

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## HIT JOB IS NOT OUR POLICY, SAYS INDIA ON U.S. CHARGES

**CONTEXT:** The linking of an Indian official to the plot to kill Khalistani separatists in a U.S. case is a "matter of concern", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday, in its first such reaction to the charges filed in a New York court a day earlier.

### Beyond borders

A look at India's response to the U.S. indictment charges

- High-level inquiry will take place on inputs shared by the U.S. in alleged plot to kill Khalistan separatist Guratwant Singh Pannun
- Links to Indian govt. official a matter of concern
- Ordering covert assassinations not govt. policy
- Issue with Canada remains over providing space to extremists and threats to diplomats

We take such inputs seriously...necessary follow-up action will be taken based on the findings of the inquiry committee

ARINDAM BAGCHI  
Spokesperson  
MEA



The government said it would investigate the U.S. indictment of Indian national Nikhil Gupta, who allegedly hired a hitman to kill Sikhs for Justice founder Gurpatwant Singh Pannun earlier this year; however, this case does not change India's position on similar allegations levelled by Canada in connection with the killing of Khalistan Tiger Force chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June.

After Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the U.S. indictment should make India take Canada's allegations "seriously", the MEA responded that the space given by Canada to "anti-India extremists" remains at the "heart of the issue".

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

## GDP SURGES 7.6% IN Q2, GOES PAST RBI FORECAST

**CONTEXT:** Despite a tangible growth downturn in the farm and services sectors as well as consumer spending, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a higher-than-expected 7.6% in the July-September 2023 quarter, as per initial estimates from the National Statistical Office.

The second quarter (Q2) growth was slightly lower than the 7.8% rise in the previous quarter, but well over the central bank's projected uptick of 6.5%. Growth in the Gross Value Added (GVA) in the economy eased slight to 7.4% in the second quarter of 2023-24, from 7.6% in Q1. But the GVA growth in the farm sector skidded sharply to just 1.2% from 3.5% in Q1 while it more than halved for services sectors such as trade, hotels and transport from 9.2% in Q1 to 4.3%.

### Construction push

The first half of 2023-24 has thus provisionally recorded a 7.7% growth in GDP, with the GVA rising 7.6%, led by a 10.5% growth in construction and 9.3% uptick in manufacturing.

While growth is expected to moderate in the second half of the year, economists expect the strong first half numbers to lift the full year performance by 0.1% to 0.2% over current projections. The RBI and the government expect GDP to grow 6.5% this year. "Considering that the RBI expects Q3 and Q4 GDP growth at 6% and 5.7% respectively, the annual growth is estimated at 6.7%," said EY India chief policy adviser D.K. Srivastava.

Mr. Srivastava attributed the buoyant first half growth "largely" to government spends dominated by front-loaded capex.

Manufacturing GVA which had shrunk almost 4% in Q2 of last year when the overall GVA grew 5.4%, recorded the fastest uptick in nine quarters to rise 13.9% between July and September. Mining GVA also jumped 10%, thanks to favourable base effects from a contraction last year.

Construction GVA jumped 13.3% this Q2, while electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services added 10.1% over last year's performance, to lift the overall growth numbers, even as private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) tanked sequentially as well as year-on-year.

The share of PFCE, which indicates consumer spending, in the GDP was 56.8% in Q2, the NSO estimated, vis-a-vis 59.3% in the same quarter of 2022-23 and 57.3% in Q1 of this year. PFCE growth halved to 3.1% from 6% in Q1, partly reflecting the weakness in rural demand, ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar noted.

Government capex lifted the investment rate to 30%, which Ms. Nayar said, was the highest for any second quarter since 2014-15.



## MASTER THE NEW LEARNING MANTRA

www.vedhikiasacademy.org



**VEDHIK**  
IAS ACADEMY  
The New Learning Mantra

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## A LOT AT STAKE

**CONTEXT:** The impact of the 15-page indictment filed by the U.S. Department of Justice against an Indian national, believed to be directed by an Indian government official for attempting an assassination plot against U.S.-based Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, is likely to be felt in more than just the U.S. and India.

