

VEDHIK  
**DAILY NEWS**  
**ANALYSIS**

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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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# Bhaskarabda to be added to official calendar of Assam

It uses a lunisolar system based on moon phases, solar year

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GUWAHATI

Bhaskarabda, an era counted from the date of the ascension of a seventh century local ruler, will be added to Saka and Gregorian eras in the official calendar of the Assam Government.

This was decided at a meeting that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma held with officials of the General Administration Department on October 18.

Bhaskarabda began when Bhaskaravarman was crowned ruler of the Kamrupa kingdom. He was a contemporary and political ally of northern Indian ruler



Himanta Biswa Sarma

Harshavardhana.

“We have decided that in addition to Saka and Gregorian, Bhaskarabda will be used in the official calendar by the Assam Government.

We have also decided to have a theme-based calendar every year,” Mr. Sarma said.

The themes, he said, could be wildlife, plants, culture, cuisine and other aspects of Assam.

Unlike Gregorian, where a day starts at midnight, the Assamese calendar begins and ends at sunrise over 24 hours. While the Gregorian goes by the solar cycle, the Saka and Bhaskarabda eras use a lunisolar system based on both the phases of the moon and the solar year.

The gap between Bhaskarabda and Gregorian is 593 years.

# No excuses please, India awaits a full caste headcount

The central government's logistical or legal justifications to not disclose caste census data do not stand scrutiny



PRASENJIT BOSE

The Narendra Modi government has finally elaborated on its reasons for not disclosing the caste data collated in the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC 2011). The Government's affidavit filed in the Supreme Court of India last month by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment – in response to a writ petition by the Maharashtra government – has also tried to explain away the exclusion of full caste enumeration in the forthcoming Census exercise, which is expected to resume in 2022 after the COVID-19 pandemic-induced interruption. The official arguments focus on the impracticability of full caste enumeration, suggesting that operational difficulties are simply too overwhelming.

## Overstating 'mistakes', 'flaws'

As detailed in the affidavit, while the total number of castes counted in the 1931 Census was 4,147, the SECC of 2011 returned over 46 lakh caste names. Such a humongous number of castes were returned partly because Indian people use the names of their caste, sub-caste, clan, *gotra* and surnames interchangeably. Moreover, the enumerators also got confused over the spellings and classification of the castes. The question is, if the 46 lakh caste names that were returned in the SECC 2011 were the

results of "mistakes by the enumerators" or "inherent flaws in the manner of conducting census" as alleged in the official affidavit, why could not those mistakes and flaws be rectified in a decade?

The Union Cabinet had appointed an Expert Committee headed by the then NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya in July 2015, charging it with the classification of caste names returned in SECC 2011. The Government's affidavit admits that no other member was appointed to the committee. Therefore, neither did the committee ever meet nor did it fulfil its mandate in six years. Who is responsible for this negligence?

The extent of errors in caste enumeration is also being exaggerated. The affidavit cites the example of Maharashtra to show that while the aggregate number of castes enlisted in the central lists of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the State list of Other Backward Classes (OBC) is 494, the caste names returned by the SECC 2011 for the State stood at 4.28 lakh. But the affidavit also states that "99% of the castes enumerated had [a] population of less than 100 persons". Out of the total population of 10.3 crore in the State, 8.8 crore people could be classified under 2,440 castes, each having a population of over 1,000. Therefore, the proliferation of caste names and the consequent difficulty in their classification have arisen not because of the majority, but a tiny proportion of the total population.

This is further corroborated by an action taken report on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Rural Development



on "BPL Survey (currently Socio Economic & Caste Census, 2011)". In this report dated August 31, 2016, the Union government is quoted as categorically stating that the data errors on caste and religion in SECC 2011 accounted for 1.34 crore out of 118.64 crore people, i.e., only around 1% of the total enumerated population. How can the same government now characterise the entire findings of the caste census as "fraught with mistakes and inaccuracies"?

## Complex, yet feasible

Population census in a vast and uniquely diverse country such as India cannot but be a complex exercise. Over the decades, the census machinery has moved on a learning curve, credibly enumerating complicated categories such as language and religion, which also display considerable diversity. For instance, as per Paper I of 2018 on the Language Census of 2011, the number of initial raw returns of mother tongues had totalled 19,569 for the entire country. Following scrutiny, editing and linguistic grouping, these raw returns were first rationalised into 1,369 mother tongues and subsequently classified on the basis of at least 10,000 or more speakers for 22 scheduled and 99 non-sche-

duled languages, i.e., 121 languages at the all-India level.

While caste appears to be an even more complex category than language in the Indian context, technologies to enumerate and analyse complex big data have become easily accessible today. Yet, the affidavit cites the absence of an all-India Registry of Castes to rule out the conduct of full caste enumeration in the forthcoming census. Why could such a registry of castes and tribes not be created till date by the Union and State governments, acting together, by combining the central lists of SCs and STs and the State lists of OBCs?

