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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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India displays indigenous arms and women power

At Republic Day parade, Indian-made field guns replace vintage model for 21-gun salute; at first parade with President Droupadi Murmu at the helm, Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is the chief guest

Mehul Malpani
Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

The drive for *atmanirbharta* or self-sufficiency in India's military strength and the key role of women in the armed forces were in the spotlight at the 74th Republic Day celebrations on Thursday, held at the renovated Kartavya Path, formerly Rajpath, in Delhi.

This year's parade was the first with President Droupadi Murmu at the helm. The celebrations had a chief guest – Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi – after two years without one owing to pandemic restrictions.

As the National Flag was unfurled on a cold and windy morning, the 21-gun salute was presented for



Made in India: The main battle tank Arjun of 75 Armoured Regiment rolls down the Kartavya Path in New Delhi. R.V. MOORTHY

the first time by Indian-made 105-mm field guns, replacing the seven vintage Quick Fire 25-pounder guns used since Independence. The change was in line with the Union govern-

ment's push for the indigenous manufacture of defence equipment.

The Army showcased more Made-in-India equipment, including its main battle tank, Arjun, the NAG

missile system, the K-9 Vajra-T gun system, the Akash air defence system, and the BrahMos missile.

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India displays women power, indigenous arms

A combined band and marching contingent from Egypt, with 144 soldiers of the Egyptian Army and led by Colonel Mahmoud Mohamed Abdel Fattah El Kharasawy, was part of the parade.

The parade was led by Parade Commander Lieutenant-General Dhiraj Seth, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, followed by the Param Vir Chakra and Ashok Chakra awardees.

In a display of women's empowerment, the marching contingents of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy were led by women officers for the first time. While Lt. Commander Disha Amrith led the Navy's 144 sailors, Squadron Leader Sindhu Reddy headed 144 air warriors and four officers of the IAF. In another first, the Navy's contingent also included three women and six men Agniveers. The Central Reserve Police Force also presented an all-woman marching contingent in the parade, led by Assistant Commandant Poonam Gupta, while the Delhi Police had an all-women pipe band comprising 35 women constables. The marching contingent was led by Assistant Commissioner of Police Shweta K. Sugathan.

The theme of nari shakti or women power carried beyond the armed forces contingents into the parade's cultural tableaux as well. Tripura's tableau focused on the active role of its women in creating sustainable livelihoods through tourism and organic farming, while Kerala presented folk traditions of women's empowerment.

One of the most popular parts of the parade every year, the fly past was not clearly visible due to the cloudy weather, leaving the audience a bit disappointed at the end. Some of the formations, as narrated by the commentators, were Netra by four Rafale fighter jets and Trishul by three Sukhoi-30 Mki. Creating a diamond shape in the blurry skies were the helicopters of the Indian Army Aviation Corps. The Rudra formation consisted of two Dhruv helicopters and two Rudra helicopters.

'India's timely support ensured Sri Lanka's economic survival'

High Commissioner of the island nation says India stepped in during the crisis and helped the country with credit lines, currency swaps and loans, apart from advocating for international support; investment, tourism and trade are the three areas where the big neighbour could aid the country in its recovery; and Jaishankar's visit to Colombo last week has opened a new chapter in ties

INTERVIEW

Milinda Moragoda

Suhasini Haidar

India's support to Sri Lanka during its economic crisis, which External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar underlined during his visit to Colombo last week, has opened a new chapter in ties between the neighbours, says Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India Milinda Moragoda, in an interaction. Edited excerpts:

Did EAM Jaishankar's visit to Colombo fulfil the Sri Lankan government's

expectations for help with economic crisis?

I think from our side, yes, very much so. It was the first visit since the new President [Ranil Wickremesinghe] was sworn in last year, and Mr. Jaishankar carried a letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, inviting him to India soon. I think it needs to be re-emphasised that Sri Lanka's economic survival today is due to the support provided by India. India's support came when nobody else would step in. We have now gone to the IMF [International Monetary Fund] for a loan of around \$2.9 billion that will be disbursed over several years with many conditions.

