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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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In Pakistan, a state of war with much drama ahead

After the failed assassination of former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday while he was on his *haqeeqi azadi* (genuine freedom) long march, things have just become far more complicated on the political horizon in Pakistan. From the operation theatre where he has been undergoing treatment, Mr. Khan has demanded the immediate removal of the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and a senior serving Major General from the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). While some of his key lieutenants have threatened revenge over the failed attempt, Mr. Khan has suggested that if these three people were not removed, all hell would break loose. The events of Thursday and the tenor from Mr. Imran Khan and his party were already foretold in the events which took place a week before.

Following the no-confidence vote against Mr. Khan's government in April this year, resulting in its dismissal, in what has been a tumultuous six months even by Pakistani standards (with allegations, intrigue and alleged conspiracies galore), there was one event last week that outdid everything else that has happened since.

A press meet to note

In what has been labelled as 'historic', 'unprecedented', 'the rarest of rare occasions', and a 'nuclear option', for the first time ever, Pakistan's military's Director General (DG), ISI, and the Director General, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) held a live joint press conference to respond to and clarify many of the allegations that Mr. Khan had made about the military, and without directly naming him, against the current Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Qamar Javed Bajwa. In the press conference, the DG, ISI, who according to media reports was the 'first spymaster to address a live news conference', said (without naming Mr. Khan) 'you meet army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa at night and then call him a traitor in the day'. The DG, ISI also revealed that days before the no-confidence motion against Mr. Khan's government was passed. Mr. Khan had, in March, offered an 'unlimited extension in tenure' to Gen. Bajwa in return for ensuring that the vote did not take place. The DG, ISI added that he was present when this offer was made: 'If you thought he was a traitor, why would you do that?' he asked, in an obvious reference to Mr. Khan. By every measure,



S. Akbar Zaidi

is a political economist based in Karachi, Pakistan

With the military making it clear that 'when the state is in a state of war, the people and the army tackle it together', things have become far more complicated politically

this press conference with the military's 'big guns' (as the media called them), was historical, unprecedented, and revealed much about the state of Pakistan's political economy, perhaps as never before.

Close ties

The Pakistan military's close relationship with Mr. Khan goes back at least four years when the general elections were held in 2018 and he became the Prime Minister. At that time there were media reports that the election results were managed by the military and its agencies to ensure that Mr. Khan's party had a winning hand. Allegations were made prior to the elections that pre-election rigging had taken place, where a number of potential candidates had received phone calls from unlisted numbers insisting that they switch party loyalties and support Mr. Khan's party. Such calls did not go unanswered and loyalties shifted overnight, resulting in Mr. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf getting the largest number of votes and seats to form a coalition government in August 2018. In a stinging and bold editorial after the DG, ISI's press conference, Pakistan's newspaper of record, *Dawn*, wrote: "It is stunning how spectacularly the PTI and the military have fallen out. There is now little question that the military establishment, especially the ISI, played a key role in bringing the PTI to power."

Throughout the nearly four year period Mr. Khan was Prime Minister, all other parties in the opposition called him a 'selected' Prime Minister. While the combined Opposition worked through parliamentary and constitutional means to oust the government, as Prime Minister, Mr. Khan had the full support of the military establishment; he repeatedly gloated over this fact, saying that for the first time in Pakistan's parliamentary history, the government and the military were 'on the same page'. When they were on the same page, Gen. Bajwa was able to get an extension of tenure by all parties through Parliament, which includes those in Opposition; the resolution in Parliament was passed in record time, with a few, mostly from the religious parties, voting against it.

While Mr. Khan's government was a failure when it came to running the country, it remained on whatever page the military wanted it to be on. In November 2021, things began to change; some decisions regarding the appointment of key

individuals in the army, including the future of Gen. Bajwa, the incumbent COAS, came up before Mr. Khan. Differences emerged and from November 2021, the combined Opposition became emboldened; probably assured of support from key institutions, it launched a successful no-confidence vote against the Khan government and ousted him from office, a move which may have now backfired.

