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

HEADING [CATEGORY]	SUMMARY
The problem with EVMs *Political*	➤ To be considered free and fair, the international standards an election has to meet are: • individuals have to be accurately identified as eligible voters who have not already voted; • voters are allowed only one anonymous ballot each, which they can mark in privacy; • the ballot box is secure, observed and, during the election, only able to have votes added to it by voters: votes cannot be removed; • when the election ends, the ballot box is opened and counted in the presence of observers from all competing parties. The counting process cannot reveal how individual voters cast their ballots; • if the results are in doubt, the ballots can be checked and counted again by different people; • as far as the individual voter is concerned, he must be assured that the candidate he casts his vote for, actually gets that vote. ➤ Over the last few centuries, the system of paper ballots was developed that could meet all these six requirements. But the pattern of use of EVMs in the last few general elections in India does not meet the fifth and sixth requirements set out here. ➤ A "paper backup" or "paper trail" can be it incorporated in EVMs as is done in some countries. This "paper trail" procedure is meant to supplement the procedure of voting, as follows: "The EVM prints out a readable receipt, which is confirmed by the voter, who then deposits it in a ballot box on the way out of the booth, and which poll workers are monitoring. "If the election is later disputed, officials can optically scan these paper ballots or hand-count them." ➤ If the EVM is linked to the Unique Identity system being developed, and the EVM can check voters' biometric details before allowing them to vote, that will eliminate bogus voting as well. ➤ The official stand of the ECI is that EVMs are 100 per cent reliable and tamper-proof, that the functioning chips have their instructions indelibly burnt into them at the time of manufacture; that these chips are then "mother-sealed" into the EVM; and that this can never be altered. This claim is presented as an immaculate premise, a mantra requiring no proof thereof.

	• The field of hacking is continually developing. There is no position to counter the averment of international scholars that no electronic machine has been devised that cannot be rigged or hacked. • The ECI must agree to a paper receipt. If it cannot arrange that, we should return to ballot papers. Ballot papers are riggable at a 'retail' level; but with EVMs, an entire election can be stolen with a chip.

protecting whistleblowers
 	
Political
	• The Bill to protect whistleblowers (The Public Interest Disclosures and the Protection to Persons Making the Disclosures Bill 2010) is a welcome move to shield those who stand up for the sake of truth and the public interest.
	
	• Like other whistleblower laws around the world, the proposed legislation has two main aims:
	  • To protect the identity of those who call attention to corruption and misuse of power in an organisation, and
	  • To safeguard them against punitive disciplinary action. It empowers the CVC, which will have the powers of a civil court, to punish those who reveal the identity of whistleblowers.
	
	• The Bill has some limitations too.
	  • While the whistle may be blown on malpractices committed by employees of the central and State governments, and companies and societies controlled by them, the Bill does not extend confidential disclosures to the private sector as legislation in some other countries does. The United Kingdom's Public Disclosure Act 1988 extends "protected disclosures" to private and voluntary sector employees. In the United States, a slew of federal and state laws protect all employees who complain about economic malpractices as well as actions that affect the health and safety of individuals and the environment.
	  • Another drawback: while promising to protect the identity of whistleblowers, the Bill is vague about the measures needed to ensure this.
	  • Whether the new law will be much more effective than the existing government order in encouraging the public exposure of corruption and malpractice remains to be seen. But it is a step forward insofar as it stands up for acts of ethical resistance and for those courageous enough to risk paying a high personal price for speaking out.

From empowerment to growth with S&T (status of women in science) *Social*	• The First World Conference on Women in Mexico was held in Mexico in 1975 and its main theme was overcoming discrimination against women. It came out with the Declaration of Mexico on the Equity of Women and their contribution to development and peace. The Beijing Declaration that came out of the Fourth World Conference that was held two decades later described gender equality as "an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms." A decade later came three international reports on related issues. • The reports revealed a positive trend of increasing numbers of women entering the field of science and technology over the previous two decades. This applied to India as well but the gender gap is still huge and the facts speak for themselves. Of the 443 Indian

	scientists who received the prestigious Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar Award in the last half-century, only 10 were women. Only one woman has won this award so far in the Medicine category. As for the emerging future, the proportion of women students in India's top S&T educational institutions, the Indian Institutes of Technology is abysmally low. ➢ One major reason for the underrepresentation of women in science in India, apart from their dual roles in society as "homemaker and child-bearer," is the discrimination practised against them by men at home and in offices and labs as well.
Coping with online threats (cyber crime)(Information Technology -+Act) *Political*	➢ In one of the most shocking and sophisticated cyber attacks to date, hackers reportedly stole at least £675,000 from 3,000 online bank accounts in the United Kingdom recently, using a "Trojan" virus known as Zeus v.3 ,that is to be considered one of the most sophisticated types of malware programs created. ➢ India, as an international IT hub, needs to focus on the issue of cyber security and combating the dramatic rise of virus attacks and other cyber crimes. ➢ Over two million computers in India have been taken over by an external controller and are available to carry out attacks, including acts of cyber-terrorism. ➢ A report titled "Shadows in the Cloud: Investigating Cyber Espionage 2.0" published by two Canadian researchers , has revealed a sustained campaign of cyber attacks waged against India by China. ➢ The Canadian investigators found that the Internet spies had stolen classified documents from the Indian government and reports from Indian military analysts and corporations, as well as documents from agencies of the United Nations and governments. ➢ However, despite evidence of increasing cyber crime in India, the Information Technology Act, 2000, even as amended in February 2009, remains an outdated and insufficient tool to effectively protect the nation from a cyber onslaught. ➢ For example, the 2009 amendments to the Act introduced two provisions concerning offences listed in Section 43. One of these concerns destroying, deleting or altering any information residing in a computer resource or diminishing its value or utility or affecting it injuriously by any means. Another concerns stealing, concealing, destroying or altering or causing any person to steal, conceal, destroy or alter any computer source code used for a computer resource with an intention to cause damage. ➢ However, modern means of cyber warfare such as BOTNETS or key-loggers are not intended to destroy, delete or alter information residing in a computer resource or to steal computer source code. Instead, BOTNETS takes over a computer so that it can be used by an external controller. Modern cyber crime is not focussed on stealing source code or information in a computer but using the computer itself as the instrument to commit a crime. ➢ Another major tool of cyber warfare is key-loggers, which is a software program or device

	designed to monitor and log all keystrokes. The key-logger software/device scans computers and their processes and data the moment a person strikes a key on the keyboard. This information is carried over to an external controller. Key-loggers are intended not to steal source code or information but to record the data input into a computer, to be used for financial fraud.
	➢ Since the turn of the century, the Internet has become the space to be regulated, not computers. The IT Act needs to make a paradigm shift from earlier concerns regarding hacking of computers to steal source code and information to not only the modern Internet age but Web 2.0 where the weapons of cyber crime are intended to elicit information such as online banking passwords, PINs and other confidential information from consumers as and when users access their online accounts, and a Chinese cyber war against India that is already under way.
Changing face of Russia-Pakistan ties *International*	➢ For decades Russia-Pakistan relations had been poisoned, first by Pakistan siding with the United States in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, then by its providing the stage for Mujahideen operations against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan and later by providing the training ground for Chechen rebels. Russia-Pakistan relations continued to be defined by Moscow's ties with India. ➢ Sochi Summit, quadripartite summit of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan hosted by President Dmitry Medvedev at the Black Sea resort, was a turning point. ➢ The focus of the Sochi meeting was on the situation in Afghanistan. But it also provided an opportunity for Moscow to improve its relations with Islamabad. ➢ Mr. Medvedev's bilateral meeting with Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on the sidelines of the summit was marked by uncharacteristic warmth. ➢ Two main conclusions can be drawn from the Medvedev-Zardari meeting: • The Russian-Pakistani dialogue has, for the first time, been promoted to the level of Presidents; and • Moscow has overcome its reluctance to develop full-fledged relations with Islamabad. ➢ What has made the Moscow turnaround is the realisation that seeing Islamabad as part of the region's problems does not help to advance the Russian goal of playing a bigger role in the region. The Kremlin finally decided that Pakistan must be part of the solution. The format of four-way cooperation with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan should help Moscow prepare for the eventual pullback of the U.S.-led forces from Afghanistan: engage Pakistan, return to Afghanistan and tighten Russian hold over the former Soviet Central Asia. ➢ In Sochi, the new forum, which Mr. Medvedev described as "a working regional format," was institutionalised as a permanent arrangement, independent of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a defence bloc of former Soviet states focussed on Central Asia. The quartet announced that its next summit would take place in Dushanbe and that the foreign and economic ministers of the four countries would hold regular meetings as well. ➢ Russia agreed to join two long-planned regional infrastructure projects that would create

	energy and transport corridors from Central Asia to Pakistan across Afghanistan.
	➢ One project, CASA-1000 (Central Asia-South Asia), involves the export of electricity from power-rich Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan.
	➢ The other project is a motor road and a railway from Tajikistan to Pakistan across the Wakhan corridor in extreme northeast Afghanistan — a buffer the British created at the end of the 19th century between the Russian and British empires. The proposed transport link resurrecting the ancient Silk Road would be a strategic gain for the countries involved. Pakistan will receive direct access to the markets of Central Asia and Russia, while Tajikistan — and Russia — will get access to Pakistani ports.
	➢ The Sochi summit has dimmed India's hopes of gaining a strategic foothold in Tajikistan. India and Russia had planned to jointly use the Ayni airfield, which India helped to renovate, but Indian presence there looks doubtful now in the context of the emerging Russia-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan axis. India will, of course, remain Russia's close friend and strategic partner, but it will have to learn to live with the new Russian-Pakistani bonhomie, just as Russia has taken in its stride India's entanglement with the U.S.
South Asia beckons China *International*	➢ China's growing power and influence in the south asian region needs to be tackled in regional politics. The security of our region and its future will significantly depend on the choices that China makes.
	➢ Even if India fails to overtake China economically, it will nonetheless be the second-strongest regional power and will be the most serious constraint on Chinese power. That is to say, the manner and the directions in which India chooses to use its power is going to be no less important than China's actions in their impact on regional stability.
	➢ The heart of the matter is that a stable, peaceful South Asia can only be built if India works with China. The alternative will be war and mayhem and history provides many examples. The point is, there is a fundamental choice involved here — the choice between "influence" and stability. India and China are on the same side — both want influence and neither seeks instability.
	➢ The rise in China's influence in the region can lead to peace and regional stability provided we eschew outdated notions of "sphere of influence." On the contrary, a struggle will inevitably ensue if India chooses to contest China's growing influence since the quintessence of that choice will be that India is prepared to sacrifice peace and stability in the region in its quest for regional primacy. Our South Asian neighbours will only see our choice as a quest for regional hegemony.
	➢ China has already grown to be the second biggest economic power in the world. With such economic power, political and strategic power inexorably follows.
	➢ The fact that China has growing ambitions to develop communication links via South Asia to the world market or that China aspires to explore the vast untapped potential for regional trade and investment in South Asia do not make the Chinese policies

	illegitimate.
	➤ Therefore, instead of contesting for primacy in the region, India should seek to engage China in harmonious and mutually beneficial ways.
Only our fears can encircle us *International*	➤ India fears being choked by a strategic "String of Pearls" — a U.S. Defence Department term for China's ambitions for bases in the Indian Ocean Region. With Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and the Sittwe port in Myanmar, it would seem the string is slowly turning into a choke-chain for India. ➤ This fear could be most constructive if it ensures that India takes a closer look at its own role in the region, and why China is making headway with so many of our neighbours. ➤ While many in India would see these projects essentially as aid to a needy neighbour, it is time to see them, as ways of increasing our footprint and extending our ambitions to a sphere of influence well beyond our land mass. ➤ A bolder move, but one that would win many hearts is to consider lifting tariff and non-tarrif barriers and duties unilaterally in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region altogether. Suspend the reality of our relations with Pakistan for a moment to think about the impact of ending such protectionism in a year that has so devastated Pakistan's economy. According to estimates, the destruction of standing crops on two million hectares has virtually wiped out Pakistan's staple revenue from export of cotton, rice, and sugar. The country will be dependent on importing these for the next few years. With 77 million people likely to go hungry, and Pakistan's projected growth likely to fall by half to about two per cent, it is only natural that China's interventions in flood relief, rebuilding destroyed roads, schools and bridges, aid and trade will grow. ➤ Today, with sustained high economic growth rates … India is in a better position to offer a significant stake to our neighbours in our own prosperity and growth. ➤ Whether it's Mauritius or Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan or yes, Pakistan — these are countries with close cultural, linguistic, historic ties to India no other country can match. As a result, it shouldn't be possible for China or any other superpower to encircle a country like India. The only thing that encircles us is our fear that they will.
Building mobile health *Sc. & Tech.*	➤ Mobile wireless technologies have the potential to aid speedy disease detection, treatment, and monitoring in remote communities. When combined with the power of computers and special software, they can work in real time and enable interventions by health authorities to prevent communicable diseases from turning into epidemics. ➤ The experience gained from a two-year bio-surveillance programme in Tamil Nadu's Sivaganga district indicates that this elegant idea, of using mobile phones and computers to generate and analyse health data, can deliver good results.

