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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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The red truth of China's 'Common Prosperity Discourse'

Rather than making a radical break and realigning social relations, it seems intended to sustain the existing system



ANAND P. KRISHNAN

From a regulatory crackdown on tech unicorns to clampdown on private tutoring, from exhorting the rich to redistribute wealth to fintech companies forming unions for their workforce, a series of verbal assertions and administrative measures have been upending people's lives in China over the last few months. The common thread binding these disparate actions together is the term, Common Prosperity (*gong-tong fuyu*).

From start to present

Common Prosperity is not an entirely new term, having figured in all political reports at different congresses of the Communist Party of China (CPC) since 1992. However, it has acquired momentum under China's President Xi Jinping as a special campaign. He unveiled its action plan in his speech at the 10th meeting of China's Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs in August this year; its text was published in the CPC's theoretical journal, *Qiyshi*, in October. Like with Mr. Xi's various signature political concepts, the theoretical design for this 'New Deal' – as has been characterised in some quarters – is believed to have been provided by Wang Hung-min, member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the CPC.

The top-down campaign is aimed at engineering a "profound

transformation" of the country, in achieving prosperity for all people in their material and spiritual (and moral) lives. It seeks to tame the excesses generated by the over four decade-long Reform and Opening Up (*gaige kaifang*). Despite achieving industrial transformation and technological growth, widening inequality (income, wealth, and region-based) and unbalanced, or inadequate development are characterised as negative by-products that need fixing. China's Gini coefficient as per available figures, have remained between 0.46 and 0.49 for the last two decades. Being abreast of happenings around the world, the Party-state is anxious about social disintegration and political polarisation, which would end up destabilising its authoritarian rule and question its legitimacy.

Roots in CPC congress

The building blocks for this campaign lie in Mr. Xi's political report at the 19th Congress of the CPC in 2017, where he identified the change in the principal contradiction in Chinese society from earlier years – between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life. In fact, several aspects mentioned in the speech on Common Prosperity also figure in that political report – rather, Mr. Xi has chosen to give some extra push to a few of them to hasten results (such as a proposed law on property tax to regulate the highly speculative real estate sector; the first step in that direction is the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China authorising the State Council to initiate



FILE PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

pilot experiments for five years before national implementation). This drive desires to tighten the Party-state's control over monopolies, regulate the private sector, expand the size of the middle class, and check wealth accumulation. There is an emphasis on equalising access to basic social services but going by past experiences, its effectiveness remains uncertain.

Redistribution and labour

Parsing through the speech, it is notable that the commitment to State-led capitalism is intact, and the pursuit of larger economic goals also remains steadfast. There is little to no criticism of the phenomenon of conspicuous consumption. Mr. Xi continues to encourage people getting rich albeit in a more controlled manner as dictated by the Party-state. Though he wishes to divide the cake well, he is silent on simultaneously increasing its size. He specifies that the action plan should not be equated with egalitarianism, and that excessive guarantees be not provided even if China reaches a higher level of development and acquires stronger financial resources in the future. In doing so, he has signalled that the government would continue its non-intervention in substantive welfare redistribution. In high-

lighting the need to avoid welfareism, which he views as a trap for nurturing lazy people, Mr. Xi's positioning is in sync with the neoliberal logic that views redistribution as anathema to economic growth.

Laying emphasis on the requirement of high-quality workers for high-quality development, Mr. Xi's prioritisation of the development and upgradation of human capital for productivity is indicative of the Party-state's calculated relationship with labour that is rooted purely in the extraction of value. In fact, this is also an extension from his political report at the 19th Congress of the CPC: 'build an educated, skilled, and innovative workforce, foster respect for model workers, promote quality workmanship, and see that taking pride in labour becomes a social norm and seeking excellence is valued as a good work ethic'. Putting the onus on the workers for self-improvement, these formulations are reminiscent of the vocabulary used in the corporate human resources management ecosystem. In imparting such a vision, the Party-state elides its responsibility for workers-centric reforms at a systemic-level.

On the margins still

Once again, the long-pending reform of the household registration system (*hukou*) – to integrate rural migrant blue-collar workers into cities and giving them access to urban services – may very well continue to remain unfulfilled given the strong pushback from city officials. Despite being the backbone of China's economic metamorphosis, the rural migrant labour (*nong-mingong*) will continue to negotiate their second class, lonely

existence in unfamiliar cities and workplaces, in the process, confronting mental challenges that accompany their physical dislocations from home. Further, his criticism of 'involution' and 'lying flat' – recent popular phenomenon, of rejecting the hypercompetitive culture of overwork by tech workers and urban youth – reveals the discouragement and intolerance against the online resistance of white-collar workers against the gruelling '996' work schedules (9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week).