Finding a new voice

Since then, Mr. Khan has become the new hero of Pakistan – by far the most popular politician. Having led rallies in scores of cities, his party has been able to win seats in the largest province of the Punjab and has formed the government there. In recent by-polls, Mr. Khan himself won six of the eight National Assembly seats. Ironically, having been brought to power by the military, he is now, and single-handedly, the anti-establishment champion of Pakistan's political set-up. He has found a new voice and a new life while out of power and has taken his politics to the people insisting that elections be held immediately, in the hope that were they to happen, he would ride this popular wave. However, the present government has not agreed to holding early elections, with those who determine things having become 'neutral'.

As the DG, ISI's press conference was such an extraordinary event, there has been much speculation as to why there were the 'big guns'. In a news report in English, and, importantly, in Urdu, Pakistan's biggest media house, the Jang Group of Newspapers, has asked 'highly placed military sources' why a press conference at this level was necessary. The reply, quoted in English and Urdu papers, was: 'a state of war is an environment that threatens the survival of the state. When the state is in a state of war, the people and the army tackle it together. Be it a soldier or the most senior officer, everyone enters the field.' Mr. Khan and the military in Pakistan have entered a 'state of war'.

As we know, in war there can be complete annihilation, bloodshed, negotiations, peace and also surrender. What has happened to Imran Khan is simply a continuation of a process which unfolded some weeks ago, with much more drama and histrionics ahead.

The views expressed are personal

In Beijing, Scholz urges Xi to exert influence on Russia

The international community should create conditions for talks and jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, Xi said

Associated Press

BEIJING

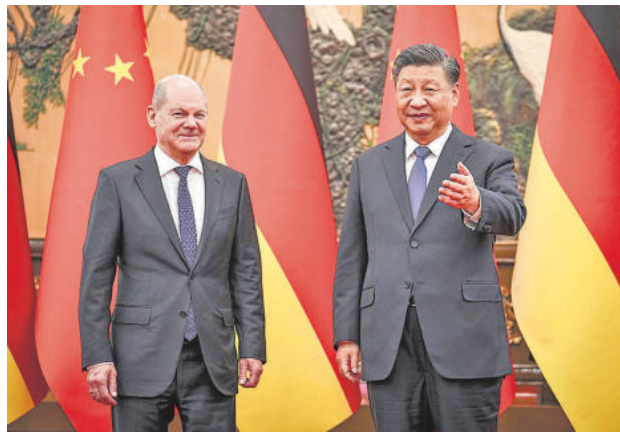
In a much-scrutinised meeting on Friday with President Xi Jinping in Beijing, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz urged China to exert its influence on Russia, while the Chinese leader repeated a call for talks between Moscow and Ukraine and warned against the conflict going nuclear.

Mr. Scholz is in Beijing for a one-day visit that has drawn criticism over China's tacit support for Russia, lingering controversies over economic ties and human rights issues, as well as the timing of the trip.

It comes after Mr. Xi further cemented his rule at a major Communist Party congress last month and as China continues to refuse to criticise Russia.

Mr. Scholz's visit reflects the importance of Germany's trade ties with China, the world's second-largest economy, particularly in the auto and manufacturing sectors. Mercedes Benz alone sold 758,863 cars in China last year, more than in any other country.

Mr. Scholz, who is travelling with several top German business leaders, received a formal welcome from Mr. Xi, who was recently reappointed head of the ruling Communist Party for a third term, at the



Furthering interests: Olaf Scholz, left, and Xi Jinping meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Friday. AP

Great Hall of the People in the heart of Beijing.

"At present, the international situation is complex and changeable," Mr. Xi was quoted as telling Mr. Scholz by state broadcaster CCTV. "As influential powers, China and Germany should work together in times of change and chaos to make more contributions to world peace and development."

Balanced framework

On Ukraine, Mr. Xi "pointed out that China supports Germany and the EU in playing an important role in promoting peace talks and promoting the building of a balanced, effective and sustainable European security framework". That was apparently a nod to Russia's anger over NATO's eastern expansion.

