

13-14 December 2024

### ILO's Social Dialogue Report

**Context:** The International Labour Organisation (ILO) released its Social Dialogue Report on December 11, 2024, urging governments to uphold fundamental labor rights, especially freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The report emphasizes peak-level social dialogue (PLSD) as a key process for fostering fair and inclusive economic development.

#### Key Findings on Labour Rights and Social Dialogue:

- A major finding in the report was the decline in compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining, dropping by 7% from 2015 to 2022. This decline was driven by violations of the fundamental rights of both employers and workers.
- Social dialogue, the report argues, is crucial for promoting economic development while ensuring social progress and creating inclusive transitions in low-carbon and digital economies. By strengthening social dialogue, countries can tackle economic challenges and promote social justice.

#### Importance of Peak-Level Social Dialogue (PLSD):

- PLSD brings together government representatives, employers' organizations, and workers' organizations to foster negotiation, consultation, and information exchange on labor, economic, and social policies. It includes:
  - » **Bipartite processes:** Involving only employers and workers' organizations for negotiations.
  - » **Tripartite processes:** Where the government joins employers and workers in decision-making on policies.
- The report highlights that PLSD is crucial for effective participation in policy-making, particularly for underrepresented groups, ensuring that labor policies are inclusive and fair.

#### Recommendations for Strengthening Social Dialogue:

- **Uphold Fundamental Rights:** Governments must ensure respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining.

- **Equip Labour Administrations:** Governments should provide resources and technical capacities to labor administrations and social partners for effective PLSD participation.
- **Broaden Outreach:** National social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) should extend their reach to underrepresented groups, including gig workers.
- **Evaluate Social Dialogue Processes:** Regular, evidence-based evaluations should assess the effectiveness of PLSD in socio-economic decision-making.



#### Case Study: Rajasthan's Platform-Based Gig Workers Welfare Board

- The report highlights Rajasthan's introduction of the Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, establishing the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers Welfare Board. The board consists of 12 members, including government representatives, gig workers, aggregators, and civil society, aimed at improving gig workers' welfare and rights.

#### About International Labour Organisation (ILO):

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO), established in 1919, is a UN agency that promotes social justice and fair labor practices. It sets international labor standards and advocates for workers' rights.
- The ILO brings together governments, employers, and workers to develop policies for decent work and economic progress. Its efforts focus on labor rights, social protection, and sustainable employment to foster a fairer, more inclusive global economy.

### Face to Face Centres





**13-14 December 2024**

### Conclusion:

The ILO Social Dialogue Report urges governments, employers, and workers to collaborate through social dialogue to address global labor challenges. By respecting labor rights and ensuring inclusive, participatory decision-making, countries can achieve fair economic and social outcomes, making social dialogue a critical tool for promoting social justice and sustainable development.

### Gene Therapy for Severe Hemophilia A

**Context:** A recent breakthrough in India has shown promising results in using gene therapy to treat severe hemophilia A, a condition that has traditionally required lifelong treatment with frequent clotting factor infusions. Hemophilia A is a rare hereditary disorder that impairs blood clotting, leading to severe and spontaneous bleeding episodes. These episodes can be fatal if not treated promptly.

### What is Hemophilia A?

- Hemophilia A is caused by the absence of Factor VIII, a protein essential for blood clotting. Without this clotting factor, individuals with hemophilia are at risk of prolonged bleeding from even minor injuries, and spontaneous internal bleeding can occur.
- Severe hemophilia A occurs when a person has less than 1% of the normal clotting factor, leading to frequent and dangerous bleeding episodes.
- Hemophilia A is relatively rare but prevalent in India, which has the second-largest population of hemophilia patients in the world, with an estimated 40,000 to 100,000 individuals affected.

