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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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# Striding back into the Afghan theatre

Though challenging, it would be a mistake to consider that there is no space for India to operate in Afghanistan



VIVEK KATJU

Amidst the multiple messages that New Delhi wished to send out by convening 'The Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan' on November 10 – a National Security Adviser (NSA)-level meet – one stands out: that despite the current absence of an on-ground presence in the country, India continues to matter in Afghan affairs. To ensure that this thought was acknowledged by the Indian political and strategic classes as well as the region, Indian officials, in their background briefings, emphasised that India's invitation was accepted by countries that have significant stakes in Afghanistan – Russia, Iran and all the five Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). They correctly downplayed Pakistan's outright refusal to join the meeting and China's lame excuse for its absence. Indeed, in the context of the present state of Sino-Indian ties and Pakistan's obsession of keeping India away from Afghanistan, neither country's decision was surprising.

## Similar concerns

There is little doubt that the initiative succeeded in demonstrating that many regional countries accept that India has legitimate concerns relating to Afghanistan. The Delhi Declaration that emerged from the deliberations of the National Security Advisers/Secretaries of the National Security Councils of the participating states shows that all these countries share similar concerns which are also widely held in the internation-

al community. The Delhi Declaration demanded that Afghan soil is not used to spread terrorism or extremist ideologies. It called for a control on the production of Afghan opium. It reflected the widely held view that the Taliban have to conform to acceptable standards of behaviour on gender issues and minority rights. The Declaration also called for the formation of "an open and truly inclusive government" that was "representative of the will of the Afghan people" and had the participation of "all sections of society" in its "administrative and political structure". This is a laudable objective, but is it realistic? The hard fact is that the Taliban achieved a military victory and unlike in the 1990s now control all of Afghanistan. Is any neighbour of Afghanistan willing to nurture a long-lasting insurgency to effectively pressure the Taliban?

## Hurdles, an outreach

All the participants of the Delhi Dialogue except India have open contacts with the Taliban even if some of them consider the Taliban to be a negative political force. It is, therefore, likely that despite this clarion collective call for an inclusive government, these states will ultimately individually settle for a Taliban government that will show a degree of responsiveness on gender issues and minority rights, including of ethnic minorities. Even more they will look for how the Taliban are addressing their individual concerns on specific terrorist groups that target them. The Russian press statement after the Delhi Declaration itself reveals that each country will act not on the basis of common positions in this document but in keeping with its interests.

It is here that Indian policymakers are still struggling to accept the consequences and realities of the great change that took place in Af-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

ghanistan on August 15, when Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani fled from Kabul and the Taliban rolled in. This far-reaching development eroded the very basis of India's Afghan policy. It required an immediate re-assessment of the regional situation and nimble, quick and comprehensive action with salience given to strategic considerations. It needed a ruthlessly cold 'all of political and strategic classes' approach unaffected by political considerations of any nature. Almost three months later this is still not discernible. And, the Delhi meeting, while serving a small diplomatic purpose, will not contribute to addressing the vast challenges that India now faces in its entire western neighbourhood, especially Afghanistan.

## Pakistan link

Pakistan has avoided its mistake of the 1990s, of giving formal diplomatic recognition to the Taliban. It is however acting in a manner with the group's government, which it helped put together, as it would have with a 'recognised' administration. It is no coincidence that the day the Delhi Dialogue was convened, the acting Afghan Foreign Minister, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, reached Islamabad leading a high-level delegation. In India's absence in Kabul, Pakistan has a free hand. As it is with its deep and abiding relations with the Taliban it has a unique and enduring advantage. But should that mean that India ignores Afghanis-

tan altogether and confines itself to only covert contacts with the Taliban? There has been no repeat of a Doha-like meeting between the Indian Ambassador and senior Taliban officials.

## A place for India

India will have to play a multi-faceted diplomatic game to safeguard and promote its interests in Afghanistan and the region. It cannot join the game unless it re-establishes a presence in Kabul. All-important regional players and Russia have kept their missions open in Kabul. New Delhi must note that the Taliban spokesperson, taking note of the Dialogue said that India was an important regional country with which it desired good diplomatic relations.

India has to proceed with caution but without inhibitions. That can only be through an understanding of Afghan traditions and culture which has been under strain but which has not disappeared altogether. At no stage in Afghan history has any ruler or group not chafed at foreign dependence however necessary it may have been. They have always looked to alternatives. Taliban signals on India to Pakistan should be taken in this context.

Besides, the Taliban are not immune from regional and tribal cleavages. This is not to underrate the difficulties in India's path in Afghanistan but it would be a profound mistake to consider that there is no space for India to operate in Afghanistan; the Taliban public statements are themselves indicating that it does; Muttaqi has publicly said that India-Afghan trade via Wagah should be allowed by Pakistan.

Expressing concern for the "deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan" the Delhi Declaration called for "urgent humanitarian assistance" to the Afghan people. It al-

so did well to emphasise that humanitarian assistance should be provided in an "unimpeded, direct and assured manner to Afghanistan". This is directly relevant for India wishes to send 50,000 tonnes of wheat for the Afghan people overland via Pakistan. Obviously, the Taliban have welcomed the Indian offer and asked Pakistan to agree. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan told Muttaqi that he will "favourably" consider the Taliban's request. At this stage, India should be bold and enhance its offer to one million metric tonnes of wheat; that is what it pledged in 2002 at the Tokyo Afghanistan conference. It should also publicly declare, if needed, that it would hand the wheat over to the World Food Programme at the Wagah border. If Pakistan obstructs the additional offer, let it explain its negativity to the Afghan people.

## On China

It is not only Pakistan that India will need to confront in Afghanistan but also China. The Chinese have always maintained contacts with the Taliban and their strategic and economic interests have and will continue to make them adopt pragmatic policies. Indian economic interests also demand its presence in Afghanistan. There is no time to lose for this purpose. A heavy and long-term price will have to be paid otherwise. In all this process India must remain grounded in reality but that seems absent in some Indian analysts who believe that it is a Eurasian power too. That should be the objective. But is it so today when it does not have connectivity to the region and is reluctant to play the Afghan game where it matters – the mountains and valleys of the Hindukush?

Vivek Katju is a retired member of the Indian Foreign Service

# U.S., China trade barbs ahead of summit

As Biden, Xi prepare for Tuesday's virtual meet, top diplomats from both countries spar over Taiwan

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
HONG KONG

The lead-up to Tuesday morning's virtual summit between United States President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping has seen the two countries exchange sharp remarks on Taiwan, one of many thorny issues on which both sides are unlikely to make much headway.

