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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

21 - OCT - 2022

FOREWORD

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

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

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

CONTENTS

- GSP 01 A Editorials - The importance of understanding many tongues
- GSP 01 A News - In China, 1962 anniversary brings new attention to 'forgotten' war
- GSP 02 A News - Controversial Bill shot down by Sri Lanka's top court
- GSP 02 A News - Truss announces exit; U.K. to get its 3rd PM in three months Part I
- GSP 02 A News - Truss announces exit; U.K. to get its 3rd PM in three months Part II
- GSP 02 C Editorials - Checks, no balance
- GSP 02 C Editorials - How is the energy crisis in Europe shaping up
- GSP 02 E Editorials - Pandemic and a free press how the largest democracy reported on COVID
- GSP 02 G News - Centre launches programme to strengthen Kashi-T.N. bond
- GSP 02 L News - Committed to press freedom, U.S. says on Mattoo's travel block
- GSP 02 L News - Competition panel imposes ₹ 1,338-cr. penalty on Google Part I
- GSP 02 L News - Competition panel imposes ₹ 1,338-cr. penalty on Google Part II
- GSP 02 M Editorials - Should Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians be given SC status
- GSP 02 M News - A new initiative in Chhattisgarh is helping prisoners get out of the legal maze swiftly
- GSP 02 M News - Forest Conservation Rules infringe upon land rights of tribespeople NCST chief
- GSP 02 M News - Panel looking into SC status of converted Dalits, says Centre
- GSP 03 A News - Low exports share lends opportunities, not gloom
- GSP 03 M News - Army's 4th round of emergency procurement to be from India
- GSP 03 P Editorials - Addressing north India's burning issue sustainably
- GSP 03 P Editorials - Saving the vultures of Tamil Nadu
- GSP 03 P News - PM launches mission to combat climate change Part I
- GSP 03 P News - PM launches mission to combat climate change Part II

The importance of understanding many tongues

The more languages reporters speak or understand, the more sources they have access to

Sobhana K. Nair

The Official Language Committee, headed by Home Minister Amit Shah, recently submitted its report to President Droupadi Murmu. It recommended that Hindi be made the medium of instruction in Central institutions of higher education in Hindi-speaking States and regional languages in other States. This has reignited a debate on the imposition of Hindi.

This debate brings to mind the importance for a reporter to speak various languages. Language is a potent tool for a journalist to start a dialogue and build camaraderie with interviewees in order to get a good story.

There are 22 official languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Most Indians speak two or three languages with relative ease. I am envious of people, especially reporters, who can converse in five or six languages. If a reporter speaks more languages, she simply has access to more sources.

Unfortunately, I am fluent in only three – English, Hindi, and Malayalam. Malayalam came in handy when I, as a crime reporter in Delhi, had to tap into the vast police circle of Malayalis who were deployed to tackle the mountains of paperwork at police stations. I can also follow Bangla and Punjabi enough to get by. Without understanding Bangla, it would be nearly impossible for me to sit through hours of briefings at the Delhi office of the Trinamool Congress, where parliamentarians often break into Bangla, especially when they want to share a story of import. Knowing a line or two of Tamil has helped me initiate many conversations and cajole laconic sources to part with crucial details.

Whether we are comfortable or not, there is really no option for reporters other than trying to understand the language of the people being reported. Recently, a colleague from Kerala, who

speaks fluent Hindi, complained about the hours of painstaking translation of Punjabi and Haryanvi he had to do to piece together a story on the agricultural crisis in Punjab and Haryana. While there is always the option of taking help from someone on the ground, a reporter will still have to trust the translator's ability to both translate and communicate the essence of the dialogue.

I can't imagine doing any ground reporting without knowing the language. Not only does the failure to decipher what the person is saying affect the story; it also becomes funny when communication is through wildly extravagant hand gestures and leads nowhere. Also, the best election stories don't come from reporters who relentlessly question respondents on electoral choices, but from the debates that voters have among themselves. If a reporter provokes the crowd and suitably places herself in the crowd to hear the argument, she will get the true picture.

Now, coming back to Hindi. How do we define "Hindi-speaking States"? There are many different dialects even in the so-called Hindi-speaking States. Most people would agree that the Hindi spoken in Delhi is vastly different from the Hindi spoken in Patna. I am not even wading into the Hindi versus Bhojpuri or Maithili debate here. Further, the tone, tenor and syntax of Hindi changes from region to region. It makes a reporter's job much easier and endears her to the public if she is able to embrace their version of Hindi.

An enduring regret from my trips to rural India is my incapability sometimes of having freewheeling conversations with the women. I distinctly recall a trip to Sikar in Rajasthan where I could not understand the women as they spoke a dialect of Hindi that I was completely unfamiliar with. I still rue the fact that I failed to get their voices in my reportage.

sobhanak.nair@thehindu.co.in

In China, 1962 anniversary brings new attention to 'forgotten' war

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

On the 60th anniversary of the India-China war, which began with a Chinese attack on October 20, 1962, China's military and media are paying renewed attention to a war that was largely previously sidelined in official Chinese military histories.

In the weeks and months leading up to Thursday's anniversary, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has showcased the war in an exhibition marking its 95th anniversary, as well as published a new military history of the war titled "One Hundred Questions on the China-India Border Self-Defence Counterattack". China officially calls the war that it launched with a massive onslaught as a "counterattack" to justify its actions.

The PLA exhibition, in Beijing's Military Museum, blames India for the conflict. "China and India have never formally demarcated their borders in their past. There is only a traditional customary line formed according to the administrative jurisdiction of both sides," it says. "After August 1959, the Indian Army invaded Chinese territory many times, causing armed border conflicts. In October 1962, the Indian Army launched a large-scale attack and Chinese



Indian soldiers seen in a bunker at a forward post in the NEFA area in November 1962. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

border defence forces were forced to flight back in self defence. It lasted 33 days and the military recovered the Chinese territory occupied by the Indian Army after August 1959."

Galwan clashes

The exhibition also highlighted the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash. The renewed focus in 1962 has coincided with the downturn in relations and the return of the border dispute to the front and centre of the relationship. The war has sometimes been described by Chinese observers as a "forgotten" war that did not receive the attention of the war against Japanese occupation or Korean War which have been a staple of Chinese television dramas and films.

The new war history has been put together by Zhang Xiaokang, daughter of former PLA General Zhang Guohua, who headed the Tibet military region and planned the Chinese

offensive in the eastern sector. Extracts of the book that were first published in January were this week once again published by the popular Chinese website *Guancha*. It said "generations of soldiers and military fans have always been interested" in the war. The main focus has been on stories of PLA war veterans. While General Zhang Xiaokang is the focus of the book, commentaries this week highlighted other 1962 Generals. An October 16 article focussed on Ding Sheng and the PLA's early offensive strategies, noting that it had drawn on its experience in the Korean War.

