



**EDSTAR**

Achieving Excellence Together

## **OPEN HORIZON**

March 2021

**LEARN, REFLECT, INNOVATE**

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“FAILURE WILL NEVER OVERTAKE ME IF MY DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED IS STRONG ENOUGH.” – OG MANDINO

## ORGANISATION’S NOTE

**OPEN Horizon** is **EDSTAR’S** monthly publication of contemporary issues and current affairs analysis. It is in fact a collective effort, by experienced educators in varied themes, of identifying current affairs in light of the Competitive Exams, supplementing them with background information, explaining their related dimensions, lending them a generalist viewpoint and thus producing critical notes for the preparation of to-the-point syllabus.

Keeping these things in mind, we, at **EDSTAR**, are always in the process of evolving our self so as to help aspirants counter the challenges put forward by competitive exams.

We hope that the initiative by **EDSTAR** will be to the liking of our students, readers and aspirants.

Thanks

Best Wishes

It is commitment that transforms the vision of success into actual success. Commitment stands first on the list of values and priorities of successful people. Being committed thus requires that a person is fully engaged in her endeavours and remains conscious and persistent enough to realize her life goals.



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## NEWS OF THE MONTH

### NATIONAL AFFAIRS

#### After the Corona Warriors, it's time that we cater to Corona Worriers

Phase 2 of Coronavirus Vaccination Drive in India began on March 1, to immunise senior citizens and people with co-morbidities in the age bracket of 45-59 years. This was the first time that the vaccines — **Covishield and Covaxin** — was available at private facilities. The first phase of the vaccination drive started on January 16th 2021. So far, more than 1.42 crore healthcare and frontline workers have received the jabs in the country.

#### Pay or Don't?

Government hospitals vaccinate for free, while in private hospitals, a recipient pays maximum of Rs 250 per dose. For two doses, that comes to Rs 500. In case of adverse events, the admission and hospitalisation charges will be separate.

#### Who are the providers?

Currently, from the private sector, only hospitals empanelled under **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) and Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS)** are allowed to participate, but several states have urged the government to allow charitable hospitals to join the vaccination drive.

#### Who is eligible?

Those who turn 60 before or by January 1, 2022, are eligible for vaccination. People aged above 60 years only need age proof to get a vaccine shot.

#### Which comorbidities are included?

The list of co-morbidity is as follows:

- Diabetes (for more than 10 years or with complications) and hypertension (must be presently on treatment)
- HIV infection/ immunodeficiency disease
- Severe respiratory disease including hospitalisation in the last two years
- Heart failure with hospitalisation in last one year
- Those with left ventricular assist device in end-stage heart disease
- Those who have undergone heart transplant/ kidney transplant/liver transplant/ haematopoietic stem cell transplant
- Left ventricular systolic dysfunction, moderate or severe valvular heart disease
- Congenital heart disease with pulmonary arterial hypertension
- Coronary artery disease with hypertension or diabetes (on treatment)
- Angina (chest pain) with hypertension or diabetes (on treatment)
- Documented stroke case with hypertension or diabetes (on treatment)
- End stage kidney disease on dialysis
- Those on immunosuppressants
- Decomposed cirrhosis
- Leukemia / myeloma/ lymphoma

- Sickle cell disease/ thalassemia/ aplastic anaemia/ bone marrow failure
- Those diagnosed with cancer on or after July 1, 2020, or those on cancer treatment presently
- People with multiple disabilities: this includes blindness and deafness, acid attack where respiratory tract involvement is there, muscular dystrophy, intellectual disabilities, disabled requiring high support needs.

#### Who isn't eligible?

People who have only diabetes or only hypertension aren't eligible for vaccination, government officials have clarified. A person aged 45-59 years must have diabetes for at least last 10 years or with complications like heart problem, kidney problem, respiratory problem along with hypertension where medication to control blood pressure is ongoing. Similarly, a person with blindness may not be eligible, but a person with multiple disabilities like blindness and deafness are eligible. People who require high support need due to disability, for instance, those paraplegic or Quadriplegic, are eligible too.

#### Revising National Food Security Act, 2013: NITI Aayog

The NITI Aayog recently circulated a discussion paper on a proposed revision in the **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**. It has recommended reducing the rural and urban coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, to 60% and 40%, respectively. It has also proposed a revision of beneficiaries as per the latest population which is currently being done through Census-2011.

#### Key Points

- Number of Beneficiaries at Present: Approximately 2.37 crore households or 9.01 crore persons, as in February

2021 under **Antyodaya Anna Yojana**. While approximately 70.35 crore persons are under the priority households.

- **Significance of the NITI Aayog's Recommendations:** If the rural-urban coverage ratio remains the same (67% of all population), then the total number of people covered will increase from the existing 81.35 crore to 89.52 crore - an increase of 8.17 crore (based on the projected 2020 population). This will result in an additional subsidy requirement of Rs. 14,800 crores. If the national coverage ratio is revised downward, the Centre can save up to Rs. 47,229 crores. This amount of savings can be utilised by the Government in other important areas of concern such as health and education.
- **Challenges of the Move:** In the times of COVID-19 pandemic, it will be a double burden (Unemployment and Food insecurity issues) on the poor section of the society. The move may be opposed by some of the states.
- **Other Recommendations:** HLC (High Level Committee) under **Shanta Kumar** had recommended reducing the coverage ratio from 67% of the population to 40%. According to it, 67% coverage of the population is on the much higher side, and should be brought down to around 40%, which will comfortably cover BPL families and some even above that. The Economic Survey- 2020-21 had recommended a revision of the **Central Issue Prices (CIP)** of food grains released from the central pool, which have remained unchanged for the past several years.
- **Central Issue Prices-** Food grains under NFSA are made available to beneficiaries at subsidized prices. The centre procures food grains from farmers at a **Minimum support price**

(MSP) and sells it to states at central issue prices. The prices are fixed by the Central Government from time to time, but not exceeding MSP.

#### Why a discussion on a revision?

The NFSA provides a legal right to persons belonging to “eligible households” to receive food grains at subsidised price— rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg and coarse grain at Rs 1/kg — under the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**. These are called central issue prices (CIPs). A revision of CIPs is one of the issues that have been discussed. The other issues are updating of the population coverage under the NFSA, and beneficiary identification criteria. Under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Act, the term “eligible households” comprises two categories — “priority households”, and families covered by the **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)**. Priority households are entitled to receive 5 kg of food grains per person per month, whereas AAY households are entitled to 35 kg per month at the same prices.

#### For how long are these prices valid, and how are they to be revised?

Under Schedule-I of the Act, these subsidised prices were fixed for “a period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act”. While different states began implementing the Act at different dates, the deemed date of its coming into effect is July 5, 2013, and the three-year period was therefore completed on July 5, 2016. However, the government has yet not revised the subsidised prices. The government can do so under Schedule-I of the Act, after completion of the three-year period.

To revise the prices, the government can amend Schedule-I through a notification, a copy of which has to be laid before each House of Parliament as soon as possible after it is issued. Even the Economic Survey of 2020-21 had recommended a revision in the CIPs. **The revised prices cannot exceed the minimum support price for wheat and coarse grains, and the derived minimum support price for rice.**

#### What is the extent of coverage, and how is it to be updated?

The Act has prescribed the coverage under “eligible households” — 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population. On the basis of Census 2011 figures and the national rural and urban coverage ratios, 81.35 crore persons are covered under NFSA currently. This overall figure has been divided among the states and Union Territories, based on the NSSO Household Consumer Expenditure Survey 2011-12. Section 9 of the Act deals with an update of coverage of population under the Act. It states: “The percentage coverage under the Targeted Public Distribution System in rural and urban areas for each State shall, subject to sub-section (2) of section 3, be determined by the Central Government and the total number of persons to be covered in such rural and urban areas of the State shall be calculated on the basis of the population estimates as per the census of which the relevant figures have been published.” Thus, the number of NFSA beneficiaries was frozen in 2013. However, given the population increase since then, there have been demands from the states and union territories to update the list by ensuring an annual updating system under NFSA. It was in this context that the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution had asked the NITI Aayog to suggest an alternative methodology** for “covering beneficiaries under NFSA, including prospective beneficiaries”.

#### What has the NITI Aayog proposed?

In its discussion paper, the NITI Aayog has suggested that the national rural and urban coverage ratio be reduced from the existing 75-50 to 60-40. If this reduction happens, the number of beneficiaries under the NFSA will drop to 71.62 crore (on the basis of the projected population in 2020). To make these changes in the law, the government will have to amend sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the NFSA. For this, it will require parliamentary approval.

Besides the Food Ministry and the NITI Aayog, discussions on the proposed revisions include the

Chief Economic Adviser and top officers of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. According to sources, several meetings have been held under the chairmanship of **Prof Ramesh Chand, Member, NITI Aayog**, to review the population coverage criterion.

### What is the implication of the revision for the Centre and the states?

If the national coverage ratio is revised downward, the Centre can save up to Rs 47,229 crore (as estimated by the NITI Aayog paper). However, the move may be opposed by some of the states.

On the other hand, if the rural-urban coverage ratio remains at 75-50, then the total number of people covered will increase from the existing 81.35 crore to 89.52 crore —an increase of 8.17 crore. This estimate by the NITI Aayog is based on the projected 2020 population, and, according to the paper, will result in an additional subsidy requirement of Rs 14,800 crore.



### Food Insecurity in India

According to the United Nations, India shares a quarter of the global hunger burden and nearly 47 million children not meeting their full potential due to malnutrition. While the Indian government has taken various steps to eliminate hunger through schemes such as the **Food Security Act, 2013**, the revised coverage ratio will have a huge impact on many rural and urban families. The government must adopt a well-detailed plan to cautiously examine the suggestions of NITI Aayog taking into consideration the number of households that depend on food rations to survive. Their future cannot be compromised.

### National Food Security Act, 2013

The National Food Security Act 2013 (also '**Right to Food Act**') is an Act of the Parliament which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people.[1] It was signed into law on 12 September 2013, retroactive to 5 July 2013.[2][3] The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA 2013) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government of India. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services scheme and the **Public Distribution System**. Further, the NFSA 2013 recognizes maternity entitlements. The **Midday Meal Scheme** and the **Integrated Child Development Services Scheme** are universal in nature whereas the PDS will reach about two-thirds of the population (75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas).

### Global Bio-India Summit 2021

The **second edition of Global Bio-India-2021** in New Delhi took place through virtual mode. It showcases the strength and opportunities of India's biotechnology sector at national level and to the global community. The minister unveiled the "**National Biotech Strategy**" and also inaugurated the Virtual Exhibition of Global Bio-India at the occasion.

### About

It is a mega international congregation of Biotechnology, with stakeholders including international bodies, regulatory bodies, Central and State Ministries, SMEs, large industries, bio clusters, research institutes, investors, and the startup ecosystem. It aims at facilitating the recognition of India as an emerging Innovation Hub and the bio-manufacturing hub globally. **India was ranked 48th in the Global Innovation Index Report 2020.**



### Objectives

*Bio- Partnering, Policy Discussions, CEO's plans for India and connecting Indian Biotech ecosystem with international ecosystem and creating platforms for new idea evaluation and investments. Showcase and identify key biotechnological innovations, products, services, technologies from national and international companies, start-ups and research institutes. Attracting major contract projects from international companies as well as major global venture funding into India. According to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report 2020, India is now ranked 1st among South-Asian countries compared to 6th rank in 2014.*

### Organisers

Co-organised by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology along with its Public Sector Undertaking Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) in partnership with industry association Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) and Invest India. ABLE is a not-for-profit pan-India forum that represents the Indian Biotechnology Sector.

### Biotechnology Sector of India

Biotechnology sector is recognized as one of the key drivers for contributing to India's USD 5 Trillion economy target by 2024. Policy initiatives of the Government of India (GoI) such as the Make in India program are aimed to develop India as a world-class Biotechnology and Bio-manufacturing hub. India is among the top-12 destinations for biotechnology in the world, with approximately 3% share in the global Biotechnology industry. Indian

Biotechnology industry's economy was valued at USD 70 billion in 2020 and is expected to grow to USD 150 billion by 2025.

### Biotechnology Parks

The Department of Biotechnology has established Biotechnology Parks/Incubators across the country to translate research into products and services by providing necessary infrastructure support. These Biotechnology Parks offer facilities to Scientists, and Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) for technology incubation, technology demonstration and pilot plant studies for accelerated commercial development of Biotechnology.

### Draft National Biotech Development Strategy 2020-24

It has called for more engagement with start-ups and to leverage the **public-private partnership** (PPP) model to take the industry to USD150 billion by 2025. To build and nurture a vibrant startup, entrepreneurial, and industrial base, connecting academia and industry. Its focus is on strengthening and nurturing of a strong basic research and innovation driven ecosystem across research institutes and laboratories, both public and private sector, with complete engagement of start-ups, small industry, and large industry.

### Freedom House's report: India declared as 'partly free'

The US government funded NGO "Freedom House" published its annual report on global political rights and liberties recently. The report titled "**Freedom in the World 2021 – Democracy under Siege**" published the report on political freedom across the world.

### Details

In the latest report, the status of India as a democracy and free society was downgraded to "partly free". Report also says that, it seems India have abandoned its potential to serve as the global democratic leader. It also highlighted that, the

downgraded rank of India from upper ranks of free nations will particularly damage the impact on global democratic standards. India has been given a score of 67 out of 100. Its further highlights that, the political rights and civil liberties in India has deteriorated since the year 2014 because of increasing pressure on human rights organisations, rising intimidation of academics & journalists, and incidents like lynching. In the freedom house reports for the year 2018, 2019 and 2020 had rated India as “free” even though its scores were declined during that period from 77 to 71 on a scale of 100. In the latest report, India had a score of 67 out of 100.

### Freedom in world report

**The freedom in world report was launched by the freedom house in the year 1973.** In the report, it assessed the level of freedom across the countries ranked them on the basis of numerical score and declared the countries as “free”, “partly free” or “not free”. This report is one of the oldest quantitative measures of democracy.

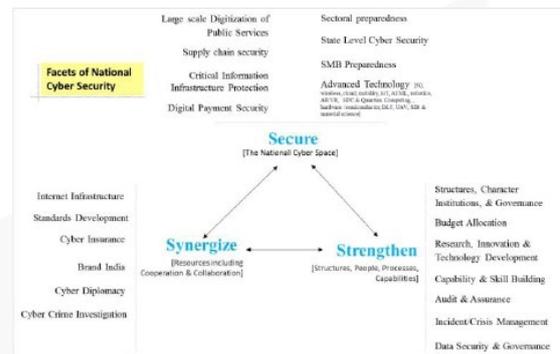
### National Cyber Security Strategy 2020

A National Cyber Security Strategy 2020 is being formulated by the Office of National Cyber Security Coordinator at the National Security Council Secretariat. Cyber Security is protecting cyber space including critical information infrastructure from attack, damage, misuse and economic espionage. The National Security Council (NSC) of India is a three-tiered organization that oversees political, economic, energy and security issues of strategic concern.

### National Cyber Security Strategy 2020

It aims to improve cyber awareness and cybersecurity through more stringent audits. Empanelled cyber auditors will look more carefully at the security features of organisations than are legally necessary now. There will be table-top cyber crisis management exercises regularly to reinforce the idea that cyber-attacks can take place regularly. It does call for an index of cyber preparedness, and

attendant monitoring of performance. A separate budget for cybersecurity is suggested, as also to synergise the role and functions of various agencies with the requisite domain knowledge.



### Why it is Needed ?

**Cyber warfare offensives:** The United States is just one of many countries that have invested significant amounts of money in developing not just defences against attack, but the ability to mount damaging cyber warfare offensives. The countries which are believed to have the most developed cyber warfare capabilities are the United States, China, Russia, Israel and the United Kingdom.

**Increased Digital usage Post-COVID:** Critical infrastructure is getting digitised in a very fast way — this includes financial services, banks, power, manufacturing, nuclear power plants, etc.

**For Protecting Critical Sectors:** It is particularly significant given the increasing interconnectedness of sectors and proliferation of entry points into the internet, which could further grow with the adoption of 5G. There were 6.97 lakh cyber security incidents reported in the first eight months of 2020, nearly equivalent to the previous four years combined, according to information reported to and tracked by **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)**.

**Recent Cyber Attacks:** There has been a steep rise in the use of resources like malware by a Chinese group called **Red Echo** to target “a large swathe” of India’s power sector. **Red Echo used malware called ShadowPad**, which involves the use of a backdoor to access servers. Chinese hacker group known as **Stone Panda** had “identified gaps and

vulnerabilities in the IT infrastructure and supply chain software of Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India. SolarWinds hack, impacted national critical infrastructure in the USA.

**For Government:** A local, state or central government maintains a huge amount of confidential data related to country (geographical, military strategic assets etc.) and citizens.

**For Individuals:** Photos, videos and other personal information shared by an individual on social networking sites can be inappropriately used by others, leading to serious and even life-threatening incidents.

**For Businesses:** Companies have a lot of data and information on their systems. A cyber-attack may lead to loss of competitive information (such as patents or original work), loss of employees/customers' private data resulting into complete loss of public trust on the integrity of the organization.

#### Present Government Initiatives

- Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative.
- Cyber Swachhta Kendra.
- Online cybercrime reporting portal.
- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).
- National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC).
- Information Technology Act, 2000.
- National Cyber Policy, 2013.

*India is the second-fastest digital adapter among 17 of the most-digital economies globally, and rapid digitisation does require forward-looking measures to boost cybersecurity. It is important for the corporates or the respective government departments to find the gaps in their organisations and address those gaps and create a layered security system, wherein security threat intelligence sharing is happening between different layers. There is a need for an apex body to ensure operational coordination amongst various agencies and ministries. Cyber deterrence can be envisaged on the lines of strategic deterrence to dissuade*

*cyberattacks. We need to acquire offensive capabilities for effective deterrence in cyberspace.*

#### Floriculture Mission to be implemented in 21 states



Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched 'CSIR Floriculture Mission' through virtual mode in New Delhi on March 4, 2021. He encouraged scientists of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) laboratories across the country to develop the land available at each laboratory to be set up as a model under the "CSIR Floriculture Mission".

The CSIR Floriculture Mission has been approved for implementation in 21 States and Union Territories of India. Under the mission, the available knowledgebase in CSIR Institutes will be utilized and leveraged to help Indian farmers and industry re-position themselves to meet the import requirements.

#### CSIR Floriculture Mission: Details

The CSIR Floriculture Mission will be implemented in collaboration with several bodies including the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-Directorate of Floriculture, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and Universities, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED), Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Fragrance and Flavour Development Centre (FFDC) and the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). The CSIR

Floriculture Mission aims to focus on commercial floral crops, seasonal/annual crops, cultivation of flower crops for honey bee rearing and wild ornaments. Some of the popular floriculture crops include Marigold, Rose, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Gladiolus, Gerbera, Canna, Liliium and Tuberose. Under the CSIR Floriculture mission, the available knowledge base in the CSIR Institutes will be utilized in order to help Indian farmers and industry to reposition themselves so as to meet import requirements.

This mission is significant because **the Indian Farmers have little knowledge regarding the floriculture which have the potential to give 5 times more return than the traditional crops.** It also has the potential to provide huge employment through floriculture farming, nursery raising, entrepreneurship development for nursery trade and export. Currently, **India only shares 0.6% of the global floriculture market despite having diverse agro-climatic conditions.** This, this mission will help in boosting this share.

The minister also launched the CSIR's Societal Portal and an Android App. This portal was developed by CSIR Team in collaboration with the **MyGov Team.** It will facilitate public to submit societal problems which will be resolved through S&T interventions. **The Indian floriculture market was worth Rs 15700 cr in 2018 and it is projected to reach Rs 47200 cr by 2024.**

#### CSIR's Societal Portal

- Dr. Harsh Vardhan also launched CSIR's Societal Portal and its Android app.
- The portal has been developed by CSIR Team with the help of the MyGov Team to facilitate the public to submit the societal problems that can be resolved using science and technology interventions.
- The portal will assist in seeking inputs on challenges and problems being faced by different stakeholders in society and seek a scientific solution to them.

- It will be a people-centric solution science portal that will be accessible to all.

#### Recommendations of Parliamentary committee on Rural Development

The Centre government must increase the number of pensions provided for poor senior citizens, widows and disabled people, said the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development.

#### Issues Pointed Out by the Parliamentary Standing Committee

The panel pointed out that it had previously proposed the increase of the miniscule pensions in its reports and slammed the government's "**laxity in raising the amount**". Also, criticised the implementation of **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** in reaching out to the poor and downtrodden section of the society. Pointed out the meagre amount of assistance ranging from Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 per month under the different components of this Scheme. Noted the callous approach of the State Governments in the proper implementation of the provision of unemployment allowance. Pulled up the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) for issues in implementation of the flagship MGNREGA scheme.

#### Issues in the MGNREGA Scheme Observed by the Committee

**Lack of Work Supply:** That too when there was an increase in the demand for work under MGNREGA due to economic distress caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

**Delay in the Release of Funds:** It is a huge discouraging aspect and does not go in consonance with the underlying spirit of the scheme.

