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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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IIT-Kharagpur calendar says Aryan invasion is a myth

Claims made in calendar came in for severe criticism from writers

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI
The 2022 calendar of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur on the theme of "evidence" for "rebutting the Aryan invasion myth" which caused a controversy when it became public last week, was "just the tip of the iceberg", with scholars abroad planning to hold workshops on the topic, according to the professor behind its concept.

The calendar, titled "Recovery of the foundations of Indian knowledge systems", covers the topics of "Recognition of the secret of the Vedas" and "Reinterpretation of the Indus Valley Civilisation", apart from the portion on "Aryan invasion".

The claims made in the ca-

lendar came in for severe criticism on social media from writers and those who have been engaged with the issue. Tony Joseph, author of the book *Early Indians*, commented on Twitter on December 26 about "the distressing transformation of centres of excellence".

He cited the 2019 genetic study "The formation of human populations in South and Central Asia", which, he said, was an example of the "strong, multi-disciplinary evidence for migration of Central Asian Steppe pastoralists into the Indian Subcontinent between 2,000 and 1,500 BCE".

Brought out by the IIT's Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge Systems,

Frankly, the quality of arguments in the calendar-pamphlet is so poor that it raises concerns about the Institute itself. Sad.

TONY JOSEPH, on Twitter, Author of *Early Indians*



which was inaugurated by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on December 18, the calendar was aimed at "bringing out the truth", said Professor Joy Sen, Chairperson of the centre who is credited for the "concept and research" of the calendar.

Professor Sen, who works at the Department of Architecture and Regional Planning of the IIT, chalked up the criticism of the calendar on social media to those "conditioned in the old ways". In fact, in a lecture uploaded on YouTube in

2019, he gave his argument for what he called the "Aryan invasion that never was".

Quick response
Speaking to *The Hindu* on Wednesday, he said, "Within 72 hours, we received 1,000 emails about the calendar, of which 800 were positive, 100 were positive and negative, asking us to change something, and 60-70 were caustic, which shows their colonial hangover... Actually, when you talk against things, you make them more popular."

He stressed that younger people were reaching out to

express interest in the calendar, for which orders had been received from "the Bay Area [San Francisco] to Japan". "Overseas scholars are planning workshops on it," he said.

According to Professor Sen, the wrong information in textbooks had "destroyed pillars of national confidence". "The people with a real scientific bent of mind have appreciated the calendar. There will always be an uncle in the family who is conditioned in the old ways who will have a problem," he observed.

The calendar carries the names of the advisory team that guided its making. It includes IIT-K Director Virendra Kumar Tewari, All-India Council for Technical Education chairman Anil D. Sahasrabudde and Sanjeev Sanyal, Principal Economic

Adviser in the Finance Ministry.

The pages of different months are dedicated to the Indus and Brahmaputra rivers; reincarnation, eons of time; cosmic symmetry; and explanation of the "Aryan invasion myth".

Then Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank announced the setting up of the centre for Indian knowledge systems at IIT-K on November 6, 2020.

The centre's website says it was set up for inter-disciplinary research on Indian history; advanced archaeological exploration; Indian language systems, aesthetics systems and systems of geometry and mathematics; and Indian systems of welfare economics and planning, among others. Professor Sen is listed as the only faculty member.

EXPLAINER

The dispute over Belagavi

Why has the border row over Belagavi flared up? Why has it simmered since the States Organisation Act of 1956?

NAGESH PRABHU
The story so far: The border town of Belagavi has been a part of Karnataka since boundaries were demarcated on linguistic lines under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. But the inter-State border dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra erupts every now and then. In the most recent instance, trouble began after some Kannada activists blackened the face of a leader of the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) - a Marathi outfit formed to demand Belagavi's inclusion into Maharashtra - during 'Maha Melava' rally. The rally coincided with the first day of the Legislature session of Karnataka in Belagavi on December 13, 2021. In turn, some Marathi outfits burnt the Kannada flag in Kolhapur in Maharashtra. This was widely condemned by Kannada organisations and the Basavraj Bommai-led government in Karnataka. To settle scores, some Kannada activists poured ink on a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji in Bengaluru. MES activists then vandalised a statue of Sangolli Rayanna, a 19th century icon of Karnataka who fought the British, at Belagavi.

What are the claims of both states?
In 1957, unhappy with the demarcation of boundaries, Maharashtra demanded realignment of its border with Karnataka.



The Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi. FILE PHOTO

It invoked Section 21 (b) of the Act, and submitted a petition to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs stating its objection to Marathi-speaking areas included in Karnataka. It claimed 814 villages, and three urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar and Nippani, all part of Mumbai Presidency before independence. A petition by Maharashtra in the Supreme Court, staking a claim over Belagavi, is currently pending.

Karnataka has consistently argued that inclusion of Belagavi as part of its territory is beyond dispute. It has cited the demarcation done on linguistic lines as per the Act and the later Mahajan Commission Report to substantiate its

position. Karnataka has argued for inclusion of areas in Kolhapur, Sholapur and Sangli districts (falling under Maharashtra) as its territory. Karnataka started holding the winter session of the Legislature in Belagavi from 2006. It built a massive Secretariat building in the district headquarters, on the lines of the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru, to reassert its claim.

In 1960, a four-member committee was formed by both States. The committee could not arrive at a consensus and respective representatives submitted reports to their government. In the subsequent decades, chief ministers of both States have met several times to find

an amicable solution but to no avail.

What has been the politics around the dispute?

In the immediate decades of formation of States, no national party, particularly the Congress which has a social base in both States, was willing to take the risk and address the dispute. This helped MES sustain its fight with a single agenda to seek Belagavi's inclusion in Maharashtra.

