



CHROME IAS

Giving Wings To Your Dreams !!!

EDITORIALS

Monthly Compilation

DECEMBER

2019

53/5, First Floor, Old Rajinder Nagar

Contact: 011-49789720, 9990356664, 7840048445

(E-mail-info@chromeias.com, Website- <http://chromeias.com>)

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

INDEX

1. Selling the family silver	Category: GS 3 (Economy)	02
2. Water planning failures	Category: GS 3 (Environment)	03
3. Meals that can educate	Category: GS 2 (Social sector)	05
4. Bearing the brunt	Category: GS 2 (Social sector)	06
5. Structural reforms	Category: GS 3 (Economy)	07
6. Capital punishment	Category: GS 2 (Social issues)	08
7. Exiting Navratna Companies	Category: GS 3 (Economy)	10
8. Instant Punishment	Category: GS 2 (Governance)	12
9. Beyond the Diaspora	Category: GS 2 (IR)	14
10. An Asian Engine	Category: GS 2 (IR)	15
11. Mind the gap	Category: GS 1 (Society)	17
12. Restructuring isn't reform	Category: GS 3 (Economy)	18
13. Testing judicial reforms.	Category: GS 2 (Governance)	19
14. Autonomous Police	Category: GS 2 (Governance)	21
15. A group of theocracies	Category: GS 2 (IR)	22
16. Reservations for Anglo-Indians	Category: GS 2 (Polity)	23
17. Challenge lies within	Category: GS 2 (IR)	25
18. Politics hurts diplomacy	Category: GS 2 (IR)	26
19. Towards jointness	Category: GS 3 (Defence)	28
20. revisit the national nutrition strategy	Category: GS 2 (Health)	29
21. National Nutrition Strategy	Category: GS 2 (Social sector)	31

THE NOT-SO BRIGHT IDEA OF SELLING THE FAMILY SILVER

CATEGORY: GS 3 (ECONOMY)

Theme of the article

The Government may not be striking pay dirt in privatising public sector undertakings, especially the profitable BPCL.

Introduction

When we examine the proposed stake sale of profit-making public sector undertakings (PSUs), a few strategic issues of national importance need to be considered.

- ❖ The first is an ideological one — that Government must get out of business.
- ❖ The second is the need to bring the fiscal deficit down.
- ❖ The third is a long-term financial one: which option, public- or privately-owned, is better for the Government treasury?
- ❖ A fourth is about national security and self-reliance: can India be under pressure if we do not have full control over petroleum? Why do the United States, China and other superpowers have control over their petroleum reserves?

Is stake-sell of PSUs such as BPCL justified?

- ❖ Since 2011, the total dividend Govt. has earned is about ₹15,000 crore.
- ❖ If the Government sells its entire stake, it would forego future income of about ₹78,589 crore.
- ❖ In addition the BPCL has also paid taxes of about ₹25,000 crore to the Government since 2011.
- ❖ No doubt the Government will continue to get taxes from the private sector as well. However, the effective tax rate on profits before tax for the BPCL is about 34%, whereas for the private sector player it is between 25% and 28%. So there will be a loss in tax revenue for the Government after any privatisation.
- ❖ In summary, financially, we as a nation are worse off by selling such a profitable venture.
- ❖ As the case of the BPCL and several other PSU 'Navratnas' show, they have given super normal returns to the public exchequer. Instead of selling such high performing PSUs, should we not be selling the loss-making ones?

Issue of fiscal deficit target

- ❖ Another issue underlying the disinvestment is the fiscal deficit target of 3.4%, now reduced to 3.3%.
- ❖ Given that revenue collections are not enough, the Government is perhaps planning the sale of well-running PSUs to meet the fiscal deficit target.
- ❖ If the Government does meet its fiscal deficit target by the stake sale of various PSUs including the BPCL this year, how would it meet that target next year?
- ❖ Note that in spite of the huge one-time dividend from the Reserve Bank of India, we are far from meeting the deficit target.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ Nothing much will change in terms of the expenditure or revenues in the coming years. These strategic sales and dividends cannot be repeated every year. We will be back to the same levels of fiscal deficit.
- ❖ The real way of meeting this target is to cut out wasteful Government expenditure, most of which is on salaries and pensions, and ensuring that the bureaucracy delivers. Unfortunately, the cuts will be in the social sector.

Issue of national security

- ❖ The ideological issue of Government versus private ownership is related to the strategic issue about national security. Natural resources, especially oil, are a strategic national resource.
- ❖ The United States maintains such an underground crude oil reserve to mitigate any supply disruptions. Some comparative figures for such reserves are: the U.S. over 600 billion barrels, China 400, South Korea 146, Spain 120 and India 39.1.
- ❖ India does have a target to substantially increase its reserves. While China sticks to state-owned national resources, we are moving in the opposite direction.
- ❖ National security also depends on the economic power that a Government has. We do have plans to build perhaps the world's largest refinery in India, with the help of Saudi Arabia, but ownership and control will be in foreign hands.
- ❖ Meanwhile with the strategic disinvestments, we will lose Government control over both crude and refining. Nothing prevents China or any other country for that matter from buying up refining capacity in India.

Conclusion

We need to see through the ideological narrative coming from the developed nations. They embraced free trade when it suited them and are now trying to embrace protectionism. China adopted a market system but does not allow this to cloud its thinking when it comes to strategic national issues; the control then remains with the Government. India too needs to re-think its strategy.

NOT MANY LESSONS LEARNT FROM WATER PLANNING FAILURES

CATEGORY: GS 3 (ENVIRONMENT)

Theme of the article

In the absence of scientific planning and implementation, measures like Jal Shakti Abhiyan may not be successful.

Introduction

Following the massive water crisis across India in the summer of 2019, the Central government hurriedly launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA), a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign to be carried out in two phases, across the 255 districts having critical and over-exploited groundwater levels.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

Aim of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan

- ❖ This campaign, however, was not intended to be a funding programme and did not create any new intervention on its own.
- ❖ It only aimed to make water conservation a 'people's movement' through ongoing schemes like the MGNREGA and other government programmes.

Issues with JSA

- ❖ Water planning should be based on hydrological units, namely river basins. And, political and administrative boundaries of districts rarely coincide with the hydrological boundaries or aquifer boundaries.
- ❖ However, contrary to this principle of water management, JSA was planned based on the boundary of the districts, and to be carried out under the overall supervision of a bureaucrat. This resulted in the division of basins/aquifers into multiple units that followed multiple policies.
- ❖ There was no data on basin-wise rainfall, no analysis of run-off and groundwater maps were rarely used. As a result, one never came to know whether water harvested in a pond in a district was at the cost of water in adjoining districts.
- ❖ The JSA also fundamentally ignored the fact that most of India's water-stressed basins, particularly those in the peninsular regions, are facing closure, with the demand exceeding supply. Hence, groundwater recharge happened at the cost of surface water and vice versa. This is where an absence of autonomous and knowledge-intensive river-basin organisations is acutely felt.
- ❖ The aim and intent of JSA are noble. But the assumptions are distorted. For example, it assumes that common people in rural areas are ignorant and prone to wasting water; on the contrary, they are the ones who first bear the brunt of any water crisis. The per capita water allocation to those living in rural areas is 55 litres, whereas the same for urban areas like Delhi and Bengaluru is 135-150 litres.
- ❖ It is difficult to say whether measures like JSA can provide long-term solutions. Most of the farm bunds built with soil can collapse within one monsoon season due to rains and/or trespassing by farm vehicles, animals and humans. Further, there are issues like lack of proper engineering supervision of these structures, involvement of multiple departments with less or no coordination, and limited funding under MGNREGA and other schemes.
- ❖ Finally, there have hardly been many efforts undertaken to dissuade farmers from growing water-intensive crops such as paddy, sugarcane, and banana, when it is widely known that agriculture consumes 80% of freshwater.

Conclusion

The summer water crisis has not led to our policymakers learning many lessons, and the country just seems to have returned to a business-as-usual situation.

MEALS THAT CAN EDUCATE THE YOUNG

CATEGORY: GS 2 (SOCIAL SECTOR)

Theme of the article

Despite its transformative potential, the mid-day meal scheme is perceived as charity, not a civic responsibility.

Context

A video revealed recently show how one litre of milk was mixed in a bucketful of water so that it would suffice for the more than 80 children present that day in a school in rural Uttar Pradesh (U.P.). This was somewhat similar to the one reported from U.P. a couple of months ago in which plain chapatis were being served with salt.