Whereas in comparison, India actually provided us

with \$3.9 billion, supporting us with credit lines, currency swaps and helping with our loans. Secondly, India took the lead in advocating for international support. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman herself spoke with IMF and World Bank. And then India wrote to the IMF last week, just before Mr. Jaishankar's visit, giving assurances on debt restructuring that were much needed. India has been the first to do so, before China, before even the Paris Club. Of course, once the process is done, we need to start looking at economic recovery, and will need India's support there as well.

What are the areas of recovery where India can help immediately?



I think there are three key areas – investment, tourism and trade. In investment, we will need assistance in infrastructure, especially for energy and in particular, renewable energy sector. Sri Lanka has immense potential of nearly 30,000 megawatts in wind energy. The only way we can bring in invest-

ment to harness that is if we can be part of an electricity grid with India as our requirements alone will not be enough to bring large-scale foreign investment.

India was the largest tourism market for Sri Lanka before COVID-19, and I hope we can expand that. I've been also talking to

aviation companies here to see how Colombo airport can become a hub.

Finally, there is trade, and even as we negotiate upgrading our FTA [free-trade agreement] with India, we can look for opportunities to increase market access and to generate market access and to generate market access and to work out a rupee trade arrangement.

Do you foresee Sri Lanka joining a South Asia renewable power grid with India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal?

That's the way the world is working now, to share renewable energy regionally. Let's remember, every crisis is an opportunity. And I

think in the power sector, it's very much an opportunity because our power generation and distribution or transmission are both inefficient, and we need to make it more competitive. So the short answer to your question is, yes. In the past, there were internal lobbies that wanted to protect Sri Lanka from becoming too dependent on external sources of energy. But today, the situation is reversed. Mr. Jaishankar also made it clear that India will go ahead with plans for the energy terminal projects in Trincomalee.

Have India-Sri Lanka ties recovered from the troubles of last year, over the docking of the Chinese vessel? Going

forward how would you balance ties with India and China?

We value our separate identity and we value our independence, but when it comes to security issues, India's security is our security, I think our leaders have also stated this. The big lesson is that we must keep channels open, keep talking and that's how to work out all such problems that come up in the future. Yes, the [Chinese] ship was a blip on the screen, but despite that, we continued to talk, and India did continue to support Sri Lanka and we have been able to establish a new level of trust. In that sense, Mr. Jaishankar's visit last week has opened a new chapter for India-Sri Lanka ties.

India and Egypt reiterate support for Non-Aligned Movement

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India and Egypt on Thursday reiterated support for the Non-Aligned Movement. A joint statement issued after the bilateral engagements for President Abdel Fateh el-Sisi, who was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade here, said both countries expressed desire for exchange of technology between their defence industries.

“The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism, the principles of the United Nations Charter, international law, the founding va-

They expressed a desire for exchange of technology between their defence industries

lues of the Non-Aligned Movement, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states,” the statement said.

Mr. Sisi arrived here on January 24 and held restricted and delegation-level talks at Hyderabad House on Wednesday, where he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed bilateral diplomatic relations between India and Egypt. The two countries

are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

India and Egypt agreed to “initiate new engagements to intensify military-to-military engagements” and planned more joint exercises between the armed forces of the two countries.

The ties have been on an upswing in the recent past and both delegations supported reform of the UN Security Council, where Egypt was a non-permanent member during 2016-17 and India had a similar stint during 2021-22.

Egypt’s relation with India was also helped by its display of pragmatism especially on the backdrop of

the Nupur Sharma controversy of 2022 when Cairo maintained silence while certain Gulf countries were vocal in criticising India.

The two governments agreed to fight terrorism in all forms, “including cross-border terrorism” and intensify consultation between their respective National Security Councils.

“Prime Minister Modi and President el-Sisi expressed concern over the spread of terrorism across the world and agreed that it poses one of the most serious security threats to humanity. Both leaders condemned the use of terrorism as a foreign policy tool,” read the statement.

Portentous overkill

Arrests and blocking of access to BBC documentary were unwarranted

The aftermath of the release of a BBC documentary on the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, which questions the actions taken by the then Gujarat government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, can only be termed as yet another rendition of the 'Streisand effect'. After issuing directions to disable access to the first episode on websites using emergency powers under the IT Rules, 2021 and Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) also blocked over 50 tweets with a link to the documentary. But this only resulted in citizens gaining access through screenings and shares over smartphones – akin to how the suppression of information has the unintended consequences of raising more awareness, or the 'Streisand effect'. Other actions such as the police detention of 13 students at Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi, on the pretext that they were about to have a screening were an overkill and amounted to an abuse of power. It goes without saying that the government should not arbitrarily block the dissemination of media content just because it is critical of the regime. Its justification to use emergency powers to block access to the documentary, as being propagandist and of a colonial mindset, does not hold water if it is seen in the continuum of coverage of the pogrom and the aftermath. In any case, propaganda should be countered by propaganda, and not censorship.

