

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

January 2022



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”

– The Mother

Year 12

Issue 10

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email: sadlecjnn@gmail.com, info@resurgentindia.org, URL : www.resurgentindia.org

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Editor : Ms. Garima Sharma, B-45, Batra Colony, Village Bharatpur, P.O. Kaushal Ganj, Bilaspur Distt. Rampur (U.P)

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year 12

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

RECENT INFRASTRUCTURAL ADVANCEMENTS IN INDIA

Infrastructure constitutes one of the core areas of advancing national interest which projects a country's soft power at the global level. The state of a country's national infrastructure – as an indicator of its rising state capacity, efficiency and ambition – is reflective of the collective dynamism within the country. It is one of the important reflections on the national character and the organizational spirit of the people. The infrastructural sector spans core areas like power, bridges, dams, roads, and urban infrastructure development (IBEF 2021).

When the country achieved Independence, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, laid great emphasis on infrastructural development in all areas, and recognized its strategic value in national defence and border issues. He looked at infrastructure through the prism of the national modernization of a newly decolonized nation. Presently, we have come a full circle. The present dispensation views infrastructural development in tandem with, not only projecting a powerful position of the country, but also bringing about internal social and behavioral changes amongst the people, such that modernization can proceed hand-in-hand with the transition towards a green and clean system.

This transition is being realized, despite much friction and struggle, due to the nationalistic ambition prevalent now. The greater the nationalism within the ranks of the political leadership, the more is the push towards all round infrastructure development. And the more divided has been the political house – such as, during the coalition era – the more the area

of infrastructure has been a theatre of inefficiency, crime, officialdom and corruption.

INFRASTRUCTURE PUSH UNDER THE MODI GOVERNMENT

The push towards infrastructure development – spanning roads, railways and waterways – has formed a key part of the Modi government’s overhaul of the country’s economy. Indeed, *perfecting the art of infrastructure and welfarism, by making every countryman a part of the changing national narrative, has been one of the singular successes of this government.* Presently, infrastructure development spans an inexhaustible building spree of “highways, expressways, high-speed freight corridors, bridges over the sea, coastal freeways, metro lines in every large city, bullet trains, “semi-high speed” inter-city journeys from reimagined railway stations, new deep-sea ports, airports” etc. (Ninan 2021).

The government is also ambitiously working on developing infrastructure for a transition towards renewable energy and electric vehicles. It is also engaged in regional and international initiatives, *linking infrastructure development with environmental sustainability* in many of these and domestic initiatives.

The wider rubric of the government’s infrastructural push can be gauged by the ambitiously planned National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) for 2020-25 which envisages world-class infrastructure for the country, and links it with facilitating ‘Make in India’ projects, emphasizing components such as energy, water & sanitation, commercial and social infrastructure, transport, logistics and communication. For its

implementation, the government has planned an investment of Rs 111 lakh crore on infrastructure projects, with 39% investment by the central government, 40% investment by states and 21% by the private sector.

Important sectors under NIP	Planned investment (in lakh crores)
Energy	25
Irrigation, rural agriculture and food processing	16
Highways	20
Mobility and railways	16
Digital infrastructure	14

Source: Nag (2020)

As a result of the government's efforts, *the share of public investment to total investment in the road sector has increased from 51.65 % in 2012-13 to 86.17 % in 2017-18, whereas the share of private investment has decreased from 48.35% to 13.83% for the same period*, thereby reflecting the prioritization of this area by the government (GoI 2021). As a result of growing advancement, India presently ranks second after the United States in terms of road length and second after Australia in terms of length of national highways.

REVIVING INDIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE – KEY INITIATIVES

The government has worked at two levels to revive the infrastructure sector viz. at the level of vision and at the level of process. At the level of vision, the government's focus has

been on key projects spanning, both, modernization and strategic importance. In terms of modernization, the key flagship schemes have centered around road and highway construction; waterways and ports projects; and, boosting regional connectivity via air. Projects of strategic importance include building critical border infrastructure.