Introduction

Two decades have passed since the mid-day meal became a part of the daily routine in government schools nationwide. In this long passage of time, procedures have stabilised but accidents continue to occur. Funds from the Centre flow smoothly though procurement of food items faces hurdles of different kinds.

The Bihar tragedy

Six years ago, 23 children had died after eating a mid-day meal. Inquiry revealed that the oil used for cooking the meal was stored in a can that originally carried a pesticide. It was put to use without even being washed properly.

Major kinds of issues with the mid-day meal

- ❖ First, there are cases of bad food, leading to food poisoning.
- ❖ The second kind is about cheating.
- ❖ Then there is the third category, pertaining to caste bias and discrimination.

Not considered a civic responsibility

- ❖ The scheme is perceived as charity, not a civic responsibility. With the growing shift of the better-off parents to private schools, government schools are viewed as places for the poor. Therefore, the mid-day meal is associated — both in public perception and state policies — with poverty.
- ❖ Like other schemes that serve the poor, this scheme is also covered by norms that insist on the cheapest. The menu, the money, the cook's remuneration, the infrastructure — they all show the value India places upon its children.
- ❖ Nor is the scheme conceived as a pedagogic resource. Otherwise, it would have been implemented at private schools as well.

Conclusion

Children receiving a litre of milk mixed in a bucketful of water will surely understand the concept of cheating better than that of fair play. Who is going to convince them that honesty is a good policy?

BEARING THE BRUNT OF SLACK LAWS

CATEGORY: GS 2 (SOCIAL SECTOR)

Theme of the article

The tweaking of labour laws on safety and minimum wage has left a large section of workers in India without rights

Context

The huge fire that engulfed a residential-cum-production unit in a congested part of Delhi killing over 40 people, has exposed the precarity of the every-day life of workers in this country. Such incidents raise the larger question of systemic labour rights violation.

Growth of industrial clusters in residential localities

- ❖ Numerous industrial clusters have mushroomed in the bylanes of residential localities and slums in our big cities, not merely due to a handful of erring officials of civic agencies but also due to non-existent regulation of labour conditions in micro-, small- and medium-sized industrial and commercial establishments.
- ❖ In these scores of smaller establishments, the workers are mostly migrants, and tend to work long hours for meagre wages. Often, they are crowded into living quarters inside the production unit itself. Such pervasive informality stems from the limited coverage of labour laws.

Factors detrimental to labourers' rights

- ❖ Out of reach laws: Key labour laws in India consistently elude a large section of workers who are denied rights and benefits on the pretext of less regular work contracts, length of employment, nature of establishment (seasonal or perennial), size of the workforce, etc. It is only a minuscule section of organised workers who have actually been granted the same.
- ❖ A new attack on labour:
 - The present conjuncture is characterised by a new and more offensive attack on labour by capital. A dominant discourse on the “ease of business” aggressively projects India’s labour laws as a fetter on the development of the free market.
 - Employers’ lobbies have projected India’s labour laws as cumbersome, a hindrance to employment generation, and, thus, intrinsically “anti labour”. Any regulation or interventionist approaches to industrial relations have been resisted.
- ❖ Deregulation: The phenomenal growth of India’s informal sector has led to deregulation of a large number of work relations; this is most evident in the watering down of the provisions of labour inspection, the growing paradigm of self-certification by employers of their compliance with labour laws, and the tweaking of many statutory labour laws on occupational safety standards, work hours, minimum wage, compensation, industrial disputes, etc. by successive governments, both at the State and Central level.
- ❖ Retreat of the state: The “private power” of employers to unilaterally fix wages, extract overtime, manage leaves, determine compensation, etc. has substantially increased with the steady withdrawal of the state from regulation of labour-capital relations that exist in myriad workplaces — from an Anaj Mandi in bustling north Delhi, to a real-estate

construction site in Borivali, Mumbai to a garment factory in Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu, to a brick kiln in Gaya, Bihar.

Conclusion

Workers contribute their sweat and blood in the making of this economy, and in return the economy gives them a pittance. How many more workers' lives have to go up in flames before our conscience is awakened?

IN PURSUIT OF STRUCTURAL REFORMS

CATEGORY: GS 3 (ECONOMY)

Theme of the article

Economic freedom should become the guiding principle of the nation's policymaking.

Introduction

The economic slowdown has pushed many people to demand more structural reforms from the government.

What does a structural reform mean?

- ❖ When economists talk about structural reforms, what they mean are reforms that free the economy from the control of the government and allow markets to allocate resources.
- ❖ The classical liberal economists of the 19th century believed that a minimalist 'night-watchman' state that limited its role strictly to the efficient provision of police, and courts that protected people's property rights and enforced contracts, could bring economic prosperity.
- ❖ Some even argued that the marketplace, in which multiple businesses compete to provide goods and services to consumers, can also offer better policing and legal services than an inefficient monopoly like the government.

The present circumstances in India

- ❖ When Prime Minister promised "minimum government, maximum governance" in 2014, the expectation was that India would be turned into a free market.
- ❖ But in the last five and a half years, the role of the government in the economy has only increased significantly with measures such as demonetisation and GST severely undermining people's economic right to own what they earn.

A minimalist government

- ❖ A minimalist or limited government would allow private individuals to own and exploit all economic resources.
- ❖ No sector of the economy would be shielded from private ownership and there would be an active attempt to disinvest almost all the assets that are under the control of the government.
- ❖ It would allow individuals to freely buy and sell anything they wish at whatever price they deem fit through voluntary trade.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ People will also be allowed to keep almost all of what they earn from such free trade, and private contracts rather than onerous government regulations would be allowed to regulate commerce.
- ❖ Such unfettered free trade, while it benefits consumers, will likely create winners and losers among producers. A minimalist government, however, will have no legal powers to save any business, whether small or large, from failure.
- ❖ People will be allowed to freely enter or exit a market as they wish and compete against anyone they want. Such genuine free market competition would ensure that the production of goods and services rises, prices fall, and the standard of living of the masses increases many-fold as a result.
- ❖ It was through such a drastic cut-down in the role of the government in the economy that countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand and China managed to achieve great economic prosperity.

Ease of Doing Business ranking

- ❖ The government has flaunted its performance in the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' ranking to prove its commitment to reforming the economy.
- ❖ But India's performance in the 'Index of Economic Freedom' ranking (129 out of 180 countries), which cannot be easily influenced by cosmetic changes to a few laws, should be of concern.
- ❖ The ranking, which measures the degree to which an economy is market-oriented, also classifies India as a "mostly unfree" economy.

Conclusion

If genuine structural reforms are to be expected, economic freedom should become the guiding principle of policymaking.

THE RHETORIC AND REALITY OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

CATEGORY: GS 2 (POLITY)

Theme of the article

Capital punishment provides neither justice nor deterrence.

Context of the article

Following the Supreme Court's dismissal of review petitions by all four convicts in the Nirbhaya rape and murder case, the four have moved one step closer to the gallows. In the light of this, and the repeated demands to punish all rape convicts with the death penalty, it becomes important to examine the issue of capital punishment.

Has death penalty succeeded?

- ❖ Death penalty as a measure to end sexual violence has completely failed.
- ❖ In 1965, only 23 nations had abolished the death penalty. But, subsequently, criminal justice systems across the world lost confidence in this mode of punishment.

- ❖ Today, over two-thirds of countries have given up on capital punishment either in law or in practice.

Is death penalty justified?

- ❖ 'Theory of Punishment' stipulates that there should be four elements of a systematic punishment imposed by the state:
 - The protection of society;
 - The deterrence of criminality;
 - The rehabilitation and reform of the criminal; and
 - The retributive effect for the victims and society.
- ❖ Capital punishment, in its very essence, goes against the spirit of the 'Theory of Punishment'.
 - The first element, 'protection of society,' is not served by imposing the death sentence any better than by incarceration. This has been proven time and again as inmates have spent decades on death row, harming no one, but being brutalised by the inhuman punishment meted out to them.
 - Second, there are several factors which effect criminal activity and deterrence is only one of them. In a UN survey, it was concluded that "capital punishment deters murder to a marginally greater extent than the threat of life imprisonment." The report of the Justice J.S. Verma Committee said that capital punishment is a regressive step and may not provide deterrence. The committee recommended the life sentence for the most grievous of crimes. A reasonable man is deterred not by the gravity of the sentence but by the detectability of the crime.
 - Third, the facet of 'reform and rehabilitation of the criminal' is immediately nullified by the prospect of capital punishment.
 - This leaves only the final element — 'the retributive effect'. Killing should never be carried out based on the primal and emotive desire among human beings for revenge. Revenge is a personalised and emotional form of retribution, which often loses sight of proportionality.
- ❖ A comparative study of death row conflicts shows that the jurisprudence in this regard is skewed against the weaker sections. Justice P.N. Bhagwati, said that death penalty in its actual operation is discriminatory for it strikes mostly against the poor and deprived. The reasons include lack of adequate legal assistance to the marginalised.

