

## Mains Master

### The dispute on India's debt burden

#### Context

This article primarily discusses the recent observations made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding India's economic situation, focusing on two main points: concerns about the sustainability of India's debts and the reclassification of India's exchange rate regime. It delves into the IMF's projections about India's debt reaching 100% of GDP by 2028 under adverse conditions, the need for financing to meet climate change goals, and the impact of global debt trends on developing countries like India. Additionally, it covers challenges India faces in managing debt, stagnant credit ratings despite economic growth, current fiscal concerns, and the balancing act needed between short-term challenges and long-term economic sustainability.

#### IMF Observations:

- **Debt Sustainability Concerns:**
  - IMF forecasts India's general government debt might reach 100% of GDP by fiscal 2028 under adverse scenarios.
  - Emphasizes the need for financing to meet climate change goals and enhance resilience against natural disasters.
- **Exchange Rate Regime Reclassification:**
  - India's exchange rate regime labeled as a "stabilised arrangement" instead of "floating" due to the rupee's narrow band influenced by Central Bank interventions.

#### Impact of Debt and Global Trends:

- **Debt's Dual Role:**
  - Acknowledges government borrowing's role in development but highlights how excessive debt hinders progress due to limited financing, increased costs, and sluggish growth.
- **Global Debt Trends:**
  - Global public debt surged to over \$92 trillion in 2022, with developing nations constituting nearly 30%, attributed to the pandemic, cost-of-living crisis, and climate change.
- **Debt Disparity:**
  - Developing nations face higher borrowing costs compared to developed ones, impacting their ability to allocate resources to crucial sectors like education and healthcare.

#### India's Challenges and Ratings:

- **Debt Management and Credit Ratings:**
  - India grapples with stagnant credit ratings despite being a fast-growing economy, attributed to weak fiscal performance, high debt, and low per capita income.
- **Debt-to-GDP Ratio and Fiscal Responsibility:**
  - India's debt-to-GDP ratio surpassed targets set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, partly due to pandemic disruptions.

#### Current Fiscal Concerns:

- **Fiscal Slippage and Expenditure:**
  - Despite robust tax collections, the possibility of fiscal slippage in FY24 looms due to increased spending on subsidies and employment guarantee schemes.
- **Subsidy Spending and Elections:**
  - Elevated subsidies raise questions about employment growth and rural livelihoods, particularly with impending elections.

#### Immediate Challenges and Long-term Outlook:

- **IMF Projections vs Short-term Concerns:**
  - While IMF projections outline medium-term challenges, the immediate focus remains on adhering to a fiscal correction path, especially in an election year, to avoid worst-case scenarios.
- **Strategic Management:**
  - Addressing short-term challenges while managing debt and fiscal policies strategically crucial for India's sustained economic growth.

### Understanding the peace pact with ULFA

#### Formation of ULFA:

- **Background:** The ULFA originated from the Assam Agitation (1979-1985) against "illegal immigrants" from Bangladesh, founded on April 7, 1979, aiming to establish a sovereign Assam via armed means by Arabinda Rajkhowa, Anup Chetia, and Paresh Baruah.

#### Peace Process Timeline:

- **Early Years:** After a decade of recruitment and training, the ULFA began abductions and executions, facing a government ban during Operation Bajrang (1990) and the declaration of Assam as a disturbed area.
- **SULFA Formation and External Support:** Subsequent to the arrests of ULFA members, a group surrendered (SULFA) engaging in talks, allegedly used for targeted killings. The ULFA received support from foreign terror groups and intelligence agencies.
- **Fluctuating Peace Efforts:** ULFA faced expulsions from Bangladesh and Bhutan due to military offensives in 2003 and 2009. Despite forming peace groups and a ceasefire, the organization resumed hostilities.

## ULFA-Centre-Assam Government Peace Accord:

- **Key Points of Accord:** The peace accord entails ULFA renouncing violence, participating in democratic processes, investing ₹1.5 lakh crore in Assam's development, addressing political demands, and seeking exemptions from certain sections of the Citizenship Act.

### Challenges Ahead:

- **Remaining Extremism:** Although the Chief Minister claims a reduction in extremism, around 200 fighters of Baruah's ULFA (I) group in Myanmar's Sagaing Division persist.
- **Baruah's Opposition:** Baruah opposes discussions without addressing Assam's sovereignty, while the government asserts no desire for secession, complicating negotiations.
- **Efforts for Negotiations:** Despite differences, continuous efforts persist to persuade Baruah for peace talks.

## Why is upskilling necessary for the rural youth?

### Context

The article focuses on the significance of addressing the needs of rural youth in India amidst urbanization. It highlights the importance of providing vocational training and tailored education to retain rural youth, prevent migration to urban areas, and equip them with skills essential for employment within their villages. It discusses the dominance of farming as the primary income source, challenges in the current vocational education landscape, and ongoing initiatives aiming to uplift rural education and skills development.

### Main Source of Rural Income:

- **Farming Dominance:** Agriculture remains the primary income source for rural areas, with children often contributing to family incomes through farm work.
- **Shift in Occupations:** However, there's a significant trend of farmers leaving agriculture for non-farming jobs, creating an agrarian crisis and signaling the need for alternative employment opportunities.

### Controlling Migration:

- **Vocational Training:** To prevent rural youth from migrating to urban areas for employment, there's a call for providing vocational training within rural settings.
- **Local Skill Development:** Initiatives like 'Skills On Wheel' need replication to impart relevant skills to rural students, aligning with their aspirations within their village vicinity.

### Current Vocational Education Landscape:

- **ITIs and Placement Challenges:** Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) exist but lack substantial placement opportunities for rural populations, resulting in limited focus on skill development in rural education.
- **Youth and Vocational Training:** A significant portion of rural youth hasn't received vocational training, hindering their ability to thrive in rural settings.

