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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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The excavation site at Rakhigarhi where 60 skeletons were found by the Archaeological Survey of India. ■PTI

Rakhigarhi skeletons' DNA samples sent for analysis

Many artefacts found at Harappa site

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAKHIGARHI**

DNA samples collected from two human skeletons unearthed at a necropolis of a Harappan-era city site in Haryana have been sent for scientific examination, the outcome of which might tell about the ancestry and food habits of people who lived in the Rakhigarhi region thousands of years ago.

The skeletons of two women were found a couple of months ago at mound number 7 (named RGR 7 by the Archaeological Survey of India or ASI), believed to be nearly 5,000 years old. Pots and other artefacts were also found buried next to them in a pit, part of the funerary rituals back in the Harappan Civilisation era, ASI officials said.

“Seven mounds scattered around two villages (Rakhi Khas and Rakhi Shahpur) in Hisar district are part of the Rakhigarhi archaeological

site. RGR 7 is a cemetery site of the Harappan period when this was a well-organised city. The two skeletons were unearthed about two months ago by our team. And DNA samples were collected by experts about two weeks ago,” Joint Director-General, ASI, S.K. Manjul said.

At present RGR 1, RGR 3 and RGR 7 have been taken up for investigation.

Dr. Manjul, who is leading the excavation team at the Rakhigarhi site since it commenced on February 24, 2022, said the DNA analysis will help answer a lot of questions, anthropological or otherwise. The samples will be first examined by the Birbal Sahni Institute of Paleosciences, Lucknow for preliminary investigation and scientific comparison, before being sent further for forensic analysis from an anthropological perspective, he said.

‘Citizenship delayed, 800 Pakistani Hindus left India’

Home Ministry examining online system

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Nearly 800 Pakistani Hindus, who were staying in Rajasthan after coming to India seeking citizenship on the grounds of religious persecution, returned to the neighbouring country in 2021, according to Seemant Lok Sangathan (SLS), a group that advocates for the rights of Pakistani minority migrants in India. Many of them returned to Pakistan after they found that there had been no progress in their citizenship application.

“Once they return, they are used by Pakistani agencies to defame India. They are paraded before the media and made to say that they were ill-treated here,”



Pakistani Hindu migrants outside their makeshift houses at a village in Jodhpur in 2019. ■ FILE PHOTO

SLS president Hindu Singh Sodha said.

The Union Home Ministry initiated an online citizenship application process in 2018, but the portal does not accept Pakistani passports that have expired, forcing people to rush to the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi to get their passports renewed for a hefty sum. “If it is a family of 10, then they

end up spending more than ₹1 lakh at the Pakistan High Commission to get the passports renewed. They come to India amid great financial hardships and to cough up such a high amount is not feasible,” Mr. Singh said.

A Ministry official said it was examining the online system.

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‘Citizenship delayed, Pak. Hindus left India’

In 2018, the Ministry made 16 Collectors in seven States accept online applications to grant citizenship to Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jain and Buddhists from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

In May 2021, the Ministry empowered 13 more District Collectors in five States – Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab – to grant citizenship certificates to applicants belonging to the six communities under Sections 5 (registration) and 6 (naturalisation) of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

According to Mr. Singh, other than applying online, applicants have to submit documents to Collectors in the physical mode, which is an added burden.

Decade-long wait

The Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha on December 22, 2021 that according to the online module, as many as 10,635 applications for citizenship were pending with the Ministry as on December 14, of which 7,306 applicants were from Pakistan. According to Mr. Singh, there are 25,000 Pakistani Hindus in Rajasthan alone who have been awaiting citizenship, some for more than two decades. Many of them have applied in the offline mode.

In 2015, the Ministry amended the Citizenship Rules and legalised the stay of foreign migrants belonging to six communities, who

had entered India on or before December 2014 due to persecution on grounds of religion, by exempting them from the provisions of the Passport Act and the Foreigners Act as their passports had expired.

Persons seeking refuge in India either come on long-term visas (LTV) or pilgrim visas. The LTVs, given for five years, are a precursor to citizenship.

Religious persecution

The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2011 decided to grant LTVs to hundreds of Hindus and Sikhs who came to India alleging religious persecution in Pakistan. Many came on pilgrim visas and continued to stay here after the expiry of their passports.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, intended to benefit undocumented (illegal) migrants from the six persecuted communities in the three neighbouring countries who entered India before December 31, 2014, is yet to come into force as the rules that govern the law have not been notified by the Ministry yet. The CAA could have helped legal minority migrants in fast-tracking their applications as it reduced the mandatory requirement of 11 years to five years to be eligible for citizenship, though many who await citizenship and arrived via the legal route have already spent more than 11 years in India.