The events that led to the pogrom, the horrific crimes, the callousness of the then regime and the lack of sufficient recourse to law and order steps, have all been well recorded and commented upon in the Indian press. The BBC documentary is just another media investigation into a portion of India's history that changed the course of the polity not just in Gujarat but also elsewhere. The online blocking of the first episode using emergency powers cannot be justified on the basis provided by the MIB that it is "propagandist", and only reflects a recent tendency to utilise IT rules to assert executive power rather than address this as a free speech issue. The IT rules were amended in February 2021 to allow for increased government control over online news publications – actions that are now being heard in courts. Recent High Court orders have also weighed in on the need to protect free speech and have stayed the government's moves to control freedom of expression on digital platforms. In its actions, a clear case can be made that the central government is more keen on blocking critical content than using the IT rules to regulate hate speech and misinformation – the true bane of the digital media ecosystem today.

EPFO's plan to review high pension payout cases sparks concern

What's in store

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation plans to re-examine the issue of higher pension

- EPFO's new circular provides for recovery from pensioners who have been granted higher pension without exercising the relevant option
- Some sections of 24,672 pensioners may be affected
- EPFO will seek an explanation from each of these pensioners before recovery



- The circular asks EPFO officials to be cautious in identifying cases of higher pension that has been granted due to judicial intervention

A. M. Jigeesh

NEW DELHI

A circular issued by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on "re-examining" cases of higher pension for those who retired prior to September 1, 2014 has evoked concern among sections of such pensioners that they may lose the benefit they have been enjoying for the past five years or so.

The EPFO, in the circular issued on Wednesday, said payment of higher pension should be stopped "from the month of January" for those who retired without exercising any option under paragraph 11(3) of the pre-amended Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, but were granted pension on higher wages.

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EPFO's plan to review cases sparks concern

Their pension would now be revised based on the salary ceiling of ₹5,000 or ₹6,500, it said in the circular, issued to all the regional offices.

In support of its move, the EPFO cited certain paragraphs of the Supreme Court's judgment of November 2022.

Paragraph 11(3) dealt with the matter of maximum pensionable salary. It also talked of an arrangement for employees and employers to give a joint option for allowing to the Pension Fund the remittance of a proportionate portion of the employers' contribution on wages higher than the statutory ceiling. The second feature of the paragraph was removed through an amendment to the Pension Scheme, effective September 1, 2014.

Alleging "high-handedness" of the EPFO in issuing such a circular, Parveen Kohli, activist for pensioners' rights, said he feared that the latest move would affect thousands of pensioners. "The circular is by distorting the facts and suppressing the details. In the *R.C. Gupta* case, the Supreme Court, in October 2016, upheld the EPS-95. Consequently, the pension of 24,672 persons was revised. There are other pensioners who got favourable orders from various courts subsequently. All these persons are facing the prospects of recovery by the EPFO, if one is to go by the latest circular," Mr. Kohli said.

The EPFO's circular said that before revising any pension entitlement, an advance notice should be issued to the pensioner so that he or she had an opportunity to prove that he or she had availed himself or herself of the option under paragraph 11(3) of the EPS before his or her retirement prior to September 1, 2014.

"Further, any recovery which may arise after such revision should be done in a staggered and persuasive manner. The RPFC [Regional Provident Fund Commissioner]-I/ officer in charge of the region will be the competent authority to re-determine the pension entitlement and initiate recovery, if any," the circular said.

It added that the Supreme Court's direction in the *R.C. Gupta* case pertained to such employees who had contributed on higher wages under paragraph 26(6) of the EPF Scheme, 1952 [joint consent to be provided by employer-employee for permitting contribution on the employee's higher pay] and had further exercised their option under 11(3) of the EPS-1995 prior to their retirement.

