



VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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Crisis in Sri Lanka

India should help Sri Lanka during the crisis and also resolve some of the bilateral issues

Sri Lanka is facing an economic crisis with long queues in front of petrol stations, steep rise in prices of essential commodities and frequent blackouts. Although the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a crisis of trade imbalance, the fundamentals of the Sri Lankan economy have always had serious issues. Debt, both domestic and foreign, has been a major problem. Even in February 2020, hardly a few months after Gotabaya Rajapaksa assumed office as President, his elder brother and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, during his visit to New Delhi, wanted India to reschedule the loan. Over the last three months, India has provided assistance of \$2.4 billion including a \$500 million loan deferment and \$1 billion credit line to enable the supply of essential commodities. Apart from approaching Beijing, Colombo has also sought help from the International Monetary Fund, shedding its earlier reservation of taking help from the agency. As soon as the shortage of certain essential commodities ends, which the government expects before the start of the Sinhala-Tamil New Year (which falls in the middle of April), steps should be taken for economic recovery. Compulsions of electoral politics should not come in the way of tough measures such as restructuring the administration of concessions and subsidies. Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa should also use the scheduled meeting with the Tamil political leadership to create a road map on the issue of political devolution and economic development of the war-affected northern and eastern provinces, among the areas badly hit by the current crisis.

Perhaps, Tamil Nadu has already started feeling the impact of the crisis with the reported arrival of 16 persons from Sri Lanka, including six women and seven children, through illegal means. Tamil Nadu was home to nearly three lakh refugees after the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983. Regardless of the motive of those who have reached Tamil Nadu clandestinely, the authorities, both in India and Sri Lanka, should ensure that the present crisis is not used to step up smuggling activities and trafficking or whip up emotions in both countries. On the contrary, the crisis should be used as an opportunity for New Delhi and Colombo to thrash out a solution to the Palk Bay fisheries dispute, a longstanding irritant in bilateral ties.

The peculiar case of Ladakh's eastern boundary

Atmanirbhar Bharat requires a bold relook at old misconceptions while continuing dialogue



MUKUL SANWAL

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is in India and is expected to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. The changed global geopolitical situation is a good time to focus on the peculiar case of Ladakh's eastern boundary and the unnecessary ongoing conflict.

Treaties, usage and custom

There has never been a defined boundary in this area because high watershed frameworks do not apply to the parallel ranges in Ladakh, where the topography shaped both its polity and relations with others. Leh was the 'cross road of high Asia' where traders exchanged goods by barter. Ladakh translates as the 'land of high passes', which defined the limits of its administrative control over trade routes via the Karakoram pass to the north, Demchok to the south and Zojila to the west, triangulating the small settled population limited to the Indus Valley, now with India. Grazing grounds in the south were shared with Tibet. The uninhabited soda plains to the east extending over 100 square miles at a height of 17,000 feet, now disputed between India and China, were of no use and not governed by anyone.

Ladakh emerged as a distinct entity with the Treaty of Timogang in 1684. This treaty established relations between Leh and Lhasa through trade exchanges. With the Treaty of Chushul in 1842, Ladakh and Tibet agreed to maintain the status quo. The Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 between the East India Company and the State of Kashmir included Ladakh with its eastern boundary undefined, and the focus remained pashmina trade for making shawls.

After Britain took over governance of India, attention shifted to the northern boundary of Ladakh because of the Russian advance into Central Asia. In 1870, a British Joint Commissioner was posted at Leh, who continued good relations and correspondence with the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Amban at Lhasa and with the Kashmir State. Both India and China have relied on the correspondence and travel accounts, which had a very different purpose, obscuring the reality that the customary boundary was defined only for the limited area under human occupation.

The authoritative 'Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladak', brought out in 1890, states that from the Karakoram to the head of the Changchenmo valley the boundary with 'Chinese Tibet' is "quite doubtful" (the area of the current discussions) and clear only for the area to the south and west which represents actual occupation (currently not disputed). The unoccupied Aksai Chin is described as "neutral territory", suitable for wheeled



LAC-APP

transport and where the Chinese built their road.

