



**VEDHIK**  
**IAS ACADEMY**

*The New Learning Mantra*



**VEDHIK**

**DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS**

---

**27 - 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.

## CONTENTS

- News - Making sense of New Delhi's Taliban rapprochement GSP 02 A
- News - How Hanoi and New Delhi are fortifying defence ties GSP 02 C
- News - Inaction does not imply conspiracy GSP 02 E
- News - Understanding the Supreme Court verdict on the Zakia Jafri protest petition GSP 02 E
- Editorials - Regressive, inhumane GSP 02 F
- News - Restoration of trust between States and Centre essential for GST system GSP 02 G
- Editorials - Indian laws on abortions GSP 02 M
- Editorials - Bringing MSMEs into global value chains GSP 03 A

- 
- News - Reviving cultivation of a traditional crop in Mysuru GSP 03 F
  - News - From July 1, Himachal to buy back single-use plastic GSP 03 P
  - News - Odisha to install siren to caution elephant movement in forest GSP 03 P
  - Editorials - Implications of India's new VPN rules GSP 03 R
  - News - 'China upgraded firepower on LAC Part I GSP 03 U
  - News - 'China upgraded firepower on LAC Part II GSP 03 U
- 

# Making sense of New Delhi's Taliban rapprochement

As a 'civilisational state' and inspiring global power, India cannot behave as a transactional, opportunistic salesman



DAVOOD MORADIAN

The Pakistan-led coalition's success and luck in toppling a United States-supported constitutional order in Afghanistan has brought to surface unexpected developments. While a growing number of the Taliban's western and regional lobbyists are distancing themselves from their pyrrhic victory, India pulled a rabbit out of its diplomatic hat by sending a senior diplomatic delegation to the Taliban-occupied Kabul. The visit was the culmination of Delhi's months of quiet diplomacy and signalling. Just hours after the Taliban's takeover, in 2021, India was the first country to immediately ban all Afghans travelling to India, including students and patients with a valid Indian visa. In a significant but not widely covered decision, India chose to abstain from the UN Security Council's calling on the Taliban to open girl schools and continues to remain silent about a worsening situation in Afghanistan.

India's apparent reorientation can be described and understood as an example of realpolitik, supremacy of national interest and a superficiality of "values" and "sentiments" in the Hobbesian world of international politics. India's neutral stance on Russia's entanglement in Ukraine reveals the Indian version of "First India" foreign policy.

However, Delhi's flirtation with the Taliban raises a number of pertinent questions: What are India's key strategic interests in Afghanis-

tan? How can a potential India-Taliban rapprochement advance such interests? Does the Taliban have the intent and/or capacity to deliver on their promise and vice versa? How would India engage with the anti-Taliban constituencies? How will India's aspiration to become a global power be served by aligning with an unacceptable regime such as the Taliban?

## India as alliance's target

Afghanistan is a security-centric concern, in particular, the nexus of Islamic militancy, illicit drugs and proxy warfare. India is a primary target for this alliance. The Taliban's victory realised two important ideological and strategic goals of militant Islamists and their Pakistani patron: establishing a "pure Islamic Government" in the Heart of Asia and securing Pakistan's "Strategic Depth". The two concepts are necessary pre-conditions for attaining another long-held vision of Islamists, Ghazwa-e-Hind.

There are both historical precedents and existing infrastructure in support of the nexus of religious zealots, tribal warriors and imperial ambitions. Mahmud Ghaznavi was the first to recruit tribal warriors from today's Afghanistan/Pakistan border region to attack and plunder India more than 1,000 years ago. The British applied a similar strategy in undermining and eventually toppling Afghanistan's progressive King Amanullah Khan in the early 20th century. In its first war against India in 1948, Pakistan mobilised a tribal army to attack India.

The central pillar of the West's anti-Soviet strategy in Afghanistan was to fund and support the Mujahideen via a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-led operation, named "Operation Cyclone". Pa-



APP

kistan's geo-strategic vision for Afghanistan is to create a "Greater Waziristan", to be ruled by an isolated, ruthless and dogmatic Taliban's reign, funded by United Nations/western humanitarian assistance. In return, Greater Waziristan would become a major centre for producing, training and sheltering different brands of "tribal/Islamist warriors" for different markets. Afghanistan's over 6,000 religious madrassas will be further incorporated into Pakistan's plus 40,000 madrassas to create the world's largest network of militancy-inspired educational institutions.

## Wishful thinking

New Delhi also seems hopeful of capitalising on the personal grudge some Taliban commanders have against Pakistan and hence its wishful thinking to create an India-friendly faction within the Taliban. Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment has shown its ruthless and efficient way in dealing with dissident, "out-of-control" and "outdated" proxies. The fate of Pakistani politicians such as Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan, or Pakistan's Afghan proxies such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and former Taliban supreme leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour showed Pakistan's zealous determination to maintain its monopoly on its proxies. India's ruling par-

ty's anti-Muslim inclinations have also provided additional ammunition to the advocates of "Ghazwa-e-Hind".

The facts on the ground are often cited to justify a realistic foreign policy; a justification by those who advocate engagement with the Taliban. There are also other facts that should be taken into account. The U.S.'s peace agreement with the Taliban ended the U.S.'s half-hearted and confused hostility with the Taliban. It did not however terminate other drivers of the Afghan conflict. The following social media trends among Afghan users reveal the full picture of the sorrow conflict: SanctionPakistan; LetAfghanGirlsLearn; StopHazaraGenocide; StopTajikGenocide; PartitionAfghanistan. The Taliban have excluded all non-Taliban Pashtuns from public space as is shown by the house detention of former President Hamid Karzai; there are also systematic violations of the human rights of the non-Pashtun communities which amount to crime against humanity, and ethnic cleansing which borders on genocide. For the first time, the partition of the country into Pashtun-dominated and Farsiwan-dominated polities has, sadly, become political discourse among the Farsiwan constituencies.

## Fallacy of 'India First'

An "India First" policy seems to drive Delhi's Taliban rapprochement. If so, it will destroy a central pillar of India's foreign and security policy, the dismantling of the region's "terrorist infrastructure". The Taliban's victory is the best product of this infrastructure. It would defy logic to be simultaneously critical of a production system while embracing its premium product. India as a "civilizational

state" and an inspiring global power cannot behave as a bandwagoning, transactional, opportunistic salesman.