The aggregate number of castes and tribes included in those lists would currently be around 5,000 at the all-India level. For any individual State, the maximum number of castes cannot be above 500. Rationalisation and classification of the numerous raw caste returns into a maximum of 500 castes at the State level or around 5,000 castes at the all-India level, is eminently feasible. Training manuals for the enumerators can also be drawn up on the basis of a single, consolidated caste list for each State.

This could have been attained by the expert committee appointed by the Union cabinet by now, but for its innate dysfunctionality. Rather than rectifying its administrative failings, the Union government is now citing it as evidence to construct a theorem of logistical impossibility.

## Within the framework

The Government's affidavit also cites the absence of categorical constitutional or statutory re-

quirements to count castes other than SCs and STs in the Census. However, Articles 15(4) and 15(5) of the Indian Constitution have explicitly recognised "socially and educationally backward classes of citizens" as a category distinct from SCs and STs and enabled the State to make special provisions for their advancement. Counting the population of these Backward Classes would therefore be very much within the constitutional framework.

Yet, the official affidavit alleges that full caste enumeration may compromise the basic integrity of the Census exercise, distorting the fundamental population count itself. If enumeration of individual castes under the "SC", "ST" and "Other" categories in all censuses since 1951 have not led to such perverse outcomes, why should the additional enumeration under another "OBC" category cause such a catastrophe? Such deliberate scaremongering has no basis in the laws or the Constitution.

The logistical or legal justifications of the Union government to not disclose caste census data and refuse to conduct a full caste enumeration in the forthcoming Census do not stand scrutiny. Rather, it creates ground for suspicion whether the establishment has vested interests in concealing the real numbers and proportions of various castes in the Indian population. Such subterfuge would not be acceptable to a wide spectrum of social movements and political parties, who are demanding full caste enumeration.

Prasenjit Bose is an economist and activist based in Kolkata

# Trouble in Bangladesh

While India voices concern on attacks, it should not appear religiously partisan

The UN, the U.S. and India have condemned incidents of majoritarian violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority community during Durga Puja in the past few days. What is particularly worrying is that the attacks which have left at least six people dead and dozens injured, have followed, according to the Government, fake news reports shared over social media, indicating a conspiracy to instigate the violence. The mob violence appears to have begun in Comilla, in Chittagong district, where an image allegedly showing disrespect to the Koran was circulated, and resulted in several major mob attacks on Hindu temples and homes belonging to the minority community. The Narendra Modi government, which has sought to preserve good relations with Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina government, has also praised the authorities for moving quickly to take control of the situation. According to the police, more than 450 people have been arrested over the past week of violence and more than 70 cases filed in different parts of Bangladesh. Prime Minister Hasina has promised strict action and sought to reassure minorities during an address via videoconference to Hindu devotees at the Dhakeshwari national temple. In a message for New Delhi, she also said that Bangladesh's big neighbour must be sensitive to the situation, and alluding to violence against minorities in India, asked that "nothing is done there [India] that affects our country [Bangladesh]". The Indian High Commission in Dhaka, which was in touch with law and order officials at the Centre, also stepped in to meet with members of the Bangladeshi Hindu community, including representatives from the ISKCON group that was attacked. The ISKCON headquarters in West Bengal as well as BJP leaders also called on Mr. Modi to personally intervene.

Given the seriousness of the attacks and the fear that has gripped the Hindu minority in Bangladesh, the international and Indian concern is not surprising. However, New Delhi will have to act cautiously in light of all the various links between India and Bangladesh. While the Indian High Commission's act of meeting local minorities comes from a sense of compassion, it could be read as an act of interference. The impact of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019 had a widespread effect in Bangladesh, and at least 12 people were killed in protests against Mr. Modi's visit to Dhaka earlier this year. As a regional leader, India has every right to be concerned about the plight of communities in the subcontinent. However, it must ensure that its domestic drivers do not upset carefully built foreign relations. And any act that is seen as religiously partisan is bound to destabilise the otherwise close and productive relations between the two countries, which have a shared history of cooperation over much of the past 50 years.

## 'India, Russia face common threats from Afghanistan'

Ambassador to Russia confirms NSA meeting

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India and Russia face "common threats" emanating from Afghanistan, said India's outgoing Ambassador to Russia, confirming India's presence at the "Moscow format" meeting, which will include the Taliban Deputy Prime Minister, on Wednesday, and a meeting of National Security Advisers in Delhi in November, where NSAs of China and Pakistan are also invited.

"The situation in Afghanistan poses similar problems in terms of instability, drug trafficking, terrorism threat, and also the instability that may radiate towards Central Asia," Ambassador Venkatesh Varma, who is set to return to Delhi shortly, said in a "farewell interview" to the *Kommersant* daily.

