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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 neighbourhood in turmoil, lessons for India

The impact of the changes on Indian policy will offer New Delhi a better understanding of future domestic challenges



SUHASINI HAIDAR

In late 2016, a senior Indian government official, in a meeting with the envoy of a neighbouring country, spelt out the consequences that the country would face if it crossed the Narendra Modi government's newly "muscular foreign policy". At the time, the Government had put Pakistan on notice on terror attacks, and cancelled Foreign Secretary-level talks; in Sri Lanka, the Rajapaksa government, that had been seen cozying up to China was voted out, with some reports that Indian intelligence played a role in facilitating opposition talks; and in Nepal, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's coalition government had fallen apart, with a similar nudge reported from New Delhi.

The message the official conveyed was that New Delhi would use all its levers to prevail over any uncooperative South Asian neighbour. However, the tough messaging did not find much favour over time. By the Modi government's second term, it had made peace with a much more consensual, conciliatory policy in the neighbourhood – visibly improving ties with each country (minus Pakistan) through high-level visits, extending development aid and lines of credit, and enabling a rush of soft power diplomacy.

A change in approach

The contrast between India's response to the events in 2016 to the present is stark, after five neighbouring democracies underwent non-electoral changes at the top, namely Myanmar, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The first difference is that New Delhi has not been held responsible in any of its neighbouring capitals for attempting to interfere in their political processes. Second, South Block has abandoned its uniformly muscular "one size fits all" approach to the region.

While in Myanmar, the Modi government continued engagement and even strengthened ties with the military junta that overthrew the government led by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, in Afghanistan it severed ties with the Taliban that took power in Kabul by force after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani left the country. In Nepal where Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba came to power after the Supreme Court dismissed K.P. Oli, and Sri Lanka, where public protests forced Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to resign and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to appoint rival and Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe as the new Prime Minister, New Delhi has been largely supportive of the processes. Whereas in Pakistan, it has virtually ignored the swearing-in of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after Imran Khan lost the vote of confidence.

People more than leaders

A second lesson that seems to have been learnt is that New Delhi's messaging now is focused on people in the neighbourhood rather than just those in power. In Afghanistan, for example, the Modi government spent months in careful negotiation with Pakistani officials to ensure it could send 50,000 MT of wheat meant for the Afghan people, despite the fact that it has no diplomatic engagement with either Islamabad or Kabul otherwise. In Sri Lanka, a Ministry of External Affairs statement said that India would "always be guided by the best interests of the people of Sri Lanka expressed through democratic processes", a subtle pitch both to the people and to democratic processes in the region. A third lesson is perhaps the toning down of rhetoric on domestic issues in the neighbourhood – the Government's public reaction to Durga Pooja violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority last year was much more nuanced than its messaging during the push ahead for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019. Some have even suggested that the continued delay in framing rules for the CAA since



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then has more to do with concern for ties with Dhaka than with the COVID-19 pandemic.

A neutral position will not do

There are, however, other lessons that New Delhi must learn from the regime changes in the neighbourhood, and some of them apply to the Indian context as well. This is after all, the Indian subcontinent, set in the Indian Ocean, and what happens here cannot leave India untouched. Therefore, a silent or "neutral" position cannot mark the Modi government's response to the changes in the way it has with Russia's invasion of Ukraine or China's moves in Hong Kong or the South China Sea region. India faces the direct impact of almost every South Asian country in crisis, in terms of the need for aid and loans or a possible influx of refugees, as movements that develop in one neighbouring country are often mirrored in another. Therefore, they must be watched more closely.

The first lesson to be learnt is that populism does not pay in the long run. While the potent combination of hyper-nationalism, religious majoritarianism, and a strident anti-elitism can bring "men of the masses" such as Mahinda Rajapaksa, K.P. Oli, and Imran Khan to power (as they promise an alternative to corrupt, dynasti regimes), it does not necessarily keep them there. It is a mistake for any government to conflate an electoral win and a mandate for governance with a *carte blanche* for ruling a country.

