

Current Affairs of the Day

'Misinformation, hate speech in FB'

Internal documents at the Facebook show “a struggle with misinformation, hate speech and celebrations of violence” in India, the company’s biggest market, with researchers at the social media giant pointing out that there are groups and pages “replete with inflammatory and misleading anti-Muslim content” on its platform, U.S. media reports have said.

Example of Kerala:

1. In a report published on Saturday, The New York Times said that in February 2019, a Facebook researcher created a user account to look into what the social media website will look like for a person living in Kerala.
2. For the next three weeks, the account operated by a simple rule: follow all the recommendations generated by Facebook’s algorithms to join groups, watch videos and explore new pages on the site.
3. The result was an inundation of hate speech, misinformation and celebrations of violence, which were documented in an internal Facebook report published later that month,” the NYT report said.

Misinformation, hate speech in FB'

Report cites internal documents

FROM FRONT OF DESK

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In an internal document titled “adversarial harmful networks: India Case Study”, Facebook researchers wrote that there were groups and pages “replete with inflammatory and misleading anti-Muslim content”.

The internal documents also detail how a plan “championed” by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg to focus on “meaningful social interactions” was leading to more misinformation in India, particularly during the pandemic.

Efforts by Rajang Dal The NYT report said another Facebook report detailed efforts by Rajang Dal to publish posts containing anti-Muslim narratives on the platform.

Facebook is considering designating the group as a disorganised organisation because it is “inciting religious violence” on the platform, the document showed, but it has not yet done so,” the NYT report said.

The documents show that Facebook did not have enough resources in India and was not able to grapple with the problems it had introduced there, including anti-Muslim posts.

A Facebook spokesman, Andy Stone, said Facebook has reduced the amount of hate speech that people see globally by half this year.





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Biggest market

1. "Internal documents show a struggle with misinformation, hate speech and celebrations of violence in the country, the company's biggest market," said the report.
2. The documents are part of a larger cache of material collected by whistleblower Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee who recently testified before the Senate about the company and its social media platforms.
3. The report said the internal documents include reports on how bots and fake accounts tied to the "country's ruling party and Opposition figures" were wreaking havoc on national elections.
4. In an internal document titled "Adversarial Harmful Networks: India Case Study", Facebook researchers wrote that there were groups and pages "replete with inflammatory and misleading anti-Muslim content".

After nearly two decades of relative peace, the Northeast has started to simmer again

It is a cause for concern that after nearly two decades of relative peace, the Northeast has started to simmer again. Old fault lines — of land, language, ethnicity, faith — have once again started to shape political mobilisations in the region. The hardening of narrower identities is now visible in Assam and Meghalaya, with the state governments acting as facilitators of this unhappy trend.

The reemergence of faultlines:

1. An inter-state border dispute involving Assam and Mizoram led to the killing of six police personnel in July. The anti-outsider politics in Meghalaya has got a fresh lease of life with the attempt to evict a small Dalit Sikh community from their century-old settlement in Shillong.





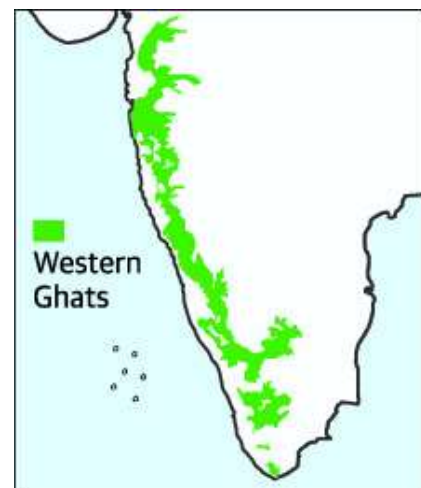
2. The peace deal with the NSCN-IM in Nagaland has reached a deadlock over the rebel position on the national flag and a separate constitution. Some of these are legacy issues and can be resolved only through dialogue and by exploring out-of-the-box solutions within a federal framework.
3. The region's distinct social history and its encounter with colonialism militate against the imposition of unitary notions of identity. Politicians exploit these fault lines for petty electoral gains at great cost to the nation.
4. Bangladesh, which has outpaced India in improving development indices in recent years, has been alert to the emergence of majoritarian religious extremism and has cracked down firmly on Islamist groups.

