

TAX 'HFSS' FOODS, VIEW IT AS A PUBLIC HEALTH IMPERATIVE

Context

- The consumption of High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods stands as a major contributor to a global health crisis, fuelling issues such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension.
- **India has witnessed a staggering increase in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) burden.**
- Therefore, it is **important to assess how combined with nutrition literacy and effective food labelling, tax on High-Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods can help improve health outcomes.**

Key Findings of The Global Burden of Diseases Study

- **Global Trend of Health Crisis**
 - According to a World Bank report of 2019, **worldwide 70% of all overweight and obese people live in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.**
 - The number of overweight or obese people in rural areas worldwide has increased by 55%.
 - This data **challenges the idea that this issue is limited to wealthy nations and urban, well-off communities.**
- **Health Crisis and Economic Impact in India's Case**
 - The Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) burden in India has skyrocketed **from 38% in 1990 to 65% in 2019.**
 - The global burden of diseases study shows that **annually 1.2 million deaths in India can be attributed to dietary risks alone.**
 - **The economic impact of overweight and obesity in India was estimated at \$23 billion in 2017. If unattended, this is likely to rise to \$480 billion by 2060.**

Changing Dietary Habits in India

- India is the world's largest producer and consumer of sugar and it **has witnessed a concerning growth in ultra-processed foods.**
- The growth has been compounded at **an annual rate of 13.4% between 2011 and 2021.**
- **About 50%-60% of edible sugar, salt and fat produced in India is consumed by the processed food industry.**
- **Sales of snacks and soft drinks have tripled over the past decade, exceeding \$30 billion last year, indicating a disturbing trend in dietary habits.**

Implications of India's Shift in Dietary Habits

- **Increasing Chronic Health Conditions:** The rise in HFSS food consumption is intricately linked to the surge in chronic health conditions like obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.
- **Escalating Healthcare Costs:** The growing prevalence of NCDs poses a significant strain on healthcare systems, leading to escalating costs for diagnosis, treatment, and management.
- **Impact on Productivity and Economic Growth:** Sales of snacks and soft drinks exceeding \$30 billion indicate a disturbing trend in dietary habits, **not only endangering public health but also impacting productivity and economic growth.**

The Need for a Comprehensive High Tax on HFSS Food

- **Due to Market Failures and Negative Externalities:** Eating HFSS foods is linked to problems in how markets work, leading to negative effects that show up as societal costs, particularly in higher healthcare expenses.
- **Can Save Additional Societal Costs and Spending**
 - When people consume more HFSS foods, it results in negative effects that become societal costs, specifically seen in higher healthcare expenses.
 - For instance, **the rise in diabetes and obesity due to increased HFSS consumption creates additional costs for society.**

- **This leads to increased healthcare spending**, which is often funded through higher taxes to support public health insurance programs like the Ayushman Bharat Yojana.
- **Taxes Can Help Consumers Understanding and Dietary Choices**
 - On the other hand, **internal issues arise from consumers not fully understanding the consequences of their choices**, often influenced by aggressive marketing.
 - This leads them to unknowingly harm themselves. **Taxes can be a focused and effective way to discourage harmful consumption habits**, thus lessening the overall burden on society.
 - **The implementation of such taxes has proven successful in several countries, resulting in a decrease in the buying of unhealthy products.**
- **Inconsistencies and Limited Impact of GST**
 - Current **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** rates on ultra-processed foods **do not adequately consider nutritional content.**
 - **Inconsistencies in taxing aerated beverages, juices, and salty snacks overlook varying nutritional impacts**, limiting their impact on altering consumption patterns.

Conclusion

- HFSS taxation in **India must be viewed not just as an economic or fiscal concern but as a public health imperative.**
- Combined with other measures such as nutrition literacy promotion and effective food labelling, **HFSS taxation can be a potent tool to combat the rising epidemic of overweight and obesity, fostering a more sustainable and equitable food system.**

[THE PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT 1991: ALLAHABAD HC SAYS 1991 SUIT NOT BARRED BY LAW](#)

Why in News?

