Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs)-- 19th October 2024

- Habeas corpus
- CHAR DHAM & HIMALAYA
- Severe Monsoon Impact in India
- Russia's Nuclear Strategy
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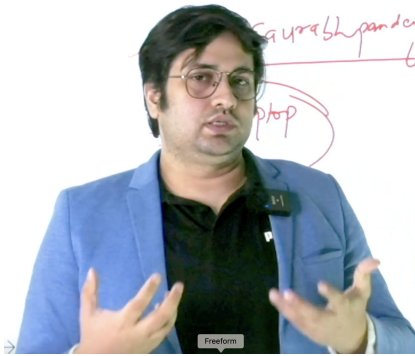
- Mains



By saurabh Pandey

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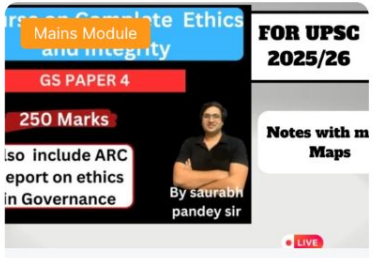

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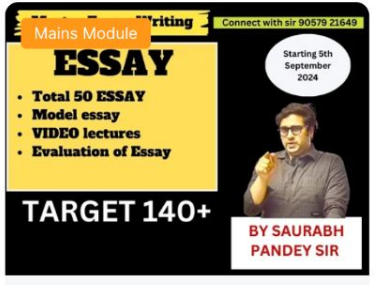

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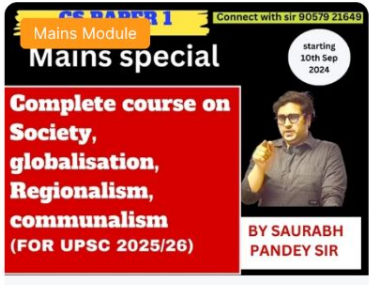

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SC closes *habeas corpus* case against Isha Foundation

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday closed *habeas corpus* proceedings initiated by a 70-year-old man accusing Isha Foundation, founded by Jaggi Vasudev alias Sadhguru, of holding his two daughters, aged 42 and 39, captives.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud terminated the proceedings, which began in the Madras High Court and reached the top court, by noting that the two women had personally assured the court in a video conference that they were living in the Isha Foundation as monks of their own free will. The women had conveyed the same thing to a Tamil Nadu Police team which had talked to them separately.

"You have to accept the fact that they are 42 and 39... You cannot control their lives... We are also parents... Inter-personal relationships between parents and grown-up children are never to be governed by legal suits, injunctions, and actions, you have to gain their confidence. They are not minors in a custody battle," the Chief Justice addressed the father who was present in the courtroom with his counsel.

"These proceedings are not to be used to malign individuals and institutions... The moment we tend to elaborate on anything wider in today's times there are handles used by third parties to malign..." the Chief Justice said orally.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, present in court, said these were clickbait used to entice viewers.

The court refused to delve into concerns raised in a report submitted by the Tamil Nadu Police about medical equipment and the functioning of the Internal Complaints Committee to address sexual harassment complaints at the Isha Yoga Centre in Coimbatore. "Please ask the State to engage with the organisation," the Chief Justice told senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for Tamil Nadu.

Topic→ Habeas corpus

Habeas corpus is a legal principle that protects individuals from unlawful detention, requiring a person under arrest to be brought before a judge to assess the legality of their imprisonment.

- The writ of habeas corpus is a legal order that requires a person holding another in custody to bring the detainee before a court, ensuring that the detention is lawful and justifiable under the law.
- **Legal Significance**: This writ serves as a vital tool for protecting individual freedom, allowing courts to intervene in cases of unlawful detention and reinforcing the principle that no one should be deprived of liberty without due process.

Process of Filing a Habeas Corpus Petition

- **Why**: The purpose of filing a habeas corpus petition is to challenge the legality of an individual's detention, ensuring that their rights are protected and that they are not held unlawfully.
- **What**: The process involves submitting a formal request to a court, seeking a review of the circumstances surrounding the detention and asking for the release of the individual if the detention is found to be unlawful.
- **Where**: Habeas corpus petitions are typically filed in the jurisdiction where the individual is being held, often in state or federal courts, depending on the nature of the detention.
-

- **When**: A petition can be filed at any time during the period of detention, but it is most effective when filed promptly after the individual is taken into custody to ensure timely judicial review.
- **Who**: The petition can be filed by the detained individual, their attorney, or a family member, and it may involve various legal representatives and court officials throughout the process.
- **How**: The filing process generally includes drafting the petition, gathering supporting evidence, submitting it to the appropriate court, and potentially attending a hearing where arguments are presented before a judge.

legal Framework

Constitutional Provisions:

Article 21: Right to life and personal liberty.

Article 32: Right to constitutional remedies.

Judicial Precedents:

Landmark cases that shaped the interpretation of habeas corpus.

Recent Developments

Sadhguru’s Isha Foundation Case:

Recent Supreme Court decisions dismissing habeas corpus petitions related to the Isha Yoga Centre.

Implications for institutional protections.

A perilous highway to salvation in the Himalayas

C.P. Rajendran

Adjunct Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and the Director of the Consortium for Sustainable Development, Connecticut, U.S.

The 900-kilometre long, 12-metre wide, two-lane Char Dham Highway Project to boost religious tourism to four shrines will end up as an endeavour with catastrophic consequences for the mountain ecology. The conclusions of a scientific paper written recently by a group of authors led by Jürgen Mey of the Institute of Environmental Science and Geography, University of Potsdam, Germany, confirm the worst fears expressed by the experts. This supposedly all-weather road project, at an outlay of ₹12,000 crore, was initiated despite intense opposition by environmental organisations in Uttarakhand, who called it unscientific.

Domino effect

The paper presents the study results of fully or partially road-blocking landslides between Rishikesh and Joshimath, along National Highway (NH-7) in Uttarakhand. Based on instances of more than 300 landslides along the 250 km-long corridor after exceptionally high rainfall between September and October 2022, the study identified "309 fully or partially road-blocking landslides along the 247 km long road, which amounts to an average landslide density of 1.25 landslides per kilometre".

While identifying variables such as slope angle, rainfall amount, and lithology as the controlling factors, the study singles out "the road-widening [as] having a doubling impact on the road-blocking landslides". The construction has now proved to be the prime cause of landslides, whose occurrences have doubled over the years. Deaths and accidents on the Char Dham road have become a daily occurrence during the pilgrimage season. This conclusion supports the earlier expert committee reports – overruled by the authorities – that had flagged improper construction practices during the road widening work in the Uttarakhand Himalayas.

The researchers have also predicted an uptick in summer monsoon precipitation due to elevation-dependent warming in the years to come. Thus, landslides and fatalities will become more frequent as climate change prediction models suggest more frequent extreme rainfall events. The study underscores that important environmental caveats must be respected before commencing any mammoth engineering project in the Indian Himalayas.

The authorities put forth the reason for wanting "smoother" and "faster all-weather" connectivity for pilgrim tourists from the plains and the armed forces and armaments, but the engineering interventions have been done with scant regard to the local geology and environment. The government has ignored its original policy framework recommending "best practice" norms for infrastructural expansion in mountainous regions to minimise the negative impact on the mountain ecosystems and landscapes.

There is growing scientific evidence that the Char Dham Highway Project will have catastrophic consequences for the mountain ecology

The project, which was initiated under the 'Char Dham Pariyojana', is in fundamental violation of all environmental norms and conservation strategies that need to be followed in the Himalayas.

The government used a technical loophole and divided the project into 50-plus smaller projects to bypass environmental clearance and impact assessment reports. Calling the project a 'geological and ecological fraud, the petitioners have argued that the roads were longer than 100 km in some stretches and would have a cumulative impact on the whole region. Land encroachment combined with the blasting and the cutting of slopes for developmental projects causes additional stress on a fragile ecosystem. One accepts that roads are the lifeline of remote mountainous regions, but such megaprojects must fully consider the region's environmental fragility.

Though the project began as a tourism project, it was finally defended in the Supreme Court of India as a defence-related requirement for moving troops and armaments, ignoring the point that the defence forces can airlift troops and heavy artillery during emergencies. The Court initially favouring a narrower intermediate road width for the highways (5.5 m), based on the recommendation of an expert committee appointed in 2019 and a Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' circular of 2018. But the Court finally permitted the Union Government to go ahead with the project on widening the hill roads from a national security angle.

No scientific assessment

It is a matter of concern that such massive projects are getting the go-ahead without any scientific assessment especially in an unstable and fragile region such as the Indian Himalayas. A key question is this: is mountain morphology, with steep slopes and sharp gradients, easily amenable to human engineering? Unlike the hinterland in the mountains, the steep gradients of the Uttarakhand Himalaya or the Himachal Himalaya make them dynamically heterogeneous in terms of climatic variables and hydrological and tectonic processes at every turn of the mountain path.

A widened road faces problems now as it is constantly blocked by recurrent landslides. It is most likely that this project will end up not being what it was envisioned to be. Not only would the movement of troops or armaments be delayed in critical moments but also much time and resources would have to be used to clear or reconstruct damaged road stretches. Year-wise statistics show a rise in the loss of human lives. In the last four years, 160 people have lost their life in landslide incidents in Uttarakhand, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

The entire region has been destabilised due to massive construction activities. Ground subsidence is now recognised as a "silent disaster" in many parts of the Himalayas. In a study published in Scientific Reports this year, widely reported land deformation in Joshimath town is being attributed to uncontrolled anthropogenic activities, infrastructural development and inadequate drainage systems. Recently, it has been reported that the Tungnath temple in the Rudraprayag district is facing serious issues such as subsidence, weakening foundation and shifting wall slates, which have caused water leakage especially during the rainy season.

