

FIGHT GLOBAL HUNGER: Stress and stress busters-order of the day

Despite significant advancements in technology, agriculture, and economic development, global hunger remains one of the most urgent and devastating challenges of our time. According to the United Nations, over 735 million people faced chronic undernourishment in 2023, with millions more at risk due to conflict, climate change, and economic instability. In an interconnected world that produces more than enough food to feed its entire population, hunger is not a problem of scarcity-but of inequality, inefficiency, and indifference.

The roots of global hunger are complex. Armed conflicts in regions like Sudan, Yemen, and parts of Africa displace millions, disrupt food systems, and destroy infrastructure. Climate change continues to cause droughts, floods, and crop failures, particularly affecting smallholder farmers who depend on predictable weather patterns. Moreover, economic disparities, inflation, and lack of access to markets and resources prevent many communities from securing basic nutrition.

Addressing global hunger requires more than emergency food aid. While humanitarian relief is essential during crises, it must be paired with long-term strategies aimed at building resilient food systems. Governments, international organizations, and private sectors must invest in sustainable agriculture, better storage and distribution networks, climate-resilient crops, and education for farmers. Supporting local food production and empowering rural communities with tools and knowledge is crucial.

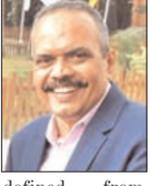
Moreover, the global food waste crisis-where nearly one-third of food produced is lost or wasted-must be tackled urgently. Reducing food waste through smarter supply chains, storage solutions, and public awareness campaigns can free up massive resources and contribute directly to food security.

Policy-level changes are also necessary. Trade policies must be reformed to ensure that poor nations can access global markets without being undercut by subsidies in richer countries. Nutrition programs, especially for children and pregnant women, must be expanded to break the cycle of malnutrition and poverty. Additionally, international cooperation must be strengthened through organizations like the World Food Programme and FAO to respond swiftly to hunger hotspots and pre-empt crises.

The fight against global hunger is not merely a charitable cause-it is a moral and economic imperative. Hunger stunts human potential, weakens economies, and fuels instability. The world cannot afford to ignore the silent suffering of millions.

As global citizens, we must demand that our leaders prioritize hunger eradication. We must support organizations working at the grassroots and hold ourselves accountable for the food we consume and waste.

■ PROF K S CHANDRASEKAR



Stress is a feeling of being under abnormal pressure from the normal self, whether from increased workload, an argument with a family member or monetary worries. Stress may be defined from 'demand-perception response' perspective. Lazarus and Folkman integrated this view into a cognitive theory of stress that has become the most widely applied theory in the study of occupational stress and stress management. Davis defines stress as "condition of strain on one's emotions, thought processes and physical conditions". Di Martino summarized the concept of stress as "the physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources needs of the employee". The fundamental concept is that stress means it is all about how an individual perceives about the demands and their ability to meet those demands. Any mismatch will mean that an individual's stress threshold is exceeded, triggering a stress response. Research has shown that stress can sometimes be positive. It makes us more alert and helps us perform better in certain situations. However, stress has only been found to be beneficial if it is a shorter term one. This stress threshold level may be called as stress hardness and of course will depend on the person's features, his experiences, ability to cope and also under the circumstances where the demands are being made. Thus one event alone may not constitute stress for all employees as stressor varies from person to person. Thus an event which may cause stress to an individual may not cause stress to another.

Many times we can see that negative connotations are usually endorsed to the term stress, even though some of the stress responses are of positive nature. Thus the term Eustress refers to positive stress and the term distress refers to negative stress. 'Stress', therefore, should be viewed as a continuum along which an individual may pass, from feelings of eustress to those of mild/moderate distress, to those of severe distress. The table below depicts the indicators and symptoms of stress which varies from individual to individual based on the severity and may culminate in emotional burn out and serious physiological disturbance if the individual is exposed to prolonged stress. The National Institute of Safety & Health says that Work related stress can cause both physical and Psychological and behavioral / emotional health problems. Physical symptoms include head, back and neck aches, tiredness, muscular tension, insomnia, skin rashes, excessive sweating, vision problems including blurred vision, migraine, dizziness, digestive issues and others. The physiological symptoms include that of cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, reproductive disorders which are common among the people doing continuous sitting work, hearing problems, dermatological problems and psycho somatic issues. Those in psychological symptoms include anxiety, depression, emptiness, irritability, burn out issues, disturbed mood swings, and disturbed eating patterns, lack of focus, lower libido, less motivation, worrying about future and lower esteem.

