

VEDHIK  
**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.

## CONTENTS

- Editorials - Memories of war and peace  
GSP 01 B
- Editorials - China's bridge over Pangong Tso  
GSP 02 A
- Editorials - The Chinese challenge uncovers  
India's fragilities  
GSP 02 A
- News - Govt. says ₹ 8 lakh cap best way  
forward Part I  
GSP 02 M

## CONTENTS

- News - Govt. says ₹ 8 lakh cap best way forward Part II  
GSP 02 M
- Editorials - Third time lucky  
GSP 03 A
- News - Traditional vaccines just as effective, say scientist  
GSP 03 L
- News - 10.74 lakh birds flock to Chilika Lake  
GSP 03 P

# Memories of war and peace

It is unbecoming of a mature democracy when the government indulges in a tug-of-war for credit



SACHIN PILOT

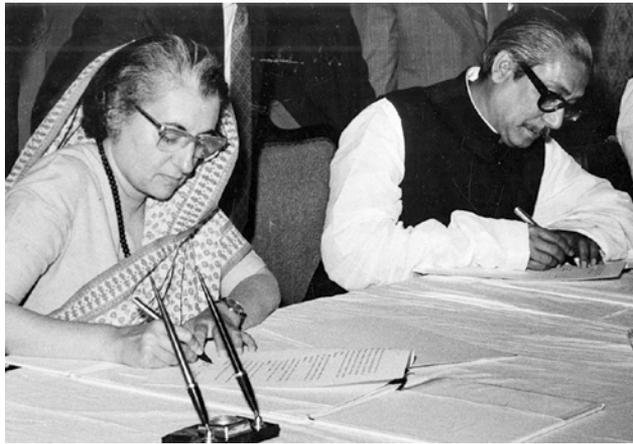
Recently, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The ruling dispensation conveniently left out mentioning India's only woman Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, and honouring her contribution. I will not delve into their pettiness. They perhaps have their reasons to ignore historical facts because they have far too little from their own past to write home about.

We must never lose sight of the circumstances under which the war, which was among the shortest in the world, was fought. India won freedom for Bangladesh in just 13 days. The war began on December 3 and ended on December 16 when the Eastern Command of the Pakistan military signed the Instrument of Surrender in Dhaka. India was not an economic or a military superpower.

## A fighter pilot

I grew up listening to the stories that my father, Rajesh Pilot, narrated about his own experiences as a fighter pilot in the war. He was posted in the eastern sector at Jorhat, Assam. In October that year, less than two months before the war broke out, he was promoted as Squadron Leader.

My father and his colleagues flew a modified de Havilland Canada DHC-4 Caribou for the bombing missions. We didn't have enough fighter aircraft to do the job, which is why Caribou, a transport aircraft, was pressed into action. I still vividly remember stories of his mission. On December 8, five days into the war, he was leading a mission to bomb 10 crucial locations controlled by the Pakistani military. His call sign was 40 and the radar's call sign was Good Wife. Somehow the Pakistani side learned about the imminent attack. Few minutes into the sortie, the Air Traffic Control (ATC) told him to begin the descent as opposed to the schedule decided at the pre-flight briefing. As he began the descent, he thought something was amiss. His intuition served him well because down below, the anti-aircraft guns of



Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the Prime Minister of Bangla Desh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, signing the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace in Dacca, Bangla Desh, in 1972. • PIB

the Pakistani side were waiting. Inside the cockpit, with his mates tailing him in a formation, he pulled the stick with all the strength. The aircraft shot up. Just then, another message came, "40, this the original Good Wife, please maintain your height as was discussed during the briefing." The Indian ATC deliberately did not disclose the height. On their way back to the airfield, another message crackled, this time with a distinct Punjabi twang. "40, where are you off to?" And he replied, "Don't you worry, I'll be back again tomorrow."

## Meaning of nationalism

The bonhomie, love and respect that I saw between my father and his colleagues in the Indian Air Force was unmissable. They would sit together to chat about the 1971 experiences, and ribbing and calling out each other for the slightest exaggeration in their respective roles.

