

# VEDHIK DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

23 - FEBRUARY 2022



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## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

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# 'China, Russia arming Myanmar junta'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

UN Security Council members China and Russia, as well as Serbia have continued supplying Myanmar's junta with weapons used to attack civilians, a UN rights

expert said on Tuesday.

UN Special Rapporteur on the rights situation in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, urged the Security Council to convene an emergency session "to debate and vote on a resolution to, at a minimum,

ban those arms transfers."

"UNSC members Russia and China continue to provide the Myanmar military with fighter jets, armoured vehicles, and in the case of Russia, the promise of further arms," he said.

# India sends first batch of aid to Afghanistan

It marks an end to months of bureaucratic wrangling between Islamabad and New Delhi

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla flagged off a convoy of 50 trucks carrying 2500 tonnes of wheat as humanitarian aid for Afghanistan at the India-Pakistan integrated checkpost (ICP) on Tuesday, the first of about 1,000 truckloads which will head for Jalalabad over the next few weeks.

The wheat is expected to be sent across Afghanistan to help people deal with the crisis caused by food shortage and an economic collapse after the Taliban takeover of Kabul.

The assistance was made "in response to appeals made by the United Nations for humanitarian assistance



Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla and Afghanistan Ambassador Farid Mamundzay flagging off the trucks. •AP

to Afghanistan", the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Traders and truckers in Amritsar also welcomed the trans-shipment, which is taking place after being suspended for nearly three years, and expressed the hope that the opening for Af-

ghan aid would also lead to a reopening of India and Pakistan trade, whose closure has caused massive economic losses in the border town.

"The wheat assistance will be delivered in multiple consignments and will be handed over to the United

Nations World Food Program (WFP) in Jalalabad, Afghanistan," an MEA statement said

World Food Program Country Director Bishaw Parajuli, who had helped complete the negotiations with India, and Afghan Ambassador Farid Mamundzay were also present at the ceremony. According to officials, the wheat, procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), has been specially "double bagged" to protect it from contamination along the 500-km journey from Attari to Jalalabad, and then to other centres for distribution.

The wheat shipment, which was packed in special bags stamped "Gift from the people of India to the people of Afghanistan", marks an

end to months of bureaucratic wrangles between New Delhi and Islamabad. The consignment had been originally offered to the Taliban leadership in October 2021, but was held up due to objections from Pakistan.

Once Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan announced he would allow the trans-shipment as an "exception", and other permissions were secured from Islamabad, it was further delayed by Punjab election, and trucks from Afghanistan finally came to Attari on Monday to be loaded, a day after Punjab polling. Afghan trucks will ply the route, not Indian trucks, as per the Pakistani stipulations, and the drivers are given permits instead of visas by India.

# Biden is risking his Indo-Pacific strategy

If the U.S. is to meaningfully pivot to the Indo-Pacific, it will have to exercise strategic restraint in Europe



BRAHMA CHELLANEY

At a time when America's global pre-eminence is being severely challenged by China, the future of the present U.S.-led international order and America's own standing are likely to be settled in the Indo-Pacific region, especially Asia. This explains why Joe Biden is the third successive U.S. President to commit to shifting America's primary strategic focus to the Indo-Pacific. Yet, it is far from certain that he will succeed where his two predecessors failed.

## Strategy on the Indo-Pacific

If anything, Mr. Biden is getting increasingly distracted from the Indo-Pacific by Russian moves. The escalating U.S.-Russia tensions over NATO's forward policy, with Ukraine as the flashpoint, threaten to become the defining crisis of the Biden presidency. The crisis, which has the makings of a drawn-out and dangerous confrontation, could deepen the involvement of an already overstretched U.S. in European security.

The White House released its long-delayed 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' document on February 11, the same day it publicly warned that Russia could launch an invasion of Ukraine within days. A Russian invasion into the Ukrainian heartland would leave Mr. Biden little time for the Indo-Pacific, which explains why the 19-page document was hurriedly released on a Friday afternoon, amid criticism that the President lacks clarity on an Indo-Pacific policy despite being in office for more than a year.

Mr. Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy, as a bare-bones paper for public consumption, offers a bird's-eye look at how his administration views the Indo-Pacific landscape. With its brief or nebulous references to key regional issues and challenges, the document does not provide adequate clarity on the thrust and direction of U.S. policy in the region.

In fact, it reads more like a watered-down version of the 'United States Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific' of former President Donald Trump's administration. More



REUTERS

significantly, it comes without the assumptions, objectives and actions that were distinctly defined under each topic in that strategic framework, which was declassified in the final days of the Trump presidency with just light redactions.

The fact is that Mr. Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy document is essentially an exercise in public diplomacy, while the Trump administration's once-secret strategic framework was formulated to advance its policy of a 'free and open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) – a concept originally authored by then-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The strategic framework's declassification was apparently aimed at underscoring that the successor administration was inheriting a coherent, comprehensive and realistic strategy on the Indo-Pacific.

The FOIP vision remains the centerpiece of Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy. The document, however, confirms a Biden-initiated shift of the Quad toward geo-economic and other larger issues – from "global health security" and climate change (Mr. Biden's pet concern) to "critical and emerging technologies, driving supply-chain cooperation, joint technology deployments and advancing common technology principles." Such a broad and ambitious agenda threatens to dilute the Quad's strategic focus on the Indo-Pacific.

## A more conciliatory approach

Mr. Biden thus far has not made his long-anticipated China strategy speech to lay out the administration's approach to a country that is a military, economic and technological challenge on a scale that the U.S. has not seen before. While largely hewing to the China policy set by his predecessor, Mr. Biden's approach, ho-

wever, appears more conciliatory.

While the Trump administration launched an ideological offensive against China as a predatory communist state without political legitimacy or the rule of law, Mr. Biden assured Chinese President Xi Jinping in a virtual summit meeting last November that the U.S. will not seek to change China's political system. That reassurance is embedded in the Indo-Pacific strategy paper, which unequivocally states that, "Our objective is not to change the PRC [People's Republic of China] but to shape the strategic environment in which it operates..."

The Indo-Pacific strategy document acknowledges that China "seeks to become the world's most influential power" and that "our allies and partners in the region bear much of the cost of the PRC's harmful behaviour". Yet it declares that the U.S. will seek to "manage competition with the PRC responsibly" and "work with the PRC in areas like climate change and nonproliferation".

