

VEDHIK
DAJLY NEWS
ANALYSIS
17 - NOVEMBER 2021

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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An outreach to tribals that checks all the boxes

'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' is a part of the steps being taken to secure the culture and welfare of India's tribal communities



G. KISHAN REDDY

In the Ayodhya *kanda* of the *Ramayana*, when Lord Rama is exiled from the kingdom of Ayodhya, and reaches the northern bank of the Ganga at Sringerapur, he is received by the king of the neighbouring kingdom of Nishadha, Guha. Rama treats the tribal leader, Guha, as his own conscience. Rama stays at Guha's place and the Nishadha king helps Rama cross the river the next day. In the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna's travels in the Northeast lead to his encounter with Ulupi, the princess of the Naga tribe, who he marries and has a son with, Iravan. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are replete with harmonious relationships between forest dwellers and the "city dwellers".

Recognition now

Despite a place for tribals in Indian culture and history, the enactment of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 by the British government, branded the very 'descendants' of Guha as criminals. With its racist overtones and the stereotyping of tribes as uncivilised, this Act aimed to create a sense of fear against tribal communities. Various tribes across India resisted British rule vehemently and the law was aimed at dealing with these tribes with an iron fist. From Birsa Munda and Tantia Bhil in the north and central parts, Komaram Bheem and Thalakkal Chandu in the south to the likes of Rani Gaidinliu

in the northeast, tribal movements in different regions of the country waged spirited battles against the British colonial rule. A lot of their contributions today are either not known or not fully appreciated.

The aim of commemorating November 15, the birthday of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is to ensure that the freedom fighters from various tribal communities who fought for India's Independence get their rightful recognition. It will also ensure that the heritage, culture and the values of the 705 tribal communities (Scheduled Tribes) that constitute approximately 10% of our population is protected and is made accessible across the nation.

Meaningful representation

Since Independence, there have been efforts to improve the social, political and economic conditions of the tribal populations. Ensuring political representation by reserving electoral constituencies with large tribal populations was one such vehicle. However, representation at ministerial levels was still restricted to the odd figurehead Ministry such as Tribal Affairs. The recent expansion of the Union Council of Ministers led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi saw the inclusion of eight Ministers belonging to the Scheduled Tribes representing the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and West Bengal. They represent the Gond, Santal, Miji, Munda, Tea Tribe, Kokana and Sonowal-Kachari communities. The Union Cabinet now has three Ministers who belong to various tribal communities. Contrast this with the period between



SANDEEP SAXENA

2004-2014, when tribal community political representatives were considered mere figureheads. Under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, between 2004-2014, the Ministers from the tribal community were fewer and primarily restricted to the Tribal Affairs Ministry.

Economic well-being

Apart from political representation, it is also important to ensure that tribal communities see economic progress and better human development indicators. This received renewed impetus in 1999, when former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee set up a separate Ministry for Tribal Affairs. Now, under Mr. Modi, imbalances in budgetary provisions are being addressed in mission mode. For the year 2021-2022, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs saw a budgetary allocation of ₹7,524.87 crore. This is nearly double the budgetary allocation made in the last UPA Budget of 2013-2014.

After close to 90 years, the Indian Forest Act of 1927 was amended in 2017 (The Indian Forest (Amendment) Act, 2017; <https://bit.ly/3wR8zSS>) so that bamboo is no longer classified as a tree. This

has allowed for the economic value of bamboo to be leveraged to its fullest potential and also brought the Act in consonance with the Forest Rights Act of 2006. The biggest beneficiaries of this are the forest dwelling tribal communities who are now able to use such forest produce to make value-added utility products. The role of tribal marketing development corporations in building market linkages is further increasing incomes of tribal communities.

Sustainable development also needs to ensure that human development indicators (HDIs) in nutrition, health and education are being improved. The National Education Policy (NEP) acknowledges the additional focus required for tribal communities to address issues such as higher dropout rates.

The NEP, by ensuring that the medium of instruction until at least Class 5, will be the mother tongue or local language of the child has ensured that tribal languages are protected and are treated on a par with languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The expansion of the Eklavya Model Residential Schools, from 90 new schools sanctioned in the UPA years to 472 new schools sanctioned since 2014, will ensure that tribal children will see better education outcomes. This coupled with health interventions in the form of primary health and wellness centres and nutrition programmes will see improved HDIs among tribal communities in the long run.

Bhagwan Birsa Munda was only 25 when he died in prison (1900). He fought bravely against the exploitative system of the British Raj

and spearheaded a movement against the British colonial oppressive system. It is unfortunate that the contributions of several other tribal freedom fighters including those of tribal women freedom fighters such as Rani Gaidinliu, Jhano Murmu, Helen Lepcha and others have nearly been forgotten.