### Traditional Treatment for Hemophilia A:

- The standard treatment for hemophilia A involves regular injections of Factor VIII, a clotting factor that helps prevent bleeding. However, these infusions are typically required on a weekly basis, making treatment burdensome and expensive.
- A study in Heliyon (2024) estimates that treating one hemophilia patient in India can cost up to ₹2.54 crore (\$300,000) over a 10-year period.
- Treatment with Factor VIII replacements is life-long and can be difficult to manage, as patients frequently face the risk of bleeding episodes.

### Gene Therapy as a Breakthrough:

- In response to these challenges, a recent study tested a new gene therapy treatment for severe hemophilia A. This therapy was trialed on five patients in Tamil Nadu.
- Gene therapy aims to offer a one-time solution by introducing a gene into the body that enables it to produce enough clotting factor to prevent bleeding episodes.
- Over an average follow-up period of 14 months, none of the five patients experienced any bleeding episodes, a significant improvement compared to the frequent bleeding episodes they would typically endure.

### How Does Gene Therapy Work?

- Gene therapy for hemophilia A involves introducing a therapeutic gene into the patient's body to restore the production of Factor VIII, which is deficient in hemophilia A patients.
- Lentivirus vectors are used to deliver the gene, considered a safer method than using adenoviruses.
- The gene is fused with stem cells taken from the patients, making the process safer and potentially suitable for children.
- This novel approach eliminates the need for immunosuppressive drugs (required in other therapies) and reduces risks to liver health.

### Global Context and Comparison to Roctavian:

- Currently, the only FDA-approved gene therapy for hemophilia A is Roctavian, which has shown positive results in trials with 112 patients. After receiving Roctavian treatment, the average number of bleeding episodes decreased from 5.4 per year to 2.6 per year.
- The Indian study differs by using lentivirus-based gene delivery, which may be safer and more affordable.
- Roctavian is associated with high costs, limiting access for patients, whereas the Indian gene therapy trial offers the potential for localized manufacturing in India, making it more accessible and affordable.

### Expert Opinion on the Study:

- Experts have hailed this trial as a "ground-breaking" achievement, emphasizing that it demonstrates the feasibility of conducting gene therapy trials in resource-constrained settings like India.
- It also highlights the potential for localized gene therapy manufacturing, which could reduce costs and expand access to treatments beyond India.

### Face to Face Centres





13-14 December 2024

### Conclusion:

The development of gene therapy for severe hemophilia A represents a significant breakthrough in the treatment of the disorder. This approach could potentially offer a permanent solution to a lifelong condition, reducing the need for frequent, expensive treatments. With continued research and advancements, gene therapy could become a more affordable and accessible treatment, particularly in countries like India, where the burden of hemophilia is high. The success of this study could pave the way for improved global access to life-changing therapies, especially in resource-constrained regions.

## India-Iran-Armenia Trilateral Consultation

**Context:** The second India-Iran-Armenia trilateral consultation, held in New Delhi, focused on enhancing cooperation in connectivity, trade, and regional stability. Led by India's Joint Secretary of the Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran Division, JP Singh, the consultation also included delegations from Iran and Armenia.

### Key Areas of Discussion:

- **Connectivity Initiatives:** The discussions emphasized the importance of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar Port in Iran. These initiatives aim to enhance trade routes between the three nations and beyond, especially to Central Asia and Europe. Armenia introduced its "Crossroads of Peace" connectivity initiative, aiming to improve regional connectivity further.
- **Trade, Tourism, and Cultural Exchanges:** A significant focus was placed on boosting trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges. The trilateral partners highlighted the need for strengthening people-to-people ties to enhance mutual understanding and collaboration.
- **Future Consultations:** The trilateral partners agreed to hold the next round of consultations in Iran at a mutually convenient date.

### India-Iran Bilateral Relations:

- **Economic Cooperation:** Bilateral trade between India and Iran reached \$2.33 billion in the fiscal year

2022-23. India's exports to Iran were valued at \$1.66 billion, while imports stood at \$672.12 million.

