

BELARUS

Luhansk
People's
Republic

Kyiv ★

UKRAINE

125 mi

Donetsk
People's
Republic

Donetsk



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

22 - FEBRUARY 2022

FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_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 Hameed 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.

CONTENTS

- Editorials - Protect the mother tongue
GSP 01 A
- News -Use international law, call out China's violations
GSP 02 A
- News - Australia calls for 'full probe' by China into laser incident
GSP 02 C
- News -India and France discuss Afghanistan, Ukraine crisis Part I
GSP 02 C
- News -Iran makes 'significant progress' in nuclear talks
GSP 02 C
- News -Russia to recognise Ukraine rebel regions
GSP 02 C
- News -Ukraine keeps India in loop, blames Russia Part I
GSP 02 C
- News -Ukraine keeps India in loop, blames Russia Part II
GSP 02 C
- Editorials -The crisis in Ukraine's Donbass region
GSP 02 E
- News - Enforce fundamental duties, says petition in SC Part I
GSP 02 E

CONTENTS

- News - Enforce fundamental duties, says petition in SC Part II
GSP 02 E
- Editorials - A red pen moment for corporate governance
GSP 02 O
- News -Union Budget will help in implementing NEP Modi
GSP 02 T
- Editorials - Questions on MGNREGA budget estimation
News -Centre clarifies on OROP scheme
GSP 03 A
- News -Ensure hassle-free loans, FM tells banks
GSP 03 A
- News -Nirmala calls for nuanced debate on GST reforms Part I
GSP 03 A
- News -Nirmala calls for nuanced debate on GST reforms Part II
GSP 03 A
- News -Returns for LIC policyholders may rise post IPO, says Kumar
GSP 03 A

Protect the mother tongue

The blood-stained streets of Dhaka in 1952 are a powerful reminder of the vitality of our mother languages even today



SYED MUNIR KHASRU

International Mother Language Day is observed every year on February 21 to honour those in Bangladesh who sacrificed their lives to protect their mother tongue, Bangla, against the then rulers of West Pakistan and to honour the ethno-linguistic rights of individuals across the world.

Language movement

The transition from East Pakistan to Bangladesh has a blood-stained story behind it. For the first time in world history, a mother tongue became the focal point for an independence movement. In March 1948, just months after the birth of Pakistan, Pakistani leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared that the state language of Pakistan would be Urdu. All official communication from then was to be in Urdu and the language was made compulsory in schools. Meanwhile, Bangla, which is a completely different language, was removed as a subject in schools and from stamps and currency.

Students of Dhaka University began their protest on February 21, 1952 against the 'Urdu only' policy. The police began indiscriminate firing on the students, killing many of them. Since then, February 21 is observed as 'Shaheed Dibosh (Martyrs' Day)' in Bangladesh to pay tribute to Shaheed Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Abdul Jabbar, Shafiqur Rahman, and many more. Their passion for their mother tongue and devotion towards their motherland forced the Pakistani leadership to make Bangla one of the official languages of Pakistan in 1954.

The language movement not only gave rise to the Bengali national identity in the then Pakistan, but also became the stepping stone for the Bengali nationalist movement, the six-point movement, the student movement in 1962, the uprising in 1969 and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. This is perhaps the only movement in history that started with protecting linguistic and cultural rights and ultimately led to the birth of an independent nation, Bangladesh.

Language is one of the most important characteristics of the foundation of a culture. Cesar Chavez said, "A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers." Language is the most powerful tool that forges social, economic, and cultural ties. Today, multilingualism and intercultural communication are growing phenome-

na. Due to globalisation and interconnectedness, vastly spoken languages have gained supremacy and indigenous languages have been increasingly localised. The haste to receive better job opportunities has led to people learning foreign languages and resulted in the disappearance of mother tongues. Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened. According to the United Nations, at least 43% of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken in the world are endangered. The UN proclaimed the period between 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, "to draw global attention to the critical status of many indigenous languages around the world and to mobilize stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization, and promotion."

The Internet is vastly dominated by English and a handful of other languages. The digital presence of most people who speak indigenous languages and dialects is nearly zero. Individuals often discredit their own language. Since it is not on the Internet, the validity of the language is questioned, and learning or practising it further is often discouraged. From keyboards to programming languages to incompatible hardware and software to website domains, social media and applications, the linguistic divide prevents a majority of local speakers from being a part of the rest of the online world.

Ray of hope

International Mother Language Day 2022 was celebrated across the world with the theme, 'Using technology for multilingual learning: Challenges and opportunities'. It highlighted the role of technology in developing multilingual education and in supporting the development of quality teaching and learning for all. The fight for local languages to be on the web has been supported by tech giants like Amazon and Facebook, as their products are available in a few local languages. Google Translate has brought numerous regional cultures closer together. The translations are undertaken by AI and native language experts who have experience and a solid academic background.

Hundreds of languages are spoken, written, and translated across the world. Linguistic diversity defines our socio-cultural identity, connects us with our heritage, and is the foundational pillar of civilizations. The blood-stained streets of Dhaka in 1952 remain a powerful reminder of the vitality of our mother languages even today.

Syed Munir Khasru is Chairman of the international think tank, *The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance*, New Delhi, India, with a presence in Dhaka, Melbourne, Vienna and Dubai. Email: munir.khasru@ipag.org

Use international law, call out China's violations

New Delhi needs to mainstream global law lexicon into its diplomatic toolkit to respond to Beijing's direct challenges



PRABHASH RANJAN

During the recent meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad, India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar said that the situation at the India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC) has arisen due to the "disregard" by China of "written agreements". But what China has been doing at the LAC is not a mere "disregard". It is a blatant violation of international law as part of a larger game of Chinese expansionism. Let us understand how.

