



NEWS ANALYSIS

13 SEPTEMBER 2024

Today's prelims practice Question

Q)The recently formed 'Middle Eastern Quad' consists of which of the following countries

1.India

2.Israel

3.USA

4.Saudi Arabia

5.UAE

Select the correct answer code:

a) 1, 2, 3, 4

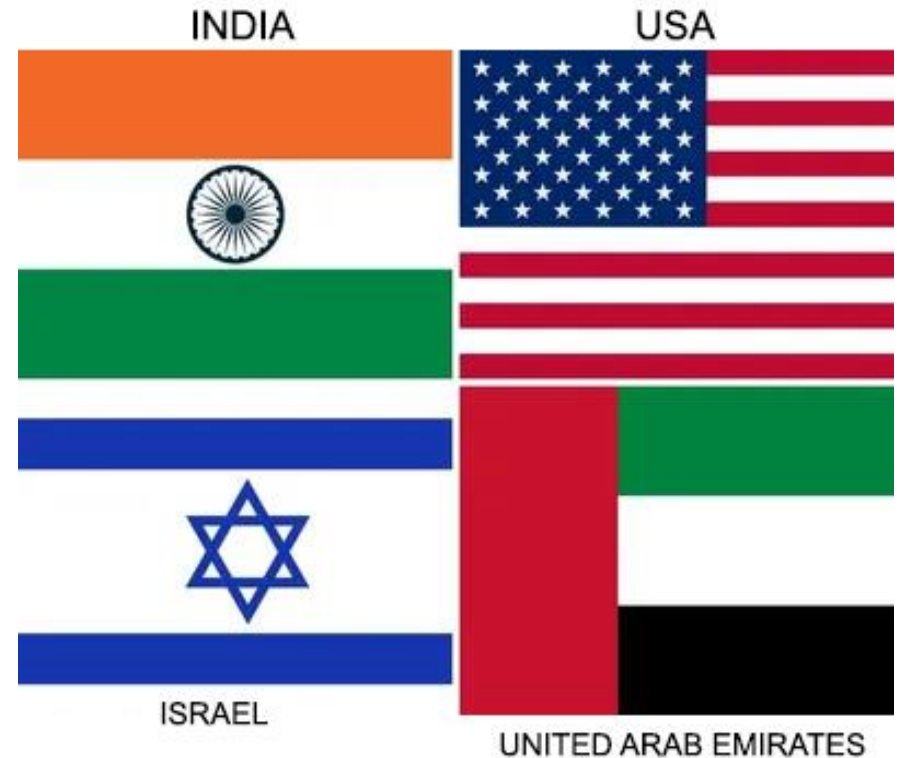
b) 1, 3, 4, 5

c) 1, 2, 3, 5

d) 2, 3, 4, 5

Explanation

- ❖ The member nations of the Middle East Quad is Israel, USA, UAE, and India. It was after the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of India, the US .



Today's prelims practice Question

Q)The term 'Unicorn Company' often seen news means

- a) Privatization of any loss-making state-owned company
- b) Privately held start-up company valued at over US\$1 billion
- c) A public sector company merged with another public sector company
- d) Foreign multinational company with monopoly

How direct benefit transfer empowers women

What Centre can learn from states

By placing cash directly in the hands of women, direct benefit transfers offer financial autonomy, improve their position in the family



ZERO HOUR
BY DEREK O'BRIEN

LET ME BEGIN by sharing a few startling statistics. India's female labour force participation rate is just 28 per cent. One out of three young people is not engaged in education, employment or training, with women making up 95 per cent of this group. For every five men in managerial positions, only one is a woman. India ranked 127th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, 2023. Three out of 10 women in the age group of 18-49 years have experienced violence from their spouses, as per a survey by Niti Aayog.