Tribal museums

There are records of over 200 tribal freedom fighters across India who participated in about 85 instances of revolts and uprisings against colonial rule. To recognise this, 10 tribal freedom fighter museums are being set up in the States of Andhra Pradesh (Lambasingi), Chhattisgarh (Raipur), Goa (Ponda), Gujarat (Rajpipla), Jharkhand (Ranchi), Kerala (Kozhikode), Madhya Pradesh (Chhindwara), Manipur (Taminglong), Mizoram (Kelsey) and Telangana (Hyderabad) will showcase the contribution of tribal freedom fighters and are at different stages of construction and completion.

Commemorating November 15 every year will integrate various stakeholders and allow for a discussion on the achievements and contributions of tribal communities, their cultural heritage, and practices and traditions among the younger generation of Indians. As India celebrates its 75th year of Independence with 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahostav', this would be a thoughtful gift for our tribal community and a recall to Ram Rajya – where the likes of Guha are given due respect, their cultural diversity is respected, and their contributions celebrated.

G. Kishan Reddy is the Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of Northeastern Region (DONER)

Biden, Xi agree on need to avoid conflict amid differences

Virtual summit, however, fails to find breakthrough on key issues such as Taiwan

ANANTH KRISHNAN
SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
HONG KONG

U.S. President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping on Tuesday agreed on the need to "responsibly" manage a competitive relationship but did not arrive at any significant breakthrough on any of the thorny issues that have led to increasingly confrontational ties.

The two leaders on Tuesday morning (Monday evening in Washington) spoke for over three hours in their first virtual summit, convened from the Roosevelt Room in the White House and the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Mr. Xi greeted Mr. Biden as an "old friend" while the U.S. President noted that the two, from their time as Vice Presidents, had "spent an awful lot of time talking to one another" and had "never been that formal with one another".

The change in tone was obvious from a March meeting in Alaska between senior officials that saw accusations traded in front of the cameras and marked a turbulent start to the Biden administration's engagement with China. But pleasantries aside, both sides essentially reinforced their positions on many of the core issues that have strained the relationship.

Any headway on these issues would have been a surprise, with expectations ahead of the summit focused firmly on what a senior U.S. administration official had described as discussing "guardrails" rather than on any specific deliverables.

The main takeaway was a mutual recognition of the need to manage competition amid differences. Mr. Biden called for "common sense guardrails to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict," the White House said, although its readout did not detail the na-



New horizon: U.S. President Joe Biden during a virtual meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday. **AP**

ture of these measures beyond saying the two leaders talked about how the two sides could continue to engage on a number of areas. The U.S. President also underlined the "importance of managing competition responsibly."

'Mutual respect'

Mr. Xi, for his part, said "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation" should be the "three principles" guiding ties, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in its readout. He said the two countries "need to treat each other as equals" and that "no conflict and no confrontation is a line that both sides must hold." "Drawing ideological lines or dividing the world into different camps or rival groups," he said, "will only make the world suffer", calling on the U.S. "to meet its word of not seeking a 'new Cold War', with concrete actions."

The unanswered question was how both sides would "responsibly manage" diffe-

rences when neither appeared to give ground on any of them. The Chinese President said on the one hand that "the key is to manage [differences] constructively so that they don't magnify or exacerbate" but added that "China will certainly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests." He added that it was "important that the U.S. properly handle the relevant issues with prudence."

Top of those issues is Taiwan. Mr. Biden said the U.S. "strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait". He also "discussed the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific, and communicated the continued determination of the U.S. to uphold our commitments in the region," the White House said, highlighting the "importance of freedom of navigation and safe overflight to the region's prosperity." Mr. Biden, in effect, said that the U.S. was

committed to the status quo from its side on Taiwan, by underlining the country's commitment to the "one China" policy, the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqués and the Six Assurances. Under its one China policy, Washington recognises Beijing alone as the formal government of China, but under the Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. will support Taiwan if it is attacked by Beijing.

'True status quo'

Mr. Xi, in contrast, referred to what he called "the true status quo of the Taiwan question" which was that "there is but one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China." "We have patience and will strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification with utmost sincerity and efforts," he said. "That said, should the separatist forces for Taiwan independence provoke us, force our hands or even cross the red line, we will be compelled to take resolute measures."

Mr. Biden also raised "concerns" on China's actions in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong and human rights issues more broadly, which brought a response from Mr. Xi saying that "democracy is not mass produced with a uniform model" and "dismissing forms of democracy that are different from one's own is in itself undemocratic." "China is ready to have dialogues on human rights on the basis of mutual respect," he said.

