

VEDHIK
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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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Biden holds talks with Putin, warns against Ukraine invasion

U.S. vows sanctions against Moscow, increased military support for Eastern Europe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin held a two-hour video summit Tuesday in which the U.S. president said he would warn of painful sanctions and increased military support for Eastern Europe if Russia invades Ukraine.

“Greetings, Mr. President,” Mr. Putin said in a brief video clip released by the Kremlin. Mr. Biden said it was “good to see” his Russian counterpart, adding that he hoped their next session would be in person.

Despite the friendly opening scene, the summit, lasting just over two hours, was steeped in tension.

Russia denies planning to invade Ukraine, but with satellite pictures showing massive troop concentrations on



New course: Joe Biden, right, speaking with Vladimir Putin, on screen, from the White House on December 7. ■ AFP

the border, fears are growing of war in Europe.

The United States says it doesn't know for sure what Russia intends to do in Ukraine, but is alarmed at the deployment of some 1,00,000 battle-ready Russian troops to the border.

Moscow calls invasion talk “hysteria.” Instead, Mr. Putin

intends to tell Mr. Biden he sees Ukraine's growing alliance with Western nations as a threat to Russian security.

Even though Ukraine is nowhere near being able to join the U.S.-led military alliance, Mr. Putin wants a “legal” guarantee this will never happen.

“Russia has never planned to attack anyone,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday. “But we have our own red lines.”

‘Real cost’

The White House says Mr. Biden will instead lay out a range of economic sanctions that will impose “real cost.” Ahead of the summit, the Biden administration has also stressed that its posture has been worked out in unison with European partners.

Mr. Putin was also planning to reach out to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky after his virtual summit.

The United States says it has options short of military confrontation to pressure Mr. Putin.

A robust friendship

India and Russia have to navigate a complex geopolitical landscape while deepening ties

Russian President Vladimir Putin has concluded a short summit meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, highlighting the “all-weather” partnership between the two countries despite trying global circumstances. Not only does the President’s visit come as the world faces the grim prospect of the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also follows years of growing proximity between New Delhi and Washington, a potential irritant to Moscow. Simultaneously, the China factor has been steadily pulling the India-Russia bilateral tango in all the wrong directions. While Russia relies on cordial ties with China to stabilise its interests in an unstable Afghanistan post the U.S.’s exit, New Delhi and Beijing have scarcely seen eye-to-eye on border tensions and geo-political rivalry across the Asia region. Notwithstanding these reasons for possible strategic dissonance, India and Russia reaffirmed the strength of their abiding deep, multi-decade ties, building further confidence in each other through substantive defence agreements. Moscow has agreed on a 10-year military-technical plan that includes technology transfer to India. And trade received a fillip through an agreement for India to produce more than 600,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles. For India’s part, despite resistance from Washington through its Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, New Delhi will proceed with purchasing the S-400 missile defence system from Moscow.

The challenges facing Mr. Modi and Mr. Putin in terms of maintaining this momentum in bilateral exchanges are multidimensional. First, and most imminently, the pandemic has periodically crippled the growth of both economies and the threats to public health remain despite considerable progress with vaccinations. Second, Russia-U.S. ties are showing signs of fraying yet again, this time over U.S. President Joe Biden’s intention, reportedly, to warn Mr. Putin that Russia will face “economy-jarring sanctions” if it seeks to occupy Ukraine, a fear that has grown in the U.S. as Russian troops massed near the Ukraine border. India has so far held firm to its mantra of ‘strategic autonomy’ in a multipolar world, but South Block will have to work hard to manage the tightrope act between Moscow and Washington. Third, India and China have forged an uneasy truce across their Himalayan border in the aftermath of the Galwan valley exchange in 2020, yet there are numerous potential flashpoints that could send ties into a spiral again, including China’s historically provocative actions in the South China Sea and its thinly veiled insecurity about India joining the Quad for Indo-Pacific security. Moscow has adroitly managed to remain friends with both its mega-neighbours, but it will require a robust focus on confidence-boosting cooperative initiatives if India and Russia are to safely navigate the complex geopolitical landscape that they occupy.

The India-Russia military alliance

What is the status of the defence sales between Russia and India? Apart from sales, what other forms of military co-operation have the two countries agreed to?

