



Indian Express News Analysis (IENA)

English PDF Notes – 01 April 2024

Free pass to the House: How often MPs, MLAs have been elected unopposed

*#UnopposedLegislators #UnopposedMPs #UnopposedMLAs #LokSabhaElection
#AssemblyElection #Election #Polity #GS2*

Just two weeks after the Election Commission (EC) announced the schedule for the Lok Sabha and four state Assembly polls, **10 BJP candidates for the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly have already won their seats, including Chief Minister Pema Khandu who also won unopposed in 2014 and 2011, the latter in a bypoll. A sixth of the 60-member Arunachal Pradesh Assembly has been elected unopposed, one seat shy of the record set in 2014, when 11 candidates won without an election being required.**

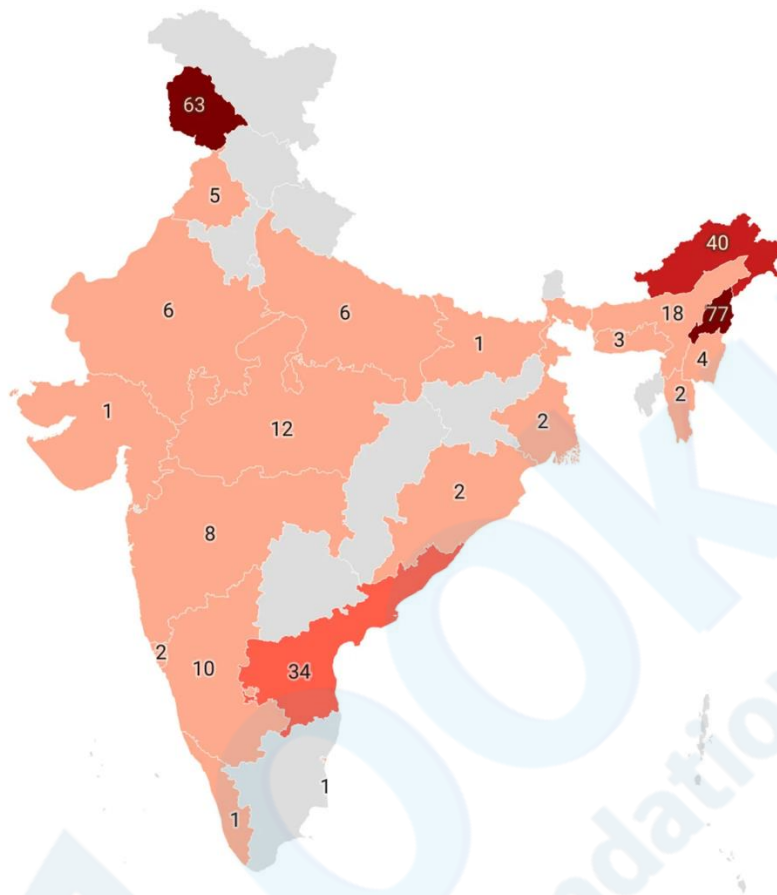
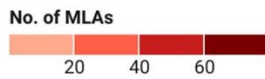
It is more common for MLAs to win unopposed than Lok Sabha MPs. Since the first elections in 1952, 298 MLAs and 28 MPs won their seats in the absence of any opponent.

State Assemblies

In Assemblies, Nagaland leads the way with the most MLAs elected unopposed at 77, followed by Jammu and Kashmir at 63, and Arunachal Pradesh at 40.

In 1962, the Assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Mysore, and J&K saw the most state legislators elected unopposed in a single year at 47. After that, the highest tallies for a single year came in 1998 at 45, and in 1967 and 1972 at 33 each.