In a telephone call between top U.S. and Chinese diplomats, both sides expressed concerns over the other's position on Taiwan, with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi attacking "the U.S.'s wrong words and deeds" and saying that "any connivance of and support for the 'Taiwan independence' forces...would only boomerang in the end."

China last also week hit out at a visit by a U.S. congressional delegation to Taiwan, while the People's Liberation Army carried out more drills that have followed recent record aerial intrusions into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone.

In the phone call, U.S. Se-



**Setting the agenda:** A combination of file pictures of Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, and U.S. President Joe Biden. ■ AFP

cretary of State Antony Blinken "expressed concern regarding the PRC's [People's Republic of China's] continued military, diplomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan" and "urged Beijing to engage in meaningful dialogue to resolve cross-Strait issues peacefully and in a manner consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan."

## 'Red lines'

Mr. Xi however is expected to reinforce China's "red lines" on the Taiwan issue in

Tuesday's virtual summit, one of many points of difference on which the two sides are unlikely to reach a meeting of minds.

The measured expectation ahead of the summit is a lowering of temperatures and an improvement in tone after years of a rancorous relationship marked by a trade war during the term of the Trump administration and tensions that have continued this year under the Biden administration, a reflection of an increasingly bipartisan consensus in Washington on the approach to China.

One point of difference with the new administration appears to be its keenness to find common ground with China on some issues such as climate change, on which the two countries recently announced a new cooperation agreement, even though officials have made clear they still viewed China as the primary strategic challenge. On the other hand, the Biden administration has said it would seek to work more effectively with U.S. allies and partners, including with the Quad grouping, in coming up with a more coherent approach to China, while also speaking out more on human rights issues.

## Common ground

Underlining the state of relations, Mr. Biden and Mr. Xi have only had two phone calls this year, the first shortly after the inauguration. In the second call in September, the U.S. President told his counterpart that both sides needed "to ensure competition does not veer into conflict" as they deal with a growing list of

differences.

Two months before that call, the Chinese side had presented the U.S. in talks in Tianjin with two "lists" of demands, named a "List of U.S. Wrongs" and a "List of Key Individual Cases that China Has Concerns With." Among those demands were unconditionally removal of visa restrictions on Communist Party members and withdrawal of an extradition request for Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of tech firm Huawei who was arrested in Canada for violating U.S. sanctions on Iran. The latter demand was met, with Ms. Meng allowed to return to China in October.

Tuesday's summit may pave the way for other limited agreements, including on reopening consulates that were closed down during the time of the Trump administration and on visas. Fundamental differences, however, remain, with Mr. Biden likely to repeat U.S. concerns on Taiwan, Xinjiang and Hong Kong and Mr. Xi expected to rebuff them.

# A routine matter or a punishment post?

It is time for the Central government to clear the doubts being raised about the collegium's recommendations



K. CHANDRU

The Supreme Court collegium's recommendation to transfer the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Sanjib Banerjee, to the Meghalaya High Court, as well as the senior-most judge of the Allahabad High Court, Munishwar Nath Bhandari, to the Madras High Court, has raised eyebrows.

## Many questions

Justice Banerjee was appointed as a judge of the Calcutta High Court on June 22, 2006. He was appointed as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court on December 31, 2020, and he assumed office on January 4, 2021. Without a promotion, he would have to retire from office on November 1, 2023. He has two more years to serve at the Madras High Court.

The Calcutta High Court has a sanctioned strength of 72 judges and the Madras High Court has a sanctioned strength of 75 judges. The proposal is to transfer him to the Meghalaya High Court, established in 2013 and with a sanctioned strength of only four judges. It is therefore only fair that some would term the transfer of a judge, who was managing a large High Court for nearly 10 months, to a northeastern State as a punishment unless the collegium provides reasons for its decision.

Article 222 of the Constitution provides for the transfer of a judge (including Chief Justice) from one High Court to any other High Court. In the case of Justice Banerjee, since the proposal came from the Supreme Court collegium, the Central government, which has to advise the President of India, is entitled to ask for relevant material before tendering any advice. If it is not satisfied, the Central government can ask the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision. Recently, the Union Law Minister, Kiren Rijiju, said that the Chief Justice of India (CJI) will "create a new dawn in judiciary". The CJI in turn said that Mr. Rijiju was "the only Law Minister or politician in recent times, who recognised our judicial



The Madras High Court, Chennai ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

hard work and appreciated us". Therefore, it may be possible that both the decision-makers have a common intention for the transfer.

Justice Banerjee was appointed as the Chief Justice of a High Court with three years of service left. He was found suitable for that post. How is that within 10 months of his tenure he is being found unsuitable for the same High Court and is being transferred to a far-away State which has just two judges at present?

## Another puzzling decision

Justice Bhandari's transfer is equally puzzling. In its September 16th decision, the collegium recommended the transfer of Justice Bhandari to the Madras High Court. The details of his appointment show that he was initially appointed as a judge of the Rajasthan High Court on July 5, 2007. If he joins the Madras High Court, he will become the senior-most judge since Justice T.S. Sivagnanam was transferred to the Calcutta High Court and the next two judges – M. Duraiswamy and T. Raja – are admittedly junior to him. With his transfer, Justice Bhandari will be-

come the Acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

Even if the consultation process in making Justice Bhandari the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court is delayed because of, say, the State government raising any issues, Justice Bhandari will continue as Acting Chief Justice and will retire on September 12, 2022. Justice Bhandari's tenure at the Rajasthan High Court was not free from controversy. After being appointed as a judge in that High Court, he was transferred to the Allahabad High Court. The collegium proposed his transfer in 2019 and the reason it provided was that the transfer was in the "interest of better administration of justice".

Justice Bhandari requested through representations on January 18 and 23, 2019, that his proposed transfer be deferred for the time being for further consideration. The collegium rejected his representation and the note published, it stated: "the Collegium has carefully gone through the aforesaid representations and taken into consideration all relevant factors including his request to defer his proposed transfer

for the time being for further consideration in future. On reconsideration, the Collegium is of the considered view that it is not possible to accede to his request". Justice Bhandari joined the Allahabad High Court on March 15, 2019, and in due course, he became the senior-most judge in that Court.

If the Supreme Court collegium of 2019 thought that Justice Bhandari should leave the Rajasthan High Court in the "administration of justice", what changed that prompted the collegium of 2021 to transfer him to the Madras High Court with the full knowledge that he will be heading that court? What was once a punishment transfer has now become a rewarding transfer. If a judge is not considered suitable for one High Court, then how does he become suitable for another High Court? This is the question that is being asked in legal circles.

