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THE HINDU ANALYSIS

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ALASKA SUMMIT & INDIA



India and Trump Putin Summit

Alaskan winds, India and the Trump-Putin summit

The "Alaska Moment" between United States President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin on August 15, 2025 will translate to other objectives for Ukraine as Mr. Trump engages with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders, leading up to a possible trilateral summit in a quest for the end of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. For New Delhi, however, the Alaska Summit did not yield the clear-cut outcomes many had hoped for before the meeting between the leaders of two of India's closest friends. Nor did it help the peculiar sense of vulnerability that Indian diplomacy faced, of having so much at stake in a meeting while having so little agency in its results.

Broadly, the Narendra Modi government had hoped that a U.S.-Russia rapprochement would take off some of the pressure from the U.S. India has felt over its ties with Russia. However, while there was a visible warmth in the Trump-Putin exchanges, this did not result in a less chilling one that Mr. Trump has had towards India. He has been taking India to task on a number of issues.

More specifically, hopes rose that the Alaska meeting would result in a rollback of the U.S.'s planned 25% secondary sanctions on India for buying Russian oil, the resumption of India-U.S. trade talks that Mr. Trump has held up over the Russia oil issue; and a subsequent revision of the 25% reciprocal tariffs already in place. In a severely worded piece in the *Financial Times* (India's oil lobby is funding Putin's war machine – that has to stop), Peter Navarro, who is Mr. Trump's Senior Counselor on Trade and Manufacturing, virtually dashed such hopes, making it clear that the double tariffs were a "two-pronged policy" by the U.S. to "hit India where it hurts", for both the Russian imports and for its curbs on market access.

No change in India policies

Nor was there any indicator that Mr. Trump would let up on the other pain point: his counter narrative to the Modi government's account of Operation Sindoor (May 7-10) and how the ceasefire was achieved. Not only did Mr. Trump repeat that he has mediated the India-Pakistan ceasefire, using trade as a leverage to coral both sides, but he now adds that a nuclear conflict would have followed as both sides were "shooting down airplanes", a version at considerable odds from that of the Modi government, which has thus far conceded that it had no losses in the conflict.

Thus, the first takeaway from the Summit must be this: while Mr. Trump's re-engagement and bonhomie with Mr. Putin may help Moscow, it does not mean a revision of his policies toward India. In any case, the rationale behind the secondary sanctions on India is dubious, and more about power games than about punishing Russia. The U.S. has itself increased its trade with Russia since Mr. Trump came to power and China imports of Russian oil have been consistently larger than India's. Hitting India with sanctions while fettering the Russian President and ignoring China's actions seems to indicate that the reasons



Subhasini Mukherjee

for the U.S.'s actions lie elsewhere. Many have suggested that Mr. Trump has acted out of pique – upset that Mr. Modi ignored his claims to have mediated with the Pakistanis. Reports suggested that Mr. Modi also rebuffed U.S. moves for him to sit down with the Pakistani leadership in Riyadh or in Washington, and that the Modi-Trump call on June 17 was extremely acrimonious and awkward as a result. Mr. Trump's more obvious focus appears to be recognition for his peace-making efforts, and a possible Nobel Peace Prize, and the Modi government has already missed the bus to give him the credit for the Operation Sindoor ceasefire that Mr. Trump so clearly wants.

New Delhi must decide whether it wishes to jump through hoops for Washington, or whether it would be more sensible to step back and allow the Trump administration to do its worst before assessing a response and turn its energies to other parts of the world. There may be avenues to shore up India's options on trade relationships with Mr. Modi's upcoming visits to Japan and then to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meet, a possible visit to the U.S. for the United Nations General Assembly, and then South Africa for the G-20 summit. There is also Mr. Putin's visit to India soon. The bellwether event for the U.S.-India ties will be the upcoming Quad Summit (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) that India is due to host later this year. It is still unclear whether Mr. Trump will visit India, especially if no India-U.S. trade deal is done by then, and whether the Indian government will be as any moved to roll out the red carpet.

