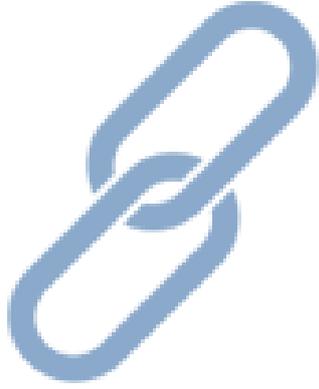


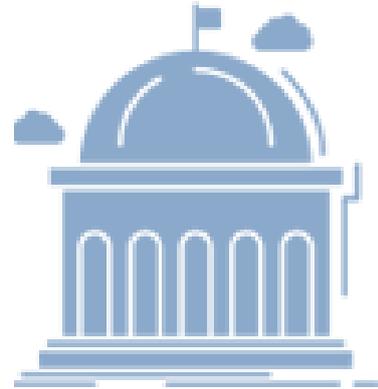
**Economic
Policy**



Social Policy



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Integration**



Governance

FIRE ENGULFS AMAZON FOREST

Written by Paromita Gupta

Amazon forest has been burning for 3 weeks and people all over the world are now awake. The hashtag #PrayforAmazonia has been all over twitter and on other social media sites too. The devastation has been so intense that the fire smoke can be seen from space.

The Brazil's 2019 fires are the highest in seven years. On August 12, the Brazilian state of Amazonas declared an emergency because of the fires, Euro News reported. Around 1699 fires were detected in the area of Amazonas as of now. The blazes have engulfed parts of the states of Rondônia, Amazonas, Pará, and Mato Grosso in Brazil.

Fires in the Rondônia nature reserve, which borders the Amazon, have been burning for more than two weeks. The National Institute for Space Research (INPE) satellite data showed an 83 percent increase in the same period in 2018. The space agency's satellite has detected more than 72,000 fires since January 2019 and more than 9,500 forest fires since 15th August, mostly in the Amazon region. The heavy smoke caused a daytime blackout more than 1,700 miles away in Brazil's largest city São Paulo on 12th August.

The blackout which lasted for about an hour came as strong winds brought in the smoke from the forest fires in the states of Amazonas and Rondonia. Santiago Gassó, a researcher at NASA's Goddard center, warned that the smoke layer stretched about 3.2 million square kilometers over Latin America. That area is equivalent to about 1.2 million square miles – roughly one-third of the United States. The beginning of the blaze Wildfires are a normal occurring during the dry seasons of Brazil, however this year seemed different. The fires typically start in July and August, ahead of the arrival of the dry season – with farmers setting fields' ablaze to clear land for crops. Activity peaks in early September and ends by November, NASA said. The Amazon forest has been pretty much fire resistant for much of its history because of its natural moisture and humidity. However, NASA has said that drought and human activities are a big cause for wildfires. In addition, fires are deliberately started in efforts to illegally deforest land for cattle ranching.

The previous governments had managed to reduce the clearance with the help of action

by federal agencies and/or a system of fines and penalties. However, this approach was overruled by the current Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro and his ministers who have criticized the penalties and overseen a dramatic fall in confiscations of timber and convictions for environmental crimes. Calling Global warming nothing but a greenhouse fable, Bolsonaro proposed that he would exit Brazil from the 2015 Paris Agreement if elected. Brazil still remains a member of the Agreement. Bolsonaro has appointed climate deniers to head both the Environment Ministry and the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Both the new ministers of environment and foreign affairs have abolished the sections within their ministries that dealt with climate change. Where others see crucial ecosystems, Bolsonaro sees potential for economic gain by opening those reserves to agriculture and mining. "Where there is indigenous land," he has said, "there is wealth underneath it." One study has calculated that deforestation rates could almost triple if all of Bolsonaro's Amazon development proposals take effect. Conservationists have blamed Mr Bolsonaro, saying he has encouraged loggers and farmers to clear the land, and scientists say the Amazon has suffered losses at an accelerated rate since he took office in January. Ironically, Bolsonaro retaliated by saying "criminal action by those NGOs, to call attention against me, against the Brazilian government" following funding cuts may be the reason for the forest fires. The fire comes as a heart wrenching news just after the Amazon Tribe's win against big oil companies. The Waorani tribe from Ecuadorian Amazon have lived in the rainforest for generations now. Although miles away from the forest fires in Paraguay, many are linking lawsuit and the Amazon forestry destruction which spans across 9 countries. According to Reuters, the tribe had been battling an on-going court case concerning the selling of sacred Amazonian lands to oil companies. The lands were originally auctioned off and approved to do so by the Ecuadorian government, much to the dismay of the indigenous tribe.

