

VEDHIK  
**DAJLY 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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# India urged to spell out 'firm policy' on Tibetan community

CTA chief says China pushing more Tibetans to borders

**SUHASINI HAIDAR**  
NEW DELHI

With growing concerns in New Delhi about China's transgressions at the Line of Actual Control and reports of the settlement of villages along it, the leadership of the Tibetan community in exile says it is concerned that China might be "pushing" more Tibetans out to the border areas while using the opportunity to settle more mainland Chinese in Tibetan cities.

In addition, according to Penpa Tsering, the newly elected "Sikyong" of the "Central Tibetan Authority (CTA) based in Dharamshala, there is also a need for a strategy to ensure livelihoods for Tibetans living in India, especially in remote and border States.

"We hope to send a representation to the Indian government on the overall situation of Tibetans in India, and challenges we face today," Mr. Tsering told journalists during a visit to Delhi that comes after a detailed tour by him to outlying areas in Ladakh.

"We want to ask how India can help us sustain our community, especially those settled in Arunachal, Tawang, in Uttarakhand and in Ladakh. We definitely need more steps – a strategy – a firm policy and the means to cater to the needs of people in the border areas," he added. Mr. Tsering declined to comment on the current

tensions between India and China at the LAC, but said the border aggressions by China denote an "insecurity" within the Chinese government.

Mr. Tsering said the CTA, the self-styled Tibetan "Government in Exile", would also like assistance in completing an authoritative census of the Tibetan diaspora worldwide, so as to be able to better care for their needs. According to informal estimates, about 75,000 live in India and 10,000 in Nepal. The U.S., which has been steadily accepting more Tibetans in the last few years, has about 25,000, while Canada is home to about 10,000, and about 20,000 are based in European countries.

## Falling numbers

When asked, Mr. Tsering said the number of those leaving Tibet has steadily decreased in the past decade, in part due to strict restrictions at the China-Nepal border, and those arriving in India are now down to a small trickle. According to the CTA officials present, about 20,000 Tibetans were enrolled in schools run by the CTA in India and Nepal, which has halved in the past decade to about 9,700.

Of particular concern, he told journalists, is that those inside the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) are "losing their culture" as school going children are mandated

to learn Mandarin over Tibetan and find employment difficult unless they are schooled in Chinese.

"Under Xi Jinping, Chinese authorities are less accommodative of different cultures and languages: they promote 'One nation, one party, one language, one culture' now," he said, adding that as a result, it was even more important for the CTA to promote Tibetan ethnic culture through the diaspora.

Talks between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government have not taken place since 2011, after which President Xi came to office with a tougher line on Tibet.

Mr. Tsering said while the Dalai Lama and the CTA are open to talks with China, they should be official, not "semi-official" and that he is in the process of structuring a "Permanent Strategy" committee to deal with the question of talks. The CTA is not recognised by any country at present, although many countries support and fund their activities and assist Tibetan refugee communities worldwide.

In a statement earlier this month, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called the government-in-exile an "out and out separatist political group". "It is against China's constitution and laws; it is an illegal organisation," Mr. Wang said.

# Russia, India, China meet reveals Indo-Pacific gap

## Beijing opposes Democracy Summit to be chaired by Biden

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The virtual meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China on Friday revealed the inherent differences among the three countries on the future of the Indo-Pacific region. The discussion among Sergey Lavrov, S. Jaishankar and Wang Yi revealed that Russia and China consider the Indo-Pacific an exclusive concept, while favouring the notion of “Asia-Pacific region” that they consider “inclusive”.

A statement from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to Mr. Lavrov’s comments in the meeting in which he reportedly described the Indo-Pacific region as “not a partnership of equals” and supported the



S. Jaishankar

notion of the Asia-Pacific as a more “inclusive and harmonious” framework.

India, along with the U.S., Japan and Australia, has formed the quadrilateral framework to ensure free and open maritime lanes in the Indo-Pacific region.

However, China’s statement indirectly disapproved of such initiatives. Mr. Lavrov, according to the Chinese statement, referred to such groupings as reminis-

cent of the Cold War.

