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**DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS**

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## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

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# Changed situation

Pakistan's frustration with the Taliban response to its security challenges is evident

When the Taliban captured Kabul in August 2021, then Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said Afghans had “broken the shackles of slavery”. Even while the Taliban's victory gave some geopolitical advantage to Pakistan, it also enhanced Islamabad's security challenges. And Pakistan's growing frustration with the response of the new Afghan rulers to these challenges burst into the open during the weekend when Pakistani missiles struck inside Afghanistan, targeting the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). During the American presence in Afghanistan, Pakistan had adopted a dual approach – fight the TTP, better known as the Pakistan Taliban, and support the Afghan Taliban. Its backing was crucial in the Afghan Taliban's return to Kabul. But the fact that an insurgency founded by a group of Deobandi madrasa students forced the U.S., the world's most powerful military, to withdraw from Afghanistan was a morale booster for the TTP. The Afghan Taliban and the TTP may be two organisations, but they are ideological brothers – both have their roots in Deobandi Islam, both share the same world-view, and have similar objectives for different geographies. If the Afghan Taliban wanted to re-establish their Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, the TTP wants to bring down the Pakistani state and establish its Islamic rule.

Pakistan supported the Afghan Taliban for geopolitical reasons. The Generals saw the Taliban as insurance against growing Indian influence in a U.S.-backed Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. But the problem with the wheel of jihad, which the Pakistanis helped unleash inside Afghanistan, is that it could also roll back across the border. Both countries share a porous 2,500-km land border that divides the tribal areas of the region (also a fertile ground for the Taliban's ideology). Earlier, Pakistan used to share intelligence with the U.S. forces in Afghanistan which carried out attacks against the TTP. Now, Pakistan has to depend on the Taliban to crack down on the TTP. Their relationship has also changed. If the Taliban were dependent on Pakistan for their survival during the insurgency, they are now the rulers of Afghanistan; what they need is support and recognition for their regime. This change in approach was visible in the Taliban's warning that they would “retaliate” if Pakistan carries out more cross-border strikes. None of these developments suggests that there would be a complete breakdown in the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban, which dates back to the Taliban's founding in the early 1990s. But the TTP factor would remain a key fault-line. The Taliban are not ready to disown the TTP and they have also made it clear that they would not remain a Pakistani proxy forever. This poses fresh security and geopolitical challenges to the Pakistani establishment which welcomed the Taliban's triumph in Afghanistan just eight months ago.

# Navy chief unveils joint navigation chart in Maldives

Male appreciates assistance of Indian Navy

**DINAKAR PERI**  
NEW DELHI

In his first overseas trip since taking over as the Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Admiral R. Hari Kumar, during a three-day visit to the Maldives, unveiled the first navigation chart jointly produced by the two countries and handed over hydrography equipment to consolidate the capabilities of the Maldivian National Defence Forces (MNDF).



Admiral R. Hari Kumar with Maldives Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi during their meeting in Male. ■PTI

“The CNS also visited MNDF maritime assets and complimented the joint efforts of MNDF personnel and the Indian Navy for maintaining the role worthiness

of these assets. He presented a consignment of engineering equipment for further sustenance of MNDF ships, thereby reaffirming India’s commitment to the capacity-

building efforts of the MNDF,” the Navy said.

*INS Sutlej* is deployed to the Maldives for undertaking joint hydrographic survey under the MoU on hydrographic cooperation.

Adm. Kumar hosted a reception onboard *INS Sutlej* on April 18 in honour of Defence Minister of the Maldives Mariya Ahmed Didi and the leadership of the MNDF. “Minister Mariya noted the promptness with which India has submitted the Detailed Project Report of the Coast Guard Harbour and Dockyard to the Maldives, the review of which

will be completed soon,” the Maldivian Defence Ministry said. She thanked the Indian Navy for facilitating the transport of medicines to the Maldives during the pandemic and expressed appreciation for the continuous support rendered by the Indian Navy in maintenance and repair of the MNDF Coast Guard Fleet.

The Navy chief also called on President of the Maldives Ibrahim Mohamad Solih, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid and Defence Minister and Chief of Defence Force (CDF) Major General Abdulla Shamaal.

# Bihar BJP to mark Kunwar Singh jayanti as a grand event

Chief Minister  
Nitish Kumar yet  
to get invitation  
from ally for the  
April 23 event

**AMARNATH TEWARY**  
PATNA

Amid continuous buzz in political circles that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will soon be replaced by a BJP leader, the party has planned to organise the birth anniversary of the 1857 uprising hero Veer Kunwar Singh on April 23 at Jagdishpur in Bhojpur as a grand event as part of the Centre's *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav* programme to celebrate 75 years of Independence.

## Shah to attend

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to attend the event along with his junior Minister Nityanand Rai, who is said to be a strong contender for replacement of Mr. Kumar.

State BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad on Wednesday visited Bhojpur to monitor the preparations for the celebration. Mr. Kumar, said party sources, has not yet received the invitation for the event.

The State BJP leaders are in an upbeat mood. Union Minister of Power Raj Kumar Singh represents Bhojpur in Parliament and he too will be present on the occasion. "It will be a grand event which will send several important messages across the political spectrum," a senior BJP leader told *The Hindu*.

Veer Kunwar Singh had played a key role in the uprising of 1857. In April



Veer Kunwar Singh had played a key role in the uprising of 1857. ■

1966, a commemorative stamp was issued to honour him and a university was established in 1992 in Bhojpur in his name.

The BJP has for the first time planned to celebrate the jayanti as a grand event at his birth place in Jagdishpur of Bhojpur. Earlier, the anniversary was organised by the State government.

The event is said to be going to make a world record by waving more than 75,000 national flags on that day. The BJP supporters and people from 12 neighbouring districts of Bhojpur are likely to participate in the event. "Our leader Amit Shah and others will be participating in the event. It will be a non-political event and through it the coming generation will be made aware of the sacrifices of freedom fighter Veer Kunwar Singh," said State BJP chief Sanjay Jaiswal.

The political buzz is that through this mega event, the BJP may project Mr. Rai, the party MP from Ujjiyarpur, as Mr. Kumar's likely replacement. Mr. Kumar is also likely to shift soon from his official bungalow 1, Anne Marg to 7, Circular Road. Officials said it was because of renovation work.

# Arunachal, Assam to form panels to solve border row

**RAHUL KARMAKAR**  
GUWAHATI

Arunachal Pradesh and Assam have decided to form district-level committees to resolve boundary disputes.

The model adopted at a meeting between Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema Khandu in Guwahati on Wednesday was similar to the one Assam and Meghalaya had pursued to partially resolve their disputes.

## **Joint surveys planned**

The committees involving stakeholders will be formed in the border districts. “The committees will undertake joint surveys in the disputed areas to find a tangible solution in a time-bound manner,” Mr. Sarma said after the meeting.

The solution would be based on historical perspective, ethnicity, contiguity, people’s will and administrative convenience of both the States, he said.

The two States have about 1,200 disputed spots along their 804-km boundary. The disputes date back to the creation of Arunachal Pradesh in 1972.

Mr. Khandu said the terms of reference of the committees were finalised at the “fruitful” meeting. “The positive enthusiasm for resolution on both sides is very encouraging,” he said.

# Nirmala Sitharaman has urged IMF to assist Sri Lanka: Centre

Colombo seeks a \$4-billion bailout package for this year from the IMF

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**  
WASHINGTON DC

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide Sri Lanka with assistance, according to the Union government. Colombo, which is in the throes of an unprecedented economic crisis, and announced that it would default on foreign debt repayments, totalling \$51 billion, is seeking a \$4-billion bailout package for this year from the IMF.

Ms. Sitharaman “indicated that [the] IMF should support and urgently provide financial assistance to Sri Lanka,” said a Finance Ministry readout of the meeting



**Financial throes:** Nirmala Sitharaman with RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at a G20 meeting, in Washington D.C. ■PTI

between the Minister and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva .

“The Managing Director assured the Finance Minister that the IMF would continue

to actively engage with Sri Lanka,” the readout said. *The Hindu* has reached out to the IMF for a readout of the meeting.

During the meeting, the

sides discussed India’s economic performance and prospects as well as issues of importance to India, the readout said. Ms. Sitharaman’s delegation included Chief Economic Adviser Anantha Nageswaran.

On Monday, the Minister held a bilateral meeting with her Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry, to discuss the economic situation in Sri Lanka, the Finance Ministry said on Twitter.

Ms. Sitharaman “assured Sri Lanka that as a close friend and good neighbour, India will try to extend all possible cooperation and assistance” to the country, the Ministry said.

# The Delhi MCA Act denudes the spirit of federalism

The interference of the Centre in matters such as municipal issues strikes a blow against the model of decentralisation



MUKUND P. UNNY

When the State Election Commission of Delhi had called a press conference at 5 p.m. on March 9, 2022, it was widely reported that the schedule for the elections to the three Municipal Corporations of Delhi would be declared. However, the State Election Commissioner (SEC), S.K. Srivastava, informed the media that it would be deferring the announcement following a letter from the Centre just earlier proposing the unification of the three municipal corporations.

## Large-scale usurpation

In less than a month, both Houses of Parliament passed the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022. In a move that appears to simply unify the trifurcated Delhi Municipal Corporations, the Central government has conferred upon itself various crucial powers to assume control over the Municipal Corporation of Delhi from the State government. The casualty of these changes introduced by the Central government

is federalism.