THE GIST

■ At the 20th meeting of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military Technical Cooperation, the two sides concluded four agreements, contracts and protocols which includes manufacture of over six lakh AK-203 assault rifles in India and the renewal of the military cooperation agreement till 2031.

■ The defence trade between India and Russia since 2018 has crossed \$15 billion. Both sides are now looking to move from licence manufacture to joint research and co-development of defence equipment.

■ Beyond defence sales, a Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS), as well as a Navy to Navy cooperation MoU are at advanced stages of conclusion. The two sides are now looking at expanding format of exercises to make them more complex as well as ideas for expanding India-Russia cooperation in Central Asia.

The story so far: At the 20th meeting of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military Technical Cooperation on Monday, the two sides concluded four agreements, contracts and a protocol. While three documents were signed by the officials of the two sides, the protocol was signed by the two Defence Ministers. This includes an agreement for manufacture of over 6 lakh AK-203 assault rifles in India and the renewal of the agreement on military cooperation till 2031. The two sides have reaffirmed their long-standing and deep-rooted defence and strategic cooperation through the visit.

What is the status of the defence trade between the two countries? Russia continues to be among India's biggest defence suppliers and the two sides are now looking to move from licence manufacture to joint research and co-development of defence equipment. Monday's agreement will see the manufacture of 6,01,427 AK-203 7.63X39mm assault rifles by a Joint Venture, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Ltd, at Korva, Amethi, in U.P. This is among a series of defence agreements signed between the two sides in the last few years. Russia has started deliveries of the S-400 Triumf long-range air defence systems to India. The first division will be delivered by the end of 2021. Dmitry Shugayev, Director of Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC), said recently. With the \$5.43 billion S-400 as well as other big ticket deals, the defence trade between India and Russia since 2018 has crossed \$15 billion. Mr. Shugayev added that Russia's sales with India is about 25% of the total arms exports.

There are several other big-ticket deals currently under negotiation and expected to be concluded in the near future. These include procurement of 21 Mig-29s and 12 Su-30MKI fighters, Iglu-S short range air defence systems and the long-delayed deal for manufacture of 200 K226T utility helicopters in India for which officials say the issues surrounding the indigenisation plan are yet to be resolved.

In addition to the S-400, other major contracts currently under implementation are construction of additional stealth frigates in Russia and India, licensed production of the Mango Armour-piercing (fin-stabilized)



Military asset: T-90S tanks on display during the Republic Day parade at Rajpath in New Delhi in 2011. ♦PTI

discarding sabot (APFSDS) rounds for the T-90S tanks as also additional T-90S tanks. Some of the largest deliveries by Russia to India since 2000, include supply and licensed production of T-90S tanks, aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, Krivak class stealth frigates, licence production of Su-30MKI fighter aircraft, Smerch multiple rocket launchers and Mi-17V-5 helicopters among others.

What are the other avenues of cooperation other than defence sales?

On a broader military cooperation, a bilateral logistics support agreement, Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS), as well as a Navy to Navy cooperation MoU are at advanced stages of conclusion. The RELOS, which has seen several delays, gives India access to Russian facilities in the Arctic region which is seeing increased global activity as new shipping routes open up and in the backdrop, India's own investments in the Russian Far East.

Underscoring the deep military to military partnership, the two countries have held a series of exercises both bilateral and multilateral, even during the COVID

pandemic. The two sides are now looking at expanding format of exercises to make them more complex, more sophisticated for exchange of experiences with regard to real time combat situations, including mobilisation of forces and their transportation across long distances, instant exercises, the impact of cyber, and the huge impact of drone technology on modern warfare, officials said.

In addition, the two countries are also looking at ideas for expanding India-Russia cooperation in Central Asia and "possibility of supplementing bilateral exercises with trilateral and multilateral ones - we are in discussion with the Russian side", the outgoing Indian Envoy in Russia D.R. Venkatesh Varma, told *The Hindu* in August.

What is the future trajectory of the defence cooperation?

Timely supply of spares and support to the large inventory of Russian hardware in service with Indian military has been a major issue from India. To address this, Russia has made legislative changes allowing its companies to set up joint ventures in India to address it following an

Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in 2019. This is in the process of being implemented. With increased competition from the U.S., France, Israel and others who have bagged major deals in recent years, Russia is also focusing on timely deliveries and lifetime support.