My father was a second-generation military man. His father was a havildar in the Indian Army and his dream was to see his son become a commissioned officer, something that he could never achieve. Though I joined politics very early on, I too craved to follow my father and grandfather. I wanted to feel the same pride, and the exhilaration of wearing that uniform. That was why I joined the Indian Territorial Army (Unit-124 Sikh) in 2012.

Nationalism is not and cannot be

imposed on you; it is something that you grow and live with. It is as organic as a child learning to walk. The chest-beating variety of nationalists may want you to believe otherwise. They forget that Indira Gandhi was an Indian Prime Minister, not a Congress Prime Minister. It is unfortunate that attempts are made to try and diminish her role. The past simply cannot be erased. The military leadership in 1971 was guided by political will from Delhi. It was an unparalleled symphony between the military and political leadership.

Some say that the Congress does not do enough drum beating; that we fail to own our own heroes. I would say nationalism is not and should not be reduced to a competition.

## Above the political divide

The 1971 war was not a Congress victory, it was India's victory. It is a disservice to the country and to all the men who lost their lives in 1971 when the government of the day indulges in a shallow tug-of-war for credit. The country's sovereignty and integrity are not up for debate; they should remain over and above the political divide.

To this day, the Indian armed forces remains the most well-preserved institution because successive governments have not interfered with its working. And we must do all that we can to maintain this tradition. The Bharatiya Janata Party government was swift to take ownership of

India's air strike at Balakot in 2019, but did it accept or apologise for the intelligence failure that led to the Pulwama terror attack that year?

In 1996, when Deve Gowda was in the Prime Minister's chair, the government, knowing fully well my father's connection to the Northeast where he had served for 15 years, roped him in to speak to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) faction. He flew out of the country to carry out the behind-the-scenes talks. After that, Mr. Gowda met the NSCN-IM leaders on February 3, 1997, in Zurich, Switzerland. In August 1997, the NSCN-IM entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Centre, starting what became one of the longest-running peace talks in India. That is Indian politics.

In winter 2001, the Naga leaders returned to India. My father was not around to see his effort bear fruit; he had passed away in a road accident in June 2000. They came to our home, paid their respects to him and candidly said that they returned to India largely because of the initiative taken under the previous government. It was a remarkable moment and left an indelible impression on me.

The current government suffers from incurable amnesia. It forgets the united front that the political leadership put up in face of the worst attack on Indian democracy when terrorists stormed Parliament just over 20 years ago, on December 13, 2001.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi was the Leader of the Opposition. She told Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, "Mr. Prime Minister, this is an assault on Indian democracy. You take whatever action you deem fit. We will support you." Ideological barriers do not come in the way of national security.

Political manoeuvring in the name of national security can be detrimental for our country. Policies and priorities for national security can't be compromised because of political advantages or disadvantages.

In the short run, you may make a few gains. The jingoism may seem to provide some political dividends, but in the long run, it will harm the very edifice on which our country and its proud history was built.

Sachin Pilot is a Congress MLA from Tonk

## EXPLAINER

# China's bridge over Pangong Tso

What is the current situation in Eastern Ladakh? How has India responded to the new developments?

DINAKAR PERI

**The story so far:** China is building a bridge across the Pangong Tso within its territory connecting the North and South Banks which will significantly reduce the time for moving troops and equipment between the two sides. This is part of the overall infrastructure build up by China on its side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to address deficiencies it noticed since the standoff began in May 2020.

### What is the status on the ground in Eastern Ladakh?

The two countries are working out details for the 14th round of Corps Commander talks to take forward the disengagement that has stalled after two phases of disengagement. The 13th round of Corps Commander talks remained inconclusive with the two sides releasing sharp statements on the outcome. At the same time, the two Armies had prepared to keep over 1 lakh soldiers on both sides deployed through the extreme winter in the high altitude region.

Since May 2020, the two sides have been holding regular military to military talks on the ground and also diplomatic level talks in addition to the 13 rounds of Corps Commander level talks to resolve the standoff. The two sides have so far undertaken two phases of disengagement, from both banks of Pangong Tso last February and from Gogra in August in addition to Galwan after the violent clash. Other friction areas yet to be resolved are Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang.