Such incidents have not impacted the government's thinking on its developmental models for such fragile areas. Unsurprisingly, the Border Roads Organisation is now seeking clearance to widen the Gangotri-Dharasu stretch in the fragile Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone, whose integrity is important for the ecology of the Ganga river near its origin.

The issue of local distress

According to Census 2011, of Uttarakhand's 16,793 villages, 1,053 have no inhabitants, while another 405 have a population of less than 10 people. This situation must have been aggravated recently since large-scale infrastructural projects were brought into the hill State. Internal and external migration have led to depopulation and land abandonment in rural areas despite the State government's initiatives in incentivising agriculture. Road widening, that promotes increased motorised tourism, will encourage entrepreneurs from the plains to set up hotels and business centres, often forcing the local people to opt for employment in the tourism industry rather than sticking to farming.

Environmental factors such as the depletion of water resources and other emerging hazards may have resulted in people leaving the agriculture sectors. With low returns from the land, farmers sell their lands to private entrepreneurs from the plains.

The State government is countering this trend by framing laws against selling land to outsiders, but this is a step that will not mitigate the local distress caused by human-induced environmental degradation. The State government claims that Uttarakhand's GSDP has increased 1.3 times in 20 months and that the unemployment rate has decreased by 4.4% in one year. By its admission, people in the State have obtained more employment in tourism.

Making feel-good speeches on climate-change resilience in COP meetings while implementing disaster-prone infrastructure in the country's most fragile area proves a double standard. The Himalayas face multifaceted environmental challenges that require well-thought-out sustainable pathways. The Union and State governments must scale down these ongoing massive construction programmes, which include dams, and formulate sound ecological solutions for the mess they have already created.

Topic→ CHAR DHAM & HIMALAYA

Project Details

🏔️ Char Dham Highway Project: Aims to construct a 900-kilometre, 12-metre wide, two-lane highway to boost religious tourism to four shrines in Uttarakhand, India.

Environmental Concerns

📉 Impact on Ecology: Criticized for its catastrophic impact on mountain ecology, deemed unscientific and environmentally harmful by experts.

Landslide Data

🌧️ Study Findings: Identified 309 landslides along a 247 km stretch, with an average density of 1.25 landslides per kilometre, worsened by road-widening efforts.

Increased Risks

⚠️ Future Predictions: More frequent landslides and fatalities are expected due to climate change and extreme rainfall, emphasizing the need for environmental considerations in engineering projects.

Legal Controversies

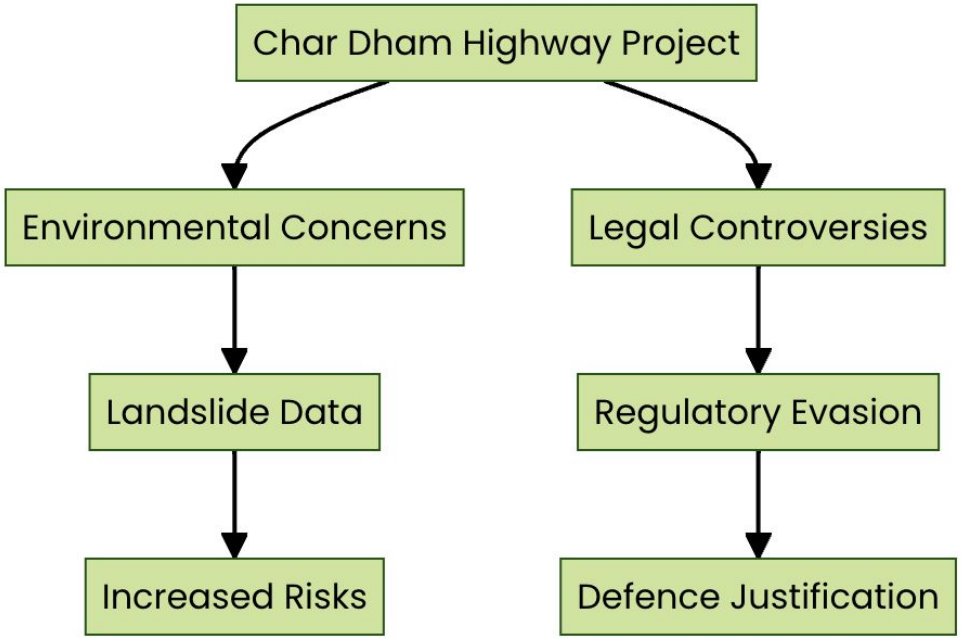
⚖️ Court Rulings: Faced legal challenges, with the Supreme Court initially favoring narrower road widths but later allowing the government to proceed for national security reasons.

Regulatory Evasion

🚧 Project Division: The government divided the project into over 50 smaller projects to bypass environmental clearance, raising concerns about cumulative ecological impacts.

Defence Justification

🛡️ Military Logistics: Initially framed as a tourism initiative, later defended as necessary for military logistics, despite alternative transport options.



Summary: The Char Dham Highway Project, aimed at enhancing religious tourism, poses severe ecological risks and has faced significant legal and environmental scrutiny.

Key Issues and Concerns

🌄 **Lack of Scientific Assessment:** Major projects in the Indian Himalayas are advancing without proper scientific evaluations, raising concerns about their feasibility in this fragile environment.

🌧️ **Landslide Risks:** Widened roads are often blocked by landslides, causing delays in troop movement and increasing resource expenditure for repairs.

⚰️ **Human Casualties:** Over the past four years, 160 lives have been lost due to landslides in Uttarakhand, highlighting the dangers of ongoing construction.

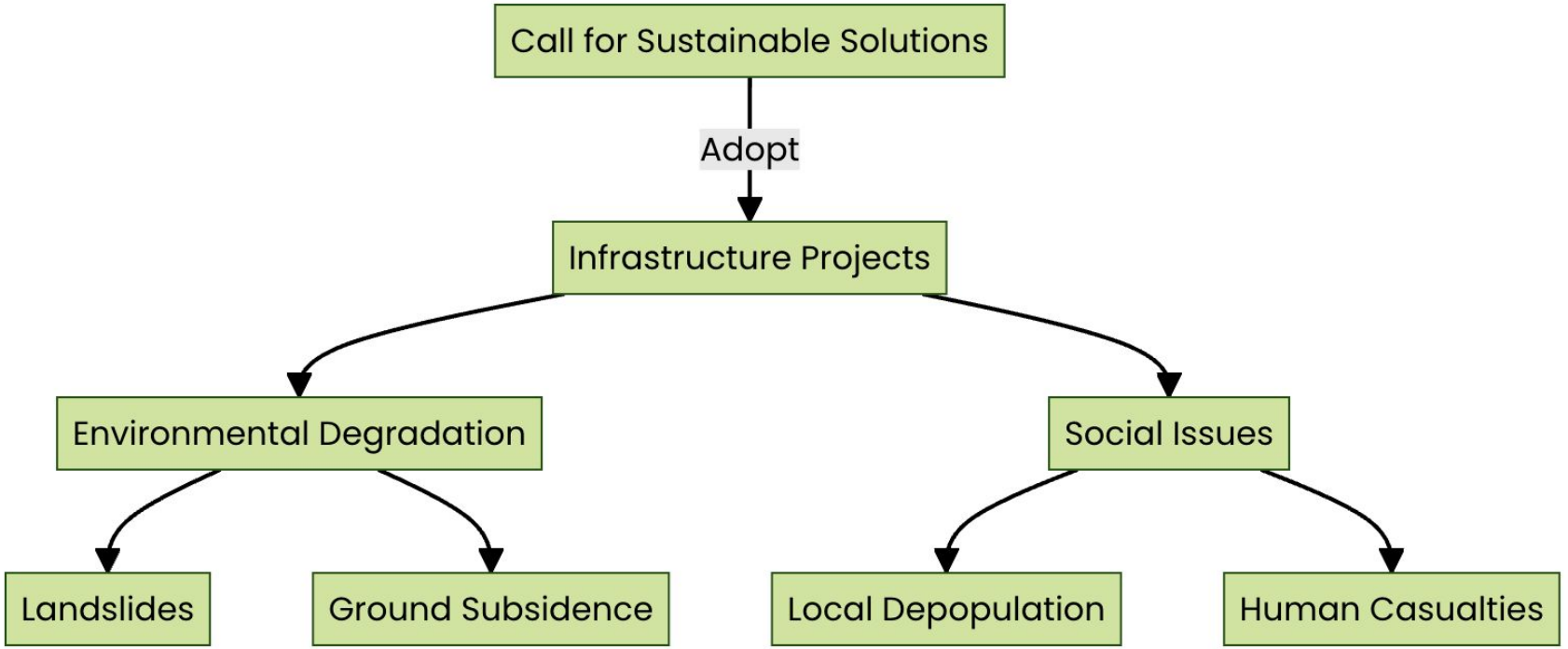
🏚️ **Ground Subsidence:** Uncontrolled construction and poor drainage have led to significant land deformation, with towns like Joshimath experiencing severe subsidence issues.

