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FOREWORD

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

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

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

CONTENTS

- GSP 01 A News - Rock art symbols could point to arrival of humans at the end of the last Ice Age in Nilgiris, says researcher
- GSP 01 News - New weather system in the Bay of Bengal to impact north coastal belt this weekend
- GSP 02 B Editorials - Getting ready
- GSP 02 B Editorials - Quest for transparency in FTA negotiations
- GSP 02 B News - At COP-27, India and three others oppose 'carbon border tax' Part I
- GSP 02 B News - At COP-27, India and three others oppose 'carbon border tax' Part II
- GSP 02 B News - India takes part in Moscow talks on forming 'inclusive government' in Afghanistan
- GSP 02 B News - India's G-20 presidency will be inclusive, action-oriented Modi
- GSP 02 B News - War causing immense human suffering G-20 Part I
- GSP 02 B News - War causing immense human suffering G-20 Part II
- GSP 02 C Editorials - Halting the slide
- GSP 02 C News - Biden, Sunak discuss Indo-Pacific, Northern Ireland at G-20 summit
- GSP 02 M Editorials - Unknown sources of income spiked after electoral bond entry
- GSP 02 M News - Supreme Court allows pension to 32 former women officers of IAF
- GSP 03 A News - Hold urgent meeting of GST Council, West Bengal's Amit Mitra urges FM
- GSP 03 L News - 'India has shown how to democratise technology for the good of humanity'
- GSP 03 News - 'Sea Vigil-22' drill tests security forces' preparedness in State
- GSP 03 P News - 'Need gender-based financing to fight climate change'
- GSP 03 W News - India deploys new docks, upgrades speedboats for Pangong Tso patrol

Rock art symbols could point to arrival of humans at the end of the last Ice Age in Nilgiris, says researcher

Rohan Premkumar
UDHAGAMANDALAM

Five symbols on a rock art site at Iduhatty in Nilgiris district that closely resemble the symbols used at other rock and cave painting sites in Europe could point to the arrival of modern humans in the Nilgiris between 10,000 and 40,000 years ago.

Janardhan Nanjundan of Thulithalai village, a National Geographic-certified educator, ecologist and researcher, has been documenting the rock art site at Iduhatty, around 20 km from Udhagamandalam. After consulting leading palaeo-anthropologists from across the world, he believes that a small band of modern humans made their way across Europe and Asia and into India during the end of the last Ice Age.

Common symbols

“Palaeoanthropologist and leading rock art researcher Genevieve von Petzinger has identified 32 geometric signs of Ice Age Europe, which are seen with a remarkable commonality in caves and rock art sites across Europe. At Iduhatty, five of these symbols – the



Digging deeper: More research is needed to date the symbols seen at the rock art site in Iduhatty.

circle, cordiform, dot, finger fluting and quadrangle (names given to identify the different symbols) – are seen,” Mr. Nanjundan says.

That the symbols were also painted in red ochre (iron oxide) is also consistent with the European rock art sites.

Possible messages

“Ochre is a natural pigment, predominantly just an iron oxide with varying degrees of water molecules, which yields different colours, from yellow to black. Heat-treating the



Five symbols at a rock art site at Iduhatty closely resemble geometric signs of Ice Age Europe; the site has 20 unique symbols painted in ochre

JANARDHAN NANJUNDAN,
Ecologist and researcher

ochre causes a chemical change and makes it a really vibrant red. Ochre is a mineral, it doesn't wash away or decay, allowing it

to persist through the ages. Ancestral Homo species started using ochre over 2,50,000 years ago,” he explains. “Without a doubt, these signs were meaningful to their creators. We might not know what they meant, but people of that time certainly did. The message that they were leaving behind is more than just ‘I was here’; it is actually the first way the early humans left each other notes,” he says. There are 20 unique symbols at Iduhatty.

If the theory can be proven with carbon dating, it

will mean a small group of humans managed to make their way to the Nilgiris and survive in the high altitudes of the hills, at least for a little while, before dying out or mixing with other primitive human populations.

‘Site needs protection’

As the Iduhatty site has not been studied thoroughly, unlike some of the other sites in the Nilgiris like Karikiyoor, it is difficult to date the period in which the symbols were drawn, says rock art expert K.T. Gandhirajan. He calls for more research to understand the symbols and steps to preserve such sites.

There are said to be 10 rock art sites in the Nilgiris, each with a unique history. Mr. Nanjundan says that though the Iduhatty site is off-limits, except for researchers, the symbols are fading for lack of protection and preservation. “We need to ensure that the signs and symbols at all the rock art sites are carbon-dated and photographed, so that anthropologists can study them in greater detail before they disappear or get damaged,” he says.

New weather system in the Bay of Bengal to impact north coastal belt this weekend

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A low-pressure area likely to form over the southeast Bay of Bengal by Thursday is expected to intensify into a depression by Saturday. This will increase the rainfall over Tamil Nadu, especially in the coastal districts, from Saturday.

According to the India Meteorological Department, a low-pressure area is likely to form over the southeast Bay of Bengal and the adjoining Andaman Sea by Thursday. It is likely to move west-north-westward and gradually intensify into a depression over central parts of the south Bay of Bengal by Saturday.

