

VEDHIK
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ANALYSIS
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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.

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Sri Lanka to ink pact with India to develop oil tanks

Lease agreements are expected to be signed soon: Minister

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Friday announced its decision to sign three lease agreements on developing the strategic Trincomalee oil tank farm with India, after the Rajapaksa administration negotiated a “suitable” deal for 16 months.

The announcement, signalling forward movement in a long-dragging project, is significant for New Delhi following a year of diplomatic strain beginning early 2021, when Sri Lanka unilaterally cancelled a tripartite agreement to develop a Colombo port terminal with India and Japan.

The Trincomalee project pertains to some 100 oil storage tanks – built by the British during Second World War – in Sri Lanka’s eastern Trincomalee district. It has dominated bilateral talks for decades, from the time of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, but has seen little progress.

Lease extended

As per the new deal, 14 tanks currently operated by the Indian Oil Corporation subsidiary, Lanka IOC, will be leased to the company for 50 years, Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila told a media conference on Friday. Further, 24 tanks will be given to the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC), while 61 will be developed in a joint venture, with the CPC holding 51% stakes, and Lanka IOC, the remaining 49%, the Minister said. The lease agreements are expected to be signed in the coming weeks, following Cabinet clearance.

After it was set up in



Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

2003, Lanka IOC obtained a 35-year lease to develop the 850-acre tank farm in Trincomalee for an annual payment of \$1,00,000. The company currently operates only 14 tanks – apart from two other recently built tanks in place of a damaged old one – while the other tanks in the massive storage facility remain unused, as the two countries have been unable to agree on the terms of its joint development. Successive governments in Colombo have acknowledged the need to bring in big foreign investment – refurbishment of each tank is estimated to cost over \$1 million – to make the near century-old, neglected facility commercially viable, but none was able to finalise a deal with India, in the face of opposition from nationalist sections to any Indian involvement in a strategic national asset.

‘Regaining control’

Perhaps anticipating similar resistance from the government’s predominantly nationalist support base, the Minister pitched the deal as a “historic victory” at Friday’s press conference. Sri Lanka, he said, is “regaining

control” of the Trincomalee oil tank farm, while also announcing that Lanka IOC – representing Indian interests in the project – would operate 14 tanks for half a century, in addition to holding 49% stakes in the new venture to develop 61 other oil tanks at the facility.

The Minister’s statement comes at a time when the government’s popularity is plummeting over its response to the current economic crisis stifling the country. On the one hand, a severe dollar crunch has prompted speculation of a sovereign default. On the other, there is growing public resentment over soaring living costs and fears of an imminent food shortage, following the government’s overnight shift to organic farming, disregarding advice from farmers and scientists. Sri Lanka has sought urgent assistance from multiple sources, including India.

Early December, Sri Lanka’s Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa visited New Delhi and sought emergency Lines of Credit to help Colombo import food, medicines and fuel, and a currency swap to boost the country’s foreign reserves. Negotiating a “four-pillar” strategy during his visit, the two countries agreed to strengthen collaboration in the energy sector, specifically mentioning the “early modernisation” of the Trincomalee oil tank farm as part of it.

Mr. Basil is expected to visit India again to attend the ‘Vibrant Gujarat’ summit from January 10 to 12. He will likely meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the event, officials earlier told *The Hindu*.

Needless provocation

India, China must adhere to past agreements to keep the peace along the border

The Chinese government's announcement on December 30 that it had come up with its own names for 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh could not have come at a more precarious moment for an already strained relationship. The move is ostensibly aimed at "standardising" how places in the Indian State are depicted in official Chinese maps, which show all of Arunachal as "south Tibet". India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement in response to the move that "assigning invented names" will not "alter" any facts on the ground and Arunachal's status as an integral part of India. As the MEA noted, this is not the first time that Beijing has done so. In 2017, Chinese authorities issued "official" names for six places in Arunachal. The first instance followed a visit by the Dalai Lama to the State, which Beijing had protested. The list on this occasion is longer, and not only includes eight towns but also four mountains, two rivers and a mountain pass. The list covers 11 out of Arunachal's 25 districts, extending from Tawang in the west to Dibang Valley in the north and Anjaw in the east. The spread of the locations suggests the places were chosen to reiterate Chinese claims to the whole State.