In a nutshell

That the success of the Chinese economic development model is built on labour repression is a grim reality. The top-down authoritarian system offers concessions from time to time to mitigate unrest but severely cracks down on any bottom-up workers' self-organising (even the recent guidelines allowing unions among gig workers, it is the tech companies who are forming them rather than through any initiatives of workers). Mr. Xi has identified Common Prosperity to be a long, arduous, and complex process. However, from the perspective of redistribution and labour – as evidenced by the increasing precariousness of workers and their continued political disfranchisement – this (Red) "New Deal" looks more rhetorical than being substantive. Rather than making any radical break and realigning social relations, it appears to be intended to strengthen and sustain the existing system.

Anand P. Krishnan is Visiting Associate Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

NSA meet seeks urgent help for Afghans

"This is the third meeting of the process that was initiated by Iran in 2018. We are grateful to Iran for that. We are meeting today to discuss matters related to Afghanistan. These have important implications not only for the people of Afghanistan but also for its neighbours and the region. This is a time for close consultation amongst us and greater cooperation, interaction and coordination among the regional countries," said Mr. Doval. He was initiating discussion among heads of the national security establishments of all the Central Asian countries, Russia and Iran.

Pakistan and China too were invited to participate in the consultation but both stayed away. The meeting

did not have representation from Afghanistan.

Addressing the meeting after Mr. Doval, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, said there is a need to establish an inclusive government in Afghanistan. "The solution comes only through the formation of an inclusive government with the participation of all ethnic groups," said Mr. Shamkhani, highlighting the need to find a "force" within society that can create an inclusive government.

Karim Massimov, Chairman of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, highlighted the many obstacles that prevent the formation of an "effective government" in Afghanistan.

NSA meet seeks urgent help for Afghans

Dialogues must not complicate situation: Russia

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan held here on Wednesday called for "urgent humanitarian assistance" to the Afghan people. The call was given in the meeting chaired by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, who urged close cooperation and consultation among the regional countries over the Afghan scenario. Russian represen-



Talk process: National Security Adviser Ajit Doval with representatives from 7 countries in Delhi on Wednesday. *AP

tative Nikolai P. Patrushev said multiple dialogue mechanisms "should not complicate" the unfolding situation in the Taliban-

controlled Afghanistan.

A joint statement titled the 'Delhi Declaration' issued after the meeting called for "collective cooperation"

against terrorism and drug trafficking in the region and "expressed concern over the deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and underlined the need to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan".

The statement emphasised that the aid should be provided in an "unimpeded, direct and assured manner" and that the help should be distributed across the country in a "non-discriminatory manner across all sections of the Afghan society".

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Voices on Capitol Hill back CAATSA sanctions waiver for India

The Biden administration remains tight-lipped as it works through details

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The Chairman of the powerful U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), Gregory Meeks (Democrat), has encouraged the Biden administration to consider a waiver of sanctions for India for the purchase of the Russian S-400 Triumf missile defence system, which New Delhi is expected to take delivery of by the end of this year.

"I'd encourage the administration's consideration of a waiver for India. Taking a long view, the potential of our long-term strategic partnership with India, and its positive impact on our own security interests, certainly outweighs any kind of benefit from sanctioning India because of its purchase of the S-400," Mr. Meeks told *The Hindu* recently in an email sent through his communications team. *The Hindu* had approached his office asking where HFAC and Mr. Meek's stood on the issue.

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle in the U.S. Congress have, in recent weeks, urged President Joe Biden to waive sanctions on India under a 2017 U.S. law, the Countering Americas Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

The President is required to impose sanctions on entities doing business with the intelligence or defence divisions of the Russian government under Section 231 of CAATSA. However, Congress also gave the President the authority to "waive the initial application of sanctions" under certain conditions.

While the Biden administration has not articulated its position on CAATSA publicly yet, and declined to provide comments for this story, it is understood to be deliberating on questions such as whom specifically to sanction and at what point in the process sanctions kick in.

The President's National Security Council (NSC) declined to comment on the

White House's position to an October 26 letter from Senators John Cornyn (Republican) and Mark Warner (Democrat), co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, asking Mr. Biden to waive sanctions on India.

The Hindu also reached out to the Pentagon and three State Department bureaus which provide input into this decision: South and Central Asia (SCA), International Security and Non-proliferation (ISN), and the Bureau of Political Military Affairs (PM) to discuss where they stood in the CAATSA sanctions process. They declined to comment. It is no accident that the executive branch has uniformly put off articulating a position on this highly sensitive issue before it needs to show its cards.

Strategic Partnership
The U.S.-India "Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership" is expanding and strengthening, including in its security aspects. Apart from the investments both countries are making in the partnership for its own sake, India is also a key element of



India is set to take delivery of the S-400 Triumf missile defence system from Russia by the year end. *FILE PHOTO

the U.S.'s overall strategy in the Indo-Pacific. Imposing sanctions and talking about them with India is therefore a delicate and awkward matter, and timing counts for a lot.

"My guess is that the administration is withholding a judgment on CAATSA as long as they can, and at least until after the 2+2 meeting in December, perhaps to see what deliverables come out of it. You certainly wouldn't announce sanctions on India

before the 2+2," said Sameer Lalwani, a senior fellow at the Stimson Center, a Washington DC-based think tank.

