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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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'Democracy doesn't happen by accident'

At Democracy Summit, U.S. President asks for concrete commitments from participant countries

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Joe Biden kicked off Day One of his Summit for Democracy, calling on countries to make "concrete commitments" to reaffirm their democratic values. Over 100 countries have been invited, as well as civil society actors, members of various parliaments and the private sector.

"Democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to renew it with each generation," Mr. Biden, sitting beside his Secretary of State Antony Blinken, told over 50 world leaders who could be seen on a large screen.

"We have to stand for justice and the rule of law for free speech, free assembly, a free press, freedom of religion, for all the inherent human rights of every individual," the President said.

"The purpose of the gathering was not to assert that any of the participant countries were perfect democracies, Mr. Biden said, but "to lock arms and reaffirm our shared commitment to make our democracy better" and to share ideas and make "concrete commitments" on combating authoritarianism, fighting corruption and promoting human rights - the three themes of the summit.



New initiative: U.S. President Joe Biden, left, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaking from the White House during the opening of the Democracy Summit on Thursday. *AP*

Mr. Biden said he was launching the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, which, along with the U.S. Congress would commit \$224 million toward various democracy related projects including transparency, fair elections and free and independent media.

(A White House factsheet released on Thursday said the initiative would involve \$424.2 million. The White House clarified for *The Hindu* that this was the correct amount).

Calling a free and independent press the "backbone of democracy", Mr. Biden said he was launching a multilateral effort to enhance independent media. He also described a recently announced defence fund by the United States

Agency for International Development (USAID) to protect journalists from "nuisance lawsuits designed to prevent them from doing their work and vital work around the world."

While the Summit is likely to see commitments, in addition to the launch of initiatives, plans to make these commitments binding appear not to be on the cards. Following the Summit, there would be "a year of consultation, coordination and delivery" a senior administration official told reporters on Monday.

Last week U.S. officials had told reporters that there would be a "written, non-binding code of conduct" on human rights parameters for the export of technologies that could be used for

repression.

Additionally, this week, the U.S. released a strategy on countering corruption.

There is a second summit planned for a year from now, where countries are expected to discuss progress on their commitments. However, the monitoring mechanism seems to rely on civil society actors holding governments "accountable, rather than there being any binding mechanism that emerges from the discussions.

"And our hope is that through the entirety of this process, we can really have a dialogue between participating governments and civil society, and that civil society will hold all of us accountable," one official said during Monday's briefing call.

Another official said that coalitions like the Open Government Partnership (India is not a member) or the Universal Periodic Review (a periodic review of human rights records of UN member states) could be leveraged for monitoring.

"...We do intend to host this summit with humility," one official said. "We see ourselves as a democracy not with all of the answers, but with openness and transparency about our efforts to overcome challenges at home..."

Earlier this week, the White House released another "fact sheet" saying the Biden administration is strengthening democracy at home, with details of its work on the infrastructure bill, Build Back Better (not yet passed), voting rights, strengthening unions and other themes Mr. Biden also mentioned during his Thursday launch speech.

Thursday's agenda included two plenary sessions, one hosted by Mr. Biden and the second, by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Pre-recorded interventions by world leaders have been scheduled for Thursday and Friday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention scheduled for Friday.

EXPLAINER

The 'diplomatic' Olympic boycott

Why has the U.S. announced a 'diplomatic boycott' of the Beijing Winter Olympics? What has been China's response?

ANANTH KRISHNAN

THE GIST

■ On December 6, the U.S. Government said it will not send any official representation to the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing announcing what is being called a "diplomatic boycott" of the games. This means that while U.S. athletes will participate in the games, no U.S. official will be present at the Winter Olympics in Beijing.

■ White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the decision was taken because these games, she argued, could not be treated as such because of China's "human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang".

■ Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have also announced that their officials will not be present at the games. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, has said he will travel to Beijing for the opening of the Winter Olympics. China has also been garnering support from countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The story so far: On December 6, the U.S. Government said it will not send any official representation to the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, due to start on February 4, 2022, announcing what is being called a "diplomatic boycott" of the games. The decision elicited a strong response from China, which slammed the move as a "political stunt" and said the Olympics "were not a stage for political posturing and manipulation". The spat over the Winter Olympics is the latest clash between the U.S. and China, adding to a long list of differences on trade, Taiwan, human rights and the South China Sea.

What does a 'diplomatic boycott' of the games mean?
A "diplomatic boycott" means no U.S. official will be present at the Winter Olympics in Beijing. This stops short of a complete boycott, which would have meant the non-participation of U.S. athletes. As such, the absence of official representation will not

A "diplomatic boycott" means no U.S. official will be present at the Winter Olympics in Beijing.

impact the games as much as an athletic boycott would have. Chinese officials, meanwhile, pointed out that they had not invited any U.S. official to attend the opening, saying their "political agenda was doomed to fail".

What led to the U.S. boycott?
White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the decision was taken because "U.S. diplomatic or official representation would

treat these games as business as usual". These games, she argued, could not be treated as such because of China's "human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang". This isn't the first U.S. move aimed to highlight Chinese actions in Xinjiang. In March, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned two Chinese Government officials "in connection with serious human rights abuses against ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region", where hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, a Muslim minority, have been sent by Chinese authorities to "re-education" camps, a network of which were constructed beginning in 2016 to house thousands of detainees. Beijing initially denied the existence of the camps, but subsequently claimed the centres were for "vocational training". Amid a growing outcry from the U.S. and the EU which also announced sanctions, authorities said last year that most of those in the camps had "graduated". This week, Beijing described U.S. allegations of "genocide" in Xinjiang as "the biggest lie of the century".

