



VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

16 - JUNE - 2022

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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75 transformed urban spaces to be models for accessibility

NIUA provides examples of fully implemented guidelines

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Seventy-five projects of transformed urban spaces, including waterfronts, transit hubs and markets or plazas, selected by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in a recently released compendium, would serve as examples where harmonised guidelines on accessibility are fully implemented, Director, NIUA, Hitesh Vaidya said.

The e-book, *Transforming Urban Landscape in India*, released on June 6 by the NIUA, covered 75 completed projects to mark 75 years of Independence. The compendium included reimagined public spaces, including the Marine Drive walkway redevelopment in Kochi, Neela Hauz Biodiversity Park and Raahgiri Day in Delhi, the M.G. Road boulevard in Bengaluru, and the Pondy Bazaar pedestrian plaza in Chennai.

Now, Mr. Vaidya said, the projects would be used as examples for other cities to learn from.

Mr. Vaidya said the pro-



Well planned: A view of the Pondy Bazaar pedestrian plaza in Chennai, a public space included in the compendium.

jects selected for the compendium would be the spaces where the government's Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India that is in the process of being updated will be implemented. "Going forward, we want these public spaces to be the model where our harmonised guidelines are implemented fully. The point is to learn, not duplicate," Mr. Vaidya said.

A draft version of the guidelines prepared by a team from Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee and the NIUA was published by the Central Public Works De-

partment in 2021, updating the existing accessibility guidelines notified in 2016. The new guidelines are yet to be rolled out, so the 2016 standards are still applicable.

Speaking about the book, Mr. Vaidya said: "The main reasons behind this e-book are to nudge all States and cities that if these cities can do it, then we can do it, and then people who will see it will put pressure on their own cities as well...Our cities require open spaces and not concrete jungles. Open spaces will contribute to the larger goal of net zero and be the first baby step towards it."

In Sri Lankan crisis, a window of economic opportunity

The fruition of the idea of a Sri Lanka-south India single market sub-region can boost growth across the Palk Strait



T. RAMAKRISHNAN

In a recent interview with an Indian TV channel, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, touched upon a less-emphasised yet significant aspect of India-Sri Lanka relations – the commonality between Sri Lanka and the southern parts of India. He even said he would “easily fit into Chennai or Kerala without a problem, while[,] similarly[,] people in the south can fit in here”. This was not the first time that he has talked of forging closer ties between his country and south India.

The sub-regional context

During his second term as Prime Minister, Mr. Wickremesinghe while delivering a lecture in Chennai, in August 2003, called for the development of the south India-Sri Lanka sub-region as a single market that would provide more opportunities for the economic growth of both countries. In 2016, addressing the South Asian Diaspora Convention in Singapore, he highlighted the fact that the five Indian southern States, with a total population of 250 million, had a combined gross state domestic product of nearly \$450 billion; with the addition of Sri Lanka’s \$80 billion GDP, the sub-region would have a \$500 billion economy, having an aggregate population of around 270 million. In the southeast Asian country, he had even referred to the tri-nation economic convergence, encompassing Singapore too. Mr. Wickreme-

single’s latest observations should be viewed in the context of his idea of sub-regional integration.

The present economic crisis in Sri Lanka has pushed it closer to India for immediate relief. For the last few months, the Indian media’s regular coverage of the crisis has led to better understanding and even created a sense of empathy in India about the plight of the neighbouring country. India, as part of its ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy, has extended support to the people of Sri Lanka in the form of aid (close to \$3.5 billion) to help secure Sri Lanka’s food, health and energy security by supplying it essential items such as food, medicines, fuel and kerosene.

Aid from India

The latest in the series was the signing of an agreement on June 10 between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Export-Import Bank of India for a \$55-million short term Line of Credit to facilitate the procurement of urea for paddy crop in the ongoing ‘Yala’ season. During her discussions with the International Monetary Fund in April, India’s Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman urged the multilateral agency to provide urgent assistance to Sri Lanka. On its part, Tamil Nadu decided to provide aid of ₹123 crore, comprising 40,000 tonnes of rice, 137 types of life-saving drugs and 500 tonnes of milk powder. The first consignment, which was flagged off by State Chief Minister M.K. Stalin from Chennai on May 18, reached Colombo four days later. Mr. Wickremesinghe and the Leader of Opposition in Parliament, Sajith Premadasa, thanked the Chief Minister. About 10 days ago, at a meeting with Sri Lanka’s High Commissioner to India Milin-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

da Moragoda, the Chief Minister assured him that the second consignment would be dispatched soon.

Baggage of history as hurdle

Whether this bonhomie can lead to greater economic collaboration between Sri Lanka and south India, not necessarily Tamil Nadu alone, given the historical baggage, is anybody’s guess. As pointed out by Jehan Perera, a prominent peace activist of Sri Lanka, during a discussion organised by the Press Institute of India last month on the crisis, some sections of the Sinhalese still hold the view that “India has been a threat to us. It can be a threat to us in future too”. This perception can be traced to history when Sri Lanka was invaded by rulers of south India who humbled the Sinhala kings. In the aftermath of the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, the support provided by the Indian government to Tamil rebels only strengthened this perception. Bitter episodes of the past involving the two countries were recalled when the Indian consignments of essential commodities reached Sri Lanka.

Despite India’s open willingness to take part in the development of Sri Lanka after the civil war, the scale of its involvement has been modest. The reason is not far to seek. The manner in which the Rajapaksa regime unilaterally scrapped in February 2021 a tri-

partite agreement signed in 2019 with India and Japan for the development of Colombo’s East Container Terminal was a reflection of the historical baggage, though the official reason cited was opposition from workers’ unions. Even though India was later provided with projects such as the West Container Terminal, the Trincomalee oil tank farm and a couple of renewable projects, there were several proposals that envisaged India’s participation but did not see the light of day.

