



## Reference: Current Affairs Material G.S. Mains 2011 – The Hindu – PART II

<p><b>Policy imperatives for growth (UN economic reports)</b></p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p>Two reports by the United Nations place the difficulties in perspective and offer valuable suggestions for both developed and developing nations to see them through the crisis in the near- to medium-term. Developed nations are yet to come to terms with the crisis in any meaningful way. Moreover, emerging economies and those from the developing world — particularly China and India — which acted as a bulwark against the spread of the economic contagion are likely to continue to play the role.</p> <p><i>The World Economic Situation and Prospect 2011</i>, in its global outlook, points out that, although the weaknesses of the developed world were offset by the growth in the emerging economies, two main challenges remain. These include the dangers posed by premature fiscal consolidation in the developing world and the valid concerns over the ability of the emerging world to sustain its performance, particularly given its dependence on developed markets. For the developed economies, which could risk sliding into a possible double-dip if they continue with their present monetary and fiscal policies, the answer lies in coordinated fiscal stimuli in the short-run, rather than early fiscal consolidation.</p> <p>For the developing world, the U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific makes it evident that maintaining the region's recent growth trajectory calls for prudent policy-making, factoring in its dependence on markets in the developed world. Its year-end update of the <i>Economic and Social Survey 2010</i> sounds a note of caution that there could be a slowdown in the growth of both developed and developing economies. The region's export-dependent economies particularly are likely to be affected in 2011.</p> <p>The observation that the Asia Pacific region would see “the most dynamic growth” in the world, despite the likely dip, gives national policymakers space to come up with well-structured policies that address a pressing social concern: poverty.</p> <p>Of direct relevance to the region's economic and social needs are suggestions to intensify regional economic activity and close infrastructure gaps. Stubborn poverty remains the biggest challenge for the Asia-Pacific, which is home to about 947 million people living under \$1.25 a day.</p> <p>It is necessary for developing countries to put in place inclusive development policies, supported by fiscal measures, to ensure that more people are pulled out of poverty. This, in turn, would step up aggregate demand and help the region come through the testing economic times.</p>
<p><b>India and Afghanistan : the way forward (TAPI project)</b></p> <p><b>India and the world</b></p>	<p>Despite nine years of war, the American-led NATO forces and their accompanying Afghan troops are nowhere close to dominating the country's military space, a prerequisite that can pave the way for productive dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban. Nation-building has also not gone far enough to inspire confidence among the Afghans to spurn the Taliban and bond decisively with their leaders and their supporters abroad.</p>

India, which has high stakes in Kabul, needs to methodically chart its way forward to ensure that its core security and long-term economic interests are safeguarded. Indian diplomacy will face a huge challenge of engaging productively with international stakeholders, whose common and competing interests in Afghanistan criss-cross frequently. These foreign players with entrenched interests in Afghanistan are the United States, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Central Asian countries, including energy rich Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.

India recently joined Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan to sign a framework agreement to build a 1,680-km gas pipeline. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline will initially draw gas from the Daulatabad gasfield and convey it to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan. India and Pakistan will each get 33 bcm annually. TAPI's route may serve as a stabilising corridor, linking neighbours together in economic growth and prosperity.

The TAPI deal presents India its first major opportunity to acquire a durable niche in this resource rich region, with which it shares deep historical bonds. Turkmenistan's neighbour Kazakhstan, a country with a massive landmass, huge oil and gas reserves has over the last few years been considered a possible candidate for supplementing TAPI gas flows.

The project would provide Afghanistan not only energy for its own development but also handsome dividends by way of a hefty transit fee. It is estimated that Kabul would annually receive a transit tariff of around \$1.4 billion from India and Pakistan once the \$7.6-billion pipeline is laid.

The implementation of the TAPI project is likely to ease the hostility between India and Pakistan. Access to the Indian market makes gas flowing through the TAPI pipeline cheaper for all stakeholders, including Pakistan. Simultaneously, energy sourced from Turkmenistan can support rapid expansion of industry in Pakistan, help spur entrepreneurship, and potentially encourage the evolution of a solid constituency among its business class, which has a vested interest in peace with India.

Finally, participation in the TAPI project would arm India with a rock solid argument to play a prominent role in Afghanistan.

While going ahead with the TAPI project, India should make sure that it does not alienate Iran. Facts of geography, shared energy interests, and Iran's cultural appeal among India's politically significant population segments call for a sustained engagement between New Delhi and Tehran.

In the absence of geographical contiguity, Iran is India's gateway to Afghanistan. Both countries have already made considerable efforts in drawing a transit corridor that links Iran's port of Chabahar with Afghanistan's ring road system. The still fragile security situation in Afghanistan also demands that India and Iran sustain a comprehensive and active political and security dialogue with each other.

Notwithstanding the existing difficulties and impediments imposed by the Americans, India, at some point of time, may have to go ahead and source natural gas from Iran. From an energy perspective, the TAPI project is not a substitute for the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline.

<p><b>The dark side of globalisation</b></p> <p><b>Economy/Essay</b></p>	<p>Although we may not have yet reached “the end of history,” globalisation has brought us closer to “the end of geography” .</p> <p>The compression of time and space triggered by the Third Industrial Revolution — roughly, since 1980 — has changed our interactions with the international environment.</p> <p>For many, globalisation — the intensified cross-border exchange of goods, services, capital, technology, ideas, information, legal systems, and people — is both desirable and irreversible, having underwritten a rising standard of living throughout the world.</p> <p>Globalisation is not uncontrolled. The movement of people remains tightly restricted. The flow of capital is highly asymmetrical. Over the last two decades, overseas development assistance from the rich to poor countries has totalled \$50-80 billion per year. In the same period, every year, \$500-800 billion of illegal funds have been sent from the poor to rich countries. That is, for every one dollar of aid money over the table, the West gets back \$10 under the table .</p> <p>The benefits and costs of linking and delinking are unequally distributed. Industrialised countries are mutually interdependent; and developing countries are highly dependent on industrialised countries. However, Brazil, China and India are starting to change this equation.</p> <p>There is a growing divergence in income levels between countries and peoples, with widening inequality among and within nations. Assets and incomes are more concentrated. Wage shares have fallen. Profit shares have risen. Capital mobility alongside labour immobility has reduced the bargaining power of organised labour.</p> <p>The deepening of poverty and inequality — prosperity for a few countries and people, marginalisation and exclusion for the many — has implications for social and political stability among and within states.</p> <p>The rapid growth of global markets has not seen the parallel development of social and economic institutions to ensure balanced, inclusive and sustainable growth. Labour rights have been less sedulously protected than capital and property rights, and global rules on trade and finance are inequitable. This has asymmetric effects on rich and poor countries.</p> <p>Even before the global financial crisis (GFC), many developing countries were worried that globalisation would impinge adversely on economic sovereignty, cultural integrity and social stability. “Interdependence” among unequals translates into the dependence of some on international markets that function under the dominance of others. The GFC confirmed that absent effective regulatory institutions, markets, states and civil society can be overwhelmed by rampant transnational forces.</p> <p>Globalisation has also let loose the forces of “uncivil society” and accelerated the transnational flows of terrorism, human and drug trafficking, organised crime, piracy, and pandemic diseases. The growth of these transnational networks threatens state institutions and civil society in many countries.</p>
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*What can developing nations do to manage the challenges of globalisation?*

The outright rejection of globalisation and a retreat into autarky is neither practical nor desirable.

The notion that endless liberalisation, deregulation and relaxation of capital and all border controls (except labour) will assure perpetual self-sustaining growth and prosperity has proven to be delusional. The three Baltic nations that embarked on this course (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) — to which, for good measure, they added the flat tax — all had double-digit negative growth in 2009.

For developing countries, lowering all barriers to the tides of the global economy may end up drowning much of local production. Raising barriers that are too high may be counterproductive, if not futile. Countries that find the golden middle, like Chile and Singapore, tend to thrive, channelling the enormous opportunities offered by an expanding world economy for the benefit of their citizens. Those that do not, like many in Central and Western Africa, are marginalised and left behind.

Finding the right, if difficult, balance between openness and regulation requires keeping a watchful eye on trans-border crimes that thrive in the interstices of the national and the international. Illicit trade, accounting for 10 per cent of global economic product according to some estimates, could be growing at seven times the rate of growth of legal trade.

The growth in transnational flows has not been matched by an equivalent growth in global governance mechanisms to regulate them. And yet the very nature of the structure of globalised networks, which intertwine global actors and interests, ensures that no single power is able to maintain its position within the newly emerging global disorder without making compromises with other global players.

In Africa, home to 36 of the world's 50 least developed countries, state weakness often has opened the door to transnational crime and terrorism. Garth le Pere and Brendan Vickers highlight six pathologies that are particularly prevalent across Africa: illegal exploitation of natural resources, terrorism, the drug trade, illegal migration and human trafficking, gun running, and money laundering. According to some, Guinea Bissau has already become the world's first narco-state.

One response to global governance gaps that have made these illegal activities possible has been regional governance. The transfer of state functions to supranational forms of regional governance could enhance the capacity of individual states to combat uncivil society. The sharing of expertise, institutions, policy tools, personnel and other resources can go a long way in stemming the tide of unwanted activities.

Human trafficking is among the darkest sides of globalisation, turning human beings into commodities bought and sold in the international marketplace. Women and children are among the most exposed to it. NGOs from all continents attempt to cope with this nefarious activity and report on those involved in it.

Southern Africa has witnessed the rise of elaborate transnational crime organisations. The illegal trafficking in narcotics, mineral resources, ivory, counterfeit products and stolen property is thriving. International crime syndicates

	<p>exploit government weaknesses to make huge profits. Illegal migration and money laundering rob the state of valuable human and material resources, in a region that desperately needs them.</p> <p>A different kind of challenge is posed by insurgencies that thrive as a result of the inequalities created by globalisation. The “development dichotomy” explains why dramatic national-level progress in India has gone hand in hand with an ever greater gap between the prosperity of urban, middle-class Indians and the squalor still seen in many of its 600,000 villages where most Indians live. Uprooted from ancestral lands and unable to adapt to the demands of a modern economy, aboriginal populations (Adivasis) often see revolutionary redemption as the only way out of their predicament.</p> <p>Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers, on the other hand, might well have been one of the most globalised terrorist movements anywhere. Part of the reason for their considerable, if ultimately transient, success was the effective way they relied on the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora both to obtain resources and to marshal political support for their cause.</p> <p>Jihadists have excelled at using modern IT and telecom technology to promote their cause and foster their objectives. Jihadis have perfected into an art form the international transfer of funds in ways that are essentially untraceable — through pieces of paper brought by hand by loyal messengers — which is one reason they remain at large.</p> <p>It remains to be seen whether the GFC has brought to an end globalisation as we have known it for three decades. But there is little doubt that the “dark side” of globalisation is here to stay.</p>
<p><b>Get science priorities right</b></p> <p><b>Sc &amp; Tech</b></p>	<p>When it comes to a skilled workforce India faces a huge supply-demand gap.</p> <p>A major reason is young people moving away from science at the tertiary level. The mushrooming of private and foreign players in an unregulated environment to impart education, much of it of poor quality, puts pressure on the government to step in and provide quality higher S&amp;T education that is affordable. This calls for measures to widen the human resource base and increase the average proficiency levels at the universities.</p> <p>While we do need more universities, the chief thrust should be towards strengthening the existing ones, both Central and State, in terms of infrastructure, finance, and autonomy so that the research and teaching environment gets invigorated to produce quality output. Modest external support for research in universities has already shown positive results: in the last three years, while India's research publications have grown annually at 12 per cent, university output has grown at 30 per cent. Unfortunately, the recent policy pronouncements of the Prime Minister as well as the S&amp;T Minister seemed to miss the point by addressing the peaks in scientific research rather than improving the average.</p> <p>Innovation is the new buzzword among Indian policymakers and scientocrats. Innovation cannot be bought or implanted. It will happen on its own once you have provided the right environment for research and education in institutions of higher learning.</p>

	<p>S&amp;T Minister announced that the government was working on the concept of creating 'Navratna' universities along the lines of Ivy League institutions. He also spoke of plans to set up 14 'Innovation' universities that would "set benchmarks in academics and ... compete with the best in the world in the context of problems of hunger, water, poverty, and diseases through cutting-edge science and technology."</p> <p>Rising India can certainly ivy-coat university buildings but that will not guarantee academic excellence and creativity. The Navratna public sector enterprises won that label in consequence of their hard work, solid achievement, and sustained growth; they were not labelled beforehand.</p> <p>Another official project is the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research to be established in association with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. This is basically conceived as a shortcut to produce hundreds of PhDs and post-doctoral fellows to meet the CSIR's needs. The real challenge is to initiate measures that will produce science and technology excellence in the university system. Diverting the CSIR from its mission of technology development into human resource development is likely to be to the detriment of universities.</p>
<p><b>Public diplomacy - the tasks ahead</b></p> <p><b>International relations</b></p>	<p>Public diplomacy is a web of mechanisms through which a country's foreign policy positions are transmitted to its target audiences. The term was first used by U.S. diplomat and scholar Edmund Guillion in 1965. He saw it as "dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy, the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries ..." Indian diplomats, however, rightly maintain that public diplomacy has to do with both foreign and domestic audiences. When you put out a story on television, blog or YouTube today, it is consumed by a university student in Bhopal as much as by a financial analyst in Toronto.</p> <p><b>Delhi conference:</b></p> <p>Recently the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) hosted, in collaboration with the CMS Academy, a two-day conference and workshop in Delhi to explore the challenges of "Public Diplomacy in the Information Age." It aimed at crafting a new understanding of how India could exploit the full potential of public diplomacy.</p> <p><b>Key conclusions:</b></p> <p>First, public diplomacy and "new public diplomacy" (which uses social media tools for reaching younger audiences) need to be situated in the post-Cold War context, where the importance of the medium has grown enormously.</p> <p>Second, the message nevertheless retains its significance: if it is not clear and credible, it will not get through. While "Incredible India" has been a great campaign, what we need now is to project a "credible India."</p> <p>Third, the link between public diplomacy and foreign policy formulation is inextricable. If policy is flawed, projection alone cannot help. Therefore, senior public diplomacy officials should have a seat on the policy-making table.</p> <p>Fourth, thinking about how to put across one's message has undergone a</p>



	<p>fundamental change. The advice now is to transcend government-to-public communication and, instead, focus on two-way communication, on “advancing conversations.” Public diplomacy is about listening and articulating. Beyond the traditional media, the cyber space sustains a “Republic of Internet” and a “Nation of Facebook” which cannot be ignored. Perhaps this perspective led the MEA to embark on a new journey last year, establishing an interactive website, a Twitter channel, a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, a BlogSpot page and a presence in online publishing sites like Scribd and Issuu.</p> <p>Fifth, management tools such as planning and evaluation are essential for devising and assessing the impact of public diplomacy strategies. They clearly form part of a continuing process, to be handled with transparency, integrity and professionalism.</p> <p>Finally, the concept of nation branding is highly relevant to the task of projecting India.</p> <p>India has a broader conception of public diplomacy encompassing all facets: media, cultural, educational, and economic and Diaspora diplomacy.</p> <p><b>Tasks ahead:</b></p> <p>Our ambassadors should be trained to become savvier at handling TV interviews. Our diplomats should rapidly acquire skills relating to Web 2.0 technology. The rising importance of non-state actors should be factored in fully.</p> <p>Finally, the striking disconnect between India's self-perception and the world's view should be addressed. Amidst unprecedented visits by leaders of all P-5 states within five months, our nation's attention was primarily focussed on internal concerns — scams, onion prices and excessive politics. Assuming we want India to become a truly Great Power, we, as a polity, must deepen interest in world affairs. The MEA would do well to use all its weaponry of public diplomacy to increase our awareness of the world and India's place in it. It must sustain its initiatives to project India's soft power.</p>
<p><b>Innovative agreement</b></p> <p><b>International relations</b></p>	<p>The recent cultural agreement between Italy and China, apart from its bilateral importance, has far reaching significance for the cultural policymakers and heritage enthusiasts worldwide.</p> <p>This first of its kind agreement allows China to have museum space in Rome and Italy likewise in Beijing. China has got about 600 square metres of space at the National Museum of Venezia Palace and a unique exhibition comparing the two empires — Roman, and Qui and Han dynasties — is currently open for viewing. This is a radical departure from the usual agreements which make provision for travelling exhibitions or loaning select cultural objects for a fixed period of time. When secure space without hurdles is provided, it is bound to encourage source countries to bring in more precious artefacts and offer a memorable experience in the host countries. Over the long term, free circulation of museum objects has the potential to reduce trafficking in antiquities, the third most pervasive criminal activity in the world.</p> <p>Indian policymakers struggling to improve the substandard exhibiting environment</p>

