

EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY - BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

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'GDP-centric view changing to human-centric one'

The *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas* model that has shown the way in India can also be a guiding principle for the welfare of the world; just like a new order emerged after the Second World War, a new order is also taking shape post-COVID, and the country's efforts to address global energy and debt concerns, as well as for greater inclusion of Global South, have been appreciated in G-20 and beyond. PM says

INTERVIEW

Narendra Modi

Press Trust of India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks on G-20, fiscal responsibility, renewable energy and the challenge of debt restructuring, which has become a problem for the Global South. Edited excerpts:

The G-20 Presidency has given India the opportunity to promote its vision for a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable world, and to raise its profile as a leader in the Indo-Pacific region. Please share your thoughts on the achievements of the Indian Presidency.

The genesis of the G-20 was at the end of the last century. The major economies of the world got together with a vision of a collective and coordinated response to economic crisis.

Its salience grew even more during the global economic crisis in the first decade of the 21st century. But when the pandemic struck, the world understood that in addition to the economic challenges, there were also other important and immediate challenges impacting humanity. By this time, the world was already taking note of India's human-centric model of development.

India's response to the pandemic through a clear and coordinated approach, direct assistance to the most vulnerable using technology, coming up with vaccines and running the world's largest vaccine drive, and sharing medicines and vaccines with nearly 150 countries – these were noted and well appreciated.

Many positive impacts are coming out of India's G-20 Presidency. The effort towards greater inclusion for the Global South, especially Africa in global affairs has gained momentum. India's G-20 Presidency has also sowed the seeds of confidence in

the countries of the so-called 'Third World'.

G-20 has emerged as the most influential bloc in the world, making up 85% of the global GDP. What do you see as the biggest challenge facing it as you hand over the Presidency to Brazil.

GDP-centric view of the world is now changing to a human-centric one. Like a new world order was seen after the Second World War, a new world order is taking shape post-COVID. The parameters of influence and impact are changing and this needs to be recognised. The *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas* model that has shown the way in India can also be a guiding principle for the welfare of the world. Irrespective of the size of the GDP, every voice matters. India has proposed making the Africa Union a permanent member of G-20.

You launched the Solar Alliance a few years ago. Now you are proposing a bio-fuel alliance, which we believe you



will unveil at G-20. What is the objective and how will it help import-dependent countries such as India on energy security.

We are perhaps the first among the G-20 countries to have achieved our climate targets nine years ahead of the scheduled date. We have moved from being just a member of global efforts to playing a leading role in many initiatives. Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure are bringing countries together for the planet. Now, the biofuel alliance is another step in this direction. Such

alliances are aimed at creating options for developing countries. Biofuels are also important from the perspective of a circular economy.

Even your critics have admired the way you made G-20 a buzzword during India's Presidency and planned a year-long calendar of high-profile meetings across the country. How did you envisage this concept of spreading G-20 meetings across India?

Unfortunately, in the past, there used to be an attitude of getting things done right here in Delhi, in and

around Vigyan Bhavan. By the time our G-20 Presidency term ends, over 220 meetings would have happened across 60 cities in all 28 States and 8 Union Territories. Over 1 lakh participants from around 125 nationalities would have witnessed the skills of Indians.

Some of our neighbours raised objections to the venues of some of the meetings. What message did we send by hosting foreign leaders at G-20 in Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh, notwithstanding the objections raised by Pakistan and China.

Ours is such a vast, beautiful and diverse nation. When G-20 meetings are happening, isn't it natural that meetings will be held in every part of our country?

Are we expecting any consensus at the G-20 summit on the challenge of debt restructuring, which has become a problem for the Global South. Is

India helping countries trapped in the Chinese debt trap such as Sri Lanka, Sudan etc. How much increase in allocation of assistance has India made to these countries?

The debt crisis is indeed a matter of great concern for the world, especially developing countries. First, countries that are going through debt crisis or have gone through it, have begun to give greater importance to financial discipline. You are well aware that I have urged our State governments to be conscious about financial discipline as well.

Whether it is in the national conference of Chief Secretaries or any such platform, I have said that financially irresponsible policies and populism may give political results in the short term but will extract a great social and economic price in the long term. Those who suffer the consequences the most are often the poorest and the most vulnerable. Our G-20 Presidency has placed a significant emphasis on ad-

ressing the global challenges posed by debt vulnerabilities, especially for nations in the Global South.

We have also been greatly sensitive to the needs of our valued neighbour, Sri Lanka, during their tough times.

Your message to President Putin in Samarkand that this is not an era of war has won worldwide endorsement. Given the differences between G-7 and the China-Russia combine, it will be difficult for the bloc to adopt this message. In that context what can India do to help forge a consensus?