- The Allahabad HC dismissed five petitions by the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board and the Gyanvapi mosque committee, holding that a suit filed in 1991 over the Varanasi Mosque is not barred under provisions of the Places of Worship Act.
- The case will now be heard by the Varanasi Civil Judge's court, which has been directed to proceed with the matter expeditiously and conclude the proceedings **within six months**.

What does the Places of Worship Act 1991 Say?

- The Act was brought in by the then govt led by **P V Narasimha Rao** during the height of the Ram temple movement,
- It mandates that the **nature of all places of worship**, except the one in Ayodhya that was then under litigation, shall be maintained as it was on August 15, 1947.
 - Therefore, it is an Act to **prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship** as it existed on 15th August, 1947.
- It was also meant to apply to the disputed Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi and the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple-Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura.
- Even the Supreme Court, in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case (2019), had underlined that the Act is “**a legislative intervention which preserves non-retrogression as an essential feature of our secular values**”.

What are the Claims in the 1991 Petition?

- The 1991 suit seeks an order that the “structure” (mosque) on top of the cellars (taikhana), the adjoining part of the “old temple” of Lord Vishweshwar, are the property of Lord Visheshwar and devotees.
- **Claiming that the Muslim community had illegally occupied the property**, the plea said that Hindus have every right to use it as a place of worship and to renovate and reconstruct their temple.

- The 1991 suit had also asked the court to pass an order directing the defendants (Waqf Board and Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee) “to remove its effects” from the said property.

What are the Counterclaims?

- **The petitioners have every right to offer their prayer in the temple** in question and are neither debarred nor anybody has stopped them from performing religious rites inside the temple.
- The Places of Worship Act 1991 was **promulgated with the purpose to foreclose any controversy in respect of any places of worship.**
- As the Gyanvapi Mosque has been used by Muslims to offer Namaz since 15th August 1947, religious character cannot change.

What the Allahabad HC Order Says?

- The HC directed the Varanasi court to **conclude the hearing in the original suit within six months.**
- The Court below **shall not grant unnecessary adjournment** to either of the parties. In case adjournment is granted, **it will be at heavy cost.**
- Either the Gyanvapi Compound has a Hindu religious character or a Muslim religious character and that **it can't have dual character at the same time.**
- **The Places of Worship Act 1991** only bars conversion of place of worship, but it does not define or lay down any procedure for determining the religious character of a place of worship that existed on 15.08.1947.
- As the scientific survey is already being conducted by ASI, it is hereby directed that ASI shall submit the same report.
- In case further survey is required, the Court below shall issue necessary directions to carry out such a survey.

WHAT ARE SOLID-FUEL MISSILES?

Recently, North Korea test-fired an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) powered by solid fuel.



About Solid-fuel missiles:

- Solid-fuel missiles **do not need to be fuelled immediately** ahead of launch.
- They are often **easier and safer to operate**, and require less logistical support.
- They are **harder to detect** and more survivable than liquid-fuel weapons.
- **Working of Solid Fuel Technology**
 - Solid propellants are a mixture of **fuel and oxidiser**.
 - Metallic powders such as aluminium often serve as the fuel, and ammonium perchlorate, which is the salt of **perchloric acid and ammonia**, is the most common **oxidiser**.
 - The fuel and oxidiser are bound together by a hard rubbery material and packed into a metal casing.
 - When solid propellant burns, oxygen from the ammonium perchlorate combines with aluminium to generate enormous amounts of energy and temperatures of more than 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit (2,760 degrees Celsius), creating thrust and lifting the missile from the launch pad.

Solid Fuel VS Liquid Fuel Missiles

- **Liquid propellants** provide greater **propulsive thrust and power**, but require more complex technology and extra weight.
 - Solid fuel is dense and burns quite quickly, generating thrust over a short time.
 - Solid fuel can remain in storage for an extended period without degrading or breaking down - a common issue with liquid fuel.
-

NATIONAL CULTURE FUND

Recently, the Union Minister for Culture, Tourism And Development informed in the Lok Sabha that the National Culture Fund (NCF) received Rs. 3.70 Crore From Non-Government Sources during the last five Years.



