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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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Biden hosts climate summit overshadowed by fuel costs

Russia to give meeting a miss, India not on list of attendees

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden hosts a virtual summit of major economies on Friday attempting to tackle climate change just as fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine underlies the globe's reliance on fossil fuels.

This is Mr. Biden's third convening of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate since he took office in 2021 with a vow to make the United States a leader in the world's attempt to halt catastrophic global warming.

"This meeting of the MEF is a continuation of the President's efforts to use all levers to tackle the global climate crisis, urgently address rising costs around the world exacerbated by Russia's war on Ukraine, and put the U.S. and allies on a path to long-term energy and food security," the White House said.



Joe Biden

"In urging countries to enhance climate ambition, he invited fellow leaders to join the United States in a set of concrete, collective initiatives that will accelerate global action on climate."

A senior Biden administration official said 23 countries would be represented at the video conference, representing most of the world's major economies and "focused around the mitigation that they will be taking" on climate impacts.

Friday's gathering will be the largest leader-level gathering before COP27, the follow-up summit, set to take place in Egypt this November.

No Xi's presence

But Russia will not be attending Friday's summit.

China will be represented only at the level of its climate envoy, rather than President Xi Jinping, the White House said. And India is not on the official list of attendees, either.

For Mr. Biden, the push to move the world away from fossil fuels comes also at an awkward domestic political moment.

Western sanctions aimed at crippling major energy producer Russia have helped send fuel costs sharply higher in Europe and the United States, with inflation generally soaring as a result.

India backs China's plan for joint border activity

Solidarity-2023 to have all SCO nations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India has supported an initiative by China to conduct a “joint border operation” in 2023 of all member countries of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) that includes Russia, Pakistan and Central Asian countries.

The border operation called ‘Solidarity-2023’ will be organised by China, a statement by the Border Security Force (BSF) said.

Exchanging information

The BSF hosted the 21st meeting of Experts’ Group and Border Security Conference of SCO countries from June 15-17 that was attended by China, Pakistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the

Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)-SCO.

The statement issued at the meeting said that the participants exchanged information reflecting assessments of the situation on the State borders of the SCO member states, trends and forecasts of its development.

“The results of the Joint Border Operation ‘Solidarity-2019-2021’ carried out in 2021 by the border services of the competent authorities of the SCO member states were discussed and highly appreciated. The plan for the preparation and conduct of the Joint Border Operation ‘Friendship Border - 2022’ this year was reviewed and approved,” it said.

Xi to host BRICS virtual summit; Modi to attend

Putin will also join the June 23 meet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Chinese President Xi Jinping will host a virtual summit of the leaders of the BRICS countries on June 23, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will join Russian President Vladimir Putin as well as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa in the virtual meet next week, which will mark the first summit of the leaders following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mr. Xi and Mr. Putin on Wednesday held a second phone conversation since the invasion, with Beijing saying it would support Russia's sovereignty and security.

Mr. Xi will also host a BRICS Business Forum on June 22 and a dialogue on global development on June

24 to be attended by leaders from BRICS and other developing countries, the Foreign Ministry in Beijing said.

In the lead-up to the summit, the National Security Advisers of the five BRICS nations on Wednesday attended a virtual meet aimed at boosting "political and security cooperation". A statement said "multilateralism and global governance, new threats and challenges to national security, and governance in new domains" were on the agenda.

Chinese officials have said Beijing is keen for the grouping to explore expansion and include new developing country members. Under the "BRICS Plus" format, the next week's summit is also expected to be attended by leaders of invited emerging countries.

EU backs Ukraine's 'European dream'

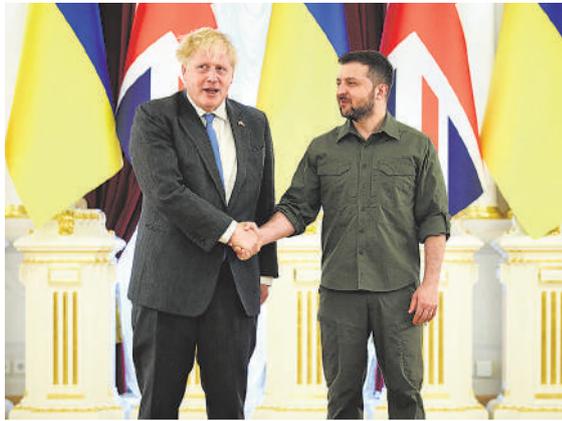
Zelensky thanks the bloc's leadership for their 'historic decision'; Russia cuts gas supplies to the West

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRUSSELS

Europe sent a powerful symbol of solidarity with Ukraine on Friday, when Brussels backed Kyiv's bid for EU candidate status, even as Russia shelled frontline Ukrainian cities and cut back gas supplies to the West.