Breach of law

The India-China LAC engagement is guided by a series of bilateral agreements that the two sides have signed over the years. A central tenet of all these agreements is the complete proscription on the threat or use of force. For instance, a 1993 agreement between India and China provides that neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by any means. It further enunciates that the India-China boundary question shall be resolved through peaceful and friendly consultations. Likewise, Article I of the 1996 agreement on confidence-building measures between the two sides prohibits the use of military capability against the other

side. The prohibition on the use of force is also enshrined in Article I and Article VIII of the 2005 and 2013 agreements, respectively. States being forbidden from using force in international relations is a cardinal rule of international law codified in Article 2(4) of the United Nations (UN) Charter. The UN Charter recognises two exceptions to this rule – self-defence under Article 51 and UN Security Council authorisation under Chapter VII of the Charter.

The June 15, 2020 military scuffle between India and China in Galwan, that led to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers, was a clear case of China using military force against India. This Chinese aggression not only violates all the bilateral treaties between India-China but also the UN Charter. Moreover, the Galwan military showdown was not an isolated incident. Since then, a muscular and assertive China and its belligerence toward India has continued unabated through multiple transgressions at the LAC. China has backed these transgressions by other developments such as implementing a new border law that renames several places in Arunachal Pradesh and aims to set up boundary markers on all its land borders. The LAC transgressions and the new border law violate Article IX of the 2005 agreement that mandates both sides to "strictly respect and observe" the LAC, pending a final solution to the boundary question.

Furthermore, there are disconcerting reports of a huge military build-up by China with heavy weaponry including missiles in the



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Eastern Ladakh Sector. This amassing of armed forces along the LAC unabashedly breaches another key tenet of both the 1993 and the 1996 agreements. This relates to both countries reducing or limiting military forces along the LAC. Article III of the 1996 agreement specifically requires the two sides to reduce armaments such as combat tanks and vehicles, missiles, and mortars and big mortar guns. China has not complied with these legal requirements, instigating India to beef up its military deployment.

Weaponising global law

China's bellicosity towards India, exhibiting complete violation of international law, fits in the larger pattern of China's conception of rule of law. Known as the 'socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics', China views law as an instrument in the service of the state or, more precisely, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This is diametrically opposed to the rule of law theory in liberal democracies where law's function is to constrain unbridled state power. Internationally, there are several examples of China weaponising international law to further the will of the CCP.

First, China fervently denounced a 2016 ruling in favour of the Philippines by an arbitration tribunal under the aegis of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in a maritime dispute between the two sides in the South China Sea.

Second, although China claims to be a defender of the international trade law regime at the World Trade Organization, the fact is that it has ingeniously exploited the system to pursue its policy of mercantilism by hiding behind a non-transparent and complex economic system. It is accused of providing illegal subsidies, manipulating currency to make exports competitive, stealing intellectual property, and forcing companies to transfer technology.

Third, as American scholar Orde F. Kittrie writes in his book, *Lawfare: Law as a Weapon of War*, China "has a long history of gaming the international legal system by entering into legally binding nuclear nonproliferation obligations with which its rivals (including the United States, Japan, and South Korea) tend to comply while [China] secretly violates these obligations by providing nuclear technology to its allies, often through proxies".

In the case of India, China uses the sovereignty argument to cover up its barefaced illegalities. The Chinese unethical legal warfare or lawfare is aimed at hamstringing the opponents without actually fighting a war.

This practice of weaponising international law sours relations between countries, generating an at-

mosphere of distrust.

India's lawfare

New Delhi should develop its strategy of ethical lawfare by mainstreaming international law lexicon into its diplomatic toolkit to respond to Beijing's challenge. Rather than pussyfooting around, India should make a strong legal case by painstakingly marshalling all the international treaties, including the UN Charter and customary international law, at every forum to call out China's illegal actions. An unequivocal proclamation should be made at all international platforms that India reserves the right to act in self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter to counter any Chinese misadventure. Enacting a national security law aimed at imposing restrictions or sanctions of various kinds (trade, economic, military) on those countries with whom India shares a land border can be an option. The purpose of India's lawfare should be to ably demonstrate to the world that China's international law violations pose a threat to the entire international community – not just India.

There is no gainsaying that for India, a liberal global order dominated by American exceptionalism, notwithstanding its flaws, is a lesser evil than a world order subjugated by Chinese exceptionalism that strikes at the heart of cherished liberal democratic values.

Prabhash Ranjan is Professor and Vice Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University. The views expressed are personal

Australia calls for 'full probe' by China into laser incident

'PLA vessel directed a laser at aircraft within Australia's EEZ'

REUTERS
SYDNEY

Australia's Prime Minister said on Monday a Chinese naval vessel that pointed a laser at an Australian military aircraft was so close to Australia's coast that it possibly could have been seen from the shore, and he called for a full Chinese investigation.

Scott Morrison told media his government had not received an explanation from China over the incident last Thursday, which Australia considered "dangerous and reckless".

China said Australia's version of events did "not square up with facts" and was "disinformation".

The Chinese Navy vessel within Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) directed a laser at an Australian mil-



A Chinese PLA-N vessel transiting the Torres Strait in Northern Australia last week. *AFP

itary aircraft over Australia's northern approaches, illuminating the plane and potentially endangering lives, Australia said on Saturday.

The P-8A Poseidon – a maritime patrol aircraft – detected a laser emanating from a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLA-N) vessel, the Defence Department said.

A Chinese guided missile

destroyer and an amphibious transport dock were sailing east through the Arafura Sea between New Guinea and Australia at the time of the incident, and later passed through the narrow Torres Strait. "It's possible people could even see the vessel from our mainland, potentially," Mr. Morrison told reporters in Tasmania on Monday.

India and France discuss Afghanistan, Ukraine crisis

Jaishankar holds talks with his French counterpart

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PARIS

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held wide-ranging and productive talks with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian here during which they discussed key regional and global issues, particularly the India-EU relationship, and exchanged perspectives on the situation in Afghanistan, Iranian nuclear deal and the Ukraine crisis.

Mr. Jaishankar, who arrived here from Germany on a three-day visit, and Mr. Drian also reiterated their shared commitment to the principles of multilateralism and a rules-based order, and agreed to coordinate in the Security Council on issues of mutual concern.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) later said the two Ministers discussed key regional and global issues, particularly the India-EU relationship and the priorities of the French Presidency of the EU Council.