And does this mean that the decision to transfer Justice Banerjee to the Meghalaya High Court was made to facilitate Justice Bhandari's elevation as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court? Also, if the decision was taken as early as on September 16, why was it made public only about one and a half months later? This is a question that many are asking.

Normally when such proposals are made, a judge in the Supreme Court who comes from the State in which the transferee judge is holding office is also consulted. With regard to Justice Banerjee's transfer, there are four judges who are qualified to be called consultee judges. Why was consultation in the case of Justice Banerjee made only with the junior-most judge of the Supreme Court and not the senior judges?

## Not a routine matter

Evaluations are not made on the discharge of duties of a judge as there is no reliable basis for making such an analysis. In terms of disposal of matters and writing skills, no one can find fault with the present Chief Justice. If there are other reasons for his transfer, then such a transfer proposal can only be termed as a punishment and not a routine matter. It is time for the Central government to step in and clear these doubts.

Justice K. Chandru is a retired judge of the Madras High Court

# Reconsider transfer of Madras HC CJ, senior counsel urge SC Collegium

‘Constant transfers of judges have left High Court in a state of flux’

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Thirty-one designated senior counsel have sent a joint representation to the Supreme Court Collegium, urging it to reconsider its recommendation to the Centre and the President to transfer Madras High Court Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee to the High Court of Meghalaya.

The representation stated that the Chief Justice had assumed office in the Madras High Court only on January 4, and had completed only 10 months here, though he had two more years of service, with his date of retirement being November 1, 2023.

“During his term, he has discharged his functions, both in the administrative and judicial side, to the best of his capabilities, bringing honour to the office he held. He has been a good administrator, and in the judicial side, has disposed a few thousand cases, even during the devastating COVID-19 pandemic,” the senior counsel said.

Their representation went on to read: “The orders were



Chief Justice of Madras High Court Sanjib Banerjee ■ FILE PHOTO

predominantly dictated in the open court and delivered. When this is a fact that most advocates and litigants will readily agree to, we are unable to fathom the reasons for his sudden transfer to another court.”

The senior counsel also said that constant transfers of judges had left the Madras High Court in a state of constant flux. Such short-lived tenures at the apex of the court’s hierarchy in a State bodes ill for the health of the institution and the justice delivery system, they said.

Stating that it takes a new Chief Justice at least a year to understand the administration, composition and challenges of an institution, apart from understanding the culture, language and local practices of a State, the senior counsel said any Chief Justice of the Madras High Court should at least have a two-year term.

However, in the last three years, the Madras High Court has had three Chief Justices apart from Acting Chief Justices who were at the helm of affairs for brief

periods, the senior counsel said, requesting the collegium not to view the representation as a missive aimed at supporting the cause of any individual, but a plea to strengthen the health of the institution.

The signatories to the representation included senior counsel P.S. Raman, V. Prakash, Nalini Chidambaram, E. Omprakash, Ravi Kumar Paul, N.R. Elango, P.H. Arvinth Pandian, Satish Parasaran, Veera Kathiravan, A. Thiyagarajan, M.K. Kabir and A.R.L. Sundaresan.

Those who signed electronically, by consent, included senior counsel Arvind P. Datar, Hema Sampath, S. Subbiah, M. Ravindran, Vijay Narayan, M. Ajmal Khan, S. Ramasamy, A. Sirajudeen, J. Raja Kalifulla, N. Krishnaveni, P.R. Raman, Pushya Sitaraman, T.P. Manoharan, N.C. Ramesh, Chitra Sampath, Isaac Mothanlal, R. Venkataraman and R. Murari. The Madras Bar Association also passed a resolution, at an emergency general body meeting on Sunday, for the transfer to be reconsidered.

## EXPLAINER

# Increase in digital connectivity but there are many who are still left out

How did COVID-19 impact digital connectivity in the context of healthcare, education and work? A survey provides answers

## THE GIST

■ LIRNEasia tied up with the ICRIER to take part in a global study funded by Canada's International Development Centre in order to assess the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 by analysing access to services. The focus was on digital technologies in healthcare, education and work.

■ The survey found that 47% of the population are Internet users, a significant jump from the 19% who were identified as Internet users in late 2017.

■ The survey found that 80% of school-age children in the country had no access to remote education during the 18 months that schools were shut. Only 10% of those employed during the lockdowns were able to work from home. Telemedicine and online doctor consultations surged during these times, but only 38% said they were able to access such services.

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

**The story so far:** Internet connectivity has shot up over the last year, with most new users attributing their connections to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a new nationwide survey has found that remote work, education and healthcare are still not equally available to all, even among those with digital access.

**How was the study designed?** LIRNEasia, an Asia Pacific think tank focused on digital policy, tied up with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), to take part in a global study funded by Canada's International Development Centre in order to assess the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 by analysing access to services. The focus was on digital technologies in healthcare, education and work.

**What did the study find about the pandemic's impact on Internet access and use?**

The survey found that 47% of the population are Internet users, a significant jump from the 19% who were identified as Internet users in late 2017. An extrapolation of respondents would indicate that 34 crore people in the country were already online before 2020. An additional 8 crore came online in 2020, and at least 5 crore have become new Internet users in 2021. Of those who first started using the Internet in 2020, 43% said they came online due to COVID-19.

Among non-users, lack of awareness is still the biggest hurdle although the percentage of non-users who said they do not know what the Internet is dropped from 82% to 49% over the last four years. Increasingly, lack of access to devices and lack of skills are the reasons why people do not go online.

**Did increased digital connectivity help in access to remote education?**

The survey found that 80% of school-age children in the country had no access to remote education at all during the 18 months that schools were shut. This happened even though 64% of these households actually had Internet connections. Less than a third of children in such homes were able to



**Lack of access to devices and lack of skills are the reasons why people do not go online.**

leverage connectivity into classes of any sort, mostly because of lack of larger screen devices as well as a lack of preparedness among schools. However, the situation was significantly worse for those homes without Internet connections, where only 8% of children received any sort of remote education. Apart from not having any devices, poor 3G/4G signal and high data cost were listed as the biggest hurdles.

Even among the 20% who received education, only half had access to live online classes which required a good Internet connection and exclusive use of a device. Most depended on recorded lessons and WhatsApp messages. The situation was significantly worse among those from lower socio-economic classes, or where the head

of the household had lower education levels. Nationwide, 38% of households said at least one child had dropped out of school due to COVID-19.

