

● POLITY

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## HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

### BASTILLE DAY CELEBRATIONS

**Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a two-day visit to France, during which he will attend the French National Day celebrations as the Guest of Honour.

**What is Bastille Day?**

- The national day of France is celebrated on 14 July every year. While it is known as Bastille Day in English-speaking nations, in France it is formally called Fête nationale française (French National Celebration).
- The **day marks the fall of the Bastille**, a military fortress and political prison, considered a symbol of monarchy and armoury in the 18th Century.
- The attack signalled the beginning of the French Revolution.
- This was the day on which ordinary people stormed Bastille, a 14th century fortress-prison in Paris that was used to incarcerate political prisoners.

- Bastille Day can be said to have set in motion the decade-long French Revolution, which fundamentally altered French political and social life and influenced the foundational ideas of democracy across the world, popularising slogans such as “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité” (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity).
- While July 14 is more popularly associated with the storming of the Bastille in 1789, it is also the anniversary of Fête de la Fédération, an event held in 1790 to celebrate the unity of the French people.

**India and Bastille Day**

Before PM Modi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had attended Bastille Day celebrations in 2009. Also in 2009, Indian soldiers were invited to take part in the ceremonies and the military parade.

## GEOGRAPHY

### YAMUNA FLOODS IN DELHI

**Context:** Delhi is facing a severe flood situation as the water level in the Yamuna river continues to rise above the danger mark.

**Details of Floods in Yamuna**

- Delhi has been witnessing an unprecedented rising in Yamuna's water level over the last three days.
- The water level in Yamuna rose up from 203.14 metre on Sunday to 205.4 metres on Monday going past the danger mark of 205.33 metres.
- The water level rose to 208.48 metres on Thursday morning and Central Water Commission (CWC) has termed it as an 'extreme situation'.

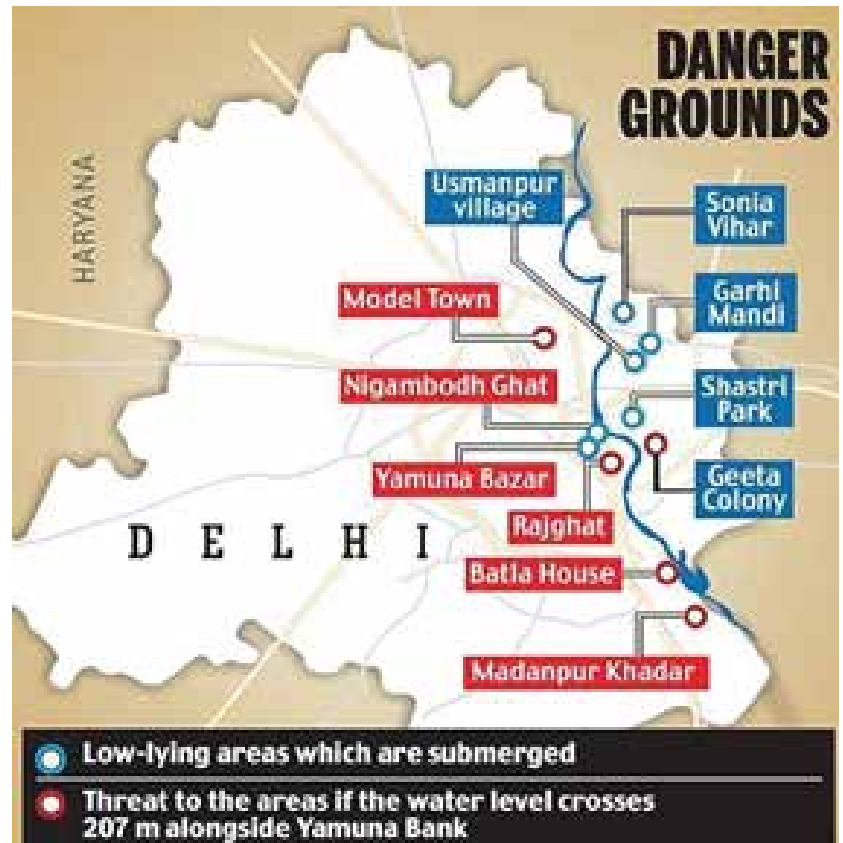
**Why is Delhi facing flood-like situation?**

- The highly unusual flood-like situation in Delhi can be attributed to following factors
- Increased discharge of water from Haryana's Hathnikund barrage: According to CWC, the flow rate from the Hathnikund barrage remained 1.5 cusecs above the normal level. The normal flow rate from the barrage is 352 cusecs but heavy rainfall led to increased discharge. One cusec is equivalent to 28.32 litres per second.
- Increased rainfall in the national capital and surrounding areas: Delhi saw the highest rainfall in a single day in the month of July since 1982. The national capital received 153mm rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8:30 am on Sunday which was followed by 107mm rainfall in the next 24 hours.
- Significant silt accumulation in riverbed: More than 20 bridges within the 22-kilometre river stretch in Delhi from Wazirabad to Okhla obstruct the flow, leading to the deposition of silt in the riverbed and the formation of numerous mid-stream sandbars.
- The locations of these sandbars include beneath the Signature Bridge, between the ITO barrage and Yamunabank, between ISBT Kashmiri Gate and ORB (Old Railway Bridge), and between ORB and Geeta Colony Bridge.
- Encroachment on the floodplains: The main reason could be encroachment. Earlier, the water would have had more space to flow. Now, it passes through a constricted cross-section.