Mr. Jaishankar appreciated the French initiative of hosting a EU Ministerial Forum on Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific on February 22,



Forging alliance: S. Jaishankar with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, during a meeting in Paris on Monday. •PTI

where he will participate along with several other Ministers from the Indo-Pacific and the EU countries.

In the context of the Ministerial Forum, the two Ministers agreed to jointly launch the Indo-French call for an "Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership" during the EU Forum.

"This partnership aims to build capacities in the Indo-Pacific region, in terms of sustainable management of protected areas," the MEA said. They also agreed to intensify India-EU ties under the French Presidency, and the need to begin negotiations on the Free Trade and Investment Agreements and implement the India-E.U.

Connectivity Partnership.

Both sides also adopted the "India-France Roadmap on the Blue Economy and Ocean Governance", which aims to enhance partnership in the field of blue economy by way of institutional, economic, infrastructural and scientific cooperation.

They also agreed to continue and enhance their cooperation in and agreed to soon conclude a Joint Declaration of Intent in the Area of Sports, aimed at further facilitating people-to-people contact.

The Ministers exchanged perspectives on the situation in Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear deal and the evolving situation in Ukraine.

Iran makes 'significant progress' in nuclear talks

Key negotiator says talks to continue

REUTERS
DUBAI

Talks in Vienna on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers have made "significant progress", Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

Separately, Iran's top security official Ali Shamkhani said talks with European negotiators were ongoing and would continue.

Indirect talks between Tehran and Washington have been held in Vienna since April amid fears about Tehran's nuclear advances, seen by Western powers as irreversible unless agreement is struck soon. While Mr. Khatibzadeh said significant progress was made, he also noted that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" in the Vienna talks.

"The remaining issues are the hardest," he told a weekly press briefing.

Mr. Khatibzadeh said that Iran's top security body, the Supreme National Security Council, handles the Vienna talks. It reports directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's top authority.

The draft text of the agreement also alluded to other issues, including unfreezing billions of dollars in Iranian funds in South Korean banks, and the release of Western prisoners held in Iran.

Iran is ready to swap prisoners with the U.S., Iran's Foreign Minister said on Saturday, adding that talks to revive the nuclear deal could succeed "at the earliest possible time" if the United States made the necessary political decisions.

Russia to recognise Ukraine rebel regions

Kremlin says Putin will sign orders on independence of breakaway Lugansk and Donetsk territories

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin will recognise the independence of eastern Ukraine's separatist republics, the Kremlin said in a statement on Monday, adding that he had informed the French and German leaders of his decision.

"In the near future, the President plans to sign the order," the Kremlin said, in a statement published before an anticipated national address from Mr. Putin.

Macron, Scholz informed
It added that French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had "expressed disappointment" over the decision in phone calls with Putin.

"At the same time, they indicated their readiness to continue contacts," the Kremlin said.

France and Germany are mediators in the conflict between Kiev and pro-Russia rebels in eastern Ukraine.



Crisis meet: Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting with members of the Security Council in Moscow. •AFP

The West has repeatedly warned Russia not to recognise the separatists – a move that effectively buries a fragile peace process in the region.

Earlier on Monday, the rebel leaders of eastern Ukraine's separatist Donetsk and Lugansk territories had appealed to Mr. Putin to recognise them as independent.

The Kremlin said the rebels had made the appeal "in

connection with military aggression carried out by the Ukrainian authorities and the mass shelling of the territory of Donbas, which leads to suffering in the civilian population."

Also on Monday, the Russian leader held an unscheduled Kremlin national security meeting on Monday, in which his top officials made impassioned speeches to him in favour of recognising the separatists.

Earlier, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said a call or meeting between Mr. Putin and Mr. Biden could be set up at any time, but there were no concrete plans yet for a summit. Tensions were growing, he said, but a Foreign Ministers' meeting was possible this week.

Mr. Macron's office and the White House said the substance of the plan would be worked out by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during a meeting planned for Thursday.

The White House said Mr. Biden had accepted the meeting "in principle" but only "if an invasion hasn't happened".

"We are always ready for diplomacy," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said. "We are also ready to impose swift and severe consequences, should Russia instead choose war."

After talks in Brussels with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, British foreign minister Liz Truss said West-

ern countries were preparing for a "worst-case scenario". The airlines Lufthansa, KLM and Air France all cancelled flights to Kiev.

The EU will move to impose sanctions on Russia should Mr. Putin recognise Ukraine's separatist territories as independent, the bloc's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday. "We call upon President Putin to respect international law and the Minsk agreements and expect him not to recognise the independence of Lugansk and Donetsk oblasts," Mr. Borrell said after a meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Brussels.

Sporadic shelling across the line dividing government forces from the pro-Russian insurgents has intensified since Thursday, with both sides trading blame. The separatists have been bussing out civilians, accusing Kiev of planning an attack. Ukraine and the West view the rebels as Russian proxies, escalating to provide Moscow with a justification to invade.

Ukraine keeps India in loop, alleges disinformation drive

Separatists making provocative allegations: Kiev

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Amid escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine, India was on Monday given an update on the developments by Ukraine, according to diplomatic sources.

As tensions mounted with separatists in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk accusing the Ukraine Army of “allegedly preparing for an armed offensive”, Kiev said it was “complete fake, a tool for destabilization and not true”.



People protesting outside the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kiev. ■ AFP

In a statement, Ukraine said, “In fact, all these allegations have been unsubstantiated and are either unfounded or provocative by their nature.”

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Ukraine keeps India in loop, blames Russia

Stating that the Russian Federation and the leaders of the “so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People Republics” are interested in escalating the conflict, Ukraine said that to attain their goals, the separatist groups are capable of “staging any provocations in order to unreasonably accuse Ukraine of aggravating the situation once again.”

“Russia is waging an aggressive disinformation campaign to create a pretext for military escalation and destabilisation in Ukraine,”

it said while terming it as yet another round of Russia’s “hybrid war” against Ukraine.