P. Senthamarai Kannan, Director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said a prevailing upper air circulation would influence the formation of the fresh system.

Officials said the weath-



In full flow: The check dam on the Kudaganar river near Dindigul witnessed heavy flow on Wednesday thanks to the recent rain. G. KARTHIKEYAN

er models indicated rain in the coastal parts of the State and adjoining districts, especially over the north coast up to Nagapattinam district.

Scattered rain

In its bulletin, the Regional Meteorological Centre predicted scattered rain over the State from Saturday, and it will cover more coastal districts on Sunday. Heavy rain has been forecast for Sunday at one or two places in Tiruvarur,

Nagapattinam, Mayiladuthurai, Cuddalore, Villupuram and Chengalpattu.

“We are monitoring the system. Once it concentrates into a depression, we will know more about its track. Spatial coverage and the intensity of rain will depend on the movement of the system towards the Tamil Nadu coast,” Mr. Kannan said.

In the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday, Rajapalayam in Virudhunagar received 12 cm of

rainfall, the highest in the State. A few places in Madurai, Kanniyakumari and Kancheepuram districts recorded light rain till 5.30 p.m.

The State will experience isolated rain till November 18 and Chennai may get light to moderate rain in some areas. Mist or haze may occur, too, in the early hours till Friday.

Chennai has received 131 cm of rainfall so far this year, as against its annual average of 140 cm.

Getting ready

India, during its G-20 presidency, needs to bring all nations in line with its vision

With the handover of the gavel from Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over leadership of the G-20 process on Wednesday, which will position India at the helm of forming consensus among the most advanced economies over the next year. India's presidency, which begins on December 1, comes at a time when the world faces economic hardships and global recessionary trends. In addition, the political polarisation between the U.S. and European Union, and Russia, all G-20 members, will make every meeting that India will host fraught with tensions. But the G-20 summit in Bali provided some positive signals. Despite fears that G-20 members would fail to produce a joint statement, Sherpas of each delegation persevered to reach a 17-page consensus document. Expectedly, there was trouble over the paragraphs on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. India's role in tempering some of the language during the negotiations has been highlighted, and Mr. Modi's phrase at the SCO summit in September, that this is "not an era of war", was included in the final statement. The majority of the G-20 leadership was not in favour of equivocating on the conflict, as India and a few other countries have been doing, and the joint communique said that "most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine". It was a positive sign that while Russia protested the statement, its Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was present, and President Putin's absence actually contributed to a more manageable summit for Indonesia.

The fact that Mr. Modi also extended his hand to Chinese President Xi Jinping during the banquet is in contrast to their stony demeanour at the SCO summit in September and could signal a thaw in talks between them for the first time since the LAC standoff began in 2020. While Mr. Modi may have to explain the shift domestically, his decision to speak to the Chinese President also reflects the practical reality that India, as host of the G-20 and the SCO in 2023, will need to ensure the full participation of those groupings, that include rivals such as China and Pakistan. More such pragmatism will be necessary for India in its year of the G-20 presidency, with about 200 meetings planned. To achieve this New Delhi will have to bring on board all countries with its vision for the forum's future – steering the world's economic leadership through this difficult phase, and preparing for future perils including climate change and global warming, food and energy shortages, terrorism and conflict, and bridging the digital divide.

Quest for transparency in FTA negotiations

To achieve the export target of \$2 trillion by 2030, India is going the whole hog on free trade agreements (FTAs). India is negotiating FTAs with countries such as the European Union, Canada, the U.K., and Israel. These FTAs cover a wide array of topics such as tariff reduction impacting the entire manufacturing and the agricultural sector; rules on services trade; digital issues such as data localisation; intellectual property rights that may have an impact on the accessibility of drugs; and investment promotion, facilitation, and protection. Consequently, an FTA has a far-reaching impact on the economy and society. Given this, one legitimately expects transparency and greater scrutiny of the FTA process both during and after the negotiations.

But India negotiates most FTAs behind closed doors with very little information about the objectives and processes followed and negligible scrutiny. This is not the case in other countries with whom India is negotiating such an FTA. In the U.K., for example, there are several robust mechanisms that foster a certain degree of transparency in the FTA negotiations. Furthermore, there are institutional apparatuses that enable the scrutiny of the actions of the executive, during and after the signing of the FTA. Let us look at these mechanisms.

FTA negotiations in the U.K.

First, the Department of International Trade (DFIT), U.K., publishes a policy paper laying down the strategic objectives behind negotiating an FTA and why it is important for the U.K. to have an FTA with a particular country. This policy paper is fairly detailed listing the specific advantages of signing an FTA such as the economic gains expected, distributional impacts, the environmental impact, and the labour and human rights dimensions of the FTA. In India,



Prabhash Ranjan

is Professor and Vice Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O.P., Jindal Global University. Views are personal.

no such document is produced publicly that makes a case for signing an FTA and assessing its impact on the environment and society at large. The Commerce Ministry – the nodal body dealing with FTAs – on its website provides the bare minimum information about FTA negotiations.

