

VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

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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India slams 'communal mindset' of OIC over remarks on hijab row

Islamic organisation asked UN to take 'necessary measures'

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday hit out at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), saying it was "hijacked by vested interests".

"Issues in India are considered and resolved in accordance with our constitutional framework and mechanisms, as well as democratic ethos and polity. The communal mindset of the OIC Secretariat does not allow for a proper appreciation of these realities," Arindam Bagchi, Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, said after the OIC commented on the hijab controversy in Karnataka.

"OIC continues to be hi-



acked by vested interests to further their nefarious propaganda against India," he added.

The OIC on Monday called upon the UN and the Human Rights Council to take "necessary measures" following reports of Muslim students being prevented from wearing hijab in Karnataka. "The OIC General Secretariat further urges India

to ensure the safety, security and well-being of the Muslim community while protecting the way of life of its members and to bring the instigators and perpetrators of acts of violence and hate crimes against them to justice," it said in a statement.

Pakistan, a leading member of the OIC, had criticised the developments in Karnataka.

India may come under pressure on Russia

After Quad meeting last week, the Munich Conference is likely to be dominated by Ukraine situation

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

European countries will make a push for India to take a stronger line on Russia as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar travels to attend the annual Munich Security Conference (MSC). He is likely to meet his counterparts, including the European Union's Josep Borrell and Germany's Annalena Baerbock, during the conference, which is expected to focus on the fears of a conflict in Ukraine.

According to sources involved in the preparations for the visit, the discussions will build on similar conversations held with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Quad Ministerial meeting in Melbourne last week, and high-level meetings in South Block with vis-



Hard line: Antony Blinken, Marise Payne, S. Jaishankar and Yoshihiro Nishiyama at the Quad meet in Melbourne. ■ FILE PHOTO

iting British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development (FCDO) Officials in the past two weeks.

A White House spokesperson said on Monday that Mr. Blinken discussed the "challenges Russia poses to the rules-based international order," "throughout his talks" with the Quad part-

ners, including Mr. Jaishankar.

In a departure from previous years, when Russia has sent officials to the conference, it has decided not to attend this year, a government spokesperson said in Moscow last week. This is understood to be due to the ongoing tensions over Uk-

raine, where more than 1,00,000 Russian troops are ranged along its boundaries and involved in massive military drill with Belarus. In

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particular, the sources said the officials would discuss a "joint sanctions package", including stringent economic and financial strictures against Russia if there was any increase in hostilities.

'Principled' stand

New Delhi has thus far held firm on what Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) officials call a "principled" stand, which involves encouraging diplomatic solutions between the NATO and Russia, abstaining from a vote on the discussion at the UN Security Council, not publicly

criticising Moscow despite western pressure given the close India-Russia strategic partnership, and refusing to follow "national sanctions", or sanctions not mandated by the UN. However, the sources said the EU members of the NATO in particular have made it clear that they hope that India "upholds Ukraine's territorial integrity" in the face of any Russian aggression.

To that end, India's decision to issue its first travel advisory to citizens in Ukraine to leave the country temporarily is being seen by Ukraine's European associates as a sign that New Delhi is recognising the precarious security situation caused by the troops buildup, said diplomats, but doesn't yet match up to their expectations.

Russia says some troops pulling back from areas near Ukraine

But military exercises to continue; Putin says 'ready to work further' with the West

REUTERS
MOSCOW

Russia said on Tuesday some of its military units were returning to their bases after exercises near Ukraine, following days of U.S. and British warnings that Moscow might invade its neighbour at any time.

It was not clear how many units were being withdrawn, and by what distance, after a build-up of an estimated 1,30,000 Russian troops to the north, east and south of Ukraine. "We've always said the troops will return to their bases after the exercises are over," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

The development drew a cautious response from Ukraine. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Kiev would only believe that Russia was moving to de-escalate the situation if it saw for itself that Russian troops were being pulled back.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, on the latest Western diplomatic mission to defuse the crisis, held talks with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. After the talks, Mr. Putin said Russia was ready to continue working with the West on security issues. "We are ready to work further together. We are ready to go down the negotiations track," he told reporters.