The statement referred to the “patchwork of small circles”, while indirectly referring to the Quad initiative and urged all three countries to jointly deal with global challenges. It referred to the Sino-Russian-Indian spirit of “openness, solidarity, trust and cooperation”, which can fight epidemics, and provide stability to the world,

Mr. Wang referred to the “democracy trap” and opposed the upcoming “Summit of Democracies”, adding that the summit will bring out “negative energy”. Sources here confirmed on Friday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi “is likely to attend” the summit that will be chaired by U.S. President Joe Biden.

## Shore up the lifeline

Fresh funds must close the gap between demand and supply for MGNREGS work

After reports clearly indicated that the States had run out of funds for expenditure on wages and materials for the MGNREGS, the Government announced ₹10,000 crore in additional funds as an interim measure. Though allocated on November 5, the scheme’s financial statement as on November 25 still showed a negative net balance of ₹9,888 crore indicating that the balance sheets were in the red in 24 States and Union Territories. This means that the fund crunch suffered by the scheme due to high demand and a low budgeted outlay in the Union Budget for this financial year, continues. The high demand is an indication of the extended effects of the pandemic in rural areas, and a continuing lack of funds will hurt any further demand for work in such areas besides of course delaying payments for those who have already completed work. The impact of the lockdowns during the pandemic has continued to depress employment levels and rural wage incomes, which is why the MGNREGS has proven to be a popular avenue for employment and wages. In fact, even during the economic crisis during the pandemic, the rural sector sustained the poor by providing them guaranteed work through the scheme. The delays in payments and the lack of funds have contributed to an estimated unmet demand to the tune of 20% in Bihar, Telangana and Gujarat, according to activists tracking the implementation of the scheme. As the scheme guarantees income for 100 days of work, many households get a reduced number of workdays for which they are paid – a situation that should not be tenable.

The budgeting for the scheme by simply fixing a nominal increase from the original Budget estimate in previous years is a flawed method. If anything, the outlay must be tied to revised/actual estimate of expenditure for the scheme each year – in the case of 2021-22, the total allocations were ₹73,000 crore, much lower than the ₹1,11,500 crore as revised estimates in expenditure in 2020-21. Nearly a quarter of the allocation for the current financial year was also tied to meeting the liabilities from previous years. Clearly, the scheme suffers from a budgeting problem that has hampered its proper implementation despite its popularity, and this needs to be rectified. The Union Government has done the right thing in continuing till March 2022, its free foodgrain ration scheme, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, that was launched as part of the COVID-19 relief packages – the fourth such extension. This was an acknowledgment of the need for the scheme to support poor families in a recovering economy. Considering that the MGNREGS acts as a robust lifeline as well, it will be prudent for the Government to make up the shortfalls in the allocations quickly.

# MPs are defenders of dignity of Parliament, says President

Vice-President rues drop in productivity in Rajya Sabha due to frequent disruptions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind said on Friday that Members of Parliament (MPs), whether they represent the ruling party or the Opposition, are defenders of the dignity of Parliament and one should not confuse competition to be rivalry.

Amid a boycott by around 15 Opposition parties, President Kovind addressed MPs in the Central Hall of Parliament on the occasion of Constitution Day to commemorate the day the Indian Constitution was adopted.

Mr. Kovind said there may be differences of opinion, but no difference should be so great as to hinder the real purpose of public service.

“The Opposition is, in fact, the most important element of democracy,” he noted. “Without an effective Opposition, democracy becomes ineffective. It is expected that the Government and the Opposition, despite



**Taking pledge:** Ram Nath Kovind, Venkaiah Naidu, Narendra Modi and Om Birla during ‘Samvidhan Divas’ in Parliament. •PTI

their differences, continue to work together in the best interests of the citizens.”

## Healthy competition

Noting that it was natural for members of the ruling party and the Opposition to compete, he said it should be “about being better representatives and doing better things for the public good. Only then will it be considered healthy competition”.