"Both sides recognise common threats emanating from Afghanistan affect India and Russia – probably more than any other set of countries," he added.

The Moscow format meet will see an official Indian delegation led by Joint Secretary for Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran J.P. Singh, and Joint Secretary for Eurasia Adarsh Swaika participate for the first time. Officials from 10



Venkatesh Varma

countries, including Taliban Deputy PM Abdul Salam Hanafi, will attend the meeting, though the US, whose special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad resigned on Monday, has announced that it will not participate due to "logistical difficulties".

### Military situation

During the meeting, which will be addressed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Ministry said the participants would "discuss prospects for development of the military-political situation in Afghanistan and the formation of an inclusive government", adding that a separate meeting of Russia, China and Pakistan took place in Moscow on Tuesday.

Ambassador Varma also confirmed an upcoming

meeting of the Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral via a videoconference format soon, amid a slew of Russia-India bilateral engagements towards the end of the year.

"Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic, we could not have a summit in 2020. It is our intention and both sides are in active discussion on this, that President Putin will be able to visit India towards the end of this year," Mr. Varma said, adding that there would be a visit by Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu for the intergovernmental defence commission, along with the "2+2" format meetings of Defence and Foreign Ministers as well as an Economic Joint Commission to prepare for the bilateral summit.

The Ambassador also confirmed that the S-400 missile systems were "on track" for delivery in December this year.

Asked about the possibility of U.S. reservations over the deal, which Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman called "dangerous" and "not in anyone's interest" earlier this month, Mr. Varma said India "stands on its own feet, thinks with its own mind and pursues its own interests."



# India, Israel, UAE and U.S. launch quad forum

S. Jaishankar says it was a fruitful first meeting

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States have decided to launch a new quadrilateral economic forum, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar joined his counterparts at a videoconference from Jerusalem, where he is on a five-day visit.

The quadrilateral, which followed his bilateral meeting with Israeli Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, builds on ongoing cooperation between the U.S., Israel and the UAE after the Abraham Accords last year, and the India, Israel and UAE cooperation that was launched since.

Mr. Jaishankar said it was a fruitful first meeting with Mr. Lapid, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, "on economic growth and global issues".

In an interesting aside, Mr. Jaishankar's travel to Israel is also routed via the UAE, on flights that started as a consequence of the Abraham Accords and the opening of diplomatic missions and flights between them.

## Infrastructure projects

Mr. Lapid added that the grouping had decided to establish an international forum for economic cooperation, and specifically discussed "possibilities for joint infrastructure projects".

The U.S. State Department said that during the meeting on Monday, the



**Biennial exercise:** S. Jaishankar with the IAF contingent at the Ovda airbase in Israel on Tuesday. ■ PTI

four Ministers discussed "expanding economic and political cooperation in the Middle East and Asia, including through trade, combating climate change, energy cooperation, and increasing maritime security," as well as ways to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.

Foreign Ministers of the U.S., Israel and the UAE had met in Washington on October 13 to discuss modalities of trilateral cooperation, and set up two working groups: on religious coexistence and the other on water and energy.

Business groups in India, the UAE and Israel have also been in talks for trilateral cooperation since diplomatic ties were established, and the International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce (IFIIC) has predicted that the potential for agreements backed by Israeli innovation, UAE funding and Indian manufacturing, given India's close ties and strategic partnership with the two other countries

could cross \$100 billion by 2030. In the first such venture, a UAE project for robotic solar panel cleaning technology was signed by Israeli company Ecoppia that has a manufacturing base in India.

Significantly, neither the quadrilateral meeting, nor the trilateral meeting discussed the issue of Palestine and resuming the "Middle East peace process", although the Joe Biden administration has expressed support for a "two-state solution", that is in line with India's broader position.

## Bilateral talks

On Monday, Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Lapid held bilateral talks, agreeing to resume long-pending negotiations for a free trade agreement, a mutual recognition agreement for COVID-19 vaccine certificates, beginning with Israeli acceptance of Indian travellers vaccinated with Covishield, and Israel's joining the International Solar Alliance.

## The other Quad

India must retain strong ties with Iran as it seeks partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc

The virtual meet of the Foreign Ministers of India, the U.S., Israel and the UAE is a strong manifestation of the changes in West Asian geopolitics. If Israel and the UAE did not even have formal diplomatic relations a year ago, their growing economic and strategic cooperation is opening up opportunities for other powers, including India. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, now in Israel, joined the quadrilateral conference after meeting his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid, where they had agreed to launch talks for a free trade agreement. The four-nation meeting also points to India's strategic desire to adopt a regional foreign policy strategy towards West Asia, transcending its bilateralism. Over the years, India has built vibrant bilateral ties with all the countries in the grouping. It is a member of the Quad with the U.S., Australia and Japan, which have common concerns and shared interests on East Asia. Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers. The UAE is vital for India's energy security. The Gulf country, which hosts millions of Indian workers, has also shown interest to mediate between India and Pakistan.

