

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC
Social and Labor Convergence Programme (SLCP)

The 'Social and Labor Convergence Programme (SLCP),' an initiative to have a standard-neutral, converged assessment framework for the textile and clothing industry, will be launched in India shortly.

Key features of the programme:

- The SLCP is not a code of conduct or compliance programme.
- The converged assessment framework is a tool developed by the SLCP, which provides a data set with no value judgment or scoring.
- It is, however, compatible with existing audit systems and codes of conduct. This means that the same data set can be used by a wide-range of stakeholders. It eliminates the need for repetitive audits to be carried out on the same facility.
- The initiative is led by world's leading manufacturers, brands, retailers, industry groups, non-governmental organisations and service providers.
- The objective of the initiative is to improve the working conditions in textile units by allowing resources that were previously designated for compliance audits to be redirected towards the improvement of social and labour conditions.
- This is a voluntary adoption by the textile and clothing makers.

Significance: For the exporting units, it will reduce the number of social audits and facilitate measuring of employment practices, thus improving working conditions and employee relations. It also redeploys resources towards improvement actions and fosters collaboration between supply chain partners.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**India – Taiwan Relationship**

The new government in India should put Taiwan on its diplomatic priority list. However, it seems to be too big and risky idea, it might offend Chinese political sensitivities. But productive engagement with Taiwan is not about abandoning India's stand on "One-China" policy. India has been rather careful in respecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. India must not deny itself the benefits of engaging Taiwan within the framework of One-China policy. Most major nations have significant cooperation with Taiwan without extending diplomatic recognition. India has too many self-imposed constraints on its Taiwan policy. It is now time to lift many of them. India needs to end the traditional political neglect of the Taiwan relationship.

Indian-Taiwan trade

- India has established a formal channel of contact in the mid-1990s, since then there has been steady progress in the relationship.
- Annual bilateral trade has reached \$7 billion in 2018 and could rise to \$20 billion in the next few years.
- There has been a rise in Taiwan's investments in India and a steady growth in exchanges between the two societies.
- The NDA government has taken steps to enhance the relationship. These include the upgradation of the bilateral investment agreement, promotion of major Taiwanese investments, expanding parliamentary exchanges and facilitating track-two dialogues on regional issues.

Why India should take a fresh look at the Taiwan relationship?**Geopolitics**

- The three-way political compromise between US, China and Taiwan crafted in the 1970s appears to be breaking down, due to rising China's regional assertiveness, the threat of forceful reunification of Taiwan and China's pressure tactics against Taipei.
- The USA has determined to strengthen ties with Taiwan to push-back China.
- The USA has been reinforcing its security commitment to Taiwan, by sending its naval ships through the Taiwan Straits more frequently than before.
- The triangular relations between the US, China and Taiwan over the last four decades have undermined the strategic significance of Taiwan which is spread across the major sea lines of communication in the Western Pacific and China.
- Taiwan sits in the key position of the geopolitics in East Asia, and it will have significant consequences for India's Act East Policy and its emerging role in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Geo-Economics

- The trade war between the US and China is compelling Taiwan to accelerate its plans to move its large manufacturing bases away from China to Southeast Asia and India.

- Before the US-China trade conflict intensified, Taiwan announced the “New Southbound Policy” in 2016. The objective is to strengthen ties with the 10 countries of the ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand and India.
- The structure of industrial production in East Asia is undergoing a profound transformation because of the trade war between the US and China, which has given a great opportunity for India to boost its manufacturing sector.
- For the government’s agenda of promoting industrial production and creating jobs in India, the Taiwan connection with its impressive small and medium enterprises is more than opportune.

Talent and Technology

- New issues have emerged for India to promote global access to India’s professional talent, but Taiwan has embarked on a big mission to attract skilled workers.
- There has been declining birth rate and growing emigration from Taiwan.
- The industry, education, and technology development in Taiwan could provide new opportunities for Indian engineers and scientists. At present, there are barely 2,000 Indians working in Taiwan.