On 24th August, the Brazilian warplanes discharged water to dose the forest fire. This was confirmed by the Brazil Defense Ministry and was authorized by President Bolsonaro. A video posted by the defence ministry on Saturday evening showed a military plane pumping thousands of litres (thousands of gallons) of water out of two large spouts as it passed through clouds of smoke close to the forest canopy. The response came after the G7 nations' meeting in France and expressed their grave concerns over the fires. As of 27th August, the G7 member countries' \$20Billion aid has been rejected by the Brazil President. "We appreciate [the offer], but maybe those resources are more relevant to reforest Europe," said Onyx Lorenzoni, the chief of staff to President Jair Bolsonaro.

In the past 50 years, one-fifth of the Amazon has already been cut and burned to make way for logging, ranching, or mining. The largest rainforest in the world, the Amazon is a vital carbon store that slows down the pace of global warming. It is a hub of 10% of the world's species and is the richest biodiversity, and has about 20% of the world's freshwater. Nearly 6,000 square kilometers (3,600 square miles) of forests were lost in 2015 in the Brazilian Amazon alone. In a normal year, the Amazon rainforest absorbs about 2.2 billion tons (2 billion metric tons) of carbon dioxide, studies suggest. That number is sure shot to be affected post these fires. The next few years are highly crucial to our future existence. With Amazon burning, Glaciers melting, Coral Reefs dying, it is high time we do more than just pan world conventions and speeches.

A SAD REALITY OF INDIA

Written by Paromita Gupta

“Bhangi”- a derogatory term used for manual scavengers. The year is 2019, 73 years after our Independence, and manual scavenging is a sad reality. An age old practice of manually cleaning, carrying, disposing or handling in any matter, of human excreta from dry latrines and sewers. It often involves moving the excreta, using the most basic tools such as brooms and tin plates, into baskets, which the workers carry to disposal locations sometimes several kilometers away. Primarily a caste based occupation, the workers are treated with utmost disregard, and in a dehumanizing manner. Apart from social injustice, these people are highly exposed to health issues by virtue of their occupation. These health hazards include exposure to harmful gases, cardiovascular degeneration, musculoskeletal disorders, infections, skin problems and respiratory system problems.

Moreover, the government bodies have little to offer as manual scavenging is not recognised and is considered illegal. It was been officially prohibited by law in 1993 due to it being regarded as a caste-based, dehumanizing practice (if not done in a safe manner). The act was not effective in its nature, hence The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, forbids the employment of any person for the task of manual scavenging by any agency or individual. It is thought to be most prevalent in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Manual scavenging has a vast majority of workers involved being women. After 2013, the government recognized 12,742 manual scavengers in 13 states, with 82% of them in Uttar Pradesh. However the number has since been criticized as a gross under-representation of the actual numbers. The biggest violator of this law in India is the Indian Railways where many train carriages have toilets dropping the excreta from trains on the tracks and who employ scavengers to clean the tracks manually.

The number of deaths of workers while cleaning has risen, despite a ban on manual scavenging. According to official union government figures, there have been 323 deaths of manual scavengers in the country, with 88 occurring in past 3 years. However, Safai Karamchari Andolan, a non-profit organization, puts the number of deaths at over 1,500. They reported 1,340 such deaths in the last ten years. A Supreme Court order from March 27, 2014 makes it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died on duty since 1993 and provides Rs.10 lakh each as a compensation to their families.

The latest news as five men were suffocated to death while working in a drainage project in Nandgram area of Ghaziabad as they allegedly did not have safety. They were working at a project, sanctioned by the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation, to connect domestic sewer lines with the main drainage system of the city, District Magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey said.

The irony!

Taking up manual scavenging as an occupation is not a matter of choice. It is a matter of discrimination which needs to be addressed.

THE HONG KONG PROTESTS

Written by Divya Gupta and Charukeshi Bhatt

The protests in Hong Kong are entering their eleventh consecutive week with three separate rallies taking place as residents continue to press the government to suspend a controversial extradition bill as well as meet other demands.