The international com-

munity should "create conditions for the resumption of negotiations (and) jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons," Xi said.

Without offering evidence, Russia has repeated Moscow's allegation that Ukraine is plotting a false-flag attack involving a radioactive dirty bomb that it would try to pin on Russia.

"President Xi and I agree that nuclear threats are irresponsible and highly dangerous. By using nuclear weapons, Russia would cross a line that the international community has drawn together," Mr. Scholz said. He also said he brought up human rights and market access, and told Mr. Xi that any change in the status of self-governing Taiwan "can only happen peacefully and by mutual agreement."

All employees can opt for EPFO pension scheme: SC

The court uses its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to allow eligible members who had not opted for enhanced pension coverage prior to the 2014 amendments to do so in four months

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the Employees' Pension (Amendment) Scheme, 2014 of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation as "legal and valid" while reading down certain provisions.

Most important, the court used its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to allow eligible employees who had not opted for enhanced pension coverage prior to the 2014 amendments, to jointly do so with their employers within the next four months.

The court struck down a requirement in the 2014 amendments that employees who go beyond the salary threshold (of

Extending the pension scheme

Some changes regarding EPS after the Supreme Court judgment

BEFORE:

- Pension coverage, extended in 2014 to employees drawing salary more than ₹15,000 per month, subject to

i) members contributing at the rate of 1.16% on salary exceeding ₹15,000 per month

ii) Employees should have exercised option within six months from September 1, 2014

AFTER:

- Requirement of additional contribution of 1.16% deemed incorrect. Implementation stayed for six months

- Entitlement not limited to employees who had already exercised an option under unamended EPS. If an employer and employee jointly opt for enhanced pension coverage — if they had not done so prior to the 2014 amendment — they can do so by four months from today



₹15,000 per month) should contribute monthly to the pension scheme at the rate of 1.16% of their salary.

The requirement to contribute 1.16% of the salary to the extent that such salary exceeds ₹15,000 per

month as an additional contribution made under the amendment scheme is held to be *ultra vires* to the provisions of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, a three-

judge Bench led by Chief Justice U.U. Lalit held.

The court suspended the implementation of this part for six months.

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'All employees can join EPFO pension scheme'

“We suspend the operation of this part of our order for six months. We do so to enable the authorities to make adjustments in the scheme so that the additional contribution can be generated from other legitimate sources within the scope of the Act, which could include enhancing the rate of contribution of the employers,” the judgment said. The court held that the amendments to the pension scheme notified in August 22, 2014, would apply to the employees of “exempted establishments” in the list of the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), which number over 1,300 companies and entities, in the same manner as for the staff of regular establishments.

The legal dispute primarily concerned the controversial amendments made to clause 11 of the EPS-1995. The 51-page verdict, authored by Justice Aniruddha Bose, came in an appeal filed by the EPFO challenging the decisions of the Kerala, Rajasthan and Delhi High Courts quashing the 2014 amendments on “determination of pensionable salary” under the Employees Pension Scheme (EPS) of 1995.

Before the amendments were introduced, every employee, who became a member of the Employees Provident Fund Scheme of 1952 as on November 16, 1995, could avail the EPS. In the pre-amended version of EPS-1995, the maximum pensionable salary was ₹6,500. However, members whose salaries exceeded this cap could also opt, along with employers, to contribute up to 8.33% of their actual salaries to the pension fund.

The 2014 amendments to the EPS, which included changes in Clause 11(3) and insertion of paragraph 11(4), raised the cap from ₹6,500 to ₹15,000. Paragraph 11(4) said only employees, who were existing EPS members as on September 1, 2014, could continue to contribute to the pension fund in accordance with their actual salaries. They were given a window of six months to opt for the new pension regime.

However, the court removed the cut-off date in the 2014 amendments. Employees who retired prior to September 1, 2014, without exercising any option would not be entitled to benefit of this judgment.

