

● POLITY

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ECONOMICS

TREASURY CHIEF SAYS U.S. NOT SEEKING 'WINNER-TAKE-ALL' COMPETITION WITH CHINA

US Treasury Secretary Ms. Yellen on her maiden visit to Beijing aimed at stabilising strained ties underscoring healthy economic competition, with a fair set of rules, can benefit both countries over time. The U.S seeks to limit the world's second-largest economy's access to advanced technology deemed

crucial to Washington's national security. Ms. Yellen underlined the need to pursue targeted actions to protect its national security in certain circumstances. Beijing unveiled new export controls on metals key to semiconductor manufacturing on national security grounds, in the latest salvo in the chips war.

GOVT. TO SHARE PM GATI SHAKTI DATA

News in gist: Industry and potential investors will have access to infrastructure data captured on the PM Gati Shakti platform

The Centre is working out a mechanism to share data about multi-modal connectivity as well as other physical and social infrastructure captured on the PM Gati Shakti platform with industry and potential investors.

The Network Planning Group (NPG) under the platform has multiple layers of geospatial data from across the country, has so far managed to evaluate and facilitate 85 large central infrastructure projects worth nearly ₹5.4 lakh Cr. Geospatial data sharing has to be compatible with the Science Ministry's policy.

INTERNAL SECURITY

OMINOUS SIGNS

News in Gist: India must calibrate its diplomacy on Khalistan issue to better effect

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval requested pre-emptory actions against the Khalistani violence especially against the Indian diplomats and ensure adequate protection to Indian diplomatic interests, as obligated under international conventions. The protests — after the attacks on Indian missions, arson attempts and vandalism — indicate a sharp uptick in separatist activity overseas.

These governments must not use "freedom of speech" tropes as a cover for failing to prevent criminal acts. Repeatedly calling out foreign governments for their failure to respond to Indian requests, freezing diplomatic contact, tit-for-tat retaliatory measures such as downgrading security for the British High Commission might be demonstrative, but hardly diplomatically effective. The need of the hour is more cooperation, and not brinkmanship, between the governments, and a mechanism to share information, intelligence and discuss solutions to growing violence by such groups.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DELHI TO HOST TEST RUN OF HYDROGEN FUEL-CELL BUSES LATER THIS YEAR

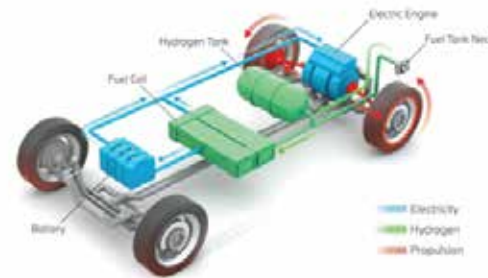
Context: Later this year, the first test runs of hydrogen-powered buses will likely be under way in Delhi followed by other States.

Details of the news

- After Delhi the hydrogen-powered buses will be rolled out on some iconic routes including Delhi-Agra; Vadodara to Kevadia [Statue of Unity], in Gujarat, Thiruvananthapuram airport to Thiruvananthapuram city centre [in Kerala].
- The buses are being developed under a joint venture involving Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. and Tata Motors.
- Currently applications made to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for route permits and are currently in the process of homologation.
- Homologation is the process of certifying that a particular vehicle is roadworthy and matches certain specified criteria laid out by the government for all vehicles made or imported into that country.
- The hydrogen fuel-cell buses to be deployed are "indigenously manufactured" in India but the actual fuel-cells are reportedly imported.
- This is not the first time that hydrogen powered buses will dot Delhi's roads. In 2020, the Delhi government tested 50 hydrogen-powered CNG buses.

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles

- Hydrogen cars and vehicles are powered by an electric motor and are therefore classified as e-cars. The common abbreviation is FCEV, short for "Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle" – in contrast to battery-powered electric cars, or Battery Electric Vehicles, BEV for short.
- There is one crucial difference to other electric vehicles: hydrogen vehicles produce the electricity themselves. This means that their power does not



come from a built-in battery, as is the case with purely electric vehicles or plug-in hybrid vehicles, which needs regular charging from an external power source.