Returning to substance

The second takeaway should be a lesson in not allowing "Summitry" to overtake India's broader interests. For more than a decade, the "Modi mantra" of foreign policy has been about personal magic and chemistry, of dealing one-to-one with leaders of other countries, as his imprimatur on bilateral ties. As a result, visits abroad have been judged by the number of joint public appearances, handshakes and embraces as well as special honours and awards that are given to the Prime Minister, rather than the actual agreements and concessions between them. With China, however, the 18 one-on-one meetings between Mr. Modi and China's President Xi Jinping between 2014-19 did not generate the requisite understanding to foresee Chinese People's Liberation Army's transgressions along the Line of Actual Control and the Galwan clashes.

With the U.S., too, Mr. Modi's close engagements during the Trump 1.0 tenure (the 'Howdy Modi' rally in Texas in 2019 and the 'Namaste Trump' rally in Gujarat in 2020), as well as his early visit to Washington under the Trump 2.0 administration in February 2025 should have given the two leaders enough of an understanding of the other. Given the shocks that have followed, it may be time to turn back the focus to substance over style. But that substance becomes more difficult to seek in Trumpian times, given that most foreign policy decisions are being taken by Mr. Trump himself and a small

ring around him in the White House, with few appointments being made on the desks that deal with India in the National Security Council or the State Department. In the 'good times' Delhi and Washington have worked well, even without a U.S. Ambassador in place in India. But at present, it is clear that a senior envoy with a keen knowledge of India as well as the U.S. President's ear are necessary to navigate the turbulence in ties.

Maintain a political balance

The third lesson of the past few months is that India must reclaim bipartisanship in diplomatic relations, and build and maintain ties on both sides of the political spectrum, regardless of which party is in power. In the U.S., the Democratic party establishment was unhappy about the Trump-Modi rallies because they were held just months before the U.S. presidential election in 2020, and India had to spend some time, subsequently, repairing ties with the Joe Biden administration. Four years later, this annoyed Mr. Trump, the Republican contender, especially as he felt the contrast between the close personal bonhomie while he was in power and the fact that the Mr. Modi and his envoys did not spend time with him when he was out of power, including during the three times Mr. Modi travelled to the U.S. in 2021, 2023 and 2024, to hold talks with Mr. Biden. Closer home, this bipartisanship has been proven to trip up India's ties in the neighbouring countries as well – Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives.

Fourth, Mr. Trump's penalties on India's import of oil, after the U.S. allowed, even actively encouraged the purchases before, show how fickle the global power can be and how futile it is for India to forego its principles in order to please a particular regime. India's time-honoured principle of only acceding to UN-mandated sanctions was broken in 2008 when the government bowed to Mr. Trump's threats of sanctions against Iranian oil, and then Venezuelan oil, possibly emboldening him to demand the same against the use of Russian oil this time. By accepting such unreasonable orders, India does not just risk economic losses in foregoing cheaper oil. It also becomes complicit in the U.S.'s foreign policy objectives that do not necessarily align with India's national interests. Conversely, when India resists such moves, it wins the support of others in the Global South. And while they object, western powers gradually accept India's strategic autonomy in these matters.

Finally, New Delhi must consider measures and countermeasures to deal with U.S. actions that hurt India's interests acutely – like the reciprocal and penalty tariffs that will make Indian goods far less competitive than those of its exporting rivals, curbs on U.S. manufacturing in India, or the punitive taxes on Indians working in the U.S. Getting back India's agency will require a firmer stance – one that is not buffeted by the winds in Alaska, at a summit meeting thousands of kilometres away from India.

subhasini@bharatnews.com

Context

❑ The Alaska Moment between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin raised expectations for India regarding sanctions relief and trade, but the summit produced limited benefits for New Delhi.

India's Hopes and U.S. Responses

- ❑ India expected the U.S.-Russia rapprochement to ease American pressure on New Delhi's relations with Moscow, particularly in oil imports and trade negotiations.
- ❑ Instead of relief, the U.S. reiterated its plan for **25% secondary sanctions** on Indian imports of Russian oil, along with maintaining **25% reciprocal tariffs** on Indian exports.
- ❑ President Trump claimed to have mediated the India-Pakistan ceasefire in May 2025, contradicting the Modi government's narrative and further straining bilateral trust.

