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## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

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# The ground beneath the President's feet

Continuing failures and confusion in policy making and implementation are at the heart of Sri Lanka's governance crisis



JAYADEVA UYANGODA

What has Gotabaya Rajapaksa achieved when he enters his third year in office as Sri Lanka's President on November 18? A not-so-attractive record of failures in governance.

President Rajapaksa (picture) has also been losing much of the public support, popularity and trust that brought him into power in November 2019.

The present crisis which President Rajapaksa and his regime are facing has four interconnected dimensions – economic, social, governance, and legitimacy.

Sri Lanka's worsening economic crisis is not Mr. Rajapaksa's creation. Yet, he and his team of policy advisers seem to be at a loss even to comprehend its gravity and its disastrous consequences which the people are forced to bear.

While the impact of the protracted public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on Sri Lanka's economy may take a few years to manage, its social impact has been devastating. The absence of any effective government interventions to alleviate economic hardships faced by the poor, the new poor produced by the pandemic, the working people and all strata of the middle class, both urban and rural, have a fresh social crisis too.

## A strong leader

Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa began his tenure as President in November 2019 by promising the Sri Lankan people a fresh beginning for a future of stability, security, development, and prosperity. He was also open about his ideological project that gave primacy to the aspirations of Sri Lanka's majority ethnic

community, the Sinhalese Buddhists. He did not have any democratic pretensions either. Mr. Rajapaksa's promise was for a 'strong government' under a 'strong leader' to ensure national security, law and order, political stability, and victor's peace with the ethnic minorities.

Soon after assuming office, he launched a programme of restoring Sri Lanka's personalised model of executive authoritarianism, that had been suspended by the previous government under the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. For this objective, Mr. Rajapaksa made use of the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

Bypassing the then Opposition-dominated Parliament, Mr. Rajapaksa concentrated a great deal of financial and administrative power into his hands, thereby re-establishing the presidential executive as the central institution of state power. In October 2020, Mr. Rajapaksa used the newly gained two-thirds parliamentary majority to abolish the 19th Amendment. Under the 20th Amendment, Sri Lanka was thus brought back to executive presidentialism, which has been the mainstay of Sri Lanka's democratic decay for decades.

## Civil-military ties

Mr. Rajapaksa also initiated a new trend in civil-military relations in Sri Lanka's structures of governance. Appointing the army commander to head a new presidential task force to manage the public health crisis and placing the military over the politicians as well as medical and civilian professionals were its first signs. In the new political and administrative order, serving and retired senior military officers are given key roles.

As critics insist, militarisation of public administration is a key component of Mr. Rajapaksa's project of de-democratisation.

Continuing failures and confusion in policy making and imple-



mentation are at the heart of an on-going governance crisis since the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, mid last year. Having been persuaded by nativist ideologues and local conspiracy theorists, President Rajapaksa initially de-emphasised the urgency of launching a rapid vaccination programme throughout the country. His encouragement of magic and sorcery to combat the pandemic put the public health policy into disarray. It is only after the pandemic had reached crisis proportions by middle of this year that President Rajapaksa turned to science, expert advice and vaccination.

Meanwhile, the current controversy caused by the President's ideologically-inspired decision to ban chemical fertilizers and inputs in all spheres of agriculture epitomises the Rajapaksa regime's record of inept and autocratic approach to initiating economic and social transformation.

This inexplicably rash and inappropriate policy intervention has already caused much social unrest and discontent among very wide sections of the peasantry.

Similarly, the recent mishandling of Sri Lanka's chronic foreign exchange crisis, leading to further destabilisation of the country's currency and economy, has caused a fear among citizens that continuing economic policy failures might even trigger an economic collapse.

Moreover, the government's repeated failures to intervene to bring the prices of essential consumer items down and manage the runaway cost of living, amidst uncertainties and confusion in policy decisions and their implementation, have further dented the President's much advertised claim to an efficient, result-oriented, professionalised, technocratic, and no-nonsense style of leadership and governance.

## Core issues

Thus, the Sri Lankan government's apathy towards the suffering of the people amidst rapidly declining income levels and an erosion of living standards and economic insecurity caused by a rampant economic and financial crisis is just one among many instances of a serious failure in governance. Moreover, the severity of the economic crisis has also made it impossible for President Rajapaksa to initiate a state-sponsored social support programme for the poor, the new poor and vulnerable segments of the people. This, obviously, is at the mainstay of Sri Lanka's growing social crisis at present.

Amidst all this, what baffles the critics and the supporters alike of President Rajapaksa is the degree of insensitivity he and his government display to the consequences of his policy failures and crisis of governance for people's lives and their survival.

It is the accumulation of such failures at multiple levels of policy, governance, and leadership that has seriously eroded the popular support that Mr. Rajapaksa enjoyed just two years ago. It also constitutes the core of the legitimacy crisis he has to deal with at the personal level as well.

The Rajapaksa administration is now facing open defiance and protests by three large segments of citizens who may have overwhelmingly voted for him in November 2019: rural farmers, small

producers engaged in export agriculture, and public sector school-teachers. As many of them are reported to have been saying at their protest rallies, defying police threats and the ridicule by ruling party politicians, they now regret that they have voted such a band of rulers into power.

It is this open expression of a generalised feeling of loss of political trust and public disillusionment with President Rajapaksa's leadership that symbolises the acuteness of the legitimacy crisis he has to deal with in the weeks and months to come.

## International relations

One area where the President has managed to secure some success is foreign relations. He seems to have taken note of the bad press he got locally, regionally and internationally for his regime's close proximity to China at the expense of Sri Lanka's traditional allies and friends. Mending relations with India, Europe and America appears to be a recent policy shift he has engineered.

However, the President seems to be quite determined to stay in power till the end of his current term and beyond. If Charles de Gaulle and Lee Kuan Yew were the role models of former Sri Lankan leader J.R. Jayewardene, Lee Kuan Yew and Chinese President Xi Jinping are Mr. Rajapaksa's idols. One crucial lesson that he seems to have learnt from all those leaders is that one term of office is hardly adequate for a ruler who thinks of himself as personifying the nation's destiny.

Meanwhile, a weakened and politically unassertive parliamentary Opposition seems to be President Rajapaksa's only credible political asset at the moment.