Key Infrastructural Allocations and Initiatives:

Domestic:

- Rs. 233,083 crore allocated to transport infrastructure under Union Budget 2021.
- Expansion of the 'National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)' to 7,400 projects. Around 217 projects worth Rs. 1.10 lakh crore were completed as of 2020. Through the NIP, the government invested US\$ 1.4 trillion in infrastructure development as of July 2021.
- PM GatiShakti National Master Plan approved in 2021 for enhancing multi-modal connectivity, spanning railways, roads and waterways.
- Other initiatives such as National Infrastructure Pipeline, National Monetisation Pipeline, Bharatmala Pariyojana, changes in the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) and fast pace of asset monetization to boost road construction.
- Ongoing projects on iron ore mining technologies.

Regional:

- Establishment of a quadrilateral economic forum in 2021 by India, US, Israel and UAE to strengthen regional connectivity.
- 'Infrastructure for Resilient Island States' launched by India in 2021 climate conference to help small island countries.
- 'Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure' launched by India in 2019.
- 'International Solar Alliance' spearheaded by India and France since 2016 to promote infrastructure for solar energy.

Key initiatives of the government have stood out which have enhanced the national prestige.

Key programmes of the government (excluding NHDP):

- Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North-Eastern region (SARDP-NE)
- The Arunachal Pradesh Package
- Left Wing Extremism affected Areas
- Development of Vijayawada Ranchi route
- National Highway Interconnectivity Improvement Programme (NHIIP)
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Loan Assistance
- Char Dham Pariyojana
- Green National Highways Corridor Project (GNHCP)
- Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I

Many of these key initiatives have borne success.

Year	Road constructed per day (km)
2014-15	12
2015-16	17
2016-17	23
2017-18	27

Source: GoI (2021)

- **National Highway Development Programme (NHDP)** – This programme was implemented by NHA from 1998 to 2017, targeting the construction of around 55000 km of roads. Its key projects include Golden Quadrilateral (GQ), North-South and East-West Corridors (NS-EW), Port Connectivity roads, Expressways, ring roads, bypasses, grade separators, flyovers, elevated roads and tunnels.

National Highway Network

2011



2021



Source: Economic Survey (2022)



Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India (2020)

- ***Bharatmala*** – The Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I was approved in 2017 for the construction and up-gradation of National Highways of 34,800 km length over a period of 5 years (2017 to 2022) at an estimated outlay of Rs. 5,35,000 crore. It aims at optimizing the efficiency of freight and passenger movements across the country and bridge the existing infrastructural gaps. The project includes interventions such as the development of economic corridors, Inter Corridors and Feeder Routes, improvement in the efficiency of national corridors, border and international connectivity roads, coastal and port connectivity roads, green-field expressways and multi-modal integration.

Emphasis has been placed on backward and tribal areas, areas of economic activity, places of religious and tourist interest, border areas, coastal areas and trade routes with neighbouring countries. Approximately, 13,171 Km worth of projects have been awarded under this scheme till November 2020. Presently, 1613 km length has been completed under this programme, while a total of 9000 km will be constructed under Phase-1 by 2026-27 (BW Online Bureau 2022).

- ***Sagarmala*** – It is the country's largest maritime modernization programme. It forms an important part of domestic as well as foreign policy, feeding into the latter through PM Modi's policy of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All) strategy in the Indo-Pacific. SAGAR is based on five values, viz.:

1. To seek a climate of trust and transparency.
2. Respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries.
3. Sensitivity to each other's interests.
4. Peaceful resolution of maritime issues.
5. Increase in maritime cooperation among littoral states.

The Sagarmala programme is the domestic infrastructural component of India's maritime reform. It was first conceptualized by the Vajpayee government in 2003, but work on it began as late as 2015, spanning a vision from 2015 to 2035. It seeks to promote port-led development in the country to reduce export-import and domestic trade logistics costs, by harnessing India's 7500 km long coastline and 14500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic locations on key international maritime trade routes (PIB 2020).