Notwithstanding India's strategic hesitancy and caution during the last two decades in Afghanistan, it attained two important benchmarks of becoming an ideal and trustworthy partner. Many Afghans looked at India as an example of a fellow developing nation that overcame the many challenges of building and sustaining a functioning democratic polity. More importantly, India was seen as a sincere friend of Afghanistan, unlike many double-faced actors. Even for an "interest"-based foreign policy, it is counterproductive to lose the trust and goodwill of Afghans toward India by embracing a policy that is doomed to failure on multiple grounds.

Since August 15, 2021, Afghanistan has descended from a Pax Americana experiment to a "Pax Pakistanana" ambition. The prospects for peace and stability in Afghanistan under a Pax Pakistan lordship are not feasible as Pakistan itself is overwhelmed by multiple internal and external challenges. Afghanistan needs a strong UN mandate, including a UN-led political transition process supported by a UN peace keeping/making force. India can lend its support to such endeavours which are worthy of its character, ambition and Afghanistan's needs.

*Davood Moradian is Director of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS). He has previously worked in the Office of President Hamid Karzai and Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Chief Policy Adviser. He has taught in the University of St. Andrews (Scotland) and the American University of Afghanistan*

# How Hanoi and New Delhi are fortifying defence ties

The maritime domain has taken centre stage in talks



HARSH V. PANT & PRATNASHREE BASU

The furtherance of India's Act East Policy, maritime multilateralism, maritime security outreach and the building of stronger networks across the Indo-Pacific are some of the key elements which have made New Delhi and Hanoi natural partners. The two countries recently deepened bilateral cooperation with the signing of the Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030 during the recent visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Vietnam. The Joint Vision Statement is aimed at boosting the scope and scale of the existing defence cooperation between the two nations. Both sides undertook extensive deliberations to expand avenues of effective and practicable collaboration in bilateral defence engagements pertaining to regional and global issues.

In the meeting with his counterpart, Vietnam's Minister of National Defence General Phan Van Giang, the early finalisation of the \$500 million Defence Line of Credit extended by India to the latter along with the implementation of existing projects which would complement India's 'Make in India, Make for the world' and Hanoi's defence capabilities were also discussed. The two sides also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Logistics Support. This is the first agreement of its kind that Hanoi has entered into with any other country and elevates the standing of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) which Hanoi shares with New Delhi since 2016 (along with only Russia and China).

Because of the volume of maritime trade that passes through sea lanes of communication in the Indo-Pacific and potential as well as estimated energy reserves in these waters, maritime cooperation between countries in the region have expanded exponentially. Undoubtedly, for India and Vietnam too, the maritime domain in particular has occupied a central focus. Both countries find convergence in their approaches towards the maintenance of stability and security of the Indo-Pacific which has translated into diplomatic and political support in the context of developments within the region.

The enhanced geostrategic prominence and attendant uncertainties vis-à-vis China's

expanding and often abrasive footprints in the Indo-Pacific have resulted in an overall increase in emphasis on cooperative mechanisms and frameworks across the region. Hanoi and New Delhi have not been strangers to these developments and have stepped up bilateral exchanges. Defence partnership between the two countries has been growing steadily following the signing of the Defence Protocol in 2000 and today covers extensive navy-to-navy cooperation spanning the exchange of intelligence, production and logistical support for Vietnam's defence requirements, development of naval facilities such as Nha Trang, defence dialogues, high-level visits and the supply of warships and cruise missiles.

Vietnam has and continues to be one of the most vocal countries with respect to China's periodic transgressions in the South China Sea. In India, Vietnam has found an equally uncompromising partner when it comes to the question of violations of freedom of navigation and threats to sovereign maritime territorial rights as enshrined under international maritime law. Indeed, it is believed that Hanoi used the term Indo-Pacific for the first time in 2018 in its Joint statement with India. New Delhi has supported Vietnam's position in the South China Sea with respect to Beijing's destabilising actions and coercive tactics backing the verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the case brought by Manila in 2016 and reiterating the irrefutability of the UNCLOS. India has also not backed down from continuing ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL)'s oil exploration project in Block 128 (which is within Hanoi's EEZ) despite China's protests. In 2020 China's incursion into Ladakh was quickly followed by the deployment of warships by India to the South China Sea in an instance of asymmetrical warfare and a signalling that India will not stand down. These instances together with the deepening of India's operational outreach in the Indo-Pacific have successfully indicated and cemented its role as a capable, willing and reliable partner.

Despite the fact that the China factor has provided impetus to the solidification of ties, it is also important to consider that mutual cooperation is not driven solely by it. Both countries have expanded areas of collaboration and are supportive of each other's individual and multilateral involvements within the rubric of the Indo-Pacific.

---

*Harsh V. Pant is Vice President, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi and Professor at King's College London. Pratinashree Basu is an Associate Fellow at ORF, Kolkata*

# 'Inaction does not imply conspiracy'

Bench calls for evidence to show 'meeting of minds' to commit crime

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Instances which "overrun" a State administration like breakdown of law and order caused by "spontaneous mass violence" or the second wave of the pandemic cannot be called the results of a "larger conspiracy" hatched at the highest level of political dispensation, the Supreme Court judgment in the Zakia Jafri case has held.

"The breakdown of law and order situation in the State, attributable to the alleged inaction of the [State] duty holders, owing to spontaneous mass violence cannot be a safe measure to infer as being a part of a criminal conspiracy at the highest level of political dispensation..." a three-judge Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar held.

The judgment observed that "larger conspiracy" can be alleged only if there is clear evidence to show a "meeting of minds" at the highest level to commit or promote the commission of a crime.

"To make out a case of larger criminal conspiracy, it is essential to establish a link



indicating a meeting of minds of the concerned persons for commission of the crime(s)," it noted.

With this, the court made it clear that the onus of proof is on the person who alleges the existence of a "larger conspiracy".

### 'No tangible material'

In Gujarat, the court concluded that the inaction or lack of effective measures taken by officials *per se* did not imply criminal conspiracy on the part of the State authorities which led to the 2002 violence.

There was also no "tangible material suggestive of a chain or any perceivable link or connection with the unfolding of mass violence

across the State".

The judgment has created a buffer for top political leaders in power who may have to bear the brunt of allegations of "state-sponsored breakdown of law and order situation".

The verdict also endeavours to insulate the highest levels of political dispensation from the failures of a few possibly inept or overworked officials whose actions may not have helped to contain the breakdown of law and order on the ground.

"Inaction or failure of some officials of one section of the State administration cannot be the basis to infer a preplanned criminal conspiracy by the authorities of the State government or to term it a state-sponsored crime (violence) against the minority community," the court held.

The judgment gains significance in the background of recent communal violence in several States.

