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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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India must shift the discourse on abortion rights

It is not just a family planning and maternal health issue, but also a sexual health and reproductive rights issue



SONALI VAID &
SUMEGHA ASTHANA

As two women public health practitioners who have studied and worked in India and the United States, we voice our solidarity with women in both countries at this precarious moment for abortion rights.

Our public health journeys started with witnessing maternal deaths in India. One of us, on her first clinical rotation, saw a woman die of sepsis, infection in the blood, due to an unsafe backstreet abortion. And the other, during her rural health internship in Uttar Pradesh, witnessed a pregnant woman die on a wooden hand-pulled cart because she was unable to reach the hospital in time. The images of these two women with their swollen abdomen and pale, dying faces still haunt us, as we reflect on the privileges we enjoy as women belonging to a certain class and caste in India.

The facts

Women, pregnant people and transgender persons in India struggle every day to exert their choice about birthing and their bodily autonomy. Yet, despite this bleak reality, netizens on social media in India claim that the country is more progressive than the U.S. on abortion rights because we have the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 ("MTP Act").

Such a self-congratulatory attitude is neither in good faith nor is it factually correct.

According to the World Health Organization, six out of 10 of all unintended pregnancies end in an induced abortion. Around 45% of all abortions are unsafe, almost all of which (97%) take place in developing countries. As per a nationally representative study published in *PLOS One* journal in 2014, abortions account for 10% of maternal deaths in India.

The recent round of the National Family Health Survey 2019-2021, shows that 3% of all pregnancies in India result in abortion. More than half (53%) of abortions in India are performed in the private sector, whereas only 20% are performed in the public sector – partly because public facilities often lack abortion services. More than a quarter of abortions (27%) are performed by the woman herself at home.

In another a fact-finding study published in *The Lancet* in 2018, 73% of all abortions in India in 2015 were medication abortions, and even though these may have been safe – many of these are illegal as per the MTP Act, if they occur without the approval of a registered medical practitioner. Another 5% of all abortions were outside of health facilities with methods other than medication abortion. These risky abortions are performed by untrained people under unhygienic conditions using damaging methods such as insertion of objects, ingestion of various substances, abdominal pressure, etc. A recent study found that sex-selective abortions in India could lead to 6.8 million

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



fewer girls being born between 2017 to 2030.

Many may be unaware of these disturbing statistics and facts. But we all know of at least one adolescent girl among our family or friends or networks who had to travel to another city in order to find a 'non-judgmental' obstetrician or who had to arrange money to access abortion in the private sector. Or, we may have heard of someone who has aborted a female foetus because the family wanted a son; or know of a mother who escaped the pressure of such forced abortion because she did not want to lose her pregnancy.

Obstacles

The MTP Act, first enacted in 1971 and then amended in 2021, certainly makes 'medical termination of pregnancy' legal in India under specific conditions. However, this Act is framed from a legal standpoint to primarily protect medical practitioners because under the Indian Penal Code, "induced miscarriage" is a criminal offence. This premise points to a lack of choice and bodily autonomy of women and rests the decision of abortion solely on the doctor's opinion. The MTP Act also only

mentions 'pregnant woman', thus failing to recognise that transgender persons and others who do not identify as women can become pregnant.

Moreover, the acceptance of abortion in Indian society is situated in the context of population control and family planning. But, most importantly, after more than 50 years of the MTP Act, women and transgender persons face major obstacles in accessing safe abortion care.

These are seven examples: First, they may not even be aware that abortion is legal or know where to obtain one safely; second, since the MTP Act does not recognise abortion as a choice, they need the approval of medical professionals even in the first few weeks of the pregnancy; third, unmarried and transgender people continue to face stigma and can be turned away from health facilities, forcing them to resort to unsafe care; fourth, mandatory reporting requirements under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill (POCSO), 2011 law against child sexual offences, impact privacy and hinder access of adolescents to safe abortion services; fifth, many are still coerced into agreeing to a permanent or long-term contraceptive method as a prerequisite for getting abortion services; sixth, health-care providers may impose their own morality by insisting on 'husbands' or 'parental' consent for abortion. Even women seeking abortion care in health facilities are often mistreated and not provided medications for pain relief; seventh, despite laws prohibiting sex determination, the illegal

practice persists. The mushrooming of unregulated ultrasound clinics in India continues to facilitate the illegal practice of sex determination, resulting in unsafe abortions and female foeticide.

It is a testament to class and caste divides when netizens talk of being 'progressive' when, 50 years after the MTP Act, women continue to die due to unsafe abortions. Passing one law and assuming the job is done is far from "progressive" when so many face a lack of access, systemic barriers, social norms and cultural preferences, and even criminal liability.