An October 9 commentary by Feng Ping, an account that focusses on Chinese history, quoted the writings of another PLA General, Tang Yinfa, who was a PLA political commissar in Tibet, on his observations of the Indian Army, which he noted were "very strong" but ham-

pered by "a chaotic command system and the disconnect between politics and military in decision-making, with decision-making in the hands of civilian officials who do not understand the military at all".

An October 7 analysis examined the world's response to 1962, particularly attacking "the duplicity of 'big brother' Soviet Union" that said "the unanimous position of the Politburo of the Communist Party is on the side of China" but "did not take a public stand on the war". "The Soviet Union was downright two-faced. On the surface, it remained neutral and intended to be close to China, but in fact supported India," it said. "India believed it had the support of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union."

It also explained in unusually candid terms why China announced a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew, which Beijing today points to as a sign of its "goodwill" but the commentary noted was likely driven by "already achieving the goal of deterring India" and "very difficult material supply" during a "famine", following Mao Zedong's disastrous Great Leap Forward, when China could not afford to "consume more materials" in a conflict.

Controversial Bill shot down by Sri Lanka's top court

Agence France-Presse
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court blocked the country's Parliament from approving a Bill that would have allowed the state to arbitrarily detain suspects for up to two years for "de-radicalisation", MPs were told on Thursday.

The Bill was put forward last month by the government of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was brought to power earlier this year after mass protests over an economic crisis forced his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa out of office.

It would have enabled authorities to crack down on dissidents by forcing them into "de-radicalisation and rehabilitation", without recourse to judicial relief.

But Speaker Mahinda Abeywardana announced that the country's highest court had ruled it was unconstitutional and could only become law if it was approved in a nationwide referendum.

The Supreme Court, which is empowered to scrutinise a Bill before it becomes law, held that only medically confirmed drug addicts should be rehabilitated, and no one else.

Parliamentary officials said the Bill was now likely to be scrapped.

Truss announces exit; U.K. to get its 3rd PM in three months

‘I cannot deliver the mandate on which I was elected’

A ‘leadership election’ will be completed next week, she says

Reports say that former PM Boris Johnson is planning a comeback

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

Britain is about to get its third Prime Minister in three months, with Prime Minister Liz Truss, who faced growing pressure from Conservative MPs, announcing that she will quit the post. Ms. Truss's budgetary plans, at the heart of which were unfunded tax cuts, had deeply rattled markets and led to the replacement of the Chancellor only days ago.

Speaking from behind a lectern outside No.10 Downing Street, where only 45 days ago she had stood, having just been appointed Prime Minister by the late Queen Elizabeth II, Ms. Truss announced her decision to a country that has been through a summer and early autumn of political chaos and economic turmoil.

The outgoing Prime Minister said she had come into office at a time of significant international and

economic instability, with families and businesses worried about how they would pay their bills. She said she was elected by the Conservative Party with a mandate to fix the "low

growth" that was holding the U.K. back, by lowering taxes and returning to high growth.

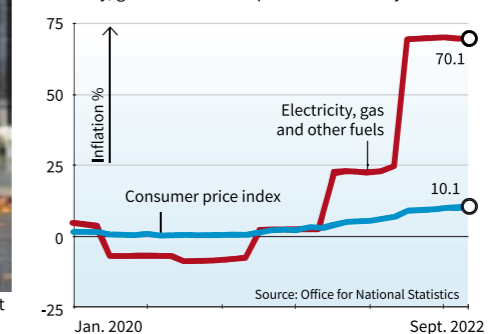
"I recognise though given this situation, I cannot deliver the mandate on



Short term: Truss makes statement outside 10 Downing Street. AFP

Exit amid turmoil

U.K. inflation accelerated to 10.1% in September, a 40-year high. Energy was among the biggest contributors as electricity, gas and other fuel prices increased by 70%



which I was elected by the Conservative Party," she said, adding that she had spoken to King Charles III and informed him of her intent to resign as leader of the party.

Ms. Truss also announced that she had met with Sir Graham Brady, who is the Chairman of the powerful 1922 Committee, on Thursday morning, and they had decided that a "leadership election" will be "completed in the next week". The 1922 Committee is a group of backbench MPs that meets twice weekly when the House of Commons is in session and whose support is crucial for Ms. Truss.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 14
ANOTHER REPORT
» PAGE 17

Liz Truss announces exit; U.K. to get new PM

Speaking later to the press, Mr. Graham was asked whether he would accept that the whole situation was a “dog’s dinner”. “It’s certainly not a circumstance that I would wish to see,” he said.

Ms. Truss’s departure is the final blow to the current government, which has seen several high profile resignations in recent days. Former Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng was compelled to step down last Friday following a botched mini-budget that had rattled markets.

Just on Thursday, Home Secretary Suella Braverman had resigned, ostensibly because she had not followed security protocols while sending an email. However in her publicly posted letter she had said that she had “concerns” about the government’s “direction”.

Also on Thursday, were chaotic scenes in the British Parliament, with reports of Tory leaders allegedly manhandling MPs in an attempt to make them support the government during a vote on fracking that had been introduced by Labour. In all of this, there was also confusion about whether the Conservative Chief Whip and Deputy Whip had resigned (it was later confirmed that they had not). Shortly after Ms. Truss’s resignation was announced on Thursday, reports emerged that former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was planning a return to No.10. Mr. Johnson believed it was in the “national interest”, *The Times* reported. It was Mr. Johnson being ousted from office in early July that had set off a contest through August that brought Ms. Truss to her leadership role after she won a majority of the some 1,60,000 votes from Conservative members.

Several Tory MPs tweeted their support for Mr. Johnson on Thursday afternoon, citing the fact that he was the only one who had won a general election and had a nationwide mandate.

The names of several contenders from the August race resurfaced on Thursday – including former Chancellor Rishi Sunak. However, Mr. Sunak had resigned from Mr. Johnson’s Cabinet, unlike Ms. Truss, who had stayed on as Foreign Secretary. Mr. Sunak’s “disloyalty” to Mr. Johnson was a factor in his loss to Ms. Truss in the summer and it is a challenge he will still need to overcome in any intra-party contest.

