

DAILY PT POINTERS

10 September, 2024



The Hindu-Governance(GSII)-Page 1

GoM set up to review 18% GST on health, life covers

Amid growing clamour for a cut in tax levy on premium paid for policies, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, at the GST Council meeting, says a decision could be made as early as November

Updated - September 09, 2024 10:10 pm IST



VIKAS DHOOT



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- The GST Council has set a 50-day deadline for a new Group of Ministers (GoM) to review the 18% tax on health and life insurance premiums.
- The review will address whether the tax rate should be reduced, scrapped, or adjusted for different types of policies.
- **GST Compensation Cess:** A new GoM will evaluate the future of the GST Compensation Cess, initially set to end in July 2022 but extended to March 2026.
- The cess was extended due to reduced collections during the COVID-19 pandemic and special borrowings for State compensation.
- **Recent GST Rate Changes:**
 - Cancer Drugs: GST rate reduced from 12% to 5% for Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, and Durvalumab.
 - Car Seat Covers: GST rate increased to 28% from 18%.
 - Extruded Savory Snacks: GST rate reduced from 18% to 12% to align with similar products.

The Hindu –Governance(GSII)/GS3/Economy-Page 8

On the challenges to road safety in India

What does the India Status Report on Road Safety 2024 state with respect to meeting international goals of reducing road accident fatalities? Which States have the lowest rates of road accident deaths? What is a crash surveillance system?

EXPLAINER

Tikender Singh Panwar
Geetam Tiwari

The story so far:

The "India Status Report on Road Safety 2024," prepared by the TRIP Centre at IIT Delhi, not only highlights India's slow progress toward meeting international goals of reducing road accident fatalities, but also emphasises the organic connection between road construction, mobility, and the need for a differentiated approach to mitigate road accidents.

What does the report state?

This report analyses road safety in India, using data from First Information Reports (FIRs) from six States and audits of State compliance with Supreme Court directives on road safety governance. It exposes disparities in road traffic death rates across States, emphasising the vulnerability of motorcyclists and the high rate of fatal crashes involving trucks. Road traffic injuries remain a major public health challenge in India, with little progress in reducing fatalities, despite advancements in other sectors. Most Indian States are unlikely to meet the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety goal to halve traffic deaths by 2030.

In 2021, road traffic injuries were the 13th leading cause of death in India and the 12th leading cause of health loss (measured in Disability-Adjusted Life Years, or DALYs). In six States (Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh), road traffic injuries ranked among the top 10 causes of health loss.

Why is crash surveillance necessary?

India's national road safety data systems are insufficient for guiding public policy. Currently, there is no national crash-level database. Road safety statistics at both State and national levels are compiled

Safety first In 2021, road traffic injuries were the 13th leading cause of death in India and the 12th leading cause of health loss.

Percentage of road traffic deaths by victims mode of transport in six States

	Chhattisgarh	Chandigarh	Delhi	Haryana	Maharashtra	Uttarakhand
Pedestrian	16	23	44	25	24	28
Bicycle	4	13	3	3	1	3
Motorised two-wheeler	58	51	40	47	58	48
Motorised three-wheeler	1	7	4	2	1	2
Car	4	4	5	8	6	7
Bus	1	1	0	1	1	4
Truck	5	1	2	5	3	4
Farm tractor	6	0	0	2	2	0
Others	0	1	1	1	2	1
Unknown	0	1	1	0	0	1
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Percentage of road traffic deaths by type of impacting vehicle in six States

	Chhattisgarh	Chandigarh	Delhi	Haryana	Maharashtra	Uttarakhand
Bicycle	0	0	1	0	1	0
Motorised two-wheeler	13	11	6	10	14	10
Motorised three-wheeler	0	7	3	1	0	1
Car	7	16	14	25	14	21
Bus	3	5	6	4	4	7
Truck	24	12	18	32	27	28
Farm tractor	5	1	1	7	4	6
Others	11	12	5	1	5	3
None	16	9	3	2	16	5
Unknown	18	9	45	17	15	21
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: India Status Report on Road Safety 2024

which are aggregated at district, State, and national levels before being published. These tables allow only the most basic analyses, preventing effective intervention or program evaluation. Furthermore, comparisons with other datasets, such as the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study and Sample Registration System (SRS), suggest that these tables often contain inaccurate information on key variables like the victim's mode of transport – data crucial for road safety management.

