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Outbreak of acute diarrhoeal disease in Jorhat under IDSP's surveillance: Centre

A CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, May 4: The outbreak of acute diarrhoeal disease in Jorhat is under the surveillance of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), the Health Ministry has said.

Quoting the IDSP report, a Health Ministry official on Saturday said that the cases were reported from a hostel at Sipahkholā at Teok in Jorhat in February. "Thirteen cases were presented with symptoms of pain in the abdomen, nausea, vomiting and loose motion. All the affected were female in the age group of 18 to 23 years," the official said.

Two stool samples were sent to the

Department of Microbiology which showed growth of enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC).

Three water samples were also tested, which were found unfit for drinking purposes.

"The District RRT investigated the outbreak. Community awareness and health education were given by the peripheral team on hygiene and sanitation," the official informed.

The ministry further said that an outbreak of human rabies was also

reported from Goalpara which is now under control.

The IDSP also detected outbreaks of communicable disease like **brucellosis, chickenpox and measles** in March in 27 places of Assam

"Human rabies cases reported from Harimura village of Goalpara. Cases presented with symptoms of hydrophobia, aerophobia. The victim had a history of dog scratch on his hand which did not receive ARV," the official said.

Following the outbreak, the district RRT team conducted surveillance activities. A house-to-house

survey was done for any dog bite cases.

"IEC activities regarding wound washing, wood management, importance of ARV in animal bite condition and completing the vaccine schedule were conducted. An awareness meeting was organized in the village. Contact tracing done and exposure prophylaxis started for all the close contacts. However, the death of a 36-year-old male occurred due to the illness," the official added.

The IDSP also detected outbreaks of communicable disease like brucellosis, chickenpox and measles in the month of March in 27 places of Assam including Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Hailakandi.

Category:

- GS-3
- GS-5

About:

- Diarrhoeal is defined as the passage of three or more loose or liquid stools per day (or more frequent passage than is normal for the individual). The most severe threat posed by diarrhoea is dehydration.
- During a diarrhoeal episode, water and electrolytes (sodium, chloride, potassium and bicarbonate) are lost through liquid stools, vomit, sweat, urine and breathing.
- Dehydration occurs when these losses are not replaced.

Statistics:

- Diarrhoeal disease is the second leading cause of death in children under five years old.
- Each year diarrhoea kills around 525,000 children under five

Clinical Types:

- Acute Watery Diarrhoea – lasts several hours or days, and includes cholera;
- Acute Bloody Diarrhoea – also called dysentery; and
- Persistent Diarrhoea – lasts 14 days or longer

Causes:

- Infection: Diarrhoea can be caused by bacterial infections such as cholera and typhoid, or by viral and parasitic organisms, most of which are spread by faeces-contaminated water.
- Contaminated Food and Water: Contamination with human faeces, for example, from sewage, septic tanks and latrines, is of particular concern.

Brucellosis Disease:

- Brucellosis is a bacterial infection that spreads from animals to people.
- It is caused by various Brucella species, which mainly infect cattle, swine, goats, sheep and dogs.
- Worldwide, Brucella melitensis is the most prevalent species causing human brucellosis.
- Brucellosis is found globally and is a reportable disease in most countries. It affects people of all ages and both sexes
- However, Person-to-person transmission is rare.

Transmission: Most commonly, people are infected by eating raw or unpasteurized dairy products. Sometimes, the bacteria that cause brucellosis can spread through the air or through direct contact with infected animals

Going to police should be the last resort in matrimonial disputes: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has in a judgment advised caution to families facing marital trouble, stating that going to the police should be the “last resort”.

“Police machinery should be resorted to as a measure of last resort and that too in a very genuine case of cruelty and harassment. The police machinery cannot be utilised for the purpose of holding the husband at ransom so that he could be squeezed by the wife at the instigation of her parents or relatives,” a Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra observed on Friday.

Justice Pardiwala, who authored the judgment, said invocation of Section

Top court requests Parliament to change Sections 85 and 86 of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

498A of the Indian Penal Code (domestic cruelty) should not be mechanical in every case in which “a wife complains of harassment or ill-treatment”.

“Every matrimonial conduct, which may cause annoyance to the other, may not amount to cruelty. Mere trivial irritations, quarrels between spouses, which happen in day-to-day married life, may also not amount to cruelty,” the court noted. Moreover, in cases of domestic abuse, an FIR is “not complete” without criminal intimidat-

tion to cause death or serious harm (Section 506(2) IPC) and causing hurt (Section 323 IPC).

The court requested Parliament to make changes in Sections 85 (husband or his relative subjecting his wife to cruelty) and 86 (definition of cruelty) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which correspond with Section 498A IPC, after considering the pragmatic realities mentioned in the judgment, especially since the accused is looking at a jail of up to three years and fine. It said the provisions were only a verbatim reproduction of Section 498A. The court directed its Registry to send a copy of the judgment to the Law and Home Secretaries and their respective Union Ministries.