"The administration is looking for India to produce a mitigation strategy that reassures them that once India gets the S-400 system, it will not have an adverse effect on any other U.S. supplied system that India may also operate concurrently,"

said Ashley Tellis, a former adviser to the George W. Bush administration and U.S. foreign and security policy expert with the Carnegie Endowment.

"And so that mitigation strategy is what the administration started discussing with India several months ago. My understanding is that that process is still underway," he said.

Another factor that repeatedly came up during conversations *The Hindu* had with experts in Washington is that those who work in national security as it relates to Russia might be in favour of sanctions if they believe the benefits of containing Moscow outweigh the costs of sanctioning New Delhi.

Then there is the fact that India is vital to the U.S.'s interests in the Indo-Pacific.

"One thing that plays in India's favour is that its importance to the United States as part of its own overall China strategy has increased dramatically, I would say, in the last year to two years," said Lisa Curtis, who was Senior Director for South and Central Asia in former President

Donald Trump's National Security Council.

Bipartisan support
Additionally, the administration is also keeping an eye on what Congress is thinking. Bipartisan support for a waiver, especially from Republicans, Ms. Curtis said, will make it "a lot easier" when it comes to considering a waiver.

Three Republican Senators, led by Ted Cruz, had introduced legislation, last week, to make it harder for the administration to impose sanctions on a member of the Quad - i.e., India, Japan or Australia. However, the Cruz-led amendment was time-bound, and India would be expected to "deepen ties with the Quad" and not keep shopping for weapons in Moscow in about 10 years' time, a Senate Republican aide had told *The Hindu*.

As far as Congress is concerned, it is not just Republicans whose support is important to this Democratic administration. The Senate is tied 50:50 with Vice President Kamala Harris holding a tie-breaking vote. Mr. Biden

cannot afford to alienate a single Senate Democrat on the CAATSA waiver, as he needs every vote to carry forward his domestic agenda.

"So, even if they have decided on a waiver, why stoke the flames? They have constituencies in Congress, including Senator [Bob] Menendez, that they don't want to irritate unnecessarily by saying to India: 'Don't worry, you're going to get a waiver,'" said Jeff Smith, a South Asia specialist at the Heritage Foundation in Washington.

Mr. Menendez, who is the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had asked Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to raise the S-400 issue with New Delhi on a trip to India in March this year. His office did not respond to multiple requests from *The Hindu* for a comment on his current position on a CAATSA waiver for India.

The administration also does not want to give "the wrong impression to Turkey or other countries that CAATSA is no big deal and waivers are easy to come by," Mr. Smith said.

Union Cabinet brings back MPLAD Scheme

MPs to get ₹2 cr. each instead of previously approved ₹5 cr.

SOBHANA K NAIR
NEW DELHI

Citing economic recovery, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday restored the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) that was suspended in April 2020 subsuming the funds for the scheme in the consolidated fund of India.

The scheme was suspended for two financial years (2020-21 and 2021-22) but the Government on Wednesday announced a partial roll-back. The MPs will get ₹2 crore instead of the annual approved ₹5 crore.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said, "I am happy to state that since we are on the road to economic recovery, with many sectors reporting a positive growth, the Union Cabinet has decided to restore the MPLAD Scheme for the remaining part of the financial year 2021-22."

When the suspension was announced last year, the Government had claimed that ₹8,000 crore that would have otherwise been spent under the scheme will go to



I am happy to state that since we are on the road to economic recovery, with many sectors reporting a positive growth, the Union Cabinet has now decided to restore MPLAD Scheme for the remaining part of financial year 2021-22

ANURAG THAKUR, INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

the consolidated fund of India and will be used for fighting the pandemic.

Opposition leaders pointed out that the Government so far has not given a record of how it spent the savings from suspending the scheme for a year.

DMK's Rajya Sabha mem-

ber P. Wilson pointed out that the Centre, by way of suspending the MPLAD Scheme, withheld funds for the States during the peak of pandemic when they were battling with financial strain themselves.

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Buoyant prices to obviate need for MSP: Cotton Corp.

Market prices higher than MSP, may rise further: Agarwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) sees buoyant market prices precluding the need for a Minimum Support Price (MSP) operation during the current cotton season (October 2021 to September 2022).

The CCI procured 2.5 crore bales during the last two cotton seasons in MSP operation and had just about 70,000 bales of cotton with it now, Chairman and Managing Director Pradeep Kumar Agarwal said. The total outgo for the MSP operation in the two seasons was almost ₹70,000 crore. Cotton prices began looking up



from February and had been high only for the last two months, he added.

"No intervention needed" "It looks like farmers will not require our intervention now as the market prices are higher than the MSP. In fact, farmers are expecting the prices to go up further," Mr.

Agarwal said. The CCI continues to sell the cotton stocks with it and may go for commercial purchase later if its stocks deplete, he added.

Textiles Secretary Upendra Prasad Singh also told mediapersons on Wednesday, "We do not see a need for procurement (cotton MSP operation) this year."