Another project, a collaboration between NTPC Limited and the Ceylon Electricity Board, was cancelled just when bids were to be floated for the coal-fired 500-megawatt project in Sampur in the Eastern Province (after obtaining environmental clearance). In fact, when Sri Lanka experienced prolonged power cuts a few months ago, some individuals did mention that had Sampur fructified, power shortages might not have been intense. Other projects too such as the development of the Kankesanthurai harbour and the expansion of the Palaly airport in Jaffna, both envisaging Indian participation, would have become a reality had there been show of political will from the other side. A few days ago, the Sri Lankan Cabinet was reported to have cleared two connectivity proposals: flights from Jaffna to Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu, and a ferry service from Kankesanthurai to Karaikal in Puducherry. The project of building a sea bridge and tunnel, connecting Rameshwaram to Talaimannar, remains on paper despite India’s Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari informing the Lok Sabha in December 2015 of the Asian Development Bank’s readiness to fund it. It requires no great imagination to find out why sever-

al popular brands of south Indian restaurants and retail textile establishments, despite an overseas presence, not having opened their branches in Sri Lanka.

Vast potential

Even now, there is enormous scope for collaboration between the two countries in the area of infrastructure development. The economic crisis has revived talk of linking Sri Lanka’s electricity grid with that of India. If this project takes off, the first point of inter-connectivity on the Indian side will most likely be in Tamil Nadu. India has cross-border energy trade with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.

India’s interests would also be served by developing the east coast of Sri Lanka, especially the Trincomalee-Batticaloa belt, whose potential for tourism, commerce, trade and industry is well known. At an appropriate time, regular movement of people and goods should be allowed again on the traditional sea routes of Thoothukudi-Colombo and Rameshwaram-Talaimannar. The apprehension in the minds of sections of the Sinhalese majority about India being a threat can be dispelled only by facilitating greater people-to-people interaction, including pilgrimages by monks and other sections of Sri Lankan society to places of Buddhist importance not only in north India but also in the south (Andhra Pradesh). Much more will have to be done but the opportunity created by the current circumstances should be utilised to bring Indian and Sri Lankan societies closer – a prerequisite to achieving an economic union between Sri Lanka and the southern States of India.

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Doval attends meeting hosted by China

Both sides downplay differences on anniversary of Galwan conflict; BRICS summit to held on June 24

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval attended a virtual BRICS meeting hosted by Chinese NSA Yang Jiechi on Wednesday, aimed at strengthening “political and security cooperation” within the five-nation grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Sources said that Mr. Doval called for cooperation on terrorism “without reservations”, and preventing the use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) by terrorists during the meeting. He also emphasised the “need for urgent reform of the multilateral system”, and the importance of resilient supply chains.

Significantly, the NSA’s meeting was one of two multilateral events attended by



The BRICS Security Advisers and High Representatives meeting underway on Wednesday. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

India and China on a day that marked two years since the Galwan clashes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). On Wednesday, New Delhi also hosted a border security conference of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) countries, that includes officials from China, Russia, Pakistan and Central Asian countries.

“With profound changes in the international land-

scape interwoven with a pandemic unseen in a century, our world has entered a new phase of turbulence and transformation,” Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday, adding that China would work with BRICS members to “further consolidate political mutual trust, deepen political and security cooperation, uphold the five countries’ security and deve-

lopment interests, and contribute to world peace and stability”.

The virtual meeting came a week ahead of the BRICS summit on June 24 hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend along with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This will be the first BRICS summit after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and will be watched closely for the discussions between the leaders. On Wednesday, Mr. Xi spoke to Mr. Putin, reaffirming China’s “mutual support” for “sovereignty and security”. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also spoken to President Putin over the telephone several times since the beginning of the conflict, but this will be the first such occasion when all

three leaders will be on a common platform along with Brazilian President Bolsonaro and South African President Ramaphosa, albeit virtually.

Meanwhile, the BSF hosted the 21st meeting of the Experts Group and eighth meeting of the Heads of Border Authorities of the Competent Bodies of SCO member states in New Delhi.

The meetings on Wednesday, the two-year anniversary of the clashes in the Galwan valley where 20 Indian soldiers were killed in brutal clashes with Chinese soldiers, also signify an attempt by New Delhi and Beijing to downplay the differences between the two countries despite the standoff between an estimated 1,00,000 soldiers on both sides of the boundary.

Myanmar unlikely to be part of ASEAN-India meeting

India has been under pressure to avoid country's inclusion

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The Foreign Minister of Myanmar is unlikely to be part of the 24th ASEAN-India Ministerial here on Thursday, an official source indicated.

Myanmar's representation at the meeting was in focus as India had been under pressure to avoid inclusion of Myanmar in the high-level meeting. The other factor behind Myanmar's absence is the souring ASEAN-Myanmar ties that were affected beginning with the February 1, 2021 coup that overthrew the Aung San Suu Kyi government in Myanmar.

The Hindu had earlier reported that India was unlikely to invite Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin. The Ministry of External Affairs last week an-



Wunna Maung Lwin

nounced that the participation of Myanmar in the ASEAN India Senior Officials' Meeting will follow the "ASEAN consensus".

The non-participation of Wunna Maung Lwin in Thursday's meet is being interpreted as India accommodating international concern over the junta in Myanmar which has refused to enter into a negotiation with the

protesters demanding restoration of democracy. In comparison, the Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin had participated in the BIMSTEC summit in a virtual format earlier. That participation had drawn criticism from the United States.

However, Myanmar Senior General and *de facto* ruler Min Aung Hlaing sent a message for the 25th anniversary of BIMSTEC - Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation - on June 6 in which he wished "peace and prosperity" for the Bay of Bengal community.

Wednesday's meeting witnessed India welcoming "positive contributions of and continued support of Singapore" in strengthening ASEAN-India relations as the Country Coordinator.

EXPLAINER

The fragile state of nuclear disarmament

How has India fared in SIPRI's annual report? Is the world becoming increasingly more militarised?

RISHABH KACHROO

The story so far: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released its yearbook a few days back highlighting some worrying trends of the past year in international security. The expected rise of the global nuclear arsenal was the chief cause of concern among SIPRI experts. The comprehensive report claims that while absolute numbers of nuclear arsenal have reduced, they are expected to grow over the next decade.

What have been the trends in military spending?