Russia will remain a key defence partner for India for decades to come, Mr. Varma had said. In line with India's quest for self sufficiency, the partnership is reorienting presently to joint research and development, co-development and joint production of advanced defence technology and systems, the joint statement issued at the end of the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

In line with this, the two countries have been discussing how they can cooperate in using India as a production base for exporting to third countries Russian-origin equipment and services. "Today we are conducting joint research work on more than 100 promising topics, laying the huge groundwork for the development of high-tech industry in both countries in the future," said Alexander Mikheev, Director General of Rosoboronexport on Monday.

India, Russia renew military pact

The two sides also conclude 28 agreements

DINAKAR PERI
KALLOL BHATTACHARJEE
NEW DELHI

The world has undergone several geopolitical changes, but the India-Russia friendship remained unchanged, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday at the 21st annual India-Russia summit with President Vladimir Putin.

"The two sides not only cooperated with each other unhesitatingly but also paid special attention to the sensitivities of each other," the



Close ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Russian President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi on Monday. ♦V.V. KRISHNAN

Prime Minister said.

The two countries held the first "2+2" ministerial meeting, where Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said India had faced "unprovoked aggression" on its northern

borders for more than a year.

At the summit, referring to the common fight against organised crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, Mr. Putin said, "It is natural we

are concerned at the developments in Afghanistan."

Both sides renewed the military-technical cooperation agreement for another 10 years till 2031 and also signed the deal for the manufacture of AK-203 assault rifles, a defence official said.

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, in a media interaction, noted this was Mr. Putin's second visit abroad since the pandemic began.

Both sides concluded 28 agreements, he said, adding that several hydrocarbon projects were on the anvil.

RAJNATH HIGHLIGHTS BORDER CHALLENGES ▶ PAGE 10

Mediation Bill: Not getting the Act together

While it contains many pluses, the Bill needs improvement in some crucial places



SRIRAM PANCHU

Over the last 15 years, the dispute resolution landscape in India has undergone significant change with the advent of mediation. To house this consensual creature in the same stables as thoroughbreds of adversarial litigation and arbitration was a challenge, and even more to ensure that they got on reasonably well, working in tandem in inventive ways like arbitration-cum-mediation and vice versa.

It seems to be the way of the world that when something becomes prominent, there must be a law to regulate it. And so with mediation. While scattered mention was made of its use in several statutes, including commercial and consumer disputes, there was no comprehensive statute providing for all dimensions of the mediation process and its practice. Such a need was articulated in several quarters, notwithstanding doubters and dissenters who insist that regulation will kill the free spirit that mediation embodies. A group of senior mediators was set up by the Supreme Court Committee in charge of court-annexed mediation process, and over a period of several months, a draft Bill emerged which then started to make its way through the labyrinthine processes of governmental and legislative mandarins. The resultant Bill titled the Draft Mediation Bill 2021, slated for presentation now to Parliament, bears no resemblance to the original in some crucial places. It reminds the mediation community of an old Clint Eastwood film – the Good, the Bad, and the Sad (tweaked).

The good

The Bill recognises that mediation has come of age and needs to be treated as a profession, which is a huge improvement over the part-time honorarium basis it has in the court-annexed mediation schemes. The Bill acknowledges the importance of institutes to train mediators, and service providers to provide structured mediation under their



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rules. It provides for pre-litigation mediation. This is quite a remarkable step, but is designed to be easy to implement. Parties are required to have at least one substantive session with the mediator where the process is explained to them. Thereafter they are free to continue or terminate the mediation and follow the litigation path if they so decide. Further, if any urgent interim order is needed, they can bypass mediation at the first stage and return to it after resolving the interim relief issue.

Another plus is that the Bill does away with the confusion emanating from using both expressions “mediation” and “conciliation” in different statutes by opting for the former in accordance with international practice, and defining it widely to include the latter. It recognises online dispute resolution, a process that is going to move mediation from the wings to centre stage in a world that COVID-19 has changed. It provides for enforcement of commercial settlements reached in international mediation viz between parties from different countries as per the Singapore Convention on Mediation to which India was a notable signatory. The Convention assures disputants that their mediation settlements will be enforced without much difficulty across the world, unlike the fresh headaches that the litigative decree or arbitration award present at the time of enforcement.