EXPLAINER

The Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation report

How will the redrawing of electoral boundaries affect the people of J&K? Does it set the stage for elections?

SUMEDA

The story so far: After multiple objections and extensions, the J&K Delimitation Commission submitted its final report on May 5, 2022, two years after it was appointed to redraw the electoral boundaries in Jammu and Kashmir as per the mandate set by the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. In its order, a notification of which was published in the Gazette of India, the three-member panel carved out additional six Assembly seats for the Jammu region and one for the Kashmir valley as per the Act. The final order of the Commission has set the stage for elections in the erstwhile State that last held Assembly polls in 2014.

What is delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of redrawing boundaries of the Lok Sabha or Assembly constituencies, the Election Commission of India states. The process is carried out in accordance with changes in the demographic status of a State or Union Territory. Delimitation is done by a Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission.

The orders of the independent body cannot be questioned before any court. In the past, Delimitation Commissions were set up in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002. Before the abrogation of Article 370 that accorded a special status to J&K, delimitation of its Assembly seats was carried out by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and the Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957. The delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies, meanwhile, was governed by the Constitution.

What is the J&K Delimitation Commission?

The last time a delimitation exercise was carried out in Jammu and Kashmir was in 1995, based on the 1981 Census. Jammu and Kashmir was under President's rule at that time. There was no Census in J&K due to the tense situation in the valley. In 2001, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed a law to put the delimitation process on hold till 2026. The Centre set up a Delimitation Commission in March 2020, six months after

the State of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated and reorganised as the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, was tasked with delimiting the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies in the UT of J&K based on the 2011 Census and in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 and the Delimitation Act, 2002.

The panel was given a year to complete the delimitation plan but was given two extensions. After considering submissions and considering factors like "geographical features, communication means, public convenience and contiguity of areas", the Delimitation Commission released its final report on May 5.

What are the key takeaways from the final report?

First, J&K is split into two divisions, with Jammu having 37 Assembly seats and Kashmir 46. After the Commission's final draft, six additional Assembly seats are earmarked for Jammu (revised to 43) and one for Kashmir (revised to 47). The total number of Assembly seats in the UT will increase from 83 to 90.

Second, the Commission has recommended the Centre to nominate at least two Kashmiri Pandits to the Legislative Assembly.

Third, the panel has proposed nine seats for the Scheduled Tribes (STs). These will include six in Jammu (Budhal, Gulabgarh, Surankote, Rajouri, Mendhar, Thanamandi) and three in the valley (Gurez, Kangan, Kokernag). Seven seats have been reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the Jammu region.

Fourth, the Commission has also recommended that the government consider giving displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir representation in the Assembly through nomination.

Fifth, in its final order, the Commission has noted that it has considered the "Jammu & Kashmir region as one single Union Territory", and merged Rajouri and Poonch (from Jammu division) with the Anantnag

constituency in the Kashmir region. The new constituency has been renamed as Kishtwar-Rajouri.

Sixth, the Commission has said it renamed 13 constituencies considering public sentiment in the region. The order shows that in Kashmir, the names of Gulmarg (from Tangmarg), Hazratbal, Zadibal, Lal Chowk, Eidgah have been restored. In the Jammu region, the name of the Gulabgarh constituency has been restored.

The final order of the Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir holds a lot of political significance. The completion of the delimitation exercise will pave the way for Assembly elections – a crucial step in the possible restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had stated earlier this year that the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir will be restored "once the situation becomes normal".

The Commission has added seven more Assembly seats, keeping the 2011 census as the basis. With this, Jammu with a population of 53 lakh (43% of the total population of 122 crore) will have 47% seats, while Kashmir which has a population of 68 lakh (56%) will have 52% of the seats.

The new constituency has five ST Assembly segments from the Jammu region. In J&K, Gujar and Bakarwals form the ST community which is 11.9% of the total population, as per the 2011 census. This restructuring is likely to have an electoral impact.

Who criticised the Commission?

Regional political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, barring the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have slammed the Commission for acting as an "extension of the BJP". Rejecting the recommendations, former J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti termed the proposal as another means to disempower the people of J&K.

Ms. Mufti's Peoples Democratic Party had boycotted both visits of the Commission to the UT. Her party colleague, Naem Akhtar, alleged that elections have been rigged even before voting. "It's another sad chapter of history written by the rulers sitting in New



Delhi," he told *The Hindu*.