### Pandemic attack

The court has said that a "larger conspiracy" cannot be readily inferred merely

on the basis of the inaction or failure of the State administration. On the other hand, the State administration may have simply been overrun by the enormity of suddenness of events. The court pointed to the recent pandemic attack as an example.

"The overrunning of State administration is not an unknown phenomenon. It has been witnessed all over the globe during the second wave of pandemic, where the countries with even best of medical facilities crumbled and their management skills were overrun under the pressure. Can it be said to be a case of hatching of a criminal conspiracy?" Justice Khanwilkar asked.

Further, the court said, breakdown of law and order for a short duration cannot take the colour of a constitutional crisis.

"There must be credible evidence regarding State-sponsored breakdown of law and order situation; not spontaneous or isolated instances or events of failure of State administration to control the situation," the court noted.

## EXPLAINER

# Understanding the Supreme Court verdict on the Zakia Jafri protest petition

When did the SIT submit its report? Why did the apex court find fault with two former Gujarat State officers?

ZIYA US SALAM

**The story so far:** The Supreme Court dismissed the protest petition filed by Zakia Jafri, widow of late Congress leader Ehsan Jafri, challenging the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat and 63 other senior officials of the State for their alleged role in the 2002 communal riots. The apex court in its 452-page verdict rubbished allegations of a "larger conspiracy" in the Gulberg Housing Society case in which Ehsan Jafri was among those killed. The massacre took place shortly after the Godhra train tragedy which had claimed the lives of 59 kar sevaks on February 27, 2002.

**What was the apex court's verdict?** The three-judge Bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar held that the inaction of "some officials of one section of the State administration" cannot be the basis to infer a pre-planned criminal conspiracy by the State government, and found no fault in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) report. "There is no material worth the name to even create a suspicion indicative of the meeting of the minds of all concerned at some level; and in particular, the bureaucrats, politicians, public prosecutors or the members of the



Zakia Jafri. •PPI

state political establishment – for hatching a larger criminal conspiracy at the highest level to cause and precipitate mass violence against the minority community across the State," the judgment said. The court further upheld the report of the SIT, stating, "No fault can be found with the approach of the SIT in submitting final report dated 8.2.2012". It held "the final report backed by firm logic, exposing analytical mind and dealing with all aspects objectively".

"The SIT has not found any conspiracy, linking separate and disparate acts of arson and looting or outrageous claims made in sting operations or individual utterances/publications of purported hate speech." The Bench upheld the decision of the Additional Metropolitan

Magistrate to accept the closure of the SIT – which was itself appointed by the Supreme Court in 2008 – rejecting the protest petition filed by Zakia Jafri.

### What were the criticisms of the Supreme Court?

The court came down heavily on two State officers, Sanjiv Bhatt and R.B. Sreekumar and former Home Minister of Gujarat Haren Pandya, stating, "At the end of the day, it appears to us that a coalesced effort of the disgruntled officials of the State of Gujarat along with others was to create a sensation by making revelations which were false to their own knowledge. The falsity of their claims had been fully exposed by the SIT after a thorough investigation."

The court held that the officers were not part of the meeting to decide the future course of action when the violence had broken out on Feb 27, 2002. Mr. Bhatt, it may be recalled, had told the Supreme Court that on the night of Feb 27, 2002, Mr. Modi had asked the police brass to let the Hindus vent their anger. Likewise, Mr. Sreekumar had in his deposition before the Nanavati-Shah commission pointed to a dubious role by the administration during the violence.

Such officials need to be in the dock for "keeping pot boiling" the court said,

pointing out, "Intriguingly, the present proceedings have been pursued for last 16 years with the audacity to question the integrity of every functionary involved in the process of exposing the devious strategem adopted. As a matter of fact, all those involved in such abuse of process, need to be in the dock and proceeded with in accordance with the law."

Incidentally, the SIT headed by former CBI director K.K. Raghavan had submitted a closure report almost a decade ago. Back in 2012, it gave a clean chit to Mr. Modi and 63 others, finding no prosecutable evidence against them. The Metropolitan Magistrate accepted the report following which Zakia Jafri went to Gujarat High Court. In October 2017, the State High Court dismissed her petition. In September 2018, Ms. Jafri knocked the doors of the Supreme Court and filed a protest petition against acceptance of the SIT report. In December last year, the apex court reserved its judgment.

### What happened in Gulberg Society?

As tensions were on a high in Ahmedabad after the Godhra tragedy, around 90 local residents had gathered at the Gulberg residence of Ehsan Jafri, hoping for safety at the former Parliamentarian's place from the mob on the rampage. Mr. Jafri, apprehending violence, called many

officers and leaders for help. In the absence of any practical aid, Mr. Jafri had lost hope. Around 9.30 in the morning, the first attack took place. The police assured help but soon a mob laid siege to Gulberg Society. Gas cylinders were hurled inside the premises from outside and kerosene cans were lobbed from the road. The house was set on fire. Mr. Jafri stepped out, pleading with the mob for the life of the people inside the house. He was then dragged to the road, mutilated and then killed. His body was not recovered. Sixty-nine people were killed, as claimed by local residents; officially 39 casualties were reported.

Further, as an eyewitness recalled in Rakesh Sharma's National award-winning documentary *Final Solution* based on the Gujarat violence, "The police removed the names of the main culprits of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal from the FIR. We were offered money to take the case back, not to recognise the culprits."

### What was the aftermath of the verdict?

Within hours of the Supreme Court judgment, human rights activist Teesta Setalvad, said to be behind Ms. Jafri's prolonged legal battle, was detained by the police. Mr. Sreekumar was also arrested. Mr. Bhatt is already under custody.

## THE GIST

■ The Supreme Court dismissed the protest petition filed by Zakia Jafri, widow of late Congress leader Ehsan Jafri, challenging the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat and 63 other senior officials of the State in their alleged role in the 2002 communal riots.

■ The court held that the inaction of "some officials of one section of the State administration" cannot be the basis to infer a pre-planned criminal conspiracy by the State government.

■ Within hours of the judgment, human rights activist Teesta Setalvad, said to be behind Ms. Jafri's prolonged legal battle, was detained by police.

