainstream, ensuring every Indian has a rightful place in our growing economy. #9YearsofJanDhan"

As we mark 9 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana, I congratulate all those who benefitted from this scheme and laud everyone who worked to make it a success. It is a milestone effort in empowering our people. Through this initiative, we have brought millions into the financial…
https://t.co/dNm8IwfVWg

***

DS

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today congratulated Jan Dhan Yojana beneficiaries on completion of 9 years of the scheme . PM Modi also lauded those who contributed towards the success of the scheme.

Replying to a thread by MyGov, the Prime Minister posted on X :

"As we mark 9 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana, I congratulate all those who benefitted from this scheme and laud everyone who worked to make it a success. It is a milestone effort in empowering our people. Through this initiative, we have brought millions into the financial mainstream, ensuring every Indian has a rightful place in our growing economy. #9YearsofJanDhan"

As we mark 9 years of PM Jan Dhan Yojana, I congratulate all those who benefitted from this scheme and laud everyone who worked to make it a success. It is a milestone effort in empowering our people. Through this initiative, we have brought millions into the financial…
https://t.co/dNm8IwfVWg

***

DS

END

A NUH MODEL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON HARYANA AND THE DETERMINATION OF THE POLITICAL EXECUTIVE

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, and the Centre-State Relations

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 30, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:55 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

The call by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its affiliates to undertake a procession on August 28 in the communally volatile Nuh district in Haryana had the authorities on their toes. A similar procession on July 31 had led to clashes that claimed six lives. The administration rightly denied permission for the gathering citing the law-and-order situation and the upcoming G-20 summit in the national capital. After a face-off between the organisers and the administration, a few representatives of the Hindu outfits were allowed amid police escort to offer prayers at three local temples to mark the conclusion of a month that many faithful consider sacred. The security arrangements this time were unprecedented with a multi-layered security cordon on all roads leading to Nuh from across Haryana. Internet services and bulk SMSes in Nuh were suspended and prohibitory orders imposed in advance. All schools, colleges and banks were directed to remain shut on August 28. The police and paramilitary personnel were deployed in large numbers. The Haryana police chief held a meeting with senior police officers of neighbouring States, social media platforms were watched closely to identify possible troublemakers, and their entry to Nuh prevented. As many as 41 people were detained across Haryana.

Similar measures and earnestness on the part of administration could have prevented the situation on July 31, especially with inputs from the State CID unit on possible trouble during the religious procession. All stakeholders must learn their lessons after the tense day, which thankfully passed without a flare up. Hindus and Muslims must put the recent past behind them to restore mutual trust and harmony. And it is not just Nuh. The stakes are equally high for its rather prosperous neighbour Gurugram, an IT and automotive hub and financial capital of Haryana that abuts Delhi. The police and the administration must deal with any unscrupulous attempts to disrupt the peace of the region again with an iron hand and send across a clear signal to fringe elements that no one is above the law. The manner in which the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Haryana has handled the situation proves that communal conflicts can indeed be controlled when the political executive shows determination. Chief Minister M.L. Khattar himself made it clear through public statements and administrative action that the law will prevail. The inverse is also true — that the police and the administration are often complicit in communal violence.

COMMents

SHARE

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

END

THE ELECTION COMMISSION — AUTONOMY IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Elections, Election Commission and the Electoral Reforms in India Incl. Political Parties

To enjoy additional benefits

CONNECT WITH US

August 30, 2023 12:16 am | Updated 01:43 am IST

COMMents

SHARE

READ LATER

'The Election Commission of India has been held to be a reliable, responsible and trustworthy institution by the people of India' | Photo Credit: K. MURALI KUMAR

Of late, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has been a focal point of differences between the government and the judiciary. This time, the clash of opinions is over its appointment.

The Supreme Court of India, in a judgment on March 2, directed that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Election Commissioners (EC) will be appointed by the President of India based on the advice of a committee made up of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha or the leader of the single largest Opposition party and the Chief Justice of India (CJI). This judgment of the Constitution Bench was a major step towards broadbasing the ECI and enhancing its constitutional status. Article 324 of the Constitution contains a provision for such a law to be enacted by Parliament.

The significance of this judgment also lies in the fact that this was a unanimous judgment of a five-judge Bench. So far, the top officers of the ECI have been appointed by the President of India on the advice of the central government. However, the government of the day, in an unambiguous move, introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha on August 10 which if passed will overturn this verdict.

The Bill seeks to replace the Chief Justice of India from the high-powered selection committee, meaning the committee will be made up of the Prime Minister (Chairperson), Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Member) and a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister (Member).