The strategy paper, while supporting "India's continued rise", has couched its reference to China's military actions against India since 2020 not as "aggression" (a term that the White House uses almost every day to describe Russia's moves against Ukraine) but in neutral language – as "the conflict along the Line of Actual Control with India." And the background press briefing on the paper's release referred to "China's behaviour in the Line of Actual Control."

Since taking office, Mr. Biden has treated China with more respect than Russia. For example, last year he imposed two rounds of sanctions on Moscow and even called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "killer". While turning Russia's troop buildup against Ukraine into a major interna-

tional crisis, Mr. Biden has not uttered a word on a bigger military buildup – by China along the Himalayas – that threatens to unleash war on America's strategic partner India.

## Shifting focus

Today, Mr. Biden is pouring military resources into Europe and focusing on containing Russia's regional ambitions at the cost of countering China's drive to gain global pre-eminence. And although Mr. Biden has deserted Ukraine to its fate by ruling out coming to that beleaguered country's direct defence, Washington has been in the lead in sounding the drumbeats of war.

If the U.S. is to meaningfully pivot to the Indo-Pacific, it will have to exercise strategic restraint in Europe, not ratchet up tensions with Russia through NATO expansionism or military drills. Last autumn's U.S.-NATO military exercises near Russia's Black Sea coast incensed Moscow, foreshadowing the present crisis.

The U.S. should be addressing its strategic overstretch, not seeking to exacerbate it through greater entanglement in European security. With its relative power in decline, it must conserve its strength to focus on retaining its global pre-eminence, including by making the strategic trade-offs required to remain the leading power in the Indo-Pacific. Economically and strategically, the global centre of gravity is shifting to the Indo-Pacific. Building a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific has become more crucial than ever for international security. Yet, the U.S. still prioritises NATO so as to dominate European security, while the bulk of its economic aid and military assistance goes to West Asia and North Africa.

Unless Mr. Biden prudently recalibrates foreign policy objectives with available resources and capabilities so as to mitigate America's strategic overreach, he will not only sap U.S. strength to deal with the bigger challenges in Asia, including to American leadership, but also undermine his newly unveiled Indo-Pacific strategy that seeks to make the U.S. role in that most important region "more effective and enduring than ever".

*Brahma Chellaney is a geostrategist and the author of nine books, including the award-winning 'Water: Asia's New Battleground'*

EXPLAINER

# Examining the Russia-China axis

What will be the relationship between Russia and China vis-a-vis developments in Ukraine? How has their alliance grown over the past years?

## THE GIST

■ Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described current relations between Russia and China as the "best in their entire history". The biggest factor behind their current closeness is their shared discomfort with the U.S. and its allies. This has been reflected in their growing military closeness as well as their two way trade. China in 2014 became the first foreign buyer of Russia's S-400 missile defence system. Their joint exercises have also grown in scope. Commercial trade was up 35% to \$147 billion, driven largely by Chinese energy imports. China has been Russia's biggest trading partner for 12 consecutive years and accounts for close to 20% of Russia's total foreign trade (Russia, on the other hand, accounts for 2% of China's trade).

■ On Ukraine, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi on February 19, told the security conference in Munich that "the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected and safeguarded." "It is also the consistent, principled position of China. And that applies equally to Ukraine," he added

■ In light of the growing Sino-Russian closeness, India should learn how to navigate the three-way dynamic amid the worst period in relations with China in more than three decades, even as Russia remains a key defence partner.

ANANTH KRISHNAN

**The story so far:** Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to China this month, as well as the Ukraine crisis, have turned the spotlight on Russia's relations with China. Many in the west have blamed the Russia-China axis for emboldening Moscow's recent moves and ensuring it will not be completely isolated in the face of western sanctions. At the same time, Beijing has found itself walking a tightrope in its response and has so far stopped short of endorsing Russia's actions. Does the Russia-China relationship, for all its undeniable closeness, have its limits?

### What explains the current state of Russia-China relations?

Last year, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described relations as the "best in their entire history". This wasn't hyperbole, he was keen to underline, but a "well-deserved and fair assessment." Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping have met 38 times (in person and virtually) since 2013. Their last meeting, in Beijing in early February where Mr. Putin was attending the opening of the Winter Olympics, produced an ambitious and sweeping joint statement, as well as a number of energy deals, that underlined the strategic, ideological, and commercial impulses driving the relationship.

On the strategic front, the statement said "new inter-State relations between Russia and China are superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War era." It added that the relationship "has no limits" and "there are no forbidden areas of cooperation". It underlined how far ties had come between two neighbours that have had, to put it mildly, up-and-downs. For the new People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union was the most important source of financial and technological support. But the early honeymoon period was followed by the Sino-Soviet split over ideology as well as a border dispute. After the collapse of the Soviet Union – an event that China's Communist Party leadership continues to study with great interest – both neighbours worked to settle their border. Booming trade ties then followed.

The biggest factor behind their current closeness is their shared discomfort with the U.S. and its allies. The joint statement this month emphasised that point, with China supporting Russia in "opposing further

enlargement of NATO and calling on the North Atlantic Alliance to abandon its ideological cold war approaches" and Russia echoing China's opposition to "the formation of closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the Asia-Pacific region and the negative impact of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy." China, for its part, said it was "sympathetic to and supports the proposals put forward by the Russian Federation to create long-term legally binding security guarantees in Europe". Russia returned the favour, saying it "reaffirms support for the One-China principle, confirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and opposes any forms of independence of Taiwan." In short, both have the other's backs on key strategic issues.

This has been reflected in growing military closeness. China in 2014 became the first foreign buyer of the S-400 missile defence system, which India has also purchased (although there have been reported delays in delivery for reasons unknown). Their joint exercises have also grown in scope. Last year, a third "joint strategic air patrol" over the East China Sea was described by Chinese military commentator Song Zhongping as "a practical action to warn some countries outside the region and some neighbouring countries, like AUKUS and Quad, not to stir up trouble." There is also the ideological binding glue in shared opposition to what both countries described this month as the west's "attempts to impose their own democratic standards on other countries" and "interference" by the west on human rights issues.