In election manifestos, speeches in Parliament or internal resolutions, every political party will tell you that there is "a need for women to be empowered, financially and socially". That is truer said than done. The challenge is: How do you provide financial autonomy, or even a small degree of financial autonomy, when the majority of women are outside the purview of the labour force? Enter, Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT).

All the data from ground research that your columnist has gleaned on this subject indicates one important trend: Much of the income that comes through DBT is spent by the women at her own discretion, targeting low-income households through these schemes is especially beneficial as these households allocate a larger proportion of their income to basic necessities like food and fuel. This is evident from the fact that the bottom 20 per cent of rural households spend 53 per cent of their income on food, while urban households in the same bracket allocate 40 per cent. Given these patterns of high consumption, much of the money provided through DBT circulates back into the economy.

Now to the politics of DBT, which is not so cut and dried. Rolling out the scheme does not guarantee an election win. YSRP's Jagannava Venkaiah Naidu, launched in January 2020, did not do the magic for Nara Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh in June 2024. In Telangana, the story was different. YSR's DBT must be using the fact that they didn't have a similar DBT scheme in place. Congress' Mahatma Scheme, adapted from their own Karnataka (Caucho Lakshmi) model and widely introduced after the big Telangana Assembly win in 2023, paid rich

electoral dividends in the 18th Lok Sabha election.

Let's look at Maharashtra and the DBT play. The state government announced the Lada Bahin scheme in the budget this June. The first tranche reached the bank accounts of women in August. The second tranche is likely to reach beneficiaries mid-October. Is this the primary reason why the Maharashtra elections were not announced along with elections in Haryana, and Jharkhand & Karnataka? Will the Lada Bahin scheme be enough to secure the NDA government? Or will the bottom social assault on women in the state be a flashpoint? Let your columnist stick his neck out and call a winner for the Maha Vikas Aghadi coalition later this year.

Besides Maharashtra, NDA states like Assam and Madhya Pradesh run similar schemes. Opposition states running DBT schemes for women are Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Punjab, Karnataka and West Bengal has Lokeshwar Bhandari, Anurag Sen's Pratichi Trust, analysing Bengal's Lokeshwar Bhandari scheme, opined that cash incentives have enhanced women's ability to make financial decisions and improved their position within the family. The study stated that four out of five women spend the money at their will, and one out of 10 decide how to spend the money after chatting with their husbands. Also, the women themselves had reported that their position in the family improved, empowering them in many ways.

All these schemes are fully sponsored by the states. Then there are 53 ministries under the Union government that run 315 DBT schemes. Of these, 13 are related to the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The ministry has an abysmal track record in implementing the schemes and ranks 31 in the DBT Performance Rankings. Intriguingly, there is no central scheme that directly transfers financial support universally to all women or specifically targets low-income women (the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana gives financial support to pregnant and lactating mothers).

In an election speech earlier this year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on record, "We (BJP) will not stop the DBT scheme (Lakshmi Bhandari). In fact, we will give the assistance by Rs 100." It isn't only Shah who is impressed. The DMJ has called India's DBT schemes a "logical marvel". So, should we wait for a national rollout? This will, in a nutshell, help change for the better the statistics mentioned in the opening of this column.

