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DAJLY NEWS
ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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The fight continues: Participants of a protest demanding the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in New Delhi in 2014. FILE PHOTO

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Weighing in on the efficacy of female leadership

It is necessary to get rid of inherent biases and perceptions about the effectiveness of women in roles of authority

BHASKAR DUTTA

THE GIST

■ A recent study in the U.S reports that States which have female governors had fewer COVID-19 related deaths. The authors of the study conclude that women leaders are more effective than their male counterparts in times of crises. While there is danger in making sweeping generalisations, the important takeaway from such studies is the necessity of getting rid of inherent biases about female effectiveness in leadership roles.

■ In India, women were allowed to vote from 1950 onwards and so could participate on an equal footing with men from the first general election of 1951-52. This is in contrast to the experience in the so-called "mature democracies" of western Europe and U.S.

■ The underrepresentation of women in Indian legislatures is striking. Even though the 2019 election sent the largest number of women to Lok Sabha, women constitute just over 14% of its total strength. Attempts have also been made to extend quotas for women in parliament through a Women's Reservation Bill. But even after being tabled 24 years ago, it has not been passed by the lower houses.

The lack of representation of women in a parliamentary panel examining a bill to increase the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years has come under scrutiny following the comments of Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi. In this piece dated September 24, 2020, Bhaskar Dutta explains how prejudices about the efficacy of women in key political roles need to be systematically eradicated.

What do Germany, Taiwan and New Zealand have in common? These are all countries that have women heading their governments. And although they are located in three different continents, the three countries seem to have managed the pandemic much better than their neighbours. Much along the same lines, a detailed recent study by researchers in the United States reports that States which have female governors had fewer COVID-19 related deaths, perhaps partly because female governors acted more decisively by issuing earlier stay-at-home orders. The authors of the study conclude that women leaders are more effective than their male counterparts in times of crises. There will be several critics (no need to guess their gender) who will question the reliability of this conclusion by pointing out deficiencies in the data – admittedly somewhat limited – or the econometric rigour of the analysis. Many will also point out that it is dangerous to make sweeping generalisations based on one study.

The point about the danger of making sweeping generalisations is valid. Of course, studies such as these do not establish the superiority of all female leaders over their male counterparts. All female leaders are not necessarily efficient, and there are many men who have proved to be most effective and charismatic leaders. The important takeaway from the recent experience and such studies is the necessity of getting rid of inherent biases and perceptions about female effectiveness in leadership roles.

India's gram panchayats

Importantly, female leaders also bring something quite different to the table. In particular, they perform significantly better than men in implementing policies that promote the interests of women. This was demonstrated in another study conducted by Nobel Laureate Esther Duflo and co-author Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, who used the system of mandated reservations of *pradhans* in gram panchayats to test the effectiveness of female leadership. Their study was made possible by the 1993 amendment of the Indian Constitution, which mandated that all States had to reserve one-third of all positions of *pradhan* for women. Since villages chosen for the

mandated reservations were randomly selected, subsequent differences in investment decisions made by gram panchayats could be attributed to the differences in gender of the *pradhans*. Chattopadhyay and Duflo concluded that *pradhans* invested more in rural infrastructure that served better the needs of their own gender. For invest in providing easy access to drinking water since the collection of drinking water is primarily, if not solely, the responsibility of women.

In addition to the instrumental importance of promoting more space for women in public policy, this is also an important goal from the perspective of gender equality. The right to vote is arguably the most important dimension of participation in public life. There are others. What proportion of women stand for election to the various State and central legislatures? How many are elected? Perhaps more important, how many women occupy important positions in the executive branch of government?

About suffrage

Independent India can rightly be proud of its achievement in so far as women's suffrage is concerned. Women were allowed to vote from 1950 onwards and so could participate on an equal footing with men from the first general election of 1951-52. This is in striking contrast to the experience in the so-called "mature democracies" of western Europe and the United States. In the U.S., it took several decades of struggle before women were allowed to vote in 1920. Most countries in Europe also achieved universal suffrage during the inter-war period. Since most able-bodied men went away to the battlefields during the First World War, increasing numbers of women had the opportunity to show that they were adequate substitutes in activities that were earlier the sole preserve of men. This, it is suggested, mitigated the anti-female bias and earned women the right to vote in European countries.

We have had and have charismatic female leaders like Indira Gandhi, Jayalalitha, Mayawati, Sushma Swaraj and Mamata Banerjee among several others. Interestingly, a glaring example of gender stereotyping was the labelling of Indira Gandhi as the "only man in the cabinet". Apart from these stalwarts, the overall figures are depressing. The female representation in the current National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre is probably not very far from the typical gender composition in Indian central and State governments. Female members make up only about 10% of the total ministerial strength. The underrepresentation of female Ministers in India is also reflected in the fact that

Ms. Banerjee is currently the only female Chief Minister.

The underrepresentation of women in Indian legislatures is even more striking. For instance, the 2019 election sent the largest number of women to the Lok Sabha. Despite this, women constitute just over 14% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha. This gives us the dismal rank of 143 out of 192 countries for which data are reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Tiny Rwanda comes out on top with a staggering 60% of seats in its lower house occupied by women.

Since women running for elections face numerous challenges, it is essential to create a level-playing field through appropriate legal measures. The establishment of quotas for women is an obvious answer. I have mentioned earlier that mandated reservation for women in gram panchayats was established in all major States since the mid-1990s. Attempts have also been made to extend quotas for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies through a Women's Reservation Bill. Unfortunately, the fate of this Bill represents a blot on the functioning of the Indian Parliament. The Bill was first presented to the Lok Sabha by the H.D. Deve Gowda government in 1996. Male members from several parties opposed the Bill on various pretexts. Subsequently, both the NDA and United Progressive Alliance governments have reintroduced the Bill in successive Parliaments, but without any success. Although the Rajya Sabha did pass the bill in 2010, the Lok Sabha and the State legislatures are yet to give their approval – despite the 24 years that has passed since it was first presented in the Lok Sabha.