With the European Commission's backing, Ukraine could now be added to the list of countries vying for EU membership as early as next week, when member state leaders meet at their Brussels summit.

In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that his country had "nothing against" Ukraine's possible membership of the EU. "We have nothing against it. It's their sovereign decision to join economic unions or not... It's their business, the business of the Ukrainian people," Mr. Putin told Russia's annual economic showcase,



Set in motion: Boris Johnson shaking hands with Volodymyr Zelensky prior to talks during his visit to Kyiv on Friday. ■ AFP

the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

All 27 EU leaders will have to agree to the candidacy, but the heads of the European Union's biggest members – France, Germany and Italy – already gave their full-throated support to the idea on Thursday, on a trip to a

war-torn suburb of Kyiv.

Then on Friday, the European Commission gave the executive's formal backing to the bid, and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen made her position clear by donning a striking jacket in Ukraine's national colours. "We all know that Ukrainians are

ready to die for the European perspective. We want them to live with us for the European dream."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky immediately welcomed the decision as a "first step on the EU membership path that'll certainly bring our victory closer".

He thanked Ms. von der Leyen for the commission's "historic decision" and said he expected that EU leaders would give Ukraine a "positive result" at the June 23-24 summit.

Once Ukraine joins the EU candidates' list – alongside several countries in the western Balkans – it could still take years to meet all the formal membership requirements, even if Kyiv prevails in the war.

"Yes, Ukraine should be welcomed as a candidate country – this is based on the understanding that good work has been done but im-

portant work also remains to be done," Ms. von der Leyen said.

In the meantime, the fighting continues, with Russian forces bombarding Ukrainian pockets of resistance in frontline Severodonetsk, including civilians holed up in a chemical plant in the eastern Ukrainian city.

And Moscow turned up the pressure on the Western allies, sharply reducing flows of natural gas in its pipelines to Western Europe, driving up energy prices.

France's network provider said it had not received any Russian gas by pipeline from Germany since June 15, and Italy's Eni said it expected Russian firm Gazprom to cut its supplies by half on Friday.

Several European countries, are highly reliant upon Russian gas and, as the West sides with Ukraine, Moscow is cutting supplies.

HC dismisses plea of Rajiv case convicts

They sought release sans Governor's nod

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Friday dismissed the writ petitions filed by S. Nalini and R.P. Ravichandran, life convicts in the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, seeking a direction to the Tamil Nadu government to release them forthwith without waiting anymore for the Governor's nod to a September 9, 2018 Cabinet recommendation.

Chief Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari and Justice N. Mala concurred with Advocate-General R. Shunmugasundaram that the Governor's signature was *sine qua non* under Article 161 of the Constitution and that the Supreme Court, too, in the famous *Maru Ram* case (1980) had held that it was "obligatory" to obtain his/

her signature.

"If the argument of learned counsel for the petitioners that a mere recommendation of the Council of Ministers to grant remission is sufficient and authorisation of the Governor is not required is accepted, then virtually the court would be declaring Article 161 of the Constitution of India redundant qua [with respect to] the power of the Governor," the Bench wrote.

It went on to state, "It may be true that the Governor of the State is bound by the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, but it would not mean that the formal acceptance as per the constitutional courtesy would not be required... Therefore, Article 161 of the Constitution has to be read as it stands without omitting the word – Governor."

A 'man's Parliament' striving for an inclusive India

Despite an encouraging start in the 1950s, its discourse, communication and laws now are a concern



RITIKA JAJOO & GAUTAM GANESH

In 1952, when the Indian Republic held its first Parliamentary session, 39 strong, intelligent, and passionate women leaders sat in the hallowed halls of power, challenging a centuries-old tide of men's dominance over the polity.

A slide from the initial years

At a time when women formed only 1.7% of the total members of the United States Congress and 1.1% of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, India was leading the way in the fight towards more inclusive world democracies with 5.5% women representation. The struggle for India's Independence can never be detached from the contributions of thousands of our women across profession, class, caste, and religion. A testament to their invaluable contribution has to be their louder voice in our parliamentary democracy; what happened in 1952 was a highly progressive step, but 70 years hence, it seems we have strayed from that path.