In the past, there were three pillars to India's West Asia policy – the Sunni Gulf monarchies, Israel and Iran. Now that the gulf between the Sunni kingdoms and Israel is being narrowed, especially after the Abraham Accords, the normalisation agreements signed between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain under the tutelage of the Trump administration, India faces fewer challenges to a regionalist approach. Mr. Jaishankar has hinted that there would be more meetings among the four countries. While it is too early to speak of the strategic significance of such a grouping, there are areas where it can deepen its engagement – trade, energy ties, fighting climate change and enhancing maritime security. But India should also be mindful of the challenges in the region. The U.S. is clearly seeking to lessen its footprint here as part of its pivot to East Asia to tackle China's rise, which is redrawing West Asia's traditional equations. India should be careful not to get sucked into the many conflicts of West Asia that could intensify amid growing regional rivalries. While the Abraham Accords made it easier for India to find common ground with the Israelis and the Emiratis, the contradiction between this emerging bloc and Iran remains as intense as ever. India, which sees itself aligned with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific, faces deepening insecurities in continental Asia after the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. And it will have to work closely with countries such as Iran to deal with the challenges emanating from a post-American Afghanistan. So the challenge before New Delhi is to retain a healthy relationship with Iran even as it seeks to build a stronger regional partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc.



# PM orders drive to cut red tape


Officials must weed out old files, clear all pending references from MPs

VIKAS DHOOT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directed all government departments to have a fresh look at all existing processes and scrap unnecessary paperwork and compliances, as part of a special spring-cleaning exercise this month.

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, in a recent missive to all Secretaries, has asked each department to weed out old files, clear all pending public grievances and references from MPs and States, while endeavouring to meet any assurances made to Parliament as part of a special campaign.

In the course of disposing of such pending matters and references, “the existing processes may be reviewed with a view to reducing compliance burden, and unne-

 The existing processes may be reviewed with a view to reducing compliance burden, and unnecessary paperwork done away with, wherever feasible

RAJIV GAUBA, CABINET SECRETARY



cessary paperwork done away with, wherever feasible”. Mr. Gauba invoked the PM’s Independence Day address this year where Mr. Modi had emphasised the need to review rules and procedures on a continuing basis.

To be monitored by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, this special campaign to run till the end of October is based on the directions of the PM, the Cabinet Secre-

tary conveyed. Secretaries have now been asked to monitor the progress on resolving pending issues on a daily basis and send a weekly report to the DARPG.

“As you are well aware, timely and effective disposal of public grievances, references from MPs and State Governments, inter-ministerial consultations, parliamentary assurances, etc. is an important part of the work of Ministries and Departments. However, these issues sometimes do not receive the desired attention,” he noted.

“During the special campaign, all out efforts may be made to dispose of the identified pending references, and do so in a meaningful manner,” Mr. Gauba emphasised, before reiterating instructions to ensure that offices are clean with a “good work environment”.

## ‘Temporary files’

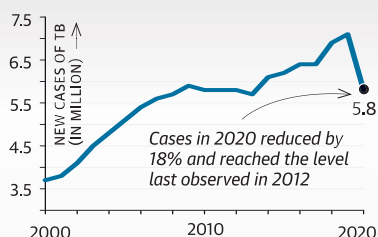
Asking Departments to weed out files of “temporary nature”, the Cabinet Secretary has also urged them to review the period for which different records are retained. Files must neither be prematurely destroyed nor kept for periods longer than necessary.

“Further, redundant scrap material and obsolete items may be discarded during this campaign to improve cleanliness at work places,” Mr. Gauba said.

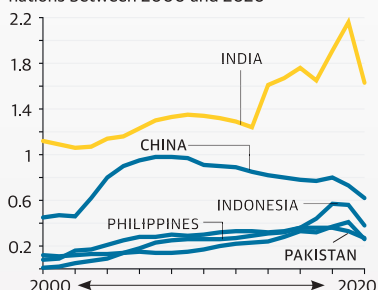
## The overlooked epidemic

As many as 1.3 million fewer cases of Tuberculosis were detected in 2020 compared to 2019, according to the WHO. The drop in cases can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic as there was reduced access to disease diagnosis and treatment as well as curtailed spending since the infection outbreak. This reversed the gains made over the past few years in detection of TB cases. Following a drop in detection of new cases, deaths attributed to TB rose for the first time in the last 16 years in the world. The estimated TB deaths in India were the highest in seven years in 2020. Visits for treatment also fell sharply. Worryingly, among high-burden nations, India spent the least on TB drugs per patient despite accounting for an estimated 28% of the new cases last year. **By Jasmin Nihalani and Sumant Sen**

**1. SHARP DROP** | The chart depicts the year-wise number of new TB cases reported globally. The pandemic year saw a sharp decline in new diagnosed cases, which were otherwise following an increasing trend till 2019