- A process known as reverse electrolysis takes place in a fuel cell.
- Hydrogen reacts with oxygen in the process. The hydrogen comes from one or more tanks in the car while the oxygen comes from the ambient air.
- The only things this reaction produces are electrical energy, heat and water, which exits through the exhaust as water vapor – with no emissions at all.
 - Fuel cells offer a variety of applications, from transportation to emergency back-up power, and can power systems as large as a power plant or as small as a laptop.
 - Fuel cells provide advantages over traditional combustion-based technologies, including greater efficiencies and lower emissions. Since hydrogen fuel cells only emit water, there are no carbon dioxide emissions or other pollutants released into the atmosphere. Fuel cells are also quiet during operation as they have fewer moving parts than combustion technologies.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

DEFAMATION CASE: GUJARAT HC REFUSES RELIEF TO RAHUL

CONTEXT: The court declines to stay the conviction of the Congress leader saying he used PM's name to 'add sensation' and 'affect' the outcome of the 2019 general election; Court comments that it calls for purity in politics.

BACKGROUND: Former Congress party president and erstwhile Lok Sabha MP of Wynad constituency in Kerala had approached the Gujrat High Court against the verdict of a lower court in Surat, Gujrat. The court had found Mr Rahul Gandhi to have violated the criminal defamation laws of India and had awarded 2-year imprisonment for him. This had resulted in his disqualification as an MP from LoK Sabha.

WHAT LAW SAYS:

1) Representation of Peoples Act

Under Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, Rahul is barred from the date of his conviction "for a further period of six years since his release". This means that if the court order were to stand, it would disqualify him for a cumulative period of eight years, including the jail term handed by the court. It also means Rahul may be unable to contest in the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

The Representation of People Act, 1951 provides for disqualification for conviction in criminal cases. It provides for disqualification in cases of offences like rape, terrorism, communal disharmony etc. In such cases, a mere conviction is enough to disqualify a legislator from Parliament.

Hence the appeal of Shri Rahul Gandhi in the Gujrat High Court.

2) Constitution of India

Under Article 102 of the Constitution, a member of the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha can be disqualified under five circumstances: holding an office of profit, insanity, insolvency, citizenship, and disqualification by law. One may also be disqualified for 'defection' under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, which is desertion of one's political poverty.

Thus, Rahul Gandhi was disqualified under law to continue as a MP in Lok Sabha.

OBSERVATION OF THE GUJARAT HIGH COURT

The Gujarat High Court observed that Rahul Gandhi had used the name of Prime minister Narendra Modi's name in his Speech at poll rally to "add sensation" and with an intention to "affect the result" of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. It also further observed that, shri Rahul Gandhi had not stopped there and had continued to further aggravate the matter. In the opinion of the High Court, it further added to the seriousness of the matter.

The court rejected the plea of Mr Gandhi seeking a stay on the conviction of the two - year jail term and observed that it was just, proper and legal. The judge noted that a stay on the conviction is not the rule, but an exception reserved for rare cases. The present case will not fall into that category. It is a well settled principle of law that staying of conviction is not a rule but an exception to be resorted to in exceptional cases.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SRI LANKA COUNTING ON INDIAN TOURISTS TO BOLSTER ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- Sri Lanka is counting on tourists from India, its primary source market, to boost foreign exchange earnings and aid economic recovery, as the island expects fewer tourists from Europe amid the ongoing recession.

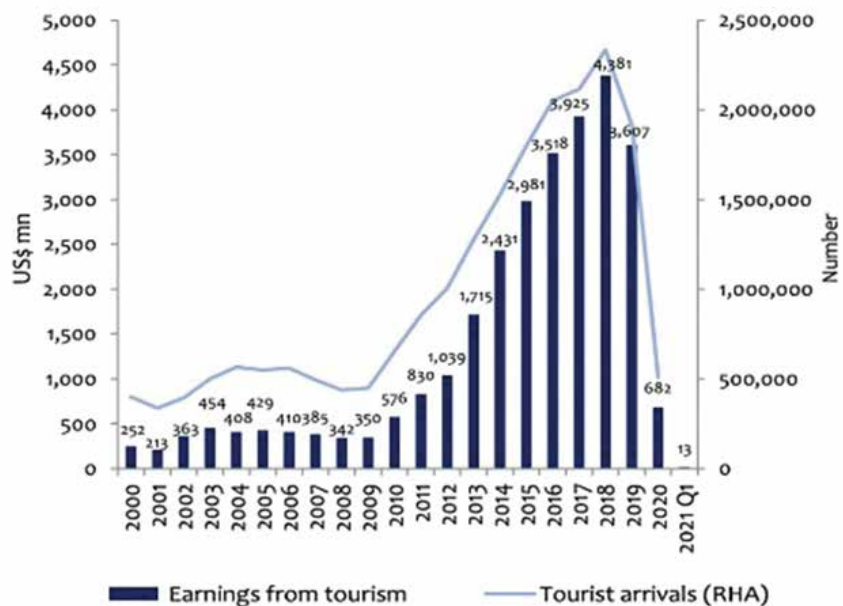
Travel Agents Association of India Convention