The Central government's line is that the amendment has been passed as in Article 239AA of the Constitution, which is a provision that provides for special status to Delhi. The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, stated in Parliament that the law is based on the power of Parliament under Article 239AA (3)(b) to make laws for the State of Delhi "on any matter". The law provides that the power to determine the number of wards, extent of each ward, reservation of seats, number of seats of the Corporation, etc. will now be vested in the Central government. The number of seats of councillors in the Municipal Corporations of Delhi is also to be decided now by the Central government. By exercising that very power, the number of councillors to the Municipal Corporations of Delhi has been reduced from 272 to 250.

The Central government has also taken over powers from the State to decide on matters such as 'salary and allowances, leave of absence of the Commissioner, the sanctioning of consolidation of loans by a corporation, and sanctioning suits for compensation against the Commissioner for the loss or waste or misapplication of municipal fund or property'. The large-scale usurpation of powers by the Central government has

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been done without any consultation with the Delhi government, and all the major stakeholders kept in the dark during the process.

## Dent in federal architecture

The Central government has consciously chosen to overlook Part IXA of the Constitution that specifically states that it will be the Legislature of the State that will be empowered to make laws concerning representation to the municipalities. The argument of the Centre that Article 239AA can be applied over and above Part IXA of the Constitution does not hold good as the latter is a specific law that will override the general law relating to Article 239AA. Further, Part IXA of the Constitution concerning municipalities was inserted into the Constitution through the Seventy-Fourth Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 and it succeeded the Sixty-Ninth Amendment Act of 1991 that brought in Article 239AA. There-

fore, it can be meaningfully concluded that if the intention of Parliament was to exclude Delhi from the purport of Part IXA, it would have specifically spelt so.

## No consultation

The Delhi Municipal Corporation was split into three regions, i.e., east, south and north, in 2011 after much deliberation and discussion at various levels. The split-up was first proposed in the 1987 Balakrishnan Committee Report which was bolstered in the 2001 Virendra Prakash Committee Report. A seven-member Delhi Legislative Assembly Panel was set up in 2001 to study the recommendations and suggest modalities.

Since the recommendations had to be processed by the Central government, another committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Ashok Pradhan to study the issue. The proposal finally took shape in 2011 and the law to trifurcate was enacted. Although the plan to split up the Delhi Municipal Corporation was well thought-out and studied, the decision to reunify has been done at the behest of the Central government without any study or consultation.

Article 239AA has, from its very enactment, been subject to numerous litigations and its scope finally determined by the Supreme

Court of India in the famous *State of NCT of Delhi vs Union of India* judgment pronounced in 2018.

## Potential for litigation

The Court held, "The Constitution has mandated a federal balance wherein independence of a certain required degree is assured to the State Governments. As opposed to centralism, a balanced federal structure mandates that the Union does not usurp all powers and the States enjoy freedom without any unsolicited interference from the Central Government with respect to matters which exclusively fall within their domain." It was made clear in no uncertain terms that the aid and the advice of the State government of Delhi would bind the decision of the Lieutenant General in matters where the State government has the power to legislate. No doubt, the amendment to the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 will lead to further litigation on the aspect of a sharing of powers between the State of NCT of Delhi and the Central government. The interference of the Centre in matters such as municipal issues strikes a blow against federalism and the celebrated Indian model of decentralisation.

Mukund P. Unny is an advocate practising in the Supreme Court

# Unfounded apprehensions about this Act

In the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, data collection does not seem disproportionate with the Act's objectives



R.K. VIJ

The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022 (now Act), that received the President's assent on April 18 and 'shall come into force on the day of such notification', has raised eyebrows. The Act authorises the police and prison authorities to take 'measurements' of convicts and others for the purpose of identification and investigation in criminal matters and to preserve records. The allegation is that the Act is unconstitutional and may be subject to misuse. The Act seeks to repeal the Identification of Prisoners Act (IPA) of 1920, whose scope was limited to recording measurements which include finger impressions and footprint impressions of certain convicts and non-convict persons.

## Broader scope

While the scope of the 'measurements' in the IPA was limited, the Act now includes physical measurements such as finger impressions, palm prints, footprint impressions, photographs, iris and retina scans; biological samples and their analysis; and behavioural attributes including signatures, handwriting; or any other examination referred to in Sections 53 or 53A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973.

The CrPC provides for 'examination' (of the accused by a medical practitioner) which includes examination of blood, semen, swabs (in the case of sexual offences), sputum and sweat, hair samples and fingernail clippings using modern and scientific techniques including DNA profiling and other necessary tests which could provide evidence as to the commission of an offence. Similarly, Section 311A of the CrPC empowers a magistrate to direct any person (including an accused person) to give a specimen signature or handwriting for the purpose of any investigation or proceedings.