**2. COUNTRY-WISE DROP** | The chart shows the new cases of TB detected (in million) in select nations between 2000 and 2020



These nations shown in the chart accounted for over 75% of the global drop in new cases in 2020 compared to 2019. An estimated 1.63 million new cases were registered in India in 2020, which is 0.5 million cases lower than 2019

### Fighting TB:

A doctor examining a TB patient in Guwahati, Assam. ■ AP



An estimated 5.8 million cases of TB were detected in 2020

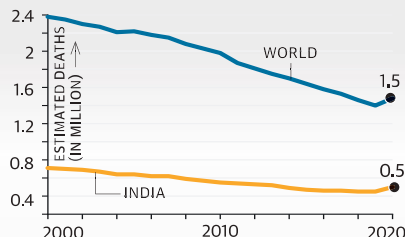


India contributed to 41% of the global drop in cases in 2020, the highest among all nations

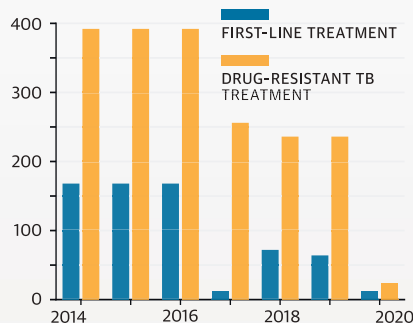


Deaths due to TB in the country also rose by 13% compared to 2019

**3. FATALITY COUNT** | An estimated 1.48 million people died due to TB globally in 2020. India accounted for 34% of them



**4. TREATMENT NEGLECTED** | Outpatient care visits for first-line and drug-resistant TB treatment fell sharply in 2020 in India. In first-line treatment, drugs which are used to treat the most common form of the disease are given. Patients who do not respond to such drugs are given drug-resistant treatment



**5. TREATMENT COST** | The table shows the average spending on drugs per patient for both forms of treatment in the 10 high TB-burden countries in 2020. India's spending on TB medication for both forms is among the lowest despite high disease prevalence

Country	First-line treatment (\$)	Drug-resistant TB treatment (\$)
China	93	20,287
Indonesia	46	2,188
Pakistan	24	1,723
Ethiopia	45	1,600
Myanmar	47	1,352
Philippines	67	1,339
Democratic Republic of the Congo	45	913
Bangladesh	26	864
Vietnam	63	713
India	33	700

SOURCE: WHO'S GLOBAL TUBERCULOSIS REPORT 2021

# Many people yet to get second dose, says Centre

'Govt. ready to give more doses to States to step up drive'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

A sizeable number of eligible COVID-19 vaccination beneficiaries have not received their second dose, and the States have been asked to focus on this, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has said.

He reviewed the progress of vaccination with senior health officials of the States and the Union Territories (UTs) earlier this week.

The country launched the vaccination programme on January 16.

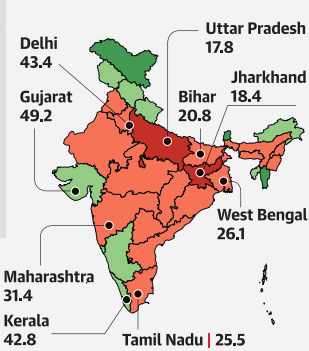
Mr. Bhushan noted that the nation was close to administering a billion doses. Many States had adequate doses to vaccinate those awaiting the second dose. "The Central Government is in a position to provide additional vaccine doses to the States/UTs so that they can

**Full coverage, not yet**

Only about **30.4%** of India's adult population has received both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine until October 18

% of fully vaccinated adults

- 0-20
- 20-40
- 40-60
- >60



complete the second dose vaccination. We also need to improve the momentum of the vaccination drive."

The Health Ministry said the Government had advised the States and the UTs to identify and prioritise districts having low coverage for focused action.

The Ministry pointed out that it was in the process of reviewing international travel guidelines in consultation with all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Bureau of Immigration, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and the Ministry of External Affairs.

## Gross NPAs of banks to rise to 8-9% from 7.5%: Crisil

'Retail, MSMEs to contribute more to stressed assets, NPAs'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks are expected to rise to 8-9% this fiscal from 7.5% as on March 31, but they would still remain below the peak of 11.2% seen at the end of fiscal 2018, Crisil Ratings said in a report.

COVID-19 relief measures, such as the restructuring dispensation and the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), would help limit the rise, it said.

"With 2% of bank credit expected under restructuring by the end of this fiscal, stressed assets — comprising gross NPAs and loan book under restructuring — should touch 10-11%," the ratings agency said.

**As the rural segment has seen strong recovery, stressed assets in agri are expected to remain stable**

"The retail and MSME segments, which together form 40% of bank credit, are expected to see higher accretion of NPAs and stressed assets this time around," said Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director and deputy chief ratings officer.