If the latest move is largely symbolic and will not, as the MEA observed, change facts on the ground, it needs to be seen against the backdrop of broader changes in China's approach to the boundary dispute. The naming announcement was made ahead of a new border law coming into force on January 1, 2022. The law, which was proposed in March 2021 and calls for various Chinese government bodies to take steps to "safeguard" Chinese territory, was put forward a year into the crisis along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). New Delhi, which has expressed concern about the law, has seen it as an attempt to formalise the transgressions made by the Chinese military since the summer of 2020 and put a stamp on China's unilateral measures to redraw the LAC. The Chinese Foreign Ministry defended the latest move saying the matter was "within China's sovereignty". Yet, Beijing had a very different view on India's own internal reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, which elicited not only sharp statements from China but also led to Beijing raising the matter at the United Nations Security Council. The announcement this week came as India and China remain engaged at both diplomatic and military levels to complete the stalled disengagement process along the LAC. Restoring relations, as well as the *status quo* along the borders, will require mutual sensitivity and an adherence to past agreements that helped keep the peace, rather than needless provocations that expand an already long list of differences.

Prepare for the worst

Policymakers must take the Omicron threat seriously and increase testing

The Omicron variant is galloping across the U.S. and many countries in Europe at a pace never seen since the pandemic began. If the United States set a new record of fresh cases on a single day on December 27 with over 0.54 million cases, the seven-day average is at 2,40,400 cases a day, a 60% increase compared to the previous week. At least seven countries in Europe – Britain, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain – are witnessing a similar trend this week. The World Health Organization said the number of COVID-19 cases recorded globally shot up by 11% last week (December 20-26) compared with the previous week, while the number of new deaths stayed nearly the same as the previous week. But globally, the weekly new cases are close to but yet to surpass the peak witnessed in the last week of April 2021. The sharp increase in daily cases is not surprising given the highly infectious nature of the Omicron variant. It is estimated that it spreads nearly three times faster than the highly transmissible Delta variant. While Omicron has emerged as the dominant variant in a few countries, it has not completely displaced the Delta variant. The twin threats from the two variants are responsible for fresh cases reaching record numbers in many countries. The Omicron variant has a superior ability to cause breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people and also cause reinfections in people who have been previously infected. Early data from South Africa and the United Kingdom suggest a reduced risk of severe disease requiring hospitalisation particularly among those fully vaccinated and previously infected. But it is still too early to draw conclusions as there is an inevitable lag between infection and hospitalisation, and the protection offered by vaccines against Omicron in older and other vulnerable populations is still not clear.

India has been witnessing a surge in cases in many States. As in the case of the first two waves, the increase in cases is currently seen in large cities. The total number of Omicron variant cases reported in India is inching closer to 1,300 and has already been reported from 22 States. There is no reason to believe that the variant will behave differently in India. The highly transmissible nature of the variant and its ability to cause breakthrough infections and reinfections, and the fact that people with no travel history or contact with international passengers have tested positive for the virus should alert policymakers to take the Omicron threat seriously. The first step in addressing this concern is to increase the daily testing numbers and adopt a dual RT-PCR testing strategy – testing all positive samples with a kit containing the S-gene target – before sequencing for Omicron detection. India should not repeat the same mistakes committed during the second wave by allowing the virus to spread widely.

An unfortunate ideological shift in the judiciary

A recent speech by a judge of the Supreme Court has serious legal and political connotations



KALLEESWARAM RAJ

A speech by Justice S. Abdul Nazeer of the Supreme Court of India (*The Hindu*, December 29, 2021; <https://bit.ly/3qJBgP8>) has evoked vibrant discourse in legal and political circles. The judge spoke in Hyderabad on the topic, “Decolonisation of the Indian legal system”, at the National Council meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Advhaktta Parishad, which is a lawyers’ organisation with express loyalty to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He called for the “Indianisation” of our legal system. He lamented about the continued neglect of the teachings of the great legal giants of ancient India such as Manu, Kautilya, Yajnavalkya, etc.

A ‘link’

This apathy has been against “our national interest”, said the judge, adding that the kingdoms of ancient India had a fine justice dispensation system. The judge underlined Kautilya’s theory about the duties of the king which, according to him, is based on the great tradition established in the age of Ramayana. He implied that many ideas of modern methods of adjudication were prevalent in indigenous jurisprudence.