Centre, employees for detailed study of EPFO case verdict

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union Labour Ministry, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and organisations of employees and employers are studying the Supreme Court order on Friday upholding the validity of the Employees Pension (Amendment) Scheme of 2014.

Sources in the Labour Ministry said it would come up with detailed guidelines for the employees and employers on implementing the verdict.

A.K. Padmanabhan, workers' representative on the EPFO Board of Trustees, told *The Hindu* that the Supreme Court had upheld the verdict in the case of *RC Gupta vs EPFO*.

"Maybe, there are some points which need to be clarified. We have been maintaining that what EPFO has done to a section of workers was an injustice. We will study the judgment before making a detailed comment. Many of our unions have gone to the court demanding clarification on this issue," Mr. Padmanabhan said.

'Incomplete verdict'

BMS national secretary V. Radhakrishnan said the apex court had not taken a decision on a number of issues that were connected



The Supreme Court has upheld the verdict in the case of *RC Gupta vs EPFO*.

with the minimum pension.

"This verdict is incomplete. Certain aspects in the verdict such as approving the EPFO's argument that the average of last 60 months' salary should be considered for calculating the pension are not good for the workers. But the verdict clearly declined to accept the EPFO's argument that the worker will have to remit the Union government's component of 1.16%. This is a welcome step. Our view is that this verdict needs more clarity from the court," he said.

K.E. Raghunathan, another member of the board representing employers, said the judgment needed to be studied in detail on its deliverables from each stakeholder such as the EPFO, employers and employees for a detailed remark.

Remote voting

Shorter term overseas migrants should be able to avail the postal ballot system

India has the largest diaspora population, with nearly 1.35 crore non-resident Indians spread across the globe. Many of them leave the country for short-term work and could miss out on exercising some of their rights such as registering their vote in India's Assembly or parliamentary elections. Currently, the Election Commission of India (ECI) allows enrolled overseas citizens to vote in person at the polling station in the constituency where the person is registered as an overseas elector. The necessity to vote in person and the costs have, for overseas citizens, acted as a disincentive for their wanting to exercise their mandate. This was evident in the numbers of such voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha election – 25,606 among the minuscule 99,844 registered electors who voted. In 2014, a committee constituted by the ECI to probe methods to enable overseas voters' mandates concluded that proxy voting was the most viable, though some political parties objected to the idea. A Bill was passed in the 16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) to enable this but lapsed. In 2020, the ECI approached the Government to permit NRIs to vote via postal ballots, similar to the system already used by service voters, i.e., the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS), which allows registering their mandate on a downloaded ETPB and sending it to the returning officer of the constituency.

On the face of it, allowing postal ballot use should be a good move for NRIs, even if this does increase the burden on embassy or consular officials. This is also a more trustworthy way of registering mandates rather than appointing proxies – which is currently allowed for service personnel who are a limited number in each constituency unlike NRIs who could constitute a more substantial chunk among the electorate in some States. In the 2014 discussion organised by the ECI, some parties raised the question whether NRIs will get a benefit denied to internal migrant workers, but the higher costs of travel back to India, as opposed to travelling within, is a valid reason for allowing NRIs the partially electronic postal balloting facility. Several democratic countries allow for this option to their overseas citizens, but again, none has to deal with anything near the scale India has. The more important question to be tackled while extending the facility of voting to overseas Indians is whether longer term migrants should also be allowed to register their mandate as the idea behind limiting voters to specific constituencies on account of their residency will become infructuous. Therefore, if the postal ballot system is indeed instituted, rules must be clearly framed for voters' eligibility on the basis of their time spent away from the country.

UGC relaxes eligibility norms for institutions to get 'deemed' status

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Higher education institutions which focus on addressing strategic needs of the country, preserving Indian cultural heritage or languages will qualify to receive the 'Deemed to be University' status without the need to comply with eligibility norms laid down for other institutions.

The University Grants Commission on Friday invited stakeholder comments on its draft UGC (Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2022, which will replace the 2019 regulations.