Second, the policy paper that the DFIT publishes also contains the inputs and responses received by various stakeholders such as businesses, non-governmental organisations, and others. Furthermore, the policy paper also explains the government view on specific suggestions. Seemingly, the Commerce Ministry also undertakes stakeholder consultations and inter-ministerial meetings but there is no public record of these discussions and the government's response to the concerns of stakeholders.

Third, in the U.K., the strategic objectives identified by the government for signing an FTA are scrutinised by the U.K. Parliament. This job is performed by the International Agreements Committee (IAC) of the British Parliament. The IAC hears expert witnesses on the FTA, critically examines the government's strategic objectives for each FTA under negotiation, and offers key recommendations wherever it finds gaps in the government's approach. The U.K. government then responds to these recommendations. In India, there is no mechanism for such parliamentary scrutiny of the executive's actions during the FTA negotiations. India's parliamentary system allows for department-related parliamentary committees that discuss various topics of importance and offer recommendations. However, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce (PSCC) rarely scrutinises the Indian government's objectives behind negotiating and signing an FTA.

Fourth, in the U.K., under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, 2010, the

executive has to lay down a treaty before the British Parliament for 21 sitting days with an explanatory memorandum before ratifying it. This allows Parliament to be apprised of the treaty the executive is going to ratify. In India, there is no mechanism for any role of Parliament in the ratification of treaties including FTAs. Entering into treaties and matters incidental to it such as negotiations, signing and ratification are within the constitutional competence of Parliament. But, Parliament in the last seven-plus decades has not exercised its power on this issue, thus giving the executive unfettered freedom in negotiating, signing, and ratifying treaties including FTAs.

India should take a leaf out of the U.K. book and develop a law on entering treaties including FTAs. This law should have the following parts. First, the executive should make a clear economic case outlining its strategic objectives publicly for entering into negotiations for a treaty such as an FTA. Second, the executive should be under an obligation to consult all stakeholders, respond to their concerns and make this information publicly available. Third, the Indian Parliament should constitute a committee on the lines of the U.K.'s IAC that will scrutinise the strategic objectives behind entering into an FTA. Fourth, the executive should place the FTA on the floor of Parliament for a certain duration, allowing Parliament to debate it, before ratifying it.

While the executive's constitutional prerogative of entering into an FTA or international treaties, in general, is indisputable, this power should be exercised in a manner that makes the executive answerable. After all, an integral facet of democracy is to hold the executive to account for its actions. It should be no different for negotiating international treaties including FTAs.

In India, there is no mechanism for any role of Parliament in the ratification of free trade agreements

At COP-27, India and three others oppose 'carbon border tax'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the 27th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Sharm El-Sheikh nearing its final stages and efforts being ramped up to arrive at a conclusive agreement, a consortium of countries, including India, jointly said on Wednesday that carbon border taxes, which could result in market distortion and aggravate the trust deficit among parties, must be avoided.

The European Union has proposed a policy called the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to tax products such as cement and steel, which are extremely carbon intensive, with effect from 2026.

BASIC, a group comprising Brazil, India, South Africa and China, large economies that are significantly dependent on coal,



The EU has proposed a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to tax cement and steel.

has for several years voiced common concerns and reiterated their right to use fossil fuels during their transition to clean energy.

Their statement expressed “grave concern” that developed countries were not showing leadership or responding with a matching effort.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 10**

India opposes 'carbon border tax' at COP-27

“Unilateral measures and discriminatory practices, such as carbon border taxes, that could result in market distortion and aggravate the trust deficit amongst Parties [signatory countries to the United Nations climate agreements], must be avoided. BASIC countries call for a united solidarity response by developing countries to any unfair shifting of responsibilities from developed to developing countries,” the statement said.

It also said that developed countries had “backtracked on finance and mitigation commitments and pledges” and there was a “significant increase” in the consumption and production of fossil fuels in the past year by developed countries, their statement underlined, even as they continue to press developing countries to move away from the same resources. “Such double standards are incompatible with climate equity and justice.”

They said that adaptation was still not being accorded the balanced and substantive attention they deserved in the UN climate framework process, despite the opportunities and linkages with “loss and damage.”

The latter refers to a demand by developing countries to have an institutional system to finance countries that are affected by climate change for the environmental damage that has already occurred.

India takes part in Moscow talks on forming ‘inclusive government’ in Afghanistan

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

India joined the latest meeting of the ‘Moscow format consultations on Afghanistan’ that was held on Wednesday in the Russian capital.

The Moscow format – one of the several dialogue platforms on Afghanistan – which began before the Taliban takeover of Kabul, consists of Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and India. Joint Secretary in-charge of Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), J.P. Singh, represented India at the talks.

“During the meeting, the participants discussed issues related to Afghanistan, including the current humanitarian situation and the ongoing efforts of

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and efforts to provide assistance were discussed

various stakeholders to provide assistance, intra-Afghan talks, formation of an inclusive and representative government, efforts to counter threats of terrorism and ensuring regional security,” the MEA said in a statement.

The meeting was announced earlier this month by Zamir Kabulov, Special Representative of the President of the Russia for Afghanistan. Mr. Kabulov had outlined that the conference would try to discuss some of the negative trends started by the Taliban in the last one year.

