

“Push yourself to do more and to experience more. Harness your energy to start expanding your dreams”.

NATIONAL

CABINET CLEARS BILL TO RESTORE THE PROVISIONS OF SC/ST ACT

DRDO conducted the successful test of the Ballistic Missile Interceptor Advanced Area Defence (AAD) from Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha.

Ballistic Missile Interceptor AAD:

It is an endo-atmospheric missile, capable of intercepting incoming targets at an altitude of 15 to 25 kms.

Indigenously developed by DRDO, the AAD interceptor is a single-stage missile powered by solid propellants.

It has been developed as part of indigenous efforts to have multi-layer ballistic missile defence system, capable of destroying incoming hostile ballistic missiles.

It is 7.5 metres tall and weighs around 1.2 tonnes.

The interceptor missile has its own mobile launcher, secure data link for interception, independent tracking and homing capabilities and sophisticated radars.

The Indian Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Programme is an attempt to develop and to use a multi-layered ballistic missile defence system to protect from ballistic missile attacks. The India’s decision to develop Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) was introduced in the light of the ballistic missile threat mainly from Pakistan, especially can be attributed to the Kargil War in 1999.

Need for BMD:

India follows ‘No First Use policy’. A robust BMD provides an opportunity to the nation to strike back if a nuclear projectile is launched by an enemy state.

BMD would shield from non-state actors initiated missile warfare and thus could avoid Mutual Destruction trap.

BMD reduces the incentive for the enemy state to launch a nuclear attack, thus enhancing strategic stability.

An indigenous system would reduce the import bill of defence systems from other nations.

Technology developed for BMD can be used in other sectors, especially in space technology.

LAUNCH	ADVANCE AIR Defence missile dubbed as Aswin was fired at about 9.45 am from Abdul Kalam Island		
INTERCEPTOR LAUNCHED a few minutes after the electronic target was fired	FIGURES		
THIS WAS 11th test of the missile and second in eight months	7.5 metres tall	1.2 tonnes weight	0.5 metre diameter
	AIM		
SINGLE-STAGE missile powered by solid propellants	India plans to deploy a two-tiered ballistic missile defence system to protect its important cities and vital installations from enemy attack		
TARGET	First phase to destroy enemy missiles outside the atmosphere and second phase to kill enemy missiles in more than 2,000 km range inside the atmosphere		
			
AAD interceptor missile being test fired EXPRESS PHOTO			

MOVE HACK

NITI Aayog has launched Move Hack, a global mobility hackathon to crowdsource solutions aimed at the future of mobility in India.

The hackathon has a two-pronged campaign approach:

“Just Code It”: aimed at solutions through innovations in technology/product/software and data analysis, and

“Just Solve It”: innovative business ideas or sustainable solutions to transform mobility infrastructure through technology.

Move Hack is open to individuals of all nationalities, making it a truly global hackathon.

Transportation and mobility are emerging as potential drivers of innovation and economic growth of the 21st.

Rapidly evolving technologies and business models for delivering mobility services have dramatic potential to transform the global transportation sector.

Mobility that ranges from pedestrian and personal transport to public transit and freight movement is extremely critical and impacts rural and urban daily lives.

INDIA RANKS 56TH IN EARLY INITIATION OF BREASTFEEDING, SAY UNICEF, WHO

A new report released by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) has ranked Sri Lanka at the top of the list of countries with early initiation of breastfeeding.

The report released ahead of World Breastfeeding Week (August 1 to 7), says that only two in five newborns are breastfed within the first hour of life across the world.

The first feed, or colostrum, is termed as the baby's first vaccine and is extremely rich in nutrients and antibodies.

Continuous and exclusive breastfeeding thereafter is also important.

Performance of the countries

India ranks 56th among the 76 countries that were analyzed.

Countries like Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Bhutan and Uruguay have fared much better than India, making it into the top 10.

Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Montenegro are at the bottom.

Low awareness holds India back

Though nearly 80% of births are institutional deliveries in India, there are missed opportunities of early initiation of breastfeeding due to low awareness among healthcare staff.

The early initiation period has doubled in NFHS 4 as compared to NFHS 3.

But more progress can be made by capitalizing on opportunities and creating awareness at the community level.

STATUTORY STATUS FOR BACKWARD CLASSES PANEL

The Lok Sabha has passed the 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill providing for a National Commission for Backward Classes as a constitutional body.

The bill provides for the grant of constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) on par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

Provisions of the bill:

The Bill as passed by the Lower House inserts Article 338 B in the Constitution.

It provides for a Commission for the socially and educationally backward classes with a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other members, all of whom shall be appointed by the President of India.

It states that the President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various states and union territories.

He may do this in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state.

The duties of the NCBC include investigating and monitoring how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented and probe specific complaints regarding violation of rights.

Under this measure, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while probing any complaint.