The four key components of Sagarmala are (Pradhan, Gupta and Bhushan 2021):

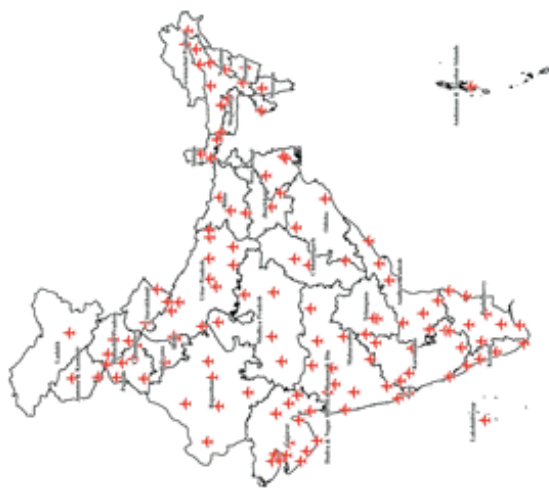
1. Modernize seaports infrastructure and add six new ports to enhance Indian seaport capacity.
2. Improve port connectivity through rail corridors, freight-friendly expressways, inland waterways and inland ports.
3. Create 14 coastal economic zones or CEZs and a special economic zone at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) in Mumbai to enable port-led industrialization.
4. Skill and training based coastal community development.

However, despite the ambitious vision inherent in maritime modernization, Parliamentary scrutiny has revealed that there has been a delay in project implementation under Sagarmala and that the complex tax rates regime for shipping – one of the highest in the world – does not bode well for an aspiring maritime power like India. So far, only 172 projects out of the 802 sanctioned projects under Sagarmala have been completed (The Hindu Businessline 2021).

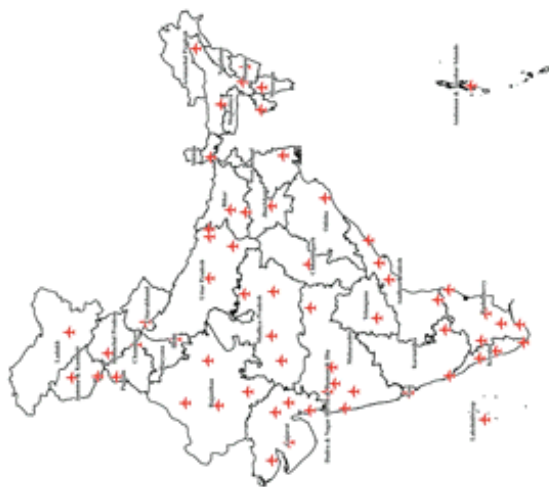
- ***Regional connectivity via air*** – There have also been other focus areas where success has been visible, such as in airport construction, easing flight travel through financial concessions and boosting domestic regional connectivity via air. One of the landmark programmes in this regard has been the Regional Connectivity Scheme or RCS-UDAN which is a scheme launched by the central government in 2016 to enhance regional air connectivity. Under RCS, plans are to connect underserved airports – such as in Andaman Nicobar, Assam, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan in the first phase – to key airports through flights that will cost Rs 2,500 for per hour flight. It is a demand-driven scheme, where airline operators assess the feasibility of operation on a particular route (Luthra, Livemint 2021).

Operationalised Airports

2021



2016



Source: Economic Survey (2022)

It also seeks to upgrade airport infrastructure. India's civil aviation sector was growing at a high rate of 14% annually prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. While this is an ambitious programme overall and the infrastructural component has performed well, here again, much more needs to be done. As per the latest Parliamentary assessments, air connectivity remains largely restricted to major city routes and less than 40% of the routes awarded under RCS-UDAN have been operationalized so far (Rajya Sabha 2021). Presently, the government is exploring the expansion of seaplane services within the territorial jurisdiction of India under the RCS-UDAN scheme, with 28 seaplane routes already being awarded (Luthra, 2021).

- ***Boosting critical border infrastructure*** – Investment in critical border infrastructure has been one of the landmark progress areas of the present government. The creation of such infrastructure – which includes critical roads, rail lines, bridges etc. – has especially accelerated after the 2020 Galwan Valley stand-off with China. Parliamentary assessments had observed that since 2007-08, the Border Roads Organization (BRO) could not achieve its construction targets. Since 2014, the government has done much to expedite the powers of BRO, including relaxing the norms of bureaucratic approvals for strategic projects.

