

Monthly Newsletter

September 2023



Dear Reader,

It gives us great pleasure to bring to you the September 2023 edition of the R M Consulting Newsletter that focuses on the G20 Leaders' Summit at Delhi being held under India's Presidency, the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies (September 7), and the need for India's higher educational institutions to double down on efforts to curb student ragging at campuses.

The highlight of this Newsletter is a special column written by former Central Electricity Authority (CEA) Chairperson Mr Pankaj Batra on his expectations from the G20 Leaders' Summit and his views on how the decisions taken therein could impact the outcome of COP28 to be held at Dubai towards the end of this year.

Besides Mr Batra's article, the Newsletter also features two write-ups by the R M Consulting team on:

- The necessity to have a relook at the efficacy of existing city-specific clean air action plans, and
- Why heads of colleges and universities can't turn a blind eye to the vicious ritual of ragging at campuses.

As always, we would look forward to your comments and feedback on the Newsletter.

Best wishes,

Team R M Consulting



Decisions on energy transition taken at G20 Leaders' Summit at Delhi will have a bearing on COP28 outcome

As expectations mount about the G20 Leaders' Summit to be held in Delhi under India's Presidency setting new benchmarks in international cooperation on several critical issues, including Climate Change and Clean Energy Transition, former Central Electricity Authority (CEA) Chairperson Pankaj Batra shares, with R M Consulting, his expectations from this meeting of global leaders, and, also, his views on the impact that the summit could have on COP28, and the issue of climate finance.

Pankaj Batra
Former Chairperson
Central Electricity Authority (CEA)



Decisions on energy transition taken at G20 Leaders' Summit at Delhi will have a bearing on COP28 outcome

Pankaj Batra

There is no doubt that all nations are making efforts to prevent climate change, as it threatens the very survival of human beings, if not tackled urgently. Under the Indian Presidency, the G20 in 2023 focuses on the theme, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'. Thus, it is expected that climate change would have to be tackled jointly by all nations, and (the process) would have to be inclusive.

The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris along with the President of France on November 30, 2015. ISA is an action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies as a means for energy access, ensuring energy security, and driving energy transition in its member countries. Subsequently, he proposed the idea of 'One Sun One World One Grid' (OSOWOG), a transnational electricity grid, supplying solar power all over the world, during the first assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2018. The concept behind the OSOWOG is '**The Sun Never Sets**' and is a constant at some geographical location, globally, at any given point of time.

The "Green Grid Initiative" was launched by the Prime Minister of India and the Prime Minister of UK jointly, at the COP26, at Glasgow, for joint responsibility of all nations. It is to build a framework for global cooperation on the effective utilisation of renewable resources and to help ensure that clean

and efficient energy is a reliable option for all nations to meet their energy requirements by 2030.

However, presently, 63.3% of electricity generation is still based on fossil fuel sources, 36.7% from coal, 23.5% from gas and 3.1% from oil. Since electricity is an essential commodity, it would take time to substitute coal with clean energy sources. Therefore, to my mind, a balance would have to be struck between availability of electricity through any source vis-à-vis transition to clean sources of energy. It will not make good sense for closing coal-based power plants, that still have useful life left in them, from the point of view of economics. Therefore, energy transition would have to be done in a methodical way. For new power generation sources, it would be preferable to source these from renewable sources of energy.



Consolidating the information given above, my guess is that **a general statement may come out for transitioning of energy sources from fossil fuel to clean energy sources like wind, solar, and hydro power. Nuclear power could also be considered, as it, too, is a non-fossil fuel source.** But outright ban on fossil fuel sources, without substituting these with clean energy sources, is not likely. India already has a target of 500 GW of clean energy sources by 2030. Considering the above, my sense would be more persuasion of all countries, to the extent that they can based on their NDCs

(Nationally Determined Contributions), to increase the NDCs, and increase efficiency in all aspects of the energy cycle, whether generation, transmission, distribution, or utilization. I feel that there is a huge scope for efficiency in utilization. An energy audit could be done to see where efficiencies can be brought out. Efficient fans, efficient cooling, efficient heating, efficient use of materials and method of construction of buildings, and efficient processes in industry. LED bulbs have already reduced lighting consumption substantially. System efficiencies could be another focus area, an example of which is the Green Grid Initiative. This, I think, has a lot of scope for energy saving, and therefore saving in emissions. This demand side efficiency (or efficiency in utilization) is even more effective than the others, since one unit of electricity consumed less is more than 1.2 units of lesser generation, considering auxiliary consumption and transmission and distribution losses. So, I think energy efficiency should form a part of the resolution of the Energy Summit of G20 nations.