The bad

Leading in from the last point, it is expected that this Bill would make

India a hub for international mediation in the commercial disputes field, and indeed institutions are being opened for this purpose. Exactly the reverse may happen. This is because the Bill unwisely treats international mediation when conducted in India as a domestic mediation. The settlement under the latter is given the status of a judgment or decree of a court. Now, that is excellent for cases between Indian parties, but disastrous when one party is foreign. The reason is that the Singapore Convention does not apply to settlements which already have the status of a judgment or decree. Ergo, if you conduct your cross-border mediation in India, you lose out on the tremendous benefits of worldwide enforceability. In sum, go to Singapore or Sri Lanka or anywhere else other than India to conduct your mediation. If this drafting mismatch is not remedied, dreams of our robust hubs and ease of doing business in India are neatly nipped in the bud.

Then comes the governing mechanism, the Council. It has three members: a retired senior judge, a person with experience of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) law and an academic who has taught ADR. This is an all-powerful body which regulates, certifies, accredits, plans, governs, etc., and it doesn't have a single mediator. Judging from the fact that these are full-time members, it is clear that none of them will be active practitioners. Most likely we are looking at sinecures for the bureaucratic and academic world. Certainly this Bill will be unique

where a profession is being regulated without a single professional on the regulator. Try doing that to lawyers, doctors and accountants. And one more lapse – this is the field of dispute resolution, the judiciary's domain, so how come the Chief Justice of India is not in the picture for making appointments?

Then there is a long list of disputes which should not be mediated. Some of them look understandable at first sight but unnecessary at second. Fraud, for example. It is standard practice in litigation to make as many and as serious charges as possible; that doesn't prevent parties from settling, and these accusations are disposed of by retraction or apology or simply ignored. In cases involving minors or persons of unsound mind, the law provides for the court to pass orders to protect them. All that is necessary is to provide that any settlement of disputes involving them needs the court's approval, not to deny the possibility of a beneficial mediated settlement. Patents and copyright cases settle on commercial terms leaving untouched the validity of the grant, so why deny this possibility and consign the parties to litigative longevity? In the case of telecom, why can't manufacturers and service providers and consumers be allowed to talk and resolve issues?

The sad

Why can't we get our act together to get the Mediation Bill in good shape? Why can't all the stakeholders get this Bill together? Mediators, lawyers, judges have applied their minds to a considerable degree. To be fair to the government, it did call for comments on the draft Bill. What is missing is the element of focused and engaged discussion after comments are sent. It is as though a wall has been erected and no one knows what is going to emerge. We all have a common purpose: to place mediation strongly in our legal landscape, and place India prominently in the world's mediation landscape. Even if it takes more discussion and consideration amongst all stakeholders, let that be done. It is for Parliament now to do the needful. We should not settle for less.

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'Domestic air passenger traffic crossed 10-mn mark in Nov.'

Omicron variant has potential to derail the recovery: ICRA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Continuing a recovery, domestic air passenger traffic crossed the 10-million mark in November for the first time since the pandemic hit the aviation industry in March 2020, but the new Omicron variant has the potential to disrupt, according to rating agency ICRA.

After recording 1.23 crore domestic passengers in February 2020, domestic air travel demand dipped to 19.84 lakh passengers in the first month (June 2020) of the resumption of flight services on local routes.

The recovery in domestic traffic continued till March this year when the second



wave hit the country, resulting in domestic travel demand nosediving to 21.15 lakh passengers in May 2021.

In the second phase of the recovery, domestic travel demand rose to 10.04-10.05 million (1.004 crore-1.005 crore) in November as against 63.54 lakh passengers in the year-earlier pe-

riod, a robust 64% growth, ICRA said in a statement.

The month-on-month growth, however, stood at 15-16% in November over about 8.98 million passengers in October, ICRA said.

"Though the recovery continued in November, demand continues to be subdued from the corporate traveller segment as reflected by the passenger traffic being lower by around 19% in November compared to pre-COVID-19 levels," said ICRA Vice-President and Sector Head Suprio Banerjee. "The new variant... has the potential to derail the domestic recovery too, if it becomes a source of a fresh round of restrictions," he added.