Checks, no balance

India must look at all its options with China to ensure listing of terrorists

China’s decision to block two proposals by India and the United States to list Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commanders on the United Nations Security Council’s 1267 terror list is part of a well-worn pattern now. Since June, New Delhi and Washington have made five such proposals, with China placing a hold on each. This includes Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar’s brother Rauf Asghar and LeT leaders Abdur Rahman Makki (Hafiz Saeed’s brother-in-law), 26/11 handler Sajid Mir and the latest listing requests for Talha Saeed (Hafiz Saeed’s son) and Shahid Mehmood, who is charged with recruitment and collection of funds for the terror group. Each of these men has been listed as designated terrorists in India’s Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act terror list as well as on the Federal Bureau of Investigation or U.S. Treasury lists. Each of them has a record of charges over the past two decades of involvement in the attacks by the LeT and JeM, organisations that are banned by the UN, and responsible for targeted strikes in India – from the IC-814 hijack, Parliament attack and Mumbai 26/11, to Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama. Even so, China’s response to the requests has been consistently recalcitrant, placing hold upon hold on the proposals made, regardless of the figure it cuts in the global counter-terrorism space, using what New Delhi has forcefully criticised as a “political bias” towards Pakistan to stymie the process.

Given the situation, India has three clear choices: the Government can abandon the effort until China can be persuaded to change its stance, or it can continue to bring terror listing proposals to the UN knowing they will be blocked by China, but showing that China is indeed misusing its power as a permanent member of the Security Council. Neither route will, however, ensure India’s goal of listing the remaining leadership of the terror groups. A third option is to open a diplomatic channel with China that focuses on the issue of global cooperation on terrorism, separate from other fractious bilateral issues, and to induce Beijing to reconsider its untenable position. While the last option seems the most difficult, if not impossible, it must be remembered that China was persuaded to “grey list” Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) from 2012-2015, and from 2018 to the present, and remove its hold and allow the terror listing of Masood Azhar at the UNSC in 2019, after blocking such attempts since 2009. As Pakistan moves off the FATF grey list – as it is expected to on Friday – it is time for India to consider all its options with China to ensure justice for all the victims of the cross-border terrorism that has exacted a deep and lasting toll on the country.

How is the energy crisis in Europe shaping up?

Why is the Netherlands government caught in a dilemma with regard to the shuttering of a large gas field in the region of Groningen, which has been plagued by earthquakes? Why should all this concern India?

K. Bharat Kumar

The story so far:

As winter approaches, Europe faces an energy problem. The numerous leaks – apparently caused by explosions – to the Nord Stream 1, which is an energy pipeline connecting Russia to Germany, has driven supplies to a halt. Amid anxieties about building up energy reserves, the gas field in Groningen in the Netherlands has once again come under the spotlight.

Why is this gas field relevant?

The region of Groningen in the Netherlands has a gas field that began operations in 1963. During the 1980s, the area saw numerous earthquakes – minor enough to avoid large damage but big enough for local buildings to develop cracks. Following these quakes, the Dutch

government had earlier said that it would shutter the field in response to local protests. The closure date was also advanced to 2022 from 2030.

However, due to recent geopolitical tensions, the Dutch government wants to keep options open. In a statement, the Dutch government had in June said that “the Cabinet would like to be in a position to close down the Groningen gas field in 2023, as this is the only way to restore safety in Groningen and to reassure residents in the long run. However, the uncertain geopolitical developments have prompted the mining minister to refrain from permanently closing down any wells this year.” A *Bloomberg* report earlier this month said that if allowed, the additional supply from the field could go up to a level that would make up for what Germany imported last year from Russia. It said that the field still had potential for

about 450 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas to be extracted.

Can oil or gas exploration cause earthquakes?

The Hindu spoke to professors specialising in both geophysics and geology at IIT-ISM (Indian School of Mines). Prof. Rajeev Upadhyay, Prof. Saurabh Datta Gupta, and Prof. Mohit Agarwal agree that man-made or induced earthquakes can be pretty damaging.

Examples of human activity that could lead to ‘induced seismicity’ are damming of rivers to create reservoirs, oil or gas extraction, and mining. Fluid extraction from hydrocarbon reservoirs (rocks that hold hydrocarbons which are oil and gas) causes an increase in net effective stresses, which, when supported by the geomechanics of the rock, may lead to development of new faults and fractures.

In the case of Groningen, the ground subsiding has been caused by extraction alone over several years. Such extraction causes rocks to contract – as the pores get to hold less and less hydrocarbons over time.

Should India be concerned about gas in the Netherlands?

India’s domestic gas price is determined from the average of four global indices viz U.S.’s Henry Hub, the U.K.’s National Balancing point, Canada’s Alberta and Russian gas. Compared with pre-pandemic times, the average domestic price of gas has more than doubled from \$5.08/MMBTU to \$11.62 and CARE Edge Director of Ratings, Sudhir Kumar, estimates that this is bound to rise again when the six-monthly reset takes place for April-September 2023. India consumed about 63.9 bcm in FY22, about 3.1 bcm more than in the previous year. Imports alone accounted for close to 50% of consumption, at about 30 bcm. Global production is estimated to decline from 4,109 bcm in calendar 2021 to 4,089 bcm in 2022. The situation would become challenging for the government unless the formula for determining domestic gas price is reviewed, he says. Till then, the government has to bear the higher subsidy burden on fertilizer – in the manufacture of which natural gas is used – as well as for the LPG sector.

THE GIST

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▼ However due to recent geopolitical tensions, the Dutch government wants to keep options open. A *Bloomberg* report earlier this month that the field still had potential for about 450 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas to be extracted.

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The need to remember: Migrant workers walking from Mumbai to Madhya Pradesh, due to lockdown, in 2020. ROY CHOWDHURY A

Pandemic and a free press: how the largest democracy reported on COVID

India must return to its democratic values to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak effectively. Indian leaders therefore need to express confidence in democratic principles and trust in the country’s citizens. That starts with a commitment to a free press.

Joel Simon

Sanna Irshad Mattoo, a 28-year-old Kashmiri photojournalist, was stopped at the Delhi airport from boarding her flight despite having a valid ticket and U.S. visa. She was on her way to receive the Pulitzer Prize for her coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in India for Reuters. In this article dated September 17, 2020, Joel Simon explains how COVID reporting in India became an endless saga of violence, harassment and censorship.

India is justly proud of its position as the world’s largest democracy. It is less proud of the fact that it has become a hotbed for the spread of COVID-19, with an estimated 90,000 daily infections, and over 5 million cases overall, second only to the United States. Can India find a way to combat the virus while preserving the democratic values that define the nation?

At the heart of any democracy is an informed citizenry that is empowered to make decisions and hold its government accountable. That is why there is nothing more essential to a democracy than a free press. It is not merely the means through which citizens gather information. It is the vehicle through which ideas are debated, policies are formulated, and conflicts are resolved. Yet, India’s press freedom record has seen a decline in recent years.

