

# 10<sup>th</sup> December

# The Hindu: Editorial summary

#### Delhi and Paris: A tale of two cities

- December 10<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as the Human Rights Day across the globe. It started with UN's declaration of the Human Rights on the same day in 1948, at the hilltop Palais de Chaillot.
- In days preceding the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR, the concept of human dignity has been facing a lot of challenges.
- The recent farmer's rally led by P. Sainath demanded every farmer's right to dignity in this wake of agrarian crisis, which has led, from 1998 to 2018, to the suicides of some 300,000 farmers.
- The concept of an industrial India has shelved agriculture which is India's life and not just a feeder line.
- business gets tax cuts, agriculture gets diesel hikes, factories get investments, farms do not even get minimum prices, all this affects HR described in article 23 of the UDHR.
- The problem lies in the fact that though the UDHR has become a part of the constitution, it isn't legally binding. This has perpetuated crimes against each of that section where it is banned by law.
- For these rights stay liberated, and celebrated, our 'Rainbow on the horizon' comprises of 7 institutions; India's judiciary, Parliament, Media, the Security Personnel, the Constitution and India's free elections, which can be best summed up as 'UDHR asset'
- The huge victory of the left wing in in Kerala, elections, overcoming the right-wing lurch on Sabarimala, shows a silent majority's peaceable wisdom, and strength.

### Death in the air

- India's commitment under the Paris Agreement requires a sharp reduction in the particulate matter from fossil fuel.
- As reported by The Lancet, "Millions of people are forced to lead morbid lives or face premature death due to bad air quality."
- It is estimated that bad air has that killed an estimated 1.24 million people in India in 2017
- As opined by researchers, the country needs to pay greater attention to ambient air quality and household air pollution. This would eventually add more than 1.7 years to their life expectancy.
- Sustainable solutions must be found for stubbleburning and the use of solid fuels in households
- ensure that the machinery already distributed to farmers and cooperatives to handle agricul tural waste is in place and working.
- new approaches to recovering value from biomass could be the way forward.
- potential of domestic biogas units, solar cookers and improved biomass cookstoves must be explored



- Each citizen is an equal shareholder in the political system. Elections enhances political creativity if the masses.
- Mill demolished the argument, "that a majority group has some unspecified right to imprint its will on the body politic." This must be kept in mind and it must be ensured that democracy doesn't give the majority the right to reduce the others to insignificance. It must be truly Representative.
- The constitution ensures and obligated the power holders to respect the principle of religious neutrality.
- In the R. Bommai v. Union of India case (1994), the supreme court ruled that equality is the most essential basis of the constitution.
- However, India todays sees a transition. Rulings of the Supreme Court are openly disobeyed.
   The Hindutva brigade in majorly engaged in intimidating the citizens.
- Regional parties, which are upheld as the perfect ingredient for a federal democratic India, are treating states as their feudal fiefs.
- India today is inhabited by impoverished farmers, insecure workers (in the wake of demonetisation and GST), the lower castes and minorities which includes women, being subjected to hateful stereotypes.
- The 2019 Election must rightly address these backlashes and give citizens an opportunity to discuss policies and proposed political agendas, and exercise free choice.

## Ascent to the temple of democracy

- Kerala may seem to be one of the rare states to achieve a high HDI despite being engulfed in poverty forty years ago. However, the recent Sabarimala fiasco has shown a regressive state of affairs.
- With the eradication of feudalism, the equality achieved between caste dominance and economic power without any major hiccups was nothing less than a feat.
- Nevertheless, the reception of the SC's verdict on Sabarimala is disheartening.
- This reaction in a society with a fairly high level of HDI is a shocker. This can be best explained by Michel Foucault's analysis of power. Power for him runs into every nook and corner of the society irrespective of economic status. Thus, in Kerala, patriarchy did not disappear with land reforms.
- The issue of Sabarimala and denying women the entry into the temple goes against the ethos of democracy. Democracy is about cognizance and recognition of the right of individuals but along with it, it also entails acknowledgement of the right of others.
- The ruckus in Sabarimala highlights the prevalent and entrenched inequality between both the sexes.
- What is going unnoticed in this dazzle of a high literacy rate and a decent HDI is the fact that women's participation in is rather low which is inevitably affecting their agency.
- It is about time that women get representation in the top rungs of decision making and break this matrix.