🏞️ **Local Distress:** Many villages in Uttarakhand are depopulating due to large-scale projects, with locals migrating for better opportunities in tourism rather than agriculture.

🚧 **Government Response:** Despite environmental degradation, the government continues to pursue infrastructure projects, including road widening in ecologically sensitive areas.

🌍 **Call for Sustainable Solutions:** There is a pressing need for the government to adopt sustainable practices and reduce large-scale construction in the Himalayas to address environmental challenges.

Environmental and Social Impact:



Forecasting better in India, come rain or shine

Mohammad Rafiuddin

Programme Associate at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

Vishwas Chitale

Senior Programme Lead at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

The monsoon season this year in India has been one of the worst in recent times, with recurrent flooding impacting most States. According to a 2021 study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), approximately 40% of districts in India experience alternating climatic hazards, which means that flood-prone regions are also facing droughts during the dry season and vice-versa. Separately, an analysis of 40 years of rainfall data by CEEW shows that there has been an increase of up to 64% in heavy rainfall days during the monsoons over the last decade.

Extreme weather needs better forecasting

In this increasingly complex scenario, while nearly two-thirds of India's population are exposed to flood risks, only a third of the flood-prone population is covered by early warning systems. This is in stark contrast to cyclone early warning systems which cover all cyclone-prone areas in the country. It is evident that India must invest in enhancing weather forecasting and bringing technological innovation to the forefront, as a safety net, to address the growing extreme weather risks.

The 'Mission Mausam', that was approved in September 2024, broadly focuses on increasing India's weather observation network, improving weather forecasting models and investigating weather modification techniques. The mission will be implemented primarily by three institutes under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, namely the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The ₹2,000 crore initiative aims to augment the weather observation network using a variety of instruments while also improving forecasting models through an improved understanding of the physics of the atmosphere and the integration of machine-learning approaches.

To harness its potential, India must expand its forecasting capabilities in areas that face a high climate risk and make data widely available for developing use cases across sectors such as energy, agriculture and water. These are the key pathways 'Mission Mausam' should focus on.

Gaps in radar coverage, limited data access

First, prioritise installing weather observation platforms on India's western coast and in large urban centres facing high climate risks. India has 39 Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs) to monitor rainfall, with many covering a radius of 250 kilometres. These provide short-term forecasts, ranging from minutes to a few hours, of extreme rainfall events. Nine of these radars are located in the Himalayan States, eight along the eastern coast, and 17 located in various Indian cities. The remaining five are on the west coast. Recent studies indicate that cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense in the Arabian Sea. But, as said, only five radars monitor the entire west coast. Even key cities such as Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Bengaluru (Karnataka), and Jodhpur (Rajasthan), which have faced repeated flooding recently, do not have radars as yet. Therefore, 'Mission Mausam' should prioritise the installation of weather radars and other observational platforms in areas that have not been covered as yet and which face growing climate risks.

Second, make weather data openly available for researchers and entrepreneurs to develop use cases. Open access to weather data helps in the analysis of trends and in understanding the causes behind extreme weather events better. It also helps in the creation of localised early warning tools. For instance, the United States has made the data from its 160 DWRs openly available which has resulted in the creation of several analytical tools to support local governments. Similarly, the United Kingdom, France, and the European Union have made their weather forecasting data available on cloud for anyone to access. While the IMD shares data through its data supply portal, restrictions remain on the volume of data provided.

Moreover, the data on the portal is not freely available to researchers from academic institutions and think tanks. Therefore, 'Mission Mausam' should establish infrastructure to distribute data generated by the new instruments, such as weather radars, wind profilers and radiometers, in the public domain. Moreover, the data from the weather forecasting models developed as part of the mission should also be placed in the public domain for researchers to validate and provide suggestions for improvement. This will foster innovation and localised decision-making.

Reaching out to users

Third, improve communication tools for weather warnings and enhance user capacity. The IMD disseminates weather information through multiple channels, which include web and mobile applications. Over the years, the web application has been significantly strengthened to the extent that it now provides district-wise weather warnings that range from an hour to the next four days of forecast. However, the user experience could be improved further. While the tool offers helpful warnings, providing users with guidance on how to interpret these warnings would enhance their experience. 'Mission Mausam' must focus on enhancing users' capacity to understand and act on warnings through informative videos, media, and guides.

'Mission Mausam' is a timely move by the Union government to make the country weather ready and climate smart through an expanded observational network and improved weather forecasting. With improvements, the mission can transform how weather information is shared and understood in India. This is critical at a time when extreme weather events are taking a heavy toll on lives and livelihoods.

With improvements, the 'Mausam Mission' will transform how weather information can help India become climate smart

The views expressed are personal

Topic → Severe Monsoon Impact in India

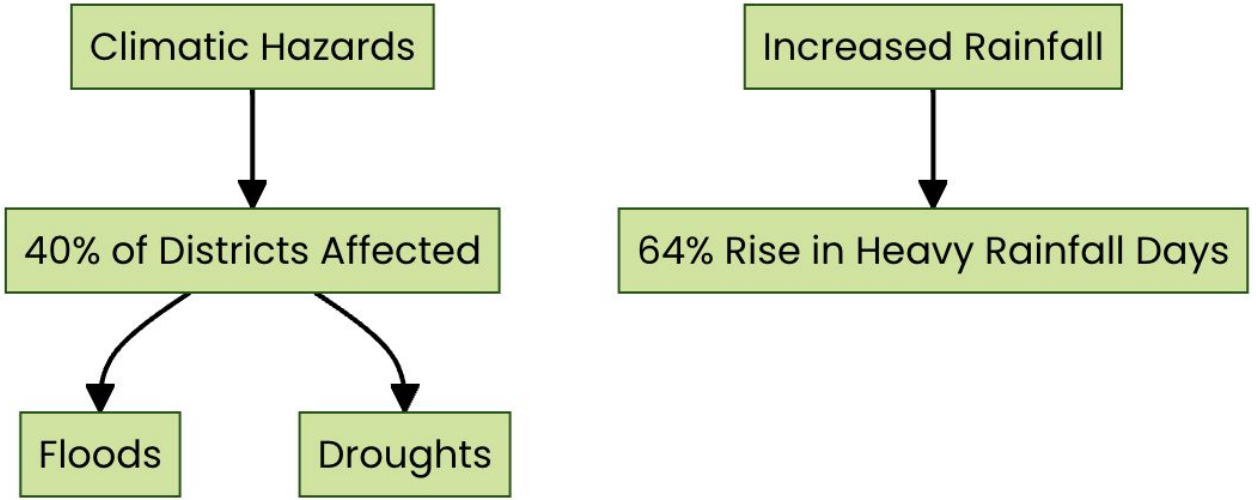
Overview of Monsoon Challenges

🌧️ **Severe Monsoon Impact:** This year's monsoon season in India has been particularly harsh, leading to widespread flooding across numerous states.

📊 **Climatic Hazards:** A 2021 study by CEEW highlights that approximately 40% of Indian districts are vulnerable to alternating climatic hazards, including both floods and droughts.

☔ **Increased Rainfall:** An analysis of four decades of rainfall data reveals a 64% rise in heavy rainfall days during monsoons over the past ten years.

Climatic Hazards and Rainfall Trends:

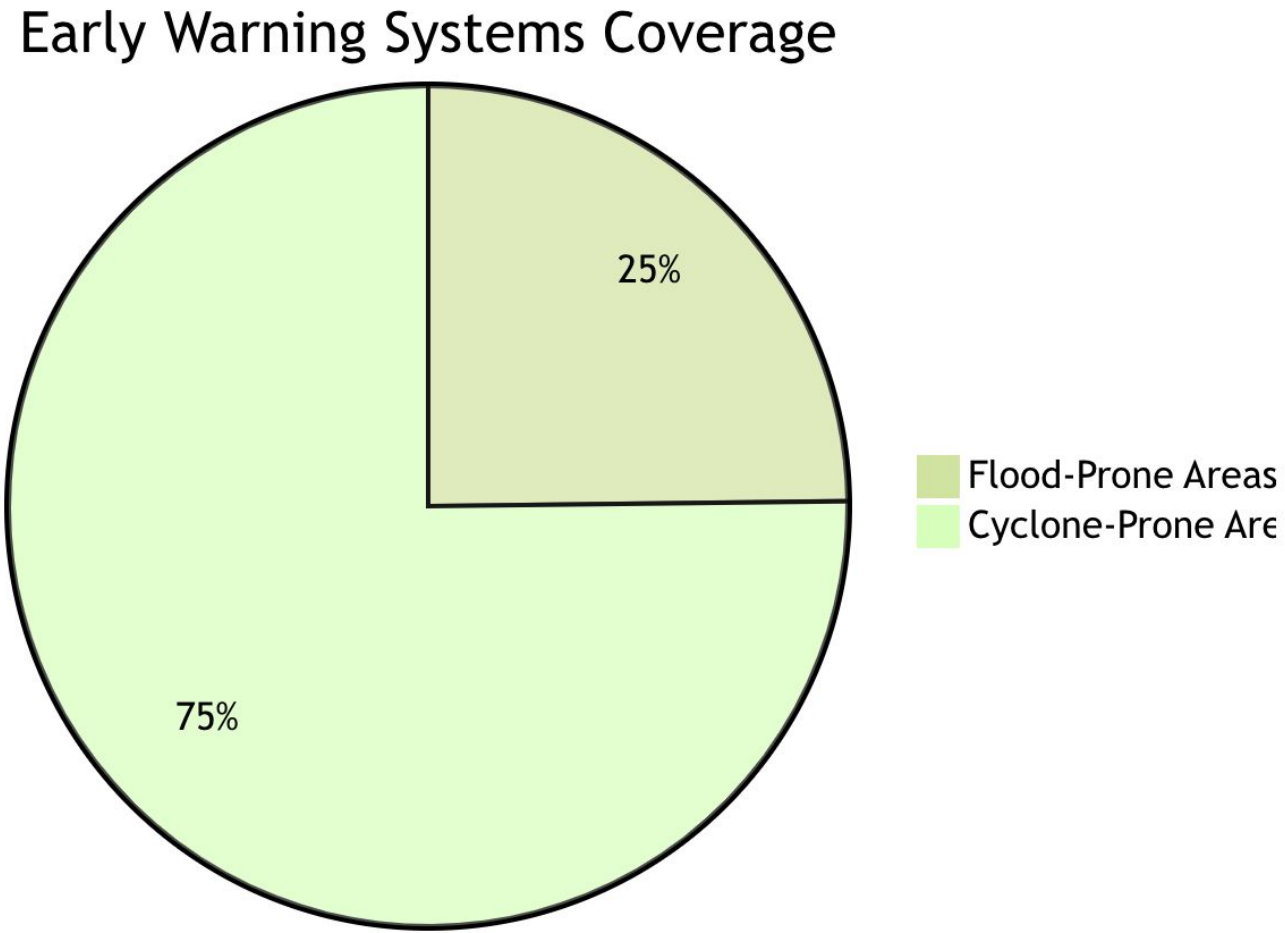


Addressing Flood Risks

⚠️ **Insufficient Early Warning Systems:** Despite two-thirds of India's population being at risk of flooding, only one-third of flood-prone areas have early warning systems, unlike cyclone-prone regions which are fully covered.

🛰️ **Mission Mausam:** Initiated in September 2024, this ₹2,000 crore project aims to improve weather observation and forecasting through advanced technology and research.

Early Warning Systems Coverage:

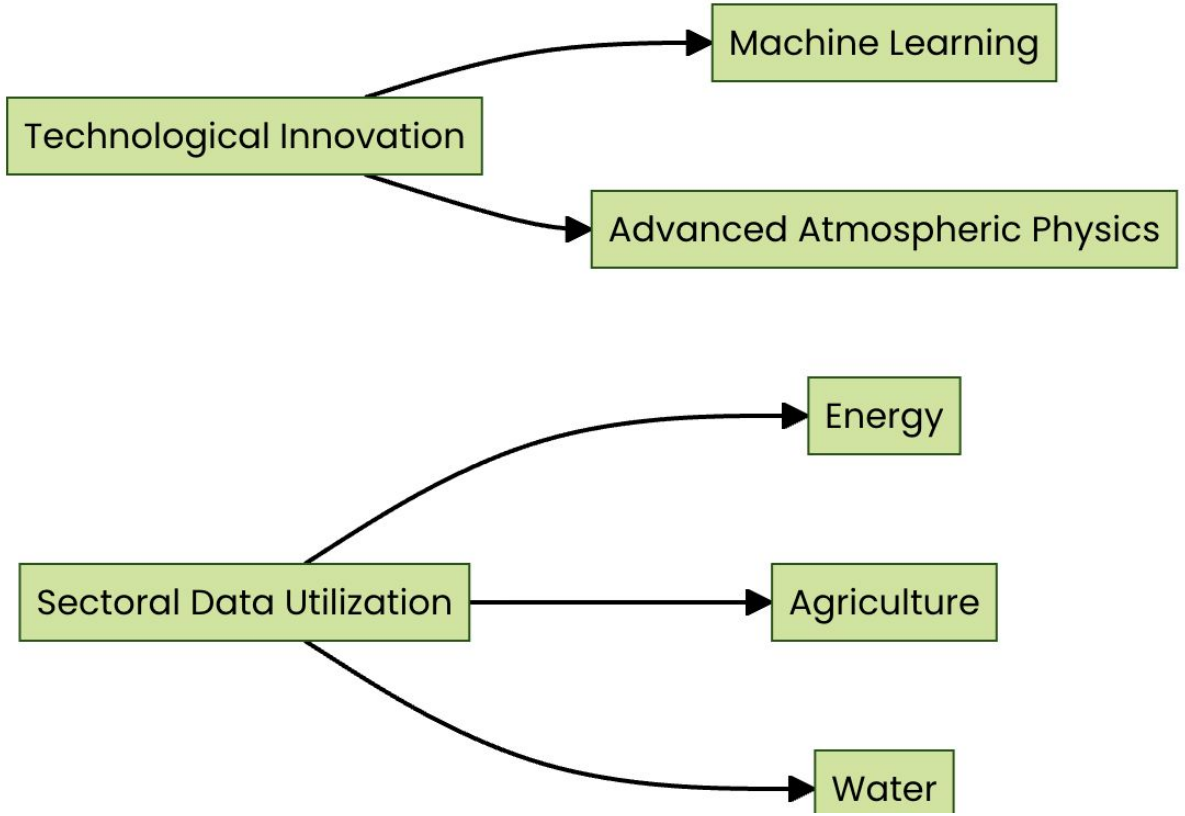


Technological and Sectoral Innovations

🔬 **Focus on Technological Innovation:** The mission will leverage machine learning and advanced atmospheric physics to enhance forecasting models and expand the weather observation network.

🌍 **Sectoral Data Utilization:** Emphasizing the importance of accessible data, the initiative aims to develop applications in energy, agriculture, and water sectors, especially in high climate risk areas.

Technological and Sectoral Focus:

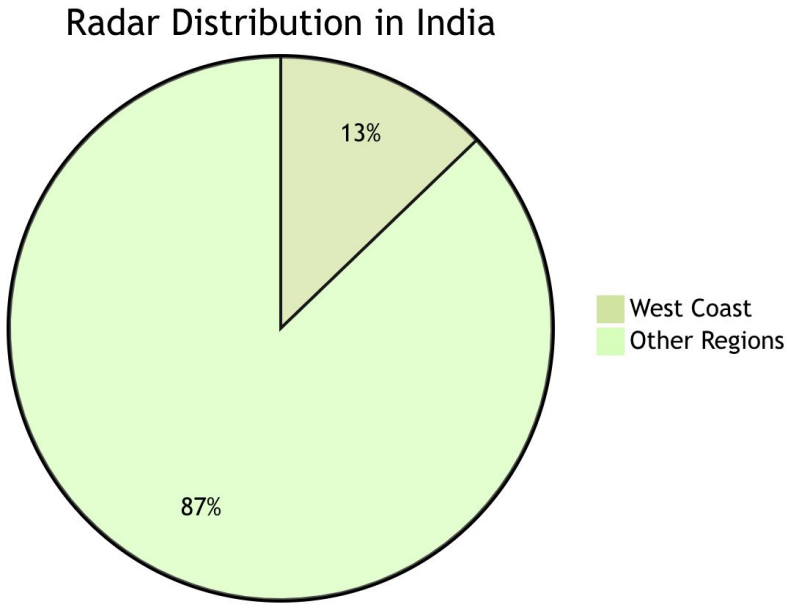


Challenges for mission Mausam

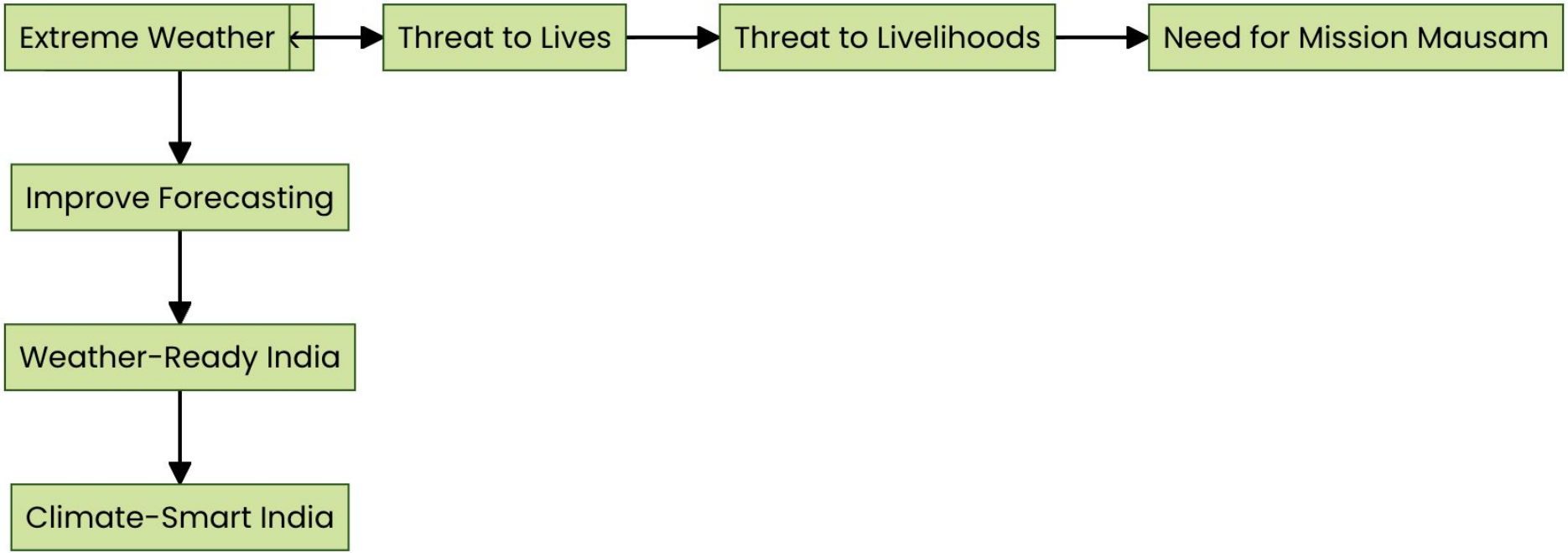
Gaps in Radar Coverage

Current Status: India operates 39 Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs).
Regional Disparity: Only five radars are located on the west coast, a region increasingly prone to cyclones