The two sides had also agreed on a moratorium on patrolling in the disengaged areas and set up buffer zones until a resumption is discussed by both sides through diplomatic and military talks. India has insisted on comprehensive de-escalation of the situation in Eastern Ladakh which includes disengagement from all friction points, de-escalation and working out of new protocols.

### What is the importance of the bridge over Pangong Tso?

The bridge over Pangong Tso is located around 25 kms ahead of the LAC in Chinese territory and will significantly reduce the time for movement between People's Liberation Army (PLA) garrison at Kurnak fort on the North Bank and the Modlo garrison on the South Bank, a distance of



**Earlier, PLA had to take a round about between the two sides of the Pangong lake which takes around 12 hours but the new bridge, around 500m long, would cut down the time to 3-4 hours.**

around 200 kms.

The initial tensions as the standoff began in May 2020 were on the North Bank of Pangong Tso with PLA troops moving upto Finger 4 and building permanent structures. However, tensions had flared up on the South Bank in August 2020. The Indian Army gained tactical advantage over the PLA on the south bank in end August by occupying several peaks lying vacant since 1962 gaining a dominating view of the Spanggur gap and Moldo area. During this, the two sides had also deployed tanks at heights of over 15,000 feet and shots were fired in the air on the LAC for the first time in decades.

This has prompted China to build deep alternate roads behind the friction points away from the line of sight, officials said. There has been massive construction of accommodation for housing of troops closer to the LAC and also road infrastructure for movement of troops and mechanised forces, officials say.

Earlier, PLA had to take a round about between the two sides of the Pangong lake which takes around 12 hours but the new bridge, around 500m long, would cut down the time to 3-4 hours. Construction has been ongoing for few months now, officials said.

India holds one third of the 135 km long boomerang shaped lake located at an altitude of over 14,000 feet.

### How is India responding to developments on the ground?

The bridge is well within Chinese territory, officials say while stating the implications of this new bridge will have to be factored in the Indian Army's operational planning for

the future.

On its part, over the last few years India has been focusing on infrastructure development in forward areas and improving connectivity to the forward areas. Large scale construction of roads, bridges and tunnels is underway all along the LAC.

Ahead of the winter, the Army had completed advanced winter stocking for the troops in forward areas, including rations, specialised fuel and ammunition among others as well as repair and upgrade of habitat and infrastructure.

While the process of disengagement and de-escalation stretches on, the two armies are geared to remain in the high altitude areas.

Army Chief Gen Manoj Naravane said in October that if they (China) are there to stay at the LAC we are there to stay too. "We will be in LoC-kind (Line of Control) of a situation but not as active as the LoC," he said when asked if they are looking at a LoC like situation at the LAC.

**No metaphorical bridges:** A file photo of the Pangong Tso lake.

## THE GIST

- China is building a bridge across the Pangong Tso lake within its territory connecting the North and South Banks which will reduce the time taken to go around the lake from 12 hours to 3-4 hours.

- India and China are working out details for the 14th round of Corps Commander talks to take forward the disengagement that has stalled after two phases from both banks of Pangong Tso last February and from Gogra and Galwan. Other areas yet to be resolved are Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang.

- On its part, over the last few years India has been focusing on infrastructure development and improving connectivity in forward areas. Large scale construction of roads, bridges and tunnels is underway all along the LAC.

# The Chinese challenge uncovers India's fragilities

The border crisis has laid bare political, economic and diplomatic problems — the result of choices made after 2014



SUSHANT SINGH

Like Banquo's ghost, the 1962 Sino-India war hangs like a shadow over the current state of bilateral ties between India and China. A military defeat close to six decades ago has no real bearing on the current border tensions, but is a constant reminder to Delhi, like Banquo's ghost is to Macbeth, of its own fears and insecurities. An outcome of India's choices since 2014, these weaknesses have been shown up by the prospect of a conflict with China, which may no longer be immediate but it does not feel as far-fetched and remote as it did just two years ago.