Steps to reducing prejudice

Of course, there is a simple fix to the problem. The major party constituents of the NDA and UPA alliances can sidestep the logjam in Parliament by reserving say a third of party nominations for women. This will surely result in increasing numbers of women in legislatures and subsequently in cabinets. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. There is substantial evidence showing that increased female representation in policy making goes a long way in improving perceptions about female effectiveness in leadership roles. This decreases the bias among voters against women candidates, and results in a subsequent increase in the percentage of female politicians contesting and winning elections. So, such quotas have both a short-term and long-term impact. Indeed, voter perceptions about the efficacy of female leadership may change so drastically in the long run that quotas may no longer be necessary!

Bhaskar Dutta is Professor, Ashoka University. The views expressed are personal

A sobering reminder to the powers that be

The present masters of the nation's destiny must remember the solemn assurance their tallest ever leader made in 2003



TAHIR MAHMOOD

It was September 2003 and a leading English daily of India was celebrating its 125th anniversary in Chennai. Inaugurating the grand event, the Prime Minister of the day, the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee said: "... In spite of the unfortunate aberrations, whose recurrence must be prevented, India will always remain an open, inclusive and tolerant nation, with the freedom of faith guaranteed to all not only by the statute book but also by the living traditions of this ancient civilisation."

A leader, his assurance

He was referring to some ghastly incidents of violence against the two largest minorities in the country witnessed during those days in various regions. The gentle Head of the Government, endowed with exemplary political wisdom, was assuring the nation with confidence that those were just aberrations not to last long, and that the country would soon return to its age-old traditions of pluralism and religious tolerance. Vajpayee's party had lost at the elections next year but, after a gap of a full decade, returned to power with a bang. Would anyone among the present masters of the nation's destiny remember the solemn assurance their tallest ever leader had graciously extended to the nation? Vajpayee did not live long enough to witness the "living traditions of this ancient civilisation" being thrown into the dustbin of history. Unfortunately, even his sad demise did not act as a sobering reminder to the powers that be for the need to translate his pious hope into the ground reality of the day.

In retrospect, Vajpayee wanted the country to religiously continue treading the path it had chosen for itself while throwing away the yoke of colonial rule in 1947. In the year following the advent of inde-

pendence in India, the United Nations had proclaimed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirming in its preamble that all members of the world body that had been set up to strive for peace across the globe had "pledged themselves" to the "promotion ... and observance" of all the ideals enshrined in that so-called "Magna Carta of Humanity". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had asserted at the outset that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." In the coming years, its implications and demands were spelt out in the minutest details in the two International Human Rights Covenants of 1966, later suffixed with several follow-up instruments like the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981) and the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities (1992).

A masterpiece of wisdom

When the celebrated Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations, the newly freed India was in the midst of writing its Constitution for the future. Its noble architects, all highly enlightened leaders of the day, infused the letter and spirit of that masterpiece of human wisdom into its preamble under which the people of India "solemnly resolved" to secure to all its citizens justice, equality and liberty of all kinds and to promote among them all "fraternity assuring the dignity of individual and unity of the nation". The details of these prefatory pledges were elaborated upon and fortified in Part III of the Constitution on people's Fundamental Rights. Before too long it was realised by experience that there was a pressing need to alert the people of the country, both the rulers and the ruled, also to their constitutional duties to the nation and the society. Part IVA was then added to spell out citizens' Fundamental Duties – joint and several. The foremost among these sacred obligations were, and



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

remain, "to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions" and "to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities."

Now, so many years after the beginning of the constitutional era, many deeply patriotic citizens of the country see the prevailing ground situation as an antithesis of the Constitution. They have begun wondering if that magnificent charter of governance "enacted, adopted and given to ourselves" two years after Independence was just an Interim Constitution to be replaced in the coming years with a brand new unwritten one drawn on diametrically opposite lines. Have we, they are asking, really decided to completely abandon our old commitments and allegiance to the international human rights instruments and to kick out our constitutional pledges to preserve religious pluralism and maintain the citizens' dignity, equality and fraternity?

An inoperative IPC

Long before the advent of Independence, India had enacted and given to all its inhabitants an Indian Penal Code with a full-fledged chapter on "Offences relating to Religion" laying down penalties for outraging religious feelings, insulting religion or beliefs, disturbing religious assemblies, wounding religious feelings, and other nefarious activities of the sort. Why are, one may ask, these provisions of the Code lying totally inoperative while many people are openly flouting them in broad daylight? Television and newspapers

regularly report how some of them, masquerading as saints, keep throwing dirt on the founder of the second largest religion of the contemporary world seen by its over two billion followers across the globe as the most highly revered figure next only to God. Does not all this attract application of the IPC offence of outraging religious feelings? And when some of them cross the limits to incite people to commit atrocities against, and even mass-killing, of the second largest group among the nation's citizenry, is their audacity not covered by any provision of our Penal Code or by any other law of the country?

The election law of India laid down in the Representation of the People Act of 1951 declares "promoting or attempting to promote feelings of enmity or hatred" on grounds of religion, etc. between different classes of citizens "in connection with election" to be a punishable offence (Section 125). Referring to it, an eminent apex court judge of the past, the late V.R. Krishna Iyer, had once observed: "It is a matter for profound regret that political communalism is foliating and flourishing largely because parties and politicians have not the will, professions apart, to give up the chase for power through politicizing communal identity." It is indeed saddening that, while the election law with its aforementioned penal provision remains intact, this lament of a deeply concerned jurist-judge seems to have become a permanent feature of political discourse across the country.

'Golden thread of unity'

The top court of the nation has in fact been constantly spelling out for us, from the very beginning, the meaning and implications of the road map the Constitution of the country had laid for us soon after Independence. In the case of *Ahmedabad St. Xavier's College vs the State of Gujarat* (1974), a large Bench of the Court had observed: "India is the second most populous country of the world. The people inhabiting this vast land profess different religions and speak different languages. It is a mosaic

of different religions, languages and cultures. Each of them has made a mark on Indian polity and India today represents a synthesis of them all. Despite the diversity of religion and language there runs through the fabric of the nation the golden thread of a basic innate unity."