The judgment said, many times, the parents of the wife make “a mountain out of a mole”. Instead of salvaging the situation and making all possible endeavours to save the marriage, their action either due to ignorance or on account of sheer hatred towards the husband and his family members, brings about complete destruction of marriage on trivial issues, the court said.

“The first thing that comes in the mind of the wife, her parents and her relatives is the police, as if the police is the panacea of all evil. No sooner the matter reaches the police than, even if there are fair chances of reconciliation between the spouses, they would get destroyed,” Justice Pardiwala noted.

Category:

- GS-1
- GS-2

What is Domestic Violence?

- Domestic violence can be described as the power misused by one adult in a relationship to control another.
- It is the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse.
- This violence can take the form of physical assault, psychological abuse, social abuse, financial abuse, or sexual assault.

Reasons:

1. Economic dependence has been found to be the central reason. Without the ability to sustain themselves economically, women are forced to stay in abusive relationships.
2. Due to deep-rooted values and culture, women do not prefer to adopt the option of separation or divorce.
3. Lack of information about alternatives also forces women to suffer silently within the four walls of their homes.
4. Domestic violence has sometimes been referred to as the ‘shadow pandemic’ — as the world faced an unprecedented crisis and lockdowns became the norm in several countries

Occurrences:

- Latest round of the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) reveals that 32% of ever-married women aged 18-49 years have ever experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence committed by their husbands, with more rural than urban women reporting experiences of domestic violence.
- National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) reports that only 14% of women who have experienced domestic violence have ever sought help

Various Initiatives of Government:

1. 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India.
2. Prevention of domestic violence against women is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations.
3. 'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005', 'The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961', 'The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006', etc. remain

Matrimonial disputes:

- Irretrievable Breakdown of Marriage An "irretrievable breakdown of marriage" is not explicitly listed as a ground for divorce in the Hindu Marriage Act but has been recognized by the Supreme Court in various judgments as a basis for dissolving marriages. This concept is applied when the marriage has broken down beyond repair, and all efforts at reconciliation have failed.
- Application of Article 142: The Supreme Court has occasionally used its powers under Article 142 to dissolve marriages that are demonstrably beyond salvage, even when the statutory cooling-off periods or other procedural requirements have not been met.
- Key Supreme Court Judgments Several landmark cases have shaped the application of Article 142 in divorce proceedings, including:
 - **Amardeep Singh v. Harveen Kaur (2017):** The Court held that the six-month waiting period could be waived if the marriage is irretrievably broken and waiting would only prolong the inevitable.
 - **Amit Kumar v. Suman Beniwal (2021):** Further clarifies conditions under which immediate relief can be granted, emphasizing the comprehensive settlement of matrimonial disputes.

Paper industry's plea

The Indian paper industry's appeal to the government to provide degraded land to it on long-term lease for pulpwood plantation merits consideration. Among the major ills afflicting the sector is a shortage of raw materials, especially pulpwood. The authorities, however, need to be careful about classifying land as degraded, as past instances have shown that laws are often tweaked to accommodate the interests of the business lobby. There have been cases when productive land is falsely shown as wasteland, only to be handed over to the industry on a platter. According to the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA), even if a small fraction of the large stretches of degraded land available across the country is allotted on lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation, it can be a game-changer for industry growth and greening of India. In today's critical times, when environmental degradation has intensified and the government authorities have made it a habit to override genuine environmental concerns to allow industry and infrastructure development, one has to be extra cautious about protecting the environment. At the same time, the needs of development warrant that we strike a balance between the needs of facilitating development and protecting the environment. Indeed, development has to be sensitive to the needs of the environment, failing which development will become unsustainable. Allotment of degraded land on long-term lease to the paper industry can have the desired impact of ensuring the required quantity of wood not only to paper mills, but to other wood-based industries as well. This can be done through a stringent protocol for identifying the plots of degraded land. There is also a need for promoting domestic agro forestry or else it will have an unfavourable impact on the import of wastepaper and wood pulp.

Even though the world is increasingly turning digital, the need for paper for different purposes continues to mount. The IPMA estimates a growth of 6-7 per cent per annum in paper consumption in the country for the next many years. The suitability of paper as a biodegradable and sustainable material for packaging, especially for replacing single-use plastic, is boosting the usage of paper across different sectors of the economy. A major feature of the paper industry in India is its big size and wide place. India has over 800 paper mills with an annual making power of over 16 million tonnes of paper, with the industry employing over 0.4 million people. As for the use of raw materials, in India, the paper manufacturers generally use locally available raw materials like wood pieces, bamboo, leftovers from sugar cane, and recycled fibres. Recycling is another key aspect, as some 40 per cent of India's total paper demand is met through recycled paper fibres, making it an environment-friendly practice. Shortage of raw materials apart, the Indian paper industry faces problems of low capacity use, dividing up, etc., and in order to be more resilient, it needs to explore new ways to enhance efficiency, productivity, and value addition.

Category:

- GS-3
- GS-5

Paper Industry:

- The pulp and paper industry comprises companies that use wood as raw material and produce pulp, paper, paperboard, and other cellulose-based products.
- The pulp and paper industry is one of the largest industries in the world. It is dominated by North American, Northern European, and East Asian countries.