One law is insufficient

There is an urgent need in our country to shift the discourse on abortions from just being a family planning and maternal health issue to one of a sexual health and reproductive rights issue. The situation in India shows that one law alone is insufficient and we must raise the bar on reproductive justice. We must improve our health systems to ensure good quality and respectful abortion care. As the focus on abortion rights in the U.S. rages, we call upon all to self reflect and to stand in solidarity with people in the U.S. and other places where reproductive rights are in jeopardy. Reproductive injustice anywhere is a threat to the lives of people everywhere.

Dr. Sonali Vaid is an Aspen New Voices Fellow and the founder of Include Labs, an organisation committed to improving health-care quality and safety.

Dr. Sumegha Asthana is a postdoctoral researcher at Georgetown University and is the co-founder of the India chapter of Women in Global Health

Dreams take wing: Army gets first woman combat pilot

Captain Abhilasha Barak was commissioned in 2018

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Captain Abhilasha Barak has become the first woman to join the Army Aviation Corps as combat aviator after completion of a six-month combat Army aviation course.

“She has been awarded the coveted wings along with 36 Army pilots today by Lieutenant General A. K. Suri, Director-General and Colonel Commandant, Army Aviation, during a valedictory ceremony at the Combat Army Aviation Training School, Nashik,” the Army said on Wednesday.

Capt. Barak hails from Haryana and was commissioned into the Army Air Defence Corps in September 2018. She is the daughter of Colonel S. Om Singh (retd). Capt. Barak has done



Flying colours: Capt. Abhilasha Barak gets wings at the Army Aviation Training School, Nashik. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

a number of professional military courses before joining the Army Aviation Corps, officials stated.

The Army Aviation Corps, the youngest Corps of the Army, was formed on November 1, 1986 and over the years, has expanded with addition of new units and equipment such as Cheetah and the advanced light helicopter Dhruv, weaponised Rudra and the light

combat helicopter.

In August 2021, Army Aviation got control of the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), which were earlier with the Artillery, bringing all aviation assets under one roof. Since the stand-off in eastern Ladakh in 2020, the Army Aviation had seen a quantum jump in the employment of helicopters along the northern borders.

EXPLAINER

Understanding the nature of U.S.-Taiwan relations

What is the controversy surrounding Biden's recent statement on Taiwan? Is the U.S. shifting from strategic ambiguity to strategic clarity?

THE GIST

■ The President of the United States Joe Biden on May 23, gave an affirmative reply to a question on whether the U.S. will come to the aid of Taiwan militarily in case of an invasion by China. This has raised questions on whether the U.S. is shifting from its long-standing policy of strategic ambiguity over Taiwan to that of strategic clarity.

■ The very foundation of the U.S. rapprochement with China is a mutual understanding on the Taiwan question. This has been outlined in three documents – the Shanghai Communiqué (1972), the Normalisation Communiqué (1979) and the 1982 Communiqué. As per the 1979 Communiqué, the U.S. recognised China, but stated that it merely “acknowledges the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China”.

■ It is possible that the Russo-Ukraine conflict might have created a context where a strong message to the adversary becomes essential, especially considering Beijing's wearing patience and Taipei's increasingly pro-independence slant.

ANAND V.

The story so far: The President of the United States Joe Biden made a controversial statement on May 23, during a joint news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida a day before the start of the Quad summit in Japan. He gave an affirmative reply to a question on whether the U.S. will come to the aid of Taiwan militarily in case of an invasion by China. This is the third time that he has made such a statement, raising questions about whether the U.S. is shifting from its long-standing policy of strategic ambiguity over Taiwan to that of strategic clarity.

What is the Taiwan issue?

Taiwan is an island territory located off the coast of mainland China, across the Taiwan Strait. After their defeat to the communist forces in the Chinese civil war (1945-1949), the ruling Kuomintang (Nationalist) government of China fled to Taiwan. They transplanted the Republic of China (ROC) government in Taiwan, while the Communist Party of China (CPC) established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the mainland. Since then, the PRC considers the island as a renegade province awaiting reunification by peaceful means, if possible. Meanwhile, the ROC retained its membership at the United Nations and its permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC). The cross-strait relations became strained as a result of the Cold War, with the PRC allying itself with the Soviet Union (USSR) and ROC with the U.S. This resulted in the two Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s.

However, with the shifting geopolitics of the Cold War, the PRC and the U.S. were forced to come together in the 1970s to counter the growing influence of the USSR. This led to the US-China rapprochement demonstrated by the historic visit of then U.S. President Richard Nixon to PRC in 1972. The same year, the PRC displaced ROC as the official representative of the Chinese nation at the UN. Diplomatic relations with the PRC became possible only if countries abided by its “One China Principle” – recognising PRC and not the ROC as China. Taiwan transitioned from a single party state to a multi-party democracy at the same time that China reformed its economic system under Deng Xiaoping, and by the end of the Cold

War they became economically entangled; nevertheless, they continue to compete for international recognition and preparing themselves for the worst possible scenario.