“We all believe that our Parliament is a ‘Temple of Democracy’. Therefore, it

becomes the responsibility of every parliamentarian to conduct themselves in this temple of democracy with the same spirit of reverence with which they do in their places of worship,” Mr. Kovind said.

The President also released the digital version of the Constituent Assembly debates, as well as the calligraphed version of the Constitution, at the event.

Speaking at the function, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, who is the Chairman

of the Rajya Sabha, said legislatures should be guided by “dialogue and debate” and not be rendered “dys-functional through persistent disruptions”.

Mr. Naidu argued that the people’s will in a democracy is conveyed as the mandate to the Governments of the day, and stressed that “tolerance towards the mandate of the people should be the guiding spirit for the legislatures”.

The Rajya Sabha Chairman said productivity of the House, that was meant to be one for Elders, had hit the lowest ever productivity of 29.60% during the last session, slipping from the previous low of 35.75% in 2018.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, in his address, too spoke about Parliament being a forum for debate instead of disruptions.

While interacting with reporters after the function, he stated his displeasure at the boycott by the Opposition.

# Venugopal pushes for national courts of appeal

Four such courts with 15 judges each would drastically reduce pendency, says Attorney-General

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Attorney-General of India K.K. Venugopal argued on the front foot in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Constitution Day for the revival of a 11-year-old proposal to set up national courts of appeal in four regions of the country.

He said four courts of appeal with 15 judges each could act as intermediate appellate courts between the State High Courts and the Supreme Court.

They would absorb matrimonial disputes, rent control cases and other such



K.K. Venugopal

cases that clog the Supreme Court, adding to pendency. The judgments of these courts of appeal would be final, he said.

“These courts would also mean that we are adding 60 judges who would be taking

over these cases. Pendency would be cut down to a very great extent. Cases could be disposed of in three or four years’ time,” Mr. Venugopal said on Friday.

This would unburden the Supreme Court, which could focus on interpreting constitutional questions of law, references and death sentence cases. Supreme Court judges could hear cases leisurely, read and write better judgments with time on their hands, Mr. Venugopal argued at an event organised by the Supreme Court to celebrate Constitution Day.

In fact, the Supreme Court would not need 34

judges. Just 15 would be ample. These judges of the Supreme Court could sit in three Constitution Benches.

“There has to be rethinking of the entire structure of the Supreme Court as it exists today. No point brushing it under the carpet. Are we aware of the suffering litigants undergo? We have inherited a system that is extremely cumbersome. Government and judiciary have to put their heads together. We have included access to justice as a fundamental right, but we are probably violating the fundamental right by continuing with this system,” the coun-

try’s top law officer said.

Starting his speech with the question “Is the Supreme Court truly a constitutional court?” Mr. Venugopal said it would need a “very, very bold person” to start a litigation.

He said cases remain pending in the Supreme Court for 10 years. It would have reached the Supreme Court after spending a decade each at the trial and high court levels.

“A person does not even know when his case would conclude and whether he would be alive to see the fruits of the litigation he had started,” Mr. Venugopal said.

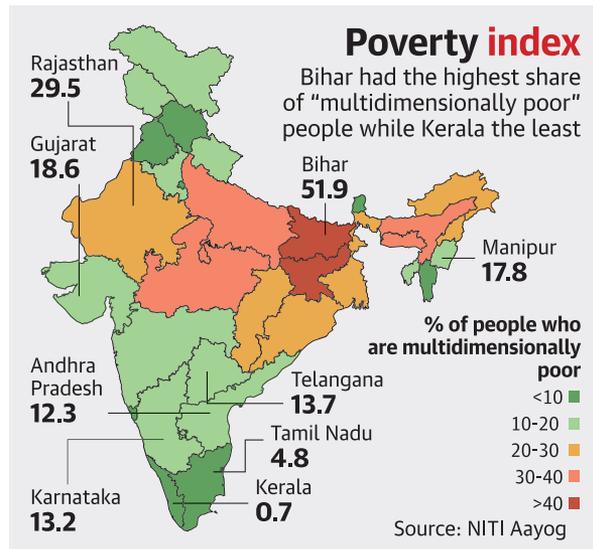
# Over 50% of Bihar population multidimensionally poor: NITI

