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# **VEDHIK**

## DAILY NEWS **ANALYSIS**

13 - D E C - 2022

## FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - “Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)\_The Hindu” compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - “Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)\_The Hindu “ would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus.

It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Haameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

We welcome your valuable comments so that further improvement may be made in the forthcoming material. We look forward to feedback, comments and suggestions on how to improve and add value for students. Every care has been taken to avoid typing errors and if any reader comes across any such error, the authors shall feel obliged if they are informed at their Email ID.

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# Big Tech and the need in India for ex-ante regulation

The Indian anti-trust body, the Competition Commission of India (CCI)'s move, in October, to impose a penalty of ₹1,337.76 crore on Google for abusing its dominant position in the android mobile device ecosystem, has forced us, once again, to rethink the market power of Big Tech companies. When India established the CCI under the Indian Competition Act 2002, it was to protect and promote competition in markets, and prevent practices that hinder competition. However, it did not account for the network effect of Big Tech companies as a force to reckon with. As their market dominance increased rather exponentially, the European Union, the United States, and even Australia realised their market-distorting abilities and moved to transform their competition law. The EU's Digital Market Act and "gatekeepers" who will enforce rules and regulations ex-ante to foresee anti-competitive practices is an example. As for India, the Competition (Amendment) Bill, and its proposed amendments, partially address these issues. India should have used this as a chance to overhaul its competition law, especially when the Bill is due to be passed in Parliament's winter session.

## Market dominance issue

In any free economy, market dominance is natural. But things get hazy when it is abused to prevent competition. As the CCI says, the intent of Google's business was to make users on its platforms abide by its revenue-earning service, i.e., an online search to directly affect the sale of their online advertising services. Thus, network effects, along with a status quo bias, created significant entry barriers for competitors to enter or operate in the markets concerned. While the competition laws address that anomaly, they are too slow to respond in complex technical sectors. By the time an order is passed, the dominant



**Amar Patnaik**

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Competition is welcome, but only under a new ex-ante-based framework that ensures a level-playing field for the big, the small, the old and the new

player has gained an edge – as in the case of Google. Thus, in this context, there is an urgent need for ex-ante legislation to prevent market failures and mitigate possible anti-competitive conduct.

Predatory pricing entails the lowering of prices that forces other firms to be out competed. Amazon and Flipkart were accused of deep discounting and creating in-house brands to compete with local sellers. Only recently, the CCI raided their offices in an anti-competition probe, leading to Amazon being forced to cut its ties with Cloudtail. Thus pricing plays a fundamental role in defining the position of any digital platform in the marketplace. It is essential to establish an ex-ante framework to ensure a level playing field for local sellers. The Government's Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) platform is a reliable option for these small players.

A crucial aspect of self-preferencing beyond the search algorithms is the bundling of services, especially with pre-installed apps, where the manufacturers eliminate competition without the consumer's consent. Apple is facing heat in the U.S. and Europe over pre-installed apps after Russia forced Apple to provide third-party apps at the time of installation. So, Indian competition laws need to be vigilant through an ex-ante framework.

## Use of data, issue of consumer protection

While the data economy has evolved, we have not dealt with its regulation as effectively. There is sensitive data stored on these platforms (financial records, phone location, and medical history). Big corporations have asserted ownership of the right to use or transfer this data without restriction.

While one might attribute it to efficiency barriers, the greed for data is a motivation. Further, the storage and collection of women's and children's data need to be dealt with more

cautiously to build a safe digital place.

Finally, market distortion can also lead to poorer quality of services, data monopoly, and stifle innovation. For a consumer, there is a need to establish harmony of the Competition law with the new Consumer Protection Act 2020 and e-commerce rules. The new law should include a mechanism to ensure fair compensation for consumers who face the brunt of the anti-competitive practices of the Big Techs. This should ensure that the penalties and restrictions being imposed on companies also ensure proportionate compensation for consumer losses.