The government, through this Bill, has taken the Supreme Court head on, making it clear that it wants greater weightage in the appointments of the top election officials — and thus a greater hold over the institution. Experience and research show that incumbent governments, especially those with authoritarian streaks, do not usually do away with democratic institutions but, instead, relentlessly work towards making them pliant. The institutional structures remain but are drained of their substance. And, in this case, one is dealing with a matter of electoral winnability and a consolidation of state power.

The procedure of appointments of the CEC and the ECs has seen much debate in policy and political circles ever since the Constituent Assembly debates and much has been written about it.

A suggestion during the Constituent Assembly Debates was that the appointment of the CEC should be subject to confirmation by two-thirds majority in a joint session of both Houses of Parliament (Constituent Assembly debates, June 15, 1949). However, Parliament was entrusted with the charge of making appropriate laws on the matter.

The V.M. Tarkunde Committee appointed by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1975, the Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms set up by the then Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, in the 1990s, and the second Administrative Reforms Commission in its fourth report in 2009 among others made recommendations that the appointments of members of the ECI should be more broad based (through a collegium) than leaving this solely to the government on whose advice the President made these appointments.

In 2006, a suggestion was made by a former CEC, B.B. Tandon, to the former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (when both were in office) that a seven- member committee headed by the Prime Minister should choose the CEC and the other ECs. The committee should include the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the Law Minister, the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha and a judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the CJI. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had supported such a suggestion and argued for a representative collegium, which included the CJI to appoint the apex electoral officials. BJP General Secretary Arun Jaitley in a press release on the CPI(M)'s suggested electoral reforms in 2006 had said, 'Any monitoring of Election Commission by Government or their nominee will be destructive of the independence of Election Commission'.

In 2012, senior leader of the BJP and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani reiterated the argument that such a collegium should be formed with the Prime Minister as its chairman, with the CJI, the Minister of Law and Justice and the Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha as its members. He argued that the prevalent system, whereby members to the ECI are appointed by the President, solely on the advice of the Prime Minister, does not inspire confidence among the people.

Interestingly, all these high-level committees, experienced officers and even the BJP leadership saw the importance of this and recommended that the CJI or a judge appointed by him/her should be a part of this committee; never was a suggestion made that a Union Cabinet Minister should be bestowed with this membership (and that too by replacing the CJI). In asking for reform in the appointment, the idea was to raise the ECI a few notches higher on the free and fair bar and pave the way for expunging biases and attachments to the ruling party. The effort was to curb it from becoming a 'committed', partisan and an incumbent-friendly entity. Through the current Bill, the government, under the BJP, is attempting to push the ECI towards further governmental control strengthening the perception about a democratic weakening.

Suggestions for reforms in the appointment procedure of the ECI came from Opposition parties, wherein the BJP was one of the most vocal parties, mainly during the Congress regime. It was felt, and rightfully so, that ruling parties have a structural advantage over institutions, making them susceptible to manipulation and biases. It was felt that having a more representative selection committee would make elections fairer by reducing the hold of the incumbent party/parties on the ECI. However, during the previous National Democratic Alliance regimes, the BJP leadership did not move on its own (clearly articulated) suggestions. Through the new Bill, it has reversed its own position which it had been voluble about while in the opposition.

The ECI has been held to be a reliable, responsible and trustworthy institution by the people of India. Handling elections that involve about 900 million voters (2019 election data) through a machinery of 11 million personnel in a setting of economic hardship and inequalities is a remarkable feat. However, going soft on the ruling party or its ideology, as the perception is, whether this has to do with election schedules, electoral speeches, alleged hateful propaganda, electoral rolls or other kinds of malpractices, is eroding not only its own autonomy but also people's trust. Nevertheless, the point remains that the present regime still sees the ECI as an institution with autonomy. And this autonomy does not gel with its goals. It would instead like a firmer grip on the ECI through statutory means.

Manjari Katju teaches at the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad

COMMents

SHARE

election / executive (government) / judiciary (system of justice) / Bharatiya Janata Party / history / politics

BACK TO TOP

Comments have to be in English, and in full sentences. They cannot be abusive or personal. Please abide by our community guidelines for posting your comments.

We have migrated to a new commenting platform. If you are already a registered user of The Hindu and logged in, you may continue to engage with our articles. If you do not have an account please register and login to post comments. Users can access their older comments by logging into their accounts on Vuukle.

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 Dhyan 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

 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 Dhyan 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

END