Impact on COP28



The UAE will host the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) from November 30 to December 12, 2023, at Dubai, to unite the world towards agreement on bold, practical, and ambitious solutions to the most pressing global challenge of our time. All events, such as the G20, where UAE has been invited this year, as India's special guest to take part in the group's summit, chaired by India, have a bearing in shaping global events such as COP28.

Any decisions taken in the G20 this year with respect to energy transition, which is occupying the minds of thought leaders and political leaders globally, would undoubtedly have a bearing on the outcome of COP28. The COP28 Presidency has said it will work to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal alive and ensure that the world responds to the Stocktake with a clear plan of action, including measures that need to be put in place to bridge the gaps in progress. Sustainable agriculture will also feature prominently on the agenda at COP28, where participants will seek to spur innovation in how food is grown and produced. **Since UAE has already made clear its emphasis on mitigating climate change, it follows that any decision on the climate change issue in the G20 will influence the decision taken at COP28.** Sustainable agriculture is being thought of, in view of ensuring food security in adverse climatic conditions, which again is an outcome of climate change. So, I think, the **outcome of the G20 Leaders' Summit will play a big part in continuing efforts in COP28 on climate change.**

Climate Finance & Developed Nations

Although developed countries had committed finance for energy transition for developing and under-developed nations, my feeling is that they themselves need money to switch to green energy, and, also, possibly feel that they themselves are not going to be the most adversely affected countries. However, climate change will adversely affect all nations, and, also, threaten livelihoods in all nations, given the increasing dependency (of countries) on each other through trade in all commodities, including in energy. We have seen the increased intensity of cyclones in the US. We see heat waves in Europe, forest fires, melting of the Arctic ice, increasing floods, and a rise in sea level. We are, therefore, all in it together. We will have to tackle this together, in a united manner, and support each other. The sensitivities for all human beings within a nation, including the marginalized, as well as across nations, will have to increase. All countries, even if they are capitalists, have a dash of socialism in them, where there is the feature of subsistence allowance for those out of jobs. **This feeling for all humans will have to transcend national boundaries.**



(The author is former Chairperson of India's Central Electricity Authority.)

International Day of Clean Air for blue skies 2023: Time for a relook at efficacy of city-specific clean air action plans



Synopsis

The International Day of Clean Air for blue skies (September 7) presents an opportunity to start reassessing the impact of city-specific clean air action plans, including determining whether targets mentioned therein need replacement by more ambitious ones.

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As we prepare to observe the 2023 edition of the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies on September 7 (<https://www.unep.org/events/un-day/international-day-clean-air-blue-skies-2023#:~:text=The%20theme%20for%20the%20fourth,responsibility%20for%20overcoming%20air%20pollution.>), it may be good if the occasion could inspire a reassessment by authorities of the efficacy of existing city-level clean air action plans, including whether the targets mentioned therein need replacement by more ambitious ones.

Embarking on such an exercise could contribute enormously to hastening the process of making 'clean air for all' a reality for India's 1.4 billion citizens and, by extension, significantly improve the quality of life of nearly 18 per cent of the global population. Doing so could also help in the realisation of the

Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) target 3.9.1 related to reducing the mortality rate attributable to household and ambient air pollution (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>).

Kickstarting an exercise of this endeavour, moreover, would be in keeping with the “Together for Clean Air” theme chosen to mark this year’s edition of the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies. And provide an impetus to “Mission LiFE” (<http://missionlife-moefcc.nic.in/index.php>), one of the signature initiatives of the government.

Although air pollution in the Delhi-NCR belt, especially during the winter months, generally tends to make headlines, air pollution is a pan-India problem and must be viewed by all key stakeholders as part of the bigger battle being waged against climate change. This is because many of the steps necessary for improving air quality such as fast-tracking the shift towards clean energy sources, introduction of more environment-friendly public transport, etc. are measures that also hold true on the climate action front.

To make city-specific clean air action plans more effective, the following may be worth considering. Have clean air action plans factor in and categorically lay down the impact of how the measures being contemplated for air pollution in an area could contribute to the larger goal of countering the threat posed by climate change to the place in question, besides the state of which the city is a part, and, by extension, the country. A clear, scientific, data-backed articulation of how city-focused clean air action plans could contribute to better handling of the climate change issue could lead to easier buy-in by key stakeholders, including businesses, of the steps being suggested to improve air quality, and thereby quicker implementation of the proposed measures that would also benefit the climate cause.



