

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

29-06-2026

GS 3: DEFENCE

THE HINDU PAGE: 06

From seas to skies, India is becoming self-reliant: Modi

PM highlights indigenously built missile systems, says June was a 'landmark month' for India's defence sector; he thanks people for responding to his call for austerity amid the West Asia crisis

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed India's growing self-reliance in defence manufacturing, pointing to the maiden flight of the first made-in-India C-295 transport aircraft and the successful test of the indigenous Long-Range Land-Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM). He also thanked citizens for supporting his appeal for austerity amid the West Asia crisis.

Addressing the nation in his monthly radio programme *Mann Ki Baat*, Mr. Modi said June had been a "landmark month" for India's aviation and defence sectors.

'Indigenous' industry

Referring to the C-295 programme, he said 40 aircraft are being manufactured in India, giving a major boost to the country's MSMEs and aerospace industry while creating employment opportunities.

The first C-295 transport aircraft manufactured in India completed its maiden flight on June

As many as 40 such aircraft [C-295] are being built right here in India and this is giving new strength to MSMEs and the aerospace sector ... From the seas to the skies, our India is becoming increasingly secure and self-reliant

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



10. The Indian Air Force is procuring 56 aircraft under a ₹21,935-crore deal, with 40 being manufactured by Tata Advanced Systems Limited in partnership with Airbus at a facility in Gujarat's Vadodara.

The Prime Minister cited the successful flight-test of the indigenous LRLACM conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation earlier this month.

"From the seas to the skies, our India is becoming increasingly secure and self-reliant," he said, adding that all major subsystems of the missile had been indigenously developed.

Mr. Modi referred to the recent induction of *INS Durgam*, *INS Shanshak*, and

INS Agrya into the Indian Navy, saying the warships were designed and built entirely in India.

West Asia conflict

The Prime Minister thanked citizens for responding positively to his appeal for conserving resources amid the conflict in West Asia. He said many people had begun carpooling, using public transport, postponing foreign travel and increasing the use of natural fertilizers. He noted that several families had decided to recycle old gold instead of buying new jewellery for weddings.

"I am grateful to every citizen of the country; not only have they supported my appeal, they are also actively cooperating in ev-

The PM praised Nagaland's 'Baby League' football initiative for children aged 5 to 12

ery way," he said.

Highlighting environmental conservation, Mr. Modi praised the efforts of biologist Purnima Devi Barman in changing public perceptions about Assam's *hargila* bird (greater adjutant) and lauded community initiatives in Meghalaya to preserve the State's living root bridges, for which India has sought UNESCO World Heritage status.

The Prime Minister commended women in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district for converting plastic waste into eco-bricks used for beautifying public spaces and praised Nagaland's 'Baby League' football initiative for children aged five to 12.

For Ganesh Chaturthi, Mr. Modi urged people to purchase idols crafted by Indian artisans, calling on buyers to check the both the material used and the country of manufacture before making their purchase.

GS 2: HEALTH

THE HINDU PAGE: 06

New Anaemia Mukht Bharat norms seek early action

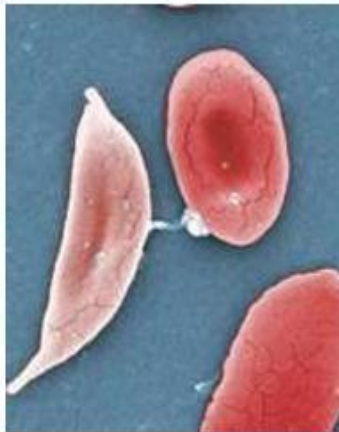
Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry is set to launch revised operational guidelines for the Anaemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (AMB) on Monday, expanding the national programme's strategy to include a new beneficiary group, greater emphasis on dietary interventions, and digital tracking of beneficiaries.

The guidelines, to be released by Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda during the 16th meeting of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare at Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi, mark the transition of the programme from Anaemia Mukht Bharat to Anaemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan.

New framework

The revised framework seeks to strengthen anaemia control through im-



Treat and track: The Ministry proposed a digital ecosystem to monitor anaemia services.

proved testing, treatment, monitoring and community participation.

The revised programme adds low birth weight babies (0-6 months) as a seventh beneficiary group, recognising the need for early intervention.