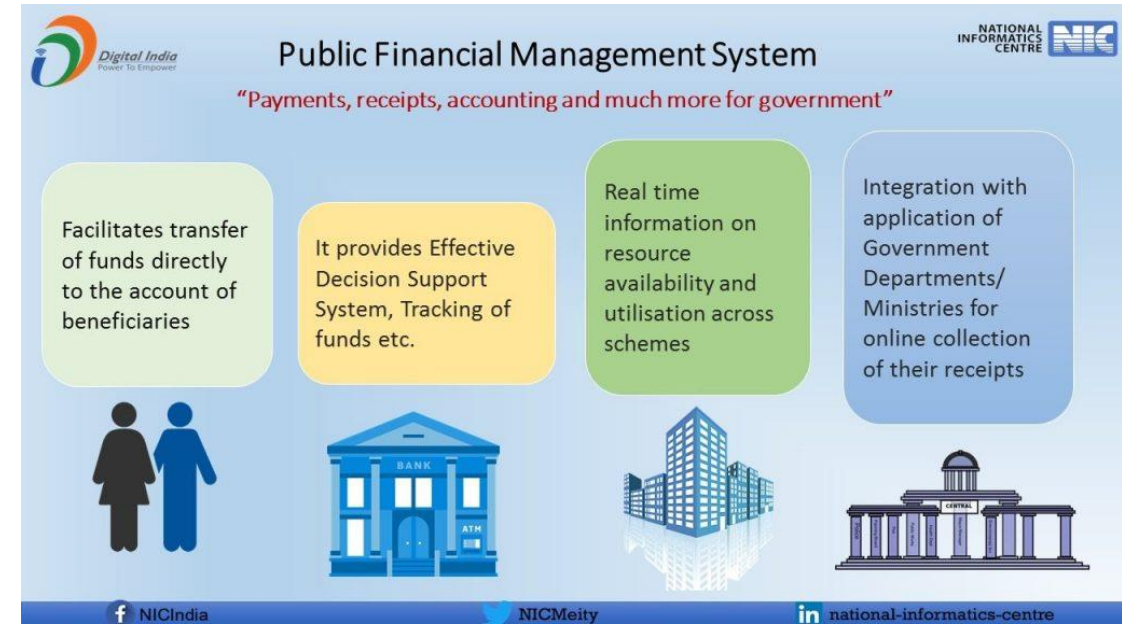
The writer is MP and leader, All India Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party (Rajya Sabha). Research by Dharmraj Jain

Context

- ❖ The Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) has done a wonderful job in addressing women's financial autonomy in India.
- ❖ With low female labor force participation and significant gender disparities in economic and social spheres, DBT schemes are being examined for their impact on women's empowerment and financial decision-making.

Financial Autonomy and DBT

- ❖ India's female labor force participation rate is just 28%, and women make up 95% of those not engaged in education, employment, or training. This highlights the need for alternative mechanisms to provide **financial autonomy to women**.
- ❖ Research indicates that income from DBT schemes is often spent by women at their discretion, benefiting low-income households where a significant portion of income goes to necessities like food and fuel.
- ❖ DBT funds are shown to circulate back into the economy, supporting local consumption. For instance, rural households in the lowest income bracket spend a large share of their income on essential items, which stimulates local economic activity.



Political and Electoral Aspects

- ❖ Various states have implemented DBT schemes targeting women, such as **Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin scheme and West Bengal's Lakshmir Bhandar**. These programs aim to enhance women's financial independence and influence within the family.
- ❖ While DBT schemes can influence electoral outcomes, their effectiveness is variable. For example, **Andhra Pradesh's YSRCP's DBT scheme did not translate into electoral success**, whereas similar schemes in Telangana and Karnataka positively impacted political results.
- ❖ Despite the benefits, the implementation of DBT schemes is inconsistent, with some states performing better than others. Additionally, central schemes lack a universal approach to support low-income women, limiting the overall impact.



**STRENGTHENING DIGITAL
FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN
GOVERNMENT-TO-PERSON
PAYMENTS TO WOMEN: LESSONS
FOR EMERGING ECONOMIES**

Implementation and Effectiveness

- ❖ State-sponsored DBT schemes, such as **Tamil Nadu's and Punjab's, have shown improvements in women's financial decision-making** and family dynamics. However, central schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana are more focused and less comprehensive.
- ❖ The Ministry of Women and Child Development, which oversees several DBT schemes, has struggled with implementation, ranking low in performance metrics. This affects the reach and effectiveness of these programs.
- ❖ There is potential for a national DBT scheme to enhance financial support universally for women, which could address some of the **gender disparities identified and improve women's position in society**.