MES-supported candidates, who have been winning one or more seats in the district since the 1957 Karnataka Assembly elections, were defeated in the 2018 Assembly elections. As another election draws close in 2023, MES is keen to revive its political fortunes.

One factor for renewal of the conflict came from then Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde in 1986 when he made the Kannada language test mandatory for anyone joining the State Government service. Though the decision was apparently aimed at bolstering the Janata Party's position, the stoppage of the concession given to linguistic minorities strained relations between two linguistic groups. Later, Hegde had to assure Marathi leaders that Kannada would not be made compulsory in primary education in the border areas.

The dispute strongly resonates in the cultural arena too. For instance, two sahitya sammelanas - the 73rd Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelana

(ABMSS) and the 70th Akhil Bharatiya Kannada Sahitya Sammelana - were held in Belagavi in 2000 and 2003, respectively. Both events prepared the ground for the re-opening of an otherwise muted issue. Well known scholar YD. Phadke, president of the 73rd ABMSS, reminded the audience of the unfinished agenda of incorporating Belagavi into Maharashtra while noted Kannada writer and journalist Patil Puttappa who presided over the 70th Kannada literary meet said the town will remain part of Karnataka.

What were the terms of the Mahajan Commission?

In 1966, at Maharashtra's insistence, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi established a one-man commission, the Mahajan Commission (Meh Chand Mahajan, third Chief Justice of India) a few months before the 1967 general elections and its report was released after the elections. It recommended that 264 villages be transferred to Maharashtra and that Belgaum and 247 villages remain with Karnataka.

Maharashtra rejected the report, while Karnataka welcomed it. Karnataka argued that either the Mahajan Commission report should be accepted fully or status quo maintained.

In the following decades, Belagavi has significantly changed on demographic and economic fronts.

The middle-class core areas and surroundings of the city are predominantly Kannada-speaking people. But in and around Belagavi a good number of people speak both Marathi and Kannada. Intercommunity marriages between the two linguistic groups exist.

THE GIST

■ The inter-State border dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra has erupted again. In 1957, unhappy with the demarcation of boundaries, Maharashtra demanded realignment of its border claiming 814 villages, and three urban settlements which includes Belagavi. Karnataka maintained that inclusion of Belagavi as part of its territory is beyond dispute citing the demarcation done on linguistic lines and the later Mahajan Commission Report.

■ The Mahajan Commission recommended that 264 villages be transferred to Maharashtra and that Belgaum and 247 villages remain with Karnataka.

■ Belagavi's demography has changed quite a bit since independence. The core areas and surroundings of the city are predominantly Kannada-speaking people. But around Belagavi a good number of people speak both Marathi and Kannada.



Livestock rearing: Cows grazing in a field near Auckland, New Zealand. •AFP

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A victory for the dairy sector

The government should remain guarded against the temptations of free trade agreements like RCEP

THE GIST

R. RAMAKUMAR

The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) between India and Australia is expected to face rough weather with the Government committing to open the dairy sector which is being opposed by the farmers' organisations. The Bharatiya Kisan Union on Wednesday said it was against Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiations because of dairy commitments and will oppose the India-Australia CECA because of the same factors. In this piece dated November 6, 2019, R. Ramakumar writes about why joining the RCEP would have proven suicidal for India's dairy sector, which is composed predominantly of small producers.

India's withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a major victory for the farmer's organisations, trade unions, associations of small and medium industrial producers and civil society groups, which had organised widespread agitations against the free trade agreement. The Indian government has bowed to their demands. In this article, I attempt to discuss why joining the RCEP would have proven suicidal for India's dairy sector.

The key fear of the dairy sector was that tariff clauses for agriculture in the RCEP are much more severe compared to the existing World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement. While the WTO allows a country to fix tariffs up to a certain maximum, or bound tariff, for a given commodity line, the RCEP binds countries to reduce that level to zero within the next 15 years. Currently, India's average bound tariff for dairy products is about 63.8% while its average applied tariff is 34.8%.

A self-sufficient sector

India's dairy sector provides livelihood to about 70 million households. A key feature of India's dairy sector is the predominance of small producers. In 2017, if the average herd size in a dairy farm was 191 in the U.S., 355 in Oceania, 148 in the U.K. and 160 in Denmark, it was just 2 in India. Yet, due to Operation Flood after the 1960s, India's contribution to world milk production rose from 5% in 1970 to 20% in 2018. Today, India is largely self-sufficient in milk production. It does not import or export milk in any significant quantity.

If we consider global milk trade, developed countries account for 79% of the total world export of milk. Major players are the U.S., the EU, Australia and New Zealand. A country like New

Zealand exports 93% of its milk production. On the other hand, developing countries account for 80% of the world's total milk imports. Though India is self-sufficient in milk production, China imports about 30% of its milk requirement.

Thus, some of the major players in the global milk trade are in the RCEP region. About 51% of the global trade of milk, 45% of the global trade of skimmed milk powder (SMP), 38% of the global trade of butter oil, 35% of the global trade of cheese and 31% of the global trade of butter takes place in the RCEP region. This is why Australia and New Zealand, deprived of the lucrative markets in the U.S. after the demise of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), have had a deep interest in the RCEP agreement.

Growth of MNCs

Over the last 25 years, Indian policy has consciously encouraged the growth of private milk companies. Milk cooperatives, which played a major role during Operation Flood, are no more seen as engines of growth. Policy has also favoured the entry of multinational dairy corporations into the Indian dairy sector, through joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions.