- Colombo is currently hosting the 67th convention of the Travel Agents Association of India, in a bid to further boost Indian tourist arrivals in the coming years.
- Addressing participants on Thursday, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said tourism would emerge Sri Lanka's chief foreign exchange earning sector in the next decade. Pitching a collaborative regional effort to promote tourism, he asked "Why don't we make our whole BIMSTEC area one borderless tourist area?", pointing to the scope in the region to showcase diverse sites and cuisines.

topped Sri Lanka's tourist arrival charts in recent years, including during the time of COVID-19 and later, during the island nation's economic crisis. In 2022, when Sri Lanka experienced its worst financial downturn since Independence — citizens suffered amidst acute shortages of essentials and long power cuts — that triggered a mass anti-government uprising.

Bouncing back after twin blow

- Until May this year, the tourism industry has brought in \$3.5 billion into the island, showing signs of bouncing back.
- Sri Lanka's tourism sector took a big hit after the Easter Sunday terror attacks in April 2019. Before it could recover, it suffered successive blows such as the pandemic and last year's financial meltdown.
- Prior to that, in 2018, the sector's foreign exchange earnings totalled \$4.3 billion, according to the Tourism Development Authority.
- India has consistently



- Connectivity to the Island nation
- Air China restored service between Colombo and Chengdu, in China's Sichuan province, with three weekly flights.
- This was after Sri Lanka Tourism welcomed the first batch of Chinese tourists for the year in March, after a gap of three years since the pandemic.
- Air India subsidiary Alliance Air has announced the introduction of daily direct flights between Chennai and Jaffna, in northern Sri Lanka.
- Launched in 2019 the Jaffna-Chennai flight, currently operated thrice a week, was suspended during the pandemic.
- Service resumed in December last year, and has since witnessed a surge in demand.

THE LONG ROAD TO FINDING TRUE PEACE IN YEMEN

- In April this year, just as the Saudi-led war in Yemen completed eight years, a diplomatic delegation from the kingdom reached Sanaa airport for talks with its Houthi enemies.
 - Some details of the talks soon became public, they are
 - Building on the year-long ceasefire, the two sides agreed to a six-month truce,
 - to be followed by talks over three months to agree on a two-year "transition" period when the details of the Yemeni state that would emerge after the war would be finalised.
 - The Houthis asked that the blockade of Sanaa airport and Hodeidah port be eased
 - Kingdom to pay the salaries from the country's oil revenues.
- An immediate exchange of prisoners was also agreed to.

Death and destruction in Yemen

- Saudi Arabia, leading a coalition of some Arab forces, had initiated military operations on March 26, 2015, to prevent the Houthis, a Shia militia representing the marginalised Zaidi community and aligned with Iran, from taking control of Yemen, with which the kingdom shares a porous 1,400-km border.
- However, the war has ground to a stalemate, with the Houthis controlling the capital and the principal port, Hodeidah.

Operation Raahat

India's rescue efforts in Yemen, codenamed Operation Raahat, as many as 23 countries have requested Indian assistance in evacuating their citizens from Yemen. The list of countries comprises Bangladesh, Cuba, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Indonesia, Ireland, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, the United States, and Yemen.

- The coalition controls the sea and the sky and large parts of the south, thus preventing essential food, medical and energy supplies from reaching the population.
- With a death toll of about 4,00,000, including 85,000 children, and several million displaced, Yemen is in the throes of a severe humanitarian crisis: 80% of its people (over 20 million) need assistance, while six million are on the brink of starvation.
- Given the estimated expenditure of about \$60 billion in the eight-year conflict, Saudi Arabia has been anxious to obtain a face-saving exit. Saudi-Iran accord
- The Saudi-Iran accord brokered by China in March provided this opportunity. There are reports that Iran has agreed to curtail military supplies to the Houthis and facilitate a peace process, thus opening the doors for the Saudi-Houthi engagement in April.