Radar Distribution:



Mission Goals:



🌍 Need for Installation

Vulnerable Cities: Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Jodhpur lack essential weather radars.
Mission Focus: 'Mission Mausam' should prioritize these high-risk areas for new installations

📊 Open Data Access

Innovation Catalyst: Open access to weather data can drive innovation.
Global Practices: Similar models in the US and Europe have proven effectiv

📱 Improving Communication

Current Channels: IMD uses multiple platforms for weather warnings.
Enhancement Needed: Focus on improving user experience and comprehension

🎥 User Capacity Building

Educational Focus: 'Mission Mausam' should include user education through videos and guides.
Goal: Help users interpret and respond to weather warnings effectively.

🌪️ Timely Initiative

Mission Objective: Expand observational networks and improve forecasting.
Urgency: Address the increasing threat of extreme weather events.

📈 Impact of Extreme Weather

Critical Need: Extreme weather events pose significant risks to lives and livelihoods.

Mission Importance: 'Mission Mausam' is vital for national safety and preparedness.

Russia flaunts its doomsday weapons amid rising tensions with NATO states

Since Putin came to power in 2000, the Kremlin has worked to upgrade the Soviet-built components of the triad; the U.S. estimates that Russia has between 1,000 and 2,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons intended for use on the battlefield that are far less powerful than the strategic warheads

Associated Press

This year has seen President Vladimir Putin repeatedly brandish the nuclear sword, reminding everyone that Russia has the world's largest atomic arsenal to try to deter the West from ramping up support for Ukraine.

He ordered his military to hold drills involving battlefield nuclear weapons with ally Belarus.

He announced Russia will start producing ground-based intermediate range missiles that were outlawed by a now-defunct U.S.-Soviet treaty in 1987.

And last month, he lowered the threshold for unleashing his arsenal by revising the country's nuclear doctrine.

Mr. Putin is relying on those thousands of warheads and hundreds of missiles as an enormous doomsday machine to offset NATO's massive edge in conventional weapons to discourage what he sees as threats to Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Federation of American Scientists estimated this year that Russia has an inventory totalling 5,580 deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads. That's about 88% of the world's nuclear weapons.

Show of strength: A Yars intercontinental ballistic missile is test-fired as part of Russia's nuclear drills from a launch site in Plesetsk, northwestern Russia. FILE PHOTO

Like the U.S., Russia has a nuclear triad of ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range bombers and ICBM-armed submarines.

Since Mr. Putin came to power in 2000, the Kremlin has worked to upgrade the Soviet-built components of the triad, deploying hundreds of new land-based missiles, commissioning new nuclear submarines and modernising nuclear-capable bombers. Russia's effort to revamp its nuclear forces has helped prompt the U.S. to launch a costly modernisation of its arsenal.

'Satan II' missiles

Russia has re-equipped its land-based strategic missile forces with mobile Yars ICBMs and recently began deploying the heavy, silo-based Sarmat ICBMs – designated "Satan II" missiles in the West – to gradually replace about 40 Soviet-built R-36M missiles. Sarmat has had only one known successful test, and reportedly suffered a massive explosion during an abortive test last month.

The navy commissioned seven new Borei-class atomic-powered submarines, each with 16 Bulava nuclear-tipped missiles, and plans to build five more. They are intended to form the core of the triad's naval component alongside a few Soviet-era nuclear subs still operating.

Russia still relies on Soviet-built Tu-95 and Tu-160 strategic bombers carrying nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. Moscow has restarted production of the supersonic Tu-160 that was halted after the 1991 Soviet collapse, aiming to build several dozen modernised aircraft with new engines and avionics.

The U.S. estimates that Russia has between 1,000 and 2,000 non-strategic, or tactical, nuclear weapons intended for use on the battlefield that typically are far less powerful than the strategic warheads capable of destroying entire cities.

Russia has high-precision ground-launched Iskander missiles with a range of up to 500 km, which can be fitted with either a conventional or a nuclear warhead.

The Air Force has a fleet of MiG-31 fighter jets that carry a hypersonic Kinzhal missile, which can be equipped with a nuclear or conventional warhead. Russia has widely used conventional versions of both Iskander and Kinzhal against Ukraine.

As part of the Kremlin's nuclear messaging, Russia and ally Belarus held drills to train their troops with the battlefield nuclear weapons in May, shortly after Mr. Putin began his fifth term.

Moscow and Washington have relied for decades on nuclear deterrence under the concept of mutually assured destruction based on the assumption that an overwhelming retaliation would discourage either side from launching an attack.

Nuclear doctrine

Russia's nuclear doctrine adopted in 2020 envisaged using such ultimate weapons in response to a nuclear strike or an attack with conventional weapons that threatens "the very existence of the Russian state."

Moscow hawks criticised that document as too vague, urging Mr. Putin to toughen it.

Last month, he warned the U.S. and NATO allies that allowing Ukraine to use Western-supplied longer-range weapons for strikes deep inside Russia would put NATO at war with his country.

He reinforced the message by announcing a new version of the nuclear doctrine that considers a conventional attack on Russia by a non-nuclear nation that is supported by a nuclear power to be a joint attack on his country – a clear warning to the U.S. and other allies of Kyiv.

Mr. Putin also declared the revised document envisages possible nuclear weapons use in case of a massive air attack, holding the door open to a potential nuclear response to any aerial assault – an ambiguity intended to deter the West.

Even as U.S.-Russian tensions soared to their highest point since the Cold War amid fighting in Ukraine, Washington has urged Moscow to resume dialogue on nuclear arms control. Mr. Putin rejected the offer.

Russian hawks are calling for a resumption of nuclear tests to demonstrate Moscow's readiness to use its atomic arsenal and force the West to limit aid for Kyiv.

Mr. Putin said Russia could resume testing if the U.S. does so first, a move that would end a global ban in place after the demise of the USSR.

Topic→ Russia’s Nuclear Strategy

Key Developments in Russia's Nuclear Strategy

⚔️ **Nuclear Deterrence:** President Vladimir Putin has highlighted Russia's nuclear strength to discourage Western support for Ukraine.

🛡️ **Military Drills**: Joint military exercises with Belarus, focusing on battlefield nuclear weapons, have been conducted by Russia.

📜 **New Missile Production:** Putin declared the production of ground-based intermediate-range missiles, contravening a 1987 treaty.

📉 **Nuclear Doctrine Revision:** Russia has lowered the threshold for nuclear weapon use in its revised nuclear doctrine.

💣 **Nuclear Arsenal Size:** Russia holds about 5,580 nuclear warheads, making up roughly 88% of the global nuclear weapons stockpile.

🚀 **Nuclear Triad:** The country maintains a nuclear triad with intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range bombers, and ICBM-equipped submarines.

🔄 **Modernization Efforts:** Since 2000, Russia has been upgrading its nuclear forces, leading the U.S. to modernize its arsenal in response.

Russia's Nuclear Modernization Efforts

🚀 Missile Upgrades

Replacement of Soviet Missiles: Transitioning from R-36M to mobile Yars ICBMs and heavy Sarmat ICBMs, known as "Satan II" in the West.

💥 Sarmat Testing Issues

Testing Challenges: Only one successful test of the Sarmat ICBM, with a significant explosion during a recent abortive test.

🚢 Submarine Fleet Expansion

Borei-class Submarines: Commissioning of seven new submarines, each with 16 Bulava nuclear-tipped missiles, and plans for five more.

✈️ Strategic Bomber Production

Tu-160 Bombers: Restarting production of supersonic bombers to modernize several dozen aircraft.

⚔️ Tactical Nuclear Weapons

U.S. Estimates: Russia's possession of 1,000 to 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons, less powerful than strategic warheads.

🎯 Iskander and Kinzhal Missiles

High-Precision Missiles: Iskander missiles with a 500 km range and MiG-31 jets with hypersonic Kinzhal missiles, both capable of nuclear or conventional warheads.

🛡️ Nuclear Drills

Joint Exercises: Conducted with Belarus in May, focusing on battlefield nuclear weapons and emphasizing nuclear messaging.

Summary: Russia is actively modernizing its nuclear capabilities with new missile systems, submarines, and bombers, while maintaining a substantial stockpile of___ tactical nuclear weapons and engaging in military drills with Belarus

Russia's Revised Nuclear Doctrine

Overview of Russia's Nuclear Doctrine

🛡️ **Nuclear Doctrine:** Russia's 2020 nuclear doctrine permits the use of nuclear weapons in response to nuclear strikes or conventional attacks that threaten the state's existence.