## In the digital age

With India now on the cusp of a digital transformation, it is essential that the country has a level-playing field to ensure a fair opportunity for new-age start-ups and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. The Competition Act of 2000, was largely constituted to deal with the physical marketplace. There is an urgent need to contextualise the law to the digital marketplace and devise new provisions with adequate ex-ante legislation. The EU has already noted this need through the Digital Markets Act. It is time that similar legislation is adopted in India.

It is equally important to contextualise India's reality. *Kirana* stores competing with e-retailers such as Big Basket is an example of unfair competition between legacy businesses and their digital counterparts. In such a setting, bulldozing through an EU-based approach to competition might not be the best way for Indian marketplace interests in protecting the local digital economy. Thus, India needs a new ex-ante-based framework that promotes competition by ensuring a level-playing field for the big, the small, the old and the new.

*The views expressed are personal*

# Don't delay scheme for madrasas, House panel tells Centre

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment on Monday pulled up the Union government for the delay in approving the continuation of the Scheme for Providing Education to Madrasas/ Minorities (SPEMM), which provides for financial assistance to madrasas and minority institutes.

The scheme has two sub-schemes – the Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas (SPQEM) and Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutes (IDMI) – and was transferred from the Ministry of Minority Affairs to the Ministry of Education in 2021.

The committee noted that the fate of the scheme continued to hang in the balance with the govern-

ment yet to approve the draft Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) memorandum for its continuation.

Given the transfer of the scheme, the committee said it had desired the Ministry to complete the process of the EFC note on the mechanism to implement the schemes. But it said it was “surprised” to note that despite the NITI Aayog’s recommendation to continue the scheme, the EFC memorandum was “still under finalisation”.

“The committee feels that a decision for continuation of any scheme is very crucial not only for the beneficiaries but also for States/Union Territories/ implementing agencies, and delay on such matters affects the purpose of the scheme,” the Parliamentary panel said, adding that the Ministry should have expedited the matter.

# RS passes 'futuristic' Energy Conservation Bill to further regulate carbon emissions

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Monday passed the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill clearing the decks for "mandate use of non-fossil sources", including green hydrogen, green ammonia, biomass and ethanol for energy and feedstock and establish Carbon Markets in the country.

The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill in August.

Replying to a debate on the Bill, Power Minister R.K. Singh termed the Bill futuristic and said it will give an impetus to India's efforts to go for greener sources of energy.

Mr. Singh said the Bill aims to bring large residential buildings, with a minimum connected load of 100 Kilowatt (kW) or con-

**The Bill, according to R.K. Singh, will enhance the scope of Energy Conservation Building Code**

tract demand of 120 Kilo-volt Ampere (kVA), within the fold of energy conservation regime. He said the States, if they wish, can bring down the connected load and contract demand.

The Bill, according to him, will also enhance the scope of Energy Conservation Building Code, amend penalty provisions, increase members in the Governing Council of Bureau of Energy Efficiency and empower the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions to make regulations for smooth discharge of its functions.

The Opposition, howev-

er, found flaws in the Bill. DMK member P. Wilson said the Bill has a lot of legal infirmities which go to the root of the matter and requires re-consideration and reintroduction. He added that the Bill is *ultra vires* of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

"While the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 deals with saving energy, the present Bill deals with saving environment and conserving climate change due to usage of fossil and non-fossil fuels while generating electricity. The scope and objective of the principal Act does not take in the purpose and object of the present Bill. The Bill relates to monitoring and controlling of carbon emission and climate change, which is an aspect of the environmental laws," Mr. Wilson said.



In a deadlock: Union Minister for Law and Justice Kiren Rijju interacts with Chief Justice of India D. Y. Chandrachud in New Delhi on November 9. PTI

# Why is there friction between the government and the judiciary?

What is the trigger for the current conflict? Why did the Supreme Court strike down the law on National Judicial Appointments? What is the government's grouse against the Collegium system? What was the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act? What is the new CJI planning?