What triggered the cause of extradition bill was a murder case in Taiwan (which China does not include in its territory), where the suspect managed to return to Hong Kong without a trial as there is no extradition pact between Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Hong Kong government proposed the extradition bill without a dash of thought and Beijing government sensing an opportunity exhibited their support for the same. These mass movements began in the month of June against a purported change in the city's extradition laws, which might give more power to mainland China to seize disagreements in the autonomous region of Hong Kong. Hence millions took to street to prohibit the extradition bill turning into a law. The protestors clad in black and clutching umbrellas marched on a spree of "Liberate Hong Kong!

Revolution of our time!" Activists are not resting till their demands are being met by the government which include the resignation of Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, a remission for all protestors arrested, retraction of the 'riot' characterization and permanent withdrawal of the extradition bill. As the protests continues, there has been no sign of concessions from the government, and Beijing has issued increasingly severe warnings. Analysts said authorities were hoping the protests would diminish on their own after students return to school in September. But secondary school students pledged to boycott classes one day a week when term begins, and university students are expected to launch similar campaigns. Nonetheless, observers suggested it is likely that the momentum of protests might decrease.

After the failure of Umbrella Movement in 2014, underlining the peaceful pro-democracy protests, a huge stretch of Hong Kong's citizens is determined to halt Beijing from further eroding the concept of "one country, two systems". As the extradition bills states that people would be sent for trial in mainland China under an unfair system and this according to the naysayers of bill will breach the official firewall between the two systems of Hong Kong and China, which is fundamental to Hong Kong's sovereignty since 1997.

A situation like this was due to happen in Hong Kong sooner or later. The reaction of the people of Hong Kong seems like a political imperative of the economic advancements free markets and capitalism brings in the country. This makes the population very resilient to any involvement with China, given the political system of the country. China is somehow incompetent to incorporate the Hong Kong market structure and will hinder the autonomy of its operation. With China's authoritative governance and blocking and censoring public and opinions, citizens of Hong Kong are not ready to restrain themselves in the boundations.

With the Hong Kong crisis slowly turning violent, and Beijing's position becoming tougher, international support for the protesters has started pouring in. However, as foreign affairs ministries in different countries grapple with the question of the extent of support that they should extend, it is clear that taking sides in the China-Hong Kong conflict is a double-edged sword. China's stature as the fiercely growing economic power and the prospects of a peaceful South-Asia, guide most nation's policy over China.

The recent growth of Chinese economy has made international power tilt towards the east of Greenwich and this has happened alongside a disturbed USA trying to win the economic battle with regular sanctions and threats. The US- China relations have continued to be strained due to the denial of China to hold elections in Taiwan being one of the factor. Already, the number two economy, China appears set to overtake the US by 2027, according to Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill. Recent relations under the Trump regime have been characterised by trade sanctions and tariff reductions on both sides as a part of the diplomatic standoff. Although, Trump promised to uphold the one China policy, the economic upsurge of Chinese economy is a matter of worry and seems to have perturbed the White House. The Trump government has taken an open stand for Hong Kong. "Millions of jobs are being lost in China to other non-Tariffed countries. Thousands of companies are leaving. Of course China wants to make a deal. Let them work humanely with Hong Kong first!" the US President tweeted. This comes after Chinese forces were seen along the China-Hong Kong border. The US state department said it was "deeply concerned" about the movements along the border and urged Beijing to fulfil its commitments to Hong Kong and allow it a "high degree of autonomy" under the terms of its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. The Soviet Union had been an ideological support to the communist China since its independence in 1949, but the Great Leap forward by China made the communist hardliners in Soviet uncomfortable. There has in general been a consensus between the two regarding US as their main competitors. The concern for China has been Russia's endorsement of India's interest while it tries to side line India as a regional superpower. Another crucial nation to look at is China's closest neighbour and competitor India. While the two began at a friendly note, with India being the first country to recognise the Independent China in 1949, the Tibet conflict made relations sour and for decades to come. Interestingly, despite the confrontations and competition, both the nations engage with each other economically and to a real extent. China's shielding of Pakistan on international platforms is an irritant between the China and India but both have great economic interests at stake to take radical steps. The 2017 Doklam standoff seemed like a tipping point in the relations but was resolved by smart diplomacy. The fact that China is foremost among India's trading partners speaks multitude of the trade relations. One cannot deny the trade imbalance that favours China, and so, India will have to measure its stance and speak carefully on the Hong Kong conflict. The most important however, in the Hong Kong conflict, will be role played by Britain for the reason that Hong Kong was an erstwhile colony of the latter. Although, China and Britain celebrated the 10th anniversary of the UK-China economic and Financial Dialogue in 2018, the fact is that Britain does not really matter, economically at least to China's vision of global ascendance. The UK has always been a marginal player and China's focus has been on Germany and France in Europe. Moreover, the uncertainty of the economic future for Britain after Brexit makes it in a vulnerable position to take a hard stand on Hong Kong, despite being a primary player in the conflict.