'Hydrogen sulphide suppresses HIV'

Finding could lead to more comprehensive antiretroviral therapy against disease

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) and their collaborators have identified a key role played by hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) gas in suppressing the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Increased H₂S was found to have a direct effect on reducing the rate at which the virus multiplies in HIV-infected human immune cells. The finding paves the way for developing a more comprehensive antiretroviral therapy against HIV.

The team included researchers from the Department of Microbiology and Cell Biology (MCB) and the Centre for Infectious Disease Research (CIDR) at IISc., along with collaborators from the Bangalore Medical College and Research Insti-



Team effort: Researchers from the multiple departments at the IISc in Bengaluru collaborated in the study. ■ FILE PHOTO

tute. The results are published in the journal *eLife*.

According to an IISc. release, current state-of-the-art combined antiretroviral therapy (cART) is not a cure for HIV. It can only suppress the virus by causing it to become latent.

"Unfortunately, in some cases, cART is known to fail

even when patients fully follow their drug regimen. Certain negative effects are also associated with cART, such as the build-up of toxic molecules leading to 'oxidative stress' and loss of function in the mitochondria, the cell's powerhouse. These effects can contribute to inflammation and organ damage.

Stopping cART is also not an option because the virus can reactivate - emerge from its latent state - in the absence of therapy," according to the release.

Amit Singh, Associate Professor in MCB/CIDR and corresponding author of the study, said, scientists have recently begun exploring the beneficial effects of the presence of H₂S in HIV-infected cells on both oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction.

As the role of H₂S in HIV has not been explored before, the authors had to set up experiments from scratch. "Studying the effects of a gaseous molecule on HIV required us to build and validate new model systems," said Virender Kumar Pal, a PhD. student in MCB and the first author of the study.

AK-203 rifles to roll out of U.P. facility in a few months

Deal inked to make 6 lakh rifles at the plant in Amethi

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Russia is ready to ensure full-scale production of the AK-203 assault rifles in India within two-three years, said Alexander Mikheev, Director General of the Russian state agency, JSC Rosoboronexport (RoE). The manufacturing of the rifles at the plant in Uttar Pradesh is likely to begin within a few months, officials said.

"The first 70,000 AK-203 rifles will be produced in India with a phased increase in the extent of localisation from 5% to 70%. The rest of the rifles will be produced with 100% localisation," Mr. Mikheev stated.

Since 2019, Russian and Indian specialists have com-



The AK-203 rifle.

pleted a huge amount of preparatory work to optimise the price and tech parameters of the contract, Kalashnikov spokesperson Maria Vorobyeva said. "Today, the long-awaited contract for the production of more than 6,00,000 assault rifles in India has been signed. We are ready to start producing the AK-203 assault rifles in India in the upcoming months," she added.

Over 6.1 lakh AK-203 assault rifles costing over ₹5,000 crore will be manu-

factured by the joint venture, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Ltd (IRRPL), at Korwa in Amethi. The IRRPL was set up jointly between the erstwhile OFB [now Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited (AWEIL)] and Munitions India Limited (MIL) of India, and RoE and the Kalashnikov concern of Russia.

Mr. Mikheev said, to date, a modern production line has been established at Korwa, and a small arms range has been set up, where both the factory and acceptance tests of the assault rifles will be carried out. "Rosoboronexport and Kalashnikov specialists take an active part in all production setup stages," he said.

A monumental mistake fomented by impunity

The anguish over the Nagaland killings is inadequate, especially as there is no gesture to recommend the end of AFSPA



PRADIP PHANJOUBAM

There are no words to express the outrage and grief over the killing of 14 civilians (the toll so far) in Mon district of Nagaland, home of the Konyak Nagas. They lost their lives in firing by para commandos of the Indian Army based in Jorhat. According to information available, this was intended as an ambush on what Army intelligence had indicated was a group of insurgents moving in the area. This intelligence, or the fact that the Army commandos would be responding to it, was not communicated to either the local police or the Assam Rifles based in the area. It was in this sense, a continuance of the culture of 'surgical strikes' hyped up after the Pulwama incident in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the context of the North-east, the ambush by a combined group of militants led by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) in Chandul district of Manipur in 2015. The NSCN-K then was not as fragmented into factions as it is now.