Conclusion

Hence, in the light of the recent incidents of heinous violence perpetrated against women, it becomes imperative for the judiciary not give in to the public clamour for making capital punishment mandatory for rape convicts. Public angst and emotions cannot be an alternative to reason and logic. There needs to be better enforcement of law in response to valid questions on justice but death penalty holds no answers.

SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT EXIT NAVRATNA COMPANIES?

CATEGORY: GS 3 (ECONOMY)

Theme of the article

Disinvesting partial stakes is more fruitful than outright asset sales of PSUs

Context of the article

Last month, the Cabinet approved sale of the government's stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, a navratna public sector company with oil refining and marketing operations.

Reason for stake sale

BPCL's stake alone is expected to raise about ₹60,000 crore for the exchequer this year, and given the fiscal pressures the government is facing on the tax revenue front, such large-scale disinvestment will help.

History of disinvestment

- ❖ If we look at India's approach to disinvestment since liberalisation, the focus in the Narasimha Rao government and the UPA years was on offloading minority stakes and listing them on the stock exchange.
- ❖ During the time of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, we saw some bold moves on strategic sales with many large, loss-making PSUs like Balco, Modern Foods and Hindustan Zinc being sold off.
- ❖ In the last six years, we saw a slightly cautious approach until now. For the first time, we are looking at a profitable public sector undertaking (PSU) like BPCL being put up for sale in an import-dependent sector like petroleum.

The significance of privatization

- ❖ It is argued that the private sector does a far better job of taking savings in the economy and making sure that they are ploughed back productively.
- ❖ One of the long-standing problems of India's public sector has been about bureaucratic and political interference and rent-seeking. So, one could argue that this kind of a sale will free up entities like BPCL to scale bigger heights under private management.

Is private sector more efficient?

- ❖ It is not borne out empirically that the private sector is more efficient.
- ❖ Even in post-liberalisation India, a number of studies show a trend towards convergence in performance between PSUs and private enterprises.
- ❖ Even in banking, until about 2011 when the NPA crisis started, we saw a similar trend.
- ❖ One of the reasons people tend to believe that the private sector is more efficient is because there's something called a survivorship bias in the data. When a public sector enterprise makes losses, it continues to exist. Whereas, if a private sector enterprise makes losses for a long time, it sort of exits the database.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ So, people will look at public and private sector banks and say private sector banks are doing much better, but they will ignore the many private sector banks that failed and had to be merged with other entities. The problem in comparing the two is that only the survivors of the private sector are left standing and you say they are doing marvellously.
- ❖ If improving efficiency is the argument, then it logically follows that the focus of disinvestment or privatisation should be on loss-making or underperforming entities. It is not clear why one should take a highly competitive and profitable company such as Concor or BPCL and opt to privatise it.

Analysing sale of stake in BPCL

- ❖ One of the arguments being made about BPCL is that if the government sells it now when it is doing well, then it stands to realise a very good price.
- ❖ But if and when private competition comes into distribution of oil, then BPCL surely will not do well and the government wouldn't realise the same price. That is just pessimistic thinking because it is presumed that every public enterprise is doomed to fail.
- ❖ One can make the argument that within the oil sector, even if we sell BPCL, there will still be public sector dominance. There is HPCL merged with ONGC and there is IOC which is much bigger than BPCL. So selling BPCL will fetch the government revenue without necessarily undermining government dominance in the oil sector. But that's a limited argument to make and one should be careful not to stretch it too far and extend it to PSUs in general.

How should privatization be done?

- ❖ Privatisation leads to superior efficiency provided certain conditions are fulfilled — how you privatise is very crucial to the success.
- ❖ One of the most important conditions to be met is that the valuation must be right. There's no point in giving assets away on the cheap, because then it is very easy for the private sector buyer to make supernormal returns on undervalued assets.
- ❖ So getting the valuation right is a tall order and that is where controversies arise. Even in Air India's case, if it is seen to be sold on the cheap, there's bound to be a severe backlash. In general, if we go for strategic sales, where you sell a 100% or majority stake in one go, then the chances of getting the valuation right is lower as there is no price discovery process.
- ❖ Later on, we realise the price was perhaps not right. Whereas with disinvestment, where we unload in tranches, there's a better chance of price discovery over time — the first tranche may be undervalued, but once it is listed and performance improves, the government can realise better valuations in subsequent tranches. This is why a vast majority of privatisation sales the world over have happened through share issue privatisations (disinvesting partial stakes) as opposed to asset sales (what we call strategic sales).
- ❖ If we look at some of the earlier strategic sales like Hindustan Zinc or Paradeep Phosphates, where the government retained a minority stake, the firms have turned around from chronic losses to become quite profitable. And the government got this upside because it retained a stake.

Recommendation of disinvestment commission

- ❖ The Disinvestment Commission under G.V. Ramakrishna was very clear that privatisation should be for strengthening the public sector.
- ❖ So they ruled out privatisation of core industries and highly profitable PSUs.
- ❖ They also said the proceeds should be used for restructuring other PSUs or spending on rural infrastructure.
- ❖ The receipts should not be used for the government's revenue expenditure.

CRIME AND INSTANT PUNISHMENT

CATEGORY: GS 2 (GOVERNANCE)

Context

The incident involving the encounter killings of four alleged rapists by the Hyderabad police has received a mixed response.

View against the encounter

- ❖ It has been condemned on the ground that the police encounter was fake and it violated two interlinked principles of the rule of law on which the system of jurisprudence in this country is based.
- ❖ One, a person accused of committing a crime is to be treated innocent till he is pronounced guilty by a court of law, and, two, it should be ensured that not even one innocent person gets punished even if in the bargain 10 guilty individuals getaway.

Public support to the encounter

- ❖ While the police action has been denounced by some, it has simultaneously received wide public support and appreciation.
- ❖ Showering of flower petals on police vehicles, touching of the feet of the police personnel, distributing sweets, beating of drums, bursting of crackers, singing and dancing with joy on the streets — these are just some of the ways in which the public, particularly women, expressed their enthusiasm and appreciation of what the police did.
- ❖ Celebrations were reported not merely from Hyderabad but from other parts of the country as well.

Reason for appreciation of the police by public

- ❖ The police in this country generally have a poor image. They are alleged to be oppressive and corrupt. The puzzling question is why, suddenly, were the police personnel involved in killing the accused accorded a grand hero's welcome.
- ❖ The answer is that the general public over time has become hugely dissatisfied, in fact, disgusted, with the way the criminal justice system has been functioning.
- ❖ This discontent is essentially due to two reasons: Lack of or a very poor rate of conviction, and enormous delay in the disposal of criminal cases. This has occasionally encouraged people to take the law in to their hands to deal with crime and criminals.

“Lynch justice”

- ❖ According to the police, they took the accused to the crime spot at night so as to protect them from being lynched by the public. This fear on the part of the police was not misplaced.
- ❖ There is an increasing tendency on the part of the public to deliver instant “lynch justice” by killing those who are caught while committing a crime, or even suspected of a crime.
- ❖ It is the public fear of crime and the incompetence of the criminal justice system to deal with criminality in a fair and swift manner that promotes a tendency amongst people to engage in vigilante justice — and beat up the accused or suspects of a crime to death.
- ❖ Such public fear and perception sometimes provide a license to the police to deal with crime and criminals by using rough and illegal methods. The blinding of criminals by the Bhagalpur Police, back in the early Eighties, was another example of such license.

Link between police vigilantism and public vigilantism

- ❖ The present incident, once again, shows how closely linked police vigilantism is to public vigilantism.
- ❖ The prominent danger in ignoring public vigilantism is that it is likely to promote greater acceptance by the public of police vigilantism. Turning a blind eye to incidents of public or police vigilantism is a sure and certain way of sounding the death-knell of a civilised democratic system of governance based on the rule of law.

Impact of public outrage

- ❖ Public outrage at any injustice perceived to have been meted out to victims of crime has been seen in the past and, on some occasions, with beneficial outcomes.
- ❖ Both in the Jessica Lal case and the December 12 rape and murder case in Delhi, people organised street marches, held candlelight vigils, circulated petitions and sent messages protesting against what was perceived to be a clear miscarriage of justice.
- ❖ In one case, the government was forced to appeal to the high court against the acquittal and, in the other case, the rape law was thoroughly revised and made harsher.
- ❖ Public outcry over ghastly crimes is thus welcome if it results in improving the working of the criminal justice system.
- ❖ It must, however, be ensured that public outrage results in guaranteeing fast delivery of justice and in strengthening the rule of law, and not in subverting it.
- ❖ Public outrage can easily descend to mob vigilantism, some signs of which were seen in many furious responses to the Hyderabad incident.