“Without imposing our own vision of the religious and cultural arrangement

of public life on the Kabul authorities, we [will] frankly draw attention to the counter-productiveness of the restrictions imposed on the participation of women in the labour force and girls in the process of obtaining education,” Mr. Kabulov had said. A veteran Afghanistan-handler from Moscow, Mr. Kabulov has been championing a “trans-regional approach” to stabilise Afghanistan.

Mr. Singh led a humanitarian delegation to Kabul in June when he met leading Taliban figures and handed over large consignments of medicines and medical equipment to the Afghan people. Preliminary reports suggest that Wednesday’s talks were held without the participation of any Taliban representative. Taliban spokespersons are yet to explain the reason behind this absence.

India's G-20 presidency will be inclusive, action-oriented: Modi

PM says the world is looking to India's leadership with hope; India to give priority to 'women-led development' on its G-20 agenda, he adds; Modi raises issues of 'trade, mobility, defence and security' in talks with British counterpart Sunak

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India's G-20 presidency will be "inclusive, ambitious, decisive, and action-oriented", said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who accepted the ceremonial gavel from Indonesian President Joko Widodo during the conclusion of the G-20 summit in Bali on Wednesday.

Mr. Modi, who also held meetings separately with the leaders of Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Singapore and the U.K., thanked Mr. Widodo and said the world was looking to India's leadership of the forum of the largest economies with "hope".

"India is taking charge of the G-20 at a time when the world is simultaneously grappling with geopolitical tensions, economic slowdown, rising food and energy prices, and the long-term ill-effects of the pandemic," Mr. Modi said.

He said that India would give priority to "women-led development" on its G-20 agenda, which would



New phase: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, and, right, British counterpart Rishi Sunak. AFP, REUTERS



be driven by the recently unveiled theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future". India is expected to showcase its geographical and cultural diversity during the year, and will hold approximately 200 G-20 meetings at different locations across the country.

Sources said Mr. Modi's talks with Mr. Widodo focussed on the problems of "food and energy security" that have particularly arisen due to the war in Ukraine. Earlier this year, Indonesia removed a ban on palm oil exports due to global shortages, and the Indian ban on wheat, sugar and other commodities was also discussed.

In his first meeting with

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Mr. Modi raised issues of "trade, mobility, defence and security", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement. Officials added that the India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement, which missed its deadlines last month, was discussed.

Speaking to the media, Mr. Sunak said he was "committed" to the FTA with India, but would not sacrifice "quality for speed", and wanted to "take the time to get trade deals right". The British PM's office said Mr. Sunak, who is the first British Hindu PM of Indian-African origin, also "passed on his thanks to Prime Minister

Modi for the overwhelming response of the Indian people to his appointment as Prime Minister".

While the issue of the Russian war in Ukraine overshadowed G-20 proceedings on Wednesday, none of the MEA readouts referred directly to it in talks between Mr. Modi and the European leaders.

Mr. Modi's meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni focussed on the deepening India-Italy cooperation in "energy, defence, culture, boosting [efforts to combat] climate change and the economic partnership", he said in a tweet. In a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the two leaders

spoke about the "green partnership" on renewable energy, as well as strengthening trade and investment, the MEA said.

Mr. Modi's talks with French President Emmanuel Macron referred to the defence partnership between India and France, as well as the civil nuclear cooperation pertaining to the much-delayed Jaitapur nuclear power plant.

Mr. Modi also met his Singapore counterpart, Lee Hsein Loong, and discussed the ASEAN-India partnership, bilateral ties, and increasing investment in "fintech, renewable energy, skill development, health and pharmaceutical sectors", the MEA said.

War causing immense human suffering: G-20

Joint declaration says the conflict is exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy, constraining growth, threatening energy and food security and elevating financial stability risks

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Leaders of the G-20 grouping on Wednesday said it was “essential to uphold international law and the multilateral system” as “today’s era must not be of war”.

In a joint declaration brought out at the end of the G-20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, the member states said the Ukraine war was causing economic difficulties and insecurity worldwide, and the threat of using nuclear weapons was “inadmissible”.

The declaration revealed that not all member states condemned the Russian action against Ukraine. “Most members strongly condemned the war, and stressed it is causing immense human suf-



Collective effort: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders attending the G-20 summit in Bali, plant mangroves at the Ngurah Rai Forest Park on Wednesday. REUTERS

fering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy – constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food security and elevating financial stability risks,” it said.

Following the summit, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said the “outcome document” was adopted through “consensus”, and India contributed “constructively” in its drafting. “The consensus document going forward

will be a positive development as we take over the presidency of the G-20 on first of December,” he said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
MODI MEETS LEADERS
» PAGE 10

War causing immense human suffering: G-20

The statement was issued soon after U.S. President Joe Biden chaired an emergency meeting of the western bloc in Bali after a missile from the Ukrainian battlefield landed in Przewodow in eastern Poland near the Polish border with Ukraine. NATO countries called for an emergency meeting to determine who exactly fired the missile.

The joint statement's reference to the phrase "today's era must not be of war" indicates that the collective has incorporated the argument that Prime Minister Narendra Modi first mentioned in his discussion with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's September meeting at Samarkand in Uzbekistan. "I know that today's era is not an era of war, and I have spoken to you on the phone about this," Mr. Modi had told Mr. Putin. Subsequently, this argument was reiterated by French President Emmanuel Macron, and by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during his tour of India.