Way Forward

- India can push for an agreement on comprehensive economic cooperation with Taiwan.
- The synergy in human resources provides the basis for massive collaborations between the universities, research institutions and technology enclaves in the two countries.
- Expanding the engagement with Taiwan should not be seen as tactical game but should be an important part of India’s effort to connect with all parts of China which is important for India’s future.

Global implications of the 2019 mandate

The clear and decisive mandate for Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a defining moment in India’s democratic history. Its extent, which is manifest from the highest-ever voter turnout in a general election and the share of votes won by the winning coalition, creates its own very unique set of circumstances.

Background

- It is a unique moment for India that the rising aspirations of people in one of the fastest growing economies have resulted in this kind of a mandate.
- While it raises the bar on expectations, more importantly, it gives the leadership of the country the necessary wherewithal to take the kind of decisions that are needed to put India on a high growth trajectory.
- At a time when two of the largest economic powers in the world, the U.S. and China, are locked in a trade war of sorts, this mandate opens the window for India to take advantage of economic opportunities that are likely to develop in the geopolitical space.
- To get the Indian economy on the right trajectory, to spur our exports and to create jobs — while this kind of a mandate creates expectations, it also empowers the leadership to take the right decisions to realise the same.

A chance to steer geopolitics

- International Solar Alliance – India over the last five years has taken a leadership position in quite a few initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, while facilitating global action on climate change through the Paris Agreement.
- International Yoga day – India has also projected its soft power through a global projection of yoga to shine the spotlight on how Indian spirituality can be a force for greater good.
- Other venues – India should would take up its rightful role in steering geopolitics in a host of areas: from global trade to regional conflicts to setting the global direction in emerging technology areas such as artificial intelligence and space exploration, to name a few.

Protecting interests

- Net neutrality and privacy – The mandate also calls for a new creed of techno-nationalism as a counter to borderless techno-activism that has threatened Indian interests through its pursuit of innocuous agendas (net neutrality and privacy) which have advocated measures inimical to India.
- Ahead in technology curve – The political mandate demands that India devise ways and means to stay ahead of the curve in emerging technology areas such as 5G and artificial intelligence, among others.
- Data Localisation – India is also the largest open market to global technology majors which continue to locate their computing and storage infrastructure outside India and beyond Indian jurisdictions.

Conclusion

- The mandate demands that India leverage the strength of its democracy and the power of its markets to ensure that the global platforms play by rules that do not hurt the Indian national interest. While India continues to benefit from global digital innovations, this needs to happen within a framework that enhances Indian interests.

ILO report on Women in Business and Management

The International Labour Organization (ILO) recently released its second global report, titled Women in Business and Management: The business case for change.

Key findings:

- A critical mass of 30 per cent women is needed by the enterprises in order to reap the benefits of gender diversity.
- Almost half of the surveyed enterprises reported women holding less than 30 per cent of entry-level management positions.
- In 60 per cent of companies, fewer than 30 per cent of senior managers and top executives are women.
- Across the world, men are still more likely to participate in the labour market than women. The average global labour force participation rate of women in 2018 stood at 48.5 per cent, while that of men was 75 per cent. This equates to a 26.5 percentage point gender gap in labour force participation.
- Just for Asia and the Pacific, the average female labour force participation rate has declined from 52.9 in 1991 to 45.3 per cent in 2018, dropping by 7.6 percentage points.

Benefits associated with gender-inclusive cultures:

- Enterprises with gender-inclusive cultures “are over 60 per cent more likely to have improved profits and productivity”. Such businesses are “9 per cent more likely to have improved business performance”.
- A study by the World Economic Forum has predicted that “if the global gender gap in labour market participation is closed by 25 per cent by 2025, an additional \$5.3 trillion would be added to GDP globally”.

Conclusion: In an era of skill shortages, women represent a formidable talent pool that companies aren't making enough of. Smart companies who want to be successful in the global economy should make genuine gender diversity a key ingredient of their business strategy. Representative business organizations and employer and business membership organizations must take a lead, promoting both effective policies and genuine implementation.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Govt plans to merge CSO, NSSO**

To streamline and strengthen the statistical system, the government has decided to merge the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) to form a National Statistical Office (NSO).

