



## Reforming the fertilizer sector

In order to address the multiple goals of fertilizer policy, India needs to work on four key areas

1. Since 1991, when economic reforms began in India, several attempts have been made to reform the fertilizer sector to keep a check on the rising fertilizer subsidy bill,
2. promote the efficient use of fertilizers,
3. achieve balanced use of N, P and K (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium),
4. and reduce water and air pollution caused by fertilizers like urea.

### Lingering issues:

1. Concerned with the adverse environmental impact of certain chemical fertilizers, some sections of society suggest the use of organic fertilizers and biofertilizers instead.
2. There is a growing demand to provide subsidies and other incentives for organic fertilizers and biofertilizers to match those provided for chemical fertilizers.
3. The government introduced the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) in 2010 to address the growing imbalance in fertilizer use in many States, which is skewed towards urea (N). However, only non-nitrogenous fertilizers (P and K) moved to NBS; urea was left out.
4. The international prices of fertilizers are volatile and almost directly proportional to energy prices. Besides, cartels of major global producers have a strong influence on prices.
5. In order to minimise the impact of rising prices on farmers, the bulk of the price rise is absorbed by the government through enhanced fertilizer subsidy. This is likely to create serious fiscal challenges.

### Terms of trade:

1. In the last 20 years, the price of urea has increased to ₹5.36 per kg in 2021 from ₹4.60 in 2001. In the same period, the Minimum Support Price of paddy increased by 280% and that of wheat by 230%.
2. In other words, in 2001, 37.7 kg of wheat was required to buy one bag of urea (50 kg), which has now reduced to 13.3 kg. At current prices, farmers pay about ₹268 per bag of urea and the Government of India pays an average subsidy of about ₹930 per bag.

23.11.2021

Tuesday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

- Thus, taxpayers bear 78% of the cost of urea and farmers pay only 22%. This is expected to increase and is not sustainable.

### The way forward

In order to address the multiple goals of fertilizer policy, we need to simultaneously work on four key policy areas.

- One, we need to be self-reliant and not depend on the import of fertilizers. In this way, we can escape the vagaries of high volatility in international prices.
- Two, we need to extend the NBS model to urea and allow for price rationalisation of urea compared to non-nitrogenous fertilizers and prices of crops.
- The present system of keeping the price of urea fixed and absorbing all the price increases in subsidy needs to be replaced by the distribution of price change over both prices as well as subsidy based on some rational formula.
- Three, we need to develop alternative sources of nutrition for plants to shift towards the use of non-chemical fertilizers as well as a demand for bringing parity in prices and subsidy given to chemical fertilizers with organic and biofertilizers.
- This also provides the scope to use large biomass of crop that goes waste and enhance the value of livestock by-products.
- We need to scale up and improve innovations to develop alternative fertilizers. Though compost contains low amounts of nitrogen, technologies are now available to enrich this.
- Finally, India should pay attention to improving fertilizer efficiency through need-based use rather than broadcasting fertilizer in the field. The recently developed Nano urea by IFFCO shows promising results in reducing the usage of urea. Such products need to be promoted expeditiously after testing.