Conclusion

The criminal justice administration has been one of the most neglected areas of governance in this country: The price for that is being paid by the citizens. It is time the government devoted greater attention to reforming the criminal justice system. The capability of the system to control crime and deliver justice in time must be enhanced. Till this happens, the incidents of instant “lynch justice” done in anger or for “revenge” — either by the public or by the police — will continue to occur.

LOOKING BEYOND THE DIASPORA

CATEGORY: GS 2 (DIASPORA)

Context

India is relieved that Jeremy Corbyn did not win the recent general elections in the United Kingdom. The Labour Party's hostility towards India on the question of Kashmir, and its political tilt towards Pakistan under Corbyn, galvanised a large section of the Indian diaspora to rally behind the Tories.

Role played by the Indian diaspora in UK elections

- ❖ Nearly 130 Indian community organisations in Britain sent strong messages of protests to the Labour Party, and as the elections approached, the diaspora seemed ready to shed its traditional preference for Labour.
- ❖ Whether or not the Indian diaspora made a decisive difference to the overall electoral outcome in favour of Johnson, there is no doubt that Labour's Kashmir policy helped unite the Indian community in Britain.

Significance of Indian diaspora in UK

At nearly 1.4 million, the Indian diaspora in Britain is one of the largest and its contributions to civic life — economic, political and social — have steadily grown over the decades. But, it is only now that it is emerging as an assertive force.

Hurdles in way of India in UK

While the Indian diaspora might have tasted the first political fruits of its assertion, and though Delhi is pleased at the outcome of the election, the problem of British involvement in Kashmir and other India-Pakistan issues is unlikely to disappear any time soon. Three problems stand out.

- ❖ First, India is being sucked into an unfortunate competition with Pakistan in diaspora mobilisation in the United Kingdom and beyond. This is not very different from the recent developments in the US, where Pakistan has stepped up the effort to direct its diaspora against India's Kashmir policy.
- ❖ Second, while the Indian diaspora outnumbers the Pakistani diaspora, Delhi may find it increasingly hard to cope with the larger alliances that are beginning to coalesce and question India's current domestic policies. The new coalitions bind the Pakistani diaspora with the broader communities of Muslim organisations and human rights groups.

Way forward

- ❖ India must surely pay attention to and manage the tactical shifts in the British establishment's attitude to Kashmir and other bilateral issues between Delhi and Islamabad.
- ❖ It must also recognise, however, that Britain, like so many other countries, has its own interests in Pakistan and faces pressures to respond to them.
- ❖ While India needs to fend off Pakistan's tactics, it should avoid the danger of turning this competition with Pakistan as the central preoccupation in dealing with the West and its domestic opinion.

- ❖ India will also need to reassure a lot of friendly constituencies in the West that are concerned about the nature of recent developments in India.
- ❖ Mobilising the diaspora can only be a small part of India's strategy in getting Britain to change its approach towards its issues with Pakistan. If India's economy is nearly 10 times larger than that of Pakistan and there is a much larger swathe of shared interests between Delhi and London, then there surely are other ways of persuading the British establishment to rethink its stance on India.

Conclusion

India must now focus on the new possibilities with Britain presented by Boris Johnson's victory. For Delhi, this can't be about a tactical play on Kashmir with Britain; nor should it be about Boris Johnson's personal commitment to improving relations with India. For India, the question is about taking full advantage of the historic shift in Britain's international orientation — economic and political — that is about to unfold.

AN ASIAN ENGINE DRIVEN BY INDIA AND CHINA

CATEGORY: GS 3 (ECONOMY)

Theme of the article

The region's rise is linked to peace and stability; cooperation rests on a compact between the two countries.

Introduction

The world today is undergoing a fundamental transformation and there are several facets to the emerging uncertainty.

The transformation

- ❖ Traditional and non-traditional security threats (economic and military competition, climate change, piracy, radical ideology, cyber threats, drug and human trafficking, and energy and food security) have grown in magnitude.
- ❖ Power, whether economic, political or military, is fractured.
- ❖ Trade and technology are at the heart of a new round of competition and contestation.
- ❖ Nationalism and regionalism are on the rise.
- ❖ There is less multilateralism but greater multi-polarity.
- ❖ Hedging and multi-alignment are the order of the day.

The obstacles

- ❖ All known paradigms are experiencing stress. The inadequacies of the post-World War II international institutions are showing up because of the complexities and uncertainties characterising global politics and the economy today. The old consensus is fraying and a new consensus is yet to emerge.
- ❖ The liberal trading order has encountered protectionism in the form of tariff and non-tariff barriers. This is why India's service exports which touch \$29.6 billion in the U.S. market, and pharma products which account for 20% of global generic medicines, have barely been able to scratch the surface in the Chinese market.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ Cheaper imports from China, which practices “state capitalism”, threaten domestic manufacturing in India. Movement of talent and the services sector, important for India, have not received satisfactory attention.
- ❖ There is a looming danger for developing countries on account of ‘zero-sum’ mercantilism and rising protectionism in western economies.
- ❖ Geopolitical considerations are increasingly driving trade and investment decisions; on the other hand, geo-economic forces unleashed by China’s economic rise are redefining the geo-strategic landscape of the Indo-Pacific region.
- ❖ Worryingly, the global economy is likely to grow at its slowest pace in a decade, at 3% in 2019.
- ❖ Today, the momentum in manufacturing activity has weakened to levels unseen since the global financial crises. Investor and business confidence even in emerging markets is at a low ebb. Low productivity growth and ageing demographics in advanced economies have further compounded the problem.
- ❖ Most countries appear to be financially vulnerable. Key anchors in the global economy, including China, are experiencing a slowdown. Elsewhere, Europe is in the throes of a major readjustment in the context of Brexit.

Asian dynamics

- ❖ Asia is witnessing the simultaneous rise of several powers. Global engines of economic growth over the past three decades have shifted to Asia, first to the Asia-Pacific and now, more broadly, to the Indo-Pacific region that includes South Asia.
- ❖ The continent, home to over half the global population, has emerged as the new fulcrum for geo-economic and geo-strategic realignments. High economic growth rates across the region are accompanied by some of the highest military expenditures in the world.
- ❖ The face of automation, countries are undertaking structural reforms and emphasising skills-training to raise productivity. Development and adoption of green technology is also a priority. Even Saudi Arabia, the quintessentially hydrocarbon-dependent economy, has endeavoured to diversify its economy through the Saudi Vision 2030 master-plan.

India and China

- ❖ India is also transforming into a knowledge-based, skill-supported and technology-driven society. A liberal FDI regime combined with a youthful demographic profile makes India an attractive destination.
- ❖ India attaches great importance to its relations with China, a large trade partner in goods. Since 2015, there has been a spurt in Chinese FDI in India. There is great scope for China to participate in flagship initiatives such as the ‘Smart Cities Mission’ and ‘Skill India’ programmes.
- ❖ As the world’s second-largest economy, China can and must play a constructive role globally and within Asia to help the world return to higher growth rates.
- ❖ Bilateral trade today is approximately \$95 billion. India faces a huge and rising trade imbalance.
- ❖ As members of several multilateral institutions, India and China are in a unique position to give shape to their economic destinies. There are suggestions that the future lies in a web of free trade agreements. However, there is still scope for India and China to work together to strengthen the WTO.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ The RCEP should have a wider ambit, including trade in services. Many countries have openly favoured a more accommodating position that addresses India's concerns and facilitates its joining the RCEP. China too should pro-actively work to ensure India's membership.
- ❖ Beyond jointly training Afghan diplomats under the "India-China Plus One" framework, China and India could explore the potential to work together on Asian infrastructure and connectivity development on the basis of equality and an open and transparent model under the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).
- ❖ As China's presence in South Asia grows, greater transparency in its actions and closer consultations with India are also necessary to help allay concerns.
- ❖ China should also be mindful of its forays into the Exclusive Economic Zone of others.
- ❖ Today, the global energy market is more favourable to consumers in the face of a supply side glut. OPEC and non-OPEC oil and gas producers have come together to prevent a fall in energy prices. This should be a common concern for China and India. As two of the world's biggest importers of oil and gas, the two nations should have a joint consultative mechanism to protect the interests of consumers.