While talking about judicial corruption too, Justice Nazeer had a point. After quoting Brihaspati, he said that “a corrupt judge, a false witness and the murderer of a Brahmin” were considered as criminals on a par with one another. Evidently, the Brahmins remained

on a different pedestal even while assessing the culpability of the act. On selection of judges, he recalled the Vedic priest, Katyayana, who insisted that the king had to appoint only a Brahmin to act as a judge. It is equally curious that Justice Nazeer has found glory in the Arthashastra which contemplated punishment for an official for personally talking with a woman employee, during work hours (<https://bit.ly/32Ln5k6>).

The speech by Justice Nazeer has certain distinct characteristics. It is nostalgic in tone and abstract in its concept. It lacked coherence in terms of specific legal situations. The speech contained generalisations without situational references. It did not indicate a concrete and comprehensive legal system that is desirable or adaptable for the nation, after Independence. The basic issues with the speech, however, are two-fold. First, it ignores the Constituent Assembly debates on designing the nation’s legal landscape. Second, when religious revivalism is used as a political tool by the ruling dispensation, the legal revivalism expounded by the judge in generic terms can only subserve the regime’s political and populist agenda.

The CA debates

The Constituent Assembly debates started on December 9, 1946 and were completed on November 26, 1949 on which day the Assembly approved the draft. Though the Government of India Act, 1935 was a major source for the constitutional script, the debates in the Assembly and their outcome made it a unique socio-political document.

The plea for Indianness was very prominent in the discourse. K. Hanumanthaiah, a member from Mysore, on November 17, 1949, la-

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mented: “We wanted the music of Veena or Sitar, but here we have the music of an English band”. Pandit Govind Malaviya’s suggestion was to start the Preamble to the Constitution by the words, “by the grace of Parameshwar, The Supreme Being, Lord of the Universe...” Mahavir Tyagi, on December 27, 1948 emphasised regaining “spiritual freedom” and not just political freedom. Lokanath Misra was anxious about “the complete annihilation of Hindu culture” (December 6, 1948). On the other hand, H.V. Kamath warned that the history of Europe during the middle age was “bloody” and it showed “the pernicious effects that flowed from the union of Church and State” (December 6, 1948). He said that “if a State identifies itself with any particular religion, there will be rift within the State”. This was in sharp contrast with what Lokanath Misra said on December 3, 1948, “If you accept religion, you must accept Hinduism as it is practised by an overwhelming majority of the people of India.”

These remarks and many others only epitomise the large volume of kaleidoscopic viewpoints that the Assembly chose to deliberate on. The plea for “Indianisation” was confronted not only with the values of western liberal democracy but also with the finer parts of the Indian tradition, which were organically incorporated into the Constitution.

The second facet of Justice Na-

zeer’s speech has contemporary relevance and to understand it, we need to contextualise the opinion. The speech tries to create a narrative of a good old past without any convincing materials in support of it. This is totally in line with the right wing’s political rhetoric which relies on the unsubstantiated glories of the past. Justice Nazeer’s remarks have come at a time when the regime is trying to subvert the Constitution and the idea of the Rule of Law in multiple ways. At a time when even legislations are being used as a means to shatter constitutional tenets such as secularism and federalism, the remarks of the Supreme Court judge against the alleged colonial nature of the legal system, which includes the nation’s Constitution, are deeply disturbing.

Metrics and a descent

The country’s democracy has stooped to a new low in recent times. It went down in the freedom index as well as hunger index. On December 27, 2021, *The New York Times* reported that “in India, laws against religious conversions have been accompanied by mob violence”. Hate speech has become a prominent mode of articulation in the country which is abetted by selective invocation or non-invocation of the penal laws. When the Constitution becomes the most effective tool against electoral autocracy, the speech by Justice Nazeer has had only an adverse impact on the movements thriving to restore the values of the Constitution. It is significant that even while attacking the colonialised legal system, Justice Nazeer did not find fault with the sedition law or such other draconian penal provisions, which are all colonial remnants.

Legal scholars David Landau and Rosalind Dixon, in a compre-

hensive study, explained that “across a range of countries, would-be authoritarians have fashioned courts into weapons for, rather than against, abusive constitutional change” (*Abusive Judicial Review: Courts Against Democracy*, 2019). They have predominantly dealt with the process of adjudication which, in one way or another, aids or abets “a broader project of democratic erosion”.