The leaders' declaration coming out of the Bali summit hinted at the conversation that has gone into ensuring that the draft reflects the strong western concerns regarding Russia, while making small concessions – especially with regards to food and fertilizer supply – for Russia, which may translate into openings for dialogue in the future.

Differing assessments

The declaration indicated that the G-20 summit addressed the impact that western sanctions against Russia have had on the global economy, saying, "There were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions. Recognising that the G-20 is not the forum to resolve security issues, we acknowledge that security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy."

The declaration from the G-20 leaders expressed concern about the challenges to global food security which has been intensified by the ongoing "conflicts and tensions", and committed to taking "urgent actions" to help developing economies.

"We will take further coordinated actions to address food security challenges including price surges and shortage of food commodities and fertilizers globally," the joint statement declared. The text of the outcome document also acknowledged the "Russian donations of fertilizers facilitated by the World Food Programme" and the Black Sea Grain Corridor.

Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who led Moscow's delegation at the summit, said, Russia has "sufficient capability" to stabilise the world markets of wheat and fertilizers and announced, "Despite the sanctions and restrictions, we have already exported 10.5 million tonnes of grain, including about 8 million tonnes of wheat: about 60 percent of it went to Asia and about 40 percent, to African countries."

Halting the slide

Biden-Xi meeting only a first step towards stabilising fraught relationship

The United States and China have agreed to more “responsibly” manage their increasingly fractious relations, following a meeting between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping. In their first face-to-face meeting, since Mr. Biden assumed the U.S. presidency, in Bali on November 14, 2022 ahead of the G-20 summit, they appeared to agree that the downward slide in relations, especially in the wake of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in August, suited neither side. The biggest takeaway is an agreement that “competition should not veer into conflict” and that both must, as the White House put it in a statement, “manage the competition responsibly and maintain open lines of communication”. Mr. Xi echoed that sentiment by saying “relations should not be a zero-sum game where one side out-competes or thrives at the expense of the other”. To that end, both sides have reopened dialogues that remained frozen since Ms. Pelosi’s Taiwan visit, starting with working together on climate change, a key challenge that cannot be addressed without the world’s two biggest polluters. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will now travel to China, while other suspended joint working groups, including on global economic stability, debt relief, food security and health security, are likely to resume.

While the resumption in contact is certainly significant, it is, however, only a first and tentative step towards stabilising an increasingly fraught relationship; none of the substantive differences has been resolved. On trade, Mr. Xi noted China’s opposition to “starting a trade war or a technology war, building walls and barriers, pushing for decoupling and severing supply chains”, reflecting Beijing’s displeasure at Washington’s latest export controls on chips, which have dealt a hammer blow to its semiconductor ambitions. Human rights is another sticking point. Mr. Biden “raised concerns” about Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong, while Mr. Xi retorted that “no country has a perfect democratic system” and “just as the United States has American-style democracy, China has Chinese-style democracy”. The biggest factor, however, remains the Taiwan question. While Mr. Biden assured Mr. Xi that there was no change in the “one China policy”, the view in Beijing is that the U.S. has been gradually “hollowing out” its Taiwan commitments. Should Ms. Pelosi’s likely successor, Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, go ahead with his already declared plan to visit Taiwan, relations may yet again be plunged into crisis. While the thaw in ties between the world’s two biggest powers will be welcomed in most Asian capitals that are wary of a brewing Cold War, the respite may yet turn out to be brief.

Biden, Sunak discuss Indo-Pacific, Northern Ireland at G-20 summit

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

U.S. President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had a bilateral meeting in Bali on the fringes of the G20 Summit, where they discussed the U.K.'s Indo-Pacific priorities, Russia and Northern Ireland. Mr. Sunak had, as per his press secretary, told Mr. Biden that the border issues with Northern Ireland, which have arisen following Brexit, would be resolved by the spring next year.

This is the first meeting between the two men since Mr. Sunak, assumed office at the end of October.

Readouts from both said the leaders discussed upholding the Belfast/Good Friday agreement – i.e., the framework for peace in Northern Ireland. U.S. officials have previously indicated that a free trade deal with the U.K., contingent on the U.K. respecting the Northern Ireland Protocol – avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The issue of a hard-border has arisen since the U.K. left the Euro-



Friendly terms: Joe Biden listens to Rishi Sunak during a meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit, on Wednesday in Indonesia. AP

pean Union (EU) as Ireland continues to be a part of the EU.

Mr. Sunak agreed with Mr. Biden that the issue will be resolved by the 25th anniversary of the agreement in the spring next year, the *Guardian* reported. “The Prime Minister did refer to that anniversary next year and ensuring that we get a negotiated settlement that protects the Good Friday agreement by then,” Mr. Sunak’s press secretary was quoted as saying.

Likeminded allies

The Downing Street readout also said that Mr. Sunak and Mr. Biden “stressed the importance of likeminded allies providing a counterpoint to auth-

oritarian regimes, including ensuring developing countries can grow in a sustainable way”.