The National Conference (NC) claimed that the final order was an attempt to help the BJP get an advantage in elections. The NC has been critical of the Commission and had boycotted it before the intervention of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Peoples Conference and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) have also expressed their disappointment. The Congress said the proposal of six additional seats to Jammu and one to Kashmir "smacks of pre-determined erroneous assessment". The BJP, meanwhile, has said it is happy with the panel for "doing a great job".

What lies ahead?

The Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir has issued a notification of its final order in the Gazette of India. As per rules, the report has been published in newspapers.

The Centre will now fix a date from which the delimitation order will come into effect. Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra told *The Hindu* that the EC will then rationalise the polling stations and revise the electoral rolls. This will pave the way for the much-awaited first Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir after being stripped of its special status in 2019.

With inputs from Peerzada Ashiq

Towards an election: The completion of the delimitation exercise will pave the way for Assembly elections – a crucial step in the possible restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir. • GETTY IMAGES

THE GIST

- On May 5, 2022 the Jammu & Kashmir Delimitation Commission submitted its final report, two years after it was appointed to redraw the electoral boundaries in J&K.

- After the final draft by the Commission, six additional Assembly seats are earmarked for Jammu (revised to 43) and one for Kashmir (revised to 47).

- The Centre will now fix a date from which the order will come into effect. Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra will then rationalise the polling stations and revise the electoral rolls.

Third and final round

Proposed Constitution Bench hearing should end the wrangling over NCT's status

The complexities of the law governing the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi will once again be under elaborate judicial focus. In what will be the third round of litigation in the dispute between the Union government and the Government of the NCT of Delhi, a Constitution Bench will embark on interpreting a couple of phrases in Article 239AA, which confers a unique status for Delhi. It would indeed seem unnecessary for another Constitution Bench after five judges had rendered an authoritative pronouncement in 2018 on various questions that arose from Article 239AA. However, the Chief Justice of India, Justice N.V. Ramana, has made it clear that the reference to a five-member Bench will be strictly limited to the interpretation of a couple of phrases that were not examined by the earlier Bench, and no other point will be reopened. Broadly, the 2018 verdict, through three concurring opinions, had ruled that Delhi was indeed a Union Territory, but the Lieutenant Governor, as the Administrator appointed by the President, should act as per the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, in areas in which legislative power was conferred on Delhi's Legislative Assembly. Under Article 239AA, except for police, public order and land, the Delhi Assembly can make law on all other matters in the State and Concurrent Lists 'insofar as such matter is applicable to Union Territories'. The mandate of the hearing is to declare what this phrase means, and whether it is one more limitation on Delhi's legislative, and by extension, executive powers.

The 2018 ruling limited the Lieutenant Governor's domain by making it clear that not every decision required his concurrence. It had cautioned against the notion of representative democracy being negated, if legitimate decisions of the Council of Ministers were blocked merely because the Lieutenant Governor had a different view. The Lieutenant Governor's power to refer "any matter" on which he disagreed with the elected regime did not mean he could raise a dispute on "every matter". It is perhaps because of the underlying message that an unelected administrator should not undermine an elected administration that the Centre badly wanted a fresh reference to another Constitution Bench. It is indeed true that a split verdict by a two-judge Bench on the question whether 'services' fell under the Union government's domain or the NCT government has flagged the absence of a determination in the Constitution Bench verdict on the question whether Entry 41 of the State List (services) is within the NCT's executive and legislative domain. Entry 41 is not one of the excluded areas of legislation by the Delhi Assembly, but it has been argued that there are no services under the Delhi government and, therefore, it was not a matter applicable to the NCT at all. Settling this remaining question should give a quietus to the endless wrangling between the Modi government at the Centre and the Kejriwal regime in Delhi.

India's judiciary and the slackening cog of trust

Departures from substantive and procedural justice need deep scrutiny as the fallout could severely imperil governance

VANI S. KULKARNI,
VEENA S. KULKARNI &
RAGHAV GAIHA

Centrality of justice in human lives is summed up in a few words by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle: "It is in justice that the ordering of society is centred." Yet, a vast majority of countries have highly corrupt judiciaries.

Judicial corruption takes two forms: political interference in the judicial process by the legislative or executive branch, and bribery. Despite accumulation of evidence on corrupt practices, the pressure to rule in favour of political interests remains intense. And for judges who refuse to comply, political retaliation can be swift and harsh. Bribery can occur throughout the chain of the judicial process: judges may accept bribes to delay or accelerate verdicts, accept or deny appeals, or simply to decide a case in a certain way. Court officials coax bribes for free services; and lawyers charge additional "fees" to expedite or delay cases.