	➢ The project, led by the Rural Technology and Business Incubator of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, and LIRNEasia, a Colombo-based ICT policy think tank, is worth studying as a model. Central to the initiative is a team of health workers, who used simple java-enabled mobile phones equipped with a custom application to record and transmit disease symptoms reported by patients. The combination of data and computer analysis mapped the disease patterns for health administrators who then worked on interventions. The Tamil Nadu trial, which will be scaled up to connect more secondary and tertiary care institutions, makes one thing clear: measurable public health benefits can flow if governments take greater interest in the emerging area of mHealth, or mobile health. ➢ In fact, the benefits can go beyond disease-tracking and extend to such areas as remote patient monitoring, health education, and creation of community-level health profiles.
China-Africa: Evaluating a growing partnership *International*	➢ China's relations with Africa cover all facets — political, defence, economic and other areas of cooperation. Shared perceptions on regional and international issues have been highlighted repeatedly. The growing China link has helped put a global focus on Africa. Similarly, relations with Africa help China to project itself as a global power. ➢ China-Africa trade, valued at $10 billion in 2000, shot up to $107 billion in 2008. China, to a large extent, imports minerals and crude oil, and exports manufactured goods. Currently, China imports over 20 per cent of its oil requirements from Africa. Over 1,600 Chinese companies have investment or an operational presence on the continent today ➢ The 'China in Africa' phenomenon has triggered conflicting reactions and assessments. Supporters have argued that China's approach is to promote mutual benefit and a balance of advantages. ➢ On the other hand, critics have argued that China is an 'exploitative' and 'extractive' mercantilist power with its own neo-colonialist inclinations. ➢ Perhaps the truth lies somewhere between the two positions. It may largely depend on how an African government manages to enhance benefits and reduce harmful effects. **The India angle** ➢ India's relations with Africa have been deeper, stronger and more substantive for long. ➢ However, in recent years, the gap between India's and China's profile in Africa has been widening, to our disadvantage. ➢ A balanced view indicates that India should leverage its many natural advantages and core strengths. ➢ It is time for India to enhance its engagement wisely and rapidly. A sustained combination of greater activism, sensitivity and synergy is essential.

Population ageing: an area of darkness *Social*	➤ Population ageing has emerged as the grand challenge of this century; for policymakers, care providers and society as a whole. ➤ India has joined the rank of "Greying nations" with over seven per cent of its population in the 60-plus years segment. A United Nations report has predicted that India will have 198 million 'Old' (60+) people in 2030 and 326 million in 2050. Currently, there could be around 100 million 'senior citizens' in India. **The problems** ➤ Studies have shown that elderly people in India suffer a double-whammy effect; the combined burden of both communicable (usually infectious) and non-communicable (usually chronic and lifestyle related) diseases. This is compounded by an impairment of special sensory functions like vision and hearing that decline with advancing age. ➤ It is also clear that disability and frailty accompany aging, especially after the seventh decade. **No safety net** ➤ The absence of a safety net for the elderly has exacerbated the problem. Traditionally, the joint family in India took care of its elderly. These traditional care arrangements have been lost in the context of rapid urbanisation and an exodus of people from rural to urban areas and from urban areas to foreign countries. ➤ In the absence of such community support in the form of kinsmen or the extended family, and an inability to continue to earn their living, the elderly are often rendered destitute, if not financially, from a pragmatic perspective. ➤ Insurance cover that is elder-sensitive is virtually non-existent. ➤ These problems demand and necessitate an urgent response from our policy makers. ➤ The Government India, supported actively by civil society, unveiled its National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) over 50 years after Independence. It proposed a role for the State in the elder care: health, shelter, financial security and protection against abuse. It recognised the need for affirmative action favouring the elderly. ➤ Unfortunately, a decade later, the NPOP awaits complete implementation in all States and Union Territories of India, much of its promise remaining unfulfilled, prompting the Government of India to seek its revision to suit contemporary needs. ➤ Discussions among civil society groups and concerned senior citizens in the run up to a re-organised NPOP, reveal many consensus points for the future organisation of elder health care. There is little doubt that the care of the elder must remain vested within the family unit and based within the community the elder resides in. Incentives for families that care for their elders are necessary; as are the development of community health-care resources; doctors, nurses and paramedics specialised in elder health care; and rehabilitation facilities for those with disability.

	➢ Providing health care that passes the "Five 'A' Test" (Availability, Affordability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Accountability) to such a large vulnerable group, is a challenge that has to be confronted. Insurance cover that is elder-sensitive is virtually non-existent.
	➢ There is need for sensitivity and sensibility in making these plans. The elder citizen is a national treasure; one who has contributed to both national growth and familial development. As they approach the autumn of their lives, they experience diminishing ability to generate income, increasing vulnerability to illness and disability, and increasing dependency on their families and communities. Rather than view this dependence as a burden to be endured, we must as a society embrace it whole-heartedly, as a pay back opportunity; to thank senior citizens for their many unconditional contributions. The organisation and delivery of elder health care must therefore be approached with enthusiasm, altruism and generosity. Mature health policy for the elder combined with a generous dose of pragmatism in organising, delivering and funding health care services is the need of the hour.
Reducing the risk of meltdown (Basel- III norms) *Economy*	**What are the Basel-III norms?** ➢ These are rules written by the Bank of International Settlement's Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) whose mandate is to define the reform agenda for the global banking community as a whole. The new rule prescribes how to assess risks, and how much capital to set aside for banks in keeping with their risk profile. **What are the changes which have been made to the way in which capital is defined?** ➢ Going by the new rules, the predominant component of capital is common equity and retained earnings. The new rules restrict inclusion of items such as deferred tax assets, mortgage-servicing rights and investments in financial institutions to no more than 15% of the common equity component. These rules aim to improve the quantity and quality of the capital. **What do these new rules say?** ➢ While the key capital ratio has been raised to 7% of risky assets, according to the new norms, Tier-I capital that includes common equity and perpetual preferred stock will be raised from 2-4.5% starting in phases from January 2013 to be completed by January 2015. In addition, banks will have to set aside another 2.5% as a contingency for future stress. Banks that fail to meet the buffer would be unable to pay dividends, though they will not be forced to raise cash. **How different is the approach now?** ➢ The new norms are based on renewed focus of central bankers on macro-prudential stability. The global financial crisis following the crisis in the US sub-prime market has

prompted this change in approach. The previous set of guidelines, popularly known as Basel II focused on macro-prudential regulation. In other words, global regulators are now focusing on financial stability of the system as a whole rather than micro regulation of any individual bank.

How will these norms impact Indian banks?

➢ According to RBI governor D Subbarao, Indian banks are not likely to be impacted by the new capital rules. At the end of June 30, 2010, the aggregate capital to risk-weighted assets ratio of the Indian banking system stood at 13.4%, of which Tier-I capital constituted 9.3%. As such, RBI does not expect our banking system to be significantly stretched in meeting the proposed new capital rules, both in terms of the overall capital requirement and the quality of capital. There may be some negative impact arising from shifting some deductions from Tier-I and Tier-II capital to common equity.

Doha: don't trade off women's rights (role of women in global economy) *Economy*	➢ The annual World Trade Organisation Public Forum on September 15-17 featured among its topics the role of women in reshaping the global economy as well as trade practices. It must now be taken and followed up with the seriousness it deserves in order to correct long-standing inequalities and promote both economic growth and human rights. ➢ Women's work accounts for two thirds of the world's working hours. However, they earn only 10 per cent of the world's income. ➢ Another troubling aspect of women's work in the global market — particularly migrant women's labour — is that it tends to be concentrated in informal sectors which expose them to a heightened risk of abuse, including low wages, long hours, and uncertainty of tenure. **Human Rights Law** ➢ To level the playing field, human rights law is of great guidance. Specifically, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sets the legal ground to promote and protect the rights of women in all spheres, including the economic field. To do so human rights law requires States to take positive measures in order to attain substantive and not merely formal equality between women and men. ➢ These principles and responsibilities also apply to intergovernmental organisations and agreements. In this perspective, the Doha round can and should incorporate all human rights, including the rights of women and accommodate their special needs, as well as take full advantage of their knowledge and skills. ➢ Progress must not merely be measured and assessed in terms of economic growth and volume of exchanges of goods and services, but also in terms of the impact such trade has on those who live at the margins of the global market and have no control over the invisible hands that shape their livelihoods. ➢ A rule-based international trade system must seek to correct these imbalances with

	specific rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches that empower women.
	➢ When it comes to essential elements of welfare, such as food, health care, and education, the international community and States cannot and should not leave the concerns of human welfare solely to market forces. Such welfare ultimately depends on not trading off women's rights.
Dead water zones *Sc. & Tech.*	➢ Levels of dissolved oxygen in the tropical oceans are dropping at a rate that threatens the survival of fish and other marine organisms. This reduction is seen off the coast as well as further away from the land where the water-depth exceeds 1,500 metres. The 'dead zones' off the coast are primarily the result of booms in phytoplankton growth due to nitrogen-rich fertilizers leaking from agricultural lands. If the incidence of hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen) has risen ten-fold globally in the past 50 years, the jump is nearly 30-fold in the case of the United States' coastal waters. The Pacific coast has witnessed a six-fold increase in the number of hypoxic sites in the last 20 years. A recent study ("Scientific assessment of hypoxia in U.S. coastal waters") by key U.S. federal agencies reveals that nearly half of the 650 waterways covered are experiencing hypoxic conditions. Particularly worrying is the reconfirmation of hypoxic condition in the waters off Oregon and Washington, the second largest hypoxic region in the U.S. and the third largest in the world. The inner continental-shelf waters off Oregon, which exhibit hypoxic conditions only during summer, have no nutrient supply. Climate change may be the cause, as warming reduces solubility of oxygen, thereby affecting the mixing of warmer surface water with deeper oxygen-deficient water. But a definite link cannot be established in the absence of long-time oxygen measurements. A news item published in Naturelast month has it that water at 50 metres depth off the Oregon coast was turning hypoxic as water above the oxygen minimum zone (OMZ) is "steadily losing oxygen." The OMZ, which is permanently oxygen-deprived and occurs naturally at a depth 600-1,200 metres, is slowly expanding vertically and extending towards the coast. ➢ The outcome in both dead zones — one caused by pollution and the other by hypoxic water, probably due to climate change — is a large-scale migration of fishes and other free-swimming marine organisms, and the death of bottom dwellers like crabs and starfish. Fish-kills happen when oxygen levels drop suddenly as reported in Oregon during certain years. Fish-kills or large-scale migration of fish can have enormous economic and ecological consequences. Since the effects of climate change cannot be reversed even in the mid-term, marine organisms can be saved only through immediate and drastic action to reduce the quantum of fertilizer leaking into the oceans. Strategies to reduce nutrient loading have proved successful in reducing the level of hypoxia in the Long Island Sound estuary, for instance.
Child abuse gets fair media attention *Social*	➢ Child abuse, as everyone knows, is by no means India-specific. Violence against children, sexual or otherwise, is practised in many countries, including the developed nations. The United Nations Organisation is also seized of the problem and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 after five decades of campaigning has been ratified, it has been remarked, "more quickly and by more governments (all except Somalia and the United States) than any other human rights instrument." Another notable feature of the Convention is that it is the one major international human rights treaty that has expressly given non-governmental organisations (NGOs) a role in

	monitoring its implementation. **Three Categories** ➢ Over the years, research on child abuse has identified three broad categories of child abuse — physical, sexual, and emotional plus the neglect of girl children on a scandalous scale. Research has also exploded many myths about the practice of child abuse and the background of its perpetrators. ➢ The National Study on Child Abuse by the Ministry of Women and Child Development notes that 19 per cent of the world's children live in India. ➢ A key finding of the national study is that children in the 5-12 age group have clearly emerged as the ones most exposed to the risks of being abused and exploited. ➢ As for physical abuse, two out of every three children are physically abused, according to the study. ➢ A shocking 88.6 per cent of the children, who are physically abused in family situations, were victims of parents. This explodes the general myth that parents are not the real perpetrators of abuse. Worryingly, many schools practised corporal punishment against boys and girls. ➢ In the case of sexual abuse, 53.22 per cent of children reported having faced one or more forms of it. ➢ Children on the streets, child labourers, and children under institutional care reported the highest incidence of sexual assault. In most cases, the victims do not inform their families about their plight. ➢ As for emotional abuse, every second child reported facing it, according to the national study. Both boys and girls suffer emotional abuse and in more than 80 per cent of the cases, parents were the abusers. The neglect of children by parents makes them vulnerable to child abuse. Harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, child labour, caste-based discrimination, son preference and the consequent neglect of the girl child, and lack of nutritious food have cumulatively deprived the women and children of India of the strength to protect themselves.
Dementia: a looming threat *Social*	➢ World Alzheimer's Day (September 21) was marked this year, in India, by the release of a comprehensive Dementia India Report. Prepared by national experts, converging under the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) umbrella, it estimates that there are 3.7 million elderly currently living with dementia in India. ➢ With the exponential increase in the population of the elderly (60+ years) in India, an estimated 100 million today, expected to rise 198 million in 2030 and 326 million in 2050, dementia poses a looming public health challenge.

What it is

➤ Dementia is a neuropsychiatric disorder in which memory and other cognitive functions like thought, comprehension, language, arithmetic, judgment and insight deteriorate progressively. While it increases in prevalence with advancing age, it is not a normal feature of ageing, a common misconception. Further, dementia is a clinical syndrome, one with many underlying causes, some potentially treatable.

What the Report Highlights

➤ The report highlights two areas of great import for dementia sufferers and their families: activities of daily living (ADL) an important measure of the human condition, and behavioural and psychological symptoms associated with dementia (BPSD), an important predictor of health related quality of life (HRQoL).