Mindfulness

The practice of being fully aware & present in this one moment



Emotional Regulation

How to change emotions that you want to change



Distress Tolerance

How to tolerate pain in difficult situations, not change it



Interpersonal Effectiveness

How to ask for what you want & say no while maintaining self-respect & relationships with others



What is Separation of Powers?

Lawyers, ex-judges question PM visit to CJI residence

**AJOY SINHA KARPURAM
& ASAD REHMAN**
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 12

A DAY after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud's residence for Ganpati puja, retired judges and eminent lawyers raised a number of questions, including whether the visit should have been made public.

Meanwhile, Opposition parties questioned the propriety of the visit even as the ruling BJP hailed it as a reflection of a healthy democracy and said there was nothing wrong with showing "civility" and "cordiality". The principal Opposition party, Congress, did not comment. The Shiv Sena (UBT) said the CJI should recuse himself from the case on the Sena split.

Former Chief Justice of India R M Lodha told *The Indian Express* that there is a constitutional separation of power and "normally, a certain distance is to be maintained" between the judiciary and the executive. "By such a meeting, public perception of the judiciary gets impacted but judicial decision-making in a way is not impacted," he said.

At a press conference Thursday, Rajya Sabha MP and Supreme Court Bar Association President Kapil Sibal, speaking in his "individual capacity", said he was "taken aback" by the video clip of Prime Minister Modi visiting CJI's Chandrachud's residence. "I am sure that maybe the CJI may not have known that this was being publicised, that is sad. The second thing is that the prime min-

ister of India should never have shown his interest to go to such a private event because the prime minister and those he must have consulted should and must have told him that this may send a wrong signal," Sibal said.

Retired Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court Govind Mathur told *The Indian Express* that making the visit "public" was "improper". "In my opinion, it was not proper to make the visit public. I don't know who invited whom, but I can say such visits may impact the image of the judiciary in the eyes of the public," said the retired judge, who served as the Chief Justice of the Allahabad HC from November 2018 to April 2021.

Former Delhi High Court judge Justice (ret'd) Rekha Sharma said: "The visit should

have been avoided under all circumstances... Cases involving the government and, lately, cases involving violations of human rights are coming before the Supreme Court. In this kind of a scenario, a social interaction between the CJI and the PM raises apprehension in the minds of victims and litigants".

But former Madras HC judge Justice (ret'd) K Chandru said "no one should make an issue" out of this. "It is not wrong for the CJI to have Ganesh pooja in his house and also invite the head of the executive wing... Maybe they should not have gone public with that. But to denigrate the CJI's integrity with that event is childish and immature."

Also on Thursday, parties exchanged barbs on the issue. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut

questioned if the Uddhav Sena would get justice under the CJI in the Sena versus Sena case pending before the Supreme Court. Sena leader from the Eknath Shinde camp, Milind Deora, termed this "reckless" commentary "unfortunate".

RJD MP Manoj Jha said: "The Ganpati puja is very personal. You are going there with a camera. The message can be discomfoting... If they have released this picture in public despite Constitutional interpretation, then what do I say."

BJP leader B L Santhosh said "though left liberals have started crying", "it was not socialising but a devoted Ganapathi Pooja". "Civility, cordiality, togetherness, co travellers in nations journey are all an anathema to these left liberals," said Santosh on X.

Context

- ❖ Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Chief Justice's residence has set off debate on the separation of powers (a cornerstone of the judiciary and a key feature of the basic structure of the Constitution) and post-retirement sinecures for judges. It has raised several questions, including the lack of up-keeping of the principle of separating the judiciary from the executive.