ThePrint

'Dialogue & diplomacy' only way forward, says MEA as it welcomes Trump-Putin's Alaska summit



Structural Lessons for India's Foreign Policy

- ❑ India's over-reliance on leader-level diplomacy has yielded limited strategic gains, as seen in the contrast between high-profile summits and unresolved disputes with both the U.S. and China.
- ❑ Decision-making under President Trump remains highly personalized, with few institutional channels available for India to negotiate effectively.
- ❑ The absence of a senior U.S. envoy with deep knowledge of India complicates navigation through turbulent phases of the bilateral relationship.

Strategic Course Correction for India

- ❑ India must reclaim bipartisan credibility in the U.S. by balancing ties with Republicans and Democrats, avoiding over-association with one political faction.
- ❑ New Delhi's past acceptance of unilateral U.S. sanctions (e.g., Iran, Venezuela) weakened its principles; resisting such pressures strengthens its credibility in the **Global South**.
- ❑ India must explore reciprocal and calibrated responses to U.S. tariff barriers, remittance taxes, and trade restrictions to safeguard its economic and strategic interests.

Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0

Easing business: Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 tabled, to decriminalise 288 offences

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 18

COMMERCE MINISTER Piyush Goyal on Monday tabled the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 that proposes the decriminalisation of 288 provisions relating to minor offences in order to make doing business easier.

The Commerce Ministry said the 2025 Bill builds on the Jan Vishwas Act of 2023 which decriminalised 183 provisions. The 2025 Bill has been referred to a select committee which is expected to prepare a report on it by the first day of the next session.

The Bill proposes to amend 355 provisions in all. Besides the 288 provisions that are proposed to be decriminalised, the Bill proposes the amendment of 67 provisions under the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Act, 1994 and Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to facilitate ease of living, the Ministry said in a statement.

The government said the proposals involve removal of imprisonment clauses for minor, technical or procedural defaults and have been replaced with monetary penalties or warnings.

To reduce the judicial burden, designated officers have been empowered to impose penalties through administrative processes.

Four Acts — Tea Act, 1953,



Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal in Lok Sabha on Monday. PTI

Legal Metrology Act, 2009, Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 — which were part of Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 are proposed for further decriminalisation under the current Bill, the government said.

As many as 47 provisions under the NDMC Act have been proposed for amendments. The proposal replaces the "rateable value" method of property tax with Unit Area Method (UAM), introducing a transparent and formula-based system linked to property size, usage and location. "This will simplify assessment, reduce discretion, and enhance compliance," a ministry official said.

The amendments proposed in the 20 provisions of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 will provide relaxation and clarity in compli-

ance, including state-wide vehicle registration instead of jurisdiction-specific.

For instance, the reporting period for vehicle registration cancellation extended from 14 to 30 days. Insurer intimation period on transfer of insurance certificate has been proposed to be extended from 14 to 30 days. "These reforms aim to simplify procedures for citizens, improve transparency in property taxation, and provide relief in vehicle-related compliances," the official said.

The official said that 11 offences under the Apprentices Act, 1961 like employer requiring an apprentice to work overtime without approval of Apprenticeship Adviser, refusal to furnish information or return, employing apprentice on work

WHAT'S IN THE BILL

■ Advisory or warning to be issued for 76 offences under 10 Acts.

■ Imprisonment clauses for minor, technical or procedural defaults replaced with monetary penalties or warnings

■ Penalties made proportionate, with graduated penalties for repeated offences

■ Designated officers empowered to impose penalties through administrative processes, reducing judicial burden

■ Automatic 10% rise in penalty every three years to maintain deterrence without legislative amendments

which is not connected to his training, etc. which are currently punishable with fine (₹1,000) are proposed to be converted to advisory for the first contravention and with censure or warning or penalty for every subsequent contravention.

Why in News ?

- ❑ The Jan Vishwas (Amendment) Bill, 2025, will be introduced in the Lok Sabha by Union Minister Piyush Goyal.
- ❑ It aims to decriminalise minor offences, amend over 350 provisions, and promote ease of living and business through trust-based governance.