On the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs' approval for committed price support of ₹17,408.85 crore to CCI for cotton seasons from 2014-2015 to 2020-2021, Mr. Singh said that about 50% funds would be released this year and the rest would get a budgetary allocation in the next fiscal.

Ethanol blending with petrol is expected to reach 10% next year and 20% by 2025. Oil marketing companies buy ethanol from sugar mills and distilleries at the rate set by the Government. By reducing the sugar surplus and increasing mills' liquidity,

Jobs, demand, credit growth to kick-start investment cycle

Finance ministry flags input costs, oil prices; sees fuel tax cuts cooling inflation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's economy is set for an accelerated uptick in job creation and demand, backed by strong prospects of a revival in investment, a surge in bank credit and easing of inflation pressures, the Ministry of Finance said on Wednesday.

"Armed with necessary macro and micro growth drivers, the stage is set for India's investment cycle to kick-start and catalyse its recovery towards becoming the fastest growing economy," it stated in its review of the economy for October.

With the progress of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign and festival season activity lending renewed opti-



Fresh fillip: 'The pace of COVID-19 vaccinations and festival season activity have lent renewed optimism'. - R. V. SRINIVASAN

mism to the ongoing economic recovery, "further demand stimulation, fuller restoration of supply chains, narrowing of demand-supply mismatches and greater employment generation are in the offing," the Department of Economic Affairs ad-

ded in the monthly review. Forecasting "a strong possibility" of faster credit growth, it noted that bank credit had been buoyant in September with 'healthy credit penetration in labour-intensive sectors' that augured well for job creation.

"In addition, high growth in personal loans and loans for consumer durables track an uptick in consumer spending in the festive season," it pointed out.

Inflation outlook

Flagging hardening input costs and 'ripple effects of escalating global crude oil prices' as concerns, the Economic Affairs department said such concerns were, however, not yet embedded in 'self-fulfilling inflationary expectations' as seen in the RBI's inflation survey.

"Further, the recent cut in central excise duty on petrol and diesel prices is expected to soften inflationary pressures exerted by rising crude oil prices," it emphasised.

Centre approves incentives for sugar cane, cotton, jute farmers

Rates for ethanol from sugar cane hiked; price support for cotton growers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In the run-up to the first anniversary of protests against three farm reform laws, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a slew of measures that will support farmers growing sugar cane, cotton and jute.

At a meeting on Wednesday, the CCEA increased the price of ethanol extracted from sugar cane juice for blending in petrol to ₹63.45 a litre in the coming sugar marketing season starting December. This is an 80 paise hike from the previous year's. The rate for ethanol extracted from C-heavy molasses has been increased by 97 paise a litre, while that of ethanol extracted from B-heavy molasses is up ₹1.47 as well.

Ethanol blending with petrol is expected to reach 10% next year and 20% by 2025. Oil marketing companies buy ethanol from sugar mills and distilleries at the rate set by the Government. By reducing the sugar surplus and increasing mills' liquidity,



Sweet deal: The rate hike is expected to reduce arrears in payment to sugar cane farmers. - MUSTAFAH K.K.

the rate hike is expected to reduce their pending arrears in payment to sugar cane farmers. Cane growers make up a sizeable chunk of protesters from western Uttar Pradesh and could also be critical voters in the State's coming Assembly election.

The ethanol blending programme also reduced the dependence on crude oil imports, said an official statement.

Price support to CCI

The CCEA also approved a committed price support of ₹17,408.85 crore to the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) as reimbursement for

its losses in procuring crops from farmers at minimum support prices (MSP) over the past seven years.

"In order to safeguard the interests of the cotton farmers, it was expedient to conduct price support operations in cotton years 2014-15 to 2020-21 as prices touched the MSP. Price support operations help stabilise the prices and alleviate farmer's distress," said the statement, adding that around 58 lakh farmers and more than 400 people engaged in processing and trade were dependent on cotton for their livelihood.

The CCI is mandated to

procure all Fair Average Quality grade cotton from farmers without any quantitative ceiling, as and when prices follow below the MSP rates set by the Centre, in a bid to protect farmers from distress sales. Over the last two seasons during the pandemic, the CCI procured a third of the country's cotton production, paying 40 lakh farmers more than ₹55,000 crore.

Jute in packaging

The CCEA approved reservation norms for the mandatory use of jute in packaging this year, stipulating that 100% of foodgrains and 20% of sugar must compulsorily be packed in jute bags. Such reservation consumed two-thirds of the total raw jute production last year. As the Centre itself purchases jute sacking bags worth approximately ₹8,000 crore a year to pack grains, it also ensures a guaranteed market for the produce of 40 lakh jute farmers, mostly in eastern India, and supports 3.7 lakh jute mill workers, largely in West Bengal.

Navy displays submarine rescue ability

India looking to sign MoUs with other countries

DINAKAR PERI
PANAJI

The Navy demonstrated its submarine rescue capability, available with very few countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), to delegations of Indian Ocean countries during the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) 2021.