# Regressive, inhumane

By removing constitutional right to abortion, U.S. Supreme Court is on wrong side of liberty

When a democracy rolls back a constitutional right that has been in place for almost half a century, it must consider itself in deep peril. The U.S. stands at that fraught juncture now, after its Supreme Court, in a 6-3 majority, overturned the 1973 ruling in *Roe vs Wade*, and took away the constitutional right to abortion. In one blow, on June 24, it withdrew from women anywhere in the country their right to reproductive and bodily autonomy. With *Roe*, as well as the 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood vs Casey* that upheld *Roe*, gone, the court returned “the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives”. States can now decide whether to ban abortion, and at what stage in a pregnancy and under what circumstances. The fight over abortion has been the U.S.’s most passionately waged ideological battle. With a focus that denies any space for compassion or respect for liberty, conservatives have prioritised the task of having *Roe* overturned for decades. With the court now having attained a conservative supermajority, the decision had been imminent – some Republican-ruled States have started banning abortion, with trigger laws in place in anticipation of such a judgment. Other Red States will follow.

This Supreme Court decision, *Dobbs vs Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, has in effect divided the U.S. territorially – States where women have the right to abortion, and those where they do not. Where they do not, women with unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, including possibly in some jurisdictions those that endanger the mother’s life or are a result of rape or incest, may have no option but to seek medical assistance in other States. This needs resources and support structures, and many women will be left with no option other than clandestine, unsafe abortions nearer home. Chillingly, there is fear that miscarriages could be subject to criminal investigations. On a positive side, major U.S. companies and some States (New York) have started offering financial support to employees and help for out-of-state abortion seekers who seek medical interventions in abortion-supporting States. This will, however, make already-bitter partisan polarisation worse. It must also alarm Americans that the logic of *Dobbs* – that abortion is not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution and is not covered by the landmark 14th Amendment of 1868 that safeguards liberty – has opened the process for other rights to be taken away. For now, President Joe Biden and his Democratic Party have vowed to put *Roe* on the ballot in November’s mid-term elections. But the way the U.S. electoral system stacks up the numbers in the Senate against their efforts to break the filibuster, the effort to protect women will likely be carried out incrementally: legal challenges at multiple levels, support to women in Red States, and persuasive political campaigns at the grassroots.

INTERVIEW | PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

# 'Restoration of trust between States and Centre essential for GST system'

States should get direct taxation powers, extension of revenue guarantee, says chairman of the Congress Data Analytics Department

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

The GST Council is meeting in Chandigarh on Tuesday and Wednesday even as the tax regime completes five years in operation on June 30. Opposition parties and States have serious concerns regarding the continuation of the indirect tax regime premised on 'one nation, one tax, one market' principle. **Praveen Chakravarty**, chairman of the Congress Data Analytics Department, was an early critic of the GST (Goods and Services Tax) regime. He thinks restoration of trust between the States and the Centre is essential for the smooth continuation of the GST system. Edited excerpts:

**You were sceptical when the GST regime was rolled out. You feel vindicated?**

■ I wish I was proven wrong. My view on GST was shaped by my understanding of federalism, and by using an economic lens. Indian States are extremely diverse economically, apart from being politically diverse. GST was a misfit in India. India has pol-

itical parties that are confined to the boundaries of particular States. I understated the ill-effects of GST in my original critique. They have only exacerbated in the last five years, partly due to the Centre's other centralising measures that accompanied the implementation of GST. The trust deficit between the Centre and the States has grown. I would not deny the

fact that it is efficient. Efficiency comes at a certain cost though – political, social, and constitutional.

**Will the GST system survive the current crisis?**

■ The fact is that the country is half pregnant with the GST system, and we cannot go back. There are three issues that form the backdrop of the GST Council meeting this week. First is the complete breakdown of trust between the States and the Centre. Second is the Supreme Court order that said the Council's decisions are not binding on the States. Third is the lapsing of the revenue guarantee, which the Centre had promised the States for five years. I don't see GST will continue smoothly unless the trust issues are resolved,



**The assumption that easy flow of goods across the country will boost growth did not turn out to be true**

and the revenue guarantee is extended. Everybody acknowledges the fact that the GST regime has not lived up to the hype and hope.

**'One nation, one market' – how has that idea evolved through the past five years,**

**particularly through the pandemic?**

■ The pandemic exposed GST's deficiencies. Had there been no GST, the States could have managed the situation better through their resource mobilisation and allocation. They ended up fighting with the Centre, and the Finance Minister invoked the Act of God principle to default on payments to them. Businesses are liking it for its efficiency. An economist would, however, not miss the point that its impact on the economy was not anywhere near the two percentage points (of growth) as was expected. The assumption that easy flow of goods across the country would boost growth did not turn out to be true. Maybe five years is early to make a judg-

ment on that; may be it will happen in the coming years.

**Is there something that is happening in the Congress which championed GST while in power? Was this discussed at the Udaipur Chintan Shivir?**

■ I cannot disclose what was discussed in Udaipur, but can tell you that I discuss this issue internally in the party, as allowed. We must ask for a reassessment, re-evaluation of the GST as it stands today. Yes, the UPA government championed the GST, and the then Gujarat CM who happens to be PM today opposed it. In my defence, in the week of the launch of the GST, I, along with the current Finance Minister of Tamil Nadu PTR (Palanivel Thiagarajan), who was then an MLA,

wrote a joint piece raising concerns.

**Shall we say the views of the then PM were less accurate than the views of the then CM of Gujarat, when the idea of GST was taking shape?**

■ The views of the current PM are less accurate than those of the current former PM. The notion that the crisis of GST is one of implementation is not true. GST implementation was shoddy, but the fundamental problem is that it is an economic square peg in the federal round hole. It would have been difficult for any government, and this government made it significantly worse, with a messy structure. I don't think even if the implementation had been smooth,

there would have been no contestations.

**Did Indian political parties fail to comprehend what was coming?**

■ Economists and technocrats were viewing it through the prism of efficiency alone. They failed to see what it does to federalism, when regional parties see that they have no taxation powers.

**Do you think the current GST regime can be rescued by tweaking it?**

■ Restoration of trust is the most fundamental challenge. In order to reverse the centralising direction of governance, the Centre should consider giving States powers of direct taxation that they have only in agriculture.

## EXPLAINER

# Indian laws on abortions

What are the conditions under which Indian women can safely terminate pregnancies?

## THE GIST

DIKSHA MUNJAL

**The story so far:** In a significant step backwards for women's rights in the U.S., the Supreme Court overturned the landmark *Roe v. Wade* judgement of 1973, which gave women in America the right to have an abortion before the foetus is viable outside the womb or before the 24-week mark. With the setting aside of the historic judgement on abortion in the U.S, here's a look at the laws that govern abortion in India.