A new "eating right" component has been introduced as the seventh intervention to promote the regular consumption of iron-rich and diversified

diets. The seventh institutional mechanism focuses on strengthening monitoring and evaluation through digital tracking. The guidelines also replace the existing T3 with a T4 strategy of Test, Treat, Talk, and Track, which emphasises routine haemoglobin testing, treatment according to national anaemia management protocols, systematic tracking of beneficiaries for referral and follow-up, and counselling on healthy dietary practices.

The Ministry has also proposed an integrated digital ecosystem for monitoring anaemia services.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) shows that 67.1% of children aged six to 59 months, 57% of women aged 15 to 49 years, 52.2% of pregnant women, and 59.1% of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years are anaemic.

GS 3 & 4: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY & ETHICS

The new digital slavery needs constitutional guardrails

In his profound encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV grounds the contemporary crisis of technology in elemental theology, reminding humanity that the individual stands at the absolute centre of divine creation. Yet, this sacred human dignity faces an unprecedented challenge. The Holy Father warns that artificial intelligence (AI), left unchecked, threatens to turn the ownership of our personal data into a new form of digital slavery – a subjugation as cruel as human bondage. Because the stakes are so inherently tied to human dignity, the Pontiff insists that the governance of AI cannot rely on vague good intentions, nor can it be left to the private consciences of the engineers who build these systems. Instead, he issues an urgent call for robust, binding law over abstract ethics, independent public oversight over the empty promises of Silicon Valley’s modern pharaohs – and a clear requirement that a human being remains accountable whenever an automated system decides who gets a loan, a job, a medical bed, or an education. Pope Leo XIV’s core demand is that this new electronic Curia be strictly regulated rather than quietly surrendered to a handful of private tech monopolies whose reach and resources already outstrip most sovereign governments. He even goes so far as to commend the courage to deliberately slow down the development of AI.

When regulation lags

However, a fundamental problem remains: AI and morality do not observe the same time. AI is developed at the breakneck speed of the start-up culture, driven by an ethos to move fast and run perpetual beta tests on society in the guise of progress. This velocity is fuelled not just by commercial rivalries, but by relentless mathematical innovation spanning from Silicon Valley to Shenzhen. It presents a deeper hurdle for lawmakers worldwide: parliament can govern what a person does, but it can never forbid a mathematical theorem, a discovery, or an equation from being made. How do lawmakers fulfil the Pope’s wishes?

Law in most democracies moves slowly. By the time landmark legislation such as the European Union’s Artificial Intelligence Act or the United Kingdom’s Online Safety Act were painstakingly debated and passed, the specific technical harms they were built to combat had already mutated, leaving an entire generation to grow up inside unaddressed digital vulnerabilities. Policymakers have historically been behind the innovation curve, and under current paradigms, we will be again.

If legislation is fated to lag behind innovation, the consequences for democratic societies are not merely regulatory; they are existential. Democracy cannot function if citizens cannot distinguish reality from fabrication. At its core, democratic governance relies on a shared epistemic foundation: a collective agreement on



Shashi Tharoor

Fourth-term Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for Thiruvananthapuram (Congress party), the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs and the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author of 29 books, including, most recently, 'The Sage Who Reimagined Hinduism: The Life, Lessons and Legacy of Sree Narayana Guru'

basic facts from which public debate, policy, and electoral choices can flow. When that foundation is systematically undermined, the entire democratic project is threatened. Today, AI-generated disinformation and advanced synthetic media (“deepfakes”) have advanced to a level of fidelity where the human eye and ear can no longer reliably detect forgery. This is already our reality. Highly convincing audio and video duplications of political leaders are deployed strategically during sensitive electoral cycles to depress voter turnout, fabricate scandals out of thin air, and instantly shatter public trust in legitimate state institutions.

This vulnerability is hyper-charged by algorithmic manipulation. Big Tech platforms operate on business models engineered exclusively to maximise user engagement. Because outrage, fear, and sensationalism generate the highest click-through rates, platform algorithms systematically prioritise and amplify hyper-partisan content, driving radicalisation. By trapping citizens within hyper-customised echo chambers, these systems normalise online hate and accelerate social fragmentation. In doing so, private platforms exert an unprecedented form of unaccountable power, effectively rewriting the rules of the public square to optimise quarterly corporate profits at the expense of social cohesion.