“We have an MoU with Singapore, under which we support each other. It helps understand each other’s system,” said Cdr V.K. Singh, pilot of the DSRV (deep-submergence rescue vehicle) on the west coast. “We can provide support in the entire IOR. We are looking for MoUs with other countries too.”

In his closing remarks at the GMC on Tuesday, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Ka-



Help at hand: The deep-submergence rescue vehicle can go up to a depth of 650 metres. ■ FILE PHOTO

rambir Singh stressed that the GMC should move beyond dialogue and focus on cogent outcomes.

He proposed “four guiding principles for the future editions: iterative and incremental gains, harnessing complementarities, synchronisation and focussed operations, and lastly upskilling and upscaling the ex-

isting capabilities.” The conclave also saw the declaration of ‘Common Maritime Priorities’, which had been identified during the Goa Maritime Symposium held earlier this year.

India and Singapore have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to exchange practices on submarine rescue and discussions

were on with more countries to have arrangements for them to utilise this mechanism, Navy officials said.

The Navy has procured two DSRVs from the U.K., of which the first one was operationalised at the end of 2018 in Mumbai and the second at Visakhapatnam in early 2019.

The system can go to a maximum depth of 650 metres and rescue 14 people in one go.

The DSRVs are designed to be agile and easily transportable to far-off places, said Capt. Koushik Hota, Officer in Charge, Submarine Rescue Unit (West).

The DSRV, attached to mother ship *INS Sabarmati*, could be transported by heavy transport aircraft like IL-76 and C-17. “From the time of distress to the time of first rescue, we are considering between 72-96 hours,” stated Cdr Singh.

Climate finance is insufficient, says Glasgow draft document

The document urges the developed countries to 'urgently scale up'

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A draft document of the agreement that countries, including India, are negotiating in Glasgow, Scotland underlines that the promised climate finance by the developed countries is "insufficient to respond to the worsening climate change impacts in developing countries" and urges the developed countries to "urgently scale up."

The provision of finance for mitigation and adaptation of the impact of global warming is one of the key sticking points. The United States, Canada, several countries of the European Union, the United Kingdom and others have dragged their feet on a commitment to provide \$100 billion annually by 2020. India, along with several other developing countries, has for years pointed out that not providing this money implies that the developed countries' demand to coerce major developing countries into a net-zero commitment by mid-century is unjustified. It also violates the core principle of equity and climate justice, they aver.

India's commitment

Last week, in Glasgow, Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed to India reaching net zero by 2070, two decades after 2050. Updated reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change say that the earth's best shot at keeping temperatures from rising beyond 1.5°C by the end of the century is most nations achieving net zero by mid-century. Net zero is when a country's greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by removing an equivalent amount from the



Voice of the future: Youth protesting during the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Britain, on Wednesday. The protesters sketched eyes and '1.5' on their hands to show they are watching and to urge countries to keep warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. • REUTERS

atmosphere. Mr. Modi also said nearly a trillion dollars in finance was needed from the developed countries.

The countries debating the agreement at the ongoing 26th Conference of Parties (COP) must have a final document in place by Friday, the concluding day of the summit. The draft document also says that it "recognises that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100 requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45% by 2030, relative to the 2010 level, and to net zero around mid-century." It also called upon the nearly 200 countries which are part of the negotiations to "accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuels."

Though Mr. Modi has committed to dramatically increase the use of renewable energy by 2030, India is

likely to double its use of coal in the interim given how it sees the economy growing in the years ahead.

"The funds necessary for adaptation must increase," said Bhupender Yadav, Environment Minister. "Our consistent stand has been that developing countries such as India need transparency in terms of what kind of market mechanism will be in place. This is necessary to ensure that the developing and developed countries are on a level playing field."

The draft document also "welcomed" the contributions [of \$413 million] to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF). The LDCF is for a group of countries, several of them island nations, that have the least carbon emissions but also are at greatest risk. Since 2001, it has provided \$1.7 billion for projects that help buffer the impacts from warming.

Independent commentators appeared unimpressed.

"The decision does not recognise strongly enough the extremely urgent need to close the huge 2030 emission gap, and to establish a high-level political process in 2020 to do so. At this stage, the draft only urges parties which have not yet submitted new or updated commitments to do so before 2022, yet many have submitted NDCs that are not at all improved or enhanced and/or are nowhere near sufficient for the Paris agreement's 1.5°C limit," said Bill Hare, Founder, Climate Analytics.

"The UN Secretary General should be invited to convene world leaders at the end of 2022, specifically to address closing the 2030 mitigation and finance gap. If this is pushed off until 2023 then the process will really only be addressed here commitments for 2035, nearly 15 years away, leaving the massive gap in 2030 unaddressed," said Mr. Hare.

Does India have a right to burn fossil fuels?