There are many different conflicts across various regions. All of them need to be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. This is our stand on any conflict anywhere. Whether as G-20 President or not, we will support every effort to ensure peace across the world. (Full interview on bit.ly/pmmodiinterview)

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Fiscally imprudent policies, populism affect the poor: PM

In an interview ahead of G-20 Summit, Modi says he has warned the States against such plans; he dismisses the reactions against holding meetings in Kashmir, Arunachal in the run-up to summit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cautioned against irresponsible financial policies and populism, saying that these measures may give political results in the short term, but will extract "a great social and economic price in the long term" with the most consequences for the "poorest and most vulnerable".

In an interview to the news agency Press Trust of India, released on Sunday, Mr. Modi said that India had been sensitive to neighbours such as Sri Lanka which were going through such a crisis, and mentioned the domestic situation.

"I have urged our State governments to be conscious about financial dis-



Making a point: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an interview in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

cipline as well. Whether it is at the national conference of Chief Secretaries or any such platform, I have said that financially irresponsible policies and populism may give political results in the short term but will extract a great social and economic price in the long term."

In a strong statement on reaction from countries

such as Pakistan and China to meetings held in Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh in the run-up to the G-20 Summit in New Delhi, Mr. Modi said: "Such a question would be valid if we had refrained from conducting meetings in those venues. Ours is such a vast, beautiful and diverse nation. When G-20 meetings are happening, isn't it nat-

ural that meetings will be held in every part of our country?"

He said that when it came to energy security the world was veering towards India's position that there was no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. "Our principle is simple – diversity is our best bet, whether in society or in terms of our energy mix... Given the different pathways countries are on, our pathways for energy transition will be different. Despite having 17% of the world's population, India's historic share in cumulative emissions has been less than 5%. Yet, we have left no stone unturned in meeting our climate goals," he said.

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Populism will hit the poor hard, says Modi

He said that India would be a developed country by the end of the *Amrit Kaal* period in 2047.

"India is again on the rise. The speed with which we jumped five spots, from the 10th largest economy to the 5th largest in less than a decade has conveyed the fact that India means business! We have democracy, demography and diversity with us. As I said, now a fourth D is getting added to it – development."

"Indians who are living in this era have a great chance to lay a foundation for growth that will be remembered for the next 1,000 years," he said.

'Inclusive, innovative'

"This is why you see an unprecedented rise across multiple domains. By 2047, I am sure that our country will be among the developed countries. Our economy will be even more inclusive and innovative. Our poor people will comprehensively win the battle against poverty. Health, education, and social sector outcomes will be among the best in the world. Corruption, casteism, and communalism will have no place in our national life. The quality of life of our people will be at par with the best countries of the world. Most importantly, we will achieve all of this while caring for both nature and culture."

He said debt restructuring was an important concern highlighted under India's Presidency of the G-20. "Our G-20 Presidency has placed a significant emphasis on addressing the global challenges posed by debt vulnerabilities, especially for nations in the Global South," he said.

"G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors have acknowledged the good progress in debt treatment of Common Framework countries and beyond the Common Framework too. We have also been greatly sensitive to the needs of our valued neighbour, Sri Lanka, during their tough times," he said.

"To accelerate global debt restructuring efforts, the Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable, a joint initiative of the IMF, World Bank, and the G-20 Presidency, was launched earlier this year. This will strengthen communication among key stakeholders and facilitate effective debt treatment," he added.

Responding to a question on the United Nations and its responsiveness to the new developing world order, Mr. Modi emphasised that "institutions can retain relevance only when they change with the times".

"A mid-20th century approach cannot serve the world in the 21st century. So, our international institutions need to recognise changing realities, expand their decision-making forums, relook at their priorities and ensure representation of voices that matter."

"When this is not done on time, then smaller or regional forums begin to attain more importance. The G-20 is certainly one of the institutions that is being looked at with hope by many countries. Because the world is looking for actions and outcomes, no matter where they come from," he said. "As a diverse nation, the Mother of Democracy, the home to one of the world's largest populations of youth, and the growth engine of the world, India has a lot to contribute to the shaping of the future of the world," he added.

Reflecting on the current scenario with regard to price volatility the world over, Prime Minister Modi said that inflation was a key issue being faced by the world.

"Inflation is a key issue that the world faces. Our G-20 Presidency engaged the G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. It was recognised that timely and clear communication of policy stances by Central Banks is crucial. This can ensure that policies taken by each country to combat inflation do not lead to negative repercussions in other countries. Significant emphasis was also placed on enabling countries to share policy experiences on how they tackle the challenges associated with food and energy price volatility especially since food and energy markets are closely interconnected," he said.