U.S. economic growth beat forecasts in Q4 as consumers raised spending

GDP expanded at a 2.9% annualised rate last quarter, the Commerce Department said in its advance growth estimate; even as the pace slowed from the July-September quarter's 3.2% increase, it exceeded economists' forecast for a 2.6% expansion

Reuters
WASHINGTON

The U.S. economy maintained a strong pace of growth in the fourth quarter as consumers boosted spending on goods, but momentum appears to have slowed considerably towards the end of the year, with higher interest rates eroding demand.

Gross domestic product increased at a 2.9% annualised rate last quarter, the Commerce Department said in its advance GDP

Still growing

Growth in the world's largest economy slowed in the last quarter of 2022, U.S. official advance estimates show but the pace of expansion surprisingly exceeded expectations



- Consumer spending, which accounts for two-thirds of U.S. GDP, slowed in Nov.-Dec. as higher interest rates hurt demand
- Spending has been undergirded by labour market resilience and savings accumulated during the pandemic
- For all of 2022, GDP grew 2.1%, sharply slower than the previous year's 5.9% pace

growth estimate on Thursday. The economy grew 3.2% in the third quarter. Economists polled by Reu-

ters had forecast GDP rising at a 2.6% rate.

That could be the last quarter of solid growth be-

fore the lagged effects of the Federal Reserve's fastest monetary policy tightening since the 1980s kick in. Most economists expect a recession by the second half of 2023, though milder than in past downturns.

Retail sales have weakened sharply over the last two months and manufacturing looks to have joined the housing market in recession. While the labour market remains strong, business sentiment continues to sour, which could eventually hurt hiring.

For all of 2022, the eco-

nomy expanded 2.1%, sharply slower than 2021's 5.9%. The Fed last year raised its policy rate by 425 basis points from near zero to a 4.25%-4.50% range, the highest since late 2007.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, was the main driver, mostly reflecting a surge in goods spending at the start of the quarter. Spending has been underpinned by labour market resilience and savings accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hindenburg welcomes Adani Group's legal 'threat'

The Hindu Bureau

AHMEDABAD

A day after Hindenburg Research raised concern about the Adani Group's "substantial debts", the Gujarat-based conglomerate on Thursday said it was evaluating relevant provisions under the U.S. and Indian laws for remedial and punitive action against the U.S.-based short-seller.

In response, Hindenburg said it welcomed the "threat" of legal action. "We fully stand by our report and believe any legal action taken against us would be meritless."

The Adani Group's legal head, Jatin Jalundhwala, in a statement, had termed the report an "intentional and reckless attempt by a foreign entity" to mislead the investor community and the general public.

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Hindenburg welcomes Adani's legal 'threat'

He stressed that it was meant to “sabotage the FPO (Follow-on Public Offering) from Adani Enterprises”. “The maliciously mischievous, unresearched report published by Hindenburg Research on 24 Jan 2023 has adversely affected the Adani Group, our shareholders and investors. The volatility in Indian stock markets created by the report is of great concern and has led to unwanted anguish for Indian citizens.”

The four-paragraph statement issued by the Gautam Adani-led conglomerate, however, remained silent on the allegations and questions raised by the U.S. short-seller, calling its report outrightly “baseless.”

On its part, Hindenburg said the Adani Group was resorting to bluster and threats instead of responding to the pointed questions it raised in the report.

'States fall short of target to improve forest cover, quality'

Centre approved plan for increasing tree cover by 53,377 ha, but only 26,287 ha has been achieved; forest quality improved in only 1,02,096 ha against the target of 1,66,656 ha, says RTI response

Jacob P. Koshy
NEW DELHI

India is lagging behind in the targets to increase the number and quality of tree- and forest-cover plantations set in the Green India Mission, according to data accessed through the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The National Mission for a Green India (GIM) is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. It aims at protecting, restoring and enhancing India's forest cover and responding to climate change.

The target under the Mission is 10 million hectares (mha) of forest and non-forest lands for increasing the forest and tree cover and improving the quality of existing forests. Improving tree cover is critical to sequester carbon and bolster India's carbon stocks as part of its international commitments to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Targets not met

From 2015-16 to 2021-22, the Centre, based on submissions from 17 States, had approved a target of increasing tree and forest cover by 53,377 hectares

Status check

The table shows State-wise physical progress under the Green India Mission. It lists the targeted increase in tree cover, achievement and shortfall for select States



T. APPALA NAIDU

Green cover: A view of a forest in Andhra Pradesh.