**'Write-off effect'**

"Stressed assets in these segments are seen rising to 4-5% and 17-18%, respectively, by this fiscal end. The numbers would have trended even higher but for write-offs, pri-

marily in the unsecured segment," he added.

The rural segment, which was hit harder during the second wave of the pandemic, has also seen a strong recovery. Therefore, stressed assets in the agriculture segment are expected to remain relatively stable, the ratings agency pointed out.

**'Base-case scenario'**

It said the estimates were predicated on a base-case scenario of 9.5% GDP growth this fiscal and continued improvement in corporate credit quality.

A virulent third wave and significant deceleration in demand growth could pose significant downside risks to these estimates, it added.

## CAD to hit 1.3% on commodity price rise: BofA

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

Rising global commodity prices will shave a lot off the current account leading to higher imports and a rise in current account deficit, which is likely to print at 1.3% of the GDP, according to a report by Bank of America Securities (BofA).

Given the sharp increase in global commodity prices, particularly oil, concerns about current account deficit (CAD) and its serviceability have resurfaced, the report said.

"But, we see FY22 CAD at 1.3% of GDP or \$40 billion, up from a 0.9% surplus in FY21, but still well-contained under the threshold of 2.5% of GDP," BofA said on Tuesday.

## 'Services exports may cross \$240 bn in 2021-22'

Tourism to give impetus: SEPC chief

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

Seeking incentives from the government, SEPC on Tuesday said the country's services exports are expected to reach over \$240 billion during 2021-22 on account of healthy performance by segments such as professional and management consulting services, audio-visual, freight-transport services, and telecommunications.

Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) chairman Maneck Davar said during the first five months of the current fiscal year, exports from the sector increased 14% to \$95 billion.

"Total services exports for 2021-22 are expected to touch over \$240 billion and may increase even further when the tourism sector is opened up later in the year," Mr. Davar said.



In 2020-21, services exports dipped by 3% to \$206 billion. He added that the recovery of services is largely based on the performance of sectors such as professional and management consulting services.

He also said the target of \$1 trillion in services exports by 2030 set by the government is feasible but there is a need to look at sectors other than IT and ITeS for growth. The need of the hour is to provide a level-playing field with manufacturing and incentives to tide over the pandemic.

## EU food recall linked to GM rice from India

In a statement on August 4, Mars Wrigley announced that it was recalling four packaging sizes of its Crispy M&Ms product with two affected best-before dates. According to German NGO site Informationsdienst Gentechnik, the European Commission announced that 144 tonnes of the contaminated rice flour had been processed by Mars, while more flour went into 11 types of baked goods manufactured in Italy and further distributed to other countries, all of which were recalled.

Commerce Ministry spokesperson D.J. Narain said that the whole issue appeared to be “infructuous”. He pointed out that “the GM ingredient may have been added in Europe to cut costs, not in India where commercial GM cultivation is banned. The quantity involved is too big to have come from leaked output from controlled trial cultivation.”

However, he also added that “APEEDA is collecting all the details and will enquire every aspect of it thoroughly with the technical and scientific institutions like GEAC and strictest form of action will be taken accordingly.”

Farmers groups say the issue of cross contamination from field trials has been raised previously. “The issue with GM field trials is that once they take place, they

can contaminate crops long after the actual trials either directly or through seed leakages,” said a letter from the Coalition for GM-Free India, sent on Tuesday to authorities at the Environment, Agriculture and Commerce Ministries. It pointed to a 2006 case, where a Bayer food trial contaminated rice and seeds in the U.S., leading to a plunge in exports from that country.

### Basmati belt

“Back in 2007, when there was widespread concern about GM rice trials and the possibility of cross contamination, the All India Rice Exporters Association took up the issue with the Department of Biotechnology and the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee. A policy decision was taken that field trials would not be allowed in the basmati belt, because of worries that the export crop could be affected,” said Rajesh Krishnan, a Kerala paddy farmer who is a member of the Coalition.

Commerce Ministry spokesperson Mr. Narain emphasised that there was little danger to India’s agricultural export image.

“It may be noted that India’s export orders remain globally growing. India is fast emerging as the world’s most trusted business partner and investment destination,” he said.

## Strategy meet discusses Chinese cyberattacks

‘Hackers from neighbouring country can strike at will’

VIJAITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The rising cyberattacks from China on critical installations was discussed at the National Security Strategies Conference chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday.

The Madhya Pradesh police gave a presentation on various lacunae in the legal and administrative sphere that were an impediment in investigating such cases.

The participants were told that while the Pakistani cyberattacks focused on stealing identity and personal data, the Chinese hackers were more sophisticated and they settled down in any network, striking at will.

“There are several choke points that deter investigation, such as the origin of the message and from where the data packet was uploaded. The Minister agreed to expedite any legal framework required to plug the gaps,” said an official who attended the conference.