### How did abortion laws come about in India?

In the 1960s, in the wake of a high number of induced abortions taking place, the Union government ordered the constitution of the Shantilal Shah Committee to deliberate on the legalisation of abortion in the country. In order to reduce maternal mortality owing to unsafe abortions, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act was brought into force in 1971. This law is an exception to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) provisions of 312 and 313 and sets out the rules of how and when a medical abortion can be carried out.

■ Under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021, abortion is permitted after medical opinion under stipulated circumstances. The 2021 Act increased the upper limit of the gestation period to which a woman can seek a medical abortion to 24 weeks from 20 weeks permitted in the 1971 Act. But this renewed upper limit can only be exercised in specific cases.

■ Several women annually approach the apex court and High Courts, when medical boards reject their application to access MTP beyond the gestational upper limit, seeking permission to abort a pregnancy, mostly in cases where it is a result of sexual assault or when there is a foetal abnormality.

Under Section 312 of the IPC, a person who "voluntarily causes a woman with child to miscarry" is liable for punishment, attracting a jail term of up to three years or fine or both, unless it was done in good faith where the purpose was to save the life of the pregnant woman. Section 313 of the IPC states that a person who causes the miscarriage without the consent of the pregnant woman, whether or not she is in the advanced stages of her pregnancy, shall be punished with life imprisonment or a jail term that could extend to 10 years, as well as a fine.

### How has the MTP Act evolved from 1971 to 2021?

The latest amendment to the MTP Act was made in 2021. Before that new rules were introduced in 2003 to allow the use of then newly discovered abortion medicine misoprostol, to medically terminate a pregnancy up to seven weeks into it. Broader amendments to the original Act were introduced in 2020 and the amended Act came into force in September 2021.

Under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021, abortion is permitted after medical opinion under stipulated circumstances. The 2021 Act increased the upper limit of the gestation period to which a woman can seek a medical abortion to 24 weeks from 20 weeks permitted in the 1971 Act. But this renewed upper limit can only be exercised in specific cases. Gestational age, calculated in weeks, is the medical term to describe how far along the pregnancy is and is measured from the first day of the woman's last menstruation or period.

Another major amendment was that MTP could not be accessed on the opinion of a single registered medical practitioner up to 20 weeks of the gestational age. From 20 weeks up to 24 weeks, the opinion of two registered medical practitioners is required. In the previous version of the Act, the opinion of one registered doctor was required to access a medical abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, while two doctors were required to endorse the abortion up to 20 weeks.

### What is the MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021?

Under the 2021 Act, medical termination of pregnancy is permitted if it is backed by medical opinion and is being sought for at least one of the following reasons – (1) If the continuation of pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman (2) If its continuation would result in grave injury to the woman's physical or mental health (3) In the case of a substantial risk that if the child was born, it would suffer from serious physical or mental abnormality.

The pregnancy can be terminated upto 24 weeks of gestational age after the opinion of two registered medical practitioners under these conditions – (1) If the woman is either a survivor of sexual assault or rape or incest (2) If she is a minor (3) If her marital status has changed during the ongoing pregnancy (i.e. either widowhood or divorce) (4) If she has major physical disabilities or is mentally ill (5) On the grounds of foetal malformation incompatible with life or if the child is born, it would be seriously handicapped (6) If the woman is in humanitarian settings or disaster, or emergency situations as declared

by the government.

Besides, if the pregnancy has to be terminated beyond the 24-week gestational age, it can only be done on the grounds of foetal abnormalities if a four-member Medical Board, as set up in each State under the Act, gives permission to do so.

The law, notwithstanding any of the above conditions, also provides that where it is immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman, abortion can be carried out at any time by a single registered medical practitioner.

Unmarried women can also access abortion under the above-mentioned conditions, because it does not mention the requirement of spousal consent. If the woman is a minor, however, the consent of a guardian is required.

### Have there been judicial interventions in cases of abortions?

Despite the fact that existing laws do not permit unconditional abortion in the country, in the landmark 2017 Right to Privacy judgement in the *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India and others*, the Supreme Court had held that the decision by a pregnant person on whether to continue a pregnancy or not is part of such a person's right to privacy as well and, therefore, the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Several women annually approach the apex court and High Courts, when medical boards reject their application to access MTP beyond the gestational upper limit (now 24 weeks), seeking permission to abort a pregnancy, mostly in cases where it is a result of sexual assault or when there is a foetal abnormality.

A report authored by advocate Anubha Rastogi for the Pratiya Campaign said that in the 15 months leading up to August 2020, High Courts across the country were hearing 243 petitions of women seeking permission to abort. In February this year, the Calcutta High Court allowed a 37-year-old woman, who was 34 weeks into her pregnancy, to get a medical abortion as the foetus was diagnosed with an incurable spinal condition. This judgment allowed abortion for the furthest gestational in the country so far.



### What are the criticisms against the abortion law?

According to a 2018 study in the *Lancet*, 15.6 million abortions were accessed every year in India as of 2015. The MTP Act requires abortion to be performed only by doctors with specialisation in gynaecology or obstetrics. However, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's 2019-20 report on Rural Health Statistics indicates that there is a 70% shortage of obstetrician-gynaecologists in rural India.

As the law does not permit abortion at will, critics say that it pushes women to access illicit abortions under unsafe conditions. Statistics put the annual number of unsafe and illegal abortions performed in India at 8,00,000, many of them resulting in maternal mortality.

**For autonomy:** Protesters march during an abortion rights rally in Austin, Texas on June 25. • AFP

# Bringing MSMEs into global value chains

These businesses are the ones that have faced the harshest of environments over the last few years

RENÉ VAN BERKEL, DAGMAR WALTER & SHOMBI SHARP

Though the growth and achievements of large businesses in India have received much attention, micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSME) actually account for over 99% of businesses. MSMEs are the largest employer in India outside of agriculture, employing over 11.1 crore people, or 45% of all workers. It is no exaggeration to call MSMEs - privately owned enterprise with less than ₹50 crore in investments in plant and machinery and turnover below ₹250 crore - the backbone of the Indian economy.

Every year on June 27, World MSME Day provides us with the opportunity to appreciate their valuable contribution to job creation and sustainable development across the world. Yet, these businesses are the ones that have faced the harshest of environments over the last few years.

The disruption of the pandemic severely impacted MSMEs, especially those in the services sector. Their small size and lack of access to resources meant that many were only beginning to mount a fragile recovery just when renewed war, supply shocks and soaring fuel, food and fertilizer prices presented a host of new threats. And all of this comes against the backdrop of the ongoing climate crisis, the greatest disruption multiplier of all.