The second is that the popularity of a leader can decline sharply and suddenly for one or a combi-

nation of reasons: K.P. Oli won a landslide victory in 2017 where his Left Alliance secured majorities in both houses, and formed governments in six of seven provinces; Imran Khan won all five National Assembly seats he fought in the 2018 elections, and while his party did not win a majority of seats, it won the popular vote; and the Rajapaksa-led Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) ruling coalition won 150 of 225 parliamentary seats in 2020. That these popular mandates could be cast aside in just a few years is a stark reminder that nothing is forever, especially in a democracy.

It is also clear that during the crises that Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka faced, the leaders who stepped into the breach may not have had the same political prowess or oratory presence as the leaders they replaced, but were acceptable both domestically and internationally because they had experience and education on their side. Mr. Deuba became Prime Minister for the fifth time, for example, Mr. Sharif had the longest tenure as Chief Minister of Pakistan's Punjab in three terms before he became Prime Minister, and Ranil Wickremesinghe was appointed Prime Minister for the sixth time.

The economy matters

The next lesson is one that United States President George H.W. Bush learned in 1992 despite the Iraq war and his pitch to patriotism, as Bill Clinton defeated him in an election where the big slogan was "It's the economy, stupid". In Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the defeat of populists has come not so much at the hand of the Opposition parties, but by the slowdown in growth, jobs and rising inflation. India had already seen six successive quarters of straight losses in December 2019, and most of the neighbourhood was floundering as well, when COVID-19 was first reported. In the years that followed, the COVID-19 pandemic enforced lockdowns, and the resultant slowdown in the global economy made GDP figures in the region plummet. More recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and sanctions by the West

have made food and fuel prices soar. In such a situation, the change in power in these three countries took only a small push, from the military, the courts, or from street protests. New Delhi must not only study the causes of the economic mismanagement that brought change in the neighbourhood but must also survey the impact of new vulnerabilities on smaller neighbouring countries that could be exploited by global powers as they seek a more direct influence in the region. Given the common challenges the region faces, New Delhi must find newer ways to energise regional groupings such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative, and even to reconsider SAARC, in order to discuss shared approaches to reviving tourism and exports, supporting South Asian expatriate labour abroad, and building common pools of food and fuel stocks to soften inflationary blows on the South Asian economy.

Consensus needed

Finally, the Modi government must learn from the lessons in political culture that let down the "alpha leaders" in neighbouring democracies. One of the common threads in each of the governments (Rajapaksa, Oli and Khan) was an abhorrence for consensus building. In various ways, each of them turned their opposition into "the enemy", and froze out the media, non-governmental organisations, and any voting constituency other than their own. Nations, especially democracies run on many engines – not just the single monolithic one of the party or people in power. As New Delhi essays its role as a regional leader, the Government would be wise to not only study the impact of changes in the neighbourhood on Indian policy but also to look into the mirror the neighbours hold up to India, for a better understanding of its future challenges within the country.

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suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in

Quad working to get nod for vaccine initiative: U.S.

It seeks Indian regulatory approval

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The Quad is working “assiduously” to get Indian regulatory approvals to get the Quad Vaccine Initiative (QVI) off the ground, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said. The initiative of the four Quad countries (India, the U.S., Australia and Japan), which aims to manufacture and distribute at least 1 billion COVID-19 vaccines for the Asia region by the end of 2022, has run into challenges.

The Hindu had reported that the original plan, which was launched in March 2021 and sought to supply Johnson & Johnson vaccines from the Biological E facility in Hyderabad, has had trouble taking off due to legal indemnity issues with Indian law, safety concerns around the vaccine, lack of World Health Organisation (WHO) approvals for the facility (in the context of another vaccine, Corbevax) and lower demand for vaccines in Southeast Asia.