Jharkhand, U.P., M.P. among poorest States; Kerala, Goa have lowest poverty rates

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

With more than 50% of the population in Bihar identified as “multidimensionally poor”, the State has the maximum percentage of population living in poverty among all the States and the Union Territories, according to Government think tank NITI Aayog’s Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

As per the index, 51.91% of the population in Bihar is poor, followed by Jharkhand (42.16%), Uttar Pradesh (37.79%), Madhya Pradesh (36.65%) and Meghalaya (32.67%). On the other hand, Kerala registered the lowest poverty levels (0.71%), followed by Puducherry (1.72%), Lakshadweep (1.82%), Goa (3.76%) and Sikkim (3.82%).



Other States and Union Territories where less than 10% of the population is poor include Tamil Nadu (4.89%), Andaman & Nico-

bar Islands (4.30%), Delhi (4.79%), Punjab (5.59%), Himachal Pradesh (7.62%) and Mizoram (9.8%).

“The development of the

National Multidimensional Poverty Index of India is an important contribution towards instituting a public policy tool which monitors multidimensional poverty, informs evidence-based and focused interventions, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind,” NITI Aayog Chairman Rajeev Kumar said in the foreword.

He said India’s national MPI measure uses the globally accepted and robust methodology developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

“Importantly, as a measure of multidimensional poverty, it captures multiple and simultaneous deprivation faced by households.”

# A close reading of the NFHS-5, the health of India

Given how little the country spends on health and education as a share of GDP, the improvements seem remarkable



ASHWINI DESHPANDE

The national health and demographic report card is finally completely out. The results from the first phase (conducted between June 2019 and January 2020) of the fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) were released in December 2020. We now have the key results from the second phase (conducted between January 2020 and April 2021).

How did India fare? It is a mixed verdict, containing both cheer and alarm in abundant measure. Before going into details, we should note that the results of the NFHS are worthy of our attention because it is not a hastily put together state-of-health index. Together, the two phases provide a detailed, comprehensive, multi-dimensional report card on the state of India's demographic and health trajectory.

## Population has stabilised

There are many pluses in the report card. A comparison of NFHS-5 with NFHS-4 (2015-16) reveals improvement in several dimensions such as educational attainment, institutional deliveries, vaccinations, infant mortality and much more. We can debate later whether the improvements are good enough given the scale and depth of what needs to be done. For now, we need to appreciate the progress, especially given the abysmal state of India's health infrastructure, which has been tragically apparent since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Given how little India spends on health and education as a share of GDP, these improvements are particularly remarkable.

The biggest positive headline news from NFHS-5 is that the total fertility rate (TFR), which is the average number of children born to a woman during her lifetime, has

been falling over time and is now just below the replacement rate of 2.1. This is true across all States of India. This means that the total population has stabilised. Therefore, politicians can strike one thing off their to-do list and devote their energies to urgent health matters, instead of raising the bogey of population explosion to justify coercive population policies. There is absolutely no evidence to justify tying welfare support measures or holding elected office to the number of children.

## Data on sex ratio

Another headline reveals that nationally, there are 1,020 adult women per 1,000 men for the first time. Does this mean that Indian women are no longer "missing", i.e. does this signal the beginning of the end of another tenacious problem – that of deep-rooted son preference which leads to illegal but pervasive sex-selective abortions as parents repeatedly try for at least one son?

To gauge this, the key metric to examine would be the sex ratio at birth (SRB). The natural SRB is 105 boys to 100 girls, which typically stabilises to a 50-50 adult sex ratio. If there are pervasive sex selective abortions, leading to a masculine SRB (i.e., more than 105 boys to 100 girls), a part of this imbalance would carry forward into adulthood. But adult sex ratio is shaped by many factors other than sex selective abortions. In household surveys, the adult sex ratio might also be affected by sampling errors, arising, for instance, from undercounting migrant males.