**Disparity in Wages in Different States:** The committee noted how it is possible that a single scheme having the provision of hundred days of

guaranteed work to willing people from the rural settings can have different yardstick when it comes to the payment modalities across the length and breadth of the country. It is against the Constitutional provision of equal pay for equal work.

**National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is a welfare programme being administered by the Ministry of Rural Development. This programme is being implemented in rural as well as urban areas. **The programme was first launched on 15th August 1995 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.** It was brought within the umbrella of 'Core of Core' schemes of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) in 2016. Currently, it has five components namely:

- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) - since inception of NSAP in 1995.
- National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) - 1995.
- Annapurna Scheme - launched in 2000.
- Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) - launched in 2009.
- Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme - launched in 2009.

The **National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS)** was part of NSAP and was subsequently transferred from the Ministry of Rural development to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

#### Important Schemes of Department of Rural Development

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)
- Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)
- Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National
- Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)
- Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

- Prasad Mukherjee Urban Mission (SPMRM)
- Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

#### India participated in the first QUAD leader's summit



India, being a member of the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**, or better known as the QUAD, participated in the first-ever summit of the grouping, accompanied by **head of government of Australia, Japan and the US**. "We're united by our democratic values and our commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said as he thanked US President Joe Biden for the **first virtual summit of the four-nation alliance**. The speech underscored the importance of a "free and open" Indo-Pacific region for these countries.

"Our agenda today – covering areas like vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies – makes the QUAD a force for global good," added PM Modi.

#### India's statement

Prime Minister Modi said that the **QUAD** has now come of age and will serve as an important pillar in ensuring the stability of the Indo-Pacific region. He described the grouping as a **"force for global good"** in the Indo-Pacific. In his opening remarks, he underlined the evolution of the group and a shedding of inhibitions India may have harboured in the past. "I see this positive vision as an extension of India's ancient philosophy of **'Vasudhaive**

**Kutumbakam'** which regards the world as one family. We will work together closely as ever before for advancing shared values and promoting secure, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific," PM Modi said in his opening remarks. "The summit, by itself, is the most significant outcome," foreign secretary **Harsh Shringla**, who is also the **Sherpa for the QUAD from the Indian side**, said.

### Production push

Scaling up India's vaccine production is a key agenda for the first-ever Quad summit on Friday, March 12

#### THE OPTIONS ARE

- Forming a group or fund with support from Quad members to procure vaccines from Indian manufacturers for developing countries
- Using India as a hub for supplying vaccines procured with the Quad's support to South-east Asian countries
- Agreeing on financing deals to scale up India's manufacturing capacity, a US official said. This will likely focus on Indian firms producing American vaccines made by Novavax and J&J.



### COUNTERING CHINA

Experts say these moves are aimed at countering China's vaccine diplomacy.

112

Beijing has or is donating vaccines to 69 developing countries, and exporting doses to 43 more

**INDIA'S CAPABILITIES**  
Indian firms are collectively capable of producing billions of doses.

**58mn doses, 66 countries**

India has also shipped more than 58 mn doses to 66 countries. This includes nearly 8 mn doses to small and developing countries



### What is QUAD?

The QUAD, which is often described as the "Asian NATO", was formed in **2007** but failed to take off amid apprehensions over antagonising a prickly China. Even before that, the four countries first worked collectively in 2004, in response to the devastation of an earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean. However, the group was revived in 2017 and has held regular meetings over the last few years to give shape to the geostrategic alliance. Bolstered by a positive support campaign from the administration of former President Donald Trump, who saw the QUAD as the regional cornerstone of its confrontational approach to Beijing. Taking it forward, last year, India, US, Japan and Australia participated in the massive **Malabar naval drill**, as the first time all four QUAD members came together for the exercise since 2007.

### The two dimensions of Quadrilateral

"The fact that the QUAD meeting now is going to be at the leader level is certainly an illustration of the seriousness with which, and the importance that, all four partners give to this partnership," Hardy-Chartrand, an East Asia analyst at Temple University

in Tokyo told Al Jazeera. The discussions sent a potent message to China that its actions have brought together a committed group of democracies supporting values of pluralism and free access in a region which Beijing likes to see as its backyard. Others have criticised the grouping for its apparent pre-occupation with China. However, in statements announcing the summit, Washington, New Delhi, Tokyo and Canberra again took measured tones, with scant reference to China, instead stressing, as India's foreign ministry put it, that the summit would focus on finding "practical areas of cooperation towards maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region".

### What was achieved through the meet?

**QUAD nations have agreed to work together to produce up to one billion vaccine doses by 2022.**

The plan would see pharmaceutical hub India manufacturing the single-dose vaccine from US-based Johnson & Johnson backed by financial support from Japan, with Australia taking charge of shipments to countries in southeast Asia, Pacific islands and Indian Ocean countries. New Delhi has long urged the other QUAD members to invest in its vaccine production capacity in an attempt to counter China's widening influence of so-called "vaccine diplomacy". Nicholas Szechenyi, a senior fellow and deputy director of the Japan Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said such a vaccine commitment could be "reassuring for countries in Asia".

The QUAD also set up **three expert level working groups on vaccines, critical and emerging technologies and climate change**. The QUAD also explored the **possibility of cooperating with some countries in Europe like France, Germany and Netherlands which had declared Indo-Pacific policies of their own**. "But there is no talk about expanding the QUAD," Shringla said. Myanmar came up for discussion and India assured to all that it would be working "constructively" to bring it back on the path to democracy. "We advocate a constructive approach, take into account the needs of the people of Myanmar," Shringla said.

### Jal Shakti Ministry launched framework for water monitoring and quality testing

The Jal Shakti Ministry on March 13, 2021, launched guidelines, **the framework for monitoring, testing, and surveillance of drinking water quality**. The Ministry also launched **Water Quality Information Management System- WQMIS**, an online portal that will be providing detailed information on the laboratories for this purpose. The guidelines by the Jal Shakti Ministry specify work to be done in terms of monitoring and surveillance of the water quality at the state, block/tehsil, state, and village levels. They have been prepared in consultation with the Indian Council of Medical Research.

According to the Additional Secretary and Mission Director of the **National Jeevan Mission, Bharat Lal**, the objective of the exercise is to instil a sense of confidence about the quality of water as well as that the people can also test the water quality. He further added that a database of 2,200 laboratories have been prepared across India so that the water quality can be tested.



**What are the prescribed water quality parameters under the guidelines?**

- pH Value
- Total Dissolved Solids
- Turbidity
- Chloride
- Total alkalinity
- Total Hardness
- Sulphate
- Iron
- Total Arsenic
- Fluoride

- Nitrate
- Total Coliform bacteria
- E. coli

#### Concern

As per the 2018 assessment done by the Central Ground Water Board, **52% of all the blocks in India have inter alia any one of the contaminants such as fluoride, arsenic, chloride, nitrate, iron, and salinity.**

Nearly 20 states in the country have a drinking water source which is contaminated with fluoride, arsenic, iron, nitrate, heavy metals, or salinity. Apart from these, there are also 61 districts on priority across 5 states that have been identified by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry which are affected by Japanese Encephalitis.

#### Water quality

**Gajendra Singh Sherawat, Jal Shakti Minister on the occasion informed that the aim of the Jal Shakti Mission is to provide functional tap water connections by the year 2024** to all the rural households of the country and water quality is a significant aspect of it. The entire cost of the Jal Jeevan Mission is Rs. 3,60,000 crores and around 2% of it has been dedicated to water quality.

### National Non-ferrous Metal Scrap Recycling Framework

The Ministry of Mines has issued a **National non-ferrous metal scrap recycling framework, 2020** in a bid to cut down the scrap imports. It also seeks to use a life cycle management approach for better efficiency in the mineral value chain process.

**Objectives of the Recycling Framework:** To work towards economic wealth creation, job creation and increased contribution to GDP through metal recycling. To promote a formal and well-organized recycling ecosystem by adopting energy efficient processes. To minimize the effect of end-of-life products on landfills and environmental pollution by promoting an environmentally sound recycling

system. To evolve a responsive ecosystem by involving all stakeholders.

**Implementation Guidelines:** The framework envisages setting up of a central Metal Recycling Authority to facilitate recycling of metals. The government will work towards establishing standards for Quality of scrap used for recycling. A mechanism for registration of segregators, dismantlers, recyclers, collection centres etc. will be developed to promote recycling to an organized sector. It is proposed to set up Urban Mines, envisaged as a location to collect and hold large quantities of similar materials. An Online market platform/ exchange platform for recycled/secondary metal will be developed. Recyclers may explore the possibility of entering into collection contracts with industrial and commercial establishments.

#### Roles/ Responsibilities of Stakeholders

**Responsibility of Manufacturer:** To ensure that any **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** guidelines/Regulations be strictly adhered to. Designing products that are easier to recycle and reuse in an efficient and environmentally sound manner.

**Role of Public:** Public should responsibly dispose of scrap at designated scrap collection centres for their effective and environmentally sound processing.

**Role of Government:** MoEFCC to streamline the regulatory requirements, eliminating multiple clearances wherever feasible, for the recycling units.

**Role of Recycling Authority:** Developing technical, safety and environmental norms and SOPs for handling and processing of scraps in consultation with MoEFCC, CPCB, BIS, etc.

#### Challenges Faced By the Non-ferrous Metals Recycle Industry

- The major challenge is its heavy dependence on import of metal scrap.
- Lack of an organized / systematic scrap recovery mechanism.

- Lack of sustained implementation of existing regulations on waste collection and recycling.
- Lack of standardization of recycled products adversely affecting market adoption.
- Lack of specific skill sets on responsible methods and technologies.

#### Government Initiatives For Recycling

**The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** is in the process of formulating **National Resource Efficiency Policy (NREP)** which aims to mainstream resource efficiency across all sectors, wherein Aluminium sector has been considered as a priority sector. The Ministry of Steel has brought out a Steel Scrap Recycling Policy which envisages a framework to facilitate and promote establishment of metal scrap recycling centres. NITI Aayog is proposing a comprehensive **“National Material Recycling Policy”** to drive concerned and coordinated national and state level programs, plans and actions towards ramping up material recycling in India in a formal and organized manner.

#### National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021

Recently, the central government introduced the Pandey Government of **National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021** in the Lok Sabha to amend the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991. It aims to "further define the responsibilities of the elected government and Lieutenant Governor (LG) in Delhi".

#### Provisions of the Bill

“Government” to mean "Lieutenant Governor (LG)": The expression 'Government' referred to in any law to be made by the Legislative Assembly shall mean the Lieutenant Governor (LG). Widening of Discretionary

**Powers of LG:** The Bill gives discretionary powers to the LG even in matters where the Legislative Assembly of Delhi is empowered to make laws. Necessarily Granted an Opportunity to LG: It seeks to ensure that the LG is “necessarily granted an opportunity” to give her/his opinion before any decision taken by the Council of Ministers (or the Delhi Cabinet) is implemented.

**Related to Administrative Decisions:** The amendment also says that “Legislative Assembly shall not make any rule to enable itself to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to the administrative decisions”.

#### Need of the Amendment

**For Structural Clarity:** The Ministry of Home Affairs’ statement on “objects and reasons” of the Bill stated that Section 44 of the 1991 Act deals with conduct of business and there is no structural mechanism for effective time-bound implementation of the said section. Also, there is no clarity as to what proposal or matters are required to be submitted to Lieutenant Governor before issuing order thereon. Section 44 of the 1991 Act says that all executive actions of the LG, whether taken on the advice of his Ministers or otherwise shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the LG.

**Background of the Events:** In its 2018 verdict, the five-judge Bench had held that the LG’s concurrence is not required on issues other than police, public order and land. It had added that decisions of the Council of Ministers will, however, have to be communicated to the LG. The LG was bound by the aid and advice of the council of ministers. The court also said that the status of the LG of Delhi is not that of a Governor of a State, rather he remains an Administrator, in a limited sense, working with the designation of Lieutenant Governor”. It had also pointed out that the elected government must keep in mind that Delhi is not a state. Encouraged by the Supreme Court verdict, the elected government had stopped sending files on executive matters to the LG before the

implementation of any decision. It has been keeping the LG informed of all administrative developments, but not necessarily before implementing or executing any decision. But the amendment, if cleared, will force the elected government to take LG’s advice before taking any action on any cabinet decision.

#### Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991

Delhi’s current status as a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly is an outcome of the 69th Amendment Act through which Articles 239AA and 239BB were introduced in the Constitution. The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act was passed simultaneously to supplement the constitutional provisions relating to the Assembly and the Council of Ministers in the national capital. For all practical purposes, the GNCTD Act outlines the powers of the Assembly, the discretionary powers enjoyed by the LG, and the duties of the Chief Minister with respect to the need to furnish information to the LG.

#### Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021



Views around the world over Abortion are lined in two camps. Whereas some opine that terminating a pregnancy is the choice of the pregnant woman, and a part of her reproductive rights. Others are of the view that the state has an obligation to protect life, and hence should provide for the protection of the foetus. India manages the law around Termination of Pregnancy through **Medical Termination of Pregnancy. (MTP) Act, 1971**, to which an amendment has been made by the parliament. Introduced and passed by Lok Sabha last year, The MTP (Amendment) Bill received a green signal through a voice vote from Rajya Sabha recently. Introduced by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan in Lok Sabha, on March 2, 2020, the Bill allows abortion up to 24 weeks “for special categories of women”, from the existing 20 weeks gestation period. It also adds to the definition of termination of pregnancy to mean a procedure undertaken to terminate a pregnancy by using medical or surgical methods. “The bill was drafted after extensive expert consultation involving all stakeholders such as gynaecologist association, related NGOs, Indian Medical Association etc. Group of ministers chaired by Nitin Gadkari, and ethics committee was also consulted, and only after elaborate discussion the bill took shape. The bill was also discussed in great detail in Lok Sabha before being passed unanimously,” asserted Dr. Harsh Vardhan in Rajya Sabha.

#### Details of the Bill

- 1. Termination of Pregnancy:** Under the original Act, a pregnancy may be terminated within 12 weeks, if a registered medical practitioner is of the opinion that: **(i) continuation of the pregnancy** may risk the life of the mother, or cause grave injury to her health, or **(ii) there is a substantial risk that the child**, if born, would suffer physical or mental abnormalities. However, for termination of a pregnancy between 12 to 20 weeks, two medical practitioners were required to give their opinion. The Amendment to the Bill changes this provision to state that a pregnancy may be terminated within 20 weeks, with the opinion of one registered medical practitioner. Approval of two registered medical practitioners will be required for termination of pregnancies between 20 to 24 weeks. The termination of pregnancies up to 24 weeks will only apply to specific categories of women, as may be prescribed by the central government. The bill furthers two situations that will constitute these categories: First, the “pregnancy occurs as a result of failure of any device or method used by any woman or her partner for the purpose of limiting the number of children or preventing pregnancy”. Such cases are to be presumed as causing grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman. Second, “where any pregnancy is alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape, the anguish caused by pregnancy shall be presumed to constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman”. The original Act said, if any pregnancy occurs as a result of failure of any device or method used by a married woman or her husband to limit the number of children, such an unwanted pregnancy may constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman. The Bill amends this statement to replace ‘married woman or her husband’ with ‘woman or her partner’ to include unmarried women too under this provision. The Amendment further states that the central government will notify the norms for the medical practitioner whose opinion is required for termination of the pregnancy.
- 2. Constitution of a Medical Board:** The Amendment Bill states that the upper limit of termination of pregnancy will not apply in cases where such termination is necessary due to the diagnosis of substantial foetal abnormalities. These abnormalities will be diagnosed by a Medical Board. For this purpose, the Bill mandates every state government to constitute a Medical Board. These Medical

Boards will consist of the following members: **(i) a gynaecologist, (ii) a paediatrician, (iii) a radiologist or sonologist, and (iv) any other number of members**, as may be notified by the state government. The central government is provisioned to notify the powers and functions of these Medical Boards.

3. **Protection of privacy of a woman:** The Amendment Bill states that no registered medical practitioner will be allowed to reveal the name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated, except to a person authorised by any law. Anyone who contravenes this provision, will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, or with a fine, or both.

### Background

The Bill states two Objectives: -

- Several cases have been filed before the Supreme Court and various High Courts seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at stages beyond the 20-weeks limit under the Act, on the grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to rape faced by women. According to a report by the Pratigya Campaign for Gender Equality & Safe Abortion, a network of individuals and organisations that have been working towards women's access to safe abortion care in India, between 2016 and 2019, the Supreme Court and the high courts of India had seen a total of 194 petitions from women seeking abortions.
- With the advancement of medical technology, there is a scope to increase the upper limit for terminating pregnancies especially for vulnerable women, and in cases of severe foetal abnormality. Under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, voluntarily

terminating a pregnancy is a criminal offence. However, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 allows for aborting the pregnancy by medical doctors (with specified specialisation) on certain grounds. Termination is permitted only when continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman, cause grave injury to her mental or physical health (including rape and failure of birth control measures), or in the case of foetal abnormalities. Termination is also allowed at any point during the pregnancy if there is an immediate necessity to save the woman's life.

*The Act of 1971 regulates the conditions under which a pregnancy may be aborted. The Bill, however, increases the time period within which abortion may be carried out. Currently, abortion requires the opinion of one doctor if it is done within 12 weeks of conception and two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks. The Bill allows abortion to be done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women between 20 and 24 weeks. The Bill also sets up state level Medical Boards to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after 24 weeks in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities.*

### Dr. Harsh Vardhan appointed as Chairman of 'Stop TB Partnership Board'

The Union Health Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, was appointed as the chairman of "**Stop TB Partnership Board**" on **March 18, 2021**. This appointment was made to recognise his outstanding contribution towards the movement of eradicating Tuberculosis (TB) from India by 2025. He will be serving the global body for a three-year term from July 2021. **India has committed to eliminating TB by 2025.** India's deadline is five years ahead of global deadline of 2030. The Government has also out forward the **National Strategic Plan for TB**

**Elimination for the year 2017-2025.** It highlights the ambitious agenda and targets of ending TB Strategy.

### Stop TB Partnership

**It is an international body which is having the power to align the nations to fight against TB.** The body observes the participation of a wide range of constituencies which provides credibility to this body. With the participation of several constituencies, the body gets a broad range of medical, social and financial expertise which is required to defeat TB. **The body works with the vision of a “TB-free world”.**

### Background

**Stop TB Partnership was established in 2000.** The body has been mandated to eliminate Tuberculosis as a public health problem. The organization was established after the meeting of First Session of Ad Hoc Committee on Tuberculosis Epidemic which was held in London in 1998. The organisation called for collaborative action from ministerial delegations through the **Amsterdam Declaration**. The ministerial delegations were to participate from the 20 countries which is having the highest burden of TB. The body has 1500 partner organizations including the international, non-governmental and governmental organizations. **It is based at Geneva, Switzerland.**

### Gram Ujala Scheme



Power and new and renewable energy minister Raj Kumar Singh has recently launched the “Gram Ujala

**Scheme” under which high quality energy efficient LED bulbs will be given for Rs 10 per piece in certain villages of five states in the first phase.** In the first phase of this programme, 15 million LED bulbs will be distributed across villages of Aarah (Bihar), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Vijaywada (Andhra Pradesh), Nagpur (Maharashtra), and villages in western Gujarat. The programme will be financed entirely through **carbon credits and will be the first such programme in India.**

**The programme will have a significant impact on India's climate change action energy savings of 2025 million KWh/year and CO2 reductions of 1.65 million tonnes CO2/year.** It will also enable better illumination, at an affordable price. This will usher in a better standard of life, financial savings, more economic activity, and better safety for rural citizens, as per the statement. In the year 2014, the previous **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Lighting for All (Ujala) scheme had cut the LED bulb prices to Rupees 70 per piece from around Rupees 310.** India is currently the **second-largest LED market across the world by value.** So, the scheme will help in avoiding the peak electricity demand of 9,428 megawatts.

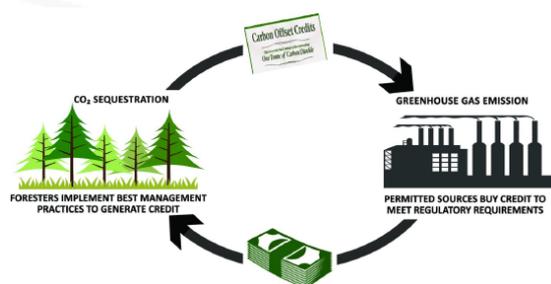
### About ‘Gram Ujala Scheme’

**The Gram Ujala Scheme is an ambitious scheme which offers the world's cheapest LED bulbs in rural areas. This is the first such scheme in India.** It provides the LED Bulbs in these areas at a mere ₹10. The scheme also furthers its climate change strategy and strengthen the self-reliance credentials. The scheme does not come with the government's support or subsidy. Under the scheme, the bulbs are offered by the state-run Energy Efficiency Services Ltd.'s subsidiary **Convergence Energy Services Ltd (CESL).** The scheme proposes for distributing some 600 million LED at rupees 10 in the rural areas. It will be financed entirely through the carbon credits which will be claimed under the “**United Nations’ Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)**”. The revenue from the carbon credit will contribute to Rupees 60 per LED. This scheme also proposes to take back the incandescent and **compact fluorescent lamp (CFL)**

bulbs of the rural consumers. After submitting the bulbs, the consumers will get 7 watt and 12-watt LED bulbs with three years' warranty. The Gram Ujala programme will be implemented in villages of the five districts only and consumers can exchange a maximum of five LED bulbs. These rural households will also have metres installed in their houses to account for usage.

