

The Hindu

Editorial

An anomaly that goes by the name populism (Page no.6) GS Paper 3, Indian Economy

While economic inequalities have grown exponentially over the last few decades, we have also witnessed social democratisation that has been silent and uneventful.

Democratisation has happened due to the spread of education, the growing reach of the market and a 'communication revolution' that includes social media, and renewed legitimisation of democracy through the principle of 'one vote, one value'.

Such social equalisation has not, however, contributed in any substantial sense to distributive justice, much against the assumption that the shift from 'equality to difference' will also account for economic equality. Populism is an expression of this anomaly of growing social mobility sans economic equality.

Democratisation can be seen on many fronts. New technology has replaced old social divides. Today, for instance, photography is not about 'capturing' a moment; it is about 'creating' one using filters and also the instant mobile phone cameras.

Markets have created new modes of consumption. David Harvey refers to Netflix as a nonexclusive consumption that can be consumed simultaneously.

A 'silver' moment to propel a Bay of Bengal dream (page no. 6) (GS Paper 2, International Relation)

June 6 marked the completion of 25 years since the 1997 Bangkok Declaration launched a modest grouping (of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand), with the acronym, BIST-EC.

Three countries (Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar) joined it later to make it the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

This unique set of five countries from South Asia and two from Southeast Asia are parents to an institution with an unwieldy name but lofty ambitions.

It is the parents' responsibility that the 25-year-old offspring, now a full adult, begins taking strides to achieve the goals set before it.

At the grouping's birth, the world was different; it was stamped by America's 'unipolar moment'.

India and Thailand joined hands to start an experiment of infusing a part of South Asia with the economic and institutional dynamism that defined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

But BIMSTEC found the burdens of South Asia too heavy to carry, and so it grew slowly. Now in the third decade of the 21st century, the strategic contestation between the United States and China defines the region's geopolitics and geo-economics, creating new tensions and opportunities.

OPED

Taking steps to ensure sex workers' rights (Page no. 7) GS Paper 2, Social Justice

Recently, in *Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal & Ors*, while issuing interim directions to States and Union Territories, the Supreme Court re-asserted that sex workers and their children cannot be deprived of their right to live with dignity and human decency.

The court said that notwithstanding the profession, every individual in this country has the right to a dignified life. The court's directions are nothing but the recommendations made by the panel constituted by the Supreme Court in July 2011 and headed by a senior advocate, Pradip Ghosh, with regard to "conditions conducive for sex workers who wish to continue as sex workers to live with dignity in accordance with the provisions of Article 21 of the Constitution of India". Since the Government of India had certain reservations about four of the 10 recommendations of the panel, the court directed the government to implement the other six recommendations as well as the provisions of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) of 1956.

These are: to provide immediate medical assistance to sex workers who are victims of sexual assault; to release adult sex workers detained in ITPA protective homes against their will; to sensitise the police and other law-enforcement agencies about the rights of sex workers to live with dignity.

To ask the Press Council of India to issue guidelines to the media so that they don't reveal the identities of sex workers while reporting on arrest, raid and rescue operations.

Explainer

The debates around the Surrogacy Act (Page no. 8)

GS Paper 2, Social Justice

Petitioners in the Delhi High Court questioned why marital status, age, or gender were the criteria for being allowed to commission or not commission surrogacy in India.

The female petitioner said that she already had a child but the trauma of the first childbirth experience and her need to juggle work with child care persuaded her that surrogacy would be a better option for the second child.

But under the provisions of the Surrogacy Act, she was denied a chance at commissioning surrogacy.

As per the Surrogacy Act that kicked in from January this year, a married couple can opt for surrogacy only on medical grounds.

The law defines a couple as a married Indian "man and woman" and also prescribes an age-criteria with the woman being in the age group of 23 to 50 years and the man between 26 to 55 years.

Additionally, the couple should not have a child of their own. Though the law allows single women to resort to surrogacy, she should either be a widow or a divorcee, between the age of 35 to 45 years. Single men are however, not eligible.

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill was introduced in Parliament in November 2016, and passed in the Winter session of Parliament in 2021.

The provisions of the withdrawn draft on social media regulations (Page no 8)

GS Paper 2, Governance

On June 2, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) put out a draft proposal, seeking comments from the general public on a set of proposed amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

The draft document was however withdrawn the same day. It had proposed measures to strengthen the oversight mechanism for regulating content on social media platforms.

The draft stated that the measures dealt with "new and emerging issues" and addresses identified "gaps" in the legislation so as to make the internet more open, safe, trusted and accountable to its users.

The MeitY reposted the draft amendments on its website, inviting comments from stakeholders in the next 30 days, the same day this article went to press.

Broadly, the IT Rules (2021) mandate social media platforms to exercise greater diligence with respect to the content on their platforms.

They are required to establish a grievance redressal mechanism, and remove unlawful and unfitting content within stipulated time frames.

News

₹76,390-cr. defence projects get nod (Page no 10)

GS Paper 3, Internal Security

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, accorded preliminary approval, the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN), for capital acquisition proposals of the armed forces amounting to ₹76,390 crore.

For the Army, the DAC accorded fresh AoNs for procurement of rough terrain fork lift trucks, bridge-laying tanks, wheeled armoured fighting vehicles with antitank guided missiles and weapon-locating radars through domestic sources with emphasis on indigenous design and development.

For the Navy, the AoN was accorded for the procurement of next-generation corvettes (NGCs) at an estimated cost of approximately ₹36,000 crore.

The DAC also accorded AoNs for the manufacture of Dornier aircraft and Su-30 MKI aero-engines by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. focused on enhancing indigenisation, particularly in indigenising aero-engine material.

Business

India has become more strategic about trade: Tai (Page no 14)

GS Paper 3, Indian Economy

With just over a week to go before the World Trade Organisation (WTO) holds its 12th ministerial conference (MC12), U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai said that she expects India to be engaging with “intentionality” at the conference.

Ms. Tai was responding to a question at an event organised by the Washington International Trade Association (WITA) and Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI) that sought her opinion on the view that India ‘did not have a great track record in bringing success to ministerials’.

India knows its own mind. India has a complex place in the world order to put it diplomatically and that India was becoming more strategic with regard to trade.

In terms of India’s approach to trade and to the WTO, it is an increasingly strategic India when it comes to trade, and so, India will be engaging with intentionality.