

# VEDHIK

# DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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*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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# Etching a trade line to bond beyond oil

An India-UAE free trade agreement will enable two-way investment flows and help achieve ambitious export targets



CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE

India has embarked on a new journey – a new free trade agreement (FTA) journey to be precise – with renewed zeal and vigour. India's approach towards FTAs is now focusing more on gaining meaningful market access and facilitating Indian industry's integration into global value chains. As Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal has repeatedly emphasised, India would no longer be signing trade agreements just to join a group, but the new approach of FTA negotiations would respond to the need of new emerging dynamics in international trade and the Indian economy.

## Focus countries

Under the revamped FTA strategy, the Government of India has prioritised at least six countries or regions to deal with, in which the United Arab Emirates (UAE) figures at the top of the list for an early harvest deal; the others are the United Kingdom, the European Union, Australia, Canada, Israel and a group of countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The early harvest deal is to be enlarged into a comprehensive FTA in due course of time. This is a very welcome move, where the Government of India can be seen actively revisiting pending FTAs, entering into fresh negotiations and also being open to interim and

mini-trade deals.

At the same time, the UAE too announced, in September 2021, its intent to pursue bilateral economic agreements with eight countries – India, the U.K., Turkey, South Korea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Israel, and Kenya – with the goal of concluding these agreements within one year.

## Major economic hub

The UAE has emerged as an important economic hub not just within the context of the Middle East/West Asia, but also globally. The UAE, due to its strategic location, has emerged as an important economic centre in the world. In recent years, the UAE, through its 'Vision 2021', has sought to diversify its economy and reduce its dependency on oil. Since 2012, growth has been led, according to a World Trade Organization document, by the non-hydrocarbon sectors reflecting the successful diversification of the economy. Although the UAE has diversified its economy, 'the hydrocarbon sector remains very important followed by services and manufacturing. Within services, financial services, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate and business services are the main contributors'.

India and the UAE established diplomatic relations in 1972. The greater push has been achieved in bilateral relations when the visit of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to the UAE in August 2015 marked the beginning of a new strategic partnership between the two countries. Further, during the visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to India in January 2017 as the chief guest at In-



GETTY IMAGES

dia's Republic Day celebrations, it was agreed that bilateral relations were to be upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership. This gave momentum to launching negotiations for an India-UAE comprehensive economic partnership agreement, eventually launched in September 2021.

## Trade and investment data

As India and the UAE strive to further deepen trade and investment ties, the soon-to-be announced early harvest agreement comes at the most opportune time. The India-UAE total trade merchandise has been valued at U.S.\$52.76 billion for the first nine months of the fiscal year 2021-22, making the UAE India's third largest trading partner. The aim is to boost bilateral merchandise trade to above U.S.\$100 billion and services trade to U.S.\$15 billion in five years.

With India's newfound strength in exports as the country is on the verge of creating history by reaching the figure of U.S.\$400 billion of merchandise export, a trade agreement with an important country such as the UAE would help sustain the growth momentum. As we are witnessing a big turnaround in manufacturing, the UAE would be an attractive export

market for Indian electronics, automobiles, and other engineering products.

A trade agreement is also an enabler for two-way investment flows. The UAE's investment in India is estimated to be around U.S.\$11.67 billion, which makes it the ninth biggest investor in India. On the other hand, many Indian companies have set up manufacturing units either as joint ventures or in Special Economic Zones for cement, building materials, textiles, engineering products, consumer electronics, etc. Many Indian companies have also invested in the tourism, hospitality, catering, health, retail, and education sectors. As both the UAE and India are aggressively pursuing FTAs with several important countries, not only companies from these two countries but also multinational companies from other geographies too would find the UAE and India an attractive market to invest.

## As an export springboard

India is aiming to achieve the U.S.\$1 trillion of merchandise exports and U.S.\$1 trillion of services exports by the year 2030. A trade agreement with the UAE could well be a springboard to realise these ambitious export targets. The UAE is a party to several regional and bilateral FTAs, including with countries in the GCC.

As part of the GCC, the UAE has strong economic ties with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, meaning the UAE shares a common market and a customs union with these nations. Under the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) Agreement, the UAE has free trade access to Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Syria, Libya, and Yemen.