Aditya-L1 'healthy', in new orbit: ISRO

ISTRAC in Bengaluru injected the mission into an earth-bound orbit;
it will stay on such orbits for 16 days; next move planned for tomorrow

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday performed the first earth-bound firing to raise the orbit of Aditya-L1, India's first solar observatory mission, which was launched on Saturday.

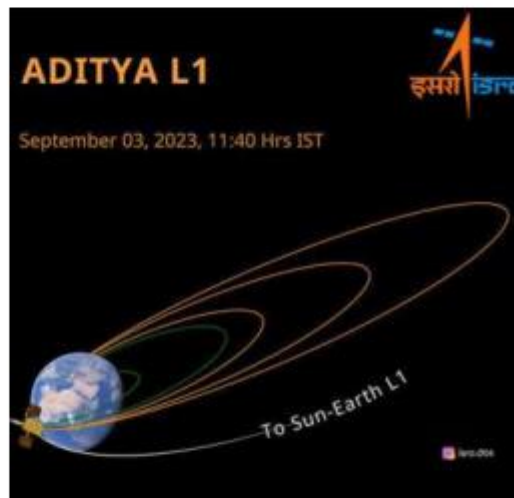
The ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network Work (ISTRAC) in Bengaluru performed the manoeuvre.

The satellite was "healthy" and operating nominally, the ISRO posted on the X platform (formerly Twitter). The new orbit attained was 245 km x 22,459 km.

The next manoeuvre was scheduled for around 3 a.m. on Tuesday.

After the successful launch, the ISRO said that Aditya-L1 started generating power as the solar panels were deployed.

Aditya-L1 will stay on earth-bound orbits for 16 days, during which it will undergo five manoeuvres



New mysteries: Aditya-L1 will stay on earth-bound orbits for 16 days, during which it will undergo five manoeuvres. ISRO

to gain the necessary velocity for its journey.

Subsequently, Aditya-L1 undergoes a Trans-Lagrangian insertion manoeuvre, marking the beginning of its 110-day trajectory to the destination around the L1 Lagrange point.

Upon arrival at the L1 point, another manoeuvre

binds Aditya-L1 to an orbit around the L1, a balanced gravitational location between the earth and the sun.

The satellite spends its whole mission life orbiting around L1 in an irregularly shaped orbit in a plane roughly perpendicular to the line joining the earth and the sun.

Centre's DIKSHA e-education platform to offer AI help

Maitri Porecha

NEW DELHI

The National e-Governance Division (NeGD) of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is set to integrate Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL) into its existing Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform. The PAL's software-based approach is expected to allow each student to have an individualised learning experience over the course of the curriculum based on their unique needs and abilities.

DIKSHA, which comes under the Education Ministry, provides e-content for schools by an online portal and a mobile application. It has embedded assistive technologies for learners with visual or hearing challenges. However, DIKSHA is a static content repository.

DIKSHA features digitised National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks used by national and State Boards. Apart from this, DIKSHA hosts 2.43 lakh contributions by

11,624 academics by way of teaching videos, explainers, and practice questions. Currently, all these contributions are scattered across the platform.

The NCERT has sought the MeitY's expertise in facilitating the PAL's integration into DIKSHA. In an example of how it works, if a student of Class 9 is learning the Pythagoras theorem and makes a calculation mistake, the AI learning system flags it and loops the student back to a basic video of how to make the calculation.

In some States, private players are already administering the PAL, which works on AI or Artificial Intelligence, but budget constraints have been an obstacle.

Massive exercise

Building the PAL is a massive exercise. Content from across subjects will have to be categorised and different chunks will have to be tagged. New content may also have to be created.

"Tagging of content is important to create learning loops, where, say, a student faces difficulty at a certain tag, then support



The PAL's software-based approach is expected to allow each student to have an individualised learning experience. ISTOCKPHOTO

ive material offering an explanation of the tagged concept can be provided," a senior MeitY official told *The Hindu*.

The official added that school students found chemistry, mathematics, and physics for Classes 9 to 12 to be the most difficult subjects, and the intention is to start building the PAL for these classes to begin with.

With nearly 35 lakh students dropping out in Class 10 and ineligible to qualify for Class 11 every year, the Education Ministry wants

to adopt digital learning with a focus on improving learning outcomes and school retention.

Experiments in States

Andhra Pradesh has signed contracts with three privately owned edtech companies – Reliance Jio Platform's start-up Embibe, ConveGenius, and Mindspark – for training teachers to use IT applications in the classroom, provide analytics for remedial learning, and help students improve their conceptual understanding.