About the National Culture Fund:

- It was set up by the Government of **India** as a **Trust** under the **Charitable Endowment Act, 1890** through a Gazette Notification in 1996.
- It was established as a funding mechanism distinct from the existing sources and patterns of funding for the arts and culture in India. It will enable institutions and individuals to support arts and culture directly as partners with its government.
- It aims to mobilise extra resources through **Public-Private Partnership** (PPP) towards promoting, protecting & preserving India's Cultural Heritage (Tangible & Intangible).
- It is managed and administered by a **Council and an Executive Committee** to actualize those policies.
- The **Council** is chaired by the **Union Minister of Culture** and has a maximum strength of 24 including both the Chairman and Member Secretary.
- It has members representing the corporate and public sector, private foundations and non-profit organisations.
- The purpose for this structure is to increase non-government representation in the decision-making process.
- The **Executive Committee** is chaired by **the Secretary, Ministry of Culture**
- The donations to the national Culture Fund will be **eligible for tax benefit** under the **Income Tax Act**.

WHAT ARE CHIT FUNDS?

Around 70 persons belonging to the Andhra Pradesh special police have lost nearly Rs 12 crore in a chit fund scheme recently.



About Chit Funds:

- Chit funds are a **financial instrument** that is **used in both borrowing and saving aspects**.
- Chit fund is also termed **Kuri and Chitty**.
- Chit funds are a kind of financial arrangement wherein a **few individuals gather and pool a fixed sum of money at regular intervals**.
- This is done with an understanding or **agreement that a single member** of the group will **receive the total sum of money collected during each interval**.
- This **process continues until every member has received their share** of the pooled money.
- This type of financial instrument is **generally conducted by a chit-fund company** that is responsible for the smooth carrying out of this process.

How Do Chit Funds Work?

- Under a chit fund scheme, a **number of individuals make contributions** towards the chit value **at regular intervals** for a **period equal to the total number of subscribers** or members (investors).
- A **person, chosen through an auction** or a lucky draw, **receives the money collected**.
- Through an auction allotment system, an **individual who agrees to receive the lowest amount** (with the lowest bid) **gets the money**. It is known as a **reverse auction system**.
- The **sum forgone by a winner** is **distributed equally among the other bidders** post subtracting a foreman's charges and commission.
- An **amount that each bidder receives is termed a dividend**.
- A **winning bidder will continue to invest** even after agreeing to claim the sum.

SAMAR AIR DEFENCE MISSILE SYSTEM

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has successfully test fired the 'SAMAR' air defence missile system recently.



About SAMAR Air Defence Missile System:

- **Surface to Air Missile for Assured Retaliation (SAMAR)** is a **short-range air-defence system**.
- It has been **developed by a unit under the IAF's Maintenance Command**.
- The system is credited with a maximum **range of 10–12 km** and is used **against low-flying aerial targets**.
- It can engage aerial threats with **missiles operating at a speed range of 2 to 2.5 Mach**.
- The SAMAR-1 system uses **the IAF's existing inventory of shelf-life-expired Russian Vympel R-73E infrared-guided air-to-air missiles (AAMs)** for the surface-to-air role.
- The system features a **twin-turret launch platform** capable of **launching two missiles** in single and salvo modes, depending on the threat scenario.
- Each missile launcher had an **electro-optic system visible**.
- It is expected to **supplement the IAF's Akash and SPYDER systems**, replacing the ageing improved Pechora and OSA-AK systems.

Key Facts about Akash Missile (SAM) Defence System:

- It is a **Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (SRSAM)** Defence System to protect vulnerable areas and points from air attacks.
- It was indigenously designed and developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- **Features:**
 - It can **simultaneously engage multiple targets** and destroy manoeuvring targets, including unmanned aerial vehicles, fighter aircraft, cruise missiles, and missiles launched from helicopters.