Russia, through “illegal armed factions” under its control, is trying to get the Ukrainian armed forces firing back in order to “further accuse” the Ukrainian military of shelling civilians, it said, adding, “The militants are pounding Ukraine government forces controlled area from densely populated settlements with artillery systems set close to residential buildings.”

EXPLAINER

The crisis in Ukraine's Donbass region

Why are the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk critical in the Ukraine-Russia stand-off? Will the provisions in the Minsk agreement offer a solution?

THE GIST

■ Since Moscow invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014, pro-Russia rebels in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions began seizing territory in Eastern Ukraine and held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine. Since then, these regions within Ukraine have been witnessing skirmishes between the rebels and Ukrainian forces leading to the loss of over 14,000 lives, creating around 1.5 million registered internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and destruction of the local economy. This shelling has intensified since last October when Russia began amassing troops along the borders with Ukraine.

■ There are two Minsk agreements, Minsk 1 and Minsk 2. Minsk 1 was written in September 2014 by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, i.e. Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE with mediation by France and Germany. Under Minsk 1, Ukraine and the Russia-backed rebels agreed on a 12-point ceasefire deal, which due to violations by both sides, did not last long.

■ In February 2015, representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE and the leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk signed a 13-point agreement, now known as the Minsk 2 accord. However, the provisions under the agreement have not been implemented because of the 'Minsk Condominium'. Russia believes that the agreement asks Ukraine to grant the Russia-backed rebels in Donbas comprehensive autonomy and representation in the central Government. Only when this is done will Russia hand over control of the Russia-Ukraine border to Ukraine. Ukraine, on the other hand, feels that Minsk 2 allows it to first re-establish control over Donbas, then give it control of the Russia-Ukraine border, then have elections in the Donbas, and a limited devolution of power to the rebels. Ukraine believes the accord supports its sovereignty fully and Russia believes it only gives Ukraine limited sovereignty. Thus, the Minsk 2 agreement has been rightly criticised for being too hastily drafted, ambiguous and contradictory, making it difficult to implement.



Ongoing conflict: Ukrainian troops patrol in the town of Novoluhanske, eastern Ukraine, on February 19, 2022. •APP

UMA PURUSHOTHAMAN

The story so far: As tensions spiral between Russia and the West over Ukraine, the rebel-held self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR/DPR and LNR/LPR) in Eastern Ukraine have started evacuating civilians to the Rostov region in Russia claiming an impending Ukrainian military offensive.

They have also declared a full military mobilisation. Shelling is going on even in civilian areas between Ukrainian soldiers and Russia-backed rebels; in response, Russia has extended military exercises outside Ukraine's northern borders. The Chairman of the Russian Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin has already said that Russia is ready to protect its citizens in DNR and LNR if their lives are in danger. Moscow is paying everyone arriving from the Donbas 10,000 roubles and giving them refuge. It is also fastpacking passports for people from the region. Meanwhile, the Duma has requested President Putin to initiate proceedings for recognising the independence of the DNR and LPR. Allegations are flying thick and fast with the rebels and Russia accusing Ukraine of carrying out a genocide against the Russian-speaking population in these regions and Ukraine and the West claiming that Russia is manufacturing a crisis as a pretext to invade Ukraine.

How did the crisis start?

The Donbas region, comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, has been at the centre of the conflict since March 2014 when Moscow invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula. In April, pro-Russia rebels began seizing territory (with Russia supporting them through hybrid warfare) in Eastern Ukraine and in May 2014, the rebels in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine. Since then, these predominantly Russian speaking regions (more than 70% speak Russian) within Ukraine have been witnessing shelling and skirmishes between the rebels and Ukrainian forces leading to the loss of over 14,000 lives by most estimates, creating around 1.5 million registered internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and destruction of the local economy. What has changed now is that the shelling has intensified since last October when Russia began amassing troops along the borders with Ukraine. If the situation in the Donbas escalates, the possibility of a war cannot be dismissed.

One way to prevent the outbreak of a war would be to implement the Minsk agreements immediately, as Russia has suggested.

What are the Minsk Agreements?

There are two Minsk agreements, Minsk 1 and Minsk 2, named after the Belarusian capital Minsk where the talks were held.

Minsk 1 was written in September 2014 by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, i.e. Ukraine, Russia, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with mediation by France and Germany in the so-called Normandy Format. Under Minsk 1, Ukraine and the Russia-backed rebels agreed on a 12-point ceasefire deal, which included prisoner

exchanges, delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. However, due to violations by both sides, the agreement did not last long.

Following this, as the rebels moved further into Ukraine, in February 2015, representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk signed a 13-point agreement, now known as the Minsk 2 accord. The new agreement had provisions for an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weaponry, OSCE monitoring, dialogue on interim self-government for Donetsk and Luhansk, in accordance with Ukrainian law, and acknowledgement of special status by parliament, pardon and amnesty for fighters, exchange of hostages and prisoners, humanitarian aid, constitutional reform in Ukraine including decentralisation, with specific mention of Donetsk and Luhansk, elections in Donetsk and Luhansk, withdrawal of foreign armed formations, military equipment, mercenaries, full Ukrainian Government control throughout the conflict zone and calls to Ukraine to restore control of state borders, etc.

power to the rebels – in that sequence. So, Minsk 2 is ambiguous.

While Ukraine believes the accord supports its sovereignty fully, Russia believes it only gives Ukraine limited sovereignty. Thus, the Minsk 2 agreement has been rightly criticised for being too hastily drafted, ambiguous and contradictory, making it difficult to implement. Moreover, the fact is that Ukraine has been reluctant to implement it for fear of Balkanisation of the country as other regions might also come up with such demands and because any Government which agrees to the kind of autonomy for LPR and DPR that Russia wants will lose domestic support. Russia, on the other hand, wants it to be implemented because it will guarantee protection of the Russian minority and Russian language and culture while increasing its leverage over Ukraine. Its fears about this are justified to some extent because in 2014, the new Ukrainian government had banned Russian as an official language despite almost 30% of its population being native Russian speakers.

Can implementing the Minsk Agreement avert war?