Commercial ties have also been growing. Two-way trade last year was up 35% to \$147 billion, driven largely by Chinese energy imports. Russia is China's largest source of energy imports and second largest source of crude oil, the Communist Party-run Global Times reported in January, with energy set to account for 35% of trade in 2022. China has been Russia's biggest trading partner for 12 consecutive years and accounts for close to 20% of Russia's total foreign trade (Russia, on the other hand, accounts for 2% of China's trade). But Russia is, for China, a key market for project contracts besides energy supplies.

Chinese companies signed construction project deals worth \$5 billion last year – for the third straight year – according to China's Ministry of Commerce.

### How has China responded to the Ukraine crisis?

Given these deep trade linkages, China does not want instability (or, for that matter, a spurt in energy prices). That was the message from Foreign Minister Wang Yi on February 19, when he told the security conference in Munich that "the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected and safeguarded." "This is a basic norm of international relations that embodies the purposes of the UN Charter," he said. "It is also the consistent, principled position of China. And that applies equally to Ukraine."

Mr. Wang also outlined China's preferred resolution to the current crisis, which, he said, was a diplomatic solution and a return to the Minsk agreement. Only two days later, that agreement was left in tatters after President Putin ordered troops into two rebel-controlled areas (the called them "peacekeepers") and decided to recognise the "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk. That, in itself, showed China's limited influence. Mr. Putin did, however, wait for the Winter Olympics to conclude on February 20 out of possible deference to Chinese sensitivities before making his move.

### What are the implications for India and the rest of the world?

China has repeatedly underlined that it is sympathetic to Russia's concerns on NATO, which mirror its own opposition to America's allies in the Indo-Pacific (Chinese strategists have repeatedly called the Quad an "Asian NATO", a label which its members reject).

On the possibility of Russia now coming under heavy sanctions, the Global Times said this week that "under this backdrop, close cooperation between China and Russia on energy, trade, finance and science and technology is all the more important." "As strategic back-to-back fraternal partners, China is obliged to bolster Russia in time of need," the newspaper said. "And, thanks to consistent support from China, the Russian economy has become increasingly resilient following years of sanctions imposed by the U.S. and other Western developed countries. A strong economy will back up Moscow to deflect ruthless economic coercion from the U.S." Yet China's capacities to do so, given its own domestic economic challenges, are in truth limited.

Strategists in the west and in India have



**Strong ties:** Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, China on February 4, 2022. • VIA REUTERS

often questioned the robustness of the relationship as well as Russia's possible unease at being the "junior partner" and increasingly beholden to Chinese interests. But are there any signs of a divide that can be exploited (as Nixon did five decades ago)? The evidence suggests no, and at least in the near-term, New Delhi should expect Sino-Russian closeness to continue, which poses its own challenges for India and how it navigates the three-way dynamic amid the worst period in relations with China in more than three decades, even as Russia remains a key defence partner.

This is not, however, an entirely new situation, as the historian Srinath Raghavan reminds us, on how the Soviet Union responded to China's attack on India in 1962. "The Chinese had sounded out the Russians," he writes in his book *The Most Dangerous Place: A History of the United States in South Asia*, "and got a wink and a nod from Nikita Khrushchev."

## China walks tightrope on Ukraine crisis

Beijing has backed Moscow's security concerns but also called for Kiev's sovereignty to be respected

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
HONG KONG

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday neither endorsed nor criticised Russia's actions but called for Moscow's security concerns to be respected, underlining Beijing's tightrope walk on the Ukraine crisis. China, which has close relations with Russia, has in recent weeks repeatedly backed Russia's broader se-

curity concerns involving NATO, which mirror Beijing's own concerns over U.S. alliances in Asia, but has also called for Ukraine's sovereignty to be respected.

Mr. Wang told the Munich security conference on Saturday that respecting "the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries" was "a basic norm of international relations that embodies the purposes of the UN Charter." "It is also the consistent, princi-



Wang Yi

pled position of China. And that applies equally to Ukraine," he said.

Mr. Blinken, the State Department said in a very brief readout of the call, "under-

scored the need to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity." The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Mr. Wang told Mr. Blinken that "the legitimate security concerns of any country must be respected, and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter must be upheld", reflecting the middle ground that Beijing is seeking to occupy between Russia and the west, without backing either side.

He repeated his call for a

return to negotiation and the Minsk agreements, which now remain uncertain after Russia's latest moves. He expressed concern that the situation was "deteriorating". Both Mr. Wang, and China's UN envoy Zhang Jun, called on "all parties to exercise restraint" and "resolve differences through dialogue and negotiation" without explicitly criticising Russia's moves, a stand that closely mirrored what India also said on Tuesday.

# De-escalation of Russia-Ukraine tensions top priority, says India

All sides should exercise utmost restraint and engage in dialogue, it says at UN

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India said it was watching the latest developments along Ukraine's eastern border and Russia's recognition of separatist states in the Donbas region "with deep concern", but stopped short of criticising Moscow's actions, during a debate at the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday.

Speaking at the start of the emergency session that was called immediately after Russian President Vladimir Putin's declaration on Monday night, India's Permanent Representative to the UN T.S. Tirumurti called for restraint and diplomatic dialogue.

## 'Peace and stability'

"The immediate priority is 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, repeating New Delhi's previous position where it had chosen not to join Western calls for action



**Ominous sign:** A military vehicle drives on a road as smoke rises from a power plant after shelling outside the town of Schastia, near the eastern Ukraine city of Luhansk, on Tuesday. • AFP

against Russia. In contrast, the U.K., the U.S., European countries, and Kenya called Russia's decision an attack on Ukrainian sovereignty, and promised sanctions and other actions.

Separately, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in a statement, said, he was "greatly concerned by Russia's decision on the status of certain areas of the Donetsk & Luhansk regions of Ukraine".

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## 'De-escalation of tensions top priority'

"We remain fully supportive of the sovereignty, independence & territorial integrity of Ukraine, within internationally recognised borders," Mr. Guterres added.

Speaking at the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in Paris, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said most of the countries were looking for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

"India can talk with Russia, with other countries in the UN Security Council and supports initiatives like those of France," Mr. Jaishankar added.