State-wise number of MLAs elected unopposed



Source: Election Commission • Map data: © OSM • Created with Datawrapper

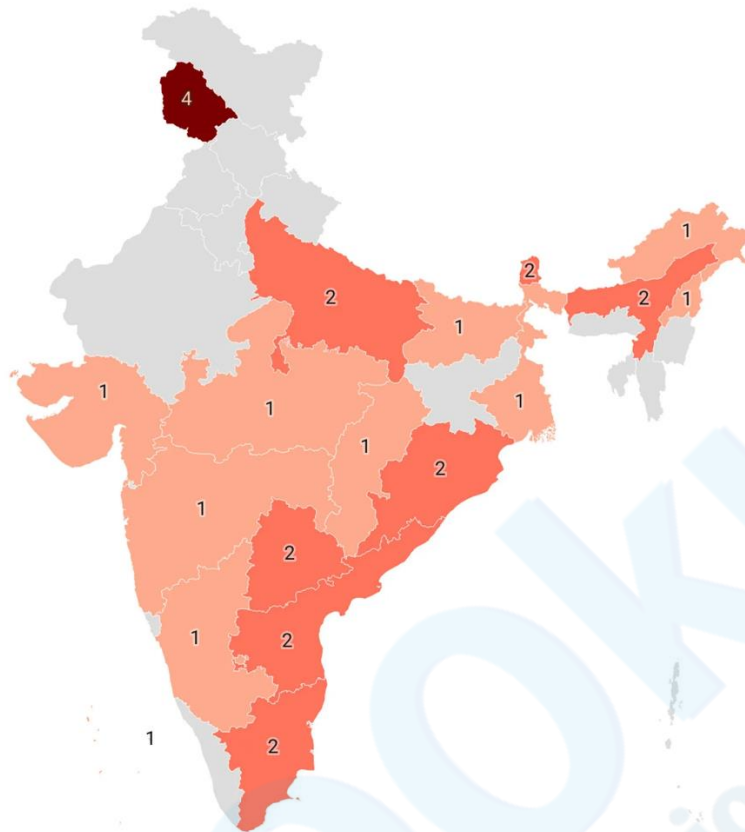
The Congress has, by far, had the most MLAs elected unopposed at 194, followed by the National Conference (NC) at 34, and the BJP at 15. To date, 29 Independents have also been elected unopposed.

Khandu and former J&K CM Syed Mir Qasim have been elected unopposed a record three times each. Khandu's Mukto Assembly seat has seen the most instances of an MLA elected unopposed at five. Before Khandu, his father and former CM Dorjee Khandu won the seat in 1990 and 2009 without a contest.

Lok Sabha

Since 1952, J&K has seen the most MPs elected unopposed at four. Only eight states have sent more than one legislator to Parliament uncontested, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

State-wise number of MPs elected unopposed



Source: Election Commission • Map data: © OSM • Created with Datawrapper

The **most MPs elected unopposed in a single election came in 1952, 1957, and 1967 at five each.** The **most recent unopposed election was in a 2012 bypoll**, when Dimple Yadav, the wife of Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh, won Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh. Before that, the **last time an MP won uncontested was in 1995.**

The **Congress has seen the most MPs get elected unopposed at 20.** The **NC and SP follow with two each.** **Just one Independent has won the parliamentary election unopposed.** **There is no BJP candidate on this list.**

Only two Lok Sabha seats have seen an MP elected unopposed more than once – Sikkim and Srinagar.

Among the notable MPs who were elected unopposed are former Deputy Prime Minister and Maharashtra CM Y B Chavan from Nasik; former J&K CM and NC chief Farooq Abdullah from Srinagar; former Nagaland CM and ex-Governor of four states S C Jamir; Odisha's first CM Harekrushna Mahatab from Angul; former member of the Constituent Assembly T T Krishnamachari from Tamil Nadu's Tiruchendur; and former Union Ministers P M Sayeed from Lakshadweep and K L Rao from Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh.

Viksit Bharat must also be inclusive Bharat

[#ViksitBharat](#) [#IssuesinAgriculture](#) [#AgriGDP](#) [#Agriculture](#) [#Economy](#) [#GS3](#)

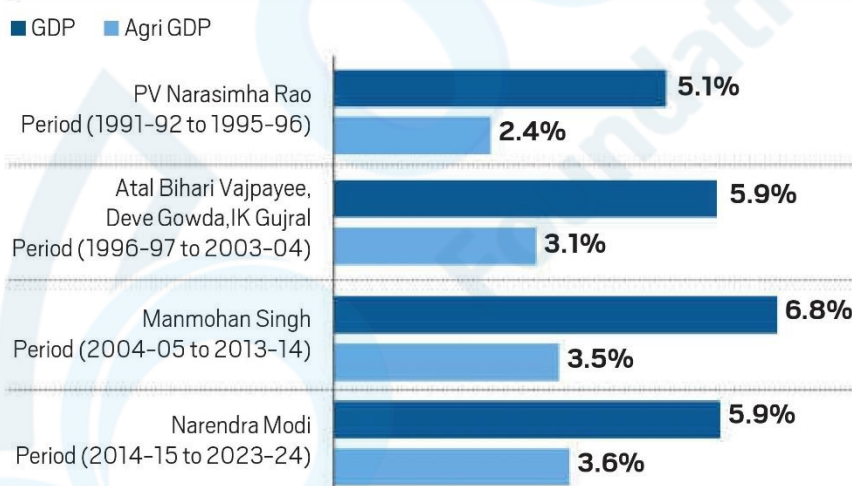
The temperatures are rising not only politically, but also atmospherically. It is now confirmed that 2023 was the warmest year on record since 1850 as per the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US. The 2023 temperatures were 1.18 degrees Celsius higher than pre-industrial levels, and many scientists are predicting that 2024 could be even worse.