One of the principal demands Russia has made of the West is the immediate implementation of the Minsk 2 agreement.

While the agreement is far from ideal, it could be a baseline from which a diplomatic solution to the current crisis could be found and reviving it could be the 'only path on which peace can be built' as French President Emmanuel Macron has said.

For Ukraine, it could help it gain control over its borders and end the threat of a Russian invasion for the time being, while for Russia it could be a way to ensure that Ukraine never becomes a part of NATO and ensure that Russian language and culture are protected under a new federal Constitution in Ukraine.

However, there could be very prolonged negotiations on the type of autonomy the LNR and DPR could get. The latest news about a Biden-Putin summit followed by talks among all relevant parties, might just be the start to dialling back this crisis which could otherwise escalate into a cataclysmic war.

Uma Purushothaman is Assistant Professor (Senior Scale) at the Department of International Relations, Central University of Kerala

Ganging up at Ukraine's border

NATO is planning to establish four new multinational battlegroups – totalling 4,000 troops – in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, in response to Russia's military build-up around Ukraine



Some 80,000 U.S. troops stationed across Europe, 8,500 additional troops on "high alert" to deploy to help NATO Response Force of 40,000 troops

Very High Readiness Joint Task Force: Core unit of NRF. French-led force of 5,000 soldiers, operational within 72 hrs

Sources: NATO, Rochan Consulting, Reuters *Under construction © GRAPHIC NEWS

Fundamental duties must be enforced: plea

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Union and the State governments to respond to a petition to enforce the fundamental duties of citizens, including patriotism and unity of the nation, through “comprehensive, well-defined laws”.

A Bench led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul issued notice in a petition filed by Durga Dutt, who introduced himself as a Supreme Court lawyer. “The need to enforce fundamental duties arises from a new illegal trend of protest by protesters in the garb of freedom of speech and expression, by way of blocking of road and rail routes in order to compel the government to meet their demands,” the petition, filed through advocate Karunakar Mahalik, said.

The petition referred to the Bhagavad Gita on the importance of duty.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Enforce fundamental duties, says petition in SC

It also took a leaf from the erstwhile Soviet Constitution and pointed to China’s advent as a “superpower” while arguing that the “need of the hour” is to remind citizens that fundamental duties are as important as fundamental rights under the Constitution.

Though it agreed that the 11 fundamental duties listed in Article 51A of the Constitution were basically “moral obligations” on citizens, the petition used the prefix “sacrosanct” to define these obligations.

“It said the time has come to balance rights, liberties and freedoms and obligations. Fundamental duties

instil a “profound sense of social responsibility towards the nation”.

“In the erstwhile USSR Constitution, the rights and duties were placed in the same footing. There is a pressing need to enforce and implement at least some of the fundamental duties.” the petition urged.

The petition said fundamental duties were “brazenly flouted” by people. These duties were an important tool to protect unity and integrity. Every citizen should know how to respect institutions in this country, it argued.

The court has listed the case for April 4, 2022.

A red pen moment for corporate governance

Convulsions of outrage after episodes such as the NSE affair are pointless; significant institutional reform is a must



T.T. RAM MOHAN

Over the past 10 days, the revelations about the functioning of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) during the tenure of Chitra Ramkrishna as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) have had people shaking their heads in disbelief. The savvy head of one of the world's largest bourses taking guidance on organisational matters from a Himalayan yogi?

The damage is huge

In his order, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) board member Ananta Barua makes short work of Ms. Ramkrishna's contention that there was no danger of any damage being caused to NSE as the yogi in question is a 'spiritual force'. He remarks with grim sarcasm, "I note that there is no exception in the Regulations or the SEBI Act or SCRA [Securities Contracts (Regulations) Act], that confidential information of the stock exchange may be shared with a spiritual force." It may be that, in this instance, the NSE did not suffer any financial costs through the leakage of confidential information. But the reputational damage caused to the NSE and to India's capital markets is huge.

Sharing confidential information was one serious lapse on the part of Ms. Ramkrishna. Mr. Barua's order highlights others. Ms. Ramkrishna appointed an individual, Anand Subramanian, first as chief strategic adviser and, next, as group operating officer without following due process.

Mr. Subramanian lacked the

credentials for the job, the position was not advertised and Mr. Subramanian was interviewed solely by Ms. Ramkrishna. He was recruited on a salary that was more than 10 times what he last drew and his salary was frequently revised without any evaluation being recorded.

Mr. Subramanian was hired as a consultant and progressively given operational powers until he became virtual second-in-command in the NSE hierarchy. Ms. Ramkrishna ensured he was not designated as a key management person as that would have meant bringing Mr. Subramanian within the ambit of regulation.

Managerial wrongdoing

Clearly, there was managerial misconduct at NSE. That is no surprise; managerial misconduct is a global phenomenon. That is why we need checks on management such as an effective board of directors. The bigger problem is that the board of NSE has been found wanting.

Mr. Barua documents the board's lapses. After the board was informed about the irregularities in Mr. Subramanian's appointment, it discussed the matter but chose to keep the discussions out of the minutes on grounds of confidentiality and the sensitivity of the matter. Second, despite being aware of Ms. Ramkrishna's transgressions, it allowed her to resign and on generous terms instead of taking action against her. Third, the Public Interest Directors (PIDs) failed to keep SEBI informed about the goings-on at the NSE.

How did all this happen and how could it have gone on for so long? The answers lie in the culture of the corporate world and the board room.

In the corporate world, much is forgiven on grounds of performance. When a performing CEO chooses to unduly favour a partic-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

ular individual or individuals, boards see that as a forgivable infirmity. Considerations of equity or fairness do not trouble boards unduly – it is a mercy if breaches of regulation do.

The problem is structural

The NSE ushered in a revolution at India's stock exchanges. It rakes in enormous profits. In such a situation, boards would tend to think they can live with a degree of nepotism and other human failings in the CEO. 'She's doing a great job, she's entitled to pick her team.' Such an attitude may pass muster at your typical private sector company. Not so in a public institution which is a Market Infrastructure Institution (MII) because it amounts to a violation of regulations. The board of an MII must tell itself that there is little margin for error.