**Conclusion and Way Forward:**

Major floods in Delhi occurred in 1924, 1977, 1978, 1995, 2010 and 2013. Given the current situation, it is crucial for the government to prioritize

comprehensive flood management strategies. This includes investing in improved infrastructure such as robust drainage systems, embankments, and flood barriers. Additionally, establishing early warning systems and effective communication channels is essential to ensure timely dissemination of information to residents and facilitate evacuation procedures when necessary.



### THE FIRST GSI SURVEY OF THE SIACHEN

**Context:** June-August 2023 marks the sapphire jubilee (65 years) of the first GSI Survey of the Siachen glacier.

**More Details**

- In June 1958, exactly 65 years ago, V. K. Raina, a top Indian geologist, who at that time was an Assistant Geologist with the Geological Survey of India

(GSI) led the first GSI Survey of the Siachen glacier.

- The identification number 5Q 131 05 084 was assigned to the Siachen glacier by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- In 1956, Mr. Raina had been a part of the Saser Kangri expedition conducted by the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute of Darjeeling. During this time, he

studied the geology and geomorphology of the Nubra Valley upto Panamik.

- 1958 was an important year for geologists all over the world as it was celebrated as the International Geophysical Year.

#### About Siachen Glacier

- Siachen Glacier is a piedmont glacier located in the Karakoram Range. The Siachen Glacier lies between the Saltoro Ridge, a subrange of the Karakoram, to the west and the main Karakoram Range to the east. It is 75 km long, which makes it the second longest nonpolar glacier in the world, after Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan.
- It originates at the base of the Indira Col West, a col (low point) on the Indira Ridge, at an altitude of 6,115 metres (20,062 feet), and it descends to an altitude of 3,570 metres (11,713 feet).
- It is fed by several tributary glaciers. On its left flank are three tributary glaciers: Teram Shehr, North Terong, and South Terong. On its right flank are five tributary glaciers: Zingrulma, Gyongla, Lolofond, and two that are unnamed.
- At the glacier's snout, two proglacial meltwater streams emerge, and eventually they combine into a single stream, thus forming the Nubra River in Ladakh.
- The Siachen Glacier has been the focus of a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan.
- In 1949, India and Pakistan signed the Karachi Agreement, which drew a cease-fire line.
- Most of the Siachen region was thus demarcated, but the line ended at map

coordinates NJ 9842, about 60 km south of the tri-border of the two countries with China.



## ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT WORK IN PROGRESS

The decisions at GST Council held recently are a mixed bag, with some decisions being positive and others having a negative impact on businesses and the economy.

#### Here are some of the key points from the summary:

- Constitute 50 GST Appellate Tribunals in a phased manner: The Centre has given an assurance that the first set of tribunals should become operational in four to six months, beginning with State capitals and cities with High Court benches. Industry may hope for quicker redress of mounting GST litigations clogging up courts.
- Levy a 28% GST on the face value of all bets placed in online games,

casinos or horse-racing: The Council acknowledged that Goa and Sikkim rely heavily on casino-driven tourism revenues, but also examined the moral question of whether this can be equated to the more compassionate tax treatment warranted for essential goods and services.

- Granted tax exemptions, reduced or clarified some rates and regularised past incongruencies in tax payments on some items owing to confusion about their classification: Food and beverages in cinema halls will now attract a lower 5% GST, as would unfried, uncooked snack pellets, fish soluble paste and imitation zari yarn. Exempted GST on drugs imported for cancer and some rare diseases and levy of higher tax levy on sport utility vehicles

## INDIA'S JANUARY-JUNE TRADE WITH CHINA DECLINES AMID SLOWDOWN

India's trade with China declined by 1.7% in the first six months of 2023, to \$47.04 billion. This is the second consecutive decline in India's trade with China. The decline in trade is attributed to a number of factors, including the slowdown in the Chinese economy and the ongoing trade war between the United States and China.

India's imports from China declined by 0.9% to \$56.53 billion in the first six months of 2023. India's exports to China also declined by 0.6% to \$9.49 billion in the same period. The trade deficit between India and China widened to

\$47.04 billion in the first six months of 2023, from \$45.64 billion in the same period last year.

The decline in trade with China is a setback for India, as China is its largest trading partner. However, the decline is not unexpected, as the Chinese economy has been slowing down in recent months. The trade war between the United States and China has also had a negative impact on trade between India and China.

