



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra



VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

21 - JULY - 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 - India-Vietnam ties, from strong to stronger GSP 02 A
- News - A hint of stability GSP 02 A
- News - Ranil Wickremesinghe elected President of crisis-hit Sri Lanka Part I GSP 02 A
- News - Ranil Wickremesinghe elected President of crisis-hit Sri Lanka Part II GSP 02 A
- Editorials - The NEET conundrum and Tamil Nadu's steadfast opposition GSP 02 P
- Editorials - The cost of misrepresenting inflation GSP 03 A
- News - RBI to initiate CBDC in wholesale, retail sectors GSP 03 A
- News - Cheetahs likely to arrive in Kuno before August 15 GSP 03 P

India-Vietnam ties, from strong to stronger

As New Delhi pursues its 'Act East Policy', Hanoi has become a valuable partner in the Indo-Pacific region



RAJEEV RANJAN CHATURVEDY

India and Vietnam are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. Bolstering friendship between the two countries is a natural outcome of a growing convergence of their strategic and economic interests, and also their common vision for peace, prosperity and their people. A strong commitment of political leadership along with the necessary institutional frameworks and cooperation between the two countries is likely to be more robust in the future. More importantly, embedding a flexible framework of engagement can contribute positively to regional stability and prosperity.

Shared concerns

India is essentially a maritime nation and the oceans hold the key to India's future. India's external trade (over 90% by volume and 70% by value) is by sea. Very dependent on the seas for its trade and commerce, India has intensified its efforts to engage with maritime neighbours, including Vietnam.

India's relations with Vietnam – some of which is based on a set of historical commonalities – predate any conflict between India and China as well as that between China and Vietnam. The strategic dimensions of Indo-Vietnamese relations, initiated during the

1980s, began unfolding in the form of structured and institutional arrangements during the 1990s. As India pursues its 'Act East Policy', Vietnam has become a valuable partner in India's political and security engagements in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries are working to address shared strategic concerns (such as energy security and open and secure sea lines of communication), and make policy choices without undue external interference. Given India's broadening economic and strategic interests in the region and Vietnam's desire for strategic autonomy, both countries will benefit from a stronger bilateral relationship. India and Vietnam face territorial disputes with and shared apprehensions about their common neighbour, China. Vietnam is of great strategic importance because its position enables it to control 'the South China Sea – a true Mediterranean of the Pacific'. The maritime domain, therefore, has become an essential element of India and Vietnam cooperation.

The driving forces

There are four key motivations behind India's growing maritime engagement with Vietnam. First, India's aspiration to counter an assertive China by strengthening Vietnam's military power. Second, with India's increasing trade with East and Southeast Asia, India has begun to recognise the importance of its sea lines of communication beyond its geographical proximity; the South China Sea occupies a significant geostrategic and geo-economic position, resulting in India's renewed interests in



the South China Sea. Third, India desires to intensify its presence to track potential developments in the maritime domain that could affect its national interests. And fourth, the Indian Navy underlines the importance of a forward maritime presence and naval partnership that would be critical to deter potential adversaries. India's maritime strategic interests in the region are well established, including the fact that almost 55% of India's trade with the Indo-Pacific region passes through the South China Sea.

More importantly, India sees an open and stable maritime commons being essential to international trade and prosperity; therefore, it has an interest in protecting the sea lanes. With this renewed interest in the maritime domain, freedom of navigation, a peaceful resolution of disputes and a respect for international laws have become salient features of the Indian approach. India is willing to take a principled stand on territorial disputes in the hope that it contributes to the stabilisation of the Indo-Pacific. Such positions align closely with Vietnam's stance on the management of the South China Sea disputes.

Ever since the formal declaration of a strategic partnership in 2007 and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2016, the scope

and scale of the India-Vietnam strategic and defence cooperation, particularly in the maritime domain, is deepening with a clear vision, institutional mechanisms and the necessary political support from both governments. The signing of 'Joint Vision for Defence Cooperation' and a memorandum of understanding on mutual logistics support in June 2022 has further strengthened mutual defence cooperation. While a U.S.\$100 million Defence Line of Credit has been implemented, India has also announced early finalisation of another U.S.\$500 million Defence Line of Credit to enhance Vietnam's defence capability. New Delhi has also agreed to expand military training and assist the Vietnam Navy's strike capabilities. For example, it is providing 'comprehensive underwater combat operation' training to Vietnamese sailors at INS Satavahana in Visakhapatnam. India's Defence Minister handed over 12 high-speed boats to Vietnam recently' a Khukri-class corvette is also expected to be gifted soon. Vietnam is also 'exploring the possibility of acquiring Indian-manufactured surveillance equipment such as unmanned aerial vehicles'.