- **Energy Cooperation:** Energy remains a cornerstone of India-Iran relations, particularly with the strategic Chabahar Port offering an alternative trade route. Despite sanctions, Iran's crude oil production showed resilience, reaching 3.4 million barrels per day in May 2024.
- **Strategic Connectivity Projects:** The Chabahar Port and the development of a 700 km railway link between Chabahar and Zahedan, including connectivity to Afghanistan, are key projects discussed.



### India-Armenia Bilateral Relations:

- **Economic Relations:** India and Armenia are exploring untapped trade potential in sectors like information technology, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. The bilateral trade in 2020 was valued at \$46.3 million.
- **Cultural and Educational Cooperation:** Indian culture, including cinema, yoga, and Ayurveda, is popular in Armenia. Additionally, many Indian students pursue medical education in Armenia, strengthening cultural and educational ties.

### India-Iran Defense Relations:

- India and Iran have established several consultative mechanisms to address security and strategic concerns. These include foreign office consultations, security consultations, and joint consular meetings.

### India-Armenia Defense Relations

- **Arms Deals:** Armenia signed a \$40 million arms deal

## Face to Face Centres







with India in 2020, which included the supply of SWATHI radars for detecting the location of weapons.

- **Missile and Ammunition Exports:** India has also exported Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers and Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (MPATGM) to Armenia, enhancing the defense capabilities of both nations.

### Conclusion:

The India-Iran-Armenia trilateral consultation represents a significant step in strengthening cooperation in critical sectors such as connectivity, trade, energy, defense, and regional security. The partnership aims to promote regional stability and economic growth, with the trilateral discussions paving the way for deeper diplomatic, economic, and strategic relations among the three countries.

## India-Thailand Relations

**Context:** India and Thailand share a centuries-old relationship rooted in trade, culture, and religion. This partnership has evolved into a robust multi-sectoral cooperation over the years, encompassing trade, investment, defence, and tourism. The recent 9th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue held in New Delhi on December 12, 2024, underscored the growing strategic ties between the two nations.

### Recent Developments

- The 9th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue, held on December 12, 2024, in New Delhi, marked a significant step in strengthening bilateral defence cooperation. Co-chaired by India's Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) and Thailand's Deputy Permanent Secretary for Defence, the dialogue explored initiatives such as:
  - » Establishing a Joint Working Group to monitor defence industry cooperation.
  - » Conducting Subject Matter Experts Exchange between the armed forces.
  - » Exploring co-design, co-production, and co-development in defence industries.
- The dialogue underscores Thailand's strategic importance in India's Act East Policy and complements Thailand's Look West Policy, enhancing bilateral

relations.



### Trade and Investment

- Bilateral trade between India and Thailand has shown remarkable growth:
  - » 2020: \$9.76 billion
  - » 2021: \$15 billion
  - » 2022-23: \$16.89 billion
- **India's Major Exports to Thailand:**
  - » **Pearls, precious stones, and jewellery:** \$1.02 billion (2022-23)
  - » **Mechanical machinery and parts:** \$570 million (April-November 2023-24)
  - » **Marine products:** \$219 million (April-November 2023-24)
- **India's Major Imports from Thailand:**
  - » Plastic raw materials: \$915 million
  - » Electronic components: \$895 million
  - » Vegetable oils: \$523 million
- Thailand ranks as the 27th largest investor in India, with a cumulative FDI of \$1.39 billion (April 2022-September 2023). Indian companies like Tata Steel and TCS have established a strong presence in Thailand, while Thai firms invest in India's agro-processing, construction, and automotive sectors.

### Connectivity Projects:

- **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway:** Enhances trade and tourism by connecting Southeast Asia.

## Face to Face Centres





**13-14 December 2024**

- **Dawei Project:** Links the Dawei deep-sea port in Myanmar to Chennai, offering an alternative to the congested Strait of Malacca.

### Defence Cooperation:

- The dialogue emphasized the potential of India's domestic defence industry in supporting Thailand's defence acquisition plans. Thailand's delegation also visited the DRDO headquarters to explore collaborative opportunities in defence research and joint production.