Both flagged climate change as one area of cooperation, coming after a recent agreement announced by the two countries at COP26. In his opening remarks, Mr. Biden said the two countries ought to work together where interests aligned, highlighting climate change, while Mr. Xi said climate change "can well become a new highlight of cooperation."

Kabul, Kashmir and the return of realpolitik

India could find itself in a catch-22 situation as engagement with the Taliban may lead Pakistan to up the ante in J&K



HAPPYMON JACOB

While the return of the Taliban to Kabul may have ended the internecine warfare within Afghanistan, the geopolitical contestation to own the spoils of Taliban's victory has just begun. In a rather unfriendly neighbourhood, New Delhi's attempts at forming a regional consensus to stabilise Afghanistan, albeit wise and timely, will only achieve limited success thanks to the China-Pakistan coalition and its interests at play in and over Afghanistan. What is worse, India's advances to court the Taliban and attempts to evolve a regional consensus on Afghanistan might deteriorate India-Pakistan relations and pose challenges for India in Kashmir.

Post-American Afghanistan

While the recently-held Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan on November 10, 2021 was an important initiative to help Afghanistan stabilise, the sober reality is that the two countries that are key to stabilising Afghanistan – China and Pakistan – decided to stay away from it. Russia or the Central Asian states have neither the ability nor the desire to pursue a role in Afghanistan autonomous from the larger Chinese or Pakistani designs there. Iran has limited interests in Afghanistan and is unlikely to go against the Chinese plan for the region, especially in the broader context of being under United States sanctions.

While China seems to be approaching the Taliban-led Afghan-

istan in a cautiously slow manner, it is clearly poised to be in the driving seat of the regional, if not global, engagement with the region in the months ahead. It is a matter of time before Beijing recognises the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, and it is likely to coordinate its recognition along with that of Russia and Pakistan. China's long-term vision for Afghanistan revolves around the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project of which Afghanistan has been a part since May 2016. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also viewed as a key component within the larger Chinese BRI project and Afghanistan could eventually become part of CPEC if and when the Taliban regime stabilises itself in the country. For China, there is a lot riding on the Taliban.

Even as Pakistan recognises the challenge to itself from an unstable Afghanistan, its current Afghan strategy reeks of a triumphalist attitude. While it lobbies the international community to help prevent Afghanistan slide into further turmoil, it is determined to keep India as far away from Kabul as possible even though the Taliban would like India to continue the engagement and offer development assistance. For Pakistan, Afghanistan is the mother of all zero sum games.

To aid or not to aid

The international community is faced with a dilemma in Afghanistan when it comes to deciding to help the country get back on its feet. Taliban and Pakistan refer to the U.S.-led coalition as 'colonisers' who just vacated the Afghan territory; and in the same breath, they seek assistance from those very 'former colonisers'. Second, if the U.S. and the West indeed send aid to Afghanistan, it may or may



not reach the people. And yet, if they do not help, Afghans will suffer untold miseries. But perhaps what might bother the West the most is that if they stabilise the country, they would still be called former colonisers, and Pakistan and China will benefit out of it geopolitically, making it, in that sense, a thankless job for the West. So the question before the western leaders is how to offer structured incentives to the Taliban, and when.

India's dilemma

India now faces a new dilemma in Afghanistan – the first one was to decide whether to engage the Taliban or not. The successive governments in Afghanistan, including the current Taliban regime, have sought relations with India which has upset Pakistan. Pakistan has always been deeply suspicious of growing India-Afghanistan relations no matter who was/is in charge in Kabul. India's current dilemma is also along the same lines. The Taliban want India to engage and help the country stabilise, but Pakistan resents that. Not too long ago, the Pakistani National Security Adviser had lashed out against India for (India) reaching out to the Taliban delegation in Doha. And now, Pakistan refused to attend the regional security meeting on Afghanistan called by India. These instances indicate that Pakistan would not like India to either develop close relations

with the Taliban or be a part of any regional set up to stabilise the country. More so, it is likely that the more India gets close to the Taliban, the more the Pakistani side will increase the heat (read 'attacks') in Jammu and Kashmir. By maintaining ties with the Taliban and convening the regional security meeting in New Delhi, India has indicated that this is an acceptable risk.

Let me explain this dilemma a bit more. Very crudely put, if the Taliban regime is stabilised in Kabul without India's assistance to the country, the more it is likely to do Pakistan's bidding *vis-à-vis* India. On the other hand, the more India helps the Taliban-led Afghanistan, the more Pakistan will up the ante in Kashmir. This is a catch-22 situation that India finds itself in. And yet, India has little choice but to engage the Taliban.