Using frameworks

The two countries are also engaging in wide-ranging practical cooperation in the maritime domain through a maritime security dialogue, naval exercises, ship visits, Coast Guard cooperation, and training and capacity building. They have found mutual convergences on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and are synergising their efforts to work in bilateral as

well as other sub-regional and multilateral frameworks, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, ADMM-Plus or the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus. The Special Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN)-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting in June 2022 has proposed an ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise and informal meeting between India and ASEAN Defence Ministers in November 2022. Both countries are also looking at collaboration around the seven pillars of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

There are some other potential areas for New Delhi and Hanoi to further deepen collaboration, such as meaningful academic and cultural collaborations, shipbuilding, maritime connectivity, maritime education and research, coastal engineering, the blue economy, marine habitat conservation, and advance collaboration between maritime security agencies. The IPOI framework presents immense opportunities for India-Vietnam relations to aid regional progress and peace. The road map agreed upon by the leaders will be helpful in addressing common challenges and decisively navigating towards making an India-Vietnam partnership that helps in stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy is Associate Professor at the School of Historical Studies and the School of International Relations, and Coordinator of the Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies at Nalanda International University, Rajgir, Bihar

A hint of stability

With a new government in Sri Lanka, India must review its options in extending help

As a leader who was the lone member of his party in Parliament, Ranil Wickremesinghe can only see his victory in Sri Lanka's presidential elections on Wednesday as a political windfall. However, the position comes with a crown of thorns. His first challenge will be to reach out to the people, including the protesters in Colombo demanding his resignation, which is something politicians usually do before they win an election, not after. Building credibility with them will require distancing himself from the very faction of the ruling SLPP backed by Mahinda Rajapaksa that won him the elections. If he fails to satisfy the "street", then general elections, which Sri Lanka can barely afford at this point, will be the only remaining course. Elections would only further delay the task of economic rebuilding, particularly the much-needed negotiations with the IMF for a bailout. In normal course, the six-time Prime Minister will be equal to the challenge. However, his performance over the past few months as PM has not seen him emerge with any big ideas to control the crisis. A combination of the fall in domestic production, tax revenues, remittances, and currency reserves signals that the road out of this economic trough will be arduous. In addition, President Wickremesinghe, and whoever fills his position as Prime Minister, will have to make many more unpopular decisions once the IMF negotiations are concluded, and the bailout stipulations and conditions spelt out.

New Delhi will also have to review its options, given the proximity, and as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told an all-party meeting on Tuesday, the Government will naturally worry about the "spill over" from the Sri Lankan situation. The Modi government has adopted a three-pronged strategy – expressing sympathy with the people of Sri Lanka and their "quest for stability and economic recovery through democratic means"; extending "unprecedented" financial assistance, credit lines and essential food, fuel and medicines worth U.S.\$3.8 billion since January 2022; and distancing itself from the Rajapaksas. The policy has reaped dividends in public goodwill in Sri Lanka for India, particularly in comparison to other partners such as China that have only provided humanitarian aid worth approximately \$74 million, and not much else by way of credit lines and debt restructuring and deferrals of repayment this year. It is significant that India's first reaction to Mr. Wickremesinghe's election was understated, given the uncertainties still surrounding the government. However, if the new government is to have a chance at overcoming the odds, New Delhi's support, bilaterally and internationally, will be essential, and the Modi government must decide if continuing its policy of distance from the leadership will achieve its objectives with its close neighbour in the months ahead.

Ranil Wickremesinghe elected President of crisis-hit Sri Lanka

In 225-member House, he garners support from 134

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Six-time Prime Minister and Acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe was on Wednesday elected President of Sri Lanka – a post he has coveted but never held in his nearly half-century-long political career – amid an extraordinary political crisis set off by the island nation’s painful economic crash.