Twenty years later in the cause célèbres captioned *S.R. Bommai vs Union of India* (1994), an even larger Bench of the Court had proclaimed that "Constitutional provisions prohibit the establishment of a theocratic State and prevent the State from either identifying itself with or otherwise favouring any particular religion" and "secularism is more than a passive attitude of religious tolerance. It is a positive concept of equal treatment of all religions."

Fading 'light'

Announcing the tragic demise of the Father of the Nation on January 30, 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru had said: "The light has gone out of our lives; that light will be seen in this country and the world will see it for that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom."

On that sad day, year after year since then, sirens have been blaring out in government offices and educational institutions alerting us to remember the teachings of that extraordinary leader who had played the key role in our struggle for Independence. But do we still have the will and the determination to let India remain what the Father of the Nation wanted it to be, then and always in future? Do we remember our first Prime Minister's optimism that the Mahatma's light "will be seen"? And, do we care for the solemn assurance given to the nation by another great Prime Minister of the country, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in 2003 that "India will always remain an open, inclusive and tolerant nation"? Are there any answers?

Tahir Mahmood is a former Dean of the Delhi University Law Faculty

India wants WTO meet on COVID package

Discussions on patent waiver sought

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India has sought an emergency meeting of the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO) this month in Geneva to deliberate upon the world trade body's proposed response package, including patent waiver proposal, to deal with the pandemic amid rising coronavirus infections globally, an official said.

The General Council is WTO's highest decision-making body in Geneva.

Expressing disappointment over no progress on TRIPs (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) waiver proposal to deal with the pandemic, India has called for includ-

ing this proposal into WTO's proposed response package.

In October 2020, India and South Africa submitted the first proposal, suggesting a waiver for all WTO members on the implementation of certain provisions of the TRIPs agreement in relation to the prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19. In May 2021, a revised proposal was submitted. TRIPs came into effect in January 1995.

"We have sought an emergency meeting of the General Council to discuss the WTO's response package to deal with COVID-19 pandemic including patent waiver proposal. WTO will start its meetings from January 10," the official said.

World powers vow to stop spread of nuclear weapons

China, Russia, U.S., U.K., France issue statement after NPT review scheduled today was postponed due to COVID-19

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Five global nuclear powers pledged on Monday to prevent atomic weapons spreading and to avoid nuclear conflict, in a rare joint statement ahead of a review of a key nuclear treaty later this year.

"We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented," said permanent UN Security Council members China, France, Russia, the U.K. and U.S., adding: "A

nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

The statement was issued after the latest review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – which first came into force in 1970 – was postponed from its scheduled date of January 4 to later in the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Putting aside current differences that have caused major tensions between both China and Russia and their Western

partners, the five world powers said they saw "the avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon states and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities."

"As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons – for as long as they continue to exist – should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war," they said according to the text released by the White House.

They added: "We each intend to maintain and further strengthen our national measures to prevent unauthorised or unintended use of nuclear weapons."

The statement comes as tensions between Russia and the United States have reached heights rarely seen since the Cold War over a troop build-up by Moscow close to the Ukrainian border.

That has raised fears that the Kremlin is planning a new at-

tack on its pro-Western neighbour.

The rise of China meanwhile has also raised concerns that tensions with Washington could lead to conflict, notably over the island of Taiwan.

Beijing considers Taiwan part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

Russia welcomed the declaration by the atomic powers and expressed hope it would reduce global tensions.

India's rights record, America's blinkered vision

Washington's diplomatic embrace is providing New Delhi a certain immunity from international criticism



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

Recent Indian foreign policy has a chequered record, the vacillations over the Taliban resuming control in Afghanistan being one instance. But it cannot be denied that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been remarkably successful in maintaining cordial Indian relations with Washington under United States President Joe Biden despite overt wooing of former President Donald Trump.

Accommodating view

India is considered a critical ally by the United States, the only designated Major Defence Partner, and Ambassador-Designate to India Eric Garcetti told the Senate, "Few nations are more vital to the future of American security and prosperity than India."

In Delhi last October, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, said of India's purchase of Russian military equipment, "We've been quite public about any country that decides to use the S-400. We think that it is dangerous and not in anybody's security interest," but our authorities did not think it necessary to

rebuke her for flagrant discourtesy on Indian soil.

For what American Defence Minister Lloyd James Austin III called "shared values", Washington takes an accommodating view of indices considered credible in assessing democratic norms and human rights. Like Israel, India finds that Washington's embrace provides a certain immunity from international criticism.

The U.S. State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices itself last March recorded "significant human rights issues" in India, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, violence against minorities, unjustified harassment of journalists, and censorship and blocking of websites. India is rated poorly by the U.S.-based Freedom House which called it 'partly free', Sweden's V-Dem Institute which dubbed it an 'electoral autocracy', *The Economist's* Democracy Index and the Stockholm Institute for Democracy which India had helped to establish.

A year ago, India ranked 142 in the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has for successive years recommended that India be listed as a 'country of particular concern' due to its treatment of Muslims and Christians, and In-



dia is ranked in the Open Doors World Watch List for 'extreme' Christian persecution below Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. government has ignored all these findings to the dismay of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists due to Narendra Modi's positioning India as an indispensable partner, and his government has no sympathy for NGOs, portraying their conclusions as biased and uninformed.

The world media

Diplomacy does not proceed according to ethical standards; nor does the global media. Six dying in a gust of wind in Australia and six in an Illinois warehouse collapse make headlines, while reports that every 25 minutes an Indian woman commits suicide, 48 persons dying in a volcanic eruption in Java and 208 in a typhoon in Philippines are not newsworthy. Nor is the current heroic popular de-

mand in Sudan for a democratic government.

