



A photograph is placed within a white diamond-shaped frame. The photo shows a blue pen with a silver clip resting on a document. The document has the words 'ELECTORAL BOND' printed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background of the photo is dark and textured, possibly a desk or a book cover.

VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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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.

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At COP-27, India opposes draft text on agriculture

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

India has opposed the developed world's efforts to extend the scope of mitigation to agriculture at the ongoing UN climate summit in Egypt, saying rich nations do not want to change their lifestyle to reduce emissions and are "searching for cheaper solutions abroad", sources said on Thursday.

Expressing concern over the draft decision text on the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, India said developed countries are blocking a pro-poor and pro-farmer decision by insisting on expanding the scope for mitigation to agriculture, thereby compromising the very foundation of food security in the world, a source in the Indian delegation said.

India made it clear that the world is facing a climate crisis today because of the excessive historic cumulative emissions by the developed nations. "These nations are unable to reduce their emissions domestically by any worthwhile change in their lifestyles. Rather, they are searching for cheaper solutions abroad," it said.

Moscow Format calls for minority rights, ‘political reconciliation’ in Afghanistan

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The Moscow Format of Consultations on Afghanistan held in the Russian capital on Wednesday called for respect for all Afghan ethnic groups and minorities in a bid to create national reconciliation in the war-torn country. A joint statement issued after the meeting stressed upon ending all terrorist infrastructure in Afghanistan, and said placing of military infrastructure facilities of “third countries” in Afghanistan “and in adjacent states is unacceptable”.

The Taliban did not participate in the talks, but welcomed the discussion



Russian envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov (second from left) during the meeting. AP

and declared that it will not allow Afghan territory to be used against “stability of the region”.

“The strengthening of Afghan authorities’ efforts to ensure the basic rights and freedoms of the population were noted as im-

portant. The sides also expressed their support for the fundamental rights of all ethnic groups, including minorities, women and children, providing equal access to justice and education respectively,” said the statement.

The representatives at the talks also called for “complete unfreezing” of Afghanistan’s assets by Washington. Participating countries in the talks that included Russia, India, China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan called upon the Taliban to “fulfil its commitments to eradicate terrorism and drug trafficking”.

SC agrees to list plea for Collegium system review

Petitioners seek revival of National Judicial Appointments Commission that gave government a say in appointment of judges; call Collegium mode a 'synonym for nepotism and favouritism'

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Thursday agreed to list in due course a writ petition to reconsider the Collegium system of judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the High Courts.

The petition sought the revival of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), which briefly gave the government an equal role along with the judiciary in the appointment of judges to the constitutional courts before it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015.

The petition follows recent verbal attacks by Law Minister Kiren Rijju on the

An open case

The Supreme Court has agreed to list a writ petition to reconsider the Collegium system of judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the High Courts. Following recent exchanges between the executive and the judiciary over the fairness of the system, a new front seems to have opened:

1993: The Supreme Court Collegium comes into existence by virtue of a judgment of a nine-judge Bench

2014: Parliament amends the Constitution and simultaneously enacts the National Judicial Appointment Commission Act to substitute the Collegium with the commission

October 16, 2015: A five-judge Constitution Bench declares the 99th Constitution Amendment Act and the NJAC Act unconstitutional and revives the Collegium

 Nowhere in the world except India is there a practice that judges appoint their brothers as judges



KIREN RIJJU
Union Law Minister, at a function on October 18

 In the elaborate procedure (followed by the Collegium)... there are enough checks and balances



SUPREME COURT
in a November 11 judgment

Collegium system, calling it opaque.

The petitioner-in-person, advocate Mathews J. Nedumpara, with other lawyers, said the Constitution Bench judgment of

October 2015 had thwarted the "will of the people" by striking down the 99th Constitution Amendment Act, which introduced the NJAC mechanism.

The petition said the

2015 judgment should be rendered *void ab initio* as it had revived the Collegium system.