Behavioral problems that has been identified are absenteeism, increased smoking and consumption of alcohol, use of psycho

active substances and drugs, aggressive behavior towards colleagues and to family members, propensity to accidents. T hus in general stress can be defined as the reaction individuals have to excessive pressures or demands. It emanates from several experiences or challenging situations. As pointed out earlier, stress varies from person to person and it arises when a person perceives that he or she cannot cope up with the excessive demands and pressures. Stress is not always created by other people; we can also be a contributing factor for stress in our own life. Eustress denotes stress which is beneficial as it generates higher productivity, creativity, innovativeness and an urge to learn and distress which is harmful leads to below par performance, unproductivity, demotivation, frustration and exhaustion of energy. Low task demands leads to boredom and apathy where as excessive demands of work leads to tension and anxiety. In both the cases performance level dips below par. But when optimal work load (stress) is maintained the performance of the individual is at its best as he experiences high level of energy and motivation. The term "Work life Stress" or "Occupational Stress" is a modern construct which is a resultant of many factors (called as stressors) at work environment or the organization and now this has become an ever increasing problem for the organization and the individuals. It is important to note what one can achieve against a goal set or target set and plan accordingly. Hence over focusing on the same will result in not achieving and will lead to stress.

There are many ways to overcome the occupational stress. One of them is meditation and being calm in a regular timing of a day. One of my colleague practices

meditation between morning 900 to 915 and evening 900 to 915. This is known to all the members and colleagues and they do not in turn call or disturb him. Another one is in terms of physical exercises. Regular walking at designated timings for 5 days a week will ensure to break the stress. That should be done alone and do not take friends from office for this purpose. This will again lead to occupational stress only. Regular monitoring of health either at home or at office can be another option. Many of the corporates provide for regular checkup every month. Once it is part of the promotion file, everyone will use the same and it is good for the corporates also. During official meetings, it is better to have dry fruits and natural fruits and fruit drinks without sugar can be a great stimulator for idea generations rather than coffee and tea with burgers and pizzas. Excessive consumption of junk foods in office can cause more physical problems. Financial planning for every employee is important and frequent money management lessons or classes can ensure that they are saving a portion of their salaries for their future benefits. Planning for week end activities, annual leave activities in advance can guide the persons that there is vacation around the corner and planning to that will create more interest among and release the stress. Due to excessive stress among first semester students in IIT, to overcome the same, a Dean for student well being was appointed in IIT Kharagpur. Similarly corporates can appoint a nodal officer for employee wellbeing so that stress could be managed better.

"There is more to life than increasing its speed." - Mahatma Gandhi
(The author is Vice Chancellor, Cluster University of Jammu)

Gender-Smart Agriculture: A Pathway to Sustainable Food Systems

■ DR. POONAM PARIHAR



Smart Agriculture, is the adoption of advanced technologies and data-driven farm operations to optimize and improve sustainability in agricultural production.

Climate-Smart Agriculture is leading the way to a more sustainable and secure agricultural future. This approach focuses on three key goals: enhancing agricultural productivity and income sustainably, fostering adaptation and resilience to climate change, and minimizing or eliminating greenhouse gas emissions where feasible. The goal of smart agriculture technology is to help farmers make more informed decisions regarding irrigation, pest control, and weather-related challenges.

Gender-smart agriculture refers to agricultural practices and systems that are designed and implemented with a focus on addressing gender disparities and ensuring that both women and men have equal access to and benefit from resources, technologies, and opportunities within the agricultural sector. It's a way to promote gender equality and empowerment within agriculture, while also enhancing climate resilience and productivity.

Key aspects of gender-smart agriculture:
► Recognizing gender roles and needs: It acknowledges that men and women often have different roles, responsibilities, and access to resources in agriculture, and that these differences need to be considered in designing interventions.
► Promoting equitable access: Gender-smart agriculture aims to ensure that both men and women have equal access to land, water, credit, technology, information, and other essential resources.

► Empowering women: It seeks to empower women by increasing their participation in decision-making processes, enhancing their access to training and education, and supporting their engagement in income-generating activities.
► Improving livelihoods: By addressing gender inequalities, gender-smart agriculture can improve the livelihoods of both men and women, leading to more sustainable and equitable agricultural systems.
► Enhancing climate resilience: It recognizes that women and men are often affected differently by climate change, and that gender-responsive approaches are crucial for building climate-resilient agricultural systems.

What are the four pillars of gender mainstreaming?

- Promoting investments in women-owned projects.
- Adapting strategies, policies and procedures to enable gender mainstreaming.
- Providing capacity building and knowledge sharing.
- Building partnerships with public and private partners who share our vision for gender equality.