Krishnadas Rajagopal

## The story so far:

A major confrontation is on between the Union government and the Supreme Court over the former's resentment towards the Collegium system of appointments and its push to have a dominant say in judicial appointments and transfers. The government has also started airing its grievance against the invalidation of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) by the court in 2015. The current round of conflict has two triggers. One is the government's repeated public criticism of the Collegium system on the ground that it is "opaque". The other concerns a ping-pong battle between the Collegium and the government over the names being recommended and reiterated for appointment in constitutional courts.

## How did the latest bout begin?

On October 17, Law Minister Kiren Rijju shot a salvo at the Supreme Court Collegium, saying they were "preoccupied" with making judicial appointments when their primary job is delivering justice. Mr. Rijju's comments came at the fag end of the 49th Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana's tenure, which saw the Collegium recommend 363 names for High Court judgeships and 11 names for the Supreme Court. On November 6, Mr. Rijju complained again on the lack of accountability of the Collegium system and made references to the court striking down the NJAC law, which gave the government an equal say in appointments, in October 2015. His criticism coincided with Justice D.Y. Chandrachud taking over as top judge on November 9 for a two-year tenure.

Meanwhile, on November 17, Chief Justice Chandrachud agreed to list in due course a writ petition to reconsider the Collegium system. The SC also began its counter-offensive with the CJ advising that the Collegium and the government should work with a sense of "constitutional state-manship" rather than find fault with each other. On the judicial side, a Bench led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul took cognisance

of the government sitting on Collegium recommendations for years together for "undisclosed reasons". It later went on to link the government's willingness to "cross some Rubicons" and take on the judiciary by delaying Collegium recommendations to the quashing of the NJAC mechanism.

But the same evening, there were media reports that the government had returned 20 names recommended by the Collegium for High Court judgeships. A few days later, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar remarked that a law – without specifically naming the NJAC – passed by Parliament and expressing the will of the people had been "undone" by the court disregarding parliamentary sovereignty.

## The procedure for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the High Courts, in accordance with the Collegium system, was laid down in the Memorandum of Procedure

On December 8, Justice Kaul's Bench said nobody was stopping the government from bringing a new law on judicial appointments, but till then the Collegium system and its Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) was the "final word". The Court said that even if a law was enacted in the future, its constitutionality would be duly scrutinised by the Supreme Court.

The parliamentary standing committee on Law and Personnel led by senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi in its report said both the judiciary and the government need to do some "out-of-the-box" thinking to deal with the "perennial" judicial vacancies in High Courts. It said that both institutions were not adhering to the timeline given in the Second Judges case and the MoP.

## What is the MoP and what is its current status?

The procedure for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the High Courts, in accordance with the Collegium system, was laid down in the MoP prepared in

1998. It states that the initiation of a proposal for appointment of Supreme Court judges vested with the CJ and that of High Court judges with the Chief Justice of the High Courts concerned. The MoP required the Chief Justices of High Courts to initiate the proposals six months prior to vacancies. The Constitution (99th Amendment) Act was passed by Parliament to provide for a National Judicial Commission, which was duly formed by the NJAC Act. On October 12, 2015, the court struck down the NJAC Act and the Constitution Amendment which sought to give politicians and civil society a final say in the appointment of judges to the highest courts. However, the court said the 21-year-old Collegium system needed a re-look. The court directed the government to finalise a revised MoP in consultation with the CJ and the Collegium. A revised MoP was sent to the CJ by the government on March 22, 2016 for the response of the Collegium.

The Collegium responded with its own revisions on May 25 and July 7 of 2016. There was an additional round of consultation when the government responded to these revisions on August 3, 2016 to which the Collegium sent back comments on March 13, 2017. Incidentally, the government, after a gap of three months, wrote to the Chief Justice of India on July 4, 2017, drawing the latter's attention to the court's own judgment in a suo motu contempt case against Calcutta High Court judge, Justice C.S. Karnan, who was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Two judges on the Bench, Justices Ranjan Gogoi and J. Chelameswar, had observed that the appointment of Mr. Karnan revealed loopholes in the Collegium system and laid bare the lacunae in making a correct "assessment of the personality" at the time of elevation of people to the Bench. The court did not respond to the letter, according to the government. The Centre said it would finalise the MoP only after receiving inputs from the Supreme Court.