New domestic consensus

There has been advance in developing a common understanding, moving from establishing respective claims to recognising the ground reality. In 1959, experts of both countries, not unexpectedly, further hardened positions as both sides relied selectively on any correspondence or travel record that would justify their already established stand. In 1993, the signing of an Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control brought in diplomats, and the dialogue moved from history to principles. In 2020, the focus shifted to the ground situation and after 15 rounds of talks, the recent joint statement has highlighted continuing the military and diplomatic dialogue and reaching a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest for progress in bilateral relations.

Outside this process, Indian diplomats, Army chief Kodendera Subayya General Thimayya earlier and recently former Commanders of the Leh Corps have character-

ised the Karakoram watershed as a defensible border, to which the Chinese claim line broadly corresponds, leaving the area where earlier no one exercised control, Aksai Chin, to China. This raises the question why this assertion has been ignored at the political level.

A former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to China and the U.S. has explained initial decisions as "ineptitude" and the approach as "unrealistic", arguing that it is necessary to first acknowledge mistakes of the 1950s for moulding a new domestic consensus. For example, following the Seventeen Point Agreement between China and Tibet in June 1951, even as the Chinese moved into Tibet across Aksai Chin, the North-East Frontier Agency was handed over to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) but not Ladakh. Examining this Agreement, the MEA felt it was "reasonable" and inexplicably that India had no use for the Consulate in Kashghar across the northern border of Ladakh. In the India-China Agreement of April 29, 1954, it appears that the reference to passes marking the boundary in the central sector was taken as including the passes in Ladakh assuming recognition of the boundary. This led to new official maps in June 1954 with the MEA deciding on 'the most favorable line' in eastern Ladakh. As the Ambassador points out, in Parliament, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru never admitted that the entire boundary was unilaterally defined or even that it was in dispute leading to the notion of "Chinese

betrayal" in the public imagination.

The year 1954, not 1962, was the turning point in complicating the situation. Unilateral actions in "neutral territory" establishing a strategic road and defining the boundary converted a colonial ambiguity into a dispute, instead of adopting the watershed principle as in the case of the border of all other Himalayan States. The Cold War heightened mistrust, with Pakistan joining the South-east Asia Treaty Organization and the United States' covert operation with the brother of the Dalai Lama residing in Kalimpong arming Tibetans.

Omission and commission

The solution lies in the equally unique 70-year-old continuing dialogue despite each side calling the other an aggressor and sporadic military incidents. Instead of claims, the growing confidence of both countries should enable them to acknowledge acts of commission and omission in the 1950s as newly independent ancient civilisations extended overlapping sovereignty in the uninhabited area in Ladakh over which neither had ever exercised control.

In what would be a bold political step, agreement on the watershed boundary following a well-established principle would meet the national security concerns of India and China without bringing in intractable issues of sovereignty.

Mukul Sanwal is a former UN diplomat

Foreign policy has a say on life: Jaishankar

‘Be alert to external developments’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The daily lives of Indians are increasingly being influenced by developments abroad, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in a speech at St. Stephens College in the University of Delhi.

Delivering the MRF Distinguished Alumni Annual Lecture on Thursday, he highlighted the evacuation of Indian students from Ukraine, and said the foreign policy of India was aimed at serving the people.

“Think for a moment as an Indian student who happened to be in Ukraine on February 24 this year. Concerned about your educational prospects and you found yourself in the middle of a serious conflict and it’s not just you but also 20,000



S. Jaishankar

fellow nationals and millions of Ukrainians who are trying to get out of the country. This is when you look for support from your government and extrication and indeed this is when the entire foreign policy apparatus that swings into action,” Mr. Jaishankar said.

The External Affairs Minister said people should be alert to external developments as they mattered at home.