While the NSSO comes out with various sample surveys such as on consumption expenditure, employment and unemployment, the CSO releases various data such as GDP and IIP.

Merging NSSO and CSO into NSO

- The move is a follow-up of a decision taken in 2005 by the UPA government's based on recommendations of the report of the National Statistical Commission, headed by former RBI governor C Rangarajan.
- Both the wings are currently part of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Rangarajan committee recommendations

- The Rangarajan committee had recommended setting up of the NSC, headed by a person with a Minister of State-level designation, to serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities of the country.
- The NSC was constituted on July 12, 2006 with a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters.
- According to the Commission, the new NSO was envisaged as an agency to implement and maintain statistical standards and coordinate statistical activities of Central and State agencies as laid down by the NSC.
- The NSO's other roles included collection of core statistics, carrying out methodological research and studies, maintaining a warehouse of core statistics, as per the Commission report.

Benefits of the merger

- This is a measure to avoid duplication of work and leverage the strength of the statistical system.
- There is no dilution of independence and in fact strengthens the system.
- This will help in meeting the requirement of the statistical system as a lack of control on these two bodies was one challenge presently.

National Statistical Office (NSO)

- The Statistical Wing, comprising the NSO with constituents as the CSO and the NSSO, to be an integral part of the main ministry.
- The NSO would be headed by Secretary Statistics and Programme Implementation, with various divisions reporting to the Secretary through Director Generals (DGs).
- Presently the CSO is headed by a DG brings out macro economic data like economic (GDP) growth data, industrial production and inflation.
- While the NSSO conducts large-scale surveys and brings out reports on health, education, household expenditure and other social and economic indicators.

Data Quality Assurance Division

- A Data Quality Assurance Division has also been set up, replacing the Data Processing Division, which will have the responsibility to bring about improvements in survey and administrative databases.
- This division will be strengthened through “re-skilling and deployment of existing personnel”.

In recent controversy!

- India’s official statistics came under a cloud after several experts raised questions on credibility of the new GDP series.
- The government’s move to withhold the first periodic labour force survey, which showed unemployment rate at a 45-year high, put a further dent.

Draft Export Policy unveiled

The Commerce Ministry has come out with a comprehensive draft of the export policy which includes product-specific rules with a view to provide a ready reckoner for exporters.

Draft Export Policy, 2019

- The draft policy aims at consolidating the export norms for each product as applicable at different government agencies.
- It is proposed to bring out a comprehensive exports policy for all ITC (HS) tariff codes (including items which are ‘free’ for export and do not currently exist in the policy), covering conditions/restrictions imposed by partner government agencies on exports.
- ITC-HS Codes are Indian Trade Clarification based on Harmonised System of Coding. It was adopted by India for import-export operations.
- Every product has been accorded eight digit HS codes.
- The compendium will help an exporter know all the applicable norms pertaining to a particular product, helping him/her understand policy conditions for that item.

Consolidating norms

- This exercise is for consolidating the norms and not for making any changes in the existing export policy of the country.
- It also includes non-tariff regulations imposed by different government agencies.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**AKASH – MK 1S Missile**

DRDO has successfully test fired AKASH-MK-1S missile from ITR , Chandipur.

AKASH Mk1S

- AKASH Mk1S is a surface to air missile which can neutralize advanced aerial targets.
- It is an upgrade of existing AKASH missile with indigenous Seeker.
- The Akash weapon system has combination of both command guidance and active terminal seeker guidance.
- The medium range multi-target engagement capable missile was developed as part of the Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) other than Nag, Agni, Trishul, and Prithvi missiles.
- The supersonic missile has a range of around 25 km and up to the altitude of 18,000 metres.
- The missile uses high-energy solid propellant for the booster and ramjet-rocket propulsion for the sustainer phase.
- Several variants of the missile — Akash MK1, Akash-MK2 — with improved accuracy and higher ranges are under development by the DRDO.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Change Nothing and Nothing Changes.