### Challenges in Bilateral Relations:

- **Trade Imbalances:** India's exports (\$5.71 billion) fall short of its imports (\$11.19 billion) from Thailand (2022-23).
- **Technical Barriers:** Stringent standards and certification processes hinder trade, especially for marine and poultry products.
- **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Inadequate logistics and warehousing infrastructure impede efficiency.

### ASEAN and Regional Cooperation:

- Thailand's strategic role within ASEAN amplifies its importance to India. ASEAN, with its combined GDP of \$10.2 trillion, promotes regional stability and economic growth.
- Collaboration through initiatives like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) aligns India's Act East Policy with ASEAN's goals.

## The Lipstick Effect

**Context:** The beauty and cosmetics market in India continues to expand, demonstrating remarkable resilience even during economic uncertainty. This growth aligns with the consumer behavior phenomenon called the lipstick effect, which explains how individuals prioritize smaller, affordable luxuries during economic downturns.

### Understanding the Lipstick Effect:

- The lipstick effect refers to a trend where consumers, despite financial constraints, indulge in small luxury items like cosmetics, coffee, or movie tickets. This behavior stems from a desire to maintain a sense of normalcy and emotional comfort during tough times.

### Key Insights:

- **Origin of the Concept:** Juliet Schor first described this effect in her 1998 book *The Overspent American*. Leonard Lauder of Estée Lauder observed increased lipstick sales during the 2001 recession, popularizing the term.
- **Economic Context:** The lipstick effect operates within the income effect in economics. When incomes fall, consumers forgo expensive luxuries and redirect limited income toward smaller indulgences.
- **Psychological Motivations:** Small luxuries provide emotional comfort and help individuals maintain self-esteem and appearance, especially in competitive job markets.
- **Current Market Dynamics and the Lipstick Effect in India:** Resilience of the Beauty Market In 2024, despite challenges like inflation and high interest rates, India's beauty and cosmetics market is thriving. It is projected to grow to \$46.6 billion by 2032, with a CAGR of 5.6% from 2024–2032.

### Segment-Specific Growth:

- **Fastest-Growing Categories:** Personal care, makeup, and skincare lead with a CAGR of 4.5%.
- **Fragrances:** Products like perfumes and deodorants are gaining a larger market share.
- **Salon Industry:** Valued at ₹20,000 crore, the Indian salon industry shows immense potential, with the organized sector comprising less than 20%.
- **Post-Pandemic Revival:** The COVID-19 pandemic renewed focus on self-care, boosting demand for beauty products. Both urban and rural consumers have become more discerning, leading to increased adoption of personal care routines.

### Drivers of Growth in the Indian Beauty Market:

- **Economic Factors:** Rising urbanization and disposable incomes fuel growth. Consumers in smaller towns are mirroring urban consumption patterns, offering new market opportunities.
- **Cultural Shifts:** Heightened awareness of personal grooming across demographics creates steady demand for beauty products. The aspiration to maintain an appealing appearance in professional and social settings adds to growth.
- **Affordable Indulgences:** Premium lipsticks, fragrances, and skincare items align with the lipstick

## Face to Face Centres





**13-14 December 2024**

effect, offering affordable ways to feel luxurious.

### Challenges and Limitations of the Lipstick Effect

- **Access to Data:** Timely sales data for specific products like lipstick is not readily available, making it difficult to use as an economic indicator.
- **Severe Economic Downturns:** In extreme contractions, even small luxuries may see reduced demand as all discretionary spending is cut back.

### Conclusion:

The lipstick effect provides valuable insights into consumer behavior during economic uncertainty. For India's beauty market, it underscores why smaller luxury items thrive while larger purchases decline. With favorable economic trends, growing personal care awareness, and expanding consumer bases in smaller towns, the beauty sector is poised for sustained growth. By understanding this effect, businesses can cater to evolving preferences, ensuring resilience and market relevance.