As for dysfunctional or ineffective boards, these remain the norm despite numerous regulations, seminars and papers over the past four decades. The issue is not the credentials of board members or their domain expertise. Few boards can match the set of luminaries who sat on the board of the NSE. The SEBI order says that these very luminaries failed to measure up.

The problem is structural. It has to do partly with the way board members are selected and partly with the absence of penalties where directors do not live up to

their mandate. Board members are selected by top management (or, in India, by the promoter who is also top management). In leading companies and institutions, board memberships are lucrative, prestigious and carry attractive perks. Board members have every incentive to nod their heads to whatever the management wants done.

To challenge management is to ensure that one's term is not renewed. It also means antagonising one's colleagues on the board, not just the top management. The dissenting board member becomes an outcast on the board – he will find it difficult to make conversation over lunch. In the closed club from which board members are drawn, word spreads that the dissenter is a 'trouble maker'. Other boards will be reluctant to touch him.

As long as the top management selects all board members or can influence their selection, there is little hope of any active challenge to management. If we are to bring about meaningful change, we need to bring in diversity in the selection of board members.

The top management must be allowed to choose not more than 50% of the independent directors. The rest must be chosen by various other stakeholders – financial institutions, banks, small shareholders, employees, etc. Then, we will have independent directors who are not beholden to the top management for their jobs. They will be accountable, not to the top management, but to stakeholders who have appointed them.

Once that happens, the dynamics of the boardroom can be expected to change. Of course, we cannot be certain it will. At the NSE, there were five PIDs who were required to keep SEBI informed about any untoward happenings. They failed to do so. All

we can say is that where independent directors are chosen by diverse stakeholders, there is at least the theoretical possibility of directors challenging the top management.

Issue of accountability

A second thing that needs to happen is holding board members accountable for lapses. In the NSE case, SEBI has penalised Ravi Narain who happened to be vice chairman. Mr. Narain has made the point that there is no reason why he should be singled out as the board of NSE was collectively responsible.

Regulators act against directors where there is financial malfeasance. They seldom act where there are breaches of regulation as in the present instance. This must change. Regulators must penalise errant directors through a whole range of instruments – strictures, financial penalties, removal from boards and a permanent ban from board membership.

Lastly, regulators themselves must be held to account. In the NSE affair, questions have been asked of SEBI. For instance, why did SEBI not seek the help of the cyber police to ascertain the identity of the yogi? SEBI needs to explain itself.

We need periodic independent audits of all regulators by a panel of eminent persons. The audits must evaluate the regulators' performance in relation to their objectives. The internal processes and governance mechanisms of regulators must be subjected to the glare of public scrutiny. It is vital to guard the guardians.

Convulsions of outrage after particular episodes will not take us very far. We need significant institutional reform if corporate governance is not to remain an illusion.

ttrammohan28@gmail.com

Questions on MGNREGA budget estimation

How the Centre's approach has eroded the very premise of employment guarantee as a legal right



ANUJ GOYAL & LAAVANYA TAMANG

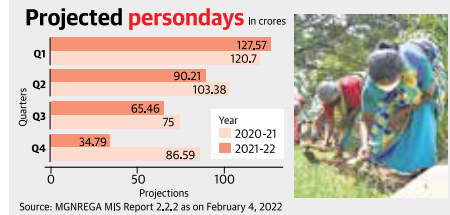
The disappointing allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in the FY 2022-23 budget has created a buzz. Organisations such as the All India Kisan Sabha and NREGA Sangharsh Morcha (NSM) have raised concerns about the inadequacy of the amount. Grassroots activists and academics have been demanding higher budgetary allocations for MGNREGA; yet, the actual allocations have been considerably lower and severely inadequate to meet needs. The initial allocations in the past two FYs have been just about half of what was recommended by groups like the People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) and NSM.

Consequently, the consistent shortage of funds has caused a situation endemic to MGNREGA – that of deficits for State governments, long delays in wage payments, decline in the work provided in the last two quarters of the FYs, and significant pending dues at the end of the FYs. In FY 2021-22, a tracker released by PAEG showed that the initial amount allocated was nearly exhausted by September, and many States were running a negative balance. For FY 2022-23, PAEG had recommended a minimal allocation of ₹2.64 lakh crore, and NSM had recommended ₹3.64 lakh crore, but the government has allocated only ₹73,000 crore. In its recent statement, NSM has argued that this amount provides for only 16 days of employment to all the active job card-holding households.

Why is the government's allocation so much lower than what State governments ask for and civil society actors recommend? This question merits scrutiny of the way the government estimates persondays. A closer look at the Centre's MGNREGA budget estimation in FY 2021-22 sheds some light on this.

Projected persondays

Among other things, the budget calculations depend on two important variables: the projected persondays for the coming year, and the wage



rate. Projected persondays are the total days of work anticipated for the year. The District Programme Coordinator is responsible for calculating this and submitting it to the State, which in turn collates the entire State's projected demand and submits it to the Centre for approval. The MGNREGA MIS Report R2.2.2 has the monthly projections approved by the Centre, along with the actual persondays generated. A closer look at these figures for the last two years reveals some discrepancies. In FYs 2019-20 and 2020-21, the persondays generated was about 18.4% higher in Q4 when compared to Q3. However, the projected persondays for Q4 in FY 2021-22 appeared to be strangely and significantly lower than that in Q3. FY 2020-21 was an unusual year, with the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures leading to significantly increased MGNREGA work demand. Work demand continued to be high in FY 2021-22 as well, implying that the rural population was still relying on MGNREGA for their livelihood. For the first three quarters, persondays generated this year were only 7% lower than the persondays generated in the same time period last year. And yet, as on February 3, 2022, the projection for the last quarter of this year was only about 40% of that for the same period in the previous year. There seems to be no clarity on how this projection was arrived at, given previous trends, and given that with the harvest concluding MGNREGA work has traditionally picked up in Q4. However, what it does suggest is that the government had not revised its projections for the final quarter of this FY even while it announced supplementary grants worth ₹25,000 crore for MGNREGA in December 2021.