Key Highlights of the Bill

- Introduced by **Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal** in the **Lok Sabha**.
- Seeks to **amend several enactments**, decriminalising minor provisions.
- Over **350 provisions** are proposed for amendment in different laws.
- Part of the government's **reform drive** to improve India's **business climate**.
- Builds on the **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023**, which decriminalised **183 provisions in 42 Central Acts**.

Significance for Governance and Economy

- Reduces **regulatory burden** for individuals and businesses.
- Encourages a more **investment-friendly climate**.
- Promotes **ease of living** by eliminating harsh penalties for minor offences.
- Strengthens **legal certainty** and supports government's **reform narrative**.
- Signals India's shift towards **modern, citizen-centric governance**.

Jan Vishwas Act and Legal Reform Measures:

- **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023:** Removed imprisonment/fines in many laws, converting some into **monetary penalties**.
- **Objective:** To reduce **criminal liability** for trivial offences and promote **ease of doing business**.
- **Legal Reforms:** Over **40,000 compliances abolished** and **1,500 obsolete laws scrapped**.
- **Prime Minister's Vision:** Eliminate outdated laws that unnecessarily **criminalise citizens**.
- **Governance Approach:** Focus on **simplification, rationalisation, and trust-based governance**.

Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0

in **Budget 2025-26**, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the introduction of **Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0**, which aims to:

- **Decriminalize 100+ more provisions** in existing laws
- Replace **criminal penalties with civil fines** and **administrative actions** for minor violations

The first **Jan Vishwas Act (2023)** had already **decriminalized over 180 legal provisions**.

Amoebic Meningoencephalitis

Alert issued against amoebic meningoencephalitis in Kozhikode; health dept. steps up awareness efforts

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

The Health department in Kerala's Kozhikode has issued an alert against primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) in the district in view of the reporting of three cases of the infection and a death in recent days.

District Medical Officer K.K. Rajaram said in a release on Monday that though the mortality of the rare brain infection was very high, it would not transmit from person to person.

PAM is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a free-living



Risk alert: During earlier outbreaks, some local bodies in Kerala had installed boards near ponds to caution the public. HEMAL HAKIM/KOZH

amoeba. People get infected when they swim or take a bath in stagnant waters. The amoeba enters the body through the nose and

reaches the brain. Children could be more vulnerable as their cribriform plate, which separates the nasal cavity and the skull, has

more porous openings compared with the adults.

Another route of the infection is through the eardrum.

Dr. Rajaram said symptoms such as severe headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, and light sensitivity would appear within five to 10 days of the amoeba entering the brain.

Children may also refuse to have food, will not go out to play, and generally prefer to lay on the bed without moving their body. Fading memory, epilepsy, and fainting are indications of the infection getting severe.

Those who seek medical treatment for fever need to inform the doctor if they had ever taken bath in ponds or stagnant waterbodies.

Officials suggested that swimming and bathing in stagnant or unhygienic water sources be avoided and nose clips be used while swimming. Those who have undergone surgeries in their nose and ears should not venture into waters.

Awareness activities are being undertaken in Thamarassery where a nine-year-old child died due to the infection.

Context

- ❑ The Health department in BENGALURU Kerala's Kozhikode has issued an alert against primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) in the district in view of the reporting of three cases of the infection and a death in recent days.

PAM (Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis)

Causative Organism – *Naegleria fowleri*

- ❑ *Naegleria fowleri* is a free-living amoeba, commonly known as the "brain-eating amoeba."
- ❑ It thrives in warm freshwater bodies such as lakes, rivers, and poorly maintained swimming pools.
- ❑ It is thermophilic (heat-loving) and can survive at temperatures up to 46°C, making global warming a potential risk factor for its spread.
- ❑ It does not survive in salty water (seawater) and chlorinated pools with proper disinfection.