### What Is a Carbon Credit?

A carbon credit is a permit that allows the company that holds it to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases. One credit permits the emission of a mass equal to one ton of carbon dioxide. The carbon credit is one half of a so-called "cap-and-trade" program. Companies that pollute are awarded credits that allow them to continue to pollute up to a certain limit. That limit is reduced periodically. Meanwhile, the company may sell any unneeded credits to another company that needs them. Private companies are thus doubly incentivized to reduce greenhouse emissions. First, they will be fined if they exceed the cap. Second, they can make money by saving and reselling some of their emissions allowances.



Further, carbon credit documentation will be sent to UN-accredited validators for inclusion into the Shine Programme of activities. Carbon credits will be prepared under the Shine Programme of Activities with an option for verifying under the Voluntary Carbon Standard, depending on the needs of buyers. Carbon credit buyers will also be sought through an open process based on initial discussions with the market. The balance cost and margin on the LED cost will be recouped through the carbon credits earned. With price being one of the principal

barriers, the Gram Ujala programme has been designed to support widespread distribution by removing the chief barrier for rural consumers. In addition, the energy savings garnered will reduce household's energy outlay, enabling higher disposable income and savings.

### Global Water Crisis : UNICEF

According to a new report released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), one in five children worldwide reside in areas of high or extremely high-water vulnerability.



### About the Report

The new report is part of UNICEF's 'Water security for all' initiative that identifies areas where physical water scarcity risks overlap with poor water service levels. The initiative aims to mobilise resources, partnerships, innovation and global response to identified hot spots. **UNICEF identified 37 hot-spot countries where children faced especially distressing circumstances in terms of absolute numbers, where global resources, support and urgent action had to be mobilised.** Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Tanzania and Yemen were especially vulnerable.

**Findings:** Children in more than 80 countries live in areas with high or extremely high-water vulnerability. Eastern and Southern Africa has the highest proportion of children living in such areas, with more than half of children – 58% – facing

difficulty accessing sufficient water every day. It is followed by West and Central Africa (31%), South Asia (25%), and the Middle East (23%). More than 155 million children in South Asia lived in areas with high or even extremely high-water vulnerability.

### Water Crisis in India

India has 4% of the world's freshwater which has to cater to 17% of the world's population. As per NITI Aayog report released in June 2018, India is facing the worst-ever water crisis in history. Approximately 600 million people or roughly around 45% of the population in India is facing high to severe water stress. The report says that nearly 40% of the population will have absolutely no access to drinking water by 2030 and 6% of India's GDP will be lost by 2050 due to the water crisis.

### Causes of Water Crisis in India

The Central Groundwater Board's estimates show that the groundwater table in most parts of the country has been declining every year because of **over-exploitation**. If the groundwater continues to decline unabated, meeting the country's agricultural and drinking water requirements will become a big challenge. **85% of rural water supply, 45% of urban water supply and over 64% of irrigation now rely on groundwater**. Due to accumulation of sediments in the water storage area of major and medium irrigation dams that are currently in use, the total storage capacity has fallen significantly. This is clearly underlined in the report 'Compendium of Silting of Reservoirs in India', released by the Central Water Commission in 2020. Climate change is causing major changes in rainfall levels.

### Measures Taken by the Central Government: "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain"

#### Campaign

The campaign is being implemented during the period **22nd March, 2021 to 30th November, 2021** - the pre-monsoon and monsoon period in the country. The campaign is intended to nudge the

State and all stakeholders to create **Rain Water Harvesting Structures (RWHS)** suitable to the climatic conditions and subsoil strata to ensure storage of rainwater. Rains falling in the four/five months of monsoon are the only source of water for most parts of the country.

### Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

In the Budget 2021-22, **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) has been announced under the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal- 6**. It complements the Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural) which envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024**.

### Ministry of Jal Shakti

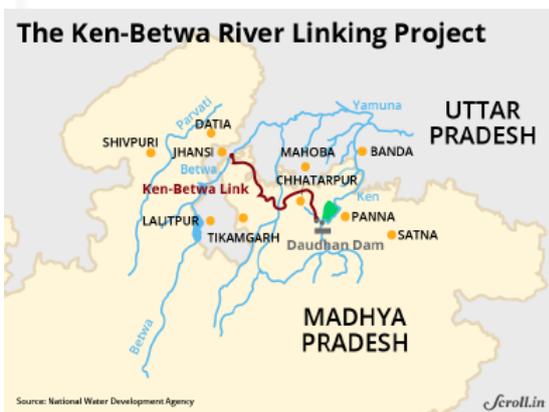
The Government of India established the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2019 to consolidate interrelated functions pertaining to water management. The Ministry launched **Jal Shakti Abhiyan – a campaign for water conservation and water security**.

### Measures Taken by State Governments

- Uttar Pradesh – Jakhni Village (water village)
- Bundelkhand Punjab – Pani Bachao Paise Kamao
- Madhya Pradesh – Kapil Dhara Yojana
- Gujarat – Sujalam Sufalam Yojana
- Telangana – Mission Kakatiya Program
- Maharashtra – Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan
- Andhra Pradesh – Neeru Chettu Programme
- Rajasthan – Mukhya Mantri Jal Swalambhan Abhiyan (MJSA)



**Ken and Betwa Link Project**



Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh signed a memorandum of agreement to implement the Ken Betwa Link Project (KBLP), the first project of the **National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers**. The two states signed a tripartite agreement with the Centre on **World Water Day (22nd March)** to finally implement this ambitious project.

#### Ken Betwa Link Project (KBLP)

The Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) is the River interlinking project that aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken river in MP to Betwa in UP to irrigate then drought-prone Bundelkhand region. The region spread across the districts of two states mainly Jhansi, Banda, Lalitpur and Mahoba districts of UP and Tikamgarh, Panna and Chhatarpur districts of MP. The project involves building a 77-metre tall and a 2-km wide Dhaudhan dam and a

230-km canal. Ken-Betwa is one of the 30 river interlinking projects conceived across the country. The project has been delayed due to political and environmental issues.

#### Advantage of Interlining of Rivers

**Reducing Drought:** River linking will be a solution to recurring droughts in Bundelkhand region.

**Farmers' Benefit:** It will curb the rate of farmers suicide and will ensure them stable livelihood by providing sustainable means of irrigation and reducing excessive dependence on groundwater.

**Electricity Production:** It will not only accelerate the water conservation by construction of a multipurpose dam but will also produce 103 MW of hydropower and will supply drinking water to 62 lakh people.

**Rejuvenate Biodiversity:** Few are of the view that the introduction of dams inside the water scarce regions of panna tiger reserve (MP), will rejuvenate the forests of the reserve that in turn will pave the way for Rich Biodiversity in the region.

#### Issues

**Environmental:** Because of certain environmental and wildlife conservation concerns like passing of the project through critical tiger habitat of panna tiger reserve, the project is stuck in for the approval from **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, and other higher authorities.

**Economic:** There is a huge economic cost attached with the project implementation and maintenance, which has been rising due to delays in project implementation.

**Social:** Reconstruction and rehabilitation caused due to displacement resulting from the implementation of the project will involve social cost as well.

### Ken and Betwa Rivers

**Ken and Betwa rivers originate in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna.** Ken meets with Yamuna in Banda district of UP and with Betwa in Hamirpur district of UP. Rajghat, Paricha and Matatila dams are over Betwa river. Ken River passes through Panna tiger reserve.

### National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers

The National River Linking Project (NRLP) formally known as the **National Perspective Plan**, envisages the transfer of water from water 'surplus' basins where there is flooding, to water 'deficit' basins where there is drought/scarcity, through inter-basin water transfer projects. Under the National Perspective Plan (NPP), the **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)**, has identified 30 links (16 under the Peninsular Component and 14 under the Himalayan Component) for the preparation of feasibility reports (FRs). The NPP for transferring water from water-surplus basins to water-deficit basins was prepared in August 1980.

### National Biopharma Mission



Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has initiated cabinet approved National Biopharma Mission with the objective of strengthening emerging biotechnology enterprise across India. Mission is entitled as "Industry-Academia Collaborative Mission for Accelerating Discovery Research to Early Development for Biopharmaceuticals – Innovate in India (I3) Empowering biotech entrepreneurs & accelerating inclusive innovation".

National Biopharma mission was launched to support small and medium enterprises in order for them to overcome the risks associated with early stages of development of products. It promotes entrepreneurship by supporting enhanced industry-academia inter-linkages. It also provides mentoring & training for academia, innovators and entrepreneurs. The mission further promotes domestic manufacturing by shared national facilities like GLP Analytical facilities, cell line repositories and setting clinical trial network.

### Objectives of the mission

Biopharma mission was launched with understated objectives:

- To develop products from leads which are at advanced stages of product development lifecycle.
- To strengthen and establish shared infrastructure facilities to validate & manufacture the products.
- To develop human capital by providing specific training in order to address 'critical skills gaps' in researchers and nascent biotech companies.
- To create & enhance technology transfer and intellectual property management capacities across public and private sector.

### Targets of the Mission

Specific targets of the mission are:

- To develop 5 biopharma products like biotherapeutics, Vaccines, medical devices and diagnostics.
- To establish the shared infrastructure and facilities like GLP Validation and Reference Lab.
- Med-Tech validation facility.
- Translational & interdisciplinary development and development of cell lines.
- To set up and establish technology transfer offices in public and private sector.

- To impart technical and non-technical skill development.

### Innovate in India (I3)

**I3 is an industry- academia collaborative mission by Department of Biotechnology (DBT) which was launched in collaboration with World Bank to accelerate discovery research.** It will be implemented by **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**. Mission was launched with the aim of enabling and nurturing an ecosystem to preparing technological and product development capabilities of India in biopharmaceutical to make it globally competitive. It also seeks to transform the health standards of India's population by developing affordable product.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



### 16 Years of Indo - US Nuclear Deal

The deal laid the foundation for greater trust and friendship. It marked the finalization of the journey that led to the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement between India and the United States, popularly called the **Indo-US nuclear deal**. A landmark Joint Statement of 18 July 2005 was the origin of a transformation of bilateral relations. It envisioned a multifaceted relationship on issues as diverse as terrorism, science and technology,

agriculture, infrastructure, health, commerce, energy and defence.

### About the Deal

The nuclear dimension of the cooperation, however, monopolised the next three years as both sides worked hard and braved critics to enable amendment of national laws and international rules to facilitate India's accommodation into the nuclear regime. This was not easy since the nuclear positions and policies of both countries had drifted apart substantively since 1974.

Three decades of estrangement had to be redressed. A revolutionary initiative was called for to not only accommodate India into the nuclear regime despite its strategic programme, but also effectuate an overall modernisation of the bilateral relationship. The Indo-US nuclear deal was crafted in this spirit. Two regional developments around this time came in handy for pushing India's case. **The first was the manifestation of Pakistan's irresponsible behaviour**—first in Kargil in 1999, and then in its role in the nuclear proliferation network revealed in 2003. While Pakistan tried to frame the second episode as a private enterprise run by A.Q. Khan, enough archival evidence surfaced to prove State involvement. Both these events exposed Pakistan's dangerous mis-adventurism and enabled a de-hyphenation of American policy towards the region. The nuclear cooperation agreement with India, only India, thus became possible.

**The second development that went in India's favour was the rise of China.** Though Beijing was yet to bare its fangs in the early 2000s, the fact that it had them was beginning to become clear even then. The American worldview of the time envisaged the need to counterbalance China and nuclear India was perceived as being able to provide the right strategic weight for the purpose. **India's democracy, liberalism and heterogeneity added greater heft to its appeal against the authoritarian, Communist and monochromatic China.** Indo-US nuclear deal illustrated American preference for policies supportive of India's rise. The US spokesperson in 2005 described this as **"a global**

**partnership with India which encourages India's emergence as a positive force on the world scene".**

Basically of course, the Indo-US nuclear agreement was about enabling a rapid expansion of India's nuclear energy programme. Given India's increasing electricity requirements and the need to fulfil them using environmentally friendly technologies made nuclear energy a natural choice. But, to effectively exploit this, India needed more uranium and larger capacity reactors, which was only possible through participation in international nuclear commerce. The deal enabled this by rehabilitating India into the narrowly straitjacketed Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). This final step was preceded by many others that included the conclusion of a Separation Plan and signing of an Additional Protocol with the IAEA by India, and amendment of the US Nuclear Non-proliferation Act by the American administration.

With the conclusion of all steps by 2008, India had signed cooperation agreements with a dozen countries within the next three years. But, nearly a decade hence, India has limited tangible benefits to show by way of an enhanced nuclear capacity built through imported reactors. This is because of many factors, such as, the blow dealt to public acceptance of nuclear power by the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011, contentious land acquisition issues, circumstances that led to India's nuclear liability legislation which inhibited private participation and complicated price calculations. Nonetheless, domestic reactor construction has accelerated with availability of imported fuel. India is also now a part of the global nuclear supply chain.

But then, the Indo-US nuclear agreement was about more than just the nuclear element. The deal pulled the relationship out of a fractious gridlock and laid the foundation for greater trust and friendship. This has withstood changes in administrations on both sides. Indo-US relations today traverse myriad dimensions: **enhanced counter-terrorism cooperation** since the 2008 Mumbai attack; a **Strategic Dialogue** institutionalised in 2010; **fillip to military cooperation** with the pivot to Asia in 2012 leading to expanded defence trade; increased energy cooperation, including on **renewables**

**technology** since 2014; **India's designation as a major defence partner** in 2016 opening new possibilities for defence acquisitions; conclusion of **COMCASA in 2018 enabling Indian access to advanced communication technology for defence**. Moreover, India's membership of export control groups such as the **MTCR, Wassenaar Agreement and Australia Group assure access to earlier denied high technologies**. All these steps have added new pillars of cooperation to the foundation laid in 2005.

*Interestingly, this broad-based cooperation particularly in areas of intelligence sharing, defence, energy and technology acquires a new relevance in the current military face-off with China. It should not be lost on Beijing that India had generally been mindful of China's sensitivities on its closeness to Washington, including since the conclusion of the nuclear deal. But Beijing's recent military assertiveness leading to the loss of lives at the Line of Actual control is likely to change India's calculus. Fortunately for India, its military, diplomatic and economic options today are many more than in 1962. The role of the Indo-US nuclear deal in opening these possibilities for India should not be overlooked.*

#### **India - Bangladesh Bilateral Meet**

Few days ago, India's External Affairs Minister visited Bangladesh for a bilateral meet. This meeting came ahead of Indian Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh scheduled in March 2021. Earlier a 122-member contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces has participated in the 72nd Republic Day parade, commemorating 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh.

#### **Bangladesh's Stand**

**Resolution of Problems:** Problems between neighbouring countries should be resolved through discussions and negotiations.

**Prioritising Each Other's Benefit:** Need to focus on possible ways to materialise commitments and

accommodate each other's priorities in a mutually beneficial manner.

**Cooperation During COVID-19:** Bangladesh acknowledged the collaborative initiative of the two countries in implementing the vaccination programme against the ongoing pandemic. Bangladesh purchased the COVID vaccine from Serum Institute of India. Bangladesh is the largest recipient of 9 million doses of Made in India vaccine.

**Multidimensional Relationship:** Both countries are committed to expand their relationship in all dimensions, ranging from security, trade, transport and connectivity, culture, people-to-people ties, energy, joint development of our shared resources and defence.

#### India's Stand

**Congratulated Bangladesh:** On its graduation from the **Least Developed Country** (LDC) status, Bangladesh has been on the United Nations (UN) Least Developed Countries list since 1975. Bangladesh fulfilled all the criteria necessary for its elevation to a developing country in 2018. Therefore the UN has recommended graduation of Bangladesh from the category of Least Developed Country (LDC). Once it receives the final recommendation, Bangladesh will formally graduate to the developing nation bracket in 2026.

**More than Strategic Partners:** India-Bangladesh relations transcend strategic partnership, and bonding of both the countries is central to the realisation of a dream of a peaceful, prosperous and progressive South Asia.

**Continued Interaction During COVID:** Despite the COVID pandemic, interactions and consultations continued unabated such as:

India and Bangladesh had a Virtual Summit in December 2020. A Joint Consultative Commission between the two Foreign Ministers in September 2020.

**Teesta Issue:** India and Bangladesh would have a meeting of Water Resources secretaries to discuss the Teesta issue.

**Development of Connectivity:** India is keen to focus on the development of connectivity with Bangladesh and beyond for next 20 years to change the region's geo-economic scenario.

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**Bangladesh Central to India's Policies:** Bangladesh was central to India's **Neighbourhood First** policy and increasingly relevant to the country's Act East Policy. Bangladesh as a key neighbour and a valued partner not only in South Asia but also in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

**Progress on Ground Situation:** Practical progress has been made on the ground. Conducting a trial run of container cargo through Chattogram port to Agartala. Adding two new protocol routes to inland waterways connecting Tripura to the national waterways. Handing over 10 broad gauge locomotives. Forming a Joint venture in the energy sector.

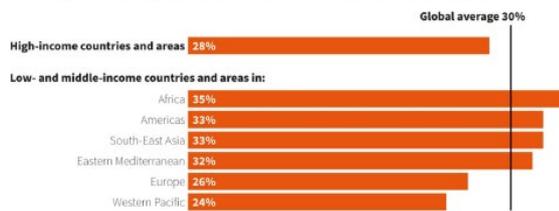
*A year after the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019-National Register of Citizens (NRC) issue strained the robust ties between the two countries, quiet diplomacy appears to have worked. India must keep up the partnership that allows for economic growth and improved developmental parameters for both countries. Deepening relationship with Bangladesh has become a necessity in the face of shifting geo-economics. Bangladesh, with its growing economic success provides a vital partnership in the region. The two countries share 54 transboundary rivers, and water management is the key to prosperity. Bangladesh-India relations have reached a stage of maturity. There is scope for India-Bangladesh ties to move to the next level, based on cooperation, coordination and consolidation. It is important to address specific issues like Teesta and to respond to Dhaka's call for help on the Rohingya issue.*

## One in three women facing violence in the world: WHO

Every one of three women worldwide has been subjected to physical or sexual violence at least once during her lifetime, reported the WHO. Moreover, pervasive criminal behaviour has also increased during the pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) had said. **“Violence against women is endemic in every country and culture, causing harm to millions of women and their families, and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,”** WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. The U.N. agency, while presenting the news had called the situation as “devastatingly pervasive” and caught our attention to an alarming situation.

### Violence against women

Percentage of women subjected to physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, 2018



Source: World Health Organization

### Some main points

- Some 31% of women aged 15-49, i.e. up to 852 million women in their lifetimes, have experienced physical or sexual assault by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner, a number that has remained largely unchanged over the past decade, the WHO said in what it called the largest-ever such study, encompassing national data and surveys from 2000-2018.
- This violence starts early for every 1 in 4 young women (aged 15-24 years), who have been in a relationship, and will have already experienced violence by an intimate partner by the time they reach their mid-twenties.
- 6% of women globally report being sexually assaulted by someone other

than their husband or partner. Given the high levels of stigma and under-reporting of sexual abuse, the true figure is likely to be significantly higher.

- Countries with the highest prevalence of sexual or physical assault include Kiribati, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan, WHO data show.
- However, the lowest rates are in Europe, i.e. 16 to 23%, over a lifetime, closely followed by Central Asia (18%), Eastern Asia (20%) and South-Eastern Asia (21%).
- An estimated 37% of women living in the poorest countries have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their life, with some of these countries having a prevalence as high as 1 in 2.

### Pandemic exacerbating the problem

WHO and its other partners have warned that the COVID-19 pandemic has further increased women’s exposure to violence, as a result of measures such as lockdowns and disruptions to vital support services. “We know that the multiple impacts of COVID-19 have triggered a “shadow pandemic” of increased reported violence of all kinds against women and girls,” said UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. “Every government should be taking strong, proactive steps to address this, and involving women in doing so”, she added. Though many countries have seen increased reporting of intimate partner violence to helplines, police, health workers, teachers, and other service providers during lockdowns, the full impact of the pandemic on prevalence will only be established as surveys are resumed, the report notes.

### The side effects

The U.N. agency have urged governments to prevent violence, improve services for victims and tackle economic inequalities that often leave

women and girls trapped in abusive relationships. A husband or an intimate partner is the most common perpetrator and a disproportionate number of victims are in the poorest countries. In some regions, more than half of women have faced violence at some point, as reported by Reuters, pointing towards regions such as Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia. Violence in all its forms can have an impact on a woman's health and well-being throughout the rest of her life; even long after the violence may have ended. It is associated with increased risk of injuries, depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually-transmitted infections including HIV and many other health problems. It impacts the society as a whole and comes with tremendous costs, impacting national budgets and overall development.