Govt. steps in to tackle Russian trade hurdles

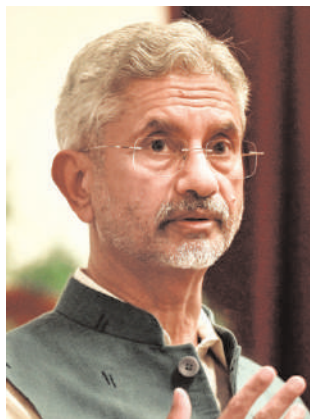
Jaishankar does not rule out reviving rupee-rouble trade

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The government has convened a multi-Ministerial group to look into how to overcome challenges in trade with Russia, including managing payments for exporters and importers, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said in Parliament on Thursday, in comments that indicate a possible revival of “rupee-rouble trade” in the wake of economic sanctions against Russian banks and entities by more than 40 U.S. and European allies.

Answering a number of queries during Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha on India’s stand on Russia and Ukraine, including some that raised concerns over India’s abstentions at the United Nations and the impact of Indian policy on India’s trade and ties with the U.S., Mr. Jaishankar said that India’s position is “for peace” and that foreign policy decisions are made in “Indian national interest”.

To a specific question from Naresh Gujral (Shiro-



Indian foreign policy decisions are made in Indian national interest and we are guided by our thinking, our views and our interests. So, there is no question of linking the Ukraine situation to issues of trade

S. JAISHANKAR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

mani Akali Dal) on whether the government would reactivate rupee trade, or trading in local currencies with Russia, Mr. Jaishankar said that, “because of the emerging problems in dealing with

Russia, [the] government is examining various aspects, including payment aspect”.

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Govt. steps in to tackle Russian trade hurdles

“There is a group within the government composed of different Ministries. It is led by the Finance Ministry to examine these matters,” Mr. Jaishankar added. To a question on purchasing more Russian oil, Mr. Jaishankar said India’s oil imports from Russia at present are “very little”.

Mr. Jaishankar also responded to a question from Jose K. Mani (Kerala Congress-M), who referred to U.S. President Joe Biden’s statement that India’s support on sanctions was “somewhat shaky” amongst Quad partners, as well as a question from Swapan Dasgupta of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who asked whether there would be any “negative impact” on India’s relations with its “closest allies”.

“Indian foreign policy de-

isions are made in Indian national interest and we are guided by our thinking, our views and our interests. So, there is no question of linking the Ukraine situation to issues of trade,” Mr. Jaishankar said.

In a statement laid before the House, the Minister said that India’s position has been “steadfast and consistent”, and India has repeatedly called for the immediate cessation of violence and end to all hostilities.

The comments by the Minister come even as a number of countries in the sanctions regime against Russia have sent delegations to New Delhi to try and shift India’s position on votes at the United Nations, with some seeking to limit Indian purchases of Russian oil reportedly being offered at discounted prices.

Time for India to redefine its relationship with Russia

It is too risky for New Delhi to pursue vague aims vis-à-vis Moscow at a time of diplomatic and strategic uncertainty



VINAY KAURA

Russia's war on Ukraine has decisively shaped international opinion. Indian foreign policy is also going to be affected in a profound manner. The most important question facing Indian diplomacy is how to navigate India's great power relations in the future. While there has always remained a pro-Russian popular sentiment in India, rooted in Moscow's support during the Cold War era, particularly against the pro-Pakistani diplomatic activism by powerful Western countries in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), a majority of Indians today seem taken aback by Russia's misadventure against a sovereign country.

Foreign policy conundrum

That Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, is moving closer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the hope of membership may be a sufficient reason for Russia to be infuriated, but it is still an insufficient condition for Ukraine to be attacked in violation of all norms of international law. However, India has not directly criticised Moscow's action. Memories of the historic Indo-Soviet partnership still seem to tip the scales when it comes to India's vote at the UNSC. Western countries have criticised India's repeated abstentions at the UNSC on the issue of the Russian invasion, while the Kremlin has praised India for taking an "independent and balanced" position. While India has not cared much about

Western criticism of its "independent" approach to foreign policy, it is the Russian angle this time which has come to restrain India's strategic autonomy.

President Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine has put New Delhi in a foreign policy conundrum that will not disappear soon because Russia's action has changed the global order. The Western world has imposed unprecedented sanctions against Russia and banned energy imports. New Delhi is concerned about the impact of these sanctions on global finance, energy supplies, and transportation, amid growing signs that they will constrain India's ability to import Russian oil.

The image of the Russian military might be tarnished now as Russian forces have underperformed in their Ukrainian campaign. Ukraine has been able to hold the Russian forces back for a long time, which can be seen as a moral victory for a weaker nation. Mr. Putin is neither a crafty strategist nor a charismatic hero who has risen from the ashes of the Soviet defeat to lead Russia into a new period of resurgence. His reputation has been severely bruised because a comedian-turned-politician next door has exposed the hollowness of Russia's military tactics and operational planning.

The real strategic challenge

China's blatant attempts to project its rising power as well as Russia's threats against its "near abroad" will continue to test India's strategic choices. Nevertheless, what must worry India is the fact that Russia will now become increasingly dependent on Chinese support to defend its policies. Mr. Putin may not know what he eventually wants in Ukraine, but he is aware of the rubble collapsing,



the punishing sanctions being imposed, and the dire state of the Russian economy. This will push him further into China's military and economic orbit.

India's real strategic challenge is surfacing in the Indo-Pacific with the rise of China, as Beijing has consistently sought to expand its zone of military, economic and political influence through the Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, instead of smoothing the ruffled edges of India's insecurities, which are rooted in an undefined boundary, China has only aggravated them further. Though India would like the U.S. to continue to focus on China, it is not possible for Washington to ignore Russia's aggression along NATO's periphery.

Since the end of the Cold War, Indians have been debating the contours of strategic autonomy. For some, the notion is a re-branding of India's non-aligned posture during the Cold War. Others say that the doctrine of 'multi-alignment' is the 21st century avatar of strategic autonomy as India has been expanding its engagement with all the major powers.

Reality has many dimensions. And in this case, history is relevant. Indian nationalists of various shades still fondly remember which countries were India's allies during the Cold War and which were not. Former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's advocacy of neutrality in the bloc politics was justified in the pursuit of an inde-

pendent post-colonial foreign policy. The Soviet Union was seen as a trustworthy partner against Western hegemony. Following the disintegration of the USSR, India joined Russia and China against the unipolarity of the U.S. The purpose of this trilateral initiative was to promote a multi-polar world to constrain the U.S.'s unbridled power and ambition. India was also uncomfortable with the arrogance that defined Western attitudes towards Russia in the immediate post-Cold War period. For some time, this common concern about unipolarity put the three countries on the same path towards mutual cooperation and understanding. Later, Brazil and South Africa were also brought into this coalition. However, it soon became clear that India and China did not see eye to eye. Moreover, India was determined to maintain its partnership with Russia, an important arms supplier. Its ties with the U.S. have also improved significantly since the end of the Cold War. But continuing dependence on Russian weaponry has become India's strategic headache.

An unpredictable Russia

Nostalgia cannot be allowed to trump reality. Mr. Putin seems too frozen in old-fashioned grievances against the West to appreciate the value of India's friendship. Much of New Delhi's disillusionment stems from a failure to understand not only Mr. Putin's political thinking, but also Russia's place in the emerging global order. If it was a nuclear-armed superpower yesterday, Russia seems to be behaving like a nuclear-armed bully today. Under Mr. Putin, Russia is in a state of transition, swinging wildly from one crisis to another. Therefore, it is too risky for India to pursue vague aims vis-à-vis Russia in

these uncertain times.