Separation of Powers

- ❖ Separation of powers is a **fundamental principle of democratic governance** that involves distributing the functions of government among different branches:
- ❖ **Legislative:** Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), State legislative bodies
- ❖ **Executive:** President (central level), Governor (state level)
- ❖ **Judicial:** Supreme Court, High Court and all other subordinate courts
- ❖ This distribution aims to **prevent the concentration of power in any single branch** and to ensure that each branch operates **independently yet cooperatively.**

- ❖ **Application in the Indian Constitution:** While the Indian Constitution **does not explicitly** use the term "**separation of powers,**" it implicitly incorporates the concept by allocating distinct functions and powers to the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary.
- ❖ In the case of **Ram Jawaya Kapur v. State of Punjab**, SC held that the doctrine of separation of powers is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution but each branch of government should not encroach on the functions of the others. Each organ must exercise its powers within the limits set by the Constitution.
- ❖ This structure helps maintain a balanced system of governance and prevents any single branch from becoming too powerful.

Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Roles

Legislative Branch:

- ❖ It is responsible for creating laws and overseeing their implementation. The Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) enacts laws within its jurisdiction as defined by the Union List, the Concurrent List, and the State List.
- ❖ **Oversight:** The Legislature checks the Executive through mechanisms such as **legislative oversight, budgetary control, and the power to impeach officials**. The Parliament also has the authority to question and censure the Executive.

Executive Branch:

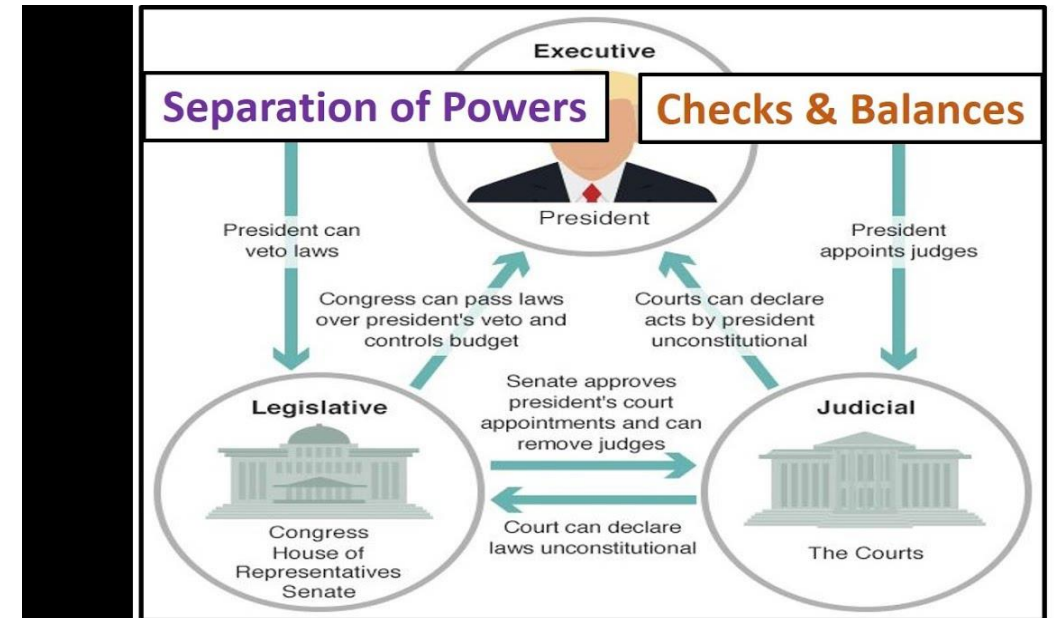
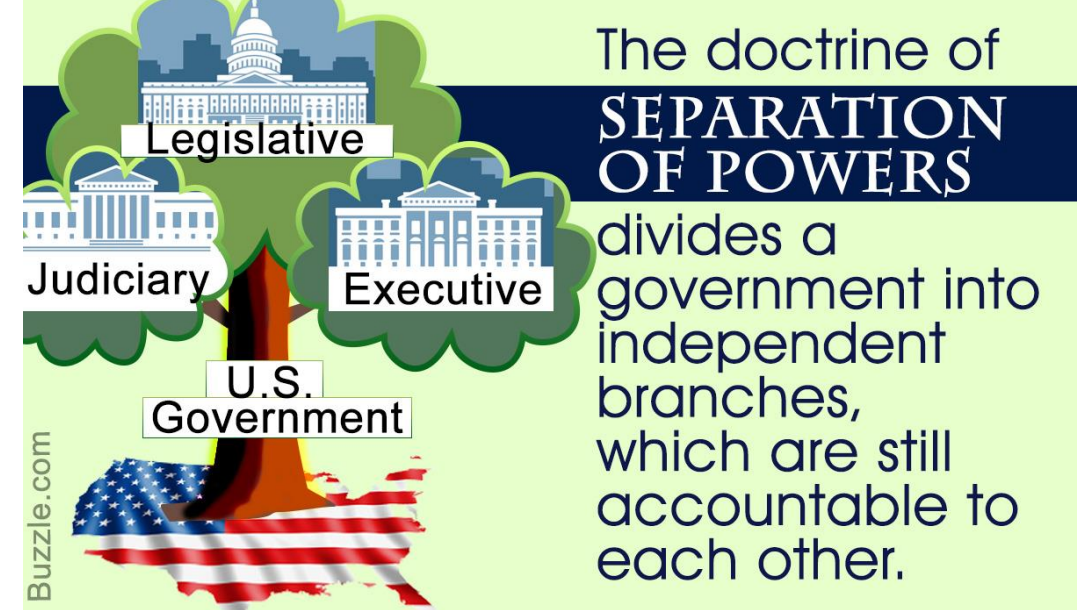
- ❖ **The branch enforces and administers laws.** The Executive includes the **President, the Prime Minister, and the Council of Ministers**. It is tasked with implementing policies and laws enacted by the Legislature.
- ❖ **Checks on Legislature:** The Executive can influence the Legislature through the **President's power to withhold assent to bills**, thereby requiring further deliberation. Additionally, the Executive can issue ordinances in urgent situations, subject to parliamentary approval.