Despite a woman Prime Minister, a President, and a relatively higher percentage of women parliamentarians when compared to some of the other mature democracies in the past, our struggle with inclusivity has not eased. Due to systemic issues, Parliament continues to alienate women. The number of women representatives is still considerably small, but even more subtly, Parliament as a work-

space continues to be built exclusively for men.

India has witnessed a burgeoning movement for gender inclusivity during the past few years. The Supreme Court judgment (*National Legal Services Authority vs Union of India*, 2014) on gender identity has given the movement greater impetus. In solidarity, citizens have begun asserting their gender identity by specifying their personal pronouns (she/her, he/his, they/them, etc.). Parliament, being the pinnacle of law-making and the symbolic centre of our democratic aspirations, must reflect this change too. However, the matter seems to have largely escaped the notice of the Legislature.

Not gender neutral

A closer look at our parliamentary discourse and communication reveals a concerning and disconcerting absence of gender-neutral language. For instance, after 75 years of Independence, and 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', Parliament often refers to women in leadership positions as Chairmen and party men.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Rules of Procedure continue to refer to the Vice-President of India as the ex-officio Chairman, stemming from the lack of gender-neutral language in the Constitution of India. Additionally, references to inherently masculine pronouns are made over 150 times in the former and 600 times in the latter. The alarming degree of usage of masculine pronouns assumes a power structure biased towards men. This tends to manifest itself in parliamentary debates, for instance, when a senior woman MP from Tamil Nadu was referred to as "Chair-



man madam" in the Lok Sabha during last year's winter session.

The issue further extends to law-making. In the last decade, there have hardly been any gender-neutral Acts. Acts have made references to women not as leaders or professionals (such as policemen), but usually as victims of crimes.

The root of such instances lies with a gender-conforming Constitution. In its present state, the Constitution reinforces historical stereotypes that women and transgender people cannot be in leadership positions, such as the President and the Vice-President of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Governor of States, or a judge. It is not a criticism of the Constitution but of the failure of the many Union Governments which did not take the initiative of amending it. In the past, amendments have been brought about to make documents gender neutral. In 2014, under the leadership of the then Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Meira Kumar, the Rules of Procedure of the Lok Sabha were made entirely gender neutral. Since then, each Lok Sabha Committee Head has been referred to as Chairperson in all documents. This initiative is proof that amend-

ing legal documents to make them inclusive for all genders is an attainable goal if there is a will.

Despite certain course corrections, both Houses of Parliament and Central Ministries have failed in one common aspect. In a compilation of ministerial replies to questions from the 17th Lok Sabha so far for 75 women Parliamentarians, it was found that 84% of the answers that used salutations (sir/madam) referred to women Parliamentarians as 'sir'. During the 15th Lok Sabha, when we had a woman Speaker, only about 27% of the answers made this error. However, there is no indication of a clear reason for such lapses, either due to pure administrative errors or ignorance of the rules of addressal.

In other countries

Internationally, even mature democracies that legalised universal suffrage after India, such as Canada (1960 for Aboriginal women), Australia (1962 for Indigenous women), and the United States (1965 for women of African-American descent), have now taken concrete measures towards gender-inclusive legislation and communication. Canada's Department of Justice has guidelines for using gender-neutral language in all forms of legislation and legal documentation; the Australian government has incorporated gender-neutrality in its drafting Style Manual; the U.K.'s House of Commons declared in 2007 that all laws would be drafted gender-neutrally.

When Parliament and government offices reinforce gender biases in their communication, stereotypical language in reference to women and transgender people

becomes more palatable to the rest of the country. The country's leaders must send the right message for citizens to follow. They can and must begin with an amendment to the Constitution and the entire reservoir of laws.

Moving ahead

Once the language is corrected, the entire country, including Parliament, can focus on the deeper issues of the aspirations and growth of its woman workforce. In 2018, the U.K. Parliament conducted a gender audit to understand its culture, environment, and policies as a workspace. If the report is any indication as to what might also be the scenario in the Indian Parliament, with an even lesser number of women employees, it opens questions about whether there is a single, transparent appointment and promotion process for women staff in Parliament, and whether their professional growth is being hindered by other issues such as harassment and domestic responsibilities.

In the 21st century, when people of all genders are leading the world with compassion, strength and ambitions, the Indian Parliament needs to reflect on its standing. Recognition and correction of past errors through amendments to rulebooks, laws, and the Constitution are just starting points, and must lead to sensitivity, equal treatment, and appreciation for the people of India, regardless of gender.