Mr. Wickremesinghe won 134 votes in the 225-member Parliament in a three-way contest. Dullas Alahapperu-



Taking charge: Ranil Wickremesinghe speaking with soldiers outside the Parliament in Colombo on Wednesday. ■ AFP

ma, a formerly Rajapaksa-aligned, now independent MP, won 82 votes, despite several Independent lawmakers, the main Opposition, and most minority par-

ties, pledging support to him on Tuesday, a day before voting in a secret ballot. The leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna’s candidate Anura Kumara Dissanayake won

three votes. Two MPs from the Tamil National People’s Front (TNP) abstained.

“The time for division is over,” Mr. Wickremesinghe said in his first remarks after clinching Presidency. He urged all political parties to come together to take the country on the path of economic recovery.

This is the third unlikely elevation this year for Mr. Wickremesinghe, 73, who is the United National Party’s sole MP – entering not with an election win, but through the national list, based on the party’s vote share in the 2020 general elections.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 10

Ranil elected President of crisis-hit Sri Lanka

In the past three months, coinciding with Sri Lanka's escalating economic crisis, he has risen from lone MP to PM, before clinching Presidency on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, protesters from the 'Janatha Aragalya' ('People's Struggle') have said they would agitate until Mr. Wickremesinghe, too, steps down.

"After 'Gota go home', demand number two of the people's protests was clearly 'Ranil go home'. He has no political mandate; he lost his own seat. He doesn't have the people's mandate," Marisa De Silva, human rights activist, told *The Hin-*

du. Over the last few months, the 'Aragalya' did "much of the heavy lifting", Ms. De Silva said, in ousting Mahinda and Gotabaya Rajapaksa from office, and dismantling the Cabinet. "The Parliament had one job today – to heed the call of the people. Our MPs proved that they don't have the people's interest at heart," she said.

On May 12, recently ousted President Gotabaya appointed him as Prime Minister, replacing Mahinda, who had resigned days earlier, in the wake of violence triggered by his [Mahinda] supporters.

EXPLAINER

The NEET conundrum and Tamil Nadu's steadfast opposition

Why is Tamil Nadu looking for exemption from the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test? What is the AK Rajan committee?

D. SURESH KUMAR

The story so far: The mandatory National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate medical degree courses was introduced across the country based on a Supreme Court ruling in 2016. The Tamil Nadu government vociferously opposed the entrance test from the beginning and initially got exemption from NEET-based admissions. However, in August 2017, the Supreme Court refused to grant further exemption to the State. The legal fight against NEET continues to this day.

Why and how was NEET introduced?

The Medical Council of India (MCI) (since replaced by the National Medical Commission) had mooted the NEET in 2009 with a stated objective of ensuring inter-se merit in medical admissions and to avoid multiple entrance tests conducted by different agencies, governments and deemed universities. The following year the MCI had issued a notification to regulate MBBS and BDS admissions in the country through a common entrance test. However, in 2013, by the majority of a 2:1 verdict the Supreme Court had struck down the NEET as unconstitutional and ruled that the MCI had no powers to issue notifications to regulate admissions in medical/dental colleges.

Three years later in April 2016, a five judge bench headed by Justice Anil. R. Dave (who delivered the dissenting



For equitable access: DMK and Congress MP's from Tamil Nadu protesting against NEET in Parliament in 2019. • THE HINDU

verdict in 2013), in a rare order recalled its 2013 judgment and eventually mandated the conduct of NEET. Following requests from certain stakeholders, the Union Government promulgated an ordinance in May 2016 exempting State-run medical colleges from the ambit of the Supreme Court mandate for a year. After which in 2017, the Supreme Court refused to grant exemption from NEET to Tamil Nadu.

Was Tamil Nadu the only State to oppose NEET?

No. Other states including Gujarat had also opposed the NEET in the initial years for varying reasons. As reported in *The Hindu* on May 4, 2016, the Gujarat government had submitted in the Supreme Court that it was "torture" to impose NEET on students who had

already mentally prepared for the State entrance exams. Tamil Nadu reiterated its argument that the State does not have a legacy of entrance exams since 2007. States like Jammu and Kashmir (now Union Territory of J&K and Ladakh), Andhra Pradesh and Telangana invoked special provisions in the Constitution to contend that only the State and not the Centre had the legislative competence to conduct examinations for MBBS and BDS courses.

Is the opposition to NEET merely political?