#### Wakeup call

"These numbers are very shocking and really are sort of a wake-up call for governments to be doing much more to prevent this violence," report author Claudia Garcia-Moreno said. One in four adolescent girls aged 15-19 who have had a relationship have been subjected to either physical or sexual violence, she said. "This is a very important and formative time in life. And we know that the impacts of this violence can be long-lasting and can affect physical and mental health and lead to unwanted pregnancies and other complications," she said.

#### What is the solution?

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General said that, "We can only fight [the situation] with deep-rooted and sustained efforts – by governments, communities and individuals – to change harmful attitudes, improve access to opportunities and services for women and girls, and foster healthy and mutually respectful relationships." Boys should be taught in school about the need for mutual respect in relationships and mutual consent in sex, the WHO has said. A strengthened health system response that ensures access to survivor-centred care and referral to other services as needed, could also prove to be beneficial. Sound gender transformative policies,

from policies around childcare to equal pay, and laws that support gender equality, would add an extra mile.

*Preventing violence requires addressing systemic economic and social inequalities, ensuring access to education and safe work, and changing discriminatory gender norms and institutions. Successful interventions also include strategies that ensure essential services are available and accessible to survivors, that support women's organisations, challenge inequitable social norms, reform discriminatory laws and strengthen legal responses, among others. But above all, strengthening data collection techniques and investing in high quality surveys on violence against women and improving measurement of the different forms of violence experienced by women, including those who are most marginalized would prove key to successful interventions.*

## ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

### RBI fixes flexible inflation target

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its **Currency and Finance (RCF) report for the year 2020-21** has said that the current inflation target band (4% +/-2%) is appropriate for next 5 years. **Inflation target is a central banking policy that revolves around adjusting monetary policy to achieve a specified annual rate of inflation.**

The principle of inflation targeting is based on the belief that long-term economic growth is best achieved by maintaining price stability, and price stability is achieved by controlling inflation. Strict inflation targeting is adopted when the central bank is only concerned about keeping inflation as close to a given inflation target as possible, and nothing else. Flexible inflation targeting is adopted when the central bank is to some extent also concerned about other things, for instance, the stability of interest rates, exchange rates, output and employment.

## Background

The central bank and the government agreed in 2015 on a policy framework that stipulated a primary objective of ensuring price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. The Flexible Inflation Target (FIT) was adopted in 2016. This has put India on par with other nations in terms of flexible inflation targeting. The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended to provide a statutory basis for a FIT framework. The amended Act provides for the inflation target to be set by the Government, in consultation with the RBI, once every five years.

## The FIT Framework

India adopted a flexible inflation targeting mandate of 4 (+/-2) percent and headline consumer price inflation was chosen as a key indicator. **Inflation targeting is known to bring more stability, predictability, and transparency in deciding monetary policy.** This is because of the argument that rising prices create uncertainties and adversely affect savings and investments.

**Fixed Accountability:** The framework made the RBI more accountable to explain to the government if it fails to meet the inflation targets. The flip side of this is such targets will restrain the RBI from taking any tight or accommodating monetary policy stance.

## RBI's Stand (Findings of the RCF Report)

The trend inflation has fallen from above 9% before FIT to a range of 3.8-4.3 % during FIT, indicating that 4% is the appropriate level of the inflation target for the country. An inflation rate of 6% is the appropriate upper tolerance limit for the inflation target. On the other hand, a lower bound above 2% can lead to actual inflation frequently dipping below the tolerance band. While, a lower bound below 2% will hamper growth, indicating that an inflation rate of 2% is the appropriate lower tolerance bound. During the FIT period, monetary transmission has been full and reasonably swift across the money market (trading in very short-term debt instruments) but less than complete in the bond markets. While there has been an

improvement in transmission to lending and deposit rates of banks, external benchmarks across all categories of loans and deposits could improve transmission.

## Monetary Policy

**It is the macroeconomic policy laid down by the central bank. It involves management of money supply and interest rate and is the demand side economic policy used by the government of a country to achieve macroeconomic objectives like inflation, consumption, growth and liquidity.** In India, monetary policy of the Reserve Bank of India is aimed at managing the quantity of money in order to meet the requirements of different sectors of the economy and to increase the pace of economic growth. **The RBI implements the monetary policy through open market operations, bank rate policy, reserve system, credit control policy, moral persuasion and through many other instruments.**

## Accommodative and Tight Monetary Policy

To avoid inflation, most central banks alternate between the accommodative monetary policy and the tight monetary policy in varying degrees to encourage growth while keeping inflation under control. **Accommodative monetary policy is adopted when central banks expand the money supply to boost the economy.** These measures are meant to make money less expensive to borrow and encourage more spending. **A tight monetary policy is implemented to contract economic growth.** Converse to accommodative monetary policy, a tight monetary policy involves increasing interest rates to constrain borrowing and to stimulate savings.

## Monetary Policy Committee

It is a statutory and institutionalized framework under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth. **The Governor of RBI is ex-officio Chairman of the committee. The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%). An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy**

governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

*In the conduct of monetary policy in an open economy setting, foreign exchange reserves and associated liquidity management are key, there is a need to enhance the RBI's sterilisation capacity to deal with surges in capital flows. The primary focus of FIT on price stability augurs well for further liberalisation of the capital account and eventual internationalisation of the Indian rupees.*

### LinkedIn Opportunity Index 2021

LinkedIn Opportunity Index 2021 was recently published. The report focuses on the manner women perceive their opportunities. It also focuses on how gender gap is slowing down the career progress for working women in India in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic.

### LinkedIn Opportunity Index 2021



#### Key Highlights

- As per the index, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the working women in India the most as compared to working women in other countries.
- The index maintains that, working women in India continue to battle strongest gender bias with respect to equal pay and opportunity across the Asia Pacific countries.
- As per the report; **about one in five women, which accounts for 22% of the working women in India**, is unhappy with the opportunities to advance in their career. These women said that, their companies are favourably biased towards men.

- Further, **85% of working women claim that they have missed out on raise, promotion, or work offer in India. While in Asia-Pacific region this figure stands at 60%.**
- The report also highlights that, **37% of working women in India get fewer opportunities than men.**
- Further, **37% of the women are paid less than men.**
- LinkedIn's findings further states that, women now seek the employers who treat them as equal. On the other hand, 56% of the women look for recognition at work for their work. Other women wants that they get work as per their skills.

#### What hinders the career development?

In India, lack of required professional skills and lack of guidance through networks & connections are the barriers that hinders the career development for working women. Because of these barriers, the women are of the view that organisations should step up in order to provide maternity policies and other flexibility & developmental programmes. The women are also appreciating the telecommuting and work-from-home.

#### 85% women in India miss out on a raise, promotion because of gender

As International Women's Day 2021 that celebrated women from all walks of life approaches, an eye-opening report shows how long the road to equality still is for female employees. LinkedIn Opportunity Index 2021 showed that **9 in 10 or 89 per cent of women were negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.** Highlighting the unequal playing field for women, the damning report said that as many as 85 per cent women in India have missed out on a raise, promotion or other work offers because of their gender.

This is significantly higher than the regional average of 60 per cent in Asia Pacific. The report said that while many women in India have the flexibility of working from home, they face other barriers

including lack of time and discrimination for family care. Lack of time is the topmost barrier for working women. One out of two, or 50 per cent, women feel that gender is a barrier when it comes to attaining opportunities. Two in three women have said that they have faced lack of guidance through networks. Seven in 10 working mothers have faced workplace discrimination because of household responsibilities -- 71 per cent feel that familial responsibilities come in the way of their career.

As many as 63 per cent women think a person's gender is important to get ahead in life. Compared to that 54 per cent men think so. Around 22 per cent women in India feel that companies harbour "favourable bias" towards men, which is significantly higher than the regional average of 16 per cent. Even though 66 per cent of people in India feel that gender disbalance has smoothed out from their parents' age, India's working women still contend strongest gender bias across Asia Pacific.

The report said that 37 per cent women feel they get fewer opportunities and get paid lower than men. Only 25 per cent men agree with fewer opportunities bit, while 21 per cent men agree with lower pay part. "While job security is critical for working women across India, women are laying more emphasis on the type of employer they choose to work with, the recognition they will receive for the work they do, and on the skills that will be utilised on the job. As per LinkedIn's findings, they are actively seeking employers who treat them as equal (50 per cent), while 56 per cent are looking to get recognition at work for what they do. Organisations should step up to provide robust maternity policies and flexibility programs," stated the report. The LinkedIn report said that women were disproportionately impacted during COVID-19 pandemic. The expectations to juggle home and work life have wreaked havoc in their lives. "As a result of the barriers faced by women at work, more than 1 in 2 women and working mothers in India expect organisations to offer reduced or part-time schedules (56 per cent) and robust maternity leaves and policies (55 per cent) to make the transition smoother," it said.

"Gender inequality at work and added domestic responsibilities amid the pandemic have collectively made women's jobs more vulnerable at this time. As COVID-19 continues to widen these gaps, this year's LinkedIn Opportunity Index report suggests that it is the need of the hour for organisations to reimagine their diversity practices and offer greater flexibility to caregivers, in order to increase female participation in the workforce. Reduced and flexible schedules, more sabbaticals, and new opportunities to upskill and learn are critical offerings that can help organisations attract, hire, and retain more female talent," said Ruchee Anand, Director, Talent and Learning Solutions, India at LinkedIn.

The LinkedIn Opportunity Index research was conducted by market research firm GfK. The survey included respondents from 18- to 65-year-olds. More than 10,000 respondents across the Asia Pacific region, from Australia, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore participated in the online survey. The survey covered 2,285 respondents in India, 1,223 of whom were men and 1,053 were women.

#### Report of USTR on India-US Trade Relationship

According to annual reports of **US Trade Representative (USTR)**, India's recent emphasis on import substitution through the '**Make in India**' campaign is one the several challenges facing the bilateral trade relationship.

#### Bilateral Trade between India and USA

**In 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the USA and India stood at USD 88.75 billion.** The USA is one of the few countries with which India has a **trade surplus**. India's trade surplus with the USA increased to USD 17.42 billion in 2019-20 from USD 16.86 billion in 2018-19. **For the USA, India was the sixth largest supplier of services imports.** India's large market, economic growth, and progress towards development make it an essential market for USA exporters.

## Issues in the Trade Relationship

**Tariffs:** Both the countries cite market barriers including both tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as multiple practices and regulations that disadvantage foreign companies.

**Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Programme:** Effective from June 2019, the USA decided to withdraw duty-free benefits to Indian exporters under the GSP programme.

**Services:** A key issue for India is the USA's temporary visa policies, which affect Indian nationals working in the United States. India also continues to seek a "totalization agreement" to coordinate social security protection for workers who split their careers between the two countries.

**Agriculture:** Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers in India limit USA agricultural exports. Each side also sees the other's agricultural support programs as market-distorting.

**Intellectual Property (IP):** The two sides differ on how to balance IP protection to incentivize innovation and support other policy goals, such as access to medicines. India remains on the "Special 301" Priority Watch List for 2020, based on concerns owing to its treatment of patents, infringement rates, and protection of trade secrets.

**"Forced" Localization:** The United States continues to press India on its "forced" localization practices. Initiatives to grow India's manufacturing base and support jobs include requirements for in-country data storage, domestic content (such as laws protecting India's solar sector), and domestic testing in some sectors. India's new data localization requirements for electronic payment service suppliers such as MasterCard, Visa, etc.

**Investment:** US concerns about investment barriers remain nevertheless, heightened by new Indian restrictions on how e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Walmart owned Flipkart conduct business.

**Defense Trade:** The United States urges more reforms in India's defense offsets policy and higher

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) caps in its defense sector.

## Generalized System of Preferences

The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a USA trade program designed to **promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.** GSP was instituted on 1st January, 1976, by the Trade Act of 1974.

*There is a huge potential to boost bilateral trade between the countries especially on account of increasing anti-China sentiment in both the nations. Thus, the negotiation should focus on the resolution of various non-tariff barriers and other market access improvements as early as possible.*

## All about Merchant Digitization Summit



Recently, the Government of India, **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)**, and **UN-based Better Than Cash Alliance** hosted **Merchant Digitization Summit 2021: Towards Atma Nirbhar (Self Reliance) Bharat.** The Summit brought together leaders from the public and private sectors to accelerate responsible digitization of merchants in India's North-Eastern and Himalayan regions, and Aspirational districts.

## Highlights of the Summit

- Empowering women merchants who play critical roles in their communities is one of the priorities to help achieve the mission of Digital India.

- The **National Language Translation Mission** can be used to disseminate digital payments information, privacy clauses and consent in local languages for trust and empowerment.
- Identified opportunities to address the challenges of connectivity, access to smartphones, and digital literacy for merchants at the last mile.
- Along with the increased focus on **'Make in India'** through Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, responsible digitization must more strongly include rural networks such as Self-Help Groups and community enablers. This will lead to creation of the local digital ecosystems to help millions of merchants join the formal economy, access credit, and grow their business.
- From an average of 2-3 billion digital transactions monthly, India has set an ambitious target for 1 billion digital transactions per day.
- **Person to Merchant (P2M)** digital payment transactions will scale to 10-12 billion transactions every month to contribute to India's digital economy.

#### Related Recent initiatives

- Digital Payments Index.
- Payments Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) scheme.
- Relaxations in Merchant Discount Rate.

#### Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA)

**About:** BTCA is a partnership of governments, companies, and international organizations that accelerates the transition from cash to responsible digital payments to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Foundation:** It was launched by the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the United States Agency for International Development, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Citigroup, the Ford Foundation, the Omidyar Network, and Visa Inc. It

is based at the United Nations. It was created in 2012.

**Members:** The Alliance has 75 members which are committed to digitizing payments in order to boost efficiency, transparency, women's economic participation and financial inclusion, helping build economies that are digital and inclusive. Members do not want to abolish physical cash but rather want to provide responsible digital payment options that are "better than cash". India became a member of the Better Than Cash Alliance in 2015 to digitize payments to achieve financial inclusion and to share success stories from **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, the world's largest financial inclusion program.**

#### Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI)

FICCI is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation established in 1927. It is the largest and oldest apex business organisation in India whose history is closely interwoven with India's struggle for independence, its industrialization, and its emergence as one of the most rapidly growing global economies.

#### Google to help 1 Mn women in rural India turn entrepreneurs

Google launched a new web platform **'Women Will'** on March 8, 2021 on the occasion of "International Women's Day". This platform will provide its support to 1 million rural women in India in order for them to become entrepreneurs with the help of accelerator programmes, business tutorials and mentorship.

#### What is Women Will Web platform?

Launched in 2015, the Google For India event has been helping Indian society to grow in multiple ways possible including the Internet Saathi program with TATA Trust. Based on learnings from the Internet Saathi program, Google has launched the Women Will web platform. This will be complemented by community support, mentorship and accelerator programs for rural women

entrepreneurs. Through this Google For India aims to support women in rural areas of the country to pursue their ambitions and improve their livelihoods through entrepreneurship.

**The Women Will web platform will be a free online tutorial platform with all the information from starting a business to making it successful.** It will be available in English and Hindi, and as the name of the **#WomenWill platform suggests**, it is designed especially for women aspiring to explore entrepreneurship. Through a “**how-to**” curriculum on turning an interest into a business, managing an enterprise, and promoting it for growth, the platform will provide guidance and support to women who want to convert an existing hobby or talent such as tailoring, beauty services, home tuition, food processing, etc. into some income. To begin with, Google will work with 2,000 Internet Saathis to help other women gain from this resource and start on their entrepreneurial journey.

#### Other initiatives by Google

Google also announced other initiatives on the occasion of Women’s day. Those initiatives include-

1. **Committed a grant of \$500,000 to NASSCOM Foundation.** This grant will reach out to 1 lakh women Agri-workers in the states of Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. It will help in offering the digital and financial literacy training.
2. **A global “Google.org Impact Challenge for Women and Girls” was also announced.** Under this, Google will offer \$25 million in grants to the non-profits and social enterprises in India and other countries which are providing its support to the women and girls so as to reach their full potential.
3. **Google has also announced to enable search in English for “women-led” such as “women-led restaurants,” “women-led clothing stores” and other such keywords on Google Search and Maps.** It will provide support to women entrepreneurs. This feature is based on an opt-in feature

on Google My Business where women-led businesses can identify on their Business Profiles.

4. **Google had also announced in February 2021 to invest \$15 million** in order to provide its support to Indian small and micro enterprises in India amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Apart from the, the company had also announced in 2020, to invest Rs 75,000 crore in five to seven years to boost the digitization efforts in India.*

#### RBI removes IDBI Bank from PCA framework

The RBI removed IDBI Bank from its enhanced regulatory supervision or **Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework** after a gap of nearly four years on improved financial performance. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had placed IDBI Bank under PCA framework in May 2017, after it had breached the thresholds for capital adequacy, asset quality (net NPAs was over 13 per cent in March 2017), return on assets and the leverage ratio. The performance of IDBI Bank was reviewed by the Board for Financial Supervision (BFS) in its meeting held on February 18, 2021. It was noted that as per published results for the quarter ending December 31, 2020, the bank is not in breach of the PCA parameters on regulatory capital, net NPA and leverage ratio, the RBI said. The bank has also provided a written commitment that it would comply with the norms of minimum regulatory capital, net NPA and leverage ratio on an ongoing basis and has apprised the RBI of the structural and systemic improvements that it has put in place which would help the bank in continuing to meet these commitments. "Taking all the above into consideration, it has been decided that IDBI Bank Limited be taken out of the PCA framework, subject to certain conditions and continuous monitoring," the RBI said. Life Insurance Corporation-owned IDBI Bank had reported a standalone net profit of Rs 378 crore for December quarter of 2020-21 on the back of healthy growth in interest income. It had reported a standalone net loss of Rs 5,763 crore in the year-ago quarter. Net interest income (NII)

grew 18 per cent to Rs 1,810 crore as against Rs 1,532 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. Its net interest margin (NIM) improved by 60 basis points to 2.87 per cent as compared to 2.27 per cent in the year-ago period. Gross NPA ratio declined to 23.52 per cent from 28.72 per cent in the third quarter of the previous fiscal. Net NPAs eased to 1.94 per cent as against 5.25 per cent.

#### What is Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)?

- PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.
- The RBI introduced the PCA framework in 2002 as a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks that become undercapitalised due to poor asset quality, or vulnerable due to loss of profitability.
- It aims to check the problem of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the Indian banking sector.
- The framework was reviewed in 2017 based on the recommendations of the working group of the Financial Stability and Development Council on Resolution Regimes for Financial Institutions in India and the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission.
- PCA is intended to help alert the regulator as well as investors and depositors if a bank is heading for trouble.
- The idea is to head off problems before they attain crisis proportions.
- Essentially PCA helps RBI monitor key performance indicators of banks, and taking corrective measures, to restore the financial health of a bank.
- The PCA framework deems banks as risky if they slip some trigger points - capital to risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR), net NPA, Return on Assets (RoA) and Tier 1 Leverage ratio.

- Certain structured and discretionary actions are initiated in respect of banks hitting such trigger points.
- The PCA framework is applicable only to commercial banks and not to co-operative banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

#### What is Non-Performing Asset?

A non performing asset (NPA) is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remained overdue for a period of 90 days. Banks are required to classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets.

#### What is Capital Adequacy Ratio?

The CAR is a measure of a bank's available capital expressed as a percentage of a bank's risk-weighted credit exposures. The Capital Adequacy Ratio, also known as capital-to-risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR), is used to protect depositors and promote the stability and efficiency of financial systems around the world.

#### PCA Measures

- RBI can place restrictions on dividend distribution, branch expansion, and management compensation.
- Only in an extreme situation, would a bank be a likely candidate for resolution through amalgamation, reconstruction or winding up.
- RBI may place restrictions on credit by PCA banks to unrated borrowers or those with high risks, but it doesn't invoke a complete ban on their lending.
- RBI may also impose restrictions on the bank on borrowings from interbank market.
- Banks may not be allowed to enter into new lines of business

## 11 committees set up to drive country to Circular Economy

The government has set up 11 committees which will be led by the concerned line ministries apart from officials from **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** and **NITI Aayog**. The committee will expedite the transition India from a linear to a circular economy across the 11 focus areas. These committees will be preparing the comprehensive action plans to help in transitioning from the linear to the circular economy in the respective focus areas. The committee will also carry the necessary modalities which in turn will ensure the effective implementation of findings and recommendations.

### Focus Area

The government has selected **11 focus area to move from linear economy to the circular economy**. The areas include: Municipal Solid Waste & Liquid Waste, Electronic Waste, Scrap Metal (Ferrous & Non-Ferrous), Solar Panels, Gypsum, Lithium-Ion Batteries, Agriculture Waste, Toxic Hazardous Industrial Waste, Used Oil Waste, Tyre and Rubber Recycling and End-of-life Vehicles (ELVs).

### What is the need of transition?

**Sustainable growth is the key element of the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative**. So, India needs a development model for the optimum utilization of resources. Thus, in the light of climate change, growing population, rapid urbanization, and environmental pollution, there is a need to move towards the circular economy.