Democracy’s digital vulnerability

When a society is deeply polarised and stripped of a shared reality, it becomes a soft target for foreign interference. Adversarial nation-states and non-state actors have weaponised these platform vulnerabilities, transforming them into a theatre for sophisticated information warfare.

Foreign information manipulation operations are no longer clumsy, bot-driven spam campaigns; they are highly targeted, AI-driven psychological operations designed to covertly exploit pre-existing religious, ethnic, or socioeconomic fault lines within a target nation. By covertly funding, generating, and amplifying divisive narratives, hostile foreign actors can destabilise a democracy from within, turning its own citizens against one another. These coordinated campaigns represent nothing less than a direct, strategic threat to democratic sovereignty itself. As the world’s largest democracy and a global technology hub, India stands at the absolute epicentre of this crisis. In an environment where digital adoption outpaces structural digital literacy, the weaponisation of synthetic media and algorithmic polarisation poses a unique threat to India’s pluralistic society.

If traditional, reactive legislation is doomed to always trail behind mathematical innovation, India cannot rely on standard, backward-looking regulatory frameworks. Instead, an enduring law and policy framework for India must be anchored in five foundational pillars that operate concurrently.

First, AI governance must adopt a strictly

rights-based framework that prioritises individual human dignity and digital autonomy, ensuring citizens possess unalienable rights over their personal data, strict consent protocols, and clear protections against algorithmic discrimination in critical sectors such as employment, credit, and health care. Second, platforms must be subjected to genuine democratic accountability; large technology firms can no longer hide behind absolute safe-harbour immunities while their algorithms profit from the viral spread of destabilising disinformation. They must be legally compelled to introduce structural transparency, allowing independent audits of their recommendation engines and forcing them to accept systemic liability for algorithmic amplification that results in real-world violence.

Third, even as these frameworks are constructed, free speech protections must remain fully intact. The power to define and combat disinformation must never devolve into a tool for state-sponsored censorship or the silencing of political dissent. The focus of regulation must remain strictly on structural platform mechanics, such as automated bot networks and deepfake originators, rather than the heavy-handed policing of individual ideological speech.

Fourth, because technical fixes are entirely insufficient without building cognitive resilience within the populace, India must launch a massive, state-backed educational initiative focused on media literacy and digital citizenship. This curriculum must be integrated across schools, universities, and rural community centres to train citizens to critically evaluate digital sources and identify emotional manipulation tactics. Finally, to defend national sovereignty, India must establish sophisticated, cross-sector early-warning systems capable of detecting coordinated misinformation operations in real-time. By leveraging advanced detection tools and fostering deep collaboration between state security apparatuses, independent fact-checking networks, and ethical hackers, the nation can identify and neutralise foreign information warfare campaigns before they achieve viral velocity.

A constitutional imperative

Ultimately, the lesson of our era is clear: AI governance cannot remain merely regulatory or technical. It is a profound mistake to treat the manipulation of the information ecosystem as a series of isolated technical glitches to be patched with minor corporate updates or narrow statutory tweaks. Because these technologies possess the unique capability to distort truth, polarise societies, and erode the sovereign choice of voters, AI governance must rise to the level of a constitutional imperative. The right to an unmanipulated information ecosystem, where reality can be clearly distinguished from corporate or state fabrication, must be viewed as an indispensable extension of the fundamental right to life, liberty, and free expression.

Unchecked AI threatens democracy, demanding constitutional safeguards beyond conventional regulation

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU PAGE: 08

July opens the biggest chapter in India-U.K. trade ties

Trade deals are important for accelerating prosperity but not every deal is a game changer. One that drives shared growth across key sectors, unlocks opportunity for businesses of all sizes, and pushes the envelope for bilateral trade qualifies to achieve that tag. And so, it is no surprise to see businesses and trade associations using the term in relation to the United Kingdom-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which is formally known as Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). India remains the fastest-growing economy in the G-20 and it is on track to become the world's third-largest economy within the next five years. Complementing this the U.K. remains one of the top global destinations for investment and was the third fastest-growing economy in the G-7 in 2025. Securing preferential access to each other's market is not an abstract diplomatic win; it is an economic advantage that will deliver significant returns in both countries over time. This FTA is forecast to boost Indian GDP by £5.1 billion, the U.K.'s GDP by £4.8 billion and increase bilateral trade by £25.5 billion every year in the long run.