How has the U.S.'s stance on the Taiwan question evolved vis-à-vis China?

The very foundation of the U.S. rapprochement as well as its recognition of the PRC is a mutual understanding on the Taiwan question. This has been outlined in three documents – the Shanghai Communiqué (1972), the Normalisation Communiqué (1979) and the 1982 Communiqué. According to the 1972 communiqué, the U.S. agreed to the ‘one China principle’, with an understanding that it “acknowledges” and “does not challenge” that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.”

As per the 1979 communiqué, the U.S. recognised PRC, but stated that it merely “acknowledges the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China”. It also established unofficial relations with Taiwan through this communiqué in the name of the people of both the countries. The 1982 communiqué assuaged Chinese concerns of the possibility for continued arms supply to Taiwan by the U.S. provisioned in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979 which enabled it to resume supply of “defensive” arms. With these foundational arrangements, the U.S. developed a way to balance the recognition of PRC with the concerns of Taiwan. This delicate balance, however, has increasingly been tested of late.

Why is the issue significant today?

As Taiwan's democracy flourished, the popular mood drifted towards a new Taiwanese identity and a pro-independence stance on sovereignty. The past decade has seen considerable souring of ties across the Strait, as the Democratic People's Party (DPP) became the most powerful political force in Taiwan, sweeping two consecutive elections in the past decade. The DPP government, led by Tsai Ing Wen has been catering to the pro-independence constituency in Taiwan and seeks to diversify economic relations away from China. This has made China wary of Tsai. China has always seen Taiwan as a territory

with high geopolitical significance. This is due to its central location in the First Island Chain between Japan and the South China Sea, which is seen as the first benchmark or barrier for China's power projection. U.S. military outposts are scattered throughout this region, and hence, taking control of Taiwan would mean a significant breakthrough as per China's geostrategic calculus. Moreover, its reunification will formally bury the remaining ghosts of China's “century of humiliation”. China under President Xi Jinping seems to have lost its patience and currently sees very slim chances of a peaceful reunification, given the current downturn in cross-Strait relations and the trajectory of the wider geopolitics. This has been demonstrated in the growing frequency of rhetorical spats between Beijing and Taipei, and China's military drills and patrols across the Strait, as well as the record-breaking aerial transgressions by China of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). Also, this build-up of tensions is happening simultaneously and drawing parallels with the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

Is U.S. strategy towards Taiwan witnessing a major transformation?

The U.S.'s strategy towards Taiwan in light of the unresolved nature of the cross-Strait relations has been marked by what has been called “strategic ambiguity”, which is quite visible in the TRA.

The TRA had come up in the wake of U.S.'s recognition of the PRC, and the resultant termination of the 1954 U.S.-Taiwan mutual defence treaty. As per the TRA, the U.S. has stated clearly that the establishment of bilateral relations with the PRC rests upon “the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means”. It also states that it is the policy of the U.S. “to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardise the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan”. Hence, there is no clear guarantee here that the U.S. will militarily involve in a situation where China attempts to invade Taiwan, short of supplying “defensive weapons”. The U.S. has for long utilised this strategic ambiguity with its own interpretation of the ‘one China principle’ to maintain its strategic interests in the Western



Pacific. It is in this context that Mr. Biden's statements have made controversy. The reason behind why Mr. Biden stated that the U.S. will come to the rescue of Taiwan, as well as the backtracking by the administration later is not clear. It is quite possible that this could have been a “gaffe”, as portrayed by some sections of the media. However, this is the third time that Mr. Biden has put forward such a strong, clear viewpoint to the media – the first was in August and the second in October, 2021. This repeated assertive signalling seems to be therefore more than just accidental. Rather, it is speculated that the need to reassure U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific in lieu of the Quad summit could have played a part in taking a bolder stance by the Biden administration.

It is also possible that the Russo-Ukraine conflict might have created a context where a strong message to the adversary becomes essential, especially considering Beijing's wearing patience and Taipei's increasingly pro-independence slant. It may have reached the point where strategic ambiguity may be losing its relevance to strategic clarity. However, another plausible interpretation can be that this messaging is aimed by the U.S. for eliciting responses and testing the waters to get a feel of China's game plan for the Indo-Pacific, at a time when a grand distraction is underway at the Eurasian-Atlantic theatre. This may muddle the level of U.S.'s strategic ambiguity further.

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Stronger ties: In this photo released by the Taiwan Presidential Office, members of a U.S. Congressional delegation pose with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, and other Taiwanese officials during a meeting at the Presidential Office in Taipei, Taiwan on April 15, 2022. • AP

Supreme Court recognises sex work as a ‘profession’

It says police should neither interfere nor take criminal action against adult, consenting sex workers

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

In a significant order recognising sex work as a “profession” whose practitioners are entitled to dignity and equal protection under law, the Supreme Court has directed that police should neither interfere nor take criminal action against adult and consenting sex workers.