Beyond issues such as the NEET threatening state autonomy, questions have been raised on the pragmatism of the common entrance test score being the sole determinant of merit from Kashmir to Kanniyakumari. The NEET overshadows students' efforts in their higher secondary education and has known to spawn multi-billion dollar coaching centres. As a result, the focus is more on cracking the 'be-all-end-all' examination instead of mastering the subjects at the higher secondary level. It also compromises the learning of non-core subjects. Besides, there have been discrepancies in the conduct of NEET with cases of impersonation being reported. Even in the NEET examination conducted last Sunday, the CBI unearthed an impersonation racket and arrested eight persons. Such racketeering challenges the very concept of merit. Also, while it has ensured merit-based admissions in state-run institutions where the fees is affordable; in deemed

universities and private colleges even now students with poor NEET scores, who have the wherewithal to pay hefty sums as fees, continue to edge out meritorious aspirants belonging to poor, lower and middle class families.

What were the AK Rajan committee findings?

After coming to power last year, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government, constituted a committee headed by retired High Court judge Justice A. K. Rajan to study the effects of the NEET-based admission process. The committee was asked to find whether the entrance test had adversely affected students from the rural and urban poor, those who studied in government schools, those who studied in Tamil medium or any other section of students from Tamil Nadu. If so, the panel was mandated, to suggest the steps to be taken to remove the impediments and to protect the rights of the State, for advancing the principles of social justice and also to fulfil the mandate of the Constitution to provide equal and equitable "access to health" to all sections of the people of Tamil Nadu. Justice Rajan in his report recommended: "The State Government may undertake immediate steps to eliminate NEET from being used in admission to medical programmes at all levels by following the required legal and/or legislative procedures." He told *The Hindu* that data showed that 99% of students, who got admitted in medical colleges post-NEET, had gone for coaching. "Coaching focuses

only on preparing students to answer questions asked in the particular exam as opposed to learning a subject," he said.

What is the current status?

While most States have adopted NEET, the Tamil Nadu government remains opposed to it with the backing of all major political parties, with the exception of the BJP and one or two fringe outfits. The President refused assent to two Bills adopted by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly unanimously in 2017 seeking exemption from NEET-based admissions for undergraduate and postgraduate degree medical courses.

In 2021, a fresh Bill to admit students for MBBS/BDS courses only on the basis of their class XII board examination scores was adopted by the Legislative Assembly. In February this year, after the Bill was returned by the Governor, for the first time in the history of the state Legislative Assembly, the Bill was readopted by the House and sent back to the Governor. The Raj Bhavan has since forwarded the Bill to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for Presidential assent. On Tuesday, the Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra informed the Lok Sabha that clarification has been sought from the Tamil Nadu Government on the Bill seeking to dispense with the NEET. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of AYUSH had furnished comments on the Bill which have been shared with the state government of Tamil Nadu for their comments and clarifications.

THE GIST

■ The Tamil Nadu government has vociferously opposed NEET-based admission to undergraduate and postgraduate medical courses.

■ NEET not only threatens state autonomy with respect to the Centre conducting admissions to state run institutions, it also overshadows students' efforts in their higher secondary education and has known to spawn multi-billion dollar coaching centres.

■ In 2021, a fresh Bill to admit students for MBBS/BDS courses only on the basis of their class XII board examination scores, was adopted by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. In February this year, after the Bill was returned by the Governor, it was readopted by the House and sent back to the Governor.

The cost of misrepresenting inflation

The inadequacy of monetary policy to address food-price-driven inflation has been recently flagged



PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN & M. PARAMESWARAN

Globally, inflation is now the prime concern of governments, even as there is a speculation that a recession may not be far behind. In India, though, government agencies regularly announce that the country is growing at a much faster rate than most economies and presently assert that inflation is much lower. The growth performance is not so surprising given that among the larger economies of the world, India's economy contracted the most in 2020-21. But despite the sharp recovery, real output in 2021-22 was barely higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20.

On the claim that inflation in India is not so high in an international comparison, note that before the recently announced rise in the U.S. inflation rate for June, inflation here was close to what it was there. While the data on inflation in India is in the public domain, the public may be excused for not seeing that India's economic agencies appear to have not fully understood what is driving it, for this requires some specialist knowledge. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been reported as saying that there was a "need to recognise global factors in inflation".

In our view, the diagnosis that the current inflation in India is, even largely, due to global factors is wrong, and harmful for reasons that we set out.