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# China rejects concerns over border law

India fears that the new law will be used as a pretext to formalise the recent military moves

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
HONG KONG

A day after India expressed strong concerns over a new land border law to be passed by China, Beijing on Thursday said it hoped “relevant countries” would not make “wanton speculation over normal legislation”.

India said on Wednesday the new Chinese land boundary law, to come into effect on January 1, should not be used to justify Beijing’s actions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and expressed “concern” over the law.

The law, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, also should not be used as a “pretext” to formalise any of the Chinese military’s recent moves, from amassing thousands of troops in forward areas to carrying out multiple transgressions in violation of past border agreements.

The MEA said China’s “unilateral decision to bring

 The main purpose for formulating and promulgating this law is to further coordinate and strengthen boundary management and advance international cooperation in relevant fields

WANG WENBIN  
CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON



about a legislation which can have implications on our existing bilateral arrangements... is of concern to us.”

## Development projects

The border law designates various responsibilities for the Chinese military and local authorities in frontier areas, calling on the military to carry out drills and for local governments to step up border development projects. Among those projects are construction of civilian settlements called frontier villages in disputed areas along the India and Bhutan

borders.

Responding to India’s concerns, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Thursday it “hopes relevant countries will abide by norms of international relations and refrain from wanton speculations on China’s normal domestic legislation.”

Its spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated, “The National Land Boundary Law was adopted at the 31st Session of the Standing Committee of the Thirteenth National People’s Congress of China on October 23. On the same day, President Xi Jinping signed

Order No. 99 of the President of the People’s Republic of China and issued the document, which is proclaimed to be enforced from January 1, 2022.”

## Boundary management

“This law consists of seven chapters and 62 articles. It stipulates clearly the leadership system and division of duties among different departments as well as between military and civilian authorities. It also offers clear provisions regarding delineation and demarcation of national land boundaries, defense and management of national land boundaries and borders, and international cooperation in national land boundary affairs,” he added.

He stressed that the “main purpose for formulating and promulgating this law is to further coordinate, regulate and strengthen boundary management and advance

international cooperation in relevant fields.”

Mr. Wang added, “It will not affect China’s compliance with existing treaties related to national land boundary affairs China has already signed or change China’s current mode of boundary management and cooperation with countries sharing a land boundary with it. Nor will it alter China’s position and proposition on relevant boundary issues.”

## MEA response

The MEA on Wednesday noted that “unilateral moves” would have “no bearing” on agreements reached previously by the two sides. Many of those agreements are, however, under strain in the wake of the Chinese military’s moves along the LAC last year, with the crisis in eastern Ladakh as yet unresolved after multiple rounds of talks.

# Don't use new law to justify LAC moves, India tells China

'It will have no bearing on present boundary arrangements'

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

China must not use its new "Land Boundary Law" to justify any actions that alter the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), said India, in a strongly worded statement that expressed "concern" over the law.

The Government called the law a "unilateral move", and said it could have no bearing on existing arrangements between both sides, as India and China have not resolved their boundary issues thus far. It also reaffirmed India's rejection of the China-Pakistan 1963 agreement, in which Pakistan handed over the Shaksgam Valley of Aksai Chin to China. India claims all of Jammu and Kashmir, which includes Aksai Chin, and has maintained that the agreement is "illegal and invalid".

In addition, New Delhi's latest statement indicates some apprehension that Bei-

**Border intent** | A look at what the new Chinese border law entails

- According to observers, the law would formalise some of China's recent actions in disputed regions with India and Bhutan
- This includes the People's Liberation Army stationing troops in areas along the India border and multiple transgressions across the LAC
- China has also constructed new "frontier villages" along its border with Bhutan at the disputed Doklam plateau
- The law will come into force from January 1, 2022



ing could use its new law, which authorises the state to combat any attempts on its land boundaries and to strengthen border defences and infrastructure, as a "pretext" to formalise the People's Liberation Army (PLA) incursions into the LAC and building infrastructure along Indian territory since April 2020.

"China's unilateral decision to bring about legislation, which can have implication on our existing bilateral

arrangements on border management as well as on the boundary question, is of concern to us. Such unilateral move will have no bearing on the arrangements that both sides have already reached earlier, whether it is on the boundary question or for maintaining peace along the LAC in India-China border areas," said a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday.

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# Biden proposes \$1.85 tn social security and climate plan

U.S. President seeks support for 'Build Back Better' proposal

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

In a bid to unite Democrats on Capitol Hill around an agenda-defining social security and climate action Bill, U.S. President Joe Biden visited Capitol Hill on Thursday morning, proposing a \$1.85 trillion legislative package.

The President delayed his departure to Rome for the G20 meetings, as the White House scrambled to bring conservative (centrist) and progressive Democrats together, so Mr. Biden had something to show the international community in Rome and then in Scotland, where nations will meet for the UN climate conference (COP26).

"We have a framework that will get 50 votes in the United States Senate," Mr. Biden told House Democrats, according to reporting in the American press.

"I don't think it's hyperbole to say that the House and Senate majorities and my presidency will be determined by what happens in the next week," he reportedly said.

## Key elements left out

The new 'Build Back Better' proposal, which has been linked to a \$1 trillion infrastructure Bill that passed the Senate and is awaiting passage by the House of Representatives, leaves out key elements of Mr. Biden's initial request of Congress, including paid family leave, free community college tuition and provisions for the government to negotiate lower drug prices.

It will nevertheless include significant social spending measures – such as expanded access to preschool for 3 and 4 year olds, making them universal, and



Joe Biden

the largest federal investment in clean energy and tech – of the order of \$555 billion.

"No one got everything they wanted, including me... but that's what compromise is," Mr. Biden said as he announced the proposal at the White House following his meeting on the Hill.

## 'Very significant'

Bernie Sanders, the Senator from Vermont and progressive who heads the Senate Budget Committee, said the legislation was "very significant" but that he wanted to make it "better".

Progressives are concerned that the 'Build Back Better' package will not go through if the House passes just the infrastructure vote, for which there is bipartisan support. Mr. Sanders made it clear that he was not in support of the infrastructure legislation passing independently.

"So you don't want to see as the infrastructure Bill passed and then not have the kind of build back better Bills that we need," he said.

"And that's why you need 50 members [of the Senate] on board before there should be a vote in the House."