This article has also been co-authored by Pallavi Baraya and Devak Namdhari. The four writers are former Legislative Assistants to Members of Parliament (LAMP) Fellows

54% of income of eight parties went to BJP, says ADR report

Out of the total ₹1,373.78 crore income, BJP had ₹752.33 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP continued to out-earn and out-spend all other national parties in 2020-2021, with 54% of the income of the eight national political parties going to the BJP, a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said on Friday.

The ADR analysed the annual audited reports submitted to the Election Commission by the BJP, the Congress, the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Trinamool Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Nationalist Congress Party and the National Peoples' Party.

Out of the total declared income of ₹1,373.78 crore,

the BJP had ₹752.33 crore, while the Congress was second with ₹285.76 crore, followed by the CPI(M) with ₹171.04 crore. The Trinamool Congress declared ₹74.41 crore in income, followed by the BSP (₹52.46 crore), the NCP (₹34.92 crore), the CPI (₹2.12 crore) and the National Peoples Party (₹69 lakh).

While the BJP spent 82% of its income, the Congress spent 73.14% of its earnings. The Trinamool Congress's expenditure was 78.10% over its earnings.

Primary source

The primary source of income for the BJP was voluntary contributions, while the Congress got the most of its

income from issuing coupons and the BSP from bank interest, the report said. The BJP spent the most of its total expenditure on "election/general propaganda" (₹421.01 crore); the Congress on "election expenditure"; and the NCP spent 84% of its total expenditure on "administration and general expenses".

The BJP, the Trinamool Congress and the Congress declared income from electoral bonds worth ₹22.38 crore, ₹42 crore and ₹10.07 crore respectively.

The ADR report observed that all the parties submitted their audit reports past the deadline, ranging from 59 days (the BSP) late to 201 days (the BJP).

ADP to be extended to block, city level: PM

‘The programme will help develop districts’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Aspirational districts should be ‘inspirational districts’ of India, and the Aspirational District Programme (ADP) should be extended to block and city levels, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said.

The ADP, launched in 2018, aims to transform 112 districts that have shown re-



Narendra Modi

latively lesser progress in key social areas.

“Lauding the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme, the Prime Minister said the government

should strive to make these the ‘inspirational districts’ of India and extend the programme to block and city levels,” an official statement said on Thursday.

The Prime Minister was chairing a three-day national conference of chief secretaries at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The conference began on June 15.

The statement said the Prime Minister stressed that India’s best, young officers should be posted to the aspirational districts to bring

about noticeable changes through their creative thinking and fresh ideas. The experience and learnings gained by them while working in these districts would be unparalleled and prove useful for the entire country, the statement said, quoting Mr. Modi.

Mr. Modi said that award-winning retired teachers could also be roped in for training teachers. He suggested that there could be a dedicated TV channel for teachers’ training.

RBI is not behind the curve: Das

‘Premature focus on inflation target would have been disastrous for economy’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday refuted criticism of the RBI being behind the curve in its policies, making it clear that the consequences of focusing on the 4% inflation target would have been “disastrous” for the pandemic-hit economy.

In comments that came two days after former chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian co-authored an article blaming the RBI for acting late on inflation, Mr. Das said the central bank acted as per the evolving economic developments.

“Tolerance of a higher inflation during the pandemic was a necessity,” Mr. Das said speaking at an event organised by the Financial Express.



Being mindful: ‘RBI’s flexible inflation targeting mandate requires it to take care of price rise and growth’. ■REUTERS

He said the RBI switched into ultra-accommodation as soon as the country went into the lockdown and shifted focus to inflation two years later in April 2022, when it saw the GDP had exceeded the pre-pandemic level.

Despite its accommodative policies, the economy

contracted by 6.6% in FY21 and recovered to barely above the pre-pandemic levels in FY22, he said, stressing that a shift in policy management to focus on inflation even 3-4 months before April would not have been apt.

“We are very much in line with the requirements of our

time, the RBI has acted proactively and I would not agree with any perception or any sort of description that the RBI has fallen behind the curve,” Mr. Das stressed.

He said the RBI’s mandate is that of flexible inflation targeting where it is required to take care of both price rise and growth, especially in extraordinary situations.

“If we had been very firm in maintaining 4% (inflation) and kept the rates unduly high, I’m sorry, the consequences of that approach would have been disastrous for the economy.

“If we had attempted to keep... monetary policy tighter at that time, the economic damage that you would have caused” would have taken years for India to recover from, he observed.