During 2012-2021, military spending as a percentage of gross domestic product has largely been stable. If anything, the average worldwide trend has been slightly downward. Russia leads the charge in absolute numbers of nuclear inventory (5977 against the U.S.'s 5428), however it is the U.S. that has the largest number of deployed warheads (1744 against Russia's 1588). The U.K. has 225 nuclear weapons in its inventory, while France has 290, China has 350, India has 160, Pakistan has 165. Israel is estimated to have 90 and North Korea 20.

It is concerning, to say the least, to see how global discourse has created a sense of fear around China's military modernisation and their upward trend in nuclear weapons development while the thousands of nuclear weapons held by the U.S. don't seem to attract a similar level of attention.

What about global arms imports?

Military modernisation is seen to be a global trend. All nuclear weapon owning states have, over the years, stated and worked upon their intention to modernise multiple facets of their armed forces—ranging from the development of newer and more efficient nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, fighter jets, manned and unmanned aerial vehicles to the growing spread of the use of missile defence systems which may result in aggravating security concerns for other countries.

The yearbook has highlighted India as being the top weapons importer during the 2017-2021 period. Other countries to feature in the top five arms importers list include

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, China, and Australia. According to SIPRI, these five nation states account for 38% of total global arms import.

What are the key developments/concerns flagged by the yearbook?

The yearbook mentions low level border clashes between India and Pakistan, the civil war in Afghanistan, and the armed conflict in Myanmar as some of the worrying indicators of an unstable system. It also highlighted three cause of concern trends: Chinese-American rivalry, involvement of state and non-state actors in multiple conflicts, and the challenge that climatic and weather hazards pose. It is important to note here that the threat posed by climate change seems to feature in the report only nominally.

The marginal downsizing observed in the nuclear arsenal has come mostly from the U.S. and Russia dismantling retired warheads. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine has raised some serious eyebrows because of the continuous rhetoric from the Kremlin over them not shying away from the use of nuclear weapons. China's recent activities surrounding construction of 300 new nuclear missile silos have also been turning heads. Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Chinese Defence Minister, Wei Fenghe, claimed that while they have made "impressive progress" vis-à-vis their nuclear arsenal, the primary purpose of said arsenal continues to be self-defence. Over in the subcontinent, India and Pakistan seem to be making gains over their nuclear arsenal (in absolute numbers) while also looking at the development and procurement of newer and more efficient forms of delivery systems.

Has Iran inflated its military expenditure?

The SIPRI yearbook claims that while there were some advances over the rollout of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran increased its enrichment of Uranium-235 to 60% in 2021. It also reported that Iran's military budget grew to \$24.6 billion, growing for the first time in four years. However, some analysts believe that SIPRI has, over the years, overstated Iran's military expenditure. This is based on there

not being a single Iranian exchange rate, resulting in a hyperinflated estimation of expenditure by SIPRI analysts.

It is claimed that SIPRI is aware of this 'accusation' and will investigate the 'exchange rate issue'.

What is the general attitude among countries about existing nuclear and arms related treaties?

Earlier this year, the leaders of the P5 countries (China, France, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S.) issued a joint statement affirming the belief that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". The joint statement also highlighted their seemingly collective belief that bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements and commitments were indeed important. The dichotomy of this sentiment against the upward trend in absolute numbers of arms and nuclear arsenals is rather unsettling. One could however claim that even with these upward trends, the nation states are making sure to remain well within the ambit of what the treaties and agreements ask for. The tactic here seems to be to milk the treaties and agreements to the hilt. The states are aware of the value of the rhetoric and the security dilemma that their actions present. The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent NATO bids by Finland and Sweden seem to be telling events. While the Ukrainian invasion saw Russian military and political establishments hype-up its nuclear attack rhetoric against Ukraine, its primary leadership (both civil and military) had been rather diplomatic and 'relatively' cordial in its treatment of the Finnish and Swedish NATO bids.

Clear and constant communication between the countries involved was instrumental in making sure no unintended meanings were construed by the parties involved. The Russians seem to protract this invasion and hope to win it by exhausting Ukraine's defence capabilities.

The year 2021 also saw the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 2017 coming into effect. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the Missile Technology Control Regimes (MTCR) held their annual meetings despite decision making being limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



What lies ahead?

The recent geopolitical events transpiring around the world in practically all regions have made the global security climate more unstable. A sense of precariousness lulls the air. It is further aided by actions of authoritarian leaders of not just non-democratic systems but also of strongmen leaders of democratic systems. The muscular military policies of these nations coupled with the continuous use of rhetoric that fuel public sentiment over the state's use of military assets make ripe conditions for the situation to further deteriorate. A strong political opposition would be needed to help keep the ruling dispensation in check. Furthermore, the two largest nuclear weapons holding states need to take on a more engaging role in the international arena. SIPRI's yearbook, while not being devoid of some challenges, forces us to look critically at how the global disarmament project seems to be going.

Rishabh Kachroo is a Ph.D scholar at the department of International Relations and Governance Studies at Shiv Nadar University

THE GIST

■ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released its yearbook a few days back highlighting some trends of the past year in international security. Russia leads the charge in absolute numbers of nuclear inventory.

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■ Recent geopolitical events transpiring around the world in practically all regions have made the global security climate more unstable. Military modernisation is seen to be a global trend. All nuclear weapon owning states have, over the years, stated and worked upon their intention to modernise multiple facets of their armed forces.

U.S. Fed raises rate by 75 bps to tame inflation

Rate move biggest since 1994

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The Federal Reserve announced the most aggressive interest rate increase in almost 30 years, raising the benchmark borrowing rate by 0.75 percentage points on Wednesday as it battles against surging inflation.

The Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee reaffirmed that it remained "strongly committed to returning inflation to its 2 percent objective" and that it expected to continue to raise the key rate.

Until recently, the central bank seemed set to approve a 0.5-percentage-point increase, but economists said the rapid surge in inflation put the Fed behind the curve, meaning it needed to

 Economists said the rapid surge in inflation put the Fed behind the curve

react strongly to prove its resolve to combat inflation.

The move was the first 75-basis-point increase since November 1994.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell will hold a press conference after the meeting to provide more details on the central bank's plans, which will be closely watched for signals on how aggressive policy-makers will be in coming meetings.