Who else is 'diplomatically boycotting' the games?
So far, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have also announced that their officials will not be present at the games. None, however, has said their athletes will not attend, which means the games themselves are unlikely to be impacted. It remains to be seen if the boycott will gain traction beyond U.S. allies and partners. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, has said he will travel to Beijing for the opening of the Winter Olympics, while China has been garnering support from countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. A declaration following the



Gearing up: A woman flies a ribbon near the logos of the Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games in a park in Beijing, China on December 8, 2021. *AP*

November 30 China-Africa foreign ministers' summit, attended by foreign ministers of China and 53 African countries, said it backed the games and "opposed the politicisation of sports". Last month, the Russia-India-China (RIC) foreign ministers in New Delhi also voiced support for the games in the statement issued after the meeting.

How is China reacting to the boycott?
On the one hand, Beijing has sought to play down the impact saying the concerned countries were not invited, while on the other, its Foreign Ministry threatened "countermeasures", as yet unspecified. China's media, meanwhile, has been largely playing down the reports of the boycotts, underlining how the authorities are going all-out to ensure the games are conducted without a hitch. Beyond the statements decrying "politicisation" of sports, there is certainly a domestic political undercurrent to the games, which are meant to showcase, as with the Beijing Olympics in 2008, China's

strength and re-emergence to a domestic audience, as well as enhance the reputation of the Communist Party and President Xi Jinping at home.

What will be the impact on U.S.-China relations?
In a virtual summit last month, the U.S. and Chinese Presidents committed to "responsibly" manage their growing competition amid increasing conflicts. At the summit, President Joe Biden called for "common sense guardrails to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict," while Mr. Xi emphasised the "need to treat each other as equals" and warned against "drawing ideological lines", calling on the U.S. "to meet its word of not seeking a 'new Cold War'".

The exchange over the Winter Olympics, however, is yet another reminder of the challenge both sides face in doing so, as a clash over ideology and political systems adds to an already long list of differences.

Modi lauds U.S. for summit; Imran to give it a miss

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi "commended" the U.S. for holding a summit for democracies that was inaugurated by U.S. President Biden on Thursday, even as Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has decided to skip it, making India one of only three South Asian nations attending the two-day event.

"PM Modi said the democratic spirit, including res-

pect for rule of law and pluralistic ethos, is ingrained in Indians," MEA sources said.

"The PM had spoken about the need for democracy in global governance and for technology companies to "contribute to preserving open and democratic societies," they added.

Mr. Modi is due to make his "national statement" on Friday where all leaders are expected to make specific commitments on promoting

democracy, on the lines of the climate change summit, officials aware of the agenda said.

"Certainly India is going to be playing a prominent role. We would encourage those who weren't [invited] to work on commitments to democracy," U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jennifer Larson said.

While India, Pakistan, Nepal and the Maldives were invited to the summit, Afghan-

istan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka were not among about 100 countries on the list.

When asked, Jennifer Larson admitted that limits on the number of invitees on the list had been "arbitrarily placed".

She expressed hope that other democratic countries in the region would be invited to the next summit.

Pakistan's decision not to attend comes on the back of

severe criticism of the summit plans from China, which has not been invited, along with Russia, presumably as they are Communist single-party states.

"We remain in contact with the U.S. on a range of issues and believe that we can engage on this subject at an opportune time in the future," the Pakistan MFA said on Thursday, but did not give a specific reason for missing the summit.

LETTER & SPIRIT

The Citizenship question in the Constituent Assembly

ABHILASH M.R.

'Letter and Spirit' as a new column will focus on explaining and understanding basic Acts and Articles enshrined in our Constitution. These columns will put into context different aspects of the Acts be it historical, legal, political etc. Today's column discusses the Constituent Assembly debates around Citizenship.

With the contentious farm laws repealed, the discussions turn to the second most politically and legally resisted legislation of recent times, The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. The vignettes of the citizenship question find its retro-reflection in the Constituent Assembly debates which serve as the undeniable autobiography of India's basic law.

The citizenship question had been one of the most gruelling tasks confronted by the drafting committee as admitted by Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who moved a set of consolidated amendments to the citizenship provisions of the original draft. He said that the task had given the drafting committee "such a headache" and multiple "drafts were prepared" and "destroyed" before arriving at a consensus, which may satisfy "most people, if not all."

The critics

The prognosis of Dr. Ambedkar that the draft may not satisfy all came true as the secular and liberal provisions of the proposed draft and the official amendments were fiercely contested on the floor of the Constituent Assembly on religious, ethnic and hyper-nationalistic considerations. While Article 5 of the draft constitution (Article 5 of the Constitution of India) was criticised for its lack of exclusive and preferential provisions on religious lines regarding the declaration as to who shall be the



commencement of the Constitution), Article 5A of the draft (Article 7 of the Constitution of India), was excoriated on the ground that its proviso sought to grant citizenship rights to the migrants of Pakistan who had returned to India under a permit for resettlement granted by Indian authorities.

Dr P.S. Deshmukh from the Central Provinces and Berar proposed changes to Article 5 of the draft by proposing to replace the universally honoured "jus soli" principle by qualifying it with a religious appendage that "every person who is a Hindu or a Sikh by religion and is not a citizen of any other State, wherever he resides shall be entitled to be a citizen of India." In the process, the additional "domicile requirement" as conceived by Article 5 along with the "jus soli" principle was consigned to oblivion.

As the "jus soli" principle is premised on the automatic grant of citizenship based on the place of birth provided the person is domiciled in India, qualifying it with religious identity, was in fact a ploy to ingrain religion into the bedrock of the Constitution. The concern of Dr. Deshmukh justifying the exclusion of people belonging to other religions, as

that we should throw open our citizenship so indiscriminately?", found fraternal support in Thakur Das Bhargava from East Punjab who exclaimed "Hindus and Sikhs have no other home but India". These views were also supported by Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena of the United Provinces.