Homebound trip: Russian tanks returning home after joint exercises with the armed forces of Belarus at a firing range near Brest on Tuesday. ■ AFP

Mr. Putin added that "of course", Russia does not want war. But it "cannot turn a blind eye" to how Washington and NATO "freely interpret" the principle of the indivisibility of security – that no country should strengthen its security at the expense of others.

A Russian Defence Ministry spokesman said that while large-scale drills across the country continued, some units of the southern and western military districts adjacent to Ukraine had completed their exercises and started returning to base.

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'Troops pulling back from areas near Ukraine'

A Russian Defence Ministry spokesman said that while large-scale drills across the country continued, some units of the southern and western military districts adjacent to Ukraine had completed their exercises and started returning to base.

The Southern military district said its forces had started withdrawing from Crimea and returning to their bases after completing drills on the

peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014. Video footage published by the Ministry showed some tanks and other armoured vehicles being loaded onto railway flatcars. "February 15, 2022 will go down in history as the day Western war propaganda failed. Humiliated and destroyed without a single shot fired," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said.

Where is the Ukraine crisis headed to?

Amid fears of war, West says Ukraine's entry into NATO is not on agenda; Moscow signals more talks

STANLY JOHNRY

In a televised address on Monday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said he had declared Wednesday (February 16), which U.S. officials had said could be the date of a Russian attack, as a day of "national unity".

But he has also said the earlier predictions by western intelligence agencies of a possible attack had proven wrong. PBS Newshour, the American TV programme, reported late last week, quoting unnamed U.S. officials, that Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, had decided to launch an invasion "any day".

But top officials of the Biden administration say, in on-the-record interactions, they don't believe Mr. Putin has taken that call. They warn, however, that Russia has mobilised enough troops to launch an invasion "any day". And then came Russia's announcement, on Tuesday, that it's pulling back some troops from the Ukraine border but will continue large military exercises. There are conflicting signals, and in fact, nobody is certain whether Mr. Putin will attack Ukraine and if so, when. This unpredictability appears to be at the core of Mr. Putin's Ukraine strategy.

Encircling Ukraine

Russia has maintained that it has no plans to invade Ukraine. When he met the visiting French President, Emmanuel Macron, in Moscow last week, Mr. Putin told him Russia would not escalate.



But at the same time, Russia has mobilised about 130,000 troops on the three sides of Ukraine. This includes 105 battalion tactical groups (each group having some 700-800 soldiers capable of fast manoeuvring in open terrain), 500 combat aircraft and some 40 warships in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. As part of the military drills with Belarus, Russia has also deployed S400 missile defence systems and Iskander surface-to-surface missiles. So with missiles, fighter jets, warships and tens of thousands of combat troops, Russia aims to ensure

total domination in the land, in the air and in the sea in the event of a war.

When Russia says it won't escalate or launch an invasion, what it actually means is that it won't take escalatory steps without "a provocation". The West had warned that there could be a "false flag operation" in the rebel-controlled Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, which Russia could use as an excuse for an attack.

And invasion could trigger severe sanctions from the West. Even if the Russian economy is better-positioned today to offset the im-

pacts of the sanctions, a full-scale invasion comes with other risks. Russia could overrun Ukraine within weeks and install a friendly regime in Kiev, but managing the post-invasion status quo in Europe's largest country where the public opinion on Russia is almost evenly split would not be easy.

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Last time when Moscow made a large military intervention – in Afghanistan in 1979 – it didn't end well. So, is Mr. Putin ready to take such a risk on Ukraine? Or would he take a less risky route of providing more arms to the rebels in Donbas to push the frontlines of a civil war that has been frozen since 2015?