The natural SRB translates to 952 girls per 1,000 boys. Nationally, the SRB has improved from 919 in 2015-16 to 929 in 2019-21, but it is still short of the natural SRB. Major States with low SRBs are spread all over the country: Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Delhi, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Maharashtra. While many States have seen an improvement in their SRBs, some have also witnessed a worsening, e.g. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. Therefore, we need to recognise that the



REYDRAJ KONDWAR

move to a small family size combined with persistent son preference is likely to impede the improvements in SRB.

## Anaemia and malnutrition

A key health indicator that has worsened is the incidence of anaemia in under-5 children (from 58.6 to 67%), women (53.1 to 57%) and men (22.7 to 25%) in all States of India. Anaemia has debilitating effects on overall health, which is why the World Health Organization characterises it as a serious public health concern; 20%-40% incidence is considered moderate. Indian States show variation: from 39.4% in Kerala to 79.7% in Gujarat: but barring Kerala, all States are in the "severe" category. It is tempting to think of the worsening as the COVID-19 effect.

However, comparing the changes in anaemia in Phase 1 States (survey done pre-COVID) to Phase 2 States, we see that if anything, the increase in the former (which include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, among others) is on average higher than the increase in Phase 2 States (Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, among others). The discrepancy between Phase 1 and Phase 2 could reflect differences in actual incidence or survey-related issues.

There are other instances of clear differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2 results. The three indicators of malnutrition: stunting (low height-for-age), wasting (low weight-for-height) and under-

weight (low weight-for-age): show an overall improvement. These conditions often occur together. Together, these reflect chronic or recurrent undernutrition, usually associated with poverty, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness and/or inappropriate feeding and care in early life. These prevent children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential.

However, the overall reduction in national estimates of these three measures masks an anomaly. In Phase 1, several States revealed a worsening in one or more of these, whereas in Phase 2, none of the States showed a worsening. It would be good to understand if the novel coronavirus pandemic affected the survey in Phase 2, leading to undercounting of incidence, or whether by pure chance, all States in Phase 2 happen to be better performers on the malnutrition count (something that could not have been known at the start of the survey in 2019).

Also, along with an improvement in these three indicators, we see an increase in the proportion of overweight children, women and men. Being overweight also reflects malnutrition, with serious health consequences in the form of non-communicable diseases.

In addition to anthropometric measures, lack of adequate nutrition is also measured by micronutrient deficiencies, i.e. lack of vitamins and minerals that are essential for body functions such as producing enzymes, hormones and other substances needed for growth and development. While the NFHS does not have data on this, the issue of micronutrients is related to diets. It would be good to note here that Indian diets display a rich diversity.

Many traditional diets reflect both local climatic conditions as well as a multiplicity of sources of essential nutrients, such as proteins. Policing of diets, by imposing an unnatural uniformity, and preventing access to animal protein for large sections of Indians that are not traditionally vegetarian is likely to reduce micronutrient diversity and contribute to

poor health outcomes.

## Notes of caution

Some analyses have suggested that the rate of progress has slowed down, based on comparisons between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 to the improvements between the two previous rounds. We would not be able to claim this yet, since comparing changes over a 10-year interval (between NFHS-3 in 2005-06 and NFHS-4) to a five-year interval (between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5) is misleading.

Some have argued that the poor health outcomes reflect the effect of COVID-19. The data for the second phase of NFHS-5 have been, to a large extent, collected during the highly unusual conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, but as the evidence on anaemia shows, the deterioration in public health indicators cannot be attributed entirely to the pandemic. COVID-19 might have added fuel to the fire of poor public health, but it did not cause the fire.

There is much more in the NFHS-5 survey that needs more than a short piece. The survey focuses on women's empowerment, autonomy and mobility indicators. It shines a spotlight on women's reproductive health, and reveals, for instance, that caesarian births have increased dramatically. In private health facilities, 47.5% births are by C-section (14.3% in public health facilities). These figures are highly unnatural and call into question unethical practices of private health providers who prioritise monetary gain over women's health and control over their bodies.