A distinction

Our focus here is on the functioning of and erosion of trust in the lower judiciary comprising high courts, and district and sessions courts. A distinction between substantive and procedural justice is helpful. Substantive justice is associated with whether the statutes, case law and unwritten legal principles are morally justified (e.g., freedom to pursue any religion), while procedural justice is associated with fair and impartial decision procedures. Many outdated/

dysfunctional laws or statutes have not been repealed because of the tardiness of legal reform both at the Union and State government levels. Worse, there have been blatant violations of constitutional provisions. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (December 2019) provides citizenship to – except Muslims – Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis and Christians who came to India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014. But this flies in the face of secularism and is thus a violation of substantive justice. A striking example of tortuous delay in the delivery of justice is the case of Lal Bihari. He was officially declared dead in 1975, struggled to prove that he was alive (though deceased in the records) and was finally declared alive in 1994 (Debroy, 2021). Thus, both departures from substantive and procedural justice need deep scrutiny. Alongside procedural delays, endemic corruption and mounting shares of under-trial inmates with durations of three to five years point to stark failures of procedural justice and to some extent of substantive justice.

Under the different regimes

All was not well with the lower judiciary under the United Progressive Alliance regime. According to Transparency International (TI 2011), 45% of people who had come in contact with the judiciary between July 2009 and July 2010 had paid a bribe to the judiciary. The most common reason for paying the bribes was to "speed things up". There were "fixed" rates for a



GETTY IMAGES

quick divorce, bail, and other procedures (Banerjee, 2012). The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) (April 2013) estimates that for every ₹2 in official court fees, at least ₹ 1,000 is spent in bribes in bringing a petition to the court.

There is a scarcity of evidence on bribes and malfeasance under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). A few broad-brush treatments are, however, worrying. Freedom House's 'Freedom in the World 2016 report for India' states that "the lower levels of the judiciary in particular have been rife with corruption" (Freedom House 2016). The GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal reports that, "[t]here is a high risk of corruption when dealing with India's judiciary, especially at the lower court levels. Bribes and irregular payments are often exchanged in return for favourable court decisions" (GAN Integrity 2017).

Allegations of corruption against High Court judges abound. For example, Tis [Tiz] Hazari District Court Senior Civil Judge, Rachna Tiwari Lakhanpal, was arrested in September 2016 for allegedly accepting a bribe to rule in fa-

vour of a complainant in a case. Such examples are indicative of the widespread malaise of corruption in the lower judiciary. Worse, there are glaring examples of anti-Muslim bias, often followed by extra-judicial killings by the police. Anti-Muslim bias alone may not result in erosion of trust but if combined with unprovoked and brutal violence against them (e.g., lynching of innocent cattle traders) is bound to.

Case pendency

According to the National Judicial Data Grid, as of April 12, 2017, there are 24,186,566 pending cases in India's district courts, of which 2,317,448 (9.58%) have been pending for over 10 years, and 3,975,717 (16.44%) have been pending for between five and 10 years. As of December 31, 2015, there were 4,432 vacancies in the posts of [subordinate court] judicial officers, representing about 22% of the sanctioned strength. In the case of the High Courts, 458 of the 1,079 posts, representing 42% of the sanctioned strength, were vacant as of June 2016. Thus, severe backlogging and understaffing persisted, as also archaic and complex procedures of delivery of justice.

Extreme centralisation of power in the Centre and a blatant violation of democratic values under the NDA have had disastrous consequences in terms of violent clashes, loss of lives, religious discord, assaults on academic freedom, and suppression and manipulation of mass media. Exercise of extra-constitutional authority by the central and State govern-

ments, weakening of accountability mechanisms, widespread corruption in the lower judiciary and the police, with likely collusion between them, the perverted beliefs of the latter towards Muslims, other minorities and lower caste Hindus, a proclivity to deliver instant justice, extra-judicial killings, filing first information reports against innocent victims of mob lynching – specifically, Muslim cattle traders while the perpetrators of violence are allowed to get away – have left deep scars on the national psyche. It may seem far-fetched but it is not, as these are unmistakable signs of abject failure of governance.