Those in India echoing Russian resentment against the eastward expansion of NATO are reminded by Western analysts that a NATO-Russia Council was formed specifically to alleviate Russia's concerns, and that Russia was recognised as one of the world's leading industrial powers through a formal admission into the elite G-7 not on the basis of its industrial might, but to soften its bruised superpower ego. Truth lies somewhere in between, which perhaps explains India's stance at the UNSC.

Everyone in and around government must think seriously about India's relations with Russia as the unfolding Ukrainian tragedy has introduced a new era in international relations. Though Moscow has drifted much closer to Beijing, and is sharply critical of India's engagement with the U.S. and the Quad, India finds it difficult to extend support to Ukraine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi may still personally like Mr. Putin, but he understands that in the halls of global diplomacy, nations have interests which are not determined by personalities alone. It goes without saying that the U.S. is the country most likely to bolster India's future as a great power.

It is not going to be easy for New Delhi to maintain its balancing act in the future as Washington hardens its position further. It is inevitable that during this time of diplomatic and strategic uncertainty, New Delhi needs to be ready to radically redefine its relationship with Moscow.

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India abstains on UNGA votes

It also abstains in UNSC on Russia's resolution on humanitarian crisis in Ukraine

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

India abstained on two resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Thursday related to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine following the Russian invasion. The first abstention was on a draft resolution proposed by Ukraine that held Russia responsible for the crisis.

The second was a procedural vote – on whether the UNGA ought to take up a second resolution, proposed by South Africa, for action at all. This resolution did not mention Russia. The first resolution was adopted with support from 140 countries and the second was not put to vote because it did not have sufficient support.

The draft version of Ukraine's resolution named Russia, saying the UNGA "demands an immediate cessa-



T. S. Tirumurti

tion of the hostilities by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, in particular of any attacks against civilians and civilian objects."

The 140 countries that voted in its favour included the U.S. and European Union countries. India was among 38 abstentions, as were China, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Five countries voted against it: Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Syria and Eritrea.

"India abstained on the resolution since what we require now is to focus on cessation of hostilities and on urgent humanitarian assistance. The draft resolution did not fully reflect our expected focus on these challenges," India's permanent representative to the United Nations (UNPR), T.S. Tirumurti said in his 'explanation of vote' remarks.

Mr. Tirumurti was presumably referring to Ukraine's resolution, since the South African one was not put to vote and the abstention there was at the procedural stage.

While he stopped short of naming Russia, Mr. Tirumurti said India emphasised a "need to respect the UN Charter, international law and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states". He said India was deeply concerned about the hu-

manitarian situation and called an "immediate ceasefire".

Resolution by Russia

Also, in another development, India, along with 12 other UN Security Council members, abstained on a resolution by Russia on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

The draft resolution was co-sponsored by Syria, North Korea and Belarus. It failed to get adopted in the Council on Wednesday as it did not get the required nine 'yes' votes to pass.

Russia and China voted in favour of the resolution while there were no countries voting against. India and the remaining Security Council members abstained.

Russia had called for a vote in the 15-nation Security Council on its draft resolution.

(With PTI inputs)

Fuel retailers lost \$2.25 bn in revenue on price freeze: Moody's

'IOC, BPCL, HPCL incur loss of \$24-25 per barrel on sale of diesel and petrol'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Fuel retailers IOC, BPCL and HPCL together lost about \$2.25 billion in revenue for keeping petrol and diesel prices on hold during elections in five States, including Uttar Pradesh, Moody's Investors Services said on Thursday.

State fuel retailers did not revise petrol and diesel rates for a record 137 days despite prices of crude oil rising to \$120 per barrel compared with about \$82 in early November when the hiatus began.

"Based on current market prices, oil marketing companies are currently incurring



Double whammy: Poorer earnings and higher borrowings will impact credit metrics of oil retailers, says Moody's.

a revenue loss of around \$25 (over ₹1,900) per barrel and \$24 per barrel on sale of petrol and diesel, respectively," Moody's said in a report.