Latin America also have significant pulp and paper industries

Key factors that determine the location:

1. Raw material: The location of the paper industry is dependent on the availability of bamboo, softwood. E.g. South Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh
2. Supply of abundant coal: Energy requirement and total transport cost of coal offset the disadvantage of the dearth of raw materials.
3. Nearness to the market: Some of the paper mills are located near the market where cheap labour is also available.
4. Water Supply: The paper/pulp mills require clean water free from chemicals/pollutants.

Paper Industry & Challenges faced by this Industry in India



Issues:

1. Not enough raw material availability is a challenge faced by the Paper Industry in India. The Indian paper sector relies mainly on wood-based raw materials like wood chips and bamboo. However, there is a shortage of suitable wood and bamboo in many places. This leads to high reliance on imported wood pulp, increasing industry costs.
2. Low use of mill ability is another challenge. Most Indian paper mills work at around 70-80% of their total ability due to various reasons like shortage of raw materials, lack of export orders, financial problems, etc. This less use of ability results in higher production costs and lower profits.
3. High energy use is also a problem area. The Indian paper industry uses massive amounts of energy, especially electricity, to run its machines. But high energy costs eat into company profits. Moreover, power availability without stopping is still an issue in some parts of India.
4. The Paper Industry in India also suffers from technology gaps as most mills still use old machines and ways even though modern techniques are available. Only a few Indian companies have adopted new technologies, while most work at lower ability levels. This old technology limits product quality and the ability to work fast.
5. Division of the industry is a challenge, too. The Indian paper sector includes mostly small mills worked by unorganized sector units. Only around 20% of total mills are run by company houses with better resources and technologies.
6. The Paper Industry in India also faces problems related to environmental sustainability. Though the idea of recycling is followed, getting rid of used water and air pollution caused by mills are major concerns that require industry-wide solutions. Stricter environmental rules also pose a challenge to working as planned.
7. The lack of skilled workers is another problem area for the paper sector. There is a shortage of technically trained employees like machine operators, engineers, chemists, etc. Many paper mills cannot find suitable talent to run hi-tech machines and ways. This contributes to a lower ability to work fast and hampers technological upgrades.
8. Inadequate research and development is also a challenge as the Indian paper industry spends only a small part of its revenue on R&D. This limits the invention and development of new products. Moreover, help from government research organizations to the sector is also insufficient

Nature's wrath

Normal life in Dima Hasao district has come to a standstill following heavy rains since Wednesday night, with the resultant deluge and landslides disrupting surface communication and destroying infrastructure and property. Two years back, a similar situation was witnessed in Dima Hasao, with floods and landslides wreaking havoc in the picturesque hills district. Reaching out to the affected people who are in urgent need of rescue and rehabilitation should be the biggest priority of the authorities. At the same time, there should be some soul searching as to why such rainfall-induced devastations – something unheard of until a few years back – have come to afflict the district. On the face of it, the insensitive development process that has resulted in thoughtless destruction of hills and forests to make room for highways and broad gauge railway tracks, has a lot of bearing on today's situation. The massive construction works undertaken recently cared little about respecting the environmental sanctity of the fragile geology of the hilly district. On the other hand, the British-era track – widely acclaimed as an engineering marvel accomplished at a time when modern technologies were not there – exemplifies why environmental concerns should not be undermined while undertaking massive infrastructure development projects. The four-lane highway and gauge conversion required large-scale destruction of the forested hills and clearly those were not done scientifically, especially in maintaining the natural hill slope gradients. It has been a norm for our governments to go for grandiose projects without assessing the environmental damage accruing out of such interventions and putting in place adequate safeguards.

In view of the growing weather extremes and also taking into account the State's position as a wonderland of biodiversity, our governments and planners should be extra careful about the development process to be set in motion. A thoughtless and unscientific development process is bound to cause long-term and inalterable damage to the region's geology and ecology. Across the State, thousands of trees are being indiscriminately chopped down to widen roads and facilitate other infrastructure projects. All this has naturally triggered a backlash from Nature in the form of flash floods and water-logging in urban areas, killer landslides, dust pollution, etc. It is time we opted for a model that would be less damaging to the natural environment even while catering to the human needs of development. Areas such as Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong have immense eco-tourism potential and the State government as also the local autonomous councils need to tap this prospect while expediting the development process in the two districts. Dima Hasao boasts multiple tourist attractions in the form of its cloud-wrapped mountains, verdant hills and meandering rivers. Sustainably harnessed with the local communities as active stakeholders, tourism can open up new vistas of development in the region. A long-term holistic tourism policy should be put in place so that insensitive tourism, which can cause irreparable harm to the region's natural environment and the close-knit tribal societies, can be avoided.

Cruelty against woman

SC asks Centre to consider making changes in Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

NEW DELHI, May 3: The Supreme Court today asked the Centre to consider making necessary changes in Sections 85 and 86 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita to avoid its misuse for lodging of false or exaggerated complaints after taking into consideration the pragmatic realities.

Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita states, "Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall

be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine."

Section 86 expands the definition of "cruelty" to encompass both mental and physical harm to a woman.

The top court said it had asked the Centre 14 years ago to have a relook at the anti-dowry law as exaggerated versions of the incident are reflected in a large number of complaints.

A bench of Justices JB

Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said it looked into Sections 85 and 86 respectively of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which is to come into force with effect from July 1, so as to ascertain whether the Legislature has seriously looked into the suggestions of the court.

"The aforesaid is nothing but verbatim reproduction of Section 498A of the IPC. The only difference is that the explanation to Section 498A of the IPC, is now by way of a

separate provision, i.e., Section 86 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

"We request the Legislature to look into the issue as highlighted above taking into consideration the pragmatic realities and consider making necessary changes in Sections 85 and 86 respectively of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, before both the new provisions come into force," the bench said.

The observation from the

apex court came while quashing a dowry-harassment case filed by a woman against her husband.

According to the FIR lodged by his wife, the man and his family members allegedly demanded dowry and caused mental and physical trauma to her.

The FIR said the woman's family had spent a large sum at the time of her wedding and also handed over her "stridhan" to the husband and his family. – PTI

Women tonsure heads, spread peace message on bicycles



For the noble cause of peace: The seven women riding on their bicycles from Sekmai to Kangla Fort in Imphal on Friday. – Photo: Newmai News

NEWMAI NEWS

IMPHAL, May 3: Seven women tonsured their heads today and took out a bicycle rally to spread the message of peace and harmony in Manipur on the first anniversary of the violent ethnic conflict in the State.

The bicycle rally kicked off from Sekmai in Imphal West district and ended at the Kangla Fort in the capital city.

The women shaved their heads on a public ground at Sekmai Koujeng Leikai. Clad in black attire to sym-

bolise mourning and sorrow, they carried placards bearing messages of peace and unity.

‘We Want Peace’, ‘Protect Territorial Integrity of Manipur’, and ‘Protect Indigenous People of Manipur’, read some of the placards.

On reaching Kangla, the women offered prayers at the shrine of Ipuhou Pakhangba, the supreme deity in the Meitei faith.

Talking to reporters, a woman taking part in the rally, slammed the governments at the Centre and in the State for “not taking any concrete

steps to end the crisis even after passage of one year”. She said that people of all sections of society are suffering due to the protracted crisis.

On shaving their heads, the woman protester stated that hair is traditionally viewed as a symbol of beauty for women, and that they willingly sacrificed this symbol to convey the distress due to the ongoing turmoil.

“Women are the most affected group in the society and the Government has failed to address their plight,” she rued.

Rescued bear cub handed over to rehab facility in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, May 3: A month-old Asiatic black bear cub was rescued by Forest personnel after its mother was killed by suspected poachers in Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh.

The male cub was rescued from the Sagalee region of the district and transferred to the **Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation (CBRC) at the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Seijosa under the Pakke Kessang district of the State**, an official of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) said.

The CBRC, jointly run by the WTI and the State Environment and Forest Department, is the only facility in India for hand-raising and rehabilitating orphaned bear cubs.

"This is the 85th bear cub received by the CBRC since its inception in 2004," said CBRC head Panjit Basumatary. The cub, estimated to be a month old, was likely separated from

PROFILE OF THE BEAR REHAB CENTRE

- **The Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation (CBRC) at the Pakke Tiger Reserve is located at Seijosa in Pakke Kessang district of Arunachal Pradesh.**
- **It is the only facility in India for hand-raising and rehabilitation of orphaned bear cubs.**
- **The cubs undergo a process of hand-raising, acclimatisation and weaning, and are taken for regular walks in the forest by animal keepers.**
- **After end of the rehabilitation process, the cubs are released back into the wild.**

its mother, which is believed to have been a victim of poaching, he said.

"Upon examination, we found the cub to be significantly dehydrated, weighing a mere 2.3 kg. Within the week following admission, it has gained some weight and is showing signs of improved health and activity," Basumatary said.

The Asiatic black bear is categorised as 'vulnerable' by the IUCN Red List of threatened species and is protected under Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

However, it faces numerous challenges, including shrinking habitats due to logging, agriculture expansion, roadway networks, and dams.

The primary threat has been poaching, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh.

Bear meat, bile and claws hold a huge commercial value in the illegal wildlife trade market. Young cubs are often orphaned due to hunting or poaching of the mother and are either picked up to be sold or kept at home as pets.

Asiatic black bear cubs spend between two and three years under the close supervision of their mothers to learn vital survival skills.

At the CBRC, these orphaned cubs undergo a similar rehabilitation process that includes hand-raising, acclimatisation, and weaning, alongside regular walks in the forest with experienced animal keepers, to help them adapt to their surroundings.

Eventually, the cub is released back into the wild, giving them a second chance in life in their natural habitat. – PTI

The paradox of India's global rise, its regional decline

One of the deeply perplexing paradoxes of contemporary Indian foreign policy is that a globally rising India is also a regionally declining power. While India's global rise is a function of growth in absolute power, peer accommodation and a conducive 'chaotic' international situation, its waning regional influence is caused by diminishing relative power (vis-à-vis China), loss of primacy in South Asia, and fundamental changes in South Asian geopolitics.