The assertion of Dr. Deshmukh that "by the mere fact that he is a Hindu or a Sikh, he should get Indian citizenship because it is this one circumstance that makes him disliked by others" finds its resonance today in the presumptive base of the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act that only people belonging to some faiths are victims of persecution and violence and the doors of the country can be legitimately shut to any other instance of persecution and ethnic violence.

Dr. Deshmukh found a steadfast ally in Jaspal Roy Kapoor of the United Provinces who expressed his strong opposition to the grant of citizenship rights to the returnees by stating that "once a person has migrated to Pakistan and transferred his loyalty from India to Pakistan, his migration is complete. He has definitely made up his mind at that time to kick this country and let it go to its own fate, and he went away to the newly created Pakistan, where he would put in his best efforts to make it a free, progressive and prosperous state."

The defenders

The well-reasoned response to Jaspal Roy Kapoor by Brajeshwar Prasad, a member from Bihar, highlighting the fact of panic driven migration without certain intention to settle down in Pakistan was left unanswered with precision. R.K. Sidhva from C.P. and Berar retorted that mentioning the name of some communities will make other communities feel that they were being ignored.

defence of the draft definition and secularism was unequivocal as he observed that "we have only done something which every country does except a very few misguided and backward countries in the world. Let us not refer to that word in the sense that we have done something very mighty", indicating how some people consider themselves as being generous while advertising to the idea of a secular state. He did not mince words when he stated that "you cannot have rules for Hindus, for Muslims and for Christians only. It is absurd on the face of it". Nehru also impressed upon the possibility of the second wave of migration including non-Hindus and non-Sikhs who were part of the first wave influx. Hence, in his view, foreclosing the doors fearing the influx of some may deprive others of exercising their choice.

Brajeshwar Prasad went further in stating that "I see no reason why a Muslim who is a citizen of this country should be deprived of his citizenship at the commencement of this Constitution, especially when we are inviting Hindus who have come to India from Pakistan to become citizens of this country. People who have never been in India but have always lived in the Punjab and on the frontier have come and become citizens of this State; why cannot a Muhammadan of the frontier be so when we have always said that we are one?"

Mahboob Ali Baig went one step ahead by calling the proposition of Dr. Deshmukh as "ridiculous" as it contemplated giving citizenship rights only to persons who are Hindus and Sikhs. Mr. Baig sought to dissuade the Constituent Assembly from following in the footsteps of those countries which were being condemned everywhere.

Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar too spoke in support of the amendments proposed

was clear in his view that "we cannot on any racial or religious or other grounds make a distinction between one kind of persons and another, or one sect of persons and another sect of persons having regard to our commitments and the formulation of our policy on various occasions."

The denouement

Dr. Ambedkar's sagacious rejoinder settled the dust of left out concerns and rendered clarity to the intent of the draft as well as the consolidated amendment. He highlighted that the principal thrust of Article 5A was to declare that persons who migrated to Pakistan after 1st of March 1947 (Internal disturbances commenced on this date) shall not be Indian citizens and the proviso provides exception to the general law.

While not bothering to re-answer what had been negated by the deliberative wisdom of the Assembly, he declared that some migrants from Pakistan were allowed to return on the basis of the agreements between both the Governments and on the basis of an ordinance promulgated.

The amendment No. 164 proposed by Dr. Deshmukh modifying Article 5 to make citizenship as a matter of right to Hindus and Sikhs irrespective of the place of residence was rejected. Other amendments proposed by Dr. Deshmukh, Jaspal Roy Kapoor and Shibban Lal Saksena were withdrawn with the leave of the house as they were on the verge of being defeated, whereas the consolidated amendment moved by Dr. Ambedkar was adopted leading to the finalisation of the provisions in the Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly debates on citizenship showed that in the rousing sentiments of ethnicity and distrust, sagacity had an upper hand, leading to the saner denouement of toleration.

Children and schooling in the post-COVID-19 era

India will have to confront bitter facts if it wants to prepare a recovery plan of any credible and practical value



KRISHNA KUMAR

When someone in the family falls sick, all normal routines and arrangements are affected. And then, the deeper problems that lay hidden under the momentum of routine lie exposed and revealed. The same applies to an epidemic. The term currently used is 'pandemic' because it covers the whole world, but one cannot forget that even a universal illness manifests itself in regionally specific, local ways, exposing the problems to which societies had become accustomed. In our case, the pandemic has revealed the limits of our wherewithal to look after the collective needs of children during a calamity. A child in the family has a radically different status from that accorded to children as a collective entity in our country. The pandemic has revealed that society and state institutions prefer to ignore the conditions under which the family copes with the demands of childhood.

Peripheral concern

Children's education and health are two major domains in which welfare policies of the modern state are expected to support and enhance the family's role. In both these domains, the policy framework reflects a minimalist stance, both in terms of financial investment and institutional strength. In policies as well as in their execution, there is considerable diversity and disparity among the States. The overall picture suggests that childhood is of peripheral concern. Gains made in this context

have proved difficult to sustain.

The pandemic's deep effect

When the Right to Education (RTE) Act was promulgated over a decade ago, it seemed like a breakthrough. This perception was grounded in the structures and procedures created under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan during the decade preceding the RTE. These structures were not perfect, but they marked a new beginning in the direction of local autonomy and devolution of power. These fragile structures required nurturing on a long-term basis. Neglect and decay set in quite soon in regions where the system was weak to begin with, and then came COVID-19. Several recent surveys show that the pandemic has left the entire system ravaged. Even something as basic as a meal for the youngest age group ceased. Teaching switched wholesale to the online mode, leaving it to the family to cope with the demands hidden in this medium. A flat discourse pervaded the ethos, offering few choices or clues to enhance them.

India was unique in the fact that even the very youngest age group was covered by online teaching. With the reopening of schools, the outcomes of prolonged exposure to digital devices in confined spaces have started to be revealed and documented. The vast majority of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds could not access online teaching for reasons totally beyond their control. And among those who did have access to online lessons, rates of comprehension and progress were quite low.