Pakistan's Kashmir policy

The earlier Pakistani willingness to be conciliatory towards India on Kashmir before and in the run-up to the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021 seems to have disappeared for now. This is at least partly due to the Pakistani triumphalism about the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. The bilateral backchannel conversations in late 2020 and early 2021 had reportedly discussed the reduction of violence in Kashmir in general and a political understanding with regard to Kashmir. The February ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan and the subsequent reduction in violence in Kashmir (i.e., infiltration of terrorists from the Pakistani side to Kashmir, terror attacks in Kashmir and ceasefire violations on the Line of Control) were a direct result of the backchannel understanding between the two sides. This understanding held until Au-

gust when the Taliban takeover happened. Since then, violence data show that the backchannel understanding is withering away with violence in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) spiking along all three indicators albeit gradually. More so, sentiments from across the border also indicate that the earlier Pakistani stand that it would accept the Indian decision to withdraw the special status to Kashmir (in lieu of New Delhi restoring Statehood to Kashmir and allowing political activity in the State) has now changed. It now demands that India fully reverts to the pre-August 5, 2019 position on Kashmir. In other words, the Pakistani conciliatory approach on Kashmir lasted only till the Taliban takeover of Kabul. At best, this is a post-facto change in the Pakistani strategy, and at worst, Pakistan is stringing India along.

The appointment of Sardar Masood Khan, former Pakistan occupied Kashmir President, as Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S. is perhaps yet another indication of the centrality of Kashmir in Pakistan's foreign policy in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Kabul.

If this analysis is accurate, then we are likely to see more war of words and violence in the context of J&K. This will mean that any possibility of India-Pakistan cooperation in Afghanistan would be very hard to achieve. Beijing will play along; so will Iran and the Central Asian countries, for the most part. For New Delhi then, the options are to coordinate its Afghan policy with Moscow, Washington and the various western capitals while steadfastly engaging the Taliban.

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UN tourism body's honour for weavers hub Pochampally

Best Tourism Village tag for centre of ikat handlooms

SERISH NANISETTI
HYDERABAD

Pochampally village in Telangana is set to be named as one of the best Tourism Villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), according to reports.

"On behalf of people of Pochampally in particular and Telangana, I am grateful that the award has been bestowed on the village," Union Culture Minister G. Kishan Reddy said after receiving the news. India had nominated two other villages in the same category Kongthong in Meghalaya and Ladhpura Khas in Madhya Pradesh.

Pochampally about 50 km from Hyderabad is an artisanal village known for its exceptional ikat weaves and textures. Visitors through the



The Pochampally fabric is known for complex colours and geometric designs.

village to see the weavers at work on their handlooms, creating fabric with complex geometric designs and colours.

Reacting to the news, Telangana Minister for Municipal Administration and Ur-

ban Development K.T. Rama Rao said: "I am delighted to know that Pochampally village was selected as one of the Best Tourism Villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation. Recent UNESCO heritage tag for Ramappa Temple and now the Best Tourism Village Award to Pochampally will significantly boost tourism in the State."

The UNWTO, the world body for promoting sustainable tourism, will hold its 24th annual meeting from November 30 to December 3.

The Tourism Villages is a global initiative to highlight villages where tourism preserves cultures and traditions, celebrates diversity, provides opportunities and safeguards biodiversity, according to UNWTO.

For more than a waiver

Threat of sanctions undermines foundation of India-U.S. global strategic partnership

The announcement by Russia that supplies of the S-400 Triumf system to India have already begun has set the stage for Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit in early December. It has also thrown down the gauntlet to the U.S. that threatened sanctions against India. The deal for the air defence system was signed in 2018 during Mr. Putin's visit then. In 2017, the U.S. had passed its Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) that provided for economic and travel sanctions against countries and officials that transacted significant military and intelligence contracts with Russia, North Korea and Iran. The Modi government has, justifiably, paid little heed to U.S. warnings that the sanctions – slapped on China and NATO partner, Turkey, for buying the S-400 – could also be used against India. In contrast to its cave-in on similar U.S. threats over the purchase of Iranian oil in 2019, Government officials have asserted that the deal is an essential part of India's defences at a time of challenges on its eastern and western frontiers. In order to protect advance payments for the S-400 from U.S. strictures, India and Russia conducted their transfers through a rupee-rouble system. With the first parts of the system now delivered, and the first squadron delivery likely to be completed by December-end, the die is cast.