Despite that, Britain has registered an opposition to China's actions and called for an independent probe on the violence on protesters. The fact that protests in Hong Kong have happened only on bigger issues like national security in 2003, national education in 2012, universal suffrage in 2014 and pro-democracy in 2019 shows that the movements may not be related to any economic parameters and happens to be all about people defending their rights and freedoms and identifying themselves only as Hong Kongers. But the case that these protests might not beget economic instability is too difficult to close, with international interventions from countries like US and UK, which comprise highest percentage of trade with Hong Kong may indicate a dent on the Hong Kong's economy sooner or later. Coming over to the protest, even if the movement dies down from this point, it will bolster long term implications. Residents have developed a political and social consciousness and this cannot be instantly undone. For people have gathered their senses, there is no time to silence them.

Economics Without Tears

-A Book Review

Written by Tanisha Sukhija

“Education would be so much more effective if its purpose were to ensure that by the time they leave school every boy and girl should know how much they don't know, and be imbued with a lifelong desire to know it.” - Sir William Haley

The current education system is flawed to an extent where it now needs a complete metamorphosis. With learning only restricted to the internet and knowledge inculcated to get marks, there is not much that one actually imbibes at the end of the day. In such a scenario, Ashok Sanjay Guha's, Economics without tears appears to be a groundbreaking book, that brings in a ray of sunshine about the existence of actual learning platforms for the students. The book does absolute justice to its title and brings in a new perspective about Economics.

While Economics is considered an arduous discipline, which involves complex mathematics, the book tries to take readers on a different route, away from all these preconceived notions. The author does a wonderful job in explaining core economics principles in such a manner that even a person who studies medicine and has zero clue about the discipline, can easily comprehend the data.

The author makes use of anecdotes and fitting examples which makes it easy for the reader to understand the concepts better. Being a student of economics, I was familiar with the concepts and theories that the book included, but never did I imagine that such topics can be viewed from a different horizon. Before coming across this book, I was just acquainted with the concepts, obscure about its practical usage and application. The use of examples, application-based problems and comparison with real-life scenarios has helped me inculcate practical knowledge about the subject. Such type of knowledge and learning often lacks in our everyday curriculum but is rather essential in the actual world.

Astounding is the fact that all this is done without the use of a single mathematical equation. While mathematics and economics are considered to be two peas in a pod, the author's ability to explain complex principle without mathematics is nothing less than a mark of his brilliance in the subject matter. The book covers one of the elementary concepts of Economics known as 'lemons problems', that springs up due to asymmetric information distribution. If we go through the curriculum books, the only thing one comes across is the definition. One is bound to deduce that the problem is rather insignificant. But in the book, Mr. Guha brings out adversities that may arise due to the existence of lemons problem. The author segregates the book into two parts, covering both micro and macroeconomics. Multifarious aspects of both subject matters have been incorporated in the book. A lot of essential topics that everyone should be familiar with are also covered, without the use of technical jargons that are generally prevalent in every economics book.