This FTA with the UAE will pave the way for India to enter the UAE's strategic location, and have relatively easy access to the Africa market and its various trade partners which can help India to become a part of that supply chain especially in handlooms, handicrafts, textiles and pharma.

## On compliance requirements

The UAE tariff structure is bound with the GCC, and the applied average tariff rate is 5%. Therefore, the scope of addressing Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) becomes very important. The reflection of NTBs can be seen through Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) which have mostly been covered by Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The UAE has 451 SPS notifications. The SPS notifications are mainly related to live poultry, meat, and processed food. In addition, the UAE has 534 TBT notifications, mainly related to fish, food additives, meat, rubber, electrical machinery, etc. Most of the notifications are related to consumer information, labelling, licensing or permit requirements and import monitoring and surveillance requirements. These compliances pose a challenge for Indian exporters. The FTA agreement must try to bring more transparency and predictability in the use of NTBs so that their compliance becomes less cumbersome.

Chandrajit Banerjee is Director General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The views expressed are personal

# India again backs diplomacy at UNSC

## 'Safety of Indians in Ukraine a priority'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

At a meeting at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) called by Russia to discuss the Ukraine crisis, on the seventh anniversary of the Minsk II ceasefire agreement, India called for a diplomatic solution to the tensions.

"India has been in touch with all concerned parties. It is our considered view that the issue can only be resolved through diplomatic dialogue," India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti, told the Security Council.

India is trying to balance its interests, given its strong relationship with both the U.S. and Russia. On Thursday, U.S. President Joe Biden had said that Russia could invade Ukraine "within the next several days."

Russia, which holds the rotating presidency of the UNSC for February, had called around the anniversary Minsk II agreement - signed in February 2015 with an aim to bring peace in the rebel-held regions of the Donbas region of Uk-

raine. The agreement was signed by Russia, Ukraine, separatist leaders and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Minsk II has not been fully implemented (its predecessor, Minsk I, broke down).

"...We urge all parties to continue to engage through all possible diplomatic channels and keep working towards the full implementation of the 'Minsk Agreements'," Mr. Tirumurti said. He also expressed support for the Normandy Format (Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France) at the Trilateral Contact Group (comprised of representatives of Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE).

"India's interest is in finding a solution that can provide for immediate de-escalation of tensions taking into account the legitimate security interests of all countries and aimed towards securing long-term peace and stability in the region and beyond," Mr Tirumurti said, adding that the wellbeing of more than twenty thousand Indians in Ukraine (including students) was a priority.

## A planetary adjustment

India must prioritise the transition to energy sources that do not upset the natural balance

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in perhaps his first address this year on the theme of the environment, remarked that it was not the planet that was "fragile", but people and their commitment to conserving nature. From James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis - that posited the inter-connectedness of nature - to Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen, who warned that chemical effluents were altering the planet's atmosphere and causing harmful climate change feedback effects, many have made the case that humanity is in the Anthropocene era and is like a geological force that is shaping the planet's destiny. However, this gives the distorted sense that it is a vaguely defined 'planet' that needs protecting, a notion reinforced by apocalyptic documentaries on melting glaciers.

The truth is more complex. Man's embrace of agriculture, the dominance of wheat and rice as food crops and the clearing of forest tracts caused the first major large-scale changes to global climate though their effects were apparent only over centuries. Atmospheric changes due to the dawn of the Industrial Age and the use of fossil fuels happened, relatively speaking, in a blink of an eye. What is common to both these eras is that those who suffered the most are the poor, or those with the least agency to shield themselves from a perturbed nature. Last year, Uttarakhand saw an avalanche of rock and ice destroy two hydropower projects and cause deaths. The geology of the Himalayas, scientists have long warned, makes the region inhospitable to large mega-engineering projects and the several floods, landslides and earthquakes over the years have underlined this time and again. But while the earth rearranges itself, it does so in a manner that can be destructive and lethal to those least responsible for causing the disequilibrium. Thus, if "fragile" were to mean a brittleness needing care, then it is people and animals that need protection than a vaguely defined 'planet'. India's position of climate justice is that it cannot be denied the right to rely on polluting fossil fuel to ameliorate the living conditions of most Indians who have limited access to reliable energy. Thus, India will continue to fire coal plants, raze forests for industry and build roads in fraught geology - in other words, put the lives of millions of the vulnerable at climate-risk in the pursuit of economic development. India's commitment to net-zero is set decades into the future at 2070. Unknown unknowns characterise climate science and India, given its size and population, will be disproportionately vulnerable. It must accelerate and prioritise the transition to energy sources that are minimally perturbing to the natural balance because - and on this the science is certain - the planet, which may be in a form incomprehensible at present, will long outlast its current residents.

