



News Analysis (12 Oct, 2019)

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14th Anniversary of Right To Information

An important instrument of participatory democracy-Right To Information (RTI) has marked its 14th anniversary on 12th october 2019.

To mark the occasion, the '**Report Card on the Performance of Information Commissions in India**' has been released by the NGOs, Satark Nagrik Sangathan and the Centre for Equity Studies.

Key Findings

- **Achievements**

- RTI is one of the **landmark acts** which has led to a **significant boost** in accountability of the govt towards the people.
It has given ordinary citizens the confidence and the **right to ask questions** to the government authorities.
- RTI ensured the **maintenance and publication of public records**.
Section 4 of the RTI Act makes it a duty of public authorities to maintain records for easy access
- It also ensured **transparency as well as accountability** between citizens and public authorities.
Recently, the government of Rajasthan has launched **Jan Soochna Portal (JSP)**, on the lines of **Right to Information Act (RTI)**.
- RTI emphasizes **citizen centric approach**.
- It assured **information accessibility** at **every level** of public governance.
- According to estimates, nearly **60 lakh applications** are being filed every year.

- **Challenges**

- Government officials face **hardly any punishment for violating the law** by denying applicants legitimate information.
 - It destroys the basic framework of incentives and disincentives built into the RTI Act.
- State and Central Information Commissions, which are the courts of appeal under the RTI Act, **failed to impose penalties in about 97% of the cases** where violations took place.
 - The State Commissions of **Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Mizoram and Tripura did not impose penalties in any cases at all.**
- The commissions also have the **power to recommend disciplinary action against officials** for persistent violations of the RTI Act.
 - Only **10 states invoked** these powers.
- Many Information Commissions are **non-functional or are functioning at reduced capacity** as the **posts of commissioners, including that of the chief information commissioner are vacant.**
 - The State Information Commission(SIC) of the state of Andhra Pradesh is yet to become functional.
 - The State Information Commission of West Bengal is currently functioning with just two commissioners.
 - The Chief Information Commissioner of Maharashtra retired in April 2017 and the government is yet to appoint a new Chief
- The central, as well as state commissions, have an **increasing workload**, which is **leading to huge pendency** of cases.
 - Any **new appeal to the Central Information Commission (CIC)** would have to wait more than one-and-a-half years for resolution.

Central Information Commission (CIC)

- CIC was established in **2005** by the Central Government under the provisions of **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.**
- The Chief Information Commissioner heads the Central Information Commission.
- It hears appeals from information-seekers who have not been satisfied by the public authority and also addresses major issues concerning the RTI Act.
- CIC submits an annual report to the Union government on the implementation of the provisions of RTI Act.

State Information Commission

- The Right to Information Act of 2005 provides for the creation of a State Information Commission at the state level.

- The State Information Commission is a high powered independent body which inter-alia looks into the complaints made to it and decide the appeals.
- It entertains complaints and appeals pertaining to offices, financial institutions, public sector undertakings, etc.under the concerned state government.
- The Commission consists of a State Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten State Information Commissioners appointed by the Governor.

Source: TH

World Vision Report

Recently to mark the occasion of **World Sight Day**, the **World Health Organization** (WHO) released its first **World Vision Report**.

- The report proposed ways to address challenges such as integrating eye care into healthcare systems that can help in drastically reducing the burden of preventable eye diseases.
 - The report found that globally, over **2.2 billion** people have some form of **vision impairment**. Out of these 2.2 billion, 1 billion people are suffering from conditions that are preventable.
- According to the report, the burden of eye conditions and vision impairment is not borne equally: it is often **far greater** in **people living in rural areas**, those with **low incomes, women, older people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous populations**.
 - Low and middle-income regions of western and eastern sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have rates of blindness that are **eight times** higher than in high-income countries.
 - The **age-specific** prevalence of distance vision impairment in an **urban** population of Delhi (20% prevalence amongst 60-69 years old) was **one-third lower** than that of a **rural** population in Northern India (28%).
- The report warned that the **ageing population** would lead to a dramatic increase in the number of people with vision impairment and blindness.
 - **Presbyopia** (a condition in which it is difficult to see nearby objects), affects 1.8 billion people. This condition occurs with **advancing age**.
 - The common refractive error -**myopia** (a condition in which it is difficult to see objects at a particular distance) affects 2.6 billion, with 312 million being under the age of **19 years**.
 - **Trachoma**- an eye disease that is caused due to **bacterial infection** in the eye. Many countries have eliminated it including **India**.

- Vision impairment also caused **productivity loss and economic burden**.
The economic burden of uncorrected myopia in the regions of East Asia, South Asia, and South-East Asia were reported to be more than twice that of other regions and equivalent to more than 1% of gross domestic product.
- The report also highlighted that in India the **rate of cataract surgery** has increased **nine-fold** (6,000 per million population) between 1981 and 2012.
This has been possible because of the **National Programme for Control of Blindness**, under which cataract surgeries were performed on 6.5 million people alone in the year 2016-2017.
In addition to it, a total of 1.5 million management/ treatment procedures were performed for other eye conditions. As a result of these concerted efforts, there was an overall reduction in the prevalence of blindness that was reported as 1.1% in 2001-02 to 0.45% during the years 2015-18.