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SC agrees to list plea for Collegium review

The petitioners called the Collegium system a “synonym for nepotism and favouritism”. It said repeated representations to the Centre to evolve an alternative mechanism to the Collegium system fell on deaf ears, prompting the petitioners to approach the Supreme Court. “The NJAC received the unanimous assent of both Houses of the Parliament (except for the lone dissenting vote of Shri Ram Jethmalani) and the assent of the 21 State Assemblies. The appointment and transfer of judges falls in the exclusive province of the legislative and executive policy. It was not justiciable at all. Therefore it is incumbent upon the government and the Opposition to restore the NJAC and to take all such steps that are required,” the petition argued.

During the mentioning, Chief Justice Chandrachud pointed out that the Collegium system was provided by a judgment of the court. The Collegium system was introduced through a nine-judge Bench judgment in 1993. The CJI also wondered whether a judgment could be challenged through a writ petition.

The petition said the judicial appointments process should be transparent and open, involving the notification of vacancies and invitation of applications from “all eligible and desirous” of joining the Bench. The public should be allowed to voice their objections against the candidates. “The Collegium system of appointment of judges has resulted in the denial of equal opportunity for the petitioners and thousands of lawyers who are eligible, meritorious and who deserve to be considered. A mechanism in substitution of the Collegium is the need of the hour,” the petition argued.

Review sought on Rajiv case convicts’ release

“In such a sensitive matter, the assistance of the Union of India was of paramount importance as the matter has huge repercussions on the public order, peace, tranquillity and criminal justice system of the country,” the Centre argued. It contended that the “principles of natural justice, the aim of which is to secure justice or to put it negatively to prevent miscarriage of justice have been grossly compromised by the order of November 11”. On November 11, the top court ordered the release of Nalini, Ravichandran, Jayakumar, Suthenthiraraja (Santhan), Murugan and Robert Payas.

Opaque political financing could cost democracy dear

The discourse around political finance in India usually revolves around the issue of corruption. We see this in the political contestation over the introduction of electoral bonds. It is either presented as a pious instrument for 'cleansing' politics, by routing funding through legal channels, or as a murky mechanism for legitimating 'institutionalised corruption'.

Thus, the corruption frame locks the issue of political funding into a superficial binary of 'clean' versus 'dirty', expressed in moral or legal terms. This framing precludes any focus on the structural relationship between the nature of political funding and the shape of our political system – conveniently so, for the relationship implicates almost every political party, whether it is ruling or in the Opposition. Corruption is merely one symptom of this structural relationship, rather than being a driving factor.

How it plays a pivotal role

In any country, the nature of political finance is an important determinant of the structure of political competition. The structure of political competition can be studied around three axes: institutional (the regulation of competition between ruling and Opposition parties); organisational (the regulation of competition within a party); and ideological (the role of ideas in determining competition between parties).

All the three axes of political competition are substantially influenced by the nature of political finance. One, the degree of transparency of political funding informs the efficacy of institutional safeguards. For example, the inherent opacity of electoral bonds renders the power of the Election Commission of India (ECI) irrelevant in terms of ensuring a level-playing field. Meanwhile, the information asymmetry between the ruling and the Opposition parties gnaws at the fairness of electoral processes.

Second, the extent to which political funding is centralised within a party determines whether power in the party is drawn from organisational structures or exercised in a personalistic manner. For example, membership-funded parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Bahujan Samaj Party of an earlier era were highly organised parties where leaders wielded power in a responsive, programmatic manner. Similarly, we can chart the transformation of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom over the course of the 20th century, from an organisationally-driven mass party to a centralised elite party, as (among other factors) the balance of party funding shifted from Labour unions to corporate houses.

Third, the political financing regime also



Asim Ali

is a political researcher and columnist

It is important that independent institutions check the black hole of electoral bonds with a minimum level of institutional safeguards

shapes the role of ideas in grounding political competition. Admittedly, this relationship can proceed in varied ways according to the contingencies of different political contexts. But, as a general matter, when political finance is anchored to a narrow concentration of economic capital, the ideological basis of political competition tends to become severely corroded.