Committee members now see the federal funds rate ending the year at 3.4%, up from the 1.9% projection in March, according to the median quarterly forecast.

Demolition drives may challenge the rule of law

Petitions have alleged that they violate Article 300A

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The recent demolition drives in the aftermath of the row over the remarks on Prophet Muhammed may challenge certain basic tenets of law, including the right of a person to be heard first, and that the state can deprive a person of his or her property only after following due procedure and under the authority of a valid law as mandated under Article 300A of the Constitution.

“The right to property under Article 300A is a human right,” former Supreme Court judge Justice V. Gopala Gowda told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

Justice Gowda is one of the 12 signatories of a letter urging the Supreme Court to take *suo motu* cognisance of the demolitions in Uttar Pradesh. The letter conveyed that razing buildings without giving affected persons prior notice or hearing them first was a violation of the rule of law. Rule of law is a basic feature of the Constitution.

The letter quoted media reports of the Chief Minister “exhorting officials to take such action against those guilty that it sets an example so that no one commits a crime or takes law into their hands in future”. It contended that the “coordinated manner in which the police and development authori-



A house being demolished in Prayagraj. ■ PTI

ties have acted lead to the clear conclusion that demolitions are a form of collective extrajudicial punishment, attributable to a state policy which is illegal”.

A plea by Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind in the Supreme Court contended that the “demolition of properties carried out by the Uttar Pradesh government in retaliation was in breach of the laws enacted by the State legislature itself”.

It referred to Section 10 of the Uttar Pradesh (Regulation of Building Operations) Act of 1958 which mandates that a building should not be demolished without giving the affected parties “a reasonable opportunity of being heard”.

Section 27 of the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973 requires the affected person to be heard and given 15 days’ prior notice before proceeding with the demolition. Besides this, the Act allows a

person aggrieved with the order of demolition to appeal within 30 days.

A former Madras High Court judge, Justice K. Chandru, said Article 300A is a “potent” right. He said demolitions were a product of the “politicisation of the bureaucracy”. Justice Chandru said acts such as demolition were a “nuclear button” held against “problem creators”.

“It is like cause and effect. If these people have violated building laws, give them a chance to be heard, give them notice... Immediate demolitions without court orders hark back to the Emergency days,” Justice Chandru said.

A slew of Supreme Court decisions on Article 300A, including in the *Indian Handicrafts Emporium* case, has held that right to property was also a “constitutional right”.

Article 300A was inserted shortly after the Emergency through the Constitution (44th Amendment) Act of 1978.

Mere executive fiats cannot be used to take away a person’s property, the court has held. While it is inherent for a sovereign state to exercise its power of eminent domain over private property, the deprivation of the property should be for a public purpose and was subject to judicial review.

Petition in SC seeks stringent population control law

It will secure the fundamental rights of citizens: petitioner

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Mathura resident has asked the Supreme Court to direct the government to “ascertain the feasibility” of enacting a “stringent population control law.”

Devkinandan Thakur Ji, the petitioner, said such a law would secure the fundamental rights of citizens, including the “right to peaceful sleep” along with “clean” air, water, food, health and shelter. Mr. Thakur said the injury caused by population explosion for women especially was “extremely large”.

Impact on women

“The impact that repeated child-bearing has on women are seldom highlighted outside niche areas,” the petition said.

It said the “incidents of grand multiparity, which is



defined as more than four viable births, in developing countries like India is 20% while it is only 2% in developed countries”.

In December 2020, in a similar petition filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, the government had clarified that it was against coercing couples into having a “certain number of children” in a bid to curb population explosion.

In fact, the government said the period between 2001-2011 had witnessed the sharpest decline in decadal growth rate among Indians in a 100 years.

Government’s stand

“The Family Welfare Programme in India is voluntary in nature, which enables couples to decide the size of their family and adopt the family planning methods best suited to them, according to their choice, without any compulsion,” the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had said in an affidavit.

It said India was a signatory to the Programme Of Action (POA) of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, which was unequivocally against coercion in family planning.

'Do away with archaic language in official papers'

LG tells govt. depts. to factor in contemporary needs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena has instructed government departments to do away with the colonial practice of using "archaic language" in official communication and documents, Raj Niwas sources said on Wednesday.

Sources added that Mr. Saxena told officials that archaic words and terms that are still being used in departments such as the police, land records and the lower judiciary, should be changed and updated as per the "contemporary linguistic needs" of the people.

Positive impact

The move would mean doing away with the use of Farsi in official communication and documentation, sources said. The aim of doing away with archaic language in official communication is in-



Delhi L-G V.K. Saxena.

tended to positively impact the interface between the citizens and the government, in the run-up to the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations this year.

Mr. Saxena issued the directions after chairing a review meeting on the 'Ease of Doing Business' recently.

Sources said the L-G has asked Home and Revenue Department officials to simplify the language used in police summons, FIRs, land records, mutation and regis-

try documents etc. to make public interaction with these government departments "easier and people-friendly".

"It was suggested by the L-G that even as government departments start this exercise, courts could be requested to simplify the language used in various legal matters and documents," a source said.

List of reforms

Sources said the L-G has also instructed officials to prepare a department-wise list of reforms that could be introduced to make them more accessible for the public.

He also asked the departments concerned to seek public opinion on such matters. Sources added that based on the feedback and viability of the suggestions, specific reforms will be introduced.

Agniveers to get priority in CAPF recruitment

Data show 80% decline in recruitment since 2017, only 10,000 personnel recruited in 2020

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Youth recruited in the armed forces under the short-term 'Agnipath' scheme will get priority in recruitment to the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and Assam Rifles, the Union Home Ministry announced on Wednesday.

A senior Ministry official said the details were being worked out, but 'Agniveers' would be given priority when they completed the four years of military service. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday that the Ministry had taken steps to fill vacancies in mission mode in accordance with Prime Minister Naren-



High priority: In 2020, only 10,184 CAPF posts were filled, while vacancies stood at 1.29 lakh. ■ FILE PHOTO

dra Modi's instructions to recruit 10 lakh personnel in a year and a half.