Against this backdrop of rising temperatures, the moot question for us in India is: **Will Indian agriculture be able to feed our growing population in the medium to long run, and whether our farmers will also be prosperous in Viksit Bharat@2047** — an aspirational slogan given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Although 2047 is still 23 years away, and it is very difficult to arrive at such long-term projections, a **rough idea can be obtained by looking at what happened since reforms began in 1991 and continued, in one way or the other, under various governments.** But more interesting would be to see the growth story in the last 10 years under the Narendra Modi government since 2014 and compare it with the 10 years of the Manmohan Singh government. Given that the incumbent government feels very confident of coming back to office with a thumping majority, it is likely to continue its policies of the last 10 years, or may even accelerate to realise its aspiration of a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

The infographic gives average annual growth rates (AAGR) of overall GDP and agri-GDP (2011-12 base, revised series). **While the long-term growth rate from 1991-92 to 2023-24 (second advance estimate) of overall GDP is 6.1 per cent, for agri-GDP it is 3.3 per cent. However, during the last 10 years of the Modi government, overall GDP has grown only by 5.9 per cent (compared to 6.8 per cent during Manmohan Singh's period) and agriculture growth has been 3.6 per cent (compared to 3.5 per cent during the Manmohan Singh period).** There is not much of a difference between the two governments with respect to agri-GDP growth.

AAGR OF GDP IS 6.1% AND AAGR OF AGRI-GDP IS 3.3% BETWEEN 1991-92 AND 2023-24



Source: MOSPI as accessed on March 28, 2024; AAGR: Average Annual Growth Rate

Agriculture is critical for India's development as it still engages about 45 per cent of the working population (2022-23, PLFS data). So, if Viksit Bharat has to be an inclusive Bharat, it must develop its agriculture to its full potential. Productivity needs to rise, water consumption needs to be reduced, groundwater needs to be re-charged, soil degradation needs to be arrested, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture need to be curtailed. Business as usual, with the current set of policies, is not likely to deliver this dream of inclusive Viksit Bharat by 2047.

What we know today is that **agriculture contributes roughly 18 per cent to the overall GDP but engages 45 per cent of the workforce** — as pointed out earlier. If our growth rates of overall GDP and agri-GDP keep growing as they have during the last 20 years, or even last 10 years, the **likely chances are that by 2047, agriculture's share in overall GDP may drop to just 7-8 per cent but it may still be saddled with more than 30 per cent of the country's workforce. More people need to move out of agriculture to higher productivity jobs with better skills. Therefore, the skill formation of rural people for rapidly growing and urbanising India has to be a top priority.** Else I am afraid,

Viksit Bharat will be Viksit only for the top 25 per cent population, while the remaining may remain stuck in the low-medium income category.

The **expected overall GDP growth of 7.6 per cent in 2023-24 is a good foundation to build on**. The Ministry of Finance and RBI both feel upbeat and expect the final numbers of this year may even be higher. It is good news and many in the tribe of economists feel that this can be maintained for the long run. But how many of us have noted that **the agri-GDP growth rate of 2023-24 is a pitifully low 0.7 per cent (second advance estimate)**? Do we want a situation where the economic conditions of the masses improve at less than one per cent while overall GDP grows at 7.6 per cent? The answer is obviously “no”.

Remember that agriculture growth dropped to this low level (0.7 per cent) primarily because of unseasonal rains during the last kharif season. And there are no positive signals that the situation will improve. If there are any signals, the risks of extreme weather events are going to increase, as humanity is falling far behind in arresting global warming. Is India in general, and agriculture in particular, ready for that? Not really.