Achievement so far..

- What has been achieved so far is the exchange of prisoners and the easing of the blockade on Sanaa and Hodeidah;
- Humanitarian aid has come in
- Flights have taken Yemeni pilgrims, including Houthi leaders, to Mecca for the Haj.

Challenges to the peace process

Challenges coming in the way of the peace process include the Houthi insistence that the kingdom pay the salaries of all government officials, including

SOBRIETY AFTER THE EUPHORIA OF THE U.S. STATE VISIT

CONTEXT: The successful state visit of Shri Narendra Modi to the United States and the euphoria it has generated. This editorial penned by Shri N. K Narayanan, Former Director IB, NSA and Governor of West Bengal, puts the visit in context to earlier visits of Former PMs.

BACK GROUND: India Us relation has had a checkered History. It has seen troughs and crests. the U.S. that had let India down in the past at crucial moments. Two U.S. Presidents in particular, Lyndon B. Johnson in 1963 and Richard Nixon in 1971, are remembered for their infamous roles in this respect.

- 1) Johnson for denying aid to India in the wake of China's perfidious attack on India in 1962, and
- 2) Nixon during the India Pakistan conflict in 1971 for sending the U.S. Seventh Fleet steaming up the Bay of Bengal in a show of force intended to deter India from supporting the 'liberation struggle' in East Bengal, which ultimately led to the birth of a new nation, Bangladesh.

Present Visit: This time, there was no room, whatsoever, to doubt in which

armed forces personnel, for the last few years from Yemen's oil revenues.

The Saudis are hardly enthusiastic about funding their former enemies.

- The Houthis are also seeking "compensation" from the Saudis for war damage;
- Saudis are willing to consider contributing to reconstruction, but not for the idea of "compensation".
- The Houthis are also reluctant to engage with the eight-member Saudi-supported Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) that heads the internationally-recognised Yemeni government.
- They insist on direct negotiations with the Saudis, while the latter wish to be "mediators" between the Yemeni factions.

Houthis have upper hand

- The crucial point relating to the Yemen scenario is that the Houthis have won the war and the Saudis are desperate to get out of the country.
- Thus, the Houthis have the upper hand in the negotiations vis-à-vis the Saudis and the PLC set up by them.
- Even as Saudi involvement with Yemen decreases, the PLC will lose its standing and credibility and open the country, particularly the northern areas, to Houthi control.

Arab Hadhramaut State

- The Southern Transitional Council (STC), a United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed movement based in Aden, wants the southern provinces that constituted the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), an independent communist country from 1967 to 1990, to once again become an independent state. A UAE academic has caused considerable disquiet in Yemeni circles by suggesting possible names for the new country as "Arab Southern State" or "Arab Hadhramaut State".

UAE vs Saudi Arabia

Competing geopolitical interests of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Yemen.	Saudi Arabia is seeking a united Yemen so that it can assert influence over the south Yemeni provinces of Hadhramaut and Al-Mahr.
The UAE's control over ports in south Yemen, Eritrea and Somaliland, as also the island of Socotra in the Gulf of Aden and Perim Island at the mouth of the Bab al-Mandab, has already given it a dominant geopolitical and commercial position in the western Indian Ocean.	Hadhramaut shares an 800-km border with the kingdom, while Al-Mahra could provide an oil pipeline.
It is backing the STC's independence agenda to retain these advantages.	Saudis has sponsored its own Hadhramaut National Council that rejects the independence agenda of the STC

- Recent reports also suggest that Saudi Arabia, anxious to leave Yemen, might accept a north-south division but would want to elbow the UAE out and itself control Aden and the southern areas.
- Another complicating feature is that, despite the Saudi-Iran bonhomie, Iran may be expected to maintain ties with the triumphant Houthis, retain its influence in Yemen, and even consolidate its presence in the Red Sea.
- Thus, despite the cessation of hostilities in the war-ravaged country, rivalries between the diverse Yemeni factions and the competing interests of regional powers will ensure that peace and stability will remain a long way off.

corner the U.S. stands in relation to India. The US is supporting India in the present world of the 21st century.