	<p>can creatively adopt the public-spirited Italy-China model. Countries with advanced museum experience can be invited to build their own space and showcase their precious heritage without having either to sacrifice social objectives or compromise the integrity of the institutions. As important, this approach will enable museum officials and designers to benefit from the most advanced international expertise.</p>
<p><b>The changing face of La Nina</b></p> <p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>La Nina and El Nino, come about when the waters of the eastern and central Pacific Ocean along the equator become unusually cold or warm. These changes in the Pacific produce swings in atmospheric pressure, winds, temperature, and rainfall that have a global impact.</p> <p>These coupled with changes in the ocean and atmosphere are collectively called the El Nino/Southern Oscillation (ENSO).</p> <p>For India, an El Nino is often a cause for concern because of its adverse impact on the south-west monsoon; this happened in 2009. A La Nina, on the other hand, is often beneficial for the monsoon, especially in the latter half. The La Nina that appeared in the Pacific in 2010 probably helped last year's south-west monsoon end on a favourable note.</p> <p>But then, it also contributed to the deluge in Australia, which resulted in one of that country's worst natural disasters with large parts of the north-east under water. It wreaked similar havoc in south-eastern Brazil and played a part in the heavy rains and consequent flooding that have affected Sri Lanka.</p> <p>It is becoming increasingly clear that global warming is contributing to the impact that ENSO has. The Indian Ocean is warming rapidly. There are already indications that this warming along with the growing temperature of the western Pacific is influencing the effect of a La Nina.</p> <p>A paper, titled 'The Perfect Ocean for Drought,' published in the journal 'Science' in 2003, linked the prolonged droughts from 1998 to 2002 that afflicted the United States, southern Europe, and south-west Asia to the warmth of these ocean waters during a protracted La Nina. Such heightened ocean temperatures may well have played a crucial part in weather-related events in recent months.</p> <p>While the La Nina that developed in mid-2010 lent a helping hand to the south-west monsoon, the warmth of the tropical Indian Ocean may have prevented a more equitable distribution of rainfall — eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and much of West Bengal received far too little of it.</p> <p>The warming of the Indian Ocean and western Pacific probably provided the extra moisture and energy for the exceptionally heavy rains that Australia and Sri Lanka experienced. It could be one reason why in India the north-east monsoon, which is usually retarded by a La Nina, has this time seen a surfeit of rain. The writing on the wall is clear enough: global warming will worsen the swings of climate variability brought about by factors like ENSO, making extreme weather events such as droughts and floods more frequent.</p>



<p><b>Meeting the health challenge</b></p> <p><b>Health</b></p>	<p>India has a staggering burden of chronic disease arising from a variety of causes, but there is encouraging evidence to show that it can reduce both death and disability through effective low-cost measures. The key to successful intervention lies in learning from good pilot programmes and making them integral to health-care protocols in both public and private sector institutions.</p> <p>In the next two decades, chronic diseases resulting from cardiovascular and metabolic disorders, respiratory conditions, mental illness, and cancer are expected to cast a long shadow over national ambitions for economic growth in terms of healthy life-years lost. The section of the population that is likely to suffer the most will be those over 45. They may find the threat of infectious and parasitic diseases reducing with better standards of living but the threat of chronic diseases will increase. This is because the incidence of hypertension, poor control of blood glucose, tobacco use, and abuse of alcohol is expected to rise. The imperative therefore is to scale up the pilot programmes that have shown good results at prevention.</p> <p>Last year the central government approved two key measures — the testing of adults for chronic diseases, and an awareness campaign on healthy behaviour — as part of an integrated national programme for prevention and control of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.</p> <p>A lot more needs to be done structurally to align policies with disease reduction goals.</p> <p>Regulation of unhealthy foods to reduce high calorie and salt content can mitigate the risk of diabetes and hypertension but this agenda is not making speed. Also, the unhealthy effects of energy-dense foods are compounded by negative changes in the urban environment. This experience shows that an assessment of the health effects of macroeconomic policies must be made mandatory.</p> <p>Achieving a drastic reduction in tobacco use must be made a national priority in the fight against cancer. The State health ministers, who met recently in Hyderabad, have done well to recognise the need to curb both smoking and smokeless forms of tobacco. But even with modified lifestyles, a medicalised approach to prevention will be needed.</p> <p>There are examples in this area to show that population-level testing for impaired blood glucose and hypertension, followed by a protocol of lifestyle modification and low-cost drug therapy, can stop disease progression. Given such clear evidence, the campaign against chronic disease must move into high gear.</p>
<p><b>Fighting persistent poverty</b></p> <p><b>Socio- economic</b></p>	<p>A global report card on poverty eradication prepared by the U.N. Secretary-General shows glaring disparities in performance both across and within regions. Economic growth is one evident reason for the progress in East Asia, particularly China, in reducing extreme poverty and raising living standards, in contrast to sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which continue to remain laggards.</p> <p>Yet, large sections of the world's population risk being left out. For instance, of the 900 million who are predicted to be in extreme poverty in 2015, India is expected to be home to more than 300 million, and sub-Saharan Africa would</p>

	<p>have more than a third of its population in poverty. Not to be forgotten, in the midst of the encouraging global data that point to a world largely on track to meet the Millennium Declaration's target of halving the proportion of people living on less than a dollar-a-day between 1990 and 2015, is that there is a large section that remains vulnerable. Applying the World Bank's \$2-a-day poverty line, for instance, would lead to a dramatic rise in the figures of the poor in developing countries.</p> <p>While income poverty is a crucial measure, eradicating poverty effectively requires methods that factor in multiple deprivations. Inadequate access to health care services and education are two important factors that work against the poor.</p> <p>The move by the United Nations Development Programme to introduce a multidimensional poverty index is a welcome intervention, as it seeks to fix the paradox of poverty despite rising incomes. That the incidence of multidimensional poverty is higher than that of income poverty in 60 per cent of the countries covered highlights the need for governments to put in place supportive systems.</p> <p>Of the three policy challenges — economic growth and development, social protection and social policy, and structural transformation — priority should be given to social protection policies, particularly in countries like India that are on a positive economic growth trajectory.</p> <p>Studies by International Labour Organisation in 12 Asian and sub-Saharan countries show that the initial gross annual cost of a basic social protection package would be between 2.2 per cent and 5.7 per cent of GDP, which should be a manageable level of spending. Creating and implementing a basic universal social protection floor will mark a new phase in the world's fight against persistent poverty.</p>
<p><b>Unique and almost 50 (The Elysée Treaty)</b></p> <p><b>International Relations</b></p>	<p><b>The Elysée Treaty</b></p> <p>Almost 50 years ago, in 1963, the Elysée Treaty chalked out the modalities of cooperation that remain the fundamental architecture of the Franco-German partnership.</p> <p>Franco-German Councils for economy and finance, defence and security, and the environment ensure the utmost consistency of national policies in the most important areas.</p> <p><b>European integration</b></p> <p>Faithful to the spirit of the 1950 Schuman Declaration, ever since 1963, France and Germany have been clearly directing their joint action “on the path of a united Europe.” Indeed, they share the belief that their common future fully forms part of that of a united Europe. Together, France and Germany have given an impetus to major progress achieved in the construction of Europe: political integration, creation of the Euro, the Schengen space, or the expansion of the European Union to include Central and East Europe in the post-Cold War period, enabling the constitution of the second largest democratic bloc after India, with 50 crore inhabitants, and the top global economy.</p> <p>Germany and France are aware of exercising a joint historic responsibility in the</p>

	<p>service of Europe. Their ambition is to continue being proactive leaders likely to draw partners, without imposing themselves. France and Germany may never agree on each and every thing, and their legitimate interests may diverge or be in competition with each other. But none of this can undermine their common will to build a more secure and more prosperous future together, along with their European partners.</p> <p><b>Germany, France and India</b></p> <p>Germany and France are each, in their own way, historic partners of India. Both countries have always been fascinated by the Indian civilisation, as attested to by our works on Indology, which remain global references. Max Müller and Sylvain Levy are household names in India today.</p> <p>At the political level, Berlin and Paris have each chosen a strategic partnership with India, aware that the latter will increasingly emerge as a hub of stability, security and development in its regional environment and the world. Hence, we unreservedly support India's candidature for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. Not only they do not conceive the reform of the Council without the accession of the largest democracy of the world on a permanent basis, but they also wish that such reform takes place at the earliest.</p> <p>The Franco-German partnership also aims to be reflected in India's economic development. The major European industrial and technological achievements, all results of Franco-German initiatives, nurture the ambition of becoming privileged partners of Indian operators in key sectors, such as aeronautics, with Airbus, Eurocopter or Arianespace. The third generation EPR nuclear reactor, which India intends to be equipped with and which, in the long term will provide it with one-sixth of the installed capacity planned for 2030, in safety conditions provided by the latest technological progress, is also the fruit of close cooperation between Germany and France.</p> <p>Lastly, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the new ambitions and the new instruments with which the European Union is now equipped are to be placed in the service of a deepened partnership with India. The EU-India Summit, held on December 10, 2010, opened new vistas for enhanced cooperation in areas of security, such as counter-terrorism or anti-piracy.</p> <p>The simultaneous presence of these three countries at the Security Council, post India and Germany's elections for the 2011-2012 biennium, offers us a unique opportunity to promote our shared vision for a multilateral approach to major issues affecting international stability and security. Germany and France are prepared to put their unique partnership of almost 50 years at the service of their cooperation with India.</p>
<p><b>Reforming micro finance</b></p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p><b>T.H. Malegam committee on microfinance institutions</b></p> <p>The T.H. Malegam committee on microfinance institutions MFIs has made valuable suggestions that are contextually significant.</p> <p>With an estimated Rs.22,500 crore lent to nearly 2.7 crore borrowers, MFI sector seemed to have become a mainstream financial activity. Yet in a matter of</p>

months, the fortunes of the industry changed drastically. In Andhra Pradesh especially, there were complaints of usurious lending, coercive recovery procedures, and exploitation of the poor. It did not help the whole body of MFIs that a few of them suffered a serious image problem. Having converted themselves into “for profit” organisations, these institutions adopted a corporate model, declared huge dividends, and paid handsome salaries to their promoters and employees. The State government, through an ordinance, required all the MFIs to register with the district authorities and avoid coercive and multiple lending practices.

In one of its key recommendations, the Committee calls for the creation of a separate category of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) covering the microfinance sector, to be designated NBFC-MFI. The MFIs, which will be accorded “priority lending status,” should provide financial services predominantly to low income borrowers, making available small loans for short-terms and on an unsecured basis, mainly for income generating activities. The repayment schedules will be more frequent than those offered by banks.

Obviously, regulation of what has been largely an unregulated financial activity will succeed only if it is accompanied by clear guidelines that are easy to comply with. It is here that some critics find fault with the Committee report. For instance, the recommendation for a cap on interest rates for individual loans at 24 per cent, they say, is impractical and fails to take account of the ground realities of the business. Besides, a large part of the MFI loans have been for consumption purposes and therefore to ask these institutions to henceforth lend primarily for productive purposes might be unrealistic.

The suggestion for imputing greater transparency in the regime of lending charges is unexceptionable. Overall, there is no doubt that a vast majority of the MFIs would acquire greater credibility and benefit from the new regulations, very much like the deposit-taking NBFCs, which came under the purview of the RBI more than a decade ago.

**Way forward in India-Pakistan Relations**

A process of “uninterrupted and unintermittible dialogue” as the only way forward for our two countries. There is no alternative to structuring such a dialogue if we really are to effect a systemic transformation of the relationship.

**India and the world**

Many would argue that differences are so fundamental and intentions so hostile that to be tricked into talking without knowing where such talk would lead would amount to compromising vital security concerns, that it would jeopardise national interests and render diplomatic initiative hostage to a meandering dialogue from which there would be no escape.

There is also the other argument, that we have lived in simmering hostility for the last six decades and can do so indefinitely, best to let matters simmer while we get on with other things instead of engaging in fruitless exchange.

However there are three compelling reasons why India should pro-actively engage with Pakistan.

First, for the domestic reason that a tension-free relationship with Pakistan would help us consolidate our nationhood, the bonding adhesive of which is secularism.

Second, for the regional reason that regional terrorism can be effectively tackled only in cooperation with Pakistan and not in confrontation with it. Third, for the international reason that India will not be able to play its due role in international affairs so long as it is dragged down by its quarrels with Pakistan.

It is also in Pakistan's interest to seek accommodation with India for three counterpart reasons.

First, the Indian bogey has harmed rather than helped consolidate the nationhood of Pakistan.

Second, Pakistan is unable to become a full-fledged democracy and a sustained fast-growing economy owing to the disproportionate role assigned to alleged Indian hostility in the national affairs of the country.

And, third, on the international stage, Pakistan is one of the biggest countries in the world and instead of being the front-line in someone else's war perhaps deserves to come into its own as the frontline state in the pursuit of its own interests.

The essential elements to be structured into an “uninterrupted and uninterrupted” dialogue are as follows:

One, the venue must be such that neither India nor Pakistan can forestall the dialogue from taking place. Following the example of the supervision of the armistice in Korea at Panmunjom for more than half a century, such a venue might best be the Wagah-Attari border, where the table is laid across the border, so that the Pakistan delegation does not have to leave Pakistan to attend the dialogue and the Indians do not have to leave India to attend.

Two, as in the case of the talks at the Hotel Majestic in Paris which brought the U.S.-Vietnam war to an end, there must be a fixed periodicity at which the two sides shall necessarily meet. In the Hotel Majestic case, the two sides met every Thursday, whether or not they had anything to say to each other. Indeed, even through the worst of what were called the “Christmas bombings” — when more bombs were rained on Vietnam than by both sides in the Second World War — the Thursday meetings were not disrupted. In a similar manner, we need to inure the India-Pakistan dialogue from disruption of any kind in this manner.

Third, the dialogue must not be fractionated, as the Composite Dialogue has been, between different sets of interlocutors. As in the case of Hotel Majestic, where the U.S. side was led by Kissinger and the Vietnamese by Le Duc Tho (both won the Nobel prize), Ministerial-level statesmen should lead the two sides with their advisers perhaps changing, depending on the subject under discussion, but the two principal interlocutors remaining the same so that cross-segmental agreements can be reached enabling each side to gain on the swings what it feels it might have lost on the roundabouts. Thus, the holistic and integral nature of the dialogue will be preserved.

Fourth, instead of an agenda agreed in advance, which only leads to endless bickering over procedure, each side should be free to bring any two subjects of its choice on the table by giving due notice at the previous meeting and, perhaps, one mutually agreed subject could thereafter be addressed by both sides.