Bilateral trade was already worth £48 billion a year in 2025. From July 15, it will be cheaper, quicker, and easier for businesses to trade across both countries. Even before this deal came into force, we have seen the creation of thousands of new jobs on both sides and that is showing no signs of slowing down, as the countdown to entry into force closes and a new era of growth between the two nations begins. We should all be excited to see what the two countries and businesses on both sides can achieve in the years ahead. These are the hallmarks of a historic deal; but it is not just about the numbers.

A story of scale and depth

From day one, both sides agreed that this deal must be broad, deep, and a driving force that brings long-term growth for both countries. Nearly three years of intensive negotiations



Harjinder Kang

His Majesty's Trade Commissioner for South Asia and the British Deputy High Commissioner for western India

The U.K.-India Free Trade Agreement, the 'gold standard of modern trade deals', comes into force on July 15

preceded this deal and there is no doubt that the agreement reached is the most economically significant trade deal that the U.K. has done since leaving the European Union; it is also one of the most comprehensive trade deals that India has ever done. In short it is a win-win for businesses and consumers and for both economies. To give readers just a flavour of the far-reaching benefits – 99% of U.K. tariff lines will be duty-free for Indian products and India will remove or reduce tariffs on 90% of its tariff lines for U.K. products.

For India, this could support jobs in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, jewellery and, equally, it will boost exports in services such as IT and finance by a large margin.

Similarly, tariff duties on U.K. exports to India are estimated to fall by around £400 million when the deal comes into effect, and further to £900 million in later phases. Critical industries such as aerospace, automobiles, medical devices, and whiskies will all benefit significantly, adding billions to the U.K. economy. This is transformational and it is also just the beginning.

Benefits beyond Mumbai and London

One of the most persistent criticisms of trade policy is that the gains created are only concentrated in a few places. We have ensured that this deal benefits all aspects of the local economy beyond the major cities in both countries. Several unprecedented and dedicated provisions across high-growth and high-value sectors from each side are agreed in a deal spanning 30 chapters. In practical terms, that means manufacturers, innovators, supply chain businesses, and service exporters – often based far away from the major cities – can compete more effectively with cheaper imports and fewer barriers. For instance, a textile manufacturer from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, will now be able to trade more efficiently into the U.K. just like an auto-parts manufacturer from Birmingham will be able to trade more cost effectively into India.

Modern trade goes beyond just tariffs and that is why this agreement's provisions on customs, digital trade, and services are central to its exceptional standard. Improved customs provisions will help goods reach markets faster – particularly valuable for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that cannot afford excessive red tape. On services, where the U.K. is globally renowned, the agreement locks in market access across key sectors, providing the predictability that U.K. businesses need to expand in India and vice versa. The deal also includes India's first-ever standalone chapters on anti-corruption, gender, and development – and one of the most comprehensive labour and environmental commitments that India has ever made in a trade deal. But it is not just about access; it is also about securing appropriate protections for domestic producers, which is what this deal does so well.

For instance, India maintains protections for dairy products and edible oils, while the U.K. shields sugar, milled rice, pork, chicken, and eggs. In an era where trade agreements are judged not only on growth but also on sustainability and fairness, this deal shows how it is done.

Making the deal count

It is clear that this landmark deal combines measurable economic gains, deep market access in the sectors of the future, practical trade facilitation, strong domestic protections, and the first-of-its-kind values chapters. It sets a template for what modern trade agreements should look like: pro-growth, pro-worker, pro-innovation – a gold standard for trade deals.

As we close in on entry into force, the task is clear: let us maximise it. Businesses from both countries should champion exports, explore procurement opportunities, map supply chains against new rules of origin, and move quickly because in trade, first-mover advantage is real, and it rarely comes twice.