It is evident that the apparently enlarged scope of 'measurements' in the Act is nothing but a merger of the scope of 'measurements' in the IPA and provisions of the CrPC highlighted above, with the addi-

tion of modern techniques of identification such as an iris and retina scan. Thus, the Act does not empower the enforcement agencies additionally but only explicitly provides for various measurements and includes the use of the latest scientific techniques.

The old code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, did not have the provision of medical examination of the accused. The Law Commission, in its 41st Report (1969), considered the necessity of physical examination of the arrested person for an effective investigation, without offending Article 20(3) of the Constitution. The recommendation was included in the CrPC (of 1973), as Section 53. Later, an amendment was made in the CrPC (with effect from June 23, 2006) and an *Explanation* of 'examination' was added to Section 53 to provide legal backing to materials/biological samples on which the medical examination could be conducted. Similarly, Section 311A was added to facilitate providing a specimen signature or handwriting during investigation.

## A settled constitutionality

As early as 1961, the Supreme Court of India in *State of Bombay vs Kathi Kalu* held that the person in custody giving his specimen handwriting or signature or impression of his thumb, finger, palm or foot, to the investigating officer, cannot be included in the expression "to be a witness" under Article 20(3) of the Constitution. Similarly, in a catena of cases, it has been held that taking a blood sample for the purpose of a DNA test, taking a hair sample or voice sample will not amount to compelling an accused to become a witness against himself, as such samples by themselves are innocuous and do not convey information within personal knowledge of the accused. Thus, the constitutionality of collecting biological samples or other measurements for facilitating investigation, has been settled since long.

The only exceptions are scientific techniques, namely narcoanalysis, polygraphy and brain fingerprinting which the Supreme Court in *Selvi vs State of Karnataka* (2010) held to be testimonial compulsions (if conducted without consent), and thus prohibited under Article 20(3) of the Constitution. These tests do not fall under the scope of expression "such other



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tests" in *Explanation* of Section 53 of the CrPC. The Court also laid down certain guidelines for these tests.

Since the Act does not lay down any specific scientific tests for the analysis of biological samples or otherwise, taking any sample or measurements for the sake of identification or comparison would not automatically violate any constitutional provision. The validity of any new scientific technique, to be applied in future, would need to be tested on the touchstone of permissible restrictions on fundamental rights.

The IPA includes three categories of persons, namely, 'convicts of any offence punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term of one year or upwards or of any offence which would render him liable to enhanced punishment on a subsequent conviction; persons ordered to give security for their good behaviour; and persons arrested in connection with an offence punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term of one year or upwards'.

## No harm is likely

The Act has done away with any such limitation for convicts and arrested persons. However, it is important to note that most offences punishable with imprisonment up to one year are non-cognisable. Otherwise too, for example, in a simple cognisable offence (though punishable with simple imprisonment up to only one month or fine) of a *chakka-jam* (which generally take place during political and other protests), though arrest may become necessary to clear the road and prevent a continuing offence, no biological samples would be required normally to facilitate investigation. Only physical measurements would be sufficient to record identity. Further, not only has the amended Section 41(l) of the CrPC put limitations on arrest in cognisable offences pun-

ishable with imprisonment up to seven years, but the Act also makes a non-obligatory provision for giving biological samples in such cases. Thus, by expanding the scope of measurements, no harm is likely to be done to an individual's privacy. Measurements *per se* do not reveal any inculpatory information.

The provision for persons ordered to give security for good behaviour or maintaining peace, the provision regarding refusal or resistance to allow taking of measurements, and the provision relating to the power of the magistrate to direct a person to give measurements for the purpose of any investigation, remain the same as provided for in the IPA.

## Records of juveniles

Though the Act does not explicitly bar taking measurements of juveniles, the provisions of the (Special Act) Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 regarding destruction of records of conviction under the Act, shall apply. Since no disqualification can be attached to a conviction of an offence by a juvenile, no measurement (if taken) can be used for any future reference. The legislature has purposefully avoided the word "arrest" in the entire Juvenile Justice Act. A first information report is to be written only in heinous cases (offences punishable with imprisonment for seven years or more). In all other cases, delinquent juveniles are produced before the Juvenile Justice Board along with a general daily diary report and social background report. The power to apprehend is to be exercised only regarding heinous offence, unless it is in the best interest of the child.

However, it would have been prudent to add a provision in the Act for juveniles for clarity and allay any doubts. Similarly, since the records of juveniles are required to be erased, the period of storage of measurements of adults could have been conveniently reduced by 10 years, as the probability of committing a crime by any person after the age of 80 years is negligible. The *Crime in India - 2020 statistics* published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that the number of arrested persons over 60 years of age is less than 1.5%.

The Act does not mandate the compulsory recording of all measurements for all types of offences.