Our analysis reinforces this concern. While trust in the judiciary is positively and significantly related to the share of undertrials for three to five years under total prisoners, it is negatively and significantly related to the square of share of under-trials. However, the negative effect nearly offsets the positive effect. So, while trust in the judiciary marginally rises with the proportion of undertrials until the threshold (0.267) is reached, it decreases beyond that point as the proportion of under-trial inmates rises.

In sum, erosion of trust in the judiciary could severely imperil governance.

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Provide legal aid to undertrials: SC judge

Over 82 lakh cases pending in U.P.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court Judge Justice D.Y. Chandrachud on Sunday said providing legal aid to individuals is “the need of the hour now” as undertrials languish in prison across the country for lack of effective legal representation. He referred to the 82.4 lakh criminal cases pending in the courts of Uttar Pradesh alone.

The judge was speaking at the centennial celebrations of the Benares Hindu University’s law faculty, highlighting how law schools should focus on clinical legal education with their own legal aid clinics to help communities. He said law schools should no longer remain “isolated islands of excellence divorced from their surrounding communities, but become active participants in them”.

“According to the National Judicial Data Grid, the Al-

lahabad High Court has 4,65,496 pending criminal cases, out of which the largest majority of cases have been pending for the last 10 to 20 years. Similarly, the District Courts in Uttar Pradesh have 82,41,560 pending criminal cases, out of which nearly 30% were filed in the last year itself,” Justice Chandrachud said.

He said the prison statistics for 2020 released by the National Crime Records Bureau, show that Uttar Pradesh has reported the highest number of undertrial prisoners in its jails, totaling 80,577, which constitute 21.7% of the overall number of undertrials in India.

“I have only taken the example of Uttar Pradesh, since it is home to BHU, but the situation is similar in many other states. I use these numbers to highlight how overburdened the courts and jails are,” Justice Chandrachud noted.

The multiple crises in Indian universities

Universities need greater funding, autonomy, and tolerance of activities by students and faculty



FEROZE VARUN GANDHI

Are Indian universities under deliberate siege? Spending on higher education (as a % of government expenditure) has stagnated at 1.3-1.5% since 2012. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education continues to push higher education institutions to increase their intake capacity by 25% (in a push to implement the 10% quota for economically weaker sections), while the Ministry of Finance has sought to ban the creation of new teaching posts (Mohanty Basant Kumar, September 2020). At the central level, student financial aid was cut to ₹2,078 crore in FY 2022-23 from ₹2,482 crore in FY 2021-22; allocations for research and innovation were down by 8%, reaching ₹218 crore. Our once-great institutions of learning are beset by multiple crises - a financial crunch at the university level, a deficit in research opportunities for faculty, poor infrastructure and learning outcomes for students; with any protests hit hard by police brutality and campus repression. Is an apathetic, bureaucratic state preventing universities from blooming?

Cash-strapped institutions

Investments in university infrastructure have shrunk. Most Indian universities and colleges have overcrowded classrooms, poor ventilation and sanitation, and unsatisfactory hostel accommodation. The Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA), which provides funding for all infrastructure loans to institutions, saw its budget reduced from ₹2,000 crore in FY 20-21 to ₹1 crore in FY 21-22. Instead, universities have been forced to take loans, but have few avenues to tap into.

Even day-to-day running costs are hard to meet. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was allocated ₹4,900 crore in FY 2022-23 versus ₹4,693 in FY 2021-22, but stifled cash flow has led to delays in salary payments for deemed/central universities. Hence, most universities are running on a deficit - Madras University saw an accumulated deficit of over ₹100 crore, forcing it to seek a ₹88



The police stormed the Jamia Millia Islamia library, fired tear-gas shells and beat up students in December 2019. •R.V. MOORTHY

crore grant from the State government (Raman A. Ragu, March 2022). Twelve colleges of Delhi University have seen a financial shortfall, with allocations by the state reduced by nearly half (for example, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College was allocated ₹28 crore versus a requirement of ₹42 crore in 2021). Faculty members have faced salary delays for months, with salaries coming in weeks later (examples include Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University, Delhi University, Visva-Bharati University, Nagaland University and Jharkhand University (Mohanty Basant Kumar, February 2021; Ara Ismat, November 2020). This has led to cuts in discretionary spending - many colleges in Delhi are unable to afford subscriptions to basic databases and journals. There is an urgent need to increased funding, along with establishing dedicated funding streams for infrastructure grants/loans and financial aid. Universities can also be freed up to utilise other revenue streams such as start-up royalties and advertising.