State	Target	Achievement	Shortfall
Uttarakhand	6,446	1,505	-4,941
Madhya Pradesh	5,858	1,882	-3,976
Kerala	1,686	616	-1,070
West Bengal	558	175	-383
Maharashtra	1,316	933	-383
Andhra Pradesh	186	75	-111

All figures are in hectares

and improving the quality of degraded forest by 1,66,656 ha.

In response to queries by a Kerala-based RTI campaigner, Govindan Nam-poothiry, the Environment Ministry this month responded with figures from 17 States noting tree/forest cover had increased by 26,287 hectares and forest quality improved in only 1,02,096 hectares as of December 31, 2022.

For executing these projects, the Union govern-

ment had allocated ₹681 crore but only ₹525 crore had been utilised, the Ministry revealed.

The States with a significant shortfall in tree cover include Andhra Pradesh, with a target of 186 ha but having only achieved 75 ha; Uttarakhand with a target of 6,446 ha but only 1,505 ha achieved; Madhya Pradesh targeting 5,858 ha but delivering 1,882 ha; and Kerala committing 1,686 ha but furnishing 616 ha.

Punjab, however, committed to 629 ha but delivered 1,082 ha.

Forest cover increase

As per the India State of Forest Report-2021, forest and tree cover in the country increased by 2,261 square kilometres since the last assessment in 2019. India's total forest and tree cover was 80.9 million hectares, which accounted for 24.62% of the geographical area of the country.

The report said 17 States and Union Territories had more than 33% of their area under forest cover. Madhya Pradesh had the largest forest cover, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra. The top five States in terms of forest cover as a percentage of their total geographical area were Mizoram (84.53%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.33%), Meghalaya (76%), Manipur (74.34%) and Nagaland (73.9%).

However, critics said the increase in green cover was almost entirely via commercial plantations, that, in an ecological sense, could not compensate for natural forests and their biodiversity and, being monocultures, were susceptible to pest attacks.

'India's first mission to study the sun to begin by June-July'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch the Aditya-L1 mission by June or July this year. Aditya-L1 is the first Indian space mission to observe the Sun and the solar corona.

ISRO chairman S. Somnath, speaking at the handover ceremony of the Visible Line Emission Coronagraph (VELC) payload on Thursday, said that the Aditya-L1 mission will be launched by June or July as the launch window for the mission would close by August.

The Aditya-L1 mission will be launched by ISRO to the L1 orbit (which is the



VELC, the primary payload on board Aditya-L1, was handed over to ISRO by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics on Thursday.

first Lagrangian point of the Sun-Earth system). L1 orbit allows Aditya-L1 to look at the Sun continuously.

Aditya-L1 has seven payloads in total, of which the

primary payload is the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC), designed and fabricated by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru.

The other six payloads

are being developed by the ISRO and other scientific institutions.

15 years of work

"Understanding the effect of the Sun on the Earth and its surroundings has become very important now and Aditya-L1 aims to shed light on this topic. It has taken 15 years for VELC from concept to completion, and this period was needed for a complex system like this. The VELC has been the finest collaboration between the Indian Institute of Astrophysics and the ISRO," said Mr. Somnath.

Following the handover of the VELC payload, the ISRO will now conduct further testing of VELC and

its eventual integration with the Aditya-L1 spacecraft.

"This is the main instrument (VELC payload) on board the Aditya-L1 satellite. There are also other instruments which are developed by the ISRO and other institutions. Currently, we are getting ready with the satellite. The payload will be taken to the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru, where we will integrate it with the Aditya-L1 satellite which will undergo a lot of testing, evaluation, and finally, it will be launched using the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle)," Mr. Somnath added.

Raghavendra Prasad, Principal Investigator,

VELC payload, said that the payload will be able to observe the corona continuously and the data provided by it is expected to answer many outstanding problems in the field of solar astronomy.

Unique ability

"No other solar coronagraph in space has the ability to image the solar corona as close to the solar disk as Visible Line Emission Coronagraph can. It can image it as close as 1.05 times the solar radius. It can also do imaging, spectroscopy, and polarimetry at the same time, and can take observations at a very high resolution, or level of detail, and many times a second," Prof. Prasad said.