At the same time, the potential of India's small businesses is truly immense. India faces a unique moment in history, a potential demographic dividend of tremendous proportions. To leverage this opportunity, India needs to create many jobs, especially for the one million young people entering the labour market every month.

## Meeting standards

While some MSMEs operate at the highest industry standards, most do not meet today's standards on productivity, environmental sustainability, and health and safety of workers. This is further exacerbated by the high degree of informality in the sector, with many enterprises unregistered, and both employers and workers are lacking awareness of and commitment to comply with labour and environmental laws. As a result, informal enterprises cannot access



G. MOORTHY

formal MSME support and financing nor participate in global value chains that require full compliance with all applicable regulations.

The Government of India has rightly identified the development of the country's MSME ecosystem as a top priority for achieving *Atma Nirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India). India's ambitious "Make in India" campaign aims to catapult the country up the manufacturing value chain to position itself as a global manufacturing hub. Initiatives such as the production linked incentives (PLI) schemes and the recently launched zero effect zero defect (ZED) certification are helping to promote and boost the sector.

To help accelerate this process, the UN system in India is supporting these and other MSME development initiatives at the local, State and national levels. Agencies such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, IFAD and others are working with MSMEs as they navigate a rapidly changing post-pandemic economic landscape shaped by large-scale transitions, chiefly digitalisation, greening and the reorganisation of value chains.

Firstly, digitalisation concerns the integration of digital technologies, such as big data, artificial intelligence and virtual reality, in business processes, also known as Industry 4.0. With few exceptions, digitalisation into smart manufacturing operations is still in its infancy. Therefore, there is a need for replicable digital solu-

tions adapted for MSMEs, including digital enhancements for machinery and equipment currently in use. Government initiatives such as the Digital Saksham and the interlinking of the Udyam, e-Shram, National Career Service (NCS), and Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee-Employer Mapping (ASEEM) portals show the promise of targeted digitalisation schemes.

## Environmental impact

Secondly, "greening" reduces the environmental impact of MSME operations and fosters cleantech innovation and entrepreneurship to accelerate the transition to a circular and low carbon economy. Energy efficiency provides a case in point as business and climate benefits go hand in hand. For example, together with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), UNIDO provided energy efficiency advisory services to 695 MSMEs in 23 clusters covering brass, ceramic, dairy, foundry and hand tool sectors. As a result, these MSMEs invested themselves during the cash-strapped COVID period ₹157 crore to save 13,105 tonnes of oil equivalent and ₹81 crore in annual operating costs and preventing 83,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Thirdly, to increase the resilience of supply in response to recent shocks, production locations for global value chains are increasingly shifting and diversifying across countries and regions.

To further leverage this opportunity, UNIDO is spearheading the notion of manufacturing excellence.

This means fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation that reduces waste and increases productivity, safety and quality. In one partnership with the Automotive Components Manufacturers Association (ACMA), the participating SME component manufacturers have achieved average reductions of in-house and client rejections of 82% and 73% respectively, eliminated hazardous work conditions, and achieved cumulative annual savings of over ₹4.2 crore.

## Job creation

The Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is also creating opportunities for self-employment and micro enterprises, with over 7 lakh micro enterprises assisted in becoming economically viable. Similarly, ILO, together with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and corporates, is supporting MSMEs in creating and retaining jobs, with over 150 MSMEs having improved productivity, aligned to international standards and integrated into global supply chains, and the Start and Improve Your Business programme helping over a lakh young people across five States launch enterprises.

A forward-looking mindset centres on policy makers and society at large fully recognising and supporting the central socio-economic role that MSMEs play in India, as across the world. In turn, to fully unlock emerging opportunities in the rapidly changing global value chain ecosystem and maximise the demographic dividend, MSME owners need to further commit to formalising their businesses, investing in improved productivity, compliance and most of all, decent work and jobs for India's aspiring youth. As UN Secretary-General Guterres has urged, "Let us renew our commitment to leverage the full potential of MSMEs, rescue the Sustainable Development Goals and build a more prosperous and just world for all."

*René Van Berkel is UNIDO Representative and head of the UNIDO Regional Office in India, Dagmar Walter is Director of ILO India Country Office and Decent Work Support Team for South Asia and Shombi Sharp is the United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, bringing the 26 agencies of Team UN India together for Agenda 2030*

# Reviving cultivation of a traditional crop in Mysuru

## Spotlight on economic benefits of Amaranthus

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MYSURU

Efforts are under way to popularise the inclusion of Amaranthus - a wide variety of leafy vegetables - as part of mixed cropping among farmers in Mysuru.

Though known to be highly nutritious and still consumed but in a limited quantity it has economic benefits too and farmers can have multiple harvest to supplement their income. But cultivation was gradually on the wane and with it a slice of culinary culture.

### Limited manner

"Amaranthus refers to a wide variety of leafy vegetables including Kirkire Soppu and



Farmer Srinivas of Mysuru district with a variety of Amaranthus cultivated by him on his land. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Dantina Soppu which are consumed but in a limited manner. Besides, its cultivation and growth is gradually on the wane and we want to bring it to the mainstream once again," said Krishna Prasad, Director of Sahaja Samruddha, an organisation promoting cultivation of in-

digenuous crops besides mapping the crop diversity of Karnataka.

He said Danttu or stem amaranth used to be cultivated in backyard gardens and in hilly areas and once cultivated, farmers harvest it multiple times to supplement their income.

In a bid to popularise Amaranthus, Sahaja Samruddha acquired 30 varieties of the traditional crop from different parts of the country and all of them were cultivated on an experimental basis in the farm of Srinivas of Rame-nahalli in H.D.Kote taluk of Mysuru district.

### Field visit

"Last week, a group of experts including scientists visited the farm for Participatory Varietal Selection Training and the objective was to learn which varieties perform well on-farm and to obtain feedback from the potential end users," according to Sahaja Samruddha.

The organisation also wanted to assess as to which traditional variety was adaptable to local climatic conditions so that it could be promoted for cultivation among

the local farmers. Apart from adding to the crop diversity, the effort was also to enthuse farmers to conserve the traditional varieties," Mr. Krishna Prasad added.

Aravinda Kumar, Assistant Professor, College of Horticulture, Mysuru, pointed out that Amaranthus was an excellent source of calcium, magnesium, potassium, vitamin A, B and C, and an incredible source of vitamin K and the crop offered the most nutrition per calorie than most foods.