Mode of Transmission

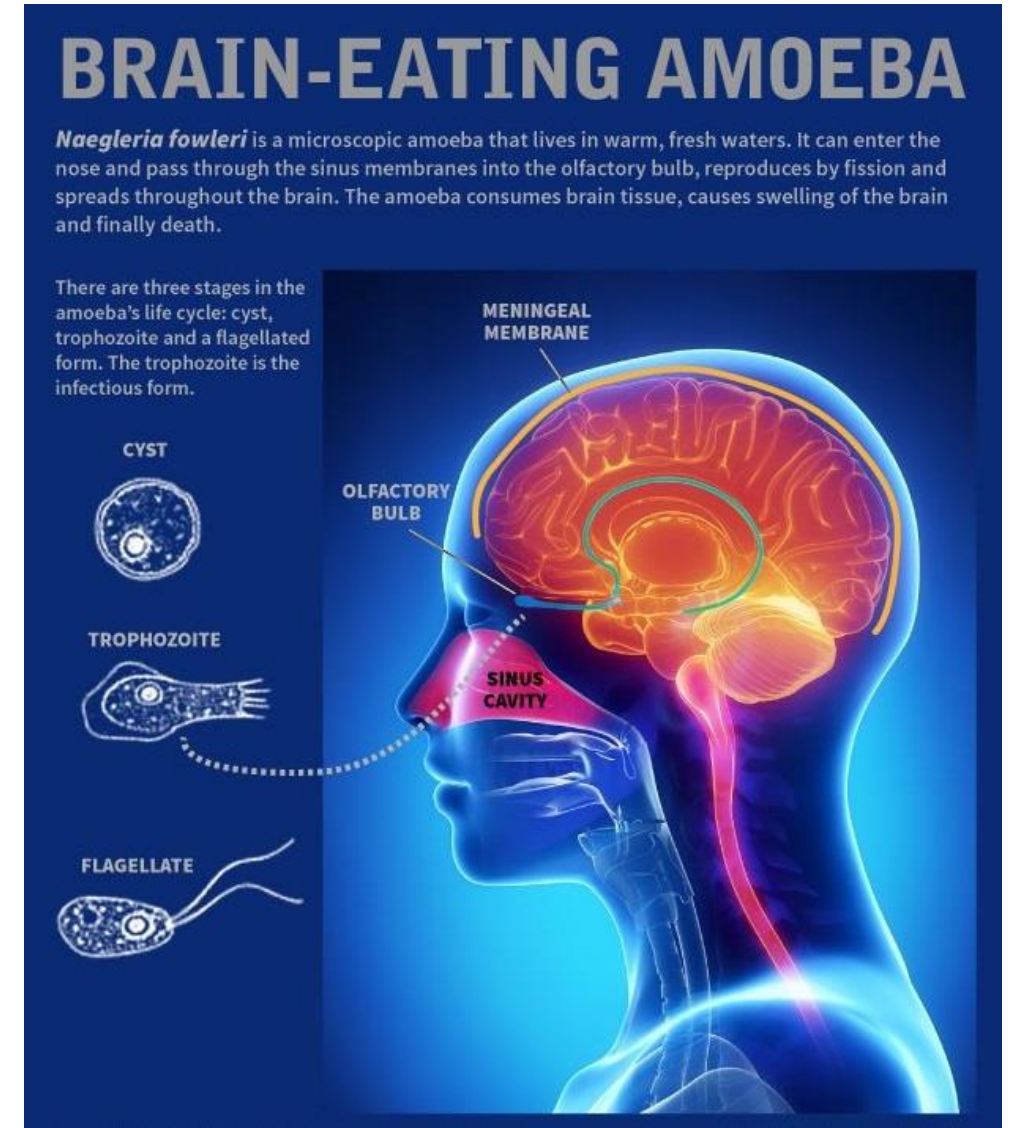
- ❑ The amoeba infects humans when contaminated water enters the nasal cavity, typically during swimming, diving, or water sports.
- ❑ From the nasal passages, it migrates along the olfactory nerve to the brain.
- ❑ It is **not transmitted person-to-person**, making it a non-communicable disease.

Pathogenesis and Fatality

- ❑ Once in the brain, *Naegleria fowleri* rapidly destroys brain tissue, causing inflammation and swelling.
- ❑ The disease progresses extremely fast: early flu-like symptoms advance to neurological dysfunction, coma, and death within days.
- ❑ The case fatality rate is over **97%**, with only a handful of survivors reported worldwide.