If crude oil prices continue to average about \$111 a

barrel, the three firms will incur a combined daily loss of about \$65-70 million on the sale of petrol and diesel unless fuel prices are increased, it said. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation

(IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) on March 22 and 23 raised petrol and diesel prices by 80 paise per litre each.

Oil companies "will need to raise diesel prices by ₹13.1-24.9 per litre and ₹10.6-22.3 a litre on [petrol] at an underlying crude price of \$100-120 per barrel," according to Kotak Institutional Equities.

Higher crude oil prices will also result in raised working capital needs, spurring incremental borrowings for refiners. Poorer earnings combined with higher borrowings will weaken credit metrics of these companies, the agency said.

Sealed justice

SC should lay down the limits of using sealed cover material to adjudicate cases

In refusing to entertain 'sealed covers' submitted by the government or its agencies, the Supreme Court has made a noteworthy and welcome shift away from this unedifying practice. At least two Benches have spoken out against it. Recently, in the Muzaffarpur shelter home sexual abuse case, Chief Justice N.V. Ramana wondered why even an 'action taken' report should be in a sealed envelope. The use of material produced in a 'sealed cover' as an aid to adjudication is something to be strongly discouraged and deprecated. However, it gained much respectability in recent years, with contents withheld from lawyers appearing against the government, but being seen by the judges alone. Unfortunately, in some cases, courts have allowed such secret material to determine the outcome. In a recent instance, the Kerala High Court perused confidential intelligence inputs produced in a sealed envelope by the Union government to uphold the validity of orders revoking the broadcasting permission given to Malayalam news channel Media One on the ground of national security. It is quite disconcerting to find that courts can rule in favour of the government without providing an opportunity to the affected parties to know what is being held against them. In this backdrop, it is significant that the Supreme Court has decided that it will examine the issue of 'sealed cover jurisprudence' while hearing the channel's appeal. For now, the apex court has stayed the revocation order and allowed the channel to resume broadcasting.

It is true that the law permits the submission of confidential material to the court in some cases. In addition, courts can order some contents to be kept confidential. The Evidence Act also allows the privilege of non-disclosure of some documents and communications. Even when authorities claim privilege over classified material, they had no objection to judges perusing them to satisfy themselves about the claims. The government usually justifies the submission of secret material directly to the court, citing national security or the purity of an ongoing investigation. Courts have often justified entertaining material not disclosed to the parties by underscoring that it is to satisfy their conscience. However, the practice sometimes has undesirable consequences. It compromises the defence of those accused of some crimes, especially those involving an alleged threat to national security, or money laundering and corruption. Undisclosed material is often used to deny bail, something the apex court criticised the Delhi High Court for doing in a case against former Union Minister P. Chidambaram. It observed that recording a finding based on material kept in a sealed cover was not justified. The main mischief of the 'sealed cover' practice lies in the scope it gives the state to avoid deep scrutiny of the need and proportionality of its restrictions on freedom. The time has come for the Supreme Court to determine and circumscribe the circumstances in which confidential government reports, especially those withheld from the other side, can be used by courts in adjudication.

1 lakh students in study to assess Class 3 literacy levels

It will set baseline for Centre's literacy, numeracy mission

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

One lakh Class 3 students across the country are participating in a foundational learning study this week, meant to set a baseline for the Centre's mission to improve literacy and numeracy in the early school years.

The study, being conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), aims to set the benchmarks for reading with comprehension in 22 Indian languages, the Education Ministry said on Thursday.

About 10,000 schools and one lakh students are expected to take part in the study being conducted from



About 10,000 schools are to take part in study being held from March 23-26.

March 23 to 26.

One of the major themes of the National Education Policy, 2020 was the understanding that “the ability to read and write, and perform

basic operations with numbers, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning”.

Non-governmental surveys, including the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), have shown that the majority of children in Class 3 in rural schools across the country do not have these basic skills.