In past times, third world leaders in countries such as India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria tried to create a rival media platform, and Qatar, China and Russia started 24-hour news channels but cannot match the resources and reach of the entrenched, West-dominated English-medium news ecosystem which includes soft power assets such as music, film and culture. Hence, the Central Intelligence Agency is portrayed as all-knowing, despite its abject failures in the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Iraq's nuclear weapons and the Afghan army's capabilities.

World news is curated by a handful of western capitals, the 'read outs' being for the domestic audience, which can enjoy the U.S. and its allies forever fulminating against opponents who meekly submit to the diatribes. Threats of "massive consequences and severe economic cost" against Russia by G7 countries and the European Union are blandly announced without reference to what might be Russia's concerns for its own security. A boycott of the Winter Olympics in China by irrelevant western officials is heralded, but no boycott is threatened of the Football World Cup at Qatar, an absolute monarchy where there are scant civil and political rights, workers rights are negligible and homosexuality is deemed illegal.

The West's instrument of choice for penalising political adversaries is this: unilateral sanctions of dubious legality in international law. No audit has ever been taken of the immense suffering these sanctions inflict on innocent civilians.

The U.S. Treasury lists 36 groups of multiple sanctions, the latest of which is a typically insensitive measure against seven Bangladeshis, including the police chief, just before the 50th anniversary of that nation's liberation from American ally Pakistan.

On the U.S.

For the world's oldest democracy to arbitrate on fundamental rights of others is ironic for a country where in 12 months ending March 2021, its police murdered 37 African-American people per million against 15 per million whites, when African-Americans comprise only 13% of the population. The Summit For Democracy hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden was predictably confused about its participants because not every democracy is liberal and not every society considered liberal is fully democratic. Meaningful summits should be global in attendance and concentrate on pressing problems such as inequality, climate change and arms control on earth and in space.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary

Centre seeks urgent listing of EWS reservation case today

Challenge to 10% quota has delayed postgraduate medical admissions

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Monday pressed the Supreme Court to list on Tuesday the hearing of a case raising questions about the ₹8-lakh income criterion for identifying economically weaker sections (EWS) to provide them reservation in admissions and jobs.

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, made an oral mentioning to urgently list the case on Tuesday.

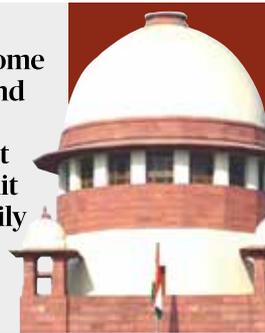
The case is originally scheduled for January 6. The Centre has filed a committee report in the Supreme Court which supports the ₹8-lakh income threshold as a “reasonable” basis to determine EWS.

All-India quota

The report is the result of the Supreme Court’s repeated grilling of the government, since October, to explain how it zeroed in on the figure of ₹8 lakh as the annual

 Considering that the currently effective Income Tax exemption limit is around ₹8 lakh for individuals, the committee is of the view that the gross annual income limit of ₹8 lakh for the entire family would be reasonable for inclusion into EWS

EXPERT COMMITTEE REPORT TO SC



income criterion to identify EWS among forward classes of society for grant of 10% reservation in NEET medical admissions under the all-India quota (AIQ) category. The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by NEET aspirants challenging a July 29 notification of the Centre announcing a 27% quota to OBCs and 10% reservation to EWS in AIQ.

The Supreme Court’s query was significant as the One Hundred and Third Constitutional Amendment of 2019, which introduced the 10% EWS quota, is itself under challenge before a larger Bench. The amendment is under question for

making economic criterion as the sole ground for grant of reservation benefits.

Committee report

On November 25, the Centre had informed the court that it had taken a considered decision to revisit the criterion for determining EWS.

The Union government then formed an expert committee comprising former Finance Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey; ICSSR Member Secretary V.K. Malhotra; and Principal Economic Adviser to the Government of India Sanjeev Sanyal. The committee submitted its report to the government on December 31.

“The current gross annual family income limit for EWS of ₹8 lakh or less may be retained. In other words, only those families whose annual income is up to ₹8 lakh would be eligible to get the benefit of EWS reservation,” the report said.

The committee said the ₹8 lakh criterion strikes a “fine balance” between over-inclusion and inclusion errors.

“The figure ensures that most low-income people who are not required to pay income tax are not excluded and are covered in EWS and at the same time it should not be so high that it becomes over-inclusive by including many incomes tax-paying middle and high income families into EWS. Therefore, considering that the currently effective Income Tax exemption limit is around ₹8 lakh for individuals, the committee is of the view that the gross annual income limit of ₹8 lakh for the entire family would be reasonable for inclusion into EWS,” the report reasoned.

Edtech regulation policy on the cards: Education Minister

Pradhan says no place for exploitation or monopoly

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The booming education technology sector, which has benefited from the disruptions in traditional education modes during the pandemic, is likely to come under regulation soon, with Union Ministries discussing framing of a common policy, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

At a virtual event to distribute coupons valued at ₹253 crore for over 12 lakh socially and economically disadvantaged students to get free access to EdTech courses, Mr. Pradhan said, “There is no place for exploitation or monopoly”, in the sector.

False promises

“We have heard reports that some education technology companies are exploiting students with loans for fee-based courses. If someone wants to subscribe for these out of their own free will, there is no problem. But students should not be lured to take loans by false promises from them,” Mr. Pradhan said noting that advisories had been issued late last month by schools and the



Dharmendra Pradhan

higher education and skill development departments. “We are also having discussions with MeitY [Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology] and the Law Department on how to come up with a common policy,” he said.

According to a September 2021 report from the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, there are more than 4,530 EdTech companies of which 435 have come about in the past two years.

Industry leaders such as Byju’s and Unacademy have raised capital worth \$2.32 billion and \$354 million, respectively, in the first year of the pandemic alone. The burgeoning field of EdTech start-ups has faced little reg-

ulation by the government, similar to the bricks-and-mortar tuition and coaching services which they are slowly taking over.