Violent attacks against journalists, including murder, are surprisingly common in India and rarely punished. A 2016 report entitled ‘Dangerous Pursuits’ by the Committee to Protect Journalists, the organisation I lead, found that journalists who report on government corruption are routinely murdered with impunity. Legal prosecution is also rife, particularly against journalists reporting on the conflict in Kashmir. Aasif Sultan, a journalist with the monthly *Kashmir Narrator*, was arrested on August 31, 2018 in reprisal for his reporting. He has since spent more than two years in jail.

‘Only official versions’

These negative trends have only intensified since the COVID-19 outbreak, with journalists across the country facing attacks, harassment, and arrests. The Narendra Modi government of course famously asked the Supreme Court to impose a nationwide censorship on the publication of information that the government deemed “false or inaccurate.” The Supreme Court denied that request, but it did direct the media to refer to the “official version” of events when covering the pandemic – an ambiguous edict which has not been enforced.

The government, and the Indian society as a whole, have a legitimate concern about the ways in which the spread of false or misleading information can undermine public health and efforts

to fight the pandemic. And the damage to the Indian economy caused by the disease itself and the precipitous national lockdown in March has inflicted tremendous pain on families across the nation.

The Narendra Modi government asked the Supreme Court to impose a nationwide censorship on the publication of information that the government deemed “false or inaccurate”

The Modi government needs to deploy the full arsenal of tools available in a democracy to confront the challenge. This means presenting a clear and credible plan to the people for tackling COVID-19, and using persuasion, arguments, evidence and reason to rally their support. It means unleashing the innovation and entrepreneurship of the Indian business community that has fuelled the country’s rapid growth. It means encouraging debate and competition of ideas that drive political solutions. And it means combating misinformation through aggressive public information campaigns, not raw censorship.

The democratic world is rooting for India’s success. While Chinese censorship helped fuel the original outbreak in Wuhan by suppressing information about

the spread of the novel coronavirus, the Chinese government has used its propaganda networks to cover up its initial failures and shape global perceptions. China has made the case that its system of authoritarian power was essential for controlling the pandemic. It contrasts the giant pool parties in Wuhan, where life has largely returned to normal, with the chaotic response in democratic countries like the United States, Brazil, and India.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese government’s narrative has resonated with authoritarian governments around the world that have used a public health emergency to restrict civil liberties and increase State surveillance and control. Even in democracies, citizens are beginning to wonder if liberty and freedom must be sacrificed to fight the disease. The U.S., grappling with its own shortcomings and political dysfunction, has not effectively made the case that democracy is an asset and not a liability in fighting a public health emergency.

India has long been a leader and an example in the democratic world, but its response to the pandemic has weakened its position. In order to restore its lustre, India’s leaders need to express confidence in democratic principles and trust in the country’s citizens. That starts with a commitment to a free press.

Joel Simon is the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists

Centre launches programme to strengthen Kashi-T.N. bond

The programme will be held as part of the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative and is aimed at rekindling the civilisational link between the two places, says Minister Dharmendra Pradhan

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Amid the continued debates over imposition of Hindi across the country, the Union government on Thursday announced a month-long programme to “strengthen” and “rekindle” the cultural and civilisational bond between Tamil Nadu and Varanasi. Named the ‘Kashi-Tamil Sangamam’, the programme would be held from November 16 to December 16.

“The period will cover the Tamil month of Karthika during which all Tamil households go pray to Lord Shiva. This programme, which would be a part of the ‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’ initiative, is aimed at rekindling the civilisational link between the new Kashi and Tamil Nadu – both deep centres of knowledge,” Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said. He added that building a heritage bridge for the new



Holy site: The programme will include visits to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. FILE PHOTO

generation was a key feature of the National Education Policy.

As part of the programme, 2,500 people divided into 12 groups would be travelling to Varanasi by train during the period. The journey points in Tamil Nadu would be Chennai, Rameswaram and Coimbatore. The groups would include students, teachers, artisans and people from various walks of life.

“It would be an eight-

day tour package,” the Minister said after launching the online registration for the tours. Mr. Pradhan said the tours would include seminars, lectures, group meetings and visits to the Kashi Vishwanath temple and centres of important Tamil cultural heritage in Varanasi.

The Centre’s decision comes at a time the Tamil Nadu government has moved a resolution against ‘Hindi imposition’ in the State Assembly.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had earlier written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi against “continuous efforts to promote Hindi in the name of one nation”.

Denying any link between the Hindi debate and the launch of this programme, Mr. Pradhan said, “This is not a reactionary programme. We had been trying to launch this for the past six months”. “The Prime Minister has earlier said that all languages are national languages and no language will be imposed on the other.”

“The Home Minister has also said that in Hindi-speaking areas it should be the link language and in other areas, the local languages should be the link language. This is our policy, all regional languages are national languages,” the Minister added.

The knowledge partners for the programme would be IIT-Madras and the Banaras Hindu University, while the Uttar Pradesh government would be the host State.

Committed to press freedom, U.S. says on Mattoo’s travel block

Sriram Lakshman

The U.S. State Department has said it is tracking the story of Pulitzer Prize-winning Kashmiri journalist Sanna Irshad Mattoo being prevented from boarding a New Delhi-New York flight on October 17 to collect her award. The U.S. also said it supported press freedom and that democratic values were the basis of the India-U.S. relationship.

Ms. Mattoo, a 28-year-old photojournalist, who won a Pulitzer Prize for her coverage of COVID-19 in India in 2020, announced on Twitter that she had been stopped at Delhi airport from boarding her flight despite having a valid ticket and U.S. visa. Other journalists who won the prize along with Ms. Mattoo were Adnan Abidi, Amit Dave and the late Danish Siddiqui, all from *Reuters*. The other two journalists who are not from Kashmir, were, as per reports, allowed to board their flight.

“Being able to attend the award ceremony was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me,” she had written. Ms. Mattoo had been stopped from travell-

ing to Paris in July for a photography exhibition as a winner of the Serendipity Arles grant 2020.

“... We are aware of the reports of Ms. Mattoo being prevented from travelling to the U.S. and are tracking these developments closely. We are committed to supporting press freedom,” Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said at the Department’s press briefing on Wednesday.

“And as the Secretary has noted, a shared commitment to democratic values, including the respect for the independence of press, is a bedrock of the U.S.-India relationship,” Mr. Patel said, adding that he did not have specific information to share apart from the fact that the U.S. was tracking developments “closely”.

Other activists and journalists have faced difficulty in recent months while attempting to depart India to attend international events. Government officials have repeatedly denied that there is crack-down on its critics and that agencies are acting independently.

Competition panel imposes ₹1,338-cr. penalty on Google

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Thursday imposed a ₹1,337.76-crore penalty on Google for “abusing its dominant position in multiple markets in the Android mobile device ecosystem”.