The U.S. has a choice not to allow the S-400 delivery to turn into a showdown with India. U.S. President Joe Biden has been authorised by the Congress to waive sanctions if the waiver is found to be in American "vital national security interests", or, that India would reduce its future dependence on Russian weaponry. While it is unlikely India would give assurances on the latter, it is easy to argue, as many U.S. Congress representatives have done in a proposed amendment to CAATSA, that India is a prized U.S. partner – of the Quad, the Indo-Pacific and in countering China. Sanctions will cause a rift in India-U.S. ties, and could spur India towards Russia. Above all, the U.S. must recognise that its unilateral sanctions, which are not U.N. endorsed, undermine the multilateral system. The subjective and whimsical manner in which these sanctions were used, withdrawn and then reimposed against Iran, for example, do not inspire confidence in them. For India, acceding to such sanctions amounts to becoming a party to a bilateral dispute, and challenges the nation's principles of sovereignty and strategic autonomy. Rather than trying to reason with the U.S. for an exceptional waiver to its domestic law, New Delhi must make it clear to Washington that the law should be abandoned, as it negates the very "rules-based international order" that is the foundation of the India-U.S. global strategic partnership.

Afghanistan: U.S. diplomat meets NSA

Humanitarian crisis on top of agenda

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and facilitating the travel of Afghans out of the country was on top of the agenda as U.S. Special Envoy Thomas West met National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla here on Tuesday.

Mr. West, who is on a multi-country tour of Europe and Asia, travelled to Delhi after meetings in Islamabad and Moscow.

They discussed the Regional Security Dialogue of NSAs held in Delhi last week, as well as the "movement of people in and out of Afghanistan and coordinating global efforts on humanitarian assistance".

In a tweet, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson said Mr. Shringla and Mr. West "exchanged views on recent developments and issues of common interest in Afghanistan".

Delhi Declaration

Mr. Doval, who chaired the Security Dialogue in Delhi on Wednesday that included Iran, Russia and five Central Asian States, briefed Mr. West on the outcomes in the "Delhi Declaration" issued after the meeting. In particular, India has drawn attention to the need for unhindered access to Afghanistan, given its desire to provide that country with 50,000 tonnes of wheat and medicines via road through Pakistan.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had promised to consider the proposal, which has been held up for weeks. There is no concrete announcement on moving the aid on trucks yet.

India, which has held a firm position of not recognising the Taliban, has been cautious about engaging the group that took control of Kabul in August last, and on dealing with Pakistan on the issue.

Pakistan and China had also declined to attend the



Thomas West

NSA meeting in Delhi, an indication of their differences with New Delhi.

Mr. West took over from former Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad when he stepped down from the post on October 18.

While he has indicated that he will be part of a U.S. "inter-agency dialogue" with Taliban representatives soon, it is unclear whether he will stop over in Doha or Kabul during this visit.

Economic emergency

In a press call from Brussels last week, Mr. West spoke about the need for countries engaged with Afghanistan to step up their efforts on the economic emergency and famine conditions ahead of the winter.

He also referred to the "logistical challenge" of flying out those in Afghanistan who needed to travel to the U.S., including Afghans the US is indebted to, American citizens and "LPRs" (Lawful Permanent Residents).

As *The Hindu* reported in September, the U.S. is keen to find temporary refuge for thousands of Afghans in third countries where they can be processed pending their entry into the U.S.

However, New Delhi, which has thus far cancelled all pre-existing visas for Afghans and issued only a few dozen "e-visas" to those desperate to leave, has been hesitant to house large numbers of Afghan refugees.

The MEA did not respond to whether India might consider allowing Afghans to stay in India while their U.S. papers are processed.

Govt. keeps no Net shutdown record

Nor are there coherent rules dictating such blackouts, finds Standing Committee

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

There were no verifiable, centralised records of Internet shutdowns in the country. Neither the Union Home Ministry nor the Department of Telecom maintains such a record, the parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology pointed out in its report adopted on Tuesday.

The committee, headed by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, pressed for a detailed study on the economic impact of frequent and prolonged Internet shutdowns.

The advocacy group Access Now, in a study published last March, reported that India topped the list of countries that resorted to government-imposed Internet clampdown.

The report, sources say, said that in the absence of a database, there was no mechanism to review whether the Internet clampdowns followed the laid-down rules or



Shashi Tharoor

the Supreme Court guidelines.

It is equally revealing, the committee noted, that there were no coherent rules dictating these shutdowns. On the grounds of maintaining "public safety" or in a scenario of "public emergency", the State Governments have the right to impose an Internet clampdown. But the report, sources say, pointed out that "public safety" and "public emergencies" were not clearly defined. The Net shutdowns have been reduced as a "routine policing

and administrative tool".

Citing the example of Jammu and Kashmir, the committee stated that there should be a "standard operating procedure" in place to review from time to time a shutdown and it could not go on indefinitely.