The success of the social security package has hinged

on the support of two Democratic Senators – Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona – and neither has thus far offered their clear support for the updated Biden plan. The Senate is split 50:50 (with Vice-President Kamala Harris holding a tie-breaking vote), and the Democrats need every single one of their members on board for the legislation to pass.

The Bill, as per data released by the administration, will be fully funded and not add to the deficit.

There will be a tax surcharge for the wealthiest Americans that the White House says will bring in \$230 billion.

There will also be penalties on companies that are based in countries not adhering to the global minimum tax recently agreed by more than 130 countries and a surcharge of 1% on corporate stock buybacks.

## 'A capitalist'

"I don't want to punish anyone's success. I'm a capitalist," Mr. Biden said. "I want everyone to be able to... if they want to be a millionaire, billionaire, to be able to seek their goal. But all I'm asking is: pay your fair share," he said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the chamber's top Democrat, told her colleagues not to "embarrass" the President before his overseas trip by not voting for the infrastructure Bill, CNN reported.

Mr. Biden will arrive in Rome and meet other world leaders en masse for the first time since America's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, and he is keen to show them that his domestic agenda – particularly around climate change – is in order.

# Key U.S. lawmakers bat for CAATSA sanctions waiver

## India likely to take delivery of S-400 from Russia soon

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**  
WASHINGTON DC

Key lawmakers continue to voice their support for a sanctions waiver for India for its purchase of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia. India is likely to begin taking delivery of the S-400 in November, potentially activating U.S. sanctions under a 2017 law, Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Senate India Caucus Co-Chair John Cornyn and Mike Waltz, a member on the House Armed Services Committee and vice-chair of the Congressional India Caucus, were among the lawmakers who have addressed the issue this week. Their comments were made on Wednesday evening at a virtually held event, organised by the U.S. India Business Council and the U.S. India Friendship Council.

Congressman Brad Sherman, a California Democrat and Co-Chair of the Congressional India Caucus, also spoke of the strength of India-U.S. ties.

### History of procurement

Mr. Waltz said he cognized New Delhi's history of procurement (from Russia) and India's desire to have diversity in its weapons systems, noting that the situation is difficult.

He said the U.S. Congress was working through "what the next steps are" – in terms of dealing with CAAT-



**Balancing act:** Taking delivery of the S-400 can potentially activate U.S. sanctions under the 2017 law. ■ AFP

SA in the Indian context and that he did not want a Turkey-type situation.

"So I don't want to get ahead of that. But I'll tell you what I want to avoid is the situation where we are with Turkey right now," he said suggesting that India and the U.S. keep the dialogue open – either at the Congressional level or at the 2+2 level (the next meeting between the Foreign and Defence Ministers will be held in early December in Washington).

Turkey, a NATO ally, was expelled from the American F-35 programme (a consortium to build the aircraft) after it began accepting S-400 shipments in 2019. President Joe Biden said in July Turkey will face further sanctions if it bought major equipment from Moscow.

"I don't think we're anywhere close to that yet. But I do think we need to find some off-ramps and find some ways to move in a more positive direction," Mr. Waltz said. The congressman co-authored, with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nik-

ki Haley, an op-ed in *Foreign Policy* earlier this week suggesting that the U.S. enter into a formal alliance with India. Ms. Haley, an Indian American, is considered a possible 2024 GOP candidate for the White House.

The op-ed argued that India could help keep "a watchful eye on Afghanistan" and "keep track of China's southern flank". The authors also suggested that a formal alliance with India would enable the U.S. to access Afghanistan via India's Farkhor Air Base in Tajikistan.

India has not publicly expressed interest in a formal security alliance with the U.S. or any other country.

Also on Wednesday, Mr. Cornyn, a Texas Republican, said the possibility of sanctions remained "one of the biggest threats" to the bilateral relationship. He pointed out that India had taken "significant steps" to reduce its reliance on Russian military equipment and had shown an interest in purchasing more arms from the U.S.

# Tsai confirms U.S. troop presence in Taiwan

## China accuses U.S. of trying to 'stir up trouble'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TAIPEI

President Tsai Ing-wen has confirmed a small number of U.S. troops are present in Taiwan to help with training, adding she had "faith" that the American military would defend the island in the event of a Chinese attack.

The remarks sparked a strident, albeit familiar, rebuke on Thursday from China which accused the U.S. of trying to "stir up trouble" and that it "firmly opposes" any official or military con-

tacts between Taipei and Washington.

In an interview with CNN, Ms. Tsai described Taiwan as a regional "beacon" of democracy that is facing down a giant authoritarian neighbour as the threat from Beijing grew "every day".

The presence of U.S. troops was first confirmed by a Pentagon official earlier this month. Ms. Tsai's comments are the first time a Taiwanese leader has publicly made such an admission since the last U.S. garrison left in 1979 when Washington switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing.

Asked how many U.S. troops were in Taiwan, she



Tsai Ing-wen

replied "not as many as people thought". "We have a wide range of cooperation with the U.S. aiming at increasing our defence capability," she added.

When asked if she was confident that the United

States would help defend Taiwan if necessary against China, Ms. Tsai replied: "I do have faith."

Speaking to lawmakers on Thursday, Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng said U.S. and Taiwanese troops have long had contacts with each other. "We have personnel exchanges and they [U.S. soldiers] would be here for military cooperation, but this is different, according to my definition, from having 'troops stationed' here," Mr. Chiu said.

Authoritarian China regards self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and has vowed to one day seize the island, by force if needed.

# Getting the focus back on Early Childhood Education

The home environment and stimulation children receive within the household can be important contributory factors

NISHA VERNEKAR, POOJA PANDEY  
& KARAN SINGHAL

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is crucial to the overall development of children, with impacts on their learning and even earning capabilities throughout their lifetimes. Despite the importance of ECE, little has been said about the continuance of ECE delivery during the COVID-19 school closures, reminiscent of its *status quo* even prior to the novel coronavirus pandemic. Those attending preschool are primarily enrolled in the nearly 14 lakh *anganwadis* spread across the country where ECE continues to suffer from low attendance and instructional time amid prioritisation of other early childhood development services in the *anganwadi* system (<https://bit.ly/3G2F3W>).