# Is the post-Cold War security order changing?

PARLEY

The Ukraine crisis has brought the unstable security architecture in Europe to the fore of U.S.-Russia ties

After a weeks-long stand-off, Russia announced on Tuesday that it is pulling back some of its troops from areas close to Ukraine, signalling a possible de-escalation. But at the same time, it has said that its core security concerns, particularly on NATO's expansionary open-door policy, remain unaddressed. The crisis, has brought the post-Cold War European security architecture into sharp focus, and triggered debates on whether the great power rivalry is back in the continent. In a conversation moderated by Stanley Johny, P.S. Raghavan and Nandan Unnikrishnan discuss the Russia-Ukraine crisis and what it means to the post-Cold War world order. Edited excerpts

**Ambassador, Russia has always maintained that it has no plan to attack Ukraine. But it has also mobilised some 1,30,000 troops on the three sides of Ukraine. What is the Russian President's strategy?**

**P.S. Raghavan:** What recent events have shown is that the post-Cold War European security architecture is not complete as yet. It is not as stable as people assumed it was. And at least since 2014, since we have seen this Russia-U.S. and Russia-Europe stand-off, the questions about what is a security equilibrium in Europe have constantly arisen. What the present action has done is dramatically pushed it to the fore. Of course, this has been going on for a long time; the troops build up was first reported in the end of October 2021. And it has been going on until it reached the stage where the U.S. said Russia has troops to invade all of Ukraine.

But what is President Vladimir Putin trying to do? I think he is responding to what U.S. President [Joe] Biden did in June last year when he extended a hand to Mr. Putin and said, 'look, I want a predictable and stable relationship with Europe'. The subtext was that he wanted the U.S. to get out of needless conflicts in Europe, West Asia and elsewhere – the withdrawal from Afghanistan was one demonstration of that – to be able to focus at least externally on the single principal adversary of the U.S., which is China. And what Mr. Putin is trying to say is, 'yes, if

you want a predictable and stable relationship with Russia, Russia's security needs to be taken care of. I don't want to have to be constantly skirmishing with NATO all around my periphery'. Essentially, that's the deal that Mr. Putin is seeking.

**Mr. Unnikrishnan, Tuesday's announcement at least signals that Russia is ready to de-escalate the crisis and continue diplomatic talks. How do you look at it? Has Russia achieved anything from its mobilisation?**

**Nandan Unnikrishnan:** First, I have to address the question of whether Russia has got anything so far. It has definitely not got security guarantees. It had handed over its written documents in December and some of those have received a written response, which the Russian sources have described as inadequate. But there is a significant victory that Russia has achieved. It's not enough to diffuse the situation, but it is a victory. The U.S.-led West has at last recognised what Russia has been saying since 1994 – that the security architecture in Europe is not in accordance with what Russia considers the security architecture should be. The fact that the West is willing to address and discuss this appears to be a big victory for Russia.

Second, has the situation been diffused? I still believe that we are heading towards some kind of accommodation. The Russians used a very heavy hammer to attract attention. But do I believe that the Russians are going to invade Ukraine? I don't think so, as that defeats the purpose of acquiring a certain degree of security. The Russians may take bits and pieces of Ukraine or even half of Ukraine, but insecurity will only grow. So, the way forward is accommodation.

**Ambassador, French President Emmanuel Macron called for respecting Russian concerns and sought to revive the Normandy format talks, while Germany's Olaf Scholz, who refused to send weapons to Ukraine, said in Kiev that Ukraine's entry into NATO is not on the agenda. So, do you**



think Europe is taking a different approach towards Russia from that of the U.S.?