## GOVT. CURBS GOLD IMPORTS TO CHECK RISING SHIPMENTS THROUGH INDONESIA

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has also imposed a minimum import value of \$250,000 for gold from Indonesia to check the rising shipments of the precious metal through the Southeast Asian country. The restrictions come after a sharp increase in gold imports from Indonesia in recent months. In the first quarter of 2023, India imported 110 tonnes of gold from Indonesia, up from 25 tonnes in the same period of 2022.

The government believes that the increase in gold imports from Indonesia is due to the fact that the country does not impose any import duty on gold. This has made it attractive for importers to route gold through Indonesia, even though the metal is subject to a 12.5% import duty in India. The restrictions

imposed by the government include a requirement for importers to obtain a permit from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) before importing gold from Indonesia. The DGFT will also be monitoring the gold imports from Indonesia closely to ensure that they are not being used to circumvent the import duty in India.

The restrictions on gold imports from Indonesia are likely to have a impact on the gold market in India. The prices of gold are likely to rise as a result of the restrictions, as the supply of gold from Indonesia will be reduced. This could lead to a decrease in demand for gold in India, as consumers may be less willing to pay higher prices for the metal.

# WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

## "A BALANCING ACT ON MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE OF THE RBI

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is facing a balancing act.

On the one hand, it needs to keep inflation in check, which is currently running above the RBI's target of 4%. On the other hand, it needs to support economic growth, which is slowing down.

The MPC has raised interest rates three times in the past six months in an effort to cool inflation. However, these rate hikes have not yet had a significant impact on inflation, which is still rising.

The MPC is likely to raise interest rates again in its next meeting in August. However, it is also likely to take steps to support economic growth. For example, the MPC could announce a cut in the repo rate, which is the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks.

The MPC's decision will be a delicate one. If it raises interest rates too much, it could slow down economic growth too much. However, if it does not raise interest rates enough, it could allow inflation to spiral out of control.

## INDIA WEIGHS BETTER MARKET ACCESS TO JOIN IPEF TRADE PILLAR

India is reportedly considering joining the trade pillar of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) but is seeking better market access in return.

The IPEF is a new trade initiative launched by the United States in October 2021. It is not a traditional trade agreement, but rather a framework for cooperation on issues such as trade, supply chains, and clean energy. India is one of the 13 countries that have expressed interest in joining the IPEF. However, India has reportedly been reluctant to join the trade pillar of the IPEF.

India is considering joining the trade pillar of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), but is demanding better market access in return. However,

India has not yet joined the trade pillar, as it is demanding better market access from the United States and other countries.

India is particularly concerned about the lack of market access for its services sector. The services sector accounts for about 50% of India's GDP.

India is also concerned about the lack of clarity on the IPEF's rules of origin. Rules of origin are the criteria that determine whether a product can be considered to be "made in" a particular country. India is concerned that the IPEF's rules of origin will be too stringent, which could make it difficult for Indian businesses to export their products to other IPEF countries.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH FRANCE

**CONTEXT:** India-France relation is now geared towards the next quarter century, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who reached Paris on Thursday afternoon. Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had reached Paris on an official visit to France as a chief Guest of the Bastille day celebrations.

**BACKGROUND:** India and France have had robust ties from the colonial times. The French republic had established diplomatic relations with India from 1947. The French and Indian government had reached an agreement with regard to transfer of the French colony of Pondicherry to India. India and France reached an agreement in 1956 and finally all French colonial territories joined the Indian Union by 1960. India had significant defence ties with the French in the wake of cordial relations following the peaceful transfer of Pondicherry. In the past when India faced significant sanctions from the western democracies following the Pokran 1 and 2, nuclear explosions, France was one of the few western powers which had breached that trend and had stood with India. France had supplied critical technologies to ISRO and Indian Military in times of need.

On the basis of this in 1998, India and France had entered into a strategic partnership agreement with India in 1998 during the then French President's visit to India on its republic day celebrations. From then onwards India France ties had grown significantly. Meanwhile due to various reasons, French collaboration with India's neighbour Pakistan had been on decline.

Visit of Shri Manmohan Singh in 2009 on the French national day had strengthened India France relations. Indian defence contingent from the Maratha light infantry had marched along with French forces on that day. This was one of the rare instances of Indian forces marching on the national day of a foreign nation. This year in 2023 another regiment from the Indian army is taking part in the celebration with Indian PM Narendra Modi as the Chief Guest.

#### WHAT IS BASTILLE DAY?

Bastille Day, celebrated on July 14th, commemorates the storming of the Bastille prison in 1789 during the French Revolution. This event marked a turning point in the revolution, symbolizing the fight against tyranny and the pursuit of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The storming of the Bastille represented the people's demand for change, leading to the end of the monarchy and the birth of the French Republic. Today, Bastille Day is a national holiday in France, celebrated with parades, fireworks, and festivities across the country. It serves as a reminder of the power of the people and the ongoing struggle for freedom and democracy.

#### INDIA FRANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Further Both countries are active participants of the comprehensive convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) and on many global issues. France

has been a consistent supporter of India's aspirations of a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. It has also facilitated India's entry into various multilateral forums like Wassenaar Agreement (WA), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Australia Group.