Multinational milk firms have opened shop in India in the hope that the Indian dairy sector would soon be opened up. For instance, the Swiss firm Nestlé was the largest private purchaser of milk in India in 2019. The French milk firm Lactalis entered India in 2014 and has taken over Trimala Milk Products in Hyderabad, Anik Industries in Indore, and Prabhat Dairy. Another French firm, Danone, has invested ₹182 crore in the yoghurt brand Epigamia. New Zealand's Fonterra Dairy has a 50:50 joint venture with Kishore Biyani's Future Consumer products.

In other words, multinational dairy firms had been building a strong presence in India even prior to the RCEP talks. At present, these firms are forced to buy milk from Indian farmers. The reason is that the applied tariff for dairy products in India is about 35%. The bound tariff would have fallen to zero if the RCEP had come into effect. It would have then been far more profitable for firms to import milk from New Zealand or Australia rather than buy it from Indian farmers. The sale price of milk received by Indian farmers would have fallen sharply.

The export price of SMP from New Zealand is about ₹150 per kg. The domestic price of SMP in India is about ₹300 per kg. An average dairy farmer in India receives ₹30 per litre of milk. According to estimations made by Amul, if free imports of SMP from New Zealand are permitted,

the average price for milk received by an Indian dairy farmer would fall to ₹19 per L. The unit cost of milk production is relatively low in countries like New Zealand because of extensive grazing lands (which reduce feed costs), mechanised operations and the advantages of economies of large-scale production, and the high productivity of milch animals (about 30 L/day). In addition, New Zealand government policy has consciously helped its major company, Fonterra, to become the dairy giant that it is. Fonterra, which controls 90% of the New Zealand milk market and one-third of world trade in milk, is feared even by large American and European dairy firms. A key demand of American dairy firms during the TPP negotiations was that New Zealand should break up and end the monopoly of Fonterra.

False arguments

Two arguments were raised in favour of India signing the RCEP. First, it was argued that India would soon become a milk-deficient country and be forced to import milk. Hence, it would be better if India enters the RCEP today rather than later. Forecasts from Niti Aayog show that this argument is wrong. In 2033, India's milk production would rise to 330 MMT while its milk demand would be 292 MMT. Thus, India is likely to be a milk-surplus country by 2033.

Second, it was argued that the quantity of milk imports from New Zealand to India are unlikely to exceed 5% of their total exports. As a result, its impact on Indian prices would be insignificant. This too is a false argument. As data put together by Amul show, 5% of New Zealand's exports in this sector is enough to flood India's domestic market. It is enough to account for 30% of the Indian market for milk powders, 40% of the Indian market for cheese, and 21% of the Indian market for butter oil. These numbers are significant, and enough to ensure that Indian dairy prices plummet. If there are 70 million households dependent on dairy in India, the corresponding number is just 10,000 in New Zealand and 6,300 in Australia. Reasoned analysis shows the socio-economic costs of India becoming a party to the RCEP agreement. India's farmer's organisations did well to keep the government on a short leash this time. On its side, the government would do well to be guarded against the temptations of joining such free trade agreements in the future. It should also begin work on correcting the imbalances of existing free trade agreements.

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A whiff of trouble in the Nord Stream pipeline

What was meant to be an ordinary energy project from Russia to Germany is now a powerful geopolitical tool



TATIANA BELOUSOVA

It would be considered an ordinary gas pipeline were it not for the controversial nature of the project. Called the Nord Stream 2, it will spell a direct supply of natural gas under the Baltic Sea from the Russian city of Ust-Luga to the German city of Lubmin, avoiding transit through Ukraine and other European countries. However, the Ukrainian authority has called the project a 'dangerous geopolitical weapon'. There is also strong opposition from the United States and most of the European countries (except for Austria, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands). Their concern is that, once operational, the project would render more leverage and bargaining power to Russia while dealing with Europe and its energy market.

Some political commentators share the view that Russia is trying to use Nord Stream 2 as a political weapon to put pressure on European security and 'undermine the democratic resilience of European institutions'. At the same time, during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed these concerns, saying that 'Nordstream 2 is purely a commercial project, which is shorter,

cheaper, and economically more viable, compared to the gas transit through multiple European countries'. Mr. Putin even went as far as calling opposing views as 'foolish propaganda'.

Mounting complexities

The construction of Nord Stream 2 began in 2015, when Russia's main energy company Gazprom took ownership of the project's operator, the Switzerland-based company Nord Stream 2 AG. The project was expected to double the capacity of the existing pipeline, Nord Stream 1, that had been operational around 2011-12. The estimated costs are around €11 billion, with the new pipeline stretching for 1,225 kilometres.

Throughout its short history, the project has undergone a series of sanctions and controversies, morphing itself into the source of contention and political battleground. At the end of 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump had signed a law that imposed sanctions on any EU company that was involved in completing the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

The Trump administration feared that the pipeline would give Russia more influence over Europe's energy supply and reduce its own share of the lucrative European market for American liquefied natural gas (LNG). Many European politicians, including then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, were opposed to the 'extraterritorial sanctions', stating that they were able to decide their own



FILE PHOTO/ANP

energy policies without an 'interference in autonomous decisions taken in Europe'.

In July 2021, the U.S. and Germany reached an agreement to allow completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Besides, the agreement aimed to invest more than €200 million in energy security in Ukraine, as well as sustainable energy across Europe, according to media reports. Earlier in May 2021, the Joe Biden administration decided to issue a national security waiver for the Nord Stream 2 AG, the major company involved in the construction of the pipeline. The main reason was apparently to restore trust and close cooperation between the U.S. and Germany.

Energy security dilemma

According to data from 2015, Germany imported about 40% of natural gas from Russia, 29% from the Netherlands, 34% from Norway, with only around 10% from Germany's own gas fields. According to a media report, about a quarter

of Germany's electricity now comes from coal, about another quarter from renewables, 16% from natural gas and around 11% from nuclear energy.