Where ECE has continued during COVID-19 pre-school closures, access has reduced and the priority for ECE is low within households. In a recent study by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy (<https://bit.ly/3DXG881>), 45% of the 650+ households surveyed in urban Maharashtra reported that they prioritise their older child's education over ECE.

A crucial factor for households to be able to prioritise ECE is active parental engagement in their child's education, especially for children in the age group of three to six years who spend a majority of their time within the household and rely greatly on parental assistance in the learning process. The overall development of a child in the early stages edicts a conducive home environment and parental

involvement in addition to equitable access to the schooling system. As such, the home environment and stimulation children receive within the household can contribute to their overall development. For example, studies have found that the act of making conversation with your child in the early years has significant gains on language skills they develop (<https://bit.ly/3BZnd6>).

### Role of parental engagement

Enabling parental engagement in ECE requires an understanding of barriers that usually prevent parents from meaningfully engaging in their child's education.

The socio-economic background of households determines access to preschools and the ability to invest in ECE. Worryingly, the lack of priority for ECE often means that households choose to forgo investing in ECE altogether. The pandemic has highlighted the glaring digital divide in the country, even in an urban context. Unless the state vows to provide devices and Internet access to all children, it is clear that complete reliance on technology is not an option.

Even for those who are able to overcome the initial barrier of access, the ability to engage in ECE at home remains dependent on time and ability. Households that have limited means have little time to invest in educational activities in the home. In the study mentioned above, with low-income households engaged in ECE in urban Maharashtra during COVID-19, we find that job and income losses led to further de-prioritisation of edu-



RAGHUVATHAN S.R.

cation, and the need to invest in educational and digital resources for its continuance during school closures.

Even among households that are able to create the time for education, many parents lack the self-efficacy to support their child's learning. Most parents lack knowledge of effective methods to facilitate learning within the home, and appropriate means of using technology for education. Parents in low-income households are additionally less likely to be able to access support to learn such methods. COVID-19 school closures made engagement of parents in their child's education a further necessity.

### Overcoming barriers

Crossing these barriers will become crucial as we move towards achieving universal and equitable ECE, as envisioned in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Some of these are harder to address, such as internalising the importance of ECE among parents. This shift of mindset requires prolonged and committed state action, which at present does not reflect any such urgency.

Other barriers, however, are easier to address if we operationalise

support of the state, schools and teachers towards the goal of enabling parental engagement at home. The pandemic has created an opportunity where parents and teachers have increasingly recognised the crucial role of parents as partners in their child's education. As we slowly move towards the re-opening of schools for younger grades, we should not lose sight of this.

In the same study we conducted in urban Maharashtra, we studied two ECE programmes – the E-paatshala programme in Balwadis run by Rocket Learning, and Akanksha schools in Mumbai and Pune. For those who were able to access the programmes, we found that those participating in these programmes showed higher engagement levels associated with the alleviation of some of the barriers discussed above. What might have worked for E-paatshala was its design to use only materials available at home for educational activities. This minimised the need for parents to purchase any additional resources and ensured that it was relevant to the child's environment and experiences. We found that programmes that were supporting parents' financially – through provision of rations and devices for education – resulted in higher parental engagement in ECE.

The study also highlighted that a more decentralised approach of identifying and alleviating these barriers to ECE, through teachers and school systems as the forerunners, goes a long way. Being the first point of contact with both the child and the parents, teachers are

the most equipped to effectively engage with parents, address their challenges, and design adaptable and innovative modes of teaching and learning.

### Empower households

We must leverage the present opportunity of heightened parental engagement in children's education. Efforts must be taken to empower households with time and resources so that they have the ability to prioritise ECE and are not forced to choose between their children's education. The provision of non-educational support to low-income households to alleviate income and food insecurities might be just as crucial in aiding parents to invest in education.

Second, we must collect information about teachers' experiences (on suitable modes of engagement with parents and children, delivery logistics, constraints of parents, etc.) and on innovations they have developed to increase parental engagement during school closures. We need to ask what has been done to alleviate constraints, and how can these be operationalised to reach more households?

While teachers should remain at the centre of this effort we must also make sure they are not further overburdened, by providing adequate resources and institutional support.

Nisha Vernekar and Pooja Pandey work on education at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Karan Singhal is a researcher at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. The views expressed are personal

# Strengthening healthcare

ABHIM can fix the weaknesses in India's health system



K. SRINATH REDDY

COVID-19 exposed several weaknesses in India's underfunded health system. Rural primary care is underfunded and has shortages of staff, equipment, drugs and infrastructure in many parts of the country. Urban primary healthcare has still not emerged as an active programme in many States. District and medical college hospitals suffer shortages of specialist doctors and support staff.

The private sector ranges from advanced tertiary care hospitals in big cities to informal and often unqualified care providers in villages. During the pandemic, it could not assuredly provide affordable care or deliver vaccines in large parts of India. There was a disconnect between the various levels of care within the public system, and the private system operated in a separate universe. Most government-funded healthcare insurance programmes did not cover outpatient care. This patchwork quilt of a mixed healthcare system frayed fast when challenged by the surging second wave of the virus.

## New scheme

Alerted by the experience of the first wave of 2020, the government proposed in the Budget greater investment in the health system. The Fifteenth Finance Commission too recommended strengthening of urban and rural primary care, stronger surveillance systems and laboratory capacity as well as creation of critical care capacity at different levels of the health system. The Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (ABHIM), announced recently, links these elements. It will support infrastructure development of 17,788 rural health and wellness centres (HWCs) in seven high-focus States and three north-eastern States. In addition, 11,044 urban HWCs will be established in close collaboration with Urban Local Bodies. The various measures of this scheme will extend primary healthcare services across India. Areas like hypertension, diabetes and mental health will be covered, in addition to existing services. Concomitantly, the network of centres will build a trained public health workforce that can perform routine public health functions while responding to a public health emergency.

Support for 3,382 block public health units (BPHUs) in 11 high-focus States and establishment of integrated district public health laboratories in all 730 districts will strengthen capacity for information technology-

enabled disease surveillance. To enhance the capabilities for microbial surveillance, a National Platform for One Health will be established. Four Regional National Institutes of Virology will be established. Laboratory capacity under the National Centre for Disease Control, the Indian Council of Medical Research and national research institutions will be strengthened. Fifteen bio-safety level III labs will augment the capacity for infectious disease control and bio-security.