The measurements shall be taken 'if so required' and as may be prescribed by governments. The purpose is to help the enforcement agencies in the prevention and the detection of crime. The NCRB will store, process, and preserve whatever data is collected by the States and Union Territories. The Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) data have only helped enforcement agencies across States in matching missing persons with found persons and unidentified bodies, matching lost/stolen mobile phones and vehicles with the recovered ones, tracking habitual criminals and inter-State gangs, etc.

The biological sample of an accused person is required during investigation for comparison with seized body fluids and blood from the scene of crime to establish linkage. Signature and handwriting specimens are taken for comparison with those on disputed or forged documents. Similarly, since fingerprints are unique in nature, latent chance finger impressions lifted from the scene of crime are admitted as clinching evidence in a court of law to establish the presence of the accused. Access to biometrics collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has been refused to enforcement agencies on the pretext of 'technology issues' and strict provisions of the concerning law. The matter is pending with the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court.

## Better technology cuts errors

The objective of the Act is to facilitate identification and investigation in criminal matters. Enforcement agencies must be allowed to use scientific methods to prevent and detect crime. A number of analytical tools can be applied nowadays to the database of measurements to do predictive policing (which is very common in developed countries). The use of better technology will only help in minimising the probability of errors. The right of an individual will have to be considered in the background of the interests of society. The data proposed to be collected through measurements of convicts and others does not appear to be disproportionate with the stated objectives of the Act.

R.K. Vij is a former Special DGP of Chhattisgarh. The views expressed are personal

# Judges must give reasons for bail decisions, says SC

Cryptic orders have no place in the judicial system, it says

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

Judges are duty-bound to give reasons for granting or denying bail, especially in cases involving serious offences and hardened criminals, the Supreme Court has held.

Cryptic bail orders without giving any reasons have no place in the judicial system, it said on Tuesday.

“There is a recent trend of passing such orders granting or refusing to grant bail, where the courts make a general observation that ‘the facts and the circumstances’ have been considered. No specific reasons are indicated which precipitated the passing of the order by the court,” a Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana observed in a judgment.

The case concerned the grant of bail by the Rajasthan High Court to a man ac-



cused of raping his minor niece for years. The man is an “infamous criminal” with 20 pending criminal cases to his name, involving offences like murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, dacoity, etc.

## **Fundamental tenets**

Setting aside the bail order, Chief Justice Ramana, who wrote the verdict, observed that “judges are duty-bound to explain the basis on which

they have arrived at a conclusion... Reasoning is the life blood of the judicial system. That every order must be reasoned is one of the fundamental tenets of our system. An unreasoned order suffers the vice of arbitrariness”.

## **Bail revoked**

“There is need to indicate reasons for *prima facie* concluding why bail was being granted particularly where the accused is charged of having committed a serious offence. Any order devoid of such reasons would suffer from non-application of mind...” the judgment noted.

The judgment said the High Court erred in granting bail to the accused in a mechanical manner without any reasoning. The top court ordered the accused to surrender in a week.

# Plea on non-payment of MGNREGS wages in SC

Payments to the poor were piling up with negative balances in most States, says Swaraj Abhiyan

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to list an application mentioned urgently by advocate Prashant Bhushan flagging a “grave crisis” concerning crores of rural poor who were not getting their wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) even as the COVID-19 pandemic had driven them to the brink of desperation.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana agreed to list the case after Mr. Bhushan and advocate Cheryl D’Souza, appearing for Swaraj Abhiyan, urged the court for an early hearing.

Mr. Bhushan said the State



**Hard life:** Acute rural distress has raised demand for MGNREGS work. ■ FILE PHOTO

governments were facing a shortage of ₹9,682 crore as on November 26, 2021.

He said 100% of the funds allocated under the scheme for 2021-22 had already been exhausted. MGNREGS wages due to the poor were piling

up with negative balances in most States.

“The COVID pandemic has caused acute rural distress shooting up demand for MGNREGA work across the country,” the application said. The plea said the “real

demand for work from registered job card holders is not being accurately registered in the system, denying them their statutory right to employment or, failing which, unemployment allowance”.

## Additional days

Taking into account the current distress, the plea urged the court to urgently direct the government to provide 50 additional days of employment under the MGNREGS to each household. It further sought the accurate registration of demand for work on the MGNREGA website and the automatic calculation and payment of unemployment allowance at one-fourth the wage rate. The plea also

sought a direction to the government to calculate and pay for the delay in payment of wages to workers.

The Supreme Court is hearing a case related to sub-optimum and irregular implementation of the MGNREGS and the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA), especially during drought and natural calamities.

The Supreme Court had earlier directed the government, through judgments, to immediately ensure payment of wages under the MGNREGS within 15 days as stipulated under the law as well as to ensure that no one deserving of accessing food-grains under the NFSA was prevented from doing so.