**PSR:** Let's remember that NATO is 28 European nations and two non-European nations – the U.S. and Canada. Europe is right next to Russia, Europe has been facing the brunt of the Soviet as well as Russian actions over the last many decades. It is obvious that Europe will look at Russia differently from the U.S. The impact of any action that NATO takes in terms of sanctions or security will first be felt in Europe, not in the U.S. So, naturally, Europe's interest is in accommodation. Europe's interest in sorting out this matter is immediate and existential, while the U.S.'s is strategic and long term.

Also, I would like to point out that what Mr. Putin has achieved is, gradually the West has moved forward more towards meeting Russia's demands. Of course, it has not gone anywhere near ensuring that Russia's demands are fully satisfied. Russia has essentially three demands. One, Ukraine and Georgia should not join NATO. Two, the Ukraine impasse should be resolved. Russia's view is that the U.S. in particular has obstructed the implementation of the Minsk agreement. And three, these mutual security guarantees that we've all been talking about. Now, increasingly, the West has been saying that Ukraine's entry into NATO is not on the cards. Of course, this is an informal statement and the Russians keep wanting a legal guarantee. But the Normandy process, which is the Russia-Germany-France-Ukraine initiative to implement the Minsk accords, is one of the fundamental demands of the Russians. And it looks like they are moving towards agreeing to that. The other point is about the mutual security guarantees. Fo-

**Mr. Putin feels that this is the most opportune moment for Russia to press forward its demands. He understands that the strategic interests of the U.S. are elsewhere currently.**

NANDAN UNNIKRISHNAN

**reign Minister Sergey Lavrov told Mr. Putin in a publicly televised address that the West has already agreed to a number of guarantees (including on missile deployments and military drills).**

**The Russians have been talking about their concerns since the 1990s. Why has the mobilisation come now? Why is Russia asking for these legal guarantees now? Does this mean that Mr. Putin senses a moment of weakness in the U.S.'s hold over the international order?**

**NU:** Mr. Putin feels that this is the most opportune moment for Russia to press forward its demands. I am not going to get into the question of whether he perceives the U.S. to be weak or not weak. We are aware that the U.S. still stays the pre-eminent power in the world. I think that Mr. Putin understands that the strategic interests of the U.S. are elsewhere currently; they are to deal with many domestic problems that the U.S. is going through, and at the international level, the focus is more on the Indo-Pacific. The withdrawal from Afghanistan is symptomatic of this desire to have stable relationships elsewhere in the world so that it can focus on what it considers to be its primary area of challenge, which is the Indo-Pacific. Incidentally, that's something that the Indians should also welcome. Having

understood that, I think Mr. Putin feels that this is the most opportune moment to attract attention, through maybe some provocative behaviour, and try to push forth his demands and hope that a negotiation will result in something that is mutually acceptable or, as Henry Kissinger said, something that is to their mutual dissatisfaction.

**Ambassador, what are the implications of the crisis for India?**

**PSR:** In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea. And we had this issue of territorial integrity and sovereignty. In spite of that, we found a way of not criticising the Russian action. Here, everyone should be happy with the stand we have taken because what we did was to take a diplomatic solution which addresses the long-term legitimate security concerns of all sides. And that is what all countries are saying they want. Now, what we would like to see and what Mr. Putin and Mr. Biden are trying to achieve is an accommodation, and there are these off-ramps available. And if these are taken, you then reach a situation of better equilibrium in Europe between Russia and the West. That can only be good for India.

Any exacerbation of this situation can be only good for China in a number of ways, which is why I found it quite amusing when the U.S. Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland said that China should persuade Russia not to take action in Ukraine. Why should China do that? It is in China's interest if there is greater exacerbation of the problem. The U.S. being bogged down in Europe is exactly what China would like. So, you're looking at a situation where these belligerent postures result eventually in a kind of amicable solution. I think it's good for India. It enables the U.S. to focus on the Indo-Pacific and on China, which is what India wants, and it leaves India free to deal with Russia without a censorious U.S. breathing down our necks with sanctions for defense purchases.

**So, we are back to the China question. How deep is the Russia-China partnership?**

**NU:** Since the 1950s, this is the closest that China and Russia have ever been. There are many factors for this. And let us also not forget that both of them have been declared an

adversary by the U.S., in official documents. On the other front, there are still many areas. If you look at it just even from the simple issue of pride, the Russians did not want to cower down to the U.S. and therefore the West as a whole, and that's what's led to the breakdown of the relationship with the West, because the West was not considering an equal partnership. Why would Russia then break one relationship, which it was seeking through the 1990s, and maybe even in the beginning of the 2000s, and opt for another option, where it will be a junior partner once again?