Judicial Branch:

- ❖ Judiciary interprets laws and ensures their conformity with the Constitution. The Judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, reviews laws and governmental actions through judicial review.

Checks and Balances Mechanisms

- ❖ Checks and balances are fundamental mechanisms within a democratic system that prevent any single branch of government from gaining too much power.
- ❖ In India, these mechanisms are essential for maintaining a balanced governance structure where the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary operate independently yet interdependently.
- ❖ The Indian Constitution's Doctrine of Checks and Balance was introduced by the Supreme Court in the 1993 decision of *Kannadasan v. Tamil Nadu State*.



Mission Mausam

Under Mission Mausam, need-based enhanced rain, radar cover by 2026

ANJALI MARAR

BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 12

THE NEWLY-LAUNCHED Mission Mausam will not just help in improving weather forecasts in the country but also enable the Met department to develop capabilities to 'manage' certain weather events, like enhancing or suppressing rainfall over an area according to requirements, a top government official said on Thursday.

"Eventually, we have to move in that direction -- from just weather forecasting to weather management. For example, if incessant rains are happening in an area resulting in floods, we can try

to suppress rainfall. Alternatively, if an area is not getting enough rainfall, we can try to engineer rainfall over that area," M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said.

Engineering rains through cloud-seeding exercises has been tried out in several countries, including in India, with varying degrees of success. He hoped that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) would be able to develop reliable capabilities to 'manage' rainfall in the next five years.

"At a later stage, other weather events like lightning can also be managed," he said.

Mission Mausam, which was approved by the union Cabinet on Wednesday, is aimed at improving India's weather forecasting capabilities, by upgrading the weather monitoring in-

frastructure, investing in scientific research, and improving the skills of the scientists. The Mission has been allocated Rs 2,000 crore for the next two years. Ravichandran said the Mission would be implemented over a five-year period, with the budget for the second half to be decided at a later stage.