EXPLAINER

# The UGC regulations for collaboration between Indian and foreign universities

What are the necessary qualifications that an Indian institute needs so that it can be eligible for dual degree programmes?

D. SURESH KUMAR

**The story so far:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) has simplified the procedure for enabling academic collaborations between Indian and foreign higher educational institutions to offer joint degrees, dual degrees and twinning programmes.

**What has the UGC proposed?** The apex regulatory body for higher education in India has decided to allow certain Indian higher education institutions to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with foreign institutions to offer dual degree, joint degree or twinning programmes. To qualify for such academic collaboration, the Indian college, institute or university must figure among the top global 1,000 QS World University or Times Higher Education rankings or have emerged as one of the top 100 universities under the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). The college or university must have secured a minimum grading of 3.01 on a 4-point scale from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). Likewise, the foreign collaborator institution must also have figured among the 1,000 global top QS or Times Higher Education Rankings.

The collaborations would be facilitated and governed under the proposed University Grants Commission (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to



offer Joint Degree, Dual Degree and Twinning Programmes) Regulations 2022. The draft of these regulations was placed in the public domain last year to invite suggestions from stakeholders. It had recommended [among other criteria] that to qualify for international academic collaboration under the “automatic mode”, the collaborating institutions must have figured among the “top 500” of Times Higher Education or QS World University ranking at the time of application.

However, the final policy, about which UGC Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar had briefed the media, has broadened the scope for collaborations by mandating that the institutions must have figured among the “top 1,000” of QS World University or Times Higher Education rankings. The draft had also proposed an “approval mode” – as opposed to the “automatic mode” – collaboration under which specialised institutions, if not

accredited, may be considered [and approved by the UGC] for foreign tie-ups “if they have sufficient demonstrable accomplishments”. There is no clarity yet if the final policy provides for such “approval mode” collaborations. Once notified, the new regulation would supersede the University Grants Commission (Promotion & Maintenance of Standards of Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2016.

**How do the new regulations differ from that of 2016?**

The earlier regulations did not provide for “automatic mode” of foreign collaboration for academic courses offered in India. While a threshold for accreditation rating was mandated, there was no requirement for the university or college to figure among the top ranked institutions globally. The qualifying institution was required to apply to the UGC for approval and a sub-committee was vested with the powers to make a recommendation on the basis of which the regulatory body would take a final decision “after considering various factors including quality of education, overall merit of the proposal, fees to be charged, credibility of the Foreign Educational Institution as well as Indian Educational Institution.” Besides, the approval granted was valid only for two cycles of the minimum duration of the degree programmes covered under the collaboration or as specified otherwise. The Indian educational institution was

required to apply for renewal of approval before six months of its expiration. Under the soon-to-be-notified regulations, the qualifying universities and colleges will not be required to seek permission for academic collaborations abroad.

**How will the courses with foreign collaboration be offered?**

The qualifying Indian university or college can offer “dual degree”, “joint degree” or a “twinning programme” in collaboration with foreign institutions. The “dual degree” programme is new, while the other two programmes were offered under the 2016 regulations, though only fewer institutions had introduced such programmes due to the bureaucratic approval process. The degrees, under the “dual degree programme” shall be conferred by the Indian and foreign institutions “separately and simultaneously” upon completion of degree requirements of both universities. For the twinning degree programme, a student can get up to 30% course credit utilisation of the total course from the collaborating foreign university. For the joint and dual degree programmes, the students shall be permitted to get more than 30% of the total course credits from the university or institution abroad. As per the 2021 draft rules, for enrolling in dual degree programmes, prospective students must meet the admission requirements of both the Indian and foreign institutions and shall apply to and be admitted separately to both the institutions. Besides, the

students must earn at least 50% of total credits from the Indian institution. The dual degree programme to be offered shall also conform to the nomenclature and duration of the degrees as specified under the UGC Act, 1956 and shall also conform to minimum eligibility and other norms and standards to offer such degree education institutions shall ensure that the credits earned by the students shall not be from overlapping course contents/curriculum.

Also, the student shall submit to only one examination and evaluation process for each of the courses by the institutions in which he/she has registered.

**What happens now?**

While qualifying Indian institutions will now be free to collaborate with foreign universities, for students the cost of education with international exposure would come down. Institutions that are committed to academic excellence will provide the students an opportunity for advanced learning with global expertise. However, it remains to be seen whether the top global institutions would immediately sign MoUs with Indian institutions. Private autonomous colleges and deemed universities are most likely to utilise this opportunity to enter into agreements for twinning or dual / joining degree programmes with foreign institutions, flaunting them in their brochures to attract students. The UGC may have to monitor the quality of academic delivery in such programmes.