Studies show that academic losses are compounded by emotional problems. A survey carried out by the Vipula Foundation has traced the kinds of stress children experienced at home. Exposure to



GETTY IMAGES

domestic violence, prolonged hours in front of TV, especially among boys, and addiction to digital sources of entertainment are among the various outcomes of COVID-19 confinement.

A recovery plan

Systemic recovery will undoubtedly prove arduous. The time required for recovery will depend on imagination and resources. A significant beginning has been made in Tamil Nadu. A committee chaired by Professor R. Ramanujam has been asked to prepare a three-year recovery plan and a new curriculum. A major problem this committee will need to address is the addictive effect of prolonged online teaching. Devices such as the smartphone induce small children into a seductive bond that may not be easy to shake off. Restoring children's innate desire to relate to the world physically and socially surrounding them will constitute a major step towards educational recovery. This will demand de-addiction from digital instruments.

The COVID experiment of exclusive dependence on digital machinery has resulted in a radical expansion of its market. It has also permitted digital activism to mutate into an ideological doctrine of progress. The Ramanujam committee may not find it easy to deal with this doctrine. Its believers

and new recruits must be persuaded to listen to child psychologists and teachers of young children. Their voices, feeble though they are at present, offer the best promise of healing our injured system.

It was not a strong and resilient system to begin with. Its key functionalities – the teachers – had little say in decisions and no autonomy to do their best. Distrust in the teacher cuts across the deep divisions that characterise the system. On one side of the divide are government schools of various types, with differential levels of funding but common norms of governance. On the other side are private schools ranging from shoestring budget schools to the well-endowed, elite institutions. What sustains this straggling order of institutional outfits is the grand national fantasy that even an inadequate system such as India's can generate a sufficient number of good doctors, judges, teachers, engineers, civil servants and so on.

Shifting of children

No description can capture the differential realities of experience that COVID-19 imposed on this vast range of institutions. Nor is there a comprehensive study to tell us how parents belonging to different socio-economic classes coped with their anxieties. We now know that financial constraints have forced a considerable proportion of children studying in private schools to shift to government schools. What this shift implies for the children and for the schools they will now attend needs more than speculation. Indeed, the shift itself remains a raw reality. In a recent webinar, Professor Shantha Sinha, former head of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, spoke about the astonishing demand faced by parents who wanted to transfer

their children from a private to a government school. As many private schools run entirely on the strength of the fees they collect, they had to close down during COVID-19. The digital record of children's enrolment maintained in some States continues to show their names in a private school. Seeking a transfer requires deletion from this record. Prof. Sinha said that many private schools in her region demand recovery of the COVID-19 period fee for granting deletion of the child's name. This is just one instance of the hundreds of bitter experiential facts we will need to gather from every part of the country in order to prepare a post-COVID-19 recovery plan of any credible and practical value.

Insightful report

For now, the best we can do is to browse through a new United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report titled "No Teacher, No Class" (<https://bit.ly/3IHJFKi>), and heed its sane recommendations. Prepared by a team of scholars at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, this report tells us that India is facing a shortfall of at least one million school teachers. The report makes several key recommendations. The first is: "Improve the terms of employment of teachers in both public and private schools." Some of the other recommendations are: value the professional autonomy of teachers, build career pathways, and, above all, recruit more teachers. If sound, research-based advice is what we need for rebuilding the system, it is available in this excellent report.

Krishna Kumar is a former Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). He is the author of 'Smaller Citizens'

Does the Omicron variant make a case for booster doses?

PARLEY

There is scarce evidence that boosters add value to the main purpose of the immunisation programme

If conversations around booster shots to tackle COVID-19 were loud earlier, the emergence of the new variant, Omicron, has ensured that the clamour for booster shots has reached a fever pitch. The Health Minister stressed that India's priority is to fully vaccinate all adults and not administer booster shots even though adequate vaccines are available. He also said that any decision on booster doses will be based solely on scientific recommendations. At a recent meeting, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation maintained that it was not recommending a booster dose for any section of the population, priority groups included, in the absence of evidence. In a conversation moderated by R. Prasad, Chandrakant Lahariya and Satyajit Rath discuss whether booster doses are required, and when and to whom they should first be given when there is enough evidence recommending their use. Edited excerpts:



Chandrakant Lahariya, physician-epidemiologist, is a public policy and health systems expert



Satyajit Rath, an immunologist, was formerly with the National Institute of Immunology



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

What is the primary objective of a booster dose – to prevent symptomatic infection or to prevent moderate or severe disease and death?

Satyajit Rath: First, let me raise what I suspect is going to be an elephant in the room during this entire discussion. Are we talking about the purpose of vaccination with outcomes at the community level or are we talking about the outcomes of vaccination in terms of protection at the individual level? This is going to remain a point during any discussion about booster shots. The evidence so far is that we are far more efficiently protected against severe illness, hospitalisation and death by being fully vaccinated than infection and transmission. The expectation from boosters is that they will proportionately increase protection against infection and transmission. However, the evidence that booster doses do this is fragmentary.

Chandrakant Lahariya: I would approach this in a different way. We know that boosters are being considered globally for a different set of populations. And when we think of the purpose of boosters, we have to go back to the purpose of the CO-

VID-19 immunisation programme. The purpose is to reduce hospitalisation, severe disease and death. Now, that purpose can be achieved through administering full vaccination. So, the booster dose does not have a separate purpose; it is intended to fulfil the overall objective of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. We really do not know whether giving booster shots adds any value to the primary purpose of the immunisation programme.

How much do we know about the effectiveness of Covishield and Covaxin in preventing symptomatic infection and severe disease? In the absence of many studies on vaccine effectiveness, what will be the basis on which a decision on booster doses will be taken?