I don't think that is in the Russian psyche, being a junior partner. Therefore, I would say that it's a matter of concern for India; India should continuously monitor the situation. But at the same time, it has not reached a stage where Russia and China are in some kind of unbreakable partnership. I think they still have their differences. So, in a nutshell, I think the Russia-China relationship is something that India should closely observe.

**Both of you talked about some kind of an accommodation. Practically speaking, how can Russia's security concerns be accommodated by the West?**

**PSR:** There are three issues. If the Ukraine impasse is dealt with in the Normandy process, if Ukraine is persuaded by the West to take forward the Minsk agreements, which have been approved by the UN Security Council, that is a clear plus for the settlement of the issue. The second is the issue which I consider almost settled. What Mr. Lavrov told Mr. Putin recently are issues that will take time, but are clearly mutually beneficial. And these are not controversial. The third issue is about Ukraine joining NATO. Please note that in all this controversy Crimea has not been mentioned at all. Neither the U.S. nor Europe has said that Russia should vacate Crimea as part of the security guarantees. As long as Crimea remains with Russia, and as long as these two breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remain (outside the control of Georgia), neither Ukraine nor Georgia can join NATO. Because one of NATO's principles before it admits a country is that the country should not have disputes over its territory. So, these three elements exist for a solution.



**P.S. Raghavan** is former Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board



**Nandan Unnikrishnan** is Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi



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# Blinken urges Russia to declare no intention to invade Ukraine

‘Moscow could fabricate an excuse to invade its neighbour’

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NEW YORK

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken challenged Russia on Thursday to make an unequivocal statement that it would not invade Ukraine and to back it up by pulling back troops.

At a UN Security Council meeting on the Ukraine crisis, the top U.S. diplomat laid out in detail how Russia could fabricate an excuse for invading its neighbour.

If it seeks peace, “the Rus-

sian government can announce today with no qualification of equivocation or deflection, that Russia will not invade Ukraine, stated plainly to the world,” Mr. Blinken said.

“And then demonstrate it by sending your troops, your tanks, your planes, back to their barracks,” Mr. Blinken added.

At the meeting, called to discuss the showdown over Ukraine, the Secretary of State said he had invited

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to meet in Europe for talks next week, even as top U.S. officials say a Russian invasion could take place within days.

Citing U.S. intelligence, Mr. Blinken laid out a scenario in which he said Moscow could “manufacture” a pretext to invade, would then bomb Ukraine, launch cyberattacks to shut down its institutions, and send tanks and soldiers in to occupy the country.

## Blinken, Jaishankar held honest talks on Russia: U.S.

It’s reflective of close relationship we share, says Donald Lu

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S.’s top diplomat for South and Central Asia Donald Lu has said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his American counterpart Antony Blinken had an honest discussion on Russia and Ukraine.

“On the issue of Russia and Ukraine, I can say that there was, between Secretary Blinken and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, an open and honest discussion,” Mr. Lu, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia said during a briefing call to discuss Mr. Blinken’s travel to Asia, including for the Quad meeting in Melbourne, as well as the Biden administration’s recently released Indo-Pacific strategy.

### ‘Complex issue’

“I think this is reflective of the close relationship we have with one another. This is a complex issue for the United States. It’s a complex issue for India as well. We share values and we talk about every issue, including the tough ones,” Mr. Lu said.



Donald Lu

India, on January 31, abstained from a procedural vote at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on whether to discuss the Russia-Ukraine issue.

Russia had thanked India for its position.

The meeting, however, took place and India called for “quiet and constructive” diplomacy to resolve the tensions. The discussions between the West, led by the US, and Moscow, have been anything but quiet, with frequent verbal sparring from both sides.

“There was a strong consensus in that [Quad] meeting that there needs to be a diplomatic, peaceful resolu-

tion to this. One of the core tenets of the Quad is to reinforce the rules-based international order, and that is a rules-based order that applies equally in the Indo-Pacific as it does in Europe, as it does anywhere else,” State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday.