Against separation of powers

But the ideological change that occurs in the institution of judiciary and the persons running it is another fundamental factor that determines the quality of judiciary and polity. The quintessential relationship between the judicial ideology and the political ideology was explained by J.A.G. Griffith in his classic work, *The Politics of the Judiciary* (1977). Remarks by the judges, on and off the Bench, need to be analysed by positioning them against political situations. Some comments by the judges could be an expression of sheer personal admiration for the Prime Minister as discernible from Justice Arun Mishra’s speech in February 2020, when he described the Prime Minister as a “versatile genius who thinks globally and acts locally”. In February 2021, Justice M.R. Shah said that Prime Minister Modi is a “popular, loved, vibrant and visionary leader”. Both these comments do not augur well for our democracy since these are not in tune with the constitutional scheme of the separation of powers and expected judicial behaviour. Justice Nazeer’s views indicate an unfortunate ideological shift in our judiciary.

Kalleeswaram Raj is a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal

CCI orders probe against Apple for 'unfair practices'

'No access to potential app distributors'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Friday ordered a detailed probe against technology major Apple for alleged unfair business practices with respect to its App Store.

In a 20-page order, the CCI said that Apple's App Store is the only channel for app developers to distribute their apps to iOS consumers which is pre-installed on every iPhone and iPad.

"Further, third-party app stores are not allowed to be listed on Apple's App Store as the developer guidelines as well as agreement prohibits app developers from offering such services... these restrictions imposed by Apple forecloses the market for app stores for iOS for potential app distributors," CCI



said in the order.

According to the CCI, this prima facie results in denial of market access for the potential app distributors/app store developers in violation of competition norms.

Further, such practices prima facie result in limiting/restricting the technical or scientific development of the services related to app store for iOS. Citing these factors, the regulator has ordered a detailed probe by its Director General.

Vaccines, boosters and some hard talk

There are questions that need to be raised and allegations that must be countered about the vaccine strategy



KARAN THAPAR

I wish it were otherwise but we are starting the new year with vaccines and boosters at the top of everyone's mind. So I hope you will forgive me if I write about these subjects. With boosters starting in a week's time, there are questions that need to be raised and allegations that must be countered. That is what I want to do today.

Issue of the certificate

First, a blunder that has mercifully been corrected but the fact it was made raises the question: how carefully did the Government think through its announcement about boosters? After insisting on calling them precautionary, why did it initially limit them to people

over 60 who can provide comorbidity certificates from a doctor? It was inexplicable and contradictory but also illogical. Let us leave aside the fact, this being India, there would have been no dearth of false certificates. If the Government had no way of checking, it would have had to accept every one. No doubt, this is why, three days later, it dropped the requirement.

Now, all you need is a doctor's advice. How will the Government know you have taken it? And how will it fathom what the advice was? This is, of course, a face-saver to wriggle out of the earlier stupidity, but it still leaves the Government with yolk all over its face.

The issue was simple before the Government decided to complicate it. Comorbidities were not a condition for those over 60 years when jabs were first given. Why were they suddenly introduced at this stage? I doubt we will ever be told but it is a question that calls for an answer.

The elderly are a priority in ev-

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



ery country – that was also true of India when the first jabs were given – because age makes them vulnerable. The older you get the more prone you are to illness. So, if the doses are precautionary, the precaution that is needed is to prevent the elderly falling sick.

Covaxin's clearance

This seems to have finally dawned on it but how is it that the Government did not realise it earlier? Someone somewhere did not think this through. Even though the error has been corrected it does not leave me with confidence in the Government's strategy.

The other issue I want to raise is

different. It is an unwarranted allegation made by the Chief Justice of India. He has claimed: "Several multi-national companies, like Pfizer, on one hand, and scores of people from within India, on the other hand, made unfair attempts to defame Covaxin. They even complained to WHO and tried to stall recognition to this made-in-India vaccine."

Pfizer can defend itself and I hope the World Health Organization (WHO) will issue a statement to clear the air, but I want to step in on the side of a lady widely considered India's top vaccine scientist. It was to me in an interview last January that she expressed her reservations about Covaxin's clearance in "clinical-trial mode".