Indian agriculture in Viksit Bharat cannot be on a weak and risky wicket. **Two years of successive droughts can spoil the party of Viksit Bharat. Even without a drought, RBI has been fighting almost this entire year to control food inflation. GoI has put export controls, stocking limits on traders, suspended futures trading in many agri-commodities, and unloaded wheat and rice at prices below their economic costs. These are all signs of panic, and policy tools of the 1960s, when India was living from “ship to mouth”. This policy toolbox cannot be carried on in Viksit Bharat.**

So, what should be the agenda for agriculture in Viksit Bharat? **Rationalise food and fertiliser subsidies, and put the savings to augment agri-R&D, agri-innovations, agri-extension, soil and water recharge through check dams and watersheds, promoting water saving techniques in agriculture (drip and sprinklers, fertigation, protected cultivation, etc). More importantly, Indian agriculture has to move to high-value agriculture (poultry, fishery, dairy, fruits and vegetables) with a value chain approach, from plate to plough, that is, a demand-driven system.**

For that, we need to think of **policies and institutions through which our farmers can access pan-India markets, and even export markets on a regular basis. Be it through cooperatives or farmer producer organisations (FPOs) on digital commerce (E-NAM, ONDC type) or through contract farming with large processors, retailers, and exporters.**

Matabari Pera, Pachra from Tripura get coveted GI tag

#MatabariPera #Pachra #GItag #ArtandCulture #GS1

Two items from Tripura have earned the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag. The two items that received the tag are Matabari Pera – a dairy-based confectionary item traditionally served as prasad at the Tripurasundari temple in Gomati district – and Pachra – a handwoven cloth used by the state’s Indigenous communities.

The Matabari Mahila Cluster Level Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited had applied for the GI tag for Matabari Pera while the Dewanbari Mahila Cluster Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited had made a similar application for Pachra or Rignai textile in March last year.

According to the 1921 census, there were 34,356 tribal families in Tripura while the number of looms was 34,485. However, the 1955-56 Industrial Survey Report noted that the total number of weavers was just 15,000.

The GI tag is expected to boost the waning number of traditional weavers and provide an impetus to the rich art form, observed experts.

A year earlier, Tripura's iconic queen pineapple had received a GI tag among 13 other products from the Northeast.

The push for nuclear energy as climate solution

#NuclearEnergy #NuclearEnergySummit #IAEA #NuclearElectricityGeneration #Decarbonisation #ClimateChange #ScienceandTechnology #GS3

Last week, **Brussels hosted a first-of-its-kind Nuclear Energy Summit** that was billed as the most high-profile international meeting on nuclear energy ever, boasting the attendance of representatives from 30 countries, including a few heads of state. This day-long meeting on March 21 was the latest in a series of efforts being made in the last few years to pitch nuclear energy as an important solution to global problems like climate change and energy security.

The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which organised last week's event**, called it a "landmark" and a "turning point" in the efforts to expand the use of nuclear energy for generating clean electricity.

Global nuclear advocates, led by the IAEA, an intergovernmental organisation that works for the safe and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology, have been very active in the last few years in highlighting the potential of nuclear power to accelerate the clean energy transition that the world so desperately needs to achieve its climate change goals.