As the Lok Sabha passed an alternative amendment to one proposed by the Rajya Sabha, the Bill will once again go to the Rajya Sabha

A constitutional amendment under Article 368 needs to be passed by both Houses separately with a special majority

GROWING CONCERNS FOR RESERVATIONS

The Maratha reservation demands, like those of the Patidars in Gujarat, the Kapus in Andhra Pradesh and the Jats in Haryana, are the

inevitable outgrowths of the political warping of the logic of reservations

This has been a contested issue since its inception

The Constituent Assembly fiercely debated the potential divisiveness of a policy of religion or caste-based reservation during a time of nation-building

When it comes to certain groups that have been systematically oppressed for centuries, community identity and economic outcomes are difficult to disentangle

The Dalit experience has often been compared to the African-American experience

A solid body of study in the US has shown that centuries of slavery followed by decades of discrimination in housing, education, employment and law and order continue to affect African-American communities today in terms of capital formation, social capital and economic mobility.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes face the same problem in India.

In addition, economic opportunities, entrepreneurship, access to credit and the like are still mediated to a large extent through informal kin and caste networks today.

Economic basis for the reservation not plausible:

Affirmative action on an economic basis must be nuanced.

It cannot be the job of a state as large and diverse as India to carve out a slice of the pie for every economically disadvantaged citizen.

Its job is to grow the pie via inclusive growth, ensure good governance that will give citizens a fair shot at it and put in place social safety nets for those who can't find a place at the table.

Economic reservations, if they are to exist, must be only in instances of persistent, intergenerational poverty.

Decades of a closed economy failed to deliver the growth necessary for socioeconomic progress and rid the country of entrenched modes of crony capitalism.

Various administrations have also failed to put in place policies and governance structures that will allow them to fulfil their basic functions: delivering public goods to citizens and enabling them to partake of economic growth.

Reservation is now a quick and dirty fix for problems that are best addressed by the longer, more arduous process of good governance.

It also has the advantage of being a practical tool of targeted political mobilization.

Way Forward:

In May 1949, Vallabhai Patel had said during the Constituent Assembly debates that rather than quotas on the basis of religion, he would wait for the blossoming of toleration and fair-mindedness for the growing conscience among my own countrymen, for there can be no future for this country except on the basis of true democracy and fair opportunity for all.

The caste consciousness still runs deep in Indian society and it shapes socioeconomic structures in negative ways.

It would take political courage and effective governance of a high order to push back against quota politics.

SCALED-UP SOLUTIONS FOR A FUTURE OF WATER SCARCITY

Precious evolutionary living resources, natural infrastructure, are going extinct.

While we thoughtlessly build artificial infrastructure, we forget that this kills natural infrastructure which took evolution aeons to create and cannot be engineered.

Forests, rivers, mountains, aquifers and soil are being lost at an alarming rate.

Today, India is in the midst of a suicidal water crisis as urban and rural landscapes go thirsty.

Root of the problem:

First, cities today are vast agglomerations that continue to spread, with bursting populations of tens of millions.

They are huge parasites on water, food, energy and all other resources.

High densities of our cities do not allow for water harvesting to fill the gap.

Invasive schemes like dams to service these large cities and the huge needs of agriculture have caused extreme ecological devastation.

Second, in our global market economies, the products and services that are derived from natural infrastructure have often led to the terminal loss of the source itself.

The global free market, and with it the scale of human intervention, now exceeds the scale of the planet.

These resources (forests, mountains, floodplains and rivers) are often lost to the greed of governments, institutions, corporations and individuals.

This is a long-term loss for short-term gain.

Using non-invasive schemes

They can provide a perennial supply of water to large populations in cities and towns

Engage the natural landscape

Sustain ecological balance and

Have major economic and health benefits

Some examples of non-invasive schemes

Floodplains of rivers are exceptional aquifers where any withdrawal is compensated by gravity flow from a large surrounding area and can be used as a source of providing water to cities.

Some floodplains, such as those of Himalayan rivers, contain up to 20 times more water than the virgin flow in rivers in a year.

Since recharge is by rainfall and during late floods, the water quality is good.

If we conserve and use the floodplain, it can be a self-sustaining aquifer wherein every year, the river and floodplain are preserved in the same healthy condition as the year before.

Land on the floodplains can be leased from farmers in return for a fixed income from the water sold to cities.

The farmers can be encouraged to grow orchards/food forests to secure and restore the ecological balance of the river ecosystem.

Forested hills are a result of evolution over millions of years. They are not polluted and sit on a treasure of underground aquifers that contain natural mineral water comparable to that found in a mountain spring.

This is because the rain falls on the forest and seeps through the various layers of humus and cracked rock pathways, picking up nutrients and minerals and flows into underground mineral water aquifers.

If a scheme of 'conserve and use' is applied correctly, it would allow a forest (like Asola Bhatti in Delhi) to be sustained as a mineral water sanctuary.

About 30 sq.km of the forest could then provide enough natural mineral water to 5 million people in the city.

This water can substantially improve the health of citizens and preserve forests at the same time.

Way Forward:

Such non-invasive, local, large-scale 'conserve and use' projects till now have not been part of our living scheme.

The evolutionary resources once lost, will be lost forever.

It is time we understood this is natural infrastructure bequeathed to us by nature and start preserving it.