"We are currently implementing the PAL in 20 schools of Prakasam district for Classes 6 to 9," a senior Jio Platforms official said.

"Building the core tech platform may cost close to ₹2.3 crore, and then developing and tagging of content will cost another ₹20 crore. The streaming costs incurred for data stored in cloud-based servers is recurring and depends on the usage. If, say, 40 crore school-going students in India stream data for two hours in a day or a week, the costs will run into several hundred crores," the MeitY official added.

In Assam, for instance, the PAL was adapted in 200 schools from Classes 6 to 10. Each school had nearly 200 students, and Embibe provided 10 devices per school. "After implementing the project for two years, Assam discontinued it, citing lack of funds," the Jio official said.

Similarly, in Haryana, after floating the tender, the State government said Embibe's quote for streaming content was too high, and the process of adopting PAL came to a standstill.

"For implementing the PAL project in the whole State, we had estimated a yearly streaming cost of ₹27 crore, considering on an average one child in a week sees four videos of 15 minutes on the platform. This cost was felt to be very high by the government," the Jio official said.

Poll-bound State Madhya Pradesh, too, is mulling over introducing PAL for students from Classes 6 to 10 on its flagship State education portal, the CM-RISE. Apart from PAL, MeitY is also considering the introduction of voice commands in DIKSHA 2.0 as a part of AI-enabled learning. "Just like ChatGPT, the student can access summaries of chapters by giving voice commands and so on," the MeitY official said.

"The process of making PAL is time consuming and it will still take three to four years to develop the tech and roll it out for use," the source added. The NeGD will float an Expression of Interest to assess the market for edtech companies that can help launch PAL and possibly integrate it with DIKSHA 2.0.

Status of the Right to Information Act

What have been the various amendments to the RTI Act, 2005? How have payment methods and poorly staffed information commissions undermined the Act? Has the process of applying for an RTI online been simplified? Is the public satisfied with the functioning of the RTI process?

EXPLAINER

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

For 13 years, the Right to Information Act, 2005, helped citizens obtain information and data from Central and State institutions that are not readily available in the public domain. The RTI Act allows any citizen to make requests for access to data, documents, and other information in the government's possession. India's RTI Act has been commonly cited as among the most comprehensive public records access legislations in the world. In recent years, though, activists worry that the system is being made less and less effective, shutting off a crucial means to hold public officials accountable.

Has the RTI Act been amended?

Apart from allowing certain information to be kept secret for national security and sovereignty reasons, the RTI Act makes one exemption – it prohibits the personal data disclosure of citizens by the government, unless there is an overriding public interest in doing so.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, amended this qualified prohibition into a total prohibition. However, the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information (NCPRI) argued that it would make 'social audits' in ration distribution impossible to carry out. In social audits, a community member gets a list of ration beneficiaries through an RTI request, and individually verifies that the beneficiaries got what they appear to have received on paper. There are also concerns that powerful public officials would evade accountability by invoking this blanket ban on disclosing personal information.

Past amendments to the RTI Act have also raised concerns. The Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019 gave the Union Government unilateral power in deciding how long information



ISTOCKPHOTO

commissioners, who hear appeals against unsatisfactory or absent RTI responses, can serve, and what their salaries are.

How else is the RTI Act undermined?

The RTI Act itself isn't the only way activists see the transparency it has ushered in undermined. The RTI Act's implementation is dependent on subordinate rules made by the Union Government and State Governments. For instance, the simple matter of what payment method a public authority can accept is left to the States to decide. Some States like Tamil Nadu do not accept Indian Postal Orders (IPOs), which are cheques that can be bought at post offices and attached to an application as payment. IPOs are generally the easiest payment method to obtain. Other payment methods are less convenient or

otherwise burdensome – court fee stamps can only be purchased at a courthouse, and a demand draft for ₹10 may require a processing fee that is over twice that amount.

Tardy appointments to information commissions – the Central Information Commission (CIC) for the Union Government, and various State Information Commissions (SICs) – have also undermined confidence in the RTI framework, as appeals can take months or even years to be heard, if ever. For example, the Jharkhand SIC has had no commissioners to hear appeals since May 2020, essentially suspending the ability to appeal ineffective administration of the RTI Act in the State.

What about online RTIs?

Allowing RTI applications to be filed

online largely removes some barriers – instead of obtaining uncommon financial instruments, citizens can simply file a request online and pay with UPI.

However, many States do not have an online RTI portal, and even if they do, it is common for many State Government bodies to simply not be registered on the portal.