The Sheikh Hasina government has been quick to reach out to the Hindu community after the Durga Puja violence — several arrests have been made and ministers have been visiting affected Hindu families. Such outreach can help heal strained relations between communities. There's a lesson here for leaders across the border as well.

Restless mountains, shattered lives

Flash floods and back-to-back landslips in Kerala bring into focus, once again, the fragile ecosystem of the mountain chain that runs almost parallel to India's western coast

1. Recognised as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, the Western Ghats region runs to a length of 1,600 km, starting from the mouth of the river Tapti near the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra to Kanniyakumari.
2. The 39 serial sites of the Western Ghats were inscribed into UNESCO's World Heritage Site list in 2012 for its "outstanding universal value and for representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, and communities of plants and animals".



3. In recent years, Kerala, known for its peaks and rich water bodies, most of which originate from the Ghats, has seen back-to-back calamities, including the disastrous 2018 floods, which raised serious questions on the conservation of the mountain chain.



GADGIL REPORT.....

- 2010 Government appointed Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel(WGEEP) - Headed by Madhav Gadgil
- Commission submitted the report to the Government of India on 31 August 2011
- They divided WG into 3 zones based on ecological sensitivity(ESZ1, ESZ2, ESZ3).
- Gadgil report considers 1370000 sq. km as ecologically sensitive area



RECOMMENDATIONS.....

- Establishment of Western Ghats Authority
- Water resource conservation plans
- No new power plants in the sensitive zones
- Organic agricultural practices
- Ban plastic within 3 years
- Roads and constructions only after study of environmental consequences
- To stop illegal mining in the western ghats area immediately & not to give permissions for new mine zones in Z1 & Z2
- Red and orange industries not to be allowed in Z1 and Z2



KASTURIRANGAN REPORT.....

- Dr. Kasturi Rangan is the former ISRO Chairman.
- expert in Nuclear Sciences and one of scientific advisers to the PM of India
- assigned to analyze the WGEEP Report and to give guidelines to the govt. and to formulate an implementable action plan.
- Removed cash crop plantations & agricultural fields from ESZ
- Remarkd 37% (60000sq km) as ESZ



RECOMMENDATIONS.....

- Banned development of any township or construction over 20000 sq. km in ESZ
- Complete ban of mining and quarrying activities
- banned red category industries (including thermal power plants)
- Hydroelectric projects can be initiated obeying terms and conditions



Key differences between Gadgil and Kasthurirangan Report

- The extend of area of ESZ

| Gadgil Report | Kasthurirangan Report |
|--|---|
| Entire WG should be considered as ESZ | Removed cash crops, agricultural lands and settlements from ESZ |
| Created three categories of protection regimes and listed activities | Made the distinction between what it called cultural landscape and natural landscape. |
| 137,000 hectares should be awarded the status of ESZ | 60,000 hectares should be awarded as ESZ |

- List of activities permissible in the protected regime

| Gadgil Report | Kasthurirangan Report |
|---|---|
| Ban pesticide use and genetically modified crops | Impose restrictions on what it called highly interventionist and environmentally damaging activities in the ESZ |
| Decommissioning of Hydro Power Projects | All mining and red-category industry (including thermal power), and buildings over 20,000 square metres would be completely banned. |
| Gradual shift from agricultural land to natural forests | hydropower projects, the panel set tough conditions to ensure adequate flow in rivers and distance between projects. |



- **Concerns on governance frame work**
 - The Gadgil panel had recommended a national-level authority, with counterparts at the state and district levels.
 - The Kasturirangan panel argued for strengthening the existing framework of environmental clearances and setting up of a state-of-the-art monitoring agency.