While the earlier 'surgical strikes' are understandable – though their success has been disputed – the Mon ambush is completely beyond comprehension. First, unlike the earlier strikes, which were in response to grave provocations, and the targets were outside Indian territory, the scenario was markedly different in the present. The ambush was unprovoked, and the target was well within India. This would have meant assault resources were much more in abundance. Again, an ambush – as those in the North-

east with a history of violent insurgencies will understand – is the combat tactics of an inferior force against a far superior one; for this reason it is also often summarised as hit-and-run warfare.

Options that were missed

The important question is, even if there was intelligence available about the movement of insurgents, why was this tactic resorted to? Why was no attempt made to have the targeted men who were in a single pickup truck, surrender to be captured alive, even if these men were insurgents and armed? From a superior pre-mediated position, and force strength precalculated to overwhelm, there should not have been much difficulty to block off the truck making its way along a winding narrow hill road, put the men in it in a hopeless position and force them to surrender.

The intent obviously was to destroy and eliminate as would be done to hated enemies. But, as it turned out tragically, the victims were all innocent unarmed villagers; six of them were killed on the spot. More casualties resulted after outraged Konyak villagers attacked the ambushers first and then an Assam Rifles post later. One army trooper was also killed in the violence.

The truth is that long decades of violent insurrections and draconian counterinsurgency laws, in particular the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) 1958, have ensured a climate of impunity among those fighting insurgency.

In neighbouring Manipur, this became evident even in a pocket where AFSPA had been removed after public agitation following another atrocious rape and murder of a woman insurgent suspect in 2004. Fake encounter killings soared in the area in the years that



GETTY IMAGES

followed. The intuitive understanding of those tasked with counterinsurgency duty has come to be that action towards this cause will have little or no legal consequence. What happened at Mon is new evidence of this. It too reeked of the attitude that in these wild lawless territories, mistakes, even if they spell immense losses to civilian life, are part of the game.

There must be ownership

In an invisible way, this mindset seems to have pervaded among a larger section of the population nationwide, other than just the combatants directly engaged in counterinsurgency duty. Hence, there have been a flood of expressions of anguish. These include messages from Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and more. But many have also brushed off the tragedy as collateral damage – an inevitable part of any conflict scenario. Obviously, it was a mistake, but an unpardonable one that culminated out of the uniquely oppressive climate of impunity which has been allowed to normalise.

What is called for then is something beyond the expression of anguish or condemnation. It must instead be about repentance and ownership of responsibility for the tragedy. Therefore, it is about sharing the tragedy, represented by deeds and sacrifices that also

pinch the giver; not just about buying truce at affordable prices. According to a report from Kohima, the central government has agreed to pay ₹11 lakh as ex gratia to each family of those killed. The State government is to pay ₹5 lakh each.

Though commendable, this gesture would hardly make for a true language of repentance. If for instance the gesture was for ₹11 crore each, that would have been closer to saying sorry. It would also have sent out the message to those likely to commit them again that such mistakes come at immense costs. Saying sorry could have also been accompanied with a gesture such as declaring AFSPA, which has come to be seen as a symbol of oppression across the region, abrogated.

The ceasefire structure

What is also intriguing is the nature of the intelligence which led to the ambush. Almost all insurgent factions that matter in Nagaland are in 'ceasefire agreement' with the Government of India and engaged in peace talks. If there were still perfidies committed by these groups, such as extortion and intimidation, they should have amounted to breaches of ceasefire ground rules; not challenges to the Indian state. Obviously then, the Naga underground faction noted in this report must have been one which had still to enter into the ceasefire agreement. Reports indicate this is the faction led by Yung Aung, the nephew of NSCN-K founder, the late S.S. Khaplang. But Yung Aung's support base is in Myanmar. So could he still have been seen as a threat to India's integrity?

In a nutshell, when insurrection began in Nagaland, there was only one group – A.Z. Phizo's Naga National Council. This group entered into a peace agreement with the Government of India in 1975 as the

Shillong Accord. A group calling itself the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), broke away in protest, in 1980. But the NSCN also split into two, violently, in 1988, with S.S. Khaplang, a Myanmar Naga, leading one faction and the other led by Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu. While the latter remains more or less cohesive, the Khaplang faction splintered a number of times.