Research grants have also shriveled up. Grants under the UGC's minor and major research project schemes have declined from ₹42.7 crore in FY 2016-17 to ₹38 lakh in FY 2020-21 (Mohanty Basant Kumar, February 2022). India has over 1,040 universities, but just 2.7% offer PhD programmes, given paltry funding and poor infrastructure. The National Research Foundation (NRF), to improve research infrastructure in un-

iversities, has not yet been approved, and may have a limited budget (\$5-6 billion spread over five years). Clearly, funding for research needs to rise significantly, with institutions like the NRF supplementing (and not replacing) existing schemes (including those from the Ministry of Science). Funding should also be allocated to enable course-based research experiences for undergraduates.

Fall in standards

Meanwhile, academic standards and processes are not being maintained. Examination paper leaks have become common - the Hindi examination of the National Eligibility Test of the UGC, which enables post-graduate students who pass to teach in State and Central colleges, was leaked in June 2021. Candidates have anecdotally highlighted examination centre operators charging ₹3 lakh per candidate to help them pass (Baruah Sukrita, July 2021). More recently, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University rescheduled exams for select B.Com and B.A courses after a paper was leaked. Such institutions have failed to protect the sanctity of their examinations. Improving this will require a decentralised approach, with universities allowed to take decisions on academic programmes, promotions, cohort size, etc.

India's universities have historically been bastions of free expression and a hub of nationalism. The Central Hindu College (Delhi), inaugurated by Madan Mohan Malaviya, was a

centre for political debate during the freedom struggle, with students and teachers joining the Quit India movement, and involved in the defence of Rash Behari Bose and Lala Har Dayal in 1915. Students from the college were also involved in helping resettle partition refugees in 1947. Queen Mary's College, Chennai, is noted to have witnessed multiple pro-Quit India Movement protests. Students involved in these would often be detained on Marina Beach road penitentiary. More recently, students from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Banaras Hindu University, Delhi University, and Jamia Millia Islamia were associated with the anti-corruption movement, led by Anna Hazare. This delicate balance between the right to free expression and nationalism has been fostered across political regimes, with the leadership aware of the role of universities in strengthening democracy and civil society. And yet, of late, institutional apathy has given way to repression. Police action against students of select universities (JNU, Jamia Millia, for instance) for campus protests, along with arrests and incarceration, have cast a pall on free expression in campuses. Students and faculty members are routinely castigated as 'anti-national', among other epithets. We need to embrace tolerance for a diversity of views in our campuses - our students have formative experiences there and must have the space to define themselves as individuals. If free expression is not fostered, how will our universities champion critical thinking?

India's higher education institutions exist in a funerary state. This is reflected in global rankings - there are just eight Indian universities in the Top 500 in the QS World University Rankings. The National Education Policy (2020) has sought to foster critical thinking and problem solving, along with social, ethical and emotional capacities and dispositions. Enabling this will require an encouraging ecosystem, with greater funding, autonomy and tolerance of universities (and activities by students/faculty). Without this, talented Indian citizens will continue to escape abroad, while policymakers lament India's brain drain.

Feroze Varun Gandhi is a Member of Parliament, representing the Pilibhit constituency for the BJP

Disinvestment lull likely after LIC IPO

Some hurdles remain to be crossed for firms in strategic sale pipeline

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

Even as the LIC IPO is expected to sail through on Monday, helping the Centre meet about a third of its disinvestment target for the year, there is likely to be a lull in the privatisation drive of big-ticket public sector enterprises over the next few months.

While oil marketing major BPCL is finding no takers at this point and the sale process would be rebooted later, the next set of public sector companies in the divestment pipeline will take some months to move forward.

Transition challenges

These include IDBI Bank, the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), the Container Corporation of India Ltd (Concor) and the BEML, along with a couple of others, where restructuring of assets needs to be undertaken and other transition challenges must be overcome before their sale process is kicked off, indicated senior Finance Ministry officials.

“We will restart the BPCL transaction later, but as of



now, we expect to issue the preliminary information memorandum for IDBI Bank before Concor,” a senior official at the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) in the Finance Ministry said.

There are still some issues to be sorted out with the Railways in terms of land leasing arrangements before the sale of the Centre’s 30.8% stake in Concor along with management control will be taken up.

In the SCI’s case, its head office Shipping House, located right next to the Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha, would have needed the State government’s approval for inclusion in the sale process.

It has been decided that the building, along with a

training institute it owns in Pune, will be demerged from the SCI before it is hived off.