## World Malaria Report

**Context:** According to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s latest World Malaria Report (2024), the battle against malaria has made notable advances, but challenges persist. Malaria remains a significant global health issue, particularly in tropical regions. Despite considerable progress, especially in the WHO South-East Asia Region, the disease still impacts millions, with the majority of cases and deaths occurring in the African Region.

### Understanding Malaria:

- Malaria is caused by Plasmodium parasites, transmitted to humans through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.
- It is not contagious and cannot spread from person to person. The most dangerous species are Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax.
- The disease leads to symptoms like fever, chills, fatigue, and in severe cases, death.

### Progress in the WHO South-East Asia Region:

- The South-East Asia Region accounts for 1.5% of the global malaria burden. In 2023, India reported around

half of all malaria cases, followed by Indonesia, with nearly one-third of cases. Despite this, the region has made remarkable progress:

- » Malaria deaths in the region have fallen by 82.9%, from 35,000 in 2000 to 6,000 in 2023.
- » The region reduced malaria cases by 82.4%, from 22.8 million in 2000 to 4 million in 2023.
- » India accounted for significant progress, with 93% fewer malaria cases and 17.7 million fewer cases reported in 2023 compared to 2000.

- **In the period 2022-2023, several countries achieved reductions in malaria cases:**

- » Bangladesh (-9.2%), India (-9.6%), Indonesia (-5.7%), and Nepal (-58.3%) reported decreases, while Myanmar (+45.1%) and Thailand (+46.4%) saw increases.
- » Timor-Leste and Bhutan reported zero indigenous malaria cases in 2023.

### Global Malaria Situation:

- Globally, there were an estimated 263 million malaria cases and 597,000 deaths in 2023. This marks a rise of 11 million cases from 2022, but the death toll remained steady. Around 95% of deaths occurred in the WHO African Region, which faces severe challenges in providing essential healthcare services to prevent, detect, and treat malaria.
- Since 2000, 2.2 billion cases and 12.7 million deaths have been prevented. Despite this progress, malaria remains a serious global health threat, particularly for vulnerable populations, such as children and pregnant women.

### Malaria-Free Certification and Challenges:

- As of November 2024, 44 countries and one territory have been certified malaria-free by WHO, with 25 malaria-endemic countries now reporting fewer than 10 cases annually—a significant improvement from just 4 countries in 2000.
- However, funding remains a critical challenge. In 2023, total funding for malaria control was US\$ 4 billion, falling short of the US\$ 8.3 billion target. This shortfall has resulted in gaps in the availability of life-saving tools like insecticide-treated nets and medications.
- Challenges such as fragile health systems, drug resistance, and climate change also threaten malaria control efforts.

## Face to Face Centres





**13-14 December 2024**

### Power Packed News

#### Donald Trump Named TIME's Person of the Year for 2024

- Donald Trump, the U.S. President-elect, has been named TIME magazine's 'Person of the Year' for 2024.
- This is his second recognition by the magazine; he was also selected in 2016 when he first became President. Trump's return to power is historic as he will be the first convicted criminal to take the presidential oath.
- Other nominees included Kamala Harris, Elon Musk, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Kate, the Princess of Wales.
- In 2023, Taylor Swift was honored with the title, showing TIME's recognition of a wide range of contributors to society.

#### Indian Grandmaster Gukesh Becomes World Chess Champion

- Dommaraju Gukesh, an 18-year-old chess prodigy from India, has won the title of World Chess Champion.
- He defeated China's Ding Liren in the final of the 18th FIDE World Chess Championship held in Singapore.
- Gukesh scored 7.5 points in 14 matches, breaking Garry Kasparov's record of becoming champion at 22.
- This makes Gukesh the second Indian to achieve this feat, after Viswanathan Anand. His win is a proud moment for Indian chess on the global stage.