➤ It also lays stress on the importance of structured caregiver interventions as part of standard treatment including psycho-educational interventions for dementia; psychological therapies such as cognitive behaviour therapy, cognitive retraining and family and caregiver counselling; as also caregiver support and respite care.

➤ The report differentiates risk factors into those that are non-modifiable (genetic factors for example) and those that are potentially modifiable.

➤ It is important that policy makers recognise these factors as targets for both primary (early) and secondary (after the onset) risk factor prevention. It points to the low level of awareness about dementia as an important reason why diagnosis is delayed and public health consciousness remains poor. Worryingly, it observes that the lack of awareness extends to health professionals, formal training in dementia diagnosis and care not being a part of most medical, nursing and paramedical curricula; a matter of great concern needing immediate remediation. That stigmatisation of persons with dementia is rampant and that there is a need for raising awareness about the condition across segments of society is explicitly stated.

➤ The report concludes with several key recommendations. The most important of these are:
- Make dementia a national priority
- Increase funding for dementia research
- Increase awareness about dementia
- Improve dementia identification and care skills
- Develop community support mechanisms
- Guarantee caregiver support packages
- Develop comprehensive dementia care models
- Develop new national policies and legislation for people with dementia
- While these recommendations do address the need for dementia to be integrated into the National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP), they predominantly highlight the specific needs of dementia as a disabling and common condition among the elderly; one that can and will challenge Indian public health systems. However, the report acknowledges that dementia must be viewed in the context of other elder health

	problems, and within the framework of the NPOP.
A modest proposal on AFSPA **A law that's past its use - by date** *political*	➢ The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has come in for widespread criticism in Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur and other parts of the northeast because of the human rights abuses that have come to be associated with its operation. ➢ The Act suffers from two infirmities: the requirement of prior sanction for prosecution contained in Section 6 often comes in the way when questions arise about the lawfulness of particular actions. Second, AFSPA does not distinguish between a peaceful gathering of five or more persons (even if held in contravention of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code) and a violent mob. ➢ Section 6 says "no prosecution … shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the Central government, against any person in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act." ➢ In a democracy, this requirement of previous sanction should have no place. ➢ It is important to recognise that AFSPA does not give an officer the unqualified right to fire upon and cause the death of any person in a Disturbed Area. At a minimum, that person should have been carrying weapons or explosives. The shooting of an unarmed individual, and the killing of a person in custody, are not acts that are permissible under AFSPA. ➢ Whenever those killed have been armed insurgents or terrorists, there has been little or no public clamour against the Act. It is only when the armed forces violate the provisions of the law and indulge in the unlawful killing of persons — especially unarmed civilians — that voices get raised against AFSPA. ➢ Regardless of what specific statutes may authorise, the use of force in both international and municipal law is considered reasonable only when it satisfies the twin tests of necessity and proportionality. ➢ Now, in the wake of the resurgence of mass protest in the Kashmir valley, the central government has once again started making vague promises about amending AFSPA. The time to make these changes is now. Section 4 should be amended to explicitly incorporate the principles of necessity and proportionality and Section 6 must be changed to allow for the prosecution of illegal acts in all cases except where the government is able to convince the courts otherwise.
Kashmir needs a political package *Political*	➢ A long and drawn-out process of political dialogue without any time-bound commitments is unlikely to be accepted by Kashmiris; so the first step is to articulate a timeframe. A political solution to the Kashmir issue can be imagined as a multi-phased one, with measures relating to it being implemented in the immediate term, the intermediate term, and the long term. **Immediate measures**

	- In the immediate term, the government should put together a panel of senior Kashmir interlocutors. They should be asked to talk to a cross-section of Kashmiris, most importantly leaders of all dissident groups, in a sustained manner. The government should immediately review the status and consider releasing all political prisoners arrested under the draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, or AFSPA, and such other laws. The AFSPA should then be suitably amended or withdrawn. There also has to be a rethinking on the Disturbed Areas Act and the Public Safety Act. Thereafter, an empowered judicial commission should be tasked to probe all fake encounters and civilian deaths in J&K at the hands of the security forces. The commission must have a legal mandate to prosecute erring officers, both civilian and military. **Intermediate term** - In the intermediate term, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) should be set up in the State to help Kashmiris come to terms with their past and to advance the cause of justice and reconciliation. Both India and Kashmir need to make peace with each other and with their complicated past. The TRC can consider bringing out a white paper on the commission and prosecution of human rights violations in J&K over the years. However, the most important aspect of this political package should be the adherence to Article 370 of the Constitution in letter and spirit. - The Supreme Court clearly observed in its judgment in Khazan Chand vs the State of Jammu and Kashmir (1984), J&K "holds a special position in the constitutional set-up of our country." The Supreme Court further stated that Article 370 is the basis for a constitutional relationship between the Indian Union and J&K State. **For the long term** - A permanent solution to the Kashmir issue is unlikely to emerge without the involvement of Pakistan. In the longer term, therefore, there is a need to revisit the back-channel decisions reached by the two countries on Jammu and Kashmir that can be implemented in the State in consultation with the people of the State. Now that Pakistan has, at least theoretically, given up many of its puritanical and irredentist positions on Kashmir, India should capitalise on the opportunity to seek mutually agreeable positions on the issue. India should also encourage the establishment of enduring linkages across the Line of Control, consultative mechanisms, trade, and public interaction between the two sides of J&K. Various non-governmental initiatives must be encouraged to bring people from the two sides of the erstwhile princely state. People-to-people contact such as this should not be underrated: it can contribute immeasurably to resolving long-standing conflicts such as that in J&K.
Millennium Development Goals: challenges and the way ahead *Economy*	**The eight goals and the results** There is no doubt that the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and their framework of accountability have served the world well. They have not only provided a much-needed sense of direction to national plans and international cooperation, they have also delivered measurable results.

	> All around the world, we have seen efforts to achieve MDG-based targets improve the lives of millions of people. > However, we are still far from achieving what we set out to do. Too many people remain caught in extreme poverty, too many remain hungry and sick, too many mothers die in childbirth, and too many children still do not go to school. We are also not yet doing enough to meet basic needs and fulfil basic rights, to protect the environment, to build effective international partnerships for development, or to harness private entrepreneurship to deliver public goods and services to those in need. > The challenges are still great and the circumstances have not become any easier since the Millennium Summit. **Political will** > Revitalising the political will to achieve the MDGs, and scaling up proven interventions, is the linchpin to success. As instigator and guardian of the MDGs, the U.N. has an important role to play in this process and the High Level Advocacy Group created by Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon is a welcome step in the right direction. > The primary responsibility, however, rests with national leaders. Their challenge is to re-articulate a compelling case for global solidarity and equitable growth. One that embraces but goes beyond aid. One that addresses the growing inequalities between male and female, rural and urban, rich and poor. One that does not measure development and progress purely in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) but also of the quality and sustainability of growth. The message must be that the achievement of the MDGs is not optional, but an essential investment in a fairer, safer and more prosperous world.
Distribute, procure, store and sow (food security) *Economy*	> Among the steps needed to address concurrently the alleviation of hunger and safeguarding farmers' income, the following four need urgent attention: **Distribute the grains for which there is no safe storage facility:** • There are seriously disadvantaged sections of our population like orphans, street children, widows, old and infirm persons, pregnant women suffering from anaemia, children in the age group 0 to 2 belonging to poor families, and those affected by leprosy, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, who need to be provided with food free of cost. • Food losses due to poor storage should be measured both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Subject to such screening, foodgrains fit for human consumption are best distributed free among the most deprived sections throughout the country. **Procurement of Kharif Crops:** • Procurement at remunerative price is the key to keeping up farmers' interest in

	farming. Unlike the Right to Information Act which can be implemented with the help of files, the Right to Food can be implemented only with the help of farmers.
	Safe storage:
	• The storage can start in every village in the form of grain banks and rural godowns and extend to strategic locations (hunger hotspots) throughout the country. It is time we invested in a national grid of ultra-modern storage structures.
	Sow extensively during the rabi season:
	• Rabi pulses and oilseeds need particular attention from the point of view of choice of variety, soil health enhancement and plant protection. The aim should be to achieve a higher per-day and per-crop productivity so that even if there is a premature rise in night temperatures in March, yields do not go down.
	• It is to be hoped that the prevailing widespread interest in saving and sharing grains will lead to an effective "distribute, procure, store and sow" movement. Without this pre-requisite, it will be difficult to implement a legal right to food for all.
Food insecurity in urban India *Economy / Social*	➢ A large segment of the urban population faces food insecurity in terms of access to food. ➢ Rapid growth of the urban economy, largely unplanned, has also meant haphazard growth of urban centres and proliferation of urban slums lacking in basic amenities such as decent shelter, safe drinking water and toilets and sanitary facilities. This has implications for the absorption dimension of food security, since lack of safe drinking water and sanitation leads to poor biological utilisation of food and repeated episodes of morbidity. ➢ A recently completed study of urban food insecurity explores these issues through an exercise of constructing an Index of urban food insecurity for the major States. It is disappointing that urban economic growth has made little dent on urban food insecurity. **Points for Action** ➢ Expansion of productive and remunerative employment needs to be enabled through special assistance to the numerous small and tiny enterprises in the urban economy from credit to marketing support to infrastructure provision, along the lines suggested by the NCEUS. Based on an Urban Employment Guarantee Act, urban employment schemes can be designed and integrated in a synergistic manner with the need to improve urban amenities, especially in the small and medium towns. ➢ Urgent action is needed to improve access to safe drinking water and to toilets. Special attention needs to be paid in this regard to small and medium towns which happen to be most poorly provided for in this respect. ➢ The urban Public Distribution System must be made universal. However, it is important to recognise that the PDS is only a part of a comprehensive food security strategy. Policy must address hidden hunger. It must also address the special needs of the vulnerable sections such as street children, orphans, HIV-AIDS patients and so on through such

	initiatives as community kitchens. Designing and implementing a nutrition literacy movement across all urban centres will also be worthwhile.
	➤ Promotion of urban and peri-urban agriculture, especially horticulture, can make a vital contribution to food and nutrition security. It can also be a source of sustainable livelihoods. Issues of governance in urban food and nutrition programmes need to be addressed through, among other things, democratic decentralisation and local body capacity-building.
Getting social (social networking) *Social*	➤ If the Internet challenged information hierarchies with generativity — defined as the capacity of unrelated and unaccredited audiences to create and share content and code — social networking has set off the next wave of innovation. ➤ A constantly expanding web of people-to-people connections now exists, and it has profound implications for democracy. ➤ People are not merely connected to websites now, they have linked-up and are holding discussions. As governments recognise, it is not easy to confine information exchange to national borders. Citizens using mobile phones send out text messages, photos, and videos to friends and followers in far corners of the world on natural disasters, corrupt regimes, and anything else that interests them. In some cases, they provide the first report to newspapers and television stations, even governments, of extraordinary domestic events; lies are also quickly exposed. ➤ Despite privacy concerns, the membership of six-year-old Facebook, arguably the best-known face of social networking today, is 500 million plus. India, with some 15 million members and high mobile phone penetration, is sufficiently promising for Facebook to open an office in the country. ➤ Activists have used the social networking admirably to pursue issues as wide-ranging as cultural policing by Hindutva groups, the arrest of civil rights activist Binayak Sen, help for Darfur refugees, and cancer awareness. Twitter is often credited with doing even better, by quickly sending out crisp 140-character messages around the globe. ➤ Social media can achieve their full potential only when everyone has easy access to them. Open standards can help build several inter-connected platforms and strengthen social media. It must, however, be underscored that this evolution will depend heavily on the attitude of governments and the telecom networks. They must not erect censorship barriers or violate the principle of net neutrality, which ensures equality of access to all users.
Road safety: a public health challenge *Social*	➤ The high mortality and morbidity associated with road traffic injuries are a major public health challenge worldwide. Every year, road traffic crashes kill an estimated 1.2 million people. The figure for the injured is over 50 million. Significant increases in these estimates are projected over the next decade. However, the scale of individual tragedies rarely attracts media and world attention. ➤ Ninety per cent of such injuries occur in the developing world. India has had the dubious distinction of high rates and a steady increase in road fatalities over the past three decades. The poor and the vulnerable (pedestrians and cyclists) bear the brunt. The social and economic costs are massive and often difficult to quantify.