Gadgil report:

1. The Gadgil report had designated the entire hill range as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA). It had classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into three Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs).
2. The panel recommended that “no new dams based on large-scale storage be permitted in the Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1”.
3. It suggested that development activity needs to be decided through a participatory process involving the gram sabhas in these zones.
4. The successive state governments opposed it stating that most of its suggestions were impractical.

Natural disasters

1. About 40% of Western Ghat ranges lie in Kerala, which makes the State particularly vulnerable to the ecological changes in the mountain chain. Environmentalists argue that the flash floods and landslips point to the fragile ecosystem of the Ghats and call for urgent action.
2. Take the case of the October landslips in Kerala. Kootickal village in Kottayam, which was among the four local bodies in the State that were removed by the State government in 2015 from the list of 123 ESAs witnessed back-to-back landslides.
3. The increasing extreme climate events have resulted in large-scale disasters and destabilised the already vulnerable districts along the Western Ghats.
4. The studies by the Geological Survey of India in the landslide vulnerable areas in the hilly districts of Kerala had found faulty cultivation patterns and defective maintenance of drainage systems.



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5. Geoscientists have advocated the need for exempting areas of very high susceptibility in the Western Ghats from any types of constructions while urging the government and the local communities to increase the vegetative cover as a first defence against the landslide vulnerability.

Is genetically modified rice grown in India?

The story so far:

1. A French manufacturer of rice flour claimed it had found unauthorised genetically modified rice in a consignment of 500 tonnes of broken rice imported from India this June.
2. Since the European Union does not permit any use of GM rice, manufacturers of confectionery items and baked goods which had used the rice flour were then forced to carry out a mass recall of products.
3. After a complaint letter from the farm and environmental groups earlier this week, Indian authorities said they were investigating the allegations, but added that any contamination was unlikely as India does not allow commercial cultivation of GM rice either.

What is GM rice?

1. GM foods are derived from plants whose genes are artificially modified, usually by inserting genetic material from another organism, in order to give it a new property, such as increased yield, tolerance to a herbicide, resistance to disease or drought, or to improve its nutritional value.
2. Probably the best-known variety of GM rice is golden rice, which involves the insertion of genes from a plant — both daffodils and maize have been used — and a soil bacterium to create a grain that is enriched with Vitamin A.
3. India has approved the commercial cultivation of only one GM crop, Bt cotton. No GM food crop has ever been approved for commercial cultivation.
4. However, confined field trials have been allowed for at least 20 GM crops. That includes varieties of GM rice which would have improved resistance to insects and diseases, as well as hybrid seed production and nutritional enhancements such as golden rice.

What are the implications for Indian farmers?

1. India is the world's top rice exporter, earning ₹65,000 crores last year by selling 18 million tonnes of grain, about a quarter of which is premium basmati.



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2. For Indian farmers, the nightmare scenario could be what happened in the U.S. in 2006, when trace amounts of a GM rice variety being tested by Bayer were found in shipments ready for exports.

3. Trading partners such as Japan, Russia and the EU suspended rice imports from the U.S., hitting farmers hard and forcing Bayer to pay \$750 million in damages.

4. Under pressure from the rice export lobby at the time, India drafted policies to ban GM rice trials in the basmati belt.