The five principles of gender mainstreaming are:

- Gender-sensitive language.
- Gender-specific data collection and analysis.
- Equal access to and utilisation of services.
- Women and men are equally involved in decision making.

► Equal treatment is integrated into steering processes.

Examples of gender-smart agriculture practices:

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) interventions: Integrating gender considerations into the design and implementation of CSA practices to ensure that they benefit both men and women equally.
Access to technologies: Providing women with access to appropriate technologies that can reduce their workload, improve their productivity, and enhance their access to information.

Capacity building and training: Offering training programs that are tailored to the specific needs of both men and women,

- 'Breaking Barriers Challenging the Gender Norms in Agriculture'.
- 'Unlocking Potential: How Gender Equality Boosts Agricultural Productivity'.
- 'Closing the Gender Gap, Feeding the World: A Win-Win Solution'.

and that promote their participation in agricultural innovation and decision-making.

Financial inclusion: Ensuring that women have access to financial services, such as loans and savings, to support their agricultural activities.

Market access: Facilitating women's access to markets for their agricultural products, and supporting their participation in value chains.

Benefits of gender-smart agriculture:
Increased agricultural productivity: By empowering women and addressing gender inequalities, gender-smart agriculture can lead to increased agricultural productivity and food security.
Improved livelihoods and reduced poverty: Gender-smart agriculture can improve the livelihoods of both men and women, contributing to poverty reduction and economic development.

Enhanced climate resilience: By addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities to climate change, gender-smart agriculture can help build more resilient agricultural systems.
Greater social equity and empowerment: Gender-smart agriculture promotes social equity and empowers both men and women to participate fully in agricultural development.

By adopting a gender-smart approach, agricultural systems can become more inclusive, sustainable, and effective in addressing the challenges of food security, climate change, and poverty.
Agriculture, the single largest production endeavour in India and contributing substantially to the GDP, is increasingly becoming a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 80% of all economically active women; they comprise 33% of the agricultural labour force and 48% of self-employed farmers.

As per the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report 2022-23, agriculture had the highest estimated percentage distribution of female workers, ie. 64.3%, with 76.2% in rural areas and 11.7% in urban areas.
The major goal of sustainable agricul-

ture is to produce food and fibre in a way that protects the environment, conserves natural resources, and maintains the economic viability of farms while enhancing the quality of life for farmers and society. It aims to balance environmental, economic, and social considerations to ensure long-term food security and well-being e.g.,

- 1. Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation:**
Protecting Ecosystems: Sustainable agriculture seeks to minimize harm to the environment by reducing pollution, conserving water, and preserving biodiversity.
Conserving Natural Resources: It aims to use resources like soil and water efficient-

ly and sustainably, reducing reliance on non-renewable resources.
Improving Soil Health: Sustainable practices focus on maintaining and improving soil fertility, structure, and water retention.

2. Economic Viability and Social Equity: Ensuring Farmer Profitability: Sustainable agriculture strives to provide farmers with a fair income and economic stability.
Enhancing Quality of Life: It aims to improve the well-being of farmers, their families, and communities by promoting healthy working conditions and access to resources.

Promoting Food Security: Sustainable practices contribute to a stable and reliable food supply for current and future generations.

3. Long-Term Sustainability: Balancing Competing Needs: Sustainable agriculture recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, and social factors and seeks to find solutions that benefit all three.
Adapting to Climate Change: Sustainable practices can help agriculture adapt to the impacts of climate change, such as changing weather patterns and increased frequency of extreme events.

Fostering Innovation: It encourages the development and adoption of new technologies and practices that support long-term sustainability.
What is SDG in agriculture?

Vision 2030. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture"
Mainstreaming gender in India's climate-smart agriculture:
Gender-smart agriculture in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) focuses on integrating women's perspectives and needs into agricultural practices to enhance their participation and improve overall agricultural outcomes. This approach recognizes that women play crucial roles in agriculture and ensuring their access to resources, information, and technologies is vital for sustainable and equitable

agricultural development.

Key aspects of gender-smart agriculture in J&K:

Addressing Gender Disparities: J&K, like many regions, faces gender disparities in agriculture, where women often have limited access to resources, land, credit, and decision-making power.

Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA): J&K is particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, making CSA practices crucial. Gender-smart approaches are essential for ensuring that women farmers can effectively adopt and benefit from CSA technologies and practices.

Value Addition and Enterprise Development: J&K has potential for high-value crops like saffron, kala zeera, and hill garlic. Gender-smart initiatives can empower women to participate in value addition and enterprise development related to these crops, boosting their incomes and economic resilience, according to the Director of Agriculture, Jammu.