	➢ There is a basic lack of knowledge of road safety rules among users. Driving tests in India never examine the actual driving skills on regular roads. "Mirror-signal-manoeuvre" is unheard of, overtaking on the left is the norm and red traffic lights are considered suggestions rather than absolutes. Periodic tests for the safety of older vehicles and drivers are non-existent.
	➢ The design, construction and operation of different classes of roads lie with different government agencies, resulting in a fragmentation of responsibility. The rural-urban and the legislation-implementation divides, and the lack of coordination among different authorities result in road safety falling in no-man's land. This also results in a lack of accountability.
	THE WAY FORWARD
	➢ India needs to aim for safe and sustainable road systems. Road injury prevention requires effective management to put in place sustainable and evidence-based measures and overcome obstacles to implementing safe practices.
	➢ Road safety is a shared responsibility. It requires political will and administrative commitment from the government, industry, public works departments and law-enforcement and health agencies.
	➢ Non-governmental and community organisations can play an important role by highlighting the issues, studying local problems, educating and informing the general public and suggesting solutions.
	➢ A combination of legislation, enforcement of laws and education of road-users can significantly improve compliance with key safety rules, thereby reducing injuries. While strategies from developed countries can be adopted, there is also need to study the local context and implement relevant interventions and plans to improve road safety.
Building smart cities *Sc. & Tech.*	➢ Cities have much to gain by adopting Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and must earnestly harness the opportunities they provide, urged the recently held Global Informatisation Forum at the Shanghai World Expo 2010. The forum, hosted by two United Nations agencies and the Shanghai municipal government, spotlighted how cities with the help of ICT can deliver public utilities better, improve mobility, reduce the carbon footprint, and enhance public participation in governance.
	➢ Existing urban systems are unable to meet the complex demands of their burgeoning number of users. They often fall short of environment standards.
	➢ Countries such as Malta and Japan have proactively addressed these issues with the help of technology.
	➢ Malta opted for a smart grid system to manage power supply better. Unlike conventional grids, this bi-directional system allows consumers to get information about their energy use in real time. This enables them to make intelligent choices, regulate their consumption, and become energy-efficient. The utility companies too have optimised their power supply.
	➢ Tokyo has mobilised technology to help the visually impaired to move freely. The electronic tags and markers placed at strategic places in the city helped the disabled to navigate by using either a portable computing system or special white canes with embedded sensors.
	➢ How do Indian cities fare?
	➢ The use of technology is often limited to a few municipal functions such as issuing certificates

	and collecting property tax. Initiatives such as the National Urban Information Systems, which are meant to support urban planning with the help of GIS applications, have not progressed well. Despite the Eleventh Plan stressing the need for using technology to relieve congestion, improve safety, and enhance the productivity of the public transport system, not much has been accomplished.
	➤ The city mangers must quickly implement existing programmes and scale up the use of technology to improve all urban services. Urban policies often tend to be myopic: to them, building smart cities is about creating special enclaves with enhanced facilities for investment purposes. On the other hand, the experience of successful cities shows that the adoption of technology produces good outcomes when the city as a whole improves and the resulting benefits are shared equitably.
A sombre appraisal of water resources *Environment*	➤ In the Planning Commission's 11th mid-term appraisal report, Chapter 21 is devoted to Water Resources. Recognising that the problems in this area appear more serious than originally assessed, the appraisal calls for a holistic approach based on the science of the hydrologic cycle, to supplant the many different administrative compartments into which water management is currently divided. The salient findings of the report include the unsustainable depletion of groundwater caused by a progressive shift over the past decades from the use of surface water to more conveniently accessible groundwater; poor project formulation coupled with shortfalls in the Central government's support to enhance realisation of the irrigation potential; and the need for cautionary diligence before embarking on the ambitious project to interlink rivers. In conclusion, the report urges the implementation of the widely spelt remedial measures to protect water quantity and quality. It also recommends that rain-harvesting be enhanced, artificial recharge structures energised, water-use efficiency improved, and treatment and reclamation of urban waste water bettered.
	➤ Given a watershed or a river basin of appropriate scale of interest, a water budget allowing for evapo-transpiration and environmental flows, limits utilisable water to about 15 per cent of the total annual precipitation. This includes surface water and groundwater, including artificial recharge and rain-harvesting. Since surface water and groundwater are essentially components of the same resource, it would appear prudent not to separate them any longer. This notion is already central to the oft-declared conjunctive strategy of water management. Within the constraint of this water availability, we have to fit in all the extant water use and distribution structures — public, private, and cooperative — to optimise its use among the stake-holders. Deceptively simple in logic, this is a daunting, formidable challenge that confronts all segments of India's society, from the lay person to state functionaries and learned academies. The quality of their individual and collective responses to this fundamental issue will determine the quality of adaptation to the scenarios of severe scarcity that are unfolding.
	➤ India's vision for food security and economic security will be in jeopardy without the availability of stabilised water supplies over the coming years. For India's gifted and the bright, the most challenging future lies in advancing knowledge and understanding of the complex web of earth resource systems, water, land and the biological habitat through which matter and energy flow incessantly to restore equilibrium, and in the process, fashion the environment in which everyone lives and breathes. The task is formidable, but this is a challenge that India shares with many other countries. There are opportunities for creative thinking and breakthroughs that may enable India to provide world leadership. Much will depend on how the country's leadership, and those who help fashion policies, choose to act.

What India can bring to the high table (India in the Security Council) *International*	➢ India's election as a non-permanent member of the UNSC with the support of 187 of the world body's 192 member states provided an opportunity for the country to establish its credentials and credibility in handling issues which come up with a degree of responsibility. ➢ As the principal empowered organ of the U.N. system, the Security Council deals with questions of international security that are often intensely political. Since the end of the bipolar division of the world, the work of the Security Council has undergone a quantitative and qualitative transformation. Prior to 1990, the total number of resolutions passed by it over 45 years was 646. In the 20 years since then, however, a total of 1295 resolutions have been passed ➢ Even as its salience in international affairs has increased, the UNSC has been singularly unsuccessful in dealing with new and emerging crises like terrorism and piracy or resolving existing problems like the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Syrian territory. ➢ There is a structural problem with the Council which runs must deeper than the existence of veto power in the hands of the P-5. Today, despite the growing American ability to mobilise all permanent members behind its initiatives, as in the case of Iran and even North Korea, the UNSC has not managed to make much headway because it is unrepresentative and because the solutions it proposes lack credibility. ➢ If the non-permanent seat India has just won is indeed to become a stepping stone for a permanent seat, the Indian government work hard to demonstrate how a restructured Security Council built around the inclusion of rising powers like itself, Brazil and South Africa stands a better chance of solving the world's problems than the present outdated arrangement.
Fighting hunger *Economy*	➢ The Global Hunger Index 2010, (GHI) released by the International Food Policy Research Institute, reveals the disturbing fact that the number of hungry people in the world hovers around the one-billion mark. ➢ The messages from the GHI are quite discomforting. ➢ First, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia face either "extremely alarming" or "alarming" levels of hunger. ➢ Secondly, glittering economic growth rates do not mean a hunger-free nation; India, with its large economy and robust growth, is ranked among countries that face an "alarming" situation. ➢ Thirdly, nothing works like meaningful state-led intervention policies that directly address hunger; Brazil has improved its performance by more than 50 per cent between 1990 and 2010, thanks to effective state intervention. ➢ The GHI rightly identifies the high prevalence of "child under-nutrition as a major contribution to persistent hunger". Although past policies targeted children under the age of five, it is pointed out that the "window of opportunity" to improve nutrition is much shorter — the period spanning (-)9 months to (+)24 months (from conception to the second birthday). ➢ This observation should lead to a reordering of public policies to ensure that this crucial period is not missed out.

	- At a wider level, malnutrition is a consequence of multiple deprivations that call for action on related issues as well. For instance, a study earlier this year by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative showed that while 38.9 per cent of the poor in India were undernourished, they encountered severe deprivations in respect of other critical and related indicators as well: cooking fuel (52.2 per cent), drinking water (12 per cent) and sanitation (49.3 per cent). - Malnutrition cannot be tackled effectively as a stand-alone issue and what is needed is a comprehensive policy that addresses multiple deprivations. In addition, there is evidence from Brazil that well-conceived conditional cash transfer schemes help in reducing hunger. India must fine-tune its social sector programmes, including the conditional cash transfer schemes, to wage a successful battle against hunger.
Millennium development goals & India *Economy*	- The Millennium Development declaration was a visionary document, which sought partnership between rich and poor nations to make globalisation a force for good. Its signatories agreed to explicit goals on a specific timeline. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set ambitious targets for reducing hunger, poverty, infant and maternal mortality, for reversing the spread of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and giving children basic education by 2015. These also included gender equality, environmental sustainability and multisectoral and international partnerships. - The 10th anniversary of the declaration was used to review progress and suggest course corrections to meet the 2015 deadline. - While the declaration and the MDGs were a clarion call and mobilised many governments into concerted action, a review of the achievements to date and projections for 2015 suggest some success and much failure. Most rich nations failed to meet the targets on promised aid. While progress has been made, much more needs to be done. - The Government of India claims that the country is on track to meet the MDG targets by 2015. - It is, however, difficult to endorse the government's confidence and optimism. - While there is no doubt that the NRHM has made a positive impact on primary and secondary health systems, we need proof of improved functioning in addition to evidence of enhanced infrastructure and increased personnel. - Similarly, while enrolment rates have improved, the question of retention of girls in primary education is yet to be established, posing a threat to meeting the targets for universal education. - While the figures for hunger reduction look better, those for malnutrition in children suggest otherwise. - The figures for poverty reduction are contested. - Patriarchy is firmly established and shows little signs of change, especially in rural India, making gender equality and justice elusive. - Many reports suggest that environmental sustainability of many development projects is not adequately evaluated. - Periodic assessments of specific outputs required to meet the MDGs are necessary

	rather than highlighting of new inputs. The many new schemes need to audit their actual, rather than their presumed, impact.
	➢ This demands a more detailed assessment of the impact of the many schemes introduced rather than the use of only input variables to predict MDG outputs.
Why we need GM labelling *Agriculture/Food*	➢ Our right to know includes the right to know what we eat. We live in a transgenic age, in which it is no longer sufficient for food labelling to list only such things as nutritional values, chemical additives, and possible allergens. Although there is no evidence that approved genetically modified food is unsafe for human consumption, people have the right to choose not to eat it for ideological, ethical, or other reasons.
	➢ Informed consumer choice demands that a mechanism for mandatory labelling of GM foods is put in place.
	➢ In India, the issue assumes significance with the possible commercial release of the country's first transgenic food crop, Bt brinjal, which has been placed under an indefinite, open-ended moratorium.
	➢ Although Bt cotton, approved for commercialisation in 2002, is not a food crop, it is well known that cotton oil produced from these transgenic plants is used as a cooking medium in many areas.
	➢ Moreover, the lack of a proper labelling regime has resulted in the import of processed foods made from genetically modified material.
	➢ At a time when the European Union and countries such as Australia, Japan, and China have mandatory labelling requirements of GM foods, which require food processors, retailers, and sometimes producers to display whether their products contain genetically engineered material, it is strange that India has not enforced a strict labelling regime. This despite Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issuing rules in 2006 to include compulsory GM labelling in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules 1955.
	➢ Not surprisingly, the lobby against the mandatory labelling of GM foods is led by companies such as Monsanto. One of the world's leading transgenic seed producers, it pioneered the beneficial introduction of Bt cotton into India and awaits clearance for Bt brinjal, which it co-developed with the Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (Mahyco). Claiming unconvincingly that mandatory labelling would put a huge burden on regulatory agencies, the lobby piously declares it has no objection to voluntary labelling, under which companies would be free to declare their products to be GM-free. Such a voluntary regime is likely to strangulate consumer choice as many companies are likely to prefer staying clear of the attendant risks and liabilities of going in for GM-free certification.
	➢ Leaving GM labelling to the whims and fancies of food processors, packagers, and retailers would compromise one of the basic principles behind the demand for mandatory certification — offering consumers a clear-cut choice. Anything less than mandatory GM labelling is an unacceptable compromise of the public's right to know what it consumes.

Rescuing biodiversity *Environment*	➢ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was drafted in 1992 to stem the decline of biodiversity. It entered into force a year later with the avowed aim of significantly reducing loss of species and even using them where compatible to alleviate poverty. But nearly two decades later, the treaty has largely failed to meet its targets. ➢ There is now another opportunity available to make it work. The parties to the CBD are holding their 10th conference in the Japanese city of Nagoya and with sufficient political will they can reverse the tide of species losses. ➢ The key to conservation is to recognise the role of nature in providing ecosystem goods such as fodder, fibre, genetic resources, fresh water, and services such as cleansing of air, nutrient flow, erosion prevention, flood control, pollination, and disease regulation. That this economic dimension of nature is being increasingly accepted the world over is heartening. ➢ India is also focussed on growth, but it needs to do more for ecosystems facing the onslaught of poorly planned development. It must begin by showing genuine recognition of nature's value. ➢ National development policy cannot afford to ignore the central role played by biodiversity. ➢ At the global level, the CBD has the opportunity once again to arrive at a consensus on sustainable use of plant diversity. Such an agreement will help local communities access and benefit from use of invaluable genetic resources. ➢ The ethical imperative to save the world's species is to restrict consumption of all natural resources to a sustainable level and allow for natural renewal.
Landmark achievement (census of marine life) *Environment*	➢ The first-ever Census of Marine Life (CoML), a mammoth decade-long exercise involving more than 2,700 scientists from over 80 countries, has been successfully completed. The painstaking research has unearthed nearly 250,000 marine species out of an estimated one million. About 6,000 new species have also been discovered. The landmark exercise marks a remarkable beginning in identifying and mapping the diversity, distribution, and abundance of marine organisms. ➢ While ten marine hotspots were identified, including one in the Indian Ocean, many biodiversity hotspots await detailed investigation. This is because the oceans cover 75 per cent of the earth's surface, and investigating their surface and depths requires tremendous scientific expertise and huge investments. ➢ The CoML provides an ideal platform for incorporating diverse inputs from future studies to help us understand the big picture. It will also serve as the baseline for evaluating the future impact of human intervention on sea animals. ➢ The CoML facilitated the use of diverse technologies on a large scale, technologies that are of continuing use. For instance, there are special sonar devices which allow us to see how marine life assemble in schools and move both vertically and laterally over thousands of square kilometres. Thanks to the use of modern techniques, scientists were also able to have a glimpse of the hitherto unknown world of marine animals. ➢ One finding of the study which is a cause for concern is that the fate of many animals living in easily accessible habitats appears gloomy. Large fishes and marine mammals like sea turtles and tuna have declined by 90 per cent on an average due to over-fishing