The Union Government's RTI portal – launched in 2013 – is also past its prime. While many public authorities under the Union Government are on the portal, filing applications on it has become harder. Having an account on the RTIonline portal allowed citizens to have their personal particulars filled in on each application by default. Now, however, the facility to create an account has disappeared, and the site forces all users to enter their particulars afresh each time they file an application. Further, past data of applicants has been stuttering in and out of the portal. In August, data of applications filed by users before 2022 disappeared without a trace, and after *The Hindu* reported this, the Government restored the applications.

What next?

Beyond the evident structural problems that institutions and websites for RTI pose, dissatisfaction is growing at the most basic level. More and more first appeals are being filed, Venkatesh Nayak, Director of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative NGO, said in an analysis of the newest report by the CIC. This indicates, according to Mr. Nayak, that people are increasingly dissatisfied with the information they are receiving from public officials. While activists have long warned of the weakening of the RTI Act, most of the damage they have seen is not merely from changes in the text of the law, but from the ways that various institutions across different Government apparatuses discharge their duties, in the narrowing of avenues to conveniently file requests and obtain information after doing so, and having appeals fall on understaffed appellate bodies.

THE GIST

The RTI Act's implementation is dependent on subordinate rules made by the Union Government and State Governments. For instance, the simple matter of what payment method a public authority can accept is left to the States to decide.

Allowing RTI applications to be filed online largely removes some barriers – instead of obtaining uncommon financial instruments, citizens can simply file a request online and pay with UPI. However, many States do not have an online RTI portal.

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What is the debate around 'one nation, one election'?

How does having simultaneous elections across Lok Sabha and State assemblies counter federalism?

Kartik Singh

The story so far:

In September 1, the Central government set up a panel headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of the 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plan.

What is the ONOE plan?

The idea of ONOE centres around the concept of synchronising the timing of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across all States to reduce the frequency of polls throughout the country.

After the enforcement of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, the first-ever general elections to Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies were conducted simultaneously in 1951-1952. The practice continued into the three subsequent Lok Sabha elections until 1967, after which it was disrupted. The cycle was first broken in 1959 after the Centre invoked Article 356 (failure of constitutional machinery)

of the Constitution to dismiss the then-Kerala government. Subsequently, due to defections and counter-defections between parties, several Legislative Assemblies dissolved post-1960, which eventually led to separate polls for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Currently, the assembly polls in the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha are held together with the Lok Sabha elections.

What do reports say about ONOE?

In August 2018, the Law Commission of India (LCI), chaired by Justice B. S. Chauhan, released a draft report on simultaneous elections, wherein the constitutional and legal questions related to the issue were analysed. Notably, the Commission submitted that simultaneous elections are not feasible within the existing framework of the Constitution. It said that the Constitution, the Representation of the People's Act 1951 and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies would require

appropriate amendments to conduct simultaneous polls. The commission also recommended it receive ratification from at least 50% of the States. However, with respect to the advantages of holding simultaneous polls, the commission said that ONOE will lead to the saving of public money, reducing the strain on the administrative setup and security forces, timely implementation of government policies, and administrative focus on development activities rather than electioneering.

Way back in 1999, the LCI headed by Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy also advocated for simultaneous elections.

What are the concerns?

The foremost concern is with regard to its feasibility. Article 83(2) and 172 of the Constitution stipulates that the tenure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies respectively will last for five years unless dissolved earlier and there can be circumstances, as in Article 356, wherein assemblies can be dissolved earlier.

Therefore, the ONOE plan raises serious questions – what would happen if the Central or State government collapses mid-tenure? Would elections be held again in every State or will the President's rule be imposed? Amending the Constitution for such a significant change would not only necessitate extensive consideration of various situations and provisions but would also set a concerning precedent for more constitutional amendments.

Second, the idea of ONOE does not square with the concept of 'federalism' as it is established on the notion that the entire nation is "one" contradicting the content of Article 1 which envisages India as a "Union of States". Third, the present form of recurrent elections can be seen as beneficial in a democracy as it allows voters to have their voices heard more frequently. As the underlying issues of national and State polls are different, the present framework prevents the blending of issues, ensuring greater accountability.

The Central government has also highlighted the substantial costs associated with frequent elections. However, this notion is misleading. In an article in *The Hindu*, the author contended whether the Election Commission's expenditure of ₹8,000 crore over five years, amounting to ₹1,500 crore annually, or ₹27 per voter per year, can be considered a 'massive' expense for maintaining the pride of being the world's largest electoral democracy.

The writer reads law at RGNUL, Punjab