Conclusion

Asia's rise is predicated on peace and stability. It is a sad fact that a stable regional security architecture has yet to emerge organically in Asia. It is worth recalling what Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stated at the Raisina Dialogue in 2017: that there is enough room for all Asian countries to prosper together, and that the Asia of rivalry will hold us all back. It is the Asia of cooperation that will shape this century.

MIND THE GAP

CATEGORY: GS 1 (SOCIETY)

Theme of the article

A rounded approach is necessary to ensure women's access to resources, opportunities.

Context

World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020 was released last week.

Introduction

Assessing women's access to equal opportunity and resources against the access that men have would be a scientific way of evaluating a nation's commitment to the advancement of its citizens. But going by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020 questions can easily be raised about whether this government is doing the right thing by the country's women.

Global Gender Gap Index 2020

- ❖ India has dropped four points from 2018, to take the 112th rank on the Index.
- ❖ The Index measures the extent of gender-based gaps on four key parameters — economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ Notably, it measures gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries, rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities.
- ❖ Despite a small score improvement, India has lost four positions as some countries ranked lower than India have shown better improvement.
- ❖ The report notes with concern that the condition of women in large fringes of Indian society is 'precarious'.
- ❖ Of significant concern is the economic gender gap, with a score of 35.4%, at the 149th place, among 153 countries, and down seven places since the previous edition, indicating only a third of the gap has been bridged.
- ❖ The participation of women in the labour force is also among the lowest in the world, and the female estimated earned income is only one-fifth of male income.
- ❖ An alarming statistic is India's position (150th rank) on the very bottom of the Health and Survival subindex, determined largely by the skewed sex ratio at birth, violence, forced marriage and discrimination in access to health.
- ❖ It is on the educational attainment (112th rank) and political empowerment (18th rank) fronts that the relative good news is buried.

Way forward

- ❖ There is no question that the Gender Gap Index presents India with an opportunity to make the necessary amends forthwith. Doing what the government is currently doing is clearly not going to be sufficient; it needs to engage intimately with all aspects indicated by the Index to improve the score, and set targets to reduce the gender gap in the foreseeable future.
- ❖ It will have to drastically scale up efforts it has introduced to encourage women's participation, and increase opportunities for them. To do so it also needs to make sure there is actual implementation at the ground level.

Conclusion

While a good score on any global index is a target worth pursuing, what is being questioned here is basic — is the state reneging on its commitment to half its population? A commitment to ameliorate the conditions for women is a non-negotiable duty of any state.

RESTRUCTURING ISN'T ALWAYS REFORM

CATEGORY: GS 3 (ECONOMY)

Context of the article

The Railway Ministry has recently announced the policy decision of "restructuring" of the organisation.

Restructuring effort in the past

Restructuring of the Railways has been on the agenda for decades. Committees — Prakash Tandon 1994, Rakesh Mohan 2001, Sam Pitroda 2012 and Bibek Debroy 2015 — have done this exercise in past.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

The proposed restructuring

- ❖ End to departmentalism: End to departmentalism would lead to unification of services which will expedite decision making, create a coherent vision and promote rational decision-making.
- ❖ Reduction in size of railway board: The size of the Railway Board is proposed to be reduced from the present eight to five.
- ❖ Raising the posts of general managers: Posts of some 27 general managers would be raised to the level of secretaries and at par with the board members.

Questions that arise

- ❖ Will the IAS lobby agree to create so many secretary-level posts for Railway officers — unless they are given the top positions?
- ❖ The Railway Board is the governing body and the general managers are subordinate to the board. How would the board control the GMs of equal rank?
- ❖ Departmentalism is just a word and means nothing for the rail users, or for the national economy. Every large organisation is bound to have many departments.

Way forward

- ❖ Even after the merging of cadres, departments will continue to exist, they would continue to quarrel, it is the ministry's task to resolve the disputes.
- ❖ The ministry should understand that the problem is not departments but the composition of the same, and their role in the Railway organisation. This should be seen from the perspective of the national economy rather than as an issue pertaining to the Railways in isolation.

Conclusion

If the restructuring is done with national priorities in mind it can be a game changer, not only for the Indian Railways, but for India as a nation. Or else, it may only create a bigger mess than it imagines it is solving.

TESTING JUDICIAL REFORMS

GS 2 (GOVERNANCE)

Theme of the article

Experimental research is necessary for the Indian judiciary to deal with issues such as high pendency rate.

Introduction

The media has given extensive coverage to experimental research in social sciences in the recent months following the Nobel Committee's decision to award the Economics prize to Abhijit Banerjee.

Randomised controlled trials (RCTs)

Abhijit Banerjee's work is premised on evidence from randomised controlled trials (RCTs) designed to isolate the effect of an intervention on an outcome or event by comparing its

impact on a 'treatment group' that gets the intervention with a 'control group' that does not get the intervention. Testing interventions in pilot settings thus prevents the state from pursuing ineffective courses of action.

RCTs in legal field

- ❖ However, there is a conspicuous lack of experimental work in the field of legal research in India.
- ❖ Rigorous RCTs are indeed difficult to carry out in legal settings, given the complexity of the legal system and the need to ensure that any such studies do not hinder people's access to justice.
- ❖ But there is a great opportunity to incorporate some of these methods from RCTs into legal policymaking.

Issues with Indian judicial system

- ❖ The Indian judicial system is plagued with problems of delay and backlog.
- ❖ Currently, 3.5 crore cases are pending across the country's high courts and district courts.
- ❖ The long-term consequence of such high pendency is an erosion of faith in the institution of the judiciary.
- ❖ Justice delivery is the monopoly of the state but delays and the cost of litigation have led to people approaching non-judicial bodies outside the formal court system such as khap panchayats, religious leaders and politicians for dispute resolution.

Increasing the number of judges

- ❖ The most common solution proposed using a simplistic input-output model is to increase the number of judges. This suggestion conveniently masks the deeper systemic flaws in the judicial system that cause such high pendency.
- ❖ Further, despite the seriousness of the issue, there has been no empirical study on the effect of increasing the number of judges on judicial pendency.

Using experimental method in judiciary

- ❖ Using the experimental method will allow researchers to test a causal relationship between an independent variable (say increasing judge strength) and possibly dependent variables (say judicial pendency).
- ❖ Experiments such as these will give policymakers insights into how certain interventions work at a smaller scale before deciding on large-scale implementation.

Resistance in the system

- ❖ Given the importance of judicial independence, members of the judiciary are resistant to outsiders doing experimental work on their functioning.
- ❖ Though there is widespread acknowledgement of the problem of judicial delay, there is only limited effort within the judiciary to understand through research the nuances of the problems and motivations of the various stakeholders.
- ❖ An exception is the 'Zero Pendency Courts' project in Delhi. The Delhi High Court carried out a pilot project between 2017 and 2018 to assess the impact of 'no backlog' on judicial pendency and to devise ideal timelines for different types of cases. Studies such as these provide policymakers with evidence to implement targeted and effective solutions.

Conclusion

Experimental research in the Indian legal system is an idea whose time has come. Judicial reforms are far too important to be implemented without the rigorous backing of such research.

FOR A HUMANE AND AUTONOMOUS POLICE

CATEGORY: GS 2 (GOVERNANCE)

Theme of the article

During strife, the focus needs to be on improving the quality of policing in the field than on 'politician management'.

Introduction

These are tumultuous times for the Indian police, especially the Delhi police, in their bid to maintain law and order as certain elements have chosen to take some contentious issues out to the streets.

Protests and demonstrations

- ❖ Protests and demonstrations form the core of democracy as long as they do not disrupt the life of the common man or cause damage to public property.
- ❖ Some media reporting has tended to be one-sided, tending to portray the police as the villain of the piece and the protesters as harmless and pacifist. This binary picture is deceptive and misleading.

Shadow of politics

- ❖ It is too simplistic and facile to look upon the police as merely an agency that has been caught in the crossfire between the establishment and protesters.
- ❖ Gone are the days when police just received orders from above to be executed as faithfully as they could.
- ❖ The vicissitudes of politics over the decades have deprived the police the luxury of resting on the statute book and responding to a developing situation.
- ❖ They will now have to be proactive and react — and react within split seconds to an incendiary situation arising from contentious political situations. While doing so they are bound to overstep the contours of law. This reminds of the classic situation summed up as: damned if you do and damned if you don't.
- ❖ If some police leaders have surrendered their autonomy to the Executive, it is their fault and not of the Executive.