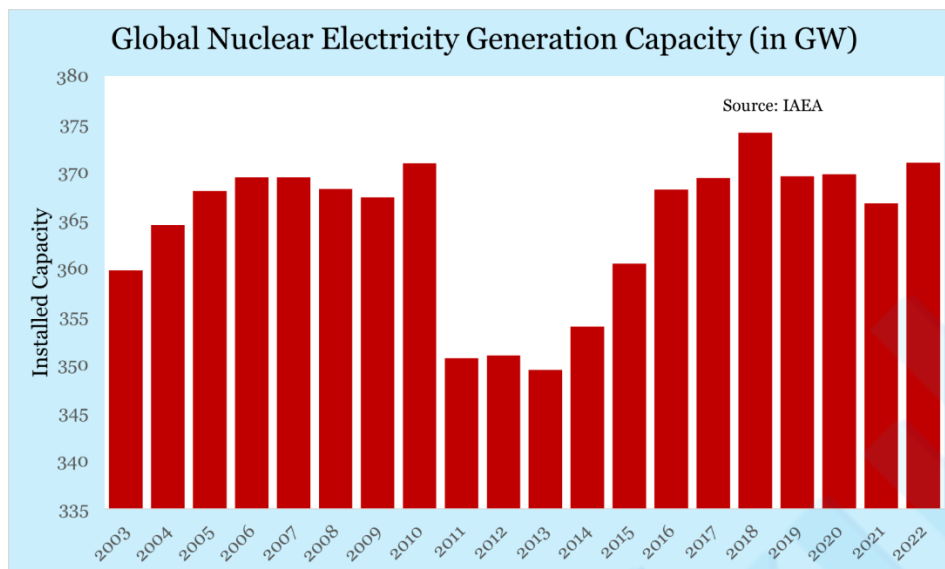
The **IAEA has launched an 'Atoms4Climate' initiative to talk about this and has begun an engagement with the climate community, especially at the COPs or the annual year-ending climate conferences. Two years ago, at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, IAEA set up a pavilion for the first time, and at COP28 in Dubai last year, about 20 countries pledged to work towards tripling global nuclear energy installed capacity by 2050.**

The case for nuclear energy

The case for nuclear energy as a possible substitute for fossil fuels, at least for electricity generation, is not without merits. **It is a clean source of energy with a minimal carbon footprint. There is negligible release of emissions during the electricity generation process.**

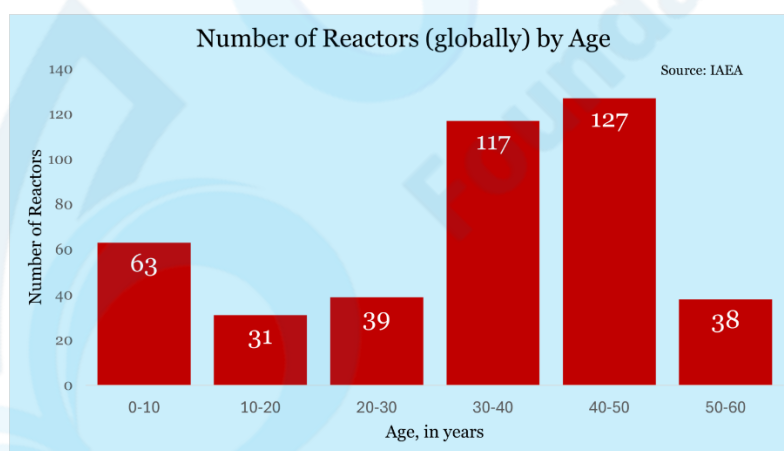
Even when the entire life cycle is considered – accounting for activities like reactor construction, uranium mining and enrichment, waste disposal and storage, and other processes – greenhouse gas emissions are only in the range of 5 to 6 grams per kilowatt hour, according to IAEA. This is more than 100 times lower than coal-fired electricity, and about half the average of solar and wind generation.

Some independent studies have put the emission from nuclear life cycles at much higher levels, around 50-60 grams per kilowatt-hour in some instances, depending on the processes and energy used for extraction of minerals, construction and other activities. But in most cases, **nuclear power plants are known to have substantially lower carbon footprint than solar or wind projects over their entire life cycle.**



The other great advantage of nuclear is its perennial availability, unlike wind or solar which are season or time-dependent. It is thus suitable for baseload electricity generation that solar or wind projects are unable to do unless breakthroughs in battery storage technologies come along.

For these reasons, nuclear energy features prominently in most of the decarbonisation pathways suggested by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and others. IAEA says nuclear energy is already contributing very significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nuclear power generation results in avoiding emissions of more than 1 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent every year, according to IAEA. In the last five decades, this has resulted in a cumulative avoidance of about 70 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.