“It need not be gainsaid that notwithstanding the profession, every individual in this country has a right to a dignified life under Article 21 of the Constitution,” the court observed.

“Sex workers are entitled to equal protection of the law. Criminal law must apply equally in all cases, on the basis of ‘age’ and ‘consent’. When it is clear that the sex worker is an adult and is participating with consent, the police must refrain from interfering or taking any criminal action,” a three-judge Bench directed in an order which was passed after invoking special powers under Article 142 of Constitution.

The Bench ordered that sex workers should not be “arrested or penalised or harassed or victimised” whe-



never there is a raid on any brothel, “since voluntary sex work is not illegal and only running the brothel is unlawful”. A child of a sex worker should not be separated from the mother merely on the ground that she is in the

sex trade, the court held. “Basic protection of human decency and dignity extends to sex workers and their children,” the court noted.

Further, if a minor is found living in a brothel or with sex workers, it should not be presumed that the child was trafficked.

“In case the sex worker claims that he/she is her son/daughter, tests can be done to determine if the claim is correct and if so, the minor should not be forcibly separated,” the court ordered.

The court ordered the police to not discriminate

against sex workers who lodge a criminal complaint, especially if the offence committed against them is of a sexual nature. Sex workers who are victims of sexual assault should be provided every facility including immediate medico-legal care.

The court said media should take “utmost care not to reveal the identities of sex workers, during arrest, raid and rescue operations, whether as victims or accused and not to publish or telecast any photos that would result in disclosure of such identities”.

Frame policies to protect LGBTIQ+ workers, says ILO

A national policy will help in ending discrimination and exclusion, says document released by the world body

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A document released on Wednesday by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on "Inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in the world of work" recommended member countries, employers' organisations and representatives of workers to launch social protection programmes to remove barriers that LGBTIQ+ persons face in society.

Citing data from various sources, the ILO document said discrimination has an economic cost not just to LGBTIQ+ persons and their families but also to enterprises and national economies.

The ILO added that around the world, LGBTIQ+ persons face harassment, violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

It said a national policy and labour law review will allow governments to assess their country's work policy environment for LGBTIQ+ persons. "This will allow the identification of concrete steps for improving the legal and policy environment, ending discrimination and exclusions, and complying with international instruments," the document said.

The ILO said consultation with LGBTIQ+ communities and social dialogue with em-



LGBTIQ+ persons face harassment and violence on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. • FILE PHOTO

ployers' and workers' organisations are key. "This will allow the identification of barriers faced by LGBTIQ+ persons when entering the labour market and accessing government schemes, including those on social pro-

tection," the document said.

The ILO asked the governments to work with small and medium industry associations, sectoral unions and informal economy workers' associations to monitor discrimination in the informal

economy and address stigma and discrimination related to gender and sexual identity.

Encouraging employers' organisations to end sexual discrimination at workplaces, the ILO said it makes business sense to work on LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the workplace.

Workplace diversity

"Studies have shown that diversity in the workplace, including LGBTIQ+ persons, is better for business. It signals a creative environment that creates the right conditions for economic growth. Employers' organisations can provide policy guidance to their members, undertake advocacy and raise awareness on including LGBTIQ+

persons in workplaces, promote social dialogue and collective bargaining, and facilitate learning and sharing of good practices among members," the document said.

The ILO asked trade unions to help LGBTIQ+ workers to organise and exercise their right to freedom of association. The ILO said workers' associations can also ensure that issues affecting LGBTIQ+ workers are represented in collective bargaining agreements with employers and in workplace policies and other tools.

"Many LGBTIQ+ workers, particularly those in smaller workplaces, may feel isolated without visible LGBTIQ+ peers or allies," the document said.

‘Cement is the next target in war against inflation’

Worries about potential inflationary impact likely to delay rationalisation of GST rate slabs, says senior official

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The government has tasked a panel led by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba to examine an array of measures to ease cement prices amid supply constraints in parts of the country, including reviewing the possibility of using the sea route to transport cement from units in south India that have idle capacities.

While reining in cement prices is part of the Centre's push to tame high inflation, which includes the recent fuel tax cuts and recalibration of import and export duties on steel and plastic, the government is also keen to ensure there are no shortages of the key building material at a time when public infrastructure is being pushed to stoke growth, a senior government official said.



Shoring up availability: Panel exploring ways to move cement by sea from units in south India that have idle capacities. • AFP

Inflation is also the main reason that changes in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate structure, currently being deliberated upon by a group of ministers (GoM) under the GST Council, would likely have to be de-

layed given the potential inflationary impact that a rationalisation of the multiple tax rates could have.