India said to impose ceiling on next season's sugar exports to check prices

'Curbs may lift benchmark white sugar prices already trading near 5-1/2 year highs'

REUTERS
MUMBAI

India is likely to impose a ceiling on sugar exports for a second straight year starting this October, aiming to ensure ample domestic supplies and keep a lid on local prices, industry and government sources said on Friday.

India, the world's biggest sugar producer, could cap exports of the sweetener at 6 million to 7 million tonnes (mt) in the 2022/23 October-September season, about one-third less than the total to be shipped out in the current season, industry and government sources said.

They asked not to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media. A government spokes-



man did not respond to a request for comment.

The curbs on exports by India, also the world's second-biggest sugar exporter, could further lift benchmark white sugar prices, which are already trading near 5-1/2 year highs, traders said.

Among factors underpinning global sugar prices this

year are lower sugar output in Brazil, the biggest exporter, and crude oil prices at multi-year highs. Higher crude oil prices encourage sugar mills to divert more cane to produce ethanol for blending into gasoline.

Brazil's sugar production is set to rebound during the current season, but with restricted exports from India, traders do not expect prices to come down and they instead could go higher.

"There is a need to regulate exports to avoid any kind of panic in the market," said a senior government official. While the sources expected next season's export cap to be set between 6 million and 7 million tonnes, the exact quantity will be

fixed near the start of the 2022/23 season, they said.

The government will look at the performance of the monsoon before fixing the quota, they added.

Monsoon rains in sugarcane growing areas of the western India State of Maharashtra, the biggest producer in the country, were 60% below average since the start of the rainy season on June 1, according to weather office.

Aditya Jhunjhunwala, president of the Indian Sugar Mills Association, has requested that the government allow mills to export 8 million tonnes of sugar next year, as output could exceed this year's record 36 million tonnes, according to a letter seen by Reuters.

China gets its third aircraft carrier

Technology onboard includes electromagnetic catapults to launch jets off deck

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SHANGHAI

China on Friday launched its biggest and most modern aircraft carrier, marking a major military advance for the Asian superpower.

The announcement comes at a time of heightened tensions between China and the United States over Beijing's sabre-rattling towards Taiwan, which it views as a breakaway province to be seized by force if necessary.

China's carrier development programme is part of a massive overhaul of the People's Liberation Army under President Xi Jinping, who has vowed to build a "fully modern" force to rival the U.S. military by 2027.



Growing fleet: The launch ceremony of the PLA aircraft carrier *Fujian* at a shipyard in Shanghai on Friday. ■ AFP

The new carrier, named *Fujian*, is the "first catapult aircraft carrier wholly designed and built by China", said state broadcaster CCTV.

It has significantly more advanced technology than China's two other carriers,

including electromagnetic catapults to launch aircraft off its deck, the official *Xinhua* news agency reported. The other carriers use a ski-jump-style ramp for takeoffs.

And with a displacement

of more than 80,000 tonnes, according to *Xinhua*, it is comparable in size to the supercarriers of the United States Navy.

Collin Koh, a research fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said it could be a "game changer" for the Chinese navy. "The conventional flight deck with (electromagnetic catapults) will at least in theory allow the carrier to launch aircraft faster and with heavier payloads – which constitute key deciding factors during battle," he said.

It will take years before the *Fujian* becomes operational. Authorities have not said when it will enter service.

Plea for IP rights waiver for COVID jabs hits a wall

While some wording in the text “mitigated some of the most worrisome elements” of a draft text presented in May 2022, the latest agreement failed overall to offer an effective and meaningful solution to help increase people’s access to needed medical tools during the pandemic, as it did not adequately waive intellectual property on all essential COVID-19 medical tools, and did not apply to all countries, the MSF said in a statement.

The measures outlined in the decision will not address pharmaceutical monopolies or ensure affordable access to lifesaving

medical tools and will set a negative precedent for future global health crises and pandemics, their statement underlined.

Earlier Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, who led the Indian delegation at the talks, had also publicly expressed disappointment. “Some of the countries who are opposing this, in a way, they have almost clearly hinted and indicated that IP rights are extremely important. We are flowing with the wind only because of the international pressure, but on diagnostics and therapeutics there is no way we are going to yield,” he said.

Pak. may get off FATF 'grey list' after on-site check

Continued political commitment to combating terror financing, money laundering has led to significant progress: watchdog

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Pakistan on Friday got a reprieve from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as the international watchdog announced that the country could be removed from the "grey list" after a visit by a fact-finding team to verify the measures it has taken to deal with terror financing. FATF noted Pakistan's claims of actions to curb terror funding.