**How did digital access impact work matters?**

Only 10% of those employed during the lockdown were able to work from home. There were significant geographical variations, with one in five Delhi residents working from home in comparison to 13% in Maharashtra and just 3% in Tamil Nadu. Predictably enough, those in the finance, insurance, information technology and communications fields formed the biggest chunk of those who were able to do remote work during the lockdowns. However, less than one in three workers even in these professions was able to work from home, the survey found.

A significant minority of those engaged in remote work ran into device and connectivity challenges. About 27% said they

were forced to share devices with another household member, while 16% said the available devices were unsuitable for work and another 16% faced poor network quality.

**How did Internet access or lack of it affect healthcare during the pandemic?**

About 15% of the sample respondents said they required healthcare access for non-COVID-19-related purposes during the most severe national and State lockdowns. Telemedicine and online doctor consultations surged during these times, but only 38% said they were able to access such services.

With regard to medical information on COVID-19, about 40% of respondents depended on television channels for advice, well above the quarter of respondents who depended on face-to-face interactions.

Only 1% went online to websites for information, although 4% depended on social media and 2% on the Aarogya Setu app.

**Long distance learning:**

Students in Tumari village have to walk long distances in search of vantage positions with good Internet connectivity to attend online classes. At times, they have to brave heavy rains. ■ THE HINDU

## EXPLAINER

# The Norovirus outbreak: prevention rooted in hygiene

What is the Norovirus and how does it spread? What is the cure for the infection?

C. MAYA

**The story so far:** Last week, an acute diarrhoeal disease outbreak reported amongst students of the College of Veterinary Sciences at Pookode, near Vythiri in Wayanad district, was confirmed as Norovirus (NoV) by the authorities. These students were staying in hostels outside the campus and four out of the seven samples sent to the unit of National Institute of Virology, Alappuzha had tested positive for NoV.

Senior health officials later confirmed that the diarrhoeal outbreak had first begun in the second week of October amongst the inmates of the hostel inside the campus. While the illness seemed to subside within two days in the affected persons, the students were sent home by the college authorities as the disease began spreading fast. It was only when the outbreak spread outside the campus that detailed investigations were conducted and NoV was confirmed. Though the outbreak has been contained, the source of the infection has not yet been found.

The first documented NoV outbreak in Kerala was in Alappuzha district this year between June and August when 950 cases



of acute diarrhoeal disease, mostly in children, were reported from the municipal area and the nearby panchayats. The outbreak had begun following a pipe burst and water shortage, when water was supplied externally.

**What is NoV and how does it spread?**

Norovirus is an important cause of acute non-bacterial gastroenteritis in children as well as adults worldwide. The virus was first discovered in connection with

an outbreak of acute diarrhoeal disease in Norwalk, Ohio, in 1968 and was called the Norwalk Virus. Later, several stomach flu viruses closely linked to the Norwalk virus were found and together, these are now called Noroviruses. Many stomach flu outbreaks typically in cruise ships have been traced to NoV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says over 20 million cases of acute diarrhoeal disease caused by NoV are reported annually in the U.S., a chunk of which are food-borne infections.

According to literature, in one study, in New Delhi, NoV was found to be the second most predominant virus (25.7%) after rotavirus. In southern India, norovirus infection rates of about 10% and 44.4% were reported in two different studies during 2005-06 while a birth cohort study found that about 11.2% of diarrhoeal episodes were attributable to NoV.

Infection is characterised by an acute onset of nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and diarrhoea. The symptoms usually begin 12 to 48 hours after exposure to the infective agent and generally subside within two days.

There is no specific treatment; rest and rehydration with warm fluids should be enough. The disease is self-limiting and rarely dangerous unless severe dehydration is allowed to set in. However, more care is needed if very young children, elderly or pregnant women are infected.

Transmission occurs predominantly by the faecal-oral route, directly or indirectly, through the ingestion of contaminated water or food or surfaces which might have been contaminated when handled carelessly by an infected person or his care-giver.

**How are NoV infections prevented?**

Prevention is rooted in hygiene. People should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating and after using the toilet. Fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed before eating. Shell fish like oysters, which might have been grown in contaminated waters, should be well-cooked. Boiled and safe drinking water alone should be used.

Infected persons should rest at home and maintain utmost personal hygiene to prevent transmission.

**What makes NoV infections a public health concern?**

NoV is a highly contagious virus and transmission occurs at a rapid pace because of heavy viral shedding by the infected person.

Even the lowest infectious dose is enough to set off extensive outbreaks, typically in environments such as hostels, schools, hospitals or nursing homes.

Experts also point out that NoV could increasingly become a public health concern because of rapid expansion of the food industry. One infected person in the kitchen or a food handler becoming infected even mildly can take the virus to hundreds of people.

# Creating safe digital spaces

It is imperative that digital platforms are free of cyberbullying, if learners have to access quality education



SANTOSH SARANGI & ERIC FALT

Recognising that school-related violence is an infringement of children's right to education and to health and well-being, UNESCO Member States have declared the first Thursday of November as the International Day against Violence and Bullying at School, including cyberbullying. The aim is to raise awareness among students, parents, members of the school community, education authorities and others about the problem of online violence and cyberbullying.

In India, an estimated 71 million children aged 5-11 years access the Internet on the devices of their family members, constituting about 14% of the country's active Internet user base of over 500 million. It should also be noted that two-thirds of Internet users in India are in the age group of 12-29 years.

## Tackling all kinds of bullying

School closures as a response to the COVID-19 lockdowns have led to an unprecedented rise in unsupervised screen time for children and young people, which in turn exposed them to a greater risk of online violence. Various reports have indicated increased incidence of cyberbullying and online child sexual exploitation by adults.

In the same vein, there is growing scientific evidence which suggests that cyberbullying has negative consequences on the education, health and well-being of children and young people. Published in 2019 and drawing on data from 144 countries, UNESCO's report 'Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying' highlighted the extent of the problem, with almost one in three students worldwide reporting being bullied at least once in the preceding month. Therefore, cyberbullying prevention interventions should aim at tackling all types of bullying and victimisation experiences at the same time, as opposed to each in silo.

Effective interventions also require gender-sensitive and targeted approaches that respond to needs of learners who are most likely to be the victims of online violence. A 2020 study by Plan International, involving 14,000 women aged 15-25 from across 22 countries, revealed that 58% of girls in the Asia-Pacific region reported online harassment. Globally, of the girls who were harassed, 14% who self-identified as having a disability and 37% who identified themselves

as from an ethnic minority said they get harassed because of it.