In 2018, the government approved Rs. 8,606 crores for Border Infrastructure development and Management (B.I.M.) to be developed in 17 states having international borders (Singh 2020). In 2020, the Modi government implemented the Shekatkar Committee recommendations, thereby enhancing the BRO's procurement from Rs 7.5 crore to Rs 100 crore (Shankar 2022).

Since 2017-18, the B.R.O.'s activities have witnessed a surge of 44% in formation cutting, 55% in permanent works, 17% in major bridges, 15% in surfacing and 49% in resurfacing works (Singh 2020). The government also stated last year that it had identified 73 critical roads totaling 4,203 km for development along the India-China border, most of which are already complete.

Some of the notable initiatives include – among many others – the Atal tunnel, the world's longest highway tunnel (9.2 kms) connecting Manali to Lahaul-Spiti in Himachal Pradesh. It cuts the travel time by 4-5 hours and will be open throughout the year, facilitating faster troop movement. Earlier, this route was closed for 6 months due to snowfall. The government is also planning to complete the third Srinagar-Leh link by 2023.

Besides these, in 2021, 75 projects of roads and bridges constructed by the BRO in six states and two Union Territories were inaugurated. A road constructed by the BRO in eastern Ladakh at over 19000 feet above sea level – inaugurated in December 2021 – is officially now the highest motorable road in the world (IANS 2022).

- ***Ensuring a Robust Energy Infrastructure*** – Clean energy infrastructure forms an important part of government's plan to scale renewables and meet its global climate commitments. The initiatives in this regard span investments in clean and alternative fuel, evolving regulatory standards for fuel and vehicles, electric vehicles policies, investment in grid and battery, and infrastructural measures such as the green energy corridor. The government has also launched a series of schemes for promoting solar parks, solar streetlights etc.

Presently, India stands at the fourth position globally for

overall installed renewable energy capacity and is also running the world's largest renewable energy expansion programme (Banerjee 2021). As of November 2021, 52 solar parks with a cumulative capacity of 37.92 GW have been approved in 14 states, 5.7 GW (cumulative) solar rooftop projects have been set up in the country (PIB, 2021), over 1.45 lakh solar street lights have been installed, 9.03 lakh solar study lamps distributed, and 2.5 MW solar power packs have been set-up.

One of the landmark moves of the government has been the push given to the Green Energy Corridor. It is a scheme for evacuation & integration of the renewable energy (RE) capacity addition of 32,713 MW during the 12th Plan Period (2012-17). It involves the development of the transmission system and control infrastructure for the addition of RE capacity in the renewable-rich states.

Recently, the government cleared 12,000 crore rupees for electricity transmission infrastructure for the second phase of the green energy corridor, aiming to supply 20 gigawatts of renewable energy to the national grid from Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, and, adding approximately 10,750 circuit km (ckm) of transmission lines and 27,500 mega volt-amperes (MVA) transformation capacity of substations. The first phase will add 9,700ckm of transmission lines and 22,600MVA capacity of substations (Luthra and Bhaskar, Livemint 2022).

Other important steps to promote the RE infrastructure in the country include (PIB, 2021):

- Launch of Production Linked Incentive Scheme “National Programme on High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules” with an outlay of Rs. 4,500 crores to support and promote

manufacturing of high-efficiency solar PV modules.

- Offshore Wind Energy Policy to harness the potential of offshore wind energy along India's coastline

- Launch of wind-solar hybrid policy, for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid projects for optimal and efficient utilization of transmission infrastructure and land, reducing the variability in renewable power generation and achieving better grid stability.

- In order to strengthen and expand the domestic manufacturing eco-system, schemes such as PM-KUSUM, Solar Rooftop and Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Scheme have a precondition of Domestic Content Requirement, directly creating a domestic demand of more than 36 GW solar PV (cells & modules).

- Launch of the National Hydrogen Mission with the goal to make India a global hub for Green Hydrogen production and export.