Troops and talks

Escalation is not the only way forward. On Monday, at the same time Russia was building its military pressure around Ukraine, in a choreographed meeting that was telecast on the state TV, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told President Putin that the diplomatic possibilities are "far from exhausted". He proposed continuing talks with the West and Mr. Putin was seen endorsing Mr. Lavrov. The meeting was telecast at a time when German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was in Ukraine.

Germany, Europe's largest economy and the destination of two Russian gas pipelines, is an important country for Moscow. Berlin, which has warned of sanc-

tions if Russia invades Ukraine, has also been sensitive towards Russia's security concerns – it refused to send weapons to Ukraine and barred other NATO members from sending German-made weapons. On Monday, Mr. Scholz said in Kiev that Ukraine's entry into NATO "was not on the agenda right now". He met Mr. Putin in Moscow on Tuesday.

Ukraine has also shown signs of a compromise. Vadym Prystaiko, Ukraine's Ambassador to Britain, told a BBC interview that Kiev was considering giving up its bid for NATO membership to avert war. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry later said Prystaiko's comments were taken out of context. But President Zelensky did not dismiss Mr. Prystaiko's comments. The prospect of Ukraine joining NATO could be "like a dream", said Mr. Zelensky.

President Joe Biden has already told Mr. Putin that the U.S. has no plans to deploy offensive missile systems in Ukraine. He has also offered signing an agreement with Russia on ruling out deploying such missiles and stationing permanent combat troops on reciprocal terms. But those offers did not lead to a breakthrough as Russia wants guarantees that Ukraine would never be taken into NATO. Now both western and Ukrainian leaders are hinting that Ukraine joining the alliance is a distinct possibility.

What's to be seen is if this is enough to convince the Kremlin to opt for a ramp-off?

Anti-lynching Bills passed by four States hanging fire

Lynching not defined as a crime under IPC, Centre has said

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Bills passed against lynching in the past four years by at least three States ruled by BJP rivals and one by the party itself have not been implemented, with the Union government taking the view that lynching is not defined as a crime under the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Union Home Ministry informed Parliament in 2019 that there was “no separate” definition for lynching under the IPC, adding that such incidents could be dealt with under Sections 300 and 302 of the IPC which pertain to murder.

In 2017, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) collected data on mob lynching, hate crimes and cow vigilantism, but the figures were not published and the work was discontinued as these crimes are not defined and the data were found to be unreliable.

On December 22, the Jharkhand Assembly passed the Prevention of Mob Violence and Mob Lynching Bill, 2021, providing for punishment ranging from three years to life imprisonment. The Bill awaits the Governor’s assent.

On August 5, 2019, the Rajasthan Assembly passed the Rajasthan Protection from

Stalled crackdown

A brief look at anti-lynching Bills passed by four States that are caught in a question of definition

JHARKHAND

The Prevention of Mob Violence and Mob Lynching Bill, 2021, provides for punishment ranging from three years in prison to life imprisonment, in case of death of the victim. Those convicted may be fined between ₹3 lakh and ₹25 lakh depending on the severity of the crime



RAJASTHAN

The Rajasthan Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019, provides for life imprisonment and a fine from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh to those convicted in cases of mob lynching leading to the victim’s death



WEST BENGAL

The West Bengal (Prevention of Lynching) Bill, 2019, has a provision for death sentence. It proposes a jail term from three years to life imprisonment for those involved in assaulting and injuring a person. The Bill, while defining terms such as “lynching” and “mob”, says the West Bengal Lynching Compensation Scheme may be framed under it



MANIPUR

The Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Bill, 2018, proposes rigorous life imprisonment for those involved in mob violence, if it results in the death of a victim



Lynching Bill, 2019, providing for life imprisonment and a fine ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh to those convicted in cases of mob lynching leading to the victim’s death.

On August 30, 2019, the West Bengal Assembly passed the West Bengal (Prevention of Lynching) Bill, 2019, that proposes a jail term from three years to life imprisonment for those involved in assaulting and in-

jurging a person and also defines terms such as “lynching” and “mob”. The government also proposed to set up the West Bengal Lynching Compensation Scheme.