	and/or pollution.
	➢ Apart from being an invaluable source of food, the oceans produce 70 per cent of oxygen present in the atmosphere, and also absorb one-third of global carbon dioxide emissions. All these are warning signs that oceans, the lifeline for all things living on earth, may well turn into a watery grave if damage to marine life continues unabated.
The plight of Dalits *Social*	➢ In a country in which a substantial section of the people, accounting for one-fifth of the population and segregated for centuries, remain poor, ill-treated, humiliated, and discriminated against, state intervention is the only antidote even after six decades of democratic governance under a republican Constitution. A major concern for the state is how to address the alarmingly rising unemployment among this section of society. ➢ The Constitution provided for reservation in education and government employment for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their share in the population. This provision was made as part of the social strategy of affirmative action (or positive discrimination) to offset extreme historical discrimination and social oppression. ➢ If reservation, despite its existence for over 60 years, has failed to improve the lot of Dalits, the fault is to be seen not in the reservation system, but in the tardy way it has been implemented by the state. ➢ While reservation has benefitted Dalits in general, it has not done much to elevate the majority of them to any higher position in society, mostly because of the state's failure on other fronts such as education and public health. **TIME FOR ANOTHER INITIATIVE** ➢ It is in this context the NCSC Chairman P.L.Punia has called for extending reservation for Dalits to the private sector. ➢ The government needs to remind private entrepreneurs, domestic and foreign, that they have a historic responsibility to help the state implement its social commitments. ➢ The second item on the agenda of the NCSC is to get the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan, which provides for each Ministry to allot special funds from its annual budget allocation for the benefit of Dalists, in proportion to their share in the population. The scheme, introduced in the early 1980s, has not been properly implemented for three decades. The Ministries are often charged with diverting funds under this head to other purposes. ➢ The news media can make a real difference by bringing a new focus on the issues of reservation and the Sub-Plan. In addition to exposing atrocities against Dalits, the press, television, and radio should investigate systemic oppression, exploitation, and discrimination in greater depth.
Abolish the death penalty *Social*	➢ Britain's campaign to see capital punishment abolished globally and its pledge to exercise moral leadership on this issue reflects a long standing philosophical commitment to this doctrine. ➢ The strategy is to get the hardline states to reduce the number of offences that attract this penalty, while encouraging incremental steps towards a total abolition. These include refraining from executing juveniles, pregnant women and the insane, besides guaranteeing the right to fair trial, appeal, and seek a pardon or commutation.

	➢ In addition, pressure will be mounted on the United Nations for getting another resolution passed by the General Assembly on global moratorium.
	➢ Over the past decade, 22 countries have scrapped this ultimate punishment with the number of abolitionist states now standing at 95 including the entire European continent except Belarus.
	➢ Retentionist countries are down to 58, but impressive changes have been recorded here too.
	➢ In China, the Supreme People's Court now requires this harshest penalty to be issued only in extreme cases, and death by firing squads is soon to be replaced by lethal injection.
	➢ In the United States, the Supreme Court is to rule on the constitutionality of lethal injection in the context of the 8th Amendment. Some 35 countries have imposed a moratorium on executions.
	➢ Russia represents an outstanding example; the constitutional court having indefinitely extended in 2009 the freeze on carrying out sentences.
	➢ As for India, a declaration of a moratorium would be a realistic next step after the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in 1980 that a death sentence can be given only if the alternative of a life sentence is unquestionably foreclosed. Vigorous steps need to be taken to lay out a global consensus on the elimination of the death penalty from the statute books of nations.
Universal social security *Economy*	➢ One far-reaching outcome of the recent global economic downturn is the reiteration of the continued importance of the state as a protector of the labour force.
	➢ The proposal by the International Labour Organisation and the World Health Organisation for a United Nations Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative, which has been in the making for over a year, is a vital intervention.
	➢ The global social security floor comprises four elements: - universal child benefits; - universal access to essential health services; - modest financial relief for the working poor ; and - basic tax-financed pensions for the old, the disabled and those who have lost the main breadwinner in family.
	➢ Today's a mere 20 per cent of the world's population has adequate social security protection, with the advanced economies having the lion's share of this coverage.
	➢ Europe, at 25 per cent of GDP, has the highest level of social security expenditure, and Africa a meagre 4.3 per cent.
	➢ Experience from the developing world reflects two massive failures.
	➢ One is reliance on the 'trickle-down' effect.
	➢ The other is that social security measures in these countries, mainly colonial in origin, were until recently designed to cater largely to the formal workforce.

	➢ The changeover to universal social security in their case demands three things. • First, ensure universal provision of a set of basic services. • Secondly, see to it that those who are economically active but fall into adversity are cushioned from slipping into poverty. • Thirdly, support — through social transfers — those who are not at an economically productive stage. ➢ There have been some recent signs of change, although piecemeal, across the developing world. Schemes such as India's National Old-Age Pension Scheme, Brazil's Bolsa Familia, and Mexico's Oportunidades are examples of building blocks that can be used to create effective social protection systems. The challenge now is for states to re-configure their public finances and win political support to put in place a basic floor below which their residents do not fall.
IBSA: talking shop or powerhouse? *International*	➢ Recently, the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum received positive attention on two counts. The IBSA Fund, which extends assistance to developing countries, won the 2010 United Nations Millennium Development Goals award for South-South cooperation. A second maritime exercise, IBSAMAR II, was held in the Indian Ocean off the South African coast, involving 11 ships of three member-states. ➢ IBSA's identity stems from its uniqueness, the ability of the three large countries — all democracies, rising economies, proponents of inclusive development and multilateralism — from three different continents to work together, despite their obvious differences. Its success lies in broadening its convergences and cooperation. IBSA is an alliance not against anyone but in favour of peoples; it is also in favour of a multipolar world where democracy — political, social, cultural — prevails. **Key facets** IBSA needs to be assessed in terms of four important facets. ➢ The first is coordination and articulation of common positions on international and regional issues. The joint declaration, issued at the last Summit in Brasilia in April 2010, reflects the member-states' perceptions of global governance, social dimensions of globalisation, climate change, disarmament and non-proliferation, among others. On U.N. Security Council reform, they have tried to speak with one voice, while keeping in view South Africa's dilemma (between an ardent desire for permanent membership and the anxiety not to stray from the joint African position). Regarding the Doha Round and climate change, IBSA prefers to speak after adequate internal coordination. ➢ Secondly, the IBSA Fund, a facility for alleviation of poverty and hunger, has been a notable achievement. ➢ So far, seven countries — Burundi, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Laos, Cambodia and Palestine — have benefited from it. If IBSA truly wants to make a difference, it should step up its assistance, expedite its decision-making and undertake more projects. ➢ The third facet, trilateral cooperation, has been perceived from the outset as "an important tool" for promoting social and economic development. ➢ At the Brasilia meeting in 2003, the Foreign Ministers identified five broad areas: trade, investment, tourism, defence and science and technology (including IT and energy). ➢ In this context, trade should receive a high priority as a complex structure is being put in

	place. The first two stages have been reached, with the signing of the Sacu-Mercosur Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and the coming into effect of the India-Mercosur PTA in April and June 2009. Efforts to finalise an India-Sacu PTA need to be expedited.
	➢ The way is being cleared for forging a Trilateral Trade Arrangement (TTA) involving Mercosur, Sacu and India. This is already being hailed as "the largest trade agreement in the developing world" of future.
	➢ Energy has often been cited as an ideal field where each country has special expertise which is of benefit to others: Brazil in biofuels, South Africa in coal-to-liquid (CTL) technology, and India in renewable sources of energy.
	➢ The fourth facet is a steady expansion of interaction beyond the executive wings — and indeed beyond governments. Meetings have been arranged of parliamentarians and representatives of apex courts. Business leaders, women activists, editors, academics and artistes have been engaged in frequent exchanges in order to provide a strong civil society underpinning to IBSA inter-governmental cooperation.
The great subcontinental green game *International/Environment*	➢ At the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Thimphu, Bhutan, this year, South Asia nations agreed on a 16-point action plan, including measures like planting 10 million trees in the next five years and setting up inter-governmental marine, mountain and monsoon initiatives.
	➢ The urgency of the situation, particularly the prospect of thousands of 'climate refugees' being forced out of their homes, requires India to lead the way as the subcontinent comes to grips with global warming.
	➢ Two recent projects may serve as role models — the first is an initiative to save the Sunderbans. Earlier this year, India and Bangladesh decided to set up the Sundarbans Eco-System Forum to protect the 10,000 sq.km of mangroves that span both countries.
	➢ While India and Bangladesh have spent much of this year ironing out their differences over terror groups, trade barriers and border fencing, they can and must take quicker strides on an issue like joint management of the mangroves before 75 per cent of them disappear, as is predicted by the university survey.
	➢ A similar concern led India to join hands with China and Nepal this year to agree on a framework, the Kailash Sacred Landscape initiative, to conserve the ecosystem of Mount Kailash.
	➢ The melting Siachen glacier is another border-transcending issue. After the devastating floods in Pakistan this year, there is much that India and Pakistan can share on managing river systems.
	➢ Water Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf acknowledged that India had addressed all Pakistan's concerns like the Nimmo Bazgo and Chutak hydel projects on the Indus and Uri-II on the Jhelum, even as the third dispute, over the Kishanganga project was headed for international arbitration.
	➢ Environmental negotiations give India and China an opportunity to work on their otherwise tricky relationship.
	➢ The changing environment offers India new avenues to forge ties within the neighbourhood and beyond, as it claims its position both as a subcontinental leader and Asian power. Perhaps the big push will come with the Environment and External Affairs Ministries working in tandem: because climate change, like terror, cyber warfare and other 21st Century threats to the world, knows no boundaries.

Repackaging mental health programmes *Social*	➢ The World Health Organisation (WHO) incorporated mental health into primary health care in low and middle-income countries in the 1970s. The WHO expert committee reports, their multinational collaborative community care projects, and the Alma Ata Declaration of "Health for all by 2000" formed the platform for launching national mental health programmes. ➢ India accepted the need for community care and proposed the National Mental Health Programme in 1982. The programme aimed at ensuring the availability and accessibility of minimum mental health care. ➢ The shortage of mental health professionals demanded that its principal strategy be to integrate and deliver mental health care through the primary health care system. Despite good intentions, the programme failed to deliver. The complete lack of estimates of cost and the absence of a provision of budgetary support were important contributors to its failure. ➢ The national programme was restructured in 2003, with clearly specified budgetary allocations. The funding increased from Rs.28 crore during the Ninth Plan to over Rs.400 crore in the Eleventh Plan. However, only a small fraction of the monies allocated in the Five-Year Plans has been utilised. **MENTAL HEALTH GAP ACTION PROGRAM** ➢ The WHO's new mental health Gap Action Program (mhGAP) is the latest in a series of repackaged solutions to bridge the huge gap between the burden of mental illness and the delivery of mental health care. ➢ The core strategies identified by the programme are information, policy and service development, advocacy, and research. Small-scale research projects, which work well in ideal Third World settings, are projected as solutions for national programmes in poor countries. Governments are again being exhorted to implement the integration of mental health care into the primary care delivery system. **THE WAY FORWARD** ➢ The goal of mental health for all, a socialistic ideal struggling in today's capitalistic world, demands a reappraisal of past programmes. ➢ Medical education needs to be skill-based to produce competent practitioners. The strengthening of the general health infrastructure, to improve primary health care delivery, is mandatory for the effective integration of mental health into primary care practice. ➢ Leadership from politicians, administrators, health and mental health professionals is crucial. ➢ The changed reality in India demands new technical inputs, including the use of the private sector. Educating the population about mental illness using the mass media will erase stigma and increase the demand for services. ➢ The availability of effective and affordable treatments and improved national finances have not closed the gap between mental health need and services. A "HIV/AIDS model" of activism, where users, families, interest groups, health professionals and scientists come together with the single aim of service provision, is required for transformation.

| Deprivation and disparities

Social/Economy | ➢ India has failed miserably in its efforts to alleviate poverty and create a more equal society. The Arjun Sengupta Committee concluded that some 77 per cent of Indians live on less than Rs.20 a day. According to the Global Hunger Index compiled by the International Food Policy Research Institute, India ranks 67 among 88 developing countries. In the course of economic growth the disparities have widened.

➢ The framers of the Sixth Plan correctly identified three cardinal failures of Indian planning. These were: the failure to achieve full employment, the failure to eradicate poverty and the failure to create a more equal society. Then the planners proceeded to spell out a strategy for the drastic reduction of poverty. The essential elements of that strategy were enlarged employment opportunities in industry and agriculture, a minimum-needs programme aimed to improve the living conditions of the poor and a few measures aimed to reduce disparities in income and wealth.

➢ However, the measures suggested to solve the problem proved to be inadequate. With the liberalisation of the economy in the mid-1990s there has, of course, been a marked increase in the annual rate of growth of GDP but without any impact on the incidence of poverty. If anything, economic disparities have widened.