Reaffirming India's position that the situation must be resolved on the basis of the "Minsk Agreements" of 2014-2015, which had not yet been implemented, Mr. Tirumurti said India welcomed talks under the Trilateral Contact Group, in-

cluding Russia, Ukraine and members of the OSCE in Europe, as well as the Normandy Format of talks between Russia and Ukraine along with Germany and France, and said "constructive diplomacy is the need of the hour". Mr. Tirumurti also called the safety of about 20,000 Indians studying and working in Ukraine a "priority" for the government. The government has issued a number of travel advisories asking Indian citizens to leave Ukraine temporarily. Families of Indian diplomats have also been asked to return to India in the light of the situation.

"The safety and security of civilians are essential," he added, calling for "all sides to maintain international peace and security by exercising the utmost restraint and intensifying diplomatic efforts".

# Most countries looking for a diplomatic solution: Jaishankar

India can talk to Russia, other countries in UN Security Council, he says

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

Most of the countries are looking for a diplomatic solution to the escalating Ukraine-Russia crisis, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in Paris on Tuesday.

Addressing the meeting, which was dominated by the Ukraine crisis, the External Affairs Minister said France was a “resident power” in the Indo-Pacific.

## Complex events

“The situation in Ukraine is the result of a complex chain of events over the past 30 years. Most countries, such as India or France, which is very active, are looking for a diplomatic solution. India can talk with Russia, with other countries in the U.N. Security Council and support initiatives like those of France,” Mr. Jaishankar said.

The quadrilateral “Quad” cooperation originally consisted of Australia, India, Ja-



S. Jaishankar with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell in Paris on Tuesday. •REUTERS

pan and the United States, but France and the United Kingdom own overseas territories in the Indian Ocean and have therefore asserted their plans to be part of the Indo-Pacific future.

## European security

However, in recent weeks, Indo-Pacific has also emerged as a concept that is

connected to European security. Indicating that concern, Mr. Jaishankar said, “Today, we see challenges on that score with the clarity that proximity brings. And believe me, distance is no insulation. The issues we confront in the Indo-Pacific will extend beyond, even to Europe.”

The External Affairs Mi-

nister also welcomed French involvement in the Indo-Pacific.

“We have very close relationship with France, which is improving over time. The high quality of our relationship affects sensitive areas like defence, nuclear, space, etc. France has been a valuable partner in these areas,” Mr. Jaishankar said.

# Russia faces sanctions after Putin move

U.S. terms Russia's troops deployment in eastern Ukraine 'invasion'; West to announce new sanctions

REUTERS

MOSCOW/DONETSK

Russia faced the prospect of harsh new Western sanctions on Tuesday after President Vladimir Putin recognised two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine and ordered the deployment of troops there, deepening Western fears of a major war in Europe.

Ukraine said two soldiers had been killed and 12 wounded in shelling by pro-Russian separatists in the east in the past 24 hours, and reported new hostilities on Tuesday morning.

A military convoy of more than 100 trucks with soldiers was seen heading in the direction of the Ukrainian border in Russia's Belgorod region, a witness told Reuters on Tuesday. Western leaders are trying to work out what Mr. Putin will do next, and whether Russia plans a full-scale invasion of Ukraine after massing troops near the borders and demanding a re-drawing of security arrangements in Europe.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his



People waving Russian flags in Donetsk after President Vladimir Putin recognised the two breakaway regions •AP

country may break off diplomatic relations with Moscow.

## Parliament's approval

Russia's Parliament ratified treaties with the two separatist regions on Tuesday. It also approved deployment of armed forces abroad for what it described as a “peacekeeping mission” in the breakaway regions. The developments pushed oil prices to a seven-year high.

Mr. Putin's announcement on Monday, and his signing of a decree on the de-

ployment of Russian troops to “keep peace” in the two breakaway regions, drew international condemnation. U.S. President Joe Biden signed an executive order to halt U.S. business activity in the breakaway regions.

The White House began referring to Russian troop deployments in eastern Ukraine as an “invasion” after initially hesitating to use the term – a red line that President Joe Biden has said would result in the U.S. levying severe sanctions against

Moscow. Britain on Tuesday imposed sanctions against five banks and three individuals – Gennady Timchenko and two other billionaires with close links to Mr. Putin. The EU agreed to impose new sanctions that will blacklist more politicians, lawmakers and officials, ban EU investors from trading in Russian State bonds, and target imports and exports with separatist entities.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, said the descrip-

tion of the Russian troops as peacekeepers was “nonsense”.

“We can, will and must stand united in our calls for Russia to withdraw its forces, return to the diplomatic table and work toward peace,” she told reporters after an emergency meeting of the White House Security Council late on Monday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov brushed off the threat of sanctions, saying the West would impose them regardless of events.

## Russian recognition

Putin's actions are aimed at wresting from the West guarantees against NATO expansion

After weeks of ratcheting tensions, and frenetic diplomacy across Europe, Russian President Vladimir Putin has played a major move by announcing formal recognition for the Donbas region enclaves (Oblasts) of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine, one which changes the course of the present diplomatic efforts. To begin with, the recognition of the two separatist groups that control parts of the Donbas region as governments signals that Russia is no longer interested in talks on the basis of the "Minsk accords". The agreements – negotiated in 2014 and 2015, but never fully implemented – had secured a "special status" for the Donbas enclaves. Mr. Putin has also ordered Russian "peacekeepers" into the region, a move that could spark off conflict with Ukrainian troops. Mr. Putin may claim that his move is far short of the "invasion" that the U.S. and its NATO allies have been warning about, and should not incur any further hostilities from Ukraine. In doing so, however, he has put paid to all hopes that the threat of conflict would recede once the tens of thousands of Russian troops along the Ukraine border, and in Belarus for military exercises, withdrew. Finally, his move is a clear sign that the situation is not going to be "managed" or "handled" without NATO sitting down to serious negotiation over the security guarantees he has been demanding for two decades, and some discussion about how to regulate the expansion of NATO to Russia's neighbouring countries and the heavy presence of western troops and weapons in the region. The ball is now in the court of the U.S. and its European allies to decide whether they would react with sanctions, military action, or return to the diplomatic table.