To a Right to Information Act application by *The Hindu*, the Home Ministry stated the said law was received from the Rajasthan government on September 6, 2019.

Anti-lynching Bills passed by 4 States hanging fire

On August 30, 2019, the West Bengal Assembly passed the West Bengal (Prevention of Lynching) Bill, 2019, that proposes a jail term from three years to life imprisonment for those involved in assaulting and injuring a person and also defines terms such as “lynching” and “mob”. The government also proposed to set up the West Bengal Lynching Compensation Scheme.

To a RTI application by *The Hindu*, the Home Ministry stated the said law was received from the Rajasthan government on September 6, 2019. It added that the Bill was “under inter-ministerial consultation with State Government/Union Ministries/Departments”.

The Ministry’s reply stated, “However, the bill The West Bengal (Prevention of Lynching) Bill, 2019 has not been received from West Bengal Government.”

In 2018, the Manipur Assembly passed the Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Bill, recommending

life imprisonment for those involved in mob violence if it led to death. The Bill is still being examined by the Ministry. The Ministry examines State legislation on three grounds – repugnancy with Central laws, deviation from national or central policy, and legal and constitutional validity.

In 2019, the Ministry informed the Lok Sabha that it had received the Bills passed by the legislatures of Manipur and Rajasthan that had been reserved by the Governor for consideration of the President. The President has to go with the advice given by the Council of Ministers represented by the Home Ministry.

In 2018, the Supreme Court asked Parliament to make lynching a separate offence. The Home Minister had informed Parliament that the government had decided to overhaul the IPC framed in 1860 and the CrPC and mob-lynching would also be examined by the committee.

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SC starts examining whether Vanniyar quota pleas need to be referred to larger Bench

T.N. law provides 10.5% special quota to Vanniyars, a most backward community

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday began examining whether petitions challenging a Madras High Court decision declaring *ultra vires* a State quota law which provided 10.5% special reservation to Vanniakula Kshatriyas within the Most Backward Community quota, ought to be referred to a larger Bench.

A Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and B.R. Gavai heard submissions on the question of reference.

Constitutional issues

“We want to first hear submissions on the issue of reference. If we feel that the matter can be decided here



A Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and B.R. Gavai heard submissions.

without referring it to a larger Bench, we can decide it here,” Justice Rao said.

Several senior lawyers submitted that the case involved constitutional issues, and would require a dive in-

to the 102nd and 105th Constitutional Amendments.

The 102nd Amendment Act of 2018 gave the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional validity. It allowed the President to notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes (SEBC) for any State or Union Territory. However, the subsequent 105th Constitutional Amendment restored the power to identify and specify SEBCs to the States.

A dozen special leave petitions have been filed by the Tamil Nadu government, the Pattali Makkal Katchi, K. Balu, etc.

Senior advocates, including Rajeev Dhawan, A.M.

Singhvi, Rakesh Dwivedi, Mukul Rohatgi, C.S. Vaidyanathan, P. Wilson and Gopal Sankaranarayan, and advocates D. Kumanan, Varun K. Chopra and Nishe Rajen Shonker, are appearing in the case.

Averments were made to the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institution and of Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act. This law led to 69% reservation in the State. The Act was brought under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

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Exports rise 25% to \$34.5 bn in Jan.

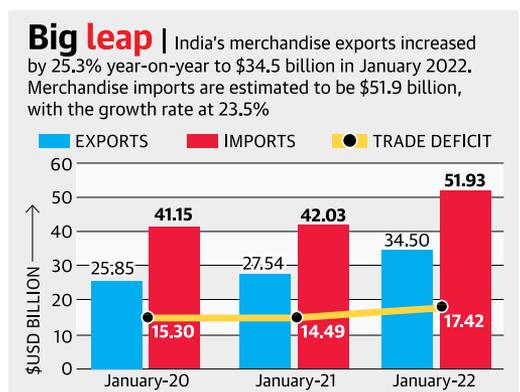
Gold imports fall sharply to just \$2.4 billion; trade deficit reaches \$17.4 billion

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

India’s merchandise exports touched \$34.5 billion in January, 25.3% higher than a year ago, while imports grew at a slightly slower pace, taking the country’s trade deficit to a five-month low of \$17.4 billion, say official estimates released on Tuesday.