11th Plan initiatives
➢ In the context of the political conditions prevailing in India, it is unrealistic to expect any radical measures being adopted. The only feasible approach is to augment employment opportunities, provide easy access to quality school education and healthcare, and operate a universal public distribution system guaranteeing monthly supply of foodgrains at subsidised prices to the poor. And this is what the 11th plan initiatives offer.

➢ The three new measures capable of making a dent on poverty are the NREGA (now rechristened MGNREGA), the Right to Education Act and the proposed right to food legislation. If some glaring inadequacies in these schemes are rectified and they are properly implemented, the poor will get considerable relief. |
| A new target

International/Environment | ➢ The 'Aichi Target' adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at its Nagoya conference has come at an appropriate time.

➢ The journal Science recently published a study by Michael Hoffmann and his colleagues titled "The Impact of Conservation on the Status of the World's Vertebrates." This presents depressing data on threatened species.

➢ The scientists conclude that four important factors — agricultural expansion, logging, over-exploitation, and invasive species — are pushing an increasing number of vertebrates towards extinction; every year, 52 mammals, birds, and amphibians are moving one category closer to extinction, adding to the existing list.

➢ The growing body of evidence should convince the 193 members of the CBD to take their goals seriously and draw up sound national biodiversity plans by 2012, the target year for implementation. It will take a lot of political will and funding to achieve the task, but the alternative is to impoverish the natural world and endanger human well being.
➢ Japan has set the pace for conservation by creating a $2 billion fund for the key 'Aichi Target' of halving the rate of biodiversity loss.

➢ It must be borne in mind that the CBD has admitted to failing in its original goal, which was to reduce loss of biodiversity significantly by 2010.

➢ The members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development have |

	been donating much more for climate change mitigation projects than for biodiversity conservation.
	➤ This pattern makes it clear that the two environmental priorities have to be aligned more closely to make progress with the ten-year strategic plan finalised in Nagoya.
	➤ In the Indian context, biodiversity concerns have been generally relegated to the background during the Environmental Impact Assessment process for land use change. This is particularly the case when the projects are small. Moreover, the EIA is often conducted by agencies that collect no original data on biological diversity to back their reports. India's performance in this area will be under the spotlight when the CBD meets in New Delhi in 2012.
Historic agreement on the High North *International/Environment*	➤ Russian Federation and Norway signed a bilateral treaty concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean. ➤ The High North is one of the world's most resourceful, yet most vulnerable regions. ➤ The recent treaty between Norway and Russia establishes a maritime delimitation line that divides a previously disputed area of about 1,75,000 sq.km, potentially rich in natural resources. ➤ After over 40 years of negotiations, the agreement exhibits the way peace and collective interests can be served through the implementation of the international rule of law. ➤ The agreement might inspire other countries in their ongoing attempts to resolve their maritime boundary issues through diplomatic channels. ➤ The agreement opens up for cooperation in a vast amount of areas, subjects that range from scientific cooperation to maritime safety to common environmental standards. ➤ Only through international cooperation can we protect the vulnerable Arctic climate, and in a responsible way exploit the vast resources emerging as a consequence of the receding ice cap. In polar research and glaciology, reference is often made to the three poles, the Arctic, the Antarctic and the Himalayas. To combat global problems, cooperation in research and technology is imperative. Shared knowledge will benefit us in the High North, as well as in the Himalayas. ➤ Norway sincerely appreciates the Indian contributions to polar research and arctic issues. India has a long and important history in international research cooperation, including polar research. In 2008, the Himadri research station in Svalbard was inaugurated. ➤ The Indian contributions manifested by political interest and by the massive expansion of research cooperation between two countries is highly appreciated by Norway. In November, the Norwegian government along with the Norwegian Polar Research Institute will organise a Polar Seminar in New Delhi.
Developing heritage cities *Culture*	➤ UNESCO's move to create Indian Heritage Cities Network (IHCN), a programme to recover the heritage value of cities is a commendable initiative. ➤ So far, city development and investment plans have bypassed integrating heritage conservation with urban development. For instance, the Master Plan for Varanasi (1991-2011), one of the ancient cities with a unique urban design and impressive river-front architecture, has designated only two per cent of the land under use as heritage area. The emphasis is always on the new areas. As a result, the peripheries develop rapidly,

	leaving the old urban core to struggle for even basic services. A case in point is the walled city of Delhi, Shahjahanabad, now a notified slum with crumbling house stocks.
	➢ The IHCN decision to work actively with the local bodies to reinvent old cities as worthy places of living is an effective strategy. However, this partnership should go beyond producing conventional development plans that mainly address aesthetic concerns.
	➢ The priority should be to improve the housing stock and the urban services without affecting the stakes of the less-privileged inhabitants.
	➢ Another challenge would be to fund residents to retrofit their old houses.
	➢ Targeted credit with affordable interest rates and allowing for limited commercial use in housing area could be other ways of mobilising funds. Redeveloping old cities without impairing their historic significance may appear challenging but, as experience elsewhere shows, it is eminently feasible.
Structural change and inequality *International/socio -economic*	➢ One important indicator of the effectiveness of economic policy is the manner in which it alters the basic socioeconomic structure of a country. Some 20 years after many of the economies of the world changed track — moving away from an active economic role for states towards liberalisation and globalisation — there is evidence that economic growth, on its own, does not reduce poverty or inequalities. This is clear from a report by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).
	➢ A basic attribute of economic growth is the movement of labour force, typically, from the primary sector to the secondary, and then to the tertiary sector. But the trend now is to work for faster growth through the tertiary sector, bypassing the all-important manufacturing sector.
	➢ For a country that embarks upon economic reforms, it is also imperative to put in place adequate institutional support, by way of social policy, so that the transitory process triggered by a smaller role for the state as employment provider does not affect the well-being of its workforce.
	➢ The report, "Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy and Politics," makes it clear that many countries are not doing enough to create productive employment during the structural adjustment process.
	➢ The message is that the current approaches to eliminating poverty are unlikely to deliver results as they emphasise macro-stabilisation. For instance, the insistence on fiscal discipline relegates social concerns to the level of by-products of policymaking.
	➢ Specifically, in pursuit of fiscal prudence, governments in many developing countries place less emphasis on universalising social protection, and go for targeted measures, which suffer from a serious shortfall — it relates to the state's limited capacity to ensure full coverage of the target group.
	➢ Moreover, macro-stabilisation policies mean a shrinking public sector and increasing reliance on market forces.
	➢ The situation warrants a transitory process that emphasises employment-growth, accompanied by active state-backed social policies. For instance, the manner in which the East Asian economies managed their structural change — with an emphasis on the manufacturing sector, backed by social structures — proved effective in achieving higher growth while narrowing inequalities.

	➢ The over-arching message from the report, which is important at a time when the global targets for poverty reduction appear elusive, is this: poverty and inequality are too serious issues to be left to the markets.

Fulbright Programme: fostering Indo-U.S. ties
 	
International
	➢ The Indo-U.S. relationship has been sustained and enhanced over the years by the exchange of students and scholars through initiatives like the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship Programme.
	
	➢ The United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) was one of the first bi-national commissions established to run the Fulbright Programme. Since its inception 60 years ago, USIEF has given out over 17,000 Fulbright awards in a wide range of academic disciplines.
	
	➢ On July 4, 2008, the U.S. and India signed a historic new Fulbright agreement making India a full partner with the United States in the governance and funding of the Fulbright Programme. To reflect this new partnership, USIEF now awards Fulbright-Nehru scholarships. The new agreement also permits private sector support for the programme, which offers great potential for future growth.
	
	➢ USIEF offers grants for leadership development in three main sectors:
	   • Research, both at the pre-doctoral and post-doctoral level, in wide-ranging disciplines significant to India and the U.S.
	
	   • Lecturing to promote mutual understanding in area studies (both American and Indian) as well as on contemporary issues relevant to the U.S. and India.
	
	   • Professional development training in emerging areas of importance to India such as environmental studies and management.
	➢ One of the founding principals of the USIEF is that when Indians and Americans study together, conduct joint research and engage in educational exchange activities, they are laying the foundation for better relations between the U.S. and India.
	
	➢ This belief in the power of people-to-people exchanges is shared by both governments, who continue to invest in their long-term relationship by supporting programmes like the Fulbright-Nehru scholarships and the Obama Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative.

Assessing development *International/socio-economic*	➢ Twenty years is a good enough time to assess how countries of the world, irrespective of the economic or political system they follow, have performed in promoting human development. ➢ Successive Human Development Reports (HDR), since 1990, have mainstreamed health and education as critical indicators of human progress and contributed to international policy structures. For instance, the Millennium Development Goals, aimed at using international financial resources to reduce global poverty, can be traced to the HDR-1991 on financing development. ➢ Significantly, this year's HDR has made long-term innovations in measuring development. ➢ First, it reconfigures its indicators on literacy and income. ➢ Replacing 'gross enrolment' and 'adult literacy rates' with 'expected years of schooling' and 'mean years of schooling' makes for a deeper understanding of this important socioeconomic attribute, particularly as literacy rates, which are rising around the world,

	could gloss over structural weaknesses.
	➢ Replacing 'Gross Domestic Product' with 'Gross National Income', which includes international income flows, would bring in a fresh perspective on an economy's standing, particularly in the current globalising context of a country's poverty reduction programmes.
	➢ Secondly, HDR-2010 introduces three indices — the Multidimensional Poverty Index, the Gender Inequality Index and the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index — aimed at gaining a deeper appreciation of a country's development path.
	➢ The 2010 Report, The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development, comes as a timely reality check on India's global standing.
	➢ It shows that, despite recording a phenomenal economic growth recently, India continues to remain in the bottom-50 on human development — it is placed at 119 out of 169.
	➢ The report points to critical social failures.
	➢ Its new indicators on education tell the story of how rising literacy rates are no cause for comfort. The 'mean years of schooling' is only 4.4, compared to the global figure of 7.4; and the 'expected years of schooling' of 10.3 is short of the global average of 12.3. These are particularly important pointers at a time when India prepares to give its children the right to free and compulsory education.
	➢ At a theoretical level, it is noteworthy that the report finds a "weak long-term association" between income growth and changes in education and health. This finding, read along with the failure of 'trickle down' theories to deliver, only re-emphasises the need to rethink economic growth strategies, particularly in the developing world.
Testimony to a friendship Indo-Bangladesh *International*	➢ Tripura, which shares an 856-km border with Bangladesh, is building a huge war memorial and friendship park(Bharat-Bangladesh Moitree Udyan)in a border hamlet,Chottakhola, in southern Tripura to memorialise the heroes of the Bangladesh Liberation War.Tripura sheltered over 1.5 million Bangladesh refugees, a number that exceeded its own population. Tripura, therefore, occupies a special place for Bangladesh.
	➢ During some phases, India-Bangladesh relations have not been as smooth as would have been logically expected. Colonial mindsets and the ghosts of 1947 continued to bedevil the growth. Only recently has a major change occurred: the two neighbours have agreed to cooperate on many vital issues, and taken up major initiatives.
	➢ In March 2010, Dhaka and New Delhi reached a deal to allow Indian goods to be transshipped to Tripura and other northeastern States. Dhaka has allowed India to use the Chittagong port. It has granted access to its Mongla and Ashuganj ports also to ferry heavy machinery and other goods from the rest of India to the northeastern States.
	➢ The two countries recently agreed to exchange their enclaves and territories that are in adverse possession. This was a longstanding irritant. People in the 111 Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India have suffered much since 1947. There is also a need to mend differences over sharing of river waters and to demarcate the entire land boundary.

A role for the RIC trilateral *International*	➢ Even though groups spanning multiple geographic and economic vectors like the East Asia Summit, the Brazil-Russia-India-China forum, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation have begun emerging and consolidating themselves, it would be a mistake to assume any of these could be a substitute for the Russia, India, China trilateral (RIC). ➢ What makes the trilateral unique — and important — is the convergence of geography, foreign policy philosophy, and economic ascent within the group. ➢ All three countries are world powers with significant interests in the Eurasian and Asia-Pacific strategic spaces. ➢ Unlike economic powers like Japan or the countries of the European Union, their foreign policy is independent. ➢ Each is committed to the creation of a multi-polar world order based on respect for international law, multilateralism, and collective decision-making. ➢ The three also have strong ties binding them, though these are somewhat uneven. India, for example, has close political relations with Russia but little to show by way of bilateral trade or investment. By contrast, India-China trade is booming, but the bilateral political relationship could be better. Another mismatch within the trilateral stems from the way each relates to the United States. Russia and China would like to use the trilateral to send a signal to Washington that they are unhappy with its bloc-like approach to the Asia-Pacific. India, on the other hand, is decidedly wary of alienating the U.S., at this juncture. Finally, there is an imbalance stemming from the fact that only Russia and China are permanent members of U.N. Security Council. ➢ As a result of all these factors, a grouping whose strongest binding factor is political and strategic has tended to adopt a hands-off approach to key regional problems like the Iran nuclear issue and Afghanistan. ➢ At the recent meeting of RIC foreign ministers at Wuhan, for example, a common position expressing unhappiness with the current U.S.-led approach on these questions was articulated but there was no attempt to carve out a role for the trilateral as a group in pushing for better outcomes. ➢ That said, the three still set for themselves an ambitious agenda of practical cooperation. Agriculture, health and medicine, and disaster management are already focus areas. To this, the foreign ministers have added energy and joint work on innovation as priority areas. Business-to-business cooperation is also being emphasised. If links at the corporate level get stronger, it is possible that the trilateral will feel less coy about taking on a political agenda.
A preventable crisis *International/ Health*	➢ When it was launched by the World Health Assembly in 2008, the six-year action plan for a global strategy to prevent and control non-communicable diseases brought attention to the heavy burden they impose on all countries. ➢ This is a development issue of such importance that the United Nations General Assembly is scheduled to hold a high-level meeting on it in 2011. ➢ Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory conditions kill a large number of people every year and cost economies dear. They are often both the cause and result of poverty. A higher number of premature deaths (below the age of 60) from preventable non-communicable diseases occurs in the lower-middle income and low-income countries.