The indictment is based on details of communications between the accused, an illicit drugs and arms dealer, Nikhil Gupta, with a serving senior Indian government intelligence officer, who is identified but unnamed, as well as with two men in the U.S., who were allegedly engaged to kill Mr. Pannun. The twist in the tale, unreported on so far in the U.S., or Canada, is that the two U.S.-based men were working for U.S. law enforcement, making it clear that American agents have been following the investigation since at least May. There have been meetings between the U.S. President Joseph Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi — other senior officials have met too — since then. The allegations raise troubling questions about how much was shared between the two countries, and whether the Modi government, which had been outraged by similar allegations made by Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau, has been less than honest about what it knows. If the government had knowingly authorised the targeting of Sikh separatists who are on India's UAPA terrorist designation list, then that implies a dramatic change in Indian policy, which it should be more upfront about. If top officials had no inkling about the "plots", and as the Ministry of External Affairs has stated this is not "government policy", it is also a matter of grave incompetence and 'rogue' officers. If, however, the U.S.'s and Canada's allegations are unfounded, and Indian officials are not linked to the plots, then the government needs to furnish evidence. In any case, the management of public messaging in the matter, especially India's reaction to Canada versus the U.S., appears inconsistent.

Whatever the factors behind the government's responses thus far, it is significant that it has now instituted a high-level inquiry committee to look into the U.S.'s allegations. Much hinges on its outcome. To begin with, India's U.S. ties could be impacted by what transpires, as White House expects India's full cooperation. India too, must ask the U.S., which is rightly placing such emphasis on the plot, why it is not keen on extraditing to India a man facing terror charges. Second, the U.S. and Canadian allegations will directly impact India's ties with all "Five Eyes" intelligence partner countries, which must not be overshadowed by this one case. Finally, it is India's reputation as a consistent and credible power — one which has earned respect worldwide for its sagacity and principled approach on such issues in the past — that hangs in the balance, and New Delhi must judge its next steps in the case extremely wisely.

*"Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. — Martin Luther King Jr.*



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## MAKING THIS ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN WAR THE LAST

**CONTEXT:** The United Nations says 1.3 million of the 2.3 million residents of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip have been displaced, and almost half of all homes in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed.

One outcome of a war is when both sides gain something of value to them. The Israeli-Hamas war is likely to end in that kind of scenario. Israel will win in military terms, no doubt about that. But Hamas is likely to win in terms of a greatly increased following among Arab populations everywhere, including, especially, in the occupied West Bank.

The Palestine Authority, which has been ruling there for the past 30 years, has become vastly unpopular and corrupt. Palestine Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the most moderate Palestine leader Israel could have ever hoped for, has failed singularly in making any progress towards the objective of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank. He is perceived as collaborating with Israel in its hunt for 'terrorists'. The peace process has long been dead.

**'Right of self-defence' and the reality**

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has reminded the international community, the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, condemnable and despicable as it was, did not happen in a vacuum. Under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, Israel has the inherent right of self-defence. The same article lays down that after acting in self-defence, the state concerned must report the action taken by it to the UN Security Council (UNSC). This does not seem to have been done.

In any case, self-defence does not authorise the disproportionate or indiscriminate use of force against civilians. It has been reported that Gaza's rate of death during Israel's assault has few precedents in this century — almost 15,000, a majority of them women and children. This goes well beyond the prevailing customary law of self-defence.

The most important and troubling issue is: what happens when Hamas has been subdued? What takes its place? Some, including the U.S. President Joe Biden, have suggested that the Ramallah-based Palestine Authority should take over administering the Gaza Strip, once the situation becomes ready for that. 'The rich Arab states', a phrase widely cited in the media, would be asked to finance the rebuilding of Gaza. The only problem is that the Palestinians, in Gaza as well as in West Bank, do not want the Palestine Authority led by Mr. Abbas to rule anywhere, let alone Gaza.

The only available option is to hold fresh elections, in Gaza as well as in the West Bank, under international supervision as and when the situation allows. The UN should be asked to deploy a peace-keeping contingent on the border



between Gaza and Israel to ensure security for both. The suffocating blockade of Gaza would be lifted. Israel does not like the UN, and likes the UN Secretary-General even less. It should be remembered that it was the UN that gave birth and legitimacy to the insipient state of Israel. The U.S. will need to take the lead on this in the UNSC.