The Hindu had earlier reported that Islamabad was confident of a positive outcome from the current FATF Plenary as it believed, it had "completed" the list of tasks that were assigned to it by the global body.

According to sources aware of the process, Pakistan would formally be taken off the "grey list" in October. They said the process really kicked off after the meeting between U.S. Secretary of



On the agenda: Money laundering and terrorist financing issues were discussed at the FATF plenary held in Berlin on Friday. • @FATFNEWS/TWITTER

State Antony Blinken and Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto at the UN in May.

India's stance

Subsequently, most Western nations and China, who are members of the FATF working group, cleared Pakistan's case at an emergency internal meeting.

As the decision was by consensus, India was not asked to vote on the decision, but New Delhi has been sceptical of Pakistan's commitment to completely end terror safe havens in the country. Officials also pointed to Jammu and Kashmir where, they said, infiltration continued and "small arms

and IEDs" were being pushed across the LoC. Agencies were preparing for an "increased threat" in the next few months, the officials added.

"Pakistan continued its relentless efforts towards successful completion of these Action Plans despite many challenges including the CO-

VID-19 pandemic," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan said in a statement after FATF announced a favourable observation about Pakistan's actions.

Officials had told *The Hindu* that Pakistan received support from the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in getting itself out of the "grey list". Pakistan was brought back on the "grey list" in 2018 which allowed the country to be monitored closely by FATF.

The Ministry said, "Pakistan has covered a lot of ground in the AML/CFT [anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism and proliferation] domain during implementation of FATF Action Plans. The engagement with FATF has led to the development of a strong AML/CFT framework in Pakistan and resulted in improving our systems

to cope with future challenges."

Marcus Pleyer, the President of FATF,

said an on-site inspection by the watchdog in Pakistan would take place before October, and that a formal announcement on Pakistan's removal would follow. He said FATF was praising Islamabad for implementing the organisation's action plans – a clear indication that Pakistan is moving closer to getting off the "grey list".

"Pakistan's continued political commitment to combating both terrorist financing and money laundering has led to significant progress," FATF said in a statement. The country's efforts were sustained, it said and added that Pakistan's "necessary political commitment remains in place to sustain implementation and improvement in the future."

(With agency inputs)

Agnipath, a fire that could singe India

The Government's defence recruitment plan could endanger the safety of the country and affect the stability of society



SUSHANT SINGH

It was on September 15, 2013 that Narendra Modi addressed an ex-servicemen rally at Rewari, Haryana as the Bharatiya Janata Party's prime ministerial candidate, where he vociferously supported the demand of 'One Rank One Pension' (OROP) for all soldiers. Mr. Modi was then campaigning in poetry, and nine years later, as the Agnipath scheme for recruitment of short-term contracted soldiers was announced, he has been forced to contend with the reality of governing in prose. However hard the Government may try to obfuscate, the driving factor for this U-turn – from 'One Rank One Pension' to 'No Rank No Pension' – is economics.

Financial motivations

The OROP demand became tricky to fulfil once Mr. Modi became Prime Minister, but it was officially instituted in November 2015 for more than 25 lakh defence pensioners. It came with an immediate annual financial implication of ₹7,123.38 crore and the actual arrears from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015 were ₹10,392.35 crore. The financial burden increased cumulatively over time and has substantially increased the budgetary expenditure on defence pensions. In the current financial year, ₹1,19,696 crore has been budgeted for pensions, along with another ₹1,63,453 crore for salaries – that is 54% of the allocation for the Defence Ministry.

It has been argued that the savings in the pensions bill – which will show up on the books only after a couple of decades – would be directed towards the modernisation of defence forces. The armed forces do not have that kind of time available to them to postpone their already long-delayed modernisation. The money must come now. The Indian Air Force is already down to 30 squadrons of fighter jets against the 42 squadrons it

needs, and the Indian Navy is at 130 ships when its vision was to be a 200-ship navy; the Indian Army is already short of 1,00,000 soldiers. The announcement of the Agniveer scheme is an implicit acknowledgement that the Indian economy is incapable of supporting the armed forces that India needs. It faces an active military threat from two adversaries, China and Pakistan, and the internal security challenges in Kashmir and the northeastern States. These realities cannot be wished away. Instead of expanding the economy to support the military, the Government has resorted to shrinking the military.