While January’s goods exports are 8.75% lower than December’s all-time record figure of \$37.81 billion, it takes India’s exports near the \$400-billion target set for 2021-22, with the first 10 months of the year already clocking outbound shipments worth \$336 billion. This marks a nearly 47% increase from a year ago and a 27.1% increase over the pre-COVID period of 2019-20.

Gold imports fell sharply during January to just \$2.4 billion, 40.5% lower than that in the corresponding month in 2021 and almost



half the \$4.72 billion imported in the previous month.

Biggest factor

The decline in the yellow metal’s imports was the biggest factor behind India’s import bill dropping to \$51.9 billion in January, 12.7% lower than in December 2021.

Consequently, the trade deficit that had hit a record

\$22.9 billion in November 2021, and had averaged 21.7 billion since September, also dropped.

Exporters, however, said high imports remain a cause of concern with January’s inbound shipments rising 23.5% year-on-year and staying above the \$50-billion mark.

“The surge in gold im-

ports in 2021 was driven by the pent-up demand of 2020 and we expect them to moderate to \$30-35 billion in this calendar year,” said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at rating firm ICRA.

“The fall in mobility and the demand for gold with the onset of the third wave and the associated restrictions, helped to pull back the merchandise trade deficit to the lowest level in five months, at \$17.4 billion,” she noted.

The trade data released on Tuesday revised January’s exports slightly upward from the \$34.06 billion estimated earlier this month, while imports were similarly revised down from \$52.01 billion.

Exports of coffee and petroleum products almost doubled in January, while cotton yarn and handloom products rose 42.4%.

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Exports rise 25% to \$34.5 bn in January

Sectors like ready-made garments, man-made yarn, leather and engineering goods grew between 20% and 25%, compared with January 2021.

“Almost all the sectors reporting impressive growth last month were labour-intensive sectors contributing majorly to the exports basket, which itself is a good sign and should bolster job creation,” said A. Sakthivel, president of the Federation of Indian Exporters’ Organisations, exuding confidence that merchandise exports through the year could go past the \$400 billion target. He, however, urged the government to expedite reso-

lution of some key challenges facing firms on account of various export facilitation and promotion schemes’ implementation norms.

The Commerce and Industry Ministry pegged the value of India’s services exports during January at \$26.91 billion, nearly 55% over last year’s number and 46.6% over the pre-pandemic month of January 2020.

Services imports are estimated to have risen by 60.3% year-on-year to \$15.8 billion, 45.3% over pre-COVID levels. However, the services trade estimations will be revised once the Reserve Bank of India updates the actual numbers.

India to make digital maps of all villages

Updated guidelines to make it easier for surveys to be undertaken using drones, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India plans to prepare digital maps of all its 6,00,000 villages and pan-India 3D maps will be prepared for 100 cities, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh said on Tuesday at an event to mark a year of the updated geospatial policy guidelines.

An ongoing scheme, piloted by the Panchayati Raj Ministry, called SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2020.