## THE GIST

■ The UGC has decided to allow certain higher education institutions to enter into an MoU with foreign institutions to offer dual degree, joint degree or twinning programmes.

■ To qualify, the Indian institution must figure among the top global 1,000 QS World University or Times Higher Education rankings. They must have also secured a minimum grading of 3.01 from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

■ Under the earlier 2016 regulations, an institution was required to apply to the UGC for approval for foreign collaboration. Under the soon-to-be-notified regulations, the qualifying universities and colleges will not be required to seek such permission.

# A.K. Sood is new Principal Scientific Adviser

He is a Distinguished Professor of Physics at the Indian Institute of Science

**JACOB KOSHY**  
NEW DELHI

Ajay Kumar Sood has been appointed Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Union government, a Personnel Ministry order issued on Wednesday said.

He succeeds K. VijayRaghavan. Dr. Sood has been appointed for a period of three years. He is a member of the Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) and is a physicist known for his work on graphene.

He is a Distinguished Professor of Physics at the In-



Ajay Kumar Sood

dian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.

Mr. VijayRaghavan was appointed the PSA in 2018

and played a crucial role in leading task forces on vaccine and drug development as well as pandemic management. His term ended in 2021 but was awarded an extension.

The PSA's office coordinates with several Ministries and advises the government on science and technology policies and interventions that are of strategic socio-economic importance. It also advises institutions, academia and industry.

The PM-STIAC is one of the catalysts for such tasks and also oversees the imple-

mentation of the tasks. The body has nine major missions: Natural Language Translation, Quantum Frontier, Artificial Intelligence, National Biodiversity Mission, Electric Vehicles, Bioscience for Human Health, Waste to Wealth, Deep Ocean Exploration, and Accelerating Growth of New India's Innovations (AGNIi).

Prior to Mr. VijayRaghavan, nuclear scientist R. Chandrabaram was the Principal Scientific Adviser for close to a decade and a half and before that A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

*(With inputs from PTI)*

# When the stars came out

The James Webb telescope is an exemplar of collaborative science and human ingenuity



PETER RONALD DESOUZA

The dominant narrative these days across much of the world is, as Ayn Rand said about her novel *The Fountainhead*, the story of 'individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man's soul'. In India, we too celebrate such individualism where heroic individuals, through their will power, strategic vision, perseverance and unique personal qualities, lift society up by its bootstraps and, like Nietzsche's superman, and create a new moral order. This new social order will, ostensibly, enjoy a higher level of human creativity and human freedom. In this narrative, individualism has built the modern world.

This is, however, only half the story. While Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Stephen Schwarzman, N.R. Narayana Murthy, Mukesh Ambani have made a significant difference as individuals, as also countless others who have passed away, there is another perspective that is equally significant but has rarely been celebrated. Obscured by the dominant narrative, this other account applauds the contribution of groups. Working together in collaborations, such groups, through sharing and cooperation, produce outcomes that are no less beneficial for society. In this story, there are no supermen just worker bees.

The making of the \$9.7 billion James Webb telescope is one such story. One of the most significant technological achievements of the last few years, that involved construction, transportation, launching, alignment, and deployment in deep space, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is a project that marked twenty plus years of continuous collaboration between many teams. Its successful placement in deep space is a defining moment in humankind's history of reaching for the stars. Another journey into 'man's soul' has just begun.

## Making the telescope

There are four aspects in this other narrative, that are complementary to, and not competitive with, that of



The James Webb Space Telescope Mirror is seen during a media unveiling at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre at Greenbelt, Maryland. ■REUTERS

the superman. These are, the ambitions of the project; how it was put together; the technologies involved; and its implications for human society. Taken together, they constitute an illustrative case of the collective production of a common good.

The James Webb telescope was imagined by its initiators as the coming together of many cutting-edge technologies. It was planned to enable humanity to peer deeper into space and to look further back in time. The telescope will give us new knowledge about the origins of the universe. Because it is essentially an Infra-red spectrum telescope, as compared to the Hubble which worked largely in the UV and visible light range, it will allow us to stare into the beginnings of the 'cosmic dawn', a period 250 million years after the big bang when light began to break through the cloud of mist and the first stars and galaxies began to form. The JWST will take us back about 150 million years further than Hubble, closer to when it all began.

The project seeks to understand how galaxies form and evolve. It will look for evidence of dark matter, study exoplanets, capture images of planets in our solar system, and other such cosmic curiosities. This knowledge will impact not just the physical sciences but also the humanities and social sciences as we attempt to understand our own place in the universe and ask those perennial questions such as: Is there other life in the universe? Will it look like us and, more worrying, will it look for us?

What is the relation between 'chance' and 'necessity', to use Jacques Monod's thesis, in the emergence of life? In this ambition, the JWST belongs to the classical tradition of scientific inquiry: the pursuit of fundamental curiosity untouched by special interests.