## What are the government's grievances?

The Centre argues that the Collegiums,

both at the Supreme Court and High Court levels, are delaying judicial appointments. The NJAC was a good law thwarted by the court.

It says that the High Courts are not making recommendations six months in advance of a vacancy. As on November 30, 2022, there are 332 judicial vacancies in the High Courts out of a total sanctioned strength of 1,108 judges. The High Courts have made 146 (44%) recommendations which are under consideration of the government and the Supreme Court. The High Courts are required to make recommendations for the remaining 186 vacancies (56%). Many High Courts have not made recommendations under the Bar and Service quotas for vacancies in the past one to five years. It said 43 High Court judges are scheduled to retire between December 1, 2022 and May 31, 2023, taking the vacancies up to 229. So far, no recommendations have been received.

The government has complained that the Supreme Court rejects 25% names recommended by the High Courts for judgeships. While making 165 appointments during 2022, 221 recommendations made by the High Courts were processed. The remaining 56 proposals were rejected by the Supreme Court Collegium. Sixty-six fresh proposals of names for judgeships are pending Intelligence Bureau inputs. The delay in the appointment process has affected the timely filling up of vacancies in the High Courts. The Supreme Court itself has six vacancies. Justice Dipankar Datta, whose recommendation was pending with the government for nearly three months, was sworn in as the 28th judge of the Supreme Court on December 12.

## What is the SC's response?

The court said the Collegium system, combined with the MoP, is the law as it exists now. The government has either kept Collegium recommendations pending for no apparent reason or it has repeatedly sent back names reiterated by the Collegium. The court accused the government of not appointing persons who are not "palatable" to it.

## THE GIST

A major confrontation is on between the Union government and the Supreme Court. The current conflict has two triggers. One is the government's repeated public criticism of the Collegium system on the ground that it is "opaque". The other concerns a ping-pong battle between the Collegium and the government over the names being recommended for appointment in constitutional courts.

The Centre argues that the Collegiums, both at the Supreme Court and High Court levels, are delaying judicial appointments and that the NJAC was a good law thwarted by the court.

The Supreme Court said that the Collegium system is the law as it exists now. The government has kept Collegium recommendations pending for no apparent reason. The court has accused the government of not appointing persons who are not "palatable" to it.

# Benefits of policy on rare diseases not reaching patients: MP

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

Rajya Sabha member from the Nationalist Congress Party Fauzia Khan on Friday raised concerns over the benefits of the National Policy of Rare Diseases (NPRD) not reaching patients even after several months since its introduction.

The Union Health Ministry notified the NPRD in March 2021. In May, it increased the funding support to ₹50 lakh per patient with diseases classified as rare.

However, the MP alleged that the “unending delay and lack of urgency” on the part of the Centres of Excellence (CoE), designated as per the policy, has claimed several young lives and endangered the survival prospects of 415 patients, largely children,



Fauzia Khan

diagnosed with rare diseases.

These diseases included Lysosomal storage disorders, Gaucher disease, Pompe disease, MPS 1 and 2 and Fabry disease.

An analysis of data from the national crowd-funding platform revealed that around 190 patients diagnosed with ultra-rare genetic conditions could be immediately put on life-saving therapy, she added.



# Oil, not workers, has pushed inflation in the United States

The rise in oil prices has mirrored the rising inflation while real wages have fallen

## DATA POINT

Rohit Azad  
& Indranil Choudhury

Inflation has been high and persistent in the global economy since 2020Q1. We are told workers buoyed by tightening labour markets have driven wages up, which in turn has resulted in inflation. A related explanation is that rising demand has led to inflation. These two factors lie at the heart of the policy of inflation targeting, according to which the central bank should, by increasing interest rates, throw sands in the gears of the labour market and in the activity level of the economy to stall the demand for higher wages. Since this policy followed by the Federal Reserve has implications the world over, particularly in the Global South as a result of capital flight, it is important to ascertain the veracity of these claims.