### Feasibility of two-state solution

Meanwhile, the proposal for a two-state solution, long pushed aside, has come alive. Everyone seems to be repeating the two-state mantra. The 1993 Oslo Accord envisaged Palestine to be based in the West Bank. Today, the West Bank is heavily populated by Israeli settlers, 4,50,000 at latest count. No Israeli government will succeed in persuading the settlers to return. Force would be required. The land is like Swiss cheese, having settler roads and innumerable settlements, with more planned. The current Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, will never agree to a Palestinian state, however truncated.

What is needed, as soon as conditions permit, is to have a reality check of the two-state proposal — what is feasible and what is not. Painful concessions will be required, including land swaps, and a monitoring mechanism established to hold each side to the commitments they make. The only lasting solution is for Israel to vacate its occupation of the West Bank and let a viable Palestinian state emerge.

### Abraham Accords are a foundation

To ensure Israel's legitimate concern for the safety of its people, the new state should be demilitarised. Other measures can be thought of to assure the Israelis of their safety. Israel's neighbouring Arab states should all be engaged in this process. The Abraham Accords provide a foundation.

If Israel has the vision of living in harmony in the region with its Arab neighbours, this is the only way. When that happens, Iran will lose its proclaimed reason for its anti-Israel tirades; Hezbollah will, likewise, lose its most important plank for threatening Israel.

For decades, Israeli-Palestinian relations have been locked in a never-ending cycle of death, destruction and misery. The war in Gaza is the latest iteration. It should be the last. The Middle East could, finally, enjoy stable peace and security.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# CHANGING TIDE

**CONTEXT:** There seems to be a rejuvenation in the hopes for a return to democracy in Myanmar if recent events in the civil war are anything to go by. The Tatmadaw (the junta) has never had a bigger challenge until now since its February 2021 coup that ousted the National League for Democracy-led government.

The violence now and reverses suffered by the ruling junta point to a new phase in the war. Ever since the launch of coordinated attacks by the Three Brotherhood Alliance (TBA) in late October, the junta has lost scores of bases and is being stretched thin as its forces have to battle opposition militias, especially in rural areas of the country. The junta sought to overcome the protests following the coup with crackdowns besides detaining NLD leaders in its attempt to reverse the changes in Myanmar's polity since its controlled democratisation in 2010. But this has only led to the NLD and its allies, which formed a National Unity Government (NUG) in exile, creating rebel militias called the Peoples' Defense Forces, who along with Karen, Kachin, Chin and Karenni ethnic forces took on the junta even as their political representatives engaged in a dialogue platform for Myanmar's federal and democratic charter.

The groups within the TBA — the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army — besides others had initially retained their ceasefire status with the junta, but have now joined the civil war, weakening the junta's hold in the northern Shan State and engaging in hostilities in Rakhine State. This, combined with renewed attacks by other NUG allied ethnic armed forces, such as in Chin State neighbouring India, has put the junta in a bind. Most international actors have condemned the coup but have stopped short of outrightly supporting the NUG, except for the European Parliament which has recognised it as the legitimate government of Myanmar. While India has supported democratic reforms, it has cautiously cultivated ties with the junta, as it seeks to counter China's influence in Myanmar. These ties seem to have played a role in New Delhi's allowing the junta's soldiers fleeing the violence in Chin State into Mizoram and facilitating their return through the Moreh border. But with the junta reverting to its tyrannical ways of bombing civilian targets in its efforts to negate the growing resistance even as the NUG has gained greater legitimacy, and heralding better prospects for a truly federal, democratic Myanmar, it is time New Delhi reviewed its ties to the junta.

**The  
More  
You Learn,  
The  
More  
You Earn**



www.vedhikiasacademy.org



**Comprehensive Coaching For  
568 Government Jobs**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## BROADCAST REGULATION 3.0, COMMISSIONS AND OMISSIONS

**CONTEXT:** The Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill released in November by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) is part of an arc of endeavours to regulate broadcasting in an integrated manner. The last initiative to take on this ambitious task was back in 2007, in the form of the Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill.