For New Delhi, the escalation in tensions comes at a particularly sensitive time: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has been travelling to Germany and France, and while he has tried to shift the focus of his European interlocutors to the Indo-Pacific, it is Russia's actions that dominate the conversation. In addition, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is visiting Moscow, the first by a Pakistani PM in over two decades, and New Delhi is watching the new ties closely. The timing of the tensions is all the more inconvenient, given that the delivery of Russian S-400 missile systems is underway, and the U.S. administration is still to decide on whether to waive or impose CAATSA sanctions against India. As a result, India's statement at the UNSC that appealed for diplomacy and de-escalation, while making no critical comment about Mr. Putin's announcement is not just an assertion of India's traditional principled position, or a study in pragmatism but also a reflection of the difficult position New Delhi finds itself in over the conflict, which appears to have now entered a new phase.

# What does the recognition mean for the Ukraine crisis?

Putin's move has brought the Minsk process to a dead end

STANLY JOHNSTON

Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to recognise the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk republics practically brought the Minsk peace process to an end.

The Minsk I and II accords, reached in 2014 and 2015, had brought a tenuous ceasefire between the Russian-backed rebels in Ukraine's Donbas region, comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and put forward a formula for resolving the conflict. The civil strife in Donbas broke out after the 2014 Euromaidan protests brought down the pro-Russian regime of Viktor Yanukovich. Donbas, located on the Russian border adjoining Russia, has a majority Russian-speaking population, like Crimea, the Black Sea Peninsula which Russia annexed in 2014.

Donbas is no stranger to military conflicts. After the fall of the Russian empire, the region was incorporated into the newly created Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918. And then came the Bolsheviks, who were fighting a civil war against the remnants of the old regime. Donbas became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, created under Lenin. (In his speech on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said modern



**On the move:** People from Donetsk region heading to temporary shelters. \*AP

Ukraine was "entirely created by the Bolshevik, communist Russia" and that "Lenin and his associates did it in a way that was extremely harsh on Russia – by separating, severing what is historically Russian land").

### NEWS ANALYSIS

During the Second World War, the Nazis took the region. Over 3,00,000 civilians were killed in Donbas alone during the Nazi occupation. In 1943, after defeating the Nazis in Stalingrad, the Red Army took Donbas back. In 1991, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the region became part of the newly-born Ukraine nation. It stayed so until the 2014 Euromaidan protests.

#### Minsk Accords

According to the Minsk II agreement, rebels were required to enforce a full ceasefire in the Donbas region,

pull out heavy weapons and start talks on holding local elections. Ukraine was supposed to devolve more powers to the Donbas "republics", introduce constitutional reforms codifying the decentralisation of power and announce an amnesty to the rebel fighters. Rebels, in turn, should allow the Ukrainian troops to restore control of the border with Russia. These terms were never implemented, mainly because Kiev (backed by Washington) was not particularly supportive of it. But it had at least remained a path towards peace. That path was closed on Monday when Russia recognised the republics.

Right now, rebels control only parts of the two oblasts, but they have laid claims to the whole region. The conflict had been frozen since the 2015 ceasefire. But now that Russia has recognised the regions, Mr. Putin can move troops and heavy weaponry to Donbas openly. Moscow has already announced that it would send "peacekeepers" to the republics. With Russian help, the rebels could try to push the frontlines to take control of the whole of the two oblasts or even extend their reach further, as many have suggested, creating a land bridge from Donbas to the Russia-controlled Crimea.

# J&K delimitation panel gets 2-month extension

## Move will further delay elections

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Delimitation Commission, set up to redraw the Assembly constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir, has been given two more months to complete the exercise, a notification from the Union Law Ministry said on Tuesday.

The extension will further delay an announcement to hold elections in J&K that is now a Union Territory but with a provision for a legislature.

The term of the panel, headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (retired), was coming to end on March 6. While Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and the Election Commissioner of J&K are ex-officio members of the Commission, all the five Lok Sabha members from the Union Territory are its associate members.

### **Redrawing boundaries**

The commission came into being by virtue of an Act of Parliament, under the provisions of Part V of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. It is redrawing boundaries of seven additional seats for the 83-member Assembly.

“In exercise of powers conferred by Section 3 of the Delimitation Act 2002 (33 of 2002), the Central government hereby makes the further amendment of two months in the notification of Government of India in the Ministry of Law and Justice



Ranjana Prakash Desai

(Legislative department no So-1015(e) dated 6th March 2020. In the notification in paragraph two for the words ‘two years’ the words ‘two years and two months’ shall be substituted,” read the gazette notification.

### **All-party meet**

Originally set up in March 2020, the commission was given a one-year extension as its work got delayed after the National Conference (NC) had refused to participate in the deliberations.

The NC decided to take part in the commission proceedings only after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held an all-party meeting in June 2021. In its first draft proposal, the commission suggested an increase of six Assembly segments in the Jammu province and one in the Kashmir province. It has also suggested reservation of seven seats for Scheduled Castes and nine seats for Scheduled Tribes.

While most Kashmir-based parties accused the commission of “gerrymandering” and termed the report “unacceptable”, the BJP welcomed it.

# A new measure of inflation is brewing on the horizon

Traditional statistical practices could be getting redefined, as an initiative by British campaigner Jack Monroe shows



ATANU BISWAS

About three decades ago, when I learned about the Consumer Price Index (CPI) – that reflects changes in the retail prices of selected goods and services on which a homogeneous group of consumers spends a major part of their income – my immediate query was about how the ‘basket’ of commodities and their weights are selected. Are they constructed in some objective way, say, by some well-defined survey on income and consumption? Or do they mostly depend on the ‘wisdom’ of a few experts?

Another important concern is that while the CPI corresponds to a “common man”, nobody knows who that common man is. Should we put a piece of imported chocolate, say, in the basket in the perspective of today’s India? And what should be its size? Well, as the consumption pattern widely varies across different economic classes, different CPIs may help understand how different economic layers of the society are affected by the increasing cost of commodities.

## A series of CPIs

However, we still have a distinct series of CPIs – for industrial workers (IW), for agricultural labourers (AL), for urban non-manual em-

ployees (UNME). The CPI (IW), certainly, is the most popular one as the dearness allowance of Central government employees is calculated on the basis of movement in this index. The National Statistical Office (NSO) periodically releases the All India CPI and corresponding Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) for Rural, Urban, and Combined. Of course, India has no income survey and the last publicly available Household Consumer Expenditure Surveys’ data is a decade old. Hence, the choice of the ‘basket’ and fixing weights of its commodities are always tricky tasks.