Jadavpur University student death: India's educational institutions can't turn a blind eye to the vicious ritual of ragging at campuses



Synopsis

Heads of higher educational institutions in India cannot just act as mere bystanders and shrug off any criticism of their inability to stop instances of ragging at their institutions stating that they can only act if students who are ragged/fear being ragged come forward with their complaints/apprehensions since ensuring student safety is a basic prerequisite of their jobs.

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The recent tragic death of a 1st year student at Kolkata's famed Jadavpur University, ranked the 4th best University overall in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2023 list (<https://www.nirfindia.org/2023/UniversityRanking.html>), should serve as a wake-up call for college and university authorities across India to show more courage to curb incidents of ragging at their respective institutions.

Education administrators at the highest levels must realise (*and even be made to do so, if required, by concerned regulators*) that their responsibility regarding the prevention of ragging does not begin and end with the mere establishment of anti-ragging committees at their facilities.

Neither is it enough for them to supplement these anti-ragging committees with anti-ragging squads to conduct surprise checks at hostels run by their educational institutions, getting students to fill up anti-ragging-related declarations, and distributing leaflets among students stating how ragging is a bad practice and would not be tolerated.



Those leading higher educational institutions must understand that the effectiveness of all anti-ragging-related mechanisms depend significantly on how good a job is being done by those entrusted with the specific responsibility of preventing ragging at campuses and student hostels. If such people are not up to this task and, also, not held accountable for their mistakes, the ragging prevention objective can never be achieved.

Filling up anti-ragging committees and/or anti-ragging squads with people who lack the necessary competence for such assignments and, most importantly, the force of personality in terms of being unafraid to take the tough calls when they come across instances of ragging is tantamount to not having any such committees and squads in the first place. **Students who are already facing ragging or have lingering fears of being ragged don't benefit in any way from anti-ragging committees and/or anti-ragging squads that either lack the expertise to prevent ragging or would prefer to remain blissfully unaware of incidents of ragging.**

It would be relevant to mention at this point that **ensuring student safety at college and university campuses and hostels run by these institutions – including inculcating in students the confidence that their grievances against ragging would be addressed without the complainants facing any kind of pushback from those against whom complaints have been made – is a basic prerequisite for those occupying key positions at higher educational institutions. Nothing can condone their failure on this front.**



Education administrators cannot just act as mere bystanders and shrug off any criticism of their inability to completely stop or, at least, significantly reduce instances of ragging at their institutions stating that they can only act if students who are ragged/fear being ragged come forward with their complaints/apprehensions. **Confidence-building among the student community is the primary responsibility of the educator fraternity and it would be unfortunate if some institutions forget this fact in their haste to deflect blame on others for failing to curb ragging at their facilities.**

From the perspective of students, it would help in a big way if governments at the Centre and states come down hard on educational institutions, irrespective of how famous these may be, where instances of ragging and/or the ineffectualness of anti-ragging mechanisms are proven beyond a reasonable degree of doubt. **Imposing hefty penalties on the heads of institutions that fail to control ragging, apart from closing the funding tap in case the**

said facilities are in receipt of any government grants, could go a long way in ensuring that administrators at higher educational institutions get more serious about dealing with the problem of ragging.

As an immediate measure, the Union Education Ministry could instruct the University Grants Commission (UGC) to issue a fresh advisory to all universities (and by extension their constituent colleges) to step up their act to curb any possible incidents of ragging at their respective institutions.

Such an advisory from the UGC could lead to universities and colleges affiliated to these undertaking a fresh assessment of the efficacy of the existing anti-ragging mechanisms in place at their facilities and bring about necessary changes if such are called for.

Harassment of any kind, physical or mental, has no place in a civilised society. Ragging is one of the worst forms of harassment. One would only **hope that, going forward, educators across the length and breadth of India would double down on efforts to rid our college and university campuses of the ragging menace.**



R M Consulting Advisor in the Media



For Reliance, sustainable profits and social responsibility go hand in hand

While carrying forward the legacy of value-creation, the slew of announcements at RIL's 46th AGM related to telecoms, retail, financial services, and clean energy can improve the quality of life of average citizens.

SUMALI MOITRA | AUGUST 28, 2023 / 08:09 PM IST



<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/companies/for-reliance-sustainable-profits-and-social-responsibility-go-hand-in-hand-11272851.html>



Paucity of funds must not dampen NRF's effectiveness

For National Research Foundation to be effective, contributions to its corpus by companies should qualify as admissible CSR expenditure

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