Entering the campus

- ❖ It is fallacy to argue that the police cannot enter campuses unless they are invited to do so by heads of institutions.
- ❖ There is no law that prohibits such police entry on their own, and any attempt to frame such a law will be preposterous to the core.
- ❖ The police are obligated under law to intervene wherever and whenever they apprehend danger to lives.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ Imagine the not-so-imaginary and improbable situation where the vice-chancellor is himself besieged and threatened by a mob of students and others and is unable to communicate with the police. Can the police wait for a nod from those facing danger?

On the measure of force

- ❖ Another bone of contention relates to the quantum of force that the police can use in quelling disorder. There is no scientific formula that applies to explosive scenes that have become routine in the national capital.
- ❖ “How much is too much?” is a question that is impossible to answer. The amount of force used in such situations can vary significantly, and will be related mainly to the strength of the mob, its composition, its mood and the kind of weapons it has at its command.
- ❖ Use of stones has become the most favourite, because of ease of availability and potency. To say that the police or any security agency should not overreact to this kind of barbarity is grossly unfair. Ultimately, it is the decision of the police commander in the field.

Way forward

- ❖ Mob control techniques are a part of the police curriculum in major training institutions. Their impact depends on the imaginative nature of the instruction. In the wake of violence across the country, the police leadership would do well to concentrate on this important aspect of policing, even if it means according a lower priority to other areas of routine.
- ❖ In a democracy such as ours we certainly need a civilised and humane police. This should not, however, dilute the need to have a potent force that will not hesitate to use the resources at its command in order to re-emphasise the dictum that democracy can flourish only when violence is checked and not allowed to hold sway.
- ❖ There is a crucial need for senior police officers to devote time to improving the quality of policing in the field, instead of frittering away their energies in concentrating on “politician management”.

A GROUP OF THEOCRACIES

CATEGORY: GS 2 (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

Theme of the article

India must rebuff attempts by the OIC to interfere in its internal affairs

Introduction

The improvement in India’s ties with the Gulf countries is often cited as a major success of the present government.

Recent initiatives to improve the relations

- ❖ Prime Minister’s visit to UAE and Saudi Arabia more than once in his tenure, and his personal ties with their most powerful royals, has yielded accolades and promises of investment.
- ❖ In March 2019, External Affairs Minister addressed the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Abu Dhabi, a breakthrough for India.

India and the OIC

- ❖ India's outreach to the OIC was seen as a way of strengthening ties with the "Muslim world" including West Asian countries where more than six million Indians live and work.
- ❖ It was therefore disappointing for the government to note that in June, the OIC appointed a "special envoy" on Jammu and Kashmir, and subsequently issued several strongly worded statements on the government's decision to amend Article 370 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya dispute and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or the CAA.
- ❖ The challenge comes chiefly from Malaysia, where Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has revived his plans for a "reformed" OIC, and has enlisted other challengers to the Riyadh-Abu Dhabi domination of the pan-Islamic movement including Iran, Turkey and Qatar. In that sense, the OIC's criticism of India is a clear attempt at reaffirming its leadership of the movement.

Way forward

- ❖ The basis of the OIC is a unity between theocratic Muslim states, an idea that India, as a secular country with a large Muslim population has never been aligned with. At all costs, attempts by the OIC to make statements and arrogate to itself the well-being of India's Muslims must be rebuffed as gross interference.
- ❖ However, India must note that the OIC's recent statements also stem from a broader tussle within the grouping that has become a concern for traditional leaders, the KSA and the UAE.
- ❖ India must strengthen ties with its strategic partners in the region on both sides of the divide without taking sides or becoming collateral damage in the internecine warfare between them. But it must also be wary of groupings with nothing in common other than a religious world view.

RESERVATIONS NEED TO CONTINUE FOR ANGLO-INDIANS

CATEGORY: GS 2 (POLITY)

Context of the article

The Union Cabinet recently approved a proposal to end the constitutional provisions that guarantee the reservation of two seats for the Anglo-Indian community in the Lok Sabha and in State Assemblies.

The basis of the proposal

The decision not to renew this provision was based on the view that the community is doing well and does not need these political reservations.

Should Anglo-Indian reservation be done away with?

- ❖ While Census data are not available (as Anglo-Indians are no longer identified as a separate category in the Census survey), those working on the ground with members of the community have experience and evidence that tell a different story. And this is

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

supported by the government-commissioned Ministry of Minority Affairs report (2013) on the situation of Anglo-Indians.

- ❖ Based on surveys conducted among people belonging to the community in a number of cities, the report documented poor economic and social conditions for too many.
- ❖ Among the major challenges and problems faced by people of the community, the report observed, the most significant ones related to identity crisis, lack of employment, educational backwardness, lack of proper facilities and cultural erosion.
- ❖ The document also explicitly commended the assistance Anglo-Indians receive from their nominated MPs and MLAs.

History of Anglo-Indian reservation

- ❖ Nomination of seats for Anglo-Indians in the Lok Sabha was a testament to the fair-minded and forward-looking vision of the founding fathers of the Republic, whose understanding of how to build a successful democracy has rather uniquely stood the test of time.
- ❖ Frank Anthony made the case for special representation on behalf of the community following which Mahatma Gandhi agreed to his request for three seats in the Constituent Assembly, thereby giving Anglo-Indians a voice in the creation of India's Constitution.
- ❖ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas was the person most directly responsible for the granting of these special concessions to this community, scattered across the country.
- ❖ Representing an All-India community, Anthony and his successors in the Lok Sabha used that voice to provide an independent, national view of the interests of India as a whole. Even when supporting their own community's causes, particularly in areas like education, they advanced the national interest and greatly benefited the country.
- ❖ The presence of Anglo-Indian MLAs in many State legislatures similarly provided a constructive pro-national voice, less tied to parochialism or provincialism, and emphatically against linguistic and religious separatism and similar narrowly communal interests.

Way forward

- ❖ A radical decision like that involving scrapping of reservations ought to have been based on a thorough examination of the position of the community as a whole, and not on the status of some eminent individuals. It should also be noted that many success stories exist because of the work of dedicated community members, including those who serve or have served as MLAs and MPs.
- ❖ Indian government needs to continue giving reservation to this marginalised community. The costs to the state here are minimal. But retaining the reserved seats would demonstrate its ability to respond to the needs of those among the most vulnerable people.
- ❖ This would also be a recognition of encouragement for the work done on the ground by grassroots groups involved with the community. In the near future, the community can also possibly find representation in the National Commission for Minorities.

Conclusion

A stronger, less socioeconomically marginalised Anglo-Indian community would benefit the nation as a whole. And the community needs all the support it can get.

CHALLENGE LIES WITHIN

CATEGORY: GS 2 (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

Theme of the article

Domestic political climate affects external relations. India must recognise this urgently.

Introduction

India will need some decisive domestic course-correction in the New Year to prevent the crystallisation of serious external challenges. Internal political accommodation and economic revival hold the key to India's diplomacy and foreign policy in the coming days.

Factors boosting international relations

In the 21st century, two important factors have boosted India's international relations.

- ❖ One is India's rapid economic growth stemming from the reforms of the 1990s. It put India on the course to join the league of major powers. India's growing economic weight would translate sooner than later into military power and that, in turn, could make Delhi an important player in shaping the regional balance of power in Asia and the Indian Ocean: This would eventually reshape the structure of the international system.
- ❖ The rise of India's hard power capabilities was complemented by its soft power — defined by India's democratic values, the spread of Indian culture and the positive influence of its diaspora.

Significance of soft power

- ❖ The idea of shared political values with the West played a critical role in ending the decades-old high technology blockade against India and improving the country's standing in the West.
- ❖ India's democratic values were of little strategic consequence during the Cold War, but they helped cement India's strategic partnerships with the US, Europe, Japan and other Asian democracies in the new century.
- ❖ Besides the question of democracy, India's ability to live with religious, linguistic and ethnic differences highlighted its political exceptionalism amidst the proliferation of intra-national conflicts and civil wars around the world.

Factors affecting external relations

- ❖ If the economic slowdown and the perceived antipathy to trade might be limiting India's attractiveness as a commercial partner, the sense of creeping Hindu majoritarianism has begun to generate concern among a range of groups from the liberal international media, the US Congress, to the Islamic world.
- ❖ Meanwhile, the diaspora, once seen as an asset, is now becoming part of Delhi's foreign policy problem. India's internal divisions are inevitably transmitted to the diaspora that, in turn, feeds into the emerging negative sentiment towards Delhi.
- ❖ The sharpening religious divide within the country coupled with the renewed confrontation with Pakistan is generating major headaches for the conduct of India's external relations.