Last year, the Education Ministry launched the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN-BHARAT) mission to ensure universal literacy and numeracy for Class 3 children within five years.

India to be TB-free by 2025: Mansukh

19% increase in patients in 2021 as compared to previous year, says latest report

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

A 19% increase was witnessed in 2021 from the previous year in TB patients' notifications. The number of incident TB patients (new and relapse) notified during 2021 was 19,33,381 against the 16,28,161 in 2020, noted India TB Report 2022 released on Thursday.

On World Tuberculosis Day on Thursday, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya

reaffirmed the government's commitment to making India tuberculosis-free by 2025 and said this will be achieved by ensuring access to quality healthcare and advanced treatment.

The report said despite the decline in TB notifications observed around the months corresponding to the two major COVID-19 waves, the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) reclaimed

these numbers.

It said 18 States have committed to ending TB by 2025 by implementing State-specific strategic plans and have devised a district-specific strategic plan, which shall serve as a guiding tool for the programme managers.

The government also released the National TB Prevalence Survey Report which was conducted from 2019 to 2021 to know the actual disease burden of TB.

The reports said there has been an increase in the mortality rate due to all forms of TB between 2019 and 2020 by 11%.

The survey report said prevalence of microbiologically confirmed pulmonary tuberculosis (PTB) among 15 years and above in India was 316/lakh population with the highest PTB prevalence of 534/lakh in Delhi and the lowest PTB prevalence of 115/lakh in Kerala.

Farm income fell in four States: panel

Jharkhand saw 30% drop in monthly earnings; MP, Odisha, Nagaland registered a similar drop

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre vowed to double farmers' income between 2015 and 2022, but by the midway point, farm families in Jharkhand actually saw their average monthly income drop by about 30%.

In its report on the demand for grants for agriculture submitted to the Lok Sabha on Thursday, a parliamentary standing committee asked why the Centre remained a "mute spectator" while farmers' income declined in four States between 2015-16 and 2018-19. Over the same period, nationwide farm income rose 27%, which is still well short of the trajectory needed to achieve the goal of doubling income this year.

The committee recommended that the Department of Agriculture and Family Welfare "should



Battling the odds: In Jharkhand, a farm family's average monthly income fell from ₹7,068 to ₹4,895. ■PTI

formulate a special team to figure out the reasons for falling farmers' income in those States and take some course corrective measures so that the doubling of farmers income is not lost sight of."

The Doubling Farmers' Income (DFI) committee had calculated the 2015-16 baseline by extrapolating the survey data of the National Statistical Organisation from 2012-13, calculating that the national average monthly in-

come of a farm family in that year was ₹8,059. By the time the next NSO survey was conducted in 2018-19, monthly income had risen 27% to ₹10,218.

In Jharkhand, however, a farm family's average income fell from ₹7,068 to ₹4,895 over the same period. In Madhya Pradesh, it fell from ₹9,740 to ₹8,339, in Nagaland, from ₹11,428 to ₹9,877, and for Odisha, it dipped marginally from ₹5,274 to ₹5,112.

When asked what steps the department had taken to increase farmers' income in these States, it responded that "input in this regard will need to be sought from the concerned State governments", a reply that the parliamentary panel termed "lackadaisical".

The panel also noted that while the department's budgetary allocation may have

risen in absolute terms, it has consistently declined in percentage terms during the second term of the Narendra Modi-led government. In the 2019-20 Budget, announced just before Lok Sabha polls, the department received 4.7% of total allocations. That proportion has dropped every year since, and in 2022-23, the department's Budget accounted for only 3.1% of the total.

"Keeping in mind the vital role played by agriculture in overall economy of the country, the committee recommend the department to take up the issue of decline in percentage budgetary allocation in favour of the department out of Central Pool with the Ministry of Finance and ensure that this declining trend is reversed or at least gets discontinued from the next Budget onwards," said the panel.

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.