“The SCI board had a meeting on Friday, where the demerger process was also taken up. What is to be done with the demerged assets will be decided later, but the process is time-consuming,” the official explained. Similarly, Karnataka-based BEML has several acres of land in Bengaluru and Mysuru that need to be demerged before its privatisation process moves forward.

Awaiting completion

The sale of the Nagarnar Steel Plant (NSP), a three million tonne integrated plant set up by the National Minerals Development Corporation (NMDC) Ltd, is also awaiting the completion of the demerger process.

In October 2016, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had decided to disinvest the NSP as a unit of the NMDC, but amended the decision in October 2020 with a view to carve out the NSP as a separate company from the NMDC and sell the new firm to a strategic buyer. At the time, the sale was ex-

pected to be completed by September 2021.

The government has budgeted for disinvestment receipts of ₹65,000 crore for the year, the lowest target in six years.

A minority stake sale in ONGC and the LIC IPO’s closure will take the year’s receipts to about ₹24,059 crore, which could go up to ₹24,270 crore by June after the completion of the Centre’s 51% stake sale in helicopter operator Pawan Hans.

An ambitious ₹1.75 lakh crore target was set for disinvestment in 2021-22, which was later revised to ₹78,000 crore, but even that was missed by a wide margin as LIC’s IPO was delayed to this financial year due to sharp volatility in the stock markets.

Expressions of interest had been received for the privatisation of the HLL Life-care Limited in mid-March and the transaction is being processed.

For Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited, a 100% subsidiary of the MSTC Ltd, expressions of interest were invited till May 5, but details are still awaited on the response it evinced.

INTERVIEW | LT. GEN. D.S. HOODA (RETD.)

'LAC crisis has been a wake-up call in how we deal with China'

India must continue to insist on restoring *status quo ante* while dealing with the change in China's behaviour since Xi took over, says former Northern Army Commander

ANANTH KRISHNAN

This month marks two years since the start of the crisis along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) following transgressions by China's PLA. After 15 rounds of talks, both sides have disengaged in some areas but others, such as Patrolling Point 15 in Hot Springs, Demchok and Depsang, remain unresolved. The crisis has been "a wake-up call" in dealing with the military threat from China, says Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda (retd.), former General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Northern Army Command who dealt with both China and Pakistan during a four-decade-long military career. India must continue to insist on restoring the *status quo ante*, while dealing with what has been a clear change in China's behaviour since President Xi Jinping took office in 2013. Edited excerpts.

How do you see the situation on the LAC, as it stands now, two years into the crisis?

I would describe the situation as an uneasy stalemate. Two years have now passed, and as you know, we still haven't achieved what we wanted to in terms of disengagement and de-escalation. There has been some progress in the areas of Hot Springs, and in the north and south bank of Pangong Tso.

But then, despite 15 rounds of Corps Commander-level meetings, numerous WMCC (Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs) meetings that have taken place, high-level political contacts at the level of Foreign Ministers, Defence Ministers, National Security Advisers, there hasn't been a significant breakthrough. What I'm describing as a significant breakthrough is the fact that complete disengagement and de-escalation takes place.

Let me also add here that

even if there is some further limited disengagement — they are talking about PPI5, there could be some disengagement from that area — I don't think we are going back to the time of what we called peace and tranquillity along the LAC. This is because, frankly, trust has been broken. All the Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) that were in place were completely ignored when the Chinese came in, in May 2020.

I think tensions are going to remain, and you're going to see a stronger deployment of soldiers along the LAC. There are going to be changes in border management protocols and how we looked at LAC management. I think too much water has flowed under the bridge for us to contemplate that even if we do arrive at some kind of agreement, that we can go back to the pre-2020 situation of LAC management. I don't think we are going to get that.

Is the *status quo ante* that

India is asking for, but which the Chinese haven't mentioned, still possible? And should that be a bottom line for India?

Firstly, how do we define *status quo ante*? Are we saying, exactly the situation as it existed prior to 2020? That situation is not going to happen because we've already agreed on certain areas of disengagement. We've agreed that there will be no-patrolling zones in those areas. This is obviously a different condition from what existed earlier. However, if we define *status quo ante* as

that the PLA must pull back its soldiers from areas where they had come in, in 2020, across our perception of the LAC, that is the more sort of practical understanding of what *status quo ante* is.