Internal policies vs external relations

- The theory is that all states are sovereign and free to do what they want at home and free to conduct foreign policies as they like.
- The reality, though, is quite different. Through the ages, statesmen have sought ways to manage the complex interdependence between the internal and the external: Those who pretended that there is no relationship between the two had to pay a high price.
- For most nations today, domestic economic policy and, increasingly, technology policy are shaped by a dynamic interaction between the internal and external.
- Absolute economic sovereignty is unsustainable in a globalised world. While one can control the degree of exposure to the world, there is no room for absolute separation.
- The same is also true of political sovereignty. It has never been absolute and is always constrained by size, economy, geography, demography and history..
- When a country chooses to inflame the divisions at home, it not only disappoints its friends and well-wishers but also provides huge opportunities for exploitation by its adversaries.
- It is not just strong countries that can take advantage of the internal conflicts of others. Russia, for long dismissed in North America and Europe as a declining power, is now being accused of interference in the domestic politics of more powerful Western democracies. Tiny Qatar in the Gulf is charged by many in the Middle East of destabilising other, larger societies, in the region.
- Beyond governments, old and new media, trans-national groups and non-governmental organisations are quick to highlight internal conflicts in societies and then shape the international narratives on them.

WHEN POLITICS HURTS DIPLOMACY

CATEGORY: GS 1 (WORLD HISTORY), GS 2 (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

Theme of the article

India needs to remove growing negative perceptions of its domestic policies in the Muslim world

Introduction

The Islamic summit in Kuala Lumpur last week raised many questions about the role of religion in promoting solidarity between nations. The gathering in Kuala Lumpur did bring some key Islamic nations together, but it also revealed the deepening schisms in the Muslim world today that are of considerable importance for the Subcontinent.

Leading the Islamic world

- ❖ While Malaysia, Turkey and Qatar were the moving forces behind the summit, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates were among the notable absentees.
- ❖ Indonesia, the world's largest Islamic nation, kept a low profile at the summit, while Pakistan was a surprising dropout at the last minute.
- ❖ For Malaysia, the summit, and the diplomacy surrounding it are means to win a leadership role in the Muslim world. Many in the Middle East, however, see the claims for Islamic leadership from outside the region with either bemusement or condescension.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ The real contestation for leading the Islamic world remains within the Middle East. Turkey and Iran have a long tradition of challenging the Saudi leadership of the Islamic world. Qatar, which punches way above its weight, has now joined their ranks.
- ❖ The Saudis expressed displeasure at convening the Islamic nations outside the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation.

Religion as unifying factor

- ❖ The idea that religion can bind people together has an enduring appeal. In practice though, religion has not been enough to sustain unity within and among nations that profess a common faith.
- ❖ Many countries in the Islamic world struggle to respect the rights of minorities, Muslim or non-Muslim, and cope with the problems of religious sectarianism and ethnic separatism.
- ❖ If keeping the faithful together within a nation is hard enough, it is a lot harder to promote supra-national solidarity in the name of Islam. The origins of pan Islamism date back to the late 19th century, but its record in binding nations has not been impressive.

Other unifying factors

- ❖ Solidarity based on other ideologies, class or political values, too has been difficult to sustain for long periods. The communist solidarity that seemed so powerful in the middle of the 20th century crashed quickly against the rocks of nationalism in Central Europe, Russia and China.
- ❖ On the face of it, shared values — political and economic liberalism — have been far more successful in holding together the so-called political and economic “West”. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became ever harder to sustain harmony within the western world.

Split in the Islamic world

- ❖ The splits in the Islamic world exposed by the Malaysian summit should be of great interest to the Subcontinent. The main differences are about political Islam and its role in shaping the domestic structures in Muslim nations.
- ❖ Turkey and Qatar have championed the Muslim Brotherhood that seeks to overthrow the current political order in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, as well as in Egypt.
- ❖ Iran has its own variant of political Islam for export.
- ❖ Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE seek to protect their own societies and state structures from external onslaught, and are pushing back.
- ❖ Beyond the nature and role of Islam, there is also the growing competition among the major Middle Eastern states for strategic influence in the region and beyond.

South Asia and Muslim world

- ❖ The South-Asian political discourse tends to see the Muslim world as a monolith. That has become increasingly difficult to maintain amidst the current conflicts in the Middle East.
- ❖ Imran Khan has showcased his special relationships with Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Malaysia’s Mahathir. He was supposed to play a leading role at the Kuala Lumpur summit. But, apparently under pressure from the Saudis and the Emiratis, his main economic benefactors, he chose to stay home.
- ❖ For Delhi too, the divisions in the Islamic world are of significance. If Malaysia and Turkey have become increasingly critical of the NDA government’s policies, the UAE and the

Saudis have given India the benefit of doubt, until now. The Qatar-owned Al Jazeera channel has run a far more damaging campaign against Delhi in recent months than the much-maligned New York Times.

Conclusion

Delhi has an urgent need to remove the growing negative perceptions of its domestic policies in the Middle East and more broadly the Muslim world. India should not miscalculate the external costs of the government's domestic politics.

TOWARDS JOINTNESS

CATEGORY: GS 3 (DEFENCE & SECURITY)

Context of the article

The Government's approval for the post of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) brings to fruition the process set in motion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech.

The origin and evolution of the idea of a CDS

- ❖ The office of a principal military advisor to the government was first mooted many decades ago but it got a serious push only after the 1999 Kargil War.
- ❖ The Kargil Review Committee, headed by the late K Subrahmanyam, stated the requirement which was fleshed out in detail in 2001 in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.
- ❖ But the recommendation did not find favour with either the Vajpayee government or the UPA government, largely due to bureaucratic and political resistance to the idea of an all-powerful military commander and also because of the interservice rivalry between the Air Force, the Navy and the Army.
- ❖ Meanwhile, another expert committee, headed by Naresh Chandra, again recommended a top military advisor, not a CDS but a Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee — but it, too, did not see the light of day.

Role of the CDS

- ❖ The major task of the CDS is to ensure coordination between the three services, especially in matters of defence procurement, besides helping in force structuring of the services to bring in savings and operational synergy.
- ❖ The CDS will prioritise requirements of the three services within budgetary allocations, taking a big responsibility away from the ministry.
- ❖ It has also been tasked to facilitate restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands.
- ❖ While the CDS will provide principal military advice to the government, he is not the commander of all the armed forces in the country. In fact, the CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs, so as to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership.

- ❖ Not only is there no concentration of power, he will be functioning as the secretary of a department within the ministry, while being at par with the three service chiefs in military status and rank.

Conclusion

Some teething problems can be expected in the beginning but things are bound to fall in place as norms, processes and rules are worked out between the three services, the CDS and the defence ministry. It will require the navigation of entrenched institutional interests, hierarchical powers and military traditions, to lay the foundations for a strong and functional CDS.

REVISIT THE NATIONAL NUTRITION STRATEGY

CATEGORY: GS 2 (HEALTH)

Theme of the article

Addressing multiple dimensions and various forms of malnutrition requires an integrated policy, coherent action, and total transformation of the country's food system

New nutrition reality

There is now a new nutrition reality, based on fresh scientific evidence in three related areas.

- ❖ First, there is evidence now that under nutrition (stunting, wasting, under weight) and overweight and obesity co-exist and promote each other.
- ❖ Second, that unsafe food directly or indirectly affects nutrition outcomes.
- ❖ Finally, that poor eating habits adversely impact digestion and hence nutrition.

Double burden of nutrition (DBM)

- ❖ Both undernutrition and overweight and obesity co-exist. It has been called 'double burden of nutrition (DBM)'.
- ❖ Historically, these were seen in two distinct silos and policies and interventions to address them followed different trajectories.
- ❖ Now there is evidence that both build on each other throughout life and across generations. Both can be addressed more effectively together, simultaneously.
- ❖ DBM is defined as wasting in more than 15 per cent and stunting in more than 30 per cent of children aged 0–4 years, thinness in women (body-mass index < 18.5 mg/kg²) in more than 20 per cent females aged 15-49 years and adult or child overweight.

State of nutrition in India

- ❖ In India, 47 million people are stunted, 25 million people are wasted, and 196 million suffer from chronic hunger. About 500 million suffer from vitamin or mineral deficiencies.
- ❖ At the same time, over 180 million are overweight or obese, including 3 million children under the age of five years.

The overweight problem

- ❖ Increases in the number of overweight are often a result of changes in the food system that make less nutritious food cheaper and more accessible, as well as due to decrease in

physical activity due to major technological shifts in the workplace, home, and transportation.