Professor Gagandeep Kang said without efficacy data, no vaccine should be cleared and Covaxin's clearance, only on the basis of its Phase 1 and 2 results, was neither correct nor defensible. She also said she would not take Covaxin as a vaccine until its required efficacy data is made public. Actually, she

had a lot more to say but you can find that out for yourself by watching the interview. It was done on January 5, 2021 (<https://bit.ly/32wbRQU>).

The Chief Justice of India did not name her but Prof. Kang is by far the most prominent scientist to have raised concerns about Covaxin's premature clearance. She had the courage to do so and what she said was scientifically indisputable. She was not "defaming Covaxin" but she was certainly – and rightly – drawing attention to its improper authorisation.

However, the Chief Justice of India went perilously further. "All Telugu people must come forward to tell the world about the greatness of our Telugu company that made this vaccine." It was embarrassing to hear a Chief Justice of India say that but I would like to believe he knows he has erred and repents. I'll say no more.

Oh well, if I have not upset or depressed you, Happy New Year.

Karan Thapar is a television anchor

Core sector output rose 3.1% in November

Crude and cement buck trend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Output of eight core sectors rose by 3.1% in November as against a contraction of 1.1% in the same month last year, according to government data released on Friday.

Barring crude oil and cement, all other sectors recorded positive growth in November.

In October, these core sectors' output had grown by 8.4%.

According to the data, coal production expanded by 8.2%, natural gas by 23.7%, refinery products 4.3%, fertilizers by 2.5%, steel by 0.8%, and electricity climbed 1.5% in November.

The growth rate of the



Coal production rose by 8.2% during the month of November.

eight infrastructure sectors – coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement and electricity – stood at 13.7% during April-November this fiscal as against a contraction of 11.1% during the same period last fiscal.

Current account slips to deficit in Q2

'Huge widening lies ahead, with the large merchandise trade deficits seen in October-November'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

India's Balance of Payments (BoP) position moved to a deficit of \$9.6 billion in the quarter ended September (Q2), as widening trade deficit weighed. At 1.3% of GDP, this compares with a surplus of \$6.6 billion in the immediately previous quarter and with a surplus of \$15.3 billion a year earlier.

"The deficit in the current account in Q2 was mainly due to widening of trade deficit to \$44.4 billion from \$30.7 billion in the preceding quarter and an increase in net outgo of investment income," the RBI said on Friday.

"The current account deficit in Q2 FY22 was somewhat smaller than our expectation. Nevertheless, a huge widening lies ahead, with the large merchandise trade



Yawning gap: The current account deficit may exceed \$25 bn in Q3, rivalling the full-year CAD in FY20, says Nayar. •PTI

deficits seen in October-November 2021," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at rating agency ICRA.

'Gap to widen in Q3'

"We expect the current account deficit to print in excess of \$25 billion in Q3 FY22, rivalling the size of the

full year CAD in FY20. For the year as a whole, we foresee the CAD at \$40-45 billion, or around 1.4% of GDP," she added.

The RBI said net services receipts decreased marginally over the previous quarter but increased on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, on the

back of robust performance in the exports of computer and business services.

Private transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, rose 3.7% from a year earlier to \$21.1 billion.

Net outgo from the primary income account, mainly reflecting net overseas investment income payments, increased sequentially as well as on a y-o-y basis.

Net foreign direct investment recorded an inflow of \$9.5 billion, declining from \$24.4 billion seen in the same period of the last year.

Net foreign portfolio investment fell to \$3.9 billion compared with \$7 billion.

Net external commercial borrowings recorded inflow of \$4.1 billion compared with an outflow of \$3.7 billion.

Non-resident deposits saw net outflow of \$0.8 billion as

against \$1.9 billion. "There was an accretion of \$31.2 billion (on a BoP basis) in Q2 which also included SDR allocation of \$17.86 billion by the International Monetary Fund on August 23, 2021."

For the half year ended September 2021, India recorded a current account deficit of 0.2% of GDP as against a surplus of 3% in the year-earlier period, on the back of a sharp increase in the trade deficit.

Net invisible receipts were higher in the first half this year, on account of higher net receipts of services and private transfers. Net FDI inflows fell to \$21.2 billion from \$23.9 billion, RBI data showed.