For the participants the field visit was also an effort to orient the farmers to include Amaranthus in the bouquet of crops under mixed cropping template and promote both crop diversity and empower rural communities to build upon indigenous and traditional knowledge, skills and practices.

# From July 1, Himachal to buy back single-use plastic

The government will pay students ₹75 for a kg of single-use plastic items they deposit with the school

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

As the Centre has decided to ban the use of single-use plastic from July 1, the hill State of Himachal Pradesh is all set to kick-start a buy-back scheme in schools and colleges to purchase the single-use plastic items from students in a bid to instil a sense of environment preservation by “catching them young”.

Under the novel scheme, the students would be encouraged to bring single-use plastic items from their home and deposit it with the school, for which they will be paid ₹75 a kg by the government.

“Across the State, we have 3,000 eco-clubs in schools and in 100 colleges under the National Green Corps programme – these eco-

clubs are an association of student-teachers that work to inculcate environmental awareness and protection. As a pilot project, we will start the buy-back scheme in 100 schools from July 1. Later, we will scale it up and implement the scheme in all the schools and colleges through the eco-clubs. We will pay the students ₹75 a kg for the single-use plastic items they bring. The purpose is to catch the students in their early years and teach them about environmental conservation. We believe that once a habit towards environment protection is inculcated during childhood it could stay lifelong,” Lalit Jain, Director, Environment, Science-Technology and Member Secretary, Himachal Pradesh Council for



**Novel programme:** The government is implementing the scheme in 3,000 eco-club schools. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Science, Technology and Environment (HIMCOSTE), told *The Hindu*.

The HIMCOSTE is the State nodal agency for the National Green Corps – Eco-club Programme of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Government of India – and is

implementing the national scheme in 3,000 eco-club schools and 100 colleges in Himachal Pradesh.

Besides the students, the scheme also aims to involve teachers, school management committees and parents by creating awareness surrounding the ill-effects of

plastic waste at the district-level through the eco-club schools, covering both rural and urban schools.

“The single-use plastic items collected from the schools would then be handed over to the Public Works Department and this plastic will be used in bitumen to construct roads in the State. The roads built with plastic-bitumen are durable and long-lasting, besides it would help to dispose of the waste plastic,” said Mr. Jain.

At Senior Secondary School in Shimla district’s Theog, Deepak Sharma, in charge of the school eco-club, is enthused by the new scheme to be launched. “We are hopeful that monetary assistance offered by the government will motivate students and teachers to bring

the single-use plastic items to school for their disposal. At our school, we have been making students and the local community aware of the ill-effects of plastic, single-use plastic in particular. To curtail plastic use, we encourage the use of steel bottles for carrying drinking water to the school. We have already been organising inter-house competitions in the school. In the first week of June, the students held an awareness rally at Theog market to highlight the dangers of plastic on the environment, conveying the proper use of plastic and avoiding its littering. Making use of social media platforms, we show students motivational videos on nature conservation and biodiversity.”

# Odisha to install siren to caution elephant movement in forest

Officials have been deployed to assess its operability

**SATYASUNDAR BARIK**  
BHUBANESWAR

The Forest Department in Odisha is experimenting with a siren system, which would go off automatically sensing elephant herds crossing the National Highway to reduce human-elephant encounters.

“We in association with a

non-government organisation have started a pilot project on siren system to alert traffic to elephant movement. The system has been installed at two places at Ratasingha and Haldihabahal,” said Dhenkanal Divisional Forest officer Prakash Chand Gogineni.

Mr. Gogineni said, “The Forest Department officials have been deployed at two places to assess its operability and how seamless it can work to prevent encounters with wild elephants.”



Steps are being taken to prevent elephant-human encounters.

“The siren system detects elephant herds approaching National Highway by its infrared sensor system. There is an in-built programme to

identify jumbos from their sizes and other attributes. Once detected, the siren would go off alerting traffic from both sides,” he said.

“We have found the system working when elephants were crossing NH. However, we will carry out overall assessment. We will evaluate how the system is responding to elephant herds and single elephant during crossing of roads,” said the Dhenkanal DFO.

As cropping season has begun, wild elephants would

start coming out from forests. The Dhenkanal forest division has identified five crossing points for elephants. Invariably, elephant herds cross NH two to three times in week. There are chances of elephants getting collided with speeding vehicles. Sometimes, people riding two-wheelers bump into elephant herds.

Similarly, the Khadi Village Industries Commission is implementing apiculture programme to keep elephants at bay in neighbour-

ing Angul district. In cooperation with Athmallik Forest Division, about 100 bee boxes have been set up at border of Laxmipur village in Angul district. Marauding elephants stray into the village frequently damaging large crop areas. Sometimes, human-elephant encounters result in human casualties. Elephants are expected to be stung by bees if their boxes are hit. It would drive elephants back. CCTV cameras have been installed to capture reaction of elephants.



CACHE

# Implications of India's new VPN rules

Will virtual servers be able to bypass the new CERT-in rules on virtual private networks?

## THE GIST

■ On April 28, India's cybersecurity agency passed a rule mandating Virtual Private Network (VPN) providers to record and keep their customers' logs for 180 days. It also asked these firms to collect and store customer data for up to five years. It further mandated that any cybercrime recorded must be reported to the CERT-In within six hours of the crime.

■ Surfshark VPN stated that taking such radical action that highly impacts the privacy of millions of people in India will most likely be counterproductive and strongly damage the IT sector's growth in the country.

■ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said that the rules are applicable to "any entity whatsoever", regardless of whether they have a physical presence in India or not, as long as they deliver services to Indian users.

ABHISHEK CHATTERJEE  
NABEEL AHMED

**The story so far:** On April 28, India's cybersecurity agency passed a rule mandating Virtual Private Network (VPN) providers to record and keep their customers' logs for 180 days. It also asked these firms to collect and store customer data for up to five years. It further mandated that any cybercrime recorded must be reported to the CERT-In (Computer Emergency Response Team) within six hours of the crime. The new directives, if passed, will be effective from June 28. In response to the CERT-In rules, Nord VPN, one of the world's largest VPN providers, has said it is moving its servers out of the country. Two other firms, Express VPN and Surfshark, said they will shut down their physical servers in India and cater to users in India through virtual servers located in Singapore and the U.K.

**Who all will be affected by the new rules?** CERT-In directions are applicable to data centres, virtual private server (VPS) providers, cloud service providers, virtual asset service providers, virtual asset exchange providers, custodian wallet providers and government organisations. Firms that provide Internet proxy-like services through VPN technologies also come under the ambit of the new rule. Corporate entities are not under the scanner.