“The GST Council members, be it the Centre or the States, are not unmindful of the desperate need for ra-

tionalising the rate slabs and structure but we just need to get the timing right,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. “Even if the GoM submits its report, is the Council ready to deal with it when inflation is the top worry,” the official wondered.

Any rejig of GST rates applicable on different products and services will entail some tax increases and some cuts. The GST Council has been aware of the need to rationalise rates since at least 2019, but the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the need to support the recovery last year, had compelled a deferral of the exercise, the official noted.

While there are suspicions about some degree of cartelisation among cement players that is likely respon-

sible for the constriction of supplies and higher prices, the Centre is exploring ways to tap the surplus production capacities that are currently idling in the southern parts of the country. The government is in talks with the South India Cement Manufacturers' Association to work out ways for members to meet the rising demand in other regions., the official noted.

‘Logistical support’

“They don't need any fiscal sops, just logistical support to move cement out, so we are looking at provision of more railway rakes as an option to pricier road transport. Even the sea route is being considered – for instance, the key input for construction could be sent to Haldia port, from say Chen-

nai port, and then moved onwards through inland waterways, with the last mile covered by road or rail,” the official explained.

The relaxation in customs duties on key raw materials for plastics and the curbs on steel exports were aimed at easing the lot of micro, small and medium enterprises, which were severely affected by non-availability or high prices for these key inputs.

Stressing that India's inflation pressures were being driven by global factors such as high fuel and commodity prices as well as supply chain disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine and China's strict lockdowns to curb COVID-19 transmission, the official said this was also leading to a surge in global investor interest in India as they seek to diversify supply risks.

Outbursts against Centre unwarranted: officials

They react to States' stance on GST

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

Taking on the recent spate of “repeated, constant and instant” outbursts against the Centre by some States on fiscal issues, top government officials asserted on Wednesday that the criticism of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime’s functioning based on a Supreme Court verdict last week was as ill-informed as the critique of fuel tax cuts announced last Saturday.

“It is quite clear where the shameless hypocrisy lies,” an official said. “Even before the Supreme Court judgment in a GST matter, where it simply reiterated the existing system, was uploaded for public view, they were holding press conferences stating the court has upheld their fiscal rights,” the official added, hinting at States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu that reacted soon after news broke of the top court’s decision scrapping a GST levy on freight services for imports.

Similarly, while States like Tamil Nadu had criticised the Centre’s plea for

them to cut local levies on petroleum products to ease inflation, the Centre had only “exhorted” them to consider it, not imposed the move as was being implied, the official explained.

“Yet, the Kerala and Maharashtra governments announced cuts in their State levies after the Centre’s initiative. Why did they feel the need to do so if we were ‘imposing’ on them?” the official asked.

Loss of revenue

On States fretting over losing their revenue powers due to GST and the levy of cess on fuel products “thus depriving them of their share of revenues”, the official emphasised that the States were not alone in giving up those powers to operationalise GST.

“As many as 18 cesses levied by the Centre, that yielded over ₹56,000 crore in 2016-17, were subsumed into the GST. This means the funds that were going exclusively to the Centre before GST are now shareable with States because of the shift,” another official pointed out.

Curbs on sugar to ensure supply: govt.

Farmers slam move, say Centre is closing all avenues for better prices

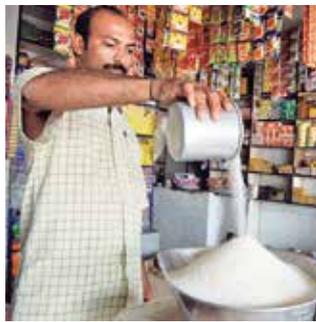
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre maintained on Wednesday that the festival season starting from October and the commitment to stabilise prices in the domestic market were the reasons for restricting sugar exports beyond 10 million tonnes (100 lakh metric tonnes).

Farmers, however, were suspicious of the decision, and said the Centre was closing all avenues for better prices for their produce.

Sudhanshu Pandey, Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution, told presspersons that the Centre's first priority was to ensure sufficient availability of sugar for consumption at a reasonable rate, and thereafter divert more sugar into ethanol production.

"During the festival period of October and November, the demand for sugar increases and therefore, the Centre is committed to ensure availability of sugar for the lean period," Mr. Pandey said.



The government says the demand for sugar will go up during the festival season.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) issued an order on Tuesday stating that export of sugar would be allowed with specific permission from the Directorate of Sugar, Department of Food and Public Distribution between June 1 and October 31, or till further orders, whichever is earlier. Mr. Pandey said the department would release Export Release Orders (EROs) on receiving applications from sugar mills and exporters. "Sugar mills will apply for ERO for dispatch of sugar from mills for export.

Exporters will apply for export of sugar out of country. Both need to apply online through National Single Window System (NSWS)," he added.