“We are working assiduously to get the necessary approvals because we think there still is the need for supply,” Mr. Sullivan said aboard Air Force One en route to Anchorage, Alaska. The White House published a transcript of his press interaction. Mr. Sullivan is accompanying U.S. President

Joe Biden on the President’s trip to Asia – his first since he assumed office. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will host Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia and Mr. Biden for the second in-person Quad summit on May 24 in Tokyo.

“But in addition, we haven’t just been standing still waiting for that,” Mr. Sullivan said. “Over the past several months, all of the Quad partners have worked together to get hundreds of millions of vaccines out into the world, many of them into Southeast Asia, and have put forward initiatives to help fund shots in arms.”

“And so, the particular effort to get an Indian manufacturer to be able to produce and disseminate these vaccines has been constrained by regulatory efforts, but that has not slowed the four Quad partners from having a very robust COVID response,” he said. “I do think that coming out of this last COVID-19 Summit, where we got \$3 billion in new commitments, that the emphasis on testing, treatment, and shots in arms, in addition to actual vaccine supply... that is something you will see reflected in the collective efforts of the Quad going forward as well,” Mr. Sullivan said.

Act early, decisively

Courts must act to end the legal onslaught to change nature of places of worship

It is a matter of great concern that laws are being used to rake up religious controversies to give a fig-leaf of legitimacy to a communal onslaught on the country's secular character. Obviously emboldened by the Supreme Court verdict handing over a disputed site in Ayodhya to Hindu claimants, determined and malicious efforts are being made by communal elements to capture sites in Varanasi and Mathura where the Gyanvapi mosque and Shahi Idgah Masjid are located. The idea that key places of worship among Muslims have been built after demolishing Hindu temples is beginning to take hold among sections of Indian society, with the active encouragement of politically affiliated religious groups. It was to prevent such attempts to change the character of places of worship in the name of correcting perceived historical wrongs that Parliament enacted the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. It sought to freeze the status of places of worship as on August 15, 1947, so that existing suits and proceedings abate and new claims are not entertained. Yet, in flagrant violation of the law, courts are repeatedly allowing proceedings to be initiated. In Gyanvapi, not only has a civil judge entertained a suit but has also ordered a commission to videograph the mosque to ascertain its religious character. The Supreme Court has not been strong enough. Instead of putting an immediate halt to such proceedings aimed at creating a groundswell of opinion in favour of converting such sites into temples, it has only ordered some elementary measures to protect Muslim worshippers and their place of worship.

Anyone familiar with the history of the Ayodhya dispute, which led to the Babri Masjid's demolition, riots and bombings, will understand that all such attempts to change the character of places of worship have a motive of using religion for political ends and marginalising minorities. Yet, even the Supreme Court feels some inexplicable need to let procedural aspects of civil law to be gone through in such litigation. It has transferred the Gyanvapi suit to the District Judge and asked for priority to be given to the petition to reject the plaint – which will involve the question whether the suit is barred by the Places of Worship Act. As long as even one application is pending somewhere, revanchist groups will continue the relentless onslaught on minority places of worship. In Mathura, the District Court has overturned a lower court's order and ruled that the Act will not bar a suit aimed at removing a Masjid in the name of the site being the birthplace of Lord Krishna. The political atmosphere is conducive for such efforts, whose proponents will expect state backing. It is up to the courts to act early and act decisively to uphold the spirit of the Places of Worship Act and preserve communal peace.

Centre executes two orders of J&K Delimitation Commission

Jammu will have 43 Assembly seats whereas Kashmir division will have 47 seats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The newly redrawn boundaries, names and the number of Assembly constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), as ordered by the Delimitation Commission, will come into effect from May 20, the Law Ministry said on Friday.

The panel's two orders – one issued on March 14 that dealt with the number of constituencies reserved for various categories and the second one, of May 5, dealing with the size of each constituency – will come into effect together from May 20.

This will be the first step towards restoring the electoral process in the Union Territory (UT) of J&K that has retained its erstwhile legislative Assembly.



The J&K Delimitation panel was chaired by Justice (retd.) Ranjana Prakash Desai.