Ten years before that, when cable and satellite broadcasting was in its infancy, the Broadcasting Bill of 1997 scripted the first effort to visualise an integrated regulatory framework for this sector. The recent third rendition of a Broadcasting Bill comes on the heels of a pre-consultation paper on 'National Broadcasting Policy' by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), a document initiated following a reference from the MIB.

### What it seeks to do and concerns

There appear to be three positive propositions in the current Bill, albeit each requiring crucial refinements. First, it obliges broadcasting network operators and broadcasters to maintain records of subscriber data, and subject this to periodic external audits, as is the international norm. Second, the Bill seeks to stipulate a methodology for audience measurement, and the sale of ratings data. Both mechanisms will bring the much-needed transparency in the opaque value chain of the cable and satellite television business in our country. That said, the Bill completely lacks any guardrails to shield the privacy of subscribers and audiences in such practices of data collection. Third, the provision to permit private actors in terrestrial broadcasting will encourage competition to Doordarshan, the state broadcaster, as is in many G-20 countries. Back in 2016, TRAI had initiated consultations on this. At that time, there was an opinion about terrestrial broadcasting proving viable only for large players, including those already in cable and satellite broadcasting; consequently, such a move, it could be argued, is likely to diminish the diversity of suppliers in broadcasting as a whole. This anxiety can be pacified if the Bill allows terrestrial broadcasting to those not involved in other forms of broadcasting.

Apart from these potentially positive provisions, there are numerous apprehensions that arise from the Broadcasting Bill's manifest scope as well as its noteworthy silences.

A major concern is the Bill including Over-the-Top (OTT) content suppliers in the definition of broadcasting services — as also proposed in TRAI's 'National Broadcasting Policy'.

Intriguingly, both moves come amidst intense discussions catalysed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) (hitherto mandated to deal with the online media) on licensing OTT players. Now, the MIB appears to poach on MEITY's jurisdiction — a territorial slugfest typical in countries with a fragmented regulatory architecture. For the news media and their audience, there is

a different concern. The Bill's expanded definition of broadcasting constricts the conditions in which journalists and news outlets that are not a part of large, multi-lingual television networks can continue their professional pursuits.

While it is fruitful for a news outlet to have an oversight body, warranting a 'Content Evaluation Committee' takes the Bill in a questionable direction: mandating an internal body to self-certify news programming. The issue is not only of feasibility and costs but also of desirability. Since the role of an internal oversight mechanism is to maintain the accuracy of news and quality of journalism, its design is best left to individual news outlets. They could decide whether to design this along the lines of an ombudsperson, as some newspapers attempted in the past, or akin to a 'Readers' Editor', as practised by few online news outlets.

### On ownership and a regulator

Now, the two crucial silences in the Bill. Like the TRAI paper, the Bill is mum on issues of ownership. While the Bill is keen to stipulate a methodology for audience measurement, there is no desire to measure the extent of cross-media and vertical ownership. Both these forms of media power thwart the diversity of suppliers, and perhaps, consequently, that of viewpoints, in the marketplace of news. In fact, just last year, TRAI itself had drawn attention to extensive cross-media ownership between newspapers and news broadcasters through indirectly owned affiliates, and the need to evolve a system to capture this.

Amusingly, one such news outlet with cross-media interests was apprehensive about inroads by telecom companies into broadcasting. They rightly feel such inroads add another dimension to vertical integration, since some cable and DTH distributors also own, in a roundabout manner, news broadcasters. Both renditions of vertical integration risk the ability of the audience to access, avail, and/or afford news from a diverse range of suppliers.

The Bill is equally silent on creating an independent broadcast regulator, as hinted in TRAI's paper. This was first mooted in the 'airwaves' judgment of 1995, subsequently in the 1997 Broadcasting Bill, and reiterated in the 2007 iteration of the Bill. Instead, this Bill plans a 'Broadcast Advisory Council' to examine viewers' grievances and violations of the Programme Code and Advertisement Code. This raises two concerns: first, the capacity of such a Council to track and address grievances, genuine or motivated, raised by over 800 million TV viewers; and second, the lack of autonomy accorded to this body, since the Bill empowers the Central government to ultimately decide on the Council's advice.