Fifth, half an hour should be set aside for each side to bring its topical concerns to the attention of the side. This will persuade the general public in both countries

	<p>that the dialogue is not an exercise in appeasement.</p> <p>Sixth, there should be no timeline for the conclusion of the Dialogue. This will enable both sides to come to considered, and therefore, durable conclusions without either feeling they have been rushed to a conclusion against their better judgment.</p> <p>Seventh, and finally, as diplomacy requires confidentiality, there will, of course, have to be some opaqueness in the talks; at the same time, we cannot afford to swing the other way and bring in total transparency; so, what I would suggest is a translucent process where spokespersons of the two sides regularly brief the media but without getting into public spats with each other. Dignity and good will must be preserved to bridge the trust deficit.</p> <p>There is no guarantee that such a dialogue will lead to success, but it is guaranteed that not talking will lead us nowhere.</p>
<p><b>Somalia pirates</b></p>	<p>Somali pirates are fast becoming “the masters of the Indian Ocean,” with foreign navies forced by legal constraints to release nine out of every 10 they detain, according to a U.N. envoy.</p> <p>Jack Lang, the U.N.'s top legal adviser on maritime piracy, has told the Security Council that special courts should be urgently established in northern Somalia and Tanzania to try suspected Somali hijackers and break the present cycle of impunity. Currently there are very few countries that are prepared to hold and prosecute captured pirates, while lawlessness in the main part of Somalia makes trials there almost next to impossible.</p> <p>The navies' “catch and release” policy is one reason attacks on ships off the Horn of Africa reached record levels last year despite the presence of several dozen foreign warships.</p> <p><b>Ransom paid in 2010</b></p> <p>At least 49 vessels were hijacked off Somalia in 2010 according to the International Maritime Bureau, with 1,016 foreign sailors taken hostage. Individual ransom payments routinely run into millions of dollars, while crew members are being detained for ever longer periods, sometimes up to a year.</p> <p><b>Situation is worsening</b></p> <p>After two days aboard, the pirates managed to break into the ship's control room and steer the 132-metre vessel west towards the Somali coast, the firm said.</p> <p>Noting that the pirates had also dramatically increased their range — up to 1,600km east of Somalia and as far south as the Mozambique channel — Lang admitted the situation was “worsening” and the pirates were winning.</p> <p>These are 1,500 people [pirates] who are defying the world, defying the U.N. We must act now, quickly and firmly.</p> <p>Countries such as Kenya have previously held Somalis captured by foreign navies</p>



	<p>and placed them on trial. But with its legal system already overloaded, the government is reluctant to take any more, and all piracy cases are on hold anyway after a Kenyan judge ruled the country had no jurisdiction to try them.</p>
<p><b>Reviving Wetlands</b></p> <p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p>The notification of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 has provided a legal framework for protecting an ecosystem that has come under serious threat from unregulated development activity.</p> <p>Wetlands provide a range of ecosystem services, not the least of which is water security to vast regions housing millions of people. If cities depend on them as reservoirs and flood control systems, rural communities derive basic sustenance from these marvels of nature.</p> <p>It is welcome, therefore, that the rules prohibit some of the more destructive activities that have wiped out a large number of wetlands in several States. Inland and coastal wetlands have been lost over the years due to reclamation, conversion to industrial use, dumping of solid waste, discharge of untreated sewage from cities and towns and effluents from industries, and encroachment for construction. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has acted commendably to stop this tragic course.</p> <p>But the conservation effort can succeed only if the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority created under the new rules has sufficient independence to work with the State governments and local authorities to identify and protect water bodies. Also, it is important to allay, through vigorous action, the apprehension among research scientists that the Authority may not have the freedom to pursue its mandate considering that the Secretary in the same Ministry heads it.</p> <p>A good beginning has been made by extending the rules to, among others, 25 wetland sites listed under the Ramsar Convention. Some of them are also covered by other environmental protection laws pertaining to forests and wildlife. In addition to the biodiversity-rich Ramsar sites, there are several less-known wetlands in India that have been documented by the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History. All of these are demonstrably important to local communities and potentially qualify for protected status.</p> <p>The real test for the new rules lies in the ability of the Authority to monitor the actions of the nodal department in the States, which will be responsible for enforcement. These departmental personnel must ensure the health of wetlands that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Forest department.</p> <p>There is a growing community of environmentalists who are keenly documenting the state of water bodies. All that the Authority has to do is to enlist these community conservationists as its voluntary field workers to maintain the vigil. State governments and local bodies, which are now on deadline to end the disposal of waste and effluents into wetlands, must move with alacrity to enforce the rules.</p>
<p><b>Ocean warming, Bay of Bengal cyclones</b></p> <p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p>While global warming has resulted in increasing sea-surface temperatures and fears that there will be an increase in frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones, it has been found that atmospheric factors also play an important role. Studies have shown that apart from ocean warming, atmospheric parameters like</p>

decreasing vertical wind shear have given rise to the increasing frequency and intensity of tropical Atlantic Ocean cyclones.

As far as the Bay of Bengal is concerned, a recent study by National Institute of Oceanography, Goa, clearly indicates that warm sea surface temperatures alone are not sufficient for the initiation of convective systems over the Bay of Bengal.

Other environmental parameters, such as the low-level relative vorticity (the rotational flow of winds), the mid-tropospheric relative humidity (the troposphere extends from sea-level to an altitude of 15 Km) and the vertical wind shear (the resultant of mutually opposing winds — one, at 1.5km above sea level and the other, at 12 km above sea level), also play an equally important role in their genesis and intensification. While high values of mid-tropospheric relative humidity and low-level relative vorticity are conducive to cyclone formation, a high value of vertical wind shear has the opposite effect.

In order to focus on the effects of global warming the study period was divided into two parts — 1951-1978 (epoch I) and 1979-2007 (epoch II) and the frequency and intensity of cyclones which formed in the Bay of Bengal were examined statistically. Bay of Bengal was chosen because of the higher frequency of convective systems forming in that region.

In the study, it was found that mid-tropospheric relative humidity and relative vorticity were decreasing throughout epoch II and were therefore not conducive for cyclone formation. It was found that there is no direct relationship between the intensity of storms or severe cyclonic storms with the sea surface temperatures over the Bay of Bengal.

The frequency of storms and severe storms in the two epochs were considered. It was seen that the number of storms and severe storms have decreased largely in the second epoch over the Bay of Bengal. Though the sea surface temperatures were higher in the second epoch, the number of storms decreased in the second epoch leading to the conclusion that “Rising sea-surface temperatures alone cannot give rise to cyclones over the Bay of Bengal. If that were so, we would be having a cyclone every other day, given the present rate of global warming. The atmosphere plays an equally important role.”

**Engaging India's far east  
PIF**

#### **Pacific Islands Forum**

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is an active political grouping of 16 independent and self-governing states, representing about 32 million people. Its motto is 'Excelling Together for the People of the Pacific.' These states treasure the diversity, especially of cultures, traditions and religious beliefs. They aim to provide good governance and sustainable development, seeking partnerships “with neighbours and beyond” in order to develop their knowledge, improve communications and ensure a sustainable economic existence.

#### **Key challenges**

Island countries face similar challenges of socio-economic development as developing countries elsewhere, but their priorities seem to be different. Climate change, power supply, connectivity for travel and communication, maritime

	<p>security and human resource development figure among the major concerns.</p> <p>A recent PIF communiqué highlights climate change as “the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific.” In calling upon the world to sign a post-Kyoto agreement, it pleads that the problem should be seen “in the longer term sustainability of economies, societies and peoples the world over.”</p> <p>Energy is a key priority as these islands are located far from known sources of oil and gas. They are unable to contemplate the use of nuclear energy. The real choice, therefore, revolves around the renewables — solar and wind energy, for which they need more assistance. Development of small industry, telephony, and better use of information technology can speed up development and reduce marginalisation.</p> <p><b>The Indian angle</b></p> <p>India needs to craft a comprehensive long-term strategy on development cooperation with the region, keeping in view the geo-political trends. Further, it should show greater generosity. Emulating the model devised for cooperation with Africa, a respectable sum, say \$50 million, should be set aside for development projects in the Pacific region. A composite study mission could be sent to the area to develop a blueprint and to recommend an allocation of resources after examining felt needs and the absorption capacity of the countries concerned.</p> <p>Interaction needs to be intensified through all channels — bilateral, regional and multilateral. In particular, India's relations with the PIF Secretariat could be expanded. The situation in the Pacific should be given greater prominence on the agenda for our dialogue with Australia and New Zealand.</p> <p>The region is important to us not only in the context of the United Nations, but also in terms of China. Beijing has been active in several Indian Ocean countries closer to our shores. India must expand its horizons and become assertive in promoting the Pacific region's interests as well as its own.</p>
<p><b>A new protocol IPv6</b></p> <p><b>Sc &amp; Tech</b></p>	<p>The Internet is running out of addresses in the numerical format. The last blocks of addresses under the IPv4 or Internet Protocol version 4 system have now been allocated to different regional registries around the world.</p> <p>The IPv4 system provides for a massive 4.3 billion numerical combinations but strong growth in communications in many countries has depleted the stock. A numerical address on the Internet is required in order to be ‘found’ (as in the case of real property). The alphabetical web addresses of familiar sites such as Google or Facebook have a numerical sequence behind them, which is read by computers. The IPv4 combinations that remain, which number only in the millions, will be exhausted soon, badly affecting Internet expansion.</p> <p>The next version of the protocol, IPv6, has the capability of providing trillions of addresses, which can comfortably meet rising demand created by an explosion of connected devices such as smartphones. Already, more than two trillion addresses have been made available to network providers by the Internet Assigned Numbers</p>

	<p>Authority.</p> <p>India, which has been alert to the issue of exhaustion of IPv4 addresses, is pursuing a National IPv6 Deployment Road Map, with a 2012 deadline for central and State government departments and public sector units to become compatible.</p> <p>Some of the Internet service providers have also been working to incorporate the new protocol in anticipation of a dry-out of IPv4 addresses.</p> <p>A strong partnership between the government and other stakeholders will ensure that there are no islands of incompatible networks. There will be no ‘switching off’ of existing operations: they will remain live while the new protocol will cater to growth needs.</p> <p>Moreover, the economic importance of the Internet has encouraged major commercial entities to work for IPv6 compatibility.</p>
<p><b>Let us join hands to fight cancer</b></p> <p><b>Health</b></p>	<p>The World Health Organization projects that unless immediate action is taken, deaths from cancer will increase by nearly 80 per cent by 2030; most of them occurring in low and middle income countries. That translates to nearly 260 lakh newly diagnosed cases and about 170 lakh deaths every year! In fact, cancer kills more people than do AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.</p> <p>There are so many known causes acting directly or indirectly on the systems to produce cancer. Many of them are related to “lifestyle” and avoiding these can prevent or protect against cancer.</p> <p>Measures to prevent cancer include eschewing tobacco, having good dietary habits, physical activity, maintaining a healthy diet, environmental health, prevention of cancer causing infections and limiting alcohol intake.</p> <p><b>Tobacco</b></p> <p>Many people relate tobacco to cardiac and respiratory diseases. But beyond that, smoking is the single biggest cause of cancer in the world.</p> <p><b>Diet</b></p> <p>This is a factor that concerns everyone. Diet plays a significant role in the prevention of certain cancers, not necessarily in the Gastro-Intestinal system.</p> <p>A “Healthy Diet” can prevent many cancers, more so if it is combined with physical activity.</p> <p><b>Cancer-causing infections</b></p> <p>An estimated 22 per cent of cancer deaths in the developing world and six per cent of deaths in industrialised countries are related to cancer-causing infections.</p> <p>Significant among these are Human Papilloma Virus causing cancer of the cervix and Hepatitis B and C causing liver cancer.</p>

	<p><b>Environmental carcinogens</b></p> <p>Environmental factors do play a role in certain cancers; poor air quality indoors and chemical pollutants can cause lung cancer. Similarly, food chemicals can be responsible for gastro-intestinal cancers.</p> <p><b>Indian scenario</b></p> <p>As per results published by the Tumour Registry, in men, lung cancer tops the list followed by cancers of the stomach, oral cavity, oesophagus and oro-pharynx.</p> <p>In women, breast cancer leads, followed by cancer of the cervix, ovary, oral cavity and stomach.</p> <p>Of these “Tobacco Related Cancers” — namely cancers of the oral cavity, oro-pharynx, larynx, lung, oesophagus, pancreas and urinary bladder — constitute 44 per cent of all cancers in men and 16 per cent in women.</p> <p><b>What is being done ?</b></p> <p>The Union for International Cancer Control is aiming for a “World Cancer Declaration”. The declaration outlines 11 targets to be achieved by 2020, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Significant drop in global tobacco consumption, obesity and alcohol intake</li> <li>— Universal vaccination programmes for Hepatitis B and Human Papilloma Virus to prevent liver and cervical cancer</li> <li>— Universal availability of effective pain medication and</li> <li>— Dispelling myths and misconceptions about cancer</li> </ul> <p>Every year February 4 is observed with a focus and for 2011 it is “teach children and teenagers to avoid UV exposure by being “Sun Smart.”</p> <p><b>What do we have to do?</b></p> <p>The major task before the health authorities is to create awareness, dispel myths and misconceptions and provide the best advice to people on healthy lifestyle, eating habits and the need for exercise. More importantly, people should not “ignore the symptoms” and must consult a doctor to get the appropriate treatment without delay. All of us can play a role to create a cancer-free world. You need not to be a doctor to spread this message. Let us all join hands to fight against cancer.</p>
<p><b>Development Environment</b></p> <p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p><b>Vs</b></p> <p>The apprehension that enforcement of environmental regulatory standards should not lead to a throwback to the days of the licence-permit raj strikes a jarring note in an era of enlightened, science-based conservation. Projecting regulation as a threat to economic development brings needless pressure on the efforts to bring accountability and transparency to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).</p> <p>The MoEF now has the difficult task of introducing greater scientific rigour in environment impact assessment(EIA) of projects.</p>

	<p>The MoEF is seeking expert counsel, holding public hearings, and publishing committee reports. This refreshing approach also serves a public education function.</p> <p>The priority should be to make the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 effective; a weak EIA regime can do much harm. The Ministry's committee on the Posco project in Orissa, for instance, recorded "serious lapses and illegalities" in EIA and the majority of members recommended revocation of clearance granted in 2007 for a minor port and steel plant. That the Ministry had to subsequently ignore the report and conditionally clear the project is a measure of the pressure it faces.</p> <p>In recent times, the Forest Rights Act has joined the list of progressive laws protecting the rights of people, and forests. Political India needs to learn the virtues of good environmental governance, which limits exploitation of natural resources to sustainable levels.</p>
<p><b>Growth Vs Environment</b></p> <p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p>The universal drive for higher incomes in the face of mounting environmental destruction has heightened the expressed tension between fast growth and environmental protection. The perception of a trade-off between the two goals rests on the view often held — wrongly — that environmental protection, not environmental degradation, is the obstacle to rapid growth. The reality, however, is that it will not be possible to sustain high growth in the coming years without environmental care.</p> <p>Interlinked</p> <p>The reason is that we are facing a twin crisis — economic and environmental — and the two are highly interlinked. The spike in food prices pressures on production that are exacerbated by the deleterious effects of environmental devastation and climate change. While some may set aside the global risks of climate change as being distant, recent extreme weather events point to changes that may already be upon us.</p> <p>Sustained growth has been the most powerful means to reduce poverty, especially in China, India and elsewhere in Asia. China's growth averaged 10 per cent yearly for the past 25 years, lifting some 400 million people out of poverty.</p> <p>Climate change presents the greatest threat to sustaining high growth. In the past 100 years, the world economy expanded sevenfold, the global population increased from 1.6 billion to 6.5 billion and the world lost half of its tropical forests. Consequently, atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are now 385 parts per million (ppm) and rising fast. This is close to the 450 ppm threshold beyond which it may be impossible to achieve the Cancun-agreed goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2° Celsius.</p> <p><b>Natural disasters on the rise</b></p> <p>National economies are already seeing the effects of climate on local agriculture. Natural disasters are on the rise: remarkably it is the hydro-meteorological events, not the geological ones that have shot up, suggesting the ominous link to global warming. The proximate reason for the doubling of wheat prices over the past</p>