In the VivaTech 2022, Europe's largest technology event, India was the "Country of Year" and in the 2022 Annual Cannes Film festival, India was the country of Honour.

#### ALLIES AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS WITH SHARED VALUES.

The past 25 years of successful and significant strategic partnership has been marked with significant bilateral visits. In 2018, the bilateral visit of the French President Emmanuel Macron to India was marked by the signing of 14 agreements with India. The visit was highlighted by his statement "We want India as our first strategic partner here (Indo - Pacific) and we want to be India's first strategic partner in Europe and even in western world."

Similar to the US, India has a strategic partnership agreement with France for mutual sharing of bases and other strategic possessions on a mutual agreement basis. France has certain islands in the Indo Pacific which are of significant importance to Indian strategic reach.

#### PARTNERSHIP IN CLEAN ENERGY

Both have many agreements to work towards achieving sustainable growth while aligning their goals towards climate change and mitigate its effects. India is a signatory to the Paris agreement of 2015. France has collaborated with India by demonstrating its support for clean energy by endorsing the international solar alliance. It was launched by PM Narendra Modi in Paris 2015. France has signed and ratified the same. India is also a crucial partner of an International thermonuclear project based in Europe.

#### INDIA FRANCE DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP.

- According to the report of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), France is the Second largest supplier of defence equipment to India with 29% share for a period between 2017 and 2022.
- India has procured 36 Multi role Rafale aircrafts in 2015 from France through Inter governmental acquisition route.
- India has also entered into an agreement with Airbus consortium to buy and later build C-295 medium lift aircraft for IAF. This is another area where France has significant influence along with other EU countries. First 16 aircraft are to be acquired in fly away condition with the rest to be manufactured and assembled by TATA Advanced systems (TASL) in Vadodara. This programme will significantly contribute to developing a complete life cycle of the aerospace ecosystem in India.

- Project 75 – India (P-75I) an initiative to construct Scorpene – Class submarines at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd(MDL) in collaboration with French manufacturers.
- Defence acquisition committee chaired by defence minister shri Rajnath sigh has accorded approval for the procurement of 26 Rafael Marine fighter which will be operated of the aircraft carriers of India
- 3 additional Scorpene class diesel electric submarines are also to be procured from France. It has also been cleared by DAC
- The Defence Acquisition Committee of India** is a decision-making body responsible for approving and overseeing the acquisition of defence equipment and systems for the Indian Armed Forces. It evaluates proposals, ensures compliance with procurement procedures, and aims to enhance the country's military capabilities and self-reliance in defence production.
  - DAC approves procurement of additional submarines with higher indigenous content.
  - Objective is to maintain force level and operational readiness of the Indian Navy.
  - Decision expected to generate significant employment opportunities domestically.
  - DAC also approves guidelines for achieving desired indigenous content in all capital acquisition cases.
  - Focus on promoting self-reliance in critical manufacturing technologies and lifecycle sustenance of defence platforms.
  - Procurement of 26 Rafale-M fighters includes 22 single-seater jets and four twin-seater trainers, as per defence officials.
  - The Defence Acquisition Committee (DAC) of India has granted acceptance of necessity (AoN) for the procurement of 26 Rafale Marine aircraft, along with associated ancillary equipment, weapons, simulators,

spares, documentation, crew training, and logistic support for the Indian Navy. This decision was made based on the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the French government. The Ministry of Defence stated that the price and other terms of purchase will be negotiated, taking into account various factors, including the comparative procurement price of similar aircraft by other countries.

There has been news of India and France collaborating to jointly develop Barracuda class SSNs by transferring technology. This may be a fall out of the scrapped France Australia submarine deal. But not confirmed.

Military dialogues and joint exercises like Varuna (Navy), Garuda (Air Force) and Shakthi (Army) are held regularly to ensure synergised interoperability

#### **INDO FRANCE COLLABORATION IN SPACE AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES**

ISRO and the French national centre for space have robust collaboration dating back to the 1960's.

Joint working group for Gaganyaan and shared expertise for space medicine, astronaut training and health monitoring are certain areas of Collaboration.

Mutual exchange of Launch facilities, high resolution space observations with applications in meteorology, oceanography and cartography are areas of mutual cooperation and collaboration.

#### **OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION**

France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with the presence of more than 1000 French establishments in India.

The two countries can further work towards increasing bilateral trade and investments including emphasis on free trade agreements and promoting investments.