Rice's share in India's exports

About 500 tonnes of broken rice imported from India were claimed to be genetically modified (GM) by a French manufacturer. This has drawn sharp reactions from the European countries as the European Union (EU) does not permit GM rice. An American company recalled four of its product lines fearing GM contamination. Data show that rice exports form the fifth-highest share in terms of India's total exports. India is also the biggest exporter of rice globally, forming over 30% of the world's exports. However, less than 5% of the rice exported from India is destined for the European countries. But for many European countries, India is their primary source of rice imports. By Sumant Sen, Jasmin Nihalani and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

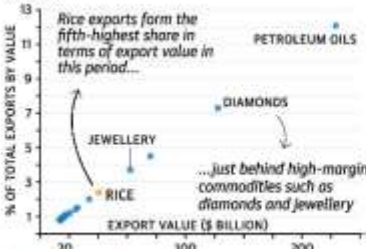
1 Between FY17 and FY22, India exported \$40.4 billion worth of rice

2 Over 90% of India's rice exports goes to Asian and African countries

3 India forms over 10% of the total rice imports of at least 9 European countries



1. SHARE OF RICE | The chart depicts the value of various commodities exported by India between FY17 and FY22 in the horizontal axis. In the vertical axis, % of each commodity in India's overall export value is depicted



Rice exports form the fifth-highest share in terms of export value in this period...
...Just behind high-margin commodities such as diamonds and jewellery

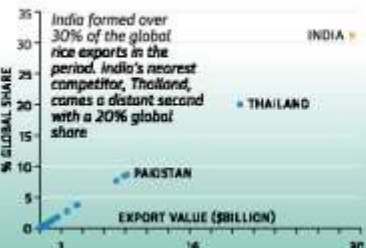
3. EUROPE'S SHARE | The tree map depicts the countries to which India exports rice. The bigger the box, the higher the export value. Europe forms a relatively smaller share of the total export value. A very high share goes to Asian and African countries

Over 64% of India's rice exports goes to Asian nations Over 25% goes to African nations

| Region | Country | Share (%) |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| ASIA | IRAN | 13.7% |
| | S.A.RABIA | 12.3% |
| | IRAQ | 6.7% |
| | UAE | 6.7% |
| AFRICA | BEEN | 4.2% |
| EUROPE | UK | 1.7% |
| | EUROPE | 3.4% |
| N. AMERICA | N. AMERICA | 4.75% |

About 4.75% of India's rice exports goes to European nations. About 1.7% goes to the United Kingdom. About 3.4% goes to North American countries

2. INDIA'S SHARE | The chart depicts the total export value of rice in \$ billion of various countries between FY17 and FY20 in the horizontal axis. In the vertical axis, the % share of each nation in the overall rice exports is depicted



India formed over 30% of the global rice exports in the period. India's nearest competitor, Thailand, comes a distant second with a 20% global share.

4. PRIMARY SOURCE | The tree map depicts India's share in a country's total rice imports in 2020. For instance, India forms 25% and 23% of the total rice imported by the U.K. and the Netherlands respectively, their chief source for the product. Many European countries depend on India for a significant share of their rice imports

| Region | Country | Share (%) |
|---------|-------------|-----------|
| ASIA | KUWAIT | 31% |
| | QATAR | 34% |
| AFRICA | MAURITIUS | 34% |
| EUROPE | U.K. | 25% |
| | NETHERLANDS | 23% |
| OCEANIA | OCEANIA | 10% |
| | N. AMERICA | 10% |

In at least nine European countries – the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Netherlands, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Iceland, Italy, Austria and Switzerland, India formed 10% of the total rice imports in 2020. About 12% of EU's rice imports were from India

SOURCE: COMMERCE MINISTRY DATA BANK, UN COMTRADE DATA

What lies ahead?

In the face of new advances in rice research, scientists and farmers say the regulatory regime needs to be strengthened for the sake of domestic and export consumers.



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|-----------------------|--|
| MAINS DAWP | <p><i>Q. Recurrent natural disasters in Western Ghats suggest a fresh relook at the Gadgil committee report. Discuss.</i></p> |
| MCQ | <p><i>Q. Arrange the following exports from India in terms of their percentage of overall export value from India</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Petroleum</i><i>2. Diamonds</i><i>3. Rice</i> <p><i>Select the correct answer from the codes given below</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>a. 1, 2, 3</i><i>b. 1, 3, 2</i><i>c. 2, 1, 3</i><i>d. 2, 3, 2</i> |