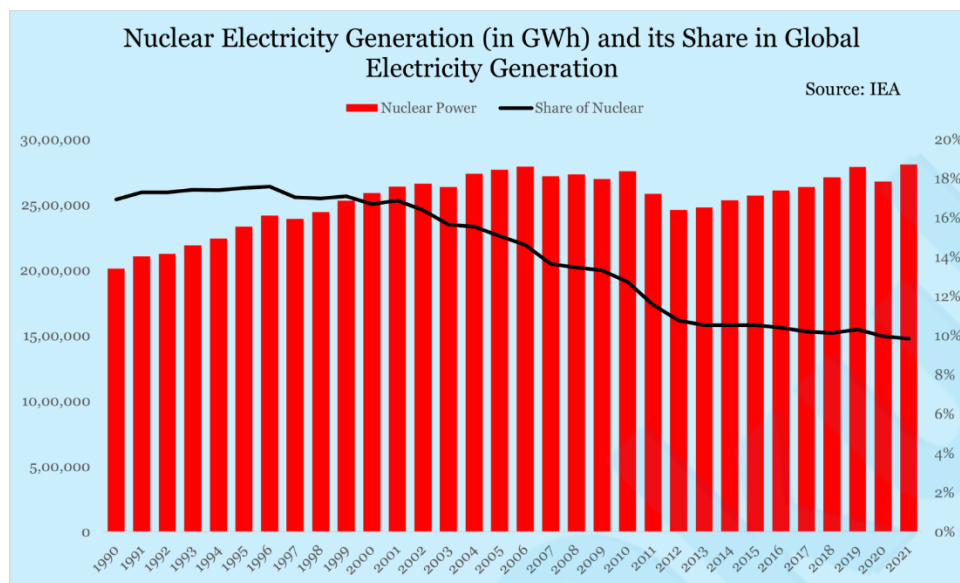
What explains the poor uptake of nuclear energy?

But despite these advantages, there has been a serious lack of enthusiasm for the accelerated deployment of nuclear energy. **Only 31 countries in the world use nuclear energy for generating electricity. And barely seven more are working towards joining this club.**

The number of operational nuclear reactors has actually come down in the last 20 years, from 437 in 2003 to 411 now, IAEA data shows. The average life of these reactors is more than 31 years, which highlights the fact that few new reactors have come onboard in the last decade.

The total installed electricity generation capacity has shown only a marginal increase during this period, from about 360 GW in 2003 to 371 GW now. Nuclear energy accounts for less than 10 per cent of global commercial electricity generation, and its share has been declining for almost three decades now.

Safety concerns are not the only reason for the poor uptake of nuclear energy in recent years, though those would be some of the most important, particularly after the Fukushima accident. **Nuclear power also happens to be the costliest electricity right now.**



Nuclear reactors require high investments and technology base, take years to build, and have to operate under a variety of regulations and constraints, making them unattractive for countries wanting to quickly ramp up their electricity generation in an affordable manner.

The kind of technology breakthroughs that have driven down the costs of solar and wind in the last decade, thus enabling rapid adoption, have not happened in the nuclear sector. The much-discussed technology of small modular reactors is far from being mature.

It is hurdles like these that have worked against a rapid growth in nuclear energy in the last three decades. But the climate emergency is creating an opportunity for a greater push for nuclear energy.

As IAEA director general Rafael Mariano Grossi said **there was a growing realisation that without nuclear “you would never get anywhere near the climate goals. Nowhere near”.**

COP outreach

Die-hard climate activists who have been demanding deep and rapid cuts in production and consumption of fossil fuels aren't really great supporters of nuclear energy. The annual climate conferences have usually maintained a safe distance from the nuclear industry and its advocates. But that is changing.

In the last five years, nuclear energy has progressively gained visibility at these conferences. IAEA has now begun participating in these like any other international agency with observer kind of status, organising side events and talks on the potential of nuclear energy.

The Dubai meeting last year was particularly eventful. Representatives from 22 countries, including several that do not currently use nuclear-generated electricity, committed themselves to working together to achieve a tripling of global nuclear energy installed capacity by 2050 from 2020 levels. This is an extremely ambitious goal, though broadly in line with some pathways projected by the IPCC for achieving global net-zero emission levels by 2050.

Even more significant was the fact that the final outcome from Dubai formally acknowledged nuclear energy as one of the zero, or low-emission technologies, that needed to be accelerated to achieve rapid and deep decarbonisation. This was the first time that nuclear energy was mentioned in any COP outcome.

According to IAEA projections, before the tripling declaration, the total electricity generating capacity of nuclear power was set to grow by 22 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050 from 2020 levels. Tripling appears to be a herculean task right now.

What is India's position on nuclear energy?

India, which currently has 23 operational nuclear reactors, does acknowledge the role of nuclear energy in its decarbonisation plan and is planning for a rapid expansion in the coming years, even though the share of nuclear energy in electricity generation is likely to remain extremely modest in the foreseeable future.