	➤ The persistence of this trend, in spite of the World Health Organisation setting targets to reduce mortality, should occasion a review of public health policy by high-burden countries. The problem of chronic diseases has been aggravated by the global economic downturn during the past couple of years. Higher food prices have affected nutrition levels, and some of the gains made over the years in improving health equity have been eroded. Political leaders must recognise this and make far-sighted investments for prevention and control.
	➤ All countries waging a campaign against chronic diseases must show greater political commitment. Unlike communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which enjoy high visibility and policy support, diabetes, hypertension, and other non-communicable diseases are often explained away as effects of personal choices. This approach is clearly wrong and it reduces the importance of policy impacts on health.
	➤ Further, urbanisation in fast-growing countries has had negative effects for health. Although WHO advocates safe, active commuting, walking and opportunities for recreation, urban development policies continue to give priority to motorisation and road building. India suffers from the same malaise. It is time to make a decisive shift. The causes of disease are clear and they must be addressed with urgency. A political consensus to deal with the 'big four' — tobacco use, unhealthy diet, harmful alcohol consumption, and physical inactivity — through policy is the vital first step.
NATO: fit for what purpose *International*	➤ The Lisbon summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has ended with some apparent successes. One is a 'Strategic Concept' document, which in fact was published before the summit; it recognises the challenges to the 28 member states' security in the form of cyber warfare, terrorism, and the continuing existence of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Secondly, a missile shield will be developed to cover all NATO countries. Thirdly, in Afghanistan, the control of security matters will start passing to Afghan bodies in July 2011, with a full handover to be completed by the end of 2104. Russia, for its part, will expand NATO supply routes into and out of Afghanistan, service Afghan helicopters, train Afghan pilots, and join western countries in countering the heroin trade.
	➤ The Lisbon outcomes, however, avoid many major issues.
	➤ The first is that of nuclear disarmament. It is not enough for NATO to say that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, it will remain a nuclear alliance. Even the much-vaunted New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between Russia and the United States is already in serious trouble, with the Republican minority in the Senate now very likely to block ratification.
	➤ NATO collaboration with Georgia and Ukraine is another source of concern to Russia.
	➤ Internally, NATO faces some apparently intractable issues; for example, Greek-Turkish animosity over Cyprus makes collaboration very difficult. The central problem, however, is that although NATO intends to be "fit for purpose", there is little purpose it can coherently state. Its contribution to global security remains highly questionable.
Counter-productive approach (UN Security Council)	➤ The United Nations Security Council's decade-long counter-terror policy has been counter-productive, says the world body's Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
	➤ In focus in the report are the sanctions regime established by the UNSC as a response to the threat from the al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan and the 9/11 bombings in the

International	United States. Under Resolutions 1267 and 1373, the member states are required to enact laws freezing the assets of individuals and entities that finance terrorist operations, or are associated with extremist bodies in any other manner.
	➢ The Rapporteur argues that the overall sanctions regime amounts to a comprehensive legislation insofar as its prescriptions are unlimited in time and space. What was originally a reaction to a specific threat to peace from the al-Qaida and the Taliban has expanded and become an open-ended system that transcended territorial boundaries of states.
	➢ India's criticism was that the exercise of legislative power by the 15-member Security Council could upset the balance vis-a-vis the General Assembly.
	➢ Moreover, the application of listing procedures for terrorist individuals and groups as also the denial of the right to appeal have drawn flak from the Council of Europe and the national human rights bodies. To that extent, both the regimes (under Resolutions 1267 and 1373) pose a threat to the protection of rights and the maintenance of international rule of law, says the Rapporteur.
	➢ The risk that charity aid might be identified as indirectly funding terrorist outfits has served as an impediment to garnering global support for the Millennium Development Goals.
	➢ Given the absence of a universal definition of terrorism, the broad-based and inclusive UN treaty system might provide a more effective avenue for global cooperation in combating terrorism than the Security Council. In the long run, this may ensure that the UN member states would discharge their multilateral obligations.
Indo-German cooperation in skills development *International/ Economy*	➢ As Germany and India focus on enhancing their strategic bilateral partnership, one field of increasing importance is the training of skilled personnel. A combination of the available workforce in India and Germany's famed dual training system can prove a successful mix.
	➢ One of India's biggest advantages is its growing and creative young population. According to India's annual report on unemployment, the average Indian will be only 29 years old in 2020; compared to 37 in China and the US; 45 in West Europe and 48 in Japan. And for a country so young, it would be a boon to create a well-trained workforce.
	➢ To this end, Germany can prove to be an experienced partner — by bringing to India our system of dual vocational training. In simple terms, this means a combination of 'in-the-school' and 'on-the-job' training. Under the German dual system, vocational schools impart theoretical knowledge to a student for two days a week, and students spend the other three days on the job, in industry.This process is also cost-effective as the government only pays for the vocational school and not for the high-tech machinery.
	➢ Apart from the cost benefits, our German dual system also helps shape the mindset of employees. It fosters pride in doing something manual and being able to support oneself. In a globalised world, you need this kind of proud workforce to stay competitive.
	➢ In 2008, the German and Indian Governments set up a bilateral working group on Vocational Education & Training (VET).
	➢ India is also looking at modernising its state vocational schools — the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). As a part of the National Skills Development Policy, the Indian

	Government is seeking to get German industry more involved under the VET. While this is a good starting point, there are various other aspects where Germany's expertise can prove helpful. ➢ Germany has a very successful dual training model. This success is due to the quality of our instructors. ➢ The two countries have agreed to enhance cooperation by providing a platform for the 'Train-the-Trainers' programmes. Another point on the agenda is support in establishing sector skills council in food processing and retail trades, the media industry, as well as the tourism and health care industries. ➢ An important area of focus that has come to the fore in recent times is the Business-to-Business (B2B) collaboration. This means to provide a platform for contacts and collaboration between Indian companies seeking partners in skills development and German training organisations seeking partners in India.
We need an ambitious agenda for engagement Indo-China *International*	➢ The year 2010 saw India and China celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. ➢ The six decades of the India-China relationship behind us have a record that is chequered. ➢ The awareness of historical contact between the two peoples of India and China created the basis for our well-intentioned attempt in the 1950s to build a new type of relationship based on Panchasheela, or the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. ➢ Today, there are both challenges that the relationship confronts us with and also opportunities. For India, the situation is complex since China is not only our largest neighbour but also because China is today a major power in the world both from the traditional geo-political point of view and the more current geo-economic point of view. ➢ China's rapid economic growth over the last three decades has been spectacular and riveting. It is now the second largest economy in the world with a GDP of roughly $5.5 trillion. China has begun to deal in the currency of global power, and its economic success is impacting its foreign, defence and security policies. ➢ However, the view that India and China are rivals is an over-generalisation and over-simplification of a complex relationship which encompasses so many diverse issues. ➢ Firstly, we have a border related disputes. But we have in place a well organised set of confidence building measures to ensure peace and tranquillity on the border. ➢ Another issue of concern is the management of trans-border rivers. Many of the rivers nourishing the plains of Northern India and also areas in North-east India arise in the highlands of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and are a source of livelihood and sustenance for millions of our people. There are reports of China damming trans-border rivers and India has sought assurances from China that it will take no action to negatively affect the flow of the rivers into India, so that our rights as the lower riparian are not adversely affected. ➢ China has assured us that the projects on the Bramhaputra are run-of-the-river projects and are not meant for storing or diverting water. ➢ There is also the question of the China-Pakistan relationship. India has genuine concerns regarding some aspects of the China-Pakistan relationship particularly when it comes to China's role in PoK, China's J&K policy and the Sino-Pak security and nuclear relationship.

The need for mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns cannot be denied. The issue of giving stapled visas to Indian nationals from the state of Jammu and Kashmir arises in a similar context. We believe that the India-China relationship will grow even stronger as China shows more sensitivity on core issues that impinge on our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

➢ There is also an information gap that keeps our peoples from understanding each other better and which we need to bridge by concerted public diplomacy from both sides. There is much work to be done to improve perceptions within the media in both countries.

➢ However, there is common ground between India and China on combating terrorism and extremism, enhancing maritime security, and on the need for a peaceful environment to permit the domestic economic growth and development of the two countries.

➢ Our consultations within the G-20 have shown the way in this regard. Similarly, we have partnered well in BASIC (for the climate change negotiations), and in the BRIC grouping of Brazil, India, Russia and China. We hope such cooperation will also be strengthened on the important issue of UN Reform and that we will be able to build common ground on the issue relating to the expansion of the Security Council and India's interest in permanent membership.

➢ Our trade with China is growing faster than that with any other country and China is our largest trading partner in goods with trade likely to exceed US$ 60 billion this year.

➢ As India and China continue to pursue their interests, and so long as their overwhelming preoccupation remains their domestic transformation, and both understand that this goal requires a peaceful periphery, the elements of competition in the bilateral relationship can be managed and the elements of congruence can be built upon.

Environmentalists vs nuclear power *Environment/ Energy*	➢ The drive to enhance nuclear power in India is a result of many factors, including the burgeoning demand for energy, diminishing fossil fuel reserves, and the need for a cost-effective alternative to generate electricity on a large scale. Non-conventional energy sources must be tapped to the fullest extent but there is no viable alternative to nuclear power if we are going to bridge the enormous energy deficit, projected to touch 150,000 megawatts by 2030. ➢ Existing alternatives for large-scale power generation such as hydroelectric projects often bring massive deforestation and displacement of people; and emissions from coal-fired plants are a major contributor to harmful greenhouse gases. ➢ However, there are legitimate environmental concerns over nuclear power generation. ➢ It is supremely important to ensure safety by strict adherence to international protocols on the design, construction, and operation of plants. ➢ Then there is the issue of final disposal of radioactive waste, which waits to be resolved through advances in technology that seek to transmute such waste into non-radioactive elements. ➢ The environmental clearance granted to the 6x1650 MW nuclear power project in Jaitapur in Maharashtra, the first concrete outcome of the decision of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group to lift restrictions on civil nuclear cooperation, has come after a serious hearing of apprehensions over its environmental impact. Clearance has also been accompanied by as many as 35 conditions and safeguards of a general as well as specific nature.

	➢ In laying down strict safeguards while clearing the Jaitapur plant, Government has taken the middle ground, which, "attempts to reconcile the objectives of economic growth, fuel-mix diversification, global diplomacy, and environmental protection."

Raising the bar (market infrastructure institutions
 	
Economy
	➢ A high level committee headed by former Reserve Bank Governor Bimal Jalan, which looked into governance and ownership issues relating to market infrastructure institutions (MIIs), has come out with prudent recommendations that should reassure investors.
	
	➢ The market infrastructure in India has three components — stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories.
	
	➢ Of these, stock exchanges have undergone a huge transformation in the reform era because of the large increase in the number of investors and share volumes, which in turn required a considerable infusion of both technology and capital.
	
	➢ One important change has been the conversion of stock exchanges from mutual entities and associations of brokers into demutualised corporates with shareholders.
	➢ A distinctive feature of the new set-up is the total separation of trading, management, and ownership rights. The number of stock exchanges has shrunk: there are only two main ones, the BSE and the NSE, both having trading terminals across India. With the possibility of new exchanges coming up, there is a need to prescribe new rules of ownership and governance.
	
	➢ The Committee suggests the raising of entry level barriers for the new exchanges.
	   ● Only financial institutions and banks with a net worth of Rs.1,000 crore could become anchor investors, owning up to 24 per cent of the capital in the first instance to be reduced to 15 per cent over 10 years.
	   ● Both on- and off-balance sheet items of an entity are to be considered while calculating the limits of shareholding. That should reduce the scope for financial engineering.
	   ● There will be a cap on the profits that the MFI shareholders can enjoy and on the remuneration of top executives of the exchange.
	   ● Trading and clearing members will be ineligible to serve on the boards and the number of public interest directors should be at least equal to those representing the shareholders.
	   ● No stock exchange will be allowed to list, a recommendation that should put an end to a long-standing controversy over conflict of interest.
	   ● Stock exchanges and other MIIs will have to fulfil the disclosures and corporate governance requirements of the listing agreement applicable to public companies.
	
	➢ Clearly, the Jalan Committee has taken note of the fact that stock exchanges will continue to have regulatory functions. The bar has to be kept high to admit only genuine players.