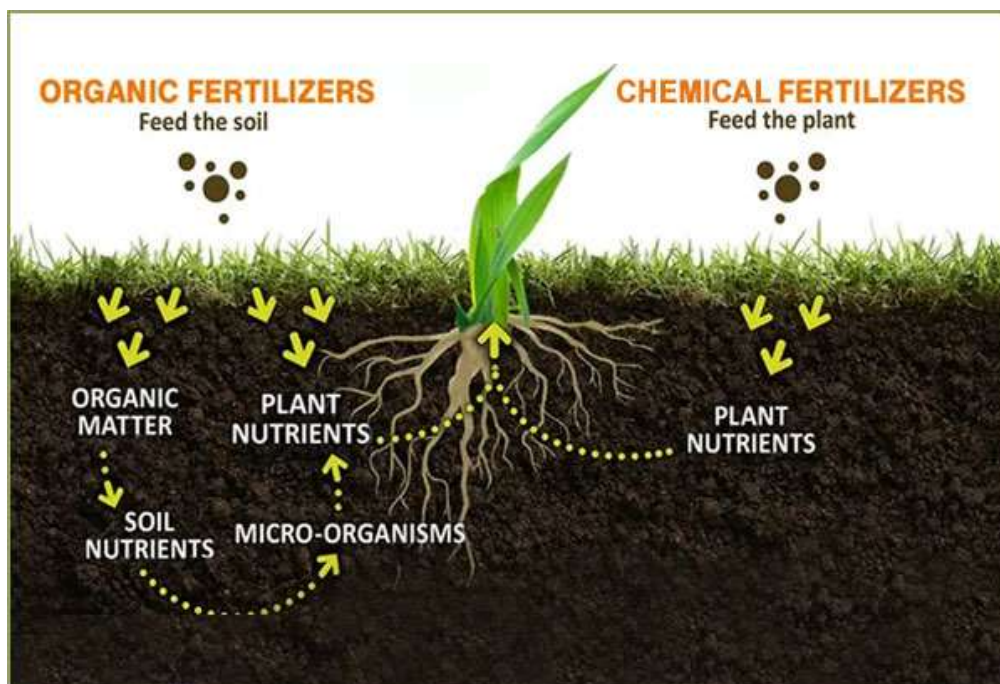
These changes will go a long way in enhancing the productivity of agriculture, mitigating climate change, providing an alternative to chemical fertilizers and balancing the fiscal impact of fertilizer subsidy on the Union Budgets in the years to come.

23.11.2021

Tuesday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>





## Advantage of biofertilizers

- ❑ Renewable source of nutrients
- ❑ Sustain soil health
- ❑ Supplement chemical fertilizers.
- ❑ Replace 25-30% chemical fertilizers
- ❑ Increase the grain yields by 10-40%.
- ❑ Decompose plant residues, and stabilize C:N ratio of soil
- ❑ Improve texture, structure and water holding capacity of soil
- ❑ No adverse effect on plant growth and soil fertility.

## Disadvantages

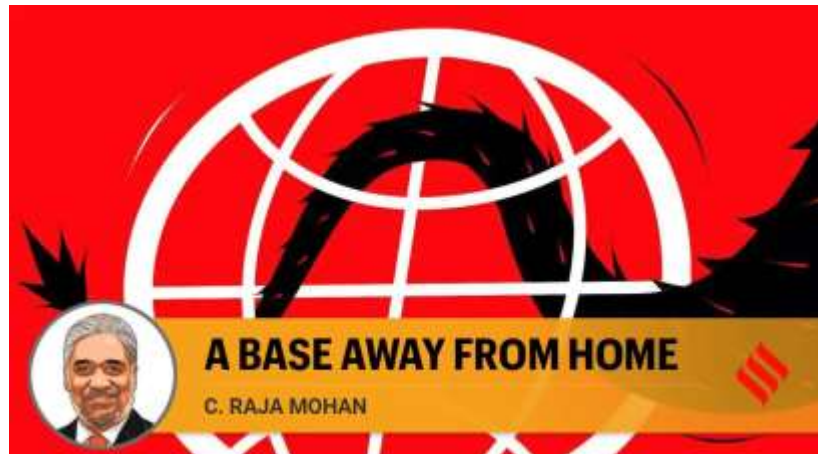
- ❑ Biofertilizers require special care for long-term storage because they are alive.
- ❑ must be used before their expiry date.
- ❑ If other microorganisms contaminate the carrier medium or if growers use the wrong strain, they are not as effective.
- ❑ Biofertilizers lose their effectiveness if the soil is too hot or dry.



## Why China is acquiring foreign military bases

It is trying to assert its primacy in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region while pushing out the US and India.

Reports that the United States has prevailed on the United Arab Emirates to stop China from secretly constructing a military facility at an Abu Dhabi port should not come as a surprise.