	<p>year is the collapse of production in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere linked to unprecedented heat waves and floods.</p> <p>The economic costs, including the losses caused by air pollution, water contamination and solid wastes as well as deforestation are estimated to amount to some three per cent of GNP in China as well as India, Argentina, Turkey and elsewhere. Strikingly, prevention is often far cheaper than cure — whether it's curbing industrial pollution, arresting deforestation or reinforcing structures in disaster-prone areas.</p> <p><b>Why then don't governments and businesses universally favour environmental safeguards?</b></p> <p>One reason is that when it comes to the global aspects, no country, rich or poor, has the economic motivation or the political will to confront them alone.</p> <p>Second, the split between what's good for society and what drives private interest is perpetuated as many policy and business leaders still do not view the environment as integral to the growth agenda.</p> <p>Third, policy often worsens the situation by encouraging the waste of natural resources.</p> <p>Growth models are silent on subsidies purportedly used to speed growth — subsidies to fossil fuels of \$650 billion a year worldwide — that encourage energy intensity, emissions and waste. Cutting these subsidies would increase economic efficiency and improve the prospects for growth.</p> <p>If high growth is to continue — be it in Brazil, China, India, or elsewhere — we need to understand that environmental protection does not hamper economic growth. Economics can be highly influential in this respect. But mainstream economics must reverse its past advice and indicate that the drive for higher incomes can succeed only by including — not excluding — environmental care in growth policies</p>
<p><b>The public and issues of science</b></p> <p><b>Sc &amp; Tech</b></p>	<p>Science and technology are now more important for the development of a country than ever before. Increasingly, however, the public seems to be suspicious of scientists' work.</p> <p>On January 27, 2011, the Dutch public's agenda on nanotechnologies, titled "Responsibly forward with nanotechnologies," was presented to Joop Atsma, State Secretary of Infrastructure and Environment, Government of The Netherlands. In this public's agenda, the people of The Netherlands speak out about their priorities for nanotechnologies research and development: what to do and what not to do, what do they fear and what do they hope for, how to balance the risks and the benefits? This public's agenda resulted from the Societal Dialogue on Nanotechnologies, held between January and November 2010.</p> <p>Nano science and technology deal with the very small: building blocks smaller than one millionth of a metre are used for new materials and instruments. Several products in the market such as sunscreens, anti-bacterial surfaces, automobile tyres, and some anti-cancer drugs already incorporate them. The promised</p>

benefits are large, and there is no field of science and technology that does not have potential applications of nanotechnologies (hence the use of the word here in the plural).

But there are possible hazards, too. Scientific evidence points to toxicological risks. Nanoparticles of gold and silver seem to be seriously toxic, while gold and silver as bulk materials are inert and safe. This is worrying: there is scientific evidence of toxicity, but not yet absolute scientific certainty about that nanotoxicity. Unlike in the cases of asbestos or radioactive radiation, where we have absolute scientific certainty about the risks, nano-scientists do not yet have the complete story on nano-risks. But we know enough to be worried about the application of especially synthetic nanoparticles.

The most striking result of the Dutch Societal Dialogue on Nanotechnology is that now, after the dialogue, the general public in The Netherlands is more aware of the risks of nanotechnologies, and at the same time more supportive of the further development of nanotechnology.

The standard views about the “public’s understanding of science” and the need for better “risk communication” are that the general public does not understand science and technology sufficiently to appreciate its benefits, and that because of this lack of knowledge it irrationally fears new science. We now know, however, that the Dutch people are more fearful of a government that hides the potential risks of nanotechnologies than of those risks themselves — when monitored and researched well.

Parallel to the process of the dialogue, the knowledge and opinions of a representative sample of the Dutch population was surveyed. “Having heard of nanotechnologies” increased during the societal dialogue from 54 per cent to 64 per cent of the Dutch population. An analysis of the process brings the committee to conclude that it was especially the heterogeneity of means that proved successful. Rather than a naïve belief in the Internet as a “global panchayat,” the committee used a combination of small-scale but specifically targeted activities, with large-scale broadcasting and publishing via TV, printed media, and the Internet.

This dialogue thus yielded an interesting result that is potentially farther reaching in terms of its societal importance than the regulatory governance of nanotechnologies. A decade ago, the Dutch people opposed GM foods. Most analysts agree that this resulted from a public debate that many perceived as biased towards the pro-GM lobby. In contrast, the Dutch people are now in favour of cautiously proceeding with nanotechnologies, while recognising its risks. The general attitude certainly is not anti-science; but the public is not prepared, as in the 1950s, to give scientists a blank cheque either. Instead, a continuous critical appraisal of the risks and the benefits of science seems to be called for: a new form of democratic risk governance.

The mechanisms to provide such a risk governance of science and technology are not readily available. The Societal Dialogue is just one example. Countries need to experiment with such innovations of democracy, as much as scientists experiment with the new technologies that shape our world.

<p><b>Behind the S-Band spectrum scandal</b></p> <p><b>National</b></p>	<p>Indian Space Research Organisation's deal — hatched in secret and sought to be covered up over a period of six years — to launch two customer-specific satellites gave away 70 MHz of high-value S-band for unfettered commercial exploitation at a scandalously low price of just over Rs 1000 crore to a private company, Devas Multimedia Private Limited.</p> <p>The agreement relates to two customer-specific satellites, GSat-6 and GSat 6-A, which ISRO is contractually committed to design, build, and launch in order to make available to Devas the S-band spectrum for commercialising a range of multimedia, broadband services across India.</p> <p>As mobile voice and data traffic increases, wireless operators around the world will require additional spectrum. However, as a finite public commodity, few bands remain available for new allocation to mobile wireless services and even fewer exist for global harmonisation of wireless spectrum assets. The 2.6 GHz band is one exception. The 2.6 GHz band (2500-2690 MHz), sometimes also referred as the 2.5 GHz band, was allocated by the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) in 2000 for terrestrial mobile communications services. The band provides an opportunity to meet rapidly rising demand for capacity to deliver mobile broadband services on a widespread, common basis across the world.</p> <p>According to a preliminary estimate by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, whose search for the relevant documents within the Department of Space has been actively obstructed, the presumptive loss of revenue to the government in the event of the Antrix-Devas deal going through now would exceed two lakh crore rupees (approximately \$4.4 billion).</p> <p>ISRO failed “explicitly” to inform the Union Cabinet that GSat-6 and GSat-6A were customer-specific satellites that would be predominantly used for a novel and commercial application developed by Devas Multimedia in association with global experts.</p> <p>Among the concerns registered by the CAG in its process of enquiry were the following: S-band spectrum was being given away without inviting competitive bids; organisational control systems were not followed; the Prime Minister's Office, the Cabinet, and the Space Commission were not properly informed about the contract details; public resources were being diverted to building two customer-specific satellites; and the contract terms deviated from the terms of previous contracts entered into by ISRO and Antrix.</p> <p>The deal has been annuled .</p>
<p><b>Acting on nutritional needs</b></p> <p><b>International/Health</b></p>	<p>Nearly one-sixth of the people in our world are affected by chronic hunger. At any time, around a quarter of all children suffer from under-nutrition. Not only are they more likely to die, but also they do less well in school and, later in life, earn less than those who were well nourished. Proper feeding during the period from conception to a child's second birthday is critical.</p> <p>Such evidence on the impact of under-nutrition on the long term prospects of children is compelling.</p> <p>There is a widespread recognition that we have a series of well-tested and low-cost interventions to address under-nutrition.</p>

	<p>In September, 2010, in New York, a movement to support national efforts to Scale Up Nutrition (SUN) was launched. World leaders — including U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Ministers from developing and industrialised countries, leaders of development organisations, European Commissioners — committed to action and results within 1,000 days — by July 2013.</p> <p>Under SUN, each country will address the challenge differently. There is no single prescription or top-down control. But outside support, where offered, must be responsive to what countries need, and it must be properly coordinated.</p> <p>The SUN movement has gathered momentum. It is starting to support action in countries, coordinate regional and global support functions, and stimulate financial support. It helps bring different professional groups together with a single purpose. It will enable hundreds of stakeholders to work together for measurable results within 1,000 days. And results are what SUN is about: helping mothers and children access the nutrition they need for a productive life.</p> <p>Effective results require the SUN movement to get to the roots of the problem of under-nutrition. In many places, agriculture and food policies are not designed to enable all people to get the balance of nutrients that they need. Women and children from households with low incomes may only be able to access some nutrients for some months each year. Women need year-round access to nutritious food, the time to feed and care for themselves in pregnancy and their small children when they are young. They need better access to water, sanitation and basic healthcare so that disease rates are reduced. Then they will be able to reduce stunting and improve micronutrient levels in their newborns and children under two.</p> <p>This is why the SUN movement focuses on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, food systems, safety nets and employment policies. The priority needs to be on women's working conditions and on their access to basic water, sanitation and health services.</p> <p>With science, self-confidence and synergy the SUN movement should make a real contribution to the sort of agricultural transformation that is needed to tackle under-nutrition. This transformation will require political leadership, an openness to bring in expertise from a variety of areas, and a systematic approach to ensuring that real progress is being made and can be sustained. This will involve a wide range of actors: from farmers, civil society organisations to financiers, government and — most importantly — the very people who need support.</p> <p>This week's groundbreaking event in New Delhi will add momentum to the SUN movement and help us all reach the elusive Millennium Development Goal of reducing hunger and under-nutrition by 2015.</p>
<p><b>An integrated resource policy</b></p> <p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p>A high-power committee headed by Ashok Chawla has been constituted to look into the pricing, allocation and utilisation of natural resources.</p> <p>The recent cases of illegal mining and corruption, undervaluation of 2G spectrum and its allocation, pricing of natural gas, and the potential of shale gas have</p>

prompted this exercise. Here is an opportunity, however, to put in place an integrated development and regulatory policy for natural resources development rather than opt for a limited agenda.

Several factors make the need for an integrated policy compelling.

One, the rising prices and economic rents these resources generate require a revisiting of how the rent is appropriated, and of the arrangements and business models we have to allocate resources and share the rents between the developer and the state.

Two, the resource and capacity needs of the constituent resource rich States need to be assessed. For, key resources such as oil, natural gas, minerals, coal and hydropower are owned by the States and controlled by the Centre.

Three, the strategic aspects of coal, oil, base metals, and rare earth metals need a longer term perspective on their development and utilisation.

Four, the often adverse environmental implications of development call for a context-specific, informed and inclusive debate on weak and strong sustainability criteria.

Five, the social impact that their development creates, in the absence of a focussed attention on a more people-oriented resources policy, will result in inequitable and unfair outcomes and, increasingly, a reduced social licence to operate.

Six, oil, gas, coal and minerals are exhaustible resources. Developing them today means we forgo the opportunity of developing them in future. It is important to ensure that some of the revenues earned from such development are put into intergenerational funds so that they generate income streams in perpetuity, as does the Government Pension Fund of Norway that is built on a share of its petroleum revenues, and invests the proceeds in income generating activities. A fiscal rule then determines what can be appropriated for budgetary purposes.

Given that resources in India occur in rich terrestrial or marine environments — and onshore resources in the midst of dense habitations — and that we are still in the early stages of their development, there is a strong case for an integrated resources policy.

### **Resource federalism**

We should focus on strengthening the institutions of resource federalism as we put in place more and more independent regulators which tend to centralise power at the Centre. Resource federalism was not an issue in the earlier phases of resource development, in that federal arrangements did not constrain the Centre's statist and centrist approach to it.

However, economic reform and coalition politics are leading to new demands from the States. As the Centre seeks to accommodate them through a greater devolution of revenues and control, there is need to strengthen the institutions of oversight and rule enforcement, which involve all three levels of government.

<p><b>Battle lines over encryption</b></p> <p><b>(Cyber crime)</b></p> <p><b>Social</b></p>	<p>The draft “Information Technology (Due Diligence observed by intermediaries guidelines) Rules, 2011 circulated by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology on February 10, 2011, address the issue of the liability of internet service providers (ISPs) and other intermediaries, an issue which achieved public notoriety through the Baazee.com case in 2004. In one master stroke, the Draft Rules settle the dispute raging over the last year, regarding the use of encryption techniques by the customers of BlackBerry, Google, Skype and MSN. Yet, while doing so, the Draft Rules also reveal the fundamental shortcomings of the IT Act even after the 2008 amendments.</p> <p>The question is whether ISPs should be treated in the same manner as newspapers or magazines publishing content and, therefore, made potentially liable for copyright infringement, defamation, obscenity and other civil/criminal liability, or as telephone companies which are not liable for the content of the communications they transmit.</p> <p>The view in the U.S. has been that an ISP is a passive service provider much like a telephone company and cannot be held liable for the content transmitted through its server. This legal position changed in the U.S. with the passage of the Digital Millenium Copyright Act (DMCA), which provided a “safe harbour” for ISPs, conferring exemption from copyright liability. However, the exemption is subject to the ISP meeting certain conditions. The ISP must not have the actual knowledge that the material is infringing, must not be aware of the facts and circumstances from which the infringing activity is apparent and, in the event of having such knowledge, must act expeditiously to disable such material. In order to avail himself of the exemption from liability, the service provider must also not receive a financial benefit directly attributable to the infringing activity.</p> <p>The legal position in India is similar to the DMCA in that the exemption from liability is not absolute but is subject to meeting certain conditions. Following the 2008 amendments, Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000 provides that an intermediary will not be held liable for any third party information, data or communication link made available or hosted by him. However, this exemption will apply only if the following conditions are met.</p> <p>First, the function of the intermediary must be limited to providing access to a communication system over which information made available by third parties is transmitted or temporarily stored or hosted.</p> <p>Second, the intermediary does not initiate the transmission, select the receiver or select/modify the information contained in the transmission. In other words, the ISP acts like a telephone company and not like a newspaper editor who can select or edit the information provided. The exemption will also not be applicable if the ISP has conspired, aided, abetted or induced the commission of the unlawful act; or upon receiving actual knowledge that any information, data or communication link residing in or connected to a computer resource controlled by the intermediary is being used to commit the unlawful act, the intermediary fails to expeditiously remove or disable access to that material.</p> <p>The last two conditions are similar to those imposed under the DMCA in the U.S.</p> <p>Sub-rule (2) of the Draft Rules lists the types of infringing information which should not be transmitted by the intermediary, including information which is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) abusive, blasphemous, obscene, vulgar etc.,</li> <li>2) infringing of IPRs,</li> </ol>
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	<p>3) sensitive personal information, and 4) information which threatens the unity, security or sovereignty of India</p> <p>The list of the offences which are the instruments of modern cyber crime includes any information which impersonates another person, that is, identity theft and deceiving or misleading the addressee about the origin of electronic messages more commonly known as phishing.</p> <p>However, this list comprising identity theft and phishing is entirely inadequate as these are only a few methods of modern cyber crime/war.</p> <p>The list ignores, for example, the installation of a program which allows an attacker to remotely control the targeted computer otherwise known as “BOTNETS.” Another common tool of cyber crime is the use of a software program or a device designed to secretly monitor and log all keystrokes otherwise known as “keyloggers.”</p> <p>The Draft Rules also introduce a definition of “cyber security incident” as any real or suspected adverse event in relation to cyber security that violates an explicitly or implicitly applicable security policy resulting in unauthorised access, denial of service or disruption, unauthorised use of a computer resource for processing or storage of information or changes to data, information without authorisation.</p> <p>There is a fundamental lacuna in the IT Act as it ignores the concepts of modern cyber war altogether and is limited to the outdated concerns of theft of software code through hacking.</p> <p>The Draft Rules incorporate the government's stand vis-à-vis BlackBerry into law because they require an intermediary to provide information to government agencies, which are lawfully authorised for investigative, protective, cyber security or intelligence activity. In sum, the Draft Rules provide the key to the back door long sought after by the government and leave no doubt that security concerns will prevail in law over the interest in privacy through use of encryption by civil society.</p>
<p><b>How not to tackle the black economy</b></p> <p><b>Economy/Essay</b></p>	<p>In the last 60 years, dozens of committees have studied various aspects of the black economy and given thousands of suggestions. Hundreds of these suggestions have been implemented but the size of the black economy has grown exponentially.</p> <p>Since 1971, when the highest tax rate was 97.5 per cent, tax rates have fallen but the black economy has grown from 7 per cent to 50 per cent of GDP. Controls and regulations have been drastically eliminated after 1991 but the size of black economy continues to rise. The causes of black income generation lie elsewhere. The recent rise in corporate tax collection is a reflection of rising disparity and not better compliance.</p> <p>Plugging loopholes has only made the laws more complex, as in the case of taxation. The ingenuity of the corrupt thwarts the enforcement agencies by either devising newer ways of circumventing the law or simply bribing the officials. In India, laws on paper and in practice differ because of the ‘Triad’ of the corrupt business class, the political class, and the executive who bend rules to their</p>