## Circular Economy

Circular economy or **circularity is an economic system which aims to eliminating the waste and continual use of resources**. This system accounts for **reuse, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing, recycling and sharing** in order to create a closed-loop system. Thus, it minimises the use of resource inputs. It also minimises the creation of pollution, waste and carbon emissions. If India adopts the circular economy path, it could bring in the substantial annual benefits. It will help in reducing the congestion and pollution.

### Government Policies

The Indian Government has been actively formulating the policies and has been promoting the projects which will drive country towards the circular economy. Government has notified several rules like **“Plastic Waste Management Rules, Construction & Demolition Waste Management Rules, e-Waste Management Rules and Metals Recycling Policy etc.”** NITI Aayog has also undertaken initiatives which ensures the economic growth. It organises an International conference on **“Sustainable Growth through National Recycling”**.

### World Development Report 2021

**World Development Report:** Data for Better Lives was released on March 24, 2021. It examines tremendous potential and risks of changing data landscape for people living in lower income countries. **The World Development Report 2021 provides a blueprint on how to harness the power of data for development, to ensure no one is left behind.**

World Development Report: Data for Better Lives provides five recommendations over development:

1. **Forge a new social contract for data.** For data to realize its potential to transform lives, new rules of the road are needed – a social contract for data is needed. Such a contract would enable the use and reuse of data to create economic and social value, while ensuring equitable access to

the value realized, as well as fostering participants' trust that they will not be harmed by data misuse. Renewed efforts are required to improve data governance domestically, as well as through closer international cooperation. Moreover, the voice of low-income countries needs to be heard in the global debate on data governance.

2. **Increase data use and reuse to realize greater value.** Using data for one purpose does not diminish their value. Increasing access to more users through open data, interoperability standards and data sharing initiatives, for example, increases the potential of data for positive development impacts. Much of the recent explosion in new data has stemmed from digitization of firm operations. Combining these data with traditional sources such as censuses, national surveys, government administrative data, and data produced by civil society organizations could help fill data gaps, provide timelier and finer-scale assessments of programs and policies, and serve public policy needs. Realizing this increased value calls for changing both mindsets and frameworks guiding data use.



3. **Create more equitable access to the benefits of data.** Major inequities in the ability to produce, utilize, and profit from data can be found across both rich and poor countries and among the rich and poor people within them. Data systems for public and private intent data alike tend to exclude poor people, and statistical

capacity and data literacy remain limited in poor countries. Many lower-income countries lack the data infrastructure needed to speedily exchange their own data traffic over the internet and secure cost-effective access to modern data storage and cloud computing facilities. Their small economic size also limits the availability of data for machine learning and constrains the development of home-grown platform businesses that could be globally competitive. Efforts to improve the fairness of the global data system need to address both types of inequities.

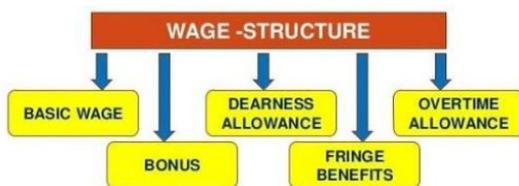
4. **Foster trust through safeguards that protect people from the harm of data misuse.** The more data are reused, the greater is the risk of data misuse. This risk is evident in growing concerns about cybercrime and the potential for politically or commercially motivated surveillance. The scope for discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender, disability status, or sexual orientation may be further exacerbated by the growing use of algorithms. Addressing these concerns calls for the regulation of personal data grounded in a human rights framework, supported by policies that secure both people and the data systems on which they depend.
5. **Work toward an integrated national data system (INDS).** Although a new social contract can rebalance and reset the rules of the game for data governance, implementation of this vision further calls for an INDS that allows the flow of data among a wide array of users in a way that facilitates safe use and reuse of data. A well-functioning INDS explicitly builds data production, protection, exchange, and use into planning and decision-making and actively integrates the various stakeholders—individuals, civil society, academia, and the public and private sectors— into the data life cycle and into the governance structures of the system. Achieving a well-functioning INDS requires

proper financing and incentives to produce, protect, and share data. Greater investment in physical and human capital is needed to improve data governance, specialized analytical and data security skills, as well as data literacy of the general public. Dependent on starting points, countries will need to work gradually toward this goal.

### World Development Report

The World Development Report (WDR) is an annual report published **since 1978 by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) or World Bank**. Each WDR provides in-depth analysis of a specific aspect of economic development. Past reports have considered such topics as agriculture, youth, equity, public services delivery, the role of the state, transition economies, labour, infrastructure, health, the environment, risk management, and poverty. The reports are the Bank's best-known contribution to thinking about development.

### New Wage Code and Employees



The government may soon notify the new wage code rules that will lead to a change in the salary structure for a large number of employees in the country. According to the Code of Wages, 2019, the basic pay of an employee has to be 50 per cent of the total salary or cost-to-company (CTC). At the moment, most companies give employees a lower percentage of basic pay while keeping the number of allowances higher. However, this will change as soon as the new wage code comes into effect. Some reports indicate that the new wage code will come into effect from April, but the government has not

officially declared it till now. Last month, it was informed that the government is working to notify it soon.

### What happens to your salary?

When the new wage code kicks in, employers have to pay at least 50 per cent of an employee's CTC as basic pay. Since the basic pay of employees will be half of the CTC, contribution towards other components like provident fund and gratuity will also increase. It may be noted that both provident fund and gratuity contributions are calculated on basic pay. Most employees could see their take-home pay reduce, depending on the basic pay. At the same time, their retirement benefits will be higher as a monthly contribution towards provident fund and gratuity will increase.

It is worth noting that the CTC of employees depends on a few components -- Basic pay, house rent allowance or HRA, retirement benefits (PF, gratuity and more) and some tax-friendly allowances like LTC and entertainment allowance.

When the new wage code rules become applicable, companies will have to ensure that components that make up the CTC -- except basic pay -- do not exceed 50 per cent. And the other half has to be basic pay. This may lead companies to cut down on some exiting allowances, which are usually higher.

### Who benefits?

All employees will benefit from the move as their retirement benefits will be higher after the wage code is notified due to a higher contribution towards PF and gratuity. At the same time, the monthly take-home salaries of employees will dip. The dip will be marginal for low- and medium-income earners. However, high-income earners could feel a bigger pinch once the new wage rules are notified. Simply put, a higher PF contribution will lead to lower in-hand pay and employees who earn more will see a higher contribution towards PF once their basic pay becomes 50 per cent under the new wage code. The same is the case with respect to gratuity contributions.

### What about Taxes?

A higher basic salary of 50 per cent under the new wage code will also impact how much taxes an individual will have to pay. According to experts, the salary restructuring could increase the tax liability of those earning a higher salary since their tax-capping options would be limited to just 50 per cent of the CTC. On the other hand, those in the low and medium salary bracket may not face any additional tax burden and also enjoy higher retirement benefits. Therefore, it seems the new wage code is likely to benefit low- and middle-income earners more than high-income earners.

## LEGAL AFFAIRS

### CJI Bobde's remarks on Uniform Civil Code

#### CJI's Praise of Goa

"Goa has what Constitutional framers envisaged for India -- a Uniform Civil Code," the CJI said. Chief Justice of India (CJI) S A Bobde on March 27 lauded Goa's Uniform Civil Code, and encouraged "intellectuals" indulging in "academic talk" to visit the state to learn more about it. "Goa has what Constitutional framers envisaged for India — a Uniform Civil Code," the CJI said. "And I have had the great privilege of administering justice under that Code. It applies in marriage and succession, governing everyone in Goa irrespective of religious affiliation. I have heard a lot of academic talk about the Uniform Civil Code. I would request all those intellectuals to simply come here and learn the administration of justice to know what it turns out to be," he said.

Earlier in September 2019, in a matter relating to properties of a citizen of Goa, the Supreme Court had described Goa as a "shining example" with a Uniform Civil Code, and observed that the founders of the Constitution had "hoped and expected" a Uniform Civil Code for India but there has been no attempt at framing one.

"It is interesting to note that whereas the founders of the Constitution in Article 44 in Part IV dealing with the Directive Principles of State Policy had hoped and expected that the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territories of India, till date no action has been taken in this regard," a Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose had said.

### What is Uniform Civil Code?

A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for a singular uniform law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc. The code finds its constitutional backing from **Article 44 which lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India. Article 44, therefore, is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy.**

**The Directive Principles constitute a very comprehensive social, economic and political programme for a modern and welfare state.** These principles emphasises that the State shall try to promote welfare of people by providing them basic facilities like shelter, food and clothing. **Article 37 defines DPSPs to be non-justiciable** (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance. This is unlike Fundamental Rights which are enforceable in a court of law. The Constitution of India does not formally classify the Directive Principles of State Policy but for better understanding and on the basis of content and direction- they can be classified into three categories: Socialistic Principles (Article 38, Article 39, Article 39 A, Article 41, Article 42, Article 43, Article 43 A and Article 47), Gandhian Principles (Article 40, Article 43, Article 43 B, Article 46, Article 47 and Article 48), and Liberal-Intellectual Principles (Article 44, Article 45, Article 48, Article 48 A, Article 49, Article 50 and Article 51).

### Fundamental Rights or Directive Principles?

There is no doubt that **Fundamental Rights are more important.** The Supreme Court held in *Minerva Mills* (1980): "Indian Constitution is

founded on the bed-rock of the balance between **Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles)**. To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution". **Article 31C inserted by the 42nd Amendment in 1976**, however, lays down that if a law is made to implement any Directive Principle, it cannot be challenged on the ground of being violative of the **Fundamental Rights under Articles 14 and 19**.

#### Arguments against UCC

1. **Uniform Civil Laws? Realities and Possibilities**

**Indian laws already follow a uniform code in most civil matters like Indian Contract Act, Civil Procedure Code, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act, etc.** Indian States, however, have made hundreds of amendments and, therefore, in certain matters, there is diversity even under these secular civil laws. For instance, recently, several states refused to be governed by the uniform Motor Vehicles Act, 2019. Therefore, there uniform non-personal laws have a precedent of getting bypassed at times.

2. **Personal Laws, who has the power to legislate?** Constitution hasn't given exclusive jurisdiction to Parliament in respect of personal laws, because "personal laws" are mentioned in the Concurrent List.

3. **No Religion has its Uniform Personal Laws All Hindus of the country are not governed by one law, nor are all Muslims or all Christians.** Not only British legal traditions, even those of the Portuguese and the French remain operative in some parts. In Jammu and Kashmir until August 5, 2019, local Hindu law statutes differed from central enactments. **The Shariat Act of 1937** was extended to J&K a few years ago but has now been repealed. Muslims of Kashmir were thus governed by a customary law, which in many ways was at

variance with Muslim Personal Law in the rest of the country and was, in fact, closer to Hindu law. Even on registration of marriage among Muslims, laws differ from place to place. It was compulsory in **J&K (1981 Act)**, and is optional in West Bengal, Bihar (both under **1876 Act**), Assam (**1935 Act**) and **Odisha (1949 Act)**. In the Northeast, there are more than 200 tribes with their own varied customary laws. The Constitution itself protects local customs in Nagaland. Similar protections are enjoyed by Meghalaya and Mizoram. Even reformed Hindu law, in spite of codification, protects customary practices.

4. **Uniform Civil Code and the Fundamental Right to Religion Article 25** lays down an individual's fundamental right to religion; **Article 26(b)** upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to "**manage its own affairs in matters of religion**"; **Article 29** defines the right to conserve distinctive culture. An individual's freedom of religion under **Article 25** is subject to "public order, health, morality" and other provisions relating to fundamental rights, but a group's freedom under **Article 26** has not been subjected to other fundamental rights. In the Constituent Assembly, there was division on the issue of putting **Uniform Civil Code in the fundamental rights chapter**. The matter was settled by a vote. By a 5:4 majority, the fundamental rights sub-committee headed by **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** held that the provision was outside the scope of Fundamental Rights and therefore the **Uniform Civil Code was made less important than freedom of religion**.

#### Arguments for UCC

Proponents of UCC in India, at times, point out that Italy that the developed world has it. Although they realise that the scenario in India is extremely complex but they say that Uniform Civil Code will in the long run

1. **Ensure Equality-** While other personal laws have undergone reform, the Muslim law has not. It perhaps makes little sense to allow Muslims, for example, to marry more than once, but prosecute Hindus or Christians for doing the same. Therefore, there is the demand for a uniform civil code for all religions.
2. **Promote Gender Equality-** Several liberals and women's groups have argued that the uniform civil code gives women more rights.
3. **Religious Rights-** The proponents of UCC say that the claim that the sentiments of the minorities are not considered while implementing a common law is thus beyond comprehension. UCC does not insist people from one religion to start practicing rituals of other religions. All it says is, with changing living styles along with the time, there should be a Uniform Civil code irrespective of all religions as far as social ethics are concerned.

nation. It was the second major movement in the legacy of the three major movements namely, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement.

In December, 1929, the Indian National Congress declared that total independence for India was its avowed objective and to that effect January 26, 1930, was celebrated as Independence Day throughout the country. People everywhere enthusiastically pledged themselves to fight for "Purna Swaraj". Again this background, the country took the first step and launched the civil disobedience movement known as the Salt Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi led the movement at the age of 61 with 78 satyagrahis.

#### The March

Before commencing the March, Gandhiji on March 2, 1930, addressed a historic letter to the Viceroy. In it, he described the ruination of the country under British Rule and gave notice of his intention to launch a civil disobedience movement by symbolically breaking the Salt Tax law which in his opinion was "the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint." He also added: "As the independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil." The Viceroy's unfeeling reply to this moving letter provoked Gandhiji to exclaim: "On bended knees I asked for bread and I have received stone instead." The place Gandhiji selected as the site for his symbolic breaking of the provisions of the hated Salt Tax, was Dandi, a seaside village in Gujarat. He decided to march the full distance of 241 miles, from his ashram at Ahmedabad, with a select band of 78 co-workers. The appointed date was March 12, 1930, 75 years from today.

Among the 78 Satyagrahis, there was a cross-section of the people from all over the country: Andhra, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Cutch, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajputana, Sind, Tamilnadu, U.P., Utkal and even Nepal. Besides Hindus, there were among them two Muslims, one Christian and two Harijans. The long 241-mile trek finally ended on April 5, 1930. Along the way Gandhiji and his companions had broken

## GLIMPSES OF HISTORY

### The day when Dandi March Started



**Dandi March, led by the Father of our Nation- Mahatma Gandhi was intended to protest against the nefarious provisions of the Salt Tax imposed by the British.** But there was another level that had deeper, more profound implications and gave the event a unique significance. The March, in effect, was the spark that ignited the flames of the Freedom Movement and caused the idea of mass civil disobedience to spread like wildfire across the

journey for the night at 22 places. On April 6, the atmosphere at Dandi was both tense and solemn. The day began with prayers. Gandhiji then nominated shri Abbas Tyabji, and after him, Smt. Sarojini Naidu, to lead the satyagraha if he was arrested. After prayers, Gandhiji with his followers took a bath in the sea. Then at 8.30 a.m. he defied the Salt Law by picking up a lump of salt. Smt. Sarojini Naidu who was there, hailed him as a 'law-breaker.'

### Reaction of Britishers

The Government replied by unleashing a region of terror. By March 31, more than 95,000 were jailed. Sporadic violence broke out in Karachi, Calcutta, Peshawar and Chittagong. The police opened fire in Calcutta, Madras and Karachi and perpetrated acts of brutality all over the country. Through all this Gandhiji urged the people to "answer this organized hooliganism with great suffering." The battle against the "Black Regime" was at its peak when Gandhiji planned to commence the march to Dharasana. But at 12.45 a.m. on May 4, he was arrested at Karadi, 3 miles from Dandi whilst asleep in his cottage.

**Thus ended a glorious episode in our Freedom Struggle.** The spark that the Dandi March ignited, soon kindled the flames of a movement that engulfed the entire nation and finally succeeded in achieving what Gandhiji in essence strove to accomplish at Dandi - total independence for the people of his beloved India.

## OBSERVANCES OF THE MONTH

**Zero Discrimination Day: March 1<sup>st</sup>**



**Zero Discrimination Day is observed globally on March 1<sup>st</sup>.** On Zero Discrimination Day this year, **United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)** had challenged the discrimination faced by women and girls in all their diversity and raising awareness and mobilizing action to promote equality and empowerment for women and girls. The day also aims to protect human's rights, remove discriminatory laws to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure equity and equality for all.

**Theme 2021: ZERO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

**A butterfly is the symbol of the Zero Discrimination Day** and it is widely used by people to share their stories and photos as a way to end discrimination and work towards positive transformation.

### Objective

**Zero Discrimination Day is celebrated to promote and celebrate everyone's right, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, etc.** Zero Discrimination Day aims to raise the voice for the right to live life with dignity, despite one's choices, beliefs, profession, education, disability or even illness. Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated on March 1, 2014, and was launched by UNAIDS Executive Director at Beijing after UNAIDS launched its Zero Discrimination Campaign on

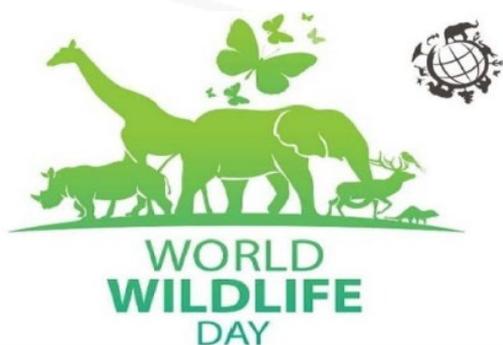
**World AIDS Day in December 2013.** As per UNAIDS, at least one among three women and girls across the world have experienced some form of violence in their lives, with adolescent girls experiencing higher rates of partner violence than adult women overall. In some countries, more than 50 percent of women have reported incidents of violence against them in the past 12 months.

#### UNAIDS

AIDS (UNAIDS) is the main advocate for accelerated, comprehensive and coordinated global action on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It was founded on 26 July 1994. The mission of UNAIDS is to lead, strengthen and support an expanded response to HIV and AIDS that includes preventing transmission of HIV, providing care and support to those already living with the virus, reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV and alleviating the impact of the epidemic. UNAIDS seeks to prevent the HIV/AIDS epidemic from becoming a severe pandemic. **United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland. UNAIDS Executive Director: Winnie Byanyima.**

UNAIDS aims to end the public threat of AIDS by the year 2030 as a part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### World Wildlife Day



**World Wildlife Day is observed on 3 March to highlight the importance of flora and fauna on Earth.** Earth is home to countless species, and wildlife plays an important role in balancing the environment. It can be found in all ecosystems, deserts, rainforests, plains, and other areas. World Wildlife Day is observed to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and

plants and discussing the threats they are facing and the urgent need for governments, civil society, private sector actors, and individuals to add their voices and take actions to help conserve wildlife and ensure its continued use is sustainable. The day also highlights the issues such as urbanization, poaching, pollution, destruction of wildlife habitat, and the ways that humans can contribute to conservation efforts.

#### Theme 2021

World Wildlife Day 2021 theme is "**Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet.**" World Wildlife Day is an opportunity to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the various challenges faced by these species. The day also reminds us of the urgent need to step up the fight against wildlife crime, which has wide-ranging economic, environmental, and social impacts.

#### History

The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 20, 2013, at its 68th session, decided to proclaim March 3,** the day of the adoption of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES),** as World Wildlife Day. World Wildlife Day has become one of the most important global annual events dedicated to wildlife.

#### World Wildlife Day significance

According to the UN, between 200 and 350 million people live within or adjacent to forested areas around the world. These communities rely heavily on the various ecosystem services provided by forest and forest species for their livelihoods. In fact, they use it to cover their most basic needs, including food, shelter, energy and medicines. Although they are neglected by most civil societies, it cannot be denied that indigenous peoples and local communities are at the forefront of the symbiotic relationship between humans and forest. **Roughly 28% of the world's land surface is currently being managed by indigenous peoples as per a UN report.** This includes some of the most ecologically intact forests on the planet. The issues that these communities are facing now, include

climate change, biodiversity loss and compounded on all of this is the COVID-19 pandemic.

### World Wildlife Day 2021 Events

World Wildlife Day is usually celebrated with a high-level event at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. However, this year the COVID-19 pandemic had posed serious challenges to the 2021 celebration, which had now been entirely virtual. UN had held an online event, bringing together representatives of UN Member States, UN System organizations and multilateral environmental agreements, civil society, and the private sector. The discussions revolved around the theme of "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet".

### International Women's Day 2021



**International Women's Day is observed on 8 March in several countries across the globe.** International Women's Day is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women.

### International Women's Day 2021: Theme

The 2021 UN theme for International Women's Day is "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world", highlighting the impact that girls and women worldwide had as health care workers, caregivers, innovators and community organizers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the United Nations, only three countries in the world have 50 per cent or more women in parliament. Women are Heads of State in

only 22 nations. In fact, globally 119 countries have never had a woman leader as a Head of State.

### COVID-19 pandemic and the role of women

One thing which the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us is that when women lead, we see positive results.