Issuing a “cease and desist” order, the CCI also directed Google to modify its conduct within a timeline. It added that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) should not be forced to pre-install a bouquet of applications.

The matter pertains to the Android operating system (OS) acquired by Google in 2005. The CCI examined various practices of Google with respect to its licensing and various proprietary mobile applications, including Play Store, Google Search, Google Chrome, YouTube, etc.

Five relevant markets in India – for licensable OS for smart mobile devices, app store, general web search services, non-OS specific mobile web browsers and online video hosting platform – were delineated for the purpose.

During the inquiry, Google argued about the “competitive constraints being faced from Apple” in terms of the respective OS ecosystems. The CCI noted

Issuing a “cease and desist” order, the CCI also directed Google to modify its conduct within a timeline

that Apple’s business was primarily based on a vertically integrated smart device ecosystem that focused on sale of high-end smart devices.

“Whereas Google’s business was found to be driven by the ultimate intent of increasing users on its platforms so that they interact with its revenue earning service i.e., online search which directly affects sale of online advertising services by Google,” the CCI said in a statement.

The Commission said in relation to app stores, the demand came from smart device OEMs, app developers and end users. From this perspective, it found that there was no substitutability between Google’s Play Store and Apple’s App Store; and concluded the most significant factor in the mind of an end user was hardware specification and device price.

Based on its findings, the CCI found Google to be “dominant in all the above mentioned relevant markets”.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 14

Panel imposes ₹1,338-cr. penalty on Google

The CCI said the Mobile Application Distribution Agreement (MADA) ensured that the most prominent search entry points i.e. search app, widget and chrome search browser were installed on Android devices. It also allegedly secured significant competitive edge over its competitors, in relation to another revenue-earning app, YouTube.

The CCI concluded that the mandatory pre-installation of entire Google Mobile Suite under MADA and their prominent placement amounted to imposition of unfair condition on the device manufacturers.

Should Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians be given SC status?



Sukhadeo Thorat is the former chairman of the University Grants Commission and Professor Emeritus at JNU

PARLEY

Recently, the Union government formed a three-member Commission of Inquiry headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, to examine whether Scheduled Caste (SC) status can be accorded to Dalits who have over the years converted to religions other than Sikhism and Buddhism. In a conversation moderated by **Abhinav Lakshman**, Sukhadeo Thorat and Subhajt Naskar discuss the question. Edited excerpts:

Professor Thorat, what is the argument for the inclusion of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians in the SC category?

Sukhadeo Thorat: The reservation policy is different from the policies we have for the poor. Some groups are discriminated against based on their race, colour, gender, ethnicity, caste, or religion and are therefore denied equal opportunities. So, special policies are developed for them to protect them against discrimination. Although the Hindu SCs are accorded reservation, in 1956 Dalits who had converted to Sikhism were given reservation, and in 1990 Dalits who had converted to Buddhism were also given reservation. So, it is not only the Hindu 'untouchables', but also the 'untouchable' converts to Sikhism and Buddhism who are provided protection against discrimination. But Sikhism and Buddhism are considered a part of Hinduism in the Constitution for specific purposes.

There is a demand that Dalits who converted to Christianity and Islam should also be given reservation. I think all groups which are discriminated on the basis of their identity should be provided protection by law against such discrimination. Dalit Christians have been asking for reservation for almost 20 years now. The churches in India set up a committee, studied the discrimination these people face, and found that they live in a separate locality in the village and face discrimination in churches and in accessing Christian educational institutions and getting employment in these institutions. Limited evidence has been provided for Dalit Muslims too.

Professor Naskar, what is the argument for denying them SC status?

Subhajt Naskar: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said untouchability is holding back Hindu Dalits and so they need protection. Now, Islam and Christianity are very different from Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. They are Abrahamic traditions and have water-tight religious segments. Nowhere does the Quran or the Bible



In search of emancipation: Dalits embracing Buddhism in Shorapur in Karnataka. BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mention untouchability or a caste hierarchy unlike texts in Hinduism, which mention the Varma system. The Constitution provides for reservation on the basis of the experiences of those within the Hindu framework. Now, you could ask, what about Dalit Buddhists and Dalit Sikhs? The tenets of Buddhism are different from Abrahamic tenets. Once we start interpreting religions through government-appointed commissions, it will lead to a communal discussion. And as regards the backwardness of Dalit Christians and Muslims, there is already reservation in the State OBC (Other Backward Classes) and Central OBC lists. In fact, from 27% reservation for OBCs, why do they want to shift to 15% SC reservation? But having said this, I will say there must be separate religious minority reservation where Dalit Christians and Muslims can be accommodated.

But what about growing literature that defines caste not as a feature of any single religion but as that of civilisations across the Indian subcontinent?

SN: You could argue that caste-based hierarchies entered other religions. But when it comes to constitutional allotment of SC reservation, that argument cannot be a basis. These are religious minorities who converted to these religions in the hope of getting into an egalitarian emancipatory framework and did not. Within the Muslim or Christian communities, the discrimination is not what we can call untouchability; these are ethnic differences and segregations. P. Sanal Mohan, in *Modernity of Slavery*, talks about struggles against caste inequality in colonial Kerala and their trust with Christianity. The experiences the converts had within Christianity were different from the experiences of the Dalits within the Hindu or the Buddhist fold.

Professor Thorat, considering that besides caste discrimination, converts might also face other forms of discrimination because



There was evidence that both 'high caste' and 'low caste' people converted to Buddhism and Sikhism and the 'high caste' converts continued to practise discrimination.

SUKHDEO THORAT

of internal hierarchies within the new religion, what kinds of discrimination should the Justice K.G. Balakrishnan Commission consider while making recommendations?

ST: Let me first clarify the point raised by my colleague. I think there is no theological difference between Buddhism and Sikhism, on the one hand, and Christianity and Islam, on the other, to the extent that all the four religions believe in equality. Yes, the 'untouchables' who converted to Buddhism and the 'untouchables' who converted to Sikhism have faced caste discrimination and have therefore been given reservation. So, it was accepted that although both the religions believe in equality, the 'untouchables' faced discrimination even after conversion. There was evidence that both 'high caste' and 'low caste' people converted to Buddhism and Sikhism and the 'high caste' converts continued to practise discrimination. If that is the case with Buddhism and Sikhism, there is no reason to say this does not happen in Christianity and Islam. If there is discrimination, segregation, some sort of untouchability, these people need protection against discrimination. If the Constitution guarantees equality before law, equal opportunity, principle of non-discrimination, and if discrimination continues after conversion, it is an obligation in the context of the Constitution to provide protection in whichever form you want to provide – reservation and law.