- ❖ Risk of overweight and obesity is greater among the higher-wealth households and urban areas, but in several countries, the risk of the DBM is starting to concentrate among people with low incomes and in rural areas.
- ❖ Right from the World Declaration on Nutrition in 1992, nutrition plans have focussed only on undernutrition. For the first time, 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition laid down dietary-related non-communicable diseases targets. Since then several countries have fixed obesity-related targets along with undernutrition targets, but these targets adopted separate strategies and have different plans.

Food safety problem

- ❖ Food safety impacts nutrition. Unsafe food causes more than 200 diseases, and hence food safety is usually seen as a public health or medical issue.
- ❖ New studies suggest more complex, long-term impact of unsafe food that include child stunting and even obesity.
- ❖ Infection by food-borne pathogens can result in poor absorption of nutrients from food, particularly of vitamins and minerals that impact the nutritional status of an individual.
- ❖ Our recent national milk survey has shown that over 5 per cent of the milk samples had Aflatoxin M1 above permissible levels. Aflatoxin, a natural food contaminant, may lead to stunting and growth impairment in children, not only reducing their chances of long and productive lives, but perhaps also making them more susceptible to other illnesses.

Poor eating habits

There is now robust scientific evidence on how poor eating habits have long term impact on the health of individuals, and cause for obesity and many lifestyle diseases. Many people have benefitted and prevented dreadful diseases and death merely by adopting proper eating habits.

India's nutrition policy

- ❖ India's national nutrition policy (NNP) of 1993 focussed on undernutrition through supplementary nutrition and deficiencies of iron and Vitamin A.
- ❖ The 2018 national nutrition strategy continued the same with interventions around nutrition and healthcare of infants and young children, mothers, adolescents and address deficiencies of iron and Vitamin A.
- ❖ Even though the strategy recognised that there was a small but increasing percentage of children at greater risk for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular heart disease, there are no specific interventions in the 2018 strategy, nor does it recognise the interconnection between undernutrition, obesity and overweight.
- ❖ To implement the 2018 strategy, the national nutrition mission was launched. It focussed on the first 1,000 days of a child's life, convergence across ministries, real-time monitoring of work and performance incentives for frontline workers and rota-virus vaccination to prevent diarrhoea.
- ❖ With these interventions, there has been some progress. However, this is not good enough. India is still placed at a rank of 102 out of 117 countries in the global hunger

index. This is way below China's rank of 25, or even our south Asia neighbours, Sri Lanka (67), Myanmar (68), Nepal (72), and Bangladesh (86).

Way forward

- ❖ The interventions and programmes that seek to address under nutrition and overweight / obesity must be taken up simultaneously.
- ❖ There are many causes for malnutrition and undernutrition in various forms/ Addressing these challenges together requires integrated actions to improve food safety and nutrition and develop a food system that provides all people with safe, healthy and affordable diets.
- ❖ Changes in the food system have to be made so that outputs per unit of water, energy, land and other inputs are optimised and footprint of agriculture and non-farm activities in the food system are managed with the planetary boundaries. The food system should provide people with diets that are sustainable.
- ❖ Poor progress on undernutrition is possibly due to the double burden of malnutrition which calls for an integrated approach and simultaneous action to address undernutrition and obesity and overweight together.
- ❖ Addressing multiple dimensions and various forms of malnutrition requires an integrated policy, coherent action, and total transformation of the country's food system.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need to revisit the 2018 national nutrition strategy so that we can move quickly towards achieving the goal of eradicating hunger and preventing malnutrition in all its forms.

REVISIT THE NATIONAL NUTRITION STRATEGY

CATEGORY: GS 2 (HEALTH)

Theme of the article

Addressing multiple dimensions and various forms of malnutrition requires an integrated policy, coherent action, and total transformation of the country's food system

New nutrition reality

There is now a new nutrition reality, based on fresh scientific evidence in three related areas.

- ❖ First, there is evidence now that undernutrition (stunting, wasting, underweight) and overweight and obesity co-exist and promote each other.
- ❖ Second, that unsafe food directly or indirectly affects nutrition outcomes.
- ❖ Finally, that poor eating habits adversely impact digestion and hence nutrition.

Double burden of nutrition (DBM)

- ❖ Both undernutrition and overweight and obesity co-exist. It has been called 'double burden of nutrition (DBM)'.
❖ Historically, these were seen in two distinct silos and policies and interventions to address them followed different trajectories.

CHROME IAS ACADEMY

- ❖ Now there is evidence that both build on each other throughout life and across generations. Both can be addressed more effectively together, simultaneously.
- ❖ DBM is defined as wasting in more than 15 per cent and stunting in more than 30 per cent of children aged 0–4 years, thinness in women (body-mass index < 18.5 mg/kg²) in more than 20 per cent females aged 15-49 years and adult or child overweight.

State of nutrition in India

- ❖ In India, 47 million people are stunted, 25 million people are wasted, and 196 million suffer from chronic hunger. About 500 million suffer from vitamin or mineral deficiencies.
- ❖ At the same time, over 180 million are overweight or obese, including 3 million children under the age of five years.

The overweight problem

- ❖ Increases in the number of overweight are often a result of changes in the food system that make less nutritious food cheaper and more accessible, as well as due to decrease in physical activity due to major technological shifts in the workplace, home, and transportation.
- ❖ Risk of overweight and obesity is greater among the higher-wealth households and urban areas, but in several countries, the risk of the DBM is starting to concentrate among people with low incomes and in rural areas.
- ❖ Right from the World Declaration on Nutrition in 1992, nutrition plans have focussed only on undernutrition. For the first time, 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition laid down dietary-related non-communicable diseases targets. Since then several countries have fixed obesity-related targets along with undernutrition targets, but these targets adopted separate strategies and have different plans.

Food safety problem

- ❖ Food safety impacts nutrition. Unsafe food causes more than 200 diseases, and hence food safety is usually seen as a public health or medical issue.
- ❖ New studies suggest more complex, long-term impact of unsafe food that include child stunting and even obesity.
- ❖ Infection by food-borne pathogens can result in poor absorption of nutrients from food, particularly of vitamins and minerals that impact the nutritional status of an individual.
- ❖ Our recent national milk survey has shown that over 5 per cent of the milk samples had Aflatoxin M1 above permissible levels. Aflatoxin, a natural food contaminant, may lead to stunting and growth impairment in children, not only reducing their chances of long and productive lives, but perhaps also making them more susceptible to other illnesses.

Poor eating habits

There is now robust scientific evidence on how poor eating habits have long term impact on the health of individuals, and cause for obesity and many lifestyle diseases. Many people have benefitted and prevented dreadful diseases and death merely by adopting proper eating habits.

India's nutrition policy

- ❖ India's national nutrition policy (NNP) of 1993 focussed on under nutrition through supplementary nutrition and deficiencies of iron and Vitamin A.
- ❖ The 2018 national nutrition strategy continued the same with interventions around nutrition and healthcare of infants and young children, mothers, adolescents and address deficiencies of iron and Vitamin A.
- ❖ Even though the strategy recognised that there was a small but increasing percentage of children at greater risk for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular heart disease, there are no specific interventions in the 2018 strategy, nor does it recognise the interconnection between under nutrition, obesity and overweight.
- ❖ To implement the 2018 strategy, the national nutrition mission was launched. It focussed on the first 1,000 days of a child's life, convergence across ministries, real-time monitoring of work and performance incentives for frontline workers and rota-virus vaccination to prevent diarrhoea.
- ❖ With these interventions, there has been some progress. However, this is not good enough. India is still placed at a rank of 102 out of 117 countries in the global hunger index. This is way below China's rank of 25, or even our south Asia neighbours, Sri Lanka (67), Myanmar (68), Nepal (72), and Bangladesh (86).

Way forward

- ❖ The interventions and programmes that seek to address under nutrition and overweight / obesity must be taken up simultaneously.
- ❖ There are many causes for malnutrition and under nutrition in various forms/ Addressing these challenges together requires integrated actions to improve food safety and nutrition and develop a food system that provides all people with safe, healthy and affordable diets.
- ❖ Changes in the food system have to be made so that outputs per unit of water, energy, land and other inputs are optimised and footprint of agriculture and non-farm activities in the food system are managed with the planetary boundaries. The food system should provide people with diets that are sustainable.
- ❖ Poor progress on under nutrition is possibly due to the double burden of malnutrition which calls for an integrated approach and simultaneous action to address under nutrition and obesity and overweight together.
- ❖ Addressing multiple dimensions and various forms of malnutrition requires an integrated policy, coherent action, and total transformation of the country's food system.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need to revisit the 2018 national nutrition strategy so that we can move quickly towards achieving the goal of eradicating hunger and preventing malnutrition in all its forms.