The leaders also agreed on the importance of “sustained engagement” in the Indo Pacific, citing AUKUS (a security alliance between Australia the U.K., and the U.S.) as an example, as per Downing Street. Mr. Sunak also outlined Britain’s Indo-Pacific priorities, including joining the CPTPP trade bloc. The U.K. is currently in the process of acceding to the treaty.

The meeting included discussions on Russia’s “barbaric missile strikes in Ukraine”, a White House readout said. The explosion in eastern Poland was also discussed, as were the “challenges posed by Chi-

na”, climate and sustainable and secure energy supplies. The Downing Street readout of the meeting did not refer to China, as the White House readout did.

However, hours before the meeting, Mr. Sunak’s office released a statement previewing a meeting he was supposed to have with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday.

Mr. Sunak was seeking “to establish a frank and constructive relationship” between the two countries the statement said, even as it called the challenges from China “systemic” and “long-term”.

“China is a country with fundamentally different values to ours, with an authoritarian leadership intent on reshaping the international order,” the statement said.

Wednesday’s meeting between Mr. Sunak and Mr. Xi was cancelled due to “scheduling issues” according to the U.K. government. Mr. Biden had convened an emergency meeting with G7 and NATO leaders to discuss the missile strike in Poland that killed two people, which reportedly resulted in the day’s schedule changing.

Unknown sources of income spiked after electoral bond entry

National parties' unknown income rose from 66% to 71% in the three years before and after the scheme's introduction

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Two developments have put the spotlight again on the controversial electoral bond scheme. On November 7, the Centre amended the scheme to allow an additional period of 15 days for electoral bond sales in years which have State elections. Whereas when it was introduced, these bonds were made available for a period of 10 days each in January, April, July and October with an exception in years with the Lok Sabha polls.

On October 14, the Supreme Court agreed to schedule a hearing of a petition challenging the scheme on December 6. While considering the petitions, Justice B.R. Gavai asked the government whether the scheme is transparent, to which Solicitor General Tushar Mehta replied, "The methodology of receiving money is absolutely transparent... It is impossible to get any black or unaccounted money." The NDA government has consistently claimed that the scheme has ushered in an era of transparency since it was introduced in 2018.

However, data analysed from the Association of Democratic Reforms' (ADR) annual reports reveal that the share of "unknown sources of income" has increased following the introduction of electoral bonds, achieving the opposite of what it was intended to do.

The ADR classifies income of political parties into two major types – known and unknown. The known sources of income are further classified into two types – voluntary donations made above ₹20,000 whose donor details are submitted to the ECI and "other sources of known income" such as sale of movable and immoveable assets, etc.

The unknown sources include donations below ₹20,000 via elec-

toral bonds, sale of coupons, etc., for which the details of donors are not available for the public. An amendment to the Representation of the People Act by the Finance Act, 2017, created a provision to exempt parties from declaring funds collected using electoral bonds.

Table 1 shows that the share of such unknown sources of income for national parties increased from 66% between FY15 and FY17 to 71% between FY19 and FY21. The transition year FY18 was not considered for analysis. In the same period, the share of unknown sources of income increased from 55% to 68% for regional parties. The BJP's share of unknown income increased from 58% to 68% in the period, while the Congress' remained at around 80%.

Also, the electoral bonds' share formed 57% and 64% of the national and regional parties' total incomes in the FY19-FY21 period, respectively. So, the unknown share of income went up and electoral bonds were a major reason behind the rise. "Other known sources of income" was not considered while calculating total income in both periods as it is not dependent on donations.

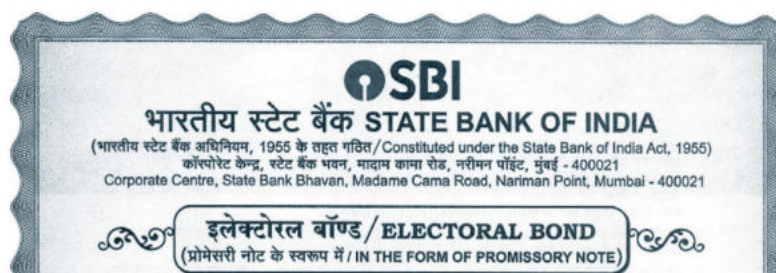
Table 2 shows the split of various unknown sources of income to the national parties in ₹ crore. It shows that after the introduction of the scheme, the burden of unknown income has merely shifted from other routes such as donations below ₹20,000 and coupon sales to electoral bonds.

Meanwhile, the expenditures for elections and otherwise, have surged as shown in table 3. Both the BJP's and the Congress' election expenses increased by more than 60% between FY19 and FY21, as compared to FY15 and FY17

Table 4 shows that the BJP has cornered a lion's share of the electoral bond income. The party received 67% of funds through electoral bonds by all parties between FY18 and FY21. If only national parties are considered, the share goes up to 81%.

Bond villain?