The overall evidence is compelling and clear: health ought to be a matter of concern for all political parties and all governments: national and State. The survey highlights deep inequalities in health outcomes. An action plan to improve India's health needs to be inclusive, firm in its commitment, and backed by solid resources.

Ashwini Deshpande is Professor of Economics and Director, Centre of Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) at Ashoka University

## The rate reset

Slashing multiple GST slabs is essential, as is resisting frequent tinkering with rates

Since its onset in 2017, the GST regime to subsume multiple State and Central levies was criticised for far too many tax rates that were amenable to creating complications instead of simplifying taxation. The Government had hinted that rates could be reviewed once the system stabilised. Now, with GST in its fifth year, the Government has assessed it is about time to consider a reboot, partly because revenues are falling short of expectations, despite healthy monthly collections. Next month, a Group of Ministers set up by the GST Council is expected to propose changes, including merging slabs, with a road map for immediate, short- and medium-term changes. This mandate marked an expansion of its initially stated task of rationalising tax rates to bolster revenues. To recap, there are eight effective GST rates, including zero on essential goods, standard rates of 5%, 12% and 18% for most goods and services, and a 28% tax plus GST Compensation Cess on sin or demerit goods. Special low rates are specified for jewellery, precious stones and supplies to exporters.

The effective tax rate under GST has slipped from the original revenue-neutral rate of 15.5% to 11.6%, which Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said occurred due to rate cuts effected across categories since 2017. Quite a few stemmed from the GST's hasty beginning and errors in the initial rate-setting. The Council continues to resolve genuine hardships this created for industry segments, but the constant tweaks have also altered the original revenue dynamics envisaged. The 18% tax rate, levied even on insurance premium payments, now accounts for the largest taxable turnover, as a National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) paper points out. Reducing the 18% rate or merging it with the 12% slab will thus entail revenue losses that would have to be offset by hikes in the lowest and/or highest rates. The NIPFP has suggested a structure of 8%, 15% and a 30% rate for sin goods, to protect revenue concerns while minimising the need for a sharp hike at either end of the spectrum and leaving special rates untouched. This may be less contentious than raising rates on bullion, reportedly proposed to the GoM, which could only spur tax evasion. Sequencing the implementation of new rates and avoiding far-too-frequent rethinks would be critical to minimise disruptions and engender investor confidence. The Council must also urgently address data limitations flagged by the NIPFP. For several months this year, the Government did not reveal returns filed by taxpayers even as it claimed GST collections reflect recovery and improved compliance. Also, many GST rate cuts that triggered the current resource worries were aimed at pandering to regional considerations ahead of critical elections. With key State polls soon, the Government's resolve to carry out a hard reset on GST rates now may be tested.

# Covishield had 63% strike rate against Delta: report

Vaccine offered 85% protection against moderate disease

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Two shots of Covishield gave 63% protection against symptomatic SARS-CoV2 infection and 85% protection against moderate or severe disease, said the results of a study conducted in Faridabad, Haryana, to assess the effectiveness of vaccines. The study notably was conducted during the second wave when the Delta variant was dominant.

While several studies – as did the latest study – had shown that vaccination elicited fewer neutralising antibodies against the Delta variant compared with the wild type variant, the Haryana study found that there was not any significant reduction in cellular immunity.

This category of immunity, also called T cell immunity, resulted from the body learning to destroy the coronavirus after having being taught to do so from either a vaccination or a previous infection and was considered more long-lasting than the protection conferred from neutralising antibodies, which were produced within weeks of an inoculation or infection.

### Severe disease

The Haryana study implied that the vaccines continued to be effective at their primary promise of protecting against severe disease and death regardless of the variants.

Though India is now seeing a downswing in confirmed cases, several parts of Europe, Africa, the United States are witnessing a surge in breakthrough infections, or those following full vaccination, prompting the roll out of booster doses in some countries. Concerns of a new variant, B.1.1.591, first



**Building resistance:** A COVID-19 vaccination drive in progress at a centre in New Delhi on Friday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

discovered in South Africa have also emerged.