	<p>advantage.</p> <p>In brief, technically we know what needs to be done to check the black economy — but the problem is political. The top echelons of the leadership are the prime drivers of the black economy. They do not wish to forgo the massive illegal profits they generate. So how can the political will be generated?</p> <p>A voluntary disclosure scheme to bring back black savings stashed away abroad for 'development' is being considered. Wasn't the Mauritius route created to allow round tripping of funds? It has accelerated black income generation by facilitating it. A National Security Adviser alerted the nation to terror funds entering the stock markets to destabilise the financial markets.</p> <p>The Wanchoo Committee argued that this kind of scheme makes honest people dishonest. A report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on the 1997 voluntary disclosure scheme pointed out that the same people who declared their black incomes earlier took advantage of the 1997 scheme — becoming habitual tax offenders.</p> <p>The Supreme Court is going after the names of those spiriting away money abroad but not after the generation of the funds. The black incomes generated in the country are ten times the size of what is siphoned out. In the liberalised environment, those with black money stashed away abroad can turn into non-residents overnight and escape prosecution in India. Taxation treaties being entered into by the government with other governments are all about legal incomes traceable to known individuals. But black incomes are typically parked via shell companies and in benami accounts.</p> <p>What is needed is serious investigation and prosecution in the country that will also expose the money siphoned off abroad. Intelligence agencies provide the leadership with information through tapping and so on, which can be mined instead of being used for political blackmail. The prosecution agencies deliberately spoil cases for political reasons.</p> <p>In brief, the policy pronouncements are delaying and diversionary tactics to allow those generating black incomes to escape via shell companies and benami accounts. There were limited gains from earlier JPCs but will this time be different? It will be only if there is political will and action — and not more studies or treaties with foreign governments.</p>
<p><b>Arabs are democracy's new pioneers</b></p> <p><b>International</b></p>	<p>Uprisings spreading across north Africa and the Middle East are not just repetitions of the past but as original experiments that open new political possibilities, relevant well beyond the region, for freedom and democracy.</p> <p>Indeed, there is a hope that through this cycle of struggles the Arab world becomes for the next decade what Latin America was for the last decade— that is, a laboratory of political experimentation between powerful social movements and progressive governments from Argentina to Venezuela, and from Brazil to Bolivia.</p> <p><b>Sparked by unemployment</b></p> <p>These revolts have immediately performed a kind of sweeping away the racist</p>

	<p>conceptions of a clash of civilisations that consign Arab politics to the past. The multitudes in Tunis, Cairo and Benghazi shatter the political stereotypes that Arabs are constrained to the choice between secular dictatorships and fanatical theocracies, or that Muslims are somehow incapable of freedom and democracy.</p> <p>These Arab revolts ignited around the issue of unemployment, and at their centre have been highly educated youth with frustrated ambitions — a population that has much in common with protesting students in London and Rome. Although the primary demand throughout the Arab world focusses on the end to tyranny and authoritarian governments, behind this single cry stands a series of social demands not only to end dependency and poverty but to give power and autonomy to an intelligent, highly capable population.</p> <p>The organisation of the revolts resembles a horizontal network that has no single, central leader.</p> <p>Outside observers fear that the Muslim Brotherhood or some other body will take control of events. What they don't understand is that the multitude is able to organise itself without a centre — that the imposition of a leader or being co-opted by a traditional organisation would undermine its power.</p> <p>The prevalence in the revolts of social network tools, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, are symptoms, not causes, of this structure. These are the modes of expression of an intelligent population capable of organising autonomously.</p> <p>The insurrections of Arab youth are certainly not aimed at a traditional liberal constitution that merely guarantees a regular electoral dynamic, but rather at a form of democracy adequate to the new forms of expression and needs of the multitude. This must include, firstly, constitutional recognition of the freedom of expression.</p> <p><b>The hope</b></p> <p>And given that these uprisings were sparked by not only unemployment and poverty but also by frustrated productive and expressive capacities, especially among young people, a radical constitutional response must invent a common plan to manage natural resources and social production. This is a threshold through which neo-liberalism cannot pass and capitalism is put to question. And Islamic rule is completely inadequate to meet these needs. Here insurrection touches on not only the equilibriums of north Africa and the Middle East but also the global system of economic governance.</p> <p>Hence there is hope for the Arab world to become like Latin America, to inspire political movements and raise aspirations for freedom and democracy beyond the region.</p>
<p><b>Cautiously optimistic</b></p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p>The Economic Survey 2010-11 is positive on the macroeconomy without glossing over the challenges.</p> <p>The farm sector that saw a negative growth in 2008-09 was further hit by erratic monsoons, severe drought, and unseasonal rains in two successive years. Despite this, the economy is poised to grow at rates seen during the pre-crisis period. On top of an estimated 8.6 per cent growth during the current year, the economy is</p>

	<p>projected to grow at 9 per cent during 2011-12.</p> <p>The optimistic forecasts as well as the downside risks are in line with the assessment of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. The services sector, for long “the power house of the economy”, with a more than 57 per cent share of the GDP in 2009-10, has started gaining momentum. That should augur well for the medium term growth prospects.</p> <p>Another favourable feature is that India's demographic dividend is yet to peak. The growing trend in savings and investment rates should benefit from the gradual withdrawal of stimulus measures by the government. In a message that could be a pointer to the strategy in the Budget, the Survey notes that once the economy operates around full capacity, it is not the savings and investment rates that will drive growth but skills development and innovation.</p> <p>The major downside risks to growth are weather, a disproportionate spike in petroleum prices, and a slowdown in the advanced economies. Inflation and a large current account deficit are major concerns.</p> <p>The Survey cautions that higher growth and a faster monetisation of the economy, through financial inclusion, may mean increased money supply and hence more inflationary pressures.</p> <p>It has recommended a phased entry of foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail, apparently in response to the concerns of farmers and consumers. That should also add to stable capital flows.</p> <p>As part of its reform agenda, the Survey calls for a streamlining of land acquisition and environment clearance procedures, using smart cards to target subsidy payments and issuance of basic banking licences. There should be an unrelenting thrust on infrastructure development. None of these is new or visionary but the Survey has stressed the doable and underlined the priorities in a way that demonstrates pragmatism.</p>
<p><b>Fertilizer health</b></p> <p><b>subsidy/ soil</b></p> <p><b>Agriculture</b></p>	<p>The government has decided to hike the chemical fertilizer subsidy, to catch up with spiralling fertilizer prices in the global market. Also, there is effort about bringing urea under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) system and decontrolling its prices. The fertilizer industry is happy. But there is hardly any discussion on what is good for the farmer and the farm. What is the state of the soil in the country? And is this chemical fertilizer-based food production system sustainable?</p> <p><b>The past debate and NBS</b></p> <p>The government has been spending a huge amount of money to support chemical fertilizer production and its usage. It has touched almost a lakh crore in 2008-2009. This investment has always been under criticism as it was promoting an overuse of chemical fertilizers and thereby catalysing soil degradation. As a result, agricultural production in the bread baskets of the country has stagnated and even started to decline, posing a threat to the food security of the country.</p> <p>There have been concerns raised by several policy experts and others that the fertilizer policy of the country is only helping to move out the Indian tax payers'</p>

money to foreign petroleum companies and fertilizer producers. It is to be noted here that fertilizer production is highly dependent on fossil fuels, and that most fertilizers are imported.

In 2009, Union Finance Minister announced a fertilizer subsidy reform and introduced the NBS system with a promise that the subsidy amount would be disbursed directly to farmers. In 2010, this policy was made effective, but there was no transfer of money to farmers. One year down the line, the NBS is proving to be a complete failure.

#### **Soil degradation: farmers' view**

A recent Greenpeace India report, "Of Soils, Subsidies and Survival," based on social audits conducted in five Indian States, has revealed that 96 per cent out of the 1,000 farmers surveyed were of the opinion that the use of chemical fertilisers led to soil degradation but they continue to use them as there was no other option. Ninety-four per cent of the surveyed farmers believed that only organic fertilisers can maintain soil health. However, only one per cent of the farmers received any kind of support for production and the use of organic fertilisers. Ninety-eight per cent of the surveyed farmers were ready to use organic fertilisers if they are subsidised and made easily available.

Further, only 34 per cent of them knew that chemical fertilisers are subsidised. Of those who knew, only seven per cent knew that a new subsidy system (NBS) was introduced by the government for chemical fertilizers. Even at the subsidised rate, 94 per cent of them thought that chemical fertilisers are unaffordable and not economical.

These are some of the eye-opening revelations that the government should look into. Whenever a fertilizer sop is announced, it is lauded as a farmer-friendly measure. But farmers are not even aware. They are more worried about the soil, a resource on which their livelihood is dependent. But the government tends to ignore this.

#### **Support for alternatives**

It is a well-accepted scientific fact that organic matter is the lifeline of the soil which is critical to maintain the health of this ecosystem. Measures have to be taken to promote the generation of sufficient biomass in a field to be added to the soil. Ecological fertilization offers a range of ways to nourish the soil, with no damage to the ecosystem, be it in irrigated or rainfed regions. Indian farmers were once aware of these practices. However, from a knowledge driven system, agriculture production in the country has become an external input-driven system. This is when the crisis started to emerge.

The agriculture research system in the country has always neglected an eco-friendly means of soil nutrition and never approached it in a holistic way. It has always revolved around a chemical intensive agricultural model. There is an impending need to refocus scientific research to identify the value of the traditional knowledge available with a farmer. Scientific research should go hand in hand with farmers' wisdom to help the country tide over the crisis.

Now is the time for the government to start building an alternative support system

	<p>which is both farmer and farm friendly. This can open up a lot of rural employment opportunities and contribute to the livelihood security of a farmer. This will also bring prosperity to rural India.</p>
<p><b>Plastic waste management</b> <b>Environment</b></p>	<p>The Plastic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011 notified by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, should be viewed by State governments and municipal authorities as a good blueprint for a much-needed civic clean-up.</p> <p>The Central Pollution Control Board estimates the consumption of plastic products in India to be of the order of eight million tonnes a year. This ranges from shopping bags to household and industrial material. The volume of plastic waste is approximately 15,300 tonnes a day.</p> <p>It is welcome, therefore, that the new rules take into account the significant growth in waste generation, predominantly in the form of carry bags and multi-layered packaging, and call for a paradigm shift in the way it is collected, sorted, and disposed of.</p> <p>What is perhaps most significant is the formal recognition given to waste pickers in the management chain. These labourers, now largely in the informal sector, must be constructively engaged by municipal authorities. Other laudable aspects of the rules include the stipulation of benchmarked Indian Standards for recycling facilities, mandatory pricing of consumer carry bags given by retailers, a labelling scheme, and introduction of extended producer responsibility for manufacturers to fund the creation of collection centres. The importance given to compostable plastics — defined as material that can be degraded through biological processes yielding carbon dioxide, water, inorganic compounds and biomass residue — can potentially reduce the use of traditional plastics.</p> <p>Municipal authorities and State pollution control boards must use the momentum provided by the new rules to move away from business as usual on waste management.</p> <p>It is apparent that urban India has been a laggard in implementing the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000, defeating the objective of the Environment (Protection) Act under which they were made.</p> <p>The new rules on plastics can help solve a major part of the national garbage crisis. Municipal corporations and other local bodies are obligated to ensure that the waste is properly segregated and recycled. They have little to fear by way of financial burden, as the cost of plastics use is to be borne by the producers and consumers. Implementing the provisions will have a salutary effect on the ecology of cities and towns where uncollected plastic waste clogs stormwater drains, rivers, and lakes. Moreover, the revised technical specifications for carry bags should make them attractive to recyclers as they will be thicker at 40 microns, up from 20 microns.</p>



<p><b>Non communicable diseases</b></p> <p><b>Health</b></p>	<p>For many health care planners around the world, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke and cardiovascular problems have hardly been a priority. South-East Asian countries are no exception. Like so many other developing and transitional countries, they have been preoccupied with the communicable diseases that were the core concern of epidemiologists and public health workers over much of the last century.</p> <p><b>New diseases</b></p> <p>But the focus on communicable diseases has prevented many health planners from paying sufficient attention to a rapidly growing health feature of our societies — new, non-communicable diseases (known as NCDs). Diabetes, hypertension, stroke and cardiovascular diseases, all of which are disabling and life-threatening, have increased in South-East Asian countries silently and relatively unnoticed. Today they constitute a growing threat to national health and national health-care systems. In South-East Asia, deaths from NCDs are far in excess of those from communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions combined. Costly in terms of long-term care, these diseases call for a type of social and financial investment that many countries will have difficulty making unless they quickly begin to re-prioritise their efforts and funding.</p> <p><b>Social, lifestyle component</b></p> <p>The fact that most if not all the major non-communicable diseases have a strong social and lifestyle component calls for new thinking and preventive action. Dietary patterns have changed fundamentally in our region, and there is now a real danger that the diets of both children and adults will produce serious health challenges.</p> <p>In some cases it is simply a case of over-eating. There is also the issue of eating foods that lead to obesity, and that are linked to related problems such as diabetes and heart disease.</p> <p>Exercise is another feature of lifestyle. Today, we walk less and exercise less, and we simply do not use up the calories that we are taking in. Even children have become more sedentary, and schools have failed to provide the physical activity that would reduce the risk of obesity. Today our region is faced with a growing epidemic of children who are grossly overweight and who are facing serious disabilities and illnesses as a result.</p> <p><b>Migrants</b></p> <p>Around the world, there is growing evidence that migrants are especially vulnerable to a variety of non-communicable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases, reproductive problems and mental health issues. In a region that has seen massive movements of people from rural to urban areas and across borders, this raises special concerns.</p> <p><b>Prevention of NCDs</b></p> <p>Irrespective of the causes, however, prevention of NCDs must be given high priority. This will not simply be the task of ministries of health. Other sectors, such as education and labour, food and nutrition, transport and communications, must all come together to design interventions that encourage people to remain</p>
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	<p>physically active and to raise awareness of what they need to do to avoid these diseases.</p> <p>This challenge will have to be taken up in schools, in the workplace, and in the home. Health-promoting activities and behaviours will have to become a part of our everyday life and awareness.</p> <p><b>Tools are available</b></p> <p>But prevention will not be enough. Major non-communicable diseases have already taken root in many of our countries and must be urgently dealt with as systematically and rapidly as possible. The tools are available.</p> <p>Early diagnosis of diseases such as diabetes can, with effective treatment, avert potentially life-threatening and disabling consequences. For this to happen, routine screening or check-ups and timely treatment of NCDs will have to be given far more priority than it has before. This will in turn mean redesigning many of our health policies, services and health care financing plans.</p> <p>Non-communicable diseases also call for long-term commitments to care, and this can be very costly if the care remains hospital-based. We must think of new ways of care-giving, and care-givers who are trained in community public health and capable of working with families in the home environment.</p>
<p><b>Siren song of cash transfers</b></p> <p><b>Socio-economic/ Essay</b></p>	<p>The idea was mooted in the Government's Economic Survey for 2010-11, and the Finance Minister made an explicit announcement in his budget speech for replacing some subsidies on goods with cash transfers.</p> <p>Cash transfers can be conditional (subject to the households meeting certain demands) or unconditional; targeted (given only to households or individuals meeting particular criteria) or universal. But essentially they amount to just what they sound like — the transfer of money to people by governments, rather than the provision of goods and services.</p> <p>If they are to be effective at all, cash transfers have to be assured, relatively easy to deliver and monitor, and large enough to affect household income. But that also means that they have to be reasonably significant chunks of public spending. And this begs the question of what expenditures they are replacing.</p> <p>There is no doubt that progressive redistributive transfers are desirable. Indeed, redistribution is a major, even critical element of any fiscal system of taxation and public expenditure.</p> <p>Minimum income schemes for the destitute, pension payments for the elderly, child support grants, unemployment benefits and other forms of social protection are obviously desirable in themselves and constitute requirements for any civilised society, even the poorest one. They also contribute in the short term to more effective demand and therefore have positive multiplier effects, and in the long term to healthier, better educated and more secure populations.</p> <p>However, cash transfers cannot and should not replace the public provision of essential goods and services, but rather supplement them. The current tendency is</p>