GS 2: HEALTH & EDUCATION

THE HINDU PAGE: 09

How schools can tackle adolescent malnutrition

As schools across the country reopened after summer vacation, classrooms were filled once again with the energy, aspirations and anxieties of millions of adolescents. Yet hidden behind their growing ambitions lies a silent public health emergency – adolescent malnutrition. **The recently released NFHS-6 (2023-24) findings are stark. Obesity among women aged 15-49 years has risen from 24% to 30.7%, and among men from 22.9% to 27.3%. High blood sugar among men aged 15 and above jumped from 15.6% to 20.9%, and among women from 13.5% to 17.8%. What is most alarming is that lifestyle changes once associated with cities and affluent communities such as sedentary behaviour, processed diets, stress and rising obesity, are now affecting rural populations too. India faces a double burden: undernutrition among children and surging obesity among adults, with obesity driving diabetes, heart disease and stroke. These crises do not begin in adulthood. Their roots lie in adolescence, making schools the most critical setting for prevention.**

Addressing diets differently
Schools must recognise that malnutrition is no longer only about thinness. India is witnessing the 'thin-fat' phenotype – children who appear lean yet carry dangerous metabolic risk. According to the Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS, 2019), 27.4% of Indian adolescents are stunted. At the same time, obesity is rising, particularly among the urban youth. More strikingly, 35% of children under five are stunted yet carry adult-level triglycerides, which is like a metabolic time bomb associated with adult-onset diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Preventing these diseases must begin in school, not in hospitals decades later.

Studies on Delhi school adolescents confirmed that the



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Schools are not merely educational institutions; they have the potential to be powerful public health promoting institutions

consumption of milk and dairy products, green leafy vegetables and fruits is lower than what is recommended. Far too many children consume cereal-heavy diets while proteins and protective foods remain woefully inadequate. Schools can address this through improved midday meals, healthier canteens and food demonstrations that teach students how to build balanced plates. **The Dietary Guidelines for Indians 2024 recommend that half the plate by volume should consist of fruits and vegetables. Yet research confirms that sedentary and screen-heavy behaviours are inversely associated with daily fruit and vegetable intake – a dangerous compounding effect. School gardens, fruit breaks, and local seasonal produce can normalise healthier eating habits.**

Addressing sugar and UPFs
Moreover, the bitter truth about sugar has to be revealed. Sugary drinks, High fat sugar and salt (HFSS) foods, and Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs) are rapidly replacing traditional foods. Studies highlight alarming trends in free sugar and UPF consumption among Indian adolescents. **A recent World Health Organization study has revealed that UPF consumption in India has been surging at more than 13.7% year-after-year. The bitter truth is that the excess sugar consumed today becomes a metabolic risk tomorrow. Schools must actively discourage sugary beverages and display sugar boards showing hidden sugar content. Reinforcement, not one-time campaigns, converts knowledge into practice.**

Physical inactivity must be treated as seriously as poor diet. Schools should guarantee structured physical activity and sports as core educational components, not optional extras. This is especially urgent as urban lifestyle habits such as reduced movement, changing diets, and rising obesity are now affecting rural communities too, making inactivity a nationwide epidemic, not only city schools' problem.

Thus, among the most common risk factors for non-communicable diseases in children and adolescents are unhealthy diets and insufficient physical activity.

The rapid rise of adolescent obesity increases the risk of early-onset Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, and will lead to substantially greater healthcare spending. UPF-free school zones must become a national movement backed by consistent policy.

Schools advancing public health

It is here that the Let's Fix Our Food (LFOF) initiative offers a compelling direction. Led by the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN), the LFOF consortium is a multi-stakeholder initiative working to create healthier food environments for adolescents by advancing evidence-based policy, empowering youth through nutrition literacy, and campaigning for regulatory frameworks. Its outputs include recommendations for regulating HFSS food advertising, taxation on unhealthy beverages, a model school nutrition curriculum and a food label reading kit.

A 2025 Lancet study projected that 21.8 crore men and 23.1 crore women in India will be overweight by 2050, with the steepest rise expected among adolescents and young adults aged 15-24 years.

Schools must move beyond textbook nutrition education and adopt skill-based approaches such as reading food labels, recognising portion sizes, understanding marketing tactics, and basic cooking. Schools are not merely educational institutions; they have the potential to be powerful public health promoting institutions. School-based interventions in India have demonstrated measurable improvements in dietary behaviour and reductions in sugary beverage consumption. **A child protected from unhealthy diets today is far less likely to become a patient tomorrow.**

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 10

It's time to resume the India-China strategic economic dialogue

LAST WEEK in New Delhi, India's national security advisor Ajit Doval told his Chinese interlocutor, foreign minister Wang Yi, "India and China are partners, not rivals," and added, "a stable India-China relationship serves the common interests of both sides." Echoing these sentiments, Wang suggested that both sides should "respect each other's core interests, properly handle sensitive issues, place the China-India boundary issue in its appropriate position, and prevent it from affecting the overall situation of bilateral relations."