However, according to the latest Home Ministry data, there has been an over 80% decline in the number of

CAPF personnel – constables, sub-inspectors and assistant commandants (ACs) – recruited in the past four years. The 10-lakh-strong CAPF is one of the largest employment generation

agencies under the Home Ministry.

According to the 2021 Data of Police Organisations report, in 2020, only 10,184 CAPF posts were filled, while vacancies stood at 1.29 lakh.

In 2017, as many as 58,396 personnel were recruited against vacancies of 77,153.

In 2018 and 2019, the number of such recruits stood at 30,098 and 14,541, respectively.

'Bulk of appointments'

In 2020, the bulk of such appointments – 7,369 constables and sub-inspectors – were made for the Railway Protection Force (RPF) under the Railway Ministry, though the vacancies were

filled by the Home Ministry.

The CAPF comprises the Central Reserve Police Force, the Central Industrial Security Force, the Border Security Force, the Sashastra Seema Bal and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force, which are under the administrative and operational control of the Home Ministry. The Assam Rifles deployed along the Myanmar border is under the administrative control of the Home Ministry.

The recruitment of 10 lakh personnel in government departments and Ministries is to be completed in the next 18 months, just before the 2024 general elections are held.

Nursing degree with add-on Ayurveda soon

Nursing Council to give approval to course by year-end

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

India is all set to unveil its first integrated Ayurveda nursing degree as an add-on to Allopathy or conventional nursing programme in an effort to offer the best of integrated medicine benefits to patients. Offered to nurses trained in Allopathy, the Ayurveda component will be a year-long add-on training capsule with specific subjects and hands-on training.

The proposal, which is in the last phase of its approval with the Nursing Council of India, is expected to become a reality by this year-end.

The syllabus has been created by the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), the apex tertiary care centre for Ayurveda in the country, said AIIA Director Tanuja Nesari, who added that this will be “a first of its kind programme which will be a breakthrough in integrative health care”.

Giving details of the initiative, Rajagopala S., medical superintendent, AIIA, said nursing care was one of the



The Ayurveda component will be a year-long training capsule. ■ GETTY IMAGES

four important pillars of health care and the integrated knowledge of both the therapies would be an asset.

“The syllabus has been prepared by top professionals in both allopathic and Ayurveda fields and the intake will be of nursing graduates who have finished their allopathic training. The syllabus has been submitted to the Nursing Council and the council has had several rounds of meetings on the issue,” he said.

“If all goes well, we should be able to offer the course soon. Besides the AI-

IA, institutes that have the infrastructure and manpower to conduct the course will be offering this to students,” he added.

Residency programme

Sindhu Rajesh, nursing superintendent at the AIIA, said this would be a residency programme where students would take theory classes and work in hospital for hands-on training.

“We are proposing a 80:20 ratio of practical and theory,” she said, adding that the syllabus had been approved in-principle and the suggestions made by the council had been incorporated. The draft syllabus was now undergoing the approval process.

“The idea is to provide holistic and rigorous medical care for patients,” she said. “The notification for the course could come in by August-end if all goes well,” Ms. Rajesh said.

India currently offers Ayurveda nursing for those having finished Class 12 with science subjects.

A ground plan for India's COVID-19 response

The population-wide application of the pandemic response can be transitioned to be focused on individual protection



CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

India's daily new COVID-19 cases have crossed the 8,000-mark for the first time after more than 100 days. However, the cases (moderate to severe) and COVID-19 related hospital admissions continue to be low. The spike in infections has raised some worries about the start of the fourth national COVID-19 wave in India. Epidemiologically speaking, an immediate major national wave in India is improbable. Part of the reason is that the Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant is the only globally circulating variant of concern, as of now. The Omicron sub-lineage BA.2, which caused the third national wave in India, continues to be the dominant variant in the country. Though two new Omicron sub-lineages, BA.4 and BA.5, have been detected globally and reported from India as well, their share is minuscule. Finally, there is no evidence that the BA.4 and BA.5 sub-lineages can cause a major nationwide surge in settings already exposed to BA.2 sub-lineage. Clearly, while the concerns about another national wave are unfounded, the ongoing surge demands for a fresh approach to the COVID-19 pandemic response in India.

Epidemiological triad

Then, a key question is if there is no new variant of concern, why this spike in COVID-19 cases? The answer lies in an age-old concept of epidemiology which explains 'why' and 'how' a disease spreads in any setting: the 'epidemiological triad' of agent, host and environment. Spread of a disease is an outcome of a complex interaction of the agent (or pathogen, in this case SARS-CoV-2 and its variants), host (humans and their immunobiological characteristics) and environment (social and behavioral factors).

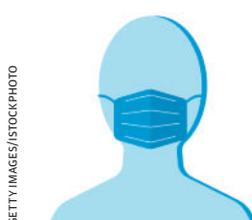
In the ongoing COVID-19 epi-

dem in India, since the third wave in January 2022, with minor variations in sub-lineage, the agent (Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2) has remained largely unchanged. As far as host factors are concerned, immunologically speaking, though antibody levels wane with time and susceptibility to infection increases, declining immunity alone cannot be attributed to rising infection as neither a past infection nor COVID-19 vaccination protect from subsequent infection.

Rather, in spite of an increase in the daily new COVID-19 infections, the low rate of severe disease and hospitalisation shows that our immunity against SARS-CoV-2 is holding up. This brings the third component of the triad, i.e., environment or external factors, at the centre stage. Here, SARS-CoV-2 is very much around, in all settings, as it was for the last many months; and, it is unlikely to go away. However, there is increased travel now, economic activities are back to or even higher than their pre-pandemic level, there are regular social gatherings, and also noticeable lower adherence to face masks wearing in crowded places. Clearly, more than the agent and the host, environmental factors are driving the spike.

However, as SARS-CoV-2 is likely to be around, and as infectious diseases experts and especially those who have studied respiratory viruses would argue, localised COVID-19 case spikes are going to be a reality in many settings and for many months (and possibly years) to follow.