Bonds as advantage to ruling party

Having constructed this framework of analysis, let us come back to the issue of electoral bonds. How do we expect the rise of electoral bonds, as a major source of political finance, to affect the prevailing patterns of political competition? At the outset, one must note the remarkable speed with which electoral bonds have colonised at least the declared sphere of political funding. Within two years of its introduction, electoral bonds were said to cover 52% of the total income of national parties and 53% of the total income of regional parties, according to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

There are two salient features of electoral bonds we must consider to gauge its impact on political competition.

One, the design of electoral bonds, perhaps more than any other instrument of political finance, leans to the advantage of the ruling party. It is not surprising that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2019-20 got over 75% of the total electoral bonds sold, as opposed to the meagre 9% share of the Congress, according to ECI data. As the political scientist, Milan Vaishnav, has written, electoral bonds invert the concept of transparency and openness in political funding, whereby only the government, and presumably the ruling party, have access to the transaction trails. The information asymmetry and barriers to institutional scrutiny thus created considerably skews the channel of electoral bonds towards the ruling party. Second, electoral bonds centralise political funding towards the national units of political parties, further entrenching the leverage of national leadership over the State and local units. As a reply to a Right To Information (RTI) query revealed, out of the ₹5,851 crore of electoral bonds sold in 2018-19, 80% of the bonds were redeemed in Delhi. Electoral bonds were introduced alongside significant legal amendments, such as the removal of erstwhile limits (7.5% of net profit) on corporate donations. These changes in the legal architecture of political finance enable the prospects of an alliance of national political elite and big business conglomerates squeezing the space for both local elites and regional capital.

These two features of electoral bonds signal an

important break, harking back to another turning point in the history of political finance brought under the Indira Gandhi regime. As Mr. Vaishnav and Devesh Kapur have written in their book, *Costs of Democracy: Political Finance in India*, Indira Gandhi banned corporate donations in 1969 in order to limit the growth of the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh, who she feared were increasingly attracting corporate backers. These changes in political funding melded well with her wider strategy of tightening the grip of the state (and hence the ruling party) over big business through the project of dialling up licence/controls and nationalisation of key industries. At the same time, the Indira Gandhi regime also cultivated personalistic relationships with big business elites in order to marginalise the regional strongmen which had till then controlled the organisational structure of the Congress party.

Centralisation of power

Yet, the centralisation of political power seems even more commanding in the present time. Even as Indira Gandhi completely subordinated the Congress elite in the Hindi-speaking States, she allowed a measure of autonomy to leaders such as Yashwantrao B. Chavan in Maharashtra and D. Devaraj Urs in Karnataka, who were backed by important sources of regional capital. Similarly, while Rajiv Gandhi changed Chief Ministers in Uttar Pradesh on a whim, he coaxed a rebellious Sharad Pawar back into the party fold. Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commands unquestionable authority even in these States, sidelining B.S. Yediyurappa from the Karnataka unit and coercing Devendra Fadnavis into accepting a secondary role in the Maharashtra government, without provoking a squeak of protest. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party now possesses the autonomy to bring in measures such as demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST) that hurt its traditional backers (small businessmen and trading castes), because they now contribute an insignificant speck to its political treasury.

To be sure, the new political financing regime only builds on the political pathologies already prevalent in our system (crumbling organisations; political centralisation; a business-politics compact fuelled by rent seeking and cronyism) rather than creating them from scratch. Even so, it is important that independent institutions (such as the ECI and the Supreme Court of India) step in to layer the seeming black hole of electoral bonds with a minimum level of institutional safeguards, lest this "reform" of political finance goes down in history as a significant marker in our story of democratic decline.

Electoral bonds worth ₹10,246 crore sold so far

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Electoral bonds worth ₹10,246 crore have been sold by the State Bank of India (SBI) since the instrument was launched in March 2018.

Electoral bonds have been pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency to political funding.

In a Right to Information (RTI) reply, the SBI said the majority of these bonds were of ₹1 crore while less than 10% of subscriptions were of lower denominations – ₹10 lakh, ₹1 lakh, ₹10,000 and ₹1,000. About 93.5% of total bonds sold were in the denomination of ₹1 crore, according to an RTI filed by Chandra Shekhar Gaur.