Many non-COVID-19 patients were denied treatment during the pandemic, as hospitals were crowded. Critical care hospital blocks, with 50-100 beds, will be established in 602 districts, to enable care for those with serious infectious diseases without disrupting other services. In non-pandemic situations, this capacity will be utilised for providing critical care for other disease conditions. For enhancing the level of disaster response readiness, 15 health emergency operation centres and two container-based mobile hospitals will be created.

## Training public health professionals

There is a need to train and deploy a larger and better skilled health workforce. Upgraded district hospitals offer the best opportunity for creating new training centres. Public health expertise will be needed for programme design, delivery, implementation and monitoring in many sectors that impact health. We must scale up institutional capacity for training public health professionals.

To provide a continuum of care at different levels, HWCs will be linked with the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, for all entitled beneficiaries. The hub-and-spoke model of block, district, regional and national public health laboratories will enable effective microbial surveillance. Private sector participation in service delivery may be invited by States, as per need and availability.

ABHIM, if financed and implemented efficiently, can strengthen India's health system by augmenting capacity in several areas and creating a framework for coordinated functioning at district, state and national levels. It can enable data-driven decentralised decision-making and people-partnered primary care at the block level while strengthening national connectivity for delivering universal healthcare. Many independently functioning programmes will have to work with a common purpose by leaping across boundaries of separate budget lines and reporting structures. That calls for a change of bureaucratic mindsets and a cultural shift in Centre-State relations. Perhaps the platforms for active citizen engagement can catalyse both.

*K. Srinath Reddy, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is President, Public Health Foundation of India. Views are personal*

# Centre releases final tranche of GST recompense loans

₹1.59 lakh crore transferred as 'back-to-back' loans to the States for the year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

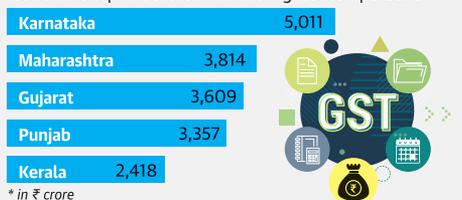
The Union Government released ₹44,000 crore to the States and the Union Territories on Thursday as back-to-back loans in lieu of their GST compensation dues, thus completing the transfer of an estimated compensation shortfall of ₹1.59 lakh crore through this mechanism this financial year.

The early disbursal of GST compensation dues this year, with five months still remaining in the financial year, will help the States manage their finances better than in 2020-21 when ₹1.1 lakh crore was transferred to them in smaller instalments till the latter half of the year. This year's estimated GST compensation shortfall has been released in three tranches – ₹75,000 crore on July 15, ₹40,000 crore on October 7 and the latest payout of ₹44,000 crore.

The Finance Ministry said

## Back to the States

Karnataka received the highest amount of ₹5,011 crore in lieu of GST compensation among all eligible States/UTs. A look at the top five States with the highest compensation:



the ₹1.59 lakh crore would be over and above the compensation in excess of ₹1 lakh crore, estimated to be released to the States and the Union Territories during this financial year, based on actual cess collections. Those funds accruing as "normal GST compensation" are released every two months.

"The sum total of ₹2.59 lakh crore is expected to exceed the amount of GST compensation accruing in FY 2021-22," it added, indi-

cating this may make up for some of the compensation shortfall still pending for 2020-21.

### Expenditure planning

"It is expected that this release will help the States and Union Territories in planning their public expenditure among other things, for improving health infrastructure and taking up infrastructure projects," the Ministry said, emphasising that the release of funds was

"frontloaded" as States have a very important role to play in effectively managing the COVID-19 pandemic and stepping up capital expenditure.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said the early release of the GST compensation loans will help States avoid a bunching up of spending plans towards the end of the year and should help to compress the size of the State Development loan auctions in the immediate term leading to a modest cooling of bond yields.

"One-third of the loan amount has been provided to just four States, namely Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab. This highlights the looming structural shock faced by those states with a high dependence on GST compensation, after the original transition and compensation period of five years ends," Ms. Nayar said.

## China's hypersonic test close to Sputnik moment: U.S. General

Gen. Milley calls it 'a very significant technological event'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

The Pentagon's top general said on Wednesday that China's recent test of an earth-circling hypersonic missile was akin to the Soviet Union's stunning launch of the world's first satellite Sputnik in 1957, which sparked off the superpowers' space race.

Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed for the first time the Chinese test of a nuclear-capable missile that would be very difficult to defend against.

"What we saw was a very

significant event of a test of a hypersonic weapon system. And it is very concerning," Gen. Milley told Bloomberg TV.

"I don't know if it's quite a Sputnik moment but I think it's very close to that," he said. "It's a very significant technological event that occurred... and it has all of our attention."

The Pentagon had previously declined to confirm the test, first reported by the *Financial Times* on October 16. The newspaper said the August test launch caught the U.S. by surprise.

The missile circled the

Earth at a low altitude and a velocity of more than five times the speed of sound, although it missed its target by more than 30 km, according to the *Financial Times*.

China denied the report, saying it was a routine test of a reusable space vehicle.

Hypersonic systems are the new frontier because they fly lower and so are harder to detect, can reach targets more quickly, and are maneuverable.

The U.S., Russia, China and North Korea have all tested hypersonics, and several others are developing the technology.

# Facebook changes parent company name to 'Meta'

Time to build next chapter: Zuckerberg

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
SAN FRANCISCO

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday announced that the parent company's name is being changed to "Meta" to represent a future beyond just its troubled social network.

The new handle comes as the social media giant tries to fend off one its worst crises yet and pivot to its ambitions for the "metaverse" virtual reality version of the Internet that the tech giant sees as the future.

Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp will keep their names under the rebranding.

"We've learned a lot from struggling with social issues and living under closed platforms, and now it is time to take everything that we've learned and help build the

next chapter," Mr. Zuckerberg said during an annual developers conference.

"I am proud to announce that starting today, our company is now Meta. Our mission remains the same, still about bringing people together, our apps and their brands, they're not changing," he added.