“The Government of India does not want to place restrictions but we are firm on certain things,” Mr. Pradhan said.

Large market

“We offer a large market and all are welcome to reach out to Indian students but there cannot be a monopoly. We have a welfare model. [The companies] can come and do business and create wealth. But simultaneously, you cannot exploit my students,” he warned.

Repeated Internet disruptions and outage marred Monday’s event held at the offices of the Education Ministry, illustrating some of the other challenges for educational technology firms seeking to reach students from poor homes, or in remote areas, with limited Internet connectivity.

“In this modern 21st century world, electricity and Internet have become essentials just like air, water, food, clothing and housing,” he said.

40 lakh adolescents get first shot of vaccine

Each centre has been provided 250 doses of Covaxin. Half of these vaccine doses will be given to the children registering online, and the rest will be for on-the-spot arrivals, the official said.

In Tamil Nadu, where Chief Minister M.K. Stalin launched the COVID-19 vaccination for children, a total of 3,03,499 children were vaccinated till 6 p.m. on Monday. A total of 33,46,000 children in the 15-17 age group are eligible to get vaccinated in Tamil Nadu. Districts such as Madurai, Salem, Cuddalore, Kanyakumari, Villupuram, Kallakurichi and Tiruvannamalai accounted for a coverage of over 10,000 children each on the first day.

As many as 38,417 children in Kerala received the vaccine, on Monday, from a target population of 15.34 lakhs. Thiruvananthapuram had the maximum number of children - 9,338 - receiving the vaccine. As many as 551 vaccination centres had been set up across Kerala.

To avoid confusion, the vaccination centres for children sported pink sign boards to distinguish them from the vaccination centres for adults.

At the end of the day, none of the centres had reported any adverse events following immunisation, State Health Minister Veena George, said.

In Telangana, Health Mi-

nister T. Harish Rao, who participated in the launch event at the Primary Health Centre (PHC), Banjara Hills, said the online registration system is being followed as the density of the beneficiaries is high in municipal corporations and online registrations will ensure less crowding at the vaccination centres. It is estimated that 18.70 lakh children in the age group 15-18 years will receive the vaccine.

The Karnataka government, which had planned to vaccinate 6.38 lakh children, was able to meet 65% of its target. Camps were organised in schools and pre-university colleges across the State.

In Bengaluru, 29,423 children were vaccinated. There were many cases of students who could not get the first shot as they had forgotten to bring parental consent forms or other documents such as identity cards.

Lakshadweep Islands Administrator Praful Patel launched the COVID-19 vaccination drive for children at a function held at the Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Kavaratti.

Vaccination for the 15 to 17 years age group began in all the 10 inhabited islands. A total of 3,469 children has been identified as the target group.

(With inputs from bureaus)

More than 40 lakh adolescents get first shot of COVID vaccine

Indigenously developed Covaxin administered; second dose after 28 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

More than 40 lakh adolescents in the 15-17 age group received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine on the first day of the vaccination drive for the cohort till 8 p.m., Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted on Monday.

According to the CoWIN dashboard, more than 49 lakh in this age group have registered for the vaccine so far. The vaccination programme, carried out in consultation with schools, is being held at hospitals and health centres. Covaxin, an indigenous COVID-19 vaccine, will be administered in this age group in two doses with a gap of 28 days.

“Only Covaxin is approved for less than 18 years. The 18+ (i.e. born in 2004 or before) – are eligible for all vaccines, including Covishield. For 15-17 years (born in 2005, 2006, 2007), they are eligible only for Covaxin. Validations in place in CoWIN,” Vikas Sheel, Additional Secretary, Health Ministry, said.

In Delhi, vaccination for more than 10 lakh adolescents began at 159 centres on Monday, official sources said. A Delhi government spokesperson said a total of 20,998 children were vaccinated on the first day till 6 p.m. More



Building resistance: A student getting her first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at a school in Bhopal on Monday. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

than 54,000 got their jab on the first day of the vaccination drive in Haryana.

Nine dedicated centres

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has designated nine vaccination centres where students can either walk in or pre-register online. The BMC aims to vaccinate nine lakh students in this drive, which was virtually launched by Maharashtra Tourism and Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray. A large number of students

from various civic schools arrived at the jumbo centre in the Bandra Kurla Complex to get vaccinated.

In Pune, the vaccination for adolescents commenced at 40 centres, Suryakant Devkar, chief immunisation officer, Pune Municipal Corporation, said. At several centres, teenagers were offered flowers, pens and masks after vaccination.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

EXPLAINER

Extending the GST compensation

What is the GST payment due to States? Why are several States demanding a continuation of the compensation beyond June 2022?

SURESH SESHADRI

The story so far: Just a day ahead of the 46th meeting of the GST Council on December 31, the Finance Ministers of several States had a pre-Budget interaction with the Union Finance Minister and demanded that the GST compensation scheme be extended beyond June 2022, when it is set to expire. Citing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall economy and more specifically States' revenues, the States including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh stressed that while their revenues had been adversely impacted by the introduction of GST, the hit from the pandemic had pushed back any possible rebound in revenue especially at a time when they had been forced to spend substantially more to address the public health emergency and its socio-economic fallout on their residents.

What is the GST compensation? The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016, was the law which created the mechanism for levying a common nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST). The adoption of GST was made possible by States ceding almost all their powers to impose local-level indirect taxes and agreeing to let the prevailing multiplicity of imposts be subsumed into the GST. This was agreed on the condition that revenue shortfalls arising from the transition to the new indirect taxes regime would be made good from a pooled GST Compensation Fund for a period of five years that is set to end in June 2022.