	<p>to see this as a further excuse for the reduction of publicly provided services, and replace them with the administratively easier option of doling out money.</p> <p>In many countries, the argument has become one of encouraging governments to give the poor cash transfers that will allow them to access whatever goods and services they want that are generated by private markets, rather than struggling to ensure public provision.</p> <p>Such a position completely misses the point. For example, providing small amounts of cash to allow people to visit local private quacks will hardly compensate for the absence of a reasonably well-funded public health system that provides access to preventive and curative services. Cash transfers are less effective in periods of rising prices of essential goods. And so on.</p> <p>It is evident that the agenda of the UPA government is to bring in cash transfers to replace public distribution of various essential items, including food. To begin with, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has proposed that the existing system of subsidies for kerosene and fertilizers be done away with and replaced by direct cash transfers to chosen beneficiaries.</p> <p>There are two immediate problems that are evident in this approach. First, what ensures that the amount of the transfer will be sufficient to fully compensate for any price increases in the newly deregulated markets of these goods? Second, how will the government ensure that the cash transfer actually goes to those who were intended to be the beneficiaries of the subsidised kerosene and fertilizer?</p> <p>The second problem is well known in India, where all public delivery systems have some element of leakage and diversion. How much simpler and easier it will be to divert cash than goods that have to be stored and resold!</p> <p>The urge to adopt this development approach involves several risks. In the case of choice between direct public provision of some essential goods (like food and fuel) and cash transfers to consumers instead, the most immediate threat is that the rising prices in these deregulated markets will make such goods unaffordable for those who need them most.</p>
<p><b>In India's forgotten diseases</b></p> <p><b>Health/Esay</b></p>	<p>India has the extraordinary opportunity to link its leading government research institutes and pharmaceutical companies in a unique public private partnership to address the diseases of the poor throughout South Asia.</p> <p>A recent report in The Lancet reveals that 205,000 people in India die annually from malaria. Similarly, India and its South Asian neighbours account for one-quarter of the world's intestinal worm infections such as hookworm and roundworm, and more than one-half of the world's cases of elephantiasis, leprosy, and visceral leishmaniasis (VL). The State of Bihar alone accounts for a large percentage of the world's cases of VL, a serious parasitic infection also known as kala-azar that affects the bone marrow, liver, and spleen, and is associated with high mortality. Thus, while much of the global health attention is largely focused on sub-Saharan Africa, the truth is that India and adjoining Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are just as devastated by neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).</p>

A little known fact about NTDs is that they not only adversely affect the health of the poorest people in India and elsewhere, they also have the capability to cause and prolong poverty. For instance, the disfigurement and swelling of the limbs and genitals resulting from elephantiasis prevents adults from going to work or working effectively. Dr. K.D. Ramaiah of the Indian Council of Medical Research in Pondicherry has estimated that India suffers almost \$1 billion in annual economic losses as a result of this NTD.

Similarly, chronic hookworm infection occurring in over 70 million Indians stunts the growth and intellect of children to the point where a child's future wage earning is reduced more than 40 per cent.

In the first-ever comprehensive report on NTDs released in October, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the economic burden of dengue costs India \$30 million annually. NTDs can impoverish entire families and communities. The bottom line is that NTDs are one of the reasons why India is trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty.

The good news is that India is beginning to fight back and show global leadership in solving its own NTD problem and, to some extent, the challenge of NTDs among its neighbouring countries.

According to the World Health Organization, the Indian National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme has scaled its mass drug administration programme to treat 85 per cent of the 600 million people at risk in India for elephantiasis. As a result, the overall prevalence of this disease in India has been cut in half since 2004, and there is the prospect that this ancient condition, which has affected the people of India for centuries, could be eliminated in the next decade. Similarly, India is aggressively implementing leprosy elimination through multi-drug therapy programmes, while in 2005 the governments of Bangladesh, India and Nepal signed a memorandum of understanding to eliminate kala-azar by 2015, with an emphasis on the border districts of these three countries where more than 50 per cent of the cases occur. Another notable achievement for India was the elimination of yaws in 2006, a chronic infection affecting the skin, bone and cartilage.

With these successes, India has the opportunity and indeed the moral obligation to take these NTD control and elimination activities to a higher level. India, together with nations such as Brazil and China, are sometimes referred to as innovative developing countries (IDCs). The concept of the IDC refers to the fact that while these countries may have chronic and debilitating poverty and high NTD prevalence, they also benefit from having top universities, medical research institutes and biotech companies. The track record of scientific publications and patents among the IDCs indicates that nations such as India have the capacity to produce a new generation of drugs, diagnostics, and vaccines for NTDs such as hookworm and kala-azar which require technologies in order to ensure that they can move towards disease elimination.

However, a big problem with new biopharmaceuticals for NTDs is that these products will almost certainly not become money makers. Almost by definition, NTDs occur exclusively among people living on less than \$1.25 (or roughly Rs.56.4) per day. The people who need new NTD vaccines and treatments the most can never afford to pay for it. Hence, there is no financial incentive for India's private

	<p>industry to embark on research and development activities for NTDs. Therefore, India urgently needs new strategies to link its government institutions and its powerful private biopharmaceutical companies together in a public-private partnership to stimulate innovation for the poor. Examples of this include a handful of non-profit product development partnerships (PDPs) supported by the Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation and sources.</p> <p>The reason there are not more than a handful of PDPs is the dearth of adequate government funding specifically targeting PDPs as well as well-financed private philanthropies beyond the Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation.</p> <p>An Indian public-private partnership for NTDs could produce a new generation of drugs, diagnostics, and vaccines that will benefit all of South Asia, and indeed the entire world's "bottom billion" — the 1.4 billion people in the world who live in extreme poverty. Innovation for the poor could truly become India's greatest gift to the world.</p>
<p><b>Kepler mission (to find Earth-sized planets orbiting Sun-like stars and capable of supporting life)</b></p> <p><b>Sc&amp;Tech</b></p>	<p>The discovery of six exoplanets or extra-solar planets (planets outside the Solar System) orbiting a single sun-like star, dubbed Kepler-11, at a distance of about 2,000 light-years from Earth makes it the largest collection to be ever found. Those found earlier using ground-based detection methods were single exoplanets orbiting a star.</p> <p>The discovery by the Kepler spacecraft launched in March 2009 and reported recently, became possible as the Kepler telescope continuously looks out for exoplanets transiting the more than 150,000 stars in a specific region of the sky in the Cygnus and Lyra constellations. A transiting planet causes a dip in the brightness of the star. Three to four transits causing the same dip in brightness, taking the same time to transit the star, and taking the same amount of time between successive transits are necessary for confirmation that the object is a planet. Though several thousand planets may be present in the region studied, the actual number that may eventually be found will be smaller as the orbital plane of the transits must be perfectly aligned with Kepler's line of sight.</p> <p>The main objective of the Kepler mission is to find Earth-sized planets orbiting Sun-like stars and capable of supporting life. All the six exoplanets are bigger than Earth, with the largest ones comparable with Uranus and Neptune. Like Mercury and Venus, they are too close to the star to support life.</p> <p>According to the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), finding an Earth-sized planet in the habitable zone that is neither too close nor too far from the star may take at least three years; one transit would take nearly a year and three such transits are needed for planet confirmation. With Kepler only halfway into its mission, we cannot possibly expect discovery of an Earth-like planet before 2013.</p> <p>The Kepler finds add to our understanding of the universe. For instance, with ground-based instruments, generally only the radius and not the mass of the planets can be measured, and hence the density and composition would remain unknown; the size and mass of only three exoplanets smaller than Neptune used to be known. Kepler has added five more to that list.</p>

<p><b>Fiscal policy and inflation</b></p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p>Given that inflation, especially food inflation, has been an extremely sensitive issue, it was certain that the budget would assume a strong anti-inflationary stance. In his budget speech the Finance Minister admitted that the government could have done better in controlling food inflation.</p> <p>The Reserve Bank of India, which has for long advocated a fiscal policy that complemented its monetary policy, would certainly take note of the anti-inflationary elements of the Union budget when it reviews the credit policy later this week. The most important of these is the large reduction in the fiscal deficit.</p> <p>As a proportion of the GDP, it is expected, according to the revised estimates for 2010-11, to come down to 5.1 per cent from the budgeted figure of 5.5 per cent. For 2011-12, the budget aims at an even more ambitious target of 4.6 per cent. However, the windfall from the sale of 3G and broad band spectrum which has brought down the deficit sharply this year will not be repeated in the near future. At a more general level, the assumptions of tight expenditure management and revenue buoyancy to bring about fiscal consolidation will be closely watched.</p> <p>Total government expenditure for 2011-12 is budgeted to be only three per cent more than this year, with a sharp contraction in non-Plan spending and a very modest rise in Plan outlay. It is doubtful whether any government can realistically cut down expenditure to such an extent.</p> <p>There are many who question the connection between deficit reduction and inflation control. For most part of the current year, the rise in inflation was attributed to demand-supply imbalances due to a poor monsoon and spike in the prices of specific food items. Deficit reduction, as a single line of attack, will meet with only limited success under these circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Dengue vaccine</b></p> <p><b>Sc&amp;Tech/ Health</b></p>	<p>Dengue, according to the World Health Organisation, is the most rapidly spreading mosquito-borne viral disease in the world.</p> <p>In the last five decades, the incidence has jumped 30-fold. The disease is now endemic in over 100 countries, placing two-fifths of the world's population at risk. Not only is the number of cases increasing as the disease spreads to new areas but explosive outbreaks are occurring, the global agency notes.</p> <p>Over the years, dengue has become endemic across much of India.. But to keep the death rate down, it is essential that signs of severe forms of the disease, such as a rash and small bleeding spots on the skin, be recognised. Such people must be immediately admitted to a hospital that can provide supportive treatment, he says.</p> <p>However, hospitals can become heavily burdened when a large number of people become infected during outbreaks.</p> <p>While vaccines are available against yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis, caused by closely related viruses, a vaccine against dengue has proved remarkably hard to develop. Nevertheless, a number of different approaches to producing vaccines against it are being tested, from live but weakened viruses to killed viruses, and giving bits of viral protein. Some of these are already in clinical trials.</p> <p>One hurdle to any prospective vaccine is that the virus comes in four varieties</p>



	<p>known as serotypes. A person who recovers after being infected with one serotype develops lifelong immunity only to that form of the virus, not the others.</p> <p>The paradigm has been to make a vaccine that contains the four different viruses and get simultaneous immunisation against each of them.</p> <p>Dengue has the most amazing perversion of the immune response. The cells that were supposed to scout out and kill the viruses as well as the antibodies that were supposed to destroy them were forming “an unholy complex” to defeat the immune system.</p> <p>Thai scientists have successfully produced the world's first dengue hemorrhagic fever vaccine and will let the private sector improve it for the effective treatment of patients. The Thailand Ministry of Science and Technology has introduced the world's first live attenuated dengue hemorrhagic fever vaccine developed by Thailand researchers.</p> <p>This was achieved by combining attenuated DNA with a protein structure that stimulates immunity against the dengue hemorrhagic fever — caused by the present strain of the dengue virus. The newly developed vaccine is expected to better protect people from the dengue hemorrhagic fever.</p> <p>But the challenge of developing a dengue vaccine may not end with successfully completing human trials and getting a licence for public use.</p> <p>Trials will need to address the risk of persons acquiring or developing severe dengue as a direct consequence of vaccination, noted a summary of a WHO Technical Consultation published in the journal, Vaccine, in 2008. Long-term follow-up of those who participated in vaccine trials would be a powerful way of conforming or rejecting such a risk. Such follow-up should be planned in advance, it said.</p> <p>Dengue vaccine, more than almost any other, is going to require sustained, long-term follow up.</p> <p>If a safe and effective vaccine becomes available, it would be possible to consider immunising children and young adults in parts of India where the disease is endemic. It is people in these age groups, rather than older adults, who are the most affected by severe forms of dengue and among whom most of the mortality occurs.</p>
<p><b>Catching it early</b></p> <p><b>Health</b></p>	<p>The public health priority identified by the international community of nephrologists to mark World Kidney Day 2011 is vital for advancing the campaign against cardiovascular disease. The key message is that protecting the kidneys also saves the heart. There is a lot of evidence on the link between hypertension and damage to renal function; in turn, chronic kidney disease (CKD) can produce high blood pressure; diabetes also leads to kidney damage. That is well known, but more recent data indicate that even lesser degrees of renal impairment, manifested as protein in the urine, result in elevated risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD). This is true, in some cases, even where other factors such as diabetes, hypertension, and a history of heart attack do not co-exist.</p> <p>The findings may be disturbing, but affordable solutions are available to mitigate</p>

	<p>the risk. Where the problem is picked up early and a treatment regimen to reduce proteinuria initiated, there is a significant lowering of CVD risk.</p> <p>The number of deaths due to communicable diseases, and maternal, perinatal, and nutritional causes is projected to decrease in India between 2004 and 2030. By contrast, cardiovascular disease is expected to kill four million people in 2030, a sharp rise from 2.7 million for the base year.</p> <p>This forecast underscores the need for policy initiatives to achieve a substantial reduction in the incidence of cardiovascular disease. The reported CVD link to kidney disease makes it imperative to detect and treat early. As a goal, this is eminently achievable. Large-scale screening to detect proteinuria and early identification of CKD is the first step; involvement of the general practitioner and village nurse under rural health schemes will aid this.</p> <p>For those who are diagnosed with renal disease, other low-cost interventions, such as control of salt in diet, and treatment using angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers, can lead to a dramatic reduction in its progression. The processed food industry, which uses a large amount of salt, must be encouraged actively to participate in such a programme.</p>
<p><b>Green reform</b></p>	<p>Many well-regarded scientists have been making the point that the EIA, a mechanism instituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in the early phase of India's economic liberalisation and amended in later years, has been turned into a joke because it is left to the project proponent to arrange for the EIA report. This dysfunctional system has produced only a thriving industry of consultants.</p> <p>Among the prominent examples of ill-advised shortcuts leading to flawed conclusions is the Kudremukh iron ore mining project in Karnataka, which was eventually ordered closed. In that case, only rigorous assessment by the Indian Institute of Science and other agencies produced evidence of harm to fragile ecology; comprehensive study by the Centre for Wildlife Studies documented environmental damage on account of the sediment load in the Bhadra river. Evidently, the earlier EIA reports based on rapid assessments provided little insight. This experience is not unique and there is a strong case to introduce stringent checks now. Reform should begin with the choice of agency to conduct the impact assessment, and include the setting of wide terms of reference.</p> <p>The task of reforming the EIA process is a challenging one. State-level authorities must also be made partners in the effort because some categories of environmental clearances come within their ambit.</p> <p>Independent studies of the working of expert appraisal committees formed under the EIA Notification of 2006 show that the rejection rate for projects in sensitive sectors such as construction, industry, thermal power plants, and mining is suspiciously low. The Union Ministry's discovery that some consultants submitted wrong reports, resulting in penal action, is proof positive of systemic rot. The cure lies in genuine, science-based EIA.</p> <p>All this is not to say that fresh barriers must be erected to development. What needs to be emphasised is the importance of assessing externalities associated</p>