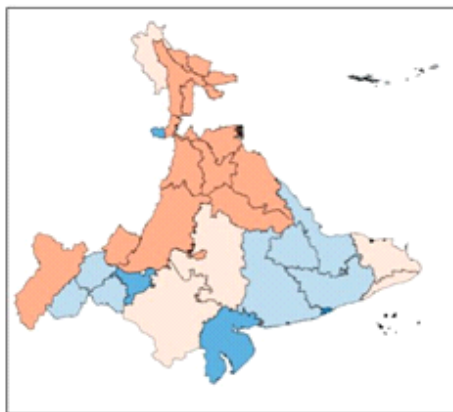
Beyond domestic borders, the government is also focusing on building climate-resilient regional infrastructure, such as Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS), developing renewable energy grid systems etc.

- **Water and Sanitation Infrastructure** – Water infrastructure has undergone considerable progress in recent times. Water and sanitation have been top priorities of the government since 2014, with the launch of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. This flagship programme is aimed at promoting cleanliness and sanitation in a holistic manner. The programme has built more than 100 million household toilets and created

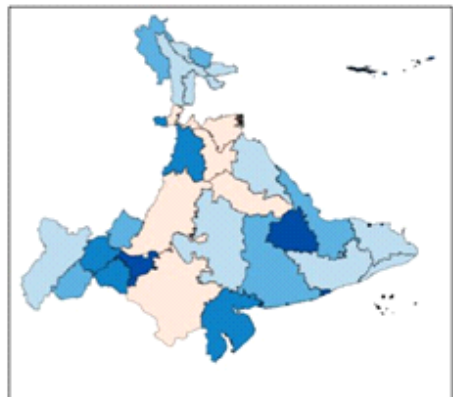
more than 700 open defecation-free districts across India as of 2020 (Bhowmick 2020).

Jal Jeevan Mission... Tap water connections to Households

As on 15th August 2019



As on 2nd January 2022



Source: Economic Survey (2022)

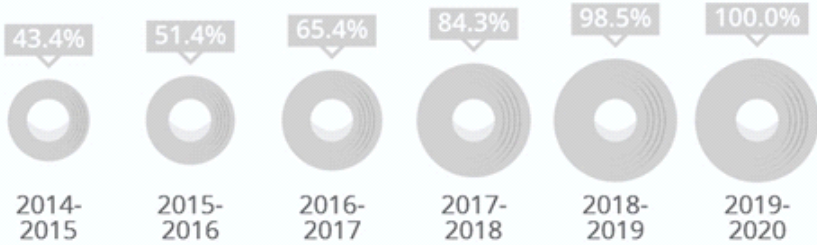
In 2019, when the Jal Jeevan Mission was launched, around 17% of the rural households had tap water supply. As of 2021, slightly over 80 million or 42.5% of total rural households have been covered under the piped drinking water mission (Haq 2021). The government is also focusing on the mode of water supply, encouraging sustainability.

Solar-powered water supply schemes are being promoted all over the country in various villages, especially in hilly, tribal and far-flung areas. In Uttar Pradesh, in about 16,000 villages such schemes are being taken up (GoI 2021). The government is also undertaking schemes for greywater or wastewater management. Wastewater generated from household activities can be treated and reused in agriculture and non-domestic activities.

On the sanitation front too, the government has built good infrastructure. The key flagship programme in this regard has been the Swachh Bharat Mission – to end open defecation and manual scavenging in the country.

India's Toilet-Building Revolution

Share of India's population with access to a household toilet



Total number of household toilets built since October 2014:

110 million

Sources: Indian Ministry Of Drinking Water and Sanitation, CNN



statista

Source: (Statista 2020)

In 2020, the Phase II of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin was launched from 2020-21 to 2024-25. It will focus on Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus, which includes sustaining the ODF status, and solid and liquid waste management, ensuring that effective solid and liquid waste management is instituted in every Gram Panchayat of the country.

Besides Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin, the infrastructure under the urban component of Swachh Bharat Mission has also developed. Its aim is to make urban India free from open

defecation and achieve 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste in towns in the country.

Table: Waste management under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (progress as of December 30, 2020)

Targets	Target	Progress as of March 2020	Progress as of December 2020
Door to Door Waste Collection (Wards)	86,284	81,535 (96%)	83,435 (97%)
Source Segregation (Wards)	86,284	64,730 (75%)	67,367 (78%)
Waste Processing (in %)	100%	65%	68%

Sources: Standing Committee on Urban Development (2021); PRS.