An important task under the would be intensifying the weather observation network in the country, not just over land, but also on sea and the sky. This would directly help improve the weather model accuracy and also facilitate studies paving the way for having better understanding of climate sciences, he said.

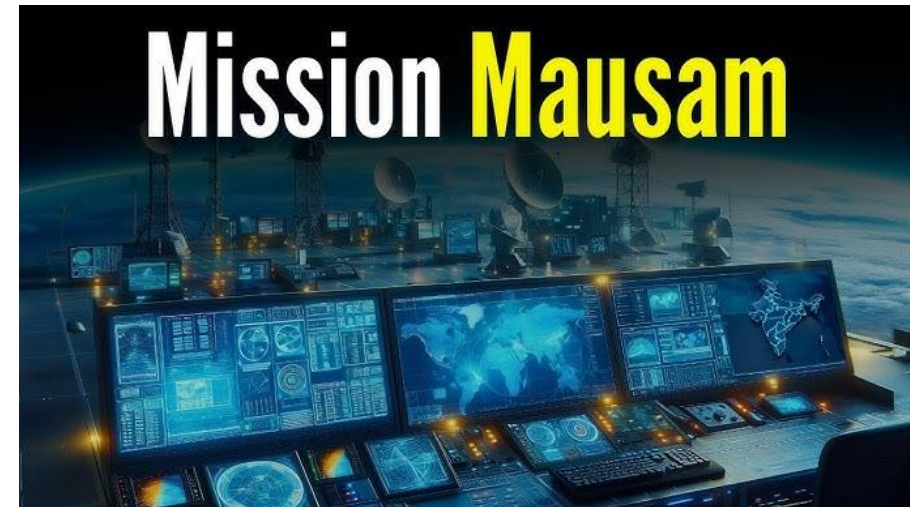
Over the next 18 months, the numbers of doppler radars, wind profilers, radiometers and radio sonde will be increased by many folds. All these are essential tools and infrastructure used for recording weather data from across the surface, atmosphere and oceans. **FULL REPORT ON:**

www.indianexpress.com

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Mission Mausam

- ❑ Mission Mausam, a ₹2,000 crore initiative approved by the Union Cabinet, aims to enhance India's weather and climate forecasting capabilities by 2026.
- ❑ Spearheaded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), the mission seeks to make India "Weather Ready" and "Climate Smart," improving resilience against climate change and extreme weather events.



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Water security must be ensured for rural India

Water security must be ensured for rural India to thrive

SHRAMAN JHA



is CEO of Hindustan Unilever Foundation and co-chair of the FICCI Water Mission.

India's agrarian society is at a crucial juncture, seeking to balance traditional livelihoods with modern market dynamics. When compounded by the unpredictable impact of climate change, the uncertainties multiply. With more than half the country's population depending directly or indirectly on agriculture, prosperity and economic growth in the rural sector becomes vital. The average land holding being just about a hectare, nearly 90% of farmers are smallholders and solutions that work for large-holding farmers may not be effective for them. Therefore, urgent policy refinements are needed to ensure people's economic independence and a prosperous rural India. These must include climate resilience, water conservation and sustainable practices to navigate an important transformation.

A significant first step is to recognize that much of agriculture depends on women. With employable young men migrating to urban areas, land tilling and allied businesses in the rural sector are increasingly

being shouldered by women. Based on my travels through rural India, I am delighted to note the immense potential of women's contribution to agriculture. They excel at it and actively organize themselves, assuming leadership and charting their paths. As a slow and steady phenomenon, the "feminisation" of agriculture, explicitly brought out in the *Economic Survey 2017-18*, is now being factored into policy-level thinking. The full potential and economic autonomy of women farmers could be unlocked if we take measures to ease their currently restricted access to knowledge, finance and markets.