CL: We know that there is evidence indicating that while the antibody level goes down over a period of time, protection against severe disease and hospitalisation remains unchanged. So, unless we change the purpose of the vaccination programme, which is to reduce symptomatic disease, the need for a booster shot is not going to be altered.

SR: In real-life effectiveness studies, while one can debate endlessly on just how much evidence is enough evidence, I don't have any difficulty in accepting that both Covaxin and Covishield provide a significant measure of protection against severe illness and death. We don't have reliable evidence about [protection against] infection and transmission and mild or asymptomatic disease. But none of that gives us evidence for how to decide about a booster dose. Because, if we are looking for protection against hospitalisation, we already have a vaccination campaign that in the first place is not complete, and where vaccines have been administered, we have every expectation that they are going to be effective. So I'm not certain of what the evidential or the tactical basis for discussing a booster dose inclusion in a vaccination campaign is.

India has administered over 1.26 billion doses, and the vaccination programme has



been going on for about 11 months. At this point, should we not have had several effectiveness studies looking at different aspects which should have helped us decide about booster doses?

SR: Certainly. But even if we had data about the effectiveness of two doses of Covishield or Covaxin in preventing hospitalisation and death, how does that tell us whether boosters will work or not? Even if it turns out that we don't have reasonable protection in real-life circumstances against hospitalisation and death with two doses of the vaccine, that doesn't automatically tell us that the booster is going to work.

CL: We need to remember that vaccine effectiveness remains unchanged over a period of time against hospitalisation and death. But the bigger point when deciding about a booster dose is: where is the cut-off for saying that this much protection is enough and this is what we want to achieve? Second, how do we decide what level of effective benefit or protection we want to achieve through the booster? Finally, do we have data for these vaccines [used in India] or different vaccines that giving a booster shot will result in improved protection? There is some data that a booster shot of the Pfizer vaccine produces improved protection. But we don't have that kind of data for other vaccines. So, all these studies should be done, analysed and interpreted in combination with other factors. Only then can a decision be made.

Does the emergence of the Omicron variant make it necessary to administer a booster dose?

SR: The emergence of the new variant makes the case for a global in-

The focus has to be on ensuring that everyone receives a primary schedule of vaccination. There is no additional value in administering a booster because of the Omicron variant.

CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

clusive primary vaccination campaign for COVID-19 even more compelling than it was. Does it separately make a specific case for a booster dose programme more compelling? I don't think so, for all the reasons discussed so far. You're going to have a little more transmission and hospitalisation, but protection against that [hospitalisation] is likely to be higher. For booster doses, evidence for protection is scarce. What Omicron does is make the case for primary global inclusive vaccination more compelling rather than specifically increasing the pressure to plan for boosters.

CL: We know that the ability of the available vaccines in reducing transmission is limited. We also know that based on available data, Omicron causes mostly mild disease. Currently licensed vaccines have a proven role in reducing severe disease, hospitalisation and death. So, there is definitely a clear disconnect that because of Omicron there would be any additional advantage in reducing any kind of illness. The focus has to be on ensuring that everyone receives a primary schedule of vaccination. There is no additional value in administering a booster because of the Omicron variant.

Who do you think should be the first to get booster doses – immunocompromised people, people older than 60 years, or those with comorbidities?

SR: We really don't have good evi-

dence. For example, there is evidence that booster doses increase antibody levels, but do they increase antibody levels in specifically immunocompromised individuals who have not responded well or have not responded for a long duration to the primary vaccine schedule? We don't know.

Of course, if we had achieved proper universal primary immunisation coverage and if vaccine supplies were available and approved, it would be nice to have boosters available for identified categories of particularly vulnerable people. But no conditionally – the supply conditionally, the primary vaccination campaign success conditionally, or the conditionality of evidence for boosters working in these categories of people are being fulfilled.

CL: The need for a booster can be assessed based on the pattern of breakthrough infections or which population group over a period of time is reporting more severe disease. These would also vary according to the type of vaccine used. So, we need more granular data on epidemiology, disease burden, and breakthrough infections before we identify age groups. This is also true for vaccine-specific data – protection, efficacy, effectiveness, and duration of protection.

Next, we need to know about the performance of booster doses. We need to know that the vaccines perform when booster doses are given to different sets of population. It is not necessary that the protection will be similar in each age group, but we need to know that. We need to know what the optimal timing after the second dose should be – six months, nine months or a year. And whether it should be a homologous or heterologous booster dose because the majority of countries are giving booster doses using either a different vaccine belonging to the same platform or vaccines from a different platform. We need to explore whether booster doses should be of the same amount of vaccine or a dose-sparing formulation.

Another key factor is the duration between the completion of the primary immunisation schedule and the planned booster dose. So, by that standard, if you look at the Indian example, of course health workers and front-line workers who received the vaccine long before anyone else might come in the cate-

gory of people who should receive a booster dose before other groups. Also, the elderly. But the elderly may require far more boosting.

I also want to bring the final and slightly related point which is relevant. There is an ongoing discussion and broader consensus that while booster doses require more thinking, an additional dose or third dose as part of the extended primary immunisation schedule for those adults of any age group who are immunocompromised or who could not develop the immune sufficient antibody after two shots of primary schedule should be considered.

Should the focus not be on primary vaccination of the global community, especially in Africa where only a very small percentage of people have been vaccinated? Should India not be focused on distributing vaccines globally than on administering booster doses especially when there is no evidence of benefit?