The commonly accepted argument is that the bargaining power of workers increases with a rise in employment. This results in a rise in demand for wages, which results in price increases. This phenomenon is called the 'wage-price' spiral. **Chart 1** shows that the real wages, despite a fall in unemployment (not shown), have been falling instead of rising during this phase of high inflation. The reason? Workers, in general, have lost their bargaining power in the era of globalisation as a result of a threat of a job flight.

While rising demand may lead to inflation (provided costs go up with the level of activity), is this phase of high inflation a case of demand-pull inflation? **Chart 2** shows the level of capacity utilisation (ratio of what is produced in an economy to the maximum that the currently installed capacities can produce) in the U.S. economy against inflation. The chart shows that while capacity utilisation has increased in the post-lockdown phase, it is not exceptional. Nor

have similar levels of capacity utilisation in the past been associated with high inflation.

The current phase of inflation is a clear case of cost-push inflation. Businesses increase prices when costs go up – in this case, the costs of oil prices. **Chart 3** shows that inflation in the U.S. has followed the rise in oil prices almost one-to-one. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the G7's economic sanction are the reasons for the rise in oil prices. If inflation is to be controlled, efforts should be made to bring tempers down on that front.

Inflation targeting as a framework is premised on inflicting recession/slowdown on the economies to bring the demand down, which in turn brings inflation down. **Chart 4** shows that increasing interest rates does manage to inflict that hardship on the economy (and its citizens). Between 2021Q3 and 2022Q3, which saw aggressive hikes in the federal funds rate (the rate of interest that the central banks controls directly), the rate of growth in private investment took a significant hit.

Since the Fed believes it needs to nip the workers' inflationary expectations in the bud, it has, and is planning, to aggressively increase interest rates. If it continues doing so, a deep global recession is almost inevitable. We have shown that the Fed is barking up the wrong tree and is punishing the working people in the U.S. for no fault of theirs. But the punishment is not just limited to the U.S.'s workers; hardships are inflicted on workers globally because such a rise in the Fed funds rate forces all the economies to increase their policy rates to avoid flight of capital back to the U.S. Economies in the Global South in particular have to increase their interest rates many times more because of the supreme preference of international finance for dollars over any other currency in the world.

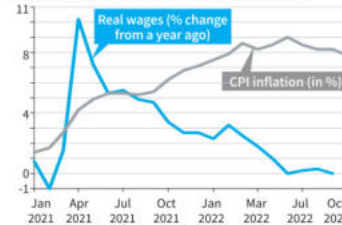
Rohit & Indranil teach Economics at JNU and PGDAV College, DU, respectively

## Greasing inflation

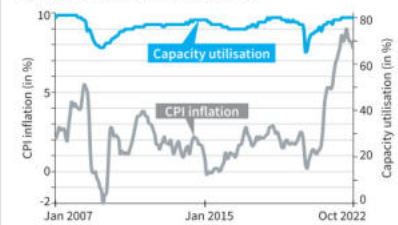
The data for charts were sourced from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, United States



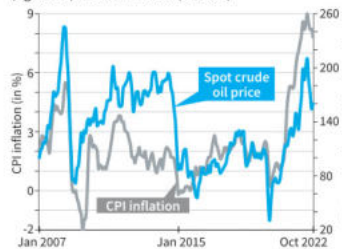
**Chart 1** The chart shows the growth in real wages and the consumer price index (CPI) inflation in the U.S.