## Improving Rural Education:

- **Skills-Infused Education:** Rural education should integrate technical and life skills essential for empowering rural youth within the formal education system.
- **Learning from Other Countries:** Examples from countries like Mexico and Bhutan show the benefits of tele-schools and value-based curricula in remote areas, improving attitudes and aspirations.

### Initiatives and Opportunities:

- **Organizational Efforts:** Organizations like NIIT Foundation and Pratham Institute are providing upskilling opportunities for rural children.
- **Hybrid Skill Programs:** Collaborative programs with UNICEF and self-learning platforms offer industry-specific and life skills training, catering to fields like healthcare, construction, and digital technologies.

## Prelims booster

### From the moon to Europa, six space missions to be excited for in 2024

#### Europa Clipper (NASA):

- Mission to explore Jupiter's moon, Europa, potentially housing a vast saltwater ocean beneath its icy surface.
- Aims to investigate Europa's potential as a habitat for extraterrestrial life.
- Launch window opens October 10, 2024, using a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket.

#### Artemis II Launch (NASA):

- Part of NASA's Artemis program aiming to return humans to the Moon, involving the first woman and person of color.
- A crewed mission to orbit the Moon, potentially launching in November 2024.

#### VIPER (NASA):

- A rover mission to the Moon's south pole to search for volatiles essential for future human lunar exploration.
- Scheduled launch in November 2024 after a delay for further testing.

#### Lunar Trailblazer and PRIME-1 Missions (NASA):

- Part of NASA's SIMPLEx program for low-cost planetary missions.
- Lunar Trailblazer orbits the Moon, mapping water molecules' locations, while PRIME-1 drills into the surface.
- Tentative launch dates in early to mid-2024, depending on primary payload readiness.





#### JAXA's Martian Moon eXploration (MMX) Mission:

- Mission by the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency to study Mars' moons, Phobos and Deimos, aiming to determine their origin.
- Launch planned around September 2024, to spend three years around Mars before returning to Earth.



#### ESA's Hera Mission:

- European Space Agency's mission to study the Didymos-Dimorphos asteroid system after NASA's DART mission collided with Dimorphos.
- Hera aims to assess the asteroids' physical properties and is set to launch in October 2024

**55% of patients given antibiotics only as a preventive measure, says survey**



#### Antibiotic Usage Patterns:

- Preventive over Curative: Over 50% of patients received antibiotics preventively rather than for treating diagnosed infections.
- Limited Diagnostic Confirmation: 94% received antibiotics before a confirmed diagnosis, relying mainly on clinical assessments.



#### Survey Findings:

- Prescription Statistics: Among eligible patients, 72% were prescribed antibiotics, with only 45% for therapeutic purposes.
- Empirical Therapy: 94% received antibiotics based on clinical judgment rather than confirmed bacterial causes, highlighting empirical therapy's prevalence.



#### Antimicrobial Resistance Concerns:

- WHO Recognition: The World Health Organization identifies antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as a major global health threat.
- Causes of Resistance: Excessive and inappropriate antibiotic use drives the development of antibiotic resistance.



#### WHO Methodology Implementation:

- Global Point Prevalence Survey: WHO introduced this methodology to understand hospital antibiotic prescribing patterns.
- Limited Use in India: Few studies in India have utilized this methodology to assess antibiotic usage.



#### Hospital Variances:

- Wide Disparities: Significant differences observed among hospitals, varying from prescribing antibiotics to 37% to 100% of patients.
- Prescription Routes: 86.5% of prescriptions were through non-oral routes, suggesting injections or infusions.



#### Antibiotic Classification and Usage:

- AWaRe Classification: Only 38% of prescriptions were for antibiotics offering the best therapeutic value (Access group), while 57% belonged to the Watch group, more prone to resistance.
- Concerning Usage: High usage of Watch group antibiotics raises concerns due to their potential for antibiotic resistance.



#### NCDC's Role and Initiatives:

- AMR Containment: NCDC leads India's program on antimicrobial resistance containment, emphasizing surveillance of antibiotic usage.
- National Antibiotic Consumption Network (NAC-NET): Established to compile antibiotic consumption data and monitor usage trends in health facilities.

**SpaceX's Falcon9 to launch India's GSAT20; satellite to spread broadband coverage**



#### Partnership with SpaceX:

- NSIL plans to launch GSAT-20, aimed at fulfilling India's broadband communication needs, on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket in the second quarter of 2024, marking India's first collaboration with SpaceX.



#### GSAT-20 Specifications:

- High-throughput Ka-band satellite designed for high-speed broadband internet and digital audio-video transmission.
- Weighs 4,700 kg and offers 48 Gbps of HTS capacity with 32 beams, covering Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep islands, among others.



#### Service Providers' Involvement:

- Indian service providers have secured the majority of the HTS capacity onboard GSAT-20.



#### Falcon 9 Rocket:

- SpaceX's reusable two-stage rocket will facilitate the launch, reducing the cost of space access and making it an efficient mode of transport for payloads into Earth orbit.



#### Demand-Driven Satellite Missions:

- NSIL undertakes "Demand Driven satellite missions" to cater to service needs, with GSAT-20 aiming to offer cost-effective HTS capacity for broadband, IFMC, and cellular backhaul services.

**PM launches Internet cable project in Lakshadweep**



#### Lakshadweep Development Projects:

- Inauguration of the Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fibre Cable project, providing high-speed internet connectivity to the archipelago for the first time.



#### Project Cost and Initiatives:

- Projects worth ₹1,156 crore, including infrastructure development, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions to curb youth migration.



#### Economic and Educational Initiatives:

- Emphasis on boosting the local economy through increased seafood exports and exploring seaweed farming potential.