In the absence of a crash surveillance system, the report had to rely on FIRs from six States and State road safety

How are States faring in road safety?

Road safety varies significantly across India, with per capita death rates differing more than threefold between States. Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh recorded the highest death rates, at 21.9, 19.2, and 17.6 per 1,00,000 people, respectively. In contrast, West Bengal and Bihar had the lowest rates, at 5.9 per 1,00,000 in 2021. Six states – Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu – account for nearly half of all traffic fatalities in India.

The report also reveals that pedestrians, cyclists, and motorised

victims of road accidents, while trucks are responsible for the highest proportion of impacting vehicles. It also notes that in only seven States do more than 50% of motorised two-wheeler riders wear helmets, despite the fact that this simple safety measure could significantly reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

Only eight States have audited more than half of their National Highway lengths, and very few States have done the same for their State Highways. Basic traffic safety measures, including traffic calming, markings, and signage, are still lacking in most States. Helmet usage in rural areas is particularly low, and trauma care facilities are inadequate. Tailored strategies are essential to address the unique road safety challenges faced by different States.

How does India fare globally?

The report presents a sobering comparison between India and developed countries like Sweden and other Scandinavian nations, which have excelled in road safety governance. In 1990, an Indian was 40% more likely to die in a road accident than someone in these countries. By 2021, this figure had soared to 600%, indicating a sharp rise in road fatalities. The report questions whether better-equipped vehicles with more advanced safety features are the solution, given that two-wheeler riders, cyclists, and motorcyclists represent the majority of road fatalities.

What is the way forward?

Central and State governments need to prioritise the scale-up of road safety interventions. A national database for fatal crashes should be established. Public access to this system will improve understanding of specific risks to road users and the effectiveness of various interventions implemented in the States.

Geetam Tiwari is Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi. Tikender Panwar is former Deputy Mayor, Shimla, and Member, Kerala Urban

THE GIST

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- **India Status Report on Road Safety 2024:** The report from the TRIP Centre at IIT Delhi highlights India's slow progress in reducing road accident fatalities and stresses the need for a differentiated approach to road construction and mobility to mitigate accidents.

- Based on FIRs from six States and audits of State compliance with Supreme Court directives.
- Exposes disparities in road traffic death rates, with high fatality rates among motorcyclists and truck-related crashes.
- Road traffic injuries remain a significant public health issue, with minimal progress in reducing fatalities.

Current Statistics:

- In 2021, road traffic injuries were the 13th leading cause of death and 12th for health loss (DALYs) in India.
- In six States (Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh), road traffic injuries were among the top 10 causes of health loss

The Hindu –Economy(GSIII)-Page 8

The role of district agro-met offices in supporting farmers

What are agro-meteorological advisories? Why did the government shut down district agro-met offices?

Rishika Pardikar

The story so far:

Last week, PTI reported that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) is planning to revive District Agro-Meteorology Units (DAMUs) under the Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) scheme. The IMD established 199 DAMUs in 2018 in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The aim was to use weather data to prepare and disseminate sub-district level agricultural advisories. In March, DAMUs were shut down following an order issued by the IMD.

Why are agro-met units important?

Around 80% of farmers in India are small and marginal. They largely practise rain-fed agriculture in the backdrop of a decades-long farm crisis that is now overlaid with climate change-related weather variability. "The climate is changing. Monsoon onset and withdrawal dates have changed. We also see extended

dry spells and heavy wet spells. Farmers should have this information because it affects crops," Madhavan Rajeevan, former secretary, Ministry of Earth Science, told *The Hindu*.

The DAMUs were located within Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). Scientists and researchers trained in meteorology and agriculture were recruited as DAMU staff. They used weather data provided by the IMD like rainfall, temperature and wind speeds to prepare agricultural advisories related to sowing and harvesting, usage of fertilizers and pesticides, irrigation etc.

These advisories were sent to millions of farmers across the country free-of-cost in local languages twice a week. They were shared via text messages, WhatsApp groups, newspapers and also through in-person communication from DAMU staff and KVK officers. Since these advisories provided weather information in advance, they helped farmers plan activities like irrigation. They also served as early warnings for extreme events like droughts and heavy rainfall. Many studies

conducted over the years have stressed the benefits of agro-met advisories.