He then called for both sides "to accelerate the resumption of dialogue mechanisms and promote exchanges" in trade, finance, and other fields. It is a timely suggestion that should be taken up in right earnest. **Fifteen years ago**, at a time when India-China relations were on a more even keel, **Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Wen Jiabao agreed to launch a bilateral strategic economic dialogue**. The Indian delegation was headed by the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, and subsequently the deputy chairman of the Niti Aayog. **Between 2011 and 2019, six meetings were convened. After 2019, the dialogue has remained suspended.** Not much seems to have come out of those dialogues.

With the recent improvement in India-China bilateral relations, there have been several interactions at the military, security and diplomatic levels. There is an urgent need for a resumption of a meaningful and focused economic security dialogue. India's chief concern remains the wide and widening trade deficit, with mercantilism occupying an important place in Beijing's economic policy toolbox.

The strategic economic dialogue had a wider remit and was aimed at improving

macro-economic policy coordination, promoting exchanges on economic issues and enhancing India-China economic cooperation. Working groups were established on a wide range of subjects, including energy, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, high tech, resource conservation and environmental protection. After the events of 2020, the stand-off and clashes along the line of actual control, this dialogue was suspended.

In the new global context in which India now finds itself and given the thaw in India-China relations, it is necessary that the focus of bilateral relations should not be confined only to extant differences on the border issue. While it is not clear if the leaderships of both countries are today in a position to resolve those differences amicably, the definition of "core" issues must extend beyond the geopolitical to include India's developmental concerns.

India's own developmental priorities necessitate a wider engagement with China on economic issues. China must recognise that sustaining economic growth and building India's industrial capacity is also a core issue for India.

One of the positive outcomes of the dialogue on energy security was a willingness on the part of both countries to work together in dealing with energy supply challenges. China and India have an enormous stake in the stability of energy supplies. Going beyond traditional sources of energy, **the two should explore opportunities to develop non-traditional energy.** Such cooperation would be a global public good.

The weaponisation of trade, finance and energy by the United States that began almost a decade ago and became intense following the Russia-Ukraine war, remains a



SANJAYA BARU

matter of concern for both countries. The fact is that initially, **China was the principal target of US and European action, but India suffered collateral damage.** The trade measures that President Donald Trump took against China in his first term also hurt India. In his second term, Trump has directly targeted India on trade and energy.

The expression of solidarity within BRICS, as has recently been in evidence, is a sign of wider developing country concern about developed economy actions. It is becoming increasingly clear that as Asian economies rise, the "West vs Rest" divide stares us in the face. As the second largest economy, **can China play a more positive role in the rise of the Rest,** instead of being seen as contributing to their deindustrialisation?

To be sure, the huge and persistent trade deficit today is also a reflection of the fact that **the Indian private sector has become dependent on imports from China.** Consider the business traffic between the two countries. Many Indian companies, large and medium-scale, continue to make a beeline for China in search of machinery and technology. Clearly, a growing economy like India can no longer afford to minimise economic links with the world's second-largest economy, especially when signals from the largest economy remain worrisome.

The difficulties Indian trade negotiators are facing in concluding a bilateral trade agreement with the US point to the need for a more nuanced approach to trade with China

The difficulties Indian trade negotiators are facing in concluding a bilateral trade agreement with the US point to the need for a more nuanced approach to trade with China. **Any strategic economic dialogue** today will have to once again emphasise Indian concerns about the trade deficit but go beyond it to find meaningful ways in which **India and China can pursue win-win**

economic cooperation. India's rise should be viewed as offering opportunities to many Asian economies, including China. A strategic economic dialogue between Asia's largest economies can meaningfully explore these opportunities.

When Prime Minister Wen met Prime Minister Singh in 2006, the former began his conversation with the observation that Asia's rise is contingent upon the rise of both China and India. It is a different matter that over the past two decades, China has risen at a faster pace and now occupies a commanding position in the global economy. However, increased economic cooperation between the two biggest Asian economies can be a win-win proposition if China adopts a more forward-looking policy towards India. It is necessary to explore these possibilities.