The data were sourced from various annual reports published by the Association of Democratic Reforms which analyses the sources of funding of various national and regional political parties. Incomes and expenditures in the tables are in ₹ crore



In all tables, figures are in ₹ crore, unless otherwise mentioned	NATIONAL PARTIES		REGIONAL PARTIES		BJP		CONGRESS	
	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21
Total known income from donations > ₹20,000 (A)	1,314	2,559	331	561	1,046	2,005	204	362
Total unknown income (B)	2,550	6,317	399	1,191	1,431	4,355	757	1,434
Total income without other known sources (C)	3,864	8,876	730	1,752	2,477	6,361	961	1,796
Total income from electoral bonds (D)	0	5,029	0	1,114	0	4,028	0	711
% of known income (A/C)	34%	29%	45%	32%	42%	32%	21%	20%
% of unknown income (B/C)	66%	71%	55%	68%	58%	68%	79%	80%
Electoral bonds income as a % of total income (D/C)	0%	57%	0%	64%	0%	63%	0%	40%
Electoral bonds income as a % of unknown income (D/B)	0%	80%	0%	94%	0%	92%	0%	50%

	Electoral bonds	Voluntary contributions (< ₹20,000)	Coupon sales	Other unknown sources of income
2020-21	74	171	170	12
2019-20	2,994	194	177	12
2018-19	1,961	217	329	6
2016-17	0	581	124	6
2015-16	0	514	173	21
2014-15	0	649	350	131

	2017-18 to 2020-21
Total electoral bond income (A)	6,364
Regional parties' electoral bond income (B)	1,120
National parties' electoral bond income (C)	5,244
BJP's electoral bond income (D)	4,238
D/A (%)	67%
D/C (%)	81%

	NATIONAL PARTIES		BJP		CONGRESS	
	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21	2014-15 to 2016-17	2018-19 to 2020-21
Expenditure	3,862	5,785	2,062	3,277	1,280	1,677
Election expenditure	-	-	1,539	2,566	785	1,264
Change in total expenses (%)	-	50%	-	59%	-	31%
Change in election expenses (%)	-	-	-	67%	-	61%

vignesh.r@thehindu.co.in; rebecca.varghese@thehindu.co.in

Supreme Court allows pension to 32 former women officers of IAF

A Bench said the petitioners had been fighting for 12 years for a chance to be considered for Permanent Commission but were now over age limit

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, in a significant order on Wednesday, ordered the Union government to grant pension to women officers who fought for 12 years to get reinstatement and Permanent Commission in the Indian Air Force (IAF).

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud found the women had been fighting for 12 years for a chance to be considered for Permanent Commission.

The 32 officers, now over the age limit to be reinstated, had urged the court at least to consider them for pension.

The women, represented by senior advocate Mee-nakshi Arora, along with advocates Archana Pathak Dave and Chitrangda Rastavara, pointed out to the court's judgment in the



The policy to induct women in the IAF included within itself the option of Permanent Commission, the petitioners said. FILE PHOTO

Babita Puniya case upholding the right of women Short Service Commission officers to be considered for Permanent Commission on a par with their male colleagues.

They also argued that the original policy to induct women in the IAF included within itself the option of Permanent Commission after completion of initial engagement

of five years. The petitioners also included three women who had lost their husbands in the service of the nation and were themselves Short Service Commission officers.

The Bench directed the IAF to consider the petitioners on the same footing with other officers to grant pension benefits after considering their deemed service of 20 years.

Hold urgent meeting of GST Council, West Bengal's Amit Mitra urges FM

Advisor to State's Chief Minister flags Council's failure to meet in the last four-and-a-half months; points to the lack of finalisation of the reports of two Groups of Ministers (GoM) for more than a year as leaving crucial issues unresolved

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Former West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra on Wednesday wrote to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman seeking an urgent meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, which he underlined had not been convened in the last four-and-a-half months.

Dr. Mitra, who is principal chief advisor to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee observed that Rule 6 of the Procedure & Conduct of Business Regulations of the

Tardy schedule

GST Council has not met even once in last four-and-a-half months

- Rule 6 of Council's business norms mandate a meeting at least once every quarter
- Former State FM says neither physical nor virtual meeting has been called
- Flags the absence of intimation of any exigency for the Council's failure to meet



GST Council state that the "Council shall meet at least once in every quarter of the financial year".

"Yet, in utter violation

of this solemn provision, you have not called a single meeting of the Council (physical or virtual) over the last four-and-a-half

months," wrote Dr. Mitra. "Not even an intimation of any exigency was communicated to the Minister of State, Finance of West Bengal, or any other member of the GST council," asserted the economist, who was a founder member of the GST Council.

Observing that the outcome of two Groups of Ministers (GoM), formed in May and September 2021 were still to be finalised, with only an interim report submitted by one of them, Dr. Mitra said the Council needed to meet to resolve the crucial issues these panels had been tasked to re-

view. He also pointed out that in the "federalist spirit" all States were doing stellar work in raising GST collections, which benefited the central government as much as it aided States.

'Zero tolerance'

West Bengal's 'zero tolerance' on default in filing of GST returns had helped lift compliance to 93% in the April-October period, from 70% last year, he asserted.

Dr. Mitra's missive comes a day after Ms. Banerjee warned the Centre should stop collecting GST if it didn't clear the dues it owed to the States.

'India has shown how to democratise technology for the good of humanity'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

India has shown how to democratise technology for the good of humanity, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi while inaugurating the 25th edition of Karnataka's tech exposition, Bengaluru Tech Summit, in Bengaluru via a video link on Wednesday.