India's aggregate power has grown over the past two decades – evident in robust economic growth, military capabilities, and a largely young demography. Its inclusion in key global institutions such as the G20, as an invitee at G7 meetings, and active participation in multilateral groups such as the Quad, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation further highlight its geopolitical significance and its powerful presence globally, even if it is not a member of the United Nations Security Council. There is a lot more peer accommodation of (except from China of course) of India's claims to be a globally significant power. India's global rise is also aided by growing international attention on the Indo-Pacific, a theatre that is pivotal to global strategic stability, where India has a central position, geographically and otherwise.

Extraneous factors

Despite this global rise, paradoxically and worryingly, India's influence is declining in South Asia. When compared to India's influence in the region during the Cold War or in comparison to China's influence in the region today, India's power and influence in the region has sharply declined. This comparative decline, not an absolute one, caused by several extraneous factors, will have an impact on India's global position over time.

Paradoxically, again, some of the factors that have led to the decline of Indian influence in the region are also the reasons behind India's global prominence. Consider the following. The American withdrawal from the region and China filling that power vacuum have been disadvantageous to India. But that is, at the same time, a major reason why the United States and its allies are keen to accommodate India's global interests including in order to push back China in the region. In the case of the Indo-Pacific, while interest in the Indo-Pacific has increased, India's global prominence as an indispensable Indo-Pacific power, New Delhi's focus on the great power balance in the Indo-Pacific may have stretched New Delhi a bit too thin in the continental neighbourhood.

If India's global rise stems from the growth in



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absolute power and the geopolitical choices made by the leading powers of the contemporary international system, India's regional decline is a product of the dynamics of comparative power, and geopolitical choices made by the region's smaller powers. To that extent, overlooking the balancing acts by the region's smaller powers to focus on the great power balancing might become counterproductive.

The rise of China and what India must do

But the rise of China explains India's regional decline more than anything else. Today, India is more powerful than it has ever been in nearly two centuries. And, yet, it is, comparatively speaking, the weakest it has ever been in history vis-à-vis China. Faced with a rising superpower next door for the first time, India is facing stiff geopolitical competition for influence in South Asia. China's rise will, therefore, mean that India may no longer be the most consequential power in the region.

The arrival of China in South Asia, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the region, and India's tilt to the Indo-Pacific have shifted the regional balance of power in Beijing's favour. Sensing this new power equation, South Asia's smaller powers, India's neighbours, are engaged in a range of strategies: balancing, bargaining, hedging and bandwagoning. India's smaller neighbours seem to find China as a useful hedge against India, for the moment at least. It is also important to keep in mind that a great deal of this regional balancing results from shifts in the regional balance of power, not merely from insufficient Indian outreach to the neighbourhood.

While the presence of a rising superpower at its doorstep for the first time is at the heart of this paradox, the growing obsolescence of South Asia as a geopolitical construct adds to India's diminishing hold on the region. For India, meeting the challenge posed by this paradox is essential as China's rise in South Asia will mean that India may no longer be the most consequential power in the region.

To begin with, New Delhi must revisit some of its traditional conceptions of the region, 'modernise' its primacy in South Asia, and take proactive and imaginative policy steps to meet the China challenge in the region.

First of all, we must accept the reality that the region, the neighbours and the region's geopolitics have fundamentally changed over the decade-and-a-half at the least. Not willing to acknowledge there is a problem will only make matters worse.

Second, New Delhi must focus on its strengths rather than trying to match the might of the

People's Republic of China in every respect – the latter is a fool's errand. Fashioning a new engagement with the region that reflects India's traditional strengths and the region's changed realities is essential. Reclaiming the Buddhist heritage is one such example.

Third, India's continental strategy is replete with challenges whereas its maritime space has an abundance of opportunities for enhancing trade, joining multilaterals, and creating new issue-based coalitions, among others. New Delhi must, therefore, use its maritime (Indo-Pacific) advantages to cater to its many continental handicaps. Doing so could involve including India's smaller South Asian neighbours to the Indo-Pacific strategic conversations. Many of them are maritime states but not serious players within the Indo-Pacific project. India and its partners (the U.S., Japan, Australia, the European Union, and others) must find ways of engaging and partnering with Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Bangladesh as part of their larger Indo-Pacific strategy. In other words, New Delhi should try to wean them away from the China-led regional grand strategy by making them a key part of the Indo-Pacific grand strategy where India and its partners hold significant advantage over China.

Fourth, there is today an openness in New Delhi to view the region through a non-India centric lens. This also means that New Delhi is no longer uneasy about external powers in its neighbourhood as it used to be during the Cold War. As a consequence, there is a desire to join hands with external friendly partners both in the Indian Ocean and South Asia so as to deal with the region's common challenges. This openness in New Delhi, and the desire of the external actors to engage the region, must be utilised to address the difficulties arising out of New Delhi's regional decline.