The dispute over Nord Stream 2 takes place at a time when Germany has set out a plan to shut down its nuclear and coal power plants, with an objective of gradually moving towards renewable sources of energy. In order to fill the supply gap and diversify the sources, the country plans to build its first LNG terminal to receive gas from Qatar, the U.S., and others.

This winter, Europe is facing a 'perfect storm' in its energy market, whereby wholesale energy prices have more than doubled in 2021, and there is a limited supply of fossil fuels altogether. Russia is blamed for an intentional decrease in gas supplies to Europe, aiming to speed up the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline by European Union (EU) market regulators. There is a 'silver lining' in the current energy crisis in Europe though, since it could provide additional incentives for green energy investments and production of green hydrogen.

Latest developments

In November this year, Germany's network regulator (Bundesnetzagentur) suspended the certification procedure for Nord Stream 2. In an official statement it said: 'it would only be possible to certify an operator of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, if that operator was organised in a legal form under Ger-

man law.' For practical reasons, Nord Stream 2 AG decided not to undergo a complete legal transformation, but establish a subsidiary under German law that would manage only the German part of the pipeline. The involved bureaucracy inevitably means further delays in project commencement as it requires re-submission of paperwork and a renewed certification process. In December, Germany's energy regulator said it would not make a decision on certifying Nord Stream 2 until, at least, the second half of 2022.

Meanwhile, tensions have been growing between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, amidst fears of Russia's invasion into Ukrainian territories and a replication of 2014 scenario. The new German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has inherited the Nord Stream 2 dilemma from his predecessor and will have to make difficult choices going forward. Some EU leaders have called for stronger actions toward the controversial pipeline from the government in Berlin, including its possible termination in the event of further military escalation.

Thus, what was meant to be an ordinary energy project has transformed itself into a powerful geopolitical tool, available to every stakeholder involved, and even beyond.

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Far from over

Israel is again violating international norms and laws with repeated strikes against Syria

The missile strike at Syria's Latakia port on Tuesday is yet another reminder that the conflict in the Arab country is far from over. This is the second strike on Latakia, one of the busiest ports in Syria, within weeks, and Damascus has blamed Israel on both occasions. The Israeli authorities have neither confirmed nor rejected the accusations, but it is a fact that Israel has carried out air and missile attacks inside Syria in recent years. After the strike on Latakia in early December, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said, "We are pushing back on the bad forces of the region day and night." The multi-faceted Syrian crisis has evolved over the years. President Bashar al-Assad's regime, with help from Russia and Iran, has defeated most of the rebel groups and recaptured almost all lost territories, except Idlib. But Mr. Assad's apparent victory did not end the conflict. When Iran, which supplied men and weapons to Mr. Assad, built up its influence in the country, Israel, which has been occupying Syria's Golan Heights for decades, viewed it as a security threat. Russia, whose primary focus in Syria is on the survival of the Assad regime and the protection of its own troops and assets deployed there, has largely stayed away from the Iran-Israel cold war. This gives Israel a free hand in Syria to target the Iranian and Hezbollah shipments.

The Israeli approach, however, has two key problems. One, the repeated strikes are a flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty. Israel, which has hardly upheld international norms and laws when it comes to its security policies, is setting another bad precedent. Second, Syria, devastated by the civil war, is emerging as a new front in the Israel-Iran tussle. In recent years, Israel has reportedly carried out sabotage activities inside Iran and assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists. Iran, in return, has attacked Israel-linked vessels in the Gulf and Mediterranean waters and enhanced supplies to Shia rebel groups in the region. The Latakia strike has come at a time when international powers are trying to revive the Iran nuclear deal, post-2018. If these attempts collapse and Iran presses ahead with its nuclear programme, the chances of an Israel-Iran military conflict will soar. Israel has already said that all options are on the table to "prevent" Iran from going nuclear. So, Syria appears to a pawn in this game between the big powers of West Asia. Enfeebled by the civil war and dependent on Iran and Russia for survival, Damascus lacks the political will and resources to either check Iran's influence or deter Israel's attack. For Syria to see relative peace, there has to be a dial-down in tensions between Israel and Iran. A good beginning point would be the revival of the nuclear deal.

The efficiency myth of Aadhaar linking

The Government has made several dubious claims to push the Aadhaar project



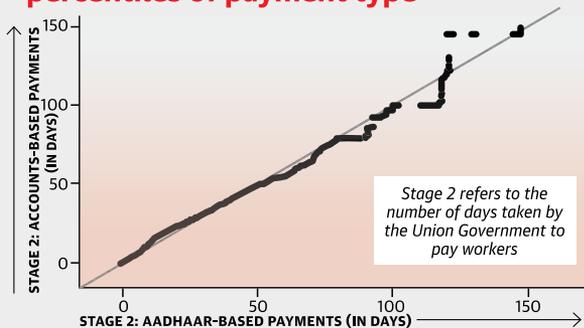
RAJENDRAN NARAYANAN

The Union Government hastily passed a Bill to link voter IDs with Aadhaar cards. Such arbitrary approaches without sufficient deliberation have become the norm, it seems. The Government claims that the move will prevent frauds and remove duplicate IDs. But as evidenced by a report by journalist Kumar Sambhav, such a move violates an individual's Right to Privacy, enables voter profiling and excludes genuine voters – perils that have also been outlined in a statement issued by the Rethink Aadhaar campaign and endorsed by many organisations. Aadhaar was, among other things, purportedly meant to improve efficiency in welfare programmes. However, there are important lessons to learn from the dubious claims made by the Government in Aadhaar linking for welfare delivery which have a strong bearing on the new proposal.