From an epidemiological point of view, the COVID-19 infections in India are not a public health concern any more. The reason is that June 2022 is completely different from March 2020. Back then, SARS-CoV-2 was a new virus; no one had immunity against this virus, and everyone was equally susceptible. There was no vaccine available and the risk of adverse outcomes after SARS-CoV-2 infection by age and other attributes, was unknown and unpredictable. It was clearly a public health challenge.



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

Nearly 27 months into the COVID-19 pandemic, most people have developed immunity either after natural infection (during three national waves) or through vaccination (nearly 97% of the adult population has received at least one shot while 88% has had two shots of COVID-19 vaccines). There is better scientific understanding of who is at higher risk of severe outcomes (everyone in the 60 years plus group and any age group with co-morbidities or weakened immunity), and the risks are known and largely predictable. Arguably, COVID-19 is less of a public health issue and more of an individual health issue.

A dynamic response strategy

Yet, a rise in daily new cases should not be ignored. However, continuing the five-pronged 'test, track, treat, vaccinate and COVID-appropriate behaviour' approach is not the best strategy for India any more and needs to be thoroughly revisited.

First, urgently revise the indicators to monitor and track the COVID-19 situation. The daily COVID-19 infections and test positivity rate may continue to be recorded but have limited utility for decision making. The two operational monitoring indicators which should be used now can be daily new symptomatic COVID-19 cases and new hospitalisations.

Second, any setting which reports a spike in COVID-19 cases should be prioritised for enhanced and expanded genomic sequencing, including the sequencing of all hospitalised COVID-19 cases and a subset of asymptomatic and the mild symptomatic cases, to track the emergence of any variant. A stronger linkage between health departments and the In-

dian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics (INSA-COG) Consortium network conducting genomic surveillance is needed to correlate the variants and the clinical outcomes.

Third, from now onwards the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection in India (or any setting across the world) is unlikely to be zero. Face masks and physical distancing have proven benefits in reducing transmission, but the benefit, at least in settings such as India, now is far greater at the individual level than at the population level. All social and economic activities (including schools) should continue to function to their full capacity. The face-mask recommendations should be calibrated, targeted, context-specific and evidence-guided and not uniform for the entire population. Science communication and public education should be used to nudge high-risk population groups to adopt such behaviour. The mandatory face-masks requirement for school-going children (implicit or explicit), is unscientific and without evidence. Mask guidelines for school children should be voluntary, without indirect coercion as is the case for some Indian States.

Booster shots

Fourth, there is a known benefit of third shots of COVID-19 vaccines in select, specifically high-risk population groups; however, the benefits of fourth and fifth shots are marginal and short lasting, as studies have pointed out. Essentially, just one additional COVID-19 vaccine shot to get some enhancement in the level of antibodies and possible protection make some sense. Because of hybrid immunity in India with two shots of vaccines and three national COVID-19 waves which are unlikely to have spared anyone, even with only two vaccine shots in India, the protective immunity might be equal to even greater than three vaccine shots in countries with low infection rates.

Therefore, Indian health policymakers need to be very strategic and pragmatic in the use of a third COVID-19 vaccine shot. Every surge should not result in a re-

newed demand and a push for booster dose uptake for adults in all age groups. After all, if you have to take just one precaution shot, there is merit in delaying it and spacing it out as long as feasible and also getting a heterologous vaccine shot. Similarly, there is no scientific rationale to rush to vaccinate children younger than 12 years.

Fifth, a disproportionately high attention on COVID-19 is not completely innocuous and rather, it diverts attention from other equally and even more pressing health needs such as tuberculosis, diabetes and hypertension, which affects a far greater proportion of India's population. It is undoubtedly time, Indian States bring the attention back on long-standing health challenges and on strengthening primary health-care services.

What must be done

After the 1918-20 flu pandemic, the influenza virus continued to be in circulation and present even today. In the last 100 years, with regular mutations in influenza viruses, there has been a seasonal rise in cases, outbreaks, and epidemics and two more influenza pandemics (1957-58 and 1968). Since then, there are annual flu seasons across the world. Being another respiratory virus and an RNA virus with a propensity for regular mutations, SARS-CoV-2 appears to be on the influenza trajectory. Factoring in country-specific SARS CoV-2 epidemiology, the population-wide application of the pandemic response in India can be transitioned to be focused on individual protection. India's COVID-19 response strategy, in the days and the months ahead, should focus on protecting the vulnerable; promoting voluntary face-mask use; strengthening COVID-19 surveillance, and using local COVID-19 data for decision making. We are on the path of learning to live with COVID-19.

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya is a primary-care physician, epidemiologist and public health specialist. He is Founder-Director of the Foundation for People-centric Health Systems, New Delhi

Cabinet approves mega 5G auction

Tech firms can set up captive networks

Need for speed

A look at how 5G compares to previous technologies. 5G's maximum data speed is 10 times higher than the presently used 4G

Year	Generation	Maximum data speed
1979	1G	none (voice only)
1991	2G	14.4 Kbps
2000	2.5G	53.6 Kbps
2001	3G	384 Kbps
2010	4G	100 Mbps
2020	5G	1 Gbps



SOURCE: GRAPHIC NEWS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved the auction of airwaves capable of offering fifth generation, or 5G, telecom services, including ultra high-speed Internet, and gave its nod for setting up of captive 5G networks by big tech firms.

The auction of over 72 GHz of the spectrum will be held by July-end, said an official statement detailing the decision taken by the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at its meeting held on Tuesday.

The spectrum auction will start on July 26, 2022.

Sources said that the Cabinet has approved 5G auctions at reserve prices recommended by the sector

regulator, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

TRAI had earlier recommended about a 39% reduction in the reserve or floor price for the sale of 5G spectrum for mobile services.

While the 5G spectrum in nine frequency bands will be auctioned to telecom operators such as Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio, the Notice Inviting Applications – bid-related document issued by the Department of Telecom (DoT) – said big tech firms for the time being will be allowed to take the 5G spectrum for their captive non-public network, on lease from the telecom companies.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Cabinet approves mega 5G auction from July-end

The notice inviting offer said direct allocation to the big tech companies will follow a demand study and sector regulator TRAI's recommendation on aspects such as pricing and modalities of such allocation.