## China's diplomatic moves

Nearly 20 months after the border crisis began in Ladakh, China has pressed on with aggressive diplomatic and military gestures against India. Beijing recently renamed 15 places in Arunachal Pradesh, following the six it had done in 2017, weeks after the Dalai Lama visited Tawang. China justifies the renaming as being done on the basis of its historical, cultural and administrative jurisdiction over the area — these old names existed since ancient times which had been changed by India with its "illegal occupation". The External Affairs Ministry said that the move by Beijing 'does not alter' the fact that Arunachal Pradesh — itself a Sanskritised rechristening of the North-East Frontier Agency in 1971 on being made a Union Territory — was an integral part of India.

Possession is indeed nine-tenths of the law but China's renaming drive is one prong of its plan to assert its territorial claims in disputed border areas. On January 1, 2022, Beijing's new land border law came into force, which provides the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with full responsibility to take steps against "invasion, encroachment, infiltration, provoca-

tion" and safeguard Chinese territory. This law supports — and mutually reinforces — the construction of 628 Xiaokang border villages by China along its disputed border with India. As per available satellite imagery, at least two of these villages have been constructed on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh. These villages will come in handy for Beijing when the principle of 'settled areas' is invoked to resolve the border dispute in the future.

It is not just Beijing but even the diplomats posted at the Chinese Embassy in Delhi who have been emboldened by India's cautious response. Last month, Political Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy, Zhou Yongsheng wrote an angry letter to Indian Members of Parliament — including two Union Ministers, Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Ramdas Athawale — for attending a meet organised by the Tibetan government-in-exile. The letter asked them to not engage with "out-and-out separatist political group and an illegal organization". This angry missive from an Embassy official to two Ministers has earned no reproach from the Government for the Chinese Ambassador. It did not even beget an official condemnation from the External Affairs Ministry.

## Submissive response

The reasons for such submissiveness by the Narendra Modi government towards the Chinese are not difficult to understand. Delhi has run out of proactive options against Beijing that will force the Chinese leadership to change course on its India policy. Tibet and the Dalai Lama were often projected as a trump card but evidently are not. Beijing does not care for its declining popularity among the Indian populace. The two countries have an increasingly lopsided trade relationship driven by Indian dependency on Chinese manufacturing, a situation further worsened by the Government's mishandling of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Delhi has little geopolitical or economic leverage over Beijing to boast of. There are no arrows left in Mr. Modi's quiver. The best Delhi can do is to prevent



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

any further loss of territory to China with extensive military deployment on the LAC, while hoping that Beijing, either with Moscow's urging or otherwise, will give Mr. Modi an honourable diplomatic exit out of this crisis. If India was to give it back to the Chinese as good as it gets, Beijing may take it as an affront, further smothering Indian desire for a smooth end to the crisis.

To restore the *status quo ante* on the LAC as of April 2020, India undertook internal balancing of its military from the Pakistan border to the China border and external rebalancing through a closer partnership with the United States in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the U.S.) has, however, remained a non-military grouping. The signing of the AUKUS (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S.) and the humiliating American exit from Afghanistan made it crystal clear that for all the intelligence sharing and logistics support from the U.S., India will have to deal with the Chinese challenge on the border on its own. In decline since 2017, India's economy is incapable of supporting such an endeavour. The Modi government has now placed its hopes on Moscow, which seems keen to play a mediator between India and China. Russian officials say that their offer of a Foreign Ministers meeting, if not a leaders' summit, of the Russia-India-China grouping is on the table but Delhi first wants to see some steps from China towards resolving the border crisis.

## Now revealed

The Chinese challenge has laid bare globally India's political, economic and diplomatic fragilities

under Mr. Modi, and this has grim portends of how challenges in future will be managed. Worried about its northern borders and the threat of a two-front collusive threat, the Modi government and the ruling party are no longer as vociferous on Pakistan. Even if viciously attacking Pakistan has been an electorally rewarding domestic agenda for Mr. Modi, he has been forced to stay away from even mentioning India's western neighbour in any of his recent electoral speeches. With 'development' and 'employment' no longer Mr. Modi's calling card, that vacuum is being filled by the most horrific attacks by Hindutva bigots on Christians and Muslims under the benign gaze of the Hindu majoritarian government.