All this requires a change in mindset in both capitals. **Between 2006 and 2019, there was a willingness in both leaderships to explore areas of potential economic cooperation.** After 2020, it would appear that **the military and security leadership had taken charge of the relationship, relegating economic interaction to the background.**

Recent events, including the last summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping, give some hope for a more positive approach to the bilateral relationship in both capitals. However, just as the national security dialogue is conducted by the NSA, the economic security dialogue should be conducted by an economic czar who can command the PM's attention and ensure speedy implementation of decisions taken.

The writer is chairman of the board of trustees, Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS) & Centre for Aerospace & Strategic Studies (CAPS)

GS 2: GOVERNANCE

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 15

• POLICY

Does dialling 112 help in all emergencies? Depends on state you live in

Dheeraj Mishra
New Delhi, June 28

WHICH HELPLINE do you dial when there's a road accident? Or a fire? Or a medical crisis? This is often the first challenge Indians face in an emergency — multiple helpline numbers that lead to confusion and delay the response.

To address this issue, the Union government launched the Nationwide Emergency Response System (NERS) number 112 in 2019 — just like the US's 911. It was intended to subsume all emergency numbers — such as 100 (police), 101 (fire), 102 (emergency medical services), 108 (ambulance), 1033 (highway), 181 (women), 1098 (child) and 1091 (woman in distress) — into one common code.

But even after seven years of 112's launch, *The Indian Express* has found from Supreme Court submissions that only five states and Union Territories — Delhi, Kerala, Gujarat, Haryana and Lakshadweep — have integrated all emergency helpline numbers into the 112 NERS.

Uttar Pradesh is close to achieving full integration, with only 102 (emergency medical services) left to be included.

Last month, the Supreme Court gave all states and Union Territories three months to complete the technical and operational integration of all emergency numbers into the 112 helpline.

Why is 112 India's common emergency number?

It's not just India that has adopted this code. The 112 helpline number is also used by European member states and many other countries.

It was the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) that first recommended 112 as a common emergency number, way back in 1976. And it did so for two practical reasons.

"First, telephones at that time had rotary dials, and dialling '112' took the least amount of time. Second, dialling the number '3' would lock the dial, so even if the phone was locked, '112' could still be dialed," says a 2019 report by the Uttar Pradesh government.

The CEPT also chose different digits rather than repeated digits like 111 or 999 to prevent accidental dialling.

In modern-day touchscreens, too, the

State of the service

- Seven years after 112's launch, it has been found from Supreme Court submissions that only five states and Union Territories — Delhi, Kerala, Gujarat, Haryana and Lakshadweep — have integrated all emergency helpline numbers with 112.

- As many as 10 states had not carried out any integration. Three states' responses were not available.

numbers 112 are easier to dial rather than, say, 108 or 102.

How did India decide to get a common helpline number?

In India, the decision to launch 112 was taken on the basis of recommendations made by an expert committee on the 2012 Delhi bus gangrape case. The Justice J S Verma committee — which also included former High Court Justice Leila Seth and former Solicitor General of India Gopal Subramaniam — recommended setting up a public emergency response system that could be activated by a call.

Following this, the Department of Telecommunications allotted the emergency number 112 and the Ministry of Home Affairs formally launched it across India on February 19, 2019 through the Nirbhaya fund to provide a one-stop solution to all kinds of emergencies.

In their responses to the Supreme Court, 16 states said they have partially integrated multiple helplines into the common code.

As many as 10 states had not carried out any integration. Three states' responses were not available.

How does the code work?

Apart from being a single emergency number, the 112 system provides a centralised mechanism to monitor resources at the district or state level. Uttar Pradesh, for instance, has developed a command centre in Lucknow from where it deals with emergency calls across the state.

"UP-112 was started in 2017. We have 6,278 police response vehicles that are deployed at hotspots. We get more than 30,000 calls daily and have integrated 25 services, which also include 'safe city Lucknow', 'Lucknow smart city', 'UPSRTC mobile app' and 'child line', etc. We have recently integrated 'PM-Rahat' where we provide details of the nearest hospital, where you can get cashless treatment. A centralised system helps in managing the resources better," said a senior official of UP-112.

This official said: "When we get a call, the system creates an event or ticket according to the emergency — like fire, ambulance or police — and triggers the nearest police response vehicle."