Facebook critics pounced last week on a report that leaked the rebranding plans, arguing that the company was aiming to distract from recent scandals and controversy. An activist group calling itself The Real Facebook Oversight Board has warned that major industries like oil and tobacco had rebranded to "deflect attention" from their problems. The "real issue" was the need for oversight and regulation, the group said.

# New Hong Kong law to censor old movies for security breaches

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong passed a toughened film censorship law on Wednesday empowering authorities to ban past films for "national security" threats and impose stiffer penalties for any breaches in the latest blow to the city's artistic freedoms.

Authorities have embarked on a sweeping crackdown to root out Beijing's critics after pro-democracy protests convulsed the city two years ago.

A new China-imposed security law and an official campaign dubbed "Patriots rule Hong Kong" has since criminalised much dissent and strangled the democracy movement.

Films and documentaries have become one of many cultural areas authorities have sought to purge.

In June the city announced censors would check any future films for content that breached the security law.

But the law passed on

Wednesday by the city's legislature – a body now devoid of any opposition – allows scrutiny of any titles that had previously been given a green light.

It empowers Hong Kong's chief secretary to revoke the screening license of past and current films that are deemed "contrary to the interests of national security".

Maximum penalties for screening an unlicensed movie have been raised to up to three years in jail and a HK\$1 million (\$130,000) fine.

# Should the NDPS Act be amended?

PARLEY

Certain provisions could be changed to ensure a reformative approach towards addicts

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has proposed certain changes to some provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985. The recommendations have assumed importance in the backdrop of some high-profile drug cases including the recent arrest of Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan following a raid on a cruise ship by the Narcotics Control Bureau a few weeks ago. One of the recommendations of the Ministry is to decriminalise the possession of narcotic drugs in smaller quantities for personal purposes. Another suggestion is that persons using drugs in smaller quantities be treated as victims. In a conversation moderated by Marri Ramu, Mahesh Bhagwat and Mazhar Hussain look at the implications of the changes suggested to tackle the problem of drug abuse and the abuse of the law. Edited excerpts:

**First arrest and then investigate seems to be the principle for investigations under the NDPS Act. Is this justified?**

**Mahesh Bhagwat:** That is not correct. The procedure of seizing narcotic drugs is important first. Section 50 of the Act (conditions under which search of persons shall be conducted) needs to be followed scrupulously. When officials stumble upon a person carrying drugs during raids or a routine check, the drugs must be seized in front of a Gazetted Officer or a Magistrate.

In cases of sudden development, the suspect is taken to the nearby Magistrate or the latter is brought to the spot and then only drugs are seized. If this is not adhered to, the court acquits the accused persons. Only then the next stage of investigation commences.

**Is there not a possibility of persons in power misusing the NDPS Act since the onus is on the accused to prove their innocence?**

**MB:** I don't think so. You cannot manage all the people all the time. While tracking drug cases, investigators go from consumers to drug

suppliers. Since the seizure procedure is to be followed, there could be one Magistrate at the time of seizing drugs, another during further investigation and a different Magistrate at the time of trial. Moreover, governments can change.

**What are the challenges that the police face in enforcing the NDPS Act to take drug cases to their logical end?**

**MB:** The Act was brought in 1985. This is a stringent law where the death penalty can be prescribed for repeat offenders. Since drug peddling is an organised crime, it is challenging for the police to catch the persons involved from the point of source to the point of destination. Identifying drugs that are being transported is a challenge since we cannot stop each and every vehicle that plies on Indian roads. Most drug bust cases are made possible with specific information leads. In one instance, it was found that a ganja peddler had a secret chamber fabricated inside a lorry. We caught it only because we had specific inputs from a network of informants. Unless we check every vehicle with specially trained sniffer dogs, it is difficult to check narcotic drugs transportation. The main challenge is to catch those producing these substances.

Going beyond State jurisdiction, finding the source of narcotic substances and destroying them is another big challenge. Catching the accused cultivating ganja in areas bordering the States too is turning out to be a herculean task. It gets tougher when ganja is cultivated in areas that are Maoist hideouts.

Securing conviction for the accused in drug cases is yet another arduous task. There are frequent delays in court procedures. Sometimes, cases do not come up for trial even after two years of having registered them. By then, the accused are out on bail and do not turn up for trial. Bringing them back from their States to trial is quite difficult let alone getting them convicted.

**Mazher Hussain:** No doubt the NDPS Act is stringent, but we need to make a distinction between the



U. M. BHASKAR

drug peddler and the end user. The person using it in smaller quantities for personal use cannot be bracketed with the person producing narcotic drugs. We need to make a clear distinction between a drug supplier and an end user. A drug user needs to be seen as a patient. The Act as of now prescribes jail for everyone – the end user and the drug supplier.

**How do you see the Ministry's proposal to refer persons possessing drugs in smaller quantities to government-run rehabilitation centres instead of awarding them jail terms and imposing fines?**

**MB:** The proposal to send persons to rehabilitation centres is good on paper but do we have the infrastructure to ensure that it is properly implemented? The answer is 'no'. We don't have adequate de-addiction centre counsellors. We face an acute shortage of psychiatrists and counsellors. How many rehabilitation centres are there vis-à-vis the volume of persons involved in drug cases? I suggest that the States be consulted. Policing is a State subject. It is not in the Concurrent list. So, instead of suggesting proposals to change sections of the law for the entire country, I think it would be advisable to introduce this on a pilot basis in one State that faces an acute drug-related problem.

The government could also study some of the best practices in the world. In Iceland, for example, a community-led approach has worked wonders. Iceland witnessed

**A drug user needs to be seen as a patient. The Act as of now prescribes jail for everyone – the end user and the drug supplier.**

MAZHER HUSSAIN

acute drug abuse among its children and the youth. The government decided to tackle the issue right from the school level. From introducing aptitude tests which revealed the inclinations of students to persuading parents to keep liquor and cigarettes out of reach of the youth, the country took various measures to tackle the problem and weaned away 70-80% of its young population from drugs. It also helped drastically reduce the usage of drugs.

**MB:** We need to thoroughly examine why and how people are getting addicted to narcotic drugs. There is a growing hopelessness in society due to various factors. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has aggravated anxieties among the youth. We need to redefine and redesign the law so as to tackle what acts as a trigger. An aspect of the Act which is least discussed is a national fund for rehabilitation. We need to allocate more money for the fund, help transform drug addicts and make the job of policing easier.