The draft regulations create a new category of institutions, known as "distinct institution". These are institutions with "focus on teaching and/or research in unique discipline (s) and/or addressing the strategic needs of the country or engaged in the preservation of Indian cultural heritage or preservation of environment or dedicated to skill development or dedicated to sports or languages or any other discipline(s)."

These institutions will be exempted from eligibility criteria laid down for other higher education in-

The draft UGC regulations create a new category of institutions known as 'distinct institution'

stitutions to receive "Deemed to be University" status. These include valid accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council with at least 3.01 CGPA for three consecutive cycles, or ranking among top 50 or top 100 given by the National Institute Ranking Framework. Neither will they be required to comply with the requirement of a teacher-student ratio of 1:20.

Among other important changes proposed, an institution will not be required to be in existence of 20 years before seeking the status.

Also, a cluster of government or private institutions that are either from the same sponsoring body or different sponsoring bodies, can also apply for the status. The UGC, and not the Ministry of Education, will now be the authority for granting permission to a Deemed to be University to set up an off-campus centre.

Hazy signals

Omission of data points for October's robust GST revenues is puzzling

October saw the Goods and Services Tax (GST) yield the second-highest gross monthly revenues – a tad short of ₹1.52 lakh crore. This marks the eighth successive month of GST collections exceeding ₹1.4 lakh crore, including the record ₹1,67,540 crore kitty in April. The Finance Ministry emphasised that domestic transactions also contributed the second-highest taxes in the month. Underpinning October's GST flows, 8.3 crore e-way bills were generated in September, which the Ministry said was 'significantly higher' than the 7.7 crore bills of August. The festive season's onset surely boosted consumption as well as stocking up by sellers. The Government, which has routinely held up GST revenues as a yardstick of strong post-pandemic economic activity, had ample cause to talk up the latest numbers. April's record revenues, for instance, were said to be reflecting a faster recovery, and when revenues dipped sequentially in May, the Government contended that the financial year ending in March had boosted April's tax kitty. Some of the bump up in October revenues may likely be similarly attributable to taxpayers filing quarter-ending returns.

It is noteworthy that no such commentary was included in the latest GST revenue statement, which has raised eyebrows for what it has chosen to leave out than disclosed. The Ministry has omitted basic routinely shared data, such as the year-on-year growth rate for overall collections, and an explicit break-up of the growth in revenues from domestic transactions (usually clubbed with taxes levied on services imports) and imports of goods. These numbers can be deduced to some extent. Imports of goods appear to have grown at a far lower pace than in recent months going by Integrated GST and the GST Cess collections on them, rising 13% and 18%, respectively – a great sign for an economy seeking to rein in a runaway import bill. Maybe the fact that overall revenues grew 16.6% from October 2021 – the lowest growth rate since April's record kitty – prompted this reticence. But as economists point out, growth rates will moderate owing to simple base effects. Another factor may have been the tepid 2.7% sequential growth in revenues despite a 7.8% rise in e-way bills month-on-month. But if inflation is eating into consumption, it will show up one way or another. Instead of splicing data, the Government would be better served by expediting reforms to shore up revenues. The GST Council, which was to take up some of these reforms in early August, must be convened quickly. Demurring over the big picture helps no one.

China's home-grown Beidou satellite system eyes global footprint

Ananth Krishnan

BEIJING

China on Friday outlined plans to further expand the global reach of its home-grown Beidou satellite navigation system, billed as its alternative to the U.S.'s Global Positioning System (GPS).

A white paper released by the Chinese government said Beijing is "strengthening regional cooperation with organisations such as ASEAN, the African Union, the League of Arab States, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States".

Beijing has, since 2020, also made an outreach to South Asia and is already working, or in discussion with, a number of countries in the region, including Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, over adopting the Beidou satellite (BDS) navigation system. "The Belt and Road (BRI) countries are our priority," Ran Chengqi, Director of the China Satellite Navigation Office, said at Friday's launch of the white paper.