Factors driving inflation

It is a common mistake to observe sharply rising prices of certain goods and conclude therefrom that it is this that is driving inflation. This conclusion can be way off the mark when the concerned goods account for only a small part of the consumption basket that the overall consumer price index is based on. Thus, while the price of edible oils and the world price of crude may have risen following the Ukraine war, the impact of this development on overall inflation in India, measured by the rise in the



■ K. MURALIKUMAR

consumer price index, would depend upon their share in the consumption basket of households, which is relatively low.

Our investigation of price trends among the major commodity groups threw up some findings crucial to understanding the current inflation in India.

Contrary to the belief that the rise in inflation in India is due to higher international prices, we found that for the commodity groups 'fuel and light' and 'fats and oils', chosen as proxies for the price of imported fuel and edible oils, respectively, inflation has actually been lower in the first five months of 2022 than in the last five months of 2021. On the other hand, for the commodity group 'food and beverages', it was exactly the reverse, i.e., inflation has been much higher in the more recent period. Not surprisingly, the estimated direct contribution of this group to the current inflation dwarfs that of all other groups, establishing conclusively that the inflation is driven by domestic factors. This is also readily seen when we find inflation in India trending upwards from October 2021, that is, well before the war in Eastern Europe.

While the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India may have flagged global factors in the current inflation, its monetary policy seems to be based on a somewhat different view. Start-

ing in May, the repo rate has been raised. Raising the interest rate in an attempt to control inflation, implicitly assumes that it reflects economy-wide excess demand. Such a diagnosis of the current inflation is belied by the fact that the price of food is rising faster than that of other goods i.e., its relative price has risen. So, the excess demand in the market for foodstuff, and it is this that needs to be eliminated. To persist with monetary policy to curb inflation under these circumstances is to miss the point that, being a macroeconomic instrument, it cannot affect any particular price.

'Necessary food surplus'

The inadequacy of monetary policy to address food-price-driven inflation has been flagged by economists internationally.

Thus, at the World Economic Forum's annual meet held at Davos, Switzerland in June, Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz observed that "raising interest rates is not going to solve the problem of inflation. It is not going to create more food. What you do is that you have supply-side interventions. Killing the economy through raising interest rates is not going to solve the inflation in any time frame. We used to have surpluses in food in the United States – we can get those back. At least, trying to do everything we can globally to increase

the supply is going to do more in dealing with the problem." Another observation comes from the head of the U.S. central bank itself, the Federal Reserve Bank, made to the U.S. House of Representatives in June. Jerome Powell is reported stating that even though the Fed's resolve to fight inflation is unconditional, "a big part of inflation won't be affected by our tools". This is an acknowledgement that there is only so much a central bank can do when battling inflation driven by the rise in energy and food prices. That an independent economist would suggest the impotence of monetary policy to control food inflation is not news, but when the head of a leading central bank does so, it should draw our attention. Interestingly, those responsible for inflation management in India continue to give the impression that the current inflation can be dealt with effectively by monetary policy.

This stance by the economic arm of the government of India, that inflation can be controlled by monetary policy, could have been ignored were it not potentially harmful. To hold on to the view that inflation in India is due to excess aggregate demand curable by raising interest rates ensures that attention is not paid to the necessary supply-side interventions. Note the call by American economists to bring back the food surpluses in the United States, even when their country has hardly ever experienced food shortages. By comparison, food in India has never been plentiful, reflected in the high share of the average household budget devoted to it. And, there is here an undercurrent of a food price inflation, which, by exacerbating poverty, stands in the way of a more rapid expansion of the economy.

As the current inflation represents a domestic imbalance, it will not end with the crashing of food prices taking place on the global market right now.

The failure to see inflation in India as the reflection of a structural feature of its economy ensures that there is very little chance that one of India's urgent problems will be solved.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor at Ashoka University, Sonapat. M. Parameswaran is Associate Professor at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram

'RBI to initiate CBDC in wholesale, retail sectors'

Implementation in phases, says ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

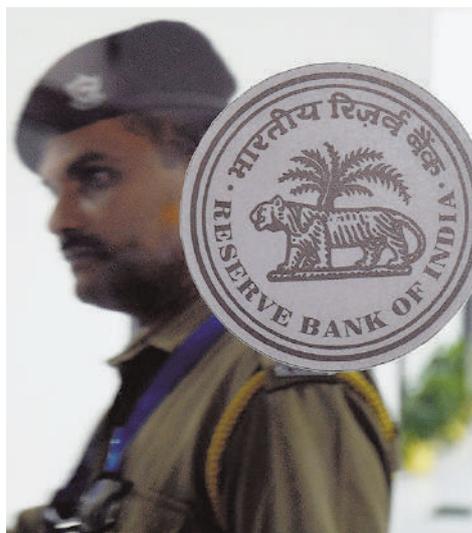
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is in the process of implementing the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in a phased manner for wholesale and retail segments, an official said.