**Taking stock:** Home Minister Amit Shah at the National Security Strategies Conference in New Delhi on Monday. •PTI

On March 1, the Union Power Ministry said the government thwarted “state-sponsored” Chinese hacker groups targeting various Indian power centres in November 2020 and February 2021.

### Malware suspected

The U.S. cybersecurity and intelligence firm Recorded Future discovered that Chinese state-sponsored actors may have deployed malware into Indian power grids and seaports after border ten-

sions between India-China began escalating in May 2020.

The conference, an annual event held at the Intelligence Bureau headquarters, was attended by Director General of Police of all States and Directors-General of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF).

The nine-hour conference was divided into separate sessions. A detailed discussion was also held on illegal migration and counter-terrorism measures.



# 'Chinese patrolling slightly up in east'

India, China are attempting to develop infrastructure close to the LAC, says Eastern Command chief

**DINAKAR PERI**  
TENGA (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

There has been a marginal increase in Chinese patrols in the eastern sector along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), while the scale and durations of its exercises has increased in their depth areas since the stand-off in eastern Ladakh last year, said Eastern Army Commander Lt. Gen. Manoj Pande on Tuesday. He noted that both India and China were attempting to develop infrastructure close to the LAC.

The Army is countering the Chinese presence by incorporating technological advancements with specific focus on expanding surveillance capabilities like long range Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and radars, Lt. Gen. Pande said while also stating that the Army's 17 Mountain Strike Corps, meant for the border with China, had been fully operationalised.

Giving an overview on the situation along the LAC in



**On the watch:** The Army's 17 Mountain Strike Corps meant for the border with China is fully operational now. • FILE PHOTO

the eastern sector in an interaction with a group of journalists from Delhi, Lt. Gen. Pande said, "Some of the PLA [People's Liberation Army] reserve formations which were mobilised continue to remain in their training areas, that again is in the operational depth. Both sides are attempting to develop infrastructure closer to the LAC and that leads to certain issues at times."

Since this infrastructure

had come up close to the LAC, there had been a marginal increase in the number of border defence troops already deployed there, he pointed out.

## **Enhanced surveillance**

Speaking of the measures taken, he observed that the first step was enhancing surveillance both close to the LAC and in the depth areas. This was being done by synergising resources right

from satellites at strategic level to troops on the ground and "we have adequate forces in each sector for any need that may arise".

They were also looking at maximising technology, especially in terms of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, communications and likewise, he reiterated.

Of the 3,488 km-long LAC, 1,346 km fall in the eastern sector.

The raising of the new 17 Mountain Strike Corps commenced in 2014. By now it was fully operationalised and all its units, including combat, combat support and support, had been fully equipped, the Army Commander asserted.

"Its employment philosophy is stabilised. The formations of the corps have been carrying our validation and integrated training with other formations," he said.

To further enhance the operational efficiency, they were were looking at Integrated Battle Group (IBG)

model for the mountain strike corps so that "we have better options for its employment and its areas of application", he remarked.

## **Equipment deployed**

IBGs are brigade-sized agile self-sufficient combat formations meant to swiftly launch strikes against adversary in case of hostilities. The concept had been tested in exercises and fine-tuned.

There had been a major push for development of infrastructure in the region. The induction of equipment such as Chinook heavy-lift helicopters, which enabled faster movement, and deployment of M777 Ultra Light Howitzers have strengthened their position.

In addition, there is major expansion of roads in the region which will facilitate faster mobilisation of men, resources and equipment. Several tunnels are under construction while a railway line is also planned to Tawang.

# In the cross hairs, civilians and Kashmiri harmony

As a compounded tragedy, there needs to be a range of actions as solutions — from security to justice to reconciliation



RADHA KUMAR

Over the past two weeks, more than 11 civilians and nine Army troops have been killed by militants in the Kashmir Valley. Most of the targeted civilians have been Hindus, though there have also been Muslims, and a Sikh. The Hindus killed include Kashmiri Pandits and migrant labour.

## Wave of fear, insecurity

The immediate reaction to these killings has been a flight of Pandits who had returned to the Valley under the 2006 Prime Minister's programme for the return and rehabilitation of migrants, which offered jobs in the Valley to Pandit teachers. Pandit organisations say that as many as a third of the returnees have left; even those of the 800 families that stayed through the insurgency years have begun to leave. Though Kashmiri political parties and civil society, as well as Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha's administration, have pleaded with them to stay, their pleas are unconvincing given the very real insecurity created by the killings.

The plight of migrant labour is equally grave. Most are attempting to leave the Valley and return to their home States. The administration has ordered that those who are not able to immediately return be sheltered in police stations and guarded camps. In other words, like refugees. Whether they will then be aided to return to their homes remains to be seen; likely they will.

These two groups are not alone in wishing to flee. A fresh wave of fear has gripped the Valley, with

most residents fearing they may be caught between the militants and the administration. Allegedly, over 700 people have been taken into detention by the police, under suspicion of supporting militancy. Meantime, according to intelligence agencies, potential militant targets include religious leaders, *panches* and the media.