Treatment Protocols

- ❑ There is **no universally effective treatment**. Most cases remain fatal despite interventions.



Global Food security through India

The path to ending global hunger runs through India

With global chronic undernourishment now on a downward trend, the world is beginning to turn a corner in its fight against hunger. The United Nations' newly released The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 reports that 673 million people (8.2% of the world's population) were undernourished in 2024. This is down from 688 million in 2023. Although we have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels (7.3% in 2018), this reversal marks a welcome shift from the sharp rise experienced during COVID-19.

India has played a decisive role in this global progress. The gains are the result of policy investments in food security and nutrition, increasingly driven by digital technology, smarter governance, and improved service delivery.

Revised estimates using the latest National Sample Survey data on household consumption show that the prevalence of undernourishment in India declined from 14.3% in 2020-22 to 12% in 2022-24. In absolute terms, this means 30 million fewer people living with hunger – an impressive achievement considering the scale of the population and the depth of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The transformation of the PDS

At the centre of this progress is India's Public Distribution System, which has undergone a profound transformation. The system has been revitalised through digitalisation, Aadhaar-enabled targeting, real-time inventory tracking, and biometric authentication. The rollout of electronic point-of-sale systems and the One Nation One Ration Card platform have made entitlements portable across the country, which is particularly crucial for internal migrants and vulnerable households.



Maximo Torero Cullen

is Chief Economist, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

India's decisive role in the world's fight against hunger is a result of its policy investments in food security and nutrition

These innovations allowed India to rapidly scale up food support during the pandemic and to continue to ensure access to subsidised staples for more than 800 million people.

Now, progress on calories must give way to progress on nutrition. The cost of a healthy diet in India remains unaffordable for over 60% of the population, driven by high prices of nutrient-dense foods, inadequate cold chains, and inefficient market linkages. That said, India has begun investing in improving the quality of calories. For example, the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) school-feeding scheme, launched in 2021, and the Integrated Child Development Services are now focusing on dietary diversity and nutrition sensitivity, laying the foundation for long-term improvements in child development and public health.

New data in the UN report also shows progress the country has made in making healthy diets more affordable despite food inflation.

What is happening underscores a larger structural challenge: even as hunger falls, malnutrition, obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies are rising. This is especially so among poor urban and rural populations.

The agrifood system needs transformation

India can meet this challenge by transforming its agrifood system. This means boosting the production and the affordability of nutrient-rich foods such as pulses, fruits, vegetables, and animal-source products, which are often out of reach for low-income families. It also means investing in post-harvest infrastructure such as cold storage and digital logistics systems, to reduce the estimated 13% of food lost between farm and market. These losses directly affect food

availability and affordability.

In addition, India should further strengthen support for women-led food enterprises and local cooperatives, including Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), especially those cultivating climate-resilient crops, as these can enhance both nutrition and livelihoods.

India must continue to invest in its digital advantage to drive the transformation of its agrifood systems. Platforms such as AgriStack, e-NAM, and geospatial data tools can strengthen market access, improve agricultural planning, and enhance the delivery of nutrition-sensitive interventions.

A symbol of hope

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) notes that the progress of India in agrifood system transformation is not just national imperatives; they are global contributions. As a leader among developing countries, India is well-positioned to share its innovations in digital governance, social protection, and data-driven agriculture with others across the Global South. India's experience shows that reducing hunger is not only possible but that it can be scaled when backed by political will, smart investment, and inclusion.

With just five years left to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) on ending hunger, India's recent performance gives this writer hope. But sustaining this momentum will require a shift from delivering sustenance to delivering nutrition, resilience, and opportunity.

The hunger clock is ticking. India is no longer just feeding itself. The path to ending global hunger runs through India, and its continued leadership is essential to getting us there.

Context

- ❑ The UN State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 Report highlights India's decisive role in reducing global undernourishment, with national hunger prevalence declining to 12% in 2022–24.