What is the shortfall for the current fiscal year ending on March 31? On October 28, the Union government said the Ministry of Finance had released ₹44,000 crore to the States and Union Territories "under the back-to-back loan facility in lieu of GST Compensation". After



Interestingly, even now the compensation cess will continue to be levied well beyond the current fiscal year since the borrowings made in lieu of the shortfalls in the compensation fund would need to be met.

taking into account earlier releases amounting to ₹1,15,000 crore, the total amount released in the current financial year as back-to-back loan in-lieu of GST compensation was ₹1,59,000 crore, it added at the time. The Centre clarified that this sum was in addition to normal GST compensation "being released every 2 months out of actual cess collections" that is estimated to exceed ₹1 lakh crore. "The sum total of ₹2.59 lakh crore is expected to exceed the amount of GST compensation accruing in FY 2021-22," the Union Ministry of Finance said at the time.

It also explained that the decision for the Union government to borrow the ₹1.59 lakh crore and release it to the States and UTs, which had been taken in the 43rd GST Council Meeting held on May 25, 2021, was aimed at bridging the resource gap due to the short release of compensation on

account of the amount accruing into the Compensation Fund being inadequate.

Why are several States seeking an extension of the GST compensation sunset timeline?

With the finances of most States having been severely hit in the wake of the pandemic and the economic slowdown that had preceded the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, the State governments have been hard pressed to find ways to garner the resources to meet the essential and additional spending necessitated by the public health crisis.

Tamil Nadu's Finance Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan had last week stressed that with the States' revenues yet to recover, and considering the huge revenue shortfall that was anticipated, it was necessary that the period of GST compensation be extended by at least two years beyond June 2022. He emphasised that at the time of introduction of GST, the States had agreed to forego their fiscal autonomy with an assurance from the Union government that their revenues would be protected. However, over the last five years, there had been a widening gap between the actual revenues realised and

the protected revenues guaranteed. While the trend had been visible even before the pandemic, the gap had widened ever since, Mr. Rajan had observed. This view was broadly echoed by other States including Kerala, Rajasthan and Delhi, with most of them seeking an extension for five years.

Can the deadline be extended? If so, how?

The deadline for GST compensation was set in the original legislation and so in order to extend it, the GST Council must first recommend it and the Union government must then move an amendment to the GST law allowing for a new date beyond the June 2022 deadline at which the GST compensation scheme will come to a close.

Interestingly, even now the compensation cess will continue to be levied well beyond the current fiscal year since the borrowings made in lieu of the shortfalls in the compensation fund would need to be met. In September, the GST Council decided to extend the compensation cess period till March 2026 "purely to repay the back-to-back loans taken between 2020-21 and 2021-22".

Tax dilemma: Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman chairs the 46th GST Council meeting, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on December 31, 2021.

PTI

THE GIST

■ Ahead of the 46th meeting of the GST Council, Finance Ministers of several States at a pre-Budget interaction with the Union Finance Minister demanded that the GST compensation scheme be extended beyond June 2022.

■ The adoption of GST was made possible by States ceding almost all their powers to impose local-level indirect taxes and agreeing to let the prevailing multiplicity of imposts be subsumed into the GST. This was agreed on the condition that revenue shortfalls arising from the transition to the new indirect taxes regime would be made good from a pooled GST Compensation Fund for a period of five years that is set to end in June 2022.

■ With the finances of most States having been severely hit in the wake of the pandemic, States have been hard pressed to find ways to garner the resources to meet the essential and additional spending necessitated by the public health crisis.

December goods exports touch \$37.3-billion high: Goyal

Numbers show 37% growth; Minister says services sector to see 'good' tidings too

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports in December touched \$ 37.29 billion, the highest-ever monthly figure, according to Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Mr. Goyal highlighted the pursuit of export-oriented programmes by the Uttar Pradesh and Tripura governments.

"In every sector, there has been significant growth in exports," said Mr. Goyal. He claimed that every month's export data from April to December 2021 had displayed a "historic high".

Export figures for Decem-



Across the board: There has been significant growth in exports in every sector, says Piyush Goyal. ■ REUTERS

ber, reflected a 37% increase from \$27.22 billion a year earlier.

'48.9% rise in April-Dec.'

Merchandise exports grew 48.9% to \$299.74 billion in the April-December 2021,

from \$201.37 billion seen in the same period of the previous year, Mr. Goyal said.

The Minister said the services side, especially the IT sector, had received special focus of the government. "We have seen \$178 billion

[services exports] in the first nine months and we are well on track to go up to about \$230 billion or upwards of that, which will also be a historic high [for] services exports," he said, explaining that the sector had performed successfully despite the "big setback" experienced by the travel and tourism industry because of the ongoing pandemic.

He also said that credit should also go to India's diplomatic missions across the world, exporters, industry associations and export promotion councils for collectively working to explore newer global regions and to help expand the "export basket".

Devas shareholders seize over \$30 million of AAI assets

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Devas shareholders on Monday said they had seized more than \$30 million of Airports Authority of India's (AAI) money held by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), following an order from a Canadian court in connection with the arbitration award the telecommunications firm had won against the Indian government. The move also impacts Air India.

"Devas' shareholders have been granted the right

to garnish property belonging to Airports Authority of India held by the International Air Transport Association in Montreal. These actions represent the first fruits of a globally focused effort to attach assets of the Indian government to satisfy the Devas Multimedia's awards," a Devas spokesperson said.

"Air India being one of the biggest users of AAI is highly impacted," the spokesperson added. The enforcement strategy requires IATA to "garnish" air navigation

charges, aerodrome charges, among others, held by it on behalf of the AAI, either at its head office in Montreal or at any of its branches worldwide.

"The Commercial Division of the Quebec Superior Court accepted to designate a judge on an urgent basis to hear the applications to quash and stay the seizures/garnishing. The hearing will take place on January 4," a senior official at the Union Finance Ministry said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

'Jobless rate hit high of 7.9% in December'

'Third wave may undo economic gains'

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

India's unemployment rate hit a four-month high in December, data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed on Monday. The unemployment rate rose to 7.9% in December from 7% in November, its highest since 8.3% in August. Economic activity has been hit in the country after an increase in cases of the Omicron coronavirus and restrictions imposed by many States.