### Aggressive in Indian Ocean:

1. China's growing interest in acquiring foreign military bases has been reported for more than a decade. Beijing opened its first foreign military base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa in 2017. It is said to be building its second foreign military base at Ream, Cambodia.
2. As the world's second-largest economy, a great trading power with a rapidly growing navy, and a massive geopolitical ambition, China is bound to get, sooner than later, a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean that will profoundly alter India's security environment.
3. The recent US annual report on Chinese military power cites several countries that are being targeted by the People's Liberation Army for military bases.
4. While Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka are candidates from the Bay of Bengal, there are many places to the west of India including Namibia, Seychelles, Tanzania, and the UAE.
5. Pakistan, is of course, in a category of its own. With long-standing and deep political and military ties to China, Pakistan is likely to emerge as the most important vehicle for Chinese naval power projection in the Indian Ocean, with significant implications for India's military planning.

In the past, Communist China claimed that it was quite different from the West and had no interest in projecting power to distant seas or foreign military bases. China also actively campaigned against the foreign military presence in Asia. As a defensive power in the second half of the 20th century, China's



priority was to fend off external threats to its sovereignty and consolidate its communist revolution.

## Falling short

It has been more than three years since a draft Bill on personal data protection was crafted by the Justice Srikrishna Committee of experts and submitted to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in 2018.

**MINT QUICK READS**

### PRIVACY LAW IN THE MAKING

- ▶ Data Protection Authority of India (DPA), an independent regulatory body responsible for the **enforcement and effective implementation** of the law, will be established
- ▶ An appellate tribunal to be established or grant powers to an **existing appellate tribunal** to hear and dispose of any appeal against an order of the DPA
- ▶ The panel has identified **50 statutes and regulations**, which have potential overlap with the data protection framework
- ▶ The Aadhaar Act needs to be amended to **bolster data protection**, and the committee has suggested some amendments
- ▶ The law will cover processing of personal data by both **public and private entities**

The data protection law will be like a new shoe, tight in the beginning but comfortable eventually.

Justice B.N. Srikrishna

#### PUTTING USERS FIRST

**A Data Protection Authority of India** must be set up with the chief justice or a Supreme Court judge as its head. This body will protect "data principals" and enforce the data protection law

**Those processing data** must acquire informed consent, spell out the purpose of collection and retain personal data only as long as necessary

**Users** will have right to be forgotten, to know about how their personal data is processed, to make corrections or updates, and to receive details of their data

**Storage** of all critical personal data — a classification that government will determine — should be within the country. All other personal data must be stored as a copy in India

**Punishment** for violating the law can range from ₹5 crore or 2% of total worldwide turnover to ₹15 crore or 4% of the total worldwide turnover of the companies. For individuals, it can range from up to a 3-year or 5-year jail term, depending upon the sensitivity of the data

**Exemptions:**  
Privacy law will not apply in cases involving national security, police investigations and legal proceedings

*"Data privacy is a burning issue and there are three parts to the triangle: Citizens' rights have to be protected, the responsibilities of the states have to be defined, but data protection can't be at the cost of trade and industry"*  
Justice BN Srikrishna

## JPC endorses the Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB), 2019

1. Two years since a Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up to scrutinise another version — the Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB), 2019 — it was finally adopted by it recently.
2. Dissent notes submitted by some panel members from the Opposition point out, the draft falls short of the standards set by the Justice Srikrishna Committee to build a legal framework based on the landmark judgment, Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India, on privacy.

## Dilution of safeguards:

1. The key divergences from the Justice Srikrishna Committee's draft Bill are in the selection of the chairperson and members of the Data Protection Authority (DPA) which shall protect the interests of users and the leeway

23.11.2021

Tuesday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

provided to the Union government to exempt its agencies from the application of the Act.

2. While the 2018 draft Bill allowed for judicial oversight, the 2019 Bill relies entirely on members of the executive government in the selection process for the DPA.
3. In contrast to the 2018 Bill that allowed for exemptions to be granted to state institutions from acquiring informed consent from users or to process data in the case of matters relating only to the “security of the state” and also called for a law to provide for “parliamentary oversight and judicial approval of non-consensual access to personal data”.
4. The 2019 Bill adds “public order” as a reason to exempt an agency of the Government from the Act, besides only providing for those reasons to be recorded in writing.
5. Dissent note also points out the dangers of exemption on the grounds of “public order” as it is susceptible to misuse and not limited to “security of the state” which is recognised by other data regulations such as Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation as a viable reason for exemption.