### Rule-based order

“We know that our Indian partners are committed to that rules-based international order,” he said, going on to draw a parallel between, presumably, China’s actions in the Indo-Pacific, and Russia’s actions in Europe.

“There are any number of tenets to that order. One of them is that borders cannot be redrawn by force, that large countries cannot bully small countries; that only the people of a particular country can be in a position to choose their foreign policy, their partnerships, their alliances, their associations. Those are principles that apply equally in the Indo-Pacific as they do in Europe,” Mr. Price said.



# Russia demands security guarantees

Moscow says it will be 'forced to respond' if no assurances come; U.S. says Ukraine invasion is imminent

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW/KIEV

Russia announced on Thursday it could respond militarily if Washington does not meet its security demands and said it wanted all U.S. troops out of Eastern and Central Europe.

"In the absence of will on the American side to negotiate firm and legally binding guarantees on our security from the U.S. and its allies, Russia will be forced to respond, including with military-technical measures," the Foreign Ministry said. The U.S. handed back a response rejecting key Russian demands, including a ban on Ukraine joining NATO and clauses limiting Western influence in Eastern Europe and former Soviet states.

In its formal follow up on Thursday, Russia also said it insists "on the withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces in Central Europe, Eastern Europe



**High tensions:** A view of the kindergarten interior after the alleged shelling by separatist forces in Luhansk, Ukraine. \*AP

and the Baltics". Moscow also made two separate announcements on Thursday that it was returning military forces to bases after completing war games that had spurred Western fears of an attack. However, NATO allies accused Russia of misleading the world with "disinformation" by saying it was returning some troops to bases. NA-

TO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance was concerned "that Russia is trying to stage a pretext for an armed attack against Ukraine."

U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday said the threat of a Russian invasion was "very high" despite Moscow's claims of troop pull-back. The threat is "very

high, because they have not moved any of their troops out. They've moved more troops in," Mr. Biden told reporters at the White House. "We have reason to believe they're engaged in a false flag operation to have an excuse to go in." "Every indication we have is that they're prepared to go into Ukraine, attack Ukraine," he said. "My sense is it will happen in the next several days."

## Escalation in Ukraine

Meanwhile, Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern district of Luhansk traded allegations of an escalation in fighting on Thursday.

The Ukrainian military's command centre in the east alleged that Russian-backed forces had, "with special cynicism", fired heavy artillery at the village of Stanytsia-Luganska. "The shells hit a kindergarten," it said.

"According to preliminary data, two civilians were injured. Public infrastructure was also damaged. Half of the settlement was left without electricity."

"Over the past 24 hours, the situation on the line of contact has escalated significantly," Yan Leshchenko, head of the People's Militia in the self-declared Luhansk republic, told reporters. "The enemy, on the direct orders of the Kiev military-political leadership, is making attempts to escalate the conflict."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described the allegation of a Ukrainian escalation as "disturbing". "This is a matter of very deep concern," he said. "We hope that our opponents from Western capitals, from Washington, from NATO, will use all their influence to warn the Kiev authorities against further escalation."

# SC lifts stay on Haryana quota for private jobs

Court requests HC to decide on plea again within 4 weeks

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday set aside a Punjab and Haryana High Court order staying a controversial State law which provides 75% reservation for local youth in private sector jobs paying less than ₹30,000 a month.

Industry associations have said the law "affects the idea of India as an economic unit".

A Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and P.S. Narasimha set aside the February 3 stay order of the High Court on the ground that it did not give "sufficient reasons". The Bench observed that every law passed by the legislature was presumed to be legal. An order of stay on its implementation by a court of law should be reasoned. The High Court had not given sufficient reasons for stopping the Haryana law in its tracks on February 3.

"There should be manifest illegality... This is not the way a statute ought to be dealt with... We are not on

There should be manifest illegality. This is not the way a statute ought to be dealt with... We are not on the merits, but the way in which the High Court dealt with this

JUSTICE L. NAGESWARA RAO  
Supreme Court



There is a presumption of legality in favour of a law and it is ordinarily not stayed unless the legislation is prima facie unconstitutional or illegal

TUSHAR MEHTA Solicitor-General

Reservation in private sector has no basis in the Constitution... There was no empirical study done, no data whatsoever to justify this law

DUSHYANT DAVE Counsel for Faridabad Industries Association

the merits, but the way in which the High Court dealt with this," Justice Rao remarked orally.