Claims on shaky ground

Cash transfers in many welfare programmes, such as payment of MGNREGA wages, are done using the Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS). For this to work, it is mandatory to link workers' Aadhaar with their MGNREGA job cards and their bank accounts where the Aadhaar number of the worker becomes their financial address. The Union Government has repeatedly made claims on savings in welfare programmes due to Aadhaar. These have been methodically debunked by Jean Drèze and Reetika Khara, among others. But the Government continues claiming that "the estimated cumulative savings/benefits due to Aadhaar in MGNREGA till March, 2021 is Rs 33,475 crores." Two Right to Information responses seeking the methodology used to arrive at such savings are relevant. In a recent response, the Government said the "Ministry has been reporting DBT Mission on the estimated DBT savings under the scheme on the assumption that 10% of the wages in the year could be saved." In an earlier response, it had said: "Savings are in terms of increas-

Distribution of wage delays by percentiles of payment type



ing the efficiency and reducing the delay in payments etc." The savings due to Aadhaar, therefore, appear to be an "assumption" while the other claims are also on shaky grounds.

Wage payment delays in MGNREGA have been persistent. An analysis of more than 18 lakh wage invoices for the first half of 2021-22 by LibTech India demonstrated that 71% of the payments were delayed (called stage 2 delays) beyond the mandated period by the Union Government. Nearly 7 lakh invoices in our sample were done through the APBS; 11.65 lakh were account-based payments where the workers' name, account number, and the IFSC code of their bank were used to transfer money. Figure 1 compares the time taken by the Union Government (stage 2) in transferring wages for the two payment methods. The axes represent the number of days taken for two kinds of payments. The 45-degree line shows the percentiles of stage 2 for APBS and the dots represent the percentiles of stage 2 for account-based payments. When dots are below the line, the account-based payments are quicker. Barring a few cases, the dots are practically on or below the line. This is perhaps the first large sample empirical evidence demonstrating that the Government's claim of Aadhaar having "reduced payment delays" is unfounded. Indeed, there is nothing inherent in the APBS that makes transfers faster.

The government's claims on "increasing the efficiency" is also questionable. Efficiency for whom and how is such efficiency related to accountability? Between 2015 and 2019, there was intense pressure on

field-level bureaucrats to increase Aadhaar linking. A recently completed study of nearly 3,000 MGNREGA workers by Anjor Bhaskar and Preeti Singh shows that 57% of job cards of genuine workers were deleted in a quest to show 100% linking of Aadhaar with job cards. Doing such plastic surgery on numbers to show efficiency gains is unethical and sets a harmful precedent.

Another key concern is the opacity surrounding APBS and the consequent dilution of accountability. Cash transfers through both the payment methods can fail. The most common reason for payment failures in account-based payments is when the account number of the worker in the system is incorrect. This can be rectified at the block. However, the most common reason for payment failures through the APBS is enigmatically called "Inactive Aadhaar." This has nothing to do with an individual's Aadhaar being inactive but happens when there is a software mapping failure with the centralised National Payments Corporation of India, the clearing house for APBS. Workers and officials alike are clueless on resolving these payment failures.

Moreover, there are several cases of misdirected payments in APBS when the Aadhaar number of one person gets linked to somebody else's bank account so her money gets credited to somebody else's account. These are very hard to detect as these will appear as successful transactions on the dashboard. As per UIDAI, its functions include "setting up of facilitation centres and grievance redressal mechanism for redressal

for grievances of individuals." However, no such mechanisms exist.

Beyond technological alibis

So, on at least three counts – timely payment of wages, efficiency gains and grievance resolution – there appears no basis to justify APBS in MGNREGA. These prompt us to move beyond technological alibis for good governance and emphasise the need for a push towards constitutional propriety and accountability for technologies. The mathematician Cathy O'Neil cautions us on how some algorithmic models and technologies for social policies can be at odds with fairness. She writes: "Fairness is squishy and hard to quantify. It is a concept. And computers for all their advances in language and logic still struggle with concepts... Programmers don't know how to code for it..." Indeed, compromising on fairness, people were coerced into using Aadhaar which had no pilot or independent cost-benefit analysis. No feedback has been collected on the user experience of the recipients or from field-level bureaucrats. Further, it is time to overhaul the nomenclature for recipients of welfare measures. Calling them "beneficiaries" subtly transforms the state from being an institution meant to uphold constitutional rights to sounding more like a charitable institution. Instead, people should be referred to as "rights holders". This will likely help us better interrogate whether technologies have imbibed democratic principles of transparency, accountability and participation.

When Aadhaar's use in welfare – for which it was purportedly intended – is itself shrouded in opacity, unreliability, and exclusions, we must be very worried if it is linked to voter IDs as it will further hollow out government accountability. It will fundamentally alter the citizen-State relationship. This must concern everyone as thousands of crores of taxpayers' money have been spent on it. The Law Minister said that linking Aadhaar with voter id is "voluntary". But given the prior experience of Aadhaar in other spheres, this will be another example of what Cathy O'Neil refers to as the "authority of the inscrutable."

Rajendran Narayanan teaches at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru and is affiliated with LibTech India

Atal innovation ranks puts IITs, IISc on top

Seven IITs, IISc, figure among top 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Seven Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, are among the top 10 central institutions in promotion and support of innovation and entrepreneurship development, according to Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) announced on Wednesday.

The top rank has been bagged by the IIT, Madras followed by the IITs in Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur and Roorkee.

The IISc has bagged the sixth position in the ranking followed by the IITs in Hyderabad and Kharagpur, the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Calicut, and the Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Uttar Pradesh.

The ARIIA is an initiative of the Union Education Ministry to rank systematically all major higher education institutions in India on indicators related to innovation, start-up and entrepreneurship development among students and faculty members.