Mr. Ran said the BDS, which now has a "constellation" of 30 satellites in or-



Level up: The Beidou satellite navigation system has been billed as an alternative to the U.S.'s Global Positioning System. FILE PHOTO

bit, began its international outreach once the set up was finished in 2018. It is now in use "in more than half of the world's countries". China is also helping several BRI partners, including Pakistan and Sri Lanka, launch communication satellites.

"Saudi Arabia is using Beidou in surveying and mapping, positioning people and vehicle in the desert," he said. "Tajikistan is using BDS to monitor dams and lakes with precision. Lebanon is using BDS at Beirut port for marine survey and construction. In Burkina Faso, it is being used for survey and construction of hospitals".

Pakistan and Russia are two significant Beidou

hubs. Mr. Ran said China and Russia have signed a strategic framework on their two navigation systems, taking forward a 2015 deal on interoperability between Beidou and GLONASS

Expanding presence

Pakistan in 2014 became the first foreign country to set up a Beidou network. South Asia and Southeast Asia – both of which are key BRI regions – are a current focus of expanding Beidou's presence.

Beidou has set up a first of three Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) for its network in Thailand in 2013, to serve as a hub for ASEAN. China and Sri Lanka also agreed

plans to set up 10 CORS, according to reports in Chinese official media, which said "CORS in Thailand and Sri Lanka will extend the BDS coverage at least 3,000 km more towards Southeast Asia and South Asia.

In 2020, Beijing reached out to Bangladesh and Nepal. That year, Bangladesh Post and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar told the official *Xinhua* news agency Dhaka "will consider cooperation with BDS", while China has invited Nepal officials to Beijing for training on the Beidou system.

Mr. Ran said the next focus was to improve Beidou's capabilities, which have, in China, closed the gap with GPS in terms of accuracy, although its overseas services still lag behind.

Its application in China, he said, now included use in guiding drones, autonomous cars, in agriculture and forestry, as well as launching with Chinese mobile phone companies, using Chinese chips, satellite-powered messaging for smartphones that provides for connectivity in remote areas even in the absence of ground reception.

The real issue at COP27 is energy equity

In a starkly unequal world, what does the urgency of climate action imply? This has been a central question in the climate change negotiations since the Rio Earth Summit (1992) and will also be at the root of contestations at the upcoming 27th Conference of Parties (COP27, beginning November 6, in Egypt) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

In the run-up to COP26, last year in Glasgow, several developed countries had declared their intention to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. These declarations did not square with the requirements of “keeping 1.5 deg. C alive”. Four-fifths of the global carbon budget to limit warming to 1.5°C (with 50% probability) has already been exhausted. Developed countries are responsible for more than half of these historical CO₂ emissions. Nevertheless, there was much celebration of these targets. There was also high drama at COP26, with moral grandstanding by many developed country negotiators who invoked the future of their children, because India and other countries understandably balked at the singling out of any one fossil fuel for immediate action.

It is important to recall some of these shenanigans at COP26, as in the last year, it has become clear that developed countries may be unlikely to meet even the inadequate targets they have set, keeping to the trend of the last three decades. The rhetoric of COP26 appears unconscionably hypocritical if we consider the reality of global energy inequalities.

Global energy inequality

Global energy poverty is concentrated in the developing countries. In 2021, 733 million people had no access to electricity and almost 2.6 billion people lacked access to clean fuels and technologies. The average per capita energy use of the richest 20 countries is 85 times higher than that of the 20 poorest countries.

Addressing this stark energy poverty in developing countries is important because there is a strong correlation between energy supply and human development. The average annual per capita electricity consumption of sub-Saharan



Tejal Kanitkar

is Associate Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru



Ankita Ranjan

is a research scholar, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

At the summit in Egypt, the global South must put the question of its energy poverty and the severe global inequalities in energy access squarely at the centre of all discussions

Africa is 487 kilowatt-hours (kWh), alongside an infant mortality rate of 73 per 1,000 live births; maternal mortality ratio of 534 per 1,00,000 live births, and per capita GDP of \$1,645. On the other hand, the OECD group of countries have a per capita electricity consumption of 7,750 kWh, corresponding to an infant mortality rate of seven, maternal mortality ratio of 18, and per capita GDP of \$42,098.