Big tech companies like Google have been seeking direct allocation of spectrum for applications such as machine-to-machine communications, IoT and AI, while telecom companies have been opposing direct allocation of 5G spectrum to them saying it will

distort the level playing field and rob the government of revenues. According to the document, the auction is slated to start on July 26, 2022. Among other key dates to watch out for is the pre-bid conference scheduled for June 20, 2022, submission of applications with a deadline of July 8, and pre-qualification of bidders on July 18. Mock auctions will be held on July 22 and 23, 2022. Overall, the payment terms have been eased for bidders in the coming auction.

Trade gap widens as imports surge 63%

Merchandise exports rose 21% to \$38.94 bn in May; oil, coal, gold purchases lifted imports to \$63.22 bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports in May rose by 20.6% to \$38.94 billion, while the trade deficit ballooned to a record \$24.29 billion, government data released on Wednesday show.

Imports surged 62.8% to \$63.22 billion.

The trade deficit stood at \$6.53 billion in the same month last year.

Cumulative exports in April-May 2022-23 rose by about 25% to \$78.72 billion.

Imports in April-May climbed 45.4% to \$123.41 billion, widening the trade deficit in the first two months of this fiscal to \$44.69 billion, from \$21.82 billion in the year-earlier period.

Commenting on the data, ICRA Ltd. chief economist



Lure of yellow metal: Gold imports vaulted to \$6 billion, from \$677 million in May 2021. ■ AFP

Aditi Nayar said that the mild sequential dip in non-oil exports amid a sharp jump in gold imports widened India's merchandise trade deficit to \$24 billion in May.

"Based on the expectation

that gold imports may reduce after the Akshaya Tritiya season, the trade deficit may demonstrate some moderation in the current month," she said.

Ms. Nayar added that

based on the performance in April-May 2022, "we foresee the current account deficit to widen to \$26 billion in Q1 FY23, from \$23 billion in Q3 FY22 and an expected \$16 billion in Q4 FY22," she said.

Oil imports double

Petroleum and crude oil imports more than doubled to \$19.2 billion.

Coal, coke and briquettes imports jumped to \$5.4 billion, from \$2 billion.

Gold imports increased to \$6 billion, from \$677 million in May 2021.

Engineering goods exports increased by 12.7% to \$9.7 billion, while petroleum products exports grew by 60.9% to \$8.54 billion.

Gems and jewellery exports stood at \$3.22 billion compared with \$2.96 billion

in May 2021.

Exports of chemicals rose 17.4% to \$2.5 billion in May.

Similarly, shipments of pharma and ready-made garments of all textiles grew by 10.3% and 27.9% to \$2 billion and \$1.41 billion, respectively.

Export sectors that recorded negative growth in May included iron ore, cashew, handicrafts, plastics, carpet and spices.

The Commerce Ministry said the estimated value of services import for May was \$14.43 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 45% from \$9.95 billion in the same month last year.

"The estimated value of services imports for April-May 2022 is \$28.48 billion exhibiting a positive growth of 45.5%," it added.

5G will drive ‘significant’ advancements: analysts

‘Spectrum base price remains an issue’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The much-awaited 5G spectrum auction will bring significant advancements for the industry and consumers, according to market watchers. However, some said the base price for spectrum remained an issue for bidders who were expecting much lower rates.

The auction and steps outlined for bidding would open up newer avenues for deeper penetration, access and rich user experience, said Peeyush Vaish, partner and Telecom Sector Leader, Deloitte India.

He noted that the Centre had also announced an auction of the millimetre-wave band, which would not only help unlock the ‘true’ potential of 5G but would also help strategically manage costs for the operators.

‘Much-awaited auction’

“The roads are now clear for 5G auctions. This is probably one of the most awaited spectrum auctions, which will bring significant advancements for the industry and the consumers,” Mr. Vaish said, adding that the good part was that spectrum across bands would go under the hammer shortly.

Another aspect which would spur ‘a good auction’ was that operators would have the flexibility to surrender the spectrum after 10 years without any liabilities, he pointed out.

Jaideep Ghosh, chief operating officer of Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas, said the wide availability of spectrum across all bands was encouraging, as potential bidders could opt for spectrum bands and quantum as per their strategy.

“Having said that, the base prices for spectrum remain an issue for the bid-



ders who were expecting a much lower price,” Mr. Ghosh added.

In its meeting on June 14, the Union Cabinet had approved the auction of airwaves capable of offering fifth-generation, or 5G, telecom services, including ultra-high-speed Internet, and gave its nod to the setting up of captive 5G networks.

The auction will commence on July 26. The Cabinet has approved 5G auctions at reserve prices recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), which had in April recommended an about 39% cut in the reserve, or floor, price for the sale of 5G spectrum for mobile services.

‘Economic benefits’

Separately, the Broadband India Forum (BIF), which had batted for private 5G networks by enterprises, on Wednesday said the Cabinet’s decision to enable captive networks was a forward-looking step that would drive digital transformation, augment industry efficiencies and lead to greater economic benefits.

BIF – whose members include Google, Amazon, Meta and Tata Consultancy Services – had pitched for direct allocation of spectrum for private 5G networks to enterprises at a nominal administrative fee, countering telcos’ stand on the vexed issue.

India a global security power: U.S. top diplomat

‘We want India to project this status’

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON DC

India is a global security power and the U.S. is keen for India to project this power, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, said.

During a wide-ranging interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Lu said India was “not only a security provider in the narrow Indian sub-continent” but “a global security power now”. “And that’s what’s in the interest of the United States – that you are militarily ready, but that you are also able to project that power far beyond your borders, because we

are partners that share a common view of the security of Asia and of the world and we want India to be able to project that power.”

On wait times for drop-box appointments for H1-B visas at U.S. missions in India, Mr. Lu said the administration was aware of the issue and the missions were fully staffed again (this was not

the case earlier due to the pandemic). The visa wait times will go back to pre-pandemic levels “over the next few months”, as per Mr. Lu.