The findings of the ChAdOx1 effectiveness of the Faridabad study, which appeared online in *Lancet Infectious Diseases* on Friday, were comparable to recent studies in England and Scotland that had reported effectiveness of 60-67% for the vaccine against infection by the Delta variant.

To estimate the effectiveness of two doses of the ChAdOx1 vaccine, 2,379 confirmed cases and 1,981 controls (healthy individuals) were analysed. Around 85 (3.6%) cases were fully vaccinated compared with 168 (8.5%) controls. As many as 157(6.4%) of 2,451 cases and 181(9.1%) of 1,994 controls had received only one dose, giving a vaccine effectiveness of a single dose

against SARS-CoV-2 infection of 46.2%.

Among the 84 cases of moderate-to-severe COVID-19, only one (1.2%) was completely vaccinated compared with 84 (3.7%) of 2,295 cases with mild COVID-19. Sixteen deaths were reported in the unvaccinated or incomplete vaccination group, but none in the completely vaccinated group.

The study was conducted at Employee State Insurance Corporation Medical College (ESICMC) Hospital (Faridabad, India) and the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (Faridabad, India) for RT-PCR testing for suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection between April 1 and May 31, 2021. The two centres account for nearly 90% of all tests in Faridabad.

# TNA seeks joint U.S.-India role for Sri Lanka political solution

Move comes amid govt. efforts to draft a new Constitution

**MEERA SRINIVASAN**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the main parliamentary group representing Tamils of the war-affected north and east, has requested the United States to collaborate with India and jointly push for a political solution in the island nation.

A delegation led by TNA Jaffna legislator M.A. Sumanthiran, with senior legal experts K. Kanag-Isvaran and Nirmala Chandrahaasan, conveyed this at a recent meeting with State Department officials in Washington DC.

“With the U.S. returning to the Human Rights Council, we think it is important that Washington advocates a political solution to the Tamil national question, along with pending issues of accountability and justice,” Mr. Sumanthiran told *The Hindu* from London, where he is briefing British officials. The U.K. leads a “core group” on Sri Lanka at the Council. In the scheduled March 2022 session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights will present a written report on Sri Lanka.

## Key interlocutor

Until now, India has been the main international interlocutor for a political solution in the island nation that is still recovering from a long civil war, while Western powers have underscored



M.A. Sumanthiran

accountability and justice. The TNA's recent move inviting the U.S. to strengthen the call for an urgent political solution comes amid the Rajapaksa government's efforts to draft a new Constitution. Its delegation therefore included the senior legal scholars and practitioners who have expertise in the area, according to the TNA MP, himself a lawyer.

While in the U.S., Mr. Sumanthiran also met Indian Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu, as well as India's Permanent Representative to the UN T.S. Tirumurti in New York to brief them about the TNA's outreach to the U.S. Mr. Sandhu was formerly High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, while Mr. Tirumurti has worked on Sri Lanka-related matters while serving as Joint Secretary in New Delhi. “Washington has kept New Delhi informed of our discussion, and the TNA too held a series of meetings with the Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay in Colombo ahead our visit to the U.S.,” the TNA MP said.

Since the end of the civil war in 2009, the chief demand of the TNA, especially its leader, the veteran Tamil politician R. Sampanthan, has been a lasting political solution through a just constitutional settlement. The TNA holds the position that the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution – born out of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 and guaranteeing a measure of power devolution to the provinces – was a necessary step, but is not sufficient, especially with successive governments failing to fully implement its provisions.

“Without powers adequately devolved to the provinces, we cannot take on the [State's] massive plan to change the demography of the Tamil-majority north and east through efforts to settle Sinhalese people and multiple threats to land belonging to Tamils, in the form of archeological or conservation projects,” Mr. Sumanthiran observed.

## India's demands

India has consistently called for the full implementation of the 13th Amendment and more recently, the early conduct of provincial council elections.

However, it is unclear if the Sri Lankan government will hold elections to its nine Provincial Councils before bringing out the new Constitution and electoral reforms that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has promised.

## 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
<b>General Studies Paper III</b>	
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;
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.