### Leeway to the government

In addition, the Bill empowers the government to inspect broadcasters without intimating them in advance, and to impound their equipment, presumably including those issued to their employees.

Furthermore, violations of the Programme Code and Advertisement Code attract deleting or modifying content, in addition to existing measures such as ceasing transmissions for particular durations. Finally, the Bill grants tremendous leeway to government to curtail broadcasting and its



distribution in “public interest”, a term that is distressingly left undefined. All these intrusive mechanisms augment the vulnerabilities of professional news suppliers to external pressure groups. This should worry those who will deliberate over legislating the Bill, irrespective of which benches they occupy in Parliament.

As the latest extension of the arc of endeavours to devise an integrated regulatory framework for broadcasting, this Bill must not lose the opportunity to protect press freedom and diversity. To do so, it has to will its way to incorporate some startling omissions, review its intrusive commissions, and fine-tune potentially positive provisions.

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

# UNDERSTANDING SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

**CONTEXT:** In September, the Union Government notified the formation of a six-member panel to ‘examine and make recommendations for holding simultaneous elections’ in the Lok Sabha, State assemblies and local bodies. For this purpose, the panel has been entrusted with the task of proposing specific amendments to the Constitution and any other legal changes necessary to enable simultaneous elections.

The panel also has to give its opinion on whether the proposed amendments shall require the assent of half of the State assemblies, as stipulated in Article 368. On October 25, the panel had an interaction with the Law Commission to discuss the roadmap to synchronise Parliamentary and Assembly elections by 2029.

### Demand for simultaneous elections

The first four general elections involved simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. It was possible then as the Congress was in power both at the national and State levels. The bifurcation of elections happened due to the advancing of Lok Sabha elections by the Congress, which after suffering a split in 1969 was looking to secure a majority of its own, riding on the populist appeal of Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. As of now the Lok Sabha elections coincide with the Assembly elections in four States namely Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim.

The proposal to hold simultaneous elections has been pushed by the BJP since it came to power in 2014. After the NITI Aayog backed the proposal in 2017, it was mentioned next year in then President Ram Nath Kovind’s address to the joint session of Parliament. He asked parties to have a ‘sustained debate on the subject of holding simultaneous elections’. The Law Commission also released a draft report on August 30, 2018, examining the legal-constitutional aspects related to the proposal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the need to hold simultaneous elections in his Independence Day speech in 2019. Most recently, the proposal received support in the Law Commission Report, which is reportedly exploring the feasibility of a common electoral roll.

### The case for common elections

The following arguments are being pushed in favour of holding simultaneous elections. First, holding separate elections incurs massive recurring expenditure for the State and the Central government. In case of simultaneous elections, there would only be one electoral roll for all elections and the government would need the services of security forces and civilian officials only once. This would save public money and human resources that can be put to other public causes.

Second, the dense electoral cycle involves prolonged deployment of security and police forces on election duty, thus posing a concern for national security and maintenance of law and order. The administration comes under strain due to the mass-scale transfers of officials within the State, either by the government looking for pliable officers in key positions or by the order of the ECI once code of conduct comes into force. High-ranking officers from other States are also deputed as observers in the poll-bound State. There is a climate of political uncertainty, wherein officials remain perpetually in election mode. Third, holding separate elections comes in the way of development as the enforcement of the code of conduct for a longer period leads to the stoppage of ongoing development work. No new projects can be started during this period and even on-going projects suffer from inertia. Looking to reap the electoral dividend, parties in power invariably indulge in populist schemes and do not commit to long-term investment in primary sectors. This happens frequently, burdening the state exchequer.

Fourth, simultaneous elections would lessen the role of money in elections as campaign finance of parties’ would come down. The monitoring of election expenditure by the ECI will also become more effective due to a concerted effort at the national level. Fifth, given the increasing role of divisive politics for electoral gains, the ‘one nation-one election’ plan would help in reducing the pernicious role of regionalism, casteism, and communalism in mobilising electorates. It would help in bringing issues of national importance on the electoral agenda. And finally, it is being argued that having too many elections creates a sense of fatigue among electorates. Voter turnout at the national level has stagnated in recent elections.