“In exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-Sections (2) and (3) of section 62 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 (34 of 2019), the Central Govern-

ment hereby appoints the 20th day of May, 2022, as the date on which the orders of the Delimitation Commission, Order No. 1, dated the 14th March, 2022 and Order No. 2, dated the 5th May, 2022,... shall take effect,” the Law Ministry notification said. The Delimitation panel has given six additional Assembly seats to the Jammu region, one to the Kashmir Valley and brought areas of Rajouri and Poonch under the Anantnag Parliamentary constituency. While the Jammu division will now have 43 Assembly seats, and Kashmir 47 in the 90-member house

Former Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra, in an earlier interview, had told *The Hindu* that the process of redrawing of As-

sembly constituencies by the Delimitation panel was done in accordance with the aspirations of the people of the Union Territory and in an “inclusive and participative manner”.

The former CEC had said that once the Centre notified a date for the Commission's order to come into effect, the Election Commission would have to rationalise the polling stations and revise the electoral rolls before conducting meetings with stakeholders. He said the Commission had visited J&K to interact with stakeholders, including around 800 people during the first visit in 2021 and around 1,500 during the second one in April. “Ultimately, we have to fulfil the aspirations of the people,” he had said.

A timely reminder

The Centre should be more conciliatory towards States' fiscal dilemmas, GST concerns

Pronouncing its verdict on a protracted dispute over the levy of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on ocean freight charges paid by importers, the Supreme Court on Thursday held that such a tax was untenable. Its 153-page judgment has also dwelt at length on the nature of the recommendations of the GST Council, the constitutional body set up to oversee the operations of the indirect tax regime. Invoking the spirit of cooperative federalism, the Court has held that both the Union and State legislatures have "equal, simultaneous and unique powers" to make GST laws, and the recommendations of the Council, where they have a one-third and two-thirds voting share, respectively, are not binding on them. While amending the Constitution to pave way for the tax system that subsumed multiple central and State levies, Parliament had intended for the Council's recommendations to only have 'a persuasive value', as per the Court. This has sparked fears that individual States can start vetoing the Council's recommendations that they do not agree with, and refuse to implement them, thus threatening the 'One Nation, One Tax' edifice of a reform that took years to bring about. Opposition-ruled States have hailed the verdict as upholding their rights *vis-à-vis* what a few termed as the 'arbitrary imposition' of Centre's decisions in the Council. The Finance Ministry has sought to quell anxiety by indicating that the Court has only elaborated on the Council's existing arrangement and the status quo would continue. States can already reject the Council's decisions but none has chosen to so far, it said.

While North Block undertakes a detailed review of the verdict, it is pertinent that it had argued that if the Council's recommendations were not binding, it would lead to an impasse and the entire GST structure would crumble. This does not hold water, the Court averred. That it has struck down a tax notified two days prior to the launch of the GST regime just as it is on the verge of completing five years, is perhaps, a fortuitous nudge for introspection on its journey and the way ahead. At worst, it can trigger more contestations in Council meetings, and at best, infuse a fresh sense of responsibility among members. The Centre could strive to be more conciliatory towards States' concerns and fiscal dilemmas, especially as their assured compensation clock winds down next month, rather than seek to bulldoze over thorny predicaments with the tacit support of NDA-ruled States in the Council. The Council should also meet more often to nurture the critical fiscal federalism dialogue in the right direction and minimise trust deficits. There are many pending reforms that require the Centre to work more cohesively with States to take India's economy forward and lift those left behind – including, but not limited to, an overhaul of land and labour markets as well as the agrarian sector.

FDI inflow 'highest ever' at \$83.57 bn, says Centre

“The government reviews the FDI policy on an ongoing basis and makes significant changes from time to time, to ensure that India remains an attractive investor-friendly destination. The government has put in place a liberal and transparent policy for FDI, wherein most of the sectors are open to FDI under the automatic route,” an official release said.