**In the U.S., some States have started permitting the usage of narcotic drugs like marijuana in smaller quantities. Do you think the legalisation of drugs usage is the right step?**

**MB:** We cannot think of legalisation of drugs usage in isolation. We need to think of the harmful effects first. There are connected issues like absenteeism in schools, loss of jobs, income, depression and suicide. The crime rate could go up, throwing up yet another new challenge for the police.

**MB:** Legalisation of drugs usage will only compound the problem. It could lead to proliferation of drugs. It is dangerous. More and more people may start using them. At the same time, the solution is to decriminalise usage of drugs. If a person is caught for the first time in a drugs case, be it for possession or usage, they should be sent to a rehabilitation centre. There should be scope for reformation of such persons. Not anybody and everybody connected to drugs cases should be sent to prison. Only repeat offenders should be sent to prison.

**There are many street children who use whiteners, glue, painting chemicals, etc. There is no focus on such children becoming victims of substance use.**

**MB:** There are three types of drugs – party drugs, prescription drugs and others, namely inhalants (also known as synthetic drugs). Some people even apply Zandu Balm on bread slices and eat them. We found people using cough syrups to get a high. Street children and labourers cannot afford to buy costly narcotic drugs like cocaine and so, they go after cheaper options like glue.

With computers replacing typewriters almost completely, it is anybody's guess how many are using whiteners. While the police have to focus on this, persons selling chemicals or whiteners are equally responsible. During my visit to the U.S., I went to a shop to buy a bullet-proof jacket; the vendor refused to sell to me. As I was leaving, the shop owner noted details of the vehicle in which I was travelling. The question is do we have such responsible traders here.

**MB:** After noticing that many street children are getting addicted to whiteners, COVA filed a PIL petition in a High Court more than a decade ago. The High Court passed a direction instructing the government to en-

sure that whiteners are not sold to children below 18 years of age. It is for the police and others concerned to implement the court order and keep a tab on persons selling such chemicals.

**Decriminalisation apart, what other steps can be taken to check the drug menace in the country?**

**MB:** There are three crucial factors we need to adopt to end the drug menace. While bringing up their wards, parents must be able to talk to their children and assure them of all support should they face a problem. Parents have to act as confidants first. Mutual trust should be so strong that wards come to them at the first sign of trouble. Sometimes, it could be a friend inducing them to take drugs once – once caught, they get trapped in a vicious cycle. So, our approach to tackling the problem should begin from home. Our experience shows that cigarette is an entry point for the young. To graduate from cigarette to drugs is not difficult if there is access to the drug. Watching a parent smoke, the child thinks it's a cool act to emulate. From here, children go to the next level of taking out tobacco from a cigarette and filling it with weed to get a high.

Second, teachers should keep an eye on school surroundings to ascertain whether anyone is selling hookah pipes or ganja papers. Checking drugs usage is not the job of only the police. The police cannot enter every house and physically check if youngsters are using drugs. Everyone should have a proactive role.

Civil society support is equally important. If everyone joins hands, wiping out drugs usage is not an issue at all.

**MB:** We should examine the root cause of the problem. Why are people taking drugs? One has to ascertain why different sections of the society, be it street children or youngsters from rich families, are getting addicted to drugs.

Relying only on law-enforcing agencies, however hard they are at work to address the problem, is not going to solve it. Civil society and governments will have to work together to create an enabling environment to address the issue.



**Mahesh Bhagwat** is Police Commissioner Rachakonda, Telangana



**Mazher Hussain** is Executive Director of Confederation of Voluntary Associations, a national network of voluntary organisations

# India will stress 'climate justice' at global summit, says Minister

Will push developed nations to transfer technology at COP26: Bhupender Yadav

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

India will emphasise climate justice and exhort developed countries to transfer the finance and technology necessary to deal with the fallout of global warming, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav told *The Hindu* on the eve of his departure to Glasgow to participate in the 26th edition of the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP).

"In the forthcoming COP, the assistance that developing countries such as India need for mitigating carbon emissions, adapting to a warming world, and insisting on a firm, transparent framework that lays out how this can be met, will be the points of discussion," Mr. Yadav said in an interview on Thursday.

Mr. Yadav said the world had publicly acknowledged India's commitment to install 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030 as "ambitious". There was also similar acknowledgement of India's electric vehicle policy,



its commitment to increase forest cover as well as the national hydrogen policy, he said. These steps by India, which were in line with achieving the target of the 2015 Paris Agreement, would be raised at the conference, the Minister added.

The COP26 is expected to be fractious with many developed countries, led by the United States, likely to push for a deadline by which all countries agree to cease net carbon dioxide emissions. India is among the major emitters, the third largest in the world, not to have indicated any deadline or even a tentative pathway towards

such a "net zero" goal. China and the United States, the other two major polluters have indicated 2060 and 2050 as potential deadlines for capping net emissions.

India has on several fora resisted being forced to commit to such a deadline on the grounds that it violates agreed-upon principles of climate justice that require countries to have "differential responsibilities" to addressing the climate crisis. Reiterating this, Mr. Yadav, however, told *The Hindu* in response to a query that "all options were open".

INTERVIEW ► PAGE 12

# National security cannot be the bugbear, says court

'State cannot expect the judiciary to be a mute spectator'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The state cannot keep a secret from the court merely on the bogey of "national security" and expect the judiciary to remain a "mute spectator", the Supreme Court drew the line for the Government on Wednesday.

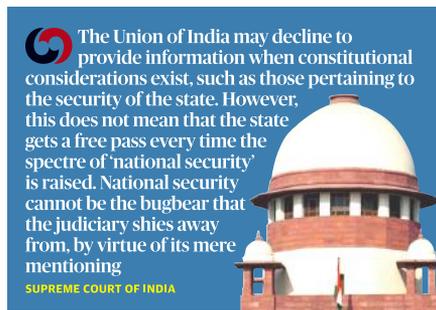
The claim has to be backed by evidence to prove that the disclosure of the information sought by the court would affect national security concerns.

## Court response

In its order, a Bench led by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana was responding to submissions made by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, in the Pegasus snooping case. Mr. Mehta had refused the court's repeated advice to file a detailed affidavit responding to the snooping allegations, blankly stating that "the disclosure of certain facts might affect the national security and defence of the nation".