The Government had first imposed a communication shutdown on August 5, 2019 to quell anticipated protests after Parliament abrogated Article 370, under which it enjoyed special status.

Access to slow, 2G Internet for mobile and fixed-line subscribers was restored in March 2020, but high-speed 4G access was restored only by February 2021.

Percolative effect

The report said the absence of Internet and regular telecom services also had a percolative effect.

The Cellular Operators Association, in their submission to the committee, claimed that every hour of Internet/telecom shutdown

cost them Rs. 25 million in every circle area. Apart from this, trade, which is now heavily dependent on Internet banking, also was strongly hit.

On January 10, 2020, the Supreme Court declared that freedom of speech and expression and freedom to practice any profession over the medium of Internet enjoyed constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a) and Article 19(1)(g).

In-depth study

Quoting the judgment, the committee recommended that there should be an in-depth study on the economic fallout of this.

The importance of the Internet, the committee stressed, could not be overemphasised.

"There is need to maintain a delicate balance between the citizen's right to access the Internet and the State's duty to deal with a public emergency," the report said.

Longer term, better impact

The recent ordinance that allows the Centre to extend the tenure of the Director of the CBI is timely and merited

CAG-Centre conflict a thing of the past: PM

'Today, audit is major value addition'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said "Comptroller and Auditor General [CAG] versus Government" had earlier become a common thought and auditing was looked upon with apprehension and dread. However, the mindset had now changed and today audit was being considered an important part of value addition.

Audit Divas celebrated

Speaking at the first Audit Divas, he said that the CAG had changed rapidly by adopting modern procedures and it was now using advanced analytics tools, geo-spatial data and satellite imagery. The institution had grown in importance and had created a legacy with the passage of time.

"In the 21st century, data is information, and in the coming times, our history will also be seen and understood through data. In the future, data will dictate history," he said.

CAG studies on the current Government initiatives could become a source of

knowledge and inspiration for future generations.

The CAG not just kept track of the nation's accounts, but also did value addition in productivity and efficiency.

Earlier, due to lack of transparency in the banking sector, various wrong practices were followed and as a result, non-performing assets (NPAs) kept increasing. "You know very well, how in the past, NPAs were brushed under the carpet. We will find the solutions only when we recognise the problems," he said.

Mr. Modi suggested focussed studies into various initiatives, also by the CAG, to assess their impact. Such studies would be beneficial for the future governments.

'Sarkar Sarvam'

"Today we are making such a system in which the thinking of *Sarkar Sarvam*, or the interference of the Government, is decreasing and your work is also getting easier," he said.

This was in accordance with the "minimum government maximum governance" policy.



R. K. RAGHAVAN

The Central government's decision to give a five-year tenure to heads of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has drawn a lot of flak. The Opposition smells a rat in the ordinance issued a few days ago. This is unsurprising. Any governmental move to strengthen a powerful law enforcement agency is bound to invite questions and raise suspicion. And the CBI's track record for objectivity and neutrality is anything but straightforward.

It is, however, preposterous to probe the intentions of this major move. How can we suspect the bonafides of the government until we have evidence to prove that the decision was motivated by dishonest intentions? No government is a saint, but to question the intentions behind an administrative decision right after it is made seems unfair. If one perceives politics here, let us remember that only 5-10% of the cases registered by the CBI involve politicians.

Capricious decisions

When I assumed charge of the position 20 years ago, I was the first beneficiary of the apex court's directive giving a mandatory two-year tenure to the Director of the CBI. This was a fallout of the Hawala scandal. I had an extra four months because my retirement age automatically gave me this benefit.

Prior to my appointment, the government was arbitrary and capricious in choosing the Director. It was not rare to see temporary appointments given to favour some individuals. Seniority was often ignored in appointments and Directors were removed frequently. In 1987, C.M. Radhakrishnan Nair was appointed as the Director. This decision was rescinded within days to give an extension to the man holding the post, Mohan Katre. Could there be anything more demoralising to the officer concerned and to the elite organisation?

The recent ordinances are timely and merited. A two-year tenure for a CBI head is too short for any officer to make an impact on the organisation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation chief in the U.S. gets a 10-year

term. This provides them the much-needed continuity that a Director needs in an outfit charged with the task of conducting highly sensitive investigations, which sometimes impinge on the longevity and stability of a democratically elected government.

We will have to wait for a few years to gauge the impact of the change in tenure rules. Any blatantly dishonest interference in the working of the organisation is bound to raise the hackles of those who believe in and carry out straightforward investigations. The government will therefore have to show enormous restraint in its interactions with the head of the CBI.