The introduction of CBDC was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23, by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and necessary amendments to the relevant section of the RBI Act, 1934 have been made with the passage of the Finance Bill 2022, Ajay Kumar Choudhary, Executive Director (Fintech), RBI, said.

The passage of the bill has enabled the RBI to conduct a pilot and subsequent issuance of CBDC, he said.

"The RBI is also working on phased implementation of a central bank digital cur-



rency (CBDC) in both wholesale and retail segment," Mr. Choudhary said while delivering a keynote address at the 'PICUP Fintech Conference & Awards' by FICCI.

CBDC is a digital or virtual currency but it is not comparable with private virtual currencies or cryptocurrency that have mushroomed over the last decade. Private virtual currencies do not represent any person's debt or liabilities as there is no issuer.

Cheetahs likely to arrive in Kuno before August 15

India and Namibia sign agreement; officials trying to complete the first transfer to the national park in Madhya Pradesh

SUHASINI HAIDAR
JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

India came one step closer to bringing back the world's fastest animal to the country with an agreement signed in Delhi on Wednesday between the Union government and the visiting Namibian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations, Netumbo Nandi Ndaitwah.

The cheetah was declared extinct in the country in 1952, and the agreement, which has been negotiated for some years, will prepare the ground for the relocation of the first batch from southern Africa to the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, with officials trying to complete the transfer before August 15.

"The [agreement] seeks to promote conservation and restoration of cheetah in their former range from which the species went extinct," Environment and Forests Minister Bhupender Yadav said in a tweet after the signing ceremony for what



New home: The agreement signed by India and Namibia on Wednesday will prepare the ground for the relocation of the first batch of cheetahs from southern Africa to Madhya Pradesh.

he called an "historic" MoU (memorandum of understanding), which took place in the presence of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

"Completing 75 glorious years of Independence with restoring the fastest terrestrial flagship species, the cheetah, in India, will rekin-

dle the ecological dynamics of the landscape," he said.

The MoU focused on biodiversity conservation, and the sharing of expertise between the two countries, technological applications, collaborations on climate change, pollution and waste management, and the ex-

change of personnel for training and education in wildlife management. However, the government is yet to reveal whether it has already procured the cheetahs, how many will be transferred in the first trial, and when they are likely to be brought to India.

According to officials, plans for the cheetah translocations to Kuno are in compliance with the IUCN's guidelines, with particular focus on the forest site quality, prey density and the current carrying capacity for a large mammal like the cheetah. "While the current carrying capacity for the Kuno National Park is a maximum of 21 cheetahs, once restored, the larger landscape can hold about 36 cheetahs," said a note issued by the government on Wednesday, adding that the carrying capacity could be further enhanced by expanding the area to other parts of the Kuno wildlife division. Kuno had earlier been identified for the translocation of Gujarat's Gir lions, but the State government has refused to allow them to be transferred out, despite a Supreme Court order rejecting its pleas.

One-year trial

The cheetahs will arrive in India for a one-year trial. The project for the cheetah – the

only wild cat to go extinct in Independent India – was put back on track in 2020 when the Supreme Court lifted a stay on the original proposal to introduce African cheetahs from Namibia into the Indian habitat on an experimental basis. In May 2012, the court had stalled the plan to initiate the foreign cheetahs into the Kuno sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh fearing they would come into conflict with the plan for bringing lions into the same sanctuary. The court had also expressed concern about whether the African cheetahs would find a favourable climate in the sanctuary.

The government said special programmes were being conducted to educate local villagers in Kuno including outreaches to "sarpanches [village head men], local leaders, teachers, social workers, religious figures and NGOs", with a local mascot named "Chintu Cheetah" to sensitise populations to the importance of the project and guidelines for the cheetah-human interface.

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.