Strengthening Extension Systems: Gender-responsive extension systems are needed to effectively reach women farmers with information, training, and support for adopting new technologies and practices.

Participatory Approaches: Involving women in the design and implementation of agricultural policies and programs is essential for ensuring that their needs and priorities are addressed.

Utilizing Self-Help Groups: Village-level cooperatives and self-help groups can play a vital role in supporting women's access to information, resources, and markets, according to ResearchGate.

Training and Capacity Building: Specialized training programs can equip women with the knowledge and skills needed to adopt gender-responsive CSA practices and technologies.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular monitoring and evaluation of gender-responsive interventions are necessary to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

Examples of potential interventions: Targeted training programs for women in specific crops and farming techniques.

Facilitating access to credit and financial services for women farmers.

Promoting women's participation in decision-making related to agricultural resources and policies.

Developing gender-sensitive value chains for agricultural products.

Encouraging women's involvement in climate-smart agriculture initiatives.

Overall, gender-smart agriculture in J&K is about creating an inclusive and equitable agricultural system where both men and women can participate and benefit from the opportunities that agriculture offers, leading to improved livelihoods, food security, and sustainable development.

Gender mainstreaming in agriculture is crucial in the present scenario because it enhances overall agricultural productivity, promotes food security, and ensures equitable development. By addressing gender disparities in access to resources, technology, and markets, it unlocks the full potential of women in agriculture, leading to increased yields and improved livelihoods.

Can Rahul Gandhi Undermine the Fastest Growing Economy That Bharat Is?

■ MANMOHAN DHAR

India today stands at a unique juncture in its modern history. With the world acknowledging Bharat as the fastest growing major economy, our trajectory has become a matter of national pride. From record-breaking GDP growth, digital transformation, infrastructure expansion, to global recognition of India as a key driver of the 21st-century economy, Bharat is scripting a new chapter of resilience and leadership. But amid this rise, a critical question emerges: Can Rahul Gandhi, through his politics and rhetoric, undermine this momentum?

Rahul Gandhi's political style has often revolved around projecting India in a pessimistic light. He always weighs and describes the Indian political and economic system on a negative stance. Whether speaking at international forums or addressing domestic rallies, he tends to amplify challenges while downplaying successes. This "politics of negativity" might suit opposition narratives, but it risks eroding investor confidence and diluting India's global image as a stable growth hub.

Economic growth is not only about numbers; it is about sentiment, perception, and confidence. Global investors, foreign partners, and domestic entrepreneurs all look for a sense of political stability and self-belief in leadership. When a prominent leader constantly questions India's democratic structures, its business environment, or paints Bharat as a nation in distress, it indirectly sends signals of uncertainty. And uncertainty is the last thing an economy thrives on.

If one analyses the statements of Rahul Gandhi with a deep insight one finds them confusing and contradictory.

Interestingly, while Rahul Gandhi criticizes Bharat's growth story, he rarely presents a concrete alternative economic vision. His rhetoric often oscillates between populist promises and broad accusations, without detailed roadmaps for job creation, industrial expansion, or fiscal discipline. This lack of clarity not only weakens his credibility but also reinforces the perception that his politics is more about obstruction than contribution.

Whole world knows that Indian political and economic growth is beyond anybody's political rhetoric.

However, one must remember that Bharat's rise today is powered by structural reforms, demographic dividends, digital revolutions, and global partnerships that extend beyond party politics. From UPI payments revolutionizing financial inclusion to highway networks, renewable energy expansions, and defence production, these are not projects that can be derailed by a few political speeches. The fundamentals of the Indian economy remain robust, resilient, and future-ready.

Can Rahul Gandhi really undermine and underestimate the positive impact that the economic growth has put on the lives of a common man in India.

In reality, while Rahul Gandhi may attempt to dent Bharat's confidence through constant criticism, the strength of our economy lies in its people, enterprises, and institutions.

Political rhetoric may create temporary noise, but it cannot permanently undermine the trajectory of a nation determined to rise. At best, he may affect perceptions; at worst, he may embolden detractors abroad. But as long as Bharat stays committed to reforms, innovation, and self-belief, the nation will outpace such efforts.

Rahul Gandhi may try to cast shadows on India's shining economic journey, but shadows do not halt the sun. Bharat's growth is not a fragile story dependent on one man's rhetoric-it is a collective march of 1.4 billion people, determined to claim their rightful place in the world.

And, not only Rahul Gandhi entire world needs to understand the unmatched reality of the economic strength of India and the growth with which it is moving on a progression path will set all the negativity and rhetoric to rest.

Thanks to the untiring and relentless efforts of the proactive approach of Narinder Modi Government at the helm.