## Anchored in human rights

- TB kills nearly two million people every year. The veracity of this disease has been acknowledged by the United Nations as well and in September 2018 it released a declaration titled "United to End Tuberculosis: An Urgent Global Response to a Global Epidemic".
- It is through this that heads of the state and governments have reaffirmed their commitment to end this global epidemic by 2030.
- What is strange in the strategy that is being envisaged to combat this disease is the fact that
  the government is planning to use a strategy of videos and drones and mobiles to manage
  the disease.
- However, the disease can easily be done away with human rights-based interventions and the fascination with new gadgets is uncalled for given the expenses it would involve.
- Bedaquiline and Delamanid, the only two most effective drugs against TB for more than 50
  years are relatively much affordable and feasible as compared to the toxic drugs and
  excruciatingly painful injections.
- The new methods are not 100% effective and may work only 50% of the time. It may also prone a patient to disability and psychosis.
- Thus, three interventions can be helpful in this context.
  - Providing drugs that work must form the bedrock of any strategy that is formulated in this regard. Besides, pressure must be mounted on companies like Johnson and Johnson to mellow down their exorbitant prices and make the drugs easily accessible.
  - 2. Community healthcare workers must be employed at the forefront. Human touch must form an important part of such strategy.
  - 3. Accountability will also help beat TB rather than a strategy embedded in coercion and control. Community based structures will go a long way in cementing trust between the communities and their health care system along with ensuring accountability.

#### Don't believe the antiGMO campaign

- The article by Kesavan and Swaminathan on 'Bt cotton; a failure' has the potential to mislead the public.
- The U.S. National Academy of Sciences in its massive research observed that Bt cotton
  and maize has contributed to a reduction in the gap between the actual yield and the
  potential yields under a circumstance where targeted pests were causing substantial
  damage to the non-GE varieties. This was remarkable as synthetic chemicals were also
  unable to provide control in this regard.
- When in 2016, some 100 odd Nobel laureates challenged Greenpeace to drop its antigenetically modified organism (GMO) technology stance, they cited that this stance is haseless
- As per reports, GM technology adoption has reduced pesticide use by 37%, increased crop yield by 22%, and increased farmer profi•ts by 68%.
- Data across the globe show that animals fed on GM corn or any such crop has not indicated any carcinogenic potential or health hazard.



- Statistics from India also prove that Bt cotton is anything but a failure. The yields hovering around 300 kg/ha at the time of introduction of Bt cotton (2002) have increased to an average of over 500 kg/ha. This has transformed India from a country importing cotton to the largest exporter of raw cotton.
- It is wrong to attribute the agrarian crisis and framer's distress to Bt cotton.
- The resistance developed can be tackled through Integrated Pest Management
- Genetic modification of a crop allows different parents to be combined easily, leading the yelids to spiral up.
- On account of all the above-mentioned facts, it is about time that we deregulate the Bt gene and lift the embargo on Bt brinjal. If not, India has a lot to lose.

## Providing health for all

- December 12th is observed as the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day
- UHC means "ensuring that everyone, everywhere can access essential quality health services without facing financial hardship"
- Japan embarked in a path of UHC some 5 decades ago and launched its first national heath insurance coverage in 1961 when the economy was taking off.
- In on the other hand India took the first major step in this regard only with the launch of Ayushman Bharat.
- Japan has been leading the international efforts towards UHC along with the inclusion of the same in the G20 agenda and SDG.
- This has inevitably led to a healthy workforce in Japan with a high degree of an overall wellbeing
- Japan has also partnered with India for better health care which at some point included the mission to eradicate Polio.
- Presently doctors of both the countries are collaborating and cooperating at a research and control centre on diarrhoea established by Japan in Kolkata.
- Both the countries have also signed a new MoC (Memorandum of Cooperation) on healthcare to pursue the synergies between the ongoing health programmes between two countries (Ayushman Bharat and Japan's Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative).

### Livemint

# The shackled Indian farmer

- Indian farmers are dealing with a lot many uncertainties and are unable to use the resources at their disposal and engage in the global market.
- It will sound a tad too ironical that it is the government's help that is the cause of their distress. Following arguments shall prove it
- The market for the framers has been severely restricted and institutionalised via the APMC. It also divides the market geographically. The traders here also need a llicense which is often politically motivated and given with due consideration to political patronage.
- The MSP is no relief. Farmers produce more expecting a high MSP and are forced to dump their products when the desired MSPs are not delivered. The government has also banned future trading in agriculture in India in which they could have utilised their bumper crop to avoid the downside of the bad crop in another year.
- The farmers have been denied a market for their asset, the land. This has limited the market for an agricultural land and the money that it can fetch a farmer.