Donald Lu

INTERVIEW ► PAGE 14

INTERVIEW | DONALD LU

'India is a global security power, and this is in U.S. interests'

The two countries share a common view of the security of Asia and of the world, says U.S. State Department's Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The U.S. State Department's Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, in a wide-ranging interview, discusses India's security role, human rights issues, visas and his forthcoming trip to Texas to engage with the South Asian diaspora and companies. Excerpts:

On the State Department's push to engage domestically with the Indian and South Asian diaspora...

■ Well, I have had the great privilege of working on South Asia generally, but specifically India, since the mid-1990s. And what has been true then, and is very much true today, is that the heart of this relationship is not governments talking to each other. It's not even businesses talking to each other. It's families, right? It's the interconnectedness. We have a million people travelling back and forth between the United States and India every year. And so we want to channel that. We want to make sure that we are listening to the diaspora that we are responsive to their interests, but that we're also engaging them and being part of making this relationship fuller and more developed. They've got a lot of great ideas, particularly on the commercial side. And we want to make full use of that.

On reports of individuals in

need of H-1B visa appointments at U.S. missions in India getting drop-box appointments that are far out in the future, sometimes in 2023. Is this something that you plan to look into?

■ Well, we know that there are delays in this process, but what I can also verify is it's getting better, not worse, that we're in touch with our colleagues, both staff at our visa sections in the many places that we offer services in India, as well as people looking at the metrics all throughout India and South Asia. And we see improvement week on week.

Yes, in a particular post, there may be a glitch that causes a delay of several additional weeks.

But as a whole, throughout the country, we're seeing wait times continue to go down...

So what are the challenges you are facing with not having a Senate-confirmed Ambassador in New Delhi, and how

are you overcoming those challenges?

■ Well, we are really excited about the President's nominee, [Los Angeles Mayor] Eric Garcetti, going to New Delhi. I have been lucky enough in my career to work for both career State Department people who have been Ambassador in India, as well as political appointees chosen by the President. Eric Garcetti is someone who knows India well but he's also a leader in the United States and will represent our country with distinction there. It is taking longer than we would have liked. Our system is very slow. But I am confident within the next few months that we're going to have a confirmed Ambassador there. I know the Congress cares deeply about this. And the President does as well. I ask for a little patience on behalf of our Indian counterparts.

I think those who know the United States well, know that our process sometimes takes a little time. It's not untrue in many parts of the world, we're still waiting for our Ambassadors to be confirmed.

About the human rights dialogue between the United States and India: The government of India's



● We want to make sure that we are listening to the diaspora, that we are responsive to their interests

response to the U.S. criticism of human rights violations in India has been that there is "vote bank politics" going on in the U.S. What is your response to this and has the dialogue between both countries progressed since the start of the Biden administration in terms of human rights?

■ We've had several excellent discussions with the Indian government and I would say the Indian government is clear that they also have human rights concerns in the United States, particularly relating to the treatment of people of South Asian descent in the United States. So it goes both ways.

And I think that's a healthy development that's happened in our relationship.

I'm a big believer that of the many countries I get to work on, or that I've worked on in my 30-year career, India has the most dynamic democracy, believes in the values that the United States does. So one of the things that I believe that we can do as a partner is to support Indian democratic institutions, your [India's] independent courts, your very free media – some would argue to free media; your robust civil society; that we should as a partner, look for ways that we can contribute to those democratic institutions, through exchanges, our judges and our prosecutors, training of journalists that goes both ways because, honestly, we have a lot to learn from Indian journalists and talking about how our civil society in America supports Indian civil society and vice versa. We have a lot, as democracies, we can do together. If we can do that successfully, I believe these democratic institutions will uphold human rights standards in India. I don't think it's going to be that foreign countries are able to fundamentally change how other foreign countries deal with human rights. But, I think if we can support these inter-

national institutions of democracy, that's really where we get the biggest bang for the buck, and that we can find ways to cooperate in support of our common goals on human rights and democracy.

We don't see much emphasis from the U.S. on the Indian Ocean part of the Indo-Pacific. Is that because the U.S. is building an understanding with India and its partners regarding security oversight of the Indian Ocean?

■ I would say it is completely accurate to say that the Indian Navy and the Indian military and the Indian government are very focused on the security of the Indian Ocean. I don't think it's right to say we don't care...that's not true at all. But we also have a lot of confidence that the Indian government, the military, are focused on the threats in the Indian Ocean, that you actually have a very robust Navy, that you are creating capabilities today that will ensure the security of this broader region, not just the Indian Ocean but far afield.

We see Indian naval vessels now transiting many parts of the globe. You are not only a security provider in the narrow Indian subcontinent, you are a global

security power now, and that's what's in the interest of the United States – that you are militarily ready, but that you are also able to project that power far beyond your borders, because we are partners that share a common view of the security of Asia and of the world and we want India to be able to project that power. And we are working in very concrete ways, right now, between our militaries, to talk about how do we cooperate more intensively, which is complex, multi-services exercises, but it's also: How do we get our defence systems to work better together? How do we help India to develop but also to obtain some of the best defence equipment in the world?

Is a visit by President Biden to India on the cards such as, say, for the next Republic Day?

■ I am working every day to try to encourage my big boss, the President, to visit India. I have the honour of working in India when President Biden visited [Mr. Biden has visited India in the past, such as in 2013, when he was Vice-President] and when President Clinton visited as well. There is nothing like an American presidential visit to create warmth,

goodwill and progress in a relationship. So I'm a huge supporter of this. I can't tell you a date because I can't speak for the White House, but we are working on this very closely with our Indian counterparts.

On the visa appointment issue again: You said the wait times are coming down. Can you commit to doing something proactively to bring those times down?

■ Throughout the pandemic, we weren't able to fully staff our visa sections because of limitations of the number of people allowed to come into our spaces. That has dramatically changed.

We are fully staffing – as of the summer – all of our visa sections throughout Mission India, and we're going to be able to see dramatic reductions in wait times over the next few months.

So everyone should stay tuned. Everyone has been so patient with us. I travel a lot. I know that visas really matter. We're going to see, over the course of the next few months, those wait times go back to a normal level from pre-pandemic. We're focused on that, I know that Indian families are focused on it.

(Full interview on bit.ly/donaldlu)

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.