The currently operational reactors have a combined installed electricity generating capacity of 7,480 MW (about 7.5 GW). At least ten more reactors are under construction, and the capacity is supposed to triple to 22,480 MW by 2031-32. The share of nuclear energy in total electricity generation capacity is just about 3.1 per cent, among the lowest in countries that do use nuclear energy.

Only Brazil and Iran have a lower share of nuclear energy in their electricity generation mix. Even after expansion, this share is not expected to go beyond 5 per cent.

Interestingly, India skipped the tripling declaration at COP28 in Dubai. It was not the only nuclear power-producing country to do so, several others also did not sign up. But India was very much part of the Brussels meeting last week, with Department of Atomic Energy Secretary Ajit Kumar Mohanty in attendance. Mohanty said that India was firmly of the view that "nuclear power is a clean and environment-friendly source of electricity, which is available 24x7, and can provide the country long-term energy security in a sustainable manner."

Mohanty talked about India's ongoing efforts to triple its current nuclear power capacity by 2030, and said that the aim was for nuclear energy to have a "significant share in electricity mix of India by the year 2047". He did not offer a target for 2047.

Former head of the Department of Atomic Energy Anil Kakodkar believes that India wasn't moving fast enough to expand its nuclear power sector. Kakodkar expressed surprise at India staying away from the tripling declaration at COP28 and said India had the potential, and also the imperative, to grow its nuclear energy sector at a much faster pace.

"There is a perception that renewables will solve everything. In the short-term, that might be the case. But as our hunger for clean energy increases, the demand cannot be met without getting in nuclear energy in a big way. Every projection shows that," Kakodkar had said.

Remembering Vaikom satyagraha, a 100 years later

#ViakomSatyagraha #TempleEntryMovement #ModernHistory #History #GS1

Vaikom, a temple town in the princely state of Travancore, saw the start of a non-violent agitation on March 30, 1924 — the first among temple entry movements that would soon sweep across the country. The satyagraha foregrounded social reform amidst the growing nationalist movement, bringing Gandhian methods of protest to the state of Travancore.

Early 20th century Travancore

The princely state of Travancore had a feudal, militaristic, and ruthless system of custom-ridden government.

The second half of the 19th century saw several social and political developments ushering in unprecedented social change. First, Christian missionaries converted large sections of lower castes seeking to escape the clutches of caste oppression. Second, the reign of Maharaja Ayilyam Thirunal Rama Varma (1860-80) saw many progressive reforms, such as universal free primary education — including for the lower castes.

By the dawn of the 20th century, there had begun to emerge among caste Hindus, Christians and even avarna Hindus, especially Ezhavas, a significant educated elite.

While religion and custom remained pervasive, the absolute material and intellectual deprivations of lower castes did not continue. **The Ezhavas, in particular, emerged as the most educated and organised untouchable community in Travancore.**

But government jobs were still reserved for upper castes — in 1918, caste Hindus, a numerical minority, held 3,800 out of 4,000 jobs in the state's revenue department. This meant that education itself did not act as a means of socio-economic advancement.

Also, while a small Ezhava elite had started to emerge, in many cases, the ritual discrimination, overrode material and educational progress. Take for instance the story of Aloommoottil Channar, an Ezhava, and one of the few people in Travancore to own a car in the early 20th century. Whenever the automobile reached a road where the Ezhavas were not allowed to pass, Channar had to get out of his vehicle and take a detour on foot.

Road to agitation

The issue of temple entry was first raised by Ezhava leader T K Madhavan in a 1917 editorial in his paper Deshabhimani. Inspired by the success of Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement, by 1920, he began to advocate for more direct methods. That year, he himself went beyond the restrictive notice boards on a road near the Vaikom temple.

But upper-caste counter-agitations across Travancore made any progress difficult — and the Maharaja, fearful of caste Hindu backlash, shied away from reforms.

It was the entry of the Indian National Congress into the picture that changed the dynamics. **Madhavan met Gandhi in 1921, and secured the Mahatma's support for a mass agitation to enter temples. In the 1923 session of the INC in Kakinada, a resolution was passed by the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee to take up anti-untouchability as a key issue.** This was followed by a massive public messaging campaign and a movement to open Hindu temples and all public roads to avarnas. Vaikom, with its revered Shiva temple, was chosen as the location for the very first satyagraha.