The government had undertaken reforms in sectors such as coal mining, contract manufacturing, digital

media, single brand retail trading, civil aviation, defence, insurance and telecom.

During 2021-22, under the domain of “computer software and hardware”, the major recipient States of FDI equity inflow were Karnataka 53%, Delhi 17%, and Maharashtra 17%, the release stated. The statement said that the FDI inflow had intensified since 2014. Singapore, the U.S. and Mauritius are among the top investor countries.

Inflation crimps Indian firms as rural millions cut spending

Price increases start to crush demand in the countryside

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

Surging inflation is forcing many poor Indians to rein in spending, threatening a slowdown for companies such as Godrej Appliances which saw bumper sales as recently as March and April after a brutal heatwave spiked demand for its cooling products.

The Ukraine crisis and global supply chain disruptions have stoked prices worldwide, but people in developing countries such as India are more vulnerable to even small cost increases that can wreck their meagre budgets.

“From May we started



seeing a drop in demand,” Kamal Nandi, the business head of Godrej Appliances, one of India’s largest makers of home appliances, told Reuters. “These are early signs of inflationary impact on discretionary spends.”

The fall came swiftly after demand from the mass seg-

ment had “zoomed up” in March, and stayed good in April, he added.

April saw India’s wholesale and consumer prices accelerate at their fastest in years, prompting the central bank to raise interest rates at an unscheduled policy meeting this month, with another rate increase likely next month.

Godrej aims to raise prices when possible to offset commodity costs, but worries that could erode demand in the countryside.

“Going forward, every quarter there has to be a price hike and that will impact demand down the line,” added Mr. Nandi.

RBI cuts FY22 dividend payout to Centre to ₹30,307 crore

The RBI had transferred ₹99,122 cr. for the nine months ended March 31, 2021

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said its board had approved the transfer of ₹30,307 crore as surplus to the Union government for the fiscal year 2021-22, while deciding to maintain the Contingency Risk Buffer at 5.50%. The RBI did not specify the buffer amount.

The RBI had previously transferred ₹99,122 crore for the nine months ended March 31, 2021 (July 2020-March 2021). It moved to an April to March accounting year from 2021/22.

“The amount of surplus to be transferred by the RBI to the Government appears to be modestly lower than the budgeted amount,” said Adi-



Pared payout: The surplus appears to be modestly lower than the budgeted amount, says ICRA's Nayar. ■GETTY IMAGES

ti Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Ltd. “However, the tax receipts are expected to substantially surpass the budgeted level, absorbing the impact of the former,” Ms. Nayar added.

The 596th meeting of the RBI's central board was

chaired by Governor Shaktikanta Das.

“The Board in its meeting reviewed the current economic situation, global and domestic challenges and the impact of recent geopolitical developments,” the RBI said in a statement. “The Board

also discussed the working of the Reserve Bank during the year April 2021 - March 2022 and approved the Annual Report and accounts of the Reserve Bank for the accounting year 2021-22,” the central bank added.

Deputy Governors Mahesh Kumar Jain, Michael Debabrata Patra, M. Rajeshwar Rao, T. Rabi Sankar and other Directors of the Central Board namely Satish K. Marathe, S. Gurumurthy, Revathy Iyer and Sachin Chaturvedi attended the meeting, the RBI said.

Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and Sanjay Malhotra, Secretary, Department of Financial Services also attended the meeting.

29 phones tested for Pegasus spyware: SC

Court gives more time to its panel to submit probe report

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said its technical committee had so far received and tested 29 mobile devices suspected to be infected by Pegasus malware and gave it four weeks to submit a report to Justice R.V. Raveendran, a retired top court judge overseeing the panel's inquiry into reports that the government used the Israel-based spyware to snoop on journalists, parliamentarians, prominent citizens and even court staff.

Opening the interim report submitted by the committee in court, a Special Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana said the committee had developed its own protocol/software to test the devices for malware.

The panel recorded the statements of petitioners, who had approached the court. It has contacted experts and agencies, including those of the government.