The updated guidelines

Surveying villages

The SVAMITVA scheme seeks to map land parcels using drone technology and providing ‘record of rights’ to those who own property

- Maps of 77,716 villages given to States
- 84,14,055 land parcels digitised
- Ownership cards prepared for 26,472 villages

Drone survey completed for **1,08,337** villages



help private companies prepare a variety of maps without needing approvals from a host of Ministries and make it easier to use drones and de-

velop applications via location mapping. The “trinity of geospatial systems, drone policy and unlocked space sector will be the hallmark of

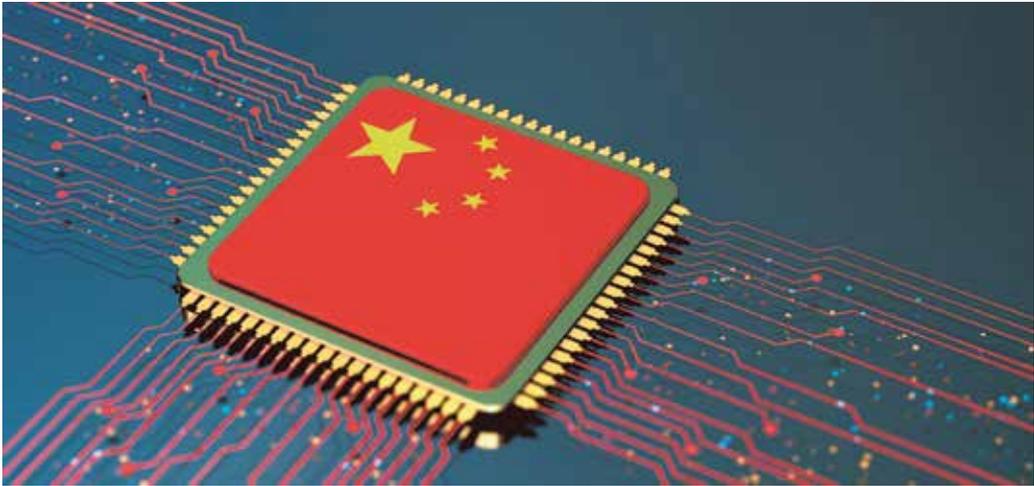
India’s future economic progress”, Dr. Singh said in a statement. The complete geospatial policy would be announced soon as the liberalisation of guidelines had yielded very positive outcomes within a year’s time, he said. The geographical information based system mapping would also be useful in forest management, disaster management, electrical utilities, land records, water distribution, and property taxation.

Dr. Singh estimated the size of the Indian geospatial market in 2020 to be ₹23,345 crore, including ₹10,595 crore of export which was

likely to grow to ₹36,300 crore by 2025.

When the scheme was launched, Mr. Modi had said that it would help establish “clear ownership” of property in rural areas by mapping of land parcels using drone technology and providing a “record of rights” to eligible households by issuing legal ownership cards to them.

So far, drone surveys have covered close to 1,00,000 villages and maps of 77,527 villages had been handed over to States. Property cards have been distributed to around 27,000 villages, according to current information on the SVAMITVA portal.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Exploiting the Chinese exit

In the absence of Chinese tech, the primary Indian IT objective must shift to providing for Indians

THE GIST

■ The Great Internet Wall of China which filters and censors Western apps and content insulated Chinese entrepreneurs from Big Tech in Silicon Valley. This led to home-grown firms such as WeChat and Alibaba having a field day building apps that were distinctly tailored solely to the Chinese market. The Chinese have leapfrogged even the U.S. in AI research, especially in the components of “neural networks” and “deep learning”. In this case, the intellectual property being produced actually belongs to China and is not a faithful duplicate of someone else’s product or technology.

■ In its attempt to dominate the rest of the world, the Chinese Internet industry needs India’s 500-plus million netizens to continue to act as a training ground for the AI algorithms they put together. Therefore, the decision to ban Chinese apps in India is not only a geopolitical move but also a strategic trade manoeuvre that can have significant economic impact. In the absence of Chinese tech, Indian entrepreneurs should focus on providing services and products of high quality that will be used by everyday Indians across the country.

■ If we can create hyper-local and hyper-regional services of high quality and great accessibility that are portable across our linguistic diversity, we are likely to succeed in creating one of the strongest Internet markets in the world.