CL: There is enough evidence to say that primary immunisation prevents severe disease, hospitalisation and death. That should be the core focus no matter which part of the world people are living in. Ensuring vaccine availability in different parts of the world should be the priority of all countries. Of course, during a pandemic, countries would want to prioritise their own population first and then share vaccines. I believe that now India can assure primary immunisation for the adult population and it has more vaccines. So, India's priority should be to revive the Vaccine Maitri initiative in an accelerated and sustained manner. This becomes especially important as new variants are emerging most likely from settings where there is low vaccination coverage. Even if new variants are not emerging from such settings, their impact would be far worse in those settings. So, if the world wants to halt the pandemic, countries need to vaccinate their own populations but also share vaccines with the rest of the world before considering booster doses. And even when evidence on boosters emerges, there is far greater evidence on the benefit of primary immunisation and that points to the importance of sharing vaccines. India should definitely share its vaccines and now is the time.

Omicron shadow

RBI may need to act to ward off price pressures sooner rather than later

The RBI's latest monetary policy action, of maintaining *status quo* on benchmark interest rates, the policy stance, as well as the full-year GDP growth and inflation projections, stems largely from a wariness of the risks posed by the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus. Announcing the bimonthly policy, Governor Shaktikanta Das observed that 'headwinds from global developments' were the main risk to the domestic outlook, which was now "somewhat clouded by the Omicron variant of COVID-19". With the key drivers of demand in the economy – private investment and private consumption – still lacking meaningful momentum, the Monetary Policy Committee had opted to continue with its growth supportive 'accommodative' policy stance so as to enable a durable and broad-based recovery, he said. While it may sound churlish to question the MPC's stand, given that the ongoing recovery from last fiscal's record contraction is still yet to register an across-the-board expansion from pre-pandemic levels, the fact that one of the six members of the rate-setting panel has dissented on the policy stance for a third consecutive time, cannot be ignored. Positing in October that the 'upside risks to long-term inflation and to inflation expectations had become more aggravated', external member Jayanth Varma had at the time cautioned the committee against falling into "a pattern of policy making in slow motion" guided by an excessive desire to avoid surprises. And while his specific reasons for voting against the grain this week are not immediately available, that the MPC is for now prioritising growth over price stability is clear.

Governor Das, who acknowledged the criticality of taming inflation when he asserted "price stability remains the cardinal principle for monetary policy as it fosters growth and stability", however, seems to be sanguine about the outlook for retail prices. Contending that winter arrivals would help bring down vegetable prices, which had spiked in October contributing to a marginal quickening in headline CPI inflation that month, Mr. Das has banked on optimism in asserting that the 'slack in the economy' may limit the pass-through of cost-push pressures that have kept core retail inflation persistently high for 17 months. The RBI's November round of 'Inflation Expectations Survey of Households' shows that households expect inflation to accelerate in the near and medium term. The median inflation expectation of respondents polled in an extension survey earlier this month, in order to factor in both a possible Omicron impact and the softening in fuel prices in the wake of the cut in excise duty, projects the three-months ahead rate at 10.8% and the one-year ahead reading at 10.9%. And though the RBI has begun to slowly tighten the liquidity spigot it opened in the wake of the pandemic last year, a more robust response to ward off price pressures will become imperative sooner rather than later. For a delay risks undermining precisely what Mr. Das said was the RBI's motto at this juncture, ensuring "a soft landing that is well timed".

Imports made up 86% of gold supply in 2016-20, says WGC

Inbound shipments likely to be stronger in 2022: Council

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Imports made up 86% of India's gold supply between 2016-2020, and inbound shipments continue to grow despite high import duty, as per a report by the World Gold Council (WGC).

Since the first duty hike in 2012, India has imported some 6,581 tonnes of gold, averaging 730 tonnes per annum, as per WGC's 'Bullion Trade in India' report.

In 2020, India imported 377 tonnes of gold bars and dore from over 30 countries, of which 55% came from just two countries – Switzerland (44%) and the UAE (11%).

One important change that has taken place in In-



dia's gold market is the growth in gold dore imports. The increase reflects the government's accommodative stance towards gold refining, the report said.

In the last five years, gold dore imports made up 30% of the total official imports of the yellow metal.

Duty benefits led to a massive expansion of refining ca-

capacity in the country as the number of refineries grew from three in 2012 to 32 in 2020. With lower duty on gold dore, its share of gold imports has increased from 11% in 2014 to 29% in 2020.

"As the second largest global market, Indian gold demand is heavily dependent on bullion and dore imports. Looking at current market trends, we expect gold imports to be stronger in 2022, as compared to this year.

"Bullion industry has developed over the last three decades in India with a significant addition to organised refining capacity and an LBMA-accredited refinery," WGC regional CEO, India, Somasundaram P R said.

'India's retail inflation likely accelerated in Nov. to 5.1%'

Reuters Dec. 6-8 poll of 39 economists cites rising prices of vegetables, fruits

REUTERS
BENGALURU

India's retail inflation likely accelerated last month towards the upper limit of the RBI's target range as fruit and vegetable prices rose, a Reuters poll found.

The Reserve Bank of India left interest rates on hold on Wednesday but the central bank said price pressures may persist in the near-term.

The December 6-8 poll of 39 economists forecast November consumer price inflation at 5.1%, faster than October's 4.48%. If realised, it would be within the RBI's target band of 2-6% for a fifth consecutive month. The CPI data is due on December 13.



Feeling the pinch: Strong momentum in prices of perishables fanned inflation last month, says Singhal. • THULASI KAKKAT

"Last month's reduction in fuel taxes and a slightly favourable statistical base were offset by strong momentum in the prices of perishables," said Yuvika Singhal, economist at QuantEco

Research.

That was pushed further "because of untimely rains and the uptick in LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) and kerosene prices", she added.

Brent crude oil, India's

biggest import, slid more than 16% last month.

High inflation last year has kept this year's price gains subdued. But that is expected to wane as prices are set to rise for mobile phone bills and clothes, putting inflation back on a rising trend.