Only 0.25% in value terms were from ₹1 lakh, ₹10,000 and ₹1,000 denominations.

The SBI has been authorised to issue and encash electoral bonds through 29 authorised branches.

Weighing in on PMGKAY, the free grains scheme

The extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), a scheme to distribute free foodgrains to the poor, for another three months, comes as a surprise for many reasons.

First, in the months prior to the latest extension made in late September 2022, there was much debate on the relevance of freebies. Second, there were reports in June that the Expenditure Department at the Centre did not favour it, citing a funds crunch. It also held the view that such a scheme was no longer needed "in non-pandemic times". This has to be viewed in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, raging since February 2022, and its adverse impact on the world's food and energy sectors.

'To support the vulnerable'

Even more surprising is the Government's reason: that it wanted to support the poor and the vulnerable, estimated to be 80 crore, during the festival season between October and December. No such consideration was shown when the scheme was discontinued between December 2020 and April 2021, another important time for festivities. The country had still to recover from the effects of the first COVID-19 wave, which was the trigger for the launch of the scheme in April 2020.

Critics of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party point out that the scheme's extension is with an eye on the Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, respectively. Also, the first extension fell in the period when the Bihar Assembly poll was held and the BJP shared power with the Janata Dal (United) in the State. The scheme is also regarded as one of the factors responsible for the BJP's victory in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

In contrast, the PMGKAY was not in force during December 2020-April 2021 when five States including West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, went to the polls. It was re-introduced in



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The Government may have its reasons in extending, once again, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana scheme, but it cannot delay the commissioning of a study that should help stop the diversion of foodgrains and identify the food needy

May 2021 when there were indications of a second pandemic wave, and has been running since without interruption.

Aimed at providing an additional allocation of foodgrains (rice or wheat) from the central pool at five kilograms per person per month free of cost, the PMGKAY benefits cardholders of the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Households (PHH) categories, both falling under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). This is over and above the regular monthly quota under the NFSA, i.e., 35 kg per month per family for AAY and 5 kg per month a person for PHH. The PMGKAY covers even Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) beneficiaries. After taking into account the estimated outgo of foodgrains – about 122 lakh tonnes during the current phase of extension, the aggregate allocation will be around 1,121 lakh tonnes. With the expenditure of ₹44,762 crore for the existing phase, the overall expenditure of the PMGKAY will be approximately ₹3.91 lakh crore.

Policymakers and experts concede that the scheme made a difference to food security and public health during the pandemic. Be it the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food and Public Distribution or the authors of an IMF-published working paper, "Pandemic, Poverty, and Inequality: Evidence from India" (April 2022), the scheme has received commendation. The working paper concluded that "the social safety net provided by the expansion of India's food subsidy program absorbed a major part of the pandemic shock." However, it would have been far better had the Government taken the decision to extend the scheme based on findings of an objective study regarding the impact of the PMGKAY, as suggested by the Standing Committee in its March 2022 report.

Why a transparent study is needed

At least now, the central authorities should commission a study and make its findings public.

Just as it did in the initial months of the pandemic, the Centre should consider providing 1 kg pulses free to States on a regular basis, or at least at highly subsidised rates.

To keep the budgetary allocation under control, rules on quota for rice or wheat can be changed suitably. While it is all right to provide foodgrains free during the pandemic, the central and State authorities need to ponder over the scheme's continuance, given the chronic problem of diversion from the Public Distribution System (PDS). In the non-pandemic period, the problem of diversion assumes a bigger dimension when a family of five, covered under PHH and living in a congested city, encounters practical difficulties in storing 50 kg rice or wheat a month, of which 25 kg is free. In many States, including West Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka, the 50 kg is free. In Tamil Nadu, for over 10 years, rice-drawing card holders, be they PHH or non-PHH, have been getting rice free.

In fact, the proposed study should be the basis for updating the database of foodgrain-drawing card holders, scrutinising the data critically and zeroing in on the needy. The task should not be onerous, given the widespread application of technological tools in the PDS such as Aadhaar, automation of fair price shops and capturing of the biometric data of beneficiaries. Using this database, the Centre and States can decide whether the size of the PHHs – nearly 71 crore – can be pruned or not.