Tap soft power

Finally, New Delhi should make creative uses of its soft power to retain its influence in the region. One way to do that is to actively encourage informal contacts between political and civil society actors in India and those in other South Asian countries. For instance, there is a need to encourage informal and unofficial conflict management processes in the region especially when and where the Indian state is hesitant about being involved directly in a conflict – Myanmar is a case in point.

The dichotomy between India's global rise and regional decline has profound implications for India's global aspirations. It is a legitimate question to ask whether a country that is unable to maintain primacy in its periphery will be able to be a pivotal power in international politics.

This dichotomy has profound implications for New Delhi's global aspirations

This is the year to get the SDG goals back on track

The United Nations summit on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), that was held in New York (September 18-19), assessed progress towards achieving the SDGs. The Agenda-2030, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, identified 17 SDGs with 169 specific targets to be achieved by 2030. The programme is internationally non-binding, but all countries have committed to work towards these goals as transitioning to sustainable development is a common global endeavour.

Slow progress

Progress, according to available reports, is off track. From 2015 to 2019, there were some improvements, although grossly insufficient to achieve the goals. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises have virtually halted progress. Apart from slow progress, and little or no attention towards the goals related to the environment and biodiversity (including responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, and life on land), it is a matter of great concern that the current practice of pursuing SDGs defies the integrated and indivisible nature of SDGs. We are far from the overarching target of balancing human well-being and a healthy environment. The present trend, if it continues, will lead to accelerated environmental degradation and the purpose of transitioning towards sustainability defeated.

Given this emerging scenario, the UN SDG Report, 2023 identified five key areas for urgent action: Commitment of governments to seven years of accelerated, sustained and transformative actions to deliver on the promises of SDGs; concrete, integrated and targeted government policies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and to end the war on nature with a focus on advancing the rights of women and girls and empowering the most



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2024 is an election year across the world and newly elected governments need to focus on the all-important sustainability issue

vulnerable; strengthening of national and subnational capacity, accountability, and public institutions to deliver accelerated progress; recommitment of the international community to deliver and mobilise resources to assist developing nations, and continued strengthening of the UN development system.

World leaders took cognisance of the situation, reaffirmed their commitments and agreed to step-up efforts to deliver SDGs, our global road map out of the crisis, by 2030. But how far these global pronouncements are operative at the ground level remains a big question.

Results that deserve deliberation

A team of 64 scholars analysed 3,000 studies, mostly peer-reviewed published articles across the world to examine 'Scientific evidence on the political impact of the sustainable development goals' within national and global governance to address pressing challenges of poverty eradication, social justice and environmental protection. The results, which were published in the journal, *Nature Sustainability*, September 2022 issue (under the leadership of Professor Frank Biermann of the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands), deserve wide deliberations, especially in the context of Agenda 2030 implementation.

The authors look at five dimensions: global governance, domestic political systems, the integration and coherence of institutions and policies, the inclusiveness of governance from local to global level, and the protection of ecological integrity. They concluded that 'the SDGs thus far have had mainly discursive effects but also have led to some isolated normative and institutional reforms.

However, effects are often diffuse, and there is little evidence that goal setting at the global level leads directly to political impacts in national and

local politics. Overall, our assessment indicates that although there are some limited effects of the SDGs, they are not a transformative force in and of themselves'.

In this context, another UN report, 'Future is Now' (2019), perhaps provides some guidelines for action. It emphasised that 'The true transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda can be realised through a systemic approach that helps identify, manage trade-offs while maximising co-benefits.' By co-benefit the stress is on the activities that, while addressing one SDG, will help address others at the same time. The report suggests adopting locally best suited entry points following regional and national priorities and applying four levers – governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology to propel our actions along the entry points.

Actors from these levers must develop partnership and establish novel collaboration to design and rapidly implement integrated pathways to sustainable development corresponding to the specific needs and priorities of the country. This will ultimately contribute to global transformation. In the prologue to this report, Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and renowned for the famous Brundtland report, 'Our Common Future', expressed the hope that politicians and policymakers will take note of the suggestions advanced in this report and steer the world towards sustainable development.

An important year

The year 2024 is an election year across the world. At least 64 countries, both developed and developing, accounting for 49% of world population, will go to the polls. Perhaps, it is important for all the newly elected governments to ponder over the sustainability issue and align their national policies accordingly.

OMY

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024

Paper industry seeks degraded land for pulpwood plantation

NEW DELHI, May 4:

The Indian paper industry has urged the government to provide degraded land on a long-term lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation to address raw material shortage and boost rural employment.

The industry has highlighted that a large chunk of degraded land is available in the country, and even if a small fraction of that is allotted on lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation,

it can be a game changer for industry growth and greening of India.

The paper industry has faced shortage of wood, the key raw material, and it is the biggest concern for mills in India, the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) said in a statement on Saturday.

While the paper industry is continuing with agro forestry efforts, pulpwood plantations need to be enhanced rapidly to meet the requirements of domestic industry, the IPMA stated.