Now, if the Supreme Court has asked the government to set up a committee, the committee's objective should be to find out whether 'untouchables' who converted to Christianity and Islam face caste discrimination. If there is no evidence, there is no case for reservation. But if they face discrimination from high caste Muslims and Christians, you have to provide them protection. So, I would suggest that this Commission undertake a study and see the forms of discrimination faced by converted 'untouchables' to Islam and Christianity. And then see whether they face discrimination in the land market, labour market, education, etc. and this affects their poverty, income, employment. Then there will be a proper database for the government to take a call or not for integration.

Professor Thorat, you spoke of the discrimination faced by converts within their new religious framework. But what

about the discrimination that such converts continue to face from Hindus who are aware of their caste identity? Should the Commission also consider this?

ST: You're right. In Tamil Nadu, 'untouchables' who converted to Christianity live in segregated localities along with those of 'untouchable' Hindus. So, they face discrimination not only from caste Christians, but also from caste Hindus. We have less information about converts to Islam because that is old conversion. But the 'untouchable' converts also face caste discrimination by 'high caste' converts to Islam and high status Muslims, such as Khans. So, they face double discrimination, of caste and religion, within Islam.

Professor Naskar, what aspects should the Commission consider when looking at the possible impact of inclusion on existing SC communities?

SN: Probably one needs the Supreme Court or the government to have a bigger Commission which can deliberate upon whether these two religions have a framework of hierarchy, which is along the line of caste or caste-based hierarchies. Additionally, the 'Dalitness' of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians needs to be socio-anthropologically proved because SCs are not a religious category, but historically depressed classes are being added to the SC list. If nothing of that sort exists in these two religions, then it gives birth to a different kind of question, of whether then there can be a demand within this reservation framework.

A large part of the debate has focused on whether Dalit Christians and Muslims should be included under the SC category. But a large part of the demand is also inclusion in the SC list so they can be protected under the SC and the ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

ST: Whether they will require legal protection or they will be included in the Prevention of Atrocities Act will depend on the nature of discrimination that the Commission should determine. I am in favour of separate laws against discrimination and separate reservation, and not a part of the SC only.

SN: In the wake of atrocities on Muslims and Christians they should be protected under a minority protection law along the lines of the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.



A new initiative in Chhattisgarh is helping prisoners get out of the legal maze swiftly

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Over 450 prisoners have walked free in Chhattisgarh after Lok Adalats – a first of its kind initiative anywhere in the country according to authorities – were set up in jails across the State on October 15.

The Adalats will be held every working Saturday and provide relief to undertrials, and in some cases convicted prisoners, by explaining their rights and legal options such as plea bargaining and settlement.

Justice Goutam Bhaduri of the Chhattisgarh High Court, who is also the Executive Chairman of the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA), visited the Central Jail in Raipur and launched these Lok Adalats at all prison complexes



To new beginnings: Justice Goutam Bhaduri giving a sapling to a freed prisoner at the Raipur jail. SHUBHOMOY SIKDAR

simultaneously through the virtual mode.

According to Praveen Mishra, Secretary, Raipur District Legal Services Authority or DLSA, the objective of the exercise is swift disposal of cases and also to reduce the congestion in various jails.

There are over 20,000

prisoners lodged in various jails in Chhattisgarh, against a sanctioned capacity of 14,000, says Director General (Prisons) Sanjay Pillay. Of these, nearly 12,500 are undertrials, he adds.

Mr. Mishra says that while hearing a *suo motu* writ petition in the case of

Sonadhar Vs State of Chhattisgarh, the Supreme Court sought suggestions to reduce overcrowding in jails. "Earlier this year, the Hon'ble SLSA of Chhattisgarh came up with the suggestion of Lok Adalats. The suggestion was accepted by the Supreme Court and it issued directions in this regard," he says.

All undertrials, who have been named in offences in the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC) that are heard by a judicial magistrate – such as petty theft, house trespass, and cheating, are eligible for hearing in these Adalats. Additionally, those who have been arrested under preventive provisions for offences such as brawl or violation of special laws such as Excise Act or Railways Act are also eligible.

Forest Conservation Rules infringe upon land rights of tribespeople: NCST chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

It is the duty of the commission to “caution the government” when its policies have the potential to affect the well-being and rights of tribal people, Harsh Chouhan, Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

He said this was why the NCST had recommended to the Union Environment and Forest Ministry to put the new Forest Conservation Rules, 2022, on hold.

“We wrote to the government about the rules, which essentially eliminate the requirement of consent of local tribespeople and forest dwellers for diversion of forest land for other purposes,” Mr. Chouhan said. He said this would amount to infringing upon the land rights of tribespeople under the



The rules eliminate the requirement of consent of local tribespeople... for diversion of forest land for other purposes

HARSH CHOUHAN
Chairperson of NCST

Forest Rights Act.

The rules were issued by the Environment Ministry in June this year under the Forest Conservation Act and both Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda have repeatedly defended the rules.

Six-member group

But soon after the rules were issued, the NCST formed a six-member working group that included members of the commission and experts to look into whether the rules issued in June violated any

provisions in the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and if they infringed upon the rights of tribal people, according to officials.

Based on the conclusion of this working group and repeated dialogue with villagers in forest areas and other stakeholders, the commission decided to recommend that the new rules be put on hold, Mr. Chouhan said.

The NCST chief then wrote to the Environment Ministry on September 2, pointing out that the Ministry should, for now, focus on implementing the rules framed in 2017 and put on hold the new rules issued this year.

It also dismissed the Tribal Affairs Ministry’s and Environment Ministry’s defence that provisions of the FRA are implemented parallelly and that the rules will not affect or dilute land rights of tribespeople.

Panel looking into SC status of converted Dalits, says Centre

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The Union government, in a fresh affidavit before the Supreme Court on Wednesday, said it had noted the demands from Dalit Christian and Dalit Muslim communities for inclusion in the SC list and formed a three-member Commission of Inquiry headed by former Chief Justice of India Justice K.G. Balakrishnan to look into all aspects of the matter. It said this was done because the “issue is a seminal and historically complex sociological and constitutional question”.

However, in the affidavit, the Union government has reiterated the position it took in November 2019, and argued that the petitions in the matter were “devoid of merits” and should be dismissed, “without prejudice” to the fact that a commission had already been appointed.

Further, the Centre has limited the question in this case to whether Scheduled Caste converts to other religions suffer from the “same degree of oppressiveness as suffered by Scheduled Castes practising Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism”.

It has also argued that after conversion to another religion, the only way to establish the backwardness is to see if they are “still suffering from the same social disability, that he is following the customs and traditions of the community which he earlier belonged to and also be accepted by other members of the caste as a member of such tribe/caste”.