"The upcoming impact from the hike in telecom tariffs, volatility in the price of perishable goods and any plausible supply-chain disruptions from COVID's latest variant could negate the recent respite we had in fuel and global commodity prices," said Madhavi Arora, lead economist at Emkay Global Financial Services.



'Ken-Betwa project a boon for Bundelkhand'

It will increase agri output: Chouhan

ANUP DUTTA
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Thursday that the Ken-Betwa river link project will lead to prosperity for the drought-prone Bundelkhand region.



CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan

The Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and the Cabinet for approving the project.

The Centre on Wednesday cleared the funding and implementation of the project and sanctioned ₹39,317 crore for it.

Chhatarpur, Panna, Tikamgarh, Niwari, Damoh, Sagar, Datia, Shivpuri, Vidisha and Raisen districts of Madhya Pradesh would benefit upon completion of the river link, said an official.

In addition, 103 mega watt of hydropower and 27 mega watt of solar power will be

generated from the project, he said.

A tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed in the presence of the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Government of Uttar Pradesh and the Prime Minister to prepare the detailed DPR of the project.

Mr. Chouhan said the linking of rivers will increase agricultural production and lead to prosperity. A new dawn of development and progress will be ushered in Bundelkhand when the project takes shape.

IN THE LIMELIGHT

The OTT proliferation

The streaming wars just got much more interesting

GAUTAM SUNDER

THE GIST

■ There has been a significant rise in vernacular OTT platforms. These homegrown video apps have emerged to be relevant disruptors, thanks to the lack of regional content on international platforms.

■ Subscriptions (monthly or annual) are cheaper by 40 to 50 per cent in comparison to the global streamers, and some have made it easier for potential user bases in rural areas to use physical currency, top-up cards, or even mobile balance to sign up easily offline.

■ Some platforms like Amazon are merging with local OTTs in order to gain traffic for their own platforms. The platform recently launched its vertical, collaborating with eight other subscription-based OTT video brands such as Eros Now, Hoichoi and manoramaMAX at discounted rates.

Much has been written about the streaming wars between global giants in India over the past half-decade, but now the likes of Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, Disney+ Hotstar and others are less concerned about each other than they are about the new entrants into the game: vernacular OTT platforms.

From the Aha Arjun-backed Aha (Telugu) and SVP-owned Hoichoi (Bengali) to Neestream (Malayalam) and Planet Marathi (Marathi), these homegrown video apps have emerged to be relevant disruptors over the past two years, thanks to the lack of regional content on international platforms that focus mostly on English, Hindi and foreign-language titles.

This has been augmented by the fact that several senior citizens and members from the middle-aged demographic in India, who enjoy movies and shows in their native languages - as opposed to the more urban, millennial fandom of the *Stranger Things* and *Ted Lasso* variety - took to streaming actively during the pandemic. Not to mention, a massive consumer base of NRIs in other countries like the U.S., the U.K., Australia and West Asia who eagerly await more vernacular titles.

The rise in vernacular OTTs

According to the latest FICCI-EY report, the share of regional language consumption on OTT platforms will cross 50% by 2025, going past even Hindi at 45%.

Hyderabad-based Aha, for instance, has blitzed the market with successful hyper-local content since its launch in March 2020, and now has a user base of around 1.7 million. Their focus on original titles, as well as non-fiction shows (Telugu Idol is up next) has proven to be a hit, and the brand is set to now enter the Tamil market in January 2022. SunNXT remains the main player in Tamil Nadu, but has not made any originals yet, with prominence given to its TV channel shows

and Sun Pictures-produced films; the reason why Aha sees a way in the market, Oly Plus (Odia), Talkies (Tulu, Konkani, Kannada), Reel Drama (Assamese), Pitaara TV's Chaupal (Punjabi), Oho Gujarati and CityShort.TV (Gujarati) are just some of the vernacular brands that are grabbing

As per Ormax Media's findings, only 25 per cent of India now has access to OTT platforms. That number is set to burgeon in coming years, as India is currently the world's fastest growing OTT market.

valuable market share.

With some of these players already experienced in film production, the go-to strategy is to ensure original content is churned out as quickly as possible, with culturally driven storylines, relatable small-town themes, and the cast populated with upcoming local names or YouTube/TV stars who have been ignored by the larger players and who the audiences already identifies with.

A classic case in point is the success of acclaimed Malayalam drama, *The Great Indian Kitchen*, which was rejected by the bigger sites before finding a home on Neestream, which consequently put the platform on the map.

Easy access

Subscriptions (monthly or annual) are cheaper by 40% to 50% in comparison to the global streamers, and some of them, like Hoichoi, have made it easier for potential user bases in rural areas - (where the main mode of transaction is cash) - to use physical currency, top-up cards, or even mobile balance - to sign up easily offline.

As per Ormax Media's findings, only 25% of India now has access to OTT platforms. That number is set to rapidly rise in coming years, as India is currently the world's fastest-growing OTT

market and is set to emerge as the world's sixth-largest by 2024, according to PwC. Regional streamers will no doubt benefit heavily from this, as more people in non-urban areas get access to the Internet.

But it's not as if the global names are ignorant of this trend; rapid steps have already been taken to learn from previous missteps. Netflix learnt that the immense fandom of southern stars like Vijay, Ajith and Pawan Kalyan can even outstrip their Bollywood counterparts, and acted quickly to set up a dedicated Twitter handle for south Indian content and regional language-dubbed Hollywood films and web series. Though their original productions last year like *Navarasa* (Tamil) and *Pitta Kathalu* (Telugu) were disappointing, more projects have been commissioned already, with A-list actors and music artists as part of the fray.

If you can't beat them, join them
Amazon Prime, by far the most stacked in regional content among the big players, has tasted a lot of success of late (*Soorari Potru*, *Drishyam 2*, *Jai Bhim*). And with a certified star like Suriya inking an exclusive deal with them, it is already poised for the upcoming challenges. The platform also recently launched its channel's vertical, collaborating with eight other subscription-based OTT video brands such as Eros Now, Hoichoi and manoramaMAX at discounted rates. If you can't beat them...