“Even if a fraction of the degraded land available in the country is provided on lease to the industry for pulpwood plantation, the same can be a game changer for growth of domestic manufacturing, rural empowerment and greening of India,” it said.

“We have been trying to convince the government that this land can be given to the paper industry on long-term lease. It will provide the desired quantity of wood not only to paper mills, but to several wood-based industries while generating a huge amount of rural employment,” IPMA President Pawan Agarwal said.



If domestic agro forestry is not encouraged, import of wastepaper and wood pulp will have to be further increased causing heavy strain on the industry and economy, Agarwal added.

The IPMA also said that for procurement of wood, the industry has worked incessantly with over 5 lakh marginal farmers over the last several years and has successfully brought over 12 lakh hectares of largely degraded land under plantations through agro forestry.

The IPMA estimates a growth of 6-7 per cent per annum in paper consumption in the country for many years. Suitability of paper as biodegradable and sustainable material for packaging, especially for replacing single-use plastic is boosting the usage of paper across different sectors of the economy, IPMA mentioned.

It stated that the move will also help reduce carbon footprint of the country. India needs to bring an additional 25-30 million hectares of degraded land under forest and tree cover to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030, it added. – PTI

Public visits to South Garo Hills cave barred after discovery of 'fossil'



BIPLAB DEY

BAGHMARA, May 4: Following discovery of what is believed to be a fossil inside a cave at Tolegre village in South Garo Hills district, Deputy Commissioner Shivansh Awasthi has temporarily closed the cave to visitors.

In an order issued on Friday, the DC stated that since studies are going on, the cave would remain closed to the public for the time being.

The order further stated

that in case entry was required by any official or individual, permission should be obtained beforehand.

In March this year, a group of explorers belonging to an NGO, Core Geo Expeditions, made the discovery of

the fossil, aged between 35-40 million years, during a survey of caves around the Tolegre area.

The fossil is suspected to belong to the genus, *Rhodocetus* or *Ambulocetus*. This prehistoric animal is believed to be the land ancestor of the whale.

Following the discovery, the Core Geo Expeditions has moved the district administration, seeking verification of the fossil by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), whose team is expected to authenticate the findings of the group.

CONNECT WITH THE PAST

- A fossil suspected to belong to the genus, *Rhodocetus* or *Ambulocetus*, found inside a cave at Tolegre village in South Garo Hills dist
- Prehistoric animal regarded as land ancestor of whale
- NGO that made the discovery seeking verification through GSI

Elephant rehab?

The image of an elephant with its outstretched trunk hanging out from a vehicle as it was being transported to Gujarat has triggered an outrage among animal lovers and conscientious sections. The cavalier and dangerous manner in which the elephant was being transhipped over a distance of several thousand kilometers naturally raises questions about its safety. Even a bigger issue is why elephants in such large numbers are being transferred from India's North-east to the Ambani-owned zoo-cum-rehabilitation centre at Jamnagar in Gujarat. Indeed, the ongoing large-scale shipment of elephants has rightly been questioned by conservationists on several grounds, especially habitat displacement. Gujarat is not even a part of the Asian elephants' natural range, with no occurrence of wild elephants in the State. First and foremost, the geo-climatic conditions of Gujarat are far from suitable for the pachyderms – as explained by the absence of any wild elephant in the State. And this is the biggest concern which should have been factored into while undertaking such a large-scale transfer of elephants from a region like the North-east which constitutes prime elephant territory. If at all the Ambani group is for genuine wellbeing of elephants, they could well have started such a facility in the North-east itself. There is clearly more than what meets the eyes in this disturbing development, as laws are being tweaked to legitimize this horrendous act and accommodate Ambani's interests. So far around hundred elephants have been transferred to Gujarat and only a fool will believe that all these elephants are in need of rehabilitation. All the animals are healthy specimens which should have no business undergoing an unwarranted rehabilitation process in an alien, harsh environment away from their homeland. Rehab should be an option only for those animals suffering due to injury or old age, abusive captivity such as in the circus, etc. And for this too, the logical option should be to have a rehab centre close to their natural habitat. Even the prolonged journey by road from the North-east to Gujarat traversing a great distance under the sweltering heat is nothing short of an ordeal for the animals. And even if the animals survive in the artificial conditions at the rehab centre, it will be a traumatic existence for the pachyderms to endure the harsh, dry conditions in Gujarat.

The American dilemma

ABU NASAR SAIED
AHMED

There are protests all over the world against Israel's war crimes. A 25-year-old American set himself on fire

Two wars have damaged irreparably America's image as a world power. One is the Ukrainian War, and the other is the War on the Gaza Strip. In the case of the Ukrainian War the sad part of the story is that the western countries, including the United States, did not try or refused to understand the roots of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by totally ignoring the Russian complaint about the atrocities committed on their people living in the Eastern part of Ukraine. Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin had been making accusations of Ukrainian genocide against the Russian-speaking people in the Donbas region for a considerably long time, from 2014 to 2022. Instead of dismissing the allegations summarily, Western powers should have addressed them dispassionately, in accordance with international norms of investigation. As the Russian threat of a war to 'punish Ukraine' had been mounting, the United States and its allies in Europe should have used diplomacy to prevent the Russian military incursion. Instead, the aggression was allowed to take place. Eventually, as the Russian military assault started, President Joe Biden appeared to have taken it as an opportunity to wage a proxy war by sending massive military aid to Ukraine. As of now, US-backed war has not been decisive in favour of Ukraine. It is unthinkable for Ukraine to defeat Russia, a massive nuclear power. On the other hand, Ukraine has been facing a huge cost of devastation of property and death of the civilian population. As the US Presidential election is approaching in which President Biden does not seem to have the last laugh, the war scenario might take a twist in favour of Putin.