The impact of online sexual harassment could have long-term negative impacts on mental health and well-being. Data on school bullying demonstrates its harmful impacts on students' educational outcomes, mental health, and quality of life. Children who are frequently bullied are nearly three times more likely to feel left out at school than those who are not. They are also twice more likely to miss out on school and have a higher tendency to leave formal education after finishing secondary school.

## Tackling the menace

Although online violence is not limited to school premises, the education system plays a crucial role in addressing online safety. Concerted efforts must be made to provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills to identify online violence so that they can protect themselves from its different forms, whether perpetrated by peers or adults. Teachers also play a critical role by teaching students about online safety, and thus supporting parental involvement.

For those looking to prevent and counter cyberbullying, the information booklet brought out by UNESCO in partnership with NCERT on Safe Online Learning in Times of COVID-19 can be a useful reference. It supports the creation of safe digital spaces and addresses the nuances of security. Similarly, to prevent the adverse effect of online gaming and the psycho-emotional stress that children could be undergoing, the Department of School Education and Literacy has circulated exhaustive guidelines to raise children and parental awareness.

At a time when COVID-19 lockdowns have resulted in online bullying, we must redouble our efforts to tackle this menace. Cyberbullying may take place in a virtual world, but it has a very real impact on children's health. The Union Ministry of Education and UNESCO are committed to ensuring access to safe, inclusive and health-promoting learning environments for all children.

It is imperative that digital and social media platforms are free of cyberbullying, if learners have to access quality education. More importantly, confidential reporting and redress services must be established. We encourage students, parents, schools, education authorities, members of the education community and its partners to take part in preventing online violence and promoting the safety and well-being of young people.

*Santosh Sarangi is Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of India, and Eric Falt is Director, UNESCO New Delhi*



# The other digital divide

The UPI payments system has cut across the Indian socio-economic digital divide amazingly fast

K. NITYA KALYANI

“Your phone is your wallet,” said Bill Gates in 1996. It sounded right out of the soon-to-be launched Harry Potter fantasy-fiction series!

In just a couple of decades, it's an everyday reality, and how! Not an elitist, exclusive or luxe technology. I just paid the milkman with my UPI app and so, I am sure, do you. Mr. Anand Mahindra just tweeted a photo of a ceremonial cow, like our own *boom-boom maadu* down South, on whose forehead is pasted a QR code to scan and make a donation.

UPI, the payment method at the basis of this, has cut across the Indian socio-economic digital divide quite well and amazingly fast. However, it is a different type of digital divide that we should watch out for, namely, the chances of being defrauded when we use our phones to pay.

## What is UPI

First came Internet banking,

more than 15 years ago, relieving us of physical cheques, exchanging them in person or through post, presenting them at a bank, and waiting for funds to be realised. All of this could take up to 15 days depending on the location of the two banks, banking holidays and postal delays.

It was magical to sit at your computer and make these NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer) payments, which would be realised in just two or three days. Soon, the service segmented itself into near instant payment for large amounts (RTGS or Real-Time Gross Settlement) and instant payments without waiting to enable a payer account (IMPS or Immediate Payment Service), handy for one-time payments.

When smartphones and apps took over, Internet banking moved to apps and IMPS transformed into mobile wallets, which was one step removed from your bank account. You had to put money

from your bank account into the wallet and know information about my wallet to pay me, more complicated if you and I dealt with different banks.

This struggling step that saw lukewarm response evolved in 2018 into United Payments Interface or UPI-based payments. UPI is the clearing house for payments across almost every bank. Pick an app, download and install it on your smartphone, authenticate your SIM through an OTP process, enable your (same) mobile number-linked bank account, and you are good to go. You can make or receive payments and also check your balance.

You can feed a bank account number and IFSC (Indian Financial System Code) as for NEFT and start paying! In the far simpler world that we live in, your vendor's VPA or virtual payment address, is sufficient. This will be `vegetables@bankname` or even `mobile-number@bankname` which makes it easier to share! Going a step further, on some apps, if

you and the vendor use the same app, just his mobile number is enough for you to make the payment.

The easiest method is to scan the QR code of the payer and make payment. This cuts across language barriers and misspelling and mishearing errors.

**Technology easy enough to use by the mass of people will be susceptible to fraud. Simple confidence tricks are enough to cheat people using UPI apps**

You can link more than one of your bank accounts to the app and make a specific payment from a specific bank account. The top UPI apps today include PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and BHIM, the latter being the Government offering. There are dozens of others and their collective use is growing phenomenally.

Demonetisation and the

pandemic may have been the triggers, but the sheer ease of use and accessibility of the technology surely laid the foundation.

## Trouble points

The rose always has thorns. Technology easy enough to use by the mass of people will be susceptible to fraud. We need not go as far as hacking or high-tech methods, but simple confidence tricks are enough to cheat people using UPI apps.

For example, writing down your password or pin can land you in trouble if it gets into the wrong hands. Sharing them with strangers and allowing them to use your phone and app are equally risky.

Some common frauds take advantage of the fact that we may be unclear how the app works and dos and don'ts of online transactions.

For example, when you initiate a payment, you have to key in your PIN to complete the transaction. However, to receive payments you don't need a PIN. This can be grounds for confusion. Let us say you are selling your used furniture online. A fraudulent buyer would, instead of paying you, generate a request for money from you through the UPI app and ask you to approve the request saying that you have to enter your PIN to receive the money. Do that and, in effect, you have paid them!

To ensure you are flustered and confused they would put pressure on you smoothly, not allowing you the time to think or get suspicious.

Some UPI apps have an on-line/ real-time chat and its easy for users to mistake the chat as being official instructions from the app itself. So, if the fraudster asks for your PIN on the chat you may well believe your app is prompting to enter the PIN. You just have to be alert always.

Another fraud is based on your registered mobile number (RMN). The SIM card of your phone/ your RMN is at the

heart of your account, its authentication and operations. Fraudsters try to replicate your SIM by cloning it or simply conning you to cooperate so that they can get a replacement SIM!

Then its theirs to get OTPs (one-time passwords) and make digital transactions on your accounts.

For example, you may get a call from somebody posing as staff of your mobile phone company offering anything from upgrade of SIM to requiring a KYC verification. They will offer to do this for you online/ on their end if you just give them the OTP.

The process can even be initiated by an SMS that sounds alarming or threatening. Something along the lines of your bank account or credit card being deactivated, or your SIM.

Of course, you won't respond to the Nigerian prince offering you a fortune if you help him access his super fortune. But when you get an SMS saying your bank account will be deactivated, wouldn't you get anxious and want to respond?