Of course, as a measure of accountability, the Director will have to keep the government informed of all major administrative decisions. He or she should inform the executive but not take orders from it.

The only problem with the latest ordinance is that, at the end of the mandatory two-year tenure, the government will have to issue orders granting one-year extensions at a time. It would have better if there was a straight five-year term for the Director. The rule about three annual extensions can be misused by a tententious government. It may be construed as a reward for 'good behaviour', which is a euphemism for an obliging Director.

Dependence on State governments

Successive chiefs have suggested the drafting of a CBI Act to ensure that the organisation is not dependent on the State governments, many of which have withdrawn consent for the CBI to function in that State. The Supreme Court has recently made caustic references to this objectionable development. Eight States – West Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Mizoram – have withdrawn the general consent. The Court termed this a "serious issue". The CBI should be made to derive its authority for launching investigations from its own statute instead of depending on the Criminal Procedure Code, which makes the CBI a police organisation. Apt analogies are the Income Tax Act and the Customs Act, which enable the officers of the two mighty departments to act on their own, without being at the mercy of State governments.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director who is currently Professor of Criminal Justice at the Jindal Global University, Haryana



Goyal urges MNCs to act as whistleblowers

Asks them to flag hurdles, red tape

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday asked multinational (MNC) investors to 'play the role of a whistleblower' and flag any bottlenecks or harassment they faced in the country, stressing that many States need to work on making approvals and regulations easier for investors.

Ten States had already joined the single-window clearance system set up for investors recently, and four more are expected to join by December, while 18 Central Ministries have onboarded so far, the Minister said. Over time, the system will include approvals going down to the level of local bodies and municipal corporations, he assured MNCs.

India, he said, had been eyeing a top 25 place in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings had it continued, but will continue to rank its States to encourage competitive policies.

'Making lives easier'

"We want States to also make lives easier for their stakeholders... like removing redundant laws, decriminalising local laws or implementing central laws more honestly, like the Boiler Regulations or the Legal Metrology Act. They are all managed by the States," Mr. Goyal said at a session with MNCs hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry.

"[At] our end, we are trying to work with them to take the pressure off industry but it will have to involve them. You can play the role of a whistleblower, tell us where the wrongdoing is happening or where your people are getting harassed



Piyush Goyal

so that we can try and resolve each of those," the Minister said.

Responding to a query about clearances getting slower where multiple Ministries are involved, Mr. Goyal said the government would try to see 'if we can get the principal Ministry to facilitate' the process.

The Centre, he said, took a year-and-a-half to get the single-window clearance system going because of abundant caution.

"I was trying to be more and more cautious and didn't want to have a goof-up like some of the other digital applications which went through a lot of time and iterations before they were fine-tuned. I have done the reverse – we did a lot of tests and checking," Mr. Goyal asserted.

However, once an approval is granted on the system, there's no need for separate physical approvals, he assured investors, urging them to use the system and give feedback. While India was willing to embrace global standards, it wouldn't do so blindly, he said, adding the Centre was in the process of opening up the Bureau of Indian Standards' testing infrastructure to private users.

Amber on economy

Policymakers must focus on inflation as high prices will put at risk the revival of demand

The latest data on inflation, both in retail and wholesale prices as well as industrial output estimates, suggest it would be prudent to adopt caution on the outlook for the economy. October's retail inflation based on the CPI showed a slight quickening in overall year-on-year price gains to 4.48%, from the 4.35% pace in September, spurred by a persistent acceleration in the prices of certain key food items and transport fuels. Oils and fats logged 33.5% inflation, while meat and fish and pulses and products both saw a marginal easing in the pace of annual gains from September – posting 7.1% and 5.4% increases, respectively. However, the food and beverages sub-index that accounts for over half the CPI, accelerated 2.3% month-on-month, led by vegetable prices that reared up sharply by 14.2% from September's levels. The sequential trend in the food category is particularly disconcerting as except egg and fruits, all the 10 other items of the 12-component sub-index saw prices accelerate last month. Transport and communication, which encompasses the pump prices of petrol and diesel, logged inflation of 10.9% from the October 2020 level, lending justification to the Centre's Deepavali-eve decision to cut the excise duty on the key fuels. With the WPI also showing price pressures intensifying at the wholesale-level last month, especially for fuel and power and manufactured products – October's headline WPI inflation accelerated to 12.5%, from 10.7% in September – the overall outlook on inflation is still far from reassuring.