Key parameters

The ARIIA evaluates institutions on parameters such as patent filed and granted, number of registered students and faculty start-ups, fund generation by incubat-



The Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

ed start-ups, specialised infrastructure created by institutions to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

ARIIA-2021 ranking has been announced in various categories which include Centrally funded technical institutions (IITs, NITs and so on), State universities, State standalone technical colleges, private universities, private standalone technical colleges, non-technical government and private universities and institutions.

According to Ministry officials, this year the participation has almost doubled to 1,438 institutes and quadrupled over the first edition. “We are delighted to be adjudged the Most Innovative Institute for the third time in a row since inception of the Atal Rankings on Innovation,” said Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Director, IIT, Madras.

Maximising the boost

India must test the feasibility of mixing vaccines to help enable informed choice

Heralding a new frontier in India’s vaccination programme, the apex drug regulator has approved two more vaccines under emergency use authorisation (EUA), and an antiviral drug. Corbevax, by Biological-E, is a protein sub-unit vaccine as is Covovax, to be made by the Serum Institute of India. Both, however, differ in their manufacturing process. Covovax has already been approved by WHO under its Emergency Use Listing and will be available globally as part of the COVAX initiative to ensure that at least 40% of the world is vaccinated on priority. Molnupiravir, which was approved this month by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, on the heels of Paxlovid by Pfizer Inc., is said to be a promising drug for those with mild and moderate disease and easily administered as a pill – its key selling point. Thirteen companies in India are set to make this drug. It has been approved for use under EUA for treating adults with COVID-19 “who have high risk of progression to disease”. Having more vaccines in the arsenal bodes well because of the uncertainties that the pandemic brings about. As of today, 90% of India’s adults have been inoculated with one dose and 60% with both doses.

The experience with the new variant Omicron is that it is so infectious, it does not discriminate among the vaccinated and the unvaccinated, though severe disease and death is disproportionately among the latter. Here too, those who are above 40 years continue to be the most vulnerable. Despite three vaccines being available, India has overwhelmingly been reliant on Covishield and that is a matter of concern as a new chapter in the vaccination programme unfolds. The new directives say that “precaution doses”, which are third doses of the vaccines an individual has already been inoculated with, will be available for health-care and frontline workers and those above 60 with comorbidities. The 15-17 year age group will get only Covaxin from January 3. That several Indians have been exposed to a live infection in the second wave only improves the odds of protection. However, the only study on mixing Covaxin and Covishield – that resulted from a mix-up in Uttar Pradesh – showed that antibody levels were higher than two doses of either vaccine. A combination of Novavax and AstraZeneca (Covishield) was also effective in boosting antibodies, according to the COV-BOOST study in the United Kingdom. India’s top medical institutions must immediately test the feasibility of mixing all available vaccines so that these may be made quickly available if needed giving recipients the option of an informed choice. The second wave revealed a treatment fiasco with remdesivir – sans any therapeutic merit – that saw irrational demand and black marketing. While molnupiravir has many more manufacturers, it is important to ensure against hoarding or indiscriminate use given its potential side-effects.

COVID-19 cases in India start to inch up as Omicron takes over

77% rise in infections compared with a week ago; rapid surge in urban centres

THE HINDU DATA TEAM
CHENNAI

The number of COVID-19 infections in India is on an increasing trend. After consistently declining since mid-May, the average number of cases showed a bump again in the last week of December.

On December 29, 13,187 cases were recorded, a 76.6% increase from the number of infections a week ago. Data for some States – Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Tripura and smaller Union Territories – were not included on Wednesday.

While Kerala continued to contribute the most number of cases, infections in all districts of the State are decreasing. On the other hand, infections are surging in other States' urban centres such as Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Delhi.

Mumbai recorded 2,510 cases on Wednesday, an 80% increase from the figure of the previous day, and a 400% rise from a week ago. Delhi recorded 923 cases, a 600% rise from a week ago. Bengaluru recorded 400 infections, a 90% increase from last week's figure. Chennai recorded 294 cases, a 100% increase.

Mumbai contributed more than 15% of the coun-

Shifting patterns

While Kerala continues to contribute the most number of infections, the cases are on a declining trend in the State. However, Maharashtra's share has increased significantly in the past 10 days. The table lists the share of new cases each day



► **Crowd source:**
A packed platform at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus on Wednesday in Mumbai ■ PTI

DECEMBER

	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th
New cases	6,661	5,134	6,313	7,499	6,768	7,240	7,109	6,515	6,270	9,132
Kerala	45%	43%	44%	43%	37%	36%	34%	28%	26%	27%
Maharashtra	14%	11%	13%	16%	17%	19%	21%	25%	23%	24%
W.B.	8%	8%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%
T.N.	9%	12%	10%	8%	9%	8%	9%	9%	10%	7%
Delhi	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Gujarat	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Karnataka	5%	4%	5%	4%	4%	6%	4%	5%	5%	4%
Telangana	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Mizoram	2%	1%	3%	3%	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Odisha	3%	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

try's cases on Wednesday – the highest among all cities – followed by Delhi, which formed about 5% of the infections.

The recent rise in infections is due to the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. According to data from GISAID, an open-access portal for genomic data on viruses, Omicron has become the dominating variant in India. In the last few days of December, the Omicron variant was found in about 60% of the samples sequenced in India.

Initial reports from other countries showed that the

Omicron wave is more infectious than the Delta wave and infects more people in a shorter span. However, hospitalisations and ICU admissions are relatively lower compared with the previous waves, especially among the vaccinated.

As of Wednesday, India has fully vaccinated 63% of its adults and partially vaccinated 89%, leaving a considerable share of the population vulnerable.

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COVID 'TSUNAMI' ► PAGE 13
CASES RISING ACROSS INDIAN CITIES ► OPED

'Bank GNPA's may rise to 9.5% by Sept.'