Chalking out a greener path to development will help India rather than arguing for more coal production



ROHIT AZAD & SHOUVIK CHAKRABORTY

There has been quite a lot of debate on India's dependence on coal against the backdrop of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) meeting. While the coal lobbyists may have obvious interests in continuing that dependence, it comes as a surprise when the progressive circles also provide theories to justify this. Despite the Environment Minister adopting a similar position on the eve of the COP26, the Government of India has, for the first time, made a commitment to achieve the net zero target by 2070. It remains to be seen whether the government will indeed walk the talk since the experience on this count (or other issues) does not necessarily inspire that confidence.

The crux of the theoretical argument is that India needs to develop, and development requires energy. However, since India has neither historically emitted nor currently emits carbon anywhere close to what the global North has, or does, in per capita terms, it has no reason to commit to declining dependence on coal, at least in the near future. If anything, the argument goes, it should ask for a higher and fairer share in the global carbon budget. There is no doubt that this carbon budget framework is an excellent tool to understand global injustice but to move from there to our 'right to burn' is a big leap. It is like arguing that since India was colonised, it has a right to do the same and stopping the country from doing that is injustice.

For development, do the countries in the global South necessarily need to increase their share in the global carbon budget? Thankfully the answer is 'no' and it does not come at the cost of development, even in the limited sense as development is defined generally.

The question of development

One, there is no doubt that economic development requires energy but that does not translate into energy by burning coal. If there are other clean



A couple fills sacks with coal at the edge of the Jharia coalfield in Dhanbad, Jharkhand. • AP

er forms of energy available, why persist on the usage of coal? Normally the argument in favour of coal is on account of its cost, reliability and domestic availability. Recent data show that the levelised cost of electricity from renewable energy sources like solar (photovoltaic), hydro and onshore wind has been declining sharply over the last decade and is already less than fossil fuel-based electricity generation. On reliability, frontier renewable energy technologies have managed to address the question of variability of such sources to a large extent and, with technological progress, it seems to be changing for the better. As for the easy domestic availability of coal, it is a myth. According to the Ministry of Coal, India's net coal import went up from ₹782.6 billion in 2011-12 to ₹1,155.0 billion in 2020-21. India is among the largest importers of coal in the world, whereas it has no dearth of solar energy.

Two, why should the global South be aping the North in the development model it wants to follow? During the debates of post-colonial development in the Third World, there were two significant issues under discussion – control over technology

and choice of techniques to address the issue of surplus labour. India didn't quite resolve the two issues in its attempts of import-substituting industrialisation which worsened during the post-reform period. But it can address both today. The abundance of renewable natural resources in the tropical climate can give India a head start in this competitive world of technology. South-South collaborations can help India avoid the usual patterns of trade between the North and the South, where the former controls technology and the latter merely provides inputs. And the high-employment trajectory that the green path entails vis-à-vis the fossil fuel sector may help address the issue of surplus labour, even if partially. Such a path could additionally provide decentralised access to clean energy to the poor and the marginalised, including in remote regions of India. So, it simultaneously addresses the issues of employment, technology, energy poverty and self-reliance.

Types of injustice

Three, the framework of addressing global injustice in terms of a carbon budget is quite limiting in its scope in

more ways than one. Such an injustice is not at the level of the nation-states alone; there is such injustice between the rich and the poor within nations and between humans and non-human species. A progressive position on justice would take these injustices into account instead of narrowly focusing on the framework of nation-states. Moreover, it's a double whammy of injustice for the global South when it comes to climate change. Not only is it not primarily responsible, but the global South, especially its poor, will unduly bear the effect of climate change because of its tropical climate and high population density along the coastal lines. So, arguing for more coal is like shooting oneself in the foot. It is true that mitigation from the South alone will not make the difference required to stop this catastrophe but burning more coal will not necessarily solve the problem either.

But none of this answers how the wrongs of the past will be righted, the basic premise we started with. We have argued in this very newspaper that one of the ways in which this can be done is by making the global North pay for the energy transition in the South. Chalking out an independent, greener path to development may create conditions for such negotiations and give the South the moral high ground to force the North to come to the table, like South Africa did at Glasgow. The current lack of action against climate change both in the North and South has been maintained by dividing the working classes of these two regions – the North justifying operating coal mines since the South continues to emit more and the South negotiating for a higher share in carbon budget based on the past emissions of the North. This is a deadlock. The need of the hour is a global progressive agenda that does not pit the working class of the North against the South but the working people of the world as a whole resisting the global ruling elite in its aggressive and dangerous model of competitive emissions. Even if one is pessimistic about this path of righting the wrongs of the past, at the very least, it is better than the status quo.

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EXPLAINER

The distant dream of a clear sky

Why has air quality dipped to dangerous levels in north India? What role do the bursting of crackers and the burning of stubble play in the severely receding air quality?

JACOB KOSHY

THE GIST

■ When there is adverse weather, the effect of key sources of particulate matter pollutants that are ever-present through the year become amplified.

■ The smoke from crackers as well as the metals they contain have been identified as key contaminants. Stubble burning on Deepavali also contributes to more than 40% of the overall increase in pollution.