My view is we have to stand firm on this. We must insist on this. Not only the areas that we are currently discussing, but also areas like Depsang and Demchok. Depsang particularly is of vital tactical importance to us. The reason why I say we must continue to insist is if you're looking for a long-term resolution of this problem, unless there is a withdrawal by the PLA of their soldiers who had come across, you're going to see tensions persist. Troops will remain on both sides. I don't see a pullback happening on the Indian side if the PLA insists it is going to remain in those areas where it had come across. Why we need to insist on the *status quo*



I don't think we are going back to the time of what we called peace and tranquillity along the LAC

ante is because, for me, that is the only way you will get peace and calm back on the LAC. Otherwise, we're not going to get it.

And that would include access to all the patrolling points that India hasn't been able to reach for some time now?

Access to patrolling points should also be an area that we must insist on. How else do you establish control over what you consider your territory, if you're not going to be able to patrol it? Merely by saying that, this is our area, and this is what we claim, the fact is that we were doing this physically by patrolling. Protocols were that people would go, and they would leave some food wrappers, etc. just to show this is our area, we've been here. Restoring patrolling points must be one of the key elements of our negotiations.

Are the past CBMs that India and China have had, going back to 1993 and even earlier, no longer relevant in this new situation along the LAC?

There is one view that we have had these CBMs which have held the peace for so many years, so why is there a need to revisit these CBMs, let's go back to them, and there is no need to look at new things. My own personal experience, having served in these areas and seen what has happened over the past six, seven years, is that slowly these CBMs had already been diluted. For example, you saw in Depsang in 2013, Chumar in 2014, troops were coming across the LAC and putting themselves up permanently. You also saw increasing physical scuffles that were taking place. During Doklam in 2017, we saw at Pangong Tso a video of heavy stone throwing that was being done. Some of these CBMs were already being diluted.

I think there is a need to look at some fresh areas, at what is it that is causing friction now. For patrolling be-

haviour and patrolling patterns, the CBMs state that when patrols come face to face, they should go back after unfurling their banner. That is not happening. So how should patrolling behaviour be regulated? Second, we need to identify disputed areas.

The third area is connected with infrastructure development. This, on some occasions, causes tension on both sides. In areas like Demchok where there are civil populations very close to the LAC, there is some constant tension over what you are building, on both sides of the LAC.

Do you see a connection between the growing tensions since 2013 and the change in the PLA's behaviour with Xi Jinping coming to power that year?

I was there, and definitely saw a change in 2013. There is no doubt about it. In 2014, when President Xi was in India, we had this fairly large incursion into the Chumar area. A lot of people said, why would he deliberately do this at a time when he was visiting India? The fact is, it wasn't a small incursion. It wasn't done by local troops. Just across Chumar, we had a small post, not more than 40, 50 people. But what came across, the total strength that came into the area, was around 3,000. So it wasn't something that a local commander did or that was not known to the PLA hierarchy or political leadership. I

don't buy that. Certainly, the behaviour has changed 2013-14 onwards.

With the current crisis too, do you see it as unlikely that such mobilisations by the PLA would have been possible without the green light from the top leadership?

It's impossible. It's impossible that such a large-scale and coordinated action — remember it happened all across the front in eastern Ladakh, starting from the north, and going right down the south till Demchok — this is not something that was done locally. There were some exercises that were going on, and from an exercise to come across the LAC, behave in such an aggressive fashion ... Even before Galwan happened, there was use of force to push people into these areas like Pangong Tso, we saw physical activities taking place. Clearly there were orders given, that you will do this and you will reach whatever they considered as their sort of claimed area. I just don't buy this argument that this was some kind of a local incident.

Looking to the future, what should be the priority for India's military preparedness in dealing with China?

Our military preparedness, our ability to manage the border, has certainly improved. We've got additional troops in. There is a great

push for infrastructure development that is taking place along the northern borders. You are also seeing plans to realign major forces from the western front to the northern front. One whole strike corps plus a few other divisions have been told that the primary task is not the western border, but the northern border. In terms of military capability, this is not something that can happen in a jiffy, but plans are in place and I'm sure as time passes by, capability along the northern borders is going to improve.

Has this crisis, in one sense, reduced this asymmetry by focusing attention on the northern borders?

It has, in some ways, woken us up to the reality of the Chinese military threat. Earlier, the feeling always was that the border is likely to remain peaceful, we have the CBMs, so we should be able to deal with China politically and diplomatically, that it will not come to China using military force. Now that it has actually happened, the way we look at China as a threat, that realisation has come. There is greater focus on infrastructure development, greater focus on realigning our military capability. We had larger forces aligned on the western border than on the northern border. That in itself is shifting. It has been a wake-up call that was necessary.

(Visit <https://bit.ly/LtGenHooda> for full interview)

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.