## Why it is skewed now

A radical shift in paradigm has recently been initiated in the United Kingdom, by the British journalist, cookbook author, and anti-poverty campaigner, Jack Monroe. This new index is intended to provide a third-party alternative to CPI, “provided by the U.K. Government’s Office for National Statistics (ONS), charting the effect of inflation on consumer goods and services, and highlighting the profound impact inflation has had on low-income families and supermarket value ranges of food and other basic goods”, as an article by James Whitbrook says.

Ms. Monroe was prompted “to create her index after the CPI measure for inflation in the U.K. rose to 5.4% in December 2021, the highest level for nearly 30 years”. Ms. Monroe was “infuriated” that the CPI “grossly underestimates the real cost of inflation as it happens to people with the least”, especial-



ly in the backdrop of the continuing economic effects of Brexit, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, prolonged lockdowns, and general supply chain issues, as the Whitbrook article highlights. She noticed, as a *Guardian* article highlights, that the price of rice, for example, in her local supermarket had increased from 45p a kilogram last year to £1 for 500g, a 344% increase! And the number of value products has also shrunk.

Ms. Monroe realised that the ONS reports a skewed and unfair version of the cost of living, which is not representative of millions of people’s experiences. In consultation with economists, charities, and analysts, she soon compiled her own index “that will document the disappearance of the budget lines and the insidiously creeping prices of the most basic versions of essential items at the supermarket” and “serve as an irrefutable snapshot of the reality experienced by millions of people”.

Ms. Monroe has been authorised by the Terry Pratchett estate to use the “Vimes Boots Index” as the name of a price index she

planned to document inflation in prices of basic necessities.

## An explanation

In the 1993 novel, *Men at Arms* in his book series ‘Discworld’, English fantasy writer Sir Terry Pratchett crisply explained the “Sam Vimes ‘Boots’ theory of socio-economic unfairness” in which Captain Samuel Vimes muses on the expensive nature of poverty! In reference to the captain, Sir Pratchett wrote: “A really good pair of leather boots cost \$50. But an affordable pair of boots, which were sort of OK for a season or two and then leaked like hell when the cardboard gave out, cost about \$10.” Good boots, however, last for years and years. Thus, “A man who could afford \$50 had a pair of boots that’d still be keeping his feet dry in 10 years’ time, while the poor man who could only afford cheap boots would have spent a hundred dollars on boots in the same time and would still have wet feet.” Sir Pratchett’s work in ‘Discworld’ consists of ‘an insightful, often furious, view of class dynamics and social injustice’. “The reason that the rich were so rich, Vimes reasoned, was because they managed to spend less money,” wrote Sir Pratchett. Worse, being poor traps you in a cycle of being poor.

Sir Pratchett’s ‘boots theory’ is not new though. The adage “buy cheap, buy twice” is dated long back. Then, writer Paul Jennings divulged exactly the same idea in his column in *The Observer*, ‘Oddly Enough’ in 1954. And the character, Owen, in Robert Tresselt’s 1914 classic *The Ragged Trousered*

*Philanthropists* illustrated how the working classes are robbed: “Everybody knows that good clothes, boots or furniture are really the cheapest in the end, although they cost more money at first; but the working classes can seldom or never afford to buy good things; they have to buy cheap rubbish which is dear at any price.”

## At the core of the index

As Ms. Monroe observed, a collection of 700 pre-specified goods that are used to calculate CPI includes items such as “a leg of lamb, bedroom furniture, a television and champagne”, which are not applicable for millions of the U.K.’s poorest “who were forced by an array of desperate circumstances to use food banks in the last year”, as a *Guardian* article notes. The proposed Index “aims to be a record of prices of the lowest-cost staple foods over time, to demonstrate the disproportionate impact of inflation on the poor”.

The index certainly gained prominence due to Ms. Monroe’s unorthodox name choice. The ONS is already been working on a radical overhaul of how it tracks prices, which “has the potential to kickstart an avalanche of change,” as Ms. Monroe believes. As the new price index is brewing, traditional statistical practices are getting redefined, for sure. And, who knows, the newly planned Boots index might eventually touch the horizon of societies of some other countries as well.

Atanu Biswas is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

# Crude oil poses key risk to financial stability: FM

Keeping an eye on global headwinds and extreme volatility in markets, but no plans to defer LIC IPO, says Sitharaman

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The government and regulators are keeping close tabs on the evolving Russia-Ukraine situation, high crude oil prices and the extreme volatility in financial markets, Finance Minister Nirjala Sitharaman said on Tuesday, ruling out any extraordinary or special measures to cope with the implications of these headwinds.

Ms. Sitharaman said she was studying the facts of the governance fiasco at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to assess whether adequate regulatory action had been taken by the stock market regulator in the matter. She was also unfazed by the possibility of volatility in equity markets affecting the prospects for the listing of Life In-

surance Corporation of India (LIC) shares before the end of the current financial year.

## ‘Safeguarding trade’

India was hoping for a diplomatic resolution of the Ukraine crisis and the External Affairs ministry was in touch with all countries in the region so that Indian trade was not affected, Ms. Sitharaman told reporters after steering the 25th meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council in Mumbai with the chiefs of financial sector regulators.

Runaway crude oil prices were identified as one of the major challenges for India’s financial stability by the council, which also deliberated on ‘the extreme volatility’ in markets, ‘headwinds’ from the tightening of mon-



Free agents: It is for oil marketing companies to decide if they need to raise prices, says Sitharaman. \*SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

etary policy by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks and the ‘worrisome international situation’ in Ukraine, she indicated.

“It is very difficult to say

on crude prices, it is obviously an important consideration... It’s not just the rise in global prices that is a problem, but there’s a supply challenge as well,” she said.

On the outlook for local retail fuel prices, which are expected to rise in tandem with global prices after the ongoing Assembly polls conclude in March, Ms. Sitharaman said it was for oil marketing companies to decide.