Why were DAMUs shut down?

According to a report by *Article-14*, the NTI Aayog misrepresented the role of DAMUs and also sought privatisation. NTI Aayog falsely claimed that agro-met data was automated, thereby undercutting the role of DAMU staff. In reality, the DAMU staff played a huge role in preparing agricultural advisories based on weather data by the IMD. These advisories were prepared at the block-level across districts and then communicated to farmers in local languages. NTI Aayog also sought monetisation of such services as opposed to the current scheme where agro-met information was provided free-of-cost to all farmers. "Closing DAMUs was not a wise decision. The (GKMS) scheme should have been strengthened to capture the needs of farmers across the country," said Dr. M. N. Thimmegowda, a professor at the University of Agricultural Sciences. In February, the Gujarat-based

Association of Agrometeorologists wrote to the Prime Minister expressing "deep concern and disappointment" about the decision to shut down the agro-met units while highlighting how DAMUs helped build "climate resilience" among the farming community. In the same month, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari wrote to Jitendra Singh, current Minister of State in the Ministry of Earth Sciences seeking a continuation of the services.

THE GIST

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What about private players?

At present, there are a handful of private players in the weather advisory space. But there are serious concerns about the affordability of such services. "Private companies work with a profit motive and the prices become exorbitant for small and marginal farmers who are the majority," Mr. Thimmegowda said. For instance, consider how some companies currently charge ₹10,000 per crop for an annual subscription to their advisories. This would mean an investment of ₹20,000-40,000 for many farmers who cultivate vegetables and cereals. Some companies also charge rates as high as ₹60,000-80,000 for annual subscriptions to downscaled farm-level agromet advisories. Further, Mr. Thimmegowda explained that there could be bias in agro-met advisories related to usage of fertilizers etc. "Their recommendations of fertilizers and pesticides could be biased towards certain brands."

Rishika Pardikar is a freelance environment reporter.

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The Hindu –Defence(GSIII)-Page 10

CDS General Chauhan releases doctrine for amphibious operations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan released the joint doctrine for amphibious operations during the Chiefs of Staff Committee meeting held on Monday.

“The doctrine is a keystone publication which will provide guidance to the commanders for the conduct of amphibious operations in today’s complex military environment,” the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

The amphibious capability empowers the armed

forces to conduct a “multitude of operations” in the Indian Ocean Region, both during war and peace, the Ministry said, adding, “These operations are a crucial component of multi-domain operations and serve as the best example of the cohesion and integration amongst the armed forces.” The joint doctrine for amphibious operations is the second joint doctrine released this year and it provides due focus on jointness and integration of armed forces in general and amphibious operations in particular, it added.

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The Hindu-IR(GSII)-Page 12

India, UAE ink pact for civil nuclear cooperation

MoU signed during visit of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to New Delhi; agreement between NPCIL and UAE's Barakah nuclear power plant

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

In a first, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for civil nuclear cooperation.

The deal between Nuclear Power Cooperation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) and the ENEC (Emirates Nuclear Energy Company)-led Barakah Nuclear Power Plant Operations and Maintenance took place during the current visit of Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to India.

During the August 2015 trip of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the UAE, both countries had agreed to cooperate in "peaceful use of nuclear energy", including in areas of "safety, health, agriculture, and science and technology."

Diplomatic sources pointed out that nothing like the agreement between the NPCIL and the ENEC had been signed before. The deal is part of the UAE's policy of expanding



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Monday. SLS/IL/ANI/REUTERS

investments into the nuclear energy sector.

Trilateral cooperation

Monday's MoU is the result of nuclear cooperation-related discussion between India and the UAE spanning a few years. On September 19, 2022, the Foreign Ministers of France, India and the UAE met in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly and launched a trilateral cooperation format. This meeting was followed by a phone call among the

three Ministers on February 4, 2023.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said following the three-party phone call that all three sides had agreed that the trilateral initiative "will serve as a forum to promote the design and execution of cooperation projects in the fields of energy, with a focus on solar and nuclear energy".

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi was earlier in the day hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at

Hyderabad House in New Delhi.

LNG supply

Apart from the nuclear cooperation-related MoU, the two sides signed an MoU for long-term LNG supply between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd.