Japan to flush Fukushima wastewater

Why is the Japanese government flushing 1.25 million tonnes of wastewater into the Pacific Ocean? How will this discharge affect the ocean? Has the TEPCO treated the water? What impact will this decision have globally?

EXPLAINER

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

Japan is expected to start flushing 1.25 million tonnes of wastewater from the embattled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean this year, as part of a \$76-billion project to decommission the facility. The project received the Japanese cabinet's approval in 2021 and could take three decades to complete. The idea, which experts and officials in Japan had floated in 2016, has been controversial for its suspected impact on the water, marine life, fishers' livelihoods and other countries in the area. It has also received flak within Japan for sidelining other options and stoked concerns about the government's sincerity.

Why is the water a problem?

In March 2011, after an earthquake of 9 magnitude, a tsunami flooded the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Okuma and damaged its diesel generators. The loss of power suspended coolant supply to reactors at the facility; the tsunami also disabled backup systems.

Soon, radioactive materials leaked from reactor pressure vessels, exploded in the facility's upper levels, and exposed themselves to the ambient air, water, soil, and local population. Winds also carried radioactive material thrown up into the air into the Pacific. Since then, the power plant and its surrounding land have been uninhabitable.

The water that the Japanese government wants to flush from the plant was used to cool the reactors, rainwater and groundwater. It contains radioactive isotopes from the damaged reactors and is thus itself radioactive.

Japan has said that it will release this water into the Pacific Ocean over the next 30 years.

Can the water be treated?

The Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which operates the Fukushima facility, has said that it has treated the water to remove most radioactive isotopes. Former Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said in 2021 that the water will be "far above safety standards". His government required the water to have 1/40th as much tritium as the permitted limit.

Officials have defended the plan saying the TEPCO is running out of room for the water-tanks and that nuclear plants around the world regularly release water containing trace amounts of radionuclides into large water bodies.

"There is no known threshold below which radiation can be considered safe," M.V. Ramana, the Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told *The Hindu*.

"[A]ny discharge of radioactive materials will increase the risk of cancer and other known health impacts to those who are exposed," Dr. Ramana added.

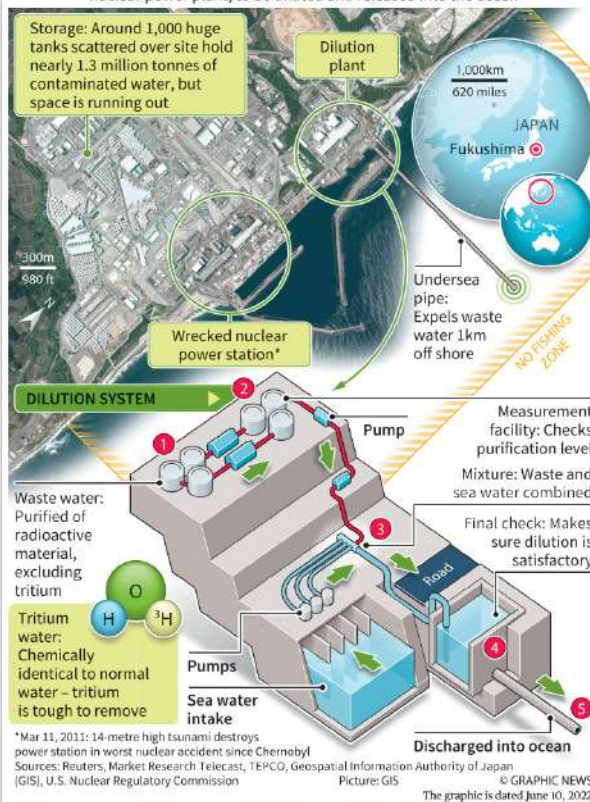
What if the water is released in a trickle? "Smaller discharges will obviously help with the extent of the risk – if you measure, say, expected numbers of cancers that might result – but it wouldn't necessarily affect the impact on the reputations of fisherfolk in the region," Dr. Ramana said.

Experts expect the affected water to poison the fish; "anyone who knows this is happening will, or should, avoid eating fish caught in the vicinity of the discharge point".