	<p>with individual projects and consider them in perspective. The loss of ecology has irreversible, inter-generational consequences. The protection of air, water, soil health, and biodiversity should be primary environmental imperatives.</p>
<p><b>Unintended Booster Economy</b></p>	<p>The Economic Survey 2010-11 makes the fairly obvious point that it is necessary to get the micro-foundations of the economy right for macroeconomic development.</p> <p>Among the key economic problems affecting the micro or unit level is of course inflation, which has remained persistently high for the greater part of this year. The RBI has recently raised its inflation target for 2010-11 by one percentage point to eight per cent. Food inflation, after showing signs of moderating, has climbed back to double digits.</p> <p>One of the key tasks is to understand how inflation, especially food inflation, affects the poor particularly severely. While the average Indian may be better off — per capita incomes have risen by about 7 per cent — some sections of the people are worse off because their nominal incomes have hardly grown and inflation has negated whatever growth there has been. Moreover, despite the high real GDP growth, many in the bottom quintile of India's rural population, whose expenditure on food accounts for 67 per cent of their spending, are bound to be worse off.</p> <p>The case for comprehensive policies to support inclusive growth and providing safety nets to the poor has never been stronger. It is certain that the relatively high inflation will accompany the expected high economic growth well into the medium term. In an insightful analysis the Survey points out that some undoubtedly beneficial developments have the unintended consequence of stoking inflation.</p> <p>Financial inclusion is on top of the agenda because it aims at encouraging particularly rural households that hold their savings in cash to deposit them with banks. Once the previously dormant money gets into a bank or a mutual fund, it automatically gets lent to other people, increasing the total money supply in the system. There is evidence from around the world that monetisation of the economy and the roping in of more and more people into formal financial systems add to the pressure on prices. Integration with the global economy can also create inflationary pressures.</p> <p>In India and other emerging economies the purchasing power parity (PPP) is low to begin with, but once industrialisation gathers pace, the PPP correction has to become smaller. This happens partly because of exchange rate changes but more substantially because the prices of basic non-traded goods and unskilled labour that ruled low catch up with the prices in the developed world.</p>
<p><b>Judicial standards and accountability bill</b></p> <p><b>Political</b></p>	<p>In recent times, the working of the judges of superior courts (High Courts and the Supreme Court) has come in for intense scrutiny and grave doubts have been cast against the conduct of some judges. The pressing call for greater institutional accountability in the Indian judiciary is now stronger than ever. It is in this light that Parliament's proposed Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010 must be seen.</p> <p>This Bill seeks to devise a new "complaint procedure" under which any person</p>

may be able to file a complaint in writing against any judge of a superior court. Upon such a complaint being filed and examined, the Judicial Oversight Committee (proposed to be constituted under the statute), may either dismiss the complaint or make a reference to Parliament for the removal of the judge, issue advisories, warnings, withdraw judicial work or make a request for voluntary retirement.

The issue of Judicial Standards must be seen in the context of Art 124(4) of the Constitution which provides for the process of impeachment of a judge on the grounds of “proved misbehaviour or incapacity.” Art 124(5) empowers Parliament only to make laws to regulate the procedure for presentation of address of impeachment, and for the investigation and proof for the misbehaviour or incapacity of a judge.

Article 124(5) does not empower Parliament to create any other forum for recommending impeachment proceedings, or allow complaints to be made by any person, or to make a judge liable for minor penalties. What can be done only by a hundred or more members of the Lok Sabha or fifty or more members of the Rajya Sabha (i.e. initiation of impeachment proceedings) can now theoretically be done by only one person.

**Outlined below are some of the other major defects in the Bill:**

**Definition of misbehaviour:**

By laying down a strict definition, the concept loses its elasticity and becomes both under-inclusive and over-inclusive. The Constitution framers had been careful not to define the term misbehaviour, let alone define it exhaustively. Implicit in this understanding was the belief that if the power of removal was vested in high constitutional authorities, they would be in the best position to judge when misbehaviour (or incapacity) had been occasioned.

**Statutory provision for judicial standards:**

The Bill also provides a list of standards of judicial conduct to which all judges are expected to adhere.

Investing the legislature with the power to lay down and amend the standards which all sitting judges must adhere to (or risk the proposed penalties), has the potential to severely threaten impartial and effective adjudication.

**Constitution of Oversight Committee, scrutiny panel and investigation committee:**

Oversight Committee shall consist of five persons with two serving and one retired judge, an appointed eminent person and the Attorney-General of India. The presence of the Attorney-General on the Oversight Committee is highly suspect. The Attorney-General has the responsibility of regularly appearing on behalf of the government before the court. On occasions, the possibility of his appearing before a judge against whom a complaint has been filed cannot be ruled out. In such a circumstance, there is clearly a conflict of interest since the Attorney-General will be a member of the Oversight Committee to look into the complaints made against the former.

The Scrutiny Panel is to consist of three members, two of whom will be judges sitting in the same court as the judge against whom the complaint is made. Since these judges would be colleagues sitting in the same court, it is likely that this will,

	<p>either way, influence their conduct. It would be difficult for judges to dispassionately decide a case against one of their own and sitting with them day in and day out.</p> <p>The composition and tenure of the Investigation Committee which is to be constituted for the purpose of enquiry into misbehaviour by a judge is undefined. Theoretically, therefore, it is possible for a lay person without any knowledge, experience or standing to be a part of an inquiry panel against a sitting judge of a superior Court.</p> <p><b>Minor punishments:</b> The idea of “minor” punishments is unworkable and has the potential to seriously undermine judicial status. If sitting judges are issued advisories and warnings and thereby publicly censured, but still continue on the bench and decide cases, this damages the credibility of the entire system.</p> <p><b>Atmosphere of secrecy:</b> The Bill completely excludes the operation of the RTI. This establishes an atmosphere of total secrecy more regressive than the present system, and for which, there does not appear to be any rational reason to make a change.</p> <p><b>Conclusion</b> Demands for change to existing systems in the judiciary must be met rationally, bearing in mind the objectives sought to be achieved. The first site of change must be in the process of judicial appointments. The present system where judges of the superior courts are chosen based on undisclosed criterion in largely unknown circumstances reflects an increasing democratic deficit. The legitimacy of the judiciary ultimately flows from public support, which cannot be maintained without a transparent and open selection process. The guiding principle should always be this: accountability there is and must be, but let it always be commensurate with judicial independence and impartiality. Ultimately, the appropriate balance between competing principles must be found in something that is best suited to our constitutional setup and is, in that sense, uniquely Indian. The citizens of India deserve no less.</p>
<p><b>Inflation management poses new challenge</b></p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p>The Economic Survey 2010-11 looks at inflation from different perspectives. In its second chapter ‘ Micro-foundations of macroeconomic development', the survey observes that the period of high growth accompanied by inflation calls for some nuanced analysis of the impact of inflation.</p> <p>Since not all sections are partaking of the fruits of growth in the same way, policymakers have to worry about the worse-off and vulnerable sections of the society.</p> <p><b>Rise in food prices</b></p> <p>The rise in food prices especially impacts on the poor more severely than on others.</p>

According to official statistics, the bottom quintile of India's rural population spends about 67 per cent of their aggregate household expenditure on food. With food inflation at around 10 per cent during the most part of the year, some in this group would be worse off despite the high real GDP growth. Then that is the reason why the official policies have to be supportive of the poor-through appropriate food security schemes, dependable micro credit, basic health support and so on. Such policies are there to stay.

### **Financial inclusion and Inflation**

There is an interesting connection between inclusion and inflation. A number of people especially in the rural areas keep their savings as cash at home. Financial inclusion aims at persuading these people to deposit money in a bank. The previously idle money would then enter the financial system and add to liquidity. Admittedly financial inclusion, a high priority policy objective, really encompasses a number of initiatives — creating the financial infrastructure in previously unbanked areas, financial literacy and so on. That such a laudable objective should stoke inflation has not been widely understood so far.

There is enough evidence from around the world that monetisation of the economy and bringing more and more people into the formal financial system contribute to an overall pressure on prices.

### **Globalisation and Inflation**

Another generally beneficial development, globalisation or integration of the domestic economy with the global economy, can also push up prices in India. In poor countries, the purchasing power parity (PPP) is low. This means the kind of living standard one can have in a poor country with \$100 is considerably higher than what one can achieve with the same money in the U.S. and other advanced economies.

But by the time a country becomes industrialised, the PPP correction has to become smaller. This happens partly because of exchange rate alignments but more substantially because the prices of basic non-traded goods and unskilled labour in the formerly poor countries rise and partly catch up with prices in industrialised countries.

Looking at the future, given that the Indian economy is expected to be on a high growth path, inflation will also remain high.

According to the Economic Survey, the country will have an average annual inflation of nearly 5 per cent during the next decade or so. That forecast is arrived after taking into account several likely scenarios, such as a spurt in real per capita incomes and its impact on prices.

All these suggest the need to revisit some of the standard policies for managing inflation. India's growth process has to be inclusive and there must be better designed systems for providing security to the vulnerable.



## India's tryst with LDCs

A common thread running through our ancient philosophy and the teachings of the Father of the Nation is the advice to care for the poor, the weaker section of our community. This needs to be practised at the local, national and even international levels, given our natural ambition to be a Great Power.

The government's decision to host the first-ever conference where all 48 LDCs were represented is laudable, but a critical assessment is essential for appreciating whether we are doing the right thing, in a right manner, at a right time, and whether we will fulfill our commitments. These questions are unavoidable because the conference has been seen by many as merely India's endeavour to advance its case for permanent membership of the U.N. Security Council and also because scepticism prevails regarding our capability to deliver.

### **An Introduction**

The U.N. created a new category of its member states — LDCs — in 1971. There were 25 of them at that time. Forty years later, the number has shot up to 48, a clear indicator that whatever the U.N. and the international community have been doing to reduce poverty, disease, illiteracy and low productive capacity of its weaker section, has proved to be ineffective. Of these 48 countries 33 are in Africa, 14 in the Asia-Pacific region and one in Central America. Five of our neighbours — Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar — are LDCs. Only three LDCs, namely Botswana, Cape Verde and Maldives, have managed to come out of this category. The LDCs contribute only one per cent to global trade, despite their 12 per cent share of world population.

The U.N. holds a major conference once a decade to assess the state of development of the LDCs. In the backdrop of previous conferences — Paris (1981), Paris (1991), and Brussels (2001) — the challenge for the conference in Istanbul, to be held shortly, is to go back to the design board and suggest how the ambitious goal to halve the number of LDCs can be achieved by 2020.

### **Delhi Declaration**

The Delhi conference was a preparatory event for the forthcoming Istanbul conference.

The Delhi Declaration highlighted the conference's theme on 'Harnessing the Positive Contribution of South-South Cooperation for Development of Least Developed Countries.' Calling upon the international community to express "its highest commitment" for supporting the Istanbul conference, it stressed that the world needs to accord "its highest priority to the cause of LDCs" for ensuring peace, security and prosperity.

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had observed so aptly: "Peace is said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated segments."

The Delhi Declaration listed the LDCs' demands and suggestions pertaining to the Doha Round, food security, climate change, and co-relation between South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation along the expected lines.

In an exceptionally important paragraph, the declaration indicated that the LDCs want the world to adopt "a comprehensive approach" for creating an effective

	<p>solution to the development challenges faced by them. Obviously they need more financial resources, but they expect much more of other kinds of assistance too, which would augment their “productive capacity, institutional strength and policy space to lead their respective national development processes.”</p> <p><b>India's approach</b></p> <p>India's policy approach is welcomed by the LDCs. They are, however, clamouring now for a 'New International Support Architecture' — NISA. Our economic and foreign affairs experts should reflect on this and come up with fresh inputs for government's consideration.</p> <p>There can be several important components of cooperation: duty free and quota free treatment to imports from the LDCs, expanded capacity building and technical cooperation under the ITEC programme, cumulative value of previous loans to the LDCs amounting to \$4.3 billion, additional LOCs of \$500 million for next five years, and a special fund of \$5 million for follow-up actions in regard to the Istanbul conference. Total investment by Indian public and private sector companies in the LDCs now stands at \$35 billion. India's annual imports from the LDCs are valued at \$10 billion at present.</p> <p>LDCs, together with other small island states and land-locked countries, account for about 100 out of 192 members-states of the U.N. Clearly they represent a very important constituency. The development experience of some of the “emerging economies” such as India is of “greater relevance” to the LDCs.</p> <p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>India has been on the right track, leading from the front in developing an extensive partnership with the LDCs. The Delhi conference has imparted a fresh momentum, creating hope that the LDCs would receive higher attention in future by the Indian authorities. Assisting the LDCs more will definitely help the campaign for a permanent seat at the UNSC. But our policy on the LDCs transcends this campaign; it touches the very core of our national convictions.</p>
<p><b>What price 'foreign providers'?</b></p> <p><b>Social/Political</b></p>	<p>The steps to regulate the operation of foreign educational institutions in India, as contained in the Foreign Educational Institution (Regulation of Entry and Operation) Bill, are welcome initiatives.</p> <p>A large number of foreign educational institutions have been operating in the country and some of them may be resorting to various malpractices to allure and attract students. The absence of a regulatory regime has given rise to chances of adoption of various unfair practices, besides commercialisation. These institutions function under several disguises, exploiting the obsession of the Indian middle class for certification from foreign institutions. The proposed legislation is intended to restrain such institutions and their malpractices, through administrative, academic and financial regulation.</p> <p>These steps will have universal approval, except from those who are the beneficiaries of such practices.</p>

	<p>The implications of the Bill, however, go beyond the stated objectives.</p> <p>An apprehension among the intelligentsia is about the possibility of the misuse of liberalisation by 'fly-by-night operators' by using the investment opportunity for quick returns. The Bill seeks to allay this genuine fear by providing for administrative control, financial safeguards and academic vigil. To qualify for registration as an educational provider, an institution should have been in the field of educational services for 20 years and have a corpus fund of not less than Rs. 50 crore.</p> <p>Secondly, any surplus revenue can be invested only for the growth and development of educational institutions established in India. The Bill stipulates that the quality of education should be comparable to that imparted on the institution's main campus. It is assumed that these stipulations, along with the administrative formalities to ensure the fitness of the institution to provide quality education, will make the participation of 'foreign providers' a positive asset to the nation.</p> <p>On the contrary, the Bill, if it is passed by Parliament, is likely to have a long-lasting adverse impact on the national character of education. Nobody expects the foreign education providers to provide mass education. Their operations will by and large be confined to specialised areas. Understandably, they are not going to make any substantial improvement in the matter of access to higher education.</p> <p>That foreign educational providers will be required to follow the same curriculum and pedagogy is the most undesirable part of the scheme, as the cultural assumptions of curriculum and pedagogy differ from nation to nation. Education is an organic process that cannot be borrowed or super-imposed on a society.</p> <p>This is not to suggest that Indian academia need no exposure to the global community or relationships with institutions abroad. On the other hand, there is a case for greater professional exposure and institutional collaboration.</p> <p>The proposal to permit foreign educational providers to function in India will do considerable harm to the independent development of Indian education. Instead of contributing to the making of the national identity, it is likely to create a social stratum that is intellectually far removed from the nations' concerns.</p> <p>In the circumstances, the best solution will be to refashion the Bill with provision to prevent the operation of foreign educational providers and introduce sufficient space to promote independent interaction and collaboration with global academia.</p>
<p><b>Doha round</b></p> <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p>The talks for the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which began in November 2001, are nowhere near completion. What is worse the topic appears to have been dropped from public discourse. One hardly hears anything that would induce optimism on concluding the talks.</p> <p>The Doha Round is about highly technical issues. Even if there was some general interest, it soon became clear that the talks are all about resolving complex issues</p>

which are invariably couched in technical language.