🔄 **Revised Doctrine:** The updated doctrine now considers a conventional attack on Russia by a non-nuclear nation, supported by a nuclear power, as a joint attack on Russia.

Criticism and Calls for Strengthening

🔍 **Criticism:** Moscow hawks criticized the 2020 doctrine for its vagueness and urged President Putin to make it more robust.

🔬 **Nuclear Testing Calls:** There are calls from Russian hawks to resume nuclear tests to demonstrate readiness and exert pressure on the West regarding support for Ukraine.

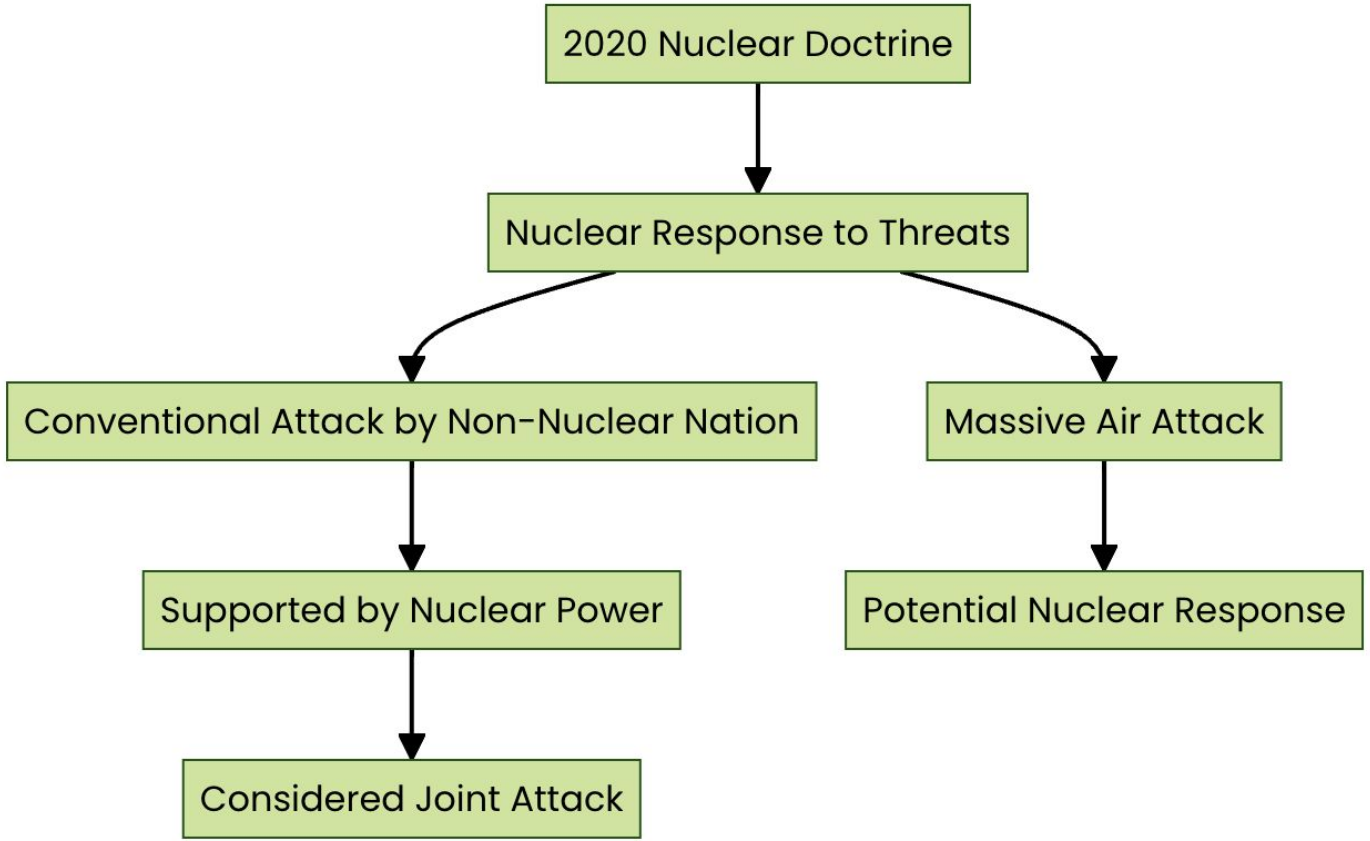
Tensions with NATO and the U.S.

⚠️ **Warning to NATO:** Putin warned that allowing Ukraine to use Western-supplied long-range weapons against Russia would equate to NATO being at war with Russia.

🗣️ **Dialogue Rejected:** Despite rising tensions, the U.S. urged for dialogue on nuclear arms control, which Putin rejected.

Potential Nuclear Response

💣 **Potential Nuclear Response:** The revised doctrine includes the possibility of using nuclear weapons in response to a massive air attack, creating ambiguity to deter Western actions.


2020 Nuclear Doctrine
Nuclear Response to Threats
Conventional Attack by Non-Nuclear Nation
Massive Air Attack
Supported by Nuclear Power
Potential Nuclear Response
Considered Joint Attack

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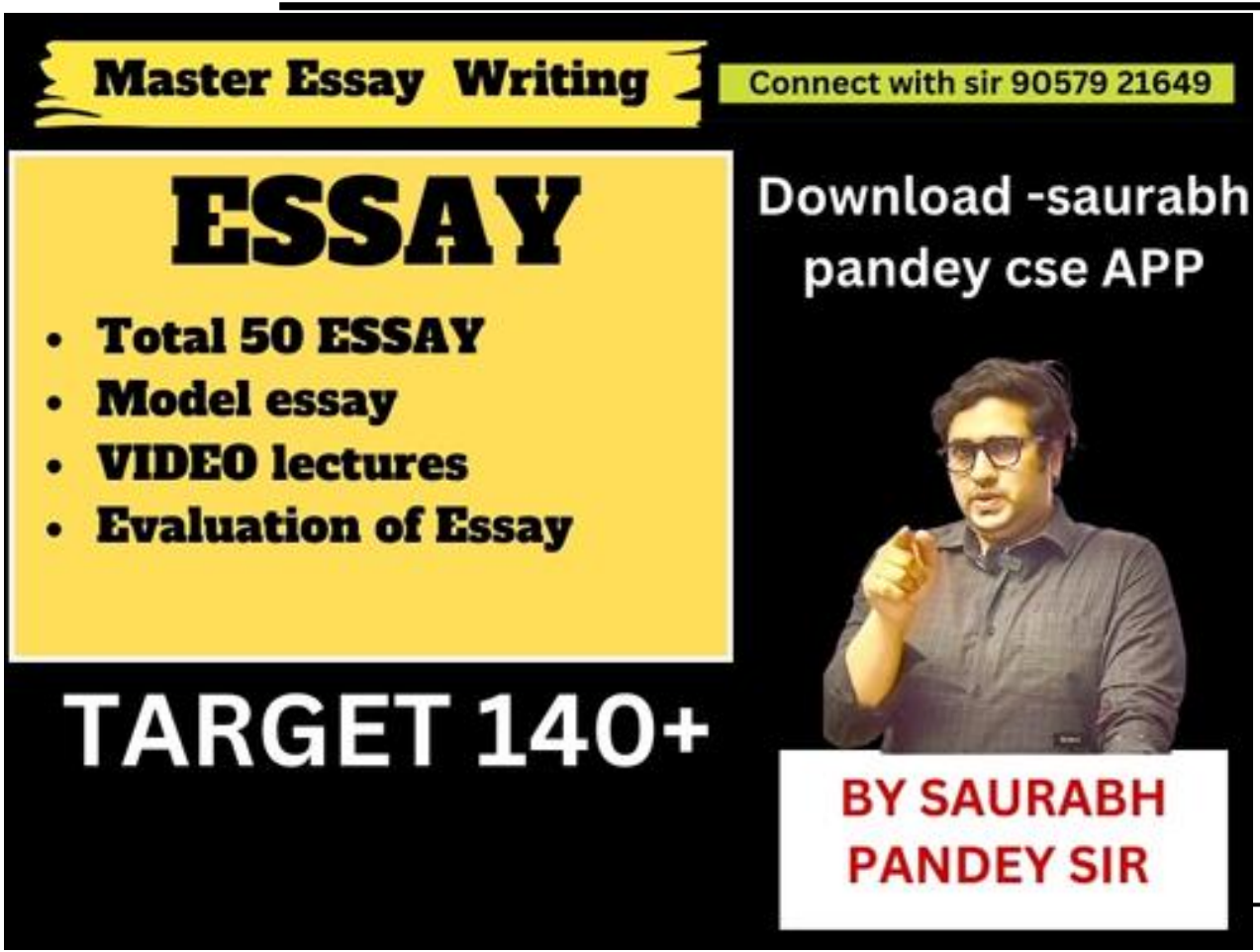
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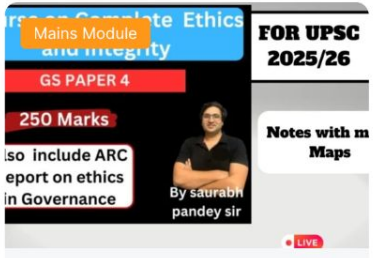

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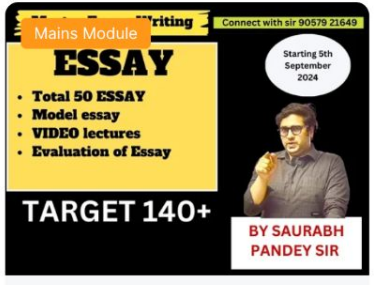