## **REFLECTIVE PAUSE - NATO MUST CHANGE THE VERY PARADIGM THAT SET THE UKRAINE CONFLICT IN MOTION**

- Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met in Lithuania to take stock of their military and financial support to Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression there, but came away without offering any timetable to induct Ukraine, much to the chagrin of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Mr. Zelenskyy, who vented his frustration after the summit, has only received reassuring words from U.S. President Joe Biden to the effect that Russian President Vladimir Putin “wrongly believes he can outlast Ukraine”.
- Mr. Zelenskyy's apparent sense of disappointment is likely to have been multiplied by the fact that as of April, Finland became the 31st member, and with Turkey withdrawing its objections, it is only a matter of time until Sweden signs its documents of accession.
- In reality, NATO has not only gone to great lengths to support Ukraine's war efforts directly but has also waived its Membership Action Plan. This plan is a series of political and military steps to ensure that the prospective new entrant is a functioning democracy based on a market economy, that its military is under tight civilian control, that it shows commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, that it treats minority populations fairly, and that it has the ability and willingness to contribute to NATO operations.
- While the summit meeting offered NATO a chance to take a reflective pause on the war, the Organization's leaders appeared to have glossed over a critical existential question: would this not be an important time for NATO to consider going slow on its recruitment campaigns, the point of contention that Mr. Putin has used to make an argument for Russia waging war?

The NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC) is a consultative forum established between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Ukraine. It serves as a platform for dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest, with the aim of enhancing the partnership between NATO and Ukraine.

The primary purpose of the NATO-Ukraine Council is to support Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and contribute to its security and stability. It allows Ukraine to engage with NATO member states and partners, discuss security challenges, share information, and receive advice and assistance in areas such as defense modernization, interoperability, and capacity-building.

- Certainly, there is a chicken-and-egg dimension to this debate, and NATO has been particularly activated ever since Moscow's unprovoked military incursion into Georgia in 2008 and subsequent annexation of Crimea in 2014. Yet war — even a war by proxies — is never a predictable prospect between the nuclear-armed rivals of the Cold War years.
- Rather than digging in their heels and setting the stage for further military escalation — now with the added cruelty of the cluster munitions promised by Mr. Biden to Mr. Zelenskyy — NATO leaders would have done well to explore potential pathways to a ceasefire and temporary cessation of hostilities. It is true that Mr. Putin is likely to remain undeterred in his ambition for territorial acquisition fuelled by the shadowy inner politics of the Kremlin — yet if NATO is a grouping that genuinely cares about market economies, democracy, human rights, and peace, it needs to work towards changing the very paradigm that set this avoidable conflict in motion in the first place.

## **THAI LEADER PITA LIMJAROENRAT LOSES VOTE TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER**

- With signs of conservative MPs of the Lower House and junta-appointed senators not giving their support to the pro-democracy leader, the outcome was increasingly inevitable; Pita failed to secure the 375 parliamentary votes Thailand's Parliament on Thursday rejected a bid by reformist Pita Limjaroenrat, who heads a coalition that won a May election, to become Prime Minister.
- After hours of discussions but a surprisingly swift voting process, Mr. Pita failed to secure the 375 parliamentary votes needed to become Thailand's 30th premier, despite his party winning the popular vote in the general

election.

- The political challenger rode a wave of support that saw voters emphatically reject almost a decade of Army-backed rule under Prayut Chan-o-cha, who took power in a 2014 coup.
- But the outcome had become increasingly inevitable, with signs conservative MPs of the Lower House and junta-appointed senators would not give him their support.

#### **Poll to continue**

- “I am not giving up,” he told reporters immediately after the vote, adding that

he accepted the first-round loss but would strategise to win a second round.

- Under Thai rules, Parliament will continue voting until a PM is elected. The House Speaker had not, however, confirmed when the next vote would be held.
- Mr. Pita's path to power has been complicated by the threat of parliamentary suspension, and two cases filed against him and his party. He was due to meet supporters after the unsuccessful bid to become PM, his party said.
- The path forward remains unclear, with the House Speaker yet to indicate if Mr. Pita can try again to secure the necessary votes.

## GERMANY STRESSES ECONOMIC SECURITY IN STRATEGY FOR CHINA

- The German government on Thursday presented a long-awaited strategy for relations with China that points to a "systemic rivalry" with the Asian power and a need to reduce risks of economic dependence, but highlights Berlin's desire to work with Beijing on challenges such as climate change and maintain trade ties.

### Germany's first national security strategy

- The 64-page document approved by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Cabinet builds on Germany's first national security strategy, issued a month ago. Mr. Scholz's three-party coalition had pledged when it took office in late 2021 to draw up a "comprehensive China strategy."

#### Germany's first national security strategy - Highlights

- Germany commits to spending 2% of GDP on defence on average over several years
- It wants to reach 2% spending target from 2024
- Spending on some other projects will be reduced as a result
- Russia is the biggest threat to peace in the Euro-Atlantic area
- Russia is trying to destabilise European democracies, weaken EU and NATO
- German Chancellor Olaf Scholz: It is important to continue to discuss security guarantees for Ukraine including when war ends
- China is increasingly putting pressure on regional stability and disrespecting human rights
- Rivalry with China has increased as Beijing seeks to change the existing international rules-based order
- China uses its economic weight to reach political goals
- China remains a partner without which we cannot solve the many global challenges
- Scholz: separate China strategy will come soon
- \* German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock: security in the 21st century means not being spied on by China on your phone chats

- Following May's election, he cobbled together an eight-party coalition totalling 312 votes — short of the needed 375.
- Official results showed he took 324 votes overall, with 182 votes against his candidacy, while 199 abstained.
- Mr. Pita's bid was sunk by the senators, with only 13 out of 249 voting for him, which raises questions about whether another round would end in a different result.