The reality of global inequality was acutely evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are facing severe agricultural and industrial slowdowns in the post-pandemic period. The lack of reliable energy infrastructure has compounded the difficulties and has multi-dimensional impacts across developmental indicators.

In 2022, these inequalities have been aggravated by soaring energy and food prices. Several countries face a severe rise in the cost of living and nearly 70 million additional people are estimated to fall below the poverty line of \$3.20 per person per day. Poor and vulnerable communities in the energy-importing countries of the global South suffer the most. Almost 90 million people in Asia and Africa, who gained access to electricity recently, cannot afford to pay their energy bills. In this background, COP27 affords a critical moment to acknowledge and address the concerns surrounding energy access and security in developing countries. Unfortunately, these long-standing problems of the global South have been ignored by developed country governments, academia, and civil society. At a time when the language of energy poverty and security is re-entering the northern vocabulary, it is time to call out the hypocrisy of the advice on fossil fuel use given by the north to some of the world's poorest regions since the Paris Agreement was signed.

Hypocrisy of the global North

In the United States, 81% of primary energy is from fossil fuels. In Europe, fossil fuels constitute 76% of the energy consumption (coal, oil, and natural gas contribute 11%, 31%, and 34% respectively). Thirty years after acknowledging the problem of anthropogenic global warming

and committing in the UNFCCC, to take the lead in climate change mitigation, the level of decarbonisation in the global North has been minuscule. In July 2022, the European Union (EU) voted to classify the use of natural gas for some uses as “green and sustainable”. Natural gas was responsible for 7.5 billion tonnes of CO₂ (i.e., 23% of the total CO₂ by the major fossil fuels), in 2020. Additionally, in 2022, even coal consumption in the U.S. and the EU is estimated to increase by 3% and 7%, respectively.

These same developed countries argue that green energy constitutes a great business opportunity for developing countries as it has become cheaper. They have used this dubious argument to dismiss differentiation between developed and developing countries and are lobbying for banning the financing of any fossil fuel projects in some of the poorest countries.

Bridging the energy deficits in the global South using renewable energy alone is a much bigger challenge compared to what developed countries will face this winter. Spokespersons for urgent climate action across the world must acknowledge this stark reality that the global South has to deal with, whether in times of war or peace.

A base camp for equitable priorities

At COP27, the global South must put the question of its energy poverty and the severe global inequalities in energy access squarely at the centre of all discussions. We need to achieve zero hunger, zero malnutrition, zero poverty, and universal well-being even as we collectively contribute to ensuring effective climate action. As the strapline for COP27 (“Together for Implementation”) suggests, we must work together to ensure that these developmental goals are not side-lined, as they were at COP26, in the pursuit of hollow declarations of net-zero targets three decades into the future. A developing country leadership at COP27 can ensure effective discussions, based on equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, on the relative responsibilities and sharing of mitigation and adaptation burdens while coping with loss and damage.

As Delhi gasps, Kejriwal says stubble burning major cause

It is the responsibility of Punjab's AAP government, will find solution by next November, says Delhi Chief Minister; Punjab Agriculture Department claims bio-decomposer is not cost-effective

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

For the second straight day, the air quality in the National Capital Region remained in the worst or “severe” category of the air quality index as thick haze blanketed the city.

With pollutants from the burning of paddy stubble in Punjab said to be a significant contributing factor, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, at a joint press conference with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday, admitted that this was “the responsibility of the AAP government in Punjab”, but that six months (since the party came to power) was too short a time to fix the problem.

“A bumper crop has meant more paddy stubble, and we promise to find a solution by next November,” he said.