Mr. Mehta's reluctance had seen the Bench ask itself the question whether the Union of India could actually decline information to the Supreme Court.

"Of course, the Union of India may decline to provide information when constitu-



tional considerations exist, such as those pertaining to the security of the state. However, this does not mean that the state gets a free pass every time the spectre of 'national security' is raised. National security cannot be the bugbear that the judiciary shies away from, by virtue of its mere mentioning," the court clarified.

## Limited review

The court accepted that judicial review in national security matters was limited. The judiciary had been circumspect while dealing with matters of national security. However, the court's delicacy did not licence the Government to call for an "omnibus prohibition" against judicial review.

"The Union of India must

necessarily plead and prove the facts which indicate that the information sought must be kept secret as their divulgence would affect national security concerns. They must justify the stand that they take before a court. The mere invocation of national security by the state does not render the court a mute spectator," the Supreme Court emphasised.

In the Pegasus order, the court reminded the Government that the petitioners do not contend that the state should not resort to surveillance/collection of data in matters of national security.

"The complaint of the petitioners is about the misuse or likely misuse of spyware in violation of the right to privacy of citizens," the court pointed out.

## Pegasus before the security cart

The Court's acknowledgement that the allegations of snooping have some weight go a long way

RAMESH KALPATHY VAIDYANATHAN  
& SUYASH SARVANKAR

The Supreme Court's recent record on civil liberties has not been inspiring, especially where the cryptic phrase 'national security' is uttered. The rationale has been that the government is best placed to assess the impact on national security as it is the one overseeing all intelligence agencies and enforcement efforts. Hence, courts must allow considerable deference rather than coerce the government into sharing details that may compromise national security. Any critique of the court's rationale for deferring to national security is hampered by the recent judgments marked by what they omit rather than what they state: the reasons. Hence, the Court's order on October 27 forming a committee to probe the use of military grade spyware in India on Indian citizens was refreshing.

It is telling that the order begins with a quote from George Orwell's 1984. The allegations against the government were indeed Orwellian: at considerable expense, the government infringed the right to privacy of several leading journalists and politicians by deploying spyware on their phones to monitor all communications. There are even graver allegations that Pegasus was used to implant false documents and evidences on the devices of persons under surveillance. The government supposedly did so through a software named Pegasus whose developer, the NSO Group, purportedly sells it only to certain undisclosed governments and the end user of its products are "exclusively government intelligence and law enforcement agencies".

## No filing of an affidavit

The Constitution mandates that any restriction on the right to privacy must be through a valid law, be necessary to meet a legitimate purpose and be proportionate, i.e., there is a proper balance to be achieved between that purpose and the harm caused by limiting the right. It is likely that the snooping, if any, through Pegasus may not be sanctioned by any law to begin with, else the government would have filed an affida-

vit to that effect as nudged by the apex court. Instead, the government has repeatedly relied on a Minister's statement in Parliament denying the snooping allegations. Representations made in Parliament are generally protected by parliamentary privilege and consequences for false or misleading statements are rare. This is unlike an affidavit in court proceedings where such communication is punishable with imprisonment.

The Supreme Court observed that there is a broad consensus between the government and the aggrieved petitioners that unauthorised surveillance/accessing of stored data from the devices of citizens for reasons other than nation's security would be illegal, objectionable and a matter of concern. The only question that remained was whether such unauthorised surveillance and access of data had taken place in this case. To the surprise of no one, in the face of evidence of snooping produced by the writ petitioners themselves, the government resorted to ritualistic invocation of 'national security' to avoid providing answers in affidavit.

Thankfully, the Supreme Court did not buy these omnibus assertions to desist from interference. It said national security cannot be the bugbear that the judiciary shies away from, by virtue of its mere mentioning. Rightly, the Court observed that in a democracy governed by the rule of law, indiscriminate spying on individuals cannot be allowed except with sufficient statutory safeguards grounded in legality, necessity and proportionality. Hence, where the government refuses to divulge the information sought, it is incumbent on the government to not only specifically plead the constitutional concern or statutory immunity but also justify the same in Court on affidavit.

The Court's acknowledgement that the allegations of snooping have some weight go a long way. Yet, the Committee's conduct in investigating these allegations must go further. The investigation must be swift and its finding must be made public.

Ramesh Kalpathy Vaidyanathan is Managing Partner & Suyash Sarvankar is Associate, Advaya Legal

# 'Pegasus sold only to governments'

Israel envoy won't say if India bought it

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

Accusing Iran of 'destabilising' the West Asian region, the Israeli Ambassador to India said the newly announced India-Israel-UAE-U.S. quadrilateral was an outcome of the "Abraham Accords" that saw Israel and the UAE establish diplomatic ties, which were the result of "common concerns" about Iran's role in the region.

Ambassador Naor Gilon told the media here that during his visit to Israel, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had also put forward India's interests in Iran, as a neighbour and a country that facilitates Indian connectivity to Central Asia and Afghanistan, but that all four countries shared 'similar' evaluation of events.

A day after the Supreme Court asked an expert committee to enquire into allegations of hacking using an Israeli software Pegasus, the Ambassador also emphasised that the software could only have been sold to a Government, but wouldn't comment on which Government or whether the Indian Government has contacted the Embassy or the Israeli Government to enquire into the sale of the software.

"The Abraham Accords have a huge potential for Israel and the region, and in a way, I believe Iran has a lot to do with this, with the fear and the sentiment in the region about its role," Mr. Gi-



Naor Gilon

lon said to a specific question about the road map ahead of the new quadrilateral arrangement.

"We are very much aware that India has its own interests on Afghanistan and Iran. They were put forward by [EAM Jaishankar]," Mr. Gilon said. "I think in discussions between countries, each country has its own interest and then you see how it all settles down in time. Israel was very clear about Iran, and [India] spoke about India's interests... As I said before, many of the evaluations, of what's happening are similar," he stressed.

## **Military issues**

'Mr. Gilon, however, denied that there were any discussions about military issues during the hybrid conference between Mr. Jaishankar, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the Foreign Ministers of Israel and the UAE held on October 18, and that the quadrilateral cooperation was 'positive' and not aimed at any country.

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 <sup>th</sup> century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
<b>General Studies Paper IV</b>	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.