### Against simultaneous elections

These are the arguments against the implementation of simultaneous elections. First, the Centre’s initiative is being viewed as being antithetical to the federal spirit as there has not been wider consultation with constituent States, especially the ones that are being ruled by non-BJP parties. Second, holding simultaneous elections would most likely push local and regional issues to the periphery. There would be a ‘national constituency phenomenon’ favouring polity-wide parties due to their comparative advantage in terms of their claim to better serve ‘national interest/ national security/national unity’ rather than regional parties who will be sidelined for focusing on ‘narrow, parochial’ issues. Simultaneous elections in a federal polity, would incentivise regional discontent. Third, as far as cost saving is concerned, holding simultaneous elections would require large-scale

purchase of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail Machines (VVPAT). Moreover, biennial elections to Legislative councils/Rajya Sabha and by-elections would still be held, costing money and resources. Fourth, frequent elections rather than sapping the enthusiasm of voters keep them enthused, as evident in the comparatively higher percentage of voting in State and local elections. Frequency of elections at different layers also helps in increasing accountability as elected representatives and their parties remain on their toes.

### Legal and constitutional issues

Even if the proposal to hold simultaneous elections were to be adopted in principle, it would require a complex and lengthy legal process to implement.

First, at least five Articles in the Constitution shall need amendment. These articles are Articles 83(2) and 85(2) that relate respectively to the duration and dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Also, on the legislative agenda would be Articles 172(1) and 174(2), which provide for the duration and dissolution of the State Assemblies. Article 85 (1) and 174 (2) allows the President and the Governor to dissolve the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha before the completion of their tenure of five years, under the circumstances mentioned in the Constitution. Article 83(2) allows the tenure of the Lok Sabha to be extended for one year at a time in case of an Emergency being proclaimed under Article 352. Article 172(1) makes a similar provision for State assemblies. These provisions would need to be repealed. As of now, after the passage of the anti-defection law enshrined in the 10th Schedule (52nd Amendment Act, 1985) and later the Supreme Court judgment in S.R. Bommai case (1994) followed by the High Court judgment in Rameswar Prasad (2006), the decision to dissolve the Vidhan Sabha and impose President Rule under Article 356 is subject to judicial review. The Court can revive the Assembly and restore the government if it does not find the grounds of the President's rule to be constitutionally valid as has happened in recent years in the case of Nagaland, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh.

Moreover, such amendments need not only the two-third-majority support of both Houses of Parliament but also ratification by at least half of the State Legislatures under Article 368. Currently, no party has even simple majority in Rajya Sabha while the States have different parties in power, many of which are not in favour of such amendments.

It would also be much more complex and difficult to link general elections with local bodies elections. This is because local government is a State subject (seventh schedule, List II) and all the State Legislatures have passed separate Panchayati Raj Acts and Municipal Acts, fixing the tenure of these bodies (five years) as per Article 243(E) and 243 (U) respectively. Since all 28 States have their own specific Acts, it would require changes in 56 sets of legal provisions.

What next?

Given the complexity of the issue, likely focus is going to be on how Lok Sabha and Assembly elections can be held simultaneously. Even for that, multiple amendments would be required. Since the proposal involves Centre-State relations, judicial review of the amendment acts shall be a major block. What seems doable is to make an attempt to club as many Assembly elections as possible to be held together or with the Lok Sabha elections in one go and hope that the verdicts favour formation of a stable government. Even for realising this, there is a need for wider consultation across parties and constituent States.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

# THREE ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE SHIPS FOR INDIAN NAVY LAUNCHED

**CONTEXT:** The first three of a series of eight anti-submarine warfare shallow water crafts being built by Cochin Shipyard Ltd. for the Navy were launched on the shipyard premises on Thursday.



The ships, to be named INS Mahe, INS Malvan and INS Mangrol upon commissioning, were launched in the presence of the Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Sanjay J. Singh; the Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Forces Command, Vice-Admiral Suraj Berry; and the Commandant of the Indian Naval Academy, Vice-Admiral Puneet Bahl, by their spouses Anjali Bahl, Kangana Berry and Zarine Lord Singh, respectively. The shipyard inked the contract with the Defence Ministry to build the eight vessels in 2019.