- Some of the most efficient and successful responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were led by women. They are even at the forefront of humanity's battle against the pandemic. Be it as front-line and health sector workers, or scientists, doctors, and caregivers.
- However, recent data released by the United Nations reveal an alarming disparity. These women frontline workers are getting paid 11 per cent less than their male counterparts globally.
- According to the United Nations Development Programme, in 2021, around 435 million women and girls are living on less than \$1.90 a day. Nearly 47 million women have been pushed to poverty because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The report also adds that women's employment is at 19 per cent more risk than men. That's not all, as per the World Economic Forum, while women make up 70 per cent of health sector workers, only 24.7 per cent of health ministers are female.

### The UN and Gender Equality

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945, was the first international agreement to affirm the principle of equality between women and men. Since then, the UN has helped create a historic legacy of internationally-agreed strategies, standards, programmes, and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.

Over the years, the UN and its technical agencies have promoted the participation of women as equal partners with men in achieving sustainable development, peace, security, and full respect for human rights. The empowerment of women

continues to be a central feature of the UN's efforts to address social, economic and political challenges across the globe.

No doubt to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) it is necessary to have transformative shifts, integrated approaches, and new solutions, particularly for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. We know that innovation and technology provide unprecedented opportunities and trends also indicate about growing gender digital divide and women are under-represented in the field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and design.

To achieve transformative gains for society it is necessary to develop gender-responsive innovations. It is vital that women's ideas and experiences equally influence the design and implementation of the innovations that shape our future societies.

According to the sixty-third session of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63)**, in 2019 priority is given to the industry leaders, game-changing start-ups, social entrepreneurs, gender equality activists, and women innovators to examine the ways in which innovation can remove barriers and accelerate progress for gender equality, encourage investment in gender-responsive social systems and build services and infrastructure that meet the needs of women and girls.

International Women's Day is an opportunity to accelerate the 2030 Agenda of building momentum for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal number 5 that is to Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and goal number 4 that is to Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. It is rightly said that **"Life doesn't come with a manual; it comes with a mother"**.

#### What needs to be done?

A gender-aware response to COVID-19 requires greater support and social protection for women workers. UNDP calls for investment in universal,

gender-responsive social protection systems to support women's income security. Also, there is a need for expanded access to affordable childcare services to enable women to remain and re-enter work.

Moreover, International Women's Day 2021 should be an inspiration to collectively work towards the reversal of long-standing inequalities. These include the likes of the unequal division of work at home, gender pay gap, and unescapable undervaluation of work done by women.

Even with a record-breaking new high in the number of women CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (2020 data), women are often less likely to be entrepreneurs as they face more disadvantages in starting a business.

#### National Women's Day 2021

India celebrates Sarojini Naidu's birthday as National Women's Day of India every year on February 13. Sarojini Naidu was India's first women governor and also famous as **'Bharat Kokila'**. Sarojini Naidu was born on February 13, 1879. She actively participated in the Indian National Movement for the independence of the country.

She was famous for her nickname **'Nightingale of India'** because of her poems. Sarojini Naidu was not only a freedom fighter, but she also became the first woman governor of the United Provinces, the present Uttar Pradesh.

#### India's working women still face the strongest gender bias across Asia Pacific countries

- COVID impact: Nine in ten (89%) women found that they were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- General Bias: 1 in 5 (22%) working women in India said their company's exhibit a 'favorable bias towards men at work compared to the regional average of 16%.
- Work opportunity: While 37% of India's working women say they get fewer opportunities than men, only 25% of men agree with this.

- **Pay:** This disparity in perception is also seen in conversations about equal pay, as more women (37%) say they get less pay than men, while only 21% of men share this sentiment.
- **Promotion:** In India, more than 4 in 5 working women (85%) claim to have missed out on a raise, promotion, or work offer because of their gender, compared to the regional average of 60%.
- **Family burden:** Lack of time and family care stop 7 in 10 Indian women from progressing in their careers.
- **Maternity:** Consumer sentiment from the report shows that more than 7 in 10 working women (71%) and working mothers (77%) feel that managing familial responsibilities often come in their way of career development.

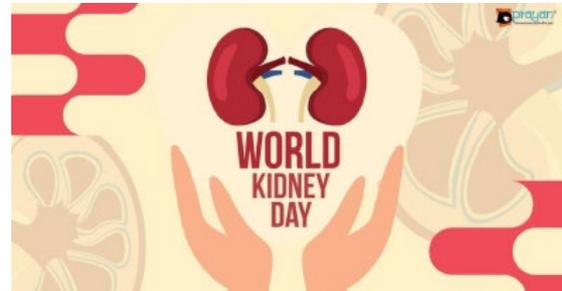
#### Scope for equality

- The report shows that even though 66% of people in India feel that gender equality has improved compared to their parents' age.
- In India, the top three job opportunities sought by both men and women are job security, a job that they love, and a good work-life balance.
- But despite having similar goals, more women (63%) think a person's gender is important to get ahead in life when compared to men (54%).

#### Barriers faced by Indian women

Lack of required professional skills and a lack of guidance through networks and connections are also some of the other barriers that get in the way of career development for working women in India.

#### World Kidney Day 2021



**World Kidney Day is celebrated annually on the second Thursday in March and in 2021 we celebrated it on 11 March** to raise awareness about the increasing burden of kidney diseases across the world and the need for strategies for kidney disease prevention and management. Kidneys are an important organ in our body as the function of the kidney is to remove waste products and excess fluid from the body. Also, to encourage people to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

#### World Kidney Day 2021: Theme

The World Kidney Day Steering Committee has declared 2021 the year of “**Kidney Health for Everyone, everywhere: Living Well with Kidney Disease**”.

The focus of the 2021 campaign is to increase education and awareness about effective symptom-management to improve patients' health-related quality of life and self-empowerment, with the ultimate goal of encouraging life-participation, the ability to participate in meaningful activities of life.

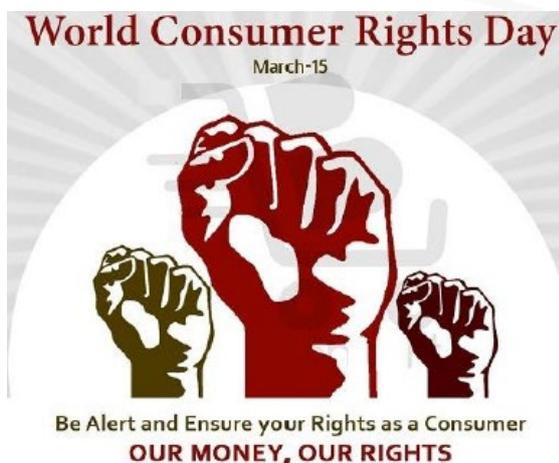
#### World Kidney Day: Objectives

- To raise awareness about Kidneys and how to take care of them.
- To inform people that diabetes and high blood pressure are the key risk factors for Chronic Kidney Disease.
- To encourage people for systematic screening of all the patients suffering from diabetes and hypertension for Chronic Kidney Disease.
- To encourage people about preventive measures.

- To encourage people to adopt a healthy lifestyle.
- Various types of kidney disease can be prevented, delayed, or kept under control when appropriate measures are taken properly.
- To provide or ensure that Kidney patients are getting basic health services that they need like blood pressure, cholesterol control, and essential medications.
- Need for transparent policies that govern equitable and sustainable access to advanced health care services like dialysis and transplantation and also better financial protection.
- We need to break down the socioeconomic barriers and expand access to comprehensive services in order to meet the needs of the population which is essential to guarantee equitable kidney care and increase quality.

*Kidneys are the vital organs of our body that filter our blood and help the body to pass waste like urine. Therefore, to make people aware of the increasing problem of kidney disease World Kidney Day is celebrated every year second Thursday in March.*

#### World Consumer Rights Day 2021



**World Consumer Rights Day is observed every year on March 15.** The day is marked for raising global

awareness about consumer rights and needs so as to enable the consumer to fight against social injustices. The day aims to raise awareness about a consumer's needs and rights and ensure that they are not subjected to social injustice or market abuse that may undermine their rights.

The World Consumer Rights Day is commemorated by countries across the world by holding conferences on human rights and conducting discussions on various ways to protect consumer rights.

#### World Consumer Rights Day 2021: Theme

The World Consumer Rights Day 2021 theme is to gather all the consumers in a fight to "**Tackle Plastic Pollution**". Currently, the world is facing a major plastic pollution crisis.

- Even though plastic is useful in many ways, yet the consumption and production of it have become unsustainable which calls for action from all the consumers.
- The consumers international portal has gathered the photos to show how the 7 'R's play an important role in tackling plastic pollution.
- The 7 R refers to replace, rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and repair.

#### #NOPLASTICPOLLUTION

A global study in 2019 found that 82% of respondents are aware of plastic waste and already taking practical actions to tackle plastic pollution. As a global consumer movement, we must support consumers to mobilize businesses, governments, and civil society to make tackling plastic pollution and sustainable consumption the easy choice for all.

- By 2050, it is estimated that there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish
- 100,000 marine mammals and turtles and 1 million sea birds are killed by marine plastic pollution annually
- An estimated 8 million tons of plastic enters our oceans every year
- Single-use plastics account for 50 percent of the plastic produced every year

- Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years
- 40 percent of plastic produced is packaging and discarded after one use

#### The original four consumer rights are

1. The right to safety
2. The right to be informed
3. The Right to choose, and
4. The right to be heard.

In 1985, the United Nations through the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection expands the consumer rights to include four more. They are:

1. The right to satisfaction of basic needs,
2. The right to redress,
3. The Right to Consumer Education, and
4. The right to a Healthy Environment.

#### Objective

World Consumer Rights Day is an annual international event that signifies celebration and solidarity in the international consumer movement, demanding that, consumer rights are to be respected and protected. The event also gives a chance to protest against the market abuses and social injustices which undermine those rights.

#### Significance

The annual occasion is dedicated to highlighting the power of the consumers, their rights so as to ensure a safe and sustainable marketplace for all. Tackle Plastic Pollution is the theme for World Consumer Rights Day 2021. The recent report by The Pew Charitable Trusts & SYSTEMIQ, which was released in August 2020, estimated that if the major innovations changes are not implied to tackle the plastic pollution, then by 2040, the flow of plastic materials into the ocean will triple, which would then give rise to another array of problems for the humans as well as for the marine life. That is why, the day is focusing on highlighting, addressing, and tackling plastic pollution amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added the rise of single-use plastics like face masks, gloves, and food packaging.

On the occasion, the Director-General, Consumers International, Helena Leurent, gave a message stating - "Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing issues facing our planet. Consumer awareness of the plastics crisis is growing around the world. Consumers have a critical role in shaping the marketplace, and we must support them to mobilize businesses and governments, to ensure sustainable consumption is accessible to all."

#### Consumer Rights in India

- In India, consumer rights were protected under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, before the act was replaced by the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
- According to the Consumer Protection Act 2019, the definition of consumer rights is 'the right to have information about different aspects of a good or service such as its quality, quantity, potency, purity, price, and standard.'

#### The Consumer Protection Act 1986 gives 6 basic rights to the consumers

- Right to choose the product.
- Right to be protected from all kinds of hazardous goods.
- Right to be informed about the performance and quality of all products.
- Right to be heard in all decision-making processes related to consumer interests.
- Right to seek redressal, whenever consumer rights have been infringed.
- Right to complete consumer education.

#### These rights form the basis of consumer protection in India. Additionally, the Consumer Protection Act 2019 had introduced five new consumer rights

- Right to file a complaint from anywhere
- Right to seek compensation under product liability
- Right to protect consumers as a class

- Right to seek a hearing using video conferencing
- Right to know why a complaint was rejected



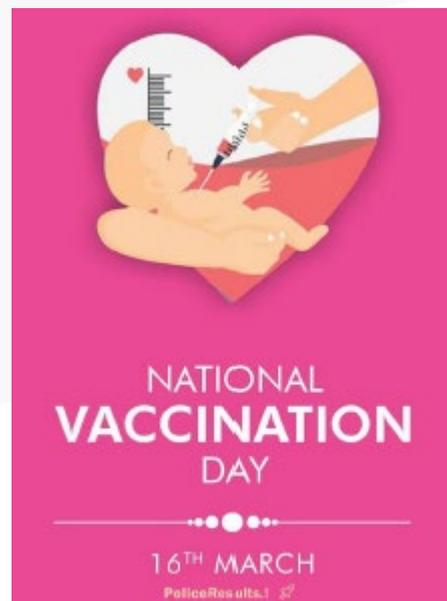
#### Other important Regulation protecting Consumers

- The Contract Act 1872: It binds people on their promises made in a contract and also provides remedies available to parties in case of breach of contract.
- The Sale of Goods Act 1930: It provides safeguard and relief to customers in case goods are not complying with the expressed conditions and warranty.
- Competition Act, 2002: Under the Act, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) was established to prevent the activities that hurt competition in India. It aims to implement and enforce competition policy and to prevent and punish anti-competitive business practices by firms and unnecessary Government interference in the market.
- Bureau of Indian Standard Act 2016: The Act establishes BIS as the National Standards Body of India. It aims to verify the conformity of products and services to a standard and issue a certificate of conformity.

#### National Vaccination Day

The National Vaccination Day sometimes called **National Immunization Day** (NID) is observed every year on March 16. The COVID-19 pandemic has once more shone a light on the importance of vaccinations. There have been more than 26 lakh deaths from the COVID-19 all across the world. The National Vaccination day is coming up in India and it's coming at the perfect time, as vaccines for COVID 19 are being rolled out for the masses.

The government creates an awareness campaign and helps people realize the importance of vaccinations. As citizens, the people should also do their part and help the uneducated folk to become aware of the importance of vaccinations. National Immunization Day 2021 Theme: **Each year, National Immunization Day adopts a theme to highlight.** This year the theme promoted is **"Vaccines Work for All"**.



#### National Vaccination Significance

The importance of vaccination in today's world cannot be overstated. Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent fatal and dangerous diseases known to man. Extensive vaccination campaigns across the world have resulted in the eradication of highly infectious and dangerous diseases like smallpox, measles, tetanus from major parts of the world. There are two types of vaccines

that are being administered in the country. It includes **IPV** (Inactivated Polio Vaccine) and **OPV** (Oral Polio Vaccine).

According to the World Health Organization, vaccination saves between 2-3 million lives per year. Now, that COVID is here, the government is taking steps to ensure that the vaccines for COVID 19 reach the people who need them. People above the age of 60 have started getting the vaccine across the country. Even people above the age of 45 who are at risk from COVID due to underlying conditions have been made privy to the vaccines. India has eradicated polio completely in 2012. In order to sustain the eradication, GoI organizes Pulse Polio immunization campaigns on the standards set by World Health Organization (WHO).

#### Importance of vaccination

- Vaccination is the most effective method of preventing highly infectious diseases.
- Extensive immunity due to vaccination is mostly responsible for the worldwide eradication of smallpox and the restraint of diseases like Polio, Measles, and Tetanus from a large part of the world.
- According to the World Health Organization, immunization is a proven tool for controlling and eliminating life-threatening infectious diseases.
- It is estimated to avert between 2-3 million deaths every year.
- The benefits of immunization are not limited to improvements in health and life expectancy but also have social and economic impacts at both the community as well as national level.

#### Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)

- India has one of the biggest Universal Immunization Program (UIP) in the world, in terms of the number of beneficiaries covered, quantities of vaccinations used, geographical spread to the resources used.

- India's immunization program is the largest public health program targeting close to 67 crore newborns, 2.9 crore pregnant women annually.
- Free vaccination is carried out throughout the country including Tribal and remote areas.
- It is one of the cost-effective public health interventions responsible for the reduction of vaccine-preventable under-5 mortality rate, with free of cost vaccination against 12 diseases.
- Nationally against nine diseases: Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, Severe form of childhood Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by Hemophilus Influenza type B.
- Sub-nationally against three diseases: Rotavirus diarrhea, Pneumococcal Pneumonia, Japanese Encephalitis.
- Special immunization drives like the **Mission Indradhanush, Intensified Mission Indradhanush, Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, and Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan** have been conducted to reach left out and hard to reach children living in remote and inaccessible areas.
- Besides, several other steps are also undertaken to strengthen routine immunization and ensure a robust supply-chain management system.
- The ultimate goal of this program is to ensure full immunization with all available vaccines for children up to two years and pregnant women. Under this program, all vaccines are available free of cost.
- Some of the vaccines introduced by India over the years include the Inactivated Polio Vaccine, Rotavirus vaccine, Measles-rubella vaccine, Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, Tetanus, and Adult diphtheria vaccine.
- Official data on India's immunization coverage still stands at 62% as per the National Family Health Survey-4 of 2015-16. However, the Union Health Ministry's data says it stands at 83%

with just 2% unimmunized children (November 2018).

### Mission Indradhanush

- Mission Indradhanush was launched under UIP in December 2014 for better health of mothers and children who are deprived of vaccination.
- The main aim is to vaccinate children who are not vaccinated or partially vaccinated by 2020.
- Vaccination is being provided against eight vaccine-preventable diseases.

### Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0

- IMI was launched with the intention of further intensifying the immunization program in 2019.
- Immunization activity will be in four rounds over 7 working days.
- There is an enhanced immunization session with flexible timings, mobile sessions, and mobilization by other departments.
- The focus is on urban underserved populations and tribal areas.
- It aims to immunize children under 2 years of age and pregnant women.
- The program aims to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of ending preventable child deaths by 2030.

contributed to increasing participation of women in the paid labour force in the world. However, this is not the case in India. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2018-19, the female **labour force participation rates** (LFPR) among women aged above 15 years are as low as 26.4% in rural areas and 20.4% in urban areas in India. The pandemic is already worsening the deep inequalities facing women and girls, erasing years of progress towards gender equality. Both supply and demand factors contribute to the low levels of employment among women — especially the burden of domestic responsibilities, including the reproductive roles played by women, coupled with the lack of adequate and appropriate job opportunities.

### Reasons for Declining Women's Employment in India

**Societal Pressure:** Generally there is a fear of women being stigmatized by the community that might see their work as a marker of low status, i.e. the inability of the husband, the main breadwinner, to provide for the family. Further, there is a rise in conservative attitudes that believe a woman's place is inside the home and kitchen, and that if the woman steps outside the socially approved threshold, it would invite a backlash.

**Growing Informalization of Work:** Over the last three decades, there has been a massive decline in agricultural jobs, which has not necessarily been accompanied by an increase in rural non-farm employment or livelihood opportunities. There has been movement out of agriculture into informal and casual jobs, where the work is sporadic, and often less than 30 days at a stretch.

## THE IDEAS EXPLAINED

### India's Women and Workforce



Women's education has increased over the last two decades, and fertility rates have fallen — both have

**Women's Work Not Being Counted As Work:** There is also the problem of much of women's work not being counted as work. Data indicate that the decline in LFPRs is driven by women moving from paid to unpaid work and hence not getting counted as "workers", even though they might continue to be involved in unpaid economic work in family enterprises (farming, livestock, kirana shops, handmade products for sale and so on).

**Inadequate Social Security Protection:** Even for women who are in the workforce, the nature of their employment is such that most of them are out of the purview of labour laws, including the recently passed Social Security Code. This automatically leaves out women in self-employment and those in informal jobs, together constituting more than 90% of the female workforce. Moreover, with land in agriculture continuing to be mostly in the name of men, women are not even recognized as farmers, although a large proportion of them are involved in agricultural work. This also keeps women away from accessing various schemes and resources such as priority sector loans, income support cash transfers, and so on.

#### Way Forward

**Bringing Women in Leadership Role:** Subdued gender participation emanates from social-economic issues, which can be treated by bringing behavioural change. This can be changed if more women are given leadership positions. Thus, there is a need to ensure equal representation— from company boards to parliaments, from higher education to public institutions -- through special measures and quotas.

**Recognizing Invisible Work:** There is a need to invest significantly in the care economy and social protection, and redefine Gross Domestic Product to make work in the home visible and counted.

**Imbibing Gender Equality:** There is a need to remove barriers to women's full inclusion in the economy, including through access to the labour market, property rights and targeted credit and investments. Women-oriented government initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN) Scheme, represent steps in the right direction.

**Checking Violence Against Women:** India should enact an emergency response plan to address violence against women and girls, and follow through with funding, policies, and political will to end this scourge.

*It is clear that COVID-19 has impacted women's employment even more than that for men. Concerted efforts towards ensuring enabling conditions for women to be employed including transport, safety, women's hostels along with social security provisions for all in the form of maternity benefits and child care arrangements are required for providing a level playing field for women entering the labour market.*

#### New IT Rules explained



Taking a revolutionary move to regularise the online platforms, the government of India has come up with a set of regulation. The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has notified Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**. These new rules broadly deal with the regulation of social media and over-the-top (OTT) platforms and digital news. These rules seek to provide compliance of law and a grievance redressal mechanism for users of social media platforms, messaging applications, streaming services as also digital news publishers. The government envisages controlling hate speech which gets proliferated through these platforms and threatens national security. However, critics pointed that the question of stricter regulation of digital media will lead to restriction of free speech and undermining of democracy.

#### Need for Digital Media Regulation

**Ensuring Compliance to Domestic Laws:** Major digital media platforms operating in India are of foreign origin. The rules emphasize the need for these social media intermediaries and online content providers, whether for entertainment or

informative purposes, to strictly comply with the Constitution and domestic laws of India.