The Index of Industrial Production data from September also points to a sharp slowdown in output. While IIP growth slumped to an annual 3.1% pace, from August's 12%, overall industrial output, of mining, manufacturing and electricity, actually shrank 2.6% on a sequential basis. While the Finance Ministry has cited monsoon rains for the slump in mining and power generation, which contracted 8.4% and 11% month-on-month, respectively, index heavyweight manufacturing too suffered a 0.5% contraction. Four of the six use-based industrial categories saw output shrink including consumer non-durables, which contracted 0.9%. The only silver lining was that consumer durables posted a healthy 6.7% jump in production from the preceding month, as white goods dealers likely stocked up ahead of the festival season. Automobile manufacturing slumped 9% from a year earlier and shrank 3.3% from August's output levels as a global shortage of semiconductors cramped production. Automakers have reported more than 20% declines in production for October as well, as the chip scarcity coupled with high input costs abides. And given that manufacturers, who have so far sought to avoid risking the tenuous demand recovery by raising product prices, may not be able to defer increases for much longer, policymakers will have to ensure they do not drop their guard on inflation.

Recovery taking hold; private investment should resume: Das

RBI chief says private capital has to be invested for growth to become sustainable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Numerous macro indicators suggest that the economic recovery is now taking hold after the beating it has taken during the pandemic, but for growth to be sustainable and reach its potential, private capital investment has to resume, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Tuesday.

Mr. Das said the economy has the potential to grow at a reasonably high pace in the post-pandemic scenario, provided private capital investment resumes.

Despite many economists revising down their growth forecasts between 8.5% and 10% for the current fiscal,



Potent force: 'The economy has the potential to grow reasonably fast if private investment resumes'. ■ M.A. SRIRAM

the central bank has not changed its forecast of 9.5% for the year, so far.

Addressing a banking function, the Governor asked banks to be investment-ready when the investment cycle picks up, which

the RBI expects would begin from the next fiscal.

Since 2013, private capital has been missing from the economy and many are of the view that this would begin flowing in from the middle of the next fiscal year.

The RBI Governor noted that gross bad loans of banks had come down in the September quarter from the previous three-month period.

Capital management

Mr. Das also asked banks to improve their capital management process.

Lauding tech entrepreneurs, the RBI chief said the country had emerged as a top performer in the start-up landscape, attracting billions in foreign capital.

The RBI wants to gradually lower excess liquidity in the banking system but will ensure there is adequate liquidity available to meet the needs of the economy, Reuters cited Mr. Das as saying.

'Navy's plan for a 170-ship force on course'

Some changes in timelines are being finalised, says Vice-Admiral S.N. Ghormade

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The Navy's plan for a 170 ship force is under way, and some changes in timelines which are being finalised, Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff S.N. Ghormade said on Tuesday. Vice-Admiral Ghormade also said the maritime environment was a complex one and it only increased when more number of players were involved.

He said that the Navy had budgeted for a second indigenous aircraft carrier in its Maritime Capability Perspective Plan (MCPP).

The Navy will commission the first Project-15B class stealth-guided missile destroyer *Visakhapatnam* on November 21, and the fourth Scorpene class submarine *Vela* on November 25, Vice-Admiral Ghormade said,



Planning ahead: The fourth Scorpene-class submarine *Vela*, to be commissioned on November 25. ■ PTI

briefing the media.

Expanding capacity

"We live in a time when global and regional balances of power are shifting rapidly and the region of most rapid change is undoubtedly the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)," he said. "Continuous efforts are therefore on to ensure

that our force levels grow progressively to enhance the capability of the Indian Navy in meeting the emerging challenges."

Termining the commissioning of *Visakhapatnam* and *Vela* as major milestones in showcasing indigenous capacity to build complex combat platforms, he said as

many as 39 ships and submarines were at present under construction at various shipyards across the country.

The Navy currently has 130 ships and had earlier planned to achieve securing 200, which was revised to 170 ships by 2027.

The timeline is now being revised as the Navy is revising its MCPP for the next 15 years, which is expected to be ready by next year and will be in line with the 10-year Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) being formulated by the Department of Military Affairs to bring in service integration, Vice-Admiral Ghormade said.

China has been rapidly expanding its Navy, rolling out more ships than any other country amid its expanding global footprint, especially

in the Indian Ocean Region.

On the need for a second Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-II) and the debate over carriers versus submarines, Vice-Admiral Ghormade said all platforms like carrier, submarine and maritime patrol aircraft have a definite role. "To make a balanced force, all these are required for the capability," he said, adding that the MCPP had factored for all of them while taking into account budgetary allocations and constraints.

The contract for the construction of four ships under Project-15B was signed in January 2011 at a project cost of about ₹29,643.74 crore. The final cost of the project is ₹35,000 crore. The remaining ships would be commissioned one per year from 2022 to 2024.

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-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.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.