The committee has further undertaken a "public consultation exercise" to invite comments on the subject of inquiry. The CJI read out the interim report to lawyers, including senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for the petitioners, and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre.

The interim report said

Seeking answers

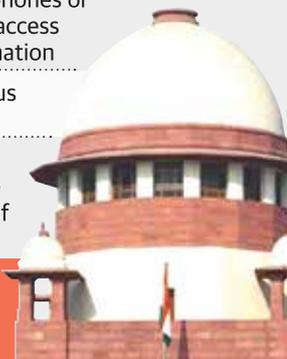
The Supreme Court, which ordered a probe last year into the allegations of **use of Israeli spyware Pegasus by government agencies for targeted surveillance of politicians, journalists and activists**, has asked its technical committee to unearth the following:

1 Whether Pegasus was used on phones or other devices of the citizens to access data, eavesdrop & intercept information

2 Details of the victims of Pegasus attack, if any

3 The steps taken by the government after reports were published in 2019 about hacking of WhatsApp accounts of citizens

4 If any government agency has used the Pegasus, then under what law



the committee had got a "large number of responses". It was awaiting responses from the agencies.

The committee said its probe would be completed by the end of May. The interim report said the overseeing judge, Justice Raveendran, assisted by two experts, would then require another 15 days to study the panel's recommendations.

The interim report sought an extension till June 20 to complete the exercise and file a comprehensive report before the court. "We will give them time," the CJI told the lawyers, who agreed.

When the parties, including the Union, urged the court to make the interim re-

port public, Chief Justice Ramana proceeded to summarise its contents.

He said the report had divided its court-appointed task into two areas. "One is regarding the inquiry itself. That is, the fact-finding report regarding the technical issues relating to the digital forensic aspects about the reported use of Pegasus malware to target mobiles of Indian citizens. Second is regarding recommendations about the enhancement of existing laws and procedures related to surveillance and securing rights including privacy, cyber security, etc.," the CJI explained.

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29 phones tested for Pegasus spyware: SC

He said the first part of the task was being done by the committee under the supervision of the overseeing judge. The second part was being taken care of by the judge and two other experts assisting him. Once the technical committee submitted its report to the overseeing judge, he would add his own report on the laws to it.

Passing the order, the Bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, directed the technical committee to “expedite the examination of the mobile devices which they have received, preferably within a period of four weeks, and submit a report to the overseeing judge”.

The court posted the case for hearing in July.

Talking peace, negotiating with the Maoists

Despite past experience and specific conditions, the Chhattisgarh government and the Maoists can work out a plan



R.K. VIJ

Recently, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel, while meeting the people during his State-wide tour, announced that the State government was ready for peace talks with the Maoists provided they laid down arms and expressed their faith in the Constitution of India.

Some conditions

In its response, through its spokesperson (pseudonym, Vikalp), the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC) of the CPI(Maoist) alleged (in a pamphlet issued on May 5, 2022) that the offer was dodgy, and wanted the Chief Minister to clarify his stand on the Maoist's conditions for creating a conducive atmosphere in which to hold peace talks. The spokesperson also made other accusations and criticised the State government for not implementing the PESA or Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 in Chhattisgarh. The major conditions the Maoists want include: a lifting of the ban on their party, the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) and people's organisations; withdrawal of security forces from camps, and the release of jailed leaders in order to participate in the talks. As the State government did not

change its earlier stand, there has been no progress.

Earlier, in 2010, then Home Minister P. Chidambaram, tried to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table, with the line, "If you call a halt to violence, we are prepared to talk to you." In response, Azad, alias Cherukuri Rajkumar (now deceased), a central politburo member and spokesperson of the Central Committee, CPI (Maoist), in an exclusive interview (11,400 words) to *The Hindu* ("A ceasefire will create conducive atmosphere for talks", April 2010), had it in writing what his party's three pre-conditions to a dialogue with the Union government were.