One such area that the author covers is the income and substitution effect. This is a fundamental economic topic, which pervades throughout the world, but only a minor portion of the world is familiar with the intricacies of it. Every decision, every dilemma, every perplexion includes a trade-off in its solution, and all trade offs comprise of the income and the substitution effect. The income and substitution effects are thus included covertly in all major decision making process. But the general population makes all these decisions throughout their life without being aware of all these details. The author takes up this topic and portrays it in an unadorned manner. Every individual has two options to utilise the money earned, either to put it into consumption purposes or save it for future use. The author takes up this simple scenario and uses it to create a coherent distinction between income and substitution effects. He describes how interest rate plays a paramount role in this decision. If interest rates plunge, some may find it rudimentary to divert their earnings from savings to consumption, on the contrary, some may also start investing more to make up for the loss incurred due to this fall. The author makes use of this simple and rather ubiquitous complication and explains a rather complex economic principle. Another remarkably explained theory by Mr Guha is the game theory. Game theory is considered to be one of the most arduous theory of Economics that involves a significant amount of mathematical applications. But, the book defies this misconception by providing an ordinal approach to the theory. The author makes use of various anecdotes and examples to explain the theory and provide a realistic approach to it. The theory is put in words that are easy to comprehend and require no prior mathematical knowledge. Game theory is considered a very helpful mechanism to increase decision making skills of a person. The theory involves various dimensions like the prisoner's dilemma concept and numerous categories of games. The author has explained in detail, every aspect of the theory. From zero-sum to sequential games, all categories and relevant examples have been embedded in the book so that the reader does not miss out on any essential fragment.

Thus, it covers all the essential topics in a comprehensive manner and helps the readers inculcate essential knowledge about economics. The book is thus revolutionary and marks the commencement of a few steps taken towards bringing a change in the learning system. It emphasises on the need for studying the practical use of a subject rather than blindly cramming the inputs for good marks. The simplification of complex ideas is a quintessential underlying of this book which makes it stand out. Mr. Guha has presented his work meticulously and it will surely help change readers misconception about economics.

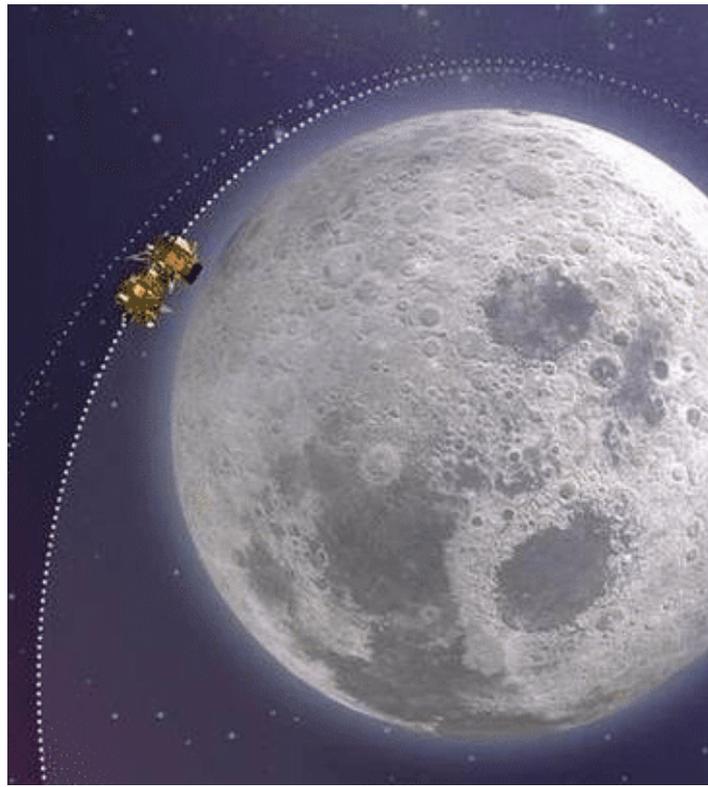
Chandrayaan 2

The Second Indian Lunar Mission

Chandrayaan 2, successfully completed its second orbital manouver on 21st August, 2019. Releasing the pictures sent by Chandrayaan 2, ISRO identified the Mare oriental basin on the moon. It also identified Apollo Craters on the far side of the moon which is not visible from the Earth.

The success of Chandrayaan 2, all set to hit the moon's surface on September 7, 2019; will bring India into the elite club with USA, Russia and China. The mission is the first in the world to hit the South pole of the Moon, and is also expected to validate the findings of Chandrayaan 1 on the presence of water molecules on the lunar surface.

Written by Mahak Mittal



The Centre of Policy Research and Governance (CPRG), India strongly believes that in the 21st century an India deprived of gainful opportunities, necessary for the flourishing of a young and emergent India, will prove to be an impediment in the development of human capital and preservation of global security. CPRG thus works towards providing gainful opportunities in an effort to promote the involvement of young people in policy making and politics.



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