In addition, if they feel the need to go beyond the mandate of the NFSA, as is being done under the PMGKAY, they can supply the foodgrains at a reasonable price. The culture of providing essential commodities free of cost at the drop of a hat has to go.

The elimination of the problem of diversion of foodgrains has to be taken up with renewed vigour as, after all, farmers toil hard in the fields to produce the grains and many deserving persons remain outside the food security net.

Programme to promote rational use of antibiotics launched

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Apollo Hospitals on Thursday launched an Antimicrobial Stewardship Programme to sensitise care providers on antimicrobial resistance and promote rational use of antibiotics.

Prathap C. Reddy, chairman of Apollo Hospitals, said antimicrobial resistance was one of the major threats to healthcare. “There is lack of awareness

on the rational use of drugs,” he said. K. Hariprasad, president, Apollo Hospitals, said decades of overuse and misuse of antibiotics had accelerated the emergence of resistant bacteria. “Drug resistance is among the top 10 public health threats faced by humanity. It has a major impact on modern healthcare. Nearly 4% of the newly diagnosed tuberculosis cases and 20% of relapses are resistant to regu-

lar anti-TB drugs,” he said.

Anupam Sibal, group medical director, Apollo Hospitals, said clinicians, nurses, pharmacologists, infection control experts and microbiologists are being brought on this platform. Sangita Reddy, joint managing director, Apollo Hospitals, said: “We have created a powerful AI-enabled system to message on appropriate antibiotic usage. We will be launching this shortly.”

Rainbow Hospital launches milk bank for preterm babies

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

On the occasion of New Born Week and World Prematurity Day, Rainbow Children's Hospital launched a perinatology clinic and a human milk bank for premature babies. This will significantly reduce the duration of hospital stay, prevent feed intolerance and facilitate early recovery in preterm babies.

Present at the event was the hospital's smallest pre-

term baby, born at 22 weeks and is now four-years old. His mother, Geetha, said her son had a twin who didn't survive and thanked the hospital for its care during the 108 days he was in hospital. She added that despite struggling with lactation, several mothers donated their milk and the hospital's crowdfunding significantly eased her burden.

"People don't believe that a baby under 500g can survive, but we are changing this perception

with our neonatal care," said Dr. Rahul Yadav, lead consultant, neonatology, Rainbow Children's Hospital. According to Shobhana Rajendran, senior consultant, neonatology and paediatrics, there are 3.5 million preterm births every year in India, of which 10% to 15% are less than 750g. "We have units on standby always and it is through coordination that we are successful in resuscitating a baby", she said. Actor Nakkhul Jaidev and his wife Sruthi participated.

Trade tumult

Shrinking exports with high deficits call for a policy reboot

For the first time since February 2021, India's goods exports shrank this October, dropping 16.7% from last year (and 16% from September 2022) to slip below \$30 billion after a 20-month-streak above that mark. Most sectors were hit hard: engineering goods, pharmaceuticals and chemicals and employment-intensive gems and jewellery, textiles and handlooms. Just six sectors recorded an uptick, with electronics goods being the only manufacturing segment. Imports grew 5.7% year-on-year, expanding the country's trade deficit over 50% to \$26.9 billion. This is the fourth straight month of a \$25 billion-plus goods trade deficit that hit a record \$30 billion in July. To be sure, imports have now been moderating sequentially for four straight months and dropped 7.3% from September to an eight-month low of \$56.7 billion. But a marginal dip in petroleum imports, along with a 10.3% shrinking of non-oil, non-gold imports from September, can also be construed as a sign of slackening domestic demand. India's trade deficit so far this year is now over \$175 billion, from \$94.2 billion a year ago. With high energy prices likely to escalate with winter's onset, a significant easing in deficit levels is not on the horizon yet.