Repeated failure to meet deadlines has induced a dose of scepticism, if not outright cynicism, on the final outcome. That is another reason why the average person is switched off from the talks.

One basic point about the trade talks is that political leaders who try to muster the political support back home face a difficult situation. Successful trade talks involve striking a balance between give and take.

In the very nature of things, the advantages of trade agreements are to be seen over the medium-term. However, once a trade pact is concluded, politicians will have to face the wrath of lobbyists, trade groups and others whose immediate interests would seem to be compromised by, say, an agreed tariff lowering

Failure to conclude the Doha Round would result in a situation where weaker nations will not prosper and hegemonic powers like the Americans and the Europeans would establish trade deals with smaller powers and dominate world trade in their own way, which is not possible in a multilateral system.

A series of bilateral trade deals would dominate global trade, giving more authority to richer countries, resulting in discrimination and perpetuating distortions.

If the trade talks collapse, there would be a number of other deleterious consequences as well. The WTO's role will be considerably diminished.

If WTO's powers are diminished, the incalculable value of its disputes settlement authority would be severely impaired. Through this authority the WTO has brought the rule of law to world trade. The smallest of countries can bring to account the richest country, forcing the latter to stop trade distortions.

The G-20 countries, which initially stressed collective action as a means of overcoming the recession, have become less enthusiastic in seeking a closure of the Doha Round. For the record, at the Seoul Summit (November 2010), it was decided to seek a closure by the end of this year.

Much has always depended on the U.S. and the EU. In mid-2008 the talks which showed some rare promise of leading to a breakthrough floundered at the last minute. The rich countries blamed India but it was the U.S.' refusal to reduce agricultural subsidies further and India's refusal to ask its subsistence farmers to compete with subsidised American farmers that were the principal causes.

The outside environment has changed considerably since then. Sky-high global food prices dramatically alter the assumptions behind the American farm subsidies. While that could help in softening the U.S. stand on what has been an intractable issue, the political climate in rich countries is less conducive to trade deals than it was before.

## Can India prevent 200 children dying every hour?

### Socio-economic/Essay

It is estimated that India lost 1.8 million children under five in 2008. That is more than 200 child deaths every hour, or more than three deaths every minute. Out of about 25 million babies born every year in India, one million die. Most who survive do not get to grow up and develop well. About 48 per cent are stunted (sub-normal height) and 43 per cent are under-weight. Additionally, about one-third of babies are born with a low birth weight of less than 2,500 grams.

#### MDG target

In South-East Asia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand have reduced newborn and childhood mortality significantly. India has also demonstrated steady progress. Under-five mortality decreased from about 150 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 74 per 1,000 live births in 2005-06. But at this rate of decline, India will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 4 (MDG) target of 50 under-five deaths per 1,000 live births by 2015. Moreover, progress has been uneven in various States in the country.

#### Causes

The causes of death among children are well understood in India. Newborn mortality (death within the first 28 days of life) contributes to more than half of under-five mortality. In newborns they are asphyxia (inability to breathe at the time of delivery), infections and prematurity. After 28 days of life, they are the result of acute respiratory infections (pneumonia) and diarrhoea. Undernutrition contributes to 35 per cent of deaths. In addition to these, immediate causes of childhood deaths, there are several socio-cultural factors including poverty, poor water and sanitation facilities, illiteracy (especially among women), the inferior status of women in society, and pregnancy during adolescence (that can be attributed to early marriage). Child mortality rates are also higher among rural populations when compared to their urban counterparts.

#### What needs to be done

Newborn deaths can be prevented by ensuring nutrition of adolescent girls; delaying pregnancy beyond 20 years of age and ensuring a gap of three-five years between pregnancies; skilled care during pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal care; and improved newborn care practices that include early (within first hour of birth) and exclusive breastfeeding; preventing low body temperature and infections; and early detection of sickness and prompt treatment. Childhood deaths can be prevented by exclusive breastfeeding for six months and complementary feeding from six months of age with continued breastfeeding for two years; immunisation; and early treatment of pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria. In addition, it is important for the mother and other caretakers at home to invest in appropriate child caring practices, right from birth to support early childhood development and lay a foundation to maximise human potential.

India needs to provide these life-saving interventions to most, if not all, newborn and children who need them. However, their (interventions) coverage has been quite low. For example, in 2005-06 (the National Family Health Survey – NFHS 3 report), the rate of initiation of breastfeeding within an hour of birth was only 26 per cent and exclusive breastfeeding at six months was just 46 per cent. Yet these two interventions have the potential to prevent 19 per cent of deaths. The use of oral rehydration salts in cases of diarrhoea, the most recommended treatment,

	<p>was just 43 per cent and only 13 per cent cases of suspected pneumonia received antibiotics. Immunisation coverage has been relatively better, suggesting that high coverage is achievable.</p> <p><b>Intervention</b></p> <p>To address the systemic challenges, India launched a flagship programme, the National Rural Health Mission in 2005-06, to strengthen the health system in rural areas. Commendable initiatives have been put in place such as training about 8,00,000 village level health volunteers (Accredited Social Health Activist, or ASHA), hiring additional staff, strengthening the infrastructure of health facilities, augmenting programme management capacity at State and district levels, and enhancing community participation. However, much more needs to be done to minimise health inequities that exist among different subpopulations in the country.</p> <p>Public health expenditure in India has remained at a low — about one per cent of GDP — for quite some time. This needs to be scaled up. Considering that about 70 per cent of health care is accessed from the private sector in the country, better regulation and participation of private health service providers must be ensured. Synergy between the health and nutrition sectors must be fostered through better coordination between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Women and Child Development, which are responsible for the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) programme.</p> <p>To reach unreached newborns and children, there is a strong case for providing home-based newborn care as well as community-based management of non-severe pneumonia and diarrhoea in children by trained ASHAs and other community health workers. This initiative needs to be supported by provision of incentives, necessary drug supplies, close supervision and appropriate referral linkages. At the same time, the quality of health services at first-level health facilities and referral hospitals must continue to be strengthened.</p> <p>Fortunately, there is renewed commitment at the global and national levels towards achievement of MDG 4. To save newborns and children, national governments, development agencies, civil society and other stakeholders must work in close collaboration.</p>
<p><b>Elusive development goals</b></p> <p><b>Socio-economic</b></p>	<p>The latest reality check on global progress to make the world more inclusive presents mixed results. The Global Monitoring Report 2011 (GMR) on the Millennium Development Goals, prepared jointly by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, makes it clear that, despite some progress, key targets will remain elusive when the 2015 deadline is reached.</p> <p>There are positive signs that the goals relating to parity in primary and secondary education, completion of primary education, access to safe drinking water, and halving extreme poverty and hunger can be met.</p> <p>But there is cause for serious concern in the areas of child and maternal mortality and access to sanitation.</p> <p>One reason for this uneven progress is that access-based goals, such as education, are easier to achieve than those that can be measured by specific outcomes, such</p>



	<p>as healthcare. What emerges from this year's GMR, based on impact evaluations in health and education, is that, while the quantity of services has increased, the quality has not improved. Correcting this will be the key challenge that nations face in their endeavour to make the world less unjust.</p> <p>Well-conceived and sincerely implemented policies can make the difference to people in countries that have to shake off persistent poverty. The GMR makes special mention of the economic growth witnessed in China and India as a positive factor in the world's progress towards MDGs. However, high economic growth rates do not at all mean inclusive growth.</p> <p>Further, absolute figures on poverty reduction do not tell the complete tale. Even going by the low poverty line measure that prevails in India, it is still home to the world's largest number of poor, estimated at 301.7 million. Herein is the clearest indication that present policies in India are ill-equipped to correct chronic poverty.</p>
<p><b>NDM-1</b> <b>Health</b></p>	<p>The discovery of the New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase-1 (NDM-1) in 71 of 151 sewage samples and two of 50 drinking water samples taken from India's capital indicates that the superbug is present in the environment and is no longer a hospital-born infection.</p> <p>The study published online in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal found that the NDM-1 gene has spread to families of gram-negative bacteria like E. coli that populate the human gut. The drug-resistant gene has been found even in pathogenic bacteria that cause cholera and dysentery.</p> <p>Transfer of the NDM-1 gene to bacteria belonging to a different species is possible as it is carried in the plasmids, which are capable of moving from one bacterium to another. Transfer of the plasmids carrying the NDM-1 gene was highest at 30°C, the average peak temperature, and within the daily temperature range of New Delhi from April to October. Most importantly, the transfer has been facilitated by poor sanitation, as reflected by the oral-faecal route of transmission.</p> <p>The Indian Council of Medical Research has invited research proposals from scientists to generate scientific evidence on antimicrobial resistance.</p> <p>The second important development has been the drafting of the much-needed national policy for containment of antimicrobial resistance. The policy admits that the use of antibiotics is inappropriate in 20 per cent to 50 per cent of cases. It targets the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in food animals and intends to curb the practice since it ultimately causes drug resistance in humans.</p> <p>Most importantly, access to third generation antibiotics like carbapenems is to be restricted to tertiary hospitals. But even in these hospitals, efforts must be directed toward restricting its use to patients with severe infections. The government should waste no time in creating a national surveillance system for measuring antibiotic resistance if it is serious about getting on top of the problem.</p>

<p><b>An alternative to nuclear power</b></p> <p><b>Energy</b></p>	<p>Post-Fukushima, the chorus against nuclear power has risen to a crescendo. In India, safety concerns have been compounded and exacerbated by fears of disenfranchisement and dislocation of the local population in the siting of new reactors.</p> <p><b>Natural gas as an option</b></p> <p>Natural gas, the lesser evil among fossil fuels, offers itself readily as an option. With less than half the carbon content of coal and very little of the other greenhouse gases that bedevil other fossil fuels, natural gas is a viable option for a carbon-constrained world. Abundant and less whimsically distributed than crude oil or coal, its fungibility improved by liquefaction technology, and less demanding of water than coal or nuclear power, natural gas could be a viable alternative.</p> <p>A versatile fuel that finds use in a wide range of applications such as fuel for power generation, industrial processes and in automobiles and as feedstock in fertilizers and petrochemicals, natural gas is also an ideal cooking fuel whether piped to houses or bottled as LPG in cylinders. In power generation, the efficiency factor (the ratio of electricity generated to the heat content of the fuel) could be as high as 60 per cent in a combined cycle as opposed to around 30 per cent in the most efficient coal-based power plant. This alone should make natural gas the fuel of choice for electricity generation.</p> <p><b>Technology</b></p> <p>The technology to explore, produce, liquefy and transport natural gas is well established. Its efficiency could be even higher in combined heat and power applications when waste heat from the turbines is utilised in other industrial processes. Indeed, the advantages of natural gas make it the ideal bridge fuel for the next 50 years until solar photovoltaic and nuclear fusion become affordable.</p> <p>Natural gas already accounts for almost a quarter of the energy basket of developed countries. Yet, in India, the share of natural gas in its commercial energy basket has stagnated at less than 10 per cent despite major new domestic discoveries in recent years. First discovered in Assam in the late 19th century, natural gas became the mainstream fuel in India in the 1960s after major reserves were discovered in the Cambay Basin on the west coast. Acknowledging its value, as a national resource, the government prioritised its application in power and fertilizer plants along the western and northern belts and built an arterial pipeline network to service them. Today, the pipeline network of 10,000 km, and with more to be added, includes a limited national grid and regional grids in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and in the North-East.</p> <p><b>Growth trajectory</b></p> <p>More gas came on stream in the early 1990s, when some of the “discovered fields” of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) were developed in joint ventures with the private sector. From 1997, India opened its acreages to international investors in exploration and production through a structured licensing process termed NELP (New Exploration Licensing Policy) of which nine rounds have been completed. Of the 239 blocks awarded to investors so far, 68 fields, of both oil and gas, are claimed to have been discovered. In fact, the discovery of the Krishna-Godavari (KG) Basin gas fields by Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), ONGC and the</p>
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Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation came from the acreages awarded in the first NELP round. Yet, only one of these fields — KG D6 — has commenced commercial production. India also has two operating LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) terminals which regassify LNG and supply it to consumers. Two more terminals are likely to be commissioned shortly.

### **Coal bed methane (CBM)**

Gas floating above coal seams, called coal bed methane (CBM), is another rich source of high calorific value fuel. India may have about one trillion cubic metres of this gas mostly in the Gondwana basin. CBM projects qualify for carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Recent years have witnessed four licensing rounds of CBM as well. There are 30 CBM blocks awarded for exploration. Production, which is modest, has also commenced and is expected to be ramped up significantly in the next few years. India is also examining the prospects of domestic shale gas.

### **Demand**

With global crude prices spiralling and coal becoming increasingly unacceptable, gas may suddenly find itself attractive, viable and competitive. It could greatly contribute to enhancing India's quest for energy security provided we get our act together in time and play our cards right to drive hard bargains. On the domestic front, it is essential to accelerate the pace of drilling for gas, CBM and shale and monitor effective compliance with drilling and production schedules specified in the licence and production sharing contracts. Multiple sources of supply will ensure a competitive price outcome. As for gas imports, since pipelines make much better economic sense, transnational pipeline projects should be pursued vigorously and built expeditiously. It is essential to clinch competitively-priced long-term contracts for both pipeline imports as well as LNG supplies.

Even if one or two transnational pipelines with a total capacity of 60 MMSCMD materialise, and assuming the entire supply is used for electricity generation, India can add 15 gigawatts of generation capacity in just three years. Similar results can be reached with two LNG terminals with a total capacity of 15 million tonnes per annum. Not only will it take nuclear energy several decades to reach this target, but even at currently prevailing long-term LNG prices, gas-based power will be cheaper than nuclear power.

### **Cochrane library**

#### **Health**

In February 2007, India created history by becoming the first, and only, low-income country to purchase a national provision for all its residents to access the online resources of The Cochrane Library.

This initiative of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), is an example of responsible leadership in healthcare, as it enables all people in India with an internet connection to access without further payment, reliable, independent, and updated evidence for the safety and efficacy of the myriad treatments in use covering all branches and specialties of medicine, surgery, nursing, dentistry, rehabilitation, as well as other aspects of healthcare delivery.

The first step in effective healthcare is ready access to reliable evidence of whether treatments work, and if they do, how effective they are likely to be; and how safe.

The Cochrane Library provides a one-stop portal for the best evidence available on the efficacy and safety of interventions that healthcare professionals, health policy makers, and consumers of healthcare interventions need to make well-informed

decisions that concern their health.

The Cochrane Library is a collection of six databases at the core of which is The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR). The April 2011 release of this resource has over 6500 articles, making this the world's largest collection of such reviews.

These systematically assembled research articles summarize the results of well-conducted clinical trials from around the world that evaluate how effective and safe healthcare interventions are for a particular condition compared to other interventions in use for that condition, or to no interventions.

All reviews have, in addition to the full article that can be downloaded, short abstracts, as well as plain language summaries meant for the lay person to understand.

The Cochrane Library also contains the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), the world's largest collection of bibliographic information, often with a summary, of clinical trials from published and unpublished sources, identified by groups within the Cochrane Collaboration.

India is now not only a user of health research generated by others but also a significant contributor to providing evidence of the effects of healthcare interventions.

However, if this investment by the Indian government to ensure that people in India have access to research evidence they can trust are to be fully realized, more people should use resources in The Cochrane Library as the first point of reference for evidence to inform health decisions.

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