He clarified that the condition of 'withdrawal of all-out war' (as the first condition) was nothing but a cessation of hostilities by both sides simultaneously, i.e., mutual ceasefire and not unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists. Second, for peaceful legal work by the Maoists, lifting of the ban on the party (the second condition) was necessary. The third condition was that the government should adhere to the Constitution and end the illegal murders in the name of encounters, tortures and arrests. In order to hold talks, it was necessary for the government to release some leaders (also a part of the third condition) or else, there would be no one to talk to since the entire party was illegal.

This interview and the stand by Ganapathi (then party general secretary) on talks with the government were also published in the Maoist magazine, 'People's March'. Swami Agnivesh, the peace broker between the govern-

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ment of India and the Maoists, forwarded Mr. Chidambaram's letter of May 11, 2010 (addressed to Swami Agnivesh) to Azad which specifically mentioned the Maoists promise 'no violence for 72 hours' to initiate talks. Azad responded to Swami Agnivesh (May 31, 2010) and reiterated the party's stand. However, Azad was killed in an encounter with the Greyhound commando force of the Andhra Pradesh police on July 2, 2010 and the process of trust building derailed.

Why talks failed

In the State Assembly election campaign in 2004, the Congress party promised to revive the peace process (that had broken down during Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu's regime) if voted to power in Andhra Pradesh. To initiate talks, the State government lifted the ban on the party in May 2004. Consequently, there was four-day peace dialogue in October 2004 between the representatives of the People's War (PW) party and government representatives at the initiative of the Committee of Concerned Citizens. A mutually acceptable team of mediators (led by former civil servant S.R. Sankaran) was constituted and an agreement on a ceasefire (eight clauses) was reached. The PW party (which had just merged

with the Maoist Communist Centre of India, and other splinter Maoist groups in September 2004 to form the CPI(Maoist)), proposed a 11-point charter of demands such as legislation on land ceiling; creation of a separate state of Telangana; and questions associated with armed action by either side. Matters of land reform figured prominently in the discussions. While the State representatives raised the issue of laying down arms, this was not the agreed agenda and the issue was held in reserve for the second round of talks.

'Clause 7' (of the ceasefire agreement) which permitted the Maoists to undertake propagation of their politics without carrying weapons, had become problematic. Though the Maoists at the peace talks had handed over their weapons to their cadres while leaving the jungles, media pictures of activity by their armed squads made the police uneasy. The talks ended with an agreement on a ceasefire till December 16, the government promised to consider the main demand of land distribution among the landless, and talks again in November. Later, the Chief Minister declared that there would be no talks with the Maoists unless they agreed to lay down arms. The Andhra Pradesh Home Minister levelled allegations against the Naxalites about extortion for their meetings and construction of their memorials. Thus the peace process collapsed midway and the ban was re-imposed on the CPI(Maoist) and its sister organisations.

Using this background, it can be

reasonably implied that the Maoist's demand of withdrawal of armed police forces can be met by a mutually agreed 'ceasefire', with its limited meaning of abjuring violence by the Maoists and the halting of anti-Maoist operations by security forces for some period. The State government cannot afford the risk of moving out security forces as a pre-condition for initiating peace talks.

Government actions

Second, the release of jailed Maoist leaders need not be made a pre-condition by the Maoists, as most senior Maoist leaders are at large; there is no senior cadre in Chhattisgarh's jails. Moreover, the Chhattisgarh government has not only withdrawn criminal cases against many tribals but has also ensured expeditious trial of Naxal cases. The government is also hard at work to implement PESA.

However, with regard to the third condition, of lifting a ban on the CPI(Maoist), the PLGA and its front organisations, some concessions may be thought of to let the talks happen. Further, it cannot be denied that the Maoists misused the ceasefire during the 2004 peace talks in Andhra Pradesh; Azad admitted in the interview, "We used it to take our politics widely among the people in the State and outside." Therefore, moving forward with the lessons learned, suitable modalities may be worked out if both sides are serious about peace talks.

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

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.