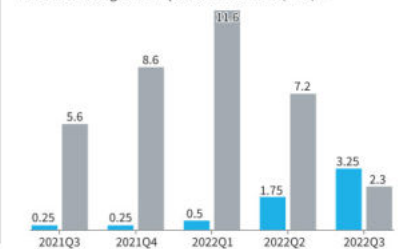
**Chart 2** The chart shows the level of capacity utilisation (right-axis) and the CPI inflation (left-axis)



**Chart 3** The chart shows spot crude oil price index (right-axis) and CPI inflation (left-axis)



**Chart 4** The chart shows the federal funds rate (in %) and the rate of growth in private investment (in %)



# Net direct tax revenue growth accelerated to 24.3% by November

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

India's net direct tax collections gathered pace over the past month to touch ₹8.77 lakh crore by November 30, or 24.3% higher than the year-earlier period, constituting almost two-third of the Budget target for 2022-23.

The direct tax kitty, net of refunds, had crossed ₹7 lakh crore by September 17, 23.3% higher than 2021-22, but that growth slowed to 16.3% by October 8, when net collections stood at ₹7.45 lakh crore.



**Right path:** On Twitter, the Finance Ministry says 61.8% of Budget estimates for FY23 has already been met. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

In a series of tweets on Monday, the Finance Ministry said that there had been “steady growth in direct tax collections. Net collection in FY 2022-23 is 24.26% higher than the net

collection for the corresponding period of the preceding year. 61.79% of Budget Estimates for FY 2022-23 already achieved.”

Emphasising that refunds had been issued

speedily, the Ministry said that 66.9% higher refunds were issued up to November compared with the year-earlier period.

## Refunds issued

“Refunds amounting to ₹2.15 lakh crore have been issued between 1st April, 2022 to 30th Nov., 2022,” it noted.

The average processing time of income tax returns had been reduced from 26 days in 2021-22 to 16 days, while the period of verification of returns had been slashed to 30 days from 120 days, the Ministry added.

# Oct. industrial output contracts 4%, slide seen second time in 3 months

Shrinkage led by significant 5.6% drop in manufacturing output, minimal growth in electricity generation; contraction in capital goods worrying as it suggests private sector investment has not picked up, say economists

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India's industrial output contracted by a sharp 4% in October, the second time in three months that production levels have slid year-on-year, led by a significant 5.6% drop in manufacturing output and minimal growth in electricity generation. Industrial output had grown almost 3.5% in September, as per revised numbers.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) stood at 129.6 in October, its lowest

## Another trough

IIP decline in October was the sharpest since August 2020



- Manufacturing output slipped to its lowest mark since June 2021
- Production declined in four of six sub-sectors
- Consumer durables, non-durables shrank a sharp 15.3% and 13.4%, respectively

level since September 2021, with manufacturing output slipping to its lowest mark since June 2021.

Crisil chief economist Dharmakirti Joshi said the IIP decline of 4% was "the sharpest since August

2020. While an unfavourable base was partly responsible, activity declined sequentially as well".

Mining output grew 2.5%, while electricity generation rose just 1.2%.

Production declined in four of six sub-sectors, led by consumer durables as well as consumer non-durables that shrank a sharp 15.3% and 13.4% respectively from year-earlier levels.

Intermediate goods and capital goods also contracted year-on-year, by 2.8% and 2.3%, respectively, while primary goods grew

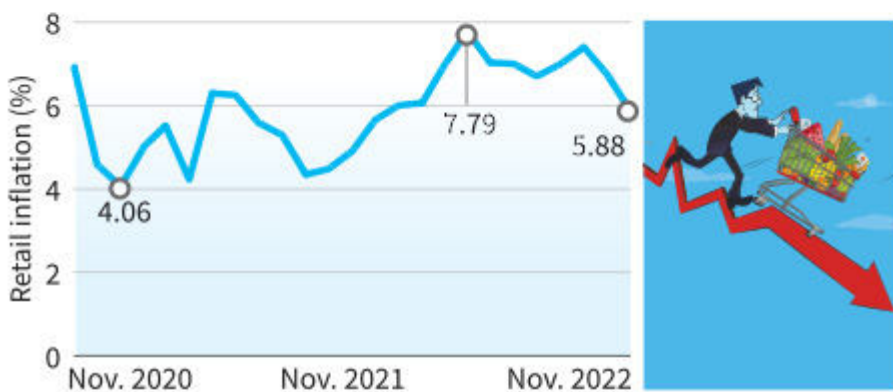
2%. Infrastructure / construction goods output rose a mere 1% in October, but was 0.7% below September 2022 levels.

Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis said the contraction in capital goods over a 1.6% decline seen last October was disappointing; it suggested private sector investment had not picked up. The continued slide in consumer durables and non-durables was also a let-down as the festival month of October would have typically lent buoyancy, he noted.

# Retail inflation falls below 6% mark for first time in 2022

## Cooling down

India's retail inflation eased to an 11-month low of 5.88% in Nov., within RBI's tolerance limit of 6%, from 6.77% in Oct. 2022



**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI

Cooling vegetable and edible oil prices drove India's retail inflation down to 5.88% in November from 6.77% in October, the first time since January this year that consumer prices have risen slower than the 6% tolerance threshold set for the Reserve Bank of India.

Food price inflation faced by consumers eased to an 11-month low of

4.67% from over 7% in October, but rural consumers faced a greater burden with a 5.2% price rise in food items, compared to just 3.7% for their urban peers.

Overall rural retail inflation also stayed high at 6.09%.

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**INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DOWN**

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**DIRECT TAX REVENUE RISES**

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# Retail inflation falls below 6% mark

November's retail inflation numbers corroborate RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das's point that the worst of inflation may be over, but core inflation remained 'sticky' above 6% as he had indicated during last week's monetary policy review. Economists expect headline inflation to resurge beyond the 6% tolerance threshold in December.

Vegetables and edible oils recorded 8.1% and 0.6% deflation, respectively, from November 2021 levels, but inflation in cereals continued to accelerate, rising from 12.1% in October to nearly 13%. Price rise in milk and spices also picked up pace to touch 8.16% and 19.5%, respectively.

"Inflation in the major components of core inflation – transportation and communication, housing, households good and services – was up or remained stable on-year, indicating continued passthrough of input prices and recovering demand," CRISIL chief economist Dharmakirti Joshi said.

"In case of fuel and lighting as the government has not altered the taxes, we have not been able to derive any benefit from lower global crude prices," pointed out Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis, who reckoned that inflation may cross 6.5% in December.

# Ready for the worst

Governments and agencies have shown better preparedness for cyclones

**T**hat Cyclone Mandous, which had its landfall near Mamallapuram, near Chennai, in the early hours of Saturday, did not cause much damage has come as a huge relief to the people of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. At one stage, it was expected to develop into a “severe cyclonic storm”, but did not gain much strength. Called a “textbook cyclone”, the storm, as predicted by the India Meteorological Department, crossed the coast with all the attendant features, to the satisfaction of professional meteorologists. Though Cyclone Mandous was similar to Cyclone Vardah which made landfall in Chennai in mid-December 2016, this event dumped heavy rainfall that was far more than what occurred under Vardah. This time, not only parts of north Tamil Nadu but also areas in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh experienced heavy rainfall. For instance, Vembakkam in Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu and Srikalahasti in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh bore the brunt, recording rainfall of 25 cm and 23 cm, respectively, during the 24-hour-period that ended at 8.30 a.m. on Saturday. But more noteworthy was the way the official machinery in Tamil Nadu steered the disaster management system. Despite the cyclone crossing the coast at almost midnight and causing a number of trees and structures to fall, the response of the administration was swift and the common man’s life hardly disrupted. Five lives were lost, a count much lower than during disasters of a similar magnitude.