SIDDHARTH PAI

The Union government on February 14, 2022 banned another set of Chinese apps (more than 50) over concerns related to privacy and national security. In this article dated September 14, 2020, Siddharth Pai explains how the vacuum created by the ban of these apps should enable the Indian IT sector to create more hyper-regional and hyper-local applications and websites.

The current India-China border standoff has expanded watchful Indian eyes into cyberspace; but the Chinese put up blinding shields on their own Internet territory more than a decade ago. The Chinese government began erecting censorship barriers (what I like to call the Great Internet Wall of China) and banned several popular Western websites and applications years ago.

In January 2010, Google announced that in response to a hacking attack from within China and it and dozens of other U.S. companies, it was no longer willing to censor searches in China and would pull out of the country completely.

Meanwhile, in the intervening years since Google and others were forced out, the Chinese Internet market exploded, and has grown to over 900 million users, most of them on mobile (paradoxically via Google’s Android) from just over 300 million in early 2010. This is according to the China Internet Network Information Center, a branch of the country’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

China’s lead

In hindsight, China’s censors look like superb long-range economic planners and technology strategists. The Great Internet Wall did not filter and screen Western content so much as it insulated Chinese entrepreneurs from Big Tech in Silicon Valley. The Chinese web market was left with substantial appetites for Internet-based social, commerce, and lifestyle services which Big Tech could not fulfil. Home-grown firms such as WeChat and Alibaba had a field day building apps that were at first faithful reproductions of Silicon Valley, but soon morphed into distinctly Chinese applications tailored solely to the home market.

Baidu has replaced Google in China. Youku Tudou is YouTube, and Xiaohongshu is a version of Instagram from which users can shop for goods directly. WeChat began as a simple messaging app, but is now many things for the Chinese (social media, news, messaging, payments, and digital commerce).

As far back as 2016, U.S. President Barack Obama released a strategic plan which addressed many issues, but the most striking part of this report is that it appeared the Chinese had learnt their lesson from failing to make themselves an IT outsourcing services superpower like India had.

According to the 2016 White House report, the Chinese have leapfrogged even the U.S. in AI research, especially in the components of “neural networks” and “deep learning”. In this case, the intellectual property being produced actually belongs to China and is not a faithful duplicate of someone else’s product or technology. This has far-reaching implications. Current affairs show us that the U.S. is likely to follow India’s lead by banning Chinese apps and technology companies.

With the rise of Jio, and the response from its competitors, the widening reach of Internet connection across the country will provide hundreds of millions of non-urban Indians with fluid access to the Internet. India now has the lowest Internet data costs in the world. In its attempt to dominate the rest of the world, the Chinese Internet industry desperately needs India’s freshly minted 500-plus million netizens to continue to act as a training ground for the AI algorithms they put together. China’s Internet ecosystem is entirely self-created, self-run, and self-serviced, yet it exports the newly banned apps such as Tik Tok and PUBG worldwide – adding to the user base of 900-plus million Chinese netizens whose data they already have exclusive access to.

The fundamental focus of the new digital products that plan to emerge in the growing market should be to provide for hyper-regional necessities and preferences

The decision to ban such apps in India is not only a geopolitical move but also a strategic trade manoeuvre that can have significant economic impact. Banning these Chinese websites and applications to the Indian public effectively allows our home-grown IT talent to focus on the newly arrived Internet user. Big tech firms from Silicon Valley and China in both hardware and software have been in a tussle over the Indian consumer, but India’s focus remains on exporting IT services while paying little attention to servicing our own nation’s tech market.

Most alarmingly, while we have spent the last two decades exporting the bulk of our technology services to developed countries in the West, the vacuum created as the Indian Internet grew has been filled by American Big Tech and by the Chinese. After the removal of more than 118 Chinese apps, Indian techies have started trying to fill the holes with copycat replacement websites and applications. But faithful copies are not enough for us to make full use of China’s exit.

