

## Water For Shared Prosperity : Report Released By World Bank

- The report, released at the **10th World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia**, addresses global water access and its impact on prosperity.
- **Key Points:**
  - **Shared Prosperity:** According to the **World Bank**, shared prosperity involves enhancing prosperity, especially for the poorest, to create more equitable societies.
  - **Four Building Blocks of Prosperity:**
    - **Human Capital:** Health and education.
    - **Jobs and Income:** Economic opportunities.
    - **Social Capital:** Peace and social cohesion.
    - **Natural Capital:** Environmental resources.
  - **Challenges:**
    - Population growth, urbanization, and climate change are increasing disparities in global water access.
    - In 2022, 197 million people lacked safe drinking water, and 211 million lacked basic sanitation.
    - Approximately 450 million people live in high-poverty and low-water-access areas.
    - In low-income countries, less than half of schools have access to water services.
    - Inadequate and unsafe water affects early childhood development.
    - Climate change causes extreme weather events like floods and droughts, disrupting children's education, damaging crops, and increasing conflicts.
  - **Recommendations for Inclusive Water Security:**
    - Enhance resilience to extreme weather by establishing early warning systems.
    - Improve water resource development and allocation by integrating nature-based solutions and adopting water accounting methods.
    - Ensure safe water supply and sanitation by reforming water information systems to focus on the needs of the poor.

The **World Water Forum** is held **every three years** and is co-hosted by the World Water Council and a host country.

- **Objectives:** Elevate the importance of water on the political agenda, Facilitate discussions aimed at resolving international water issues

## MPLADS Scheme

- In the last 10 years, Lok Sabha members elected from Delhi's seven constituencies have not utilised Rs 100 crore from their entitled Rs 311.5 crore funds under the **Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme**.
- **About MPLADS Scheme:**
  - **Launch Year** – 1993
  - **Administration** - Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation
  - **Central Sector Scheme**
  - Annual MPLADS Fund entitlement per **MP: Rs.5 crore**.
  - **Minimum amount sanctioned for any individual work:** It cannot be less than Rs. 2.5 lakh (earlier Rs. 1 Lakh).
- Pooling of MPLADS funds with other schemes can be done, only if such works are eligible under MPLADS Guidelines
- To enable members of parliaments to recommend works of developmental nature with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets in their Constituencies.
- **Features:**
  - **Choice of Works:** MPs can suggest projects to the District Collector to be carried out in their constituency, with a budget of up to Rs. 5 crores per year.
  - **Rajya Sabha MPs:** They can recommend projects in one or more districts within the state they represent.
  - **Nominated Members:** Members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha who are nominated rather than elected can choose districts from any state for their projects.
  - **Guidelines for SC and ST Areas:** It's recommended that MPs allocate at least 15% of their MPLADS funds for projects in areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste (SC) populations and 7.5% for areas inhabited by Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations.

## Tweaking The Inflation Targeting Mandate

- The article explores the challenges and debates concerning the **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) strategy** for managing inflation through its interest rate policy. It evaluates the effectiveness of the existing inflation-targeting framework and proposes a reevaluation of the targeted indices and their calculations.
- **Current Status of Interest Rates in India**
  - In 2020-21 and 2021-22, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept interest rates low.
  - By mid-2021, inflation started to rise, but the RBI initially called it temporary.
  - In May 2022, the RBI raised the repo rate from 4% to 6.5% by February 2023 and has kept it there since.
- **Issues with High Interest Rates**
  - High interest rates are seen as too restrictive for economic growth.
  - These rates discourage new investments, which are crucial for maintaining economic momentum.
  - There is ongoing speculation about when the RBI will lower these rates, showing concern about their impact.
  - The debate is whether the high rates have already controlled inflation and if it's time to lower them.
- **Challenges Faced by RBI**
  - The RBI's strict mandate to keep CPI inflation at 4% +/- 2% limits its flexibility to respond to other economic factors.
  - External influences, like US Federal Reserve policies, also impact the RBI's decisions due to the global economy and the dollar's dominance in trade and finance.
- **Recommendations**
  - **Lowering Interest Rates:** The RBI should consider reducing interest rates as they may have already controlled inflation.
  - **Reevaluating the Inflation-Targeting Framework:** Review the effectiveness of using CPI as the sole measure of inflation. Other indices like the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and GDP deflator could offer additional insights.
  - **Improving Transparency and Accountability:** Enhance transparency in the RBI's decision-making and explain the factors influencing their decisions, especially when targets are missed, to build public trust.

## Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

- Airbus Helicopters and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) recently signed an MoU to finance the purchase of Airbus helicopters in India.
- **About SIDBI:**
  - **Establishment:** 2nd April, 1990, under an Act of Parliament.
  - **Purpose:** Main financial institution for promoting, financing, and developing the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector, and coordinating similar functions with other institutions.
  - **Jurisdiction:** Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
  - **Origins:** Initially a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI).
  - **Ownership:** Shares are held by the Government of India and 22 other institutions, including public sector banks and insurance companies controlled by the Central Government.
  - **Headquarters:** Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

## Project Astra

- Recently, Google revealed a sneak peek of **Project Astra** at its annual developer conference.
  - **Project Astra is Google's** new venture aimed at **developing AI that** can understand and respond to users through text, voice, and visuals. It's tailored for devices like smartphones and smart glasses.
- **Key Features:**
  - **User Interaction:** With Project Astra, users can engage with their surroundings by using their device's camera. They can ask questions or seek information about what they see or hear.
  - **Goals:** The main objective is to enable real-time information exchange and interaction through wearable tech.
- **Functionality:**
  - **Accessing Information:** The AI Assistant within Project Astra can fetch and provide information from both the web and the real world captured by the device's camera.
  - **Learning and Adaptation:** It's designed to learn from user interactions and the environment, improving its effectiveness over time.