While the Government acknowledged forecasts of a slump in global shipments growth to just 1% in 2023, it attributed the October trade blip to a seasonal Deepavali effect – production dips as workers go on leave and imports rise with festive demand. Though the pre-Deepavali and Deepavali month exports did have a \$5 billion gap in 2021, this was not the case in pre-COVID 2019. Officials conveyed there is no need to be 'overly depressed' as India has a very low share of global trade which can only grow. But that growth will not accrue automatically – in a shrinking buyer's market, rivals such as Vietnam cannot be expected to simply wait out the slump. In contrast, a new Foreign Trade Policy to replace the current policy from 2015, was recently deferred yet again till April 2023 for reasons that included waiting out the current global turmoil. If anything, the tumult in trade flows will be much worse by then. Policymakers must stop dithering and be more pro-active in recalibrating their stance – for instance, the steel export duty amid lower global prices has triggered higher imports, while exports, including those of engineering goods, have collapsed. The Finance Ministry recently identified external pressures as a key challenge – with a depreciating rupee making imports pricier and slowing global demand hurting exports. More actions are needed to match these concerns; waiting and watching is not an option.

FM asks NIIF to guide private capital into infrastructure

The National Investment and Infrastructure Fund proposes its first bilateral fund with Japan, banking on government funding; Sitharaman urges the fund to expand its lending operations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has urged the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) to expand its operations and explore ways to crowd in private capital for projects under the National Infrastructure Pipeline, PM Gati Shakti and National Infrastructure Corridor.

The loan book of two major infrastructure focused non-banking finance companies, where the government-funded NIIF has a majority stake, has

Investment shepherd

NIIF can help crowd in private capital into infrastructure projects

- Finance Minister urges fund to back National Infrastructure Pipeline, PM Gati Shakti projects
- NIIF says two infra-focused NBFC units have grown loan book to ₹26,000 cr. in 3 years
- NIIF's maiden bilateral fund involves MoU with Japan Bank for international Development



- FM urges fund to leverage attractive investment fundamentals, tap countries keen to invest in India

grown from ₹4,200 crore to ₹26,000 crore in three years with no loans turning into NPAs till date, the NIIF informed its governing

council chaired by Ms. Sitharaman.

The NIIF has proposed setting up its first bilateral fund, an 'India Japan

Fund' with contributions from the government, and signed an MoU on November 9 with the Japan Bank for International Development, it told the council.

'Tap fundamentals'

"The Finance Minister asked the NIIF team to build on the work done so far and leverage India's attractive investment fundamentals to expand its operations," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. The Minister also encouraged NIIF 'to continue discussions with investors from countries that are keen to invest in India'.

India can be a sizeable player in electronics: Minister

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

India has a great scope to emerge as a sizeable player in electronics and semiconductor products manufacturing as part of China-plus-one diversification strategy, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar said here on Thursday.

“We are well-positioned to become a trusted global partner under China-plus-one strategy and hopeful of becoming part of Global Value Chains (GVCs) for logic semiconductors, chip sets and other electronic

products,” the Minister said at the 25th edition of Bengaluru Technology Summit, Karnataka’s annual tech exposition.

Elaborating on the opportunities for India currently, he said electronics and semiconductor products today was a \$1.5 trillion industry with China solely accounting for almost 75% of it and having enjoyed a monopoly in the sector for over two decades now.

‘Tectonic changes’

“However, the pandemic has brought tectonic changes in the global electronics and semiconductor



Logging in: Visitors at the Bengaluru Tech Summit on the Palace grounds on Wednesday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

industry and they triggered huge chip shortages and a shift in GVCs. Global economies are no longer

dependent only on China and a China-plus-one diversification plan is clearly under way,” Mr. Chandra-

sekhar stated.

According to the Minister, the country’s electronics and semiconductor products manufacturing sector has witnessed a quantum growth in the last decade.

For instance, in 2014, some 92% of the mobile devices sold in the country were imported while in 2022 some 97% of mobile devices were manufactured in the country.

Also, in 2014, the country’s electronics ecosystem that comprises manufacturing, designing, innovation and production was pegged at \$10 billion, and in 2022 it grew to \$75 bil-

lion and expected to cross \$300 billion by 2025-26.