A third agreement between ADNOC and India Strategic Petroleum Reserve Ltd. (ISPR) was also one of the outcomes during the visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. Urja Bharat and ADNOC signed a Production Concession Agreement for Abu Dhabi Onshore Block I.

The fifth MoU was between the Government of Gujarat and Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company PJSC (ADQ) on food parks development in India.

India and the UAE are part of the I2U2 grouping that includes Israel and the United States. The visit also coincided with the first India-Gulf Cooperation Council meeting that took place in Saudi Arabia.

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The Hindu-IR(GSII)

China set to conduct joint naval, air drills with Russia

Associated Press
BEIJING

China's Defence Ministry on Monday announced joint naval and air drills with Russia starting this month, underscoring the closeness between their militaries as Russia presses its grinding invasion of Ukraine.

The Ministry said the "Northern United-2024" exercises would take place in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk farther north, but gave no further details.

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- The Ministry said the "Northern United-2024" exercises would take place in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk farther north, but gave no further details.
- It said the naval and air drills aimed at improving strategic cooperation between the two countries and "strengthen their ability to jointly deal with security threats."
- The notice also said the two navies would cruise together in the Pacific, the fifth time they have done so, and together take part in Russia's "Great Ocean-24" exercise. No further details were given.

Indian Express-Environment(GSIII)-Page 5

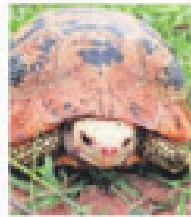
Critically endangered elongated tortoise spotted in Aravallis for first time

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 9

THE ELONGATED tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*), a critically endangered species, was spotted in Haryana's Damdama area during a research survey in the Aravallis.

The tortoise is medium-sized with a yellowish brown or olive shell and distinct black blotches at the centre of each scute. It has on its nostril a pink ring, which appears in the breeding season. Mature species of both sexes develop a distinct pinkish colouration surrounding the nostrils and eyes during the season.

The tortoise, found in the Sal deciduous and hilly evergreen forests, is distributed across Southeast Asia from northern India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh in the west, eastward through Myanmar, Thailand, and all of Indochina, north to Guangxi Province of China and south to Peninsular Malaysia.



The tortoise spotted in Damdama area. Express

Sunil Harsana, an environmentalist, and Nitesh Kaushik, a project fellow at Coexistence Consortium, discovered the tortoise. An expert in the field, Sneha Dharwadkar, identified the species through photographs. Harsana had deployed cameras in the region.

"There have not been enough surveys to ascertain its presence in Aravallis, but the tortoise is found in the foothills of the Himalayas. It inhabits wetter areas and discovering it here is an aberration than a norm," Dharwadkar said, adding that it cannot be ruled out that the tortoise was brought by trade.

Harsana said it was the tor-

- A critically endangered elongated tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*) was spotted in Haryana's Damdama area during a research survey in the Aravallis. The tortoise is medium-sized with a yellowish-brown or olive shell, distinct black blotches, and a pink ring around its nostrils during the breeding season.
- This species is native to Southeast Asia, including northern India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Indochina, Guangxi Province in China, and Peninsular Malaysia.
- It typically inhabits Sal deciduous and hilly evergreen forests and lowlands up to 1,000 meters above sea level.
- The elongated tortoise is listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as of 2018, with severe population declines attributed to human activities.

PIB-Economy(GSIII)

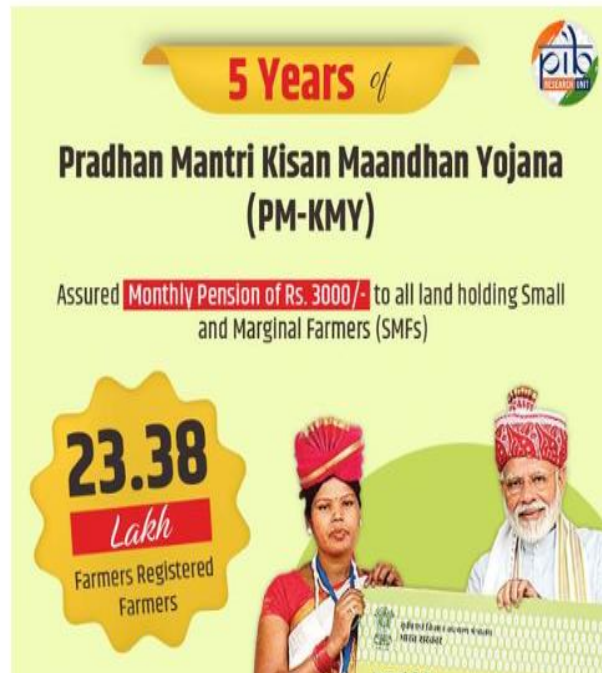
Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

Five Successful Years of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY)

Posted On: 09 SEP 2024 4:41PM by PIB Delhi

Introduction

Launched on September 12, 2019, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY) has been providing social security to all land-holding Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs) across the country.