- Germany has Europe's biggest economy and is the 27-nation European Union's most populous member. Its strategy is a balancing act; it is keen to maintain good ties with China, its biggest single trading partner in recent years, despite wariness over Beijing's growing assertiveness and refusal to criticise the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that "for Germany, China remains a partner, competitor and systemic rival, but the aspect of systemic rivalry has in recent years increasingly come to the fore."
- In its strategy, the government said it is committed to ensuring that economic cooperation with China "becomes fairer, more sustainable and more reciprocal." It noted that "whereas China's dependencies on Europe are constantly declining, Germany's dependencies on China have taken on greater significance in recent years."

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## BLINKEN, WANG MEET AGAIN FOR TALKS AIMED AT MANAGING U.S.-CHINA COMPETITION

### What happened at the meeting?

- The talks took place at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations meeting for foreign ministers.
- The US say talks in Indonesia are part of an effort to 'responsibly manage competition' between Washington and Beijing. Blinken raised alleged Chinese involvement in computer hacking a day after Microsoft said Chinese state-backed hackers had breached email accounts of U.S. government agencies, while Wang pushed back on US's interference in China's affairs.
- The talks between Mr. Blinken and Mr. Wang touched on regional and global issues, including peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.
- Mr. Wang also called on Washington to stop suppressing China in economy, trade, science and technology, referring to efforts by the United States to restrict Chinese access to advanced technology.
- It was their second meeting in less than a month. Blinken met Wang in Beijing last month, marking the first visit to China by a U.S. secretary of state

in five years. It was aimed at easing the intense rivalry between the superpowers, which are also the world's two largest economies.

### Current development in US-China Relations

- The two sides remain at odds over a range of trade, security and geopolitical issues.
- Blinken and Wang in their previous meeting clashed over Taiwan, the democratic island which Beijing claims as its own.
- On Thursday, Chinese fighter jets monitored a U.S. Navy patrol plane that flew through the sensitive Taiwan Strait, as China carried out military exercises to the south of the island.
- China's commerce ministry also on Thursday renewed its call for the United States to lift unilateral sanctions against Chinese enterprises ahead of a possible visit by the U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.
- The meeting came a day after Microsoft said Chinese state-linked hackers secretly accessed email accounts of organizations, including government agencies. Raimondo was among those hacked.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON MANIPUR VIOLENCE

The European Parliament (EP) has called on the Indian government to act "promptly" to halt the violence in Manipur and protect religious minorities. The resolution expressed "grave concern" at the violence in Manipur, which has reportedly claimed the lives of at least 10 people and displaced thousands more. The EP resolution also called on the Indian government to grant unhindered access to the area by journalists and international observers and to end Internet

shutdowns.

The Indian government has condemned the violence in Manipur and said that it is taking steps to restore normalcy. However, the EP resolution has been met with criticism from some Indian politicians, who have accused the EP of interfering in India's internal affairs.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## CHANDRAYAAN 3 LAUNCH TODAY

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is all set to launch Chandrayaan-3, its third lunar mission, on Friday, July 14. The launch is scheduled to take place at 2:35 pm IST from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. Chandrayaan-3 will be launched by the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV Mk III), India's heaviest launch vehicle.

The spacecraft will carry a lander and a rover, which will be deployed on the lunar surface. The lander will soft-land on the moon in the South Pole region, which has never been explored by any other country. The rover will then explore the lunar surface for up to 14 days. The Chandrayaan-3 mission is a significant milestone for India's space program. It will be the first time that India will attempt to soft-land a spacecraft on the moon's South Pole region. The mission is also expected to provide valuable insights into the lunar surface and its history.

India weighs better market access to join IPEF trade pillar

India is reportedly considering joining the trade pillar of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) but is seeking better market access in return.

The IPEF is a new trade initiative launched by the United States in October 2021. It is not a traditional trade agreement, but rather a framework for cooperation on issues such as trade, supply chains, and clean energy. India is one of the 13 countries that have expressed interest in joining the IPEF. However, India has reportedly been reluctant to join the trade pillar of the IPEF. India is considering joining the trade pillar of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), but is demanding better market access in return. However, India has not yet joined the trade pillar, as it is demanding better market access from the United States and other countries.

India is particularly concerned about the lack of market access for its services sector. The services sector accounts for about 50% of India's GDP.

India is also concerned about the lack of clarity on the IPEF's rules of origin. Rules of origin are the criteria that determine whether a product can be considered to be "made in" a particular country. India is concerned that the IPEF's rules of origin will be too stringent, which could make it difficult for Indian businesses to export their products to other IPEF countries.

## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## CENTRE LISTS NEW BILL TO REPLACE DELHI ORDINANCE

- The government has listed the Bill to replace the contentious ordinance on Delhi services for the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament, that begins on July 20.

**Background**

The National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 which aims to affect the powers of the elected State government of Delhi and restore certain powers to the Lieutenant Governor (LG).

- The Ordinance amending the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi Act, 1991 curtails Delhi government's powers over bureaucracy.
- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met the heads of various Opposition parties over the last one month garnering support for AAP's campaign against the Bill.
- The Congress, despite pressure from the AAP, has not taken a stand publicly on the Bill, though the party's president Mallikarjun Kharge promised support to Mr. Kejriwal during the Opposition strategy meeting in Patna last month.
- The AAP wants the Bill to be defeated in Rajya Sabha where the Opposition is numerically in a better position, but without the support of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and YSR Congress.

**Article 239AA - 69th Amendment**

Article 239AA was inserted in the Constitution by the 69th Amendment Act 1991. The Article provides for a special status to the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT).

The article states that the NCT shall have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister. The Legislative Assembly shall have the power to make laws on all matters in the State List and the Concurrent List, except for those matters that are specifically excluded by the Constitution.

The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Legislative Assembly.

What are interpretations of Article 239AA by the Supreme Court?

Supreme Court held that the Delhi government has the power to make laws and administer civil services in the national capital.

The court limited the role of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) over bureaucrats in the capital to three specific areas such as public order, police and land.

It emphasized the importance of federal cooperation and acknowledged the special status of Delhi as reflected in Article 239AA and other articles.

## AN UNACCEPTABLE VERDICT IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL SENSE

- A judgment by the Allahabad High Court recently, declining the prayer by an inter-faith couple in a live-in relationship for protection from police harassment has caught national attention.
- The judgment in Kiran Rawat vs State of UP negates the very idea of constitutional morality in personal relations, which the Supreme Court of India has repeatedly affirmed. The High Court in its judgment implied that the live-in relationship is a "social problem".

**The Story of a Couple**

- The case of the petitioners, a Muslim man and a Hindu woman, was short and simple: They are around 30 years of age, living together and their relation is based on mutual love and affection. They alleged that the local police have been torturing them while living in a rented house, and sought protection from police harassment, allegedly done on the basis of a complaint made by a family member.

**High Court is wrong**

- The judgment by the High Court is unacceptable in the constitutional sense.
  - First, the court is ostensibly carried away by the notions of conventional social morality rather than the constitutional principles on individual autonomy and personal liberty.
  - Second, in the process, the court also discarded several Supreme Court judgments, even after citing them, by giving untenable reasons.
  - Third, the High Court travelled much beyond the brief and relied on personal laws on marriage which were irrelevant.
- The Allahabad judgment said that Supreme Court verdicts on live-in relationships such as D. Velusamy (2010), Indra Sarma (2013) and Dhenu Lal (2015) were not intended "to promote such relationships" and that the law traditionally has been "biased in favour of marriage". Thereby, the High Court essentially rejected the precedential value of the top court verdicts.
- The High Court also made an unnecessary reference to Section 125 of the

Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC) which talks about maintenance to wives (and not “other women”). The High Court also said that extramarital and premarital sex are not recognised under the Muslim law. Even the “sexual, lustful, affectionate acts such as kissing, touching, staring etc.” prior to the marriage, are ‘Haram’ in Islam, says the judgment.

#### An inclination towards orthodoxy

- Though there were many deficits in the petition, the High Court could not have assumed that marriage is a condition precedent for constitutional protection and the exercise of fundamental rights. In effect, it acted as a theological court, as if the very idea of individual liberty and autonomy are alien to the writ jurisdiction. The verdict shows a clear inclination towards social orthodoxy and religious revivalism. In the guise of constitutional adjudication, the court only tried to reiterate the traditional beliefs on marriage and morals.
- The Supreme Court verdicts on fundamental rights are not mere adjudication of the inter-party disputes, as fallaciously conceived by the High Court. The law laid down by the Supreme Court is binding on all the courts in the country, as in Article 141 of the Constitution. In the process of constitutional adjudication, the top court is not ‘encouraging’ or discouraging any social practice or human conduct.

#### Fidelity is a value

- In *Joseph Shine vs Union of India* (2018), the Court decriminalised adultery as defined under Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). This was done since the state’s police power cannot be used for punishing individual moral aberrations. In the words of Deborah L. Rhode, “Fidelity is a value, but not one that the state should police” (*Adultery: Infidelity and the Law*, Harvard University Press). In *Navej Singh Johar* (2018), while substantially striking down Section 377 of the IPC dealing with same sex relations, the Supreme Court made a constitutional adjudication rather than mere moral judgment. The libertarian value of these judgments lies in their capacity in limiting the

state’s power in the realm of personal choices.