- The promise of the transfer of technology in several areas
- Most conspicuously in terms of producing fighter jet engines for the Indian Air Force, and
- holding out the promise of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)

marks a remarkable turn in the American attitude. All this, and with the many more agreements on critical technologies on the anvil, could lead to a quantum jump in India's military and aerospace capabilities.

Why the US agree to share technology?

- as an attempt by the U.S. to persuade India to accept an alliance status, visàvis, the U.S. Strategic ties
- The U.S. side certainly hopes it could lead to "a deeper, more effective, and

more diverse defence partnership”.

- India’s attractiveness to the U.S. as a huge market for goods,
- as a destination for state-of-the-art military items,
- to wean away its dependence on Russian military technology
- as a counterweight to CHINA
- as a fellow democracy

Comparison of Indian Visit earlier and Now

A good visit of Indian PM to US positively impacts India US relations
It also favourably affects India’s standing in the world
Possible categorisation of earlier visit

PM	Remarks
Jawaharlal Nehru	Met with 3 US presidents- Harry s Truman D. Eisenhower John F Kennedy
Lal Bahadur Shastri	Visit did not happen
Indira Gandhi	Can be classified as a disastrous to both countries, with India and US having different versions of the visit.
Rajiv Gandhi	Has been categorised as a breakthrough in India US ties
Manmohan Singh	Met both George Bush and Obama. Has been considered as one of the most successful visits to US Ended nuclear apartheid of India which existed from 1974
Narendra Modi	His interactions with President Obama was also forth coming. Highly successful visit with Donald Trum and recent one with Joe Biden.

CIVIL NUCLEAR DEAL

It marked the transformation of the India US relation in the 21st century. Securing a waiver under the Nuclear NonProliferation Treaty, and obtaining the approval of the U.S. Congress for the iconic 123 Agreement that paved the way for an India specific Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) subsequently, were not merely unprecedented, but one-time achievements, the like of which have few equals in the annals of world history.

Result of the deal

As a result, India today has the freedom to maintain a select number of reactors outside IAEA Safeguards, enabling it to utilise them for military purposes. The freedom India currently enjoys for reprocessing and enrichment are other critical outcomes that stemmed from the visit.

Subsequently India entering many technologies restrictive regimes MTCR, WASSENAR agreement etc are resultant of this.

all this was achieved despite the entire U.S. Establishment (with the sole exception of President George Bush) being opposed to these concessions — a testimony to the nature of the personal relationship that existed between then U.S. President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Seldom has such a shift been witnessed in the global arena, due solely to the personal chemistry between leaders of two countries — a testimony to the civilisational attributes of the two leaders at the time.

Both leaders were able to break deep levels of distrust which had been entrenched in both the Indian and US establishment over the many years. Both in 2005 and in 2009, it was evident that it was India’s reputation as a civilisational entity that seemed to weigh with U.S. leaders at the time.

Present Visit Of PM

Highly successful in breaking technology denial regime about critical fighter engines and emerging technology

India may not be an ally which US needs or seeks at this point of Time Nor India would be comfortable with an ally status. (AKUS pact that binds Australia, Us and UK, or Like NATO)

The fundamentals underlying the Quad (India, Japan, Australia and the U.S.) and AUKUS are very different.

Conclusion: India must, instead, use the outcome of the Prime Minister’s visit to skilfully function as a ‘bridge power’. It is eminently suited to play such a role, and should not be inveigled — through blandishments such as defense ties — to play the role of a subordinate to the U.S. in the politics of the AsiaPacific. India’s potential should be marshalled to act as a bridge between conflicting parties in the IndoPacific, in West Asia and in Europe. This could be the enduring legacy of the Prime Minister’s latest visit to the U.S., which has occasioned so much interest not only in the U.S. and India, but across the world. It is for India to seize the moment and play its rightful role.

Bridge state: A bridge state is a country or region that acts as a connector between different regions, cultures, or geopolitical blocs in international relations. It facilitates communication, trade, and diplomacy, often serving as a mediator or intermediary in conflicts, negotiations, or regional cooperation. The concept of a bridge state is analogous to the idea of a "bridge builder" or "intermediary" in international politics. Such countries can play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue, fostering cooperation, and bridging gaps between different parties or regions.

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