If such converts are “arbitrarily given the perks of reservation” in the absence of these principles, “it would cause grave injustice and abuse of the process of law, that would consequently affect the rights of the SCs”.

'Low exports share lends opportunities, not gloom'

India must tap the shift to 'one-plus' strategy in global supply chains, says Commerce Secretary Barthwal; official urges industry to not get 'overly pessimistic' over grim outlook for world trade

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

There is no need for industry to get too pessimistic about forecasts of slowing global trade, as India's share of world exports is still fairly low and there are opportunities to grab amid a shift to a 'one-plus' strategy in global supply chains, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Thursday.

"Many people would be looking at the global headwinds and may be feeling disappointed about those predictions being made... But I think one thing we should understand about



Trade winds: India hardly represents 2% in total global exports, so there is a huge opportunity, says Barthwal. REUTERS

India is we hardly represent 2% in the total global exports, so there is a huge opportunity," he said, adding that countries of similar size have a share of 10%

to 15% in world exports.

'Aim to double exports'
"So we can easily aim for doubling our exports, we can easily aim for increas-

ing our exports to 10% over a period of time. And therefore, these opportunities exist even if somebody says that world trade scenario is looking bleak, we should not get overly pessimistic about the trade scenario," Mr. Barthwal said at a national exports summit hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

As the world looks for resilient supply chains post-pandemic, countries as well as businesses are looking at a 'one-plus' strategy to reduce dependence on any single supplier nation and are keen to engage with India, he stressed.

Army's 4th round of emergency procurement to be from India

Army chief Gen. Manoj Pande says the domestic industry has risen to the challenge of meeting defence demands

Dinakar Peri
GANDHINAGAR

The Army, which has made three tranches of Emergency Procurements (EP) in the last few years, is preparing for a fourth round of EP which will be entirely from the domestic industry, Army chief Gen. Manoj Pande said on Thursday. He also said that in the next seven to eight years, orders worth ₹8 lakh crore could be placed with Indian industry.

"Emergency Procurements are done to address critical operational requirements. Three tranches of EPs were executed under which 68 contracts worth ₹6,000 crore were



Indian pavilion: Visitors viewing exhibits at the Defence Expo 2022 in Gandhinagar. VIJAY SONEJI

placed. We are now in the 4th EP for indigenous equipment. Our industry has risen to the challenge," Gen. Pande said speaking on the sidelines of the DefExpo-2022. "We also need to indigenise to modernise. It should not be seen as an impediment, but as

an opportunity."

Emergency financial powers were granted to the armed forces by the Defence Ministry in the past under which they could procure weapons systems up to ₹300 crores on an "urgent basis without any further clearances

to cut short the procurement cycle." Gen. Pande said the EP also gives them an opportunity to test various systems in the field before going in for larger acquisition through the capital budget route.

The Russia-Ukraine war taught us lot of lessons, the Army Chief said on becoming self-reliant. Not just maintenance and spares but also in terms of new acquisitions. He said the Army was working on indigenisation of ammunition while looking for alternate sources with regard to spares.

Elaborating on efforts in this direction, Gen. Pande said in the last three to four years indigenous contracts have grown almost three

times. Last year, Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for various contracts to the tune of ₹40,000 crore were issued from the domestic industry.

"Similarly, last year, Army signed contracts with indigenous industry to the tune of ₹47,000 crore. In the next 7-8 years, contracts worth about ₹7-8 lakh crore could be placed with Indian industry. So in terms of a viable market, there is great potential in the industry..." Gen Pande said. He said priority areas for indigenisation are intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, mobility solutions in forward areas, special armaments like loitering munitions and artificial intelligence.

Addressing north India's burning issue sustainably

The monsoon has receded, and North India is bracing for a smoggy winter. And with that the feverish focus on crop stubble burning has returned to India's public discourse. Like each year, discussions have begun on how bad this year's stubble burning season will likely be and what potential ad hoc techno-fixes could solve the issue – in the short term.

A problem that is historic

We will soon read in-depth analyses of satellite image-derived counts of the number of fires observed on each day, and source apportionment studies that determine the exact contribution of stubble burning to poor air quality. The purportedly apathetic farmer who cares little about the well-being of Delhi's urban citizenry will be held to a high standard of environmental stewardship, and the inevitable political mudslinging will follow soon. However, this heated public discourse adopts an unhelpful adversarial frame to a complex challenge. The problem is a historic one that cannot be fixed with short-term, unsustainable solutions.

The root cause of stubble burning can be traced back to the 1960s-70s, when to meet the urgent challenge of feeding its rapidly growing population, India introduced several measures as part of its Green Revolution. The Green Revolution transformed the way agriculture was practised, especially in Punjab and Haryana. The economics of high-yielding varieties of paddy and wheat, supported by a guaranteed buyer (the government) and minimum support prices led to a crop duopoly oriented solely around increasing caloric intakes, supplanting the earlier diversity of crops grown in the region.

Further policy moves in subsequent decades, which included the introduction of subsidies for electricity and fertilizers, and ease of access for



Bhargav Krishna

is a Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research

The issue of crop stubble burning cannot be addressed in a silo and using short-term, unsustainable solutions

credit in agriculture only served to cement this duopoly. But this transition to a two-crop agricultural praxis, while filling godowns and feeding mouths, has been depleting the water table, increasing pesticide and fertilizer use exponentially. It has also led to the consolidation of small farms into larger landholdings.

In an attempt to address the growing water crisis, the Punjab and Haryana governments introduced laws around water conservation, encouraging farmers to look to the monsoon rather than groundwater to irrigate their crops. The shortened harvesting season that arose resulting from a not clearly thought-out policy move brought about the need for farmers to rapidly clear their fields between the kharif and rabi crops; the quickest of these ways was to burn off the remaining stubble post-harvest.

The repercussion of stubble burning is felt all through the Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) airshed, where what is burned in Punjab and Haryana has an impact on air quality all the way down to Bihar and West Bengal. With studies showing a large contribution of stubble burning emissions on winter air quality in the National Capital Region, the demand for governments to act on this seemingly avoidable practice translated initially into a criminalisation of the act.

No significant improvement

More recently, however, with concerted focus on the subject, a series of short-term ex-situ and in-situ solutions have been rolled out by the Union and State governments. In-situ solutions include happy seeders and bio-decomposers, while the ex-situ solutions include collecting and using stubble as fuel in boilers, to produce ethanol, or to simply burn away alongside coal in thermal power plants. Economic incentives to reduce burning have also been tested with limited success. With crores invested in these solutions

over the last five years, we have yet to see any significant improvement in the situation.