Urban unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in December from 8.2% in the previous month while the rural unemployment rate was at 7.3%, up from 6.4%, the data



Urban unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in December.

showed. Many economists worry that the Omicron variant could reverse the economic recovery seen in the previous quarter. CMIE's data on unemployment is closely watched by economists as the Centre doesn't release monthly figures.

RBI approves small, offline e-payments

It aims to promote usage in rural areas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come out with the framework for facilitating small-value digital payments in offline mode, a move that would promote digital payments in semi-urban and rural areas.

The framework incorporates feedback received from the pilot experiments on offline transactions conducted in different parts of the country between September 2020 and June 2021.

An offline digital payment does not require Internet or telecom connectivity.

"Under this new framework, such payments can be carried out face-to-face (proximity mode) using any channel or instrument like cards, wallets and mobile devices," the RBI said.



"Such transactions would not require an Additional Factor of Authentication. Since the transactions are offline, alerts (by way of SMS and / or e-mail) will be received by the customer after a time lag," it added.

There is a limit of ₹200 per transaction and an overall limit of ₹2,000 until the balance in the account is replenished. The RBI said the framework took effect 'immediately'.

The deafening silence of scientists

Few Indian scientists argue for the freedom of thought and are able to stand up against pseudoscience



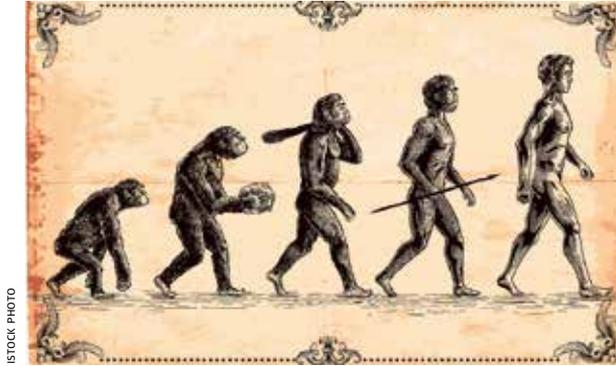
C.P. RAJENDRAN

In December 1954, Meghnad Saha, one of India's foremost astrophysicists and an elected parliamentarian, wrote to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, "My request to you is that you do not smother your Desdemonas on the report of men like this particular Iago. I sometimes believe there are too many Iagos about you, as there have been in history about every person of power and prestige". By referring to the characters in Shakespeare's *Othello*, an aggrieved Saha was showing his displeasure at a situation that he perceived to be bad for Indian science wherein the courtship between the state and science was being ruined by the Machiavellian advisers of the then Prime Minister.

A glorious tradition forgotten

We have come a long way from Nehruvian times when scientists could afford to be directly critical of the Prime Minister and still expect to get a pat on their shoulder in return. Over the past few years, a pernicious political landscape that encourages intolerance and superstition has been developed. This has proved to be non-conducive for the time-tested scientific model and freedom of inquiry. For the creation of knowledge, one should be able to think and express themselves freely. One also needs to have a space for dissent, which is a fundamental requirement for democracies to thrive. Are our scientists vocal enough to argue for the freedom of thought and are they able to stand up against pseudoscience? Their silence has given rise to the perception that they too are complicit in creating an unhealthy atmosphere of ultra-nationalism and jingoism, where the glorious tradition followed by socially committed scientists like Saha is forgotten.

We have seen this lack of reactivity from Indian scientists and science academies on many occasions in the recent past, starting with the conduct of the 102nd Indian Science Congress in 2015. How did a session suffused with extreme nationalism



ISTOCK PHOTO

and promoting junk science find its way into this prestigious meet? How was it vetted and approved by a high-profile committee containing the country's front-ranking scientists? Completely sidelining the real scientific contributions made in ancient and medieval times, ridiculous claims were made in that forum about ancient 'Bharat' being a repository of all modern knowledge. Except a few, like the late Pushpa Bhargava, who always fretted about the lack of scientific temper among Indian scientists, most of our leaders in science chose to ignore something that was patently wrong.

Pseudo-scientific remarks by responsible political leaders have continued to hog the limelight ever since. Even when a former Union Minister insisted that Darwin's Theory of Evolution was scientifically wrong, leading scientists remained silent save a few. More recently, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief made a misinformed statement that the DNA of all the people in India has been the same for 40,000 years. His message clearly goes against the proven fact that Indians have mixed genetic lineages originating from Africa, the Mediterranean, and Eurasian steppes. As a part of revisionist history-writing, the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur has now issued a 2022 calendar. The purpose of it is to argue for a Vedic cultural foundation for the Indus Valley Civilisation – a theory that goes against all the available evidence; morphing an Indus Valley single-horned bull seal into a horse will not solve the evidentiary lacuna. A retinue of junk science propagators and new-age 'gurus' have been flourishing in this

anti-science environment, often marketing questionable concoctions including cow products to cure COVID-19 and even homosexuality, as though it is some sort of disease. Pseudoscience has provided a foundational base for a huge money-making industry that successfully peddles quackery by sustaining and exploiting the people's ignorance.

Our social and political life resonates uncannily with the fascist era of the 1930s-40s when Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini argued that the "white race" was locked in a deadly demographic competition with races of "lesser purity" whose numbers were growing much faster. It can be instructive in our current political climate to reflect on how science failed as a bulwark against such regressive viewpoints. The science historian, Massimo Mazzotti, at the University of California, Berkeley, ably showed how the fascist regime in Italy, using various intimidation and surveillance tactics, made academic elites toe the official line. The faculties did so without making an actual anti-fascist choice. Instead, they entered the grey zone of cynical detachment. It was due to cynicism and careerism that the scientists of Italy derided racist policies as foolish in private but did not bother to question them publicly. Like Italy, racism and 'othering' was very much a part of the political landscape in Germany under the Nazi regime, which saw a big exodus of high-ranking scientists with Jewish tags.