On the contrary, your antennae should perk up if anything like this happens as you should never share any OTP with anybody and certainly not something pertaining to your SIM card or bank account. Your bank will never ask you for it and neither will your mobile service provider. Another widely prevalent fraud is through fake apps. Once downloaded and installed, these apps can steal much of your personal information. Bottomline, never download apps except from authorised sources.

A basic precaution would be to keep a low balance in the bank account linked to your UPI app. That way you minimise the risk should you fall prey to some scam.

## Recourse

Should something happen, what should you do. Call your bank immediately and lodge a complaint. Your UPI app itself has a link to raise a complaint. You can complain to the cyber-crime cell as well.

As with cash, being alert and being circumspect, even a little paranoid, will go a long way in keeping you safe!

*(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)*

# Deliveries of S-400 systems have begun: Russian official

'First division will be delivered by the end of 2021'

**DINAKAR PERI**  
NEW DELHI

Ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India early next month, Moscow has started deliveries of the S-400 air defence systems to India, a senior Russian official confirmed.

This risks the possibility of sanctions from the U.S.



India is to get five S-400 systems as per its \$5.43 bn deal with Russia. ■ REUTERS

under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) which would come up for

discussion at the India-U.S. 2+2 ministerial dialogue, also scheduled for early December.

"Russia has started supplying S-400 air defence system to India, the first division will be delivered by the end of 2021," said Dmitry Shugayev, Director of Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC). The supplies are proceeding on schedule, he added.

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## 'Tiger tourism' on Nallamala Hills

Package includes cottage stay, educational tour, jungle safari and forest trek

**SWATHI VADLAMUDI**  
MANNANUR

The lush green hills of Nallamala are now open for tourists to explore and learn from, thanks to the eco-tourism package announced by the Telangana Forest Department.

Safari ride into the Amrabad Tiger Reserve, which had been a minor sojourn for the pilgrims bound for the Srisailem temple, will be part of the 'Tiger Stay Package' which is set to begin from November 17. The package includes cottage stay, educational tour, jungle safari, and forest trek up to the Umamaheshwaram Temple, exclusive of food. Pricing starts from ₹4,600 for two, and goes up to ₹17,000 for 12 members. More the number, better the bargain.

On the first day, the tourists arriving at the CBET



Cottages for tourists at Mannanur, inside the Amrabad Tiger Reserve in Nagarkurnool district. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

(Community Based Eco Tourism) resort of Mannanur, about 143 km from Hyderabad, around noon will be apprised of the Forest Department's initiatives, which include a tour to the health clinic, interpretation centre, plastic recycling centre, biological lab and others.

Jungle safari will follow,

taking tourists through the verdant forest paths up to the Farhabad view point, with ample opportunity for wildlife photography without any additional charge.

Youth from the local Chenchu tribe will accompany the tourists on the ride and explain about the culture of the particularly vul-

nerable tribal group (PVTG), besides providing assistance in spotting the wild animals.

The trek is not for the weak-limbed though. Part of it is in the rough, rock strewn terrain which presents a formidable challenge to the knee joints.

### Chenchu guides

The effort is amply rewarding, majorly due to the presence of the Chenchu guides who slide into their new roles effortlessly, stopping at every occasional tree to explain its significance and the symbiotic relationships it promotes.

Breaking the ice with these unassuming guides will open the portals to great learning, as they could come up with most interesting facts and more about the wild which even the forest officials may not be aware of.

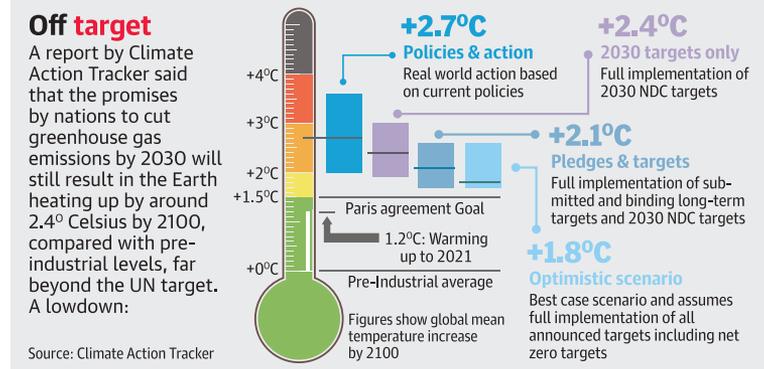
# Coal 'phase-down' is a right: Minister

India entitled to responsible use, he says of COP-26 deal

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

A day after the 26th United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow ended on Saturday, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, in a personal blog, dwelt on India's last-minute intervention that played a key role in the final text of the agreement that called for coal to be "phased down" rather than "phased out".

"Fossil fuels and their use have enabled parts of the world to attain high levels of growth. Even now, developed countries have not



completely phased out coal. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) refers to mitigation of GHG emissions from all sources. UNFCCC is not directed at any particu-

lar source," he wrote, "Developing countries have a right to their fair share of the global carbon budget and are entitled to the responsible use of fossil fuels within this scope."

He said the lack of commitment (by the West) to climate finance is "troublesome".

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U.K. HAILS DEAL ► PAGE 11

## Kaiser-i-Hind is Arunachal's State butterfly

The insect with a 90-120 mm wingspan is found in the eastern Himalayas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

An elusive swallowtail butterfly carrying 'India' in its name and found in next-door China will become the State butterfly of Arunachal Pradesh.

The State Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday approved the large, brightly coloured Kaiser-i-Hind as the State butterfly. The Cabinet meeting was for the first time held outside State capital Itanagar at an unusual location – Pakke Tiger Reserve.

The Cabinet also adopted the Pakke Tiger Reserve 2047 declaration on climate change-resilient and responsive Arunachal Pradesh aimed at lowering emissions and sustainable development.

Kaiser-i-Hind (*Teinopalpus imperialis*) literally means Emperor of India. This butterfly with a 90-120 mm wingspan is found in six States along the eastern Himalayas at



Winged beauty: *Teinopalpus imperialis*. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

elevations from 6,000-10,000 feet in well-wooded terrain.

The butterfly also flutters in Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and southern China.

The State Wildlife Board had in January 2020 accepted the proposal from

Koj Rinya, the divisional forest officer of Hapoli Forest Division in the Lower Subansiri district to accept the Kaiser-i-Hind as the State butterfly. The proposal was made with a view to boosting butterfly tourism and saving the species from extinction in the State.

Protected areas under the Hapoli Forest Division are popular with butterfly enthusiasts.