Because of the China factor, the U.S. is currently looking away even as India mistreats its minorities and its democracy stands diminished. That is unlikely to continue for long if India is to be the democratic counter in Asia to the rise of a one-party authoritarian state like China, one that is now keen to offer its own governance and growth model to the world. India's difficult diplomatic and military engagement with China is going to leave it more dependent on U.S. support, rendering the Modi government more vulnerable to American pressure on 'shared values'.

A decade ago, many observers had warned that the emergence of an increasingly assertive and confident China under Xi is going to be to India's detriment. The signs were there when PLA soldiers walked into Chumar even as Mr. Modi hosted Mr. Xi in Ahmedabad in 2014. The Doklam crisis of 2017 only lulled the Government into thinking that the worst was over. It, instead, triggered the border crisis of 2020. With the loss in the 1962 war, India lost its pre-eminent position in Asia; with this display of weakness six decades later, India is in danger of losing its dominant influence even in South Asia.

India's internal situation, from Nagaland to Kashmir, with the minorities under attack, is not going to help either. India made its choices after 2014, and the China

border crisis has only shown them up.

## Onus on the leader

With a rising China as its neighbour and a more self-centred U.S. — which is uncomfortable with India's reliable partner, Russia — as its friend, Delhi continues to face difficult choices. Not made from a position of strength, in future too, these choices will be as much domestic as they will be in the domain of foreign policy. A collegial and deliberative model of decision-making would work best but is unlikely to be followed if the track record of the current dispensation is any indicator. Pushing a domestic narrative through a compromised media is one thing but dealing with the geopolitical realities at a difficult time is a different ball game.

Put under the harsh glare, a domestically divided, economically weak and diplomatically boastful India has been found wanting in its ability to deal with future challenges. The immediate challenge, however, remains China. It cannot be wished away and must be tackled.

As the Chief Minister of Gujarat, when Mr. Modi was barred from most western capitals after the 2002 riots, he frequently travelled to China. He made a show of learning from China's remarkable and unique growth story, and applying it to the 'Gujarat Model' which he promised to India in 2014. After he became the Prime Minister, Mr. Modi has met Mr. Xi at least 18 times, but has not had even one telephone call since the border crisis began.

As a proponent and exemplar of personality-centric diplomacy, which included two informal summits with Mr. Xi, there has been a surprising lack of any personalised move from Mr. Modi so far. Now that his generals, advisers and Ministers have failed to deliver, it is time for Mr. Modi to step up and personally resolve the crisis. He has no excuse left. Allowing things to fester will only ensure that India pays a price far higher than it can afford.

Sushant Singh is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research

# Govt. says ₹8 lakh EWS income cap 'best way forward'

## Allow NEET counselling, it urges SC

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

The Centre, in the Supreme Court on Wednesday, backed its committee's recommendation to retain the ₹8-lakh annual income criterion to identify the economically weaker sections (EWS) of society as the "best way forward" and urged the court to let NEET counselling continue.

Appearing before a Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and A.S. Bopanna, the government said it would not let anything come in the way of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and the "poorest of the poor" getting the benefits of reservation. "We will not accept any position whereby OBC or EWS is deprived of something that is legitimately due to them," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted.

The government, meanwhile, said the NEET admission process could not wait for the conclusion of "lengthy arguments" in court.

 Graduate and postgraduate counselling are stuck... There is a justified request from resident doctors to continue with the counselling. Society cannot go into lengthy arguments with the situation now

**TUSHAR MEHTA**  
Solicitor General

The court was hearing the case urgently following the Centre's repeated oral requests on January 3 and 4 to list the case as NEET counselling was in limbo.

On Wednesday, Mr. Mehta said the government's statement in court on November 25 to put NEET counselling on hold while reviewing the EWS criterion had "never anticipated" the current situation. Resident doctors had clashed with the police amid protests in the Capital after the counselling was suspended.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

# Govt. says ₹8 lakh cap 'best way forward'

“Graduate and postgraduate counselling are stuck. We feel their [doctors’] issue is genuine. We need to respond to the bona fide request of doctors... There is a justified request from resident doctors to continue with the counselling... Society cannot go into lengthy arguments with the situation now... Let us proceed with the counselling,” Mr. Mehta conveyed a sense of urgency.