"Wholesale prices of sugar in India are range-bound between ₹3,150-₹3,500 per quintal, while retail prices are also within control in the range of ₹36-₹44 per kg in different parts of the country. The global situation reflects a shortage of sugar, especially due to lower production in Brazil. This may trigger the demand globally and so as to safeguard domestic availability and interests, DGFT issued an order to maintain domestic availability and price stability of sugar in the country during sugar season 2021-22 (October-September)," he said.

The move has irked farmers' groups. "The direct impact of this decision is not on sugar price but on farmers. The traders will take it as a pretext to reduce the cost they pay to farmers. The go-

vernment recently announced such decisions on wheat, sugar and onion," Ajit Nawale, general secretary of the Maharashtra unit of the All India Kisan Sabha, said.

Jitender Singh Hudda, a farmers' leader from Shamli in western Uttar Pradesh, said farmers got a better price for sugar cane after several years due to exports. "We were told that there is enough sugar stock in the country. The next crushing season would have started in October after four months. This government is closing all opportunities for farmers. We would have got access to more markets and better prices because of the international situation. The sugar production is regularly surplus. They should have looked at the cultivate area before imposing restrictions. Monsoon reports are also normal. The quota release system is already there for sugar mills. So domestic markets wouldn't have been impacted at all," Mr. Hudda said.

Be wary of growing exports

The growing consumption in rich countries has come at a cost for developing countries such as India



POORNIMA VARMA

The uncertainties in the global economic environment, significantly driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resultant sanctions on Russia by the West, along with Sri Lanka's ongoing struggles to stay afloat amidst a deepening crisis, have all been believed to have created export opportunities for countries such as India. However, this well-celebrated export spike needs to be viewed with a pinch of salt.

Emissions-embodied exports

The 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen witnessed a vociferous argument from countries such as India and China that developed countries who are consuming polluted goods produced elsewhere also have an obligation to clean up the mess. The data available from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that India is one of the leading exporters of carbon emissions-embodied products, and that there is a steady increase in the total carbon emissions embodied in exports. China is the largest exporter of carbon emissions-embodied products, followed by the U.S., Russia and India. India's total carbon emission exports increased from 80.3 million tonnes at the time of it joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 to 426.1 million tonnes in 2018. The sharp increase in carbon-embodied exports brought India closer to that of the U.S.'s carbon emission exports. In the case of the U.S., carbon emission exports were more or less stagnant between 1995 and 2018.

Net CO₂ exports can be calculated by taking the difference between carbon emissions-embodied exports and carbon emissions-embodied imports. The striking difference between China and India is that while China's net exports began to decline from 2007-08, net exports in India started to steadily increase in that period. While India's net exports of carbon emissions were observed to be the lowest in 2007 (-11.6 million



Farmers plant saplings in a rice field on the outskirts of Ahmedabad ■ REUTERS

tonnes), at present the net exports are 55.4 million tonnes. Another way of calculating the net export of carbon emissions is by taking the difference between domestic carbon emissions embodied in gross exports and foreign carbon emissions embodied in gross exports. By using this definition also, there is a steady increase in net exports of carbon emissions from India. In 1995, net exports were 75.8 million tonnes; it increased to 372 million tonnes in 2018.

India's recent export performance has been attributed to petroleum products, electronics and chemicals. Although net carbon emission exports have been declining in the case of chemicals and electronics as imports have been rising at a greater rate, the carbon emissions-embodied exports of all these products have been steadily increasing over the years. For example, the domestic carbon emissions-embodied exports of chemicals was only 2.1 million tonnes in 1995, which increased to around 9.8 million tonnes in 2018. Similarly, carbon emissions exports of electronics increased from 1.3 million tonnes to 8 million tonnes, and exports of petroleum carbon increased from 6.6 to 25.5 million tonnes during this period. The net exports of carbon emissions have also been increasing in the case of petroleum products.

Most developed countries are the net importers of polluted goods produced elsewhere, especially in the developing countries. The largest net importers of carbon emission-intensive goods are the U.S., Japan and Germany. The U.S. net carbon imports increased from 262.3 million tonnes in 1995 to 834.1 million tonnes in 2018. The OECD member countries which are developed are net importers. Due to the stringent environmental measures adopted by developed countries, pollution-intensive industries show a tendency to relocate from developed countries to developing countries with the lowest environmental standards/weak enforcement of environmental standards in order to cut resource and labour costs – a phenomenon researchers term as 'pollution haven hypothesis'. Thus, developing countries that are lax in enforcing environmental policies eventually become pollution havens.

One could possibly argue that an increased GDP as a result of expansion in export revenue can be utilised for improving the environmental quality. As per the environmental Kuznets curve, there is an inverted U-shape relationship between the income of a country and its environmental degradation. This implies that as income increases, environmental quality begins to deteriorate,

but improves after some time. However, there is no consensus across studies with respect to this possibility.