## Not for adjournments

The top court requested the High Court to decide the writ petition filed by industrialists before it expeditiously and not later than a period of four weeks from Thursday. The parties were directed not to seek adjourn-

ments in the High Court.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court ordered the State government not to take any "coercive steps" against employers for violating the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act. Industry bodies said in court that the Act impacted 48,000 registered companies by ushering in "inspector raj".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

# SC lifts stay on Haryana quota for private jobs

An employer faces a fine of ₹10,000 to ₹2 lakh for violation of the Act. The statute covers companies, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms, partnership firms, and large individual employers. Many hire talents from outside Haryana.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for Faridabad Industries Association, opposed the Haryana government's appeal against the High Court stay.

## 'No study done'

"Reservation in private sector has no basis in the Constitution. The law impacts not only employment but the very existence of livelihood. There was no empirical study done, no data

whatsoever to justify this law," Mr. Dave asked.

He submitted that the continuation of the law's implementation, which came into effect in January 2022, would have far-reaching effects, not only in Haryana, but across India as it would not stop other States from enacting similar laws which exclude jobs to residents of other States.

"There is a presumption of legality in favour of a law and it is ordinarily not stayed unless the legislation is *prima facie* unconstitutional or illegal," Mr. Mehta argued. But the top court left it to the Punjab and Haryana High Court to decide the case finally, assuring that it had meanwhile "protected those working".

# 'Draft laws on refugee rights need revision'

## NHRC member says expert panel could take up task

**DAMINI NATH**  
NEW DELHI

Model laws on asylum and refugees that were drafted by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) decades ago but not implemented by the government could be revised by an expert committee, according to Commission member Justice M.M. Kumar's suggestion at

a recent meeting.

The NHRC held a discussion on "protection of the basic human rights of refugees and asylum seekers in India" on January 20 and many participants raised the issue of India not having a specific law for refugees and asylum-seekers, according to the minutes of the meeting that were published on Thursday.

Though India has not signed the United Nations Refugee Convention, 1951, Justice Kumar said the refu-

gees and asylum seekers were entitled to the rights in Articles 14, 20 and 21 of the Constitution. He highlighted the lack of a specific legislation governing refugees and asylum seekers.

Roshni Shanker, executive director of Migration and Asylum Project, spoke of the NHRC's contribution in drafting a domestic asylum law and a model law for refugees in the nineties, the minutes of the meeting said. She suggested the drafts needed to be updated and

converted into laws.

In his concluding remarks, Justice Kumar highlighted the need to update the two old NHRC documents regarding the domestic asylum laws and model law for refugees. He suggested constituting a panel/committee of scholars and domain experts to update these draft laws, the minutes stated. He also stated that if such laws were enacted, it would give legal sanctity and uniformity, ensuring the protection of human rights.



A water taxi leaves from the Belapur Jetty in Navi Mumbai on Thursday. ■ EMMANUAL YOGINI

# India's first water taxi service inaugurated in Maharashtra

Project connects Navi Mumbai with the main city

**STAFF REPORTER**  
MUMBAI

India's first water taxi service was inaugurated in Maharashtra on Thursday connecting the Navi Mumbai area to mainland Mumbai. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray inaugurated the Belapur jetty while Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbanand Sonowal flagged off the service.

The ₹8.37-crore project will presently operate on three routes and the State and the Centre have shared

the expenditure. The three routes include Belapur to Ferry Wharf - the domestic cruise terminal, Belapur to Elephanta Caves and Belapur to JNPT.

In the initial stage, seven speedboats – each with a capacity of 10 to 30 passengers – and one catamaran with passenger capacity of 50 to 60 will run on these routes. The cost per person on a single journey will be between ₹820 to ₹1,200 for speed boats and ₹290 for the catamaran.

Addressing the event, Mr.

Sonowal said the Sagarmala project has offered 131 projects worth ₹1.05 lakh crore for Maharashtra. “Financial aid of ₹278 crore for 46 projects will be offered under the project,” he said.

“India's first train ran between Mumbai and Thane and it expanded throughout the country gradually. What happens in Mumbai spreads across the country,” said Mr. Thackeray.

He said the ease of transport is a key factor for investors to set up businesses in the region.

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.