**Setting Accountability:** It extends its approach to instil a sense of accountability against misuse and abuse by social media users and is the first of its kind to bring social media use under the regulatory framework of the Information Technology Act.

**Bringing Uniformity:** There are many laws to combat unlawful content that are already in place. The recent rules envisage bringing their uniform application.

**Social Imperative:** It lays a special emphasis on the protection of women against the progression of sexual offenses on social media. It also envisages checking the proliferation of fake news and hate speech.

#### Associated Issues with the Rules

**Distortion of the Idea of Self-regulation:** For digital publishers of news and current affairs as well as video streaming services, a three-tier structure for grievance redressal has been mandated. With an inter-ministerial committee of government officials in effect becoming an appellate authority over the self-regulatory exercise. This would be self-regulation by the media organization and the industry at the government's pleasure.

#### Three-Tier Redressal Mechanism

The notified rules set out an elaborate time-bound three-tier process whereby each and every such grievance:

- First handled at the level of the portal itself by its own grievance officer.
- If not satisfactorily settled, it passes on to the self-regulatory body of the sector or industry.
- If yet not resolved, moves further up to an inter-ministerial oversight committee of the central government.

**Compliance Burden:** The sheer process of such grievance handling can impede the operations of a relatively smaller digital venture in the news and current affairs space. A measure like this,

moreover, jeopardizes the very sustenance of the already financially straitened and functionally beleaguered digital news media.

**Potential Misuse:** Apart from imposing a compliance burden on digital publishers, this also opens the floodgates for all kinds of interventions. Any criticism of the ruling party or government could trigger an orchestrated avalanche of grievances. This is more worrisome in the already vitiated climate of political and religious majoritarianism.

**Arbitrary Powers:** The notification gives the Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, ad hoc emergency powers to block any content the government considers problematic even without such token procedure. Also, a negative list of content that shall not be published would be encountered under law as reasonable restrictions to free speech.

**Eroding Pillars of Democracy:** The freedom of the press is an implicitly prescribed fundamental right in the Articles 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution. It gives every citizen the right to free speech and expression. These freedoms have in practice become constitutive and definitive of the fourth estate in the country. As any government presence could have a chilling effect on free speech and conversations, these rules weaken the dynamic relationship of checks and balances vis-à-vis the Media and other three pillars: the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary.

**Problems in Tracking the First Originator:** The rules require messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Signal to trace problematic messages to the originator. However, it raises uneasy questions about how such apps will be able to adhere to such orders, as their messages are encrypted end-to-end.

#### Way Forward

**Deliberating with Stakeholders:** The solution to ongoing criticism about these rules is to start afresh with the publication of a white paper. The white paper should clearly outline the harms that are sought to be addressed through regulation of

online video streaming platforms and meaningful public consultation which is not limited to industry representatives.

**Statutory Backing:** After that, if regulation is still deemed to be necessary, then it must be implemented through legislation that is debated in Parliament instead of relying upon executive rule-making powers under Section 69A of the IT Act.

**Expediting Data Protection Law:** Making platforms share more information could prove counterproductive in a country where the citizens still do not have a data privacy law to guard themselves against excesses committed by any party. In this context, there is a need to expedite the passing of the personal data protection bill, 2019.

*Regulation has an important place in a liberal democracy. However, given an environment where people are sensitive to content, the regulatory mechanism with a scope of strong government intervention could become an operational nightmare and hamper creativity & freedom of expression.*

### The power dynamics in Indian Ocean

The **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** has become the new arena of infighting between world powers with even the US trying hard to fill the void it once left in the region. This becomes even more visible after the QUAD meeting, in which the US along with Japan and Australia, enforced the structural dynamics of the QUAD. The QUAD underscores its commitment “by upholding a rules-based international order, underpinned by respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, rule of law, transparency, freedom of navigation in the international seas and peaceful resolution of disputes,” indirectly pointing towards the expansionist role of PRC. During his speech in the QUAD leader’s summit, PM Modi described the grouping as a “**force for global good**” in the Indo-Pacific. But QUAD countries are not the only vultures having their sights set on the region. Before looking at the power dynamics of the region, we must first know what the region stands for.



### What is the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

The Indian Ocean refers to a vast theatre of land stretching right from the Strait of Malacca and western coast of Australia in the East to the Mozambique Channel in the West. It encompasses the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea in the North, all the way down to the southern Indian Ocean. Along the coasts of this huge geographic expanse are countries that are home to some 2.7 billion people. This population reside in different cultural settings, making the region super diverse. In order to simplify things, the Indian Ocean can be divided into some key sub regions which includes: South Asia, the Middle East, the eastern coast of Africa, and the islands dotting the ocean from Sri Lanka in the East to the Comoros Archipelago in the West.

### Why it remains in spotlight every time?

The region’s size and diversity explains its geo-economic importance. While it may be difficult today for one nation to control the entire expanse of the Indian Ocean the way the British, French, or Portuguese empires did during the colonial period, the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean remains the same as that time. In fact, the advent of the Indo-Pacific—the new geopolitical framework that includes both the Indian and Pacific Oceans—has pushed the Indian Ocean back into the spotlight after a period with no serious great power competition in the region, after the collapse of Soviet Union.

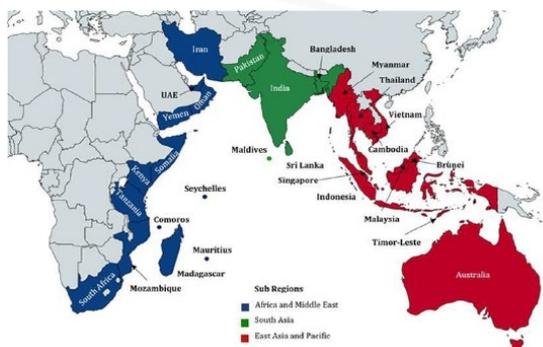
### Why it is so important?

The importance of trade and the sheer scope of its many subregions make the Indian Ocean region critical in terms of military and strategic engagement. It is a vital trading hub, connecting the Middle East to Southeast and East Asia, as well as Europe and the Americas. Any disruption along its trading routes will impact the entire globe's energy security, let alone that of significant economies like China, Japan, and South Korea, which depend on energy imported primarily via the Malacca strait. Thus, the region is important to maintain the trade routes that currently dominate the oil trade.

### The choke points

The first choke point is the Malacca strait between Malaysia, Singapore and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, which connects Southeast Asia and the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The second is the Strait of Hormuz, which is the only sea passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the wider Indian Ocean. The third is the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which flows between Eritrea and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Finally, there is also the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique in the southern part.

### Who are the major players in the region?



Paris is a major player in the western Indian Ocean, while New Delhi has the primary role in the eastern Indian Ocean. Through its overseas region of Reunion, France is also a member of the Indian Ocean Commission, the only forum that brings together the French-speaking islands of the region. However, the Indian Navy claims the entire Indian

Ocean as its area of responsibility and prides itself on being the first to respond to natural and humanitarian disasters there. While France and India are the key regional players on security, the UK also plays an important role.

Other countries, however, are involved in specific issues, especially on maritime piracy: China, India, Japan, and the United States and its NATO allies, as well as the UN, all have ongoing missions to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. Their presence addresses a shared international maritime concern for the security and stability in the region. In 2020, Russia announced the establishment of a new naval base in Sudan for a period of twenty-five years. This provides Moscow with strategic access to the Red Sea and by extension to Bab-el-Mandeb, one of the key choke points in the Indian Ocean. Saudi Arabia and Turkey are also strengthening their economic and diplomatic ties with the islands of the Indian Ocean, which could lead to new power dynamics.

### Role of China in the region

Building on its antipiracy missions, China has emerged as a strong partner for the islands and littoral countries of the Indian Ocean Region. The Maritime Silk Road, under Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, has provided an added platform to collaborate on with these countries. In 2017, Beijing set up its first overseas military facility in Djibouti on the Indian Ocean coast. While France, Japan, and the United States already have facilities in Djibouti, the Chinese base cements its position as a new player in the region. China's presence in the region has become a source of shared anxiety for France, India, the United States, and others. The vacuum left by limited U.S. engagement over the last three to four decades combined with strategic inertia from New Delhi and Paris has been filled by new competition between India and China.

### The role of India

As the largest nation in the IOR region with a vast coastline of 7,500 Kms, India has an active role to play for peaceful and prosperous co-existence of all countries. **SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region is the theme of Indian Ocean Policy** as outlined by Prime Minister Modi in 2015. India's

approach and vision to tackle global challenges was highlighted by the dynamic five 'S' vision – Samman (Respect), Samvaad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace) and Samriddhi (Prosperity). Of all the QUAD countries, India has the most benign and friendly engagement with the countries of the Indian Ocean Region. Hence, the system of QUAD can be a way for other QUAD members to enter as a strategic player in the IOR, and thereby be in a position to challenge a dominating China in its own backyard.

### FX Reserves: What is the real deal?

After shedload of fluctuation and instability in the foreign reserves of all the countries, India has lately managed to surpass Russia and stand 4<sup>th</sup> on the International Monetary Fund list (after China, Japan and Switzerland). The Indian reserve was valued \$580,299 million on 12th March 2021. Since 1991, when India faced a major financial crisis, with a dearth of foreign reserves left for barely three weeks, it has progressed plethorically passing the \$500 bn mark and is now capable of covering more than a year's imports.

### What is Foreign Exchange Reserve

The **Foreign exchange reserves** (or forex reserves or FX reserves), also known as **reserve assets** are deposits held by the government of a country. These deposits include various instruments; foreign banknotes, foreign bank deposits, foreign treasury bills, short and long-term foreign government securities, gold reserves, **special drawing rights (SDRs)**, International Monetary Fund (IMF) reserve positions to name a few. They may also be labelled under interbank position, other transferable deposits, other deposits, debt securities, loans, equity (listed and unlisted), investment fund shares and financial derivatives, such as forward contracts and options. They are held in different reserve currencies (e.g. the U.S. dollar, the Euro, the Japanese Yen, Swiss Franc, Chinese Yuan, Indian Rupees and the Pound Sterling). These assets are held by a central bank or other monetary authority that are primarily available to balance payments of the country, influence the foreign exchange rate of

its currency, and to maintain confidence in financial markets.

### FX Reserves in IIP

International Investment Position (IIP) is a statistical statement (a nation's balance sheet) that shows the value of financial assets of residents of an economy (nation) that are claims on non-residents or are gold bullion held as reserve assets; and the liabilities of residents of an economy to non-residents. In simpler words, it is the difference between the external financial assets and liabilities of a country. It is an important barometer of a nation's financial condition and creditworthiness. There is no counterpart for reserve assets in liabilities of the IIP, meaning it is an excess fund held to ensure that a central government agency has backup funds if their national currency rapidly devalues or becomes all together insolvent.

### Why a nation needs FX reserves?

The foremost reason for maintaining FX reserve is to keep the value of currency stable in relation to other currencies and give credibility to nation's currency. Importers may agree to sell goods in native currency payments if they know the country has sufficient reserves and the central bank will ensure the value of currency in the international foreign exchange market. A country might not need FX reserves if it does not need to import anything or is able to balance imports and exports. However, for a country like ours, there is dependency on foreigners for necessities like petrol and diesel, and hence the need for it.

Also, in case of an economic crisis, the reserves ensure a country's liquidity. They ensure that the country is will be able to meet its external obligations which include international payment obligations, including sovereign and commercial debts. This comforts foreign investors and credit rating companies and gives them confidence that the government is capable of meeting its debts. It also demonstrates the backing of domestic currency by external assets while maintaining a reserve for emergencies and national disasters.

### Why fluctuations are seen?

According to a report in Bloomberg, FX reserves of both India and Russia have declined after months of rapid increase. However, India pulled ahead as Russia's holdings declined at a faster rate in recent weeks and the Reserve Bank of India continued to hoard dollars to cushion the economy against any sudden outflows. Experts say this has occurred due to the rare current-account surplus, rising foreign direct investment and inflows into the local stock market. Foreign investors have taken up substantial stakes in several Indian companies over the last year. Forex inflows would have been further boosted by a deal of foreign investments worth over INR1520 bn by Jio Platforms, a Reliance Industries subsidiary.

On the other hand, one of the major reasons for descent in FX Reserves is due to a fall in the foreign currency assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves. In 2020, the RBI bought a net \$88 billion in the spot forex market which made the Indian rupee the worst performer among Asia's major currencies. However, it has made a good comeback since foreign capital inflows have resumed. Following this, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das in the latest interaction had stressed the idea of emerging market central banks to build reserves to prevent any external shocks. Additionally, foreign travels and overseas remittances crashed during the pandemic hit lockdown which led to stanch dollar outflows.

### FX as a revenue opportunity

Generally, no interest is paid on foreign cash reserves, or on gold holdings, and the central bank usually earns interest on government securities. The government incurs opportunity costs from holding the reserve assets (especially cash holdings) as the return on forex reserves is less than 1%. There should be greater emphasis on generating returns on forex assets rather than on liquidity, thus helping reduce net costs. The money can be deployed for infrastructure development leading to further growth of the nation. Thus, we can unanimously say that a rise in forex reserves is beneficial for India and with efficient usage, these

reserves can bring in greater benefits. The government may also make a profit from a depreciation of the foreign currency or incur a loss on its appreciation.

### The international stance

FX reserves are a cornerstone of economic foreign policies of countries around the world. Saudi Arabia holds extensive FX reserves, as the country relies mainly on the export of its vast oil reserves. If oil prices begin to rapidly drop, their economy could suffer. They keep large amounts of foreign funds in reserves to act as a cushion should this happen, even if it's only a temporary fix. Let's bring our attention to the nation with deepest pocket of foreign reserves, China. Although India did a good job in overtaking Russia in the foreign exchange reserves list, it still has a long way to go to China's, which stands unrivalled at the top position with \$3.3 trillion of reserves as in February 2022. Included in this amount is a very large chunk of US Government bonds, making China the largest foreign owner of U.S. Treasury securities accounting for about 22% of all U.S. Treasuries held by non-Americans. Contrastingly, United States has a foreign reserve of only \$142 bn as in March 2022. It is an issue of tremendous significance as the situation might develop into a face-off between China, the 'upcoming' superpower and, the United States, the 'current' superpower. Many American and other economic analysts have expressed concerns on account of China's "extensive" holdings, as part of their reserves, of United States government debt which can lead to a unilateral shift in power in the trade between the two countries.

### Upshot

Foreign exchange reserves play a very vital role in economic stability of a country. And not just that, it also plays a role in maintaining relations between countries and/or regions. Progress of Indian reserves is definitely an indicator of progress of the nation irrespective of the signs of other indicators. When the world's manufacturers are leaning away from China, it is essentially a prolific influence to

India's renowned ambition of being the next global manufacturing hub.

### Population Stabilization

National Population Policy, 2000 envisaged achieving a stable population for India. One of its immediate objectives is to address the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure, and personnel and provide integrated service delivery for basic reproductive and child health care. The National Population Policy 2000 affirmed a commitment to achieve replacement levels of fertility (total fertility rate of 2.1) by 2010. Most of the southern states have controlled their population. However, low socio-economic development in northern and central India has led to population explosion in these regions. The population explosion would irreversibly impact India's environment and natural resource base and limit the next generation's entitlement and progress. Therefore, the government should take measures to control the population in time.

### Need for Population Stabilization

According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates, India's population will reach 1.5 billion by 2030 and hit 1.64 billion in 2050. This would make India become the largest populous country, overtaking China. At present, India hosts 16% of the world's population with only 2.45% of the global surface area and 4% water resources. Globally, the debate over population explosion has erupted after recent ecosystem assessments pointed to the human population's role in driving other species into extinction and precipitating a resource crunch.

### Associated Challenges with the Population Stabilization

**Level of Education:** Lack of education in women results in their early marriages. Not only does early marriage increase the likelihood of more children, but it also puts the woman's health at risk. Fertility usually declines with an increase in the education levels of women.

**Socio-economic Factors:** The desire for larger families, particularly preference for a male child, also leads to higher birth rates. One of the reasons for this son-preference is the inheritance law favouring women's rights to ancestral property is far from being implemented. China is already facing a demographic catastrophe because its nearly four-decade-long one-child policy resulted in a strong son preference.

**Inadequate Use of Contraceptive:** Women in rural areas of northern states like UP, Bihar are still giving birth to four or more children. This is because the contraceptive prevalence rate is less than 10%. In many districts, women do not use modern family planning methods and rely on traditional contraception methods.

**Emergence of Son of Soil Narrative:** Southern states that have achieved population stabilization now face the issue of the elderly will start outstripping the working-age population. Initially, it was thought that younger people from the Central-Northern states might fill the growing gap in services. However, with the emergence of growing resistance to people from northern states working in southern states, such prospects appear to be increasingly uncertain.

### Way Forward

**Adopting Women-Centric Approach:** Population stabilization isn't only about controlling population growth but also entails gender parity. A balanced sex ratio is essential to secure social cohesion. Therefore, the state needs a women-centric approach wherein they incentivize later marriages and childbirths, make contraception easy for women and promote women's labour force participation.

**Switching to Modern Contraceptives:** Action to prevent unwanted pregnancies, particularly in northern states is urgently required. The over-reliance on traditional methods of contraception needs to be swiftly replaced with reliable and easy alternatives. In this context, India can learn from its neighbourhood. Indonesia and Bangladesh introduced injectable contraceptives right from the late 1980s. Once executed properly, one jab

renders protection from pregnancy for three months. ASHA workers can help immensely in this regard.

**Politics of Population Stabilization:** The Constitution (84th Amendment) Act 2002, extended the freeze on the state-wise allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha to 2026. It was expected to serve as a motivational measure to pursue population stabilization. However, this goal has not been achieved as the population in northern states continued to rise. Now, in the absence of a further extension, it will be politically destabilizing

**Emulating the Success of Southern States:** When fertility reduction in the five southern states succeeded, it overturns the conventional wisdom that literacy, education, and development are prerequisites for populations to stabilize. The simple explanation is that fertility decline was achieved because southern governments proactively urged families to have only two children, followed by sterilization immediately after that. Almost the entire state apparatus was marshalled to achieve this objective. The northern states need to adopt this approach. Further, national and state policies emphasize male vasectomy which is much safer than female sterilization.

*The population stabilization difference between the southern and northern states is becoming disproportionately skewed. In such a scenario, demographics will eclipse economic growth and destroy the gains from a young populace. Thus, the long-term policy requires a stable population consistent with the requirements of sustainable economic growth, social development, and environmental protection.*

#### Lateral Entry Reforms : Pros and Cons

Recently, eight professionals were recruited for joint secretary-level positions in various ministries under the lateral entry scheme. Lateral entry means when personnel from the private sector are selected to an administrative post of the

government despite them not being selected in or being part of a bureaucratic setup. Lateral entry is needed because contemporary times require highly skilled and motivated individuals at the helm of administrative affairs, without which public service delivery mechanisms do not work smoothly. However, the success of lateral entry hinges entirely on how it is designed.

#### Permanent System of Administrators

In the permanent system, IAS officers get promoted to joint secretary level after 17 years of service and remain at that level for ten years. Joint Secretaries are at a crucial level of senior management in the Government of India and lead policymaking as well as the implementation of various programs and schemes for the department assigned to them. The joint secretary-level is usually filled by officers selected through the Civil Services Examination conducted by Union Public Service Commission. The IAS and permanent system are strictly seniority-bound — nobody gets promoted ahead of time. That makes the average age of a joint secretary around 45.

#### Advantages of Lateral Entry

**Need for Specialized Knowledge:** Governance is becoming more and more complex requiring specialized skills. For example, increasing penetration of data dominance in our lives. Generalist officers cannot be always expected to be up-to-date with specialized knowledge. Therefore, people with expertise and specialist domain knowledge are required to navigate the complex needs of present-day administrative challenges.

**Filling The Gap:** According to Department of Personnel and Training data, there is a shortage of about 1500 IAS officers. Lateral entry can help bridge this deficit.

**Bringing a Change in Work Culture:** It will help in bringing change in bureaucratic culture in Government sector culture. This bureaucratic culture is criticized for red-tapism, rule-book bureaucracy, and status-quoist. Lateral Entry helps in bringing the values of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the Government sector. It will help

in building a culture of performance within the Government sector.

**Participatory Governance:** Presently, governance is becoming a more participatory and multi-actor endeavour. In this context, the lateral entry provides stakeholders such as the private sector and non-profits an opportunity to participate in the governance process.

#### Arguments Against Lateral Entry

**Outsourcing Expertise:** There is a difference between bringing expertise and being part of the decision-making process. For bringing expertise, the government doesn't strictly need to hire private-sector personnel. Expertise is widely available and used by almost every ministry — expert committees, consultations, think tank engagements, etc.

**Cumbersome Decision-Making Process:** The success of lateral entry requires an understanding of the system and an ability to work with the “permanent” establishment. No training or orientation is provided for this. By the time networks are built, it is time to move on. On past evidence, the lateral entrants who made the biggest impact are those who served in the system for a length of time and at different levels

**Profit Motive vs. Public Service:** Private sector approach is profit-oriented on the other hand motive of the Government is public service. This is also a fundamental transition that a private sector person has to make while working in government.