The primary Indian IT objective must shift from servicing others to providing for ourselves. In the absence of Chinese tech, Indian entrepreneurs should not simply look to replace what the existing

firms have so far been providing. They should focus instead on providing services and products of high quality that will be used by everyday Indians across the country. The aim of providing netizens with the same services across diverse markets is overarching – regional barriers created by language exist within our own nation. These provide an accretion of excellent smaller markets, with opportunities for specialised Internet services created for a local community, by the community itself.

The fundamental focus of the new digital products that plan to emerge in the growing market should be to provide for hyper-regional necessities and preferences. With this in mind, there are several commercial opportunities available. For example, apps and services that provide specific market prices, local train and bus routes, allow for non-traditional banking and lending, education, health, online sales, classified advertising, and so on.

It’s hyper-local, hyper-regional Accessibility is also crucial.

With the rise in migrant work and labour all over the country, a news or banking app with, say, an Odia interface should work everywhere that Odia-speaking people migrate to.

However, national accessibility on its own will not make an app a game changer. Indians are savvy enough to know what a world class app is. If we create hyper-local and hyper-regional services of high quality and great accessibility that are also portable across our linguistic diversity, we are far more likely to succeed in creating one of the strongest Internet markets in the world, rather than creating copycat apps or apps that only cater to English speakers.

Technology companies all over the world have focused their efforts on the 15% of the world’s population with deep pockets while largely ignoring the other six billion denizens of the world’s population.

Some sympathetic noises about “emerging” markets are made, but the waters remain largely untested.

If we go forward with the aim of servicing our own, India’s experiences as a modernising power are of great use to the bulk of the world’s population, which lives in penury when compared to its western counterparts. We can export our “India stack” to other countries in the “south”, such as those in Africa and Latin America. We have successfully done this before with our outstanding railway technology. There is no reason we cannot pull off the same achievement with our home-grown Internet power.

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Gaming and banning

Online gaming might be addictive, but a ban will militate against individual freedom

Yet another legislative attempt to prohibit online gaming has failed under judicial scrutiny. The amendments brought to existing regulations on betting and gambling in Karnataka have been struck down by the State's High Court. Last year, the Madras High Court invalidated similar amendments that targeted online rummy and poker. What is common to both cases is that the legislature assumed a paternalistic role, arguably with the laudable aim of protecting the people, especially the youth, from the temptations of online gambling. However, the resulting provisions failed to make a distinction between games of skill and games of chance, and sought to bring under the proscription all games played online, regardless of the extent to which skill was required. Further, the Karnataka High Court has rejected a key submission that it could be upheld as a 'public order' law. It referred to "the menace of cyber games" of epic proportions, and the registration of about 28,000 cases by the police in the State in the last three years. The Government did have a point when it said many have taken their own lives and families ruined as a result of gaming addiction and indebtedness. However, as the court has pointed out, if the objective was to curb the menace of gambling, the Government should prohibit activities that amount to gambling as such, and not the games of skill. While enacting the extreme measure, it did not consider the feasibility of regulating wagering on games of skill.

While the idea of betting and gambling conjures up the image of a 'bucket shop' associated with dingy gaming-houses frequented by hustlers, there is an element of 'information, expression and entertainment' that has constitutional protection. And gaming platforms are also a legitimate business that enjoy the freedom of trade when used for online versions of games of skill. The court has drawn attention to the fact that what such bans do is to create "a wholly new category of medium-based regulation, when chance of medium *per se* does not alter the true nature and content of the games". In other words, what is targeted is not the gambling part but the 'online' part. Also, the amendments contradicted a general exemption in the original law to 'games of skill' by making all online gaming punishable even if they involved skill. It is clear that an absolute embargo on games of skill involving money or stakes could not have been upheld by the court, as the line between individual freedom, both to carry on the business and to participate in it as a consumer, and state action could not have been obliterated. All legislation that assumes that sections of society require the hand of the state to guide and support them have some populist appeal. And there is an addictive element to online gaming, but that does not mean there is no individual freedom and choice at all.

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

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

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