Decline in Undernourishment

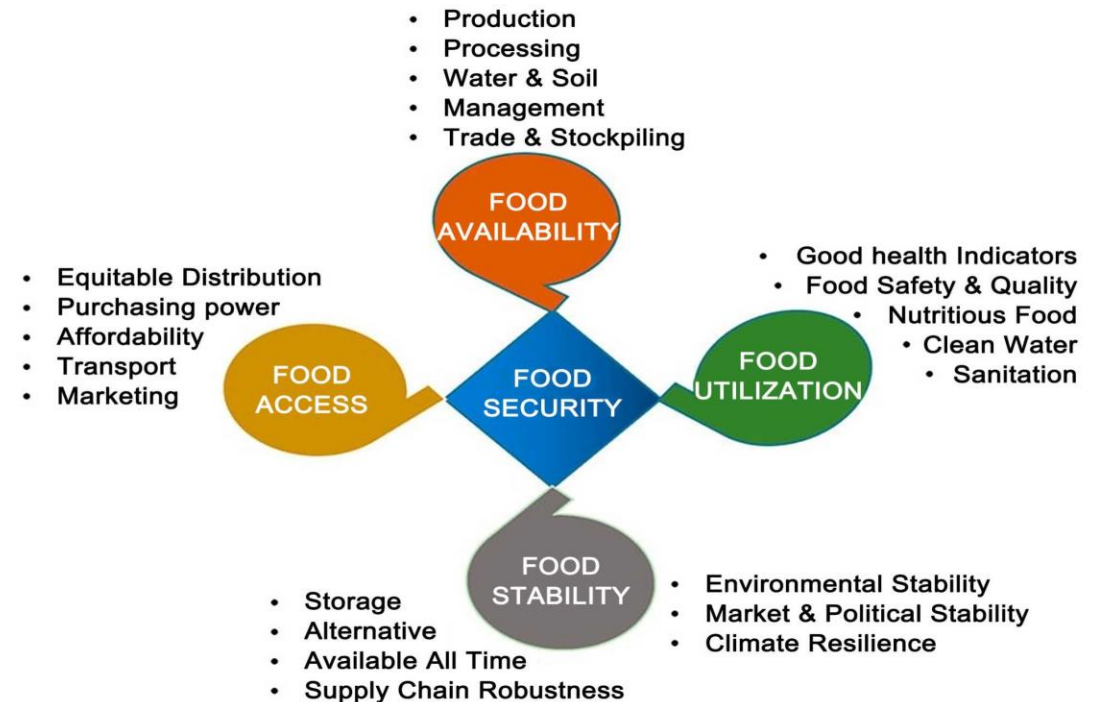
- ❑ Undernourishment fell globally to **673 million people (8.2%) in 2024**, marking a reversal of the pandemic-induced spike.
- ❑ India reduced undernourishment from **3% (2020–22) to 12% (2022–24)**, translating into **30 million fewer people facing hunger**.
- ❑ Policy investments in digital governance, targeted delivery, and nutrition-sensitive programs underpinned these improvements.

Transformation of India's Food Systems

- ❑ **Public Distribution System (PDS) Modernisation** Digitisation, Aadhaar-enabled authentication, real-time tracking, and **One Nation One Ration Card** enabled food portability for **800 million people**.
- ❑ Schemes such as **PM POSHAN** and **ICDS** have shifted focus from calorie sufficiency to dietary diversity and child nutrition.
- ❑ Despite progress, **over 60% of Indians cannot afford a healthy diet** due to high prices of nutrient-dense foods and inadequate cold chains.

The Road Ahead for Agrifood Transformation

- ❑ Expanding production and affordability of **pulses, fruits, vegetables, and animal-source foods** is essential for balanced nutrition.
- ❑ Investments in cold chains, digital logistics, and support for **FPOs and women-led enterprises** can reduce food loss and enhance livelihoods.
- ❑ Through innovations like **AgriStack, e-NAM, and data-driven agriculture**, India can guide other developing nations in meeting **SDG-2: Zero Hunger**.





Thank you

Address

**B-47, Main Road Shivalik Enclave, Block-
B, Shivalik Colony, Malviya Nagar, New
Delhi-110017**

Phone Number +91 8178833167