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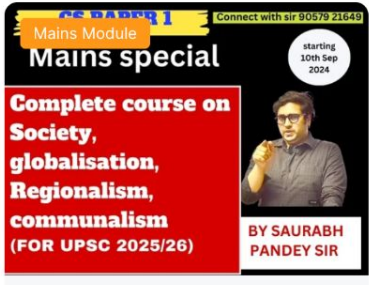

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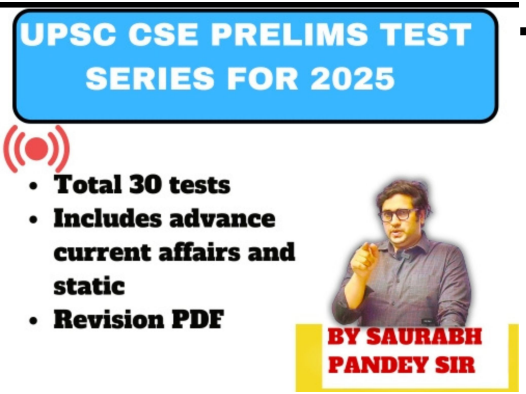

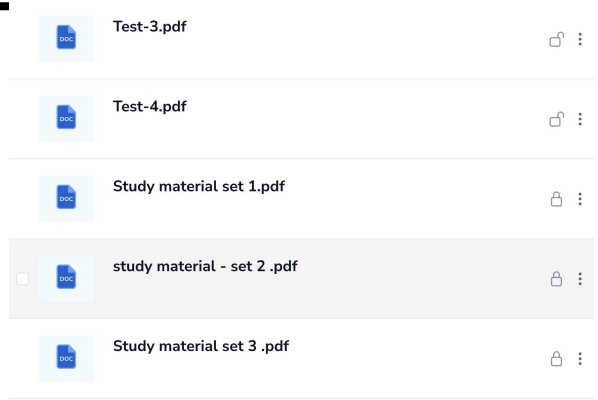

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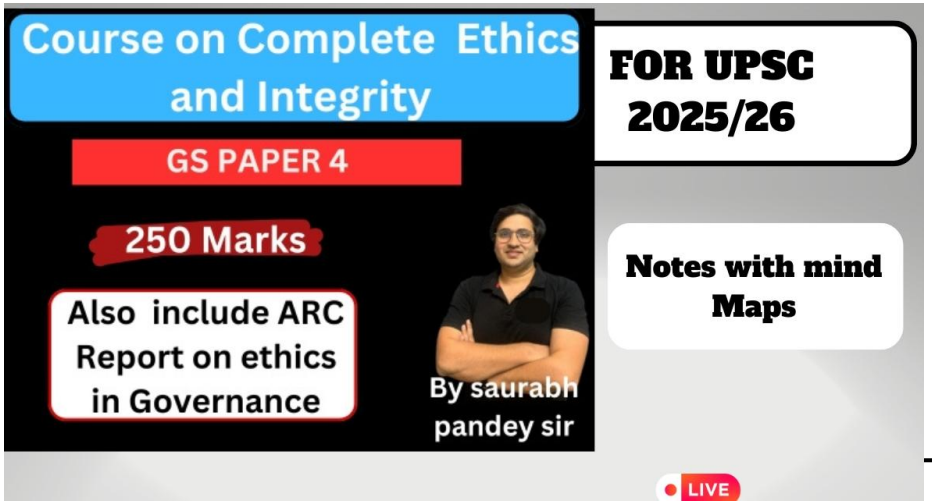

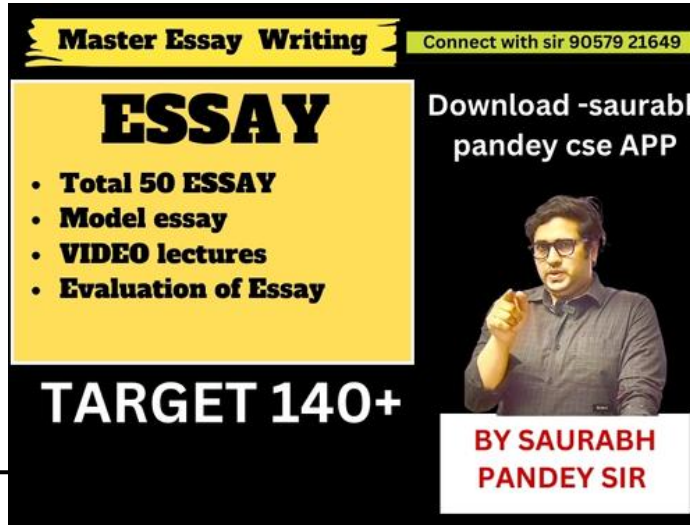

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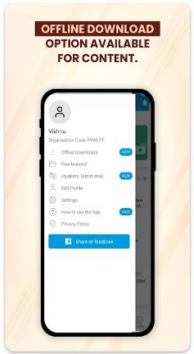

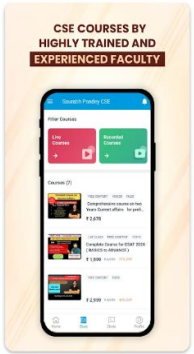

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The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has accepted the recommendations of the High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections under the chairmanship of former President Shri Ram Nath Kovind.

Simultaneous elections: recommendations of high-level committee

1. Elections have been held simultaneously between 1951 and 1967.
2. Law Commission (1999): One election to Lok Sabha and all
3. Parliamentary Standing Committee (2015): suggest methods for si
4. High-level committee under Ram Nath Kovind extensively c lers including political parties a

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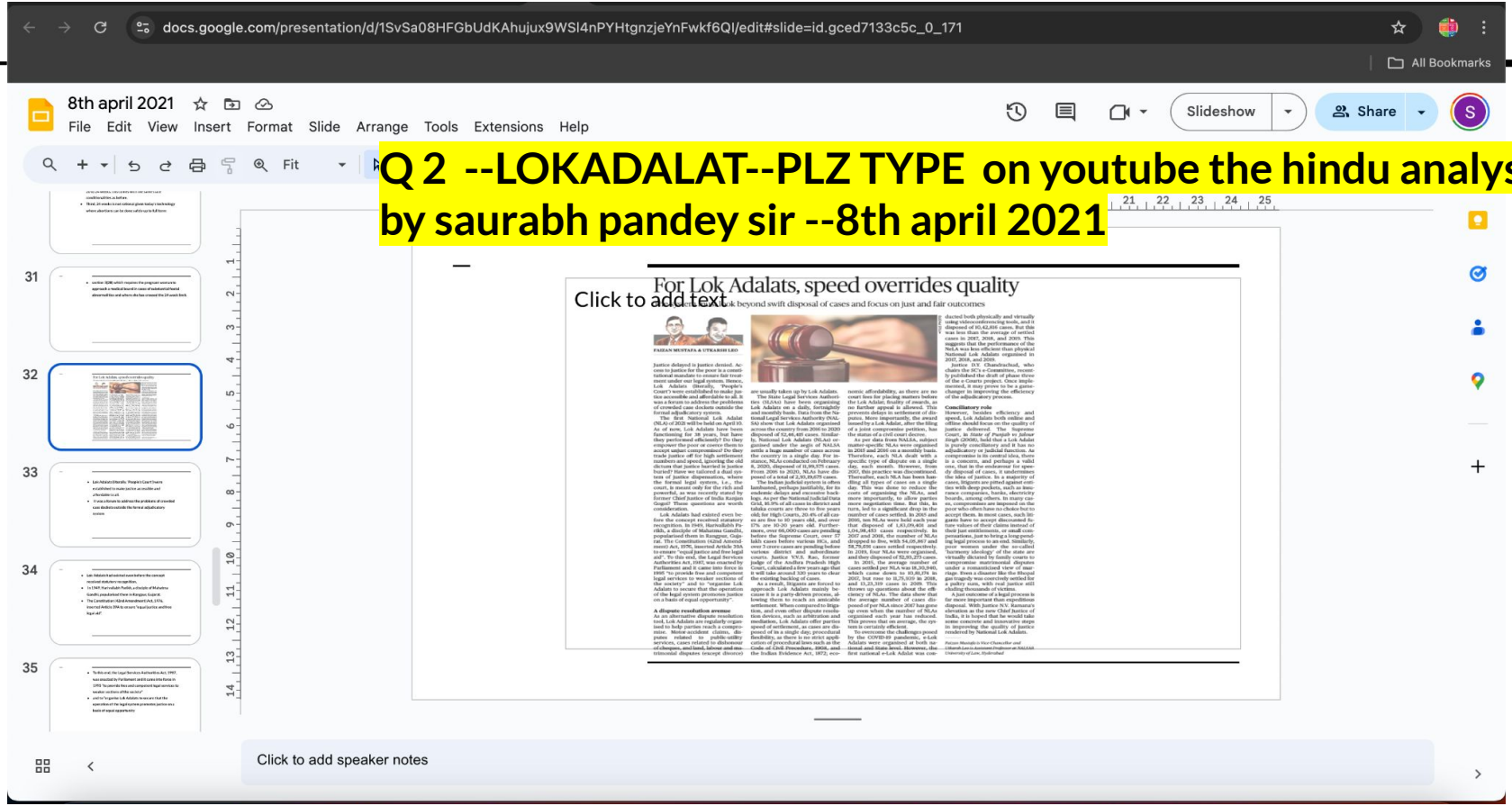