In the last week, the worsening air quality index prompted the Union and the State governments of Delhi and Punjab to trade accusations of not doing enough to address stubble burning, particu-



Smog-hit commute: A train passes through a thick layer of smog in New Delhi on Friday. R.V. MOORTHY

larly on the use of the bio-decomposer, a microbial liquid spray, that has been experimented on for at least two years in the Delhi NCR region.

The bio-decomposer when sprayed onto paddy stubble breaks it down in a way that can be easily absorbed into the soil where by farmers then have no need to burn the stubble.

The product was expected to be applied on five lakh acres of farmland in Haryana, or about 15% of the acreage under paddy. This year, instances of stubble burning have reduced to 2,440 from 3,666 last year in the State.

In Punjab, however, limited bio-decomposer had been applied with Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav claiming that the State had “officially” declined to use the spray saying it was ineffective. This year, there have been 26,583 instances of burning in Punjab compared to the 23,610 in the corresponding period last year. This, however, is nearly 54% of such instances recorded in 2020. Of the 75 lakh acres of paddy in Punjab, the State had committed to use the spray only in five lakh acres. An official in Punjab said that the spray had been applied in

about “90%” of this area but there was pessimism about its success.

Rain marred collection

Experts said that persistent rain in October shortened the time available for farmers to collect the residue. Moreover, unlike in previous years where farmers would pay to clear their crop of stubble or burn them, several were now expecting agents to pay them upfront for collecting it. “Farmers now want some money for it and using a decomposer to turn the straw into mulch is obviously less lucrative than selling it,” Ravinder Khaiwal, Professor of Environment Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh, said.

Meanwhile, the contribution of pollutants from stubble burning to Delhi’s noxious air increased to about 30% on Friday, a steady increase from 12% on November 1. According to the analysis by National Clean Air Programme tracker, average PM 2.5 levels in October this year were higher as compared to 2021 in capital cities of Delhi, Chandigarh, Lucknow and Patna.

Mathura-Vrindavan aims to become a carbon neutral tourist destination by 2041

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Mathura-Vrindavan, one of India's largest pilgrimage centres, aims to become a "net zero carbon emission" tourist destination by 2041, Uttar Pradesh government officials have told *The Hindu*.

This means that tourist vehicles will be banned from the entire Braj region, which includes famous pilgrim centres such as Vrindavan and Krishna Janmabhoomi. Instead, only electric vehicles used as public transport will be allowed into the area.

All 252 waterbodies and 24 forests in the area will also be revived, officials privy to the U.P. government's draft redevelopment plan said.

According to the plan, the Braj region's annual pilgrim-tourist footfall is ex-



Green plans: Work under way at a visitors' shelter near the Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple at Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. R. V. MOORTHY

pected to multiply from the current level of 2.3 crore to six crore by 2041.

"Keeping this in mind, there is a need for eco-friendly development of the area which while aiding the local economy does not have an adverse effect on the environment," said a top official of the Braj Teerth Vikas Parishad, the

nodal agency for implementing the plan.

While the draft masterplan was submitted in March, the strategy document will be submitted this month after which it will be released for public consultation.

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Mathura-Vrindavan to become carbon neutral

To attain a net zero carbon emission status, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere, by oceans and forests for instance. To facilitate this in Mathura-Vrindavan, the plan divides the entire region into four clusters, each containing two of the eight key cities. “The idea is to form small circuits called *Parikrama Paths* which the pilgrim can undertake either on foot or using electric vehicles,” Shubham Meena of Design Associates, the company which has drafted the plan, told *The Hindu*.

Tourists would park their vehicles outside the cities and use only electric vehicles such as e-rickshaws and mini-buses to travel within these small circuits. The plan envisages three to five charging points for electric vehicles in Mathura and Vrindavan and two each in other key towns. Each Parikrama Path will include water kiosks, centres distributing *prasad*, dining halls and resting spaces for tourists.

Some of the Paths being planned are in Govardhan, Gokul, Barsana and Vrindavan, all places deeply associated with Krishna devotion.

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 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.