Governor flags inflation concerns in report, seeks supply-side measures to contain food, energy prices

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The gross non-performing asset (GNPA) of commercial banks may increase to 9.5% by September 2022 under a severe stress scenario, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a report on Wednesday. This compares with 6.9% seen in September this year.

"Macro stress tests for credit risk indicate that the GNPA ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) may increase from 6.9% in September 2021 to 8.1% by September 2022 under the baseline scenario and to 9.5% under a severe stress scenario," the RBI said in its Financial Stability Report (FSR) of December 2021.

It said SCBs would, however, have sufficient capital even under stress condi-



Cause for worry: Emerging signs of stress are seen in the MSME and the microfinance segments, the RBI said. ■ AFP

tions. Emphasising emerging signs of stress in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) as also in the micro-finance segment, it has called for close monitoring of these portfolios going forward.

In the foreword to the report, RBI Governor Shakti-

kanta Das noted that a stronger and sustainable recovery hinged on the revival of private investment and shoring up private consumption, which, unfortunately, still remain below pre-pandemic levels. Admitting that inflation remains a concern with the build-up of cost-push

pressures, Mr. Das called for stronger supply-side measures to contain food and energy prices.

'Stability prevailed'

He said financial institutions had remained resilient amid the pandemic and stability prevailed in the financial markets cushioned by policy and regulatory support.

In the report, the RBI said global economic recovery had lost momentum in the second half of 2021 with resurfacing COVID-19 infections, the Omicron variant, supply disruptions, elevated inflationary levels and shifts in monetary policy stances and actions across economies. "On the domestic front, progress in vaccination has enabled recovery to regain traction after the debilitating second wave of the

pandemic, notwithstanding signs of slowing pace more recently; the corporate sector is gaining strength and bank credit growth is improving," the RBI added.

It said the capital to risk-weighted assets ratio of SCBs rose to a new peak of 16.6% and their provisioning coverage ratio stood at 68.1% in September 2021.

RBI, however, warned non-banking financial firms and urban co-operative banks to be mindful of frailties on the liquidity front and ensure robust asset-liability management, apart from improving the quality of their credit portfolios. Stress tests showed "a significant number of NBFCs would be adversely impacted in the event of liquidity shocks".

(With PTI and Reuters inputs)

'Govt. may find it hard to meet fiscal deficit target'

Gross borrowing to stay elevated: RBI

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI**

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday expressed doubt over the government's ability to contain fiscal deficit at the budgeted 6.8% this fiscal after it moved the second supplementary demand of grants worth ₹3.73 lakh crore which came in spite of a massive 83% jump in net tax revenue so far this year to ₹10.53 lakh crore.

The government has budgeted for total expenditure of ₹34.83 lakh crore or 6.8% of GDP.

While the net tax revenue rose from ₹5,75,697 crore in October 2020 to ₹10,53,135 crore till October 2021, total expenditure rose only by 9.95%, led by infra spending to ₹18,26,725 crore from ₹16,61,454 crore during the

period, the RBI said in the financial stability report.

Total expenditure grew 9.9%, with capital outlay expanding 28.3%, the RBI said.

"But with the second supplementary demand of grants worth ₹3.73 lakh crore, presented in December, the budgeted fiscal deficit of 6.8% of GDP may come under strain," the central bank warned.

Though the size of gross government borrowing has proceeded at a pace that suggests that budget estimates would be adhered to, RBI said the Centre's repayment obligations indicate a significant uptrend going forward, implying that gross borrowing is likely to remain elevated, notwithstanding fiscal consolidation.

Amara Raja set to invest €10 mn in EV battery firm

Europe's InoBat makes lithium-ion cells

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD**

Amara Raja Batteries is investing €10 million in InoBat Auto, a European Group focused on research and development in the field of batteries for electric vehicles (EVs) and production of lithium-ion battery cells as well as tailored and custom cells.

Consisting of a subscription of 0.04% equity stake and convertible loan in InoBat Auto AS, Norway, the investment is part of the energy and mobility strategy Amara Raja is pursuing to foray into new green technologies and solutions through expansion and investment.

The initial investment will give Amara Raja a foothold in the thriving European EV ecosystem, where multi-



ple battery gigafactories are being established to support the region's determined EV push, including in the U.K., which is seeing a rising need to address increasing demand for EVs, the company said in a statement.

"We will jointly explore future opportunities together to adapt the advanced battery technology developed by InoBat for markets served by Amara Raja," executive director Vikram Gourineni said.

Omicron has high immune escape potential: INSACOG

Initial estimates show severity of illness lower, it says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

There is now clear experimental and clinical data supporting very high immune escape potential of Omicron, but initial estimates show the severity of illness being lower than what was seen in previous outbreaks, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG) said in its latest bulletin.

In India, appropriate public health measures and investigations are being conducted for surveillance of the Omicron variant, INSACOG said, noting that globally there appeared to be significantly reduced ability of vaccines or prior infection to protect against symptomatic infection by the Omicron variant.

Race with Delta

“While Delta continues to be the most prevalent VOC [variant of concern] globally, the Omicron variant has completely displaced it in south-



Uncharted waters: INSACOG says ability of vaccines to shield against Omicron seems to be low. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ern Africa and is on track to become the dominant variant in the U.K. and elsewhere,” INSACOG said in its bulletin on Wednesday.

The genomic consortium, citing global data, said there was now clear experimental and clinical data supporting very high immune escape potential of Omicron, which appeared to be the major component of its growth advantage over Delta.

“Initial estimates of severity of illness have, however, been lower than seen in pre-

vious outbreaks. Whether these initial observations are generalisable to older non-immune subjects is not clear and the threat level is still considered high,” the consortium said.