"For a long time, technology was seen as an exclusive domain. It was said to be only for the high and mighty. India has shown how to democratise technology," he said.

India has also shown how to give tech a human touch. Technology, in India, is a force of equality and empowerment. The



Basavaraj Bommai and others listening to Narendra Modi's virtual address at the inauguration of the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2022. PTI

world's largest health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat provides a safety net for nearly 200 million (20 crore) families and about 600 million (60 crore) people. This programme is based on a tech platform. India also organ-

ised the world's largest COVID-19 vaccine drive, again on a tech-based platform called CoWIN, said the Prime Minister.

India is using technology as a weapon in its war against poverty. "Under the Svamitva scheme, we

are using drones to map land in rural areas. Then, property cards are given to the people. This reduces land disputes. It also helps the poor to access financial services and credit."

Technology has helped small businesses find big customers. At the same time, it has reduced the scope for corruption.

Inviting the global business community to invest in India, he said, "India has many excellent factors coming together. Your investment and our innovation can do wonders here. Your trust and our tech talent can make things happen. I invite you all to work with us as we lead the world in solving its problems."

'Sea Vigil-22' drill tests security forces' preparedness in State

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Armed commandos stormed vital installations across Tamil Nadu following an intelligence input on a possible terror attack and intercepted 'intruders' in a mock drill codenamed 'Sea Vigil-22'. Security forces successfully apprehended 111 'intruders' who tried to enter 15 target locations.

The exercise, which began on November 15, will be held till November 18 to check the preparedness of security forces and intelligence agencies against possible terrorist attacks along the entire coast of India. About 1,000 personnel were drafted for the exercise from the Navy, the Coast Guard, the Central Industrial Security Force, the National Security Guard (NSG), the Fisheries Department, the Directorate-General of Lighthouses and Lightships, intelligence agencies, the Mercantile Marine Department, Immigration, Cus-



On guard: Security forces apprehended 111 'intruders' who tried to enter 15 locations during 'Sea Vigil-22'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

toms, the Coastal Security Group and the police.

Sandeep Mittal, State Maritime Security Coordinator/Additional Director-General of Police, Coastal Security Group, supervised the personnel, who were divided into two groups. One group was to intrude by sea to target vital assets/vulnerable locations along the coast, while the other was to intercept intruders at sea and land.

The Coast Guard, the Navy and Customs deployed ships, boats, fast interceptor craft, helicopters and hovercraft. The Coastal Security Group de-

ployed a prototype drone, fast interceptor boats, all-terrain vehicles and more than a dozen hired boats.

Mr. Mittal said 'infiltration attempts' at 15 places were thwarted and 111 'intruders' were apprehended. Security forces and officials launched an operation to rescue 10 employees held hostage by 'terrorists' at Adani Port Control Tower. A drone located the 'terrorists'. The State Level Crisis Management Group negotiated the release of the hostages.

As the talks failed, NSG commandos captured the 'terrorists' alive.

‘Need gender-based financing to fight climate change’

At the COP-27 climate summit in Egypt, Nandini Azad, global coordinator on Global Cooperative Policy, World Farmers Organisation and president of Working Women’s Forum-Indian Cooperative Network for Women (WWF-ICNW), said that gender was an important issue that needs to be considered for poverty reduction and climate-friendly food systems. Speaking during a panel discussion on ‘Gender considerations and gender responsive action for resilient and climate friendly food systems’, she elaborated on the best practices of WWF-ICNW to benefit poor women and bring in climate-friendly regenerating strategies.

India deploys new docks, upgrades speedboats for Pangong Tso patrol

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

The Army has deployed new landing docks and speedboats for patrolling on the Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, matching the Chinese deployments on the lake.

This is part of an overall capability enhancement and infrastructure development taken up by India since the 2020 stand-off to plug deficiencies and catch up with the Chinese build-up along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

“The induction has given huge impetus to our patrolling capability and we now have boats which match the adversary,” a defence source said.

The landing crafts are capable of carrying 35 troops or one jeep and 12



Pangong Tso has been an area of constant friction. GETTY IMAGES

personnel, while the speedboats can reach speeds of 35 knots, the source stated.

In early 2021, the Army signed two contracts for the landing crafts and speedboats which were delivered in the second half of 2021.

A ₹65-crore contract was signed for 12 special-

ised patrol craft with Goa Shipyard Ltd. (GSL). The second contract for 17 troop-carrying, flat-bottom fibreglass landing docks was signed with a private manufacturer, also in Goa.

The new landing crafts have also been deployed at Sir Creek in Gujarat facing Pakistan, sources stated.

Pangong Tso has been

an area of constant friction between India and China for a long time. India holds one-third of the 135-km-long boomerang shaped lake.

The lake, a glacial melt, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jutting down referred to as ‘fingers’ and the brackish water lake freezes in winter.

India has always held until Finger 4 while it claims till Finger 8, which is where the Indian perception of the LAC lies.

The north bank of the lake, which has a much more higher difference in perception of the LAC than the south bank, was the initial site of the clash in May 2020, the beginning of the stand-off. The Indian Army has a permanent position near Finger 3.

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 war, re-drawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the India 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 provision 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 & privilege and issues arising out of these;

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.