But senior advocate Arvind Datar, for a petitioner, questioned the government’s plea to allow NEET counselling process to resume. “By counselling, does he [Mr. Mehta] mean the government will conclude NEET medical admissions on the basis of ₹ 8 lakh limit,” he asked.

The government committee report showed that no exercise was undertaken before the ₹8 lakh threshold was fixed to identify EWS. “There was no application of mind... And now they are trying to justify the ₹ 8 lakh limit,” he stated. The cloud of doubt about the ₹8 lakh limit has led to a serious situation.

“The entire counselling has been stopped,” he observed.

The case started in the top court with several NEET aspirants challenging a July 29, 2021 notification of the Centre announcing 27% quota to OBCs and 10% reservation to EWS in the All India Quota (AIQ) for NEET.

The hearings, however, took an unexpected turn in October-November last year when the court itself started questioning the very basis of the income criterion of ₹ 8 lakh to determine EWS, asking whether the figure came out of “thin air” or was even an automatic adoption of the OBC criteria.

## ‘Grossly unfair’

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for another petitioner, said the July 29 notification came five months after the NEET admission process commenced in March. “The government cannot change the rules of the game after game has begun. This is grossly unfair,” he submitted. He also questioned the OBC quota in AIQ.

The court adjourned the hearing to Thursday.

# Third time lucky?

The economy needs closer attention for a less bumpy 2022 amid the latest COVID-19 wave

India's post-COVID economic recovery remains delicately poised at the turn of the new year – the third successive year under the shadow of the pandemic. With the Union Budget for 2022-23 less than four weeks away, the latest set of numbers capturing different aspects of the economy present a mixed picture with persistent pressure points. COVID-19 restrictions are already denting India's services exporters' order books, even as merchandise exports have hit a record high in December. Worryingly though, imports grew even faster last month than exports, keeping the merchandise trade deficit at an elevated \$22 billion, just a tad less than the record \$22.9 billion in November. The eight core sectors had a disappointing November, but GST collections from that month were reasonably healthy at around ₹1.3-lakh crore, albeit a three-month low. GST compensation cess revenues touched a record high in November, but customs duty collections dipped to a five-month low. The Purchasing Managers' Indices (PMI) for manufacturing and services were robust for December, but have moderated from previous months even as input cost pressures remain a headache for businesses along with the prospect of the latest virus wave upending normalcy again. For the first time in four months, firms surveyed for the PMI by IHS Markit reported 'broad-based' job losses in manufacturing and services in December. Global headwinds are shifting after the surge of COVID cases and disruptions, even as inflationary forces have central bankers bracing for interest rate hikes from the U.S. Federal Reserve this year.

It will be equally challenging for North Block mandarins to conjure up an appropriate mix of relief and support measures for businesses and jobs – preferably going beyond the credit guarantees that appear to have lost traction in sanctions and disbursements in recent months. This needs to be accompanied by a fresh ramp up in health-care spending, including on COVID inoculations and booster shots, as well as maintaining the bullish stance on public capital expenditure with a demonstrably greater purpose in getting actual projects off the ground. The prospect of more disruptions looms large, even though their extent and impact on GDP may be uncertain at this point. Preparing for the worst may be a good idea, even if it is accepted that manufacturing suffered less in the second wave than during the initial lockdowns in 2020, and may likely be even better prepared to cope with the ongoing third wave. Yet, there is a risk that damage to contact-intensive services sectors that have had another topsy-turvy year with lakhs of jobs at stake, and have barely struggled back from the first two waves, could be permanently debilitating this time around, if mobility restrictions spiral in tandem with cases. More effective interventions, with a stable and clear articulation of policy direction, could have a calming effect in 2022.

# Traditional vaccines just as effective, says scientist

## mRNA jabs shiny new toys: Hotez

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Vaccines like Biological E's Corbevax and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin that are made by traditional methods are "just as effective" as the latest mRNA technology-based vaccines, says U.S. scientist and vaccine developer Dr. Peter Hotez.

He announced last week that his research teams would transfer production technology to companies in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Botswana free of patents.