While enhancing the agricultural output of small-scale farms has many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that must fall in place, the largest chunk pertains to water security—the right quantity, at the right time and in the right place. This is not just another problem, but a pressing issue. Water is the flip side of climate change; almost every aspect of it, be it global warming, rising ocean levels or the onslaught of floods and droughts, is linked to water in one way or another.

Water security for agriculture is not just about enhancing overall supply. As we have seen over the past few decades, enhancing year-round supply has led to gross over-extraction of groundwater, and the conse-

quences are there for all to see. A starting point would be to accept and reinforce the knowledge passed on for generations that India's agricultural sector is mainly rain-fed, with all the vagaries of monsoon rainfall. This renders it susceptible to water scarcity and unpredictable precipitation patterns. Incorporating water conservation strategies, such as collecting rainwater, using effective irrigation technologies (like drip and sprinkler systems) and managing watersheds, is crucial to preserve soil moisture and sustain long-term agricultural output. Underlying all these is the need to recharge groundwater—a slow process, but without which we will run the risk of 'overconsuming,' much like spending on a credit card. The bill to repay will follow shortly. These water-efficiency-linked measures will help enhance crop yields by ensuring that crops receive sufficient moisture throughout their growth cycles.

A recent unveiling by the Prime Minister of 109

high-yielding, climate-resilient and bio-fortified crops is a commendable step. So is the call for regenerative agriculture practices, which, simply put, re-invigorate the soil for higher productivity.

These efforts must be accompanied by the availability of contemporary technology and information. Weather forecasts and real-time data can assist farmers make well-informed plantation and harvest choices, and hence help them minimize losses caused by unpredictable factors. Initiatives taken by Hindustan Unilever Foundation (HUF) have

shown how para-agricultural professionals and local cadres can improve productivity by offering technical support and promoting more effective farming methods. Water management practices built into these programmes are expected to enhance the resilience of rural populations to climatic shocks.

India has a large young population, too, well set to reap a demographic dividend. Unless farming

is financially rewarding and exciting, the youth will not be attracted to it. Nothing hooks the youth more than the sense that they are at the cutting-edge of technology. There are opportunities to bring startup-type technology into agriculture and allied fields such as horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries. These include using Internet of Things-based sensors, micro-geo maps and fine water management methods. The spread of tech-enabled activities in villages can keep the youth engaged throughout the year, and not just during the traditional *kharif* and *rabi* cultivation cycles.

Much thought at the highest levels is needed to make rural India a powerhouse. A comprehensive approach that factors in the active inclusion of women in the economic cycle, makes it exciting for the youth to stay in their villages and fosters startup thinking would be crucial. All this would ensure that each rural community is water secure and water-wise, with an understanding that while the supply and conservation of water must be enhanced, it must also be used efficiently for greater economic prosperity. The recently concluded World Water Week focused on water cooperation for peace and security—which we all need to reflect on.

These are the author's personal views.

QUICK READ

No sustainable path to rural development is possible without water conservation, given our reliance on agriculture, especially as we navigate uncertainties posed by climate change.

With men migrating to urban areas, we must empower women farmers with knowledge, finance and market access, even as we arm the farming sector with technological aids for farming.

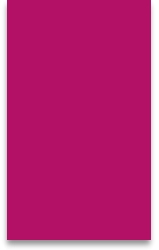
- ❑ With more than half the country's population depending directly or indirectly on agriculture, prosperity and economic growth in the rural sector becomes vital.
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- ❑ With employable young men migrating to urban areas, land tilling and allied businesses in the rural sector are increasingly being shouldered by the women.
- ❑ The full potential and economic autonomy of women farmers could be unlocked if we take measures to ease their currently restricted access to knowledge, finance and markets.

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- ❑ These water-efficiency linked measures will help enhance crop yields by ensuring that crops receive sufficient moisture throughout their growth cycles.
- ❑ A recent unveiling by the Prime Minister of 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient and bio-fortified crops is a commendable step.
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Thank you

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