Meaningful steps that are needed

Driven largely by short-term thinking, these techno-fixes or alternative uses work at the margins, without addressing the root cause. As pointed out in a recent article, the entire value-chain of agriculture in the region needs to change if air quality, water, nutrition, and climate goals are to be addressed. In practical terms, this means substantially reducing the amount of paddy being grown in the region and replacing it with other crops that are equally high-yielding, in-demand, and agro-ecologically suitable such as cotton, maize, pulses and oil seeds. It will also require building trust with farmers to ensure they are seen as partners (rather than perpetrators) and providing them the financial support necessary.

At a policy level, it also requires recognising that agriculture, nutrition, water, the environment, and the economy are all deeply intertwined in the era of the Anthropocene. One cannot be addressed in a silo without having second and third order effects on the other. Therefore, taking the long view on this would also mean establishing a mechanism for intersectoral policymaking that aligns our goals for sectoral policy within the broad frame of sustainable development we wish to follow.

A transition at this scale has not been witnessed since the Green Revolution, but it is what is required if we are to address stubble burning in the long run. Fostering the conditions necessary for such a transition is complex. Whether our institutions have the right mix of political will and professional skill to do so remains to be seen.

The views expressed are personal

Saving the vultures of Tamil Nadu

Which regions of the State have vulture populations? What are the reasons for the decline in vulture numbers? Are they man-made or natural? What steps do experts recommend in order to save the four species found in the State? What are the measures being taken by the State government?

EXPLAINER

Rohan Premkumar

The story so far:

In October 19, the Tamil Nadu government formed a committee to set up an institutional framework for the effective conservation of vultures. The State is home to four species of vultures – the white-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), long-billed vultures (*Gyps indicus*), the Asian king-vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*) and the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*).

Which areas in Tamil Nadu have vulture populations?

While there have been reported sightings of vultures in other districts including Dharmapuri; essentially the Nilgiris, Erode and Coimbatore districts are believed to form one of the largest contiguous expanses where vultures are spotted. Home to the nesting sites of three of the four species of vultures seen in the State, the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, parts of the Nilgiris forest division and the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve are crucial strongholds for the vultures in southern India. Occasional migrants such as the Himalayan griffon vulture and the Cinerous vulture are also spotted each year. Tamil Nadu boasts the largest population of vultures south of the Vindhyia Mountain Range.

In the Nilgiris, researchers and forest department officials estimate that there are between 100 and 120 white-rumped vultures, 10 and 15 long-billed vultures and less than 10 Asian king vultures. Though Egyptian vultures are spotted in the Sigur plateau, encompassing the Nilgiris and Erode districts, they are not believed to use the landscape to breed, while researchers still remain unsuccessful in tracing the breeding sites of the critically endangered Asian king-vulture.

Are vulture numbers decreasing?

While the population of the vultures in the



Casual meeting: White-rumped and long-billed vultures spotted in Sigur in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve buffer zone. SATHYAMOORTHY M

Nilgiris, Erode and Coimbatore districts has remained largely stable, experts state that the numbers are still extremely low, and that even a single poisoning event could lead to several of the species going locally extinct, especially the long-billed and Asian king vulture. Over the last few years, breeding seasons have also seen fewer hatchings than is the norm, with experts attributing the cause to lesser availability of prey as well as erratic weather.

Experts also agree that the use of some Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) to treat cattle, such as diclofenac, nimesulide, ketoprofen among others, has led to the crash in vulture populations across India.

What role do vultures play in the local ecosystem?

As scavengers, vultures help prevent the spread of many diseases and can remove toxins from entering the environment by

consuming carcasses of dead cattle/wildlife before they decompose. Unfortunately, their tolerance for harmful substances does not extend to man-made drugs.

What are the challenges which impact vultures in the State?

There are multiple. For one, temple tourism in the Sigur plateau is centred primarily around vulture habitats, such as Siriyur, Anaikatty and Bokkapuram. Over the last few years, there have been recorded instances of vultures abandoning nesting sites located too close to temples inside these reserves, with activists calling for strict controls on the amount of people allowed to attend these festivals.

Another threat is the spread of invasive weeds such as the Lantana camara in vulture-landscapes, which hinder the birds from scavenging as their large wing-spans require plenty of open area to safely land and to take to the skies in case of any major

threats. Finally, due to the illegal tapping of water along the streams running through these areas, possible climate change, and forest fires, the Terminalia arjuna trees, that many vultures use as nesting sites are disappearing. Only through a multipronged approach of increasing the amount of food available to the birds and managing invasive species can vulture numbers start rebounding, say experts.

What are the steps taken to protect vultures in the State?

The State government has banned the use of diclofenac, a drug, to treat cattle, while there are strict restrictions for the sale of other NSAIDs in the Nilgiris, Erode and Coimbatore districts. Additionally, as the vultures in the Sigur plateau utilise landscapes in neighboring Karnataka and Kerala, experts have called for a synchronous vulture census to accurately identify vulture populations and nesting sites.

THE GIST

On October 19, the Tamil Nadu government formed a committee to set up an institutional framework for the effective conservation of vultures. Tamil Nadu boasts the largest population of vultures south of the Vindhyia Mountain Range.

Vulture numbers are decreasing over the last few years, with experts attributing the cause to lesser availability of prey as well as erratic weather. Experts also agree that the use of some Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs to treat cattle has led to the crash in vulture populations across India.

The State government has banned the use of diclofenac to treat cattle, while there are strict restrictions for the sale of other NSAIDs in the Nilgiris, Erode and Coimbatore districts.

PM launches new mission to combat climate change

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the presence of U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, launched 'Mission LiFE' (Lifestyle For Environment), a new initiative for sustainable and healthy lifestyle at the Statue of Unity in Gujarat on Thursday.

Listing climate change and global warming as the main challenges before the world, the Prime Minister underlined that Mission LiFE makes the fight against climate change democratic with the contri-

bution of everyone in their own capacity.

Mr. Guterres unveiled the LiFE logo and tagline and released the mission document at the event in which Union Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar and Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel were present.

"The launch of Mission LiFE in Gujarat is important as it was the first State to initiate measures in the direction of renewable energy and climate protection," Mr. Modi said.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 14**

PM launches mission to combat climate change

Setting up solar power plants, installing solar panels on canals or taking steps for water conservation in drought-prone areas were meant to fight the environmental-related calamities while setting the trends for sustainable development, he said.

He described Mission LiFe as a global initiative by India to help the world in its fight against climate change and lead to a sustainable way of life to achieve the sustainable development goals. The fight went beyond policy making and needed wider support from individuals and community, he said and advocated the concept of 'reduce, reuse and recycle'.

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	Citizen's 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.