The CEO of Northrop Grumman, an aerospace and defence company and the primary contractor of the project, has gone on record to announce that because of the delays and production lapses, the company would only book profits after the successful deployment of the telescope.

## Collaborative science

If the ambition of the project was to understand the origin of the universe, and our place in it, the execution of the project was a stellar product of collective endeavour. Although there were many remarkable individuals who led the various groups in the project, the emphasis throughout was on its accomplishment by teams who worked together to fabricate the instruments, make the telescope parts, design the cooling systems, etc. This new collective, comprising of free scientists and engineers, collaborated with the single purpose of producing, launching, and placing, at the chosen Lagrange point (a point where the Earth's and Sun's gravitational forces are balanced), a telescope that was lighter than Hubble but had a mirror six times larger. Compared to Hubble's location 550 km from the Earth, JWST was located 1.5 million km

away. All its parts had, therefore, to work the first time around. There were no second chances. Recent reports from NASA inform us that the deployment and aligning of the mammoth telescope is proceeding well and may even 'exceed expectations'. The launch of the satellite, on 25 December 2021, was a joint project of NASA, the European Space Agency, the Canadian Space Agency and involved many universities, organisations, and companies across 14 countries.

Further, the science and technology that was deployed should be toasted as a tribute to human ingenuity. Eighteen hexagonal beryllium mirrors first had to be folded to fit the available space in the Ariane rocket and then unfolded, in deep space, to make a single mirror with nanometric precision. One of the instruments, for example, has 2,50,000 individually-controlled shutters to ensure that the illumination of only the narrow portion of the sky being observed is possible. The JWST teams built and installed a Near Infra-Red camera, a slitless spectrograph and, after technical difficulties, a Mid Infra-red instrument because, unlike the other instruments that need to be cooled to 40 K, it needs to be cooled to 7 K. At great cost the successful cryocooler was finally engineered.

These collaborative achievements have produced a sophisticated scientific infrastructure for exploring space and for opening the door to new scientific knowledge. It has created a new 'knowledge commons'. Administered by the Space Telescope Science Institute (STSI), which has a charter and a website that places in the public domain all relevant information, and that invites scientists from across the world to submit projects, JWST, through the process of commoning, is on the threshold of producing a huge knowledge commons. The 'heroic collective' thereby shares space with the 'heroic individual'. Hubble gave us mind blowing pictures of the infinite sky, such as the Lagoon nebula. JWST will give us pictures of the heavens that Isaac Asimov only imagined in his brilliant science fiction short story *Nightfall* when the stars came out.

Peter Ronald deSouza is the DD Kosambi Visiting Professor at Goa University



**Grand launch:** *INS Vagsheer* being launched at the Mazgaon Dockyard on Monday. ■ EMMANUAL YOGINI

# Sixth Scorpene takes to water

*INS Vagsheer* to be inducted next year

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The sixth and last of the French Scorpene-class submarines, *INS Vagsheer*, was launched into water at the Mazgaon Docks in Mumbai.

“The sixth submarine will now commence setting to work of various equipment and their harbour trials. The crew will thereafter sail the submarine for the rigorous sea acceptance trials after which the submarine would be delivered to the Navy by late next year,” the Navy said. Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar was the chief guest at the ceremony.

*INS Vagsheer* was launched by Veena Ajay Kumar, in keeping with the naval tradition of launch and naming by a woman. The six submarines were being built under Project-75 by the Mazgaon Docks under technology transfer from the Naval Group as part of a \$3.75-billion deal signed in October

2005. *INS Kalvari* was commissioned in December 2017; *INS Khanderi* in September 2019; *INS Vagir* in November 2020; *INS Karanj* in March 2021; and *INS Vela* in November 2021.

*INS Vagir* is undergoing sea trials now. The Navy has drawn up plans to install an air independent propulsion (AIP) module on all the Scorpene-class submarines as they go for refit, beginning with *INS Kalvari*, in the next couple of years to enhance their endurance.

Development of an indigenous AIP module by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is in advanced stages. The tender to build six more advanced conventional submarines under Project-75I is in the Request For Proposal stage. The Navy has a 30-year submarine-building programme and after the P-75I, it intends to design and build conventional submarines indigenously.

# Naga ceasefire agreements extended

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

The ceasefire agreements between the Union government and three Naga groups have been extended by a year, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said on Wednesday.

The agreements are with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-NK, National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Reformation and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (K-Khango)

The development came a day after the Central government's interlocutor for the Naga peace talks, A.K. Mishra, met NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah at its headquarters at Hebron in Nagaland. While in Nagaland, Mr. Mishra is also expected to meet the working committee of the Naga National Political Groups.

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-drawing 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.