The Vaikom satyagraha

Madhavan and other leaders took the strategic decision to initially focus on opening up the four roads around the temple — not the temple itself — to avarnas. Early morning on March 30, 1924, a Nair, an Ezhava and a Pulayu, dressed in Khaddar uniforms and garlanded, and followed by a crowd of thousands, attempted to use the roads.

They were promptly stopped and arrested. So, the next morning, another three men entered the forbidden roads and courted arrest. This went on every day — until the police stopped making arrests on April 10 and barricaded the whole area instead.

From then through September, protesters sat in front of the barricades, fasting and singing patriotic songs. **Leaders such as Periyar, who was arrested multiple times, and C Rajagopalachari came to Vaikom to offer support and lead the protesters.** At the same time, counter-agitations raged on, and the satyagrahis often faced violence and intimidation from caste Hindus.

In August, 1924, the Maharaja of Travancore died, following which, the young Maharani Regent, Queen Sethulakshmi Bai, released all prisoners. But when a large group of protesters marched to the royal palace in Trivandrum, she refused to allow all castes access to temples.

In March 1925, Gandhi was finally able to iron out a compromise: three out of the four roads surrounding the temples were opened up for everyone, but the fourth (eastern) road was kept reserved for brahmins. This was finally implemented in November 1925, when the government completed diversionary roads that could be used by the low castes “without polluting the temple”. The last satyagrahi was recalled from Vaikom on November 23, 1925.

Legacy and aftermath

The Vaikom satyagraha was a remarkable movement, which sustained itself for over 600 days, amidst hostile social forces, police crackdowns, and one of the worst floods in the town’s history in 1924. The satyagraha also saw previously unseen unity across caste lines, which was crucial for its continuing mobilisation.

But the final compromise disappointed many. Famously, Periyar, who had envisioned a far more spectacular outcome, fell out with Gandhi over the issue.

In November 1936, the Maharaja of Travancore signed the historic Temple Entry Proclamation which removed the age-old ban on the entry of marginalised castes into the temples of the state. This, along with the demonstration of Gandhian methods of civil disobedience as effective tools of protest, was the great success of the Vaikom satyagraha. As King wrote: “Despite its shortcomings ... the Vykombathur satyagraha brought untouchability, unapproachability, and unseeability to the forefront of political issues in India.”

India’s trade reliance on China and EU rising: UN trade body

#TradeReliance #IndiaChinaTrade #IndiaEUTrade #InternationalTrade #Economy #GS3

India’s trade reliance on China and the European Union is rising as global trade is witnessing a marked shift along geopolitical lines, says a report by the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**.

This comes in the backdrop of major supply chain reset following the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war that had sent food and fuel prices to record highs.

The UNCTAD estimates, based on national statistics, showed that **India’s dependence on China and the European Union (EU) grew by 1.2 per cent while its reliance on Saudi Arabia slid by 0.6 per cent.**

This came despite India’s efforts to cut reliance on China by implementing its flagship Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme and Quality Control Orders (QCOs) largely to limit entry of cheap Chinese products.

UNCTAD’s estimates showed a major shift in trade due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. **While Russia’s trade dependence on China surged by a record 7.1 per cent, its reliance on the EU slid by 5.3 per cent.**

This was largely a result of Russian oil shifting from the EU to China and India. **Chinese custom data showed that China’s two-way trade with Russia in 2023 had hit a record \$240 billion. Russia had also increased purchasing Chinese goods when major US and European Union companies began exiting Russia after the war.**

Interestingly, the **US managed to cut reliance on China by 1.2 per cent in 2023 and increase its trade dependence on the EU and Mexico.**

The dependence of an economy on another is calculated as the ratio of their bilateral trade over the total trade of the dependent economy. Change is computed as a four quarter average of this ratio relative to the same period in the previous year, the report said.

The report showed that **global trade declined in most sectors, except for pharmaceuticals, transportation equipment, and road vehicles, particularly, electric cars.**

Among the sectors where the value of trade declined by more than 10 per cent during 2023 are apparel, chemicals, energy metals, office equipment, and textiles, UNCTAD said.

The report further said that the **value of global merchandise trade has experienced continuous decline since mid-2022. Trade in goods expected to contract by about US\$ 1.3 trillion or 5 per cent in 2023. But services trade is expected to gain about \$500 billion, or 8%.**

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