Coming to the exports of agricultural and food products, India is virtually exporting some of its depleting natural resources such as water through exports. India is the leading exporter of rice in the world market. Given that rice is a water-intensive crop, India is indirectly exporting water to other countries. This virtual water trade will have an adverse impact on long-term sustainability and food security of the country although there has been an overall improvement in water-use efficiency. (As per the water use efficiency index developed as part of the sustainable development goals, water efficiency has risen from 0.95 (\$/m³) during the period 1993-97 to 3 (\$/m³) during the period 2018-22.) The agricultural water withdrawal as a percentage of total available renewable water resources has increased from 26.7% in 1993 to 36% in 2022. The total per capita renewable water resources have also declined from 1909 cubic metres to 1412 cubic metres during this period.

The way forward

The growing consumption in rich countries has come at a cost for developing countries such as India. Countries have begun imposing an environmental tax to address a broad spectrum of environmental issues. For example, in OECD countries, the tax roughly constitutes 2% of the GDP. While the environmental tax in India is around 1%, the tax as a percentage of GDP has marginally come down from 1.38% in 2005 to 1.07% in 2019. In order to ensure long-term sustainability, strict environmental measures need to be explored, such as revisiting the possibilities of increasing the environmental tax, even though the short-run implications, especially on the trade front, may not be pleasant. Similarly, water-saving policies that seek to improve the water use efficiency are also the need of the hour, in order to promote sustainable production of rice and also safeguard food security in the country.

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India's palm oil imports said to hit 11-year low

Soyoil imports may jump 57%: dealers

REUTERS

MUMBAI

India's palm oil imports could drop by almost a fifth as cheaper soyoil takes more market share, following Indonesia's curbs on palm oil exports and New Delhi allowing duty-free imports of soyoil, dealers said.

Palm oil imports by the world's biggest vegetable-oil importer in its marketing year ending on October 31 will fall 19% to 6.7 million tonnes, the lowest since 2010/11, according to the average forecast from dealers.

Soyoil imports could jump 57% to a record 4.5 million tonnes, they said. That could put pressure on Malaysian palm oil prices and may lift soyoil imports to record highs and support U.S. soyoil futures prices.

India on Tuesday allowed duty-free imports of two



million tonnes each of soyoil and sunflower oil for the current and next fiscal years ending March 31, as part of efforts to keep a lid on local edible-oil prices.

"The duty structure has made buying soyoil more attractive than palm oil," said Sandeep Bajoria, CEO of Sunvin Group, a vegetable oil brokerage.

India will import 1.9 million tonnes of sunflower oil in the current year, unchanged from a year earlier, dealers estimate.

‘Chip, supply issues cost BEL ₹2,200 cr.’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Bharat Electronics Ltd. lost business to the tune of ₹2,200 crore during fiscal 2021-22 following chip shortages and disruptions in the global supply chain, a top official said.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, BEL CMD Anandi Ramalingam said the company would have recorded an additional turnover of ₹2,200 crore had the supply-side environment been better in the March-ended fiscal.

“We expected a growth of 10-15% but due to a global chip shortage, pandemic and the geopolitical situation affecting logistics, we lost some business that would have otherwise come to us as additional turnover,” she elaborated

BEL turnover grew 9% to ₹15,044 crore in FY22.

WHO seeks India's help to test monkeypox cases

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
PUNE

The World Health Organization Country Office for India has sought the assistance of India's – ICMR-National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, – to test suspected cases of monkeypox for the south-east Asia region (SEAR) member-states.

The SEAR accounts for one-quarter of the world's population, 40% of the global poor and already bears approximately 30% of the overall global disease bur-

den. The request comes at a time when more than 10 countries, where monkeypox is not endemic, have reported outbreaks of the viral disease, with over 100 confirmed or suspected infections, mostly in Europe.

NIV Director Priya Abraham said: "This is not the first time India is extending its laboratory and diagnostic support to countries of this region. We have done it during COVID also. For monkeypox testing, we have agreed in principle to help out and

will await more formal requests from individual countries".

'Unusual outbreaks'

Stating that India has not yet reported a case of monkeypox, she said "recent monkeypox outbreaks are unusual because they are occurring in countries where the virus has not been endemic". "We have two of our Institute's laboratory groups ready to do the testing. We are equipped and prepared," she said.

Protesters clash with police, markets stay shut in Srinagar

Supporters of Yasin Malik gather at his residence and raise slogans

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Most shops at Srinagar's main commercial hub and its adjoining markets remained shut on Wednesday, as Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chief Yasin Malik was awarded with a life imprisonment in a terror financing case by a court in New Delhi. The shutdown was observed in absence of any bandh call by separatists.

Security forces were deployed in large numbers in volatile pockets of the city "to ward off any protests". Markets also remained closed in large parts of the old city, including Hawal, Nowhatta, Zaina Kadal, and Safa Kadal.