## ‘I cannot answer’

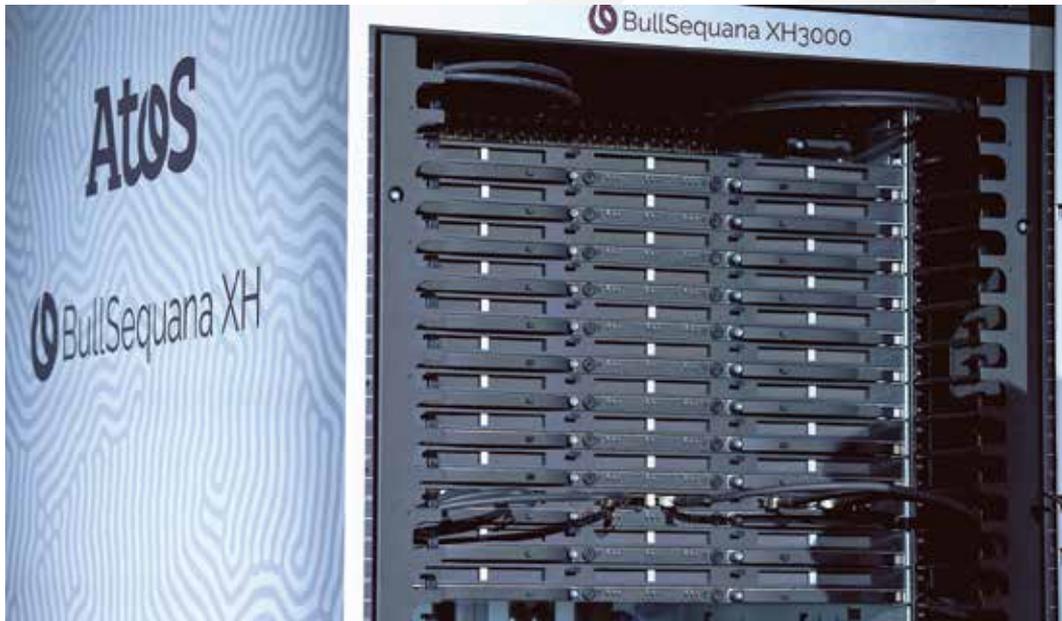
“But about why oil marketing companies, who actually play at a price... meaning they buy at some cost, they use a 15-day average based on which they put out a pump-level price; what the OMCs will have to do, why they have not done it for the last 7 days, 17 days, 27 days, I cannot answer,” she added.

Emphasising that the volatility in the financial markets was due to triggers from overseas developments such as the Ukraine crisis, Ms.

Sitharaman said the government was discussing the implications and ‘pressures we may have to face due to what is happening there’. “We are keeping a watch and moving forwards,” she added.

“On whether the market condition is conducive for LIC [listing], if it’s good for LIC, it is good for everybody else. If there are headwinds for LIC, it is headwinds for the rest as well. I can see there’s a lot of buzz and interest in the market now that the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) is out,” Ms. Sitharaman said.

Dismissing queries on whether the listing process could spill over into the next financial year, the Minister said: “We will be going ahead with it... the DRHP is not issued two years in advance.”



**Macro machines:** The BullSequana XH3000, a hybrid exascale-class supercomputer created by French information technology company Atos, in Paris, on February 16, 2022. **•AFF**

CACHE

# Meta's AI Supercomputer

How are supercomputers changing the current technological landscape? Is Facebook's latest innovation going to expand the metaverse experience?

## THE GIST

■ Meta announced in January last week that it is building an AI supercomputer, the AI Research SuperCluster (RSC). The RSC is a powerful supercomputer which can perform tasks like translating text between languages and help identify potentially harmful content on Meta's platform. It can run computer vision workflows up to 20 times faster, and train large-scale natural language processing models three times faster.

■ Meta said that the RSC will help its researchers build better AI models that can work across hundreds of different languages, seamlessly analyse text, images and video together, power real-time voice translations to large groups of people speaking different languages so that they can collaborate on a research project or play an AR game together, and develop new augmented reality tools.

■ With the pandemic, the demand for data centres of AI and ML among Government and educational entities is witnessing exponential growth which in turn is boosting the demand for supercomputers. Mordor Intelligence estimates the supercomputers market to grow around 9.5% during the 2022 to 2027 period.

**ABHISHEK CHATTERJEE**

**The story so far:** Facebook-parent Meta announced in January last week that it is building an AI supercomputer, the AI Research SuperCluster (RSC). The company said that this will be the fastest supercomputer in the world once fully built by mid-2022. The device is said to accelerate AI research and help in building the metaverse, the next major computing platform.

**What are supercomputers and how are they different from normal computers?**

A supercomputer can perform high-level processing at a faster rate when compared to a normal computer. Supercomputers are made up of hundreds or thousands of powerful machines which use better artificial intelligence (AI) models to improve operations that process huge amounts of data in less time than normal computers. They work together to perform complex operations that are not possible with normal computing systems, Sanjay Gupta, Vice President, and India Managing Director, NXP India, a global semiconductor company said to *The Hindu*. Supercomputers require high-speed and specialised chip architectures. The chip performs 660 operations per cycle and thus run up to 230 gigaflops at 350 MHz, Gupta said.

AI supercomputers are built by combining multiple graphic processing units (GPUs) into compute nodes, which are then connected by a high-performance network fabric to allow fast communication between those GPUs, Meta said in their blog.

**Is the supercomputer market growing?**

The supercomputers market is limited to a few major players holding a greater share of the market. According to Mordor Intelligence, a market intelligence firm, some of the key players include HPE, Atos SE, Dell Inc., Fujitsu Corporation, IBM Corporation, Lenovo Inc., NEC Technologies India Private Limited etc.

The firm estimates the supercomputers market to grow around 9.5% during the 2022 to 2027 period. The firm also considers the increasing use of cloud technology as one of the significant supercomputer market trends with supercomputing centres adopting the cloud, due to the growing workload.

The demand for data centres, AI, and ML (machine learning) among enterprises such as Government and educational entities, is witnessing exponential growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic boosting the demand for supercomputers, Mordor Intelligence said in a report.

"Today's increase in the quantity and complexity of data means that there is an exponential need in terms of computing power," Arnaud Bertrand, Head of Strategy and Innovation, Big Data & Cybersecurity, Atos, a global technology company, said to *The Hindu*.

Fast processing of large scale complex data, weather forecast, studying the impact of climate change, predicting and managing natural disasters, advance research on genomes to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases, simulating car crash tests are some of the major areas where supercomputers are used, Bertrand said to *The Hindu*.

**What is the RSC?**

Meta considers the RSC as a powerful supercomputer capable of quintillions of operations per second. It can perform tasks like translating text between languages and help identify potentially harmful content on Meta's platform.