Electronics and semiconductor sector captured 66% of the FDI that came to India in the last three years, he said.

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), a specialised business division within the Digital India Corporation that aims to promote the growth of semiconductor and electronics manufacturing industry in the country, is currently in the process evaluating business proposals received from several investors to set up fabs and chip manufacturing facilities in the country.



Army's first LCH squadron moves to Missamari in Assam

The Army has moved its first light combat helicopter (LCH) squadron to Missamari, Assam, in the eastern sector near the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The LCH, India's first indigenously designed and developed attack helicopter, is also the first dedicated attack helicopter operated by the Army. "Two helicopters have moved there on November 1. The third light combat helicopter will move by November-end and the fourth by mid-December. The Army will receive the fifth LCH by January-end next year. The squadron will be fully operational by then," a defence source told *The Hindu*. The Air Force raised its first light combat helicopter squadron at Jodhpur in October.

Siberian rubythroat recorded in the Nilgiris

The bird, which breeds in the coniferous forests of Siberia, is known to winter in Thailand, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh

Rohan Premkumar
UDHAGAMANDALAM

Arare winter migrant, Siberian rubythroat (*Calliope calliope*), has been recorded in the Nilgiris.

The bird, which breeds in the coniferous forests of Siberia, is known to winter in Thailand, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Chandrasekar Das, an ecologist with the Keystone Foundation, has recorded the bird at Kotagiri.

He said that according to the data posted on the eBird website, the bird had been seen only once in Tamil Nadu, in Chennai. "However, I spotted it in the Nilgiris around six years ago as well," he said.

Spotted in tea estate

"I saw the bird while birding in a tea estate. I could hear the calls of two individuals and tracked them to find one male that I photographed. I will continue to monitor the bird from a

distance to find out whether the bird is a vagrant and how long it will be in the Nilgiris. Such insights could help in better understanding of the bird's behaviour," he said.

The Siberian rubythroat is a ground-loving songbird. The male has a red throat edged with a narrow black border and a broad white border. Females lack brightly coloured throat and borders, Mr. Chandrasekar Das said.

Each year, bird watch-

ers from across south India watch for winter migrants to the Nilgiris.

Winter gathering

Photographer M. Murali, an avid bird watcher, said he had already spotted and recorded rosy starlings, wood sandpipers and northern pintails, all winter migrants to the Nilgiris. "I have also spotted a rare Chinese blue flycatcher, though I have been unable to catch it on camera," he said.



A rare visitor: A Siberian rubythroat which was photographed in the Nilgiris recently. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

India has evidence of terror financing through social media platforms: NIA chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India has evidence of social media platforms using crowdfunding measures to fund terror activities, Dinkar Gupta, Director-General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), said on Thursday.

The chief of the federal anti-terror agency said the misuse of these platforms was an issue that needed to be discussed at the third “No Money for Terror Conference” (NMFT), which India will be hosting from November 18 to 19.

Mr. Gupta, while sharing the details of the conference that is to be attended by representatives of 78 countries, said Pakistan and Afghanistan were not attending the event while a confirmation from China was awaited.

While Pakistan and Afghanistan will not attend the event, a confirmation from China is awaited

The Hindu reported on November 15 that the use of crowdfunding platforms to finance terrorism and weak control mechanisms of social media platforms were one of the four main agendas to be discussed at the conference.

Mr. Gupta said the aim was to build an integrated approach to countering terrorism. There would be 450 representatives attending the conference, including representatives from Interpol, Europol and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be inaugu-

rating the session on Friday.

“Terrorism is an important topic for India. Almost all countries will get an opportunity to present their points. There will be no limitations,” Mr. Gupta said, adding that there had been a considerable reduction in number of terror incidents in all areas.

When asked if Pakistan’s role in sponsoring terror in India would be addressed at the conference, Mr. Gupta said, “Discussions not revolved around a particular country, wherever the threat is coming from, will be discussed.”

Sanjay Verma, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, said the NMFT was a complementary platform to discuss terrorism-related matters while the FATF also had money laundering as a vertical.

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.