**What is a virtual server, and what are its uses?**

A virtual server is a simulated server environment built on an actual physical server. It recreates the functionality of a dedicated physical server. The virtual twin functions like a physical server that runs software and uses resources of the physical server. Multiple virtual servers can run on a single physical server.

Virtualising servers helps reallocate resources for changing workloads. Converting one physical server into multiple virtual servers allows organisations to use processing power and resources more efficiently by running multiple operating systems and applications on one

partitioned server. Running multiple operating systems and applications on a single physical machine reduces cost as it consumes less space and hardware. Virtualisation also reduces cost as maintaining a virtual server infrastructure is low compared to physical server infrastructure. Virtual servers are also said to offer higher security than a physical server infrastructure as the operating system and applications are enclosed in a virtual machine. This helps contain security attacks and malicious behaviour inside the virtual machine.

**Express VPN and Surfshark have said that they will shut down their physical servers in India and cater to users in India through virtual servers located in Singapore and the U.K.**

Virtual servers are also useful in testing and debugging applications in different operating systems and versions without having to manually install and run them in several physical machines. Software developers can create, run, and test new software applications on a virtual server without taking processing power away from other users.

**Can server relocation and virtualisation help VPN providers circumvent the new rules?**

The FAQs published by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY) regarding the cybersecurity directions offers some clarity on relocation and virtualisation. It says the rules are applicable to "any entity whatsoever" in the matter of cyber incidents and cyber security incidents, regardless of whether they have a physical presence in India or not, as long as they deliver services to Indian users. The service providers who do not have a physical presence in India but offer services to the users in the country, have to designate a point of contact to liaise with CERT-In. Also, logs may be stored outside India as long as the obligation to produce logs to CERT-In is adhered to by the entities in a reasonable time. VPN companies, like Surfshark, on the other

hand believe that by removing their physical servers to countries outside India they will comply with the laws applicable to their activities, the company said to *The Hindu*.

**How will the law impact India's IT sector?**

In response to *The Hindu's* queries on the impact of removal of physical servers from the country on jobs, SurfsharkVPN said "It would be difficult to estimate the exact number of individuals impacted in terms of employment because we were renting servers from Indian providers."

VPN suppliers leaving India is not good for its burgeoning IT sector. Taking such radical action that highly impacts the privacy of millions of people in India will most likely be counterproductive and strongly damage the IT sector's growth in the country, the company said in a release last week.

It estimated that 254.9 million Indians have had their accounts breached since 2004 and raised its concern that collecting excessive amounts of data within Indian jurisdiction without robust protection mechanisms could lead to even more breaches.

The Netherlands-based company further said that they have never received a similar directive on storing customer logs from any other governments in the world.

**Does China have similar rules regarding VPN usage?**

Though not all VPNs are officially banned in China, only government-approved VPNs are officially permitted to function, Syed Ali Akhtar, Fellow at the National Law University, Delhi told *The Hindu*.

Visitors and Chinese citizens use VPNs to circumvent China's Great Firewall, which has blocked access to many websites, keywords and even IP addresses.

Government-approved VPNs have to register with the Chinese government and have to comply with data requests during investigations. However, cases of tourists being penalised for using non-government approved VPNs have not been reported, Akhtar said.



A 2021 photo shows Chinese soldiers and tanks during disengagement on the India-China border in Ladakh. ■ AFP

## ‘China upgraded firepower on LAC’

### Intelligence inputs cite upgraded air defence systems and expanded runways

**DINAKAR PERI**  
NEW DELHI

Vastly expanded troop accommodation within 100 km from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the western sector, long-range artillery and rocket systems, upgraded air defence systems, expanded runways and hardened blast pens to house fighter aircraft – these are some of the major upgrades undertaken by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) on its side in the past two years since the stand-off in the eastern Ladakh began, according to intelligence inputs.

“In the western sector across the LAC, the accommodation capacity was for 20,000 troops in 2020 before the stand-off began. That has now been expanded to 1.2 lakh billets - infrastructure and accommodation-wise,” an official source said on condition of anonymity, citing intelligence inputs. “They have also set up captive solar energy and small hydel power projects all along the LAC. This enhances their winter sustenance capability manifold,” the source said, adding that this is apart from the model villages they are building all along the LAC.

This is within 100 km on the Chinese side from the LAC, the source said.

Four PLA divisions under the Xinjiang military district are being rotated on the Chinese side facing eastern Ladakh. In 2020, when the stand-off began, the fourth and sixth divisions were deployed, which were rotated with eighth and 11th divisions in 2021. This year, the fourth and sixth divisions have been redeployed as part of rotation. “All these divisions are in the process of being converted into a combined arms brigade (CAB). Equipment upgrade is almost complete,” the source said.

### Weapons upgrade

On the weapons upgrade, sources said the fourth division, which has one armoured regiment, has inducted the ZTQ 15 (Type 15) third generation modern light tank, replacing the ZTZ-88 first generation tanks in service. The sixth division which operates the Type 96 A second generation tanks remains the same. In terms of technology upgrade, the fire control systems of the tanks have been upgraded, sources said.

Similarly, two mechanised brigades which operate wheeled armoured personnel carriers (APCs) have upgraded from the ZBL-08 to the latest ZTL-11 APCs.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

# 'China upgraded firepower along LAC'

Following the confrontation on the Kailash range on the south bank of Pangong Tso in August 2020 when India and China deployed tanks on the peaks at over 15,000 feet, the Indian Army too has issued a tender for the procurement of light tanks.

Similarly, air defence and airbases closer to the LAC have been upgraded, including blast pens and extended runways, an official source said citing inputs.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has developed heliports at Shigatse and Rudok and airbases have been upgraded with extended runways and blast pens at Gargunsh, Lhasa and Guangzhou, the source said.

In terms of long range firepower, the PLA has upgraded its artillery by replacing the towed howitzers with truck-mounted howitz-

ers having a range of 50 km. This gives better mobility, faster shoot and scoot ability and less deployment time, officials noted.

In addition, the PLA has deployed the PHL-3 Multi-Rocket Launch Systems (MRLS) with a range of over 100 km and has better targeting than earlier versions. This is a Chinese version based on the Russian Smerch MRLS, three regiments of which are in service with the Indian Army.

In the eastern sector, opposite Arunachal Pradesh, China has moved artillery guns within 50 km range from the LAC, the first source said.

Since the stand-off, India too has significantly expanded its military capability and augmented infrastructure on its side of the LAC.

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 <sup>th</sup> 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.
<b>General Studies Paper IV</b>	
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.