Under the second phase of the urban component of the Swachh Bharat Mission, launched in 2021, the government will focus on (i) sludge management, (ii) waste-water treatment, (iii) source segregation of garbage, (iv) reduction in single-use plastics and (v) control of air pollution caused by construction, demolition, and bio-remediation of dumpsites (Ahluwalia 2021).

The infrastructure built under sanitation and water sectors has contributed greatly to strengthening the effectivity of the overall welfare infrastructure in the country.

Changing the Process and Working

Besides these key initiatives, the government has also brought about processual changes and reforms to the infrastructure sector. At the level of process, government initiatives have revived the highway construction sector (which had been deprived of private investment) and curbed corruption. The government has attempted to address the corruption seen in bodies such as the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). In 2020, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari had famously slammed the corrupt NHAI officials for delay in project implementation.

The government also undertook a range of measures for infrastructural revival, such as improving the processes of land acquisition, terminating certain projects, resolving risks around other projects, introducing asset monetization or the toll operate transfer (ToT) model and introducing the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM), wherein the government provides 40% of the project cost to the developer to start work. All these steps have helped to address the basic bottlenecks hampering the highways sector in the country and speeded up the pace of construction.

In terms of coordination, the recently launched Gatishakti Master Plan will connect all the major government ministries and departments with each other and with the latest technologies, to enable seamless implementation of infrastructural works in the country and resolve the root infrastructural bottlenecks facing the country for decades.

REIMAGINING INDIA

A forward national growth trajectory has always encountered innumerable obstacles, and the country's infrastructural growth is no exception. During the era of previous governments, the sector was notorious for infamy as the hub of crime, corruption and loot. It was riven by constant bottlenecks and endless rounds of clearances that ensured that projects had great difficulty moving forward. In addition, the non-state, foreign-funded lobby was always active in ensuring that critical, strategic projects did not move forward, either in the name of environment or community rights or forest rights etc.

Indeed, many of the roads, bridges and other connecting infrastructure for the border areas was deliberately not built by many previous administrations on the pretext that if there were no connecting infrastructure, enemy forces would have difficulty accessing Indian regions. This made troop movement on the Indian side even more difficult. Endless loops on environmental clearances and other protests and demands by non-state lobbies were always yielded to. The main target of these lobbies was to ensure that India's infrastructure did not develop.

All this was dealt with by the present government, with many of the foreign-funded lobbies closing operations in India,

and with the doing away of endless environmental clearances for critical border infrastructural projects. Corruption and entrenched bureaucracy have been another obstacle that is still being dealt with. Having dealt with most of these obstructions, the country is now on a path of rapid infrastructural development. This will position India significantly on the global stage in the time to come.

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HIGHLIGHTS

THE EBBING FLOW OF FOREIGN FUNDING OF NGOs

The non-renewal of FCRA (Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act) licenses of nearly 6000 NGOs in India reflects the declining dominance of foreign-funded NGOs and civil society organizations in changing times. As per the latest amendments to the FCRA – dating to September 2020 – NGOs are barred from transferring foreign funds to other domestic NGOs. The September 2020 amendments have also heralded other stringent compliance requirements that have made it difficult for NGOs to operate.

As a result of the non-renewal of licenses, the present total number of Active FCRA associations in India stands at 16,829 NGOs (Singh, 2022). It means that nearly 30% of the NGOs ceased to be FCRA-registered organizations at one go, making it difficult for them to sustain their operations over time.

Many of the prominent names whose license was not renewed due to various reasons – such as non-application for license renewal – include Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi, Jamia Milia Islamia, Indian Medical Association, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, India Habitat Centre, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Delhi College of Engineering, Medical Council of India, Emmanuel Hospital Association, Tuberculosis Association Of India, Hamdard Education Society, Delhi School Of Social Work Society, India Islamic Cultural Centre, Godrej Memorial Trust, The Delhi Public School Society, etc.

Out of this long list, the case of Missionaries of Charity became politicized and generated much political controversy. Missionaries of Charity is a foreign-funded organization started by Mother Teresa in 1950, headquartered in Kolkata. It has a wide network of works all over the country. It has been accused, in the past, of proselytization and religious conversion to Christianity under the garb of social work (Kaushik, 2022). Most recently, its Vadodara shelter home was booked for religious conversion of young girls. However, due to various reasons, after much political controversy, the central government – despite receiving ‘adverse inputs’ about Missionaries of Charity – renewed its license till 2026.