■ The need for a joint-front has led to the formation of a Commission for Air Quality Management

The story so far: Post-Deepavali, Delhi – and many of the cities in the adjoining National Capital Region – have been enveloped in a familiar pall of particulate matter pollution. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in several cities has breached the 450-mark on a scale of 500. Anything above 400 is categorised as ‘severe’.

How bad is the situation?

Air quality for over a week has been calamitous in most of north India. With the retreat of the southwest monsoon, moisture levels have reduced and the cold dry air that results from the overall drop in temperature with the advent of winter starts to settle down. There is also a significant drop in windspeeds during this time. When windspeeds are over 10-15 kmph and temperatures are warm, fine particulate matter rises and it goes into the higher recesses of the atmosphere. But once the monsoon retreats, and windspeed reduces, pollutants take much longer to disperse. The

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana have been incentivised to abstain from burning stubble and there are stringent fines to rein in errant ones.

entire Indo-Gangetic plain, covering large parts of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and eastern Uttar Pradesh, constitutes an air shed, meaning that roughly the same atmospheric conditions prevail. Therefore, when there is adverse weather, the effect of key sources of particulate matter pollution – road dust, vehicle exhaust from transportation, from the burning of wood for heat and cooking and from heavy industry – that are ever-present through the year become amplified.

What role do crackers and stubble burning play?

The smoke from crackers as well as the metals they contain such as nickel, lead and arsenic have been identified as key contaminants. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) monitors both air and noise levels at several places in the country few days before and after Deepavali to measure this. Since 2017, when the Supreme Court imposed restrictions on bursting crackers, the CPCB reported a reduction of as much as



38% in barium levels in 2020 compared to previous years’ levels. However, there has been no significant improvement in particulate matter pollution as many cities such as Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata and Bhopal recorded a 60% to 80% increase on Deepavali day when compared with that in previous days of the week. Such a measurement does not account for changes in meteorological conditions or increased traffic observed during festivals, and with crackers being the most discernible variable that is present during Deepavali, all changes in air quality are usually attributed to crackers. The burning of stubble, which poses a unique air pollution challenge in parts of North India, may end up increasing pollution levels on Deepavali. Farm fires this year were set to peak – and there are nearly 4,000-6,000 recorded instances of burning in Punjab, Haryana and eastern Uttar

Pradesh on a single day – during Deepavali week. Meteorological forecasts, before Deepavali, had said that in spite of a rise in stubble burning these fires were unlikely to contribute more than 5% of the pollution load. However, on Deepavali, these fires ended up contributing to more than 40% of the load. This was because of a change in the wind direction, which, instead of moving east, turned north-westerly, bringing pollutants from stubble-burning States. Coupled with the fact that wind speeds were near zero in Delhi, this led to a dramatic increase in particulate pollution. Thus, both crackers and stubble add to Delhi’s noxious air, but are significantly influenced by the prevailing meteorology.

What is being done about it?
A major realisation that has come about from years of facing the air pollution crisis is

that no State can control pollution in isolation. But it has been difficult to get all States on board. Farmers in Punjab and Haryana have been incentivised to abstain from burning stubble and there are stringent fines to rein in errant ones. However, implementation on the ground is weak. Only a limited fraction – 10-20% – abstain from burning, primarily because burning stubble is the cheapest and easiest option. The fear of political reprisal means that fines are not seriously pursued. However, the need for a joint front has led to the formation of a Commission for Air Quality Management, a full-time body with a Chairman, a core group of members and independent experts.

A paucity of people, who can enforce measures on the ground, and the sheer scale of the problem, which cannot be solved by quick fixes but only through systemic changes, are going to be the key challenges.

Clearing the smog: Public Works Department workers sprinkling water from the tankers to curb the air pollution in New Delhi last week. *R.V. MOORTHY

Coringa set for fishing cat collaring project

The exercise involves study of its habitat, feeding habits, threats and movements

T. APPALA NAIDU
CORINGA

Conservation biologists of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, will begin collaring 10 fishing cats (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) in the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) in Andhra Pradesh next week. The country’s first such project will be led by principal investigator Bilal Habib.

In Asia, a similar project had been done in Bangladesh. The project, planned in 2020, had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

The State Forest Department had already released ₹45 lakh of the ₹75 lakh total project cost being entirely funded by the Vedanta group.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had also



First project: The census conducted in 2018 had recorded the existence of 115 fishing cats in the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary.

permitted the project.

“Our team of researchers will begin the fishing cat collaring project next week in the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary. The project begins with enumerating the fishing cat before selecting the animals for collaring,” Dr. Habib told *The Hindu* over phone on Wednesday.

“The project involves the fishing cat estimate and collaring, and how it survives in the sanctuary,” Dr. Habib said.

“The three-year project will also study its habitat, feeding habits, threats and movements,” he added.

The 2018 census had recorded the existence of 115

fishing cats. A significant portion of the Coringa mangrove ecosystem had recently been disturbed because of the clandestine manufacturing of ID liquor in the Godavari estuary.

There is, however, no scientific study on the impact of the illegal activity on the wildlife in general and the fishing cat in particular.