Although the Kaiser-i-Hind is protected under Schedule II of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, it is hunted for supply to butterfly collectors.

### Habitat conservation

According to Assam-based butterfly expert Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi, the species is confined to very few pockets of Arunachal Pradesh and could become extinct if not conserved.

"The State butterfly tag can translate into its habitat conservation," she said.

The first dead specimen of Kaiser-i-Hind was recorded in Sikkim by Usha Lachugpa, a senior forest official of the State, in 2012. It was captured live on camera by a few participants during a butterfly watching meet in Arunachal Pradesh's Talle Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in 2014.

# A lost cause

Despite severe losses, the Maoists refuse to acknowledge the futility of their cause

With the deaths of 26 rebels in a police operation in Gadchiroli on Saturday, the proscribed Communist Party of India (Maoist) has faced yet another setback in its “protracted armed struggle” against the Indian state. Gadchiroli, a largely forested and tribal-dominated district, is among Maharashtra’s poorest and the Maoists have sought to expand their presence extending from neighbouring Chhattisgarh. There have been major encounters in the district, with recent ones involving the deaths of 40 Maoists in two separate operations in April 2018 and a landmine blast claiming 15 police personnel and a driver in May 2019. Gadchiroli remains one of the few districts “severely affected” by left-wing extremism. Despite suffering significant losses to its leadership either in military operations or due to physical infirmities and a shrinking of the areas of influence, the Maoists have refused to withdraw from their pursuit of armed struggle. In cycles of violence, they have managed their own strikes against security forces, but such attacks have not provided them any heft in expanding their presence or increasing their support base. The conflict has fallen into a pattern – violence begets violence as insurgents and the security forces continually lose combatants, but equally disturbing, this also affects the poor tribal people whose lives are caught in a prolonged crossfire.

The Maoists’ inability, not just to expand but also to entrench themselves, is to some extent to the credit of the Indian state apparatus, both its security establishment and its work, through development schemes, in weaning away support for the Maoists among the poorest and marginalised sections, especially in remote areas. At the same time, this is also a reflection of the incongruence of the Indian Maoists’ programme which bases itself on replicating the Chinese Revolution of the previous century, and its quixotic pursuit of armed struggle as the means to achieve its aims. Neither are the conditions in India remotely closer to that of China in the 1920s, nor are the peasantry – whose support the Maoists deem as crucial to their project – enamoured of the Maoist programme or its reliance on guerilla struggle. The Maoists’ refusal to acknowledge the diverse industrial base in the country, their rejection of liberal democratic instruments in the Indian state and the faith of the poor in the robust electoral system have blinded them to pursue a futile cause. Yet, despite the futility, the Maoists retain the capability to strike in isolated skirmishes. Maharashtra must not rest on its success in militarily diminishing the Maoist threat in Gadchiroli. It must act continually in winning over the support of tribals in the region and retaining their faith in the liberal democratic institutions of the state.

# Learning from the best in India's COVID-19 fight

Innovative interventions have helped communities across the country change the course of the pandemic response



PURNIMA MENON &  
MADHUKAR PAI

A few months ago, as the country reeled under the impact of the second wave of COVID-19, officials deep inside Madhya Pradesh's tribal districts had to contend with an additional crisis: vaccinating a people firmly resistant to any coronavirus vaccines.

## A transformation

It was April 15, 2021, and less than 10% of the eligible population had been vaccinated in Jhabua, the district in Madhya Pradesh, per government figures, with one of the highest percentages of Scheduled Tribes population in India (<https://bit.ly/3Cez2Lk>). It was then that district officials decided to leverage tradition in their efforts to convey the message of timely vaccination. They started by organising *khatla baithaks* (*khat* means “women bed,” and *baithak* means “meeting”), or community meetings, to dispel vaccine myths.

By July, Jhabua saw a five-fold increase in vaccination uptake, with approximately 40% of eligible people in the district having received at least one dose. In fact, as members from the department of Women and Child Development handed out turmeric-smear rice to rural houses as a traditional means of welcoming people to vaccination programmes across the district, vaccination drives across the district saw a discernible uptick.

An easy interpretation of this in-

tervention might make it seem that Jhabua district is an outlier in the larger narrative of COVID-19 containment strategies. However, the data has made us see that, quite simply, it is not. Like Jhabua, there are multiple districts and regions where individuals and groups, from both government and civil society, have stepped in to ensure that impact of COVID-19 was mitigated in any and every way possible – even if that meant the use of rice or *khatla baithaks*. But just as it is easy for such stories to dissolve in the predominant din of the news cycle, it is also easy to see why our journey over the last several months began.

## Space for initiatives

In April and May 2021, when the nation was going through the peak of a crippling second wave, a small group of us – that soon grew to over 500 people – came together to form India COVID SOS. We realised that there existed a wide spectrum of people who had made it their mission to help society steer to safer shores in this pandemic: medical professionals who, despite the volume of patients, were managing COVID-19 in an evidence-informed, pragmatic way; teams vaccinating entire villages once overwhelmed by hesitancy; workers ensuring even the remotest areas had adequate oxygen supply, etc. These efforts needed to be foregrounded, and a space was essential to document learnings from such successful initiatives.

Subsequently, together with Exemplars in Global Health, our research led to the development of case studies from India; now publicly available, these case studies highlight interventions and innovations that drove meaningful outcomes in the pandemic response



GETTY IMAGES

across India.

We confirmed that the story of Jhabua was not one of exception. As our case studies show, there are other commendable endeavours as well. For instance, in February 2021, when India's vaccination drive was initiated, health-care workers in Janefal, a rural hamlet with just over 500 residents in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district had a difficult time convincing people to get vaccinated. Some had heard stories from neighbouring villages about people dying after vaccination. Others believed that people who were vaccinated had to amputate their arms.

To build trust and confidence, village heads and other front line workers set an example by getting vaccinated first. They had their photos taken while getting the vaccine, and later, to address apprehensions, spent time painting gram panchayat buildings. A task force was also set up. It comprised health workers, police officers and village council leaders who discovered villagers had an unprecedented fear of hospitals and were terrified doctors would kill them and rob them of their kidneys if they went in for treatment. With the nearest vaccination centre being eight kilometres away, the task force overcame both challenges by conducting a vaccination camp in the village, taking the vaccines to the people. They also did this on

April 27, Hanuman Jayanti – an auspicious day for the locals. It was an insightful and clever way to leverage the occasion for the right cause.