After drawing flak in November 2021, and, subsequently, when Chennai and its vicinity experienced inundation following spells of heavy rain, the Tamil Nadu government has been paying greater attention this time to improving the storm-water drain network and such other works. Though one of the reasons cited for many areas being spared of flooding was that the core parts of the city did not receive as much rain as the interior parts of north Tamil Nadu, the State government’s coordination with the Meteorological Department and its preparedness in tackling the post-landfall situation made a difference to the situation this time. Otherwise, as in the past, citizens would have suffered even in light rain. Technology too, both in terms of forecast and information dissemination, has been playing a key role. The authorities, i.e., the State government and the Meteorological department, should continuously work to improve their ways of functioning, making use of technology, and helping people to be ready to face a natural disaster of this nature or even of greater strength. Ideally, the official machinery should set a goal of ensuring no loss to life. Such a task would not be impossible, given the availability of resources, both hardware and software, and empirical data on cyclones and severe cyclones crossing the coast of Tamil Nadu.

# Indian and Chinese soldiers clash near Arunachal border

Both sides 'suffered injuries' and the troops immediately disengaged from the area, says the Army; commanders hold a Flag Meeting to discuss the issue and restore peace in the Tawang sector

**Vijaita Singh**  
**Dinakar Peri**  
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Indian and Chinese soldiers suffered "minor injuries" in a face-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9, the Army said on Monday evening. *The Hindu* had earlier in the day reported the clash that occurred at Yangtse. Around 20 Indian soldiers and a much higher number on the Chinese side were injured, multiple sources had said.

"On December 9, 2022, People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops contacted the LAC in the Tawang sector, which was contested by own troops in a firm and resolute manner. This face-off led to minor injuries to a few personnel from both



**Face-off:** This is the first such incident after the June 2020 episode when 20 Indian soldiers were killed in Galwan Valley. FILE PHOTO

sides," the Army said in a statement after reports of the incident. "Both sides immediately disengaged from the area."

As a follow-up to the incident, Commanders on both sides held a Flag Meeting to discuss the issue in accordance with structured mechanisms to restore peace and tranquility, the Army's statement

added. It noted that in certain areas along the LAC in the Tawang sector, there are areas of differing perception, wherein both sides patrol the area up to their claim lines. This had been the trend since 2006, the Army added.

This is the first such incident after the June 15, 2020 episode when 20 Indian soldiers were killed and

several others were injured in violent clashes with the PLA troops in Ladakh's Galwan Valley.

The clash occurred as a large PLA patrol came across into the Indian side, one Army source said. "Injuries on the Chinese side were much higher than on the Indian side," the source added. At least three different units of the Indian Army were present at the time of the face-off, it has been learnt.

According to another source, a few soldiers sustained fractured limbs during the skirmish and are said to be recuperating at a hospital in Guwahati. Around 600 PLA soldiers were present when the clashes took place, the source said.

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# Indian, Chinese soldiers clash in Arunachal

This is not the first time that the area in Arunachal Pradesh has seen a face-off between the Indian and Chinese troops. Since the boundary is undefined, Indian and Chinese troops often face off while patrolling the area. In October 2021, a similar incident had taken place when some Chinese soldiers of a large patrol team were detained for a few hours by the Indian Army as they engaged in a minor face-off near Yangtse.

In the past few years, the Army has significantly upgraded firepower and infrastructure along the LAC in the Tawang sector and a similar effort is under way in the rest of Arunachal Pradesh (RALP). This includes road infrastructure, bridges, tunnels, habitat and other storage facilities, aviation facilities and upgradation of communications and surveillance, especially in the Upper Dibang Valley region, as reported earlier.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, there has been a change in the pattern of PLA patrols, with large-size patrols coming now to assert their claim. Before the 2020 standoff in eastern Ladakh, Chinese bases have largely been much farther from the LAC.

Majority of the transgressions in the past few years have been in the western sector, while there is an increasing trend of transgressions in the eastern and middle sectors, officials had stated earlier. The LAC is divided into western (Ladakh), middle (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), Sikkim, and eastern (Arunachal Pradesh) sectors.

In eastern Ladakh, India and China are positioned in close proximity at multiple locations along the undefined LAC for more than two years. While several rounds of talks at diplomatic and military levels have eased the stand-off at a few points, turning the areas into no-patrolling zones, there are others where the build-up continues.



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