There have been attempts by the government to curb work demand based on the availability of funds. In 2016, for instance, *Business Standard* reported that the Rural Development Ministry was unofficially communicating to States to cut down on MGNREGA work because funds were running out. Since budget allocations are based on projected persondays, underestimated projections will lead to inadequate allocation. The unusually low projections of the final quarter in the current FY certainly contributed to the supplementary allocation of only ₹25,000 crore, when activists had been demanding an additional allocation of at least ₹50,000 crore. The low allocation for FY 2022-23 is also likely to be an outcome of artificially low persondays projections.

Wage rate

The official MGNREGA wages also contribute to keeping the budget low. Despite a clear mandate of the MGNREGA Act that the wage remuneration cannot be lower than the minimum wage in each State, the former remains much below the latter. In doing so, the Central government has violated the provisions of the Act, as well as the fundamental rights of MGNREGA workers. There have been estimates devised of what the average MGNREGA wage should be. For instance, an expert committee under the chairmanship of Anoop Satpathy estimated a need-based national minimum wage of ₹375 per day as of July 2018. In comparison, PAEG used a conservative estimate of ₹269 per day in its recently released pre-budget brief. However, according to the NREGA 'At a Glance' report, the average MGNREGA wages paid this year remain at a meagre ₹209 per day, and the low allocation for next

year indicates that the wage will not be increased by much, if at all.

However, even if we take the wage rate of ₹209 per day that the government is paying on average, the current FY is expected to end with dues of over ₹20,000 crore. The Central government's expenditure for this FY is expected to be over ₹1.02 lakh crore even if the wage bill, material costs, and administrative costs are to increase in a linear fashion till the end of the FY. The pending dues for previous FYs add up to over ₹17,000 crore. Adding the two figures, the government's estimated expenditure will be ₹1.19 lakh crore by the end of this FY. And yet, the government has allocated only ₹98,000 crore (₹73,000 crore in the initial budget plus ₹25,000 crore as supplementary grants) for the FY. In such a likely scenario, only ₹53,000 crore will be available for expenses in FY 2022-23. In fact, since FY 2016-17, 20% of the initial budget allocation has gone into clearing pending dues.

Correcting for the mentioned discrepancies, PAEG recommended a minimal budget of ₹2.64 lakh crore for FY 2022-23, considering only the households that were active this year. However, even this number is much lower than the number of households that are registered under the scheme. MGNREGA treats employment guarantee as a legal right; any rural household can demand work up to 100 days every year, and the government has to provide it. As and when demand arises, the government must fulfil it. In this context, treating the budget allocation as a 'ceiling' to the work that can be provided erodes the core premise of the scheme. To illustrate, less than 5% of households active this year have completed 100 days of work. While an initial budget allocation has to be made, MGNREGA funds must be regularly replenished by supplementary grants provided based on actual work demand in each State. The Centre's approach to estimating projections, keeping the wages illegally low, and treating the budget as an upper limit to the work that can be provided has eroded the very premise of MGNREGA.

Anuj Goyal (anujgoyal@riseup.net) and Laavanya Tamang (laavanyatamang@gmail.com) are members of the People's Action for Employment Guarantee

Union Budget will help in implementing NEP: Modi

PM moots National Digital University

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Union Budget for 2022-23 will be of great help in implementing the National Education Policy on the ground, and said the decision to set up a National Digital University can solve the problem of shortage of seats in educational institutions in the country.



Narendra Modi

Addressing a webinar on the positive impact of the Union Budget 2022-23, Mr. Modi said the Budget focused on five aspects related to education – universalisation of quality education, skill development, urban planning, internationalisation and AVGC (Animation Visual Effects Gaming Comic).

Asserting that digital connectivity is what kept the education system running during the pandemic, Mr. Modi said the digital divide was shrinking in India.

"Digital university is an innovative and unprecedented step that has the potential of fully addressing the problem of seats in the universities," the Prime Minister said.

Mr. Modi said the Budget for 2022-23 would be of great help in implementing the National Education Policy. On International Mother Language Day on Monday, Mr. Modi underlined the link between education in the medium of mother tongue and the mental development of children.

Centre clarifies on OROP scheme

SC had sought govt. response on statement made by Chidambaram in 2014

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's statement in the 2014-15 interim Budget presentation that the government has accepted the principle of one rank, one pension (OROP) was "not based on any decision or recommendation by the then Union Cabinet", the Centre told the Supreme Court on Monday.

However, the Centre, in an affidavit, said the Cabinet Secretariat had conveyed the approval of the Prime Minister on the OROP scheme in terms of the Government of India (Transaction of Business Rules) on November 7, 2015.

"Following this, the Government of India, Ministry of Defence, Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare, in a



Members of a welfare group for former members of paramilitary forces raise demands on OROP. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

communication dated November 7, conveyed the policy of OROP for the defence forces personnel," the affidavit said. It said a "post facto approval" of the Union Cabinet on April 6, 2016 was also conveyed by the Cabinet Secretariat on April 7, 2016.

The clarification was given by the Centre after a Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, while hearing a PIL petition filed by Indian Ex-servicemen Movement, had asked it to clarify whether the statement made by then Finance Minister on Fe-

bruary 17, 2014, was based on any decision or recommendation by the Union Cabinet.

To the court's query about the financial data of the outflow that is likely to be incurred by the Centre if non-Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) personnel were grouped with MACP personnel for payment of OROP, the government said the financial outflow from 2014 would be in the range of ₹42,776.38 crore.

On Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP), the Centre said it was more or less automatic unless a person got disqualified for specific reasons such as disciplinary proceedings. The government clarified that the same rank and length of service were necessary for claiming the OROP benefits.

Ensure hassle-free loans, FM tells banks

SBI chief Khara promises to roll out a fully digitised, 'hassle-free' lending process in two months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Indian banks need to become more customer-friendly and ensure hassle-free loans, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday, even as the chief of the country's largest lender SBI promised to roll out a fully digital loan application system in two months to ease borrowers' lot.