Surveillance strategy

INSACOG reports genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 across the country through sequencing of samples from sentinel sites and also detailed State-wise, district analysis for some States.

More defence systems to be locally manufactured

Defence Ministry notifies a list of 2,500 subsystems and components that have been localised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Following the two indigenous manufacturing lists barring import of 209 major platforms and systems, the Defence Ministry on Wednesday notified a list of 2,500 subsystems and components that have been localised and another 351 imported items to be so substituted in the next three years.

“This ‘Aatmanirbhar’ initiative will save foreign exchange approximately equivalent to ₹3,000 crore every year,” a Ministry statement said.

A positive indigenisation list of subsystems and components had been notified



Aiming high: India's defence and aerospace manufacturing market will increase to ₹1 lakh crore. ■ G.R.N. SOMASHEKAR

by the Department of Defence Production as part of the Ministry's efforts to achieve self-reliance in manufacturing and minimise imports by the Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on social media. They would only be

procured from Indian industry after the timelines indicated in the list. “DPSUs will work in close coordination with local industrial supply chain to ensure strict adherence to the stipulated timelines,” the office memorandum said. Necessary certifications and approval

of all items included in the list shall be granted on priority by stakeholders concerned, it added.

The positive indigenisation list is among a series of measures announced recently to reduce defence imports and give a push to domestic manufacturing.

Speaking at a recent event, Mr. Singh said that in this decade, the Ministry would increase the items under the positive list for indigenisation from current 209 to over 1,000. At present, India's defence and aerospace manufacturing market was worth ₹85,000 crore, of which the contribution of the private sector was ₹18,000 crore.

In 2022, the country's defence and aerospace manufacturing market would increase to ₹1 lakh crore and could reach ₹5 lakh crore by 2047. The Ministry is also expected to put out the final version of the Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020, the draft of which has been released for public feedback.

In a separate development, the Army said it had established a quantum lab at the Military College of Telecommunication Engineering in MP, to lead research and training with support from the National Security Council Secretariat as part of focus on emerging technology domains.

Centre had justified FCRA non-renewal in top court

The govt. said that foreign funds needed tight monitoring

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The non-renewal of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of the Missionaries of Charity citing “audit irregularities” comes shortly after a line of argument made by the government in the Supreme Court recently that NGOs have no fundamental right to receive “unbridled foreign contributions”.

The government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), was justifying amendments made to the FCRA in October 2020. Petitioners had contended in court that the amendments were choking the flow of foreign funds to NGOs engaged in philanthropic activities in India. “There exists no fundamental right to receive unbridled foreign contributions without any regulation... There is no question of fundamental

Every transaction is watched by the MHA, from the very beginning

SOLICITOR-GENERAL TUSHAR MEHTA

rights being violated through controls of acceptance of foreign contributions by certain types of organisations as the said organisations or individuals are always open to operate with locally secured funds and achieve their expectations,” the MHA argued in court in a 90-page affidavit. It said that foreign contributions, considering their nature and vast expanse of abuse, needed tight monitoring.

The government, in November, had also red-flagged the use of foreign funds to finance activities detrimental to national security and interests. The strong stand had even prompted the court to specifically ask why the

MHA was involved in the FCRA as the nodal Ministry.

To this, the government had referred to intelligence inputs which indicated that money from abroad was being used to feed activities meant to destabilise national peace and security.

“There is an element of national security, integrity of the nation involved here... Every transaction is watched by the MHA, from the very beginning,” Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta had described the MHA's responsibility.

Mr. Mehta had said the FCRA amendments had been introduced to “strengthen the mechanism, enhance transparency and accountability”. He had said it was noticed before the amendments came that only a minuscule portion of the foreign funds was actually used by NGOs for their registered objectives.

Centre may extend Dec. 31 deadline for FCRA renewal

Registration of thousands of NGOs, associations stuck

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry is likely to extend the December 31 deadline for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and associations registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) to apply for renewal.

The registrations of thousands of NGOs and associations that were up for renewal in October 2020 are stuck. The registrations are renewed every five years.

A senior government official said only around 5,000 renewal applications have been processed so far. There are 22,762 NGOs registered under the FCRA in the country. It is mandatory to register under the Act to receive foreign funds or donations.

Due to the pandemic and the amendments to the Act in 2020 that introduced stringent compliance measures, many NGOs could not complete the process.

Among the changes that were brought in, operationalising a designated FCRA bank account with the State Bank of India's main branch in Delhi was made compulsory.

The bank account could be made operational only after receiving an authorisation certificate from the Ministry. Several NGOs had



The Centre had refused to renew the FCRA registration of Missionaries of Charity. ■ AP

moved court, stating that despite fulfilling all requirements to open bank accounts by March 31, the process was not completed at the Ministry's end, which hampered their work as they could not receive foreign funds.

The Ministry had provided a relief up to September 30 to the NGOs whose registration was expiring between September 29, 2020 and September 30, 2021 to apply for renewal.

It extended the deadline till December 31.

Foreign funds

If the applications are not scrutinised in time, even those whose appeals are pending could be stopped from accessing foreign funds until they are cleared.

The Hindu had reported

that the FCRA division of the Ministry is facing staff crunch and logistical issues. Since the division saw the transfer of many officials, the identity and password login of the new officers were not generated in time, leading to a huge backlog. Since 2015, all FCRA activities are done online.

The Ministry said in a statement on Monday that it refused to renew the FCRA registration of the Missionaries of Charity, set up by Nobel laureate Mother Teresa, on December 25 as "some adverse inputs were noticed." The registration of the Charity was valid till October 31 and it was subsequently extended till December 31 along with other FCRA associations whose renewal applications were pending, it added.

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-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies

General Studies Paper II

A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

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

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
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.