**Conflict of Interest:** Hiring of the private sector into administrative positions raises issues of potential conflict of interest. This issue requires a stringent code of conduct for entrants from private sectors to ensure conflict of interest is not detrimental to the public good.

#### Way Forward

**Setting Objective Criteria:** There are several joint secretaries in each ministry who handle different portfolios. If lateral entrants are assigned to an unimportant portfolio, there are chances that they will not be motivated. A cursory look at the

portfolios of the eight laterally-hired joint secretaries doesn't suggest that they hold critical portfolios. That's why one entrant has already quit. Thus, what key skills, qualities, and experiences a particular role requires must be objectively decided.

**Relaxing Age Barrier:** To attract the best talent from outside at the joint secretary level, entry requirements need to be relaxed so that persons of 35 years of age are eligible. If one looks at lateral entry in an earlier generation, among economists, there was much greater flexibility. The likes of Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Bimal Jalan and Vijay Kelkar were joint secretaries in their mid-30s and secretaries by their late 40s or by 50. That is one of the reasons they left lucrative assignments abroad.

**Need for the Transparent Process:** The key again to the success of this scheme would lie in selecting the right people in a manner that is manifestly transparent. The constitutional role of UPSC should not be ignored as it will provide legitimacy to the entire process of selection

**Training of Lateral Entrants:** An intensive training program for entrants from the private sector to civil services needs to be formulated which helps them understand the complex nature of work in Government. Conclusion Lateral entry, like competition in any sphere, is a good thing. But serious thinking is required on entry requirements, job assignments, number of personnel, and training to make it a force for positive change. Apart from it, reforms of the “permanent” system — particularly its seniority principle — are also a prerequisite for holistic administrative reforms.

#### Empowering the MSME Sector

India's economic landscape is defined by its **micro, small and medium enterprises** (MSMEs). However, the sector is based on obsolete technology, which hampers its production efficiency. With India's goal of inclusive development, enhanced livelihoods and the notion of “**vocal for local**”, e-commerce marketplaces for the MSMEs become more significant. With its ability to accelerate businesses,

e-commerce could be a means for Indian MSMEs to unlock global value chains. Moreover, automation in the production process for greater efficiency and availability of more channels to MSMEs to provide access to greater markets is the need of the hour.

### MSMEs and e-Commerce

**MSME:** As per data from the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**, almost 51% of Indian MSMEs are based in rural areas. They often need exposure to large markets and expertise to be able to scale up and enhance capabilities. Some of the challenges that MSMEs are faced with today are working capital crunch, supply chain bottlenecks, technological glitches, elaborate GST compliance framework, limited customer appetite for spending and many more. The answer to some of these challenges lies in MSMEs embracing digital solutions for managing various aspects of their business.

**e-Commerce:** The share of e-commerce in total retail has been growing consistently across the world, particularly in China, the US, and in countries in the Asia Pacific region. Studies suggest that the India's e-commerce market is expected to expand to USD 84 billion by 2021 from USD 24 billion in 2017. E-commerce could provide Indian MSMEs an opportunity to attract consumers and organizations from India.

### Significance of Digitization in MSMEs

**Connects MSMEs Globally:** It allows for small companies and start-ups located even in hinterlands to get their products to the national as well as global market. It provides opportunities to artisans and small sellers from Tier-2/3 towns to sell online to customers beyond their local catchment.

**Investment and Income:** E-commerce marketplaces are today the best possible enablers for this transformation at minimal cost, innovation and investment. By investing in supply chains, the e-commerce sector provides opportunities for MSMEs to partner them in supply and delivery networks. This leads to additional income generation through multiple livelihood

opportunities and thus contributes to economic prosperity and inclusive growth.

**Cost Effective:** E-commerce could also become a tool for Indian MSMEs to lower operational costs, increase revenue, acquire more customers and benefit from customer advocacy. The online medium could help them access a seamless global supply chain at a fraction of the proportional cost of market access and delivery, freeing up cash for growth.

### Challenges Associated

**No Threshold Exemption from GST:** The businesses with an annual turnover of up to Rs 40 lakh are exempted from GST. Sellers on e-commerce marketplaces do not get advantage of GST threshold exemption for intra-state supplies that offline sellers enjoy. They have to "compulsorily register" even though their turnover is low.

**Physical Principal Place of Business (PPoB):** In e-commerce, it is not quite practical for online sellers to have a physical PPoB. It leads to increased complexities for MSMEs in registering in e-commerce marketplaces.

**Lack of Access to Appropriate Infrastructure and Technology:** Buying the latest smart devices, best internet services, retaining skilled employees to manage digital systems and maintaining physical and digital infrastructure is also an expensive affair for small, nascent companies.

**Lack of Awareness:** There are still many small and medium scale enterprises who are unaware of the impact of digital transformation and fail to build customer loyalty and retention as other e-businesses. Moreover, MSMEs are resistant to augment digital technologies because cutting-edge technologies evolve faster, and they sometimes may not be able to match up with that advancement.

**Maintaining a Database:** Storing, analysing, and managing crucial structured and unstructured data to make business decisions is challenging for MSMEs. Data, cloud, and system management

along with the training required to handle them, leave MSMEs uncertain.

### Way Forward

**Dovetailing Existing Schemes with Technology:** Examine the existing schemes and benefits for MSMEs, which were formulated with an offline, physical market in mind, and tweak them to include the special needs to leverage online sales channels. For example, MSMEs could be given fiscal incentives to access markets and invest in digital marketing. The objective is to incentivise those who shift to the digital mode. Connecting the skilling policy and programmes with the requirements of the e-commerce sector to meet future demand of the sector.

**Increasing Exports via e-Commerce:** Taking specific steps to increase exports via e-commerce. The steps may include: Identifying products that have potential for the export market. Connecting e-commerce with export-oriented manufacturing clusters. Encouraging tie-ups with sector-specific export promotion councils. Leveraging existing Special Economic Zones to create e-commerce export zones.

**E-Commerce and Foreign Trade Policy (FTP):** The Foreign Trade Policy should identify the areas required by online sellers to succeed in global markets and include e-commerce export specific provisions in the upcoming revised policy. It may include: Specific policy provisions providing incentives for e-commerce exports. Enabling end to end digitization for e-commerce exports.

**Role of Bigger Tech-Based Companies:** Many technology-based companies are building exclusive tools to support small and medium scale enterprises by enhancing their business proficiency and profitability. Google Advantage is one such initiative by Google India that facilitates MSMEs to use the growing online clientele base. Google My Business is specifically developed to support startups, and MSMEs in India to succeed virtually.

**Simplifying the PPOB Requirement:** The government shall simplify the PPOB requirement especially for online sellers by making it digital and

not requiring physical presence to expand their reach outside their home state. Replacing physical PPOB with Place of Communication. Eliminating the need for state specific physical PPOB requirement will facilitate sellers to get state-level GST with a single national place of business.

*Manufacturing by small units, cottage units and MSMEs has been a major contributor to India's growth story. These small sectors, if effectively facilitated by digitisation, will be the game changer to accelerate economic growth, employment, income levels and enhance supply chain efficiencies. Digital proficiency for MSMEs is vital to set foot in the online market successfully. Without that, the sector cannot be future ready.*

### India abstains from voting against Sri Lanka in UNHRC

Sri Lanka suffered a setback when the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** adopted a resolution to punish Colombo for the gross human rights violation committed by it against Tamils, but still, the island nation continues to reject the UNHRC process, claiming that allegations of human rights abuses are "politically biased". The passing of the resolution marks the strongest action ever taken by the UNHRC regarding the human rights violations by Sri Lanka, thereby calling for an extensive series of actions for correcting past wrongs. It also recognises the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka over the past one or more year. Meanwhile, protests in the North-Eastern part and in the Tamil, diaspora have continued to intensify over calls for Sri Lanka's referral to the International Criminal Court over charges of genocide.



22 countries vote against Sri Lanka on its Human Rights record; India abstains

### A timeline for implementation

Providing a timeline for ensuring implementation, the Council had asked the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to present an oral update to the Human Rights Council at its forty-eighth session, as well as a written update at its forty-ninth session, and a comprehensive report that includes further options for advancing accountability, at its fifty-first session. The adopted resolution, although technically giving Colombo time till September 2023 to make amends for past laxity, calls on the Office of the United Nations Human Rights Council to “collect” as well as “consolidate, analyse and preserve” evidence that could be used in future war crimes trials against Sri Lanka. An allocation of \$2.8 million had also been assigned for the implementation of the resolution.

### What is OHCHR?

The **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. It is entrusted with the principal responsibility for promoting and protecting the effective enjoyment of human rights. The post and its mandate were established by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993 in the wake of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is part of the UN Secretariat and supports the High Commissioner in the implementation of his/her mandate. The work of the OHCHR has three main dimensions: standard-setting, monitoring, and supporting implementation on the ground. It serves as the secretariat of both Charter-based bodies, in particular, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and treaty-based bodies – i.e. the treaty bodies established under the various international human rights conventions. Although individual governments retain the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights, the OHCHR seeks to work with them to strengthen capacity and provide technical support, in pursuit of this goal.

### Serious allegations

Even after the resolution was adopted, Sri Lankan Tamil activists and civil society have expressed their

disappointment with the draft for failing to include the High Commissioner’s recommendations including asset freezes and travel bans. According to the UN, the Sri Lankan security forces employed acts of sexual violence not as 'isolated acts but part of a deliberate policy, and the UN confirmed that there are credible allegations that these personnel continue to use sexual violence against men and women in detention.

### Expert views

The United Nations Department of Peace Operations should “immediately suspend the deployment of Sri Lankan peacekeepers” over Sri Lanka's failure to investigate and prosecute international crimes and the promotion of “alleged war criminals to perform high-level state functions,” Yasmin Sooka, Executive Director at the International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) wrote for Just Security. Since the election of Rajapaksa brothers, as the LNW News outlet of Sri Lanka writes, the country had been in the midst of militarization of civilian government functions, the erosion of the independence of the judiciary and key institutions responsible for the promotion and the protection of human rights and ongoing impunity and political obstruction of accountability for crimes and human rights violations in emblematic cases.

### India's stance

First Secretary to India's Mission to the United Nations, Geneva, Pawan Badhe said in a statement that India's approach to the question of human rights in Sri Lanka is guided by two fundamental considerations: one is our support to the Tamils of Sri Lanka for equality, justice, dignity and peace. The other is for ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. The first secretary stated that New Delhi supports the call by the international community for the Government of Sri Lanka to fulfil its commitments on the devolution of political authority, including through the early holding of elections for Provincial Councils and to ensure that all Provincial Councils are able to operate effectively, in accordance with the 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution.

### Need to rethink India-Sri Lanka relationship

Sri Lanka's relationship with India has taken a hit following Lanka's unilateral withdrawal from the East Container Terminal (ECT) agreement, which is worth an estimated \$700 - \$800 million dollars. India was further enraged by Sri Lanka granting permission to China for building three power plants on the islands off the coast of Jaffna. These projects are seen as a security threat to India and highlights the increasingly close ties between Colombo and Beijing. The Rajapaksa who have lost three such resolutions in a row, from 2012-14, need to rethink their approach towards India and the human rights situation in their yard.

*As members of the United Nations gathered to vote on the resolution, Sri Lanka was met with increasing opposition as it relentlessly pursues on a path of ethno-nationalism. This new resolution marks the beginning of a firm international intervention aimed at protecting the rights of the Sri Lankan people and paves the way for greater respect for the rule of law and international law. India's abstention marks a diplomatic move for it to avoid being seen aligned with someone with genocidal past and at the same time, safeguarding an important neighbour from falling into a trap of an adversary.*

### All about Electoral Bonds



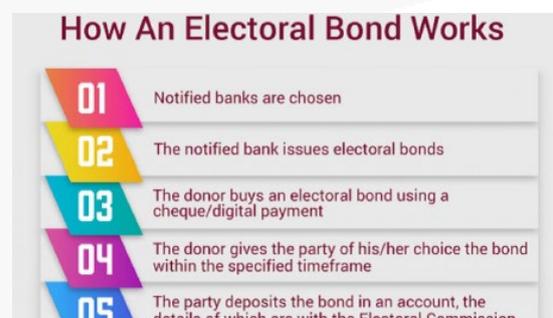
An electoral bond is like a promissory note that can be bought by any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India from select branches of State Bank of India. The citizen or corporate can then donate the same to any eligible political party of his/her choice. The bonds are similar to bank notes

that are payable to the bearer on demand and are free of interest. An individual or party will be allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque.

### When was electoral bond introduced?

The electoral bonds were introduced with the **Finance Bill (2017)**. On January 29, 2018 the Narendra Modi-led NDA government notified the **Electoral Bond Scheme 2018**.

### How to use electoral bonds?



Using electoral bonds is quite simple. The bonds will be issued in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 100,000 and Rs 1 crore (the range of a bond is between Rs 1,000 to Rs 1 crore). These will be available at some branches of SBI. A donor with a KYC-compliant account can purchase the bonds and can then donate them to the party or individual of their choice. Now, the receiver can encash the bonds through the party's verified account. The electoral bond will be valid only for fifteen days. The 29 specified SBI branches are in cities such as New Delhi, Gandhinagar, Chandigarh, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Mumbai, Jaipur, Lucknow, Chennai, Kolkata and Guwahati.

### When are the bonds available for purchase?

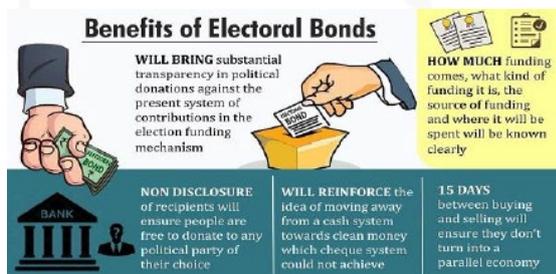
The electoral bonds are available for purchase for 10 days in the beginning of every quarter. The first 10 days of January, April, July and October has been specified by the government for purchase of electoral bonds. An additional period of 30 days shall be specified by the government in the year of Lok Sabha elections.

### Electoral bonds: Conditions

1. Any party that is registered under section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and has secured at least one per cent of the votes polled in the most recent General elections or Assembly elections is eligible to receive electoral bonds. The party will be allotted a verified account by the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the electoral bond transactions can be made only through this account.
2. The electoral bonds will not bear the name of the donor. Thus, the political party might not be aware of the donor's identity.

### Are electoral bonds taxable?

In February 2017, the then finance minister Arun Jaitley said that the donations would be tax deductible. Hence, a donor will get a deduction and the recipient, or the political party, will get tax exemption, provided returns are filed by the political party.



**Benefits of Electoral Bonds**

- WILL BRING** substantial transparency in political donations against the present system of contributions in the election funding mechanism
- HOW MUCH** funding comes, what kind of funding it is, the source of funding and where it will be spent will be known clearly
- NON DISCLOSURE** of recipients will ensure people are free to donate to any political party of their choice
- WILL REINFORCE** the idea of moving away from a cash system towards clean money which cheque system could not achieve
- 15 DAYS** between buying and selling will ensure they don't turn into a parallel economy

### Why were electoral bonds introduced in India?

According to the Narendra Modi-led government, electoral bonds were being introduced to ensure that all the donations made to a party would be accounted for in the balance sheets without exposing the donor details to the public.

The government said that electoral bonds would keep a tab on the use of black money for funding elections. In the absence of electoral bonds, donors would have no option but to donate by cash after siphoning off money from their businesses, the government said.

### Why is there a controversy over electoral bond?

Experts are of the view that if the electoral bonds scheme had been introduced to bring about greater transparency, the government must not restrain from allowing details of such donations to be made public.

Experts and several politicians say that since neither the purchaser of the bond nor the political party receiving the donation is required to disclose the donor's identity, the shareholders of a corporation will remain unaware of the company's contribution. Voters, too, will have no idea of how, and through whom, a political party has been funded.

Opponents of the electoral bond scheme argue that since the identity of the donor has been kept anonymous, it could lead to an influx of black money. Some others allege that the scheme was designed to help big corporate houses donate money without their identity being revealed. According to civil rights societies, the concept of donor "anonymity" threatens the very spirit of democracy.

The Congress party said that the donations made through electoral bonds were equivalent to money laundering.

### Restrictions that were done away with after the introduction of the electoral bond scheme

1. Earlier, no foreign company could donate to any political party under the Companies Act
2. A firm could donate a maximum of 7.5 per cent of its average three-year net profit as political donations according to Section 182 of the Companies Act
3. As per the same section of the Act, companies had to disclose details of their political donations in their annual statement of accounts.
4. The government moved an amendment in the Finance Bill to ensure that this proviso would not be applicable to companies in case of electoral bonds.

Thus, Indian, foreign and even shell companies can now donate to political parties without having to inform anyone of the contribution.

### **What does the Supreme Court have to say on electoral bonds?**

On April 12, 2019 the Supreme Court asked all the political parties to submit details of donations received through electoral bonds to the ECI. It also asked the Finance Ministry to reduce window of purchasing electoral bonds from 10 days to five days. The apex court is yet to fix a date for hearing other pleas against the electoral bonds.

### **Election Commission of India's view on electoral bonds**

The Election Commission on April 10, 2019 told the Supreme Court of India that while it was not against the Electoral Bonds Scheme, it did not approve of anonymous donations made to political parties.

"We are not opposed to electoral bonds...but want full disclosure and transparency. We are opposed to anonymity," Senior Advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the poll panel told the apex court. The poll panel's submissions came during a hearing on bunch of pleas challenging the validity of electoral bonds in the apex court.

### **Reserve Bank of India on electoral bonds scheme**

According to an article published by HuffPost India on November 18, 2019, the RBI was critical of the scheme. The central bank had warned the government that the bonds would "undermine the faith in Indian banknotes and encourage money laundering."

### **The issue of Unpaid Work**

Women bear a disproportionately high burden of unpaid domestic work and care work in India. They carry a disproportionately higher burden of unpaid work, namely, unpaid domestic services as well as unpaid care of children, the old, and the disabled for their respective households. Women do this job not necessarily because they like it or are efficient in it, but because it is imposed on them by

patriarchal norms, which are the roots of all-pervasive gender inequalities. Though this work contributes to overall well-being at the household level and collectively at the national level, it is invisible in the national database and particularly in national policies. By excluding this work from the economy, macroeconomics shows a clear male bias. Therefore, in order to adhere to the principle of gender equality and justice, it is imperative to recognize this unpaid work and make provisions to rectify this problem.

### **Need to Recognise Unpaid Work**

**Restricting Opportunities:** The invisible labour that a woman puts into household work is a 24-hour job without remuneration, promotions, or retirement benefits. Further, it restricts opportunities for women in the economy and in life. It is due to this female labour force participation rate in India is around 25%.

**Linkage with Economy:** The household produces goods and services for its members, and if GDP is a measure of the total production and consumption of the economy, it has to incorporate this work by accepting the household as a sector of the economy. Unpaid work is a privately produced public good that is critical for the sustenance of the mainstream economy.

**Subsidizes Private Sector:** At the macro level, unpaid work subsidizes the private sector by providing it a generation of workers (human capital) and takes care of the wear and tear of labour who are family members.

**Subsidizes Government:** Similarly, unpaid work also subsidizes the government by taking care of the old, sick, and disabled. The state would have spent huge amounts in the absence of unpaid work.

### **Challenges in Compensating Unpaid Work**

**Implementation Issue:** The Economic Survey 2019 recognizes this unpaid work, is a positive development. However, its implementation may create problems such as the affordability of the government and calculation of the amounts.

**Endorsing Norm of Women's Work:** Paying monetary benefits carries with it the possible danger of formally endorsing the social norm that domestic and care work is 'women's work', for which they are being paid.

**Master-Servant Relationship:** The term salary, wage, or compensation is indeed problematic as it indicates an employer-employee relationship, i.e., a relationship of subordination with the employer having disciplinary control over the employee.

**Reduction: Women's burden of unpaid work can be reduced by**

- Improving technology (e.g. better fuel for cooking),
- Better infrastructure (e.g. water at the doorstep),
- Shifting some unpaid work to the mainstream economy (e.g. childcare, care of the disabled, and care of the chronically sick),
- Making basic services (e.g. health and transportation) accessible to women.

**Redistribution:** Policy measures should also envisage redistributing the work between men and women by providing different incentives and disincentives to men (e.g. mandatory training of men in housework, childcare, etc.) and financial incentives for sharing housework.

These measures will give free time to women and open up new opportunities to them. Further, payment of pension to old women (60+ years) may be a better idea to compensate them for their unpaid work.

*In order to reduce women's burden of unpaid work and tap their potential in development, there is an urgent need to expand the purview of economics not only for gender justice but mainly for moving towards realistic economics.*

*Public policy should aim at closing the huge gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work through 'recognition, reduction, and redistribution.*

*Recognition: Paying a wage is a formal recognition of the fact that unpaid domestic and care work is no less important than paid market work, as the latter is parasitic on the former. What governments could do is recognize this unpaid work in the national database by a sound time-use survey and use the data in national policies.*



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