State Bank of India (SBI) chairman Dinesh Khara, who was part of the audience at an industry interaction with the Minister on the Union Budget in the commercial capital Mumbai, received a flurry of advice from Finance Ministry top brass on easing access to credit, after a woman entrepreneur flagged the need for 'hassle-free' loans to budding busi-



Easy pickings: Availability of credit scores has helped lift retail credit growth to 16%, says SBI's Khara. ■ L. BALACHANDAR

nesses like hers. Ms. Sitharaman directed the query to Mr. Khara, stating loans should be hassle-free for all and 'more so for women'.

"Our PM has said, in Mu-dra and Swanidhi [schemes], where the poorest of the

poor are involved, he told banks: 'look I am the security behind them, don't ask for any security, give them the loans they want'. And actually, the performance on servicing of those loans has been good," she said.

"Often for start-ups, more than loans, equity is required and we are more than happy to support with loans provided they have the equity," Mr. Khara initially noted.

"What is being done now is to make it digital end-to-end so that hassle-free loans are addressed, right from the filing of the application to the decision-making via digital means. That will make life easier; it should be ready in two months or so," he said.

'Bland reaction'

Remarking that the SBI chief's initial reaction was 'very bland', Ms. Sitharaman said there was 'no harm', "but banks will have to be a lot more customer-friendly, not to the extent of taking adverse risks that you don't need to take, but you need to

be a lot more friendly towards customers."

Mr. Khara said: "My situation is that in one quarter, the underutilisation of the working capital limit has come down by around 900 basis points, and still at that level, the underutilisation of working capital is still as high as 52%". The bank, he said, had set a benchmark of loans up to ₹5 crore to be processed 'hassle-free'.

On lending to MSMEs, Mr. Khara said credit based on balance sheets posed challenges, and lending could be more 'hassle-free' if lenders had access to credible cash flows instead. This, the SBI chief said, could raise credit growth in the segment to the 16% level seen in retail loans, where credit scores had made lending easier.

Nirmala calls for nuanced debate on GST reforms

‘Rollback of rate corrections on textiles will hit PLI scheme’

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The rollback of Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate “corrections” on textiles in late December will hurt the production-linked incentives (PLI) scheme for the sector, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday. She sought a more nuanced debate to undertake course correction in the indirect tax regime instead of a tendency to oppose decisions without understanding their implications.

Taking on “one of the Opposition leaders” [Congress leader Rahul Gandhi] who remarked that GST is “Gabbar Singh Tax”, Ms. Sitharaman said: “More often, for whatever reason, knowingly or unknowingly, when we try to tarnish the GST for whatever agenda, we are undermining the institution [GST Council] that has been created with all the States on board. Very knee-jerk reactions like saying ‘Oh My god,



Nirmala Sitharaman at a post-budget interaction in Mumbai on Monday. ■PTI

GST has now become the Gabbar Singh Tax.... We are doing a disservice to our own country’s institutions.”

Be vocal, industry told

While there could be “teething problems”, the Minister said, these had “been taken up over and over again, several iterations are made on the same issue, but the system works”, noting that the Centre was in no position to dictate decisions at the GST Council.

“Because you address it to me, doesn’t make it a Cen-

tral government issue. At the same time, I am not saying it is not a Central government issue. These things need more calibration and discussion,” she said, asking industry also to be more vocal when debates erupt over tax regime changes.

Ms. Sitharaman was responding to Grasim Industries managing director M.K. Agarwal who said the GST rate structure remained inverted for textiles, with basic raw material taxed at 18% while later parts of the value chain attracted lower rates.

“That is exactly what we wanted to correct, the inversion that is hurting all of us. It was a conscious decision taken by the GST Council after having deliberated over three meetings. But then we had to wait for longer and said all right, we will give more time to correct it and retain the status quo,” she said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Nirmala calls for nuanced debate on GST reforms

The industry, she said, had given mixed signals on the rate changes for textiles that were approved by the GST Council last September.

“The voice of the industry is also sometimes, this way, some other times, that way. Within the industry, there is a request to correct inversion, but at other times, they say not yet, please bear with us. Therefore, we went to the GST Council and took a call not to correct the inversion at an extraordinary emergency meeting, although the correction itself is required for the PLI. Otherwise investments are not going to

come in certain areas,” she noted.

Expressing sadness at the inability to undertake necessary rate corrections, Ms. Sitharaman said each decision entailed ‘a perception battle’. “Equally, the decision taken is not studied in full much before people comment about it and forcefully ask for a retraction. I think all this will have to become a discerning debate over an issue rather than a passionate reaction,” she concluded.

Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj also asked business leaders to be more vocal about the need for reforms.

Returns for LIC policyholders may rise post IPO, says Kumar

We’ll be a board-led firm and perform better: Chairperson

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The listing of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on the stock exchanges would bring out version 3.0 of the insurance firm, said its chairperson M.R. Kumar.

“When we nationalised life insurance in 1956, my thought was, that was LIC 1.0. When the market opened and we were subjected to competition and we did well even in the competitive market, that was LIC 2.0,” Mr. Kumar said while answering a question at a virtual press conference ahead of the insurer’s Initial Public Offering (IPO).

“And now, we are going to see LIC 3.0, a listed organisation and a listed, huge, life insurance company. 3.0 will



mean that we will be having another family of shareholders with us. We need to cater to their needs,” he said. Mr. Kumar said LIC ‘needs to be agile, nimble under these circumstances’.

“We are working on many things simultaneously to make that happen,” he added.

He said: “We hope to deliver excellent results to our

policyholders, who have been with us all this while and to our shareholders.”

“Therefore, when it comes to our own shareholders, do you not think we will be far ahead in what others are doing?” he said. Stating that LIC was watching global events unfolding amid the geopolitical tension, he said the IPO will hit the market as planned in March and preparations for the same were on.

He said LIC would be a board-led organisation and returns to policyholders should not reduce but in turn, it might go up as LIC will perform better post IPO. He added that LIC would continue to have a stake in IDBI Bank in the interest of its bankassurance business.

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.