Religious conversion by NGOs is a serious problem in India. In 2018, the government had informed the Lok Sabha that more than 5800 NGOs in the country, which receive foreign funding, carry out various *religious activities* (PTI, 2018). Many of these NGOs are usually involved in funding protests in India, such as the *anti-CAA, environmental/infrastructural and farm protests*. Foreign funding is a crucial source of such subversive activities. A leaked past report from the Intelligence Bureau had said that *well-known international NGOs like Amnesty International, Action Aid and Greenpeace had undermined India’s international standing by their criticism and were indirectly responsible for reducing India’s GDP by 2-3%* (Singh G. , 2021).

Thanks to government efforts, nearly all these NGOs have long ceased to have active operations in India – mainly by cutting them off from foreign funding. A survey by Bain & Company, of India’s philanthropic activity, said *there had been about a 40% decline in foreign funding between 2015 and 2018* (Singh G. , 2021). Such prolonged and decisive action by the

government since 2014 has certainly put the Modi administration out of favour with the western liberal media and political lobbies but bodes well for the country.

UKRAINE CRISIS

The Russia-Ukraine crisis poses one of the most serious challenges to Europe since the Cold War. During the last few months, Russia has amassed more than 130,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. Tensions between Russia and Ukraine have persisted ever since Russia ‘took back’ Crimea in 2014 and has been funding armed separatist rebellion in the border areas with Ukraine. What followed to calm tensions and prevent the countries from going to war were the Minsk Accords signed in 2015, (largely inefficient) calling for a maintenance of status-quo post-Crimea.

Russia sees Ukraine as an extended part of itself, having been a part of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. However, after the collapse of Soviet Union, Ukraine has attempted to forge closer ties with the West, thereby antagonizing Russia. The present crisis was precipitated by Russia’s angst towards expanding activities of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Ukraine and eastern Europe. This has made Russia feel cornered. Ukraine has also expressed renewed ambition to join NATO – a scenario which Russia flatly refuses to countenance due to its own security concerns. In recent times, NATO was setting up military centers in Ukraine and conducting drills near the Russian border.

As a result of these moves by the West, Russia amassed troops and demanded legally-backed security guarantees – such as Ukraine not joining NATO and NATO’s withdrawal from

eastern Europe – from the West in subsequent summit with President Biden of US. These summits have failed and presently backdoor talks are going on between Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine. US has antagonized its partners by repeatedly fueling war-mongering hysteria about possible Russian invasion. This has made even US's European allies feel cornered.

In this unfolding crisis, the situation is particularly tricky for India. For, both, West and Russia are strong allies of India. As a result, India has not taken any side and chosen to remain neutral, hoping that the crisis would resolve. Russia's other Asian ally – China – has given a balanced statement, suggesting that while Russian demands should be met, the status-quo maintained by the Minsk Accords should be adhered to. Thus, China has, both, supported Russia and, at the same time, ensured that there is not war/invasion by favouring the Minsk peace accords. Russia is not likely to subvert China's wishes and sour relations.

FAILURE OF INDIA-CHINA TALKS

The 14th round of military talks between India and China, held mid-January, failed to yield any concrete results, much like the 13th round of talks held in October 2021. While a joint statement was issued, it indicated that none of the remaining outstanding friction points were resolved. India wanted disengagement at Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang.

The talks also come under the backdrop of massive Chinese infrastructural construction of bridges and housing on its side of the LAC, but very close to the border, and, the passage of a Land Border Law that would allow the People's Liberation Army of China to 'protect and exploit' the country's land border

areas. The talks are at a stand-still as India wants to go back to April 2020 status quo, before the Galwan confrontation broke out, while China wants a new status-quo.

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Nationalism

“Nationalism is an *avatara* and cannot be slain. Nationalism is a divinely appointed *shakti* of the Eternal and must do its God-given work before it returns to the bosom of the Universal Energy from which it came.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.07, Page. 750)