National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI)

- It was launched in the year **1976** as a 100% **centrally sponsored scheme** (now 60:40 in all states and 90:10 in NE States) by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.
- The goal of this programme was to reduce the prevalence of blindness to **0.3% by 2020**.
NPCB aimed to provide for '**Eye Health for All**' and prevention of visual impairment, through the provision of comprehensive universal eye-care services and quality service delivery.

Way Forward

According to the World Report on Vision, integrated people-centered eye care has the potential to accelerate action and overcome the challenges. To make it a reality, the report recommends the following actions:

- Make eye care an **integral part** of universal health coverage.
- Promote high-quality **implementation** and health systems **research**, complementing existing evidence for effective eye care interventions.
- **Monitor** trends and **evaluate** progress towards implementing integrated people-centered eye care.
- **Raise awareness** and **engage and empower** people and communities about eye care needs.

Source: IE

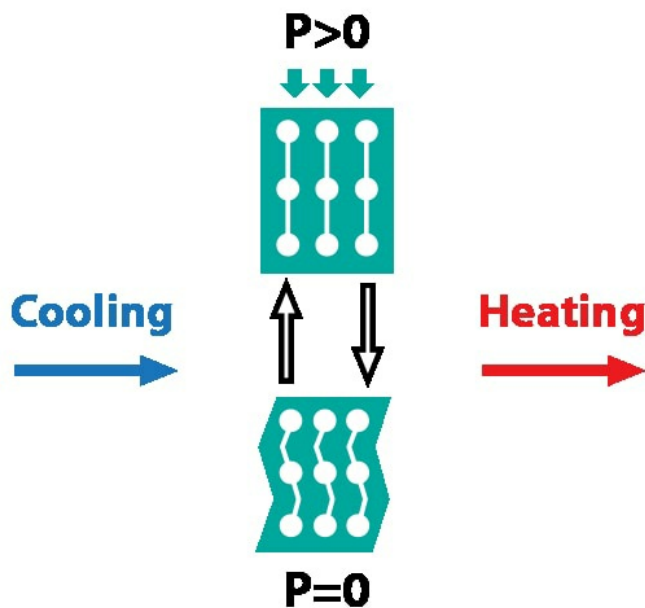
Elastocaloric Effect

According to a research published in the Journal Science, the **elastocaloric effect**, if harnessed, may be able to **do away with the need of fluid refrigerants** used in fridges and air-conditioners.

The **fluids** used are **susceptible to leakages**, and can contribute to **global warming**.

Elastocaloric Effect

- **Caloric effects** refer to the **entropy changes** when applied external fields, such as stress, electric or magnetic fields, change.
- Recently, owing to the strong demand for efficient and environmentally friendly refrigeration technologies, materials with giant caloric effects, including elastocaloric, have been widely investigated.
- When **rubber bands are twisted and untwisted**, it produces a **cooling effect**. This is called the “elastocaloric” effect.
- It is defined as the isothermal change of entropy or the adiabatic change in temperature of a material subjected to a uniaxial strain.
- Basically, elastocaloric materials are **solids capable of stress-induced reversible phase transformations** during which **latent heat is released or absorbed**.



Elastocaloric Effect Replacing Fuel

- In the elastocaloric effect, the transfer of heat works much the same way as when fluid refrigerants are compressed and expanded.
- When a rubber band is stretched, it absorbs heat from its environment, and when it is released, it gradually cools down.

- In order to figure out how the twisting mechanism might be able to enable a fridge, the researchers compared the cooling power of rubber fibres, nylon and polyethylene fishing lines and nickel-titanium wires.
- **Observations:**
 - They observed **high cooling** from twist changes in twisted, coiled and supercoiled fibres.
 - They reported that the **level of efficiency** of the heat exchange in rubber bands is **comparable to that of standard refrigerants**.
 - These findings may lead to the development of greener, higher-efficiency and low-cost cooling technology.

Source: IE

C40 World Mayors' Summit

The C40 World Mayors' Summit is being held from 9th-12th October 2019 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

- It is a conference where **city leaders from around the world share ideas on green urban development**, and on ways to get national governments to act on climate issues.
- Apart from Mayors and Deputy Mayors, the Summit is being attended by climate experts, influencers, business leaders, innovators, changemakers, and citizens.
- Over the past decade, C40 has convened six Mayors Summits, hosted by London (2005), New York (2007), Seoul (2009), São Paulo (2011), Johannesburg (2014) and Mexico City (2016).

Each C40 Mayors Summit has provided unique opportunities for the mayors of the world's great cities to showcase their climate leadership on the global stage.

- C40 Summits are known for publishing important research, showcasing innovations by cities, and for forging global partnerships.
- At the **2019 Summit**, the **Mayor of Los Angeles** has taken over as **chair of the group**.
- The **cities from India** that are part of the C40 are **Delhi NCT, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata**.

C40

- The C40 group was **started in 2005** by the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and **got its name in 2006**, since it had 40 members that year.
- It has **96 members at present**, representing over 70 crore people, and one-quarter of the global economy.

- It connects the world's largest cities to deliver urgent and essential climate action needed to secure a sustainable future for urban citizens worldwide.
 - The group is **committed to delivering on climate targets set under the 2016 Paris Agreement**, and sets the bar for cities to develop and implement local level plans that comply with those targets.
 - It has its offices in **New York, USA and London, UK.**
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