The RSC, compared with Meta's legacy production and research infrastructure, can run computer vision workflows up to 20 times faster, and train large-scale natural language processing (NLP) models three times faster. Meta estimates that a model with billions of parameters can finish training in three weeks, compared to the nine weeks it was before.

RSC today comprises a total of 760 NVIDIA DGX A100 systems as its compute nodes, for a total of 6,180 GPUs. RSC's storage tier has 175 petabytes of Pure Storage FlashArray, 46 petabytes of cache storage in Penguin Computing Altus systems, and 10 petabytes of Pure Storage FlashBlade, Meta said.

**What are the current challenges?**

Since 2013, we have been making significant strides in AI, including self-supervised learning, where algorithms can learn from vast numbers of examples, Meta said in the blog. The company however reckons that to fully realise the benefits

of advanced AI—self-supervised learning of various domains whether vision, speech, language—will require training large and complex models for critical use cases like identifying harmful content on Meta's platform.

Computer vision, for example, needs to process larger, longer videos with higher data sampling rates. Speech recognition needs to work well even in challenging conditions with a lot of background noise and needs to understand more languages, dialects, and accents, Meta said. The company therefore decided that the best way to accelerate progress was to design a new computing infrastructure, RSC.

There are very large-scale scientific problems that need the right level of depth, accuracy and speed, like modelling all the climate change phenomena, which cannot be handled with the current generation of supercomputers, Bertrand said.

**What changes can the RSC bring about?**

Meta said that RSC will help its researchers build better AI models that can learn from trillions of examples, work across hundreds of different languages, seamlessly analyse text, images and video together, power real-time voice translations to large groups of people speaking different languages so that they can collaborate on a research project or play an AR game together, and develop new augmented reality tools.

Researchers will be able to train the largest models needed to develop advanced AI for computer vision, speech recognition, Meta said.

**What is the role of supercomputers and RSC in the metaverse?**

"The AI supercomputers will help build the foundation of metaverse to create artificial-intelligence agents in that environment for rich user interaction mimicking the real world and provide high-performance computing to specific tasks," Gupta said to *The Hindu*.

Meta reckons that RSC will pave the way toward building technologies for the metaverse where AI-driven applications and products will play an important role.

RSC can keep people safe in the metaverse through its training models that can detect harmful content faster than earlier systems, Meta said in the blog.

# Panel on AFSPA removal misses '45-day' deadline

It was formed after the botched Army operation in Nagaland

**VIJAITA SINGH**  
NEW DELHI

A committee constituted by the Union Home Ministry in December to study the withdrawal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, or AFSPA, from Nagaland, slated to submit a report within 45 days as claimed by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, is yet to conclude its findings.

The panel was formed in the wake of growing civilian anger against the botched ambush by an elite unit of the Army that led to the killing of 13 civilians at Oting in Nagaland's Mon district on December 4.

## Solitary visit

The six-member committee, headed by Registrar-General of India Vivek Joshi, made a solitary visit to the State in January. Though Mr. Rio claimed on December 26 that the panel had 45 days (by February 9) to submit its report, the Home Ministry's order accessed by *The Hindu* says the committee is to make "suitable recommendations" within three months (March 26).

## Special powers | A timeline of the events leading to the formation of the committee



**Making a stand:** People protesting against the AFSPA in Kohima, Nagaland, in December 2021. ■ AP

**Dec. 4, 2021:** 13 villagers are killed in a botched operation by the Army in Oting village of Nagaland. Another person is killed later during a protest

**Dec. 6:** Home Minister Amit Shah tells Parliament that the civilians, who were returning from a coal mine, tried to flee when the para-commandos of the Army signalled their vehicle to stop

**Dec. 8:** The Konyak Naga Union issues a statement accusing the Home Minister of presenting "misleading, indigestible and false" statement in Parliament

**Dec. 20:** Amid massive protests, Nagaland Assembly passes a resolution

demanding repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act

**Dec. 26:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio announces in Kohima that a committee to look into the withdrawal of AFSPA will be instituted, and it will submit its report in 45 days

■ A Home Ministry order of the same day, however, states that the committee will make suitable recommendations within three months

T.R. Zeliang of the Naga People's Front (NPF) said the committee had sought an extension for three months, but it was likely to miss the extended deadline as well.

Mr. Zeliang had issued a joint statement with Mr. Rio announcing the constitution of the committee on December 26.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

# Panel on AFSPA removal misses '45-day' deadline

He told *The Hindu* that their demand was for removal of the AFSPA from Nagaland, except areas along the international boundary with Myanmar and inter-State boundaries with Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

“Repealing of the AFSPA cannot be done by the State government, it has to be done by Parliament ... the process will take time. We are demanding and conveyed to the Union government that except international border and inter-State border, the AFSPA should be removed from the entire State,” Mr. Zeliang said.

He said they were expecting to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah after the Assembly elections in Manipur and Uttar Pradesh were over. The issue has made a resonance in Manipur where Assembly election is to be held in two-phases on February 27 and March 3.

The NPF is an ally of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP)-led coalition government in Manipur and is also a constituent of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP)-led government in Nagaland of which the BJP is also a part. On February 16, the NPF and the NDPP shared stage at an election rally in Manipur's Naga-dominated Senapati district where the NPF and the BJP are fighting election independently.

The announcement of

the constitution of the committee was made by the Nagaland Chief Minister in Kohima on December 26, though the meeting chaired by Mr. Shah was held at North Block on December 23. Mr. Rio said in a press conference the committee would submit its report in 45 days, adding that it would look into the withdrawal of the AFSPA from not only Nagaland but in the entire northeast.

Significantly, the Opposition-less Nagaland Assembly passed a resolution on December 20 demanding the repeal of the AFSPA and an apology from the “appropriate authority” for the botched Army operation. The Home Ministry is yet to issue any official statement on the subject nor has it specified the terms of reference of the committee.

*The Hindu* filed a RTI application to know the terms of reference, composition and the date the committee of officers is expected to submit its report. The Ministry replied that “it is not possible to reply to your RTI application” as “disclosure of information will prejudicially affect the security of state”. However, a copy of the order accessed by *The Hindu* says that “the terms of reference of the committee shall be to review the application of AFSPA in Nagaland and make suitable recommendations within a period of three (3) months.”

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.