### The Global Privacy Assembly

1. In October 2021, the Global Privacy Assembly came up with a clear resolution on principles for government access to personal data.
2. In its resolution, the Assembly asked for a set of principles on the legal basis, the need for clear and precise rules, proportionality and transparency, data subject rights, independent oversight, and effective remedies and redress to the individuals affected.

As the JPC’s adoption of the draft Bill and the dissent notes appended to it suggest, it has fallen short of standards protecting the privacy rights of individuals against blanket misuse by the state. It is now the task of Parliament to tighten the provisions further and bring them in conformance with the 2018 Bill.



## JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill

### Ringfencing data

Concluding its deliberations since 2019, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill adopted its report on Monday

#### Key recommendations

- Treat as publishers all social media platforms which do not act as intermediaries, and they be held accountable for the content they host
- Allow no social media platform to operate in India unless the parent company handling the technology sets up an office in India
- Develop an alternative indigenous financial system for cross-border payments
- Set up dedicated lab for certification of all digital devices
- In case of cross-border transfer of data, a mirror copy of sensitive and critical personal data be mandatorily brought to India



### 'No adequate safeguards'

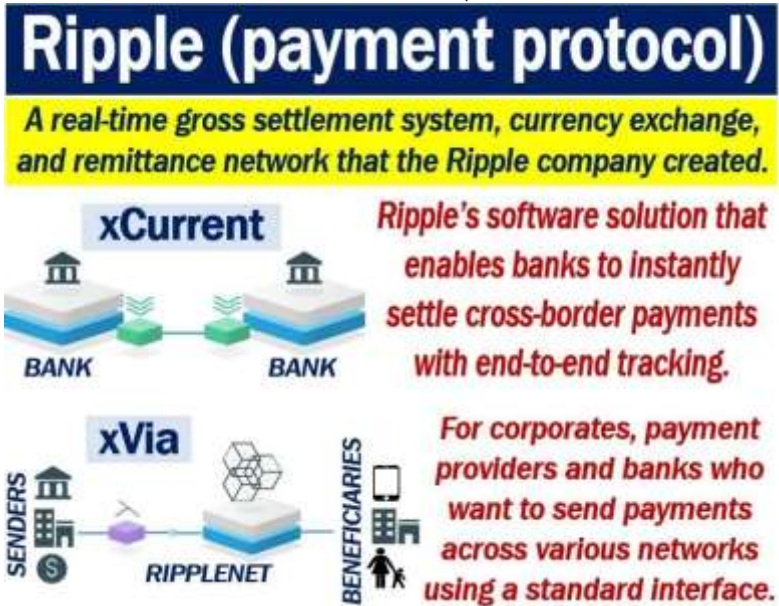
1. Exemption clause was one of the widely debated clauses in the panel meetings, where the members had argued that "public order" should be removed as a ground for exemption. They had also pressed for "judicial or parliamentary oversight" for granting such exemptions.
2. The final report that The Hindu has accessed did not accept any of these suggestions.
3. The report noted that this clause was for "certain legitimate purposes" and also said there was precedent in the form of the reasonable restrictions imposed upon the liberty of an individual, as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution and the Puttaswamy judgment.
4. In one of the longest dissent notes, Congress leader Manish Tiwari said the Bill created two parallel universes — one for the private sector where it would apply with full rigour and one for the Government where it was riddled with exemption, carve-outs and escape clauses.
5. The Bill did not provide adequate safeguards to protect the right to privacy and gave an overboard exemption to the Government. Clause 35 was open to misuse since it gave unqualified powers to the Government.





**Key recommendations:**

1. Among its key recommendations, the committee pitched for stricter regulations for social media platforms. It recommended that all social media platforms, which did not act as intermediaries, should be treated as publishers and be held accountable for the content they host and should be held responsible for the content from unverified accounts on their platforms.



2. It said no social media platform should be allowed to operate unless the parent company handling the technology sets up an office in India and that a statutory media regulatory authority, on the lines of the Press Council of India, may be set up for the regulation of the contents on all such platforms irrespective of the platform where their content is published.



3. Some of the other recommendations of the committee included the development of an alternative indigenous financial system for cross-border payments on the lines of Ripple (U.S.) and INSTEX (European Union).