Road to peace

The pattern of these splits is also interesting. In all cases, the separations were broadly between the Indian and the Myanmar Nagas; the Indian Naga factions end up entering the ongoing ceasefire making observers suspect the influence of the Indian intelligence to be behind these splits. This is understandable too, for India could not have entered into any truce with Myanmar nationals. The last of these splits, in 2018, followed this pattern. After Khaplang's death in 2017, the leadership mantle of the NSCN-K passed on to Khango Konyak, an Indian Naga. Then, in a bloodless coup in 2018, Khango Konyak was impeached and Yung Aung took over leadership. The former returned to India and entered the ongoing ceasefire.

The question now is whether the tragic development would have any lasting impact on the ongoing peace talks now presumed to be in its final stage. Considering the combat fatigue of the Nagas, maybe not. But this would also depend greatly on the Indian state's ability to say sorry from the heart and not just bargain for just another *quid pro quo* truce in the present tragedy.

Pradip Phanjoubam is Editor: *Imperial Review of Arts and Politics* and the author of *'The Northeast Question: Conflicts and Frontiers'*



Against impunity: Students of Jawaharlal Navodaya Vidyalaya, Khumbong, burn down their textbooks in support of the popular demand to repeal AFSPA in Manipur, Imphal, in 2004

FROM THE ARCHIVES

AFSPA: Who rules India?

The problems in troubled areas such as Jammu and Kashmir and parts of the Northeast should be solved through a political process and not through a law that violates people's right to life and dignity

THE GIST

■ The Government cannot make the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) more human because the army does not want it diluted, leave alone repealed.

■ Many committees have been set up to review the AFSPA. In 2005 the Jeevan Reddy Commission said that AFSPA should be repealed and the clauses that are required should be included in other Acts. Similarly, the Justice Verma Commission also said that security persons who rape women should be judged under the same act that applies to civilians.

■ One can question AFSPA even from the security point of view. It was enacted in 1958 on an experimental basis for six months against "terrorist" groups in Nagaland. Now, the law has been deployed in more than three states over five decades and "terrorist" groups have increased.

WALTER FERNANDES

Following the botched Army operation in Nagaland that resulted in the tragic death of 14 civilians, demands for the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) have gained momentum. In this piece dated February 12, 2013, Walter Fernandes argues that AFSPA has not only provided blanket impunity to the armed forces in disturbed areas but also failed from the security point of view, with militant groups continuing to grow. He argues that the problems in troubled areas such as Jammu and Kashmir and parts of the Northeast should be solved through a political process and not through a law that violates people's right to life and dignity. Edited excerpts:

Finally a senior Union Minister has made official what many knew already: The Government cannot even make the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) more human because the army does not want it diluted, leave alone repealed. In his K. Subramanyam Memorial Lecture on February 6, 2013 at the Institute of Defence Studies Mr P. Chidambaram said "We can't move forward because there is no consensus. The present and former Army Chiefs have taken a strong position that the Act should not be amended (and) do not want the government notification ... to be taken back. How does the government ... make the AFSPA a more humanitarian law?" (*The Hindu*, February 7, 2013).

Whose country is it?

The first question it raises is: "Who rules India: The elected representatives or the army?" The second is "Why does the army oppose even dilution of the Act to make it more human?" The Justice Verma Commission has said in unequivocal terms that security persons who rape women should be judged under the same act that applies to the civilians. A similar stand has been taken by others. In 2005 the Jeevan Reddy Commission said that AFSPA should be repealed and the clauses that are required should be included in other Acts. Mr R. N. Ravi, former head of the Intelligence Bureau for the North East is on record that AFSPA is the biggest obstacle to peace in the region. Former Home Secretary Mr G. K. Pillai has come out openly against the Act. These statements are not emotional outbursts. They come from persons who have worked in the system and know the dynamics of the Act and of running the Government.

But the army is opposing even this change. What is their rationale for thinking that security persons who rape innocent women should enjoy

impunity in the name of national security? For whose security was the law enacted, for that of the country or of the criminals in uniform? Whenever some change is suggested in the Act the army seems to oppose it and the civilian government buckles under its pressure. For example, when the Jeevan Commission appointed to inquire into the alleged rape and murder of 30-year old Manorama Devi of Imphal in Manipur arrested by the Assam Rifles suggested that the law should be repealed and the clauses that are required should be integrated with other All India laws the Government did not even publish the report. *The Hindu* procured it "illegally" and uploaded it on its website.