Damaging consequences

As the short-term recruitment policy has neither been theoretically modelled nor tried out as a pilot project, the exact consequences of the move will only be known as they play out. But its adverse effect on the professional capabilities of the armed forces is certain. It starts with the very high turnover of young soldiers, the increase in training capacities and infrastructure and the augmentation of the administrative setup for greater recruitment, release, and retention of soldiers. An armed forces boasting of a poor teeth-to-tail ratio is further increasing the tail. The Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy employ their airmen and sailors in very specialised roles, which require technical skills, and a high degree of training and experience. They form the backbone of the system that keeps the warships at sea, the fighter jets in the air, and high-tech weapons and platforms operational. Because the short-term contractual soldier model (the Agniveer scheme) is going to take a few years to fully play out at an organisational level, the actual degradation of operational capability will only be known then.

In the case of the Indian Army, the challenge is two-fold. The Indian Army has emerged from a legacy which traces to 1748. In the early years, says a paper by Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, the emphasis was on discipline and efficiency, and their separation from the fragmented Indian society. This turned the Indian soldiers into a professional, united and auto-



MAGARA GOPAL

nomous fighting force whose loyalty, in Stephen Rosen's words, was to their 'homogeneous military units' for which they served 'full time, long term' rewarded with a secure pay and pension system. As the homogenous nature of the Bengal army was seen as one of the factors that contributed to the outbreak of the 1857 Mutiny, the British Crown thereafter maintained distinction and separateness of castes and class in the Indian Army, as described in the paper.

Even after Independence, class-based recruitment – the euphemism for caste – has defined the nature and the character of the Indian Army, shaping its ethos and fighting capabilities. In an affidavit in court a couple of years ago, the Government asserted that the Army has "performed exceedingly well while maintaining the class composition in recruitment of presidential bodyguards and changing to All India class composition will not only affect the functioning of the PBG [President's Bodyguard] Presidential but will also affect the seniority structure of the regiment". It defended class-based units by claiming that "after selection, personnel are grouped based on functional requirements to have optimum operation effectiveness".

In the Agnipath proposal, the class-based recruitment has been replaced with an all-India all-class recruitment. The reasons for this drastic shift in the Government's thinking are a secret but it will strike at the core of the organisational management, leadership structures and operating philosophy of the Indian Army. Even though the soldiers in the Indian Army are professionally trained, they also draw their motivation from their social identity – reflect-

ed in the characterisation of *naam, namak* and *nishan* – where each soldier cares for his reputation among the peers in his caste group or his village or his social setting. To replace that with a pure professional identity of a soldier will bring its own challenges in a tradition-bound army, where units showcase their campaigns in the 18th century as battle honours. Running a Gorkha regiment with a Jat soldier from Haryana, a Malayali from Kerala and a Meitei from Manipur needs massive restructuring, something the Army currently seems unprepared for. It is driven more by a hope that as an adaptive institution with great resilience, the Army will somehow find a way to deal with this upheaval while protecting its operational capabilities.

There are other challenges thrown up by the model. There will be major problems in training, integrating and deploying soldiers with different levels of experience and motivations. The criterion of identifying the 25% short-term contracted soldiers to be retained could result in unhealthy competition. An organisation which depends on trust, camaraderie and esprit de corps could end up grappling with rivalries and jealousies amongst winners and losers, especially in their final year of contract. Even though the Government has kept the contract at four years to deny the Agniveer gratuity and is not counting the contractual period towards regular service, these provisions are bound to be challenged legally; and just like the OROP issue, could become a politically attractive demand for longer tenures and pensions to be picked up by the Opposition parties. Over time, this will lead to the salary and pension budget creeping back up again.

Political, social implications

The Agnipath scheme also does away with the idea of a State-wise quota for recruitment into the Army, based on the Recruitable Male Population of that State which was implemented from 1966. This prevented an imbalanced army, which was dominated by any one State, linguistic community or ethnicity, as it happened in the case of Pakistan with its province of Pun-

jab. Academic research shows that the high level of ethnic imbalance has been associated with severe problems of democracy and an increased likelihood of civil war, a worrying scenario for today's India where federalism is being severely tested by the ruling party's ideology.

Coupled with this is the lack of hope in India's economy, where over 45 crore Indians have stopped looking for jobs, there are high levels of unemployment and underemployment. It is to this mix that these few thousand young men who have been trained in inflicting organised violence will be thrown up every year. From erstwhile Yugoslavia to Rwanda – and closer home, during Partition – there are numerous examples of demobilised soldiers leading to increased violence against minorities. Today's India is characterised by weak state capacity, where the state has ceded its exclusive right to violence to majoritarian groups. This provides a heady cocktail which only needs a spark to consume India.