According to Dr. Hotez, who is the dean of Houston-based Baylor College of Medicine's Tropical Medicine School and chair at Texas Children's Hospital, the traditional "protein subunit vaccines" and "live inactivated vaccines" are cheaper and simpler to produce at the scale required for low- and middle-income countries.

### New technology

"We never really saw the advantage of mRNA, at least for a global health vaccine... because it's a brand new technology and it's going to take years to figure out how you scale it up to make nine billion doses for Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America," Dr. Hotez told *The Hindu* in an interview, where he called the new vaccines "shiny new toys".

Science policy makers, particularly in the U.S., were "too focused" on speed and innovation and not on ensuring universal vaccination, he noted. In particular, he said the method developed by him and Dr. Maria Elena Bottazzi through the same "yeast fermentation expression technology" used to make the Recombinant Hepatitis-B vaccine first approved in the 1980s,



Dr. Peter Hotez

was also safe for children, and less likely to cause vaccine hesitancy among parents, as it has been used for decades.

### Focus on quantity

Given that even after three or four doses, mRNA vaccines were not effective in stopping COVID-19 variants such as Omicron, it was necessary to "balance the portfolio" by focusing on quantity of vaccines rather than the newest technology, Dr. Hotez observed.

Traditional vaccines such as a virion (entire virus particle) and subunit ones (pathogen fragment) contain inactivated parts of the virus that enter the body as antigens and trigger an immune response. mRNA or DNA vaccines contain modified genes that use the body's cells to make the immune-triggering antigen.

"Delta arose out of an unvaccinated population in India in 2021. Then Omicron arose out of an unvaccinated population in southern Africa later in the year, and as long as we refuse to vaccinate the world's low- and middle-income countries, Mother Nature will continue to deliver horrible new variants of concern," Dr. Hotez stated. At present the world "just needs vaccines that work".

(Read interview at <https://bit.ly/HotezQA>)

# 10.74 lakh birds flock to Chilika Lake

106 personnel deployed for bird counting in subcontinent's largest wintering ground

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Chilika Lake, the largest brackish water lake and wintering ground of birds in the Indian subcontinent, saw a million birds, including the uncommon Mongolian gull, visiting the waterbody this year.

As per the Water Bird Status Survey-2022 conducted in the Chilika, 10,74,173 water birds (107 species) and 37,953 individuals (76 wetland dependent species) were counted in the entire lagoon. Last year, the count in the Chilika was over 12 lakh. Members who were part of the census also reported sighting the Mongolian gull.

The census was undertaken jointly on Tuesday by the Odisha State Wildlife Organisation, the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) and the Bombay Natural History Society. A total of 106



**Winged visitors:** Flamingos at Chilika Lake in Odisha. ■ FILE PHOTO

personnel, including bird experts from government- and non-government organisations, were deployed. The lagoon was divided strategically into 21 segments for the census.

A total of 3,58,889 birds (97 species) were counted in Nalabana Bird Sanctuary – a decrease by 65,899 from the previous year.

The decrease is attributed to high water level and presence of water in cultivated fields in adjoining areas. Water birds love to flock to large mudflats.

of the northern pintail, common coot and common pochard was noticed.

## 'Highest in last decade'

"The increase in numbers for the greater flamingo at Nalabana mudflat indicates that the restoration at Nalabana is effective. This year's greater flamingo count was the highest in the last decade. It is largely due to appropriate management of mudflats," a CDA official said. Overall, the local resident species such as purple swamp-hen, purple heron, Indian moorhen, and jacanas were found in higher numbers.

Chilika Lake hosts birds migrating from thousands of miles away from the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, Aral Sea, remote parts of Russia, Mongolia, Central and Southeast Asia, Ladakh and the Himalayas. The winged guests find the vast mud-field and abundant fish stock suitable to congregate.

"Among the three pintail species of ducks, the northern pintail (1,72,285), gadwall (1,53,985), Eurasian wigeon (1,50,843) accounted for over one lakh in this year's count," the report said. However, the population of gadwall and Eurasian wigeon was less than that of the previous year.

There was a marginal decrease in the number of species such as the northern shoveler, tufted duck and red crested pochard. An increase in the population

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

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

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