#### Saudi Arabia to Host 2034 FIFA World Cup

- Saudi Arabia will host the 2034 FIFA World Cup, becoming the second Middle Eastern nation to do so.
- The matches will take place in 15 stadiums across Riyadh, Jeddah, Al Khobar, Abha, and Neom.
- This decision follows the announcement that Spain, Portugal, and Morocco will co-host the 2030 edition.
- Saudi Arabia's hosting highlights its growing focus on global sports events.

#### World Ayurveda Congress Focuses on Digital Integration

- The World Ayurveda Congress and Ayurveda Expo started on December 12 in Dehradun.
- The theme, "Digital Health, Ayurvedic Approach," focuses on combining traditional Ayurveda with modern technologies like AI, augmented reality, and blockchain.
- Over 5,500 Indian and 350 international delegates are attending to discuss advancements in Ayurveda.
- The event includes an exhibition showcasing products and services from leading Ayurvedic institutions, highlighting how Ayurveda can play a role in modern healthcare.

#### India Finishes Sixth in Asian Women's Handball Championship

- India achieved its best-ever result in the Asian Women's Handball Championship by finishing sixth after a 30-41 loss to China on December 10. This was the first time India hosted the tournament, held in New Delhi.
- In the final, Japan beat defending champions South Korea 25-24 to win their second title. Kazakhstan secured the bronze medal by defeating Iran 28-22.
- The tournament's success shows the growing popularity of women's handball in Asia.

### Face to Face Centres





**13-14 December 2024**

### **Delhi Government Launches Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Scheme**

- The Delhi Government has launched the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Scheme, which provides monthly financial assistance of 1,000 to eligible women.
- After Delhi elections, this amount will increase to 2,100.
- The scheme, announced in the 2024-25 budget with a 2,000 crore allocation, aims to benefit 38 lakh women.
- To qualify, applicants must be permanent Delhi residents, aged 18 or older, with an annual family income below 3 lakh. They should not be taxpayers or in government employment.
- This initiative seeks to improve women's financial and social well-being.

### **Ladakh to Host Khelo India Winter Games in January 2025**

- Ladakh will host the Khelo India Winter Games from January 23 to 27, 2025, focusing on ice events. Jammu & Kashmir will host snow events from February 22 to 25, 2025.
- These games will kick off the Khelo India season, followed by the Youth and Para Games in Bihar in April 2025.
- In 2024, the games included 700 athletes, 141 support staff, 113 technical officials and over 250 volunteers.
- Ladakh is hosting part of the event for the second consecutive year, highlighting its growing importance in winter sports.
- The games promote winter sports and boost tourism and sports infrastructure in the region.

### **India Achieves Total Fertility Rate Target of 2.0**

- India has achieved a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0, as per the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21).
- This meets the targets of the National Population Policy 2000 and the National Health Policy 2017. Government family planning programmes have been key to this achievement.
- Contraceptive options include condoms, oral pills, emergency contraception, intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUCDs), and sterilization. Additional options like the Antara injectable contraceptive and Chhaya pill have been introduced.
- The Mission Parivar Vikas initiative focuses on providing family planning services in high-priority and northeastern states.
- Financial incentives are offered for sterilization and post-pregnancy contraceptive measures, such as post-partum IUCDs and sterilization, are encouraged.
- To ensure quality, 16,586 health facilities have received National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certification.
- These efforts aim to improve family health and ensure balanced population growth.

### **Railways (Amendment) Bill 2024 Passed by Lok Sabha**

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Railways (Amendment) Bill 2024, which aims to enhance the powers and independence of the Railway Board.
- The bill amends the Railways Act of 1989, giving the central government the authority to decide the Railway Board's composition, including the number of members, their qualifications, and service terms.
- This bill incorporates all provisions of the Indian Railway Board Act, 1905, into the Railways Act, 1989. Although the Railways Act of 1989 replaced the Indian Railways Act of 1890, the Railway Board has operated without statutory backing until now.
- The amendment strengthens Indian Railways' governance, improving efficiency and decision-making.
- It is a step toward modernizing the railway system and addressing the needs of a growing transport network.

### **Face to Face Centres**