The sanctuary spreads about 235.7 square km. In October, 177 square km area surrounding the sanctuary was declared as eco-sensitive zone.

“The collars are imported,” said C. Selvam, Divisional Forest Officer (Wildlife), Rajahmundry.

The sanctuary is yet to be declared as a Ramsar site despite facing various threats to its ecology.

Eight arrested for fishing near Olive Ridley rookery

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BERHAMPUR (ODISHA)**

Eight fishermen from Andhra Pradesh have been nabbed for fishing in a prohibited area near Rushikulya river mouth in Ganjam district of Odisha, an official said on Wednesday.

To ensure the safety of Olive Ridley turtles during their breeding and mating season, the State government has clamped a seven-month fishing ban within 20 km from the coast at the river mouths of Rushikulya, Dhamara, and Devi from November 1.

Forest officials spotted the fishermen in the no-fishing zone on Tuesday afternoon and seized a trawler and 210 kg of fish, Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Amlan Nayak said.

The fishermen were handed over to the fisheries department for action under the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, the DFO said.

The seized fish were auctioned by the forest staff, Khallikote Forest Range Officer Sidharth Sahu said.

At least three boats and a trawler are engaged in sea patrolling in the area, he said.

Rushikulya mouth is considered as the second biggest rookery for the Olive Riddleys after Gahiramatha in Kendrapara district.

EXPLAINER

FCRA changes: ease of monitoring vs crippling curbs

What are the new amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010? Why are NGOs moving court against the changes?

K. VENKATARAMANAN

The story so far: The Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on petitions challenging the validity of amendments introduced in 2020 to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, aimed at tightening the curbs on NGOs allowed to receive foreign funds. While NGOs that have termed the amendments as harsh and arbitrary, the Government has argued that its intended to streamline the flow of funds and to enhance transparency and accountability.

What is the background to the amendments?

Foreign donations received by individuals and organisations in India have been regulated by law since 1976. The Act was since repealed and re-enacted with fresh measures and restrictions as the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010. The law sought to consolidate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by individuals, associations or companies, and to prohibit such contributions from being used for activities detrimental to national interest.

The FCRA was amended in September



2020 to introduce some new restrictions. The Government says it did so because it found that many recipients were wanting in compliance with provisions relating to filing of annual returns and maintenance of accounts. Many did not utilise the funds received for the intended objectives. It claimed that the annual inflow as foreign contributions almost doubled between 2010 and 2019. The FCRA registration of 19,000 organisations was cancelled and, in some cases, prosecution was also initiated.

How has the law changed?

There are at least three major changes

that NGOs find too restrictive. An amendment to Section 7 of the Act completely prohibits the transfer of foreign funds received by an organisation to any other individual or association.

Another amendment mandates that every person (or association) granted a certificate or prior permission to receive overseas funds must open an FCRA bank account in a designated branch of the State Bank of India in New Delhi. All foreign funds should be received only in this account and none other. However, the recipients are allowed to open another FCRA bank account in any scheduled bank to which they could

transfer the received funds for utilisation. The designated bank will inform authorities about any foreign remittance with details about its source and the manner in which it was received.

In addition, the Government is also authorised to take the Aadhaar numbers of all the key functionaries of any organisation that applies for FCRA registration or for prior approval for receiving foreign funds. Another change is that the portion of the receipts allowed as administrative expenditure has been reduced from 50% to 20%.

What is the criticism against these changes?

NGOs questioning the law consider the prohibition on transfer arbitrary and too heavy a restriction. One of its consequences is that recipients cannot fund other organisations. When foreign help is received as material, it becomes impossible to share the aid if the recipient NGO does not have the means to distribute on its own. Even the court wanted to know whether this means that one organisation funding other organisations for designated activities is completely prohibited.

Lawyers have argued that there is no

rational link between designating a particular branch of a bank with the objective of preserving national interest. It is also inconvenient as the NGOs might be operating elsewhere. They have also cited the recent Supreme Court judgment on the alleged use of Pegasus spyware to argue that 'national security' cannot be cited as a reason without adequate justification.

What does the Government say?

The Government has contended that the amendments were necessary to prevent foreign state and non-state actors from interfering with the country's polity and internal matters. The changes are also needed to prevent malpractices by NGOs and diversion of foreign funds.

Preventing possible diversion of funds is also the reason cited for reducing the administrative expense component, as some organisations tended to inflate the actual expenditure incurred.

The provision of having one designated bank for receiving foreign funds is aimed at making it easier to monitor the flow of funds. The Government clarified that there was no need for anyone to come to Delhi to open the account as it can be done remotely.

THE GIST

■ The FCRA sought to consolidate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution and to prohibit such contributions from being used for activities detrimental to national interest.

■ NGOs questioning the law consider the prohibition on transfer arbitrary and too heavy a restriction.

■ The Government has maintained that the changes are needed to prevent malpractices by NGOs and diversion of foreign funds.

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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-drawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
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C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
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E	Land reforms in India
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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.
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J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
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W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
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P	Corporate governance.
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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.