Reasons for toeing the line

As discussed by Naresh Dadhich, an Indian theoretical physicist, in an article, one of the reasons for this ac-

quiescence is that scientific research relies almost entirely on funding from the government. So, a fear of retribution acts against the idea of engagement with society. Another equally valid reason is that our contemporary science researchers remain entirely cut off from liberal intellectual discourse, unlike in the initial years after Independence. For most scientists today, the idea of science as a form of argument remains foreign. For many of them, exposure to the social sciences is minimal at university. They also don't get trained in a broad range of social topics at the school level.

Globally, STEM students downplay altruism and arguably demonstrate less social concern than students from other streams. The blame squarely lies with the pedagogy followed in our science education system. The leading science and technology institutes recruit students right after school and largely host one or two perfunctory social science courses. Students, thus, mostly remain oblivious to the general liberal intellectual discourse. This issue is of major concern, as the 21st century is witnessing a new rise of illiberal democracy with fascist tendencies that generate intolerance and exclusion in various parts of the world, including India. We are also living at a time when scientific advice is marginalised in public policy debates ranging from natural resource use to environmental impacts.

In the early 20th century, many leading scientists were deeply engaged with philosophy and had developed a distinctive way of thinking about the implications of science on society. They were much more proactive about societal issues. The continuity of that legacy appears to have broken. A cowed-down scientific enterprise is not helpful in retaining the secular autonomy of academic pursuits. To regain this cultural space among younger practitioners, science education must include pedagogical inputs that help learners take a deliberative stand against false theories that could undermine civil society and democratic structures.

C.P. Rajendran is an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru and an author of a forthcoming book, 'Earthquakes of the Indian Subcontinent'. Views are personal

China constructing bridge on Pangong lake in Ladakh

It will bring down time to move troops and equipment

DINAKAR PERI

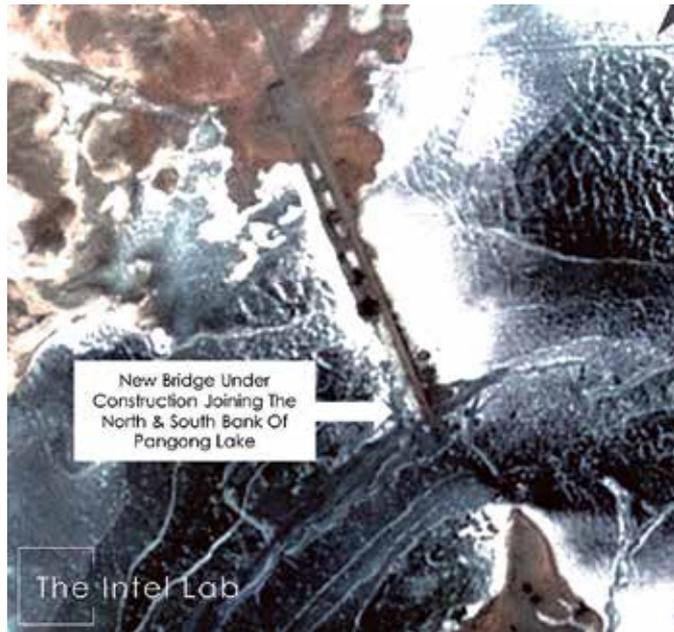
NEW DELHI

China is constructing a bridge in eastern Ladakh connecting the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake), which will significantly bring down the time for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move troops and equipment between the two sectors, two official sources independently confirmed on Monday.

“On the north bank, there is a PLA garrison at Kurnak fort and on the south bank at Moldo, and the distance between the two is around 200 km. The new bridge between the closest points on two banks, which is around 500 m, will bring down the movement time between the two sectors from around 12 hours to three or four hours,” one of the sources said. The bridge is located around 25 km ahead of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the source stated.

The construction had been going on for some time and it would reduce the overall distance by 140-150 km, the other source said.

Earlier, the PLA had to take a roundabout crossing the Rudok county. But now the bridge would provide a direct axis, the first source said, adding that the biggest advantage with the new bridge was the inter-sector



New link: A satellite image of the region where the bridge appears to be constructed. ■ [TWITTER/@DETRESFA_](https://twitter.com/DETRESFA_)

movement as the time would come down significantly. “They need to build piers for the bridge, which has been under way,” the source stated.

The bridge is in China's territory and the Indian Army would have to now factor this in its operational plans, the source noted.

India holds one-third of the 135-km-long boomerang-shaped lake located at an altitude of over 14,000 feet. The lake, a glacial melt, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jutting down, referred to as fingers.

The north bank, which

has much higher differences in perception of the LAC than the south bank, was the initial site of the clashes in early May 2020, while tensions on the south bank flared up later in August.

The Indian Army got tactical advantage over the PLA on the south bank in August-end by occupying several peaks lying vacant since 1962, gaining a dominating view of the Moldo area. On the north bank too, the Indian troops set up posts facing PLA positions on the ridge-lines of Finger 4.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

China constructing bridge on Pangong lake

In February 2020, as part of the first phase of disengagement, both sides agreed for complete disengagement on the north and south banks. The Indian Army has a permanent position near Finger 3, the Dhan Singh Thapa post, while the PLA has a base east of Finger 8. The south bank leads to the Kailash range and to the Chushul sector.

Since the August action, China has taken up construction of alternate roads away from our line of sight, a defence official stated. As reported by *The Hindu* last June, China had intensified construction work behind the main confrontation

points in Aksai Chin.

A satellite image of the area put out by an open source intelligence analyst with Twitter handle @detresfa_ shows a bridge like structure between the closest points of the two banks.

In a separate incident of a video by Chinese media showing PLA soldiers with a map in Galwan on January 01, an Army source said it was not in the location of the clash last year or the buffer zone set up after the first phase of disengagement. “It appears to be propaganda. The place [clash site] doesn’t have any markings as shown in the video,” the source 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-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.
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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.