## In Tamil Nadu and Bihar

In Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, the district administration in collaboration with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) addressed vaccine hesitancy effectively, too. The NGOs enlisted the help of community members to write songs in tribal languages to share the benefits of getting vaccinated. The district administration also recorded statements from village leaders in their own languages, regarding the vaccine's effectiveness, and broadcast those messages throughout the district's different villages. This helped villagers engender trust, and soon, vaccination rates there went up, too.

In East Champaran, Bihar, district officials remarkably achieved 95% COVID-19 vaccination of adults in the Bankatwa block in just two days using what has been dubbed the “Bankatwa Way”. Bankatwa block historically had low routine immunisation coverage of just 64.3% due to challenges of difficult terrain, poor health infrastructure and vaccine hesitancy in the community, among others. To tackle this, the district adopted a mission mode approach. This was a concentrated effort of all government departments in collaboration with World Health Organization, civil society organisations, local elected leaders, and religious leaders to mobilise all eligible people in the district for COVID-19 vaccination. In just 48 hours, over 55,000 of the block's 62,000 registered inhabitants were vaccinated by setting up vaccination sites in each of the area's 102 villages and hamlets. The effort had a knock-on

effect across the district with similar intensive effort campaigns, delivering 100% first dose coverage by early October.

## Work in progress

Like these stories, there are many such novel, inspirational efforts that can be found in the case studies we have helped to collate (<https://bit.ly/2YJ6VpG> and <https://bit.ly/3c8VECj>). Our idea has always been to capture a broad canvas of learnings that could inform policy at the highest level, through critical vignettes showing what is working best (or not). But we are just getting started. It is essential that we keep working toward expanding the scope of our case studies, making them a reservoir of accurate information and inspiration. If we can effectively share and disseminate learnings and highlight the best interventions from across different domestic geographies, we can take a step towards being better equipped to tackle health crises in the future.

(India COVID SOS is an international non-profit volunteer group of scientists, clinicians, engineers, policy-makers, community organisers, and industrial partners. Exemplars in Global Health brings together researchers, funders, and collaborators around the globe with the mission of identifying countries that are positive outliers in global health. Their analyses of best practices strive to be a template that can be potentially replicated by others at a country/regional-level.)

Purnima Menon is a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute, New Delhi.

Madhukar Pai is a professor of epidemiology and global health at McGill University, Canada. They are volunteers with India COVID SOS

# Gadchiroli encounter a ‘severe blow’ to Maoists’ networks

‘Milind Teltumbde’s death likely to put brakes on expansion in MMC zone’

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

The Gadchiroli encounter in which 26 members of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) – including key fugitive Milind Teltumbde – were “neutralised” was a severe blow to the Naxals’ urban and jungle networks in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, said authorities.

They said the death of Teltumbde, central committee member and in-charge of the newly formed Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh confluence (MMC) zone, was likely to affect the recruitment and expansion of the Maoists in this zone.

Gadchiroli SP Ankit Goyal said Teltumbde was the “mastermind” behind violent and obstructionist activities and the organisation’s linchpin in establishing and expanding Maoist activity in the zone.

## Pivotal figure

“Milind Teltumbde was an important figure not merely in the CPI(Maoist)’s organisation in Maharashtra but a pivotal figure in the country’s



**Arms cache:** Weapons recovered from 26 Naxals who were killed in an encounter on Saturday in Gadchiroli district. ■PTI

network. Likewise, two other slain Maoists, Lokesh and Mahesh Gota, were both divisional committee members (DVCs) who terrorised the local populace and thwarted development work in the district and the region,” said Mr. Goyal.

He said Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh too would reap the dividends of the “historic” operation as the zone was a veritable bastion for the Maoists on account of its hilly terrain and dense forests. Officials said Teltumbde had an elaborate

personal security system and moved with heavily armed bodyguards and a platoon of Maoists wherever he camped. Authorities said given the high number of Maoists who had been laying down their arms or were killed in encounters in the past few years, the outfit’s leadership in north Gadchiroli was severely weakened and as good as finished for the past one year.

He said the police had obtained intelligence inputs two-three days ago that a large number of Maoists had

set up camp somewhere around the Gyarapatti village in Gadchiroli’s Korchi tehsil. The authorities apparently did not precisely know that Teltumbde would be among them.

## Sophisticated weapons

“After analysing these inputs, we planned an operation headed by Additional SP Soumya Munde, who led teams of around 300 C-60 jawans and commenced combing operations. At around 6 a.m. on November 13, the Maoists opened fire on our teams using sophisticated weapons. Going by the intensity of the fire they kept up from their positions in the hilly areas, we estimate that 100 Maoists were present there,” Mr. Goyal said, adding that there was a likelihood of more outlaws being injured in the operation. He said the Maoists had kept up a heavy fire for the most part of the 10-hour operation.

He said the injured men were immediately taken out of the combat zone in a chopper and admitted to a Nagpur hospital where they are out of danger.

# Manipur ambush: Naga outfit under scanner

## MNPF claims responsibility for attack

**RAHUL KARMAKAR**  
GUWAHATI

A less-known Naga extremist group involved in killing seven, including an Assam Rifles officer and his wife and minor son, in an ambush in Churachandpur district of Manipur on Saturday has puzzled the security forces and counter-insurgency specialists.

The Manipur Naga People's Front (MNPF) had along with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) claimed responsibility for the attack that killed Colonel Viplap Tripathi and his family.

The PLA had been lying low for about six years until Saturday's strike but has been around since September 1978 as one of the fiercest of the VBIGs, an abbreviation used by the armed forces to mean groups comprising mostly of fighters from the Meitei community who dominate Manipur's Imphal Valley. VBIG expands to Valley-based insurgent group.

"There isn't much information on the MNPF except that it is ideologically opposed to the NSCN(I-M), the strongest of Manipur's Naga group but not in conflict with the armed forces in the

State since the ceasefire in 1997," an armed forces officer keeping tabs on activities along the India-Myanmar border said. The NSCN(I-M) is short for the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland.

According to local intelligence officials, the MNPF was formed in June 2013 after the merger of two more obscure outfits called the United Naga People's Council and Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front.

A statement issued by the MNPF said the group's objective was "restoration of sovereignty and right to self-determination" besides "bridging the gap" among all revolutionary groups across the seven northeastern States.

Justifying the merger, the outfit had said: "We encompass all parties for a united struggle which is our loud and clear message. We shall not demoralise our political vision by remaining aloof like the organisations under ceasefire pacts whose interest is either higher autonomy or economic package."

Last known, the MNPF's chairman was John Francis Kashung and Wilson Tao its general secretary.

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 <sup>th</sup> 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
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.
<b>General Studies Paper IV</b>	
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.