South Korea banned seafood imported

Fukushima plant to dump waste at sea

Japanese authorities have granted permission for irradiated waste water containing trace amounts of tritium from the destroyed Fukushima nuclear power plant, to be diluted and released into the ocean



An aerial view of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Okuma.

from around Fukushima, to Japan's displeasure, from 2013.

Another problem is that the TEPCO has not removed tritium from the water because this is very difficult to do so. Tritium is "easily absorbed by the bodies of living creatures" and "rapidly distributed... via blood," Dr. Ramana said.

In 2018, *Kyodo News* reported that there were other radionuclides in the water that the TEPCO's treatment procedure could not entirely remove. These include isotopes of ruthenium and plutonium, which could persist for longer in the bodies of marine creatures and on the seafloor.

What are Japan's other options?

Some have asked why the Japanese government can't store the water for longer and then discharge it. This is because tritium's half-life – the time it takes for its

quantity to be halved through radioactive decay – is 12-13 years. The quantity of any other radioactive isotopes present in the water will also decrease in this time (each isotope has its own half-life). So, at the time of discharge, the water could be less radioactive.

The Japanese government has also declared land around the Fukushima facility to be uninhabitable. The thousand or so tanks to hold the water, each with a capacity of 1,000 metre cube, can be situated here.

But in 2020, authorities determined that flushing the water would be the way forward, over storage and vapourisation. Many experts agreed.

After visiting Fukushima in February 2020, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) officials also said the discharge would be "technically feasible and

The Fukushima Daiichi accident in March 2011 triggered an avalanche of public opposition to nuclear power worldwide, especially in Europe, diminishing its contribution to the clean-energy power generation mix

would allow the timeline objective to be achieved".

Will the Pacific Ocean be affected?

There are concerns about the water body as well as the region. China, South Korea and Taiwan have expressed concerns over Japan's plan. A representative of the Pacific Islands Forum, the bloc of Oceania countries including Australia, has called it "simply inconceivable" based on their experience with "nuclear contamination".

Researchers have also called for more studies to understand the precise composition of each tank before it is flushed and for more details about the TEPCO's water-treatment process.

The National Institute of Marine Laboratories, a non-profit group of more than a hundred research centres across the United States, published a position paper in December 2022 excoriating the plan: "The supporting data provided by the TEPCO and the Japanese Government are insufficient and, in some cases, incorrect, with flaws in sampling protocols, statistical design, sample analyses, and assumptions".

On the flip side, the Joe Biden government in the U.S. voiced support for Japan's plan to discharge the water.

How will the rest of the world be affected?

All nuclear accidents have global repercussions.

The Fukushima Daiichi accident triggered an avalanche of public opposition to nuclear power worldwide, especially in Europe, diminishing its contribution to the clean-energy power generation mix.

In Japan itself, the accident reduced nuclear power's contribution to electricity generation from 30% before 2011 to 5% in 2022. But the incumbent Fumio Kishida government has articulated plans to upgrade and restart older reactors and build new ones in response to the increasing cost of fossil fuels.

However, both India and China doubled down on their domestic commitments. The then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called nuclear energy an "essential option" for India's climate action and energy security. His successor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has clarified that India plans to expand its nuclear power programme with Russia's help.

Then again, the accident also revived concerns about some existing nuclear power plants – especially the Department of Atomic Energy's Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) facility in Tamil Nadu.

In October 2012, police arrested nearly 2,000 protesters after they attempted to march to the Secretariat in Chennai against the KKNPP, in response to the Fukushima accident and what they said were parallels between the two sites.

Ultimately, Japan is also concerned about its reputation. An official committee including scientists, consumers' representatives and Ministry officials wrote in a 2020 report: "It is important to dispose of the... treated water as part of the decommissioning work... taking into account the reputational impact when the disposal method for the... treated water is examined."

THE GIST

Japan is expected to start flushing 1.25 million tonnes of wastewater from the embattled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean this year, as part of a \$76-billion project to decommission the facility. The project received the Japanese cabinet's approval in 2021 and could take three decades to complete.

The water that the Japanese government wants to flush from the plant was used to cool the reactors, rainwater and groundwater. It contains radioactive isotopes from the damaged reactors and is thus itself radioactive. It will release this water into the Pacific Ocean over the next 30 years.