Wanted: zero tolerance (road safety) *Social*	➢ A major consequence of fast-paced motorisation and expansion of roads and highways in India is the mounting rate of fatalities and injuries from traffic accidents. ➢ More than 110,000 people are killed on the roads each year, with the death toll rising by eight per cent annually; the estimate for serious injuries is 1.6 million. India's roads are now rated the worst in the world. ➢ Viewed against this background, the road safety initiative launched by the central government and the World Bank to cover 3,000 km of high-risk national and State

	highways in Assam, Gujarat, and Karnataka is an incremental step to improve the situation. Under the plan, affordable improvements based on the latest technologies will be put in place to reduce crashes and fatalities.
	➤ The project will draw upon the experience of the International Road Assessment Programme supported by the World Bank in several countries.
	➤ The continuing carnage demands a policy of zero tolerance to crashes covering the entire network of 65,000-plus km of national highways and the quarter million km of urban roads. Almost three years ago, the Sundar Committee recommended a national road safety policy but precious little has been done by way of implementation.
	➤ There is no justification for delayed action on road safety when the national economic loss on account of death and disability from accidents is officially reckoned to be of the order of Rs.75,000 crore a year.
	➤ Pedestrians, bicyclists, and non-motorised vehicle users constitute 60 per cent of those killed on urban roads; and motorcyclists and small car users make up 25 per cent.
	➤ There is a disproportionate involvement of trucks and buses in fatal crashes, highlighting a key problem.
	➤ These data point to the need for segregation of vulnerable road users and appropriate traffic calming measures to reduce risk.
	➤ Scientific design of roads and vehicles can reduce conflicting interactions among road users and mitigate the consequences of accidents.
	➤ There should be a sincere attempt to analyse such data emerging from studies conducted by injury prevention researchers in the country.
	➤ The Sundar Committee has rightly pointed out that the State transport departments, which now play the relatively minor role of licensing and vehicle registration, should be made legally responsible for coordination of multi-sectoral safety.
Perils of becoming a republic of scandals (Corruption) *Social*	➤ India confronts several pressing national security threats. But only one of them - political corruption - poses an existential threat to the state. The pervasive misuse of public office for private gain is an evil, eating into the vitals of the state, sapping India's strength.
	➤ If India today is widely seen as a soft state, much of the blame must be pinned on the corruption. Such 'softening' of India has made the country a tempting target for those seeking to undermine its security.
	➤ Corruption stalls development, undermines social progress, undercuts the confidence of citizens in the fairness and impartiality of public administration, impedes good governance, erodes the rule of law, distorts competitive conditions in business transactions, discourages domestic and foreign investment, fosters a black market economy, and raises new security threats. In sum, corruption obstructs a country from realising its goals and undercuts national security.
	➤ The cancer of corruption in India has alarmingly spread to elements within the two institutions that are central to the country's future - the judiciary and the armed forces. The defence of India indeed has turned into an unending scandal. Even indictments by the

	Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) have made little difference to the manner arms continue to be procured from overseas. Such imports, often clinched without transparency or open bidding, are a major source of political corruption.
	➢ As in other national security challenges, the principal causes of rampant corruption are leadership deficit and governance deficit. The only way corruption can be contained is through integrity of leadership; improved governance; measures to ensure fiscal transparency; strengthened anti-bribery enforcement; government accountability; and active public involvement. The independence of investigating agencies is a prerequisite for developing an anti-corruption culture in politics and business.
The EU-India summit *International*	➢ India and the European Union are engaged on issues of vital importance. ➢ The 11th EU-India summit was significant for several reasons. ➢ Both sides hope to conclude a free trade agreement by the spring of 2011. ➢ EU is among India's biggest trading partners. Last year, the two-way trade in goods and services was worth €69 billion. ➢ The 27-nation EU is also a big investor in India. The Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement, in the works since 2007, aims to dismantle tariffs on most products traded by the two sides. Expectations are that it could push bilateral trade to as much as €100 billion. ➢ The negotiations had stumbled on EU insistence over including a clause on sustainable development that would hold trade and investors to strict human rights, particularly labour rights, and environmental standards. India had resisted this. ➢ Although, the EU had indicated it would not let this condition stand in the way of the agreement, but it is in India's own interests to follow best practices while ensuring adequate protection to the interests of domestic trade and industry and the workforce. ➢ Both sides are also trying to negotiate two other major irritants — a dispute over intellectual property rights relating to Indian-made generic drugs, and the resistance of EU member-states to free movement of Indian professionals. The accommodation of Indian concerns on both is crucial to a satisfactory trade agreement. ➢ This was the first EU-India summit to be held after the Lisbon Treaty came into force a year ago. Among other measures, the Treaty aims to raise EU influence in global affairs. ➢ Accordingly, the group has been eager to look beyond trade in its relations with India, and give it more political and strategic content. ➢ Cooperation in combating terrorism, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, non-proliferation, disarmament, climate change, the role of G20 in global economic governance, and the proposed EU-India agreement on cooperation in the development of peaceful nuclear energy were all discussed at the summit. ➢ In recent years, the EU has signalled the willingness to play down what India sees as an overly activist attitude on the Kashmir issue — at this summit, it was not even mentioned in the summit. ➢ As it seeks to broaden ties with India, much will depend on how the EU tackles the challenge of reconciling the positions of its numerous member-states on important issues to present a coherent foreign policy.

Sustaining people on the move (The World Migration Report) *International*	➤ The World Migration Report, which estimates that the number of international migrants will swell from 214 million in 2010 to about 405 million by 2050, makes important and inter-related points. ➤ Despite a current slowdown owing to the global economic crisis, the international movement of people will continue. Consequently, there needs to be a focus on building capacities across states to support sustainable migration. ➤ One of the undercurrents directing the future of international migration is the expected slower growth in labour force in developed economies (where its strength is projected to remain at about 600 million until 2050), compared with the less developed countries (where it is expected to increase from 2.4 billion in 2005 to 3.6 billion in 2040). It is thus clear that the attention of policymakers should be aimed at putting in place structures providing for sustainable international migration. ➤ Creating such systems requires the generation of accurate data, particularly relating to migration and labour market. ➤ Also useful would be properly defined national migration policies and priorities. For example, assessments of a country's work requirements, the expected areas of shortages, and the manner of sourcing them through international migrants can be made available. This, in turn, would help in the mainstreaming of migration into domestic and international policies. ➤ This is presently lacking in many countries. ➤ However, one welcome change is in the mindset of countries that complained of "brain drain" —they now see migrants as a source of economic value. ➤ Remittances by migrants, at $414 billion in 2009, are also set to increase, offering governments an opportunity to dovetail domestic development and, possibly, poverty reduction plans to such inflows. The report's observation that remittances have surpassed official developmental assistance in most of the non-rich world, barring sub-Saharan Africa, points to a positive outcome of migration for developing countries. ➤ There are attempts internationally to identify meaningful ways of channelling remittances towards development. ➤ India, which got $49,256 million by way of remittances in 2009 — the highest for any country — has a great opportunity to make the best of its enduring strength: an internationally productive labour force.
Universal health care *Health*	➤ It is to be noted that a commitment was made five years ago by the member-states of WHO to realise in their countries the objective of Health for All by 2020. ➤ Two recent reports relevant to public health – the World Health Report 2010 (WHR 2010) of the World Health Organisation, and the Annual Report to the People on Health 2010 of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India – have revived the debate on the vital need for a universal health care system. ➤ The WHO, an active wing of the United Nations Organisation, estimated that a billion people round the world could not afford any health care services at all. WHR 2010 aimed to put more countries on the path to universal health care coverage. It noted: "Access to basic health care is a fundamental human right, as stated in the WHO Constitution, and not just a privilege to be enjoyed in a few wealthy societies."

	➢ The WHO report suggests that governments can increase their spending capacity by going in for special taxation. Other suggestions include finding diverse sources of revenue from levies like 'sin' taxes on products such as tobacco and alcohol and tax on transactions. The report notes, for example, that if India were to impose a levy of 0.005 per cent on foreign exchange transactions, the government could raise $370 million a year. ➢ The second document, the Annual Report to the People on Health, which was published in September 2010, begins, understandably, with listing the achievements of the Indian government in the health sector. ➢ The report, however, calls attention to the wide variations across States in the improvement of these key human development indicators, and to the "inequities based on urban divides, gender imbalances, and caste patterns." ➢ The performance of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), which was launched in 2005 with a special focus on 18 States, including eight Empowered Action Group States (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and the North-Eastern States), is commended. ➢ However, the report emphasises that a major constraint in achieving universal access to health services, is the non-availability of skills and trained human resources. It admits that by international standards, India fares very poorly, calling for strong remedial action. ➢ The government report concludes that the private sector's prominence in the health sector has led to inequities in access to health care. Such a predominant presence of the private sector in the medical filed would naturally lead to an exodus of highly qualified medical and para-medical personnel (most of whom have been trained in government-run medical institutions) from government service to hospitals run by corporates, which have mushroomed with government support. ➢ In most Indian States, after two decades of such developments, a decent health care is beyond the reach of the poor. ➢ It is the social responsibility of the news media to be an active part of the national agenda of rescuing the Indian public health care system, strengthening it, and, if necessary, re-inventing it so that it can meet the needs of the hundreds of millions of the health-deprived.
NRHM: addressing the challenges Health	➢ The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was launched in 2005 to bring about a dramatic improvement in the health system and health status of people in rural India. ➢ It seeks to provide universal access to health care, which is affordable, equitable, and of good quality. It aims at making architectural corrections to basic health care systems, reduce regional imbalances, pool resources, integrate organisational structures, optimise human resource, decentralise the management of district health programmes and integrate many vertical health programmes. It also aims at facilitating community participation, partnership and ownership of health and health care delivery. ➢ The NRHM has been described as one of the largest and most ambitious programmes to revive health care and has many achievements to its credit. • It has reiterated the focus on health and re-prioritised rural health and health care. • It has increased health finance, and improved infrastructure for health delivery. • It has established standards and trained health care staff. • It has also set benchmarks for health institutions and improved and streamlined health care delivery structures.

	- It has coordinated technical support from health resource institutions and non-governmental organisations. - It has improved health care delivery in many regions. - It has facilitated financial management, assisted in computerisation of health data, suggested centralised procurement of drugs, hospital equipment and supplies, and mandated the formation of village health and hospital committees and community monitoring of services. - It has revived and revitalised a neglected public health care delivery system. ➢ The NRHM has injected new hope in the health care delivery system. However, it continues to face diverse challenges, which need to be addressed if its goals are to be achieved in the near future. - Non-convergence of different programmes: Many programmes of the government, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and the NRHM focus on the rural poor. In principle, these programmes are meant to be complementary and synergistic. However, many issues need to be resolved. For example, the NRHM's Village Health and Nutrition Days compete with the ICDS's well-established Anganwadi programme. This results in a lack of synergy between the workers employed by the two programmes. Similarly, coordination between the MGNREGS and the NRHM, which could help the most vulnerable sections, is non-existent. The goal of health for all requires cooperative teamwork among the many schemes and departments of the government. - Parallel health systems: The NRHM is intended to strengthen and support the existing State health systems and services. However, its status as a project makes its complete integration problematic. The idea that the States will take over its financing after 2012 does not generate enthusiasm for long-term commitment from staff at the State and district levels. In addition, the administrative machinery of the NRHM and health services at the national, State and district levels remains separate without complete integration, making the programme less effective and the services less than optimal. - Process and outcome indicators: The NRHM currently employs process indicators to measure its implementation. The measures used are mainly related to infrastructure and personnel. There is need to shift to indicators of efficient functioning. In the final analysis, the NRHM's impact will have to be assessed against hard data on health outcomes. The initial high rates of mortality tend to reduce rapidly with early inputs but require fully functional, efficient and effective systems for sustained results. - Social determinants of health: The NRHM's goals clearly state the need to impact on the social determinants of health by coordinating efforts to provide clean water, sanitation, and nutrition. It should be in conjunction with MGNREGS work towards the reduction of poverty. Social exclusion and gender discrimination are two major areas of concern as they have a significant impact on health. The NRHM should not only focus on treating diseases in these sub-populations but also work towards implementing policies, which will bring about health and social justice for all. The NRHM has made a significant impact on health care delivery. However, the need for constant monitoring of its impact for course corrections should be built into the system for optimal results and for achieving the goal of "Health for all."
Revolutionary test for TB	➢ A new test (Xpert MTB/RIF)developed for diagnosing active tuberculosis is set to revolutionise treatment of a disease that kills 1.8 million people round the world every year. ➢ It recently won approval from the World Health Organisation for a worldwide rollout over the next few years.

Health	• Xpert has 99 per cent specificity.
	• The test's ability to provide reliable results within two hours, compared with 4-6 weeks in the case of culture, will help begin treatment earlier and reduce the chances of an individual infecting others. The greatest beneficiaries will be those co-infected with HIV and TB. The long wait for the results before starting TB treatment is one of the main reasons for the death of many co-infected individuals.
	• Unlike smear microscopy, Xpert can identify rifampicin drug resistance. It correctly identified 98 per cent of bacteria that were resistant to rifampicin.
	➢ In India and many other countries where multidrug resistant TB (MDR-TB) is not high, much of the testing that goes on now is mainly for diagnosing active TB and not for drug resistance.
	➢ But Xpert is all set to change this: rifampicin resistance is an excellent marker of MDR-TB. Most patients who are resistant to rifampicin are also resistant to isoniazid drug. Patients who are resistant to rifampicin will need culture to find out which drugs work for them. Following this protocol before starting the treatment will go a long way in preventing MDR-TB from becoming widespread.
	➢ There is one major problem, however: the diagnostic test is prohibitively expensive. India being one of the high-burden countries, the public sector and certain NGOs will be eligible for a special pricing agreement.
	➢ Uninterrupted power supply and temperature control, which are essential, will turn out to be major challenges in rural areas.
	➢ India must find ways to embrace this technology swiftly after necessary field testing — considering that TB kills two Indians every three minutes.