In the case of the War on the Gaza Strip, a small land with a population of around two million, Israel received enormous support domestically and internationally after a deadly rocket attack launched by Hamas on October 7, killing 1200 and holding 250 people under its captivity. Now, the scenario has changed as Israeli Defence Forces and air strikes have killed more than 33,800 Palestinian civilians, severely injuring more than 74,980 and displacing about 1.9 million, destroying more than 250,000 houses and turning all the hospitals into rubble. Consequent to the show of unrelenting cruelty, Israel is facing public wrath domes-

tically and internationally. Having seen this barbaric destruction of population and property, the United States moved a resolution in the Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire. Ironically, the United States vetoed such a resolution twice to facilitate Israel to continue its inhuman carnage on the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. What for the recent call for a ceasefire when virtually the entire human population in the area is wiped out, all infrastructure is turned into debris, and dust and rubble remain there as a stark reminder of an unequal war? Currently, about one hundred thousand people are still living in the war-ravaged area under appalling conditions, waiting to die of starvation and in bullets fired from Israeli guns while running outside home to collect airdropped food. At this juncture, Israel needs a ceasefire to ensure unhindered occupation of the entire Gaza Strip. This is the cruel rationale for America's peace advancement.

It is unbelievable to find that while the entire Gaza Strip was totally destroyed and is made ready for Israeli occupation, the role of the Arabs is despicable. Except for Qatar, which has been trying to forge a ceasefire, the entire Arab world has virtually abandoned the Palestinians. As against the sordid role of the so-called Arab fraternity, South Africa has been pursuing a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. This world forum has already asked Israel to allow the unobstructed supply of food and medicines to the distressed Palestinians. Some western countries have been demanding the imposition of international norms on any shipment of weapons to Israel, which has been accused of ruthless genocide. There are protests all over the world against Israel's war crimes. A 25-year-old American airman, Aaron Bushnell, shouted 'Free Palestine!' before setting himself on fire in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington DC, declaring he would "not be complicit in genocide". It is also alleged that American soldiers participated in the act of genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Such allegations are yet to be properly investigated by independent agencies. But the allegation itself has not been contested by the United States leaves strong scope for condemnation of America's role in support of Israel.

Consider the following statements regarding Government of India Act of 1858.

1. The British Governor-General of India was given the title of Viceroy.
2. It established 20-member council which was an advisory body.
3. It abolished the board of control and court of directors.
4. It established new legislative council for Bengal.

Select the *incorrect* statements using the codes given below

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. 1 and 2 only | C. 1 and 4 only |
| B. 2 and 3 only | D. 2 and 4 only |

Solution: Correct Answer D

- **Government of India Act (1858)** was passed by the British Parliament on August 2, 1858. The British Parliament handed over the administrative control of British India from the East India Company to the Crown.
- The representative of the British government in India was the Governor General/ Viceroy. (First Governor-General and Viceroy of India: Lord Canning).
- The court of directors and the Board of Control of the British East India company was scrapped .

Consider the following statements about the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

1. It is primarily written in verse form.
2. It features the famous dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi on the nature of self and reality.
3. It is associated with the Rig Veda.
4. It propounds the concept of Brahman as the ultimate reality.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Solution : Correct Answer is B.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is primarily written in prose, unlike many other Upanishads that are in verse form. The dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi is one of the most well-known passages in the Upanishadic literature and explores the nature of the self (Atman) and its relationship with the ultimate reality (Brahman). The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is associated with the Yajur Veda, not the Rig Veda. The concept of Brahman as the ultimate, unchanging reality that underlies all existence is a central theme of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

In an examination 45% is required to pass the examination. Rajesh got 612 marks and thus failed by 108 marks. What is the maximum marks of the examination?

- A. 1800
- B. 1600
- C. 1700
- D. 1500

Correct Answer: B. 1600

Passing marks: $612 + 108 = 720$

Now, 45% is equivalent to 720 marks

Hence total marks

$$= \frac{100}{45} \times 720 = 1600$$

What is the value of X in the sequence below:

2, 3, 6, 12, 24, 48, X ?

- A. 82
- B. 96
- C. 85
- D. 89

Correct Answer: B. 96

- 2
- $2+1=3$,
- $2+3+1=6$,
- $2+3+6+1=12$,
- $2+3+6+12+1=24$,
- $2+3+6+12+24+1=48$,
- Hence, $X = 2+3+6+12+24+48+1 = 96$