Impunity under AFSPA

After the Verma Commission Report said that security persons who rape women should be tried under the civilian law, the Union Law Minister said in an interview on NDTV that there are problems in implementing these suggestions.

For whose security was the law enacted, for that of the country or of the criminals in uniform?

During a TV discussion another Union minister said that because of its slow legal process the public does not know the punishment meted out by the army. They did not specify the constraints or the legal action taken. A search of the records shows very few cases of trial leave alone punishment. For example, no action has been taken in the Manorama Devi case. On December 23, 2005 a group of university students entered a railway compartment at Kokrajhar in Assam, not knowing that armed security persons from Haryana were travelling in it. The jawans closed the doors of the compartment and tried to molest the students. Alerted by their shouts the Bodo student union stopped the train and tried to take action on the jawans. The police opened fire on them and four students died. No action has been taken till today.

One can give many more such instances that have gone unreported or have been hushed up. In a recent case in Assam the local people caught the jawan so the army promised action against him. He was jailed for three months. People in Jammu and Kashmir speak of a large number of women who have been violated but the armed forces have gone unpunished. So the women live with a sense of shame. Some of them testified before the Verma Commission and its recommendation stems from their testimony. One is also told that

the honour of the army is involved and national security requires the law. In what way does lack of action against rape protect the honour of the army?

Proliferation of militant groups

One can question AFSPA even from the security point of view. It was enacted in 1958 on an experimental basis for six months as a measure against "terrorist" groups in the North East. It was applied first in Nagaland, in 1980 in Manipur, later in Jammu and Kashmir and over the decades in more areas of the North East. What was enacted for six months has remained for more than five decades. In 1958 there was one "terrorist" group in the North East. Manipur had two groups when the State was brought under the Act. Today, Manipur has more than twenty such groups, Assam has not less than fifteen, Meghalaya has five of them and other States have more groups. How does the army explain this proliferation of militant groups in spite of the Act? Has it served its purpose?

One is also told that the armed forces will not be able to remain in the North East or Jammu and Kashmir if the law is repealed. That is a lie. The army is deployed all over India without such a law.

Those who demand its repeal do not ask the army to leave any region. They only want the armed forces to serve the country under the Constitution without a law that allows abuses with impunity. There is no reason why a rapist or murderer should have a separate law only because he belongs to the armed forces. Take for granted for a moment that all the women whom they rape are terrorists. Why should they be raped? Why can they not be dealt with under the law of the land? These actions do not add to the honour of the armed forces or to the security of India. They only violate people's right to a life with dignity and cannot be justified in a democratic country.

Civilians have been elected to rule the country. They have a duty to ensure that the security forces work under the Constitution. The problems in the North East and in Kashmir should be solved through a political process and not through a law that violates people's right to life and dignity with impunity. They need confidence building measures (CBM) in order to move towards peace with justice. What better CBM can one suggest than repealing the AFSPA?

The author, is former director and at present Senior Fellow at North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati.

Triservice training held in Kashmir

Helicopter exercise conducted at over 9,000 feet to simulate enemy territory

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

The Army's Srinagar-based 15 Corps conducted a triservice helicopter-borne training and validation exercise in the snow-clad higher reaches of the Kashmir Valley on Monday.

“The exercise was planned to validate the joint capability to insert the task force tactically behind enemy lines in an intense air defence and electronic warfare operating environment,” the Army said in a statement. “The heli dropped task force operated in snow clad region at heights over 9,000 feet. It included troops from Infantry, the Special Forces and the MARCOS from Navy.”

The heli-drop exercise included full transportation and armed helicopters from Army and Air Force includ-



Man and machine: A joint exercise was conducted in Baramulla district of Kashmir on Tuesday. •PTI

ing Apache attack helicopters, the Army said adding that aspects related to electronic warfare were also validated.

A Srinagar-based defence spokesman said the exercise showcased the capability of

the Chinार Corps and the Indian Army “to carry out successful operations in high altitude areas incorporating all facets of contemporary and modern battle field in synergy with Indian Air Force and Indian Navy”.

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.