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Q 3 --Parliamentary supremacy--PLZ TYPE on youtube the hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir --14th jan 2023

Bound supremacy

Parliamentary sovereignty isn't undone by the basic structure doctrine

It is fairly well-known that parliamentary legislation is subject to two limitations under the Constitution of India. One is by judicial review, or the power of constitutional courts to review legislation for possible violation of any fundamental right. Another is that no amendment to the Constitution should have the effect of destroying any of its basic features. While the first limitation is set out in Article 13, under which laws inconsistent with or in derogation of fundamental rights are void, the second limitation is based on the 'basic structure' doctrine evolved by the Supreme Court. Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar's remarks questioning the basic structure doctrine propounded in the landmark *Kesavananda Bharati* case (1973) does not reflect the correct position of law. In his view, the basic structure doctrine has usurped parliamentary sovereignty and goes against the democratic imperative that the elected legislature should reign supreme. His particular concern seems justified that the Supreme Court prevented the National Judicial Appointments Commission, a body to appoint judges to the superior courts in the country, from coming into existence by striking down the relevant amendment to the Constitution and a parliamentary law to give effect to it. But it is difficult not to see his attack on the basic structure doctrine as part of the current dispensation's tirade against the judiciary and its grievance that it does not have enough say in the appointment of judges.

The idea that the basic structure doctrine undermines parliamentary sovereignty is simply wrong. Parliament is sovereign in its domain, but it is still bound by the limitations imposed by the Constitution. Mr. Dhankhar seems to have a problem with any sort of limitation on Parliament's jurisdiction to amend the Constitution. Surely, he could not have forgotten that the basic structure doctrine had helped save the Constitution from being undermined through the misuse of parliamentary majority. The main purpose of the doctrine is to ensure that some fundamental features of the Constitution are not legislated out of existence. It has been invoked to strike down amendments only in a few cases, but many others have survived basic structure challenges. Parliamentary majority is transient, but essential features of the Constitution such as the rule of law, parliamentary form of government, separation of powers, the idea of equality, and free and fair elections ought to be perennially protected from legislative excess. It may be open to a new Constituent Assembly to come up with another constitution that changes these fundamental concepts, but a legislature formed under the current Constitution cannot be allowed to change its core identity.

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Q 4 --CAG --PLZ TYPE on youtube the hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir --28th dec 2022

The story so far:

- A recent Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on the update exercise of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has flagged serious irregularities, including "haphazard development" of software for the exercise, making it prone to data tampering, and flagged undue profits worth crores amassed by the system integrator (SI) by violating the Minimum Wages Act.

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Q 5 --local bodies and urban bodies --PLZ TYPE on youtube the hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir --11th october 2022

- The Constitution mandates that panchayats and municipalities shall be elected every five years and enjoins States to devolve functions and responsibilities to them through law.
- This is regarded as a design weakness, but on closer look, is not one.
- Given diverse habitation patterns, political and social history, it makes sense to mandate States to assign functions to local governments.

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Democratise and empower city governments

The general approach towards urban empowerment, including financial capabilities, has remained piecemeal in India

TIKENDER SINGH PANWAR

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in a report, "State Finances, Study of Budgets of 2021-22", released in November 2021 (https://bit.ly/3rskeFv), wrote: "With the third-tier governments in India playing a frontline role in combating the pandemic by implementing containment strategies, healthcare,... their finances have come under severe strain, forcing them to cut down expenditures and mobilise funding from various sources."

The RBI further commented that the functional autonomy of civic bodies must increase and their governance structure strengthened. This could happen by 'empowering them financially through higher resource availability'.

It is interesting that the RBI did echo the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission report on local bodies that emphasised city governance structures and financial empowerment. The addition in the RBI report is from the praxis and the objective reality from during the novel coronavirus pandemic – which continues even now.

However, there is only partial truth in the report. The emphasis is on resource availability, but how this will happen is not highlighted. At the most, it speaks only about generating more resources at the local level.

The essence

While correctly identifying the role of the city governments in meeting the challenges the pandemic has thrown up, the report also points to the draining of resources. An RBI survey of 223 municipal corporations (2020-21) revealed that more than 70% saw a decline in revenues; in contrast, their expenditure rose by almost 71.2%.

The RBI report also highlights the limited coverage of property tax and its failure in shoring up municipal corporation revenues. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data show that India has the lowest property tax collection rate in the world – i.e., property tax to GDP ratio. But this explains only one part of the story.

An old problem continues

During the pandemic, while leaders from the Prime Minister to Chief Ministers to District Magistrate were seen taking a call on disaster mitigation strategies, city mayors were found missing. Why? Because under the disaster management plan of actions, cities are at the forefront to fight the pandemic; however, the elected leadership finds no place in them. It is not just in disaster mitigation. The old approach of treating cities as adjuncts of State governments continues to dominate the policy paradigm.

The general approach towards urban empowerment has remained piecemeal in India. Urban development is a state subject, which is more linked to political and democratic movements in States. The first intervention to understand 'the urban' (though there are references in the Five Year plans) and plan with a pan-Indian vision took place in the 1980s when the National Commission On Urbanisation was formed with Charles Correa as its chairperson.

Another important intervention was in the first half of the 1990s with the Constitution 73rd and 74th Amendments. The latter refers to urban reforms – empowering urban local bodies to perform 18 functions listed in the 12th Schedule. But this was also the period of neo-liberal reforms, so the generation of own resources and a slow withdrawal of the state could be witnessed.

Though the democratic transfer of 18 subjects was an important element, and necessary, there was, however, no mention of financial empowerment. It was linked more to the idea of "competitive cities" to attract investments in the urban centres by making their structures and land laws flexible. We now know that not much investment has happened, and cities have not really been able to enhance their financial capabilities.

The only exception to the rule has been the people's plan model of Kerala where 40% of the State's plan budget was for local bodies (directly) with a number of important subjects such as planning, etc. This paved the way for a new dimension to urban governance.

Functional autonomy

The RBI report has been right in highlighting that functional autonomy of city governments must be allowed. But this should happen with three F's: the transfer of 'functions, finances and functionaries' to city governments. Without these, functional autonomy would be empty rhetoric. There are nearly 5,000 statutory towns and an equal number of census towns in India. Nearly 35% of the population lives in urban centres. And, nearly two-thirds of the country's GDP stems from cities and almost 90% of government revenue flows from urban centres.

Before value added tax and other centralised taxation systems, one of the major earnings of cities used to be from octroi. In fact, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Pune are examples of two very high revenue-earning municipalities dependent on octroi, as both cities have strong bases of industrial production. But this source of revenue collection was taken away by the State and the central governments. Instead, finance commissions recommended grants to urban local bodies based on a formula of demographic profile. Previously, while almost 55% of the total revenue expenditure of urban centres was met by octroi (e.g., Shimla), now, the grant covers only 15% of expenditure. In such a situation, it is difficult for the towns to sustain their ability to perform their bare minimum functions, especially with the latest Pay Commission recommendations.

This has resulted in a vicious circle of burdening people more with taxes and further privatisation/outsourcing of the services of the municipalities. This is a pan-India phenomenon and the grading of cities and urban policies are linked to this.

Now with Goods and Services Tax, the ability to tax has been 'completely robbed'; cities find themselves in a worse state than States.

The often-cited example is how cities in the Scandinavian countries manage their functions well – from city planning to mobility to waste management. But the truth is that a chunk of the income-tax from citizens is given to city governments. Imagine cities such as Mumbai or urban agglomerates in India getting a percentage of income tax for managing the affairs of urban places. It would be phenomenal!

A committee formed under the United Progressive Alliance (under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to review the 74th constitutional amendment), recommended that 10% of income-tax collected from the cities was to be given back to them as a direct revenue grant from the central government. Alas, it was never taken into consideration.

What needs to be done? Cities must be treated as important centres of governance, where democratic decentralisation can bring in amazing results (as seen in Kerala). There will be transparency and adequate participation of the people.

Second, cities should not be considered as entrepreneurship spaces where the sole driving force is to make them competitive to attract investments. We have seen how fallacious this argument is. They must be considered as spaces for planned development by giving adequate attention to resources.

Our cities are hardly prepared for the impact of climate change; nor do they have adaptive strategies. The resources required for quantitative and qualitative data must be immediately provided to the cities to ensure a disaster risk reduction plan keeping vulnerable communities in mind.

Nothing 'smart'

Fourth, a piecemeal approach such as the concept of 'smart cities' must be shunned altogether. This approach further widens the gap between different sets of people. Rather, the grants from the Centre must be enhanced and cities asked to draw up their plans themselves based on priority seeking from city residents. Cities are people, as they say, and people must be a part of the decision-making process.

Fifth, leadership in the cities must be elected for a term of five years. In some cities, the term of the mayor is for a year! Likewise, the third F, i.e., functionaries, must be transferred to the cities with a permanent cadre.

Thus, in this exercise by the RBI, the good part is that there has least been a mention of cities, with local bodies as important centres of governance.

Tikender Singh Panwar is a former directly elected Deputy Mayor of Shimla and an urban practitioner. He is also a senior Fellow with the Impact and Policy Research Institute (IMPRI), Delhi

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