### Comes as replacement

These Mahe class ships will replace the Navy's in-service Abhay class ASW corvettes and are designed for anti-submarine operations in the coastal waters, and low-intensity maritime, mine-laying and sub-surface surveillance operations. They are also capable of coordinated ASW operations with aircraft, and search and rescue. Each vessel can carry 57 personnel, including seven naval officers.



## INTERNAL SECURITY

## 2.23 LAKH CRORE TO BUY 97 TEJAS JETS, 156 PRACHAND HELICOPTERS

**CONTEXT:** In a major move to enhance the combat capabilities of the armed forces significantly, the Union government on Thursday accorded initial approval to defence acquisition projects estimated at ₹2.23 lakh crore that included procurement of 97 Tejas light combat aircraft and 156 Prachand combat helicopters.



The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, cleared the projects at a time India is locked in a military stand-off with

China at a number of friction points in eastern Ladakh for over three years.

The Defence Ministry said 98% of the total procurement will be sourced from domestic industries and that the move will give a substantial boost to the Indian defence industry in achieving the goal of *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance).

The DAC also approved a proposal of the Indian Air Force to upgrade its Su-30 fighter fleet by state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. It further accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) or initial approval for procurement of two types of anti-tank munitions namely area denial munition (ADM) Type-2 and -3.

### For the Navy

The top body on procurement of military hardware also cleared acquisition and integration of automatic target tracker (ATT) and digital basaltic computer (DBC) for T-90 tanks besides approving another proposal to buy medium-range anti-ship missiles (MRAShM) for the Navy.

The MRAShM is a lightweight surface-to-surface missile which will be a primary offensive weapon aboard various Indian naval ships.

“The DAC accorded AoNs for procurement of Light Combat Helicopter for Indian Air Force and Indian Army and Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A for IAF from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under Buy (Indian-IDD) category,” the Ministry said.

Though it did not mention the specific numbers, official sources said 97 Tejas light combat aircraft (Mark 1A) are being procured for the IAF and 156 light combat helicopters (LCH) are being procured for the Army and the IAF.

In February 2021, the Defence Ministry sealed a ₹48,000-crore deal with the HAL for procurement of 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF. With the additional fleet, the number of Tejas aircraft being procured by the IAF would go up to 180.

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## CENTRE AGREES TO EXAMINE DEMANDS FOR LADAKH SAFEGUARDS

**CONTEXT:** The Union Home Ministry has agreed to examine the demand of civil society groups in Ladakh to provide “constitutional safeguards” for the Union Territory, said an order issued on Thursday.

Civil society organisations have been demanding Ladakh’s inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and granting tribal status to the Union Territory.

The key detail is mentioned in an order issued by the Ministry to reconstitute a high-powered committee for Ladakh. The 22-member panel, chaired by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, will have representatives from both Kargil and Leh divisions. The panel is expected to hold its first meeting in Delhi on December 4.

The terms of reference of the committee are to discuss measures to protect the region’s unique culture and language taking into consideration its geographical location and strategic importance; to ensure protection of land and employment for people of Ladakh; to discuss measures for inclusive development and employment generation in the region, to discuss measures related to the empowerment of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill District Councils of Leh and Kargil; and to examine constitutional safeguards that could be provided to ensure the measures and protection detailed above. Ladakh has erupted in protests several times since it was carved out of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

## ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

## LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND CLEARED ON DAY ONE OF COP-28 SUMMIT

**CONTEXT:** On the first day of the 28th Conference of Parties or COP-28 here on Thursday, member countries agreed to make operational a Loss and Damage (L&D) Fund meant to compensate countries already dealing with climate change.

To be based at the World Bank but managed by an independent secretariat, the Fund has received commitments worth nearly \$250 million from countries, though billions of dollars are still needed to meet its purpose.

The Fund was first announced at the conclusion of COP-27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, last year, but it has taken five separate meetings since then, through “transitional committees”, to get to a position where countries could unanimously agree on a text that was then passed by COP-28 President Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber. The demand for such a Fund is nearly three decades old.

The UAE, the host country, and Germany made a financial commitment of \$100 million each; the U.S. \$17 million, the U.K. approximately \$50.6 million, and Japan \$10 million for the Fund. The European Union committed \$145 million, over and above the German contribution.

# WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

## 'Good momentum'

Several delegates said that an agreement to kick-start the fund on the first day of the COP was a "positive" start and set a "good momentum" on the tenor of discussions in the days ahead. "Countries must build on this and generate enough momentum in the days ahead. We must keep our eyes on the prize [of taking concrete steps to keep temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius]," said Simon Steill, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Representatives, including heads of states, from nearly 160 countries have confirmed attendance at the World Climate Action Summit on Friday and will make statements. Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived here on Thursday.

The World Bank will be the "interim host" of the Fund for a period of four years. All developing countries are eligible to apply for and every country has been "invited" to contribute to the Fund. Payments are voluntary and a certain percentage has been set apart for a category of countries called the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Loss and damage from climate change cost about \$1.5 trillion (\$1,500 billion) in 2022, says a study published this week by the University of Delaware. Several developing countries and some of the poorest lost an average of about 8.3% of the GDP due to climate change. The Fund, as it stands now, does not specify how often it will be replenished.

Harjeet Singh of the Climate Action Network International has been at the forefront of demanding an L&D Fund for years. In a statement, he said, "Amid this historic decision to operationalise the Loss and Damage Fund within a year of its establishment, addressing underlying concerns becomes critical. The absence of a defined replenishment cycle raises serious questions about the fund's long-term sustainability."

Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav thanked the UN Presidency for facilitating the kick-starting of the Fund. "India has given key inputs during the transitional committee meetings and we thank the presidency for facilitating this," he said.



*"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."*  
—Benjamin Franklin

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## INDIA SET TO LAUNCH X-RAY POLARIMETER SATELLITE, SAYS ISRO

**CONTEXT:** The Indian Space Research Organisation has announced a plan to launch its first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) to investigate the polarisation of intense X-ray sources.

In a recent update on its website, the ISRO said that while space-based X-ray astronomy had been established in India focusing on imaging, time-domain studies, and spectroscopy, the XPoSat mission marked a major value addition. This research, supplementing traditional time and frequency domain studies, introduced a novel dimension to X-ray astronomy, generating anticipation and excitement within the scientific community. The satellite will be launched by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. The date has not been revealed.

The XPoSat is designed for observation from a low earth orbit (non-sun synchronous orbit of 650-km altitude, low inclination of approximately six degrees) and will carry two scientific payloads. With these two payloads, the mission is capable of simultaneous studies of temporal, spectral, and polarisation features of the bright X-ray sources.

The mission objectives include the measurement of X-ray polarisation in the energy band of 8-30 keV emanating from X-ray sources and long-term spectral and temporal studies of cosmic X-ray sources in the energy band of 0.8-15 keV. The mission life is expected to be approximately five years.

The primary payload, POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays), is designed to measure polarimetry parameters, specifically the degree and angle of polarisation, in the medium X-ray energy range of 8-30 keV photons originating from astronomical sources. The payload was developed by the Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru, with support from ISRO centres.

The secondary payload is the XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing) payload, which will provide spectroscopic information within the energy range of 0.8-15 keV. The payload was developed by the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre, ISRO.

**The  
More  
You Learn,  
The  
More  
You Earn**



[www.vedhikiasacademy.org](http://www.vedhikiasacademy.org)

  
**VEDHIK**  
IAS ACADEMY  
The New Learning Mantra







# VEDHIK

## IAS ACADEMY

*The New Learning Mantra*

# START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S  
TOP MOST  
CIVIL SERVANTS  
FOR COACHING**

[www.vedhikiasacademy.org](http://www.vedhikiasacademy.org)

*Head Office:*  
**Vedhik IAS Academy**  
Mercy Estate,  
MG Road, Ravipuram,  
Ernakulam-682 015,

*Corporate office:*  
**Vedhik IAS Academy**  
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,  
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,  
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

*Regional office*  
**Vedhik IAS Academy**  
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,  
Museum Road. Bangalore -  
560001. Karnataka, India.

*GCC Office:*  
**Bobscoedu,**  
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L  
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,  
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain  
[www.bobscoedu.com](http://www.bobscoedu.com)