It was widely anticipated that Pakistani armed groups would be emboldened to revive cross-border infiltration following the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan. Now it seems that their strategy repeats elements of the insurgency of the 1990s. As happened then, the insurgency was prefigured by attacks on Pandits who were seen by Islamist militants as an arm of India because they were Hindus, and Muslims who worked in the State administration or central Indian agencies such as Doordarshan.

## Attacks and the aim

The attacks were intended to both communalise the Valley and paralyse its administration, and over time succeeded in doing so, albeit only partially. The Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's ceasefire negotiations with cross-border armed groups in 2000 were shattered by the killing of over 100 Bihari labourers, but the years of peace building that followed, from 2002-2014, restored a large degree of administration and created conditions for the return of Pandits — sadly at far too gradual a pace — and of migrant labour.

Whether cross-border and local militant groups succeed in once again communalising the Valley is debatable. Much depends on the policy in the Union administration adopts in response.

There are two quite separate issues involved: one, reassuring the minorities in Kashmir as well as the wider public of the Valley; two, a rethink on counter-insurgency strategy, including its cross-border



tentacles.

## Some reassurance

Hearteningly, every single opinion group in Kashmir has condemned the killings. Mosques have broadcast their criticism. Kashmiri political parties have voiced their opposition to such militancy, as have political leaders, including the Hurriyat and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. Civil society groups have issued statements of protest. Local community leaders and neighbours have visited Pandit homes to offer aid and support. This wave at the ground level can provide a strong base for reassurance, if encouraged.

Encouragement can begin with the Lieutenant-Governor. Thus far, Mr. Sinha's administration does not appear to have consulted either the Kashmiri Pandit organisations, or the various groups that have condemned the killings, on which steps can be taken to restore a degree of confidence. This is surprising, given that these groups, added together, comprise a formidable cross-section of public opinion, and with their support, militancy can once again be socially marginalised, as it was during the peace-building years.

From available information, it appears that the bulk of the recent civilian killings have been carried out by what the Army calls 'hybrid militants', because they are locally recruited and trained, have regular jobs and are part-time militants using basic weapons such as country pistols. The implications are

that the field of militancy has grown more dispersed, with wider public support, despite counter-insurgency successes in degrading large armed groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohamed. In this context, any opportunity to marginalise militancy is vital.

## Setback for Kashmiri Pandits

Many have begun asking whether Kashmiri Pandits will ever be able to return to the Valley, as the Narendra Modi administration had promised in August 2019. There is no doubt that the recent civilian killings have been a major setback to prospects of return. It is also the case that Kashmiri Pandit organisations have increasingly complained of administrative neglect on returns over the past year. A recurring point that is made by some of them is that the administration, while focusing on returns, needs to simultaneously pay attention to securing Pandit families that never left. Their condition has worsened as their numbers have shrunk; though less covered by the media, the same problem has begun to affect the Sikh minority too, whose numbers have shrunk over the past decade-plus.

The Kashmiri Pandit tragedy has continued for 30 years now, and like all compounded tragedies requires a range of actions, from security to justice to reconciliation. Beginning with security, which is the first requirement to enable justice and reconciliation to follow, it is a mistake to imagine that gated enclaves alone will provide it, or even that stepped up counter-insurgency operations will minimise the risk. Each measure is useful if accompanied by community support, but neither is a solution to the security dilemma by itself. True, targeted killings will only cease when insurgency does. But peace-making combined with counter-insurgency has proved more efficient in ending in-

surgency in democratic countries than counter-insurgency alone, in our own experience as well as across the world. Thus far, the Union administration has not held out any olive branches; on the contrary, its implementation of the August 2019 decisions has added one cause for resentment after another, the latest being the multiple use of Article 311(2) to dismiss government employees without an enquiry or hearing. A policy for Pandit property recovery that had not been thought through did not help either; apparently it has now been corrected.

Political science and sociology both tell us that an insecure majority is unlikely to protect vulnerable minorities; it is focused on its own survival. The arrest of over 700 people in the aftermath of the recent civilian killings has added to the majority's sense of insecurity, because it raises questions about why police intelligence has not narrowed the field of suspects as should, surely, be professionally required.

## Approach to Pakistan

The Narendra Modi administration appears to have adopted a multi-pronged approach to Pakistan recently, beginning with a ceasefire and extending to an invitation to the Pakistani National Security Adviser for a regional meeting on Afghanistan, while giving the Army a free hand on cross-border infiltration. Why then is it not adopting a similarly multi-pronged approach in the Valley, where civil and human rights remain severely restricted and the administration lacks the transparency that oversight and grievance-redress commissions provided? Without overall civil and human rights, how can minority rights be protected or minority returns be encouraged?

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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-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant 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.