- The records are in such a bad shape that it adds additional uncertainty to the farmers. The land may be illegally possessed by thugs in areas which have no documented records. The government has regulated local moneylenders which leave the farmers only at the disposal of the state-owned bank reducing the competition in loans and benefitting the political class who have the authority to waiver the farm loans taken by the farmers.
- The farm inputs to be used by the farmers are controlled by the government. Private players are barred from entering such a scenario. The only option with them left is the subsidies given by the government which is unreliable due to shortages caused without a price system.
- Farmers are barred from experimenting with new technologies be it is a fertilizer, machinery or pesticide. If given an opportunity to explore this area, farmers could be creating their own green revolution every now and then. The partial ban on genetically modified (GM) seeds needs to be reviewed in this regard given the new seeds are more resistant to pests and bacteria, and reduce the need for other inputs. This can benefit a farmer in a big way.

## **Engaging with climate change**

- Children in Australia have protested the government's dreary response to climate change. This coincided with the G 20 summit in Argentina which showed no consensus on climate change.
- This isn't uncommon given leaders across world think that concepts like 'climate change' distracts people and confuses them.
- Leaders like Trump and Canavan opine that activist scientists are spreading myths and that no goal should overshadow the concept and practise of an economic growth.
- There is a reason behind such a perception among a vast section of people.
- A report by UNESCO's Delhi based
   Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development on the curriculum policy document shows that UNESCO's sustainable development goals have been included in the school syllabus across Asian countries, there presence is only nominal.
- Environmental concerns are highlighted but it is economic growth that is prioritised.
- This can be attributed to the nexus between the political and the economical. Environmental struggles are caught up between politics and its popular agenda and the right of every human to live in a safe environment which is sustainable.
- As children have no financial interests to be redeemed, they understand the implications of climate change in a more comprehensive yet neutral manner.
- Any concept formulated during childhood becomes embedded in the mind. A well-founded syllabus can go a long way in enabling children to hold the government accountable on sustainability.

## The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill

- The government might push the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016 in the coming winter session.
- The law proposes amendments to the original Citizenship Act of 1955 and mandates that Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan will not be treated as illegal immigrants despite having entered India without valid documents.



- Such groups of people are forced to apply for citizenship by the process of naturalisation only which takes some 12 years for a person to become an Indian citizen.
- The law proposes to shorten the period of residency for such immigrants from 12 to 7.
- The Bill also empowers the government to nullify any registration as OCI with respect to any violation of any such law.
- Critics opine that the Bill would violate the basic tenet of equality under article 14 of the constitution, by discriminating the illegal immigrants based on religion.
- Also. It would hamper the credentials of the Assam National Register of Citizens which does not discriminate based on faith.

#### The fear of executive courts

- The recent remark by, Justice S.R. Sen of the Meghalaya High Court was another addition to the political controversies that the judicial office has been venturing into off late.
- According to the conventional thinking, judicial independence means the independence from the government.
- Nevertheless, in the truest sense of the of concept, Judicial independence must depend
  upon the judges recognising the law while being influenced by the politics but not being
  reduced by it.
- Partisan ideologies and personal nexus must not be a roadblock in discharge of their constitutional responsibilities.
- Control brings in accountability. Just the way politicians have some control over them, i.e. elections and people's mandate.
- Judges are accountable only to themselves and this is rather a very weak form of constraint. It is lured with the temptation of overstepping their realm.
- The legal culture that we are witnessing today is undoubtedly not created in vacuum. It has been created and nurtured by the political climate, academic scholars, media, lawyers and the citizenry.
- The reference to the 1980s is important in this regard. It was in this era that there was a rapid expansion of the judicial power. The prevailing wave with respect to the judiciary at that point in time was that the judiciary has been a conservative institution, and this needed a change.
- It needed to protect the people more as against the trend of protecting the landed elites more. Hence came in the wave of dispensing away with the procedural check on the power of the judiciary by the SC.
- It was in this background that the PIL was born.
- By 1990s and the 2000s, the courts under the garb of "judicial activism" began undertaking a host of administrative activities leading to a perception that the constitutional court had become a Supreme 'Administrative' Court.
- The recent judgements, in the case of National Anthem order and the NRC process, what looms over is the prospect of an Executive court,
- A court whose moral and political compass aligns itself with the government in power is an
  Executive court which is defying the very logic of a judiciary, which is to check and limit the
  power of the government.



# The anatomy of a police station

- Background: The death of an inspector while trying to control a mob of cow watchdogs depicts the contempt of the rule of law and to that of the ruling classes.
- This is the backdrop to the all-pervasive lawlessness rampant in India. The question arises as to why has the police has become the **agent of lawlessness**?
- The reasons lie in several factors. To start with, there is a shortage of personnel, miserable working conditions and personal dissatisfaction with work have all hindered the development of system that can uphold the law.
- Police stations have become an agent of lawlessness via the prevalent corruption. It is so
  engrained in the system that it is not at all difficult to be corrupt as it is more of a habit for
  the personnel.
- The need of the hour is to be vigilant towards this callousness of the system and scrutinise it well.

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