"Portfolio investment recorded a net inflow of \$4.3 billion in H1:2021-22 as compared with \$7.6 billion a year ago," the central bank said.

Foreign-owned assets in India rose by \$37 bn in Q2: RBI data

'Indian residents' overseas financial assets rose \$31.9 billion'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Foreign-owned assets in India increased by \$37.3 billion during the July-September quarter (Q2), according to RBI data.

Indian residents' overseas financial assets rose \$31.9 billion, almost three-fourths of which came from build-up in reserve assets. This partly reflects the allocation of special drawing rights (SDRs) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in August 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

The regulator on Friday released data relating to India's International Investment Position (IIP) at end-September 2021.

The International Monetary Fund describes a na-



tion's IIP as showing the value of financial assets of residents of an economy that are claims on non-residents, or are gold bullion held as reserve assets; and of the liabilities of residents to non-residents.

Reserve assets accounted for 68.5% of India's international financial assets in September 2021. The share of

Reserve assets accounted for 68.5% of India's international financial assets in September

debt liabilities in total liabilities increased marginally to 47.8%. The ratio of international assets to international liabilities improved to 73.6% from 70.4% a year earlier. Net claims of non-residents on India increased by \$5.4 billion during July-September 2021.

'HFC applies for licence' Separately, the RBI also said that West End Housing Finance Ltd. had applied for 'on tap' licence to set up a Small Finance Bank in the private sector.

GST Council defers tax rate increase on textiles

Gujarat, West Bengal, Delhi, T.N. had opposed the hike

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Hours before the new GST rate was to take effect, the GST Council on Friday decided to temporarily roll back the increase in tax rate for the textiles sector at an emergency meeting on Friday. The move follows demands from several States, including Gujarat, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said it was a brief meeting with just one item on the agenda. "The decision today was that we retain the status quo and not go to 12% from 5% in the case of textiles," Ms. Sitharaman said after the meeting.

She said the trigger to review the decision, announced in September, was a December 29 letter from the Gujarat Finance Minister requesting reconsideration of the same. Representations were also received



Welcome move: The decision has come as a relief to the textile industry. *G.N. RAO

from other stakeholders, Ms. Sitharaman said.

Various States such as Gujarat, West Bengal, Delhi, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu had opposed the move to raise the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate on textiles to 12% with effect from January 1, 2022.

12% for footwear

However, a similar demand

for footwear was not considered and the sector will attract GST of 12% from January 1, irrespective of prices. While the industry is perplexed over the last-minute holding off on the rate change, Ms. Sitharaman indicated the final decision on the rate would be taken a couple of months from now.

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GST Council defers tax rate increase on textiles

The Finance Minister added that the panel of State Finance Ministers looking into GST rate rationalisation had been asked to review the tax rate on textiles along with other items. The committee is likely to submit its report by February, the Minister said. After the report is submitted, the Council will meet to take it up for discussion.

While welcoming the deferment, experts have, however, pointed out that the textiles sector hardly had any time left to make appropriate changes to their systems and software as the changes were to come into effect on January 1.

“Textile industry will certainly have a sigh of relief. However, it may be noted that the rate revision was

due right from January 1, and wholesalers / retailers would have already got their pricing tags changed to 12%, made necessary revisions to the billing systems to adhere to the rate change,” Saket Patawari, executive director - Indirect Tax, Nexdigm, said.

Bimal Jain, chair, Indirect Tax Committee of PHDCCI, pointed out that the footwear sector, which is also an unorganised sector with small/ medium-scale traders “also needed support and sustainability but now, this hike in GST rates will make footwear expensive for the common man... to ensure sustainability of the footwear sector...the Council should have deferred hike in GST rate from 5% to 12% for this sector as well.”

Fiscal deficit narrowed in April-Nov.

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

India's federal fiscal deficit in April-November, the first eight months of current fiscal year, narrowed to 46.2% of the full-year budgeted target, helped by a rise in tax collections, government data showed on Friday.

The fiscal deficit had surged to 135.1% of the full-year target during the same period last fiscal year.

The fiscal deficit for eight months ended November 2021 stood at ₹6.96 trillion compared with the ₹15.07-trillion target for the whole fiscal year, the data showed.

In April-November, net tax receipts were ₹11.35 trillion while total expenditure was ₹20.75 trillion, the data released by the government showed.

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.