#### Upholding personal liberty

- The Supreme Court judgments, cited in the Allahabad verdict, also upheld personal liberty and laid down the law in that regard. In *Lata Singh* (2006), the Court directed police authorities throughout the country to see to it that any adult undergoing inter caste or inter religious marriage is not harassed by anyone. In *S. Khushboo vs Kanniammal & Anr.* (2010), the Supreme Court held: “While it is true that the mainstream view in our society is that sexual contact should take place only between marital partners, there is no statutory offence that takes place when adults willingly engage in sexual relations outside the marital setting”. It was only a restatement of law.
- But the Allahabad High Court said that the observations of the Supreme Court in these judgments were made in the context of the facts of the respective cases. Facts of every case will vary from one another and there cannot be precedents on facts. But that does not mean that the High Court can disregard the proposition of law laid down by the Supreme Court on questions of fundamental rights.
- The petitioners in the Allahabad case only asserted their right not to be tortured by the police and did not pray for a moral evaluation of their decision to live together. They relied on the law laid down by the top court. The High Court ought to have sought further particulars if required and endorsed the couple’s fundamental right, without conducting an unwanted and irrelevant survey of the personal laws on marriage. The judgment is a classic case of judicial indiscipline which the Supreme Court will, hopefully, set right as early as possible. To imply that the moral lessons of personal laws will supersede the constitutional tenets is a serious adjudicatory mishap.
- A recent Allahabad High Court judgment negates the very idea of constitutional morality in personal relations, which the Supreme Court of India has affirmed

## SCIENTISTS NEED THE OXYGEN OF FREE SPEECH

- Last week, more than 500 scientists and academics wrote to the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) criticising its administration for prohibiting a discussion on the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.
- In response, the director of a different research institute, the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER) at Mohali, Punjab, issued a show cause notice to two faculty members at his institute who had signed the letter to the IISc.
- As a signatory of the letter, this writer would like to explain why it is important for scientific research institutions to encourage social and political discussions, rather than seeking to shut them down like the IISc and IISER administrations have done.
- Scientific research institutes are part of the broader society; and so their members have the same constitutional right as others to participate in social discussions. Researchers at such institutions are offered the leisure and the training to pursue critical inquiry into a variety of subjects. This privilege, which relies on the public support that these institutions receive, means that they have an added responsibility to educate and express themselves on matters of public interests. For scientific researchers to fail to stand up for justice, especially at a time of great social turmoil, would be an abdication of this responsibility.

#### Science has multiple links

- A narrow perspective might suggest that scientists should restrict themselves to science and stay away from social questions. However, it is artificial to erect intellectual silos around what is considered “science” and proscribe discussions outside those limits.
- For instance, an investigation of the science of climate change can naturally flow into complex geopolitical issues about colonialism and historical responsibility. This, in turn, leads to broader questions about inequality and justice. These issues are not peripheral to the subject but help to determine which scientific questions deserve focus.
- As another example, research on energy policy cannot be separated from environmental concerns or questions about the usage and equitable distribution of energy. Most recently, research on artificial intelligence has thrown up a host of ethical dilemmas.
- Some scientific fields, such as quantum physics, are further separated from current affairs. But the generous public support for research in these areas — the recently announced “national quantum mission” involves an investment of ₹6,000 crore — arises from the expectation that this research, either directly or through spinoffs, will lead to public benefit.

- However, scientific and technological advances do not automatically lead to social progress; they can also facilitate oppression or entrench inequality. So, it is important for scientists to involve themselves in decisions of how science is deployed, and not cede this ground entirely to capitalists or the government. Therefore, a broader political and historical perspective on scientific research is helpful even in pure science.

#### An engagement with social issues

- India has a rich and unique tradition of scientists who have engaged with social issues. Apart from prominent individuals such as the physicist, Meghnad Saha, the mathematician, D.D. Kosambi, and the chemist, Amulya Reddy, this tradition includes the peoples’ science movements. The Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, whose slogan is “science for social revolution”, has contributed enormously to spreading scientific values in the State. The All India Peoples Science Network has consistently advocated that science be used for social benefit rather than private profit.
- To be clear it is possible for individual scientists to focus on narrow scientific topics and ignore larger questions. My argument is that scientific issues are often related to broader political issues, and that society has benefited from the participation of scientists in these discussions.

#### The pressures

- Given these facts, why are some scientific administrators uncomfortable when political discussions are hosted in their scientific institutions? The reason is not hard to find. Administrators worry that they might be seen as promoting views that are hostile to the government of the day and might incur its wrath. Often, they do not even wait for instructions from the government but proactively censor discussions deemed to be controversial.
- This attitude predates the current government. However, it is no secret that the pressure to conform and the level of self-censorship has increased significantly under the current dispensation.
- In some cases, such as IISER (Mohali), administrators invoke the Central Civil Service (Conduct) Rules that prohibit “criticism of ... the ... government”. However, these rules are designed for government bureaucrats and are ill suited for academic scientists. Indeed, the Allahabad High Court held in 2015 that the CCS rules “have no application to a Central University”.
- Moreover, the Tripura High Court ruled in 2020 that even when the rules apply, they do not deprive citizens of their “right of free speech” which is “a fundamental right.”



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