In India, the Indian Army has so far provided salary, uniform and prestige, an inheritance of the British who took care of the living conditions, facilities for the soldiers' families, and post-retirement benefits and rewards, such as grants of land. This meant that military service remained attractive to many generations of the same families, anchoring them in tradition. It also resulted in social standing and privilege where pensions resulted in a comfortable life for the retired soldier. A short-term contractual soldier, without earning pension, will be seen as doing jobs after his military service that are not seen to be commensurate in status and prestige with the profession of honour. It will reduce the motivation of those joining on short-term contracts while diminishing the "honour" of a profession which places extraordinary demands on young men. The Government's yearning for financial savings runs the risk of reducing the honour of a profession, the stability of a society and the safety of a country.

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China foils bid to designate LeT deputy chief a terrorist

India slams the move, accuses Beijing of double standards

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NEW DELHI

India slammed China for blocking a proposal to list Pakistani terror convict and Lashkar-e-Taiba/ Jamaat-ud-Dawa (LeT/JuD) deputy chief Abdul Rahman Makki as a UN Security Council-designated terrorist.

Calling the decision by China to place a “technical hold” on the listing requested by the United States and India this month “regrettable” and “extremely unfortunate”, India said that China’s actions ran counter to its claims of combating terrorism. It added that evidence against Makki was “overwhelming”.

“China should reflect on



Abdul Rahman Makki. ■@ANI

its response that signals double standards on combating terrorism. Protecting well-known terrorists from sanctioning in this manner will only undermine its credibility and risk exposing even itself more to the growing threat of terrorism,” government sources said, pointing to a similar blocking by Chi-

na of the UNSC terror designation proposal against Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar for several years, until Beijing agreed to his designation in 2019.

Defending its actions on Friday, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs insisted that it “opposes terrorism in all its manifestation”.

“The actions we take in the 1267 Committee in the UNSC always abide by relevant procedures and rules. China will continue to carry out work in a constructive and responsible attitude,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

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China opposes labelling LeT convict a terrorist

Asked if the refusal to designate the LeT deputy chief would further strain India-China ties, Mr. Wang said China hoped that “India and China can work together and promote the relations to be more sound and stable”, without elaborating on the question.

On how the action squared up with the BRICS NSA meeting hosted by Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi on Wednesday, which committed to closer cooperation on combating terrorism, Mr. Wang said he had already shared China’s position quite clearly, adding, “I won’t go back to that”.

At the BRICS NSA meeting, Ajit Doval had specifically raised the need to cooperate on fighting terrorism “without reservations”.

Waiting till last day

China’s “technical hold” on adding Makki’s name to the UNSC list could hold up the process for up to six months, after which a new proposal would have to be introduced to designate him. The proposal to list Makki under the UN Security Council sanctions regime was circulated to all the members of the UNSC’s 1267 Committee under a “no-objection procedure” on June 1 with a deadline of 16 June, the sources said, indicating that China waited until the last possible day to raise objections to the listing.

According to the UNSC resolution on designating terrorists linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, a designated terrorist cannot access funds, buy weapons or travel outside the jurisdiction. Pakistan has been held

on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force for several years, including most recently since June 2018, for its failure to effectively prosecute and convict terrorists on the UNSC list, as it is obliged to.

Makki, who is the brother-in-law of LeT chief and convicted mastermind of the Mumbai 26/11 attacks Hafiz Saeed, is wanted for a number of cases of terrorism and terror-financing in India, and has been designated a wanted terrorist by the government.

The sources said he held a “leadership position” when the LeT carried out the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack in 2008, the Red Fort Attack on 22 December, 2000, as well as several attacks on security force personnel in Jammu and Kashmir in recent years.

He was arrested on terror financing charges by the Pakistani police in 2019, and convicted and sentenced to nine years in prison by a court in April 2021 along with other senior LeT/JuD leaders. However, later in the year, the men were but was acquitted by the Lahore High Court that cited lack of evidence presented by the prosecution.

Makki has also been on the U.S.’s list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists since 2010, and the U.S. announced a reward of up to \$2 million for information that would help convict him in its “Rewards for Justice Program”, specifically castigating the “Pakistani judicial system [that] has released convicted LeT leaders and operatives in the past”.

(With inputs from Ananth Krishnan)

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| 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, |
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| H | Effects of globalization on Indian society; |
| I | Role of women and women's organization; |
| J | Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism |
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| D | Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. |
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| 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; |

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| 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; |
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| R | Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes; |
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| T | Various forces and their mandate; |
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| 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. |