China, South Korea and Taiwan have expressed concerns over Japan's plan. A representative of the Pacific Islands Forum, the bloc of Oceania countries including Australia, has called it "simply inconceivable" based on their experience with "nuclear contamination".



Kuno cheetah detected with hepatorenal infection

One of the eight cheetahs that were flown into Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh from Namibia in southern Africa in September last year has been detected with a hepatorenal (associated with the kidneys and liver) infection, an official said on Thursday. He identified the female cheetah as Shasha. “The cheetah’s condition has improved,” M.P. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests J.S. Chauhan said. PTI

A 'Holocaust education' for India to create a just present

Six million Jews were murdered in cold blood – a consequence of the worst form of government-sponsored antisemitism in Nazi-Germany. Today, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27), we remember those who became the victims of the unprecedented and systematic killings. Remembering the dead is our responsibility, and fighting against antisemitism and hatred is our resolve.

The need to counter disruptive behaviours

Violence and hatred are learned behaviours that disrupt the core humanitarian principles of peaceful co-existence and acceptance of differences. The Holocaust stands as a jarring example of the deadly consequences of hate crimes and antisemitism that made their way from the fringes to the mainstream. With antisemitism as the case in point, this is particularly dangerous when used for power-related purposes, or to appease anxieties during times of crisis and uncertainty. In this way, ideologies of hate can permeate the social fabric as human frailty gets exploited.

Unfortunately, the world is still struggling with inequality, intolerance, and injustice in many places. As evidence suggests, a host of grave economic, cultural, religious and ethnic issues continue to provoke division, hate crimes, and violence in many parts of the globe. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of antisemitic incidents against Jews all around the world. Most of these were incidents of harassment but hate speech on social media,

Naor Gilon

is the Ambassador of Israel to India, Sri Lanka and Bhutan

Philipp Ackermann

is the Ambassador of Germany to India and Bhutan

Hezekiel Dlamini

is the Officer-in-Charge, UNESCO New Delhi

By teaching India's youth to view the Holocaust catastrophe as a watershed moment in history, they can be equipped with core values such as empathy and tolerance to tackle the future

assaults and antisemitic vandalism have also spiked in recent years. We must counter these phenomena, to avoid wider societal tension and conflict.

A path of remembrance

Today, as we mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, we recall the systematic murder of six million Jews. The Shoah or the Holocaust, in which Jews were systematically targeted solely for being born Jewish, stands out as a defining moment in history. Education about the Holocaust helps us understand the processes and factors that lead to the eradication of human rights and democratic values, and identify circumstances that can lead to the increase in hate speech, violence, and even mass atrocities. It is our duty to remember the past in order to understand that the relevance and impact of the Holocaust transcend time and history.

This path of remembrance is a moral imperative for many countries in Europe, and around the world. One of the key messages of Holocaust remembrance is vigilance against dehumanisation and discrimination. Instead of erasing the past, we must educate people to ensure that there is no residue of this deep-rooted history of discrimination and build up resilience to ideologies of hate and a cognisance of the effects.

Drawing from the concept of 'reparative futures', we must find ways to talk about the past by imbuing the responsibility to 'never forget' and developing competencies to fulfil the

promise of 'never again' among the youth.

Important UNESCO initiatives such as the International Program on Holocaust and Genocide Education (IPHGE) are a step in the direction of fostering reparative justice. By teaching the youth to view this catastrophe as a watershed moment in history with the possibility of its recurrence in other shapes and forms elsewhere, we can equip them with fundamental skills, values, and dispositions to address future challenges, such as critical thinking, empathy, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

For teachers and youth

Coming to terms with this past is equally important for countries that are seemingly unaffected by Nazism and antisemitism. It is unsurprising that for the academic community in India, the Holocaust remains a geographically and emotionally distant historical event.

At a time when antisemitism and other forms of discrimination, Holocaust denial, and distortion are on the rise globally, we must provide the youth with opportunities to engage with this history and interrogate the injustices of the past to create a just present. Likewise, teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to develop and deliver lessons about the history of the Holocaust that resonate with their students in today's world.

After all, forewarned is forearmed. Education suffused with learnings from the past can demonstrate, as Jean-Paul Sartre very rightly said, that individual choices or the lack thereof can indeed make a difference.

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-drawing 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.