Similarly, ZEE5, which also boasts of a decent regional library thanks to its content from various ZEE TV channels down south, could potentially bolster its appeal if it joins hands with SonyLIV, following the merger between Sony Pictures Networks India and Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd.

With over 40 video OTT apps (and counting) set to tussle for viewership in 2022, it will be fascinating to see how the international behemoths face off against the homegrown up-and-comers. One thing is for sure though: the viewer will always be the winner.

Govt. mulls 5G test bed roll-out in early January 'SMEs, industries can trial solutions'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The government is planning to roll out a 5G test bed in early January to enable small and medium enterprises and other industry players to test their solutions on a working platform, a top Department of Telecom official said on Thursday.

To promote 5G indigenous technology, DoT had in March 2018 approved a multi-institute collaborative project to set up a 5G Test Bed at a total cost of ₹224 crore. A test bed consists of a specific environment including hardware, software, operating system and network configuration to test a product or service.

"One more effort that we have taken in the recent



past is setting up a 5G test bed. We hope to roll out this 5G test bed in early January which will enable SMEs and other parts of industries to come and test their solution on a working platform," DoT Secretary K. Rajaraman said at the India Mobile Congress. At present, the DoT has allocated spectrum to Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, Vodafone Idea and MTNL for 5G trials.

A tragic loss

India must realise Gen. Rawat's plans for genuine tri-service operational capabilities

India has lost a capable and experienced military leader in the tragic death of the country's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, in a helicopter crash near Coonoor in the Nilgiris on Wednesday. His wife, Madhulika, and 11 others also perished when the Indian Air Force's Mi-17V5 helicopter came down in a heavily wooded area. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has announced in Parliament that a tri-service inquiry, headed by Air Marshal Manvendra Singh, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Training Command, of the IAF, will take place into the incident. The IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, has already visited the crash site; the cockpit voice and flight data recorders have been recovered, which would give investigators insights into how the crash occurred. It is imperative that the inquiry be done both thoroughly and speedily. Without speculating on the cause, it needs to be stressed that speedy course corrections in training or hardware are imperative given that these Mi-17VF choppers are being used to ferry top military leaders across the length and breadth of the country.

Gen. Rawat had not even completed two years as CDS when the Coonoor tragedy happened. After completing his tenure as Army Chief on December 31, 2019, he slipped into his new role as CDS the very next day. Many of his plans to give India genuine tri-service operational capabilities are still to be realised. In such a situation, the Government should not lose time in appointing his successor to ensure that the plans on the drawing board do not suffer. An aggressive China and a still belligerent Pakistan define India's security challenges. The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) continues to be tense with Indian and Chinese troops staring down each other. Gen. Rawat, known to have been proximate to the ruling establishment, had never minced words while speaking about the challenges facing the country and had waded into political controversies. Though the concept of having a CDS was recommended by a Group of Ministers in 2000 after the Kargil war, it took another 20 years for one to be appointed. The CDS, who functions as Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister, is expected to work in tandem with the three service chiefs who continue to operate in their respective domains – a role and function that is still in the making. To ensure that the new CDS and the service chiefs function as a team, the Government would do well to keep in mind the principle of seniority while choosing Gen. Rawat's successor.

No peace with AFSPA: NSCN(I-M)

Emboldened by ‘draconian’ law, soldiers are treating Nagas as sub-humans, it says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, or NSCN(I-M), has said the “Indo-Naga” political talks will not be meaningful under the shadow of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

The NSCN(I-M) is the key player in the peace process that has been hanging fire since 1997, when the extremist group declared a ceasefire.

Several factions of the rival Khaplang group came on board the peace process from 2001.

Referring to the December 4 killing of 14 civilians by the armed forces at Oting village in Nagaland’s Mon district, the NSCN(I-M) said it had now been driven to the point of taking a stand on the draconian AFSPA.

‘Licence to kill’

“This notorious AFSPA has given the Indian security forces the licence to shoot and kill anyone on mere suspicion... The Nagas have had the bitter taste of this act on



Upping the ante: NSCN(I-M) cadres at the outfit’s headquarters in Dimapur, in this file photo. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

numerous occasions and it has spilt enough blood. Blood and political talks cannot go together... No political talks will be meaningful under the shadow of the AFSPA,” the outfit said.

“Let human dignity take control and be made an integral part of the Naga political peace process. Unfortunately, the Oting killing has become a threat to the Nagas’ longing for Naga political solution.”

It said the Centre must immediately withdraw the AFSPA if it wanted to do justice to the Naga people.

The NSCN(I-M) said the soldiers, “emboldened by the Act beyond measure”, had been treating the Nagas like sub-humans without the fear of any scrutiny of court of law.

‘Absolute fidelity’

“Therefore, this time around, the Naga people expect that the judgment [of the special investigation team probing the December 4 incident] must be transparent and must be swiftly delivered. This is the only way to establish absolute fidelity between the Naga people

and the Government of India,” the statement said.

The outfit accused the armed forces of stripping naked the bodies of the 14 victims and trying to wrap them in military fatigues to give the impression that they were militants. “They were caught red-handed by the villagers before they could succeed in their plan,” it said.

Political maturity

In a rebuttal to Home Minister Amit Shah’s statement in Parliament on the December 4 incident, it said that in a situation like this, Mr. Shah was expected to show political maturity and statesmanship to cool down the socio-political upheavals.

However, he added fuel to the fire by standing behind the para commandos, which was like rubbing salt into the wounds of the Nagas, the outfit said.

The NSCN(I-M) called the December 4 operation “a deliberate mission to kill and nothing to do with ‘credible’ intelligence of the NSCN movement in the area”.

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

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

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