Protesters, including women, assembled at the residence of Malik in Maisuma in Srinagar. Malik's sister was seen reciting the Quran, ahead of the verdict.

Protesters raised pro-Malik and pro-freedom slogans and many clashed with the security forces. Police used



Tense moments: Protesters clashing with police in Srinagar on Wednesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

smoke shells to disperse the crowd.

Malik's wife Mushaal Hussein Mullick, who is in Pakistan, has said he was facing "trumped up" charges.

"The fear of losing power over the people of Kashmir is driving the Indian government to take such harsh stances which have no legal base. India's BJP wants to punish my husband to in-

crease Modi's vote bank and make the people of J&K leaderless. India must end these war crimes and politics of hatred and intolerance," Ms. Malik said, in a tweet.

Incarcerated Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, in a statement, said, "Malik since 1994 pursued peaceful and democratic means of conflict resolution.

Malik actively participated in all negotiations held on Kashmir after 2000 under various regimes in New Delhi and Islamabad. Yet, he was arrested and has now been convicted in invented cases under draconian laws. Actually, he is being punished for his political beliefs on the J&K dispute and for representing the sentiments of its people."

Yasin Malik gets life term for terror funding

NIA court verdict triggers strong political reaction in J&K

DEVESH K. PANDEY
PEERZADA ASHIQ
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

A special court on Wednesday sentenced Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik to life imprisonment in a terror funding case, triggering a spontaneous shutdown of the main markets in Srinagar and a strong political reaction in Jammu & Kashmir. Mobile Internet was suspended in parts of the Kashmir Valley “as a precautionary measure”.

The People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgam of regional parties in J&K that includes the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), said the life imprisonment to Malik was “unfortunate and a setback to the efforts for peace”.

“Kashmir is a political problem. Muscular policy adopted will have only a negative impact. Instead of resolving the Kashmir problem, it will complicate it. Unless the muscular policy changes, the bloodshed will not end,” PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) court of special judge Parveen Singh sentenced Malik – who previously had pleaded guilty to the charges – to life term under Section 17 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention)



Grave charges: Yasin Malik being produced at the Patiala House Courts in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Act (UAPA) and Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and also imposed a fine of ₹10 lakh. He was also sentenced for several other offences under the UAPA and the IPC.

Death penalty sought

During the course of arguments on the sentence, the NIA prosecutor sought death penalty for Malik, stating that his “terrorist acts” had led to severe chaos and unrest in the Kashmir Valley and resulted in the loss of numerous lives and damage to property. The prosecutor said Malik was involved in terror funding, supported terror outfits and had waged war against the country.

The *amicus curiae*, however, argued for minimum

punishment pointing out that since his arrest, and during his confinement, Malik had not engaged in any of the activities for which he had been convicted and that he had voluntarily pleaded guilty.

Malik submitted that after the ceasefire in 1994, he had declared that he would “follow peaceful path of Mahatma Gandhi and would engage in non-violent political struggle”. Not only Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, but all the Prime Ministers from the time of V.P. Singh to Atal Bihari Vajpayee had engaged with him and given him a political platform, Malik said.

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Yasin Malik gets life term for terror funding

Having considered all the arguments, the court observed: “The crimes for which convict has been convicted are of very serious nature. These crimes were intended to strike at the heart of the idea of India and intended to forcefully secede J&K from Union of India. The crime becomes more serious as it was committed with the assistance of foreign powers and designated terrorists. The seriousness of crime is further increased by the fact that it was committed behind the smoke screen of an alleged peaceful political movement.”

The court said: “The claim of the convict is that he gave up the gun in 1994 and thereafter, he was recognised as a legitimate political player which is evident by the fact that the Government of India has been engaging with him and had been providing him the platforms to express his opinions. On the face of it, it seems to be a very sound argument which would give an impression that convict has already reformed. However, in my opinion, there was no reformation of this convict.”

Malik had never expressed any regret for the violence he committed

prior to 1994, the court noted, stating that when he claimed to have given up the gun, the Indian government took it at face value and gave him an opportunity to reform and in good faith, tried to engage in a meaningful dialogue with him.

Violence in disguise

“However, as discussed in the order on charge, the convict did not desist from violence. Rather, betraying the good intentions of government, he took a different path to orchestrate violence in the guise of political struggle. The convict has claimed that he had followed Gandhian principle of non-violence and was spearheading a peaceful non-violent struggle. However, the evidence on the basis of which charges were framed and to which convict has pleaded guilty, speaks otherwise.”

“The entire movement was planned to be a violent movement and large-scale violence ensued is a matter of fact. I must observe here that the convict cannot invoke the Mahatma and claim to be his follower because in Mahatma Gandhi’s principles, there was no place for violence, however high the objective might be,” the court said.

General Studies Paper I

A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-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.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.