The infographic features a green background with a yellow banner at the top that reads "5 Years of". Below this, the text "Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY)" is displayed in bold black letters. A red box highlights the text "Assured Monthly Pension of Rs. 3000/- to all land holding Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs)". At the bottom left, a yellow starburst contains the text "23.38 Lakh Farmers Registered Farmers". On the right, there is a photograph of a woman in a red and white sari and a man in a white kurta and red turban, both holding a green document. The PIB Research Unit logo is in the top right corner.

- Launched on September 12, 2019, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY) has been providing social security to all land-holding Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs) across the country.
- This old-age pension scheme is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme. Under the initiative, eligible small and marginal farmers are given a fixed monthly pension of Rs. 3,000 after attaining the age of sixty. To qualify, farmers contribute monthly to the pension fund during their working years, with matching contributions from the central government.
- This landmark scheme to provide a safety net to farmers in their old age has completed five years of its implementation.
- Successful Implementation of PM-KMY
- Under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), small and marginal farmers can enroll by paying a monthly subscription to the Pension Fund. Farmers aged between 18 and 40 years need to contribute between Rs. 55 to Rs. 200 per month until they turn 60.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB-Defence(GSIII)

Ministry of Defence

INDIA- USA JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE YUDH ABHYAS -2024 COMMENCES IN RAJASTHAN

Posted On: 09 SEP 2024 2:45PM by PIB Delhi

- The 20th edition of India-USA Joint Military Exercise YUDH ABHYAS-2024 commenced today, at Foreign Training Node in Mahajan Field Firing Ranges, Rajasthan. The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 9th to 22nd September 2024. Exercise YUDH ABHYAS has been held annually since 2004, alternating between India and the USA.
- This edition marks a significant increase in the scope and complexity of the joint exercise in terms of troop strength and equipment
- Exercise YUDH ABHYAS will enable both sides to share best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting joint operations. It will facilitate developing inter-operability, bonhomie and camaraderie between the two armies. The joint exercise will also enhance defence cooperation, further augmenting bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB-Environment(GSIII)

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Govt to organise the 4th Global Renewable Energy Investment Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST) from 16-18 September 2024 at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Prime Minister to inaugurate the 4th Global RE-INVEST at Gandhi Nagar on 16th September 2024 :
Shri Pralhad Joshi

State governments to give their firm commitments in the form of Shapath-Patra specifying their plans/targets for Renewable Energy sector : Shri Pralhad Joshi

Posted On: 09 SEP 2024 7:20PM by PIB Delhi

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is organising the 4th Global Renewable Energy Investors Meet & Expo (RE-INVEST 2024) from 16 to 18 September 2024 in Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.”
- Union Minister while addressing the media in Gandhinagar today informed that Hon’ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the investment meet and exposition on 16th September..
- The RE-INVEST 2024 aims to highlight India’s significant achievement in the renewable energy sector including manufacturing and deployment. India recognizes the importance of building a green sustainable future for the next generation, and at the core of this lies the Prime Minister's vision of Panchamrit and installing 500 GW of non-fossil power by 2030.
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HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Environment(GSIII)

Nepal Becomes 101st Member Of International Solar Alliance



- Nepal has become the 101st country to join the International Solar Alliance-ISA as a full member. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies as a means for bringing energy access, ensuring energy security, and driving energy transition in its member countries.
- The ISA strives to develop and deploy cost-effective and transformational energy solutions powered by the sun to help member countries develop low-carbon growth trajectories, with particular focus on delivering impact in countries categorized as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Being a global platform, ISA's partnerships with multilateral development banks